Shiʿi Defenders of Avicenna: An Intellectual History of the Dashtakī Philosophers of Shiraz

Submitted by Ahab Bdaiwi to the University of Exeter as a thesis for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Arab and Islamic Studies in February 2014

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Abstract

Shi'i Defenders of Avicenna: An Intellectual History of the Dashtakī Philosophers of Shiraz

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February 2014

This dissertation is a study of the intellectual history of Ṣadr al-Dīn Dashtakī (d. 903/1498) and Ghiyāth al-Dīn Dashtakī (d. 949/1542), two important Shirazi philosophers and Shi'i thinkers who lived in the late Timurid and early Safavid period. It argues that Avicennan philosophy was revived and provided with a new impetus at a time when it was under attack by Ash'ari thinkers belonging to the later tradition. Paradoxically, many of the later Ash'ri thinkers saw it fit to engage in metaphysical speculations that took the Avicennan tradition as its basis. Yet, these same thinkers accused Avicenna and his followers of advancing specious arguments and for making incoherent statements about God, the cosmos, religious matters, and the general nature of things. So overarching was this later Ash'ari tradition, that it became the intellectual tradition par excellence in the centuries leading up to the Safavid period.

In many of their major philosophical writings, the Dashtakīs sought to decouple Avicennan philosophy from Ash'ari kalām, and, at the same time, to attack the foundations of the Ash'ari tradition. In doing so, the Dashtakīs proposed a particular reading of Avicenna that was purified of Ash'ari influences and closer to philosophical Shi'ism.
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such wonderful parents and family. This dissertation is dedicated to them.
Note on Transliteration and Style

I follow the *International Journal of Middle East Studies* for Arabic and Persian transliteration. Arabic and Persian terms that have entered the English language, such as madrasa, qadi, etc, have not been italicized unless they form part of a proper name. I also naturalize other frequently used terms (e.g. Shi‘i, Ash‘ari, Sunni, etc.).

Translation

Unless otherwise stated, all Arabic and Persian translations are mine. When citing the Qur’an, however, I rely throughout on A. J. Arberry’s Qur’an translation: *The Koran Interpreted* (New York, 1955).

Dates

H = *Hijrī* calendar
Sh = *Shamsī* calendar
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Introduction

These [Ash'ari] theologians obfuscate matters by sayings things which are contradictory...whoever wishes to see their errors let him peruse their theological works and discover what they really contain (wa-fihā mà-fihā).

Thus writes the Shirazi philosopher and polymath Ghiyāth al-Dīn Manṣūr al-Dashtakī (d. 949/1542) who together with his father Šadr al-Dīn al-Dashtakī (d. 903/1498) revived Avicennan philosophy and countered the Ash’ari consensus in Iran in the late Timurid and early Safavid period.

Post-Avicennan philosophy, with few notable exceptions, has gone largely unnoticed in modern western scholarship. This neglect is particularly true of its development during the period between Naṣīr al-Dīn al-Ṭūsī (d. 672/1274) and Mīr Damād (d. 1041/1631) and the formation of the so-called School of Isfahan. A major

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2 On this lacuna in modern western scholarship, Seyyed Hossein Nasr writes, ‘the period from the seventh/thirteenth to tenth/sixteenth century is the most unknown and least studied in the history of Islamic philosophy, and consequently many claim that it was in fact a period of languor in Islamic philosophy, a period that did produce a philosopher of the statute of Fārābī, Ibn Sīnā, Ibn Rushd, Suhrawardī or Mullā Ṣadrā. Such a judgement can only be made, however, after the works of major philosophers of this school are studied. Certainly Mullā Ṣadrā himself had as great a respect for some of the philosophers of this period as he did for those of earlier centuries. Without doubt the School of Shiraz was of exceptional influence in the intellectual life of the Ottoman world and Islamic India, as well as of later schools of philosophy in Persia itself, starting with the School of Isfahan, and produced a number of important Persians’. See Seyyed Hossein Nasr, Islamic Philosophy from its Origins to the Present (Albany, 2006), p. 194. For recent studies that deal with thinkers and philosophical traditions in this period, see Reza Pourjavady, Philosophy in Early Safavid Iran: Najm al-Dīn Maḥmūd al-Nayrīzī and His Writings (Leiden, 2011); Firouzeh Saatchian, Gottes Wesen-Gottes Wirken: Ontologie und Kosmologie im Denken von Sams-al-Dīn Muhammad al-Ḥafī (Berlin, 2011); Sabine Schmidtke, Theologie, Philosophie und Mystik im zwölferschitischen Islam des 9./15. Jahrhunderts. Die Gedankenwelt des Ibn Abī Ḥamīd al-Ẓāfirī (um 838/1434–35 – nach 906/1501) (Leiden, 2000); David Reisman and Ahmed al-Rahim (eds.), Before and After Avicenna: Proceedings of the First Conference of Avicenna Study Group (Leiden and Boston, 2003); T. Langermann (ed.), Avicenna and His Legacy: A Golden Age of Science and Philosophy (Turnhout, 2010); Peter Adamson (ed.), In the Age of Averroes: Arabic Philosophy in the Sixth/Twelfth Century (Warburg Institute Colloquia) (London, 2011). Arguably the best recent study to map out the intellectual landscape in the post-Avicennan period, Heidrun Eichner’s habilitation provides us with extremely useful insights about the development of philosophical theology in Sunni and Shi’i milieus. See Heidrun Eichner, Towards the Construction of Islamic Orthodoxy: Philosophy in the post-Avicennan Period and Islamic Theology as Literary Traditions, Unpublished habilitation thesis, (Martin Luther Universität, 2009).
reason for this neglect is that many works of this period, the majority of which
remain in manuscript form, were written in the style of commentaries, super-
commentaries, glosses, super-glosses, and abridgments. As such, they are
considered unoriginal compositions, which are unworthy of modern scholars’
attention.3

I.1: Objectives of this study

This dissertation is a first step towards remedying the desideratum discussed above.
It seeks to shed light on Ṣadr al-Dīn Dashtakī and Ghiyāth al-Dīn Dashtakī, two
Muslim philosophers who remain largely unknown to modern scholarship. To help
me approach this problem, I consider the following questions:

1. What can we say about the intellectual milieu in western Iran in the late
   Timurid and early Safavid period?

2. Why did the Dashtakīs oppose the philosophical tradition associated with
   the later Ash’ari current of Shiraz?

3. Did the Dashtakīs have a philosophical project?

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3 This is indeed misleading given the extent of the period in question. Considering the vast number
of philosophical works extant from this period, scholars such as Dimitri Gutas have concluded that
the period between Ṣūsī and Mīr Dāmād was indeed the golden age for ‘Arabic philosophy’. See
Glosses and Commentaries on Aristotelian Logical Texts: The Syriac, Arabic, and Medieval Latin Traditions
on the historiography of Arabic philosophy’, in British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies 1 (2002), pp. 5-
125; Robert Wisnovsky, ‘The Nature and Scope of Arabic Philosophical Commentary in Post-classical
(ca. 1100-1900) Islamic Intellectual History: Some Preliminary Observations’, in P. Adamson, H.
Baltussen, and M.W.F. Stone (eds.), Philosophy, Science and Exegesis in Greek, Arabic and Latin
Commentaries (London, 2004), vol. 2, pp. 149-191; Ahmed al-Rahim, ‘The Twelver-Šī’ī Reception of
Avicenna in the Mongol Period’, in Before and After Avicenna, pp. 219-231, at pp. 219, 231. In a
schematic representation of post-Avicennan philosophers, Rahim does not make any reference to
Ṣadr al-Dīn Dashtakī and Ghiyāth al-Dīn Dashtakī.
4. What can we say about the lives and philosophical training of the Dashtakīs?

5. Did they train students who went on to become philosophers in their own right?

6. What was the confessional identity of the Dashtakīs and did it influence their conception of philosophy?

This study is organised into four chapters, a conclusion, and two appendices. In chapter one, I examine the history of the Dashtakī family, the early life of Ṣadr al-Dīn Dashtakī, his intellectual training and career, his students, his political connections, and his confessional identity. I argue that the Dashtakī family had always been Shiʿi. I trace their origins as far back as the sixth/twelfth century starting with a certain Abū Saʿīd who was reputedly the first member of the family to move to Shiraz. Moreover, by examining the early life of Ṣadr al-Dīn and his intellectual career, I provide an insight into the workings of a late Timurid era Avicennan philosopher as well as providing insights into the intellectual milieu of that period in general. I show that philosophical activity in western Iran in that period was very much alive and primarily pointed toward a study of Avicenna. By providing brief intellectual biographies of Ṣadr al-Dīn’s most famous students, I argue that the Dashtakī circle was the main actor who furnishes a physical link with the later philosophers of Isfahan, and one who mediated the emergence of a Shiʿi theology in the later Safavid period. Lastly, by examining a number of heretofore unexplored primary sources, I argue that Ṣadr al-Dīn was an Avicennan philosopher who belonged to the Shiʿi tradition, making him arguably one of the last and perhaps most important Shiʿi philosophers in the late Timurid era.
In chapter two, I look at the *Risāla fī ithbāt al-barī* which I argue is Ṣadr al-Dīn’s most important and influential philosophical work, one which contains the totality of his views on falsafa and kalām, and which, I show, is primarily directed at defending the Avicennan tradition against the attacks of the later Ashʿarī thinkers. I also provide an intellectual history of some of the key philosophical ideas which emerge in the *Risāla*. This is done in order to show that Ṣadr al-Dīn saw himself as an inheritor of the Avicennan tradition passed down to later generations through Ṭūsī and al-ʿAllāma al-Ḥillī (d. 725/1325); that is to say that he inherits the Avicennan tradition as it was received and interpreted through the lens of two important Shiʿi thinkers.

In chapter three, I examine the life and intellectual and political career of Ghiyāth al-Dīn Dashtakī. I also provide brief but essential intellectual biographies of his most famous students, some of whom went on to train the leading philosophers of the later Safavid period. I also make a case for Ghiyāth al-Dīn’s connection to the Twelver Shiʿi tradition, which has rarely been addressed with any degree of seriousness in modern scholarship. In doing so, and looking at his students and some of their major writings, I show that Ghiyāth al-Dīn was the first Shiʿi philosopher of prominence in the Safavid period. Moreover, I look at the political career of Ghiyīth al-Dīn and his disputations with other court clerics, most notably Shaykh ʿAlī al-Karakī (d. 939/1533), who was responsible for the former’s dismissal from the office of ṣadr.

Finally, in chapter four, I examine a number of recently published philosophical, theological, and mystical writings of Ghiyāth al-Dīn. I argue that Ghiyāth al-Dīn mediated the arrival of the Avicennan tradition into Safavid Iran. I also show that he was the first Safavid thinker to broach an Imāmī philosophical
mysticism, which was I argue the first attempt in that period to wed Avicennan philosophy to philosophical Shi‘ism and non-Sufi mysticism. In addition, I show that most of Ghiyāth al-Dīn’s writings were in fact written as a response to the philosophical ideas of later Ash‘ari thinkers such as Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī (d. 504/1111) and Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī (d. 605/1209). Ghiyāth al-Dīn devotes entire sections in his works engaging in critical and polemical attacks against both Ghazālī and Rāzī. Both Ghazālī and Rāzī were, according to Ghiyāth al-Dīn, responsible for distorting the Avicennan tradition by mixing Ash‘ari kalām with Avicennan metaphysical speculations.

I also include two appendices with this study. Appendix A contains an annotated bibliography of Şadr al-Dīn’s writings and includes locations of extant Iranian manuscripts. It is not an exhaustive list, but it is intended as a preliminary study, which will hopefully provide a useful foundation for future studies. In Appendix B, I provide an annotated bibliography and survey of Ghiyāth al-Dīn’s writings, including locations of some manuscripts, which summarise the major arguments therein.

I.2: Was there a School of Shiraz?

There is a recent tendency among western scholars to describe the philosophical activity in Shiraz between the ninth/fifteenth and tenth/sixteenth century as something characteristic of a ‘school’. Henry Corbin, who coined the term ‘The School of Shiraz’, uses the label to refer to the Dashtakī family dynasty of philosophers that was headed primarily by Şadr al-Dīn Dashtakī. But for Seyyed

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Hossein Nasr, ‘one should start the School of Shiraz with Quṭb al-Dīn Shīrāzī (d. 710/1311)’ and must also include ‘figures such as [Aḍud al-Dīn] Ḥūṣain (d. 756/1355), [al-Sharīf] Jurjānī (d. 816/1413)’, Ṣadr al-Dīn Dashtakī, Ghiyāth al-Dīn Dashtakī, Jalāl al-Dīn al-Dawānī (d. 908/1502), Mullā Shams al-Dīn al-Khafīrī (d. 942/1535), and Najm al-Dīn al-Nayrīzī (d. 948/1541). Contemporary Iranian scholars, too, have gone with this label. Qāsim Kākāyī, for example, uses the label to refer to Ṣadr al-Dīn Dashtakī and his most famous students, namely Ghiyāth al-Dīn Dashtakī, Khafīrī, and Nayrīzī.μ

Muḥammad Barakat reserves the label for Ṣadr al-Dīn Dashtakī, Dawānī, Ghiyāth al-Dīn Dashtakī, Khafīrī, Nayrīzī, Jamāl al-Dīn Maḥmūd al-Shīrāzī (d. 962/1555), Mīr Fakhr al-Dīn al-Sammākī (d. 984/1576), Mīrzā-jān Ḥabīb Allāh Bāghnawī al-Shīrāzī (d. 994/1586), Kamāl al-Dīn Ḥusayn Ilāhī al-Ardabīlī (d. 950/1543), and Ṣadr al-Dīn al-Dashtakī IV (Ghiyāth al-Dīn’s son). In recent times other Iranian scholars speak of ‘two strands’ of philosophy in Shiraz, while some speak of the ‘School of Ṣadr al-Dīn Dashtakī’ and the ‘School of Jalāl al-Dīn Dawānī’.

But was there ever a philosophical school as such? To answer this question we need to define what we mean by ‘school’. In philosophy a school conventionally describes systems of coherent ideologies or trends which inform how certain thinkers answer the questions asked in philosophical debate. It may refer to a


\[\text{\textsuperscript{6} Qāsim Kākāyī, ‘Maktab-i shīrāz qabl az Mullā Ṣadrā’, in Ghiyāth al-Dīn Maṃsūr Dashtakī va falsafa-i ʻirfān, ed. Qāsim Kākāyī (Tehran, 1387 Sh/2008), pp. 19-31.}\]

\[\text{\textsuperscript{7} Muḥammad Barakat, Kitāb-shināsī-yi falsafī-yi Maktab-i Shīrāz (Shiraz, 1383 Sh/2004), pp. 9-16.}\]

\[\text{\textsuperscript{8} Aḥad Farāmarz Qarāmālīkī, ‘Mukātabahā-yi Dawānī u Dashtakī dar ḫall mu’ammā-yi jadhr-i āsamm’, in Khirdān-yī Ṣadrā 8 and 9 (1376 Sh/1997), p. 95.}\]

\[\text{\textsuperscript{9} See the editor’s introduction in Ghiyāth al-Dīn Maṃsūr Dashtakī, Ishrāq hayākīl al-nūr li-kashf zulumāt shawākīl al-ghurūr, ed. Ḥājī Aḥmad al-Awjaḏī (Tehran, 1382 Sh/2003). There the editor speaks of the ‘school of Dawānī’ and the ‘school of Dashtakī’ of Shiraz.}\]
collection of thinkers who share common characteristics of views, or visions of reality, or intellectual discipline, or belief. The term may also be associated with an intellectual movement or an interpretative community that focuses on a particular text. In what sense then can we consider the philosophers of Shiraz as belonging to a school? On the question of epistemology, for example, Šadr al-Dīn Dashtakī was, on the one hand, an Avicennan philosopher who opposed Ashʿari kalām speculations and considered their method invalid; while Dawānī, on the other, was committed to Ashʿari philosophical theology, though he did have a pronounced penchant for Avicennan philosophy. Moreover, while Dawānī espoused illuminationist and mystical themes in his writings, Šadr al-Dīn did not exhibit such mystical or illuminationist proclivities and remained throughout his life a committed intellectual disciple of Avicenna (d. 428/1037).

Similarly, on the question of being and existence, Jurjānī upheld the doctrine of the unity of being (waḥdat al-wujūd),10 Šadr al-Dīn denied it, while Ghiyāth al-Dīn argued that existence is gradational, a doctrine which came to be known as tashkīk al-wujūd. On the dialectic between falsafa and kalām, Jurjānī and Dawānī, for example, were primarily Ashʿari theologians, secondarily philosophers, whereas the Dashtakīs privileged Avicennan rationality over kalām speculations. To complicate matters further, Nayrīzī, although committed to Avicennan metaphysics and critical of Ashʿari kalām, was explicit in stating his preference for Shiʿi theology over Avicennan philosophy. Khafrī showed much interest in Avicennan philosophy and Akbarian mysticism, unlike his teacher Šadr al-Dīn, who did not express interest in mystical traditions.

Noting this plurality of philosophical positions, I therefore reject the label of ‘the School of Shiraz’ as a term that describes adequately the key figures of the late Timurid and early Safavid period. Instead, I argue that there was a revivalist circle of Shi‘i Avicennan philosophers centred on the figure of Šadr al-Dīn Dashtakī, and that these figures shared three epistemological concerns. These are: first, to revive interest in Avicennan metaphysical speculations; second, to counter the Ash‘ari consensus in Shiraz and reject its reading of Avicennan philosophy as inauthentically Avicennan; and third, to reconcile Shi‘i philosophical theology with the Avicennan tradition. I refer to this revivalist trend as the Dashtakī circle, named after its foundational figure Šadr al-Dīn Dashtakī, whose radical defence of Avicennism together with his systematic critiques of Ash‘arī kalām ushered in, I argue, the Shi‘i renaissance which was to reach its most profound expression in the writings of his students and, later, in the works of the major exponents of ‘the School of Isfahan’, particularly Mīr Dāmād and Mullā Šadrā Shīrāzī (d. 1045/1635-6).

Following in the footsteps of his father, Ghiyāth al-Dīn sought to provide Avicennan philosophy with a new impetus. He often accused later Ash‘ari thinkers of failing to grasp the basic tenets of Avicennan philosophy. We will see that often, Ghiyāth al-Dīn employs condescending language to refer to Ash‘ari theologians, even using ridicule and derisive terms to describe the titles of their works. For instance, he would often refer to Dawānī’s ḥawāshī, on the commentaries of Naṣir al-Dīn Tūsī’s Tajrīd, as ghawāshī (i.e. ‘works which obfuscate rather than clarify matters’). In fact, the Dashtakis hold both Jurjānī and Dawānī responsible for ‘contaminating’ Avicennan philosophy and promoting philosophical Ash‘arism, which, in their view, is incompatible with Avicennism. It was often the case that the

11 See, for example, Ghiyāth al-Dīn Dashtakī, ‘Kashf al-ḥaqā‘īq’ in Muṣannafāt, vol. 2, pp. 829-835.
Dashtakīs employed abusive nicknames against Dawānī and other Ashʿari thinkers. Ghiyāth al-Dīn would regularly refer Dawānī as al-qāṣir al-muʿāṣir.12 Some putdowns were more elaborate than others. For instance, commenting on Dawānī’s argument on the existence of the Necessary Being, Ghiyāth al-Dīn says: wa-lā yukhfū ma-fiḥ min wujūd al-man’ wa-l-qadḥ wa-l-fasād wa-l-inḥirāf an al-sadād wa-li-ʿumrika innahu ʿa’if sakhīf jiddan wa-nasjahu askhāf min nasj bayt al-ʿankabūt wa-huwa mahdūm manqūd ījmālān wa-taṣīlān (the presence of corrupt, deviant, and objectionable argument cannot be overlooked. His [Dawānī] argument is weak, silly, and his construction [of arguments] is more fragile than a spiderweb, its [content] is wrecked and is self-refuting, generally and particularly).13 Elsewhere, Ghiyāth al-Dīn describes Dawānī as ‘stubborn’, ‘cheat’, ‘inept’, ‘foolish’, ‘ignorant’, and ‘clumsy’.14 Even referring to him as someone who was tricked by Satan.15

This being said, when the Dashtakīs criticize Dawānī they are not attacking his Ashʿari beliefs per se; rather, they are critiquing his reading of Avicenna. But, when the Dashtakīs attack other Ashʿari thinkers such as Abū Ḫāmid Ghazālī and Fakhr al-Dīn Rāzī, they are specifically targeting their theological underpinnings, that is, their commitment to Ashʿari kalām. It will be stated from the outset that, this dissertation is not an attempt to reconstruct the debate between the Dashtakīs and Dawānī, for this is beyond the scope of the current study. Rather, this dissertation seeks to shed further light on the Dashtakīs vision of reality, their conception of


Avicennan philosophy, and their attempts to decouple Avicennan rationalistic discourse from Ashʿarism, and, moreover, their attempts to wed Shiʿism to Avicennism.

I.3: The Intellectual Context

While of central concern to us here is the Dashtakīs’ engagement with Avicennan philosophy and the later Ashʿari tradition, both of which we discuss in details throughout this study, it is important to note, however, that around the time when our thinkers lived there were in the Islamicate east especially in Iran a number of other important strands of thought with which the Dashtakīs seem familiar. These were Neoplatonic philosophy, illuminationist philosophy, and later Muʿtazili theology. A detailed study of these intellectual strands and how each one influenced or not the Dashtakīs requires a separate study, which is beyond the scope of the present dissertation. In what follows we will discuss each of these strands in brief and ask why each was important or not to the overall thought of the Dashtakīs, and the extent to which the Dashtakīs engaged with the respective strand.

I.3.A: Neoplatonic philosophy

In the early period of Islamic intellectual history the so called Theology of Aristotle, known as the Uthūlūjiyā, was considered to be a fundamental Neoplatonic text. The importance of this text among the early Arabic philosophy cannot be exaggerated. Indeed we now know that the Theology was a translation or a paraphrase of the Enneads of Plotinus. It was, however, mistaken by many Muslim thinkers for a work of Aristotle.
The Theology is divided into ten sections, each called mīnar, which is a Syriac word for 'chapter'. The content, editions, and reception of the Theology in later times has been the subject of numerous studies and we do not need to repeat it here. Suffices to say, however, that 'in the Safavid period the Theology was given some significance judging by the numerous citations, allusions, and borrowings from the text in the philosophical writings of the period as well as the number of manuscripts of the work from this period that are extant in the libraries in Iran and India'. The Safavid scholars attributed this work to Aristotle, too, but they also recognised its Neoplatonism.

What form of the Theology was available in the Safavid period? This remains quite unclear. We know, however, that Ghiyāth al-Dīn was the first philosopher in the Safavid period to engage with the Theology. He produced a ‘corrected edition’

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18 Rizvi, ‘(Neo)Platonism Revived in the Light of the Imams’, p. 177ff.

19 Rizvi, ‘(Neo)Platonism Revived in the Light of the Imams’, p. 178; Muṣannafat, vol. 1, p. 106; Pourjavady, Philosophy in Early Safavid Iran, p. 31; Marco Di Branco, ‘The ‘Perfect King’ and his
(tadḥḥīb) of the Theology with glosses attested in a manuscript, copied in 1030/1621, in the Yahuda (Garret) collection at Princeton University Library. There is also a manuscript at the University of Tehran Central Library (MS 5392). In both manuscripts, the prologue reads:

Thou my God, Perfection of the lights, You who effuse quietness on those who know the secrets: illuminate us with Your light, make us perfect by the knowledge of Your secrets, close the door on separation from You and open for us the way to the proximity to Your presence. Illuminate our sight towards the understanding of the light of Your beauty, and guide the contemplation of your people.

Make the people of Light and Illumination be victorious and let them share in the contemplation of lights, make them happy and bless and sanctify them, in particular our Master, the Master of mankind who is the guide to the right path, the rescuer of the community who has removed the darkness of the gloom through the beginning of the dawn of the light of the Word; he who has effused on us the lights of the guide to the right path, away from the darkness of both reprobation and seduction. And his family is the most perfect among those who possess knowledge and wisdom and the noblest among those who possess nobility and magnanimity.

Then, the poor and humble Ghīyāth, known as al-Manṣūr, says: Our aim in this book of ours is the introduction to knowledge, the opening of the exposition, the seal of the demonstration, and the secret of the explanation, that is the fourth vision of the fourth of the pillars of the garden of rejoicing, which consists in the pursuit of the truth of knowledge in view of the unveiling of the Theology that has been put together by the leader of the great wise men, the great philosopher, Aristotle the wise. He composed it in the ancient language of Greece; then one who knew and understood it interpreted and translated it. Then I first occupied myself with the interpretation and the literal quotation of his speech and of his treatise; then, I turned to what I needed, items or discourses which help to refine items in all steps, especially about it [i.e. the treatise]; I have accomplished the discourse, and in this hearts became tired”. In sum, the author of this noble book was the great philosopher Aristotle the wise, and its commentator was Porphyry of Tyre; its translator was ʿĀbd al-Maṣḥīṣ al-Ḥimṣī, and its corrector was Yaʿqūb al-Kindī. The one who prepared, adorned, corrected, verified and rectified it was the blessed Abū ʿAlī ibn Muḥammad Manṣūr al-Ḥusaynī, may his Lord be merciful towards him, may the much forgiving and generous God nobilitate his state and grant success to his deeds, may He reveal him the divine kinds of knowledge.

The two manuscripts in which this prologue is included do not, however, contain the promised commentary, but only the text of the Theology. Further research will

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20 Rizvi, '(Neo)Platonism Revived in the Light of the Imams’, p. 178, fn. 10; Di Branco, 'The 'Perfect King' and his Philosophers’, p. 207.

21 Di Branco, 'The 'Perfect King' and his Philosophers’, p. 207.

ascertain whether or not the commentary by Ghiyāth al-Dīn is extant as an independent work.

Ghiyāth al-Dīn was not the only thinker in the early Safavid period to engage with the *Theology*. His student Fārsī is known to have produced a Persian explanatory translation or edition (*tahrīr*).23 Āqā Buzurg Tīhrānī tells us of a copy of a manuscript in the Āstan-i Quds Library in Mashhad along with the commentary of 'Alī-qulī Khān.24 Similarly, Nayrīzī, a student of the Dashtakīs, mentions the presence of the *Theology* text among the sources he used for his commentary on the *Hidāyat al-ḥikma*.25

What are we, then, to make of Ghiyāth al-Dīn’s engagement with the *Theology*? To the best of my knowledge there are no allusions, citations, or references to the *Theology* in Ghiyāth al-Dīn’s writings except in the actual aforementioned edition or revision. When we examine Ghiyāth al-Dīn’s philosophical writings we find no direct engagement with the *Theology*. For the most part he remains an Avicennan philosopher and it is arguably through Avicenna that he engages with Neoplatonic themes, as we will see in his discussion on the soul in chapter four. As for Ṣadr al-Dīn, he does not ever allude to the *Theology*.

There are, however, plenty of instances in Ghiyāth al-Dīn’s writings that show him to be generally familiar with the Greek tradition. He sometimes sprinkles his discussions with fleeting and very brief references to such Greek philosophers

as: Democritus,²⁶ Galen of Pergamon,²⁷ Aristotle,²⁸ Plato,²⁹ and Euclid of Alexandria.³⁰ Ghiyāth al-Dīn does not deal with these thinkers or their thought in any systematic fashion whenever such figures are mentioned or alluded to. Ṣadr al-Dīn does not ever allude to or cite something from the Greek tradition.

Beside Avicenna and the later Ash’ari theologians, we will see that the Dashtakīs especially Ṣadr al-Dīn engage directly with the Islamic Neoplatonist Abū Naṣr al-Fārābī (d. 339/950). Two works of Fārābī are singled out by the Ṣadr al-Dīn. The first is the Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikma, a pseudo work attributed to Fārābī which as will be shown is cited by Ṣadr al-Dīn in a few instances to augment the formulations of Avicenna. The second work Ṣadr al-Dīn quotes from is the little known Sharḥ risālat Zaynūn al-Kabīr (Commentary on the Treatise by Zeno the Great), which is also attributed to Fārābī. The work contains Fārābī’s rendering of the contingency argument where he says that all contingent beings depend on and flow from a necessary being whose essence and existence are identical. As for the title, Fārābī claims that Zeno was a student of Aristotle. But this seems to be inaccurate since Aristotle had no such student. There were three Zenos among the ancient Greek philosophers: Zeno of Elea, a pre-Socratic philosopher (c. 490-430 B.C.), Zeno of Citium, a Stoic (336-364 B.C.), and Zeno of Sidon, an Epicurean (c. 150-73 B.C.). Upon closer inspection, Zeno appears to have been a pseudonym used by Fārābī, a quasi-

mythical philosopher of the past probably used as a literary mouthpiece to express his own ideas.\textsuperscript{31}

When we examine the philosophical training of the Dashtakīs in chapters one and three we will see that, to the best of our knowledge, there were no known philosophers in Shiraz under whom they could have studied the ideas associated with Fārābī. It is for this reason that I am led to conclude that when it comes to Fārābian thought the Dashtakīs were autodidacts.

I.3.B: Illuminationist philosophy

The illuminationist tradition, ḥikmat al-īshrāq, was founded by Suhrawardī. This tradition marked a turning point in the history of Islamic philosophy since it changed the direction of the nature of philosophical thinking from a purely rationalistic approach to one that considered ascetic practices to be part of its epistemological paradigm.\textsuperscript{32}

In addition to the religious and intellectual elements that enabled Suhrawardī’s ideas to take root in Iran, which have been studied in the past and


more recently, there are other important commentaries and expositions on Suhrawardī’s writings which helped to consolidate his ideas. The most important was the commentary of Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad b. Maḥmūd al-Shahrazūrī (d. after 687/1288) on the Ḥikmat al-ishrāq and the Talwiḥāt. There was also the commentary by Ibn Kammūna (d. 683/1284) on the Talwiḥāt, and a commentary by Quṭb al-Dīn al-Shīrāzī on the Ḥikmat al-ishrāq, among other commentaries. Some later authors attribute a commentary to al-ʿAllāma al-Ḥillī (d. 726/1325). This attribution seems doubtful, however.

Ṣadr al-Dīn did not show any interest in the illuminationist tradition. When we examine his thought in chapter two we will see that the ideas of Suhrawardī do not feature at all in his overall conceptions of philosophy and related issues. For Ghiyāth al-Dīn, however, the story is different. Dawānī composed a commentary on Suhrawardī’s Hayākil al-nūr called Sharḥ hayākil al-nūr. Dawānī’s commentary was the subject of another commentary called Ishrāq hayākil al-nūr by Ghiyāth al-Dīn.

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33 Razavi, Suhrawardī and the School of Illumination, pp. 121-135. More recently Eric van Lit has completed a doctoral study on Suhrawardī and his commentators in Iran. See E. van Lit, ‘Eschatology and the world of Image in Suhrawardī and His Commentators, Unpublished Ph.D. Dissertation (University of Utrecht, 2014).


36 Published as: Quṭb al-Dīn al-Shīrāzī, Sharḥ hikmat al-ishrāq [with Mullā Ṣadrā’s glosses], ed. Asad Allāh Harawī Yazdī (Tehran, 1895–7); Quṭb al-Dīn al-Shīrāzī, Sharḥ hikmat al-ishrāq [with Mullā Ṣadrā’s glosses], ed. S. M. Mūsawī (Tehran, 2010).


However, Ghiyāth al-Dīn’s commentary was intended primarily, it would seem, as a rebuttal against Dawānī. It was completed in 886/1481 when Ghiyāth al-Dīn was eighteen years of age.\footnote{See §B.3 in Appendix B.} In it Ghiyāth al-Dīn does not offer any original theses or arguments on the philosophy of illumination. Rather, he limits himself to long citations from an epistle by Quṭb al-Dīn Shīrāzī. An indication that when Ghiyāth al-Dīn wrote his commentary he was more interested in undermining Dawānī’s intellectual underpinning than engaging with the illuminationist philosophy of Suhrawardī can be seen the introductory statements of his Ishrāq hayākil al-nūr. For instance, in the prologue Ghiyāth al-Dīn informs his readers in unequivocal terms that Dawānī is an ignoramus who is incapable of grasping the basic tenets of philosophy. He writes:

When it became manifestly clear to me that what this commentator [i.e. Dawānī] has brought forth in this commentary is nothing but fragile and meaningless expressions, I realized he has also misunderstood so many other ideas too.\footnote{Dashtakī, Ishrāq hayākil al-nūr, p. 27.}

And:

I am surprised by what this Shaykh writes [i.e. Dawānī]. He spent his entire life engaging in matters which do not concern him. And he has distorted [some] ideas and committed many mistakes to such an extent that it is better for him to laugh less and weep more.\footnote{Dashtakī, Ishrāq hayākil al-nūr, p. 49.}

When we examine Ghiyāth al-Dīn’s major philosophical and mystical thought we will find that he offers little if any direct engagement with Suhrawardī’s illuminationist philosophy. In his Miṭ ṭ al-ḥaqā’iq, completed on 30 Rabīʿ I 895/21 February 1490, Ghiyāth al-Dīn sets out to prove his mystical experiences in rational terms using terminologies relevant to illuminationist philosophy but, again, he make little effort to engage with these ideas in a systematic fashion.
It has been pointed out that the *Hikmat al-ishrāq* together with Shīrāzī’s commentary on the text were well known to the scholars of Shiraz around the time of the Dashtakīs.\(^4\) As will be seen in chapters one and three, there is no evidence that the Dashtakīs studied illuminationist philosophy with a known teacher in Shiraz, and their general though remained for the most part Avicennan. In fact we find that in his later works, Ghiyāth al-Dīn no longer espoused the illuminationist ideas he did in the commentary.\(^4\) This is perhaps an indication that his engagement with the illuminationist tradition was limited to his early years before his career fully took off.

**I.3.C: Later Muʿtazīlī theology**

It will become evident in chapter three that in philosophical theology Ṣadr al-Dīn in particular was influenced by the later Muʿtazīlī tradition represented by the school of Abū l-Ḥusayn Muḥammad al-Baṣrī (d. 437/1044). Although nowhere in his writings, as few as they are, does Ṣadr al-Dīn mention the name of Abū l-Ḥusayn and his followers, he does however draw influence indirectly from Ṣūsī and Ḥillī, who were influenced by Abū l-Ḥusayn.

Indeed our knowledge of Abū l-Ḥusayn’s ideas is based primarily on the extant writings of his student, Rukn al-Dīn Maḥmūd b. Muḥammad al-Malāḥîmī (d. 532/1144).\(^4\) Ibn al-Malāḥîmī is considered the main representative of the school of

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Abū l-Ḥusayn in the first half of the 6th/12th century. Studies have shown that the influence of Abū l-Ḥusayn and his student Ibn al-Malāḥimī is visible in the writings of Imāmī thinkers such as Sadīd al-Dīn Maḥmūd b. ‘Alī al-Ḥasan al-Ḥimmaṣī al-Rāzī (d. after 600/1204). Furthermore, Ṭūsī, who ‘represents the last school of original thought in Imamite kalām’, relied much in his philosophical formulations on Avicenna but the ideas of Abū l-Ḥusayn and Ibn al-Malāḥimī are ‘fully apparent’ in his thought. Similarly, Ḥillī acknowledges in many points in his Kashf al-murād that Ṭūsī adopted the views of Abū l-Ḥusayn.

However, Madelung is clear in stating that Ṭūsī and Ḥillī did not follow Abū l-Ḥusayn slavishly. We will see, for instance, in chapter two that Ṣadr al-Dīn relied much on Ḥillī’s philosophical theology in the Kashf al-murād which were in fact based on the opinions of Abū l-Ḥusayn and Ibn al-Malāḥimī.

During the era of the Dashtakīs we find that the later Muʿtazili tradition was less established in Shiraz than the later Ashʿarī tradition. However, its ideas and

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47 Ibn al-Malāḥimī, Kitāb al-muʿtamad, p. xi.

48 Madelung, ‘Imāmīsm and Muʿtazilite Theology’, p. 27.

49 Ibn al-Malāḥimī, Kitāb al-muʿtamad, p. xi.

50 Ibn al-Malāḥimī, Kitāb al-muʿtamad, p. xi.

51 Madelung, ‘Imāmīsm and Muʿtazilite Theology’, p. 27.
views reached Shiraz indirectly through Ṭūsī and Ḩillī and were then adopted by Ṣadr al-Dīn and Ghiyāth al-Dīn.

I.4: Later Ash’arism

The rise of Ash’ari kalām and its eventual dominance of the intellectual landscape in Shiraz in particular can be linked to the socio-political developments that took place in the Khorasan region shortly after the death of Avicenna (d. 428/1037). The region saw the rise of political dynasties such as the Seljuks who adopted Sunnism as the official religion of the realm. The Seljuk rulers patronised colleges (madrasas) in Iran, Iraq and Anatolia. Special efforts were invested to promote Ash’ari kalām in the newly founded Niẓāmiyya colleges especially in places like Nīshāpūr and Merv. These colleges were named after Niẓām al-Mulk (assassinated in 485/1092), the celebrated minister who served under the Seljuk sultans Alp Arslān and Mālikshāh. The most celebrated of the Niẓāmiyya colleges was located in Baghdad. It was founded in 475/1065 and was to play an instrumental role in the propagation of Ash’ari theology in many areas of the Islamicate world, particularly in localities where Sunnism was already dominant.


By founding teaching institutions whose ethos followed closely the revelatory authority as it was seen through the lens of its Sunni interpreters, the Seljuk polity had achieved what they had intended, a Sunni political, cultural, and intellectual revival in the central and eastern lands of the Islamicate world.55

Standing at the helm of the Seljuk intellectual project was the celebrated Sunni polymath, Abū Ḥamīd Ghazālī, who was primarily Sufi, secondarily mutakallim. Ghazālī became the normative voice in those Muslim lands where Sunnism was dominant.57 Ghiyāth al-Dīn Dashtakī himself alludes to this phenomenon in one of his typical attacks against Ghazālī, writing sarcastically that:

Our objective is not to condemn the Imam of Mankind and the Proof of Islam (imam al-anām wa ḥujjat al-islām), for he is nobler than that, especially since the multitudes believed in his veracity and have taken him as their imam (wa itakhadhūhu imānan) and accepted his words as equal to religion itself and to Islam (wa kalāmahu dīnan wa islāman), so much so that many people assign him to a higher status than prophets (yufadilānahu ‘alā al-anbiyā’), and they read and interpret prophetic traditions in a way so as to make sure they confirm to his words and expressions.58

But what was Ghazālī’s intellectual project? And what was his attitude towards philosophy in general and the Avicennan tradition in particular? His project is clearly expressed in such major works as the Incoherence of the Philosophers (Tahāfut al-falāsifā). Modern scholars, such as Frank Griffel, have noted that, the Incoherence marks the rise of an Islamic theory of nominalism that challenged the dominant Neoplatonic understanding of Aristotle. To explain, nominalism argues that abstract


56 On Ghazālī’s rise to prominence and his court services under the reign of the Seljuks, see Frank Griffel, al-Ghazālī’s Philosophical Theology (Oxford, 2009), pp. 31-49.


concepts and universals have no independent existence of their own. It is thus claim
that, Ghazālī’s epistemological concerns rest on his reliance on nominalist readings
of Islamic philosophy. In the Incoherence, Ghazālī attacks twenty philosophical doctrines of the
falāsifa, seventeen of which, according to him, constitute blasphemy or heretical
innovation (bid’ā), while three constitute unbelief (kufr). The doctrines that
constitute unbelief are the philosophers’ denial of God’s knowledge of the
particulars, their claim that the Creator emanates the world necessarily (thus the
world exists co-eternally with God), and their claim that bodily resurrection is
indemonstrable. What is most striking about Ghazālī’s approach is that he accuses
the philosophers of advancing specious arguments that do not concord with their
basic philosophical premises. He describes the Incoherence as a ‘refutation’ (radd) of
the philosophical tradition in vogue. This professed stance has contributed to the
scholarly misconception that Ghazālī opposed Aristotelianism and rejected its
teachings. In the introduction of the Incoherence, Ghazālī explains his general
approach as follows:

Let it be known that [our] objective is to alert those who think well of the philosophers and
believe that their ways are free from contradiction by showing the [various] aspects of their
incoherence. For this reason, I do not enter into argument objecting to them, except as one
who demands and denies, not as one who claims and [affirms]. I will render murky what
they believe in [by showing] conclusively that they must hold to various consequence [of
their theories]. Thus, I will force on them at one time necessary adherence to Mu’tazilite
doctrine, at another to that of the Karrāmiyya, at yet another to that of the Wāqifīyya. I,
however, will not rise to the defense of any one doctrine but will make all the sects as one
group against them. For the rest of the sects may differ from us in matters of detail,
whereas these [philosophers] challenge the [very] principles of religion. Let us [all], then
strive against them. For in the face of hardships rancors depart.

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59 Griffel, al-Ghazālī’s Philosophical Theology, p. 97.
60 See the translator’s introduction to Abū Ḥāmid Ghazālī, The Incoherence of the Philosophers, ed./tr.
Michael Marmura (Provo, 2002).
61 Griffel, al-Ghazālī’s Philosophical Theology, p. 98.
62 Ghazālī, The Incoherence, pp. 7-8.
According to Ayman Shihadeh, this professed negativism relates to the fact that Ghazālī considers the *Incoherence* as a *kalām* work; for it serves one of the two essential functions he assigns to this discipline. First, *kalām* concerns the defence of Sunni orthodox creed by refuting the conflicting views of the *falāsifa*. Second, it concerns dispelling doubts induced by *falsafa* that may plague the lay believer’s mind, by providing probative proofs for the ‘orthodox’ creed. That Ghazālī’s criticisms of the *falāsifa* had often been overestimated was stated clearly by David Baneth in a 1924 article. Baneth makes a convincing argument by stating that Ghazālī’s goal in writing the *Incoherence* was to show that the metaphysical ideas of Fārābī and Avicenna are ‘unscientific’. In other words, the views of the *falāsifa*, chiefly represented by Fārābī and Avicenna, could not be proven philosophically and thus lack logical coherence. Commenting on this, Frank Griffel notes that, whether or not the *falāsifa*’s teachings are wrong, Ghazālī’s argument in the main is to show that the conclusions of the *falāsifa* are not demonstrative and do not establish certain knowledge.

This was precisely how the Dashtakīs received Ghazālī. They viewed him as someone who openly accused Avicenna of advancing specious arguments. Rightly or wrongly, the Dashtakīs viewed Ghazālī’s attacks on Avicennan philosophy as an attempt to undermine the tradition altogether. Indeed, we read in the thirteenth

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65 Griffel, *al-Ghazālī’s Philosophical Theology*, p. 98.
discussion of the *Incoherence* that the philosophers failed to abide by their own logical principles. Ghazālī writes:

We say: each of these two alternatives is not impossible in terms of your own principle. Regarding your saying that it is impossible for a temporal event to proceed from the eternal, [this] is a [statement] we have refuted in the question [of the world’s temporal creation]. And how [is this not the case] when, according to you, it is impossible for a temporal event which is a first temporal event to proceed from an eternal, where the condition for its impossibility is its being first?66

Ghazālī’s chief focus here is the demonstrative method and its use in the study of metaphysics, traditionally defined as the highest branch of philosophy. In his *al-Munqidh min al-ḍalāl*, Ghazālī asserts that:

It is in the metaphysics (al-ilmāh) wherein most of their errors (aghāliṭahum) lie. They were unable to demonstrate [something] by remaining sincere to what they have set out as conditions in logic. For this reason, they have disagreed much among themselves regarding the subject [of metaphysics]. Aristotle’s metaphysical views are concordant with the metaphysical views of the Muslim [philosophers] especially what has been transmitted by Fārābī and Avicenna. The total number of errors they [Fārābī and Avicenna] committed comes to twenty. It is necessary to declare them [Fārābī and Avicenna] as unbelievers with reference to three of their views on metaphysics, and accuse them of committing seventeen instances of heretical innovation.67

### 1.5: Post-Ghazālian opposition to falsafa

Less than a century later after Ghazālī’s death, Averroes (d. 594/1198) tried to counter Ghazālī’s attacks on the *falāsifa*. However, the latter’s attempt to restore confidence in the tradition seems to have gone largely unnoticed in the eastern lands of Islam, especially in Iran. This may have something to do with the nature of the eastern philosophical tradition and partly because Averroes did not, strictly speaking, take to defend Avicenna; rather he was more interested in undermining Ghazālī’s epistemological foundations. Despite Averroes’ attempts, Ghazālī’s views

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prevailed, particularly in those regions which fell under the orbit of Sunnism and which were partly influenced by the Niẓāmiyya curriculum. Ghazālī’s conception of the role of philosophy in Islam became the dominant interpretation thanks to his immediate students and their students. However, this is not to say that Avicennan philosophy did not yield some influence in the post-Ghazālīan Islamic east.

Commenting on the continued prevalence of philosophy after Ghazālī’s death, Sayf al-Dīn Āmidī (d. 631/1233) writes:

The fascination of the people of our time and the scholars of our age in studying the sciences of the ancients and in borrowing from old philosophers has increased, such that it led them away from studying legal matters and religious issues. That passion may drive one of them to frequently display his recklessness, by omitting obligations and committing prohibited things, imagining that he is one of the firmly grounded philosophers and erudite virtuous men (although he is the most ignorant of men in what he claims and the furthest among them from knowing what it involves), and fooled by the bombastic words and strange-sounding names that he hears, such as ‘hyle’, ‘element’, ‘element’, ‘matter’, ‘form’, ‘First Cause’, ‘Active Intellect’, Socrates, Hippocrates, Plato, Aristotle, Pythagoras, Proclus, Alexander of Aphrodisias, etc.! The utmost of the most erudite among them is to have superficial knowledge of the words, instead of [knowing their] meanings.\(^{68}\)

Ironically, by the sixth/twelfth century, many Sunni thinkers began to incorporate philosophical ideas in their religious learning; both jurists (fuqahā’) and theologians (mutakallimūn) adopted those philosophical ideas, perhaps inadvertently, which Ghazālī had attacked in the \textit{Incoherence}.\(^{69}\) This phenomenon was noted later by the

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\(^{68}\) Shihadeh, ‘From Al-Ghazālī to Rāzī’, p. 148.

philosophers of Shiraz most notably Ṣadr al-Dīn Dashtakī and Ghiyāth al-Dīn Dashtakī. In fact, so influential was Avicennan philosophy in the post-Ghazālīan Islamic east, it played an instrumental role on the development of later Ashʿari theology, to the extent that it became virtually impossible in later times to engage in any kind of philosophical and speculative thinking without reference to Avicenna’s ideas, giving rise to what some call “la pandémie avicennienne”.  

Commenting on the rising influence of Avicennan philosophy among the Sunni learned class, Ibn Ghaylān (d. 590/1194) explains that ‘the books and various doctrines of the falāsifa have become widespread’ among the Muslims. He writes:

Many Muslims have become inclined to accepting their claims and to studying the deviations that they include in their books. Such belief and inclination are increasing by the day – something that threatens to result in widespread corruption in faith. Most of those inclined to accepting their claims believe that they affirm prophecy, the afterlife, a happy [end] for the good and a miserable [end] for the bad.  

Further indications that Avicennan philosophy was almost fully embedded in Sunni theology, a second wave of anti-falsafa polemics ensued (Ghazālī’s being the progenitor of such trend). Two intellectual disciples of Ghazālī led this charge: al-Mašūdī (d. circa 582/1186) and Ibn Ghaylān (d. 590/1194).

Mašūdī embodied the Ghazālīan scholarly ethos. He wrote on ḥudūth al-ʿālam, mathematics, astrology, and the philosophical sciences. He appears to have been well versed in philosophy given that his name appears in one chain of pedagogical masters who taught the Ishārāt, which includes the likes of Athīr al-Dīn al-Abharī (d. 703/1304).

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663/1264) and Tūsī. The chain is related by al-Ṣafadī on the authority of Shams al-Dīn al-Akāfīnī,72 who writes:

I [i.e. al-Akāfīnī] read the Ishārāt of Ibn Sīnā with the Shaykh Shams al-Dīn al-Shirwānī al-Sūfī in the khānaqa of Sā’īd al-Su’ā’da’ in Cairo towards the end of the year [six] ninety-eight [hijrī] and the beginning of the year [six] ninety-nine. He [i.e. al-Akāfīnī] said to me [i.e. al-Asfādī] that he read the Ishārāt with the commentary of its commentator Khawāja Naṣīr al-Dīn al-Ṭūsī who said to have read the Ishārāt with the imam Athīr al-Dīn al-Mufaḍḍal al-Abharī who said to have read it with the Shaykh Qūṭ al-Dīn Irshad al-Miṣrī who said to have read it with the imam Fakhr al-Dīn Muḥammad Rāzī who said to have it with the Shaykh Sharaf al-Dīn al-Masʿūdī who said to have read it with the Shaykh Abī l-Fath Muḥammad, famously known as Ibn al-Khayyām, who said to have read it with Bahmanyār, the student of Ibn Sīnā, who said to have read it with the author himself, Ibn Sīnā.73

Masʿūdī penned an important philosophical work called the Shukāk wa-l-shubah ‘alā al-īšārāt, which, as the title indicates, tackles the so-called doubts and specious argument advanced by Avicenna in the Ishārāt. For instance, Masʿūdī challenges the Avicennan argument that the First Cause knows itself and all other existents (al-mawjūdāt), but it does not know the particulars. He writes:

On each of these [contentions], serious doubts and objections can be raised. These have been presented by the felicitous Imām al-Ghazālī in the Tahāfut in such a way that cannot be enhanced; and there will be no benefit in reproducing them.74

As we will see, both Mīr Ṣadr al-Dīn and his son Ghiyāth al-Dīn accused the later Ashʿarī theologians who wrote critically against Avicenna of failing to provide a philosophical alternative to the arguments they criticised or condemned. Masʿūdī is a typical example here, though there is not evidence to suggest that the Dashtkās knew of his philosophical writings. Masʿūdī criticises the emanationist principle ex

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72 His full name was Muḥammad b. ʿIbrāhīm b. Sā’īd al-Akāfīnī al-Sanjārī. He was born in Mosul but lived in Cairo and was known to have a penchant for philosophy, mathematics, astronomy, and geometry. Some of his works include, ʿIrshād al-qāṣīd ilā asnā al-maqāṣīd, al-Lubāb fi l-ḥisāb, Nukhāb al-dhakāhā ir fi maʾrifat al-jawāhīr, Ghuniyat al-lābīb ‘ind ghaybat al-ṭabīb, and Kashf al-rayn fi amrād al-ʿayn. He died in Cairo in 749/1348. See his biography by his student al-Ṣafadī in Šalāḥ al-Dīn al-Ṣafadī, Kitāb al-wāʾfī fi l-wafāyāt, eds. Aḥmad al-Arnāwīt and Turki Muṣṭafā (26 vols. Beirut, 2000), vol. 2, pp. 20-21.


uno non fit nisi unum (only one can come from one), by stating without bringing any proof that such a cause can conceivably produce multiple entities of the same species.\textsuperscript{75} Noting this methodological feature of Masʿūdī, Shihadeh describes the Shukūk as a work which properly speaking belongs to the genre of the Tahāfat ‘given its overall negativist theme and character.’\textsuperscript{76} Later, the work would inspire a distinct anti-falsafa trend which was championed by Rāzī, who began his career as a purely classical Ashʿari theologians as is clearly demonstrated by one of his earliest works, the Ishāra.

As for Ghazālī’s second student Ibn Ghaylān,\textsuperscript{77} al-Bayhaqī describes him as follows:

\textit{Al-Imām al-Farīḍ: the noblest of the philosophers, who acquired all the [necessary prerequisites of] philosophy, with him it is as if philosophy returned to its rightful owner (al-imām al-farīḍ afdal ḥukamāʾ al-ḥaḍra wa lahu maḥṣūl min al-ḥikma kāmil wa kaʾan al-ḥikma ādat bi-ḥuqūq mustaḥaqihā).}\textsuperscript{78}

Although intimately familiar with the philosophical sciences in general and Avicennan in particular, Ibn Ghaylān was not a philosopher, and he certainly would object to Bayhaqī describing him as the noblest of the philosophers. In his treatise entitled Ḥudūth al-ʿālam, intended as a counter-rebuttal to Avicenna’s refutation of the theologians’ argument that a pre-eternal world is inconceivable, Ibn Ghaylān writes:

\textsuperscript{75} Shihadeh, ‘From Al-Ghazālī to Rāzī’, p. 155. The challenge to refute this principle was taken up later by Rāzī who argued that, if an indivisible single thing were to give rise to two things, \textit{a} and \textit{b}, this would result in a contradiction, for the same single thing would be the source of both \textit{a} and \textit{b} and of not-\textit{a} and not-\textit{b}. See John Cooper, ‘Al-Razi, Fakhr al-Din (1149-1209)’, in Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy (London, 1998), vol. 8, p. 113.

\textsuperscript{76} Shihadeh, ‘From Al-Ghazālī to Rāzī’, p. 156.


These sciences [i.e. logic, astronomy, geometry etc] motivated me to go into physics and metaphysics, since they are close to them. My heart then used to be very anxious because they contradicted the religious creed that I used to believe in. I realized that it was possible to refute them by the science of kalām; so I began to study it, with the main purpose of comprehending the fallacies underlying the erroneous contentions with which they contradict truth. In [kalām], I came across views of the falsafah that Ibn Sinā contradicted and refuted; thus my interest in reading his books and understanding what is in them increased, so that [my] objections to their claims and responses to their errors can be based on knowledge and understanding.79

In his other philosophical works, Ibn Ghaylān identifies Avicenna as the chief spokesman for the Muslim Peripatetics. In his al-Tawṣi’a li’l-takhtī’a, for example, Ibn Ghaylān critiques Avicenna’s views on manṭiq and kalām.80 He also wrote a critical commentary on Avicenna al-īshārāt wa-l-tanbīḥāt entitled al-Tanbih ‘alā tamwihāt kitāb al-tanbīḥāt (which seems to have focussed on the fourth section, or namaṭ, of the Ishārāt).81 Even on the question of the Avicennan study of medicine, Ibn Ghaylān wrote a work entitled al-Tanbih ‘alā al-īkhtilāf wa-l-taṭāwuṭ wa-l-tanāqūḍ fī kitāb al-adwiya al-mufrada min al-qānūn [of Avicenna] for the purposes of ‘silencing those who believe Avicenna is infallible’.82

1.6: Fakhr al-Dīn Rāzī and the later Ash’ari tradition

Born in 534/1149 or 535/1150,83 Rāzī stands out as one of the towering figures in the

81 Ibn Ghaylān, Ḥudūth al-‘ālam, p. 11.
post-classical period. Noting this, Heidrun Eichner writes, ‘for an adequate understanding of the development of the reception of Avicennan philosophy both in the philosophical and in the theological tradition from the [7th]/13th century onwards, the writings by Rāzī play a central role. Within the philosophical tradition, the influence of Rāzī’s approach has been partly effected through commentaries which Rāzī wrote on Avicennan works. The later interpretation of Avicennan works has been considerably influenced by widespread commentaries by Rāzī, i.e. his commentaries on the al-Ishārāt wa-l-tanbihāt, on the ‘Uyūn al-ḥikma and the K. al-Najāt.’\(^\text{84}\) As stated earlier, Rāzī started his career in the philosophical sciences as a follower of Abū l-Ḥasan al-Ashʿarī (d. 324/936) to whom he refers as ‘our Shaykh Abū l-Ḥasan may God be pleased with him’.\(^\text{85}\) In his other works, such as the Taḥṣīl al-ḥaqiq, Rāzī boasts about his pedagogical chain in kalām tracing its origin back to Ashʿarī. Rāzī explains that he first studied kalām under his father Diyāʾ al-Dīn ʿUmar, who studied under his father Abū l-Qāsim Sulaymān al-Anṣārī, who studied under Imām al-Ḥaramayn Juwaynī, who studied under Abū ʿĪsāq al-Isfārāʾīnī, who studied under Abū l-Ḥasan al-Bāhilī, who was a student of Ashʿarī.\(^\text{86}\) However, as we learn from his wasiyya, Rāzī did not confine himself to the study of a few disciplines but strove to understand everything in his capacity as someone who ‘loved all knowledge’. He writes:

\(^{84}\) Eichner, Towards the Construction of Islamic Orthodoxy, p. 31.

\(^{85}\) Shihadeh, ‘From Al-Ghazālī to Rāzī’, p. 163.

Know that I was a man who loved knowledge (kuntu rajulan muḥīban li’l-ilm). So I wrote on everything, I did not care for quality nor quantity, nor whether [what I wrote] contained the truth, or whether it was false. 87

Later, we learn, that like Ghazālī, Rāzī studied philosophy in order to refute the doctrines with which he disagreed. Commenting on this development, Rāzī writes:

At the early stages of our learning of kalām, we developed an interest in becoming more acquainted with the works of [the falāṣifa], so as to refute them. We devoted prolonged periods doing just that, until God guided us to write books which refute them [i.e. the falāṣifa]. [These books include] Nihāyat al-ʿuqūl, al-Mabāḥith al-mashriqiyya, al-Mulakhkhas, and Sharh al-Isḥāqāt. All these books strive to, first, provide an exposition of the fundamentals of religion, and second, to refute the errors of the philosophers and other opponents. Both admirers and critics [of mine] agree that no one among ancient or late thinkers wrote works of equal match [to mine]. 88

But what can we say about Rāzī’s epistemology and his approach to the study of kalām and falsafa? Writing in the Nihāyat al-ʿuqūl, Rāzī explains that the main task of kalām, according to his Ashʿarī vision of reality, is to refute the falāṣifa and defend the Sunni creed:

I included in it [discussions of] scientific and subtle matters that can hardly be found in any of the books of ancient or later authors of both supporters and opponents. My book is distinct from other books written in this subject in three ways: First, the pursuit of questions and answers, and the deep delve into the oceans of problems, such that the benefit that the follower of each creed gains from this book of mine may be greater than the benefit he gains from the books authored by supporters of that creed itself. For I select from each discussion its cream, and from each investigation its best part. When I can no longer find any discussion that is of any value, or any view that is worthy of attention, in supporting their creed and proving their claims, I myself produce the utmost that can be put forth in proving that creed and completing the investigation (taḥrīr) of that topic. However, at the end, I will refute each view, except what is upheld by the followers of the sunna, and I will show, with strong proofs, that one ought to adhere to it. Second, producing demonstrations (burhān) that lead to true knowledge and complete certainty, rather than arguments ad hominem (ilzām), of which the whole purpose is to refute and defeat [the opponent]. Third, our novel approach that requires he who commits himself to it to address all possible objections and doubts, and to avoid superfluity and prolixity. 89


In the Nihāya, Rāzī speaks as an Ashʿari theologian but with clear Avicennan influences, a feature common in the writings of later Ashʿari thinkers, particularly in Shiraz during the late Timurid period. The philosophical doctrines with which Rāzī especially disagrees are the philosophers’ argument for the preeternity of the world, the claim that God has knowledge of the particulars in a universal way, and the denial of bodily resurrection. In his later and more mature writings, Rāzī departs from the classical Ashʿari position and adopts an approach which blends philosophy with theology. In the Maṭālib al-ʿāliyya (which he never finished), and his other works such as the Mabāḥith, Rāzī brings much falsafa in his kalām argument and much kalām in his falsafa viewpoints, a clear instance of the Rāzian synthesis as Ibn Khaldūn would later call this approach.

Commenting on this approach, Ibn Khaldūn writes:

Then those mutakallimūn who emerged later (al-mutāʾakhkhirūn) mixed the problems (masāʾil) of ʿilm al-kalām with the problems of falsafa due to the fact that the two [disciplines] share [the same] topics of inquiry (al-mabāḥīth) and [due to] the similarity of the subject-matter of ʿilm al-kalām with the subject-matter of the [subject of] metaphysics (ilāhiyyāt), and [due to similarity of] the problems (masāʾil) of the former [ʿilm al-kalām] with the problems of the latter [falsafa], so that it became as though they are one science (fann wāḥiḏ). Then they [i.e. the mutakallimūn] changed the order (tartīb) [formulated by] the philosophers (al-ḥukamāʾ) of the problems of natural philosophy and metaphysics, and they mixed them up [to make] one science, introducing it [i.e. the new science] with the discussion of general things (al-umūr al-ʿammā), which they then followed with [the discussion of] bodily things (al-jismāniyyāt) and its concomitants (tawābīʿihā), which [they followed] with [the discussion of] immaterial things (rūḥāniyyāt) and its concomitants, as was done by the Imām son the Khaṭīb [i.e. Fakhr al-Dīn Rāzī] in al-Mabāḥith al-Mashriqiyya and by everyone after him of the scholars of kalām. 91

Thus, the Rāzian synthesis marks a major development in the later course of Islamic intellectual history. Beside the two aforementioned works of Rāzī, the Mulakhkhaṣ fiʾl-ḥikma was arguably his most influential; it would later serve as the philosophical

90 For Rāzī’s critiques of Avicennan metaphysics, specifically the argument of the eternity of the world, the claim that God has knowledge of the particulars in a universal way, and the denial of bodily resurrection, see Rāzī, Al-Maṭālib al-ʿāliyya min al-ʿilm al-ḥālī, ed., Aḥmed Ḥijāzī al-Saffā (Beirut, 1987), vol. 1, pp. 35-333.

canon for later Ashʿari thinkers, as well as the Dashtakī philosophers. In fact, we will see that Ṣadr al-Dīn’s Risāla fi ʿithbāt al-bāri follows a similar structural order as the Mulakhkhas. This phenomenon would later become an established tradition particularly among Ashʿari theologians, an approach which Ibn Khaldūn famously termed, ʿarīqat al-mutaʿakhkhirin, or, the via nova.92

In the proceeding centuries, specifically in Shiraz, the Rāzian synthesis was to be adopted by Ashʿari thinkers who came to dominate the intellectual landscape in western Iran in the early phases of the late Timurid era. During the Timurid period, the reputation of Shiraz as an important centre of learning in the Islamic east was on the ascendency. By the ninth/fourteenth century, the city became a bastion for the propagation of Islamic theological traditions associated with the views of Ghazālī and Rāzī, as will become clear in due course. In fact, Shiraz’s rise to prominence as an important intellectual hub began a few centuries earlier. Many centres of learning were destroyed or obliterated following the devastation caused by the Mongol invasion and its aftermath; however, Shiraz was spared the fury, thanks to its local rulers. We will return to this question later but first what can we say about Ashʿari kalām in Shiraz in the Timurid period?93

The first Ashʿari thinkers to settle and teach in Shiraz were Ijī,94 Jurjānī,95 Saʿd al-Dīn al-Taftāzānī (d. 792/1390),96 and Dawānī.97 Although thoroughly familiar

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93 For brief introductions on the main exponents of later Ashʿari kalām in the Timurid era, including English translations of important sections/excerpts from their major works, see ‘Later Sunni Theological Thought’ section in Seyyed Hossein Nasr and Mehdi Aminrazavi (eds.), An Anthology of Philosophy in Persia, pp. 55-363.

94 On Ijī’s life and thought (especially on the Mawaqif), see Josef van Ess, Die Erkenntnislehre des ʿAdudaddin al-ʿiṭī: Übersetzung und Kommentar des ersten Buches seiner Mawaqif (Wiesbaden, 1966); idem, ‘ʿAzod al-Dīn Ijī’, in El.,

with the falsafa tradition, these thinkers saw themselves first and foremost as theologians. Some like Jurjānī and Dawānī were drawn to Sufism and the philosophy of Suhrawardī, respectively.98

Starting with Ījī, he was born sometime after 679/1281 in Īj, a settlement near the city of Shiraz. He was a descendant of a family which claimed descent from the caliph Abū Bakr. Ījī’s scholarly reputation spread far beyond the borders of Iran. One biographer describes him as pādeshāh-i ‘ulamā’ khosrow-i dāneshmandān.99 He thus rose to fame as a great exponent of Ash’āri kalām, earning political favours with local rulers as was the case when he was invited by the Ilkhānid sultan Abū Saʿīd Bahādor Khan (r. 716-736-1316-1335) to take up the position of supreme judge of the Ilkhānid empire (qāḍī al-mamālik) shortly after the latter took office. Later, after the death of Abū Saʿīd in 736/1336 Ījī joined the court of the Īnjū Išāq at Shiraz where he became chief judge (qāḍī al-qudāt). During his time there, Ījī, like his


98 There is some evidence to suggest that Dawānī himself joined the Sufi order of the Murshidīyya that was based in Kāzīrūn. Sufism, especially Ibn ʿArabī’s theoretical mysticism, seems to have had an impact on the thought of Dawānī. This is evinced in some of his writings such as, for example, the Zawrā’, an early work which was written in 870/1466 during his stay in Najaf, near the shrine of ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālī. See Pourjavady, ‘Kitāb-shināsī-i āthār-i Jalāl al-Dīn-i Dawānī’, pp. 81-13; idem, Philosophy in early Safavid Iran, p. 7. Dawānī wrote a commentary on the Zawrā’ which he called al-Ḥurā’, see Jalāl al-Dīn Dawānī, ʿSharḥ al-Zawrā’, in ʿab al-adāb, ed. Sayyid Aḥmad Tūṣī Ṣārābī (Tehran, 1381 Sh/2003), pp. 199-225. According to some, Dawānī is known to have authored one of the first commentaries on the ghazals of the famous poet of Shiraz, Ḥāfīz, published as: Naqīd-i niyāzāt dar sharḥ-i du bayt va yak ghazal az khwājā Ḥāfīz-i Shirāzī, ed. Ḥusayn Muʿallīm (Tehran, 1995). See also Carl Earnst, ‘Jalāl al-Dīn Dawānī’s Interpretation of Ḥāfīz’, in Leonard Lewisohn (ed.), Ḥāfīz and the Religion of Love in Classical Persian Poetry (London and New York, 2010).
Ash’ari predecessors, taught that matters pertaining to religious thought such as the essence-attribute problem should be discussed in *kalām* contexts. His major work, the *Kitāb al-mawāqif fī ‘ilm al-kalām* (The Book of Stations in the Science of Theology), probably composed before 730/1330, is an encyclopedic work set out in the style of a *summa theological*, and which was to attract a number of commentaries, the earliest being one written by his student Shams al-Dīn Kirmānī (d. 786/1384). However, the commentary which was to become the most popular was the one written by Jurjānī, completed some time around 807/1404 at Samarqand. The work can be characterized as a rational defence of Ash’ari *kalām* and which is at the same time critical of Avicennan metaphysics. Following Ījī, Jurjānī emerged as one of the leading Ash’ari authorities in Shiraz. His full name was Sayyid ‘Alī b. Muḥammad b. ‘Alī al-Ḥusaynī Jurjānī, commonly known as al-Sharīf al-Jurjānī. He was born in Gurgān in 740/1339. Very little is known about his life except that he was a contemporary of his famous rival Taftāzānī. When Timur captured Shiraz, Jurjānī was forced by the former to migrate to Samarqand. However, he returned to Shiraz following the death of Timur in 807/1405. An important Ash’ari theologian who was drawn to Sufism, Jurjānī composed a number of important works in theology including the already-mentioned commentary *Sharḥ kitāb al-mawāqif* and *Kitāb al-ta’rīfāt*, a dictionary of technical terms focusing on philosophy, theology, and Sufism.\(^{101}\)

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100 According to van Ess, the *Mawāqif* is based on the Muḥaṣṣal of Rāzī and the *Abkār al-afkār* of Āmidī. See van Ess, "ʿAẓod al-Dīn Ījī", in *EI*.

In Shiraz, at the Dār al-Shifā’ madrasa Jurjānī taught kalām and philosophy until 789/1387. He trained a number of students, three of whom were Dawānī’s teachers in kalām and fiqh, namely his father Sa’d al-Dīn Dawānī, who was the qāḍī of Kāzirūn, Qawām al-Dīn al-Kurbālī, and Mażhar al-Dīn Muḥammad al-Murshidī Kāzirūnī; very little is known about these thinkers, not even their death dates.

The circle of Jurjānī in Shiraz, renowned for its commitment to philosophical Ash’arism, dominated the intellectual discourse in the middle decades of the ninth/fifteenth century.

Jurjānī, who was influenced by Ijī’s thought, was one of the last major Ash’ari theologians to teach in Shiraz. His classes, some of which were attended by local dignitaries, focused on advancing theological arguments expressed in philosophical language. In the Kitāb al-ta’rifāt, Jurjānī, following the model set by Ghazālī, attempts to reconcile Sufism with Ash’ari kalām. To this end, he wrote an important treatise on the subject of unity of being called Risāla fī wahdat al-wujūd. In it he tries to bring a synthesis between Sufi spirituality and praxis and the theological assertions propounded by the Ash’ari tradition. Jurjānī’s attempt to find harmony between falsafa and kalām was to be severely criticized later by Ghiyāth al-Dīn, who together with his father Šadr al-Dīn Dashtakī referred to Jurjānī as the first thinker in Shiraz to ‘contaminate’ philosophy. Similar accusations were leveled by the Dashtakīs against Dawānī, arguably the last representative of the Jurjānī circle of kalām in

103 ‘Allī Dawānī, Maṣfākhīr al-Islām (Tehran, 1363 Sh/1984), vol. 4, pp. 412-413; Pourjavady, Philosophy in early Safavid Iran, p. 5.
As already noted, Dawānī was contemporary with Ṣadr al-Dīn Dashtakī and for a lesser period with Ghiyāth al-Dīn. In their attempts to decouple Avicennan philosophy from the later Ashʿari discourse, the Dashtakīs identified Dawānī as the last living representative of this tradition. The Dashtakīs were known to have held public debates with Dawānī on more than one occasion. They disagreed with Dawānī on the nature of Avicennan philosophy and its compatibility with kalām discourse. A number of contemporary and near contemporary sources make reference to the Dashtakī-Dawānī debates in Shiraz, often described as fierce, contemptuous, and heated. In his Kashf al-ḥaqāʾiq, Ghiyāth al-Dīn alludes to these debates writing: wa-bayn ab al-ābaʾ wa-sayyid aʿāzīm al-ḥukamāʾ Ṣadrā Muḥammad [Dashtakī] wa-bayn al-mawlā al-fāḍil Jalāl al-Dīn Muḥammad al-Dawānī - raḥmat Allāh ʿalayhumā - fī al-ʿulūm mubāḥathāt wa-mushājarāt (there was fierce debates and heated arguments between my exemplary father, the master of the majestic philosophers Ṣadr [al-Dīn] Muḥammad and the noble Jalāl al-Dīn al-Dawānī). Similarly, Mīr Fakhr al-Dīn al-Sammākī (d. 980/1572 or 984/1576), a student of Ghiyāth al-Dīn in Shiraz, confirms that between Ṣadr al-Dīn and Dawānī there was a fierce rivalry, materialised in the form of public debates which centred around Avicennan metaphysics and Ashʿari kalām.

In addition, Ghiyāth al-Dīn Khwāndmīr (d. 942/1536) writing in his Tārīkh Ḥabīb al-sīyar says that every new ruler of Shiraz made it customary to organise

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106 On the Dashtakī-Dawānī debate, see Pourjavady, Philosophy in early Safavid Iran, p. 74ff.


public debates between Šadr al-Dīn Dashtakī and Dawānī, held at least once in the Jāmiʿ ‘atīqī mosque of Shiraz.\textsuperscript{109} Similarly accounts follow in Sullam al-samāvāt by Kāzirūnī (fl. 1014/1605), who adds that at least one public debate between Šadr al-Dīn Dashtakī and Dawānī was held in the Jāmiʿ ‘atīqī mosque of Shiraz. Commenting on their approaches to philosophy, Kāzirūnī tells us that Dawānī relied strictly on demonstrative method whereas Dashtakī relied on intuition and ‘allusions and subtle expressions (ishārāt-i mūjāz u ‘ibārāt-i lātīfu).\textsuperscript{110} Later historians such as Muḥammad Amīn Al-Astarābādī (d. 1036/1626-27), who founded the Akhbārī legal school, discuss briefly the rivalry between Šadr al-Dīn Dashtakī and Dawānī. Astarābādī identifies Dawānī as ‘a philosophising Ashʿari thinker’ and a ‘noble scholar who was much respected by his contemporaries’.\textsuperscript{111}

Although committed to the Ashʿari tradition, at least in its later form, Dawānī had a pronounced penchant for Avicennan metaphysics prompting him to write extensively on the subject.\textsuperscript{112} This, however, irritated the Dashtakīs who accused Dawānī of being the one responsible for ‘distorting’ Avicennan philosophy


\textsuperscript{111} Muḥammad Amīn Al-Astarābādī, Al-Fawāʾīd al-madāniyya, ed. Rahmat Allāh al-Rahmatī al-Arākī (Qum, 1424 H/), p. 500ff. Pourjavady notes that Dawānī saw himself as a philosopher tracing his intellectual lineage back to Avicenna through Jurjānī. Pourjavady, Philosophy in early Safavid Iran, pp. 5-6.

\textsuperscript{112} This is clearly evinced in his philosophical writings especially in his ‘proof for the existence of the Necessary Being’. See, for example, Dawānī, ‘Risāla fī ithbāt al-wājib al-qadima’, in in Sab’ rasā’īl, pp. 67-114 and idem, ‘Risāla fī ithbāt al-wājib al-jadīda’, in Sab’ rasā’īl, pp. 115-170.
in Shiraz. Further still, the Dashtakīs would go as far as to claim that Dawānī lacked the proper exegetical training to understand Avicennan metaphysics.

It would appear that the rivalry between Dawānī and the Dashtakīs was much more than a scholarly disagreement; it hinged on personal animosity and extreme disdain. It was not free from sectarian rhetoric either. According to one Safavid source, the locals who attended the public debates would refer to Dawānī as the ‘son of Abū Bakr’ and to Dashtakī the ‘son of ’Alī.’ This is unsurprising since Dawānī was said to be a descendent of the caliph Abū Bakr, whereas Ṣadr al-Dīn claimed descent from ’Alī.

Much evidence would seem to suggest that Dawānī subscribed to the Ash’ari tradition and was not afraid to express his confessional attachment to Sunnism, as we will be shown shortly. Some contemporary Iranian historians and those who write on Islamic philosophy, however, have claimed without strong evidence that Dawānī became Shi‘i towards the end of his life. Indeed, in his later works Dawānī seems to have agreed with the basic tenets of Shi‘ism. For example, speaking about the Imamate of ’Alī and his sons, Dawānī says:

I am [now] certain that the true caliph (khalīfā-yī bar ḥaqq) after the Prophet, peace be upon him, is the Commander of the Faithful, peace be upon him, and after him [the true successor] is Imam Ḥasan, and after him is Imam Ḥusayn, all the way down to the Mahdī, peace be upon him.

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113 As we saw earlier they leveled a similar charge against Jurjānī.


116 Pourjavady, Philosophy in early Safavid Iran, pp. 4-5.

117 Murtaḍā Yūsufrād, Andīša-yi siyāsī Jalāl al-Dīn Dawānī (Qum 1378 Sh/2008), introduction.

Elsewhere in this work, Dawānī goes as far as to condemns the three Sunni caliphs by referring to their actions after the death of Muḥammad as ‘most repugnant’.¹¹⁹ Be that as it may, in the introduction of al-Rasā’il al-mukhtāra, the editor of the work Sayyid Aḥmed Tūysirkānī points out that the Nūr al-hidāya, where Dawānī’s supposed Shi‘ism is to be found, was rather perfunctory and written in haste for it was penned shortly before the advances of the conquering Shi‘i armies of Ismā‘īl Ṣafavī and his Qizilbash forces.¹²⁰

However, based on stronger internal evidence from Dawānī’s writings especially works were written later in his later years, and which would therefore represent his mature thought, it would seem that Dawānī was a committed Sunni Ash‘āri. For instance, in his commentary on Ījī’s al-‘Aqā‘īd al-‘Aḍudiyya, Dawānī refutes the claims made by Ṭūsī and Ḩillī, where he writes:

The truth of the matter is that the saved sect is the Ash‘āri. This is because the Shi‘is and the Mu‘tazilis have much in common whereas the Ash‘aris differed with regard to belief to most Islamic sects. Indeed the Ash‘aris are the saved sect because their doctrines are based on sound prophetic traditions narrated by the prophet on the authority of the companions may God be pleased with them.¹²¹

In another anecdote recalled by Nī‘mat Allāh al-Jazā‘īrī (d. 112/1701) in his al-Anwār al-nu‘māniyya, it is reported that after the Safavids took power in Iran, Dawānī was asked by his students about the meaning of the famous ḥadīth ‘he who dies without knowing the imām of his time dies the death of jāhiliyya’, to which Dawānī replied: ‘the Shi‘is claim the imam of the time is the Mahdī, but what do you claim?’ His students replied: ‘the meaning of imām here surely refers to the sultan of the age,


¹²¹ Dawānī, Sharḥ al-‘aqā‘īd al-‘Aḍudiyya, pp. 41-42. Later in the same work, commenting on the issue of succession, Dawānī writes, ‘the rightful imam after the prophet peace be upon him was Abū Bakr al-Ṣiddīq, may God be pleased with him (wa-al-imām al-ḥaqq ba’d al-nabbī šalla Allāh ‘alayhi wa-sallam Abū Bakr al-Ṣiddīq raḍiya Allāh ‘anhu). Dawānī, Sharḥ al-‘aqā‘īd, p. 137.
which is Shah Ismā‘īl’. Dawānī retorted: ‘In such a case we have been commanded by God to follow this rāfīḍī sultan’ (idhan qad awjaba Allāh ḍelaynā ma’rifat hādhā al-sulṭān al-rāfīḍī).

Lastly, in his Akhlāq-i Jalālī, Dawānī asserts that even the Umayyad caliphs can be sources of philosophical and ethical enlightenment, a sentiment which is at odds with Shi‘ism. Moreover, Dawānī applies the title of amīr al-mu‘minīn to the Umayyad caliph ‘Umar b. ʿAbd al-‘Azīz (d. 101/720), who according to Dawānī was perfectly just (kāmil-i ‘adālat) and a great source of ethical wisdom. In the same work, Dawānī lavishes the caliph ‘Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb (d. 26/644) with praiseworthy titles and honorifics including the appellation of amīr al-mu‘minīn. In Dawānī’s view, ‘Umar was the epitome of justice and high ethics. Moreover, as if to counter the Shi‘i practice of disassociating from ‘errant’ companions (ṣaḥāba), Dawānī explains that in order to cultivate piety one has to be thankful to his teachers, the most important of whom according to Dawānī are the Prophet’s companions. He augments his argument by citing the well-known tradition in which Muḥammad is quoted as saying, ‘whoever angers my companions has angered me’.

I.7: Literature review

As already noted, modern scholarship has given very little attention to Ṣadr al-Dīn and Ghiyāth al-Dīn Dashtakī, and the little that has been done is primarily in

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Persian. The earliest treatments in a Western language are Henry Corbin’s perfunctory remarks in the *Histoire de la philosophie Islamique* published in French in 1964 and later in English translation in 1994. There, Corbin devotes one paragraph to Ṣadr al-Dīn and another to Ghiyāḥ al-Dīn. He identifies the former as the ‘eminent Shiite thinker’ and the putative founder of the ‘School of Shiraz’, and the latter as the figure responsible for heralding the synthesis that was to be forged by Mullā Ṣadrā. In Corbin’s view, it is the Dashtakīs and their students who furnish the physical link with the School of Isfahan.¹²⁶

In his 1966 entry on the School of Isfahan in M.M. Sharif’s edited volumes entitled *A History of Muslim Philosophy*, Seyyed Hossein Nasr, close associate of Corbin, speaks of ‘Quṭb al-Dīn Rāzī, Mīr Sayyid Sharīf al-Dīn Jurjānī [sic], and Jalāl al-Dīn Dawwānī [sic] as some of the intellectual precursors to the *hikmat* tradition in the Safavid era’ yet he makes no reference to the Dashtakīs.¹²⁷ This was to come later in a short, introductory section on the School of Isfahan in Leonard Lewisohn’s edited volumes of *The Heritage of Persian Sufism* published in 1995. In it, Nasr, following Corbin, claims to have coined the term ‘the School of Shiraz’ to describe a number of key thinkers of the late Timurid and early Safavid period and urges future studies on them.¹²⁸

In a sketchy article about intellectual developments in the post-Ṭūsī period, John Cooper recognises the Dashtakīs as leading Sunni Shafi’i philosophers and exponents of Avicennan metaphysics in Shiraz who came to dominate the

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intellectual milieu in western Iran before the rise of the School of Isfahan.129 Hamid Dabashi knows of the Dashtakī presence in Shiraz in the early Safavid period,130 while Andrew Newman describes Ghiyāth al-Dīn as a ‘scholar, philosopher, and theologian of the late Timurid and early Safavid period’ who ‘served Sołṭān-Ḥosayn Bāyqarā (r. 874-911/1469-1506)’, an assertion which is clearly mistaken.131 Similarly, David King, in his book about the methods of determining the qibla direction in medieval times, mentions Ghiyāth al-Dīn incidentally, describing him as ‘the scholar Ghiyāth al-Dīn Manṣūr al-Dashtakī, son of the well-known philosopher Mullā Ṣadrā’ [sic].132 Mehdi Amin Razavi briefly mentions Ghiyāth al-Dīn when he describes him as someone who ‘for practical purposes’ belongs to the school of Isfahan.133

In more recent works, Rula Abisaab briefly mentions the Dashtakī family as part of Persian Sunni elite who served the Safavid monarchs but later fell out of favour following Ghiyāth al-Dīn’s famous dispute with Shaykh ‘Alī al-Karakī.134

A noticeable improvement came in 2006 when Nasr published his *Islamic Philosophy from Its Origins to the Present*. Nasr summarises in several passages the findings of previous Iranian scholarship on the Dashtakīs and their students. Ṣadr al-Dīn, recognised as the ‘real founder of the School of Shiraz’, receives coverage of

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133 Mehdi Amin Razavi, *Suhrawardi and the School of Illumination* (Surrey, 1997), p. 121.

just over two pages, while Ghiyāth al-Dīn a little over three.\textsuperscript{135} As already noted, according to Nasr ‘one should start the School of Shiraz with Quṭb al-Dīn Shīrāzī, and must also include ‘Aḍūd al-Dīn Ḫāji, Sharīf al-Dīn Jurjānī [sic], Ṣadr al-Dīn Dashtakī, Ghiyāth al-Dīn Dashtakī, Jalāl al-Dīn Dawānī, Mullā Shams al-Dīn Khafīrī, and Najm al-Dīn Nayrīzī.’ However, Nasr later concedes that Ḫāji and Jurjānī were ‘essentially experts on kalām rather than falsafa’ and could not therefore be part of the philosophical revival that took place in Shiraz.\textsuperscript{136} Others such Oliver Leaman includes an entry of no more than three lines on Ṣadr al-Dīn Dashtakī in \textit{The Biographical Encyclopedia of Islamic Philosophy}, identifying Ṣadr al-Dīn as a Sunni philosopher who belonged to the Shafi`i rite.\textsuperscript{137}

Sajjad Rizvi links the School of Isfahan with the philosophers of Shiraz which according him includes, primarily, the ‘Dashtakī sayyid family’ and Jurjānī and his student. Like Nasr, Rizvi notes that many of the key thinkers associated with the philosophical activity in Shiraz in the said period remain largely unknown and their works unedited. He recognizes Ghiyāth al-Dīn as the single most influential of these major figures.\textsuperscript{138}

However, by far the most sustained treatment on the Dashtakīs is Reza Pourjavady’s 2011 study on Najm al-Dīn Maḥmūd Nayrīzī, one of Ṣadr al-Dīn’s students and contemporary of Ghiyāth al-Dīn. Pourjavady devotes several pages to the life, works, and general outlines of Ṣadr al-Dīn’s thought. Pourjavady adopts a


\textsuperscript{136} Nasr, \textit{Islamic Philosophy}, p. 195.


\textsuperscript{138} Sajjad Rizvi, \textit{Mullā Ṣadrā Shīrāzī: His Life and Works and the Sources for Safavid Philosophy} (Oxford, 2007), pp. 141-142.
similar approach when he deals with Ghiyāth al-Dīn, who receives coverage of approximately eight pages, but which contain nevertheless an abundance of biographical and bibliographical information. Moreover, Pourjavady provides us with the first attempt in western scholarship to reconstruct the famous debate between Dawānī and Ṣadr al-Dīn Dashtakī, taking up approximately thirty pages and which, following recent Iranian scholarship, speaks of ‘two strands of thought in Shiraz’ (not a single school).\textsuperscript{139}

Similarly, in 2011 Firouzeh Saatchian published a study on the life, works, and general thought of Shams al-Dīn Khafīrī, another of Ṣadr al-Dīn’s famous students. Saatchian’s work includes a critical edition of Khafīrī’s treatise on the Necessary Being, among others. This being said, however, neither Ṣadr al-Dīn nor Ghiyāth al-Dīn received significant mention. Coverage of their lives and thought amounts to little more than a few lines.\textsuperscript{140} There are also ongoing efforts to translate into English some of the relevant excerpts from the major writings of the philosophers of Shiraz. It has recently been brought to my attention that the forthcoming volume five of Anthology of Philosophy in Persia will include short English translations of Ṣadr al-Dīn’s Risāla fi shubhat jadhr al-aṣamm (‘The Liar Paradox’) and of Ghiyāth al-Dīn’s Akhlāq-i Manṣūrī (‘Manṣūrian Ethics’) and the Maqāmāt al-ʿārifīn (‘Stations of Knowers’).\textsuperscript{141}

The treatment of the Dashtakīs in modern Iranian scholarship, however, fares much better. In 1976, ʿAbd Allāh Shakība wrote his doctoral dissertation on a comparison between the philosophical thought of Ṣadr al-Dīn Dashtakī and Mullā

\textsuperscript{139} Pourjavady, Philosophy in early Safavid Iran, pp. 16-24 (on Ṣadr al-Dīn), 24-32 (on Ghiyāth al-Dīn), 74-105 (on the Dawānī-Dashtakī debate).

\textsuperscript{140} Saatchian, Gottes Wesen-Gottes Wirken, p. 20.

\textsuperscript{141} I grateful to Professor Mehdi Amin Razavi for providing me with this information.
Şadrā Shīrāzī. His study, however, is best described as a Persian summary of Şadr al-Dīn’s treatise on the Necessary Being, entitled Risāla fi ihtibāt al-bārī. Shakiba offers little in the way of philosophical analysis and does not engage with the historical background or the theological aspects of Şadr al-Dīn’s thought. The 1990s to the 2000s in Iran saw the rediscovery and the beginnings of a concerted effort to edit and publish the major works of the Dashtakīs. In 1996, Qāsim Kākāyī published a sketchy but useful article on the life and general thought of Şadr al-Dīn whom he recognizes as the founder of the School of Shiraz. Between 1996 and 1998, Qākāyī published a set of articles on Shams al-Dīn Khafrī, Ghiyāth al-Dīn Dashtakī, and the School of Shiraz in general. Similarly, 'Alī Naqī Munzawī mentions the Dashtakīs in a 1996 work on the learning of centres of Shiraz during the tenth/fifteenth century. There, the author speaks of ‘two strands of philosophy’ which centre on Şadr al-Dīn and Dawānī.

In 1997, Aḥad Farāmarz Qarāmalikī wrote a work on the history of the Liar’s Paradox focusing on the writings of the philosophers of Shiraz particularly Şadr al-Dīn. Following Munzawī, Qarāmalikī identifies two philosophical schools or strands

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in Shiraz in the late Timurid period. A few years later, 'Alī Awjabī took up this label in the introduction to his critical edition of Ghiyāth al-Dīn’s Iṣrāq hayākīl al-nūr li-kashf zulmāt shawāqīl al-gharūr. In 2002, Parwīn Bahārzāde provided us with a useful biographical and bibliographical information about Ghiyāth al-Dīn in her edition to the latter’s Tuhfat al-fatāfī tafsīr sūrat hal atā. In more recent years, Iranian scholars have focused on providing us with bio-bibliographical information on the Dashtakīs. In 2003, ‘Alī Ṣadrāyī Khuyī provides a useful list of manuscripts of Ṣadr al-Dīn’s glosses on Qūshchī’s commentary upon Ṭūṣī’s Tajrīd al-i’tiqād along with a list of Dawānī’s glosses. In 2004, Muhammad Barakat prepared a useful bibliography entitled Kitāb-shināsī-yi falsaf-yi maktab-i shīrāz which includes location of Iranian manuscripts and publication details of the works of Ṣadr al-Dīn, Dawānī, Ghiyāth al-Dīn, Khafrī, Nāyrizī, Jamāl al-Dīn Maḥmūd Shīrāzī, Sammākī, Mīrzā-jān Ḥabīb Allāh Bāghnawī Shīrāzī (d. 994/1586), Kamāl al-Dīn Ḥusayn ʿIlāhī Ardaḇīlī (d. 950/1543), and Ṣadr al-Dīn Dashtakī IV (Ghiyāth al-Dīn’s son).

However, Abd Allāh Nūrānī’s 2006 two volume set containing twenty edited works by Ghiyāth al-Dīn is one of the best treatmenets of the Dashtakīs in Persian. In the introduction, the editor provides very useful intellectual biographies of Ṣadr al-Dīn and Ghiyāth al-Dīn as well as brief biographies of some of their most famous students.


549 ‘Alī Ṣadrāyī Khuyī, Kitāb-shināsī-yi tajrīd al-i’tiqād (Qum, 1382 Sh/2003), pp. 84-87, 90-92.
I.8: Primary sources

In my attempt to construct an intellectual history of the late Timurid and early Safavid period with particular reference to philosophical, theological, and, to a lesser extent, mystical traditions, I draw on a number of primary Arabic and Persian sources. For an internal witness account, I rely on the works of Ṣadr al-Dīn and Ghiyāth al-Dīn. For instance, when I discuss the dominance of the Ashʿāri tradition in Shiraz, I rely primarily on the historiographical accounts provided by the Dashtakīs who interpreted the intellectual landscape as such. As if to agree with the Hegelian dictum that philosophy is history of philosophy Muslim philosophers can indeed be useful sources for details regarding the historical development of ideas and thought. As such, their accounts of how certain philosophical ideas traverse the trajectory of Islamic intellectual history can be quite useful, if a little biased, though perceptions of historical developments even if somewhat inaccurate are as useful for an historian as accounts which portray an accurate history.

Another key genre of texts which I rely on are the histories of philosophies and heresiographies which compile views of individual thinkers, schools of thought, and religious communities and traditions. Some of the key works which I make use of include, the Maqālāt al-islāmiyyīn of Ashʿārī which serves an useful source for early kalām views, al-Milāl wa-l-nīḥal of ʿAbd al-Karīm al-Shahrastānī (d. 548/1153), the Mughnī fī abwāb al-tawahīd by Qāḍī ʿAbd al-Jabbār, the Kitāb al-majmūʿ fī al-muḥīṭ biʾl-taklīf, the Kitāb al-fāʾiq, the Kitāb al-mu tamad, the Tatimmat ṣiwān al-ḥikma of Zahīr al-Dīn al-Bayhaqī (d. 565/1169), the Maqāṣid al-falāṣifa of Ghazālī, the Muḥṣal and the Maṭālib al-ʿāliyya of Rāzī, al-Mubayn fī sharḥ maʿānī alfāẓ al-ḥukamāʾ wa-l-mutakallīmīn of Sayf al-Dīn al-Āmidī (d. 630/1233), Kitāb muʾjam al-taʾrifāt of Jurjānī, the Maḥbūb al-
Quṣṭb al-Dīn Muḥammad b. ʿAlī al-Ashḵivarī (d. circa 1095/1684), which provides us with useful doxographies of past philosophers, including Ghiyāṯ al-Dīn, and, the Ṣaḥīḥ al-ṣawātir of Mullā Ṣadrā, which contains a wealth of information on past thinkers and their ideas including the Dashtakīs. To help me reconstruct the thought of influential thinkers whose philosophical or theological works are now lost, I rely on the writings of the later followers of their school or tradition. For instance, Abū l-Ḥusayn al-Baṣrī, an influential Muʿtazili theologian with philosophical tendencies, ‘had developed independent theological views which set him apart from the school of Abū Hāshim al-Jubbāṭī (d. 321/933).’

Although all of Abū l-Ḥusayn’s theological works are now lost we are able to recover his ideas in the writings of such later followers of his as Ibn al-Malāḥīmī, namely the Kitāb al-fāʿiq fi ṭalāṭul al-dīn and the Kitāb al-muʿtamad fi ṭalāṭul al-dīn.

More recent and still useful works, which I have consulted, include the Majmuʿa-yi muṣannafat-i ḥakīm-i muʿassis Āqāʾ ‘Alī Mudarris Ṭihrānī edited by Muḥsin Kadīvār, as well as the Tārīkh-i hukamāʾ wa ʿurafāʾ-yi mutaʾākhkhīr bar Ṣadr al-mutaʾalhīḥīn of Manūʾī al-Qūṣṭb. For biographical and bibliographical details about the Dashtakīs and other key thinkers, I have relied on a number of key sources which belong to this genre. These works provides us with short accounts about the lives of thinkers, their vocations, scholarly networks, transmission of texts, and pedagogical chains. More often than not these works tend to be repetitive even contradictory and sometimes wilfully inaccurate. They can be formulaic and even hagiographical but they contain

152 Ṣaduqī Suhā, Tārīkh-i hukamāʾ wa ʿurafāʾ-yi mutaʾākhkhīr bar Ṣadr al-mutaʾalhīḥīn (Tehran, 1381 Sh/2002).
invaluable and exclusive material which historians of philosophy cannot ignore. One of the key works of this genre which I use in this dissertation is the Persian Majālis al-mu’mīnīn of Sayyid Nūr Allāh al-Ḥusaynī Marʾāshī Shushtarī (killed 1019/1610), popularly known as Qāḍī Nūr Allāh because he served in that capacity in Lahore as a Mughal judge, and who was at once a philosopher, theologian, and historian of philosophy. The Majālis was completed sometime between 990/1582, before Shushtarī moved to India, and 1010/1602 in Lahore. It is divided into an introduction and twelve sessions (majālis). It aims to defend Shi’ism and thus tends to be triumphant in nature for Shushtarī tries to claim many historical luminaries for Shi’ism. Nevertheless, the sections on Ṣadr al-Dīn and Ghiyāth al-Dīn are arguably one of the earliest historical accounts we have on these thinkers.

Similar works in the genre are, the Amal al-ʿāmil of Muḥammad b. al-Ḥasan al-Ḥurr al-ʿĀmilī (d. 1104/1693), which is an important work composed in the later years of the Safavid rule. For the most part, this work contains short and condensed entries, except for more prominent scholars. ʿĀmilī’s student, Mīrzā ʿAbd Allāh al-Afandī (d. 1130/1717) wrote a continuation to this work entitled Istidrākāt al-amal which is also known as Taʿliqāt al-amal. ʿAbd al-Nabbī al-Qazwīnī wrote another supplement under the title Tatmīm amal al-ʿāmil completed in 1191/1777, and which

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155 Rizvi, Mullā Ṣadrā Shīrāzī, pp. 155-156.

156 In fact we learn from Shushtarī himself that he was a student of Jamāl al-Dīn Shīrāzī who was a student of Ghiyāth al-Dīn Dashtaki, thus forging a physical link between him and the Dashtakīs. See Shushtarī, Majālis al-mu’mīnīn, vol. 2, p. 231.
provides us with useful information about Şadr al-Dīn’s students most notably Khafī. Another important work which belongs in the genre is the *Sulūfat al-‘asr fi maḥāsin al-shu‘arā‘* bi kullī misr of Sayyid ‘Alī Khān b. Ṭhām b. Maṣūm Dashtakī Shīrāzī (d. 1118/1707), a descendant of the Dashtakī family.\(^{157}\) Despite its title, the work contains useful biographical and bibliographical information on philosophers as well as famous poets. Sayyid ‘Alī Khān, as he was famously known, composed another invaluable which belongs to the ṭabaqāt genre which he entitled *al-Darajāt al-rafi‘a fi ṭabaqāt al-shī‘a* and which includes one of the earliest genealogical trees of the Dashtakī clan.\(^{158}\)

Other sources of this genre are *Riyāḍ al-‘ulamā‘ wa-ḥiyād al-fuḍalā‘* by the already mentioned Afandī who was a student of the celebrated Safavid ʿālim Muḥammad Bāqir al-Majlisī (d. 1109/1698). The *Riyāḍ* is arguably one of the most important biographical dictionaries written in the final years of the Safavid period, Afandī includes hundreds of licenses (ijāzāt) issued by various ḥadīth transmitters. It is divided into two parts, the first on Shi‘i scholars while the other is on Sunni and non-Imāmī thinkers. Some of the later biographical dictionaries are also useful in gleaning information about past thinkers. These include the *Lu’lu‘at al-Bahrāyin fi ʿijāzāt wa-tarājim rījāl al-ḥadīth* of Yūsuf b. Ṭhām al-Bahrānī (d. 1185/1772) written originally as *ijāzas* for Bahrānī’s nephews, Khalf b. ‘Abd ʿAlī b. Ṭhām (d. 1207/1793) and Ḥusayn b. Muḥammad b. Ṭhām (d. 1216/1801). Given Bahrānī’s Akhbarī proclivities it provides us with hostile but useful accounts of the lives of some philosophers. Similarly, the *Ṭarā‘iq al-ḥaqā‘iq* of the Ni‘matullāhī Sufi Maṣūm ʿAlī Shāh Shīrāzī (d. 1344/1926), although quite late, provides useful information on


Safavid era philosophers. The celebrated Kashf al-żunūn ’an asāmī al-kutub wa-l-funūn of the Ottoman scholar Ḥājjī Khalīfa (d. 1067/1657) is an indispensible tool which contains much useful information on the Dashtakīs.

Muḥammad Bāqir Khwansārī (d. 1313/1895), the Qajar era anti-Akhbārī scholar, compiled an invaluable source for the lives and works of past scholars including the Dashtakīs under the title of Rawḍāt al-jannāt fī ahwāl al-‘ulamā’ wa-l-sādāt.159 In the same period, the Fārsnāma-yi Nāṣirī of Mīrzā Ḥasan al-Fasāyī (d. 1316/1898), which is a history and geography of the province of Fars, including maps and illustrations, is an indispensible source on intellectual life in Shiraz during the time of the Dashtakīs. Fasāyī, who was a descendant of the Dashtakīs, provides us with invaluable information on the lives of the Dashtakīs, their works, on the Madrasa-yi Manṣūriyya founded by Ṣadr al-Dīn as well as on other key figures of the period. In fact, Fasāyī compiled the work in an attempt to recover the property of the Madrasa-yi Manṣūriyya of which he was the mutawalli.160 The first part of the work, written in traditional annalistic form, is on the history of Fars covering the period from the Islamic conquest of Bahrain in the year 10/631 to the author’s own time. The second part provides us with a survey of the climate of Fars, its flora and fauna and agricultural products as well as discussions on the proper method of finding the qibla direction.

A modern source and arguably one of the most useful, in fact indispensible to any serious historian of Islamic philosophy, is the al-Dharī’a ilā tašānīf al-shī’a of Āqā Buzurg Ţihrānī (d. 1391/1970). It contains a wealth of bio-bibliographical


information as well as locations of key manuscripts including works written by the Dashtakīs and their students. Ṭhirānī’s Ṭabaqāt ‘alām al-shīʿa, intended as a companion to the Dharī’a, which also contains biographical material on the Dashtakīs, is another useful source written by a modern scholar.

Another is the voluminous work by Khayr al-Dīn al-Ziriklī entitled al-Aʾlām: qāmūs tarājim li ash-har al-rijāl wa-l-nisāʾ min al-ʿarab wa-l-mutaʾāribīn wa-l-mustashriqīn, which has a useful entry on Ghiyāth al-Dīn.¹⁶¹

Other type of historical material include works written by court chronicles such as the Aḥsan al-tawārīkh of Ḥasan Beg Rūmlū completed in 985/1577 and which is written in the traditional annalistic form. This source includes sections especially devoted to philosophers and mystics and provides us with useful dates of death. Of a similar nature is the Ḥabīb al-siyār by Ghiyāth al-Dīn Khwāndmīr (d. 941/1434), the author being the son of Mīrkhwānd (d. 903/1498), who compiled the Rawdat al-ṣafā fī sīrāt al-anbiyāʾ wa-l-mulūk wa-l-khulafāʾ. Ḥasan Beg Munshī’s Tārīkh-i ālām-ārāʿ-yi ʿAbbāsī, completed in 1038/1629, contains some useful biographical information on the Dashtakīs. The kitāb al-ijāzāt in Muḥammad Bāqir Majlisī’s Biḥār al-anwār contains much useful information on the transmission of key philosophical texts and pedagogical chains. There, we find an important ijāzā by one of the grandsons of Ṣadr al-Dīn Dashtakī to his student Sayyid ʿAlī Yazdī, which provides us with the earliest genealogical account of the Dashtakī family, among other things. Works which properly speaking belong to the anthology genre and which were written later contain valuable information on key dates, debates, and scholarly networks. Of relevance here is al-Fawāʾid al-madāniyya wa-l-shawāhid al-makiyya of Muḥammad Amīn Astarābādī (d. 1023/1614) who refers to the Dashtakī-Dawānī debates in some

¹⁶¹ Published in 8 volumes in Beirut in 2002.
detail, and the *Anwār al-nu’māniyya* of Sayyid Ni’mat Allāh al-Jazā’irī (d. 1112/1701), which contains useful histories of key philosophical and theological ideas.

Lastly, the endowments deed (*waqf*) of madrasas particularly the Manṣūriyya contains invaluable information about the curriculum and key texts taught. These give us an insight into pedagogy in the late medieval societies and dates of completion of key texts, including information about commentaries, glosses and super glosses, and where some works where taught and completed.

### I.9: Methodological concerns

I approach this main study of this dissertation primarily using research methods employed by intellectual historians such as Quentin Skinner and John Pocock, the putative founders of the Cambridge School. Generally, the school is defined as a historiographical movement for it offers a historicist or contextualist mode of interpretation, one which places primary emphasis on the historical conditions and the intellectual and socio-political contexts of philosophical traditions in a given historical epoch. For example, Skinner’s approach to the interpretation of ideas can be best characterised as an attempt to counter the anachronistic readings of philosophical formulations, arguing instead that ideas are produced as result of complex interactions in political language, thought, and action, in a particular context. In order to fully understand a text from another time especially those canons believed to contain ‘dateless wisdom’, one requires knowledge of the linguistic conventions that were prevalent then.

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Both Skinner and Pocock stress the importance of taking linguistic contexts into account when approaching ideas from the past; their methods are, however, not identical. Skinner is best classified as a ‘conventionalist’ while Pocock a ‘contextualist’. The latter argues that humans communicate through language systems which help constitute both their conceptual worldly authority structures and social worlds. These contextual and social worlds act as contexts to each other. An individual’s thought is at once ‘a social event, an act of communication and a response and a historical event, a moment in a process of transformation of the system.’\textsuperscript{163} It can be said therefore that Pocock’s contextualism is an attempt to replace the history of ideas with the history of languages and expressions. Its major flaw, in my opinion, is its failure to draw a clear distinction between a unit idea and linguistic expression.

It is tempting perhaps even unavoidable to conflate the two especially since an idea is usually expressed in the style of language prevalent at the given time. In this study, I take caution not to conflate the two, however. Indeed, ideas traversed through time, they are received, interpreted, and re-interpreted many a times by those authors who adopt them. But to suggest that any given idea is merely the product of linguistic considerations rooted in particular historical epochs at the exclusion of other considerations, say philosophical or theological, is certainly not representative of the Islamic philosophical tradition. In order to eschew the excessive contextualism and conventionalism of Pocock and Skinner and to provide some balance to my argument, I draw on another methodological approach which is somewhat dominant in the study of Islamic philosophy in the west, namely the

phenomenological method most famously associated with Henry Corbin.\textsuperscript{164} But first what can we say about phenomenology in general?

Phenomenology, as the movement inaugurated by Edmund Husserl (1859-1938), is now a century old. It was one of several strong currents in philosophy prominent at the outset of the twentieth century. Though important precursors of phenomenology can be found in the work of Immanuel Kant, Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, and Ernst Mach, phenomenology as a new way of doing philosophy was first formally announced by Edmund Husserl in his \textit{Logische Untersuchungen (Logical Investigations)} in 1900-1901. Husserl writes:

This phenomenology, like the more inclusive pure phenomenology of experiences in general, has, as its exclusive concern, experiences intuitively seizable and analysable in the pure generality of their essence, not experiences empirically perceived and treated as real facts, as experiences of human or animal experiments in the phenomenal world that we posit as an empirical fact. This phenomenology must bring to pure expression, must describe in terms of their essential concepts and their governing formulae of essence, the essences, which directly make themselves known in intuition, and the connections which have their roots purely in such essences. Each such statement of essence is an a priori statement in the highest sense of the word.\textsuperscript{165}

This being said, during his years at the University of Gottingen (1901-1916) Husserl made a very important amendment to his phenomenology. He proceeded by setting out his full programme of phenomenology, not just as the epistemological clarification of logic and mathematics, or even as the \textit{a priori} science of the essential features of consciousness (a position he held previously), but instead he saw phenomenology as a pure eidetic science, a ‘science of essences’ (\textit{eine Wesenswissenschaft}) that would, as he would have us believe, also provide the essential grounding for all scientific knowledge and would finally in Husserl’s mature vision become co-extensive with philosophy itself.


It can be said therefore that Husserl’s vision of phenomenology followed a progressive, or gradual, line of thought. It is certainly true that Husserl’s early conceptions of phenomenology restricted its scope to logic and epistemology. And it may also be argued that at that stage Husserl’s phenomenology bore a lot of resemblance to Franz Brentano’s descriptive psychology which itself was not too dissimilar from introspectionism. After 1903, Husserl’s thinking in the early phase of his mature vision of phenomenology began to make a transcendental turn. Right from the outset, Husserl laid great stress on phenomenological principle of presuppositionlessness; that is, the claim, or the effort, to discard all philosophical theorising in favour of careful description of phenomena themselves and to be attentive only to what is given in intuition. Hence in order to fully grasp the quintessential aspects of any given phenomena one ought to suspend value judgement, and by doing so the phenomena will be given an opportunity to ‘speak for itself’ without any explicatory terms or scientific jargon. Such methodological concerns will inform my reading of the Islamic philosophical traditions throughout this dissertation.

So what exactly is Corbin’s phenomenological method? Corbin’s vision of studying philosophy hinges on the view that philosophy ought to be studied in and of itself, and it should not fall prey to the ‘perils of historicism’. According to Corbin, the study of philosophy will not fulfil its true objectives when and if it is ‘subservient to the unique perspective of the history of philosophy as history, in

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166 Moran, Introduction to Phenomenology, pp. 65-66. This kind of ambiguity in definition and scope would later generate a series of severe denunciations of Husserl’s programme of phenomenology by some of his critics.

167 According to Henri Bergson, Husserl’s understanding of intuition is the kind of intellectual sympathy by which one places oneself within the object in order to coincide with that which is unique in it and consequently inexpressible. See Henri Bergson, An Introduction to Metaphysics, trans. T. E. Hulme (London, 1913), pp. 6-7.
subordination to the chronological succession and the hypothetical laws of historical causality.”

Perhaps it is more appropriate to view Corbinian phenomenology as an intertwined two-dimensional system that, from one dimension, is deliberately anachronistic, or ahistorical, and from the other seeks to promulgate concepts and ideas through phenomenological viewing that takes place in a transcendental realm or the ʿālam al-malākūt. To achieve this, Corbin instructs scholars seeking to understand Islamic philosophy to first extricate themselves from the post-Hegelian historical dialect and second to invoke the phenomenological method in order to ‘unveil the hidden’ or kashf al-mahjūb.

It follows, then, that a proper reading of post-Avicennan philosophy such as that of the Dashtakīs, for example, must hinge on two interconnected activities which in order to succeed must remain loyal to the following considerations: (i) the philosophers’ writings must be divested from its cultural, historical, political, social, and economical; (ii) readers of Islamic philosophical texts, for example, are not expected to indulge in textual criticisms and attempt to resolve or explain apparent contradictions and inconsistencies in the texts. Instead canons are to be treated as divine litanies that are perpetuated chronologically through different historical settings but nevertheless maintaining their perennial (and unchallengeable) wisdom; and (iii) the reader, in order to appreciate Islamic philosophical wisdom, ought to operate like a mystic who must journey through the divine hierarchies in order to engage with the pure expressions articulated by Muslim philosophers whose utterances are of a divine origin yet manifested in denotative language in the sublunary world.


169 On this, see prologue to vol. I in Henry Corbin, En Islam Iranien: aspects spirituelles et philosophiques (Paris, 1971), vol. 1, pp. VIII-XXIII.
But how as in the present study does an aspiring historian of Islamic philosophy go about extricating himself from historicism? Firstly, Corbin argues that scholars of Islamic philosophy ought to know that history has parted ways with its eschaton, that is, its final term. In the Hegelian context, history is a matter of events passing in the world, events that have already happened and have met their end. In the language of theology, such events have had their eschatology fulfilled, and should therefore have come to a stop. The course of history, as Corbin would have us believe, is navigated by an invisible entity, not in the sense of theological determinism but oriented towards its final form, its eschatology.\textsuperscript{170} This would have been the ideal turn of events in the empirical realm.

History therefore plays out like a drama. However, in a post-Hegelian world, history decouples itself from its navigator, the entity that gives it its sense of direction. Thus history has overtaken its eschatology and henceforth has its eschatology behind instead of before it.\textsuperscript{171} What follows is a situation where history is sets-off from its expected course in a tangent and becomes ‘disoriented’ seeking desperately for a direction it can no longer find."\textsuperscript{172} In other words, history is intrinsically connected to chronological events as they happen. History, in a Hegelian context, ceases to be of any importance after the occurrence of an event. A Hegelian approach to the study of philosophy is,\textsuperscript{173} according to Corbin, nothing but ‘a form without hope’. To proceed with their investigation, historians of Islamic

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{170} Corbin, \textit{En Islam Iranien}, vol. 1, pp. XVII-XVIII.
\item \textsuperscript{171} Corbin, \textit{En Islam Iranien}, vol. 1, p. XVI.
\item \textsuperscript{172} Corbin, \textit{En Islam Iranien}, vol. 1, p. XVI.
\item \textsuperscript{173} According to Hegel, philosophy is simply the history of philosophy; to study philosophy is to undertake a historical approach by studying axioms to determine the genetic causes, currents, influences, etc, which make themselves felt at such an such date, in order to deduce from them certain processes, in the belief that is possible to compare them among themselves.
\end{itemize}
philosophy are urged to rise up against the Hegelian conceptions of history which can no longer envisage things except according to their chronological genesis. According to Corbin, in order to capture the true meaning of philosophical ideas historians of philosophy are advised to avoid ‘agnostic historical’ approaches and instead indulge in a phenomenological ‘viewing’ that lays philosophical ideas bare in order to tell the hidden and the invisible present beneath the visible. It is ‘to make the phenomenon show itself forth such as it shows itself to the subject to whom it reveals itself’.174

It is evidently clear that the Corbinian phenomenological viewing is dressed with the robes of Islamic mysticism. It is the prerogative of the investigator to take the phenomenon back to its origin (ta’wil) in the hope that the structure of its essence is released as it passes through each level, which in the language of Islamic philosophy is known as tartib al-mazahir.

Historians will confess that the fundamental problem with Corbinian phenomenology lies in the rejection of historical causality. Corbin’s thesis asserts that events are accomplished in the interior consciousness of man whose hidden sense is to be found in the ta’wil by a type of spiritual unveiling of that which is hidden.175 By implication this procedure echoes the paradigm which Muslim mystics call kashf al-mahjūb. This last claim by Corbin underscore the two most important points in his methodology. First, there is the issue of hierohistory, which according to Corbin is a sacralised history that resorts to phenomenological viewing as its tool of comprehending ideas of the past. Second, there is the more important issue of

174 Corbin, En Islam Iranien, vol. 1, pp. XII-XIII.

ignoring or overlooking the dynamic relationship between ideas and history. Corbin rejects the notion that a philosopher or any given thinker for that matter is the product of his time.

Be that as it may, Corbin’s method of studying Islamic philosophy is not without its critics. Leading the charge against Corbin, Dimitri Gutas notes that ‘Corbin’s approach alienated philosophers from the study of Avicennan and all post-Avicennan Arabic philosophy, it attracted scholars who were interested precisely in confessional esotericism as a means to promote their personal or ethnic or religious chauvinistic agenda.’ This, Gutas adds, is a ‘far cry from studying Arabic philosophy as philosophy in its historical context, much less making it accessible to historians of philosophy and scholars of Islam!’

This is precisely why I insist on historicising Corbin’s phenomenology as a means to keep it in check and avoid the ahistoricism Gutas warns us about. It is true that Corbin anticipated this epistemological problem or inability to convince his reader that propositional knowledge is less important than intuitive knowledge and that intuitive knowledge ought to be considered seriously in academic studies, especially in the study of Islamic philosophies. But this is not a solution to the problem. Corbin’s model of mystical unveiling has no place in academic studies, to put it bluntly. The study of Islamic philosophy entails an investigation into the past and how it gave rise to some of the ideas and opinions one encounters today. In other words, the study of Islamic philosophical traditions cannot be read in abstract without due considerations of some of the conventions available to the author and the historical contexts in which these texts were authored.

It is probably accurate to suggest that Corbinian phenomenology is more suited for traditional and confessional studies of Islamic philosophy. The approach is subjective and inconsistent with modern epistemological theories and it rests on the assumption that one needs to undergo traditional training in Islamic spirituality before one can hope to understand the nature of Islamic philosophy. This is primarily why I insist on a mixed approach, one that blends the historical methods of the Cambridge School with a soft Corbinian phenomenology that permits philosophical traditions to speak to us as they are.
Şadr al-Dīn Dashtakī is arguably the most significant philosopher in the late Timurid period. Commonly known as Mīr Şadr al-Dīn, he was later given the honorific title of Sayyid al-Mudaqiqīn (Master of the meticulous scholars) as a testimony to his scrupulous exposition of Avicennan philosophy to which he remained committed his entire life.\(^\text{177}\)

In his writings, Mīr Şadr al-Dīn does not shy away from lavishing Avicenna with many honorific titles as he often quotes the latter with much admiration. He regards Avicenna as the most authoritative voice in, and greatest representative of, the Peripatetic tradition,\(^\text{178}\) an assertion with which many would find difficult to disagree. Indeed Avicenna’s major philosophical writings such as the Shifā’ and the Ishārāt became the subject of numerous commentaries that were written by the later generations of philosophers and theologians including some written by his fiercest critics such as Rāzī.\(^\text{179}\) In what follows we will examine the life, training, intellectual career, and students of Mīr Şadr al-Dīn.

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\(^{179}\) To date, only one critical edition of Rāzī’s commentary on Avicenna’s Kitāb al-īshārāt wa-l-tanbihāt has appeared. See Fakhr al-Dīn Rāzī, Sharḥ al-īshārāt wa-l-tanbihāt, ed. Ālī Riḍā Najaf-zāde (Tehran,
1.1: General introduction


The medieval sources including biographical dictionaries and bibliographical literature provide us with little information about him except for few incidental remarks about his life and career in Shiraz. Some medieval biographers and historians of philosophy, for example, have ignored him altogether even though they had much to say about his son Ghiyāth al-Dīn and his

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180 His full name is Sayyid Muḥammad Dashtakī al-Shīrāzī al-Ḥasanī al-Ḥusaynī. In his works he refers to himself as Muḥammad Ṣadr al-Dīn (see Appendix A for an annotated bibliography of his works).

rival Dawānī.\textsuperscript{182} Similarly, modern biographies especially those written in European languages have added little more than what we already know.

The Dashtakīs were a family of philosophers, exegetes, jurists, and \textit{ḥadīth} scholars noted for their thinkers since 'Abbasid times. They claimed descent from Ḥusayn b. 'Alī b. Abī Ṭālib, as the following genealogy shows which is provided by Ṣadr al-Dīn IV, Mīr Ṣadr al-Dīn's grandson, in his \textit{ijāza} to his student Sayyid 'Alī b. Qāsim al-Yazdī:


Aside from their well-known ancestors such as Ḥusayn b. ‘Alī, ‘Alī b. al-Ḥusayn and Zayd b. ‘Alī, the earliest reports we have about the Dashtakī family background can be traced back to the time of a certain Ṭālib (or Muḥammad) b. ‘Ammār al-

\textsuperscript{182} For example, Qūṭb al-Dīn Muḥammad \‘Alī Ashkīvarī Lāhijī includes biographical entries for Dawānī and Ghiyāth al-Dīn but not Mīr Ṣadr al-Dīn. Given this, one is tempted is ask why an important Safavid era historian of philosophy like Ashkīvarī Lāhijī would decide not to provide us with biographical information about Mīr Ṣadr al-Dīn. A possible explanation for this biographical lacuna may have something to do with the reception of Mīr Ṣadr al-Dīn in Safavid Iran, since for the most part, the Mīr Ṣadr al-Dīn’s ideas and writings were subsumed, chiefly, by Ghiyāth al-Dīn and his immediate students.

Nakhaʻī. Al-Sakkîn, as he is commonly known in biographical dictionaries, who lived in the early ‘Abbasid era and was said to be a close companion of the eight Shi‘i Imām ‘Alî al-Riḍā. Al-Sakkîn spent ten years in the company of ‘Alî al-Riḍā and his disciples during the latter’s stay in Medina. It is said that during this time, al-Sakkîn studied ḥadīth and fiqh under al-Riḍā. It was customary in the early historical phases of Shi‘i ḥadīth transmission for some companions of the Imams to be in the possession of ‘books’ (kutub) that contained written reports dictated by the Imams. According to one of the earliest fihrist works written by renowned Shi‘i authors such as Abû l-‘Abbâs al-Najâshî and Abû Ja‘far Ţûsî (d. 460/1067), Aḥmad al-Sakkîn compiled a work called Fiqh al-Riḍā which is a compendium of legal injunctions (al-ḥarām wa-l-ḥalāl) reputedly dictated by al-Riḍā to al-Sakkîn.

Based on this, it is probable that the descendants of al-Sakkîn lived in Medina up until the fifth/eleventh century since we know that the first family member to move to Shiraz was a certain Sayyid ‘Alî b. Zayd, known as Abû Sa‘īd al-Naṣîbînî (i.e. of Nisîbîs). According to the Fârs-nâma-yi Nâṣîrî, Abû Sa‘īd migrated from Nisîbîs to Dashtak shortly after 400/1009 with Nisîbîs being an ancient Mesopotamian city situated in the south-eastern province of Mardin in present day...

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184 See Abû l-‘Abbâs al-Najâshî, Rijâl al-Najâshî, ed., Mûsa al-Shabîrî Zanjânî (Qum, 1416 H/1995), p. 361. Najâshî describes him as thiqa, i.e. reliable or veracious. His father, Sakkîn b. ‘Ammâr was a companion of Ja‘far al-Ṣâdiq. See Muṣṭafâ al-Tafrishî, Naqâd al-rijâl (Qum, 1418 H/1997), vol. 2, p. 340. However, according to the Dashtakī genealogy, Aḥmad al-Sakkîn was the son of Ja‘far, not ‘Ammâr.


186 For a bibliographical study of this trend, see Hossein Modarressi, Tradition and Survival: A Bibliographical Survey of Early Shi‘ite Literature (Oxford, 2003). See also the editor’s introduction in Fahâris al-shî‘a, ed. Mahdi Khudâmiyân al-Ârânî (Qum, 1431 H/2009).

Turkey. At the time, Dashtak was one of eleven districts (maḥallāt) in Shiraz and remained so until the early Safavid period.

The reasons for Abū Sa’īd’s migration to Shiraz are unknown. In fact, we know very little about his life and career except that he was a poet who composed verses in Arabic. This is based on the fact that he is referred to as al-shā‘īr. Besides Abū Sa’īd, other notable members of the Dashtakī family include Sayyid ‘Alī Diyā’ al-Dīn Dashtakī (d. 685/1286) who was also known as diyā’ al-dīn wa-l-milla. He was a renowned jurist who was appointed to the office of Chief Judge (qādī al-quḍāt) of Fārs during the Mongol period, a position that was usually the sole preserve of Shi‘i and Sufi persons.

Not much else is known about Sayyid ‘Alī Diyā’ al-Dīn except that his son Sayyid Ishāq ‘Izz al-Dīn Dashtakī also served the Mongol court. According to Fasāyī, Ishāq was known by the locals of Shiraz where he lived as hāmī-yi muslimīn va nāṣīḥa-yi mulūk-ī va salāfīn. Moreover, he appears to have been a scholar of ḥadīth and philosophy. It is said he authored a work called Miṣbāḥ al-dujā about which very little is known except that it was an exposition on philosophical mysticism. Ishāq died in 677/1254 in Shiraz. Known by the locals for his piety and asceticism, his

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189 The eleven districts are: 1) Ishāq-i beg, home of the Maḥallātī family; 2) Bāzār-i morgh, home of Emāmī family who moved to Shiraz from Qaṭīf; 3) Bālā-yi kuft, home of Mīrzā Jān Ḥabīballāh Bāḡnawī (d. 995/1587); 4) Darb-i shāhzāda; 5) Darb-i masjīd-i naw; 6) Serbāgh; 7) Dashtak, home of the Dashtakīs; 8) Senj-i sīyā, home to the Kāẓirūn Sufi family who were contemporaries of Mīr Ṣadr al-Dīn; 9) Leb-i āb, home of the Kalantar family; 10) Maydān-i shah; and 11) Mahalla-ye yahūd, home to some Jewish families who lived in Shiraz. See Fasāyī, Fārs-nāma, vol. 2, pp. 931-1140.

190 Bahārzadeh, ‘Ṣadr al-Dīn Muḥammad Dashtakī Shīrāzī’, p. 139-141.


gravesite was turned into a shrine, which became popular among the Shi’i locals and where it continues to receive visitors until the present day.\(^{194}\)

Sayyid Ishāq ‘Izz al-Dīn had a son called Sayyid Muḥammad b. Ishāq Dashtakī who is known in the genealogical literature as Abū Ibrāhīm and Ṣadr al-Dīn al-Awwal (Ṣadr al-Dīn I).\(^{195}\) He was a renowned jurist who studied fiqh in Shiraz and Baghdad under some of the leading Shi’i authorities in jurisprudence and legal methodology such as Ḥillī. In fact, Muḥammad b. Ishāq was issued with a licence (iḥāza) to teach and transmit Ḥillī’s Qawā’id al-ʾahkām fī masā’il al-ḥalāl wa-l-ḥarām, which according to Ṭihrānī is written on the back of a copy of the Qawā’id in MS 704 in Tehran University Central Library.\(^{196}\) This tells us that Muḥammad b. Ishāq was in Baghdad where he attended Ḥillī’s classes sometime before 724/1324. Although the precise reasons for his stay in Baghdad are unknown, it is probable that Muḥammad b. Ishāq made the journey from Shiraz, where he was born, to Baghdad, and possibly other cities in Iraq that had an active scholarly community, to attend Ḥillī’s fiqh lessons. Although Ḥillī spent most of his teaching career in his hometown of al-Ḥilla, especially following his departure from Marāgha in 672/1274 after Ṭūsī’s

\(^{194}\) There is virtually no information on him in the standard bi-bibliographical sources, though some modern studies have briefly mentioned him. See ‘Īsā b. Junayd Shīrāzī, Ṭadhkira-yi hizār maẓār: tarjuma-yi shadd al-azār, ed., Nūrānī Waṣāl (Shiraz, 1364 Sh/185), p. 19.


\(^{196}\) Ṭihrānī, Ṭabaqāt ‘alām al-shīʿa, vol. 4, pp. 178-179; idem, al-Dhariʿaʾī, vol. 11, p. 17. The beginning of the iḥāza reads as follows:


Hence, Ḥillī issued the licence around the 15 Jamāḥī I 724/10 May 1324.
death, he did however frequent Baghdad intermittently to meet some of the leading scholarly authorities there. It is likely therefore that he became acquainted with Muḥammad b. Ishāq during his short stays in Baghdad for there is no evidence to suggest that the latter lived in al-Ḥilla. Assuming the dates are correct, the meeting between Ḥillī and Muḥammad b. Ishāq must have taken place two or three years before former’s death in 726/1325.

As for Muḥammad b. Ishāq, he died in 767/1366 in Shiraz and was later buried in the Masjid al-ʿAtīq. The bibliographical source consulted does not mention any known titles of his works not even in the discipline of fiqh which seems to have been his preferred area of study.

Muḥammad b. Ishāq had a son called Sayyid Ibrāhīm Dashtakī, also known as Amīr Sharaf al-Dīn Dashtakī, who appears to have been a Shiʿi thinker. He was born in Shiraz during the eighth/fourteenth century and appears to have spent most of his life there. There, he acted as the local mujtahid, led daily prayers in the Madrasa Raḍawīyya, and taught classes on fiqh and philosophy, though precise details on the contents of his teachings are unknown. However, according to one source, Ibrāhīm was especially interested in the writings of the Brethren of Purity (Ikhwān al-Ṣafā), a fourth/tenth century secret society of Ismāʿīlī thinkers who wrote on a variety of subjects, including metaphysics and epistemology, and whose collected writings known as the Rasāʾil ikhwān al-ṣafā (‘Epistles of the Brethren of

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198 Fasāyī, Fārs-nāma, vol. 2, p. 1039. According to Fasāyī, Ibrāhīm Dashtaki was renowned for possessing manners like those of Muḥammad and character qualities like those of ʿAlī (akhlāq-i nabawīyya u awṣāf-i murtadawīyya), an indication that in terms of confessional affiliation, he may have been Shiʿī, at least according to the author of Fārsnāma.

199 We know very little about this school except that it was located in Shiraz and attended by some of the ancestors of the Dashtakīs. See Fasāyī, Fārs-nāma, vol. 2, p. 1039.
Purity’) bring together various strands of Islamic and non-Islamic philosophical traditions for the purposes of finding salvation. The treatises emphasize the role of philosophy particularly in its more mystical form as a soteriological tool, albeit predicated on eclectic metaphysical speculations, which many modern scholars regard as sui generis.200

But what are we to make of İbrahim Dashtakī’s supposed interest in philosophy particularly in its esoteric traditions such as the Rasāʾil of the Brethren of Purity? While his father and his forefathers were scholars noted primarily for their abilities in the transmitted sciences, few however showed much interest in philosophy and esoteric doctrines. This tells us that İbrahim was arguably the first member of the Dashtakī clan in Shiraz during the late Ilkhanid period to revive interest in philosophy, albeit in its mystical form. He appears to have been interested in Sufism, too. We are told, for example, that he travelled with his father to meet with and pay respect for the famous Kubrawī Sufi ʿAlāʾ al-Dawla Simnānī (d. 736/1336), though that would mean İbrahim was still a youth when the alleged meeting took place.201

İbrahim died in 788/1386 and was later buried in Dashtak. According to one rather late source, large crowds from across the city attended his funeral. In it there is a legendary account which describes the day of his passing away as especially


gloomy and dark which witnessed heavy rainfalls, an incident that led those present to believe that such cosmic events were triggered by Ibrāhīm’s death. An obscure figure who appears to have combined interest in philosophy and Sufism, Ibrāhīm is known to have authored a work on philosophy entitled *Mashāriq al-anwār* about which very little is known.²⁰²

Ibrāhīm had a son called Muḥammad b. Ibrāhīm who was known as Ṣadr al-Dīn al-Thānī (Ṣadr al-Dīn II). Details about his life and whether he led a scholarly career are scant.²⁰³ We do know, however, that the people of Shiraz considered him an authority in the rational sciences.²⁰⁴ Muḥammad b. Ibrāhīm is said to have passed away in 828/1424 and was later buried in Dashtak.²⁰⁵ He had two sons, Ishāq Dashtakī and Mīr Ghiyāṭh al-Dīn Manṣūr Dashtakī. Ishāq was the father of Sayyid Nizām al-Dīn Aḥmad Dashtakī, while Mīr Ghiyath al-Dīn Manṣūr was the father of Ṣadr al-Dīn Dashtakī, who is sometimes referred to as Ṣadr al-Dīn al-Thālīth (Ṣadr al-Dīn III), the subject of the present chapter.²⁰⁶

According to one source, Mīr Ghiyāṭh al-Dīn Manṣūr Dashtakī, Ṣadr al-Dīn’s father, was highly respected in Shiraz as a scholar of ḥadīth and tafsīr.²⁰⁷ Later biographers, including the author of *al-Darajāt al-rafi‘a*, lavish him with scholarly titles such as *a‘lam ‘ulamā‘ al-mutasharri‘in* and *ṣadr al-sharī‘a* which suggest he was a scholar of *fiqh*. Mīr Ghiyāṭh al-Dīn died in 870/1465 and was buried in Dashtak.

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²⁰² The work is not mentioned in any of the standard bibliographical sources, though reference to its title is mentioned in Shirāzī, Tadhkira-yi hizār mazār, p. 30.


²⁰⁶ Ṭihrānī, Ṭabaqāt ‘alām al-shī‘a, p. 177.

Hence, as shown, our thinker, Šadr al-Dīn Dashtakī, hailed from a family of esteemed scholars most probably Shi‘i who contributed to the religious and intellectual life of Shiraz during the Ilkhanid and Timurid periods, though the sphere of their intellectual influence appears to have been confined to Shiraz and its immediate localities. In what follows we turn our attention to the early life and scholarly career of Šadr al-Dīn Dashtakī, who lived most of his life in Shiraz.

1.2: Early Life of Mīr Šadr al-Dīn

Mīr Šadr al-Dīn was born on 2 Sha‘bān 828/19 June 1424. This date is confirmed by his son Ghiyāth al-Dīn in *Kashf al-ḥaqā‘iq al-Muḥammadīyya*.208 We have already mentioned his father. As for Mīr Šadr al-Dīn’s mother she was a descendant of a certain Sayyid Ibrāhīm al-Karīm who was one of the representatives of the revolutionary branch of the Ḥasanids (probably Zaydi) and who was a contemporary with Ja‘far al-Ṣādiq (d. 148/765).209

During his early years, Mīr Šadr al-Dīn made a living from farming and the irrigation of water canals (*qanawāt*). This appears to have been his main source of income until the age of fifty-one.210 During this period, he held evening classes on philosophy and theology in his home. It is not known exactly which texts he used

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208 This work is a commentary by Ghiyāth al-Dīn on his father’s *Ithbāt al-bārī*. For Mīr Šadr al-Dīn’s year of birth, see Dashtaki, ‘*Kashf al-ḥaqā‘iq*’ in *Musannaflat*, vol. 2, p. 982.


210 Dashtaki, ‘*Kashf al-ḥaqā‘iq*’, in *Musannaflat*, vol. 2, p. 982ff. Interestingly, Ghiyāth al-Dīn describes his father as someone who was particularly skilled in labour activities and who dedicated great amounts of time helping the people of Shiraz, even claiming that his father was highly repected by the locals, though there is no evidence to suggest the Dashtakīs were wealthy, they were however of sufficient means.
but it is probable that both the *Ishārāt* and the *Tajrīd* were included based on the fact that most of his writings as well as those of his students focused primarily on these two works, though he very rarely cites the other works of Avicenna such as the *Shifāʾ* which would suggest the *Ishārāt* in particular was the preferred Avicennan text in that period perhaps due to its brevity and comprehensiveness.

Evidence suggest that Mīr Ṣadr al-Dīn taught other subjects which include gemology (the study of precious stones), *ʿilm al-ḥurūf* (the science of lettrism), and *fiqh*. The study of these sciences seems to point to a wider trend of an holistic approach to knowledge, a phenomenon which can be traced back to the intellectual project of Ibn Turka in Isfahan and his quest for a universalist approach to the sciences, one which seems to have continued well into the Timurid period, though it must be noted that Ibn Turka is never alluded to or cited in the works Mīr Ṣadr al-Dīn and his students. In the Safavid period, however, the interconnection between science and philosophy became less pronounced, especially as we approach the period during which the philosophers of Isfahan flourished.²¹¹

At the age of fifty, Mīr Ṣadr al-Dīn’s career took an important turn. In Muḥarram 879/May 1474, the Qarā Qāyūnlū prince Yūsuf b. Jahānshāh invited him to take up the main teaching post at the shrine of Ahmed b. Mūsa, known as Shāh-i Chirāgh.²¹² The princely patronage indicates that Mīr Ṣadr al-Dīn was already recognised and respected as a philosopher at least several years before 893/1488,

²¹¹ Cf. Mathew Melvin-Koushki, *The Quest for a Universal Science: The Occult Philosophy of Saʿīn al-Dīn Turka Isfahānī (1369-1432) and Intellectual Millenarianism in Early Timurid Iran*, Unpublished Ph.D Dissertation (Yale University, 2012).

the year in which according to some modern biographers he become widely known as a noted thinker.\textsuperscript{213}

However, for unknown reasons Mīr Șadr al-Dīn would spend the remainder of his career teaching at the Madrasa-yi Manşūriyya. It seems that the school generated significant amounts of revenue soon after it was inaugurated. This may explain why on 8 Dhū l-Qa‘da 893/13 October 1488, the Āq Qūyūnlū sultan Ya‘qūb issued a \textit{fārmān} in which he exempted the Madrasa-yi Manşūriyya from state taxation.\textsuperscript{214} It is not known, however, if Mīr Șadr al-Dīn continued to teach at the Shāh-i Chirāgh after Üzūn Ḥasan, leader of the Āq Qūyūnlū, clan captured Shiraz and removed all traces of the Qarā Qūyūnlū clan.\textsuperscript{215}

However, the sources inform us that in 883/1478, Mīr Șadr al-Dīn purchased a large plot of land (approximately one hectare) in the district of Dashtak on which he built his own school which he later named Madrasa-yi Manşūriyya after his son Ghiyāth al-Dīn Manşūr who was seventeen-years-old at the time.\textsuperscript{216}

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\textsuperscript{213} Ghiyāth al-Dīn Manşūr Dashtakī va falsafa-i 'irfān, p. 37.
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\textsuperscript{214} Fursat al-Dawla Shīrāzī, Āthār-i ajam (Tehran, 1362 Sh/1983), p. 498; Fasāyī, Fārs-nāma, vol. 1, pp. 351-354; Ghiyāth al-Dīn Manşūr Dashtakī va falsafa-i 'irfān, p. 37. The laudatory honorifics ascribed to Mīr Șadr al-Dīn which are contained in the opening remarks of the \textit{fārmān} read as follows:

The one with whom the kings of Islam are pleased, the role model of erudite scholars, the pride of the scholars, the truly-deserving precent of the divine philosophers, the leading master of the scholars of his age, the one favoured by God, the foremost in religion, Muḥammad (Murtadā mamālik al-Īslām, muqṭādā 'ulamā‘ al-‘ālām, ʿiftikhrār sadāt al-‘ulamā‘ wa-l-nuqābā‘ fī l-a’yām, i’tīād al-a’immah al-mutabābhīrīn fī l-‘āfāq, quwdat al-ḥukamā‘ al-mutawallīn bī’l-‘istīhāqā‘, allāmat ‘ulamā‘ al-zamān, āstādīār arbāb al-ḥikam wa-l-ma‘ārifī fī l-‘awān, muwaffaq min ‘ind Allāh al-ṣamād, șadr al-milla wa-l-‘ifāda wa-l-dīn, Muḥammad).

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1.3: Political times

The political times in which Mīr Šadr al-Dīn lived was marked by an intra-Turkic rivalry between the Āq Qūyūnlū (The White Sheep) and the Qarā Qūyūnlū clans (The Black Sheep).\(^{217}\) The Āq Qūyūnlū rose to prominence in 804/1402 when Timur (reg. 771/1370–911/1506) gave them control of Diyar Bakr. In 857/1453 the then head of the clan ‘Alī Beg was succeed by his son Jahāngīr. Known to have a mercurial temperament, Jahāngīr was later removed by his more resolute brother Üzūn Ḥasan shortly after the former assumed power.\(^{218}\)

Indeed Üzūn Ḥasan was by far the most powerful and celebrated of the White Sheep clan. He made Tabriz his new capital after he defeated his brother and soon began to patronize scholars including the famous polymath and author of the important commentary on the Tajrīd al-‘itīqād, ‘Alī Qūshchī (d. 878/1474), who visited Üzūn Ḥasan in Tabrīz in 873/1469.\(^{219}\) Üzūn Ḥasan reigned supreme over much of western Iran from 856/1453 to 861/1457. However, his few years in power were marked by internecine strife including failed revolts by his brothers. Determined to crush all forms of dissent, even if spearheaded by blood relatives, he put down an attempted revolt by his brother Jahāngīr and Uways in 851/1456, which historians say resulted in a bloody massacre committed by Üzūn Ḥasan’s


\(^{218}\) Ḥasanzada, Ḥukūmat-i turkamān-i5, chapter 3.

\(^{219}\) For a biography of Qūshchī, see Al-shaqāʾī ṣ al-nuʾ māniyya fi ‘ulamā’ al-dawlat al-ʿuthmāniyya, ed. ʿAlīb̄iḥ Furāt (Istanbul, 1985), pp. 159–162.
soldiers. In the years the followed, Üzün Hasan reached the height of his power. In 864/1459 many amīrs in Asia Minor and Syria submitted to his authority.

Scholars, too, sang his praises and spoke about him using terms that suggest he was the recipient of divine grace. Jalāl al-Dīn Dawānī, described by John Woods as the ‘ideological mainstay’ of the Āq Qūyūnlū Empire, compares Üzün Hasan to the historical caliphs going as far as describing Üzün Hasan the ‘shadow of God’ and the ‘deputy of Muḥammad’. In the Akhlāq-i Jalālī, a treatise on politics and ethics, completed in 880/1475 and dedicated to Üzün Hasan and sultan Khalīl, Dawānī writes:

As for the ruler, he should be a person distinguished by divine support (taʾyīd-i ilāhī-yi mumtāz) so that he might lead individual men to perfection (takmil-i afrād-i insān) and order their affairs (nazm-i mašālīh-i īshān). The ancient philosophers call this person ‘the absolute ruler’ and his ordinances ‘statecraft’. The moderns call him ‘the Imam’ and his function ‘the imamate’. Plato labels him ‘controller of the world’ (mudabbir-i ‘ālam) while Aristotle names him the ‘civic man’ (insān-i madāni), i.e. he who efficiently discharges the duties of state. When the control of affairs rests in the hands of such an exalted person, food fortune and prosperity accrue to the entire country and all the subjects. Thus by the grace of God and in accordance with the proverb, ‘Give the bow to its maker’, the regulation of the affairs of mankind has been placed in the mighty grip of the victorious emperor [Üzün Hasan]... The first concern of the controller of the world is the maintenance of the injunctions of the Sacred Law. In specific details, however, he retains the power to act in accordance with the public interest of his age as long as his actions fall within the general principles of the Sacred Law. Such a person is truly the Shadow of God (zill-i Allāh) and the Caliph of God (khalīfat-i Allāh), and the Deputy of the Prophet (wa-nāyib-i nābī-yi bāshid).221

Dawānī became acquainted with Üzün Hasan after the latter captured new territories in Iran on 25 Rabīʿ II 873/11 November 1468. In the same year, Üzün Hasan launched a surprise attack on his long-term Shiʿi rivals, the Qārā Qūyūnlū, and defeated their leader Jahānsāh (reg. 841/1438-872/1468).222

In the following year on 28 Rajab/11 February, Üzün Hasan waged another war known as the Battle of Qarābāg against the relatively weak Timurid ruler Abū

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221 Dawānī, Akhlāq-i Jalālī, pp. 222-23.
Saʿīd Mīrzā, who was captured and handed over to the Timurid ruler of Herat and his long-time rival, Yādīqār Muḥammad (d. 874/1470). It was in that battle where Shiraz fell under the command of Úzūn Ḥasan who appears to have held the city in high regard. In a dispatch sent to the Ottoman sultan Muḥammad ‘The Conqueror’, Úzūn Ḥasan refers to Shiraz as ‘the seat of the throne of sovereignty and the station of caliphate’.\(^{223}\)

Generally, the relationship between Úzūn Ḥasan and Mīr Ṣadr al-Dīn appears to have been amicable. The latter was not considered an ideological supporter of the empire as Dawānī was.\(^{224}\) While Dawānī was avowedly Sunni his support for a staunchly Sunni ruler like Úzūn Ḥasan was not unusual. The case of Mīr Ṣadr al-Dīn is not so straightforward, however. While evidence seem to suggest a Shiʿi connection on his part, it still remains to be seen whether this can be corroborated by historical evidence. We will return to this question later, but for now it is worth noting that Mīr Ṣadr al-Dīn dedicated a short prayer to Úzūn Ḥasan in the introduction to his Jawharnāma. However, he did not seem to have a choice in the matter, given that he was requested to do so by Úzūn Ḥasan’s son Khalīl Mīrzā.\(^{225}\)

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\(^{223}\) Ṣhrārī, Kitāb-i diyārbakriyya, pp. 88-89. Cf. Shapur Shababazi, ‘Shiraz i. HISTORY TO 1940’, in EI.,

\(^{224}\) This being said, however, Mīr Ṣadr al-Dīn did dedicate his Ḥāshiyya ‘alā sharh tajrīd al-iṭiqād, completed in 888/1483, to the Ottoman Sultan Bāyazīd II (reg. 886/1481-918/1512) who appears to have held Mīr Ṣadr al-Dīn in high regards. See Muṣlīḥ al-Dīn Lārī, ‘Mīr ʿāt al-adwār wa-mirqāt al-akhbār: faṣl-i dar sharḥ-i ḥāl-i buzurgān-i Khorasān u Māwarā’, in Maʿarif 13 iii (1997), pp. 91-113, at p. 105; Cf. Allī Ṣadrāyī Khuyī, Kitāb-shināsi-i tajrīd al-iṭiqād, p. 85.

\(^{225}\) In the introduction of his Jawharnāma, Mīr Ṣadr al-Dīn refers to Úzūn Ḥasan as the ‘renewer (mujaddīd) of the Ḥanafī faith’ and the ‘promised one of the ninth/fifteenth century’ (see Ṣadr al-Dīn Dashtakī, Jawharnāma, ed. M. Sūṭūdā, Farhān-i Irān zamin 3 (Tehran, 1335 Sh/1956), p. 186). However, as Woods explains, the idea that Úzūn Ḥasan was the ‘renewer’ of the faith had already been in circulation in western Iran at the time; Dawānī was the progenitor of the notion that Úzūn Ḥasan’s reign was sanctioned by divine providence, he dedicated a similar prayer to Úzūn Ḥasan in his Akhlāq-i Jālālī (John Woods, The Aqquyunlu, p. 157). Mīr Ṣadr al-Dīn’s prayer for Úzūn Ḥasan should not, however, be taken at face value; the relationship between patrons and scholars in medieval societies was not always straightforward; for there is nothing to suggest Mīr Ṣadr al-Dīn had any connection the Ḥanafī rite.
After an illustrious military career, Üzün Hasan passed away in 872/1478. His son Khalîl Mîrzâ succeeded him in taking charge. However, Khalîl was soon removed from office by his brother Ya’qûb who led a revolt against Khalîl in the Battle of Khûy. Ya’qûb became the new sultan and reigned from 872/1478 to 895/1490. He faced many internal challenges particularly from the tribal chiefs who had their sights set on the Āq Qûyûnlû throne.

Eager to show his support for scholars, on 8 Dhû l-Qa’da 893/13 October 1488, Ya’qûb issued a farmān which shows that he held Mîr Ṣadr al-Dîn in high regards, as the following reverential formulae demonstrates:

The one with whom Muslim monarchs are pleased; the exemplary model for the scholarly elite; the pride of leading scholars and chief scientists of the age; the support of those imams whose knowledge reaches beyond the horizons; the paragon of the divine philosophers; the erudite one of the scholars of the age; the instructor of the masters of wisdom and the sciences; the recipient of tawfîq from God the eternal refuge; the foremost in the religion [of Islam], the foremost in benefit, and the foremost recipient of [divine] effusion, Muḥammad [Ṣadr al-Dîn Dashtakî]...

This situation was not to last, however. Ya’qûb passed away in 895/1490. His death encouraged several Āq Qûyûnlû chieftains to rise in arms and to contest the throne. As a result, civil wars erupted in many regions of Iran, including Shiraz. For a period order was restored when Ya’qûb’s son, Bâysundar, assumed power. His reign did not last, however. A year later after assuming power, Üzün Hasan’s son Rustâm rebelled against the throne and forcibly removed Bâysundar from office.

In another unexpected twist, Rustâm was killed (probably by Turkish mercenaries) in 902/1496 and was succeeded to the throne by Aḥmad Govde b.

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226 Tîhrânî, Kitâb-i diyârbakriyya, p. 90.

Ughurlu Muḥammad b. Üzün Hasan. In that same year, Mīr Ṣadr al-Dīn wrote his *Risāla fi ithbāt al-bārī wa-ṣifātihi* which he dedicated to sultan Aḥmad.\(^{228}\)

Shortly after, in Rabī’ I 903/October 1497 sultan Aḥmad passed away. His unexpected death triggered further political unrest in Shiraz and other regions of western Iran. In Jumāda I 903/December 1497, Qāsim Beg Purnāk who was the governor of Shiraz at the time - having been appointed to the post by sultan Rustām in 900/1494 - revolted against the throne and declared himself the new sultan of Shiraz.\(^{229}\)

Displeased with the new sultan, the people of Shiraz turned to Mīr Ṣadr al-Dīn for help which leads one to assume that he was a man of political prominence. In addition, turning to Mīr Ṣadr al-Dīn for help during this tumultuous period, would seem to suggest that Mīr Ṣadr al-Dīn was also displeased with the new ruler. In the following days, Mīr Ṣadr al-Dīn began to publically criticize the new sultan for his political misadventures and rebellion against the throne. In response, sultan Qāsim Beg Purnāk lifted the tax exemption on the Madrasa-yi Manṣūriyya.\(^{230}\) The sources remain murky as to what happened next. However, we are told that Mīr Ṣadr al-Dīn organized an uprising against Qāsim Beg Purnāk. Before the uprising could gather momentum, Qāsim Beg Purnāk ordered the arrest of Mīr Ṣadr al-Dīn and placed the latter under house arrest and was guarded by a group of Turcoman soldiers from Diyar Bakr.\(^{231}\) On the 12 Ramāḍān 903/9 May 1498 Qāsim Beg Purnāk ordered the execution of Mīr Ṣadr al-Dīn. Interestingly, Ghiyāth al-Dīn describes his

\(^{228}\) See §A.2.1 in Appendix A.


\(^{230}\) Fasāyī, *Fārs-nāma*, vol. 1, p. 86.

father’s killers as the ‘treacherous disbelievers and followers of Yazīd’ (fajara kafara aʿwān Yazīd), clearly hinting that his father suffered the same fate as Ḫūsayn b. ‘Alī who was killed rather brutally by the armies of the Umayyad caliph Yazīd b. Muʿāwiya. Mīr Ṣadr al-Dīn’s body was later moved from his house and buried in the Madrasa-yi Manṣūriyya where his mausoleum remains today. In later biographical literature, he is sometimes described as al-ṣadr al-shahīd.  

1.4: Mīr Ṣadr al-Dīn and Shiʿism

The question of Mīr Ṣadr al-Dīn and his connection to Shiʿism has rarely been addressed with any degree of seriousness in modern scholarship, particularly in those works written in the European languages, which have failed to add much to what we already know. Rula Abisaab, for example, claims that the Dashtakī family was renowned for its attachment to Sunnism during the Safavid period, yet her claim appears to have been based on a misreading of an anecdote cited by Khwānsārī in his Rawdāt al-jannāt. Similarly, John Cooper asserts without proof that Mīr Ṣadr al-Dīn was a Sunni philosopher who belonged to the Shafiʿi rite. More recently, Reza Pourjavady, in his study of Maḥmūd Nayrizī, devotes a brief discussion on the confessional identity of Mīr Ṣadr al-Dīn and his son, Ghiyāth al-

233 Fasāyī, Fārs-nāma, vol. 1, p. 86.
234 Abisaab, Converting Persia, p. 18.
235 Cooper, ‘From al-Ṭūsī to the School of Iṣfahān’, in History of Islamic Philosophy, vol. 1, pp. 592-593, fn. 41.
Dīn. Pourjavady asserts on more than one occasion that the Dashtakīs were a prominent sayyid family of well known Zaydi origins. However, he does not cite any evidence to substantiate this claim.²³⁶ It is true that the Dashtakī family traced their lineage back to Zayd b. ʿAlī, the eponymous founder of Zaydism, but ancestral descent does not necessarily equate to confessional attachment. To claim otherwise does not qualify as sufficient proof; it is at best an inaccurate inference.

To date, two modern scholars, to the best of my knowledge, have recognized Mīr Ṣadr al-Dīn as Shiʿi. First, Kākāyī, who claims that the Dashtakī family were Shiʿi but kept their faith secret through the practice of taqiyya since the Ilkhanid times. This was especially true for Dashtakī family members who led public lives as teachers and jurists.²³⁷ Kākāyī explains that in the late Timurid period the local population of Shiraz, where Mīr Ṣadr lived all his life, was particularly hostile towards Shiʿi scholars, and as such sectarian tensions caused the Dashtakīs to conceal their faith. Kākāyī does not, however, cite any historical sources or anecdotal examples to support this claim.²³⁸ If Mīr Ṣadr al-Dīn had indeed belonged to the Shiʿi tradition, his writings would surely provide us with some clues about his confessional belonging. Second, Corbin in an unsupported declaration recognizes Mīr Ṣadr al-Dīn as ‘an eminent Shiite thinker of the ninth/fifteenth century’.²³⁹ But Corbin does not bring any internal or external evidence to substantiate this assertion.

Thus of the very few studies on the life of Mīr Ṣadr al-Dīn, modern

²³⁶ Pourjavady, Philosophy in Early Safavid Iran, p. 13.

²³⁷ On some of these thinkers who lived during the said period, see ʿAbd al-Jalīl Qazvīnī, Kitāb al-naqḍ, ed. Mīr Jalāl al-Dīn Muhaddith (Tehran, 1385 Sh/2006), pp. 222-227.

²³⁸ Ghiyāth al-Dīn Mansūr Dashtakī va falsafa-i ʿirfān, p. 35ff.

scholarship remains divided on his confessional affiliation. Indeed an examination of Mīr Ṣadr al-Dīn’s confessional identity will provide us with new insights into the religious and intellectual context in which philosophical and theological writings were composed in the late Timurid period. It will certainly contribute to our growing knowledge of the already mentioned obscure period; furthermore, such study will shed light on the philosophical activity in western Iran during the little-known transitory era between the decline of the Timurids and the rise of the Safavids.

Given the scantiness of Mīr Ṣadr al-Dīn’s writings, a fuller exposition of his confessional identity could be undertaken only when critical editions of his works are available. At this stage, however, the evidence, both contemporary and later, points to the fact that he was Shi’i. In what follows next we examine the contemporary evidence first followed by the later evidence.

**Internal contemporary evidence**

We will start with the internal contemporary evidence (that is, the writings of Mīr Ṣadr al-Dīn himself). There is nothing in his writings to suggest that Mīr Ṣadr al-Dīn was a Sunni. He does not praise the companions (ṣaḥāba) of Muḥammad, nor does he in fact mention them much, except in the case of ʿAlī. Unlike so many of the so-called purveyors of ʿAlid-loyalism, who rarely took the Shi’i Imāms as sources of intellectual authorities, Mīr Ṣadr al-Dīn placed the Imāms on a higher pedestal than any other religious figures. His writings are peppered with traditions reputedly uttered by the Shi’i Imāms, including reports found in the major canons of Twelver Shi’ism. In fact he seems to consider the Shi’i Imāms as sources of ethical, philosophical, and theological inspiration. He treats the Imāms with far more
reverence than he does for any other historical figure from the formative period.

For instance, in his Risāla fī ithbāt al-bārī, Mīr Ṣadr al-Dīn reserves profuse praises for fifth Shi’ī Imām Muḥammad al-Bāqir. After surveying the earlier theological views on the subject of the divine attributes, including opinions articulated by the Ash’aris and Mu’tazilis, Mīr Ṣadr al-Dīn says the correct view is that which stems from ‘the reservoirs of prophethood and sanctity’ (mawārid al-nubuwwa wa-l-walāya).²⁴⁰ Later in the same section, he prefixes a report of Muḥammad al-Bāqir with the following reverential formula, ‘and how befitting is the saying of that person from the Household of the Prophethood, sanctity, and illumination’ (wa-nī ma-qāla wāḥidun min ahl bayt al-nubuwwa wa-l-walāya wa-l-īshrāq).²⁴¹ Similarly, in the prologue of his glosses upon Qūshchī’s commentary on Ṣūsī’s Tajrīd, Mīr Ṣadr al-Dīn describes the Ahl al-bayt (household of Muḥammad) as the people of ‘mystical knowledge’ (al-‘urafā’) and ‘the poles of heaven’ (aqtāb al-samā’).²⁴²

Another instance that seems to indicate a Shi’ī identity on the part of Mīr Ṣadr al-Dīn is when he argues that the ahl al-bayt are superior (aṣfḍal) to the šaḥāba. Commenting on the statement by Qūshchī in the Sharḥ which reads: ‘and peace and blessings be upon his [i.e. Muḥammad] progeny (ālihi) and companions (aṣḥābihi), who alone deserve praises...’ (wa-’alā ālihi wa-aṣḥābihi al-ladhīn khuṣṣū bi’l-tajrīd wa-l-tafrīd), Mīr Ṣadr al-Dīn explains that Dawānī is wrong to assume that the praises offered in this statement refer exclusively to the companions. According to Mīr Ṣadr

²⁴² Dashtakī, Ḥāshiya ‘alā sharḥ tajrīd al-‘ītiqād, Istanbul, Fāṭih Library, MS 3025, fol. 1b. I am grateful to Reza Pourjavady for sending me a copy of this manuscript.
al-Dīn, the question of who deserves more praise, the ahl al-bayt or the šaḥāba, is an old one. He explains that Muslim scholars disagree over the issue of who is the best person after Muḥammad. He explains that the Sunnis claim it is Abū Bakr, while the Shi‘as say it is ‘Alī. After a lengthy discussion, Mīr Ṣadr al-Dīn offers a view which agrees with position of the Shi‘as. In his view it is the ahl al-bayt, not the šaḥāba, who deserve to be the recipients of profuse praises.243

**External contemporary evidence**

Coupled with the internal contemporary evidence, there is also external contemporary evidence to support the plausibility of Mīr Ṣadr al-Dīn being Shi‘i. It is to this evidence that we now turn.

As mentioned already, in Muḥarram 879/May 1474 the Qarā Qūyūnlū prince Yūsūf offered Mīr Ṣadr al-Dīn a teaching post at the Shāh-i Chirāgh. The offer, however, came with the following two provisos.244 First, Mīr Ṣadr al-Dīn was required to build irrigation canals in the two villages of Shiraz that were owned by the Qarā Qūyūnlū clan, namely Khusraw-ābād and Turkamān-ābād, which were used primarily for farming.245 Second, the mutawallī (caretaker), namely Mīr Ṣadr al-Dīn, was required to dedicate four out of seven days in the week to the teaching of

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243 Dashtakī, Ḥāshiya ‘alā sharḥ tajrīd al-iʿtiqād, fols. 2a-6a.

244 Regarding the issue of patronage in the post-classical period, Sonja Brentjes observes, ‘Courtly patronage of ancient sciences in the post-classical period was characterised by two kinds of relationships to the classical period. On the one hand, it was institutionally similar to that of the classical period; on the other, it differed in two respects profoundly from the previous period. It was institutionally similar insofar as it took place first and foremost as a relationship between individuals. Rulers supported scholars, not disciplines, even if certain forms used for installing and legalizing patronage such as waqf (religious donation) apply an abstract, disciplinary rhetoric’. See Sonja Brentjes, ‘Courtly Patronage of the Ancient Sciences in Post-Classical Islamic Societies’, in al-Qanṭara xxix 2 (2008), pp. 403-436.

the following subjects: 1) fiqh; 2) hadīth; 3) tafsīr; 4) ʿilm al-kalām; and 5) Arabic grammar.246

In the prologue of the waqṭnāma prince Yūsuf is presented as a devout Shiʿi patron who is committed to the teachings of the Shiʿi Imāms. The prologue reads:

...The protector of Islam and faith, the one who calls people to accept the most noble of religions (dāʿī al-khalq ilā ashrāf al-adiyān), the one who seeks support from the providence of the all-merciful, all-compassionate, Abū Naṣr Yūsuf...may he follow the example of the holy progeny of Muṣṭafā [i.e. Muḥammad], Murtaḍā [i.e. ‘Alī], and Zahrāʾ [i.e. Fāṭima], peace be upon them all. He [i.e. Yūsuf] seeks to come closer [to God] by serving the members of the Ahl al-bayt, the progeny of the one who strikes with the Dḥū al-Fiqār [i.e. ‘Alī]...may he [Yūsuf] find protection from the fire [of hell] through this holy progeny. 247

In other passages in the waqṭnāma, Mīr Ṣadr al-Dīn is lavished with honorifics that seem to suggest his patron considered him to be a co-religionist who followed the Shiʿi tradition too. For instance, prince Yūsuf describes Mīr Ṣadr al-Dīn as:

The fruit from the lofty tree of prophecy and Imamate (farʿ-i dawḥa-yi nubuvvat va imāmat), the fruit from the tree of nobility and generosity, the qibla of the learned scholars, the manifestation of the Word of God, the renewer of the faith in the ninth [fifteenth] century...the proof of Islam and Muslims, the master of all the philosophers and divine-thinkers, the foremost and erudite of the men of God, the seal of authors, the grand teacher of mujtahids, the one who laid the foundations for the science of ʿusūl, the progenitor of the rational and transmitted sciences [in Shiraz], the eleventh intellect, amīr ṣadr al-sharṭ wa-l-ḥaqīqa wa-l-ṭfāda wa-l-hidāya wa-l-dunyā wa-l-dīn, Abū l-Maʿālī Muḥammad [Ṣadr al-Dīn Dashtak]...248

Elsewhere, prince Yūsuf refers to Mīr Ṣadr al-Dīn and his son Ghiyāth al-Dīn as 'the defenders and propagators of the teachings of the stars of guidance and tree of sanctity (nujūm-i samāvāt-i hidāyat va arshād va asmār-i ashjār-i vilāyat).249 Further indication that Mīr Ṣadr al-Dīn was considered Shiʿi by his contemporaries is attested in an addendum to the second condition of the waqtnām. Mīr Ṣadr al-Dīn

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was instructed by prince Yūsuf to dedicate four days per week teaching shari'a-centric subjects and to give preference to hadīths reports by the Prophet and the Shi'i Imāms. The relevant passage in the waqfna'ma reads:

And [the other condition is that] the aforementioned mutawallī [i.e. Mīr Ṣadr al-Dīn] must teach in the holy shrine [of Shāh-i Chirāgh] and is to spend [money] on his teaching however he sees fit. Four days in the week must be dedicated to the teaching of legal sciences (ʿulām-i shar'iyya), including [the teaching of] hadīth, Qur'anic exegesis (tafsīr), ethical exhortation (va'z va tadhkīr), theology (ʿilm-i kalām), [and] Arabic sciences (ʿulām-i 'arabiyyat). These must include also the hadīths reported by the Master of Messengers and he [i.e. Mīr Ṣadr al-Dīn] must propagate the teachings that stem from the holy progeny, especially the infallible Imāms (va intiqād aḥādīth-i hazrat-i seyyid-i mursalin-i va nasr-i āsār az hazrāt-i 'a imma-yi ahl-bayt tāhirin va khusūṣan ma'sūmīn). This is much preferred by us.250

What the above seems to suggest is that when the prince Yūsuf required someone whose commitment to Shi'ism is certain to take up the post of teaching, he turned to no other person but Mīr Ṣadr al-Dīn, suggesting that the latter was noted for his adherence to Shi'ism. That the Qarā Qūyūnlū clan was indeed Shi'i can be seen especially in the figure of Jahān Shāh, the leader of the clan between 842/1438-872/1467, who was often accused by his enemies of upholding 'heretical' Shi'i beliefs. In fact, there is some evidence to suggest that the Qarā Qūyūnlūs flirted with Twelver Shi'ism in the middle decades of the ninth/fifteenth century. It said that Aspand, Jahān Shāh’s brother, when governor of Baghdad (circa 836-848/1433-1445), introduced Twelver Shi'ism as the official religion of the region.251 Similarly, one of the nephews of Jahān Shāh, who fled from Hamadan to India in 883/1478, founded a Shi'a dynasty in Golkonda.252

To recapitulate, there is thus some internal and external contemporary evidence to suggest that Mīr Ṣadr al-Dīn was Shi'i. In what follows next we will look

250 ‘Waqfna’má’, in Muṣannafat, vol. 1, p. 84.
at later evidence which will help us shed light on our thinker’s confessional identity.

**Evidence of later provenance I**

In the foregoing we saw that Mīr Ṣadr al-Dīn was instructed to to teach Shi’i ḥadīth. The details regarding specific texts he used are unknown, however. We find out from later sources the name of at least one text Mīr Ṣadr al-Dīn taught, though it is not clear whether he did so at Shāh-i Chirāgh or the Madrasa-yi Maṇṣūriyya.253

This text is *Fiqh al-Riḍā*, a well-known Shi’i text made up of legal injunctions. But why did Mīr Ṣadr al-Dīn single out this particular text? According to Ṣadr al-Dīn IV we learn that the Dashtakīs preferred this text because the person who compiled it, namely al-Sakkīn, was their ancestor. For centuries it passed from one generation of Dashtakīs to another.254 Descendants of the Dashtakīs who went on to become notable Shi’i thinkers, such as ‘Alī Khān Maṇdani, author of *al-Darajat al-razi’*a, would later confirm this pedagogical trend.255 If these later sources are to be believed, we would have, then, taken another major step in pin-pointing Mīr Ṣadr al-Dīn’s sectarian identity, especially since his involvement in teaching a major Shi’i canon is indicative of an actual affiliation to the tradition.

In another piece of evidence Mīr Ṣadr al-Dīn appears as part of a well-established chain of Shi’i narrators. Later authors count him as one of the transmitters of the Night Journey tradition as it transmitted in the Shi’i ḥadīth

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The *matn* of this particular report is markedly Shi‘i; it ascribes to ‘Alī various divinely derived and luminous qualities, while at the same time referring to him as the *mażhar*, or manifestation, of divine light.\(^{257}\) Again, if these sources are accurate, then they do indeed suggest that Mīr Ṣadr al-Dīn did feel at home with the overtly Shi‘i nature of the content of the said *ḥadīth*; he could have chosen not to disseminate such ideas had he disagreed with them.

Another piece of evidence of later provenance presents Mīr Ṣadr al-Dīn as part of a long, established line of Shi‘i *muḥaddithūn*. It is to be found in the closing remarks of the *ijāza* of Ṣadr al-Dīn IV to his pupil Yazdī. Ṣadr al-Dīn IV writes:

> I have permitted him [i.e., Sayyid ‘Alī Yazdī] to narrate those traditions which are reported through the *ṭūraq* of the Ahl al-bayt, peace be upon them, such as the book of *al-Kāfī*, the two books of *al-Tahdīḥ* and *al-İstibṣār*, the book of *Man lā yahduruhu al-faqīh*, and the two books of *al-ʿAmāli*. He [Yazdī] may report these traditions with the following prefixation: ‘It has been reported to me by Abū Naṣr Muḥammad b. Maṣūr b. Muḥammad al-Ḥasanī al-Ḥusaynī al-Daṣḥakī [i.e. Ṣadr al-Dīn IV] who reported from his teachers (*mashāyikh*) via the following chain of transmission’...\(^{258}\)

Those *mashāyikh* we find out in the next passage are Ghiyāth al-Dīn, who received his license to transmit Shi‘i *ḥadīths* from his father, Mīr Ṣadr al-Dīn, who received it from his uncle, Niẓām al-Dīn Daṣhtakī. This pedagogical line is confirmed by Ṣadr al-Dīn IV, who writes:

> And I narrate from my father and my grandfather [i.e. Mīr Ṣadr al-Dīn] who in turn narrates from his father, who narrates from his father, who narrates from his father, who narrates from his father, who narrates from al-Shaykh al-Muţahdīdī al-ʿAllāma Abī Maṣūr al-Ḥasanī b. Yūṣuf b. ‘Alī b. al-Muţahhār al-Ḥillī, who narrates from his father, who narrates from Abī Fāraǧ al-Nīlī, who narrates from al-Shaykh al-Muftīdī, who narrates from al-Ghāḏāʾīrī, who narrates from al-Tālʾabkarī, who narrates from Humām, who narrates from Ibn Zakariyya al-BAṣrī, who narrates from Ṣuḥayb b. Ṣabbād, who narrates from his father Ṣabbād, who narrates from our master (mawlāna) al-Ḥumām al-Ṣādiq, peace be upon him.”...\(^{259}\)


\(^{258}\) See ‘*ijāza*’, in *Muṣannafat*, vol. 1, p. 61.

\(^{259}\) See ‘*ijāza*’, in *Muṣannafat*, vol. 1, p. 61.
The Shi‘i connotations of this pedagogical chain are interesting. The scholarly lineage, of which Mīr Ṣadr al-Dīn is part, further adds to our suspicion that he was in all probability Shi‘ī; for such connection to the Shi‘ī faith on the part of our philosopher seem to go beyond the pietistic devotion to the ahl al-bayt that is oftentimes associated with post-Mongol pro-‘Alid-loyalism.260

Evidence of later provenance II

The earliest biography of Mīr Ṣadr al-Dīn was written by his son Ghiyāth al-Dīn. It is included as an appendix to the latter’s Kashf al-ḥaqāʾiq al-Muḥammadiyya. In it Ghiyāth al-Dīn describes his father as a descendant of the ‘household of prophethood and sanctity’ (kāna min ahl bayt al-nubuwwa wa-l-walāya).261 Similarly, we are told that Mīr Ṣadr al-Dīn’s mother was a descendant of the ‘household of sanctity’.262 Such references to walāya provide us with a clear indication that Ghiyāth al-Dīn took pride in the fact that his father was a descendant of ‘Ali, ‘the gate of the city of wisdom’ (bāb madīnak al-‘ilm).263 It could be read as an indication of the family’s confessional loyalties. Indeed the concept of walāya in Islamic thought is a leitmotif that finds its most profound expression in the writings of Shi‘i and Sufi


authors; however, its efflorescence took place in Shi’i circles. The author of Ṭarāʾiq al-ḥaqāʾiq, the Ni’matullāhī Sufi Maʾṣūm ʿAlī Shāh Shīrāzī (d. 1344/1926), argued that the efflorescence of the concept of walāya took place first in the Shiʾi circles of the companions of the Imāms beginning in the time of ʿAlī, who instructed Kumayl b. Ziyād, among others, in the esoteric teachings of the faith. And since neither Mīr Ṣadr al-Dīn nor Ghiyāth al-Dīn showed much interest in Sufism, it is more likely that the latter had the Shiʾi notion of walāya in mind when he spoke of his father.

In the same biography we are also told by Ghiyāth al-Dīn that his father performed the obligatory hajj pilgrimage on more than one occasion and made several trips to visit (ziyāra) the tombs of the Imāms. Ghiyāth al-Dīn writes:

He was a pious man who prayed much. He also performed the hajj to the Sacred House of God (bayt Allāh al-ḥarām) and visited the Prophet and the Imāms (wa-ziyārat al-nabbī wa-l-ʿimma alayhim al-salām).

That Mīr Ṣadr al-Dīn was Shiʾi further attested by an incidental remarks by Mīr Fakhr al-Dīn Sammākī (d. 980/1572 or 984/1576), one of Ghiyāth al-Dīn’s students, who, writing in his commentary on the Throne Verse (āyat al-kursī) refers to Mīr Ṣadr al-Dīn as one the scholars of the ’Ithnāʾ ashariyya’ and as someone who ‘defeated the Ashʾari theologians’. Given that Sammākī was a near contemporary of Mīr Ṣadr al-Dīn, his claims cannot be ignored or brushed aside as posthumous appropriation. The reference to Ithnāʾ asharism is quite interesting; for according to

264 For an excellent study on the relationship between Sufism and Shiʿism and the efflorescence of the concept of walāya in these two traditions, see Muṣṭafā Kamāl al-Shaybī, al-Ṣila bayn al-tawṣīwwaf wa-l-tashayyuʾ (Beirut, 1982), p. 409ff.


manuscript evidence, Mīr Ṣadr al-Dīn is known to have authored a Persian work on the Twelve Imāms.\textsuperscript{268}

**Evidence of later provenance III**

Long ago, the famous historian of Islam William Muir (d. 1905) observed:

The biographer of Mahomet continually runs the risk of substituting for the realities of history some puerile fancy or extravagant invention. In striving to avoid this danger he is exposed to the opposite peril of rejecting as pious fabrications what may in reality be important historical facts.\textsuperscript{269}

What is true of early Islamic figures is equally true, *mutatis mutandis*, of medieval figures like Mīr Ṣadr al-Dīn. If we read all the later sources critically, then we have to dismiss the claims that he was Shiʿi as pious fabrications by posterity. The danger of this, however, is that in doing so we may inadvertently omit important historical facts. Indeed all the medieval biographical dictionaries agree that Mīr Ṣadr al-Dīn was Shiʿi. The problem lies elsewhere, however. According to the sources, the Dashtakī family kept their Shiʿi faith secret for centuries, to the extent that some family members engaged in the teaching of Sunni *kālām* and *fiqh* so as not to make their Shiʿi identity apparent. The situation was reversed when, according to Shushtarī, Prophet Muḥammad appeared to Mīr Ṣadr al-Dīn in a dream and told him to stop teaching Sunni *ḥadīth* since all reports transmitted by Sunni narrators are likely to be fabrications and lies.\textsuperscript{270}

As the story continues, we learn that Prophet Muḥammad was irked by the

\textsuperscript{268} See Appendix A.


fact that his descendants were teaching dubious *ḥadīth.*²⁷¹ In order to remedy the situation, the Prophet then instructed Mīr Ṣadr al-Dīn to focus instead on those philosophical and theological traditions articulated by Shi’i authors, to whom the Prophet supposedly refers as *ahl al-baṣīra.*²⁷² Regardless of the fantastical nature of this account, which is likely to be a pious fabrication or even perhaps a Shi’i *Heilsgeschichte,* it does nevertheless make an interesting point; it tells us, at the very least, that some Safavid era historians were convinced Mīr Ṣadr al-Dīn and the Dashtakī family belonged to the Shi’i tradition. That was certainly how the later Safavid and Qajar historians received Mīr Ṣadr al-Dīn. These accounts are in all probability laboured exaggerations of a more straightforward fact, namely that Mīr Ṣadr was Shi’i.

1.5: Mīr Ṣadr al-Dīn’s teachers

Aside from his sojourns in Mecca, to perform the ḥajj, and in Iraq, to visit the ʿatabāt, Mīr Ṣadr al-Dīn lived all his life in Shiraz. Hence, it was there where he received his training in the Islamic sciences. In the preliminary stages, which every student of knowledge must undertake before moving on to more advanced studies, he was tutored, at an early age, by his father, Sayyid Mīr Ghiyāth al-Dīn, and his paternal uncle, Sayyid Niẓām al-Dīn Aḥmad, focusing on Arabic and *ḥadīth* and other subjects that fall under the category of the transmitted sciences.

Under his father and uncle he studied the Shi’i *ḥadīth* canons, including *al-Kāfī,* the *Tahdhiḥ* and the *Istibṣār* of Shaykh Abū Ja’far al-Ṭūsī (d. 460/1067), and the

²⁷¹ Khwānsārī, Rawḍāt, vol. 5, p. 189.

Fiqh al-Riḍā, compiled by Aḥmad al-Sakkīn.273 Based on the testimony of his grandson, Ṣadr al-Dīn IV, Mīr Ṣadr al-Dīn received a licence to teach and transmit the Fiqh al-Riḍā from his uncle, who was known by his contemporaries as sulṭān al-muḥaddithīn.274 Moreover, the same uncle issued him with a licence to transmit reports (akhbār) from the Shiʿī hadīth sources through a line of scholarly authorities that can be traced back to Ḥillī and Muḥīḍ.275

With his cousin, Sayyid Majd al-Dīn al-Ḥaqq Ḥabīb Allāh Dashtakī, about whom little is known, except that he was highly regarded as an authority in the transmitted sciences, he studied fiqh and adabīyāt (belle lettres), and may have been introduced to some philosophical subjects like theology, as is indicated by Ghiyāth al-Dīn.276 Many members of the Dashtakī family appeared to have been renowned teachers in Islamic sciences in Shiraz. Another Dashtakī with whom Mīr Ṣadr al-Dīn was contemporaneous, and who was also noted for his learning, is Sayyid Aṣīl al-Dīn ‘Abd Allāh al-Ḥusaynī Dashtakī (d. 840/1436). It is unlikely that he was one of Mīr Ṣadr al-Dīn’s teachers, however.277 He was born in Shiraz but lived most of his life in Herat.278

This much we know about Mīr Ṣadr al-Dīn’s initial education in the Islamic

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275 This is based on the statement in the jāzā of his grandson Ṣadr al-Dīn IV who says, thuma innī arwī ‘an jaddī ‘an abīh ‘an abīh ‘an abīh ‘an abīh ‘an al-shaykh al-ʿallāma al-Ḥillī ‘an abīh ‘an al-shaykh al-Al-Mufīd [and I narrate on the authority of my grandfather, who narrates on the authority of his father, who narrates on the authority of his father, who narrates on the authority of his father, who narrates on the authority of his father, who narrates on the authority of his father, who narrates on the authority of his father].
277 At the time of his death, Mīr Ṣadr al-Dīn was ten years old.
278 He is known to have authored a work on the biography of the Prophet called Duraj al-durrar fī aḥwāl sayyid al-bashar. See Fāṣyāṭ, Fārs-nāma, vol. 2, p. 1057.
His son’s biography seems to indicate that Mīr Ṣadr al-Dīn acted as a local mujtahid in Shiraz soon after 866/1461.²⁸⁰ We also know, for example, that he issued a legal pronouncement against the playing of chess, though he did consider the game lawful before that, further indication that he resorted to ʿijtihād.²⁸¹ Similarly, he appears also to have been thoroughly familiar with Sunni fiqh and is known to have authored two works in the discipline, one on Shafiʿi fiqh, and another on Shafiʿi legal methodology.²⁸²

²⁷⁹ He had another son, Sayyid Maḥmūd al-Dīn Dashtakī, about whom we know nothing. As for his wife, the sources do not provide us with any biographical information about her.

²⁸⁰ Speaking about his father’s abilities in fiqh, Ghiyāth al-Dīn writes, wa-lam yabluḥ murtabatu ḍabada min ahl zamānīhi [No one from his era was capable of reaching his (scholarly) rank]. See Dashtakī, ‘Kashf al-ḥaqāʾiq’, in Muṣannafāt, vol. 2, p. 985.

²⁸¹ Dashtakī, ‘Kashf al-ḥaqāʾiq’, in Muṣannafāt, vol. 2, p. 985. Ghiyāth al-Dīn writes, wa-kāna yuḥṣin laʿb al-shatrānī wa-yuḫīr minhā mā aʿād aḥībāʾihi wa-tarākahā ākhirān dḥāḥibi lā ʿaḥramihi [he played chess well, preferring to play with his loved ones; but eventually he stopped playing, believing that the game was (legally) impressive].

²⁸² Dashtakī, ‘Kashf al-ḥaqāʾiq’, in Muṣannafāt, vol. 2, p. 984. See the list of his works in Mīr Khvānd, Ḥabīb al-sīyār, vol. 4, p. 603; Shushtarī, Majālis al-muʿminīn, vol. 2, p. 229-230. According to Shushtarī this work was written in the form of a scholia (taʾlīqāt) upon an unknown Shafiʿi work called Tayṣīr al-ṭafḥ. Kākāyi, however, identifies the work as Tayṣīr al-waṣūl ilā fāmī al-uṣūl min ḍaḥāth al-raṣūl; this seems highly implausible given that its author,ʿAbd al-Ḥaḥmān b.ʿAll, known as al-Shaybānī al-Shāfīʿī, died in 943/1537, forty years after Mīr Ṣadr al-Dīn passed away. A more plausible explanation is that the work in question is Tayṣīr al-waṣūl ilā minḥāj al-uṣūl, written by Abū Muḥammad al-Qāhirī al-Shāfīʿī, commonly known as Ibn Imām al-Kāmilīyya, who died in 874/1470. Cf. Appendix A.

The title of this work is Ḥashīyaʿ al-ʿlā Sharḥ mukhtaṣar al-uṣūl (Glosses on the Commentary of The Abridged Principles). These are sets of glosses upon Ijī’s commentary on Ibn al-Hājīb’s Mukhtaṣar muntahā al-waṣūl wa-l-amal fī ilmey al-uṣūl wa-l-jadal, a celebrated work on Shafiʿī legal theory. Ibn al-Hājīb (d. 646/1249) was a prolific jurist and grammarian. The Mukhtaṣar has been the subject of numerous glosses, some of which began in the author’s lifetime, and include later commentaries by such scholars as Ḥillī and Ijī. The commentary of Ijī was hugely popular in the Islamicate world and drew no fewer than thirty glosses, some of which were written by Taftāzhānī, Jurjānī, Dawānī, and our philosopher, Mīr Ṣadr al-Dīn. For a list of commentaries, glosses, and super-glosses, see the editor’s introduction in Ibn al-Hājīb, Mukhtaṣar, ed. Nādhir Ḥamādū (Beirut, 1427 Ḥ/2006), pp. 92-104.
A versatile thinker who authored works in the rational and transmitted sciences, Mīr Ṣadr al-Dīn received his training in Qur’anic exegesis under the guidance of his uncle, Sayyid Niẓām al-Dīn, known also as sultān al-mufassirīn. Although it is not clear which works of tafsīr he studied, based on the testimony of his grandson Ṣadr al-Dīn IV, however, it would appear that attended classes by his uncle on the famous work of Majma‘ al-bayān by the Imāmī exegete Faḍl b. Hasan al-Ṭabrisī (d. 548/1153).

As for the rational sciences, especially kalām, Mīr Ṣadr al-Dīn was introduced to the works of Ghazālī, Rāzī, Ṭūsī, and Ḥillī. There, Qawām al-Dīn Muḥammad al-Kurbālī appears to have been his most important teacher. Supposedly, Kurbālī was one of the Jurjānī’s students in Shiraz. In some medieval sources such as Ḥabīb al-siyar his name appears as Kulbārī. However, Ghiyāth al-Dīn, a contemporary of his, refers to him as ‘al-Kurbālī’, presumably the correct version. The relationship between Kurbālī and his supposed student, Mīr Ṣadr al-Dīn, was tense, sometimes acrimonious, according to Ghiyāth al-Dīn, who informs us that his father and Kurbālī debated on theological matters in public. According to Ghiyāth al-Dīn, Kurbālī was chiefly a mutakallim who was critical of Avicennan philosophy, someone who did not take well to attempts by Mīr Ṣadr al-Dīn to revive the Avicennan tradition and to purify it, in Ghiyāth al-Dīn’s words, of Ash‘ari contaminations.

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283 See ‘ijāza’, in Muṣannafūt, vol. 1, p. 70.

284 Following a well-known literary antecedent, Mīr Ṣadr al-Dīn is also known to have written a set of glosses on Tafsīr al-Zamakhsharī, written by the Muʿtazilī exegete Abū l-Qāsim al-Zamakhsharī (d. 537/1143). See §A.2.3 in Appendix A.

285 Mīr Khvānd, Ḥabīb al-siyar, vol. 4, p. 603. Kākāyī informs us that Kurbālī is located near Zarqān, a town on the outskirts of Shiraz. See Ghiyāth al-Dīn Maṣṣūr Dashtakī va falsafa-ī irfān, p. 35. As mentioned before, Kurbālī was one of Dawānī’s teachers. See Mīr Khvānd, Ḥabīb al-siyar, vol. 4, pp. 603–604.

On one occasion in his Risāla, Mīr Ṣadr al-Dīn accuses Kurbālī and his teacher Jurjānī of engaging in sophistry and qarāmaṭā. As we will see in the next chapter, this aversion to Ashʿarī kalām became one of the defining features of Mīr Ṣadr al-Dīn’s thought, as well as that of his circle in Shiraz.

Mīr Ṣadr al-Dīn studied logic and philosophy, including the Ishārāt and the Tajrīd with the enigmatic figure of Sayyid Muslim al-Fārsī, about whom nothing is known, not even the date of his death. However, we know that Fārsī belonged to a family of philosophers who traced their pedagogical lineage back to Avicenna himself. This is the same lineage to which Mīr Ṣadr al-Dīn supposedly belonged, as the following shows:


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287 Dashtakī, ‘Kashf al-ḥaqāʾiq’, in Muṣannafāt, vol. 2, p. 983. In the parlance of medieval Muslim polemics, those who advance ‘specious arguments’ are said, according to their opponents, to engage in sophistry, particularly when making arguments pertinent to the rational sciences; while those who engage in ‘superficial reasoning’ are accused of qarāmaṭa, particularly when the argument is connected to the transmitted sciences. Both terms are used pejoratively (al-qarāmaṭa fi’l-samʿ iyyāt wa’l-safṣaṭa fi’l-aqāliyyāt). The latter term is derived from al-qarāmīṭa (Qarmatians), an esoteric and antimonian Ismāʿīlī sect. On this distinction, see Ibn Taymiyya, Minhāj al-sunna al-nabawīya fi naqḍ kalām al-shīʿa wa-l-qadariyya (Riyadh, 2001), vo. 1, pp. 218, 276, 286.

288 There is no indication in the sources that Taqī al-Dīn al-Fārsī, one of Ghiyāth al-Dīn’s students, was related to Sayyid Muslim Fārsī.

289 Šīrānī suggests that Nayshābūrī was the renowned Sufi poet Farīd al-Dīn al-ʿAttār (d. 589/1190). See Šīrānī, Tabaqāt a lām al-shīʿa, vol. 3, p. 179. However, this claim is refuted by Ahmed al-Rahim, who points out that ʿAttār died before Ṭūsī arrived in Nishāpūr. See Rahim, The Creation of Philosophical Tradition, p. 19, fn. 49.
As already mentioned, Mīr Šadr al-Dīn appears to have been thoroughly familiar with Fārābī’s writings, particularly the pseudo-work *Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikma*, which he cites often. It is not known with whom he studied the works of the Second Master, since Fārābī did not seem to have had an impact upon the intellectual scene in Shiraz; a more likely explanation is that insofar as Farabian philosophy was concerned, Mīr Šadr al-Dīn, like Avicenna, was an autodidact.

He also appears to have been self-taught in the esoteric subjects, such as *ʿilm al-ḥurūf* and *ʿilm al-firāsa* (physiognomy). His apparent interest in the occult is indeed interesting, since it opens new vistas to the spiritual and esoteric currents in Shiraz in the late Timurid period, an area of research which has received little attention in modern scholarship, though recent studies have briefly examined the occult and esoteric writings of his famous rival Dawānī.

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290 On the controversy surrounding his death date, see Rahim, *The Creation of Philosophical Tradition*, pp. 14-17.

291 For discussion on the *khurasani*-isnad and its historicity, see Rahim, *The Creation of Philosophical Tradition*, pp. 12-23.


293 Based on the extensive citations and proof-texts, there is good reason to believe that Mīr Šadr al-Dīn was in the possession of a great many of Fārābī’s philosophical writings.

294 He is known to have composed a work on this subject entitled *Risāla fi taḥqīq ʿilm al-ḥurūf*, which, according Kākāyī, is lost. However, Ţīhrānī discusses an extant copy in the ‘Nayrīzī Codex’ (*Majmuʿ at-i Nayrīzī*), seen in the personal library of Sayyid Naṣr Allāh Taqawī in Tehran. There, Nayrīzī, a student of Mīr Šadr al-Dīn, attributes this work to his teacher; however, Nayrīzī refers to it with a variant title, namely, *Risāla fi maʿna al-ḥaraf*. See Ţīhrānī, *al-Dhāriʿ al-aʿ*., vol. 21, p. 274.

1.6: Mīr Ṣadr al-Dīn’s students

Monographs on the intellectual and religious life in Shiraz in the late Timurid and early Safavid period remain a desideratum. This period marks one of the most important epochs in the intellectual history of Islam, an era which witnessed the transformation of the religio-political milieu from Sunni domination into one in which Shi’ism pervaded so much of the intellectual and religious life.

It is tempting therefore to assume that this transformation was a major factor which helped popularize the ideas of Mīr Ṣadr al-Dīn in the Safavid Empire, especially since he and his circle where noted for their Shi’i attachment, and whereas Dawānī and his were associated with Sunnism. A detailed study of the legacy of Mīr Ṣadr al-Dīn and the reception of his ideas among later Safavid thinkers, while hugely important, is beyond the scope of this thesis, though we will make some general observations in what follows. In this section we will endeavour to shed light on his legacy by examining briefly the life and thought of two of his most famous students, Khafrī and Nayrizī, both of whom went on to become important thinkers in the Safavid period. The life and thought of his most celebrated student, Ghiyāth al-Dīn, will be examined in chapters three and four.

Khafrī

As his name suggest, Muḥammad b. Aḥmad b. Muḥammad al-Khafrī hailed from Khafr, a small village on the outskirts of Shiraz. His date of birth is unknown. Most of his education seems to have taken place in Shiraz where he studied religious sciences such as logic, fiqh, philosophy and kalām, under the tutelage of Mīr Ṣadr al-
although the biographical sources do not say so, he probably attended the classes of Mīr Ṣadr al-Dīn in the Manṣūriyya. There, he studied the Ishārāt and the Tajrīd. Given Khafṛī’s intimate knowledge of the history of the famous logical sophistry called the Liar Paradox, we can postulate that he studied this with Mīr Ṣadr al-Dīn, too, especially since he later composed a treatise in which he attempted to solve the problem.

Some modern biographers have claimed without evidence that Khafṛī was in fact a student of Dawānī. This seems highly improbably given that he lampooned Dawānī by describing him as a ‘pseudo-philosopher’ (mutafalsif). While others have erroneously identified Khafṛī as a student of Taftāzānī (d. 792/1390), which again is highly implausible given that the latter died almost hundred and fifty years before Khafṛī died.

As for Khafṛī’s confessional affiliation, some biographical sources claim he was Sunni but converted to Shi‘ism following shah Ismā‘īl’s capture of Shiraz in 909/1504. This claim is repeated by modern scholars such as George Saliba, who appears to have misread the account provided by Khwānsārī. Saliba claims that Khwānsārī’s biography of Khafṛī was embellished so as to present the latter as someone who always professed Shi‘ism, though sometimes in secret. However,

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Khwānsārī was quoting an anecdote from Niʿmat Allāh al-Jazāʾirī’s al-Anwār al-nuʿmānīyya regarding Khafrī’s supposed conversion to Shiʿism; he was not stating his own opinion. Jazāʾirī reports that when shah Ismāʿīl captured Shiraz in 909/1504, he asked Khafrī, among others, to profess their allegiance to Shiʿism by cursing the three Sunni caliphs; however most of the Sunni scholars present refused, except Khafrī who cursed the Sunni caliphs ‘passionately and unreservedly’ (fa-laʿanahum laʿnan shanʿān) so much so that he was later asked by his townsfolk why he ‘abandoned his [Sunni] faith’, to which Khafrī replied, ‘do you wish for this noble man to die for three Arab bastards?’ Khwānsārī then goes on to explain that Sunni law does not sanction the act of taqiyya, if indeed this was such, hence there is no reason not to believe Khafrī’s proclamations, nor do such statements suggest he was ever Sunni.302

Moreover, according to internal evidence in some of Khafrī’s writings, his allegiances to the Shiʿi faith seem clear-cut. For example, in one of his philosophical treatises on the Necessary Being and the doctrine of emanation, Khafrī writes:

...The wājib al-wujūd insofar as He is living (ḥayyan), knowing (ʿalīman), powerful (qādiran), and willful (murādan) - in fact He is characterized (mutaṣṣifan) by all existential attributes of perfection - from Him emanate that light which is living, this light is the manifestation of His knowledge and power and all other existential attributes of perfection except the quality of being wājib al-wujūb, this light is none other than the Light of Muḥammad and ‘Alī...it is the First Intellect according to the philosophers...303

Another example that seems to demonstrate Khafrī was Shiʿi is found in the opening remarks of his Persian treatise on the hierarchical nature of existence entitled


303 Cited in the original Arabic in: Firouzeh Saatchian, Gottes Wesen-Gottes Wirken, p. 23. The English translation is by the present author. In another passage, Khafrī says ‘the method through which one demonstrates that God is knowing is that of the advanced by the khawāṣṣ; according to him the khawāṣṣ are the Imams, he names Muḥammad al-Bāqir, as one such example. See Khafrī, ‘al-Risāla fi ithbāt wājib al-wujūd biʾl-dhāt wa-ṣifātihi’, ed. Firouzeh Saatchian in Gottes Wesen-Gottes Wirken, p. 24. This work was written 939/1532, some time after the Safavids took power in Iran and declared Shiʿism as the official religion of the realm.
Risāla-yī marātib al-wujūd. In it Khafrī says the Shi’a are the ‘true believers’, ‘God’s tested-servants’ (muʾminin-i mumtaḥan), and the ‘true folk of mystical knowing’.\textsuperscript{304}

When the Safavids seized power, Khafrī established good relations with shah Ismāʿīl and his royal court, particularly with Amīr Sayyid Sharīf Shīrāzī (d. 920/1514), who served as the vizier of shah Ismāʿīl for two terms, first from 915/1509 to 917/1511 and second from 919/1513 to 920/1514, the year in which Shīrāzī died.\textsuperscript{305}

Khafrī is reported to have been in Shiraz several years after the death of his teacher Mīr Ṣadr al-Dīn in 903/1498; according to the sources he was still residing there in 909/1504.\textsuperscript{306} However, sometime after 926/1519, Khafrī moved to Kashan where he spent the remainder of his life teaching and writing. The exact reasons for this migration are not known; however, according to Kākāyī, prior to the establishment of the Safavid state, the Sunni residents of Shiraz in general and Khafr in particular were known to hold extreme anti-Shī’i sentiments. It seems that, like his teacher, Khafrī kept his Shi’i faith secret, and it is likely that when he finally professed his faith in public he became persona non grata in Shiraz.\textsuperscript{307}

Another, more likely, explanation for his migration from Shiraz to Kashan may have something to do with his abilities in fiqh. When he arrived in Kashan, he acted as the local mujtahid and issued public rulings in accordance with Shi’i fiqh; he remained in this position until the arrival of al-Muḥaqiq al-Karakī who spent a


\textsuperscript{305} Pourjavady, Philosophy in early Safavid Iran, p. 38.


\textsuperscript{307} Ghiyāth al-Dīn Manṣūr Dashtakī va falsafa-i ʿirfān, p. 50.
short stint in Kashan soon after he migrated from Jabal-ʿĀmil to Iran. Karakī showed great respect for Khafrī and recognized him as a mujtahid. He praised Khafrī for his efforts to propagate Shiʿism and to familiarise the people of Kashan with its legal principles.

As for his general thought, Khafrī was committed to Avicennan metaphysics; like his teacher, he took pains to defend Avicenna against charges of heresy and deviation leveled by Ghazālī. In other areas, he demonstrates profound knowledge and understanding of ancient Greek wisdom; for example, in al-Risāla fī ʿithbāt wājīb al-wujūd, he peppers his arguments with protracted references to Thales of Miletus,310 Anaximenes,311 Empedocles,312 Pythagoras,313 Plato,314 and Aristotle.315

However, unlike his teacher, Khafrī was at once a keen analytic mind and a spiritually enlightened person in touch with theosis (taʿalluh); a thinker who represented a higher philosophical synthesis, one who combined the Shiʿi scriptures with rationcinative thought. He appears to have been influenced by Ibn ʿArabi, too. His position on the doctrine of waḥdat al-wujūd, for example, is very much sympathetic to the Akbarian paradigm of wujūd and its concomitants; he uses the famous analogy of the sea and waves when he discusses the hierarchical nature of

308 Ghiyāth al-Dīn Mašṣūr Dashtakī va falsafa-i ʿirfān, p. 50.


313 Khafrī, ‘al-Risāla fī ʿithbāt wājīb al-wujūd’, p. 44.

existence (marātib al-wujūd) in terms that anticipate, one can argue, Mullā Şadrā’s theory of tashkīk al-wujūd.

Interestingly, Khafīrī’s reliance on Ibn ‘Arabī led some medieval biographers to accuse him of adopting Sufi ideas uncritically; for instance, the author of Riyāḍ al-‘ulamā’, known for his anti-Sufism, refers to Khafīrī, perhaps sarcastically, as al-ḥakīm al-ṣāfī al-ḥādhiq fi ‘ulūm al-riyāḍa. Although Khafīrī was not a Sufi who belonged to a ṭarīqa, much of his writings on philosophy and mysticism are suffused with Sufi motifs, however. Following Suhrwardī and Ibn ‘Arabī, he says the ranks of philosophers are three: first, a divine philosopher proficient in intuitive philosophy but lacking in discursive philosophy, he calls such person ahl al-kashf; second, a discursive philosopher proficient in discursive philosophy but lacking in intuitive philosophy, whom he calls al-ḥakīm al-mahjūb; third, a philosopher proficient in both intuitive philosophy and discursive philosophy, which he terms al-ḥakīm al-muta’alih. Accordingly, he echoes Suhrwardī who says the third rank is the noblest and one that every student of philosophy should aspire to attain. For example, Suhrwardī writes, ‘The ranks of the philosophers are many, and they fall


317 On Khafīrī’s influence on Mullā Şadrā, see Musannafāt, vol. 1, pp. 51-58. The influence of the former on the latter is found in many passages in Mullā Şadrā’s writings. For instance, Mullā Şadrā, who advocates the theory of the ‘ontological priority of existence over essence’ (aṣālat al-wujūd), appears to have been influenced by Khafīrī and his teacher Mīr Şadr al-Dīn. Interestingly, the title of Mullā Şadrā’s most celebrated work, the Asfār al-arba’ ā, appears to have been borrowed from a passage in Khafīrī’s treatise on wahdat al-wujūd in which he says, ʿlam inna li’l-ʿirfīn arba’ ā asfār. A copy of the MS is preserved in Tehran University Central Library, though it is erroneously attributed to Mullā Şadrā, not Khafīrī. The two extant MSS of this treatise are: MS 6/1074, University of Tehran Central Library (122v-132v) and MS 3/8, Astān-i Quds-i Radavī, Mashhad (3ff).

318 Afandī, Riyāḍ al-‘ulamā’, vol. 7, p. 250.


into these classes: a divine philosopher proficient in intuitive philosophy but lacking discursive philosophy; a discursive philosopher lacking intuitive philosophy; a divine philosopher proficient in both intuitive philosophy and discursive philosophy; a divine philosopher proficient in intuitive philosophy but of middle ability or weak in discursive philosophy; a philosopher proficient in discursive philosophy but of middle ability or weak in intuitive philosophy; a student of both intuitive philosophy and discursive philosophy; a student of only intuitive philosophy; a student of only discursive philosophy. Should it happen that in some period there be a philosopher proficient in both intuitive philosophy (ta’alluh) and discursive philosophy (baḥth), he will be the ruler by right and the vicegerent of God'.  

That being said, who were Khafrī’s teachers in mysticism? It is not clear if any lived in Shiraz during his lifetime. Nor does he mention the name of anyone under whom he studied mystical ideas. It seems, in all probability, that in the mystical sciences he was self-taught.

As for his oeuvre, there are thirty extant works attributed to Khafrī. He composed eleven works in falsafa and kalām, five of which belong to the ithbāt al-wājib genre, namely 1) Risāla fi ithbāt wājib al-wujūd bi’l-dhāt; 2) Risāla fi’l-īlāhiyāt; 3) Risāla-yi dar bayān aham masā’il-īl-kalāmī-yi dar īlāhiyāt; 4) Risāla fi’l-īlāhiyāt or Risāla fi’ithbāt wājib al-wujūd; and 5) Risāla kūtah-yi dar ithbāt-i wājib. The central

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323 For a detailed bibliography of his works, including locations of extant manuscripts, see Barakat, Kitāb-shināšt, pp. 172-197; Saatchian, Gottes Wesen-Gottes Wirken, pp. 25-58.

324 Barakat, Kitāb-shināšt, p. 172.

325 Barakat, Kitāb-shināšt, p. 174.

326 Barakat, Kitāb-shināšt, p. 175.

327 Barakat, Kitāb-shināšt, p. 176.
theme of these works is proof using rational arguments that there exist a being whose existence is necessary and who bestows through the process of emanation existence onto other beings which are contingent upon that First Being. In the process, he takes it upon himself to refute, sometime using harsh language, the ideas of Dawānī and his Ashʿari predecessors, including Rāzī.

In kalām, he composed two works on Tūsī’s Tajrīd, one set of glosses on Qūshchī’s commentary, namely al-Sharḥ al-Jadīd,329 which covers all six maqāṣid, and another set of glosses also on Qūshchī’s commentary, which focus on the section of al-wujūd al-dhihiṭī.330 He also wrote a muḥākama in which he compares the views outlined in the debate-polemic between his teacher Mīr Ṣadr al-Dīn and his contemporary rival Dawānī, a rivalry which was played out in a series of competing glosses and counter-glosses on Qūshchī’s commentary (al-Sharḥ al-jadīd) on Tūsī’s Tajrīd.331

In mysticism, Khafrī penned three works, namely 1) al-Asfār al-arbaʿa or Asfār al-ʿarifīn,332 which discusses the four journeys of mystical wayfaring; the title of this work was later adopted by Mullā Ṣadrā who entitled his magnum opus al-Ḥikma al-mutaʾāliyya fi l-asfār al-ʿaqliyya al-arbaʿa; 2) Risāla fi waḥdat al-wujūd, which surveys the views of Sufis on the famous doctrine of the unity of being;333 and 3) Risāla fi marātib

328 Barakat, Kitābī, p. 177.

329 The section in which Khafrī discusses God’s knowledge and theory of intelligible or divine forms (al-ṣawwar al-ilāhiyya) that inhere in the Essence, is strongly criticized by Mullā Ṣadrā who refers to Khafrī as min al-qādīḥīn fī ithbāt al-ṣawwar al-ilāhiyya. See Shīrāzī, al-Ḥikma al-mutaʾāliyya fi l-asfār al-arbaʿa (Najaf, 2004), pp. 191-195.


331 This work is unpublished. See the Fihrist-i Āstān-i Quds, vol. 4, p. 68. See also Saatchian, Gottes Wesen-Gottes Wirken, pp. 36-37; Pourjavady, Philosophy in early Safavid Iran, p. 40.


al-wujūd, which proposes a reading of being as an hierarchical, gradational and an all encompassing ontic reality; its reliance on Ibn ʿArabī is clear, but it also makes use of exegetical arguments derived from the Qur’anic verse of Kursī when the concept of being is discussed; thus he blends scriptural exegesis with theoretical mysticism, a move which distinguishes his epistemology from that of his teacher, Mīr Ṣadr al-Dīn.334 Regarding the attribution of the Marāṭib, Pourjavady asserts that the work belongs to Khafrī since the author mentions his name in full in the prologue and he states explicitly his links to Khafr and Shiraz. Moreover, Pourjavady points to the similarities in the style of expression employed in the Marāṭib and in another work by Khafrī, namely the Āyat al-kursī. Both of these works use such technical terms as ʿarsh, kursī, and umm al-kitāb, suggesting that they belong to the same author.335

More recently Saatchian has argued that while Pourjavady’s observations are rational and sound, one must still, however, consider the counter evidence. Saatchian suggests that the terminology in the Marāṭib must be compared with other works by Khafrī, not just the Āyat al-kursī. He also suggests further comparisons be made between the Mirʿāt al-wujūd by Nūr al-Dīn Khalīfa and the Marāṭib. Another point raised by Saatchian is that to determine the authenticity of the Marāṭib one must place the semantic usages of the text within the context of the ninth/fifteenth and tenth/sixteenth centuries. And lastly, one must also ask why Khafrī wrote the Marāṭib in Persian when most of his other works were written in Arabic.336

334 This verse was also the subject of a commentary by Ghiyāth al-Dīn Dashtakī’s student, Sammākī.
335 Pourjavady, Dard-i falsafa, pp. 243-244.
In the transmitted sciences, Khafrī is known to have compiled a work of Shi'i hadīths called the *Arba'īniyyāt* which properly speaking belongs to the *manāqib* genre. In the prologue he writes:

In the Name of God, ever-merciful, ever-compassionate...praise belongs to God the Creator of the earth and heaven, and peace be upon the prophet and his family, the guided and the guides [of humanity]...the humble servant, who seeks blessing from the dust under the feet of the lovers of the Ahl al-bayt, Muḥammad al-Khafrī...**337**

In scriptural exegesis, he composed three works, namely 1) *Tafsīr āyat al-kursī*, 2) *Tafsīr sūrat fātiḥat al-kitāb*; and 3) *Nūr al-bayān fi tafsīr al-qur'ān*.

An important polymath, Khafrī wrote eight works on astronomy and mathematics, most of which remain in manuscript. In astronomy he is said to have written a voluminous commentary on the astronomical work of Ṭūsi, namely *al-Tadhkira fi īlm al-hay'a* (Memento in Astronomy), which he called *al-Takmila fi sharḥ al-tadhkira* (The complement to the explanation of the memento). **340** As Saliba points out, the *Takmila* was a complement to another commentary written by Jurjānī and as such it was intended as a critique of Ptolemaic astronomy. In the introduction of the *Takmila*, Khafrī does not shy away from talk about his ability to produce ‘original ideas’ in astronomy, he writes:

I included in it [i.e. the *Takmila*] the useful lessons (jawā'id) that had discovered (istanbaṭtuhu) in the books of others together with those additions that I extracted from my own lazy intellect. These are principles through which difficult problems can be resolved, and methods through which one can uncover the difficulties that proved impossible for those endowed with the final grasp for the comprehension of the celestial spheres (dhawī nihāyāt al-īdrāk fi dirāyat al-aflāk), especially in the matters of latitude and prosneusis, regarding which all that was said before proved to be either impossible and inapplicable.**341**

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**338** It has recently been edited by 'Alī Awjābī in *Ganjīna-yi Bahārīstān: 'ulām-i qur'ān va ravātī 1* (Tehran, 1380 Sh/2001), pp. 185-212.


In addition, Khafrī authored another work on astronomy which he called *Muntahā al-ıdrāk fi madārik al-aflâk*, this was a commentary on Quṭb al-Dīn Shīrāzī’s *al-Tuhfâ al-shâhîyya*. According to Khafrī, his commentary was the first ever on the *Tuhfâ*.

Finally, in mathematics he wrote a set of glosses upon Ṭūsī’s *Tahrîr-i uqlîdis* (summary of Euclidian principles) which he called *Ta’lîqa bar tahrîr-i uqlîdis*. And another work which examines the mathematical principles of *ʿilm al-jafr*, entitled *Risâla dar usûl-i ahkâm-i jafr*, another instance where the Dashtakī circle of philosophers appear to engage with the occult and esoteric sciences.

After an illustrious career Khafrī passed away in 942/1535 in Kāshān where he had spent the remainder of his life. He was survivded by his son, Mullā Qawām al-Dīn ʿHuṣayn al-Khafrī, who studied under his father, and who led a career as an astronomer and philosopher; he is known to have authored a Persian work on mathematics and astronomy, namely, *al-Risâla al-jafârîyya fiʾl-masâʾ il al-mushakala al-ḥisâbiyya*. Another student of Khafrī was Shâh Ṭâhir b. Raḍī al-Dīn, known as Shâh Ṭâhir Dakkanî, who was an ʿIsmāʿīlī Imâm. He was a friend of Khafrî and was was famous for his poetic panegyrics praising the Shiʿi Imams; he composed a work on

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343 This work is known by another variant title as *Fiʾl-zâwiyya*.


Shi‘i theology, namely Sharḥ al-bāb al-ḥādi‘ashar which is a commentary on Ḥillī’s al-Bāb al-ḥādi‘ashar, the famous treatise on the principles of Twelver Shi‘i kalām.¹⁴⁹

**Nayrizī**

The second most celebrated student of Mīr Ṣadr al-Dīn was Najm al-Dīn Maḥmūd b. Muḥammad b. Maḥmūd Nayrizī, known simply as Ḥājjī Maḥmūd.

As his name suggests, Nayrizī hailed from Nayriz, a town east of Shiraz.¹⁵⁰ In his early youth, he earned a living as a scribe who copied philosophical and theological texts, focusing on the works of Avicenna, including some pseudo-works, namely the so-called sermon of Tamjīd wa‘l-tawḥīd attributed to Avicenna,³⁵¹ and Fārābī’s Ḥaḍar al-mujām al-nujūm.³⁵² In falsafa and kalām, Nayrizī studied the works of Avicenna, especially the Najāt and the Shifā’,³⁵³ in Shiraz under the guidance of Mīr Ṣadr al-Dīn.

He explains that although he was thoroughly familiar with philosophy, it was not his favourite subject; instead he preferred the science of kalām because ‘its questions are more important than others and its argument are more certain than others’.³⁵⁴ Like his teacher, Nayrizī subscribed to the Shi‘i faith, the tone of phrase in

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³⁵⁰ Ṭehrānī, al-Dharʿal-a‘a, vol. 13, p. 140.


³⁵² Ṭehrānī, al-Dharʿal-a‘a, vol. 1, p. 81. See also his Maṭʿīn al-thalātha, an anti-caliph polemic which vilifies the first three caliphs, namely Abū Bakr, ’Umar, and ’Uthmān, a work which remains in manuscript form. See MS Ḥāfiyāt 749D/24. According to Pourjavady, the attribution of this work to Nayrizī is uncertain, though it is plausible that it was written by him. See Pourjavady, Philosophy in Early Safavid Iran, p. 154.

³⁵³ See his introduction in his commentary on Tahdīh al-mantiq of Taftāzānī which is quoted in full in: Pourjavady, Philosophy in Early Safavid Iran, pp. 130-131. Ṭehrānī tells us that Nayrizī wrote one commentary (see al-Dharʿal-a‘a, vol. 13, p. 163) as well as a set of glosses (see al-Dharʿal-a‘a, vol. 6, p. 53) on Taftāzānī’s Tahdīh.

³⁵⁴ Pourjavady, Philosophy in Early Safavid Iran, p. 44, fn. 41.
his commentary on Ṭuṣī’s Tajrīd makes it quite clear that he agreed with the principles of Twelver Shi‘ism, including the practice of the ritual cursing (la’īn) of the Sunni caliphs Abū Bakr and ‘Umar.\footnote{Pourjavady, Philosophy in Early Safavid Iran, p. 47.}

Based on recent bibliographical evidence, Nayrīzī’s theological writings appear to have had an impact upon such later Safavid thinkers as Mīr Dāmād.\footnote{According to Ṭīhrānī, a codex, known as Majmū‘at al-Nayrīzī, which is said to contain fifty-seven philosophical and theological works of Nayrīzī, copied by Nayrīzī himself between 903/1498 and 919/1512-13, was in the possession of Afḍal al-Dīn Muḥammad al-Turka al-Īsfahānī (d. 991/1583) and, later, Mīr Dāmād (Ṭīhrānī, al-Dharīʿa, vol. 1, pp. 81; idem, Ṭabaqāt a lām al-shī‘a, vol. 7, p. 244). Pourjavady, to the best of my knowledge, is the first scholar in modern scholarship to discuss the Nayrīzī Codex. [Discussed in: Pourjavady, Philosophy in Early Safavid Iran, pp. 54-6 and 152-3].} We can thus postulate that the writings of Nayrīzī, particularly in kalām, initiated the process of reviving Shi‘i theology in Safavid Iran, as has recently been argued, or alluded to, in Pourjavady’s recent study.

Unlike his contemporaries and fellow members of the Dashtakī circle of philosophy in Shiraz, who were drawn to a host of intellectual subjects including philosophy, mysticism, astronomy, and mathematics, Nayrīzī seems to have focused on kalām and falsafa, to the exclusion of other subjects. In 903/1498, few months before his execution, Mīr Ṣadr al-Dīn issued a license (ijāza) to Nayrīzī that permitted the latter to teach the former’s Risāla fī ithbāt al-wājīb.\footnote{References to the ijāza are mentioned several times by Ṭīhrānī. See, for instance, Ṭīhrānī, al-Dharīʿa, vol. 1, pp. 81, 118, 123; vol. 5, pp. 92; vol. 6, p. 54; vol. 7, pp. 184, 102, vol. 12, p. 12; vol. 13, pp. 140, 163; vol. 14, p. 175; vol. 15, p. 253; vol. 20, p. 120; vol. 21, p. 274. Cf. Barakat, Kitāb-shināsī, pp. 198-206; Pourjavady, Philosophy in Early Safavid Iran, pp. 124-151.}

An itinerant scholar, who wrote some of his works in between his travels, (he is known to have visited Qazvin, Gilan, and Isfahan, as well as Mecca and Medina), a total of fifteen extant works have been attributed to Nayrīzī.\footnote{Ṭīhrānī, al-Dharīʿa, vol. 1, pp. 81, 118, 123; vol. 5, p. 92; vol. 6, p. 54; vol. 7, p. 184; vol. 12, p. 12; vol. 13, pp. 140, 163; vol. 14, p. 175; vol. 15, p. 253; vol. 20, p. 120; vol. 21, p. 274.} His most significant writings were in the philosophical and theological sciences, including, 1)


Risālat ithbāt al-wājib, which deals with the three modalities of existence, namely necessary, possible, and non-existence; it follows the same structure and line of argument as that of his teacher Mīr Šadr al-Dīn, sparing no effort to attack the Ashʿarī views on the essence-attributes problem; 359 2) Tahrīr tajrīd al-ʿaqāʾid, a commentary on Tūsī’s Tajrīd, the work is also known by its triumphant title, namely Tahrīr al-ʿaqāʾid al-mushtamal ‘ala zubdat al-masāʾil al-kalāmiyya ‘ala madhhab al-firqa al-nājiyya min al-shī’a al-imāmiyya; 360 3) Ḥāshiyya ‘ala ḥāshiyyat sharḥ tanwīr al-maṭāli’; 361 4) Sharḥ ithbāt al-wājib al-jadīd, a critical commentary on Dawānī’s Ithbāt al-wājib al-jadīd; 362 5) Sharḥ tahdīb al-mantiq, a commentary on Taftāzānī’s Tahdīb which was praised by his colleague Ghiyāth al-Dīn; 363 6) Sharḥ al-hidāya al-athāriyya; and 7) Ḥāshiyya ‘ala unmūdḥaj al-ʿulūm, a commentary on Dawānī’s Unmūdḥaj al-ʿulūm. 364

In 948/1541 Nayrūzī passed away. 365 He did not train many students. According to Pourjavady, his only known student was Shah Mīr b. Mālik Maḥmūd Jān, who was one of Shah Ismāʿīl’s close aides and who possibly served as one of the Shah’s viziers. 366

As for Mīr Šadr al-Dīn’s other students, namely Muẓaffar al-Dīn Shīrāzī (d. 922/1516) and Taqī al-Dīn Muḥammad Fārsī (d. after 957/1550), very little is known about their lives and works. The former is said to have left Shiraz for Aleppo in

359 Barakat, Kitāb-shīnāsī, p. 198; Pourjavady, Philosophy in Early Safavid Iran, p. 125.
360 Barakat, Kitāb-shīnāsī, p. 199.
361 Barakat, Kitāb-shīnāsī, pp. 199-200.
362 Ṭīhrānī, al-Dhārīʿaʾa, vol. 2, p. 120.
364 Kākāyī, Ghiyāth al-Dīn Maṃṣūr Ḍashtakī va falsafa-i ʿirfān, p. 66.
366 Pourjavady, Philosophy in Early Safavid Iran, p. 49.
918/1512 possibly for religious reasons, he was known to belong to the Shāfi‘ī legal rite, and may have studied under Dawānī, too. He died there in 922/1516.\textsuperscript{367} Even less is known about the latter, except that he was a Shī‘i thinker and a close friend of Khafrī, and one of Ghiyāth al-Dīn’s students in astronomy.\textsuperscript{368}

What conclusions, then, might be drawn from the life and legacy of Mīr Ṣadr al-Dīn?

We are now in a better position to answer the questions posed earlier about the extent to which Mīr Ṣadr al-Dīn and his students were responsible for giving the study of Avicennan philosophy a new impetus in the late Timurid and early Safavid period. We have seen that the Ash‘ari consensus in Shiraz, which dominated its intellectual landscape in the preceding centuries, was slowly but surely making way for another philosophical current inspired chiefly by the writings of Mīr Ṣadr al-Dīn and his students.

\textsuperscript{367} Kākāyī, Ghiyāth al-Dīn Manṣūr Dashtarī va falsafa-i ʻirfān, p. 66.

\textsuperscript{368} On Fārsī, see §3.4.
The main challenge with which Mīr Šadr al-Dīn had to contend was to overcome the pervasive influence in Shiraz of later Ash’ari thinkers like Ghazālī and Rāzī. In conclusion, Mīr Šadr al-Dīn can be considered the intellectual heir of Avicenna and Ṭūsī in Shiraz; he was committed to Avicennan philosophy throughout his career and took constant pains to defend Avicenna against his Sunni detractors in the same way Ṭūsī did. In the next chapter I hope to show that Mīr Šadr al-Dīn’s sought to revive Avicennan metaphysics, tinged with philosophical Shi’ism, in order to counter Ash’ari philosophizing in Shiraz.
CHAPTER 2:

LAYING THE FOUNDATIONS:
MĪR ṢADR AL-DĪN ON AVICENNAN PHILOSOPHY AND HIS CRITIQUE OF
ASH’ARI KALĀM

2.1: General introduction

In the late Timurid period particularly in western Iran, the Ash’ari philosophical
discourse was, arguably, the intellectual tradition par excellence. However, soon
after the death of Mīr Ṣadr al-Dīn, the influence and prevalence of this tradition
appears to have been on the decline in western Iran, particularly in Shiraz. After
Dawānī, arguably the last major Ash’ari thinker in Shiraz and its environs, the
number of works produced which dealt with traditional kalām subjects from the
point of view of Ash’arism, particularly in its later form, were few and far in
between. Whatever Ash’ari presence there was, it was manifested in the writings of
Dawānī’s students, most of whom if not all did not produce ‘original’ theses but they
wrote expository glosses upon their teacher’s major philosophical works. In fact,
with the advent of the Safavids, Dawānī’s students, who had previously studied in
Shiraz, moved to various geographical locations which fell outside the socio-
political orbit of the new Shi’i polity; some moved to Ottoman territories while
others migrated to India.369

369 Modern studies have yet to investigate the fate of the later Ash’ari tradition in Iran. That later
Ash’arism faded out some time after the rise of the Safavids is, indeed, the prevailing, standard
account; a detailed analysis, however, is as of yet lacking. At this stage of our knowledge we can only
hypothesise the following, partly based on the present study, partly on ongoing research on some of
the major fugures of this period, and partly on the preliminary findings of forthcoming studies: First,
evidence indicate that Dawānī was the last major representative of the later Ash’ari tradition in Iran;
In what follows we will examine in detail the philosophical output of Mīr Ṣadr al-Dīn and shed light on his critique of later Ash’āri kalām. Although he did not write prolifically, Mīr Ṣadr al-Dīn authored a very important work known as the Risāla fi ithbāt al-bāri wa-ṣifātihī, it was to play an instrumental role in countering the Ash’āri dominance in Iran in late Timurid times. The Risāla was his only independent philosophical work. The remainder of his philosophical writings (on which see appendix A) were written in the form of glosses and superglosses, most of which contain little analytical insights, for Mīr Ṣadr al-Dīn’s chief focus, it would seem, was to explicate or even rehearse the ideas of Avicenna, sometimes offering little less than semantic explications. For this reason, we have decided to focus our attention on the germane Risāla, which is undoubtedly his magnum opus, one which summaries rather succintly the entirety of his views on falsafa and kalām.

for subsequent philosophising Ash’āri thinkers, such as Muṣṭah khālīd al-Dīn al-Lāfī and Ḥābīb Allāh al-Bāghnawī, were much influenced by Dawānī philosophical thinking and were indeed self-proclaimed intellectual disciples of Dawānī. Both Lāfī and Bāghnawī left Iran to settle elsewhere as the socio-political milieu in Iran could no longer accommodate the presence of Sunni thinkers. Lāfī settled entered the service of the Mughal court, where he was warmly received, then moved to Constantinople, in 968/1560, during the reign of sultan Suleiman the Magnificent (reg. 926/1520-974/1566). Bāghnawī became persona non grata after the death of Shah Ḥusayn I (reg. 984/1576-986/1578), forcing him to move to India (on Lāfī, see Hanna Sohrweide, ‘al-Lāfī, in EJ; Reza Pourjavady, ‘Muṣṭah khālīd al-Dīn al-Lāfī and His Sample of the Sciences’, in Oriens 42 (2014), pp. 292-322. On Bāghnawī, see Reza Pourjavady, ‘Bāghnawī, Ḥabīb Allāh’, in EJ’).

Second, later Safavid historians, such as Muhammad Amīn al-Astarābādī (d. 1036/1626), for instance, portray Dawānī and his intellectual disciples as the last major Ash’āri current in Iran after the arrival of the Safavids (al-Astarābādī, al-Fawā’id al-madaniyya, ed. Raḥmat Allāh al-Ḥarākī (Qum, 1424 H/2003), p. 500).

Third, another indication that Ash’āri activity in its later form was on the decline at the turn of the tenth/fifteenth century is found in a statement of Ṣammākī, who described his teacher, Mīr Ṣadr al-Dīn, as the ‘one who defeated the Ash’āri theologians’ (Ṣammākī, ‘Ṭafsīr āyat al-kurs’, pp. 439, 444).

Fourth, the later intellectual disciples of Mīr Ṣadr al-Dīn, such as the already mentioned Khafīrī, Nayrīzī, and Ṣammākī, known for the opposition to Ash’āri philosophising, singled Dawānī out as the last major Ash’āri figure in Iran, rarely if ever acknowledging the existence of post-Dawānī Ash’āri thinking worth attending to.

Fifth, a recent study have shown that Dawānī, insofar as he was a philosophising Ash’āri thinker, was one of the last major luminaries of this tradition in Iran; philosophising Ash’āris in post-Dawānī Iran were, as argued by Dīnānī, few and far in between (Ghulām Ḥusayn Ibrāhīmī Dīnānī, Jalāl al-Dīn Davānī filṣāfī zawq al-taʿalluh (Tehran, 1390 Sh/2012), p. 431ff).
As we will see, upon closer examination this work reveals an implicit undercurrent, or mild traces, of what I call Shi‘i consciousness; that is, an unspoken acknowledgement of and reliance on the teachings of the Imams as the final and ultimate arbitrators of rational enquiry. Given the socio-political climate in which he lived, Mīr Ṣadr al-Dīn did not always reveal his commitment to Shi‘ism; however, in some passages in the Risāla his attachment to the faith becomes less obfuscated by the preponderance he gives to the sayings of the Imams and coupled with his pronounced aversion to Sunni theology; in fact he even attacks the Sunni traditionists, most notably the Ḥanābila, whom he accuses of accepting the scriptures blindly and literally.

This chapter will aim to test the following hypothesis: Mīr Ṣadr al-Dīn, writing in the Risāla, had in mind a set project, a deliberate plan to drive a wedge between philosophical Ash‘arism and Avicennan metaphysics, and, instead, to bring philosophical Shi‘ism and Avicennan rationality closer. An intentionality which, as we shall demonstrate, is evinced only partially in his writings especially when he quotes the Shi‘i Imāms as sources of rational authority.

As already stated, the main challenge with which Mīr Ṣadr al-Dīn had to contend was to overcome the pervasive influence in Shiraz of later Ash‘ari figures. In this regard, it is manifestly clear that Mīr Ṣadr al-Dīn’s aim in the Risāla is threefold: first, to revive the Avicennan metaphysical speculation in Shiraz; that is, to revisit the major theological-philosophical doctrines, such as the proofs for the existence of God and the essence-attribute problem, in order to reformulate anew both the premises and conclusions using the Avicennan demonstrative method; that is, the method in which reasoning starts from certain premises and proceeds by valid logical method to certain conclusions; in the view of Mīr Ṣadr al-Dīn, the
demonstrative method represent the acme of the philosophical process, it can deliver results in which one is genuinely entitled to repose complete confidence and trust.

Second, to critique and expose the Ash’ari method; Mīr Ṣadr al-Dīn accused the later Ash’ari theologians, particularly Ghazālī and Rāzī, of indulging in dialectic argument which involves knocking down someone’s else’s premise instead of constructing one’s conclusion from true and certain premises. For instance, according to Mīr Ṣadr al-Dīn, the later Ash’ari theologians tend to assume that, once a given proposition is proven to be false (as they claim) then it follows that its contrary must be true. So, for example, if the proposition ‘the world is pre-eternal’ is proven false, its opposite, namely ‘the world is originated’, must be true.

However, according to Mīr Ṣadr al-Dīn such methodological approach is misleading. Rather, the proper epistemological procedure would require, in addition to the dialectical argument, a demonstrative argument that will establish beyond doubt the truth of the conclusion and the validity of the process that led to it. So, if, for example, the Ash’ari theologians want to prove the temporality of the cosmos, they must proffer a demonstrative syllogism to augment their claim, and should not rely on tenuous and flimsy arguments.

Third, to imbue philosophical enquiry with Shi’i ideas; that is, to infuse Avicennan enquiry with Shi’i consciousness, such as augmenting certain proofs with the sayings of the Imams or the Shi’i theologians (e.g. Tūsī and Ḥillī), as is particularly evident toward the end of the Risāla.

The intellectual background and historical development of the major philosophical arguments regarding the nature of God, or the Necessary Being, the proofs for the existence of God, and all the related theological-philosophical issues,
such as for example the essence-attribute problem, all of which serve as an important background to Mīr Ṣadr al-Dīn’s ideas in the Risāla, are significant enough to dwell on before we discuss Mīr Ṣadr al-Dīn’s philosophy.

2.2: **Kalām arguments for the existence of God**

In his al-Kашf’an manāḥij al-adillah, Ibn Rushd (d. 594/1198), better known in the Latin West as Averroes, dedicates a chapter to the various proofs for the demonstrability of God’s existence in which he surveys and critiques the viewpoints of the major intellectual traditions in Islam. The major traditions are: the Ashʿaris, whom he says are representative of the Sunnis; the Muʿtazilis; the Sufis, whom he describes as bāṭiniyya (esotericists); and the Ḥashawiyya, the stern literalists.

The Ḥashawiyya, who believed scripture was fundamental and ought to be read and interpreted literally, advocated an uncritical acceptance of God’s existence based on the outer (al-ẓāhir) expressions of the Qurʾan. They also believed that whatever is heard (samʿ) from recitations or readings of the Qurʾan will thus constitute belief (imān) without need for contemplative deliberation or rational

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370 Although the philosophical presence of Ibn Rushd is largely absent in the philosophical traditions of the eastern lands of the Islamiсate world, the germane text serves as a useful near-contemporary internal witness to the development of philosophical theology in the Islamiсate world.


372 Ibn Rushd, al-Kашf, p. 100.

373 The term Ḥashwiyya derives from ḥashw which literally means ‘farce’ but idiomatically it is used as a contemptuous label to describe a ‘group of ignorants, reactionary lot who grossly exaggerated anthropomorphism and were receptive enough to accept any fantastic belief and superstition’ (A. S. Halkin, ‘The Ḥashwiyya’, in *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 54 (1934), pp. 1–28). In general Muslim parlance, this ‘group’ are subject to unanimous condemnation, though often in polemics it was applied to those who showed strict adherence to scripture. For example, al-Nawbakhtī, author of *Firaq al-shīʿa*, uses the label to describe well-known traditionists such as Sufyān al-Thawrī and Mālik b. Anas (see ‘Ḥashwiyya’, in *EI*).
speculation (*al-samīʿ qabl al-aql*). For Averroes, and the great majority of Muslims, such utterances are described as misguidance (*dalāl*) and will lead astray. But according to the Ḥashwiyya, literal adherence to scripture in which the existence of God is manifestly clear will safeguard believers against the pitfalls of interpreting the Qur’an erroneously. Nevertheless in the view of Averroes, those who commit to such ‘conservative scripturalism’ are what he calls *aqliy’l-wujūd* (lit. ‘belong to the lowest rank of existence’).

As for the Sufi method, they, writes Averroes, do not present rational arguments in order to proof God exist but encourage their followers to find God through the process of self-purification which prepares the soul to ‘see’ God directly without intermediaries. To support this claim, the Sufis cite several passages from the Qur’an, for instance 2:282: And fear God; God teaches, and God has knowledge of everything. However such methods are exclusivist and cannot be pursued by everyone, argues Averroes.

Regarding the Ash’aris, including their eponymous founder Abū l-Ḥasan al-Ash’arī, no doubt an important systemiser of Sunni doctrine, they expounded arguments for the demonstrability of God’s existence based on elaborate speculative frameworks in which the tool of reason was central. The Ash’ari *kalām* demonstration par excellence was based on the creation *ex nihilo argument*, or

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378 Ibn Rushd, *al-Kashf*, p. 103ff; it must be noted however that Ash’ari himself held some reservations about using rational proof to demonstrate the existence of God. He preferred to rely on scripture instead, though in one work employs the argument from accidents, but rejects it in another. See Herbert Davidson, *Proofs for Eternity, Creation and the Existence of God in Medieval Islamic and Jewish Philosophy* (New York and Oxford, 1987), p. 35.
temporal generation (ḥudūth). The argument runs as follows: the universe is temporally originated (ḥādīth). All that is temporally originated requires a separate originator. Therefore, the universe requires a separate originator. In turn, this originator must be pre-eternal. Otherwise, if it is generated, then, through similar reasoning, it will require another originator. And ultimately the existence of a pre-eternal originator has to be admitted.\textsuperscript{379}

Averroes notes that the two premises contained in the argument were subject to great debate and incessant disputations, both among theologians, and between them and the philosophers. The two premises upon which the argument hinges are: the minor premise, namely that the universe is temporally originated and a major, and causal, premise, which says that which is temporally originated requires an originator. This proof was the same one advanced by the Muʿtazilis.

In what follows we will consider some of the controversies that surrounded these two premises, both among the mutakallimūn, and between them and the falāsifa.

\textit{That the world is temporally originated}

To prove the temporality of the universe premise true, the early mutakallimūn augmented the premise with several arguments, the mostly commonly used is the argument from accidents (aʿrād) which was first presented in Islamic debates by the

Muʿtazili Abū l-Hudhayl al-ʿAllāf (d. 281/894) and reproduced later by exponents of Ashʿarism such as Bāqillānī. It consists of four principles:

(i) Accidents (maʿānin) are present in bodies.

(ii) These accidents are generated.

(iii) Bodies in which accidents are present cannot be free (yanfakk) of them, nor does it precede (yataqaddam) them.

(iv) That which cannot be free of, or precede, what is generated is likewise necessarily generated.

Thus the early Ashʿari mutakallimūn believed that the proof for the existence of God is inextricably linked to the above principles that in turn qualify the premise that the world is temporally originated. However, Averroes rejected the validity of all such qualifying principles, in his view such articulations lack methodological rigour, exhibit poor knowledge of the principles of philosophy, and can generate confusion among lay believers.

Regarding the first principle (i), Averroes says the substances are either bodies which can be pointed at sensibly or bodies which do not accept division. He says the Ashʿaris are correct in their assumption that bodies cannot be devoid of accidents; however, the so-called existence of indivisible bodies is not self-evident,

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380 Davidson, Proofs for Eternity, p. 134. According to ʿAbd al-Jabbār, the first to employ this argument was indeed Abū l-Hudhayl. See ʿAbd al-Jabbār, Sharḥ al-uṣūl al-khamsa (Cairo, 1965), pp. 95.

381 Davidson, Proofs for Eternity, pp. 138-140.

382 The systemisation of the argument from accidents into four premises can be traced back to ʿAbd al-Jabbār, though some evidence suggest it was even earlier and dates back to Abū Hāshim al-Jubbāʾī. Cf. ʿAbd al-Jabbār, Kitāb al-majmʿū ʿfi al-muḥić bi l-taklīf, ed. J. Houben (Beirut, 1965), vol. 1, pp. 28-67; Davidson, Proofs for Eternity, p. 140.

383 Ibn Rushd, al-Kashf, p. 105.

384 Ibn Rushd, al-Kashf, p. 103-105.
since it cannot be ascertained through mental abstraction or empirical observation, to postulate its existence would require elaborate philosophical deductions, however (laysa muṭā hisiyan wa lā badīhiyatan ‘aqliyatan bal huwwa natijat naẓar wa istidlāl).\(^{385}\) Furthermore, he accuses the Ashʿaris of resorting to rhetorical word play with little, if any, philosophical novelty (wa l-dalāʾil al-latī tastaʾ miluhā al-ashʿariyya fī ithbāṭīhi hiya khīṭābiyya fīʾl-akthar).\(^{386}\)

As for principle (ii), regarding the temporality of accidents, it is not self-evident, opines Averroes, perhaps even dubious and certainly lacking in philosophical merit.\(^{387}\) It is difficult to claim that all accidents are temporally originated, just as it is equally difficult to say all bodies are temporally originated. Such fallacious conclusions, he adds, result from the use of the archetypal kalām analogy known as al-istidlāl bi l-shāhid ‘alā l-ghāʾib which the mutakallimūn employ unreservedly, according to him.\(^{388}\)

In this analogy, an inference is made from the ‘observable’ in order to say something about the ‘unobservable’, or put differently, an inference may be drawn with respect to what is absent and transcendent, on the basis of what is phenomenally experienced. For Averroes, it may be possible to uphold principle (ii) based on empirical observations like bodies which can be pointed at sensibly (al-mushār ilayhā) but this principle cannot extend to those bodies which cannot be observed, such as the unobservable celestial bodies. In order to say with certainty that accidents are temporally originated, or generated, Averroes says we should rely

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\(^{385}\) Ibn Rushd, al-Kashf, p. 105.

\(^{386}\) Ibn Rushd, al-Kashf, p. 105.

\(^{387}\) Ibn Rushd, al-Kashf, pp. 105-106.

\(^{388}\) Ibn Rushd, al-Kashf, p. 109.
on proofs based on empirical observation, such as those advanced by the natural philosophers.

Determined to point out the futility of principle (ii), Averroes changes the course of the discussion to talk about time and space. Time (zamān) is an accident which if temporally originated would be difficult to imagine. This is because, he writes, every originated existent in time must be preceded by time itself, thus time permits us to conceptualise the preceding state of non-existence that precedes the existence of the existent before it comes into existence. Here, Averroes’ prime objective is to point out the confusion that would ensue if this principle (ii) is taken to its logical conclusion. Consequently, since such argumentation has the tendency to generate profound doubt in the mind of the faithful, it is better for the Ashʿari theologians to avoid bringing forward such arguments as proof for the existence of God, says Averroes.

As for principle (iii), it has two possible meanings, according to Averroes. It either means that which cannot be devoid of the genera of generated accidents but can be devoid of individual generated accidents is likewise generated, or that which cannot be devoid of individual generated accidents which can be pointed at sensibly is likewise generated. Averroes says the latter meaning is acceptable.389 Think of a body which is entirely black, its colour (blackness) is an accident without which the body cannot exist unless the body is pre-eternal, in which case it cannot have been generated.390 But pre-eternal bodies do not have accidents; hence the body must be generated, too.

390 Ibn Rushd, al-Kashf, p. 110.
However, this meaning was not the one intended by the Ash’aris. Averroes argues that it was the former meaning that they had in mind advocated in order to prove the universe is temporally originated. On the one hand, to admit as the early Ash’aris did that a body could not be devoid of an aggregate of generated accidents is to accept, on the other, the possibility of an infinitely regressing series of generated accidents occurring in that body. Hence Averroes points to a major gap in their proof which renders it invalid, given that it would still be conceivable to imagine the existence of a pre-eternal universe that involves an infinitely regressing series of generated accidents.

After realising that such a gap did indeed exist in their proof, later Ash’ari theologians, starting with Abū l-Ma‘ālī al-Juwaynī (d. 478/1085), offered a revised version of principle (iii). Juwaynī conceded that a single locus, or body, could not have an infinitely regressing series of generated accidents. Moreover, single bodies, or loci, cannot admit infinitely regressing series of generated and causally reflexive accidents. To demonstrate the incompatibility between a universe which is temporally originated and the possibility of an infinitely regressing series of generated accidents in that universe, Juwaynī presents the following analogy: A man says to another, ‘I will not give you this dinār until I give you the other dinārs which precede this dinār in infinity’. Obviously, the promise will never be fulfilled because the poor recipient will not receive the promised dinar since the preceding dinars can go back ad infinitum.

391 On Juwaynī’s version of the proof from accidents, see Herbert Davidson, Proofs for Eternity, p. 143ff. See also Mohammad Moslem Adel Safo, al-Juwaynī’s Thought and Methodology: with a translation and commentary on Lumaʾ al-adillah (Berlin, 2000).

In later times, Juwaynī’s modified argument of the temporality of the universe, which forms the basis of the Ashʿari proof for God’s existence, was adopted by later Ashʿari thinkers such as Ghazālī and Shahrastānī.\(^\text{393}\)

That which is temporally originated requires an originator

This is the major, causal premise in the kalām proof. Its exponents argue that we can prove the existence of a maker by proving the universe is temporally originated, an argument known also as dalīl al-ḥudūth (a novitate mundi). Put simply, exponents of this argument say we can infer the existence of a creator from creation.

However, according to Rāzī there are two approaches to this argument.

Regarding the first approach, he writes:

Certain kalām thinkers who inferred a creator from the creation maintained that ‘the need of what comes into existence for an agent is [a piece of] necessary knowledge.’ To ‘prove’ their thesis they pointed out that ‘anyone who sees a building erected or a castle upraised would know necessarily that the structure had a builder and maker; and, indeed, should someone allege that the building might come into existence without a maker and builder, he would be judged mad. We thus recognize the proposition to be [a piece of] immediate [knowledge].\(^\text{394}\)

This approach finds support among many Muslims (tā’ifa ’azīma min ahl al-islām), says Rāzī. He ascribes its provenance to the Muʿtazili Abū l-Qāsim al-Kaʾbī (d. 319/931), who argued that the existence of God, whom he calls the Agent (al-fāʾil), could be ascertained from our basic knowledge of causation. According to al-Kaʾbī, every effect or generated thing (al-muḥdath) requires an effector; given that such


\(^{394}\) Davidson, Proofs for Eternity, p. 158.
knowledge is self-evident to all rational people (al-ʿuqalāʿ), all rational people can therefore ascertain the existence of God.  

As for the second approach, Rāzī says it finds support among the Basran Muʿtazilis. They argue that any proof for the existence of God as creator, must follow discursive reasoning (lā yatim ila baʿd al-dalīl). This view is usually ascribed to Abū ʿAlī al-Jubbātī (d. 303/916) and Abū Hāshim (d. 321/933). Rāzī seems to reject both views, though he is more tolerant of the discursive proof. He rejects Kaʿbī’s so-called self-evident proof because it ignores the complexities of causation. He says while the argument advanced by Kaʿbī demonstrates that every generated thing is preceded by another generated thing that brings it into existence, it does not however prove the existence of an uncaused agent who does not undergo change and who is separate from the temporally created world. Therefore, Kaʿbī’s claim that this premise constitutes immediate knowledge will only demonstrate the infinite regress of temporal causes, and it does not show that the world had a pre-eternal creator who is completely other than it is not.

By contrast, says Rāzī, most of the Muʿtazilis, including ʿAbd al-Jabbār, treat the proposition that things coming into existence are dependent on a cause not as

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395 Kaʿbī says: when the rational people sense the generation of a thing, they will immediately look for its cause without hesitation or contemplation. Thus we know that every generated thing requires an effector and that which gives it preponderance [to exist], this kind of knowledge is self-evident (ʿilm badihi) which inheres in the minds of the rational people. See Herbert Davidson, Proofs for Eternity, p. 158. On Kaʿbī’s theology, see Racha Moujir el Omari, The Theology of Abū l-Qāsim al-Kaʿbī (d. 319/931): a study of its sources and reception, Unpublished Ph.D Dissertation (Yale University, 2006).


self-evident but as ‘something to be proved’. Herbert Davidson maintains that the proof put forth by the Mu’tazilis turns out to be an argument by induction, particularly true in the writings of ‘Abd al-Jabbār. Rather oddly, ‘Abd al-Jabbār turns to human actions in order to conclude, through the use of complex analogy (ṣiyās), that God exists. He says, human action requires an originator because it is temporally originated; the world is too temporally originated; therefore, the world requires an originator. Hence, ‘Abd al-Jabbār invokes the classical kalām principle al-istidāl bi’l-shāhid ‘alā l-ghālib; in other words, based on judgements and grounds drawn from ‘observable’ realm (namely, human actions are originated by an originator), an inference is made about the ‘unobservable’, in this case, the world, which must likewise be originated by an originator.

As one would expect, this view does not find support among the Ash’aris, particularly Rāzī, who sees it as a rather odd way to argue for the existence of God. He insists that if the existence of God is to be inferred from creation, the principle that everything coming into existence requires an agent must be accepted as a self-evident truth, but it is not.

So why did the Mu’tazilis resort to such circuitous reasoning? The reason being may have something to do with their denial of natural causality. According to Mu’tazili theology, God creates all generated things except those accidents which are generated by the power of living organisms. Hence, human acts are generated

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400 i.e. that which is temporally originated requires an originator.
401 Davidson, Proofs for Eternity, p. 158.
405 Davidson, Proofs for Eternity, p. 159.
according to human volition and distinguishable motives, such as the motive to break one’s fast when overcome with thirst.\textsuperscript{406} Whereas natural phenomena such as objects moved by gusting winds are in fact divine acts generated by God. Thus, they maintain, when we observe the generation of accidents by human acts, we are able to conclude that such acts were originated by humans. Whereas the generation of accidents in natural phenomena, which falls outside human agency, must have been originated by God since there is no other viable explanation. Hence ‘Abd al-Jabbār writes, ‘everything that is beyond the power of created beings points to Him’.\textsuperscript{407}

\textit{Arguments from particularisation (takhşīs)}

This type of argument was advocated by later mutakallīmūn, mostly Ashʿarīs especially since it relies on the classical Muʿtazī presupposition of atomism and rejection of natural causality. Its exponents assert that randomness of any kind in the world is inconceivable. Every configuration in the world of creation, including the world itself, was seemingly selected over a given alternative. This selection is not arbitrary but points to an action of a particularizing agent (mukhaṣṣīṣ).\textsuperscript{408}

The nexus between the inconceivability of randomness in the world and the demonstrability of God’s existence, the Ashʿāri theologian Abū Bakr al-Bāqillānī (d. 404/1013) notes that, sometimes we encounter things similar to one another coming into existence but at different moments. Some occur earlier, while others later. However, whatever causes these things to come into existence cannot be

\textsuperscript{406} Davidson, \textit{Proofs for Eternity}, pp. 210-211.

\textsuperscript{407} ‘Abd al-Jabbār, \textit{Kitāb al-majmā’}, p. 28.

\textsuperscript{408} Davidson, \textit{Proofs for Eternity}, p. 160.
intrinsic therein, in other words things do not come into existence by virtue of themselves, otherwise everything of the same kind would come into existence at once without time separation. Hence, he concludes, this is proof that physical objects come into existence by a particularizing agent. This agent is an external effector; it does not exist within the object it brings into existence. This agent (mukhasṣis) is God, says Bāqillānī.409

Continuing with the particularizing theme, Juwaynī applies this argument to the world as a whole, however. His version of the argument ‘frees it of the occasionalistic burden with which Bāqillānī loaded it’.410 Juwaynī argues that since it has been demonstrated that the world in which we live is temporally originated, it could not have come into existence without a particularizing agent who decided between bringing into existence instead of leaving it in a state of non-existence. From this, he writes, the ‘intellect immediately judges that the world requires a particularizing agent who selected out existence for it at the moment when it came into existence. Hence such selection can only point to a willing, pre-eternal, and unchanging agent.’411

A recent study by Madelung, however, has shown that these substantial reformulations, which were supposedly advanced first by Juwaynī,412 were heavily

410 Davidson, Proofs for Eternity, p. 161.
indebted to the ideas of Abū l-Ḥusayn al-Baṣrī. We learn from Ibn al-Malāḥimī that Abū l-Ḥusayn articulated two major proofs for the existence of God.

The first was a revised form of the traditional kalām proof from accidents. It resembles the Avicennan argument that relies on the principle of causality rather than the analogy between the seen and the unseen world. While there is agreement in substance between Avicenna and Abū l-Ḥusayn, there is difference in basic terminology. Abū l-Ḥusayn argues that the world was created by choice of its creator and in finite time. This generator, he argues, must be a freely choosing agent, not a necessitating cause.

The second proof advanced by Abū l-Ḥusayn is an argument from particularisation. He notes that while in the phenomenal world we observe that all bodies share in corporeality yet there are differences between these bodies. These differences must be accounted for by a matter (amr) which causes the differences between different bodies. Abū l-Ḥusayn, by relying on the disjunctive method, concludes that the cause of this difference must be a powerful, free choosing (qādir mukhtar) and pre-eternal agent who can neither be a body nor an atom.

414 Ibn al-Malāḥimī, Kitāb al-fā’iq, p. 36ff.
2.3: Avicenna’s argument for the existence of God

This is known as the argument from contingency (imkān). It was developed by Avicenna but was often employed by theologians especially those who wished to demonstrate that the existence of God was amenable to philosophical proof.\textsuperscript{419}

In his \textit{Shifā}, Avicenna argued that the proper subject matter of the science of metaphysics is the existent \textit{qua} existent (al-mawjūd bi-mā huwa mawjūd).\textsuperscript{420} There, he discusses the method that he pursues in the proof for the existence of God which he famously characterized as metaphysical, that is, a proof which consists in ‘examining nothing but existence itself.’\textsuperscript{421} Hence, Avicenna contrasts his proof with that of the theologians who argue for the existence of God from creation and effect. Although he does not refute the method of the theologians, in fact he considers their method as valid, he does, however, claim rather proudly that his is ‘more reliable and more noble’. He writes:

\begin{quote}
Reflect on how our proof for the existence and oneness of the First and His being free from attributes did not require reflection on anything except existence itself and how it did not require any consideration of His creation and acting, even though the latter provide a proof for Him. This [proof], however, is more reliable and noble...when we consider the state of existence, we find that existence insofar as it is existence bears witness to Him, while He thereafter bears witness to all that comes after Him in existence (wa-lam yaḥtaj iḥā lī tībār min khalqihi wa-fī līhi wa-in kān dhālik dalīlan `alayih lākin hādhā al-bāb awθaq wa-ashraf).\textsuperscript{422}
\end{quote}


\textsuperscript{421} Ibn Sīnā, al-Najāt fī-l-mantiq wa-l-ilāhiyāt, ed. ‘Abd al-Raḥmān ’Umayra (Beirut, 1992), pp. 134-135. On different versions or conceptions of this proof, i.e. whether it was cosmological or ontological, see below.

\textsuperscript{422} Ibn Sīnā, al-Ishārāt wa-l-tanbīḥāt, ed. Sulaymān Dunyā (Cairo, 1957-69), p. 54.
So what of the proof itself? As mentioned, Avicenna claims his proof is ontological, in other words, it rests on an analysis of the concept of existent *qua* existent without consideration of physics. It proceeds from the dichotomy between necessity (*wujūb*) and contingency (*imkān*), which according to Avicenna is primary in the mind, intuited without need of sensory perception and mental cogitation. Hence, existence is always either necessary or contingent. An existence that is necessary does not require a cause, and denial of its existence amounts to a contradiction, it is impossible to conceive its non-existence; in other words we have indubitable knowledge that there is an existence that is necessary and intuited in the mind and to deny such existence would be absurd.  

By contrast, contingents or possible existents might or might not be; hence denial of the existence of such contingents does not involve a contradiction. If contingents exist *in concreto*, it must be due to an external, necessitating cause without which contingents would not exist. As for the necessitating cause, it is either necessary or contingent. If the necessitating cause is contingent, then it too must have been brought into being by an antecedent cause, and so on and so forth. Therefore, to avoid an infinitely regressing series of contingent causes, the series must terminate with an uncaused necessary being whose existence is necessary by itself. The reason for the previous is obvious since an infinitely regressing series of causes cannot reach an end in an actual effect, which is based on the Aristotelian

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424 McGinnis, *Avicenna*, pp. 159-164 (particularly section on Avicenna’s modal ontology).

425 The necessitating cause is the cause that brings contingents into being.

principle of *infinitum actu non datur* (lit. ‘an actual infinite is not given’).\(^{427}\) Nor can a complex system of causes sustain itself and overcome the contingency inherent in all complexity since that would make effects ultimately their own causes, thus transforming what is contingent in itself (*mumkin* bi’-*dhat*) into something necessary in itself (*wajib* bi’-*dhat*). Therefore, based on the foregoing, Avicenna concludes that there is a necessary being.

Recent studies differ on whether Avicenna’s proof is cosmological or indeed ontological.\(^{428}\) To determine whether the proof is indeed ontological or cosmological, we ought to ask an important question: is the ‘existence’ with which Avicenna begins his argument known *a priori* or *a posteriori*? In other words, does our understanding of existence rest on conceptions that are intuited without need of sensory perception, independently of experience, or does it depend on the sensory perception of actual existents in the external world? Avicenna attempts to answer this question as follows:

‘Every existent, if you look at it in itself (*min haythu dhatihi*), not looking at anything else, is either such that existence is necessary for it in itself (*fi nafsihi*), or it is not. If [its existence] is necessary then it is God (*al-haqiq*) in Himself, the Necessarily existent in Itself – namely, ‘the Self-Subsistent’ (*al-qayyum*).\(^{429}\)

By contrast, those who argue the proof is cosmological advance the following arguments. First, the premise by Avicenna ‘there is no doubt that there is existence’


(lā shakka anna hunā wujūdan) is rather opaque and does not lend itself to easy comprehension. When Avicenna says that his proof will call existence itself to testify to the reality of God, he, in the words of Lenn Goodman, echoes a Sufi turn of phrase, not philosophy proper. Moreover, Goodman points out that the proof employs at least one *a posteriori* premise especially when Avicenna assumes the existence of something here before us. Goodman writes:

Although the concept of being is said by Avicenna to derive from pure rational intuition, his proof works from experience. For the claim that this itself before us, and indeed the world, are not the necessary being we seek but are contingent and that this is known by our power to conceive the non-existence of any single item and to suppose without the contradiction the failure to come together of any composite of matter and form or essence and existence, shows that the argument rests on experience.430

As can be seen, the crux of the proof is that contingent existents can never be self-sufficient. Even complex systems, where each part contributes to sustaining the whole, are intrinsically incapable of self-sufficiency through the complexity of the inner interdependencies. In fact, quantitative increment of inner parts will result in more compound contingency and thus decrease self-sufficiency. Put simply, the more contingents added to the series, the less self-sufficient it becomes. That being said, to what extent are such formulations original with Avicenna? In recent times, scholars such as Robert Wisnovsky and Michael Marmura431 speak of clear *kalām* influences or traces in Avicenna’s argument from contingency, in particular notions like *takhīṣ*. Wisnovsky in particular argues that Avicenna’s works mark the beginning of a synthesis between Muslim Neoplatonism


and the kalām tradition. Certainly the claim that Avicenna was influenced by the mutakallimūn is not new. Centuries ago Averroes criticized Avicenna for being influenced both in his philosophical method and in certain concepts of metaphysics and physics by the mutakallimūn and then criticized him for failing to follow Aristotle. Specifically, Averroes claims that Avicenna’s proof was influenced by the Ash‘ari argument from takhsīs and refers to the proof by the derogatory phrase wa-hādhā qawl fi ghāyat al-suqūṭ (i.e. ‘this proof is of the basest rank’).

No doubt, Avicenna’s proof seems to contain ideas of kalām provenance particularly the notion of takhsīs. But, Avicenna showed in true Aristotelian fashion that causal explanations are in fact reductions of phenomena to necessity. If a thing is not necessary in itself, it is necessary through another. Something made it as it is or it would not have been so. However, whereas Aristotle would apply such reasoning to particulars, not to the cosmos as a whole, Avicenna feels no such inhibition; even if a thing is eternal or infinite, it may be so through something else (wājib al-wujūd bi‘l-ghayr). This is where Avicenna departs from the radical contingency of kalām. Unlike the mutakallimūn, Avicenna believes that the causes of a thing can make it necessary, although it is never necessary in itself. Hence Avicenna reconciles the metaphysics of contingency with that of necessity, relying on some kalām ideas but firmly committed to Aristotelian metaphysics, though Averroes would beg to disagree.

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433 Davidson, Proofs for Eternity, pp. 311–335 [Averroes’ Critique of Avicenna’s Proof].

2.4: Mir Ṣadr al-Dīn as an Avicennan philosopher

The structure of Mir Ṣadr al-Dīn’s Risāla follows partly the literary schema provided in Tūsī’s Tajrīd and Ījī’s K. al-Mawāqīf, a convention already established in Rāzī’s al-Mulakhkhas fi ʿl-ḥikma.435

It will become clear that Mir Ṣadr al-Dīn follows the rationalist method in order to elucidate Avicenna’s views on the Necessary Being; however, much of the work is focused on philosophical theology, it includes issues such as the nature of the Qur’ān and the essence-attribute problem.436 There, Mir Ṣadr al-Dīn’s approach is that of a Muslim rationalist, citing Tūsī and Ḥillī much to substantiate his claims, and in order to refute Ashʿari positions. Of course his reliance on Tūsī, whether in the Risāla or in his Ḥawāshī,437 is indicative of the primary importance of the Tajrīd tradition in the post-classical period.

In the Risāla, Mir Ṣadr al-Dīn’s main intellectual rival is Dawānī; he saw in Dawānī an Ashʿari theologian who purveyed an Ashʿari philosophical theology that was hostile to Avicennan metaphysical inquiry. The assumption on the part of Mir Ṣadr al-Dīn that Dawānī was hostile to the Avicennan tradition does not hold, and should be read or interpreted as an anti-Dawānī polemic; for, as shown previously, Dawānī was not at all hostile to Avicennan philosophy. This in mind, one can say with some confidence that Mir Ṣadr al-Dīn was arguably the first thinker in the late

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435 Heidrun Eichner has recently argued that later Shiʿi and Sunni thinkers, such as Tūsī and Ījī, adapted Rāzī’s al-Mulakhkhas in order to establish which topics one ought to discuss in a kalām-work. Indeed Eichner shows that the earliest examples for this new structure were popularised first by the Tajrīd, and later by the Mawāqīf. This new literary schema was primarily productive in Ilkhanid and post-Ilkhanid periods, and leading up to the late Timurid period. See Eichner, Towards the Construction of Islamic Orthodoxy, pp. 351-378.

436 This had already become standard convention in the ithāt al-bārī genre. See Saatchian, Gottes Wesen-Gottes Wirken, pp. 100-104.

437 On Mir Ṣadr al-Dīn’s glosses and superglosses on the Tajrīd, see §A.2.1 (2 and 3).
Timurid period to write critically against the Ash’ari dominance in western Iran.438

In the sections that deal with subjects traditionally considered part of classical kalām, such as the essence-attribute debate, Mīr Šadr al-Dīn begins every discussion in the Risāla with a pellucid statement of the subject matter. He then surveys earlier opinions in details, often singling out Rāzī, whom he considers the greatest representative of later Ash’arism.439 He then takes great pains to investigate scrupulously the reasoning underlying each claim, the objections raised against it, and the adjustments made by its proponents.440 For Mīr Šadr al-Dīn, philosophy must commit to the advancement of rationalistic theses concerning God and the cosmos; it must strive to give rational order to the world of being and to achieve the noblest of deeds, namely knowledge of the Necessary Being and His attributes.441

Although he did not approve of mixing falsafa with kalām, especially since he attacked Sunni theologians like Jurjānī and Dawānī for doing precisely this, he is also guilty of mixing philosophical reasoning with theological proof in the Risāla. This, however, is not a contradiction; whenever Mīr Šadr al-Dīn makes reference to kalām he almost exclusively means Sunni kalām, which he held in disdain. But, he was more than happy to augment philosophical arguments with theological dictums, provided such dictums had their roots in the sayings of the Shi‘i Imams; sometimes citing verbatim the same Shi‘i dictums found in the writings of such

438 Sabine Schmidtke has demonstrated that prior to Mīr Šadr al-Dīn there was already a Shi‘i-Mu‘tazili theological tradition in Hilla in the eighth/fourteenth century, which was critical of some of the theological positions of Rāzī. See Schmidtke, The Theology of al-‘Allama al-Ḥilli, pp. 167, 168, 179.

439 This claim can hardly be disputed. According to some medieval authors such as Tāj al-Dīn al-Subkī (d. 771/1370), Rāzī was ‘the renewer of faith (mujaddid) at the end of the sixth/twelfth century’. See Tāj al-Dīn al-Subkī, Tabaqāt al-sha‘ī‘yya al-kuṭrā, eds. M. Tanahi et al. (Beirut, 1992), vol. 1, p. 202.


The Risāla is divided into twelve sections (fuṣūl) and an epilogue (khātima):

**Section One**: On proving God’s existence (fi ithubāti ta’āla);
**Section Two**: On affirming God’s unity (fi tawḥidīhi ta’āla);
**Section Three**: On the Necessary Being and the inadmissibility of Him being a composite entity (fi ithubā inna wajib al-wujūd lā yaqbal al-qisma ilā ajzā‘ ašlan);
**Section Four**: On the Necessary Being and whether His attributes are additional to His essence (fi inna wajib al-wujūd hal yajāţ ‘an takān lahu šifātun za’idatun am lā);
**Section Five**: On God’s knowledge (fi ʿilmī hi ta’āla), an extensive section, made up of seven sub-sections (maṭālib), which are as follows:

(i) God Has Knowledge of His Own Essence;
(ii) God Has Knowledge of All Existents;
(iii) God’s Knowledge of Material and Immaterial Existents That are Extraneous to His Essence;
(iv) God’s Knowledge of Temporal and Transient Things;
(v) God’s Knowledge of That Which Does Not Have an End;
(vi) God’s Knowledge of the Particulars;
(vii) The Unity of God’s Knowledge and the Multiplicity of Intelligibles.

**Section Six**: On God’s Power (fi qudratī hi ta’āla);
**Section Seven**: On God’s Will (fi irādatī hi);
**Section Eight**: On God’s Life (fi ḥayātī hi);
**Section Nine**: On God’s Hearing and Seeing (fi sam‘i hi wa-baṣrī hi);
**Section Ten**: On God’s Speech (fi kalāmī hi ta’āla);
**Section Eleven**: On Fate and Destiny (fi al-qādā‘ wa-l-qadr);
**Section Twelve**: On God’s Other Attributes (fi sā‘ir ṣifātī hi);
**Conclusion**: On the Division of God’s Attributes (fi taqsim ṣifātī hi).

In it, we will find that many parts of the Risāla focus on philosophical theology and contain protracted refutations of both classical and later Ashʿarism; we will encounter the presentation of an alternative philosophical outlook, one rooted, primarily, in Avicennan philosophy and, secondarily, in Shiʿi-Muʿtazili kalām; thus placing Mīr Ṣadr al-Dīn in the line of Shiʿi thinkers who paved the ground for the later philosophical synthesis between Avicennism and Shiʿism.\(^{442}\)

\(^{442}\) Others in the same period who adopted a similar synthesis include Ghiyāth al-Dīn (on whom see chapters three and four), Khafārī, and Nāyīrīzī. Previous examples famously include Tūsī and Ḥillī; and less famously Kamāl al-Dīn Ibn Saʿīd al-Bahrānī (d. 640/1242), Jamāl al-Dīn Allābī b. Sulaymān al-Bahrānī (d. 669/1271), and Kamāl al-Dīn Maytham b. Maytham al-Bahrānī (d. 699/1300), and Ibn Abī Jumhūr al-Āhṣā‘ī. On the philosophers of Bahrain, see Ali al-Orabi, Shiʿi Renaissance: A Case Study of the Theosophical School of Bahrain in the 7th/13th Century, Unpublished Ph.D. dissertation (McGill)
2.4.1: Proof for the existence of God

Commenting on his father’s proof for the existence of God, Ghiyāth al-Dīn writes that before his father emerged as a philosopher, the scholars of Shiraz employed one of two methods to demonstrate the existence of God. The first is the so-called way of the mystics (ṭarīq al-ʿurafāʾ). Based on Ghiyāth al-Dīn’s testimony, this method was popular among the mystical circles of Shiraz. Exponents presented a non-demonstrative proof for the existence of God. They said that, God is an all-encompassing divine reality, one that becomes wholly manifest to those whose hearts have been thoroughly purified; this reality is beyond explanatory terms, it does not require mediating arguments (bayyinan ghaniyyan ʿan al-bayān), but must be lived and experienced directly, a phenomenon known as dhawq taʿalluh.\textsuperscript{443} This indicates a clear connection to Sufi epistemology, where mystical experience is privileged over rational deductions.\textsuperscript{444} It is noteworthy that while Mīr Šādīr al-Dīn dismissed the ‘Sufi method’ as non-demonstrative and therefore non-apodictic, Ghiyāth al-Dīn, writing in his commentary, is more accepting. Indeed, as we will see, his taste for mystical inquiry was far more pronounced than that of his father.

According to Ghiyāth al-Dīn, it is with spiritual certitude that one fully comprehends the existence of God, that is, through the process of theosis, or al-


\textsuperscript{444} On Sufi arguments for the existence of God, see William Chittick, ‘Mysticism versus Philosophy in Earlier Islamic History: The Al-Ṭūsī, Al-Qūnāwī Correspondence’, in Religious Studies 17 (1981), pp. 87-104.
takhalluq bi-akhlāq Allāh. He writes:

When the rational agent disjoins from his self and conjoins with the Truth, verily the Truth will become his sight through which he sees; his hearing through which he hears; his power through which he acts; his knowledge through which he knows; and his being through which he exists. Indeed the mystic becomes God-like.

In the second method, demonstration is required. Its exponents privileged the exoteric sciences (al-ʿulūm al-rasmiyya) over the esoteric. This method is not philosophical but teleological. It seeks to prove the existence of God through a culmination of proofs derived from evidence from providence, an approach previously advocated by Rāzī. According to Rāzī:

Know that whoever reflects the various parts of the higher and lower world it will become clear to him that this world is constructed in the most complete and refined manner, and the most superlative and meticulous form of order (al-tartīb al-affāḍl wa-l-atqān). The clear mind [then] testifies that this state of affairs cannot be except by the governance (tadbīr) of a wise and knowledgeable [being]. Thus this proof (ṭarīq) points to the existence of the God of the world.

But neither proofs where considered satisfactory and apodictic by Mīr Ṣadr al-Dīn. He was especially dismissive of the proof advanced by the mutakallimūn, which he considered a flawed type of syllogism and falls below the standards philosophical demonstration. He argued that the demonstrability of the existence of God must follow the Avicennan rational method; one must present sound and indubitable proof, which if articulated correctly and cogently should find universal support

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among the leaders of wisdom and theology (*a’immat al-ḥikma wa-l-kalām*). Here, Mīr Ṣadr al-Dīn is accusing the theologians of advancing arguments that rely on flawed premises. In the *Ishārāt*, Avicenna identifies four such premises which he calls (i) *musallamāt*, arguments that rely on admitted premises; (ii) *maẓnūnāt*, arguments that rely on conjectural premises; (iii) *mushabbahāt*, arguments that rely on doubtful premises; and (iv) *mukhayyalāt*, arguments that rely on estimative premises. In turn (i) is subdivided into (ia) *mu’taqadāt*, arguments that rely on received dogma and (ib) *ma’kādhāt*, arguments that rely on transmitted reports. In turn (ia) is further subdivided into (iia) *al-wājib qubūlahā*, premises that must be accepted necessarily; (iab) *al-mashhūrāt*, premises that are widely accepted; and (iac) *al-wahmiyyāt*, premises that rely on imagination. In addition, (ia) is, again, subdivided into (iiaa) *awaliyyāt*, premises that are unambiguous and clear to the mind (*ṣarīḥ al-aql*); (iab) *mushāhadāt*, premises that rely on empirical observations (i.e. relies on human senses); and (iac) *mujarabāt*, premises that rely on experience.

So how does Mīr Ṣadr al-Dīn present his proof for the existence of God? It follows closely Avicenna’s argument from contingency but with some minor modifications. In typical Aristotelian fashion, Mīr Ṣadr al-Dīn reduces everything in the world of creation to necessity. Before delving into the proof, he states the following: ‘if there is no existence that is necessary in itself, then generated existents (*mawjūdāt*) would not exist at all’. The proof may be summarised as

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449 For a more detailed explanation, see Ibn Sīnā, *al-Ishārāt*, pp. 123-133.

follows: generated, or contingent, existents need that which gives them
preponderance to exist, namely a preponderant (*murajjiḥ*) (lit. ‘to swing it in favour
of existence’). Every contingent (*mumkin*), whether it has existed pre-eternally or
has been temporally originated, has an equal relation to existence and non-
existence; in order for any contingent to come into being, it must be given
precedence to exist by an external agent that ‘swings it in favour of existence’.

In and of itself, a contingent being are intrinsically incapable of generating
its own existence, unless it is brought into being by another contingent, which must
be temporally and ontological prior to it. Thus, every contingent, whether caused or
itself a cause, exists in concerto due to another external and necessitating cause,
without which it would not exist. As for the necessitating cause, it is either
necessary or contingent. To avoid an infinitely regressing series of contingent
causes, the series cannot terminate with an effect, but rather it must come to an end
with an uncaused cause. Such uncaused caused is in fact a being whose existence is
necessary by itself, if not then an infinite series results. Hence, given that
contingents exist, a Necessary Being In-It-Self must necessarily exist, too.

Having demonstrated that a being whose existence is necessary by itself
exists, Mīr Šadr al-Dīn poses the following question: can a series of infinitely
regressing contingents exist? Before answering this question, Mīr Šadr al-Dīn
considers Rāzī charges that the philosophers are unable to demonstrate the
impossibility of an infinitely regressing series of contingent that does not terminate
in an uncaused cause.

According to Rāzī, upholding the possibility of an infinitely regressing series

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of temporally originated contingents is theologically problematic.\footnote{Rāzī, al-Maṭālib al-ʿāliya, p. 74ff.} Whoever admits that an infinitely regressing series is possible cannot as a result prove the existence of voluntary creator (fāʾ il mukhtār), writes Rāzī.\footnote{Rāzī, al-Maṭālib al-ʿāliya, pp. 77-79; Dashtakī, ‘Risāla fī ithbāt al-bārī’, in Muṣannafūt, vol. 2 pp. 762-763.} To point out the absurdity in the claim made by some philosophers, that an infinitely regressing series of temporally originated contingents, is possible, Rāzī raises the following objections: temporally originated contingents are either caused or uncaused. If the philosophers admit the latter premise, their proof from contingency will be invalidated. Therefore, they will be left with no choice but to accept the former.\footnote{Dashtakī, ‘Risāla fī ithbāt al-bārī’, p. 763. For the background context on this problem, see Toby Mayer, ‘Avicenna against time beginning: the debate between the commentators on the Ishārāt’, in Peter Adamson (ed.), Classical Arabic Philosophy: sources and reception (London and Turin, 2007), pp. 125-149.}

Now, if a temporal contingent is caused, its efficient cause must either be contingent itself or pre-eternal. The former results in an infinitely regressing series of contingent causes, whereas the latter contradicts the original premise, namely that an infinitely regressing series of contingents is possible.

But, says Rāzī, according to Avicenna’s proof from contingency, contingent existents can never be self-sufficient. Even complex systems, where each part contributes to sustaining the whole, are intrinsically incapable of self-sufficiency through the complexity of the inner interdependencies. And any quantitative increments of inner parts will result in more compound contingency, and thus decrease self-sufficiency. Hence, an infinitely regressing series of contingents cannot possibly exist; to do so, it must be self-sufficient; however, Rāzī points out that the status of self-sufficiency attached to such series would therefore contradict
Avicenna’s premise that contingents cannot be self-sufficient. And since a series of contingents is likewise contingent, it cannot, therefore, be self-sufficient. Concomitantly, an infinitely regressing series is not possible.  

But what if the series is triggered, or ‘set in motion’, by an external cause? It is possible for it to sustain itself thereafter? Rāzī seems to entertain this idea only to prove it false later. He says any such series must be brought into existence by an efficient and external cause, which he calls the condition of the series (shart). This condition, he writes, must either be coterminous (musāwiq) or prior (mutasābiq) to the first temporal contingent in the series. In the words, the cause that triggers the infinitely regressing series of contingents must either exists at the same moment in which the first contingent in the series comes into existence, or it must come before the existence of the first contingent. However, if the trigger, or conditional cause, is ontologically and temporally ‘equal’ to the first term in the series, this begs the following question: from whence did the conditional cause come? Rāzī says this question generates further doubt and makes matters worse for the philosophers. Whatever its provenance, the existence of the condition is contingent upon another condition ad infinitum; hence Rāzī writes: as for the first [case] then the [said] division applies regarding its coming-to-be and, as such, results in an infinite regress [fa ‘ala al-awwal ya’ūd al-taqśīm fī kayfiyat ḥudūthihi wa-ylzam al-dawr wa-l-tasalsul].

On the other hand, to argue that the condition is ontologically prior to the first term in the series (mutasābiq) does not necessarily obviate the problem, says

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Rāzī. If we accept that the condition is indeed ontologically prior to the series, then we have to ask ourselves whether it had always existed. For the philosophers to maintain the validity of the original premise (i.e. an infinitely regressing series of temporally originated contingents is possible), they have to concede that the condition did not always exist. But, Rāzī writes, that which did not always exist could only have been brought into existence by an external cause. Does this external cause rely on another cause to bring it into existence? It would, says Rāzī, but this further complicates the problem because creates another infinitely regressing series of conditional causes.

Thus, the conditional cause that triggered the series is not necessary in itself but contingent upon another external cause, which did not always exist. Concomitantly, says Rāzī, the philosophers will have to contend with one of four possible scenarios: (i) to admit the existence of an uncaused temporal contingent; (ii) to admit the possibility of an effect that had always existed but which was contingent upon a cause that did not always exist; (iii) to admit the possibility where the notion of causality is ontologically prior to the occurrence of the actual cause in concerto; and (iv) to admit the possibility that causes (asbāb) and their effects (musabbabāt) are, at once, infinitely regressing.

However, since all these possibilities lead to absurd conclusions; thus claim of the philosophers that an infinitely regressing series of temporally originated contingent is possible is false.

In sum, Rāzī is of the opinion that when the philosophers uphold the possibility of a self-sufficient infinitely regressing series of contingent, they ‘close

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the door’ to the possibility of proving the existence of a creator (insidād bāb ithbāt al-
šānī’).\footnote{Rāzī, al-Maṭālib, vol. 1, pp. 75-76.} Before responding to the Rāzī. He writes thusly:

...However it must known that such objections are of concern to the philosophers [not the theologians] because they uphold the possibility of an infinitely regressing series of contingents that, [absurdly] does not terminate in the First (al-ʾawwal). Moreover, they [the falāsifa] do not believe that God is a voluntary agent, but He acts due to necessity.

However, our belief, and that of all mutakallimūn, is the world is created, and a Principal Originator brings all creation into being. [Hence], unlike the falāsifa, our view protects us from adopting theologically repugnant positions. Our method offers the soundest proof for the existence of the Necessary Being. [It must be noted that] belief in the pre-eternality of the world amounts to denial of the Creator, [in fact] this is the madhhab of physicalist atheists (al-dahriyya).\footnote{Rāzī, al-Maṭālib, vol. 1, p. 160 [Quoted in: Dashtakī, 'Risāla fī ithbāt al-bārī’, in Muṣannafāt, vol. 2, p. 765].}

Certainly that Rāzī’s influence in Shiraz was pervasive is indicated by the fact that Mīr Ṣadr al-Dīn felt obliged to quote and refute his lengthy objections. So how does Mīr Ṣadr al-Dīn respond to Rāzī’s objections?

Firstly, he challenges Rāzī’s claim that the so-called condition, which did not always exist, requires a preparatory cause to bring into existence. According to Mīr Ṣadr al-Dīn, preparatory causes are not real entities. Instead, he writes: all that there is to the matter is that an essence that was causal in potentiality became causal in actuality (ghāyat ma-fī al-bāb inna dhātan lam takun ʿillatan thuma ʿillatan biʾl-fiʾl).\footnote{Dashtakī, ‘Risāla fī ithbāt al-bārī’, in Muṣannafāt, vol. 2, p. 765.} In other words, Rāzī fails to realize that causes are not real entities; they do not subsist in external reality, but ‘exist’ as essences in the mind. Therefore, the condition that Rāzī speaks of is not real, but mentally posited, so this invalidates at least one of his objections. Moreover, Rāzī is accused of failing to provide proof that preparatory causes are real. Mīr Ṣadr al-Dīn writes:

[Rāzī’s] claim that the ʿiliyya is a thing that subsists in actual reality (amr mawjūd fīʾl-
and that it requires a cause to bring into existence, is impossible (mamnū‘). All that there is to the matter is that an essence that was in potentiality became an essence in actuality. Therefore this does not necessitate the supposition that the preparatory cause (al-ʿilīyya) was non-existent but later became existent and real.

To answer Rāzī’s second objection that charges the falāṣīfa of ‘closing the door to the possibility of proving the existence of the creator’, Mīr Šadr al-Dīn reproduces an argument that was central to medieval debates about the origins of the world. He says, since the Ashʿaris subscribe to the doctrine of creationism, they themselves fail to prove that the world is not pre-eternal:

There is no doubt that temporally generated contingents exists; such contingents must have been brought into existence by an efficient cause. The efficient cause is either temporally originated or pre-eternal. The former entails an infinitely regressing series [to which the theologians object]. However, if the efficient cause is pre-eternal, it could not have been an efficient cause in actuality prior to moment of creation/origination. Concomitantly, this begs the question: whence comes the efficient cause?

Hence, this objection ought to be responded to by the theologians, not the philosophers. At any rate, Mīr Šadr al-Dīn admits that nothing can be a cause of itself, since a cause essentially precedes its effect. Quoting from Fārābī’s Fuṣūs al-hikma, he says:

Contingent causes cannot continue ad infinitum, since each of them is an intermediary (li-kul wāḥid minhā khāṣṣyat al-waṣṭ), being caused in one aspect and a cause in another. Everything that is intermediary must have a limit, and a limit is an end, so that contingent things must depend on the existence of a necessary existent, who is unaffected by the causes, whether material, formal, final or efficient.

In conclusion, Mīr Šadr al-Dīn does not agree with the claim by some philosophers that a self-sufficient series of contingent causes is possible. Nevertheless, he responded to Rāzī’s objections to such a claim, simply because in his view these objections were beside the point; he accuses Rāzī of shifting attention away from

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465 Rāzī seems to be suggesting that the ‘illa (the cause) is iʿtibārī (derivative).
467 Mīr Šadr al-Dīn quotes from the Sharḥ risālat Zaynān al-Kabīr.
Avicenna’s proof and focusing instead on an issue of secondary importance.  

2.4.2: On God’s unity

Having demonstrated the existence of the Necessary Being, Mīr Ţadr al-Dīn turns to the question of the Necessary Being’s unity and whether such notion is necessarily entailed. Before doing so, however, he sets out the following premise. The notion of existent (mafḥūm al-mawjūd), that is, existence (wujūd), is not additional to the essence of the Necessary Being. The same holds true for the notion of necessity (wujūb). Both existence and necessity are predicated of the Necessary Being in the sense of being existential qualities. But this, says Mīr Ţadr al-Dīn, presents us with a conundrum.

To elaborate, he says think of a being whose existence is necessary, which we shall call A. There has to be something intrinsic or extrinsic to A’s essence which gives it the quality of being necessary. To argue that A’s necessity is something intrinsic (or essential) leads to absurd conclusions. In other words, to claim that A’s necessity is identical with A’s essence is the equivalent to saying something is prior to itself. This is because according to Mīr Ţadr al-Dīn the essence of something is ontologically prior to its existence, hence when applied to the example of A, its


\[470\] The influence of Avicenna’s writings on this discussion is quite evident. Cf. Ibn Sīnā, al-Shifā: Ilāḥiyāt, vol. 2, p. 43ff. However, the order of issues discussed is seemingly determined by Ţūsī’s Tajrīd and possibly Rāzī’s Malakhkhas. On this phenomenon, see Eichner, Towards the Construction of Islamic Orthodoxy, pp. 363-378. Of relevance here are the rebuttals by Tūsī to Rāzī’s critiques of the unity section in the Ishārāt. On this see, Mayer, ‘Fakhr ad-Dīn ar-Rāzī’s Critique of Ibn Sīnā’s Argument for the Unity of God in the Ishārāt, and Naṣīr ad-Dīn at-Ţūsī’s Defence’, pp. 199-218.


\[472\] Thus confirming that Mīr Ţadr al-Dīn subscribes to the theory of aṣālat al-māḥiyya, or the ontological priority of essence over existence. Be that as it may, it would appear that, earlier in his life, Mīr Ţadr al-Dīn held on to the idea that existence is ontological prior to essence. This belief is
essence would therefore be prior to its necessity (which is an existential quality).

But this is absurd, writes Mīr Ṣadr al-Dīn. So we must turn to the other possibility, in which A’s necessity and existence are additional to its essence. Does this help us overcome the conundrum? Far from it, writes Mīr Ṣadr al-Dīn, for it further complicates the problem.

Additional qualities are accidental to the essence of the thing. We must therefore avoid a conclusion whereby the notions of necessary and existence are accidental to A. Otherwise we have to concede that a necessary being such as A admit multiplicity and is necessary-due-to-something-else (wājib al-wujūd bi-ghayrihi), a pernicious conclusion that is clearly at odds with the Islamic Revelations, and one which Mīr Ṣadr al-Dīn cautiously avoids.⁴⁷³

So if A’s necessity is neither intrinsic nor extrinsic, how can we justifiably refer to A as a necessary being? The problem, says Mīr Ṣadr al-Dīn, lies in our definition of the Necessary Being and in the fact that philosophers reading Avicenna claimed without justification that the Necessary Being has an essence.

Essences, Mīr Ṣadr al-Dīn continues, are considered in abstraction from determinate existence, and yet the Necessary Being cannot be considered independent of existence, since the Necessary Being is real (ḥaqīqa), we cannot problematize it using abstractive categories, such as genus or differentia.

Hence, regarding its relation to the Necessary Being, the notion of necessity is not an extrinsic quality imposed upon the Necessary Being (mashhūm al-wājib bi’l-dhāt laysa zā’idan ‘alayih fa huwa wājibun bahtun) but the very reality of the Necessary

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Being, Mīr Ṣadr al-Dīn writes:

The Necessary Being is pure necessity (wājib baḥt). That is not to say that It is necessary like [the letters] alif or yāʾ are necessary, which are contingents, since both are necessary through something else, [such as] for example, [when we say] the heavens, or earth, are necessary, or man is necessary. Generally speaking, contingents accept division [into the categories] of wājib bi’l-ghayr and mumkin, whereas the Necessary Being cannot accept such divisions.\(^{474}\)

Therefore the necessity with which the Necessary Being is characterized is neither extrinsic nor ontologically independent, but identical to it. Put in theological terms, God exists necessarily, the necessity of His existence is not an additional attribute, nor is it an independent quality that inheres therein; but, God is pure necessity and pure existence (wujūd maḥḍ).

To help us understand why Mīr Ṣadr al-Dīn is insistent that the Necessary Being cannot have an essence, we must consider Avicenna’s famous distinction between wujūd and māhiyya.\(^{475}\) We must also bear in mind that the claims perpetuated by Averroes and Suhrawardī that Avicenna considers existence to be an ‘accident’ which is preceded by the essence is no longer tenable, as shown by Fazlur Rahman.\(^{476}\) An interesting passage in the Ishārāt shows that Avicenna believed the existence of something precedes its essence, where he writes: wa lā mutaqadim bi’l-wujūd qabl al-wujūd.\(^{477}\)

An essence (māhiyya) can be considered in isolation from any given mode of existence, Avicenna writes in the metaphysics section of the Shifa’ that an essence

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\(^{477}\) Ibn Sīnā, al-Ishārāt, p. 270.
considered in itself, such as, for example, horse-ness, is:

Nothing at all save horse-ness. Indeed in itself it is neither one nor many, nor something existing in either concrete particulars or in the soul, nor is it in any of that either potentially or actually such that [that] would enter into horse-ness. [The essence of horse-ness considered in itself] is in fact nothing but horse-ness.⁴⁷⁸

That the Necessary Being has an essence which is His existence, famously expressed by Avicenna as inniyat al-wājib māhiyyatahu, was seldom contested by medieval Muslim philosophers; however, according to Ghiyāth al-Dīn, the Ash‘ari mutakallimūn of Shiraz rejected this argument which lead Mīr Šadr al-Dīn to respond with a counter-argument.⁴⁷⁹ They, the Ash‘aris, argued that if the notion of ‘necessity’ is not additional to the Necessary Being, then it is either an integral part of it or identical with it. The former, they maintained, entails multiplicity and in which case the Necessary Being becomes a composite (murakkab); whereas the latter forces the philosophers into a position whereby they must admit the Necessary Being has an essence separate from existence, which contradicts Avicenna’s argument about the essence.⁴⁸⁰

Responding to these critiques, Mīr Šadr al-Dīn says the notion of ‘necessity’, although identical with the Necessary Being, does not, however, entail the Necessary Being having an essence (innahu ’aynahu wa-lā yulzam minhu an yakān māhiyyatahu).⁴⁸¹ Here he explains that in the modality of nafs al-amr, that is, in the modality of pure existence, notions (such as necessity) that are predicated univocally (al-ḥaml bi‘l-muwāṭi‘) – whether essentially (al-ḥaml al-dhātī) or accidentally (al-ḥaml al-‘aradī) – are identical to and in union with the subject. The

⁴⁷⁸ Ibn Sīnā, al-Shīfā’ vol. 1, pp. 37, 43, 46.
essence of such subject is given in the answer to the question what is it? (mā huwa).

For example, man is said to be a rational animal that is capable of walking; however in and of themselves these predicative notions are not man; in other words if asked ‘what is man?’ we cannot reply he is ‘rational’ or he is ‘capable of walking’. This, says Mīr Ṣadr al-Dīn, is rejected even by the human innate nature, fiṭra. Instead, man may be said to be a ‘rational animal’. This, he writes, is an existential quality that describes man but does not necessarily refer to his essence. In the case of the Necessary Being, Mīr Ṣadr al-Dīn argues that It has no essence, though we sometimes think of notions such as necessity which are predicated of It as Its essence; whereas in reality they describe an existential quality, given that the Necessary Being is a pure existent that is beyond essences (al-mawjūd al-baḥt al-munazzah ‘an al-māhiyya).

Hence, Mīr Ṣadr al-Dīn response to the Ashʿari critiques involves a semantic clarification of the Avicennan principle of māḥiyat al-wājib inniyatahu.

Having set out these introductory remarks, Mīr Ṣadr al-Dīn then proceeds to demonstrate that there cannot be multiple necessary beings. Centuries ago, the Jewish philosopher of Baghdad, and follower of Avicenna, commonly known as Ibn Kammūna (d. 1284/683) attempted to show that the species of the Necessary Being is specific to Him, from this he wished to demonstrate the impossibility of His species being shared by two necessary beings. However, Ibn Kammūna was unable, at first, to rule out the possibility of there being two necessary beings sharing the same essence.483


This problematic, which the philosophers of Shiraz labeled *shubhat* Ibn Kammūnā, does not rule out the possibility of there being in existence multiple necessary beings, where each one being only representative within its own specific species.\(^{484}\) Although in his later writings, namely the *Taqrib al-maḥajja*, Ibn Kammūnā attempted to solve this problematic,\(^{485}\) the philosophers of Shiraz, nevertheless, took it as a starting point from which the uniqueness of the Necessary Being could be adduced.\(^{486}\)

So to rule out the possibility of postulating the existence of multiple necessary beings, which Ibn Kammūnā says is not impossible, Mīr Šadr al-Dīn advances the following argument. If there were two necessary beings, it follows, then, that each must be characterized by that which make them necessary, which Mīr Šadr al-Dīn calls ‘the specifying agent responsible for distinctiveness’ (*al-ta’ayyun alladhī bihi al-imtiyāz*).\(^{487}\) So we would end up with, for example, necessary beings A and B, where

\[^{484}\text{Pourjavady and Schmidtke, *A Jewish Philosopher of Baghdad*, p. 38.}\]

\[^{485}\text{Pourjavady and Schmidtke, *A Jewish Philosopher of Baghdad*, p. 39.}\]

\[^{486}\text{A recent study has argued that Dawānī was the first philosopher in Shiraz to discuss this particular sophistry, though he did not use such term to describe the problem. Dawānī first discusses the issue in his *Shawākid al-ḥur fi sharh hayakīl al-nūr* (written in 872/1468). And although Mīr Šadr al-Dīn alludes to the problem in his *Risāla fi ithbāt al-bārī* (written in 905/1497), he does not mention Ibn Kammūnā by name, nor does he use the term *shubha*. The first to coin the term *shubhat* Ibn Kammūnā was Khafrī, who also referred to the sophistry as ‘The Pride of the Devils’ (*iftikhār al-shayātīn*). Other philosophers in Shiraz to discuss this sophistry include Ghiyāth al-Dīn and Nayrīzī. See Pourjavady and Schmidtke, *A Jewish Philosopher of Baghdad*, pp. 41-44.}\]

each is said to be necessary due-to-its-essence (wājiban bīl-dhāt). However, to accept this, says Mīr Ṣadr al-Dīn, is to concede that the notion of necessity is additional to the essence, an extraneous entity which does not inhere therein and which violates the notion that the Necessary Being is simple. But, as shown previously, the notion of necessity is not additional to the necessary being (wa dhālik munāf līl-wujūb al-dhāt). So if the specifying agent is not identical to the essence of the postulated necessary beings, what, asks Mīr Ṣadr al-Dīn, is its nature?

If the specifying agent is indeed additional to the essence then its nature will be one that particularizes (takhṣīṣ), says Mīr Ṣadr al-Dīn. It will particularize one being in order to make it necessary; in other words, the specifying agent acts like a cause, one which Mīr Ṣadr al-Dīn calls ‘illa mukhassīsa.’ But, this cause cannot be identical to the necessary being, for something cannot be the caused of itself, and similarly a necessary being cannot rely on something external to make it so; since the consequent is false, so is the antecedent, namely that multiple necessary beings exist. Interestingly, Mīr Ṣadr al-Dīn claims that this proof is intuitive (ḥadsī), a position, which he claims, is inspired by Avicenna.

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491 Similarly, Mīr Ṣadr al-Dīn considers the following objection to his conclusion: it is possible to postulate the existence of multiple necessary beings, say, two or three, where the notion of necessity is predicated of each one without compromising the necessity of the other. To this he replies: this is not possible, since it leads to a situation where the notion of necessity is distinguishable from the essence, thus breaking up the necessary being into components or dimensions, which contradict the claim the He is pure existence (yakān kullun minhumā shay‘ an ākhar wājib al-wajūd wa-yakān wājib al-wajūd qābilan li-an yuqsim ilā māhiyya wa-mafhum al-wājib...wa dhālik yunāfī al-wajūb al-dhāt).

492 Ibn Sīnā, al-Ishārāt, p. 270; idem, al-Shīfā’, vol. 1, p. 43ff. The Peripatetics were not the only Muslim philosophers who refuted the so-called Ibn Kammūnā sophistry. Suhrawardī, founder of the ishrāfī philosophy, writes that there cannot be more than one Necessary Being. He says if we postulate, for example, the existence of multiple necessary beings, A and B, then one of the following cases will occur:
Unlike Avicenna who argued philosophically that there can only be one necessary being (wājib al-wujūd yajib an yakān dhātan wāhida), Mīr Ṣadr al-Dīn sprinkles his argument with scriptural evidence, which he considers to be the coup de grace to the multiple necessary beings’ sophistry.

For instance, he cites the Qur’an 21:22, ‘Why, were there gods in earth and heaven other than God, they would surely go to ruin; so glory be to God, the Lord of the Throne, above that they describe!’ This, says Mīr Ṣadr al-Dīn, is clear proof that that God, or the Necessary Being (he uses these terms synonymously), is One (burhān ākhar ‘alā tawhīdīhī). As indicated by the verse, the Qur’an associates multiplicity of necessary beings with ruin (fāsād). Moreover, Mīr Ṣadr al-Dīn writes that if there were multiple gods, each would require an external agent to bring into

1. A and B have nothing in common.
2. A and B have everything in common.
3. A and B have something in common, i.e. C.

The first, he says, cannot be true, since A and B have at least one thing in common, both are Necessary Beings. The second scenario is equally unlikely, because if A and B had everything in common, then they would be the same. The third scenario implies that A and B have something in common, and yet there are no differences between them, which is equally problematic. This is because if A and C is a necessary being, then C cannot be a contingent part, since this goes against all definitions of the Necessary Being. The same holds true with regard to B and C. See Suhrwardī, Opera Metaphysica et Mystical, ed. S.H. Nasr (Tehran, 1993), vol. 3, pp. 34-34. Cf. Mehdi Amin Razavi, Suhrwardi and the School of Illumination (Surrey, 1997), pp. 38-39.


494 Dashtakī, ‘Risāla fi ithbāt al-bārī’, in Muṣannafāt, vol. 2, p. 798. A similar argument can be found in a reported exchange between the sixth Shi’i Imam Ja’far al-Šādiq and a dualist (zindiq); the Imam was asked whether there can be two or more gods. He replied, ‘had there been two gods then three scenarios would arise: (i) both are equally powerful, (ii) one is stronger than the other, or (iii) both are weak.’ The Imam then explains that the first scenario is inconsistent with reality; for the cosmos exhibit order and harmony; had there been two gods, both equally powerful, there would have been chaos and disorder. Hence the first scenario can be ruled out. He then continues to say that the second scenario is untenable; for there cannot be one god that is strong and another weak. This rules the remaining two. But, the Imam says, if there were two powerful gods who exist separately from each other and do not interfere with each other’s affairs, they would at least have one thing in common. That which they have in common would also share the property of being pre-eternal. However, he objects, this leaves us with three gods. Again, those three gods would also have a common feature that they all share. Similarly, this feature would also be pre-eternity, thereby leaving us with four gods, and so on ad infinitum. See Muḥammad b. Yāqūb al-Kulaynī, Uṣūl al-kāfī (Tehran, 1424 H/2003), vol. 1, p. 103.
being, for a single entity cannot duplicate itself without an external stimulus; however God cannot be contingent upon something other; therefore there cannot be but One God, he concludes.495

Finally, Mīr Şadr al-Dīn maintains that multiplicity of necessary beings, or gods, would require at one necessary being to trigger the process of multiplicity; this, however, requires change to occur in the divine essence; but, as shown earlier, this is philosophically problematic, for the divine essence is simple and cannot undergo change, which associated with composite entities.496 If, however, change does occur in the divine essence, it has to be triggered by an external cause, for something cannot be the cause of itself; in such case, the divine essence can no longer be qualified with the notions of necessity and simple, but rather contingency and composite. So to avoid such pernicious conclusions, Mīr Şadr al-Dīn, quoting from Fārābī’s Fuṣūṣ, writes:

The [notion of] necessary being cannot be predicated of many, multiple entities. Otherwise It [i.e. Necessary Being] will be caused (maʿlūlan). The claim that multiple gods are possible will [concomitantly] obliterate (intīfāʾ) [conceptually] that which is necessary-due-to-its-essence (al-wājib bīl-dhāt). Consequently, when the necessary-due-to-its-essence is no longer, the earth and the heavens and all creation will cease to be.497

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495 He writes: ma’nā al-wāḥid yastaḥlīl an yata’ddad bi-nafsiti bi’l-ḍarūra... See Dashtakī, ‘Risāla fī ithbāt al-bārī’, in Musannafūt, vol. 2, p. 799. The reason why multiple gods or necessary being are associated with ruin has something to do with competition for cosmological dominion; Mīr Şadr al-Dīn explains that each deity would wish to implement its plan of cosmological order; and given that different deities will have different plans, competition between them will ensue, a cosmic battle so to speak, one that will undoubtedly bring destruction and ruin to the cosmos. For this reason, he explains, the Qur’an associates multiplicity with ruin.


497 Dashtakī, ‘Risāla fī ithbāt al-bārī’, in Musannafūt, vol. 2, p. 799. In the relevant section of the Asfūr, Mullā Şadr advances a similar argument to Mīr Şadr al-Dīn. Although Mullā Şadrā claims to be the first philosopher to adequately refute the so-called Ibn Kamānīnī sophistry, his line of argument is similar to that of Mīr Şadr al-Dīn. See Shīrāzī, al-Ḥikma al-mutaʿāliya fi l-asfūr al-arba a, vol. 6, pp. 51-56. Mullā Şadrā writes, ‘we have attained this conclusion through a special path of divine provenance, which none before me have attained’ [qad sabaq mina ṣariq khāṣʿ arshī fī ḥādhā al-bāb lam yatafaṭṭan bihi aḥad min qabil] (Shīrāzī, al-Ḥikma al-mutaʿāliya, vol. 6, p. 51).
2.5: On God’s Attributes

After establishing through philosophical proof the existence of God and His unity, Mīr Ṣadr al-Dīn turns his attention to the essence-attribute problem. Prior to him, however, intellectual speculations relating to God’s unity (tawḥīd) and His transcendence (tanzīh) dominated the intellectual landscape in the Islamicate world. In their quest for scriptural exegesis, Muslim thinkers made the essence-attributes problem central to speculative religious concerns. The overarching dominance of this theme in Islamic thought would later evince itself in the disputes between representatives of different intellectual trends in Islam.⁴⁹⁸

The Muʿtazili view

In order to defend unity (tawḥīd) and transcendence (tanzīh), what they believed to be the quintessential doctrines of Islam, the Muʿtazilis stressed that God is one not insofar as He is the only being that there is, but insofar as He is absolutely one in the perfect unity of His being (wāḥid fi ṣifātihi),⁴⁹⁹ and the distinction of perfections would simply be ad modum intelligendi.⁵⁰⁰ Abū l-Hudhayl al-ʿAllāf (d. 227/841) was the first Muʿtazili to proffer this argument.⁵⁰¹ It was famously expressed in the formula: ‘God is knowing by a knowledge that is He, is powerful by a power that is He, and is living by a life that is He (ʿālim bi-ʿilm huwa huwa wa-qādir bi-qudra hiya huwa wa-ḥayy

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Some Muʿtazilis were wary of Abū l-Hudhayl’s formulation. Fearing it could introduce multiplicity into the divine essence, al-Naẓẓam (d. 221/836), who was a nephew of Abū l-Hudhayl, suggested an alternative reading expressed in the following formula: ‘God is from eternity knowing, living, powerful, hearing, seeing, eternal by Himself (li-nafsihi).’

The subsequent generation of Muʿtazilis distinguished between two types of attributes: attributes of essence (ṣifāt al-dhāt) and attributes of act (ṣifāt al-fiʿl).

Regarding the attributes of essence, Abū ʿAlī al-Jubbāṭi asserted that God existent, living, knowing, and powerful because of His essence (li-dhāthihi). In Jubbāṭi’s view God is absolutely one and undivided, and when one says ‘God knows’ there is no assertion of the reality of any entity other than God’s self (nafsuḥū). Jubbāṭi’s son Abū Hāshim advanced the same argument, but with some modification.

For Abū Hāshim the phrase ‘because of His essence’ meant ‘because of His states’ (ahwāl). God is thus existent, living, powerful, and knowing by that which He is upon in His essence (li-mā huwa ʿalayhi fī dhāthihi). According to Abū Hāshim and the Başran Muʿtazilis following him, known as the Bahshamiyya, the expression ḥāl (state) designates the ṣifa (attribute). In order to avoid introducing multiplicity in God, Abū Hāshim adapted the concept of ḥāl employed by the grammarians for the purposes of formulating a philosophical interpretive tool for the concept of the attribute. Abū Hāshim and successors went on to classify the attributes into five basic categories which apply to God and man. The first is the attribute of essence, which is the thing’s being itself what it is in itself (ma-huwa ʿalayhi fī dhāthihi).

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504 Richard Frank, ‘Ḥāl’, in EI².
Accordingly, the attribute of essence is irreducible. The second is the essential attribute. These are attributes whose actuality is entailed by the attribute of essence given the actuality of its existence. The third is the attribute whose actuality flows immediately from an entitative determinant cause (ʿilla). The fourth is an attribute whose actuality depends on the agent that effects the existence of the thing. The fifth is the attribute whose actuality is in the thing is due neither to its essence nor to an entitative cause (lā ʾil-nafs wa-lā ʾilla).

The Ashʿari view

According to Ashʿarī, believers are required to affirm God’s attributes when the Qur’an speaks explicitly about them, but one must avoid misreading these attributes in anthropomorphic terms, otherwise one could fall into the pitfall of affirming multiplicity.

For Ashʿarī God has eight attributes of essence: power, knowledge, life, will, hearing, sight, speech, and endurance (baqāʾ). The Ashʿaris maintain that the attributes of essence are eternal and inhere in God’s essence (qāʾima bi-dhātihi).

For instance when one says God is powerful (qādir) and knowing (ʿālim), one is

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508 Abd al-Qāhir al-Baghdādī, Kitāb al-farq bayn al-firqa wa-bayān al-firqa al-māfiya minhum (Cairo, 1910), pp. 322, 326; There is some internal controversy over ‘will; some Ashʿaris claim that it is unlike the other attributes, given that it hints at action or intention rather than being everlasting and unchanging. See Muhammad b. ʿAbd al-Karīm al-Shahrastānī, al-Mīlāl wa-l-nihā, eds. Amīr ʿAlī Mīhnā and ʿAlī Ḥasan Fārū (Beirut, 1414 H/1993), vol. 1, p. 108.
referring to the entitative determinants of power and knowledge which subsists in His essence.\textsuperscript{509}

The Ash‘aris say further that the attributes are not mere qualifications, like knowing, powerful, etc., but are in fact corresponding entitative determinants (or substantives). They are not only words, but also real things, which exist in God (ṣifāt al-dhāt) or which are produced in God (ṣifāt al-fīl). Ash‘ari and the Ash‘aris following him argued that the attribute (ṣifa) and the attribution (wasf) are distinct. The latter is a word (qawl), but the former is a real existent residing in God.\textsuperscript{510} These entitative determinants are neither identical with nor other than Him (ṣifāt azaliyya qā‘ima bi-dhātihā lā yuqāl hiya huwa wa-lā hiya ghayrihi).\textsuperscript{511}

\textbf{The Shi‘i view}

The emergence of a systematic Shi‘i kalām tradition came some time after the major occultation of the Twelfth Imam (circa 330/942).\textsuperscript{512} On the question of divine attributes post-occultation Shi‘i theologians followed the traditional Mu‘tazili position. Mufid, for example, rejects the Ash‘ari thesis of realism, which affirms the ontological reality of God’s attributes. Mufid accuses the Ash‘aris of violating the


basic principles of divine unity (tawḥīd) and transcendence. According to Mufīd, the essence-attribute question should be tackled as a language problem where attributes are looked at as signified ideas (maʿnan mustafād) that are peculiar to the object signified. Other Shiʿi theologians such as Hīlī stated that God’s essential attributes are entailed by His essence. Hīlī stated that God’s attributes are additional to His essence in ratiocination (zāʾida ʿan al-dhāt fiʾl taʾaqqul); these mental concepts do not, however, have a reality in the external world (fiʾl khārij) beside His essence.

The Falāsifa (Avicennan) view

Like their mutakallimūn counterparts, the falāsifa, too, discussed the essence-attribute problem in their writings, albeit with less intellectual vigour. The Peripatetics, addressed this question in terms of an ontological analysis of the modalities of being; namely impossibility, contingency and necessity. For Avicenna, the impossible is that which cannot come into being, its existence is not possible; whereas the contingent in itself (mumkin bi-dhātihi) may or may not come into being without entailing a contradiction. In order to become actualized, the contingent would require an external cause other than itself. When actualized, it breaks its relation of indifference to being and non-being and becomes a ‘necessary

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514 Mufīd, Awāʾil al-mafaqāt, pp. 55-56.
In other words, contingency-in-itself is potential beingness that could eventually be actualized by an external cause other than itself. Avicenna points out that the chief difference between necessity and contingency is metaphysical, the Necessary Being is necessary-due-to-itself (wājib al-wujūd bi-dhātihi); put differently, it is true in itself, while the contingent being is ‘false in itself’ and ‘true due to something other than itself’. The necessary is the source of its own being without borrowed existence. Denying its existence amounts to a contradiction, thus it has always existed pre- eternally. As we saw earlier, Avicenna maintains that the Necessary Being has no quiddity, or essence, other than Its existence.

Thus in Avicennan metaphysics the essence-attribute problem particularly in the manner expressed by the theologians is somewhat irrelevant. One notices some reluctance on the part of Avicenna to discuss the complexities of the Necessary Being’s essence in terms peculiar to the theologians; for instance, in the relevant section of the Shifāʾ, Avicenna takes pains to underscore the importance of relying on philosophical categories when discussing the essence and unity of the Necessary Being. As if to warn against the perils of affirming the ontological reality of the attributes spoken of in scripture, Avicenna says the Necessary Being cannot admit multiplicity whatsoever. His essence, Avicenna continues, is absolute unity and pure existence. In fact, His essence is nothing but existence. Avicenna goes as far as to say, that His essence is His existence (inna al-awwal lā māhiyya lahu

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ghayr al-inniya).\textsuperscript{520}

In the treatise known as the \textit{Risāla ʿarshiyya fī tawḥīd Allāh taʿālā wa-ṣīfātihī}, which contain a useful précis of his views on monotheism and the essence-attribute problem, Avicenna states that the attributes are not additional to the divine essence.\textsuperscript{521} According to Avicenna, the attributes of praise and perfection (ṣifāt al-madhī wa-l-kamāl) are of two kinds: first, attributes that are relational (iḍāfa); these are not additional to the divine essence, but are used to predicate something of God, or the Necessary Being, such as saying God is willful and powerful, both of which are relational to God being knowledgeable. Second, attributes of negation (salbiyya), which tell us what God is not. For example, God cannot accept division whatsoever, nor can He admit multiplicity.\textsuperscript{522} This, says Avicenna, is an instance of negative attribution. One cannot, says Avicenna, think of the attributes as real substantive entities; this, he continues, leads to multiplicity, which in turn violates the basic principles of transcendence and unity. Even the divine names, which \textit{prima facie} hint at multiplicity, ought to be considered as referential and verbal descriptors, not real entities. Avicenna made clear that God, or the Necessary Being, is not the same as the descriptors, or the attributes, which we assign to Him. Avicenna explains:

If an attribute (ṣifā) and that to which it is attributed (al-mawsīf) are not the same, then each one will dispense with the other, or each one will need the other for it to be, or one will dispense with the other while the other will be in need of the former. In the first of these cases, both will be necessary beings due to themselves, and this is impossible. In the case where each of them needs the other, then neither is a wājib al-wujūd bi-dhātihi, and this

\textsuperscript{520} Ibn Sīnā, \textit{al-Shīfā‘: ilāhiyāt}, vol. 2, p. 344.

\textsuperscript{521} Ibn Sīnā, \textit{‘al-Risāla al-ʿarshiyya‘}, p. 247. He says in the prologue that he was asked to compose a short summary of the proofs for the existence of God as well as of the discussions on the essence-attribute problem. This may suggest that this work was intended for students and educated persons who are not yet familiar with advanced philosophical argument. One notices that Avicenna employs both philosophical and theological language. In fact, the entire treatise reads as a philosophical exegesis of Qur’an 21:22, which reads: ‘Why, were there gods in earth and heaven other than God, they would surely go to ruin; so glory be to God, the Lord of the Throne above that they describe!’.

\textsuperscript{522} Ibn Sīnā, \textit{‘al-Risāla al-ʿarshiyya‘}, pp. 247-248.
is impossible in the case of what we call God. However, if one has no need of the other, but it needed by it, then one of them acts as the cause of the other. So in this case, if what is ascribed with an attribute is in need of it, the one in need is characterized by a lack, and this does not apply to God.\textsuperscript{523}

\subsection*{2.5.1: Mīr Ṣadr al-Dīn’s on the essence-attribute problem}

The discussion on the essence-attribute problem makes up the most part of Mīr Ṣadr al-Dīn’s \textit{Risala fi Ithbāt al-wājib}. In typical fashion, Mīr Ṣadr al-Dīn begins his argument by summarizing the Ashʿarī objections in which they accused the philosophers of denying the non-conceptual existence of the attributes, known in polemics as \textit{nafy al-ṣifāt}. Mīr Ṣadr al-Dīn considers the following objection against the philosophers:

The philosophers famously said, ‘the attributes of the Necessary-due-to-Its-Essence (\textit{al-wājib bi’l-dhāt}) are identical [to it] (\textit{‘aynahu}).’ It has been said against them [however], ‘This [position] amounts to negation of the attribute because they [the philosophers] do not concede that there is an Essence and an attribute that are in fact in union (\textit{muttaḥidān})’...This [i.e. the position held by the philosophers] is manifestly invalid and no rational person accepts it as valid. This is because each of the attribute (\textit{al-ṣifā}) and subject of attribution (\textit{al-mawsūf}) are other than that which it accompanies...for example, your essence is insufficient for things to be unveiled before you [i.e. to know things], but it requires an attribute of knowledge, which inheres within you; this is contrary to His Essence, exalted is He, for He does not need an inherent attribute [of knowledge] for things to be unveiled before Him and become manifest; however, [in the case of the Necessary] that which is conceptual is already unveiled before His Essence, exalted is He, His Essence therefore is the attribute of knowledge. This paradigm applies to the rest of the attributes.\textsuperscript{524}

On the face of it, Mīr Ṣadr al-Dīn does not object to the claim that His Essence is the attribute of knowledge \textit{ipso facto}; however, his argument follows a different line of reasoning altogether. According to him, when the theologians, by whom he means

\textsuperscript{523} Ibn Sīnā, ‘al-Risāla al-‘arshiyya’, pp. 247-249.

However, Later Ashʿaris, such as Ghazālī, object to these claims by Avicenna by saying that he and those who follow him have opposed all Muslims by denying divine attributes. In fact, some stern jurists like Ibn Taymiyya did not spare the label of apostate for those philosophers like Avicenna who denied God’s attributes. The views of later Ashʿaris on the essence-attribute problem are discussed in detail in the section ‘on God’s knowledge of particulars’.

the Ash‘aris, discuss the essence-attribute problem they are essentially talking about two types of attributes: one, an attribute that is in union but not additional to the Essence; two, an attribute that is additional but not in union with the Essence.525

To explicate his position, Mīr Ṣadr al-Dīn turns the principle of nafs al-amr. Before delving into Mīr Ṣadr al-Dīn’s usage of the principle, a brief explanation is in order. Linguistically, nafs is synonymous with dhāt (essence), whilst amr corresponds to shay’ (lit. ‘thing’ or ‘existent’). The predication of nafs for dhāt and amr for shay’ is employed frequently in Arabic literature; hence when compounded, nafs al-amr can also mean dhāt al-shay’. As for the meaning of the term, generally speaking, Muslim philosophers speak of two realities, or modalities of existence: one is mental (dhihnī), while the other is extra-mental (khārijī). To grasp the nature of things, we make judgements about those things whereby we try to ascertain the truthfulness of our statements, or predications, by relying on the soundness and clarity of reason of our mental activity or judgements; or by trying to find an external correspondence, or match, to our mental conceptualizations in order to find an agreement, or assent, to our mental judgements. Writing in his Kashf al-Murād, Ḥillī explains:

Mental judgements (al-aḥkām al-dhihnīyya) can be ascertained with reference to external reality, or [with reference] to other means. If the mind reaches judgement concerning external things via similar external things, such as our saying, ‘man is an animal in external reality’, then [such mental judgments] must be correspond to external reality for the judgement to hold true, otherwise [the judgement is] false.

If the mind reaches judgement of external things through intelligible concepts, such as our saying, ‘man is contingent’, or if the mind reaches judgement of mental concepts through mental judgements, such as our saying, ‘contingency is the opposite of impossibility’, it must not necessarily correspond to external reality, because in external reality there is no such thing as contingency and impossibility, nor is there such a thing as contingent man. Once this is established, we say: correct judgement must not be ascertained through correspondence to external reality; as shown previously, judgement is not derived from

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525 Dashtakī, ‘Risāla fī ithbāt al-bāri‘, p. 825. The first is muttaḥida ghayr zā‘ida; the second, zā‘ida ghayr muttaḥida.
reference to external reality, neither must judgement correspond to mental reality, since mental activity can conjure lies; [for example] we may [falsely] think man is necessary, whereas in truth man is contingent.\textsuperscript{526}

However, beyond the two modalities of reality identified above, there is a third modality, where pure and incorruptible essences subsist, which philosophers call \textit{nafs al-amr}. There, the pure essences of things subsist in an extra-mental reality akin, but not equivalent, to Plato’s Forms; moreover, it is in \textit{nafs al-amr} where the truthfulness of judgements and statements is determined. Ḥillī adds:

If the truthfulness of judgements were ascertained by considering what corresponds in the mind, then the judgement ‘man is necessary’ would hold true, since there exist in the mind a corresponding mental form for this judgement. However, [the truthfulness of mental judgements is ascertained] by considering its correspondence [i.e. mental judgement] to \textit{nafs al-amr}.\textsuperscript{527}

It follows therefore that \textit{nafs al-amr} is the third modality that is applied generically to mental and extra-mental realities; it is subsistence in general, including the subsistence of existence, quiddity, and \textit{ʿitibārī} concepts (\textit{al-thubūt al-ʿāmm al-shāmil li-thubūt al-wujūd wa-l-māhiyya wa-l-mafāhiḥ al-ʿitibāriyya al-ʿaqliyya}).\textsuperscript{528} Let us consider an example using squares and finite bodies. Squares will always have four sides, and finite bodies will always be continuous; both of these statements are true and essential judgments subsisting in an extra-mental reality; their truthfulness, which is ascertained by correspondence to \textit{nafs al-amr}, does not require verification by, or correspondence to, human mental intellection or external reality. A corollary of this last is that \textit{nafs al-amr} cannot be applied to things false, illogical, and non-existent.\textsuperscript{529}


\textsuperscript{527} Ḥillī, \textit{Kashf al-murād}, p. 103.


This in mind, Mīr Šadr al-Dīn says, then, that attributes are of two types: (i) attributes of judgement, which can either be truthful and thus correspond to nafs al-amr, such as for example Zayd’s knowledge and mobility (al-‘ilm wa-l-ḥaraka); or (ii) attributes that are additional; for example, in the case of Zayd the attributes knowledgeable and mobile, which do not correspond to nafs al-amr, are accidental to Zayd. In external reality the attributes knowledgeable and mobile are identical to Zayd, though they are additional to his essence. 530 Consequently, it can be said that Zayd posses the attributes of being knowledgeable and mobile in external reality, but not in the modality of nafs al-amr, where the pure essence of Zayd subsist. Zayd can only be described as essentially knowledgeable and mobile if the attributes of knowledge and mobility correspond in fact, that is, to nafs al-amr. 531 Hence, according to Mīr Šadr al-Dīn, what determines whether Zayd’s attributes are essential or accidental to his essence is their correspondence, or lack of, to nafs al-amr, or in fact. 532

As for the the Necessary Being, Mīr Šadr al-Dīn explains that when the philosophers affirm that God is knower, they face the problem of admitting that there is something superadded to the Essence, namely knowledge. However, Mīr Šadr al-Dīn asserts that the attributes and the subject to which they are attributed, known as al-mawṣūf, are identical in fact, i.e. in nafs al-amr; suggesting thus that the attributes and essence are distinguishable in sense but identical in reference. Focusing on the example of ʿilm and qudra (knowledge and power), Mīr Šadr al-Dīn,


response to the Ash‘aris who accuse the philosophers of upholding ‘ilm and qudra as superadded attributes. He considers the following objection:

If you say ‘the meaning of al-qādīr (the powerful) is that in which qudra (power) subsist’, as elucidated by the folk of language (ahl al-lugha), then [it follows] if qudra is not an attribute of Him, He will not be powerful according to this definition; hence He cannot be considered powerful. Similarly, He cannot be considered knowledgeable and existent (‘ālim and mawjūd).

Mīr Ṣadr al-Dīn’s response to the above objection is follows:

I say: we do not concede that the meaning of al-qādīr is that in which qudra subsist. On the contrary, the true meaning [of qudra] is captured by what is expressed in the Persian as tavāna. The aforementioned definition of the folk of language is based on the grammatical rule where the participial is formed from the verb that subsists in the verbal noun. When they [i.e. ahl l-lugha] extended this grammatical rule to include the other participial, they realized that many attributes subsist in God.

To explain further, the theologians, relying on the rule of the relation between the active participial and the verbal noun, state that an attribute such as al-qādīr, which is the active participial (ism al-fā‘il), is formed from the qudra, its verbal noun (al-maṣdar). When applied to the attributes problem, al-qādīr denotes that in which qudra subsist. This is based on the grammatical rule, ism al-fā‘il ma-ishtaqa min fī l-li-man qāma bihi, where al-qādīr is the active participial and qudra is the verbal noun.

Be that as it may, Mīr Ṣadr al-Dīn considers this way of thinking about the divine attributes as problematic for two reasons. First, the supposition that the Necessary Being’s attributes subsist in the divine essence rest on considerations of language, not theology. Second, theologians cannot extend this the grammatical rule above to include wujūd and wujūb, for example. What the theologians say is invalid and implausible since to speak of wujūd or wujūb as a participial formed from the verbal noun is absurd. The implications, which Mīr Ṣadr al-Dīn dismisses as


illogical, are wujūd is a verbal noun formed from the verb, the Existent, which corresponds to God; this entails saying existence subsist in the Existent. Put differently, Mīr Ṣadr al-Dīn rejects the notion that God is Existent because existence, a supposedly superadded attribute, subsists in Him; and similarly with the Necessary and necessity. Mīr Ṣadr al-Dīn is adamant that this is manifestly untenable. In other words, neither philosophy nor monotheistic orthodoxy permits the supposition that God, the Existent, derives the said quality from the attribute of existence that exists in the Divine Essence. He writes:

Is it possible for the Necessary Being to have attribute that is additional to Him? There are different views on this matter. A group of theologians (ṭāʾifa min al-mutakallimīn) say it is possible, while the philosophers, along with some other theologians, do not.536

It is said that philosophers argue that the Simple Real (baṣīt al-haqīqa), which does not admit multiplicity, such as the Necessary Being, cannot be at the same time [an efficient] causal agent (fī il) of a thing and its receptive (qābil). Based on this assertion they [the philosophers] said it is impossible to characterize the Necessary Being with real attributes (imtīnāʾ ittiṣāf al-wajib bi-ṣifāt haqqīyya). They [i.e. the philosophers] explain further that the relationship between the efficient causal agent and its effect (mafūl) is that of necessity, whereas the relationship between the Receptacle and receptivity (maqbull) is that of contingency. [It follows that] necessity and contingency are opposites that cannot be present at the same time in the same locus [i.e. due to the law of non-contradiction]; nor is it possible to share the same properties.

Some [theologians] took objection to the above. They said: the efficient causal agent must necessarily generate an effect when the conditions that characterizes it as causal (fī iliya) are met. Similarly, when the conditions that characterize the receptive as receptive in actuality (qābil bi-l-fīl) are met, the receptivity (maqbull) must necessarily exist. If it said that the receptive when considered by itself does not necessitate the existence of the receptivity or lack of, then, similarly, the causal agent does not necessitate the existence of its effect when considered by itself. Thus, there is no difference [i.e. the causal agent and the receptive do have common properties].

I [i.e. Mīr Ṣadr al-Dīn] say: the difference between the two states [described above] is that the causal agent, when its conditions are met, becomes a causal agent in actuality; contrary to the receptive, which may or may not receive something when it becomes a receptive in actuality. Do you not see that a white gown is receptive to all colours (qābil li-sār al-alwān)? When the gown is considered in relation to its causal agent [i.e. that which adds colour to it], it must necessarily exist in its colourful form, whereas when the gown is considered in relation to its receptive [i.e. the possibility that it may acquire colour], it may or may not exist in its colourful form.537

536 This of course assumes God is a simple being, which is the case in Avicenna, but not for all the mutakallimīn.

In sum, Mīr Ṣadr al-Dīn is of the opinion that attributes are identical to the Divine Essence, which is transcendent and free from composition; his view is comparable to another Shi‘i-Mu‘tazili thinker, namely Mu‘īd, who argued, somewhat similarly, that attributes provide information about ideas peculiar to the thing described, however these ideas do not inhere in the object to which the attributes refer. 538

Further underscoring the Shi‘i consciousness that tinges his philosophical writing, Mīr Ṣadr al-Dīn brings the discussion to a close by quoting the first sermon of ‘Alī from the Nahj al-balāgha, which directly addresses the essence-attribute problem, and which, according to Mīr Ṣadr al-Dīn, serves as an accurate précis for his own view on the matter:

All praise is God’s whose praise cannot be duly recognized by speakers. Nor can those proficient in numeracy grasp His abundance. Nor can those who excel in good works give Him His due. The farthest horizons of mortal imagination cannot comprehend Him, nor can the keenest intellects apprehend Him. [The limit of] His description knows no bounds, nor is there in existence a worthy quality that can be ascribed to Him, nor is there an exhaustive time limit [during which He can be described truly], nor an infinitely prolonged age.

He brought creation into being through His omnipotent; He dispersed the winds through His mercy; and set stones as firm foundation for His vast earth.

The foremost religious obligation is to know Him. To know Him perfectly is to veraciously testify to His existence. To veraciously testify to His existence is to affirmatively recognize His unity. To affirmatively recognize His unity is to regard Him free from composition (al-ikhlāṣ lahu). To regard Him free from composition is to negate attributes ascribed to Him [nafy al-ṣifāt ‘anhu]. 539 Verily! Every attribute is other than that which it is attributed. Verily! That of which attributes predicate is other than the attributes.

Whoever describes God – exalted is He – has set up something similar to He. Whoever sets up something similar to He has accepted the existence of His dual. Whoever accepts the existence of His dual has divided Him. Whoever divides Him does not know Him. Whoever does not know Him points at Him sensibly. Whoever points at Him sensibly has limited Him. Whoever limits Him makes Him one of many. Whoever imposes spatial limitations upon Him has contained Him. And whoever imposes locality upon Him has made Him absent [from other localities]. 540

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538 Of course Mu‘īd is largely absent in the post-classical tradition and he is never alluded to or cited by Mīr Ṣadr al-Dīn. The comparison is quite interesting nevertheless.

539 Notice that ‘Alī does not say, nafy sifātahu.

2.5.2: On God’s knowledge

In Shiraz during the later part of the ninth/fifteenth century, the dispute between the Avicennan philosophers and the Ash’ari mutakallimūn regarding the issue of God’s knowledge was especially animated. The entire fifth chapter of the *Risāla* by Mīr Ṣadr al-Dīn is devoted to the question of God’s knowledge. In terms of length, it is by far the longest and most elaborate section in the entire treatise. Here Mīr Ṣadr al-Dīn rehearses the arguments of Avicenna, and in some places Mīr Ṣadr al-Dīn does not hesitate from couching Avicenna’s theory of God’s knowledge in theological language. One can only speculate that his purpose in doing so is to appeal to the Ash’ari theologians of Shiraz. Perhaps he felt Avicenna was misunderstood or misread, and he saw it necessary therefore to present Avicenna’s theory of God’s knowledge in such language so as not invite further theological denunciations. Indeed in the preceding centuries, Ghazālī singled out Avicenna’s theory of God’s knowledge of the particulars as one of three doctrines that amounted to heresy, and whose proponents are to be condemned as disbelievers.⁵⁴¹ Against this background, Mīr Ṣadr al-Dīn set out not only to restore faith in the philosophical tradition of Avicenna but to also attack Avicenna’s detractors, who, in Mīr Ṣadr al-Dīn’s opinion, failed to properly understand Avicenna.

For the early Ash’aris, when man ponders over the evidence that point to divine providence, he will realize that God is knowing (ʿālim).⁵⁴² Ash’ari writes:

Well-made works (al-afāl al-muḥakkama) can be wisely ordered only by one who is knowing (ʿālim). That is clear from the fact that a man who lacks skill and knowledge cannot weave a pattern brocade or execute fine points of craftsmanship...If works of wisdom could be produced by one who is not knowing, we could not know but that perhaps all the determinations, dispositions and works which proceed from living beings proceed from


⁵⁴² Similarly, according to Ash’ari, an inspection of the cosmological order leads to human affirmation that the Creator is powerful (qādiran) and wilful (murīdan).
them while they are unknowing. The impossibility of that proves that well-made works can be produced only by one who is knowing.

Ashʿaris proof that God is knowing is based thus on observation of the world of creation which point to an ordering produced by one who is knowing. This proof was also employed by the early Muʿtazili theologians and, later, by Shiʿi-Muʿtazilis such as Ḥillī. Later Ashʿari theologians such as Rāzī adopted the proof that was proffered by the school of Abū l-Ḥusayn al-Baṣrī as elucidated by Ibn al-Malāḥīmī. Writing in his Kitāb al-fāʾiq fī ʿuṣūl al-dīn, Ibn al-Malāḥīmī says:

And the proof that He is knowing (ʿālim) is based on the fact that from Him one sees well-wrought acts proceed. Well-wrought acts are ordered and correspond to action that carries benefit. An ordered act (al-ʿfiʿ al-murattab) require that one privileges one action over another...had there not been something beside [His] power (al-ʿamr) which decides which order is most befitting, [then order will not ensue]. This something (al-ʿamr) is that He is knowing.

By the same token, Rāzī argues that a powerful, voluntary agent (qādir mukhtār) acts with intention (qaṣd) in order to create and bring order. Intent to create and bring order is conditioned on the necessity of conceiving those essences, which ultimately leads to the conclusion that God is knowing. Rāzī writes:

The creator of the world is knowing because His acts are well-wrought and perfect as is indicated by observation and because the doer of a well-wrought, perfect act must be knowing. This is a known by immediate insight. Moreover, God acts by choice and a choosing agent is one who intends the production of a certain kind is subject to the condition that [the agent] conceives that essence. Thus it is established that God conceives some essences and the essences by themselves undoubtedly require the stability of some qualities and the non-existence of others. And the conception of what requires necessitates the conceptions of what is required. Thus, from God’s knowledge of these essences follows His knowledge of their concomitants and effects.


Against this background, Mīr Ṣadr al-Dīn states that to fully grasp that God is ‘knowing’, one must comprehend the following preliminary principles. Knowledge that leads to discernment is of four types: sensible cognition (iḥsās), imaginative cognition (takhayyul), fantastical cognition (tawahhum), and intellectual cognition (ta’āqqu). The mental faculty responsible for cognition/perception (al-qūwa al-mudrika) cannot make intellectual judgements or discernments if it is entrapped in matter. When in matter it can only make sensible, imaginative, or fantastical judgements. Mīr Ṣadr al-Dīn writes:

It [the mental faculty responsible for cognition] may be entrapped in obfuscating matter (al-ghawāṣīḥ al-māddiyya) such as the senses, in which case it [the mental faculty] cannot [employ] intellectual cognition (ta’āqqu). However, [the mental faculty] may be free from impeding matter, such as the intellectual faculty, in which case it [the mental faculty] can employ intellectual cognition. Thus, sensible/material things (al-umūr al-māddiyya) are intrinsically incapable of intellection. Whatever is attached to matter even if partially is thus unable to discern things, neither through the process of cognitive thinking or abstract intellection. Mīr Ṣadr al-Dīn adds:

Know that sensible things that are hindered [from intellection] by [the] things discussed already [i.e. senses] cannot be intellected themselves, unless the intellect divest it from matter. In such case [when the intellect divests sensible things from impediments such as matter] sensible things can be intellected. Thus the aforementioned obfuscation (al-ghawāṣīḥ) acts as barriers against intellection (‘aqīyya) and being intellected (ma qūliyya).

The philosophers (ḥukama) were able to discern through intuition that whatever is free

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from sensible impediments is thus capable of intellection and, moreover, can be intellec
ted. In fact such entity is said to be capable of intellec

Here Mīr Ṣadr al-Dīn is following the famous Fārābian and Avicennarian principle that
an immaterial entity must necessarily be capable of intellec
tion since it is free from
all forms of matter and materiality.\footnote{Ibn Sinā, al-Ishārāt, pp. 321-338 (namaṭ vii).} In his Epistle on the Intellect, Fārābī links the
immaterial intellect with the active intellect discussed in Book III of Aristotle’s De
Anima. Fārābī explains that the perpetual intellec
tion of the active intellect is due to
its absolute immateriality. He writes:

Then if one ascends by degrees from prime matter to the nature that is the corporeal forms
in prime matter, then up to the [potential intellect] and above that to the acquired intellect,
one will have reached something like the outermost boundary and limit to which the things
related to prime matter and matter reach. When one ascends from [that], it is to the first
level of immaterial beings, that of the Active Intellect. What Aristotle calls the ‘Active
Intellect’ in Book III of De anima is a separate form that has never been and never will be in
Anthology of Sources (Indianapolis, 2007), pp. 68-78, at p. 74.}

Avicenna forwards a similar argument in his commentary on Aristotle’s De Anima.

There, he states that an immaterial intellect is capable of intellec
ting all things
writes:

The faculty of sensible cognition (al-qūwa al-ḥassāṣa) does not cognize (idrāk) [intellectually]
because it has no other means to cognizes but its own means, which is incapable of
cognition. This is not true for the faculty of intellectual cognition (al-qūwa al-‘aqīyya), which
cognizes everything (ta qal kull shay).\footnote{Ibn Sinā, al-Ishārāt, p. 323.}

It follows then that the purpose of these introductory remarks by Mīr Ṣadr al-Dīn is
to show that every immaterial entity is capable of intellec
tion and being intellec
ted

itself, given that it will have all other intelligibles lay bare before it.

**That God knows His essence**

Mīr Ṣadr al-Dīn maintains that God knows His essence. He states that this view finds support in the traditions of the prophets, the arguments of the philosophers, and the reports of the pious scholars. Mīr Ṣadr al-Dīn advances two proofs to support this claim. First, that every immaterial entity knows itself. Since God is immaterial, He necessarily knows Himself. Second, knowledge is that which cannot be absent from the essence. In the case of God and other immaterial beings His essence cannot be absent from His essence (*nafsihi ghayr ghāʾib ’an nafsihi*). Therefore, God knows His essence.558

With this view, Mīr Ṣadr al-Dīn followed Avicenna who stated that the Necessary Being must necessarily know His essence through His essence. Avicenna writes:

The Necessary Being must necessarily intellect [or know] (*yaʿqal*) His essence through His essence.559

Similarly, Avicenna states:

The First has no opposite (*lā ḍidd lahu*), no genus, no differentia, and no limit...such Being must [necessarily] know His own essence and [must know that] He knows His essence.560

The school of Abū l-Ḥusayn al-Baṣrī advanced similar arguments to those proffered by Avicenna on the notion that God knows His essence. Ibn al-Malāhīmī explains that the essence of God is knowing and living (*ālima wa-ḥayya*). He writes:

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He knows His essence...He knows that His essence is real and necessary due to Its self (fa-innahu ta‘āla la-ya‘lam min haqiqaatihi ilā innahu haqiqa wājibat l-wujūd bi-dhātiha).  

Later Ash‘ari theologians such as Rāzī reach similar conclusions as Avicenna and the school of Baṣrī. Rāzī’s formulations, however, rest on teleological considerations, and may be summarised as follows: God is the creator (šāni’) of the cosmos. Every creator knows the thing it created. Concomitantly, the creator knows that it knows its creation. Since God created the cosmos, He too must necessarily know His creation as well as knowing His knowing of His creation. Therefore, God knows His essence.  

In Rāzī’s view, this argument is more sound than that produced by Avicenna. This is because Avicenna does not demonstrate how something that knows its essence knows all other intelligibles that are laid bare before it. Rāzī accuses Avicenna of relying on a priori assumptions. Against this view, Rāzī privileges an a posteriori argument, one that reaches the same conclusion but is based on observation of actual existents in the external world.  

Mīr Ṣadr al-Dīn rejects Rāzī’s argument even if its conclusion are correct. According to him, the correct argument and conclusion must follow the same line of reasoning as Avicenna. Mīr Ṣadr al-Dīn writes:  

Since the Necessary-by-Its-Essence (al-wājib bi-l-dhāt) is essentially immaterial, free from matter and its concomitants, He [necessarily] knows His essence. His knowledge of His essence is identical to His essence because, in this case, it is knowledge by presence (‘ilm ḥuḍūrī).  

563 Rāzī, al-Maṭālib, vol. 3, pp. 139-149.  
While Avicenna argued along similar lines, seemingly influenced by Aristotle’s Metaphysics Lambda, he however stressed that in the case of God, that He knows His essence and that He knows that He knows His essence are in fact one and the same. From this Avicenna concluded that God knows Himself, His creation, and the fact He knows that He knows both.\(^\text{567}\) Based on this Rāzī accused Avicenna of being unable to demonstrate that this does not amount to multiplicity occurring in unity.\(^\text{568}\) This may explain why Mīr Ṣadr al-Dīn chose to present his view in slightly different terms using the phrase ‘knowledge by presence’ (‘ilm ḥuḍūrī), which is seemingly less problematic than Avicenna’s articulations, since it does not give the Ashʿaris an opportunity to accuse Avicenna of upholding multiplicity in unity.

**How God knows existents that are other than His essence**

The central question with which Mīr Ṣadr al-Dīn grapples is as follows: if God knows multiple intelligibles does this entail the existence/occurrence of multiplicity in the divine essence, which is simple and one?

Rāzī held that God knows existents other than His essence. Rāzī compares the knowledge of God of other existents to man’s knowledge of other existents. Just as man knows an intelligible when the form of the intelligible is imprinted in him, God by the same token knows other existents by knowing their essences. Rāzī writes:

It has been established through demonstration (biʾl-dalīl) that knowledge of a thing does not occur except when the form of the intelligible is imprinted (intībā’) in the knower. Knowledge [of this nature] occurs in the essence of God, that is, when God knows of other existents, then [similarly] the essences [of these things] are present [in His essence] at the


same time. This is not impossible.569

The philosophers put forward a different argument as to how God knows other existents. According to Mīr Şadr al-Dīn, God’s knowledge of multiple intelligibles and existents, both externally and mentally, occurs by His essence. Since God decrees (yaqtaḍī) the existence of all existents in the realm of nafs al-amr, He is said to know all the multiple existents to which He bestows existence. This He knows, says Mīr Şadr al-Dīn, through His special command (amran makhṣūsan). However, His knowledge of other existents is not through an intermediary but it is immediately present before Him (ḥuḍūr). Mīr Şadr al-Dīn writes:

Given that the Necessary Being decrees [the existence of] all existents with all their specific attributes in the realm of nafs al-amr, He has special knowledge of everything that He decrees. The command with which He decrees is identical with His essence. And since He knows His essence (ʿāliman bi-nafsihi), that is, knowledge by presence (ʿilm huḍūr), He knows all the specificities of all the existents.570

Avicenna grappled with the same problem. Writing in the Ishārāt, Avicenna says:

You [may raise the following] question: If the intelligibles (al-maʿqūlāt) do not conjoin with that which knows [them], nor do they conjoin with each other, and since you admitted that the Necessary Being intellects everything, how then can you claim He is truly one when there [exists] multiplicity [in the divine essence]?571

Avicenna replies to this objection is as follows:

We say: since He knows His essence by His essence, and [since] His subsisting as an intellect by Himself due to His essence necessarily leads to His knowledge of the multiplicity, it follows [then] that the multiplicity comes as necessary consequence posterior to and not includes in the essence as a constituent of it. [In addition], the multiplicity proceeds in a hierarchy. The multiplicity of concomitants due to the essence – whether separate or not – do no cause a breach in the unity.572

Avicenna’s view is seemingly based on the earlier formulations by Fārābī, who stated that:

571 Ibn Sīnā, al-Ishārāt, p. 329.
572 Ibn Sīnā, al-Ishārāt, p. 329.
The Necessary Being is the original source of all emanation. He is manifest (ẓāhir).
Everything is from Him without there multiplicity occurring in Him (fa-lahu al-kull min hayth la-kathra fih). He insofar as He is manifest will grasp (yanâl)573 everything (i.e. intelligible) through His essence. And His knowledge of all existents (al-kull; lit. ‘everything’) comes after His knowledge of His essence (wa-ilmahu bi’l-kull ba’d dhâthi). And His knowledge of His essence is identical to His essence. Hence His multiple knowledge of everything comes after His knowledge of His essence, but in reality [His knowledge of His essence and His knowledge of multiple existents] is in union. Thus He knows everything but He remains one (fa-huwa al-kull fi’l-wâhda).574

Commenting on Fârâbî’s argument, Mîr Şadr al-Dîn says:

What he [i.e. Fârâbî] meant by ‘manifest’ is that which is free from matter (al-mujarrad min al-mâdda) and its concomitants (wa-lawâhiqha). The précis of his statement is that the Necessary Being is the source of all existents, but He is immaterial. Thus He knows/grasps (yanâl, lit. ‘gains’) all existents through [knowledge of] His essence. And as such multiplicity does not arise in His essence.575

But how does Mîr Şadr al-Dîn deal with the problematic claim by Fârâbî that God’s knowledge of His all the existents ‘comes after’ His knowledge of His essence? For this seems to imply multiple instances of comprehension; in other words, God’s knowledge appears to be compartmentalized and subject to the laws of temporality.

First, writes Mîr Şadr al-Dîn, God knows His essence through the first knowledge (al-‘ilm al-awwal). This, he explains, is the kind of knowledge that particularizes things (ma-yata’ayyan bihi amr). God alone is said to know in this manner. This modality of knowledge is the sole preserve of the Necessary Being.576

The second type of knowledge is called the Second Knowledge, al-‘ilm al-thânî. This is the actual process of particularization. Quiddities, for example, take their particular shape, form, and attributes by this knowledge. Hence God knows every existent through the First and Second knowledge. But since in Mîr Şadr al-Dîn’s view essences are prior to existences, God will know the essence of a thing through the

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573 Here yanâl can mean ‘to acquire’ or ‘to gain’ or ‘to grasp’. The last is perhaps the most accurate translation since it denotes ‘full comprehension of something’.


First Knowledge and then through the Second Knowledge. For this reason, Fārābī employs the phrase ‘comes after’, which does not refer to a temporal process but rather a conceptual order, a phrase to distinguish God’s knowledge of essences, which are fundamental, and His knowledge of existences, which are derivative.\(^{577}\)

As for the question of multiplicity and whether it occurs or inheres in the divine essence, Mīr Šadr al-Dīn says multiple intelligibles which represent datum, or knowledge of existents, do not inheres in the divine essence, but the forms which represent intelligibles in the sensible world exist in the realm of \textit{nafs al-amr} and subsist therein not as multiples but unity. It is this unity of forms that God knows. Therefore God knows of all existents. All existents insofar as their essences subsist in the realm of \textit{nafs al-amr} are known by God at once without entailing multiplicity occurring in His essence. Mīr Šadr al-Dīn calls this \textit{al-shuhūd al-‘ilmī}; that is, a divine witnessing of knowledge which occurs without any intermediaries.\(^{578}\)

Ghiyāth al-Dīn tells us that Dawānī opposed this claim put forward by Mīr Šadr al-Dīn. According to Dawānī, the presupposition that all essences are witnessed by God in the realm of \textit{nafs al-amr} cannot be demonstrated philosophically (i.e. through rational argument). Dawānī accuses of Mīr Šadr al-Dīn of relying on intuition, \textit{ḥads}, rather than rational demonstration.\(^{579}\) Ghiyāth al-Dīn, however, rejects this claim. Ghiyāth al-Dīn writes, rather sarcastically:

\begin{quote}
It is abundantly clear that he [i.e. Dawānī] is incapable of understanding my father’s argument. In fact, is it really my concern if the cow does not comprehend complicated matters? (\textit{ma‘ alayya idhā lam yafham al-baqar}).\(^{580}\)
\end{quote}


A corollary of the assertion that God knows other existents is that He also knows existents which undergo change. Does God’s knowledge change accordingly? According to Rāzī, some philosophers asserted that God does not know the changes that some existents undergo. If a certain Zayd changes his position from sitting to standing then one of two outcomes arises vis-à-vis God’s knowledge of this event: (i) the continuation of God’s knowledge of Zayd’s sitting when he is standing, which would thus make God ignorant of Zayd’s standing; or (ii) the discontinuation of this knowledge, which implies a change in God’s knowledge. Both outcomes are inconceivable (muḥāl). 581

Indeed Rāzī tells us that some of the early mutakallimūn accept the possibility of the continuation of God’s knowledge of the changes existents undergo on the ground that just as plurality of the objects of knowledge does not cause plurality of knowledge, so the change of the objects of knowledge does not cause change in knowledge. 582 From this, it was concluded that God knows everything through one piece of knowledge. Rāzī, however, rejects this. For according to him, knowledge does multiply due to the multiplicity of the objects of knowledge, whether knowledge is perceived as a form which corresponds to its objects or as a special relationship between the knower and the object of knowledge. 583 He writes:

We do not concede [to the claim] that knowledge does not multiply as objects of knowledge multiply. Our proof is as follows: knowledge is either a form that corresponds to the object of knowledge, or [knowledge is] a special relationship between the knower and the known. If the first, then indeed knowledge will multiply, just as as objects multiply. This is because different objects (or things) that correspond to the different essences must necessarily be different. If the second, then the same is also true [as with the first]. This is because the special relationship between one thing and its object is different in different cases. 584

In the view of Mīr Ṣadr al-Dīn, God’s knowledge does not change, not because He will be ignorant of the changes in Zayd’s position, but because His knowledge is atemporal (azali). Mīr Ṣadr al-Dīn states that to argue that God’s knowledge must change in accordance with temporal events, presents serious problems to how philosophers conceive God. He states that God is transcendent (munazzah), immaterial (mujarrad), and His knowledge of His essence and the world of creation remain atemporal, despite changes in the temporal.585

With this view, Mīr Ṣadr al-Dīn presented a succinct summary of Avicenna’s take on the matter, which is expressed in more details. Avicenna writes:

The attributes of things may change in different ways as follows:

(1) [Such as] that which is white becomes black due to the change of a nonrelative (ghayr mudāfa), unchanging attribute.
(2) [Such as] a thing which has the power to move a body, but if that body becomes nonexistent then it is impossible to say that that thing has the power to move it. Therefore that thing no longer has its attribute, yet [this does not imply] change in its essence, but [only] in its relation. That it is powerful is an attribute of it [i.e. the thing] which is one; and it is followed in a primary and an essential manner by a relation to a universal thing, such as moving bodies in a certain state, for example. Zayd, ‘Amr, stone, and tree are also included in this [relation], but in a secondary manner. If Zayd were not at all in possibility, and the relation of power to move him did not occur at all, this would not harm [the mover’s] power to move [things]. It follows then that [the mover’s] primary possession of power is not changed by the change of the states of that which is one of the things over which the power is exercised. Rather, it is just the external relations that change only.
(3) [Such as] a thing that knows that another thing is not, and then that other thing comes into existence; the former thing then knows that the latter thing is. Hence the relation and the relative attribute change at the same time. That it is knowledgeable of a certain thing is something for which the relation is reserved, so that if it knows a universal concept this will not be sufficient for its having knowledge of the particular things one by one. Rather, knowledge of the conclusion is resumptive knowledge, necessitating a resumptive relation and a new disposition of the soul that has a new proper relation. This knowledge is other than knowledge of the premises and other than the disposition for the determination of their truth. This is not the same as its having power, i.e., its having different relations by one disposition. Therefore, if [in the case of knowledge] the state of the object of the relation is made different by not existing or by existing, the state of the thing that has the attribute must become different not only in the relation of the attribute itself but also in the attribute that is necessarily followed by this relation. Thus it is not permissible that that which is not subject to change undergo change either in accordance with the first division or in accordance with the third division. However, change in

accordance with the second division is permissible in distant relations that have no influence over the essence. 586

But given that changes may occur in the world of existents will God’s knowledge reflect actual reality? In other words, since it is inconceivable to speak of change in the divine essence, how up-to-date will God’s knowledge of external reality be?

Borrowing from the above statement by Avicenna, Mīr Ṣadr al-Dīn explains that God’s knowledge will not change and, at the same time, will be up-to-date with the changes external existents undergo. 587 Given our limitations in the temporal world what we perceive as changes are not in fact changes in the atemporal and permanent realm. By knowing His essence, which is unchanging, God knows everything, including that which undergoes change in the temporal world. Mīr Ṣadr al-Dīn writes:

Thus, His knowledge of each and every intelligible is identical to His essence. By the relation of concomitance, He knows each and every existent be it external, mental, universal, or particular. He knows all these events, changes, and temporal shifts, through knowledge that is eternal, atemporal, and unchanging; this is because all these events and changeables are effects of His essence, which does not change. 588

Following Avicenna’s line of thinking, Mīr Ṣadr al-Dīn explains that there are two types of knowledge: infīālī and fiʿlī. 589 The former is identical to the maʿlūm (the object of knowledge) in external reality. It changes accordingly in order to apprehend multiple intelligibles to which it corresponds. For example, we observe changes in spatiality and temporality such as the changing of day into night with infīālī knowledge. Hence human knowledge of multiple intelligibles, including real

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and mental existents, is not one; rather it is multiple and variegated. As for \( \text{fi'ili} \) knowledge, through it one is able to apprehend multiple intelligibles, real and mental, finite and infinite. This knowledge is one piece and does not change.

In the case of God, Mīr Ṣadr al-Dīn holds that God knows changeable and multiple intelligibles through \( \text{fi'ili} \) knowledge, which is identical to His essence. Given that \( \text{fi'ili} \) knowledge is the source of all intelligibles, its relation to the intelligibles is vertical, whereas the relationship between \( \text{infi'ali} \) knowledge and other intelligibles is horizontal. In other words, intelligibles proceed from God’s \( \text{fi'ili} \) knowledge. In turn humans apprehend these multiple intelligibles through \( \text{infi'ali} \) knowledge. God’s knowledge of multiple intelligibles is characterized by unity, whereas human knowledge is not. Hence the saying of Mīr Ṣadr al-Dīn: \( \text{waḥdat 'ilmihi ta'āla ma'a kathrat al-ma'ālāmāt}. \)

One can gain a better understanding of Mīr Ṣadr al-Dīn’s argument by examining the linguistic connotations of the terms \( \text{infi'ali} \) and \( \text{fi'ili} \). According to Mīr Ṣadr al-Dīn, the former is passive, and is influenced by change. A pertinent example is the case of human knowledge of multiple intelligibles. Humans know multiple intelligibles with multiple pieces of knowledge. Put differently, \( \text{infi'ali} \) knowledge exists on the horizontal plane of existence, and it changes as our knowledge of things undergoes change.

God’s knowledge of multiple intelligibles is \( \text{fi'ili} \). This type of knowledge is active. It is highest knowledge in the ontological hierarchy of existence. Hence it knows all intelligibles but remains itself one and unchanging.

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How God knows the particulars

Prior to Avicenna, the Muslim philosophers held different views regarding God’s knowledge. According to Sayf al-Dīn al-Āmidī (d. 631/1233), the philosophers were divided into three groups. First, those who denied God all knowledge, whether knowledge of Himself or of other things; second, those who affirmed God’s knowledge of Himself only; third, those who affirmed God’s knowledge of things other than Himself but limited this knowledge to the universals.593 Ghazālī informs us that the first group was the Neoplatonic philosophers. Building on the Plotinian model of emanationism, they argued that the world emanates necessarily from God. Accordingly, this deprives God of the attributes of will and knowledge. As consequence of this last is that whoever is not living cannot know himself. The second group, Ghazālī tells us, are the Aristotelians. Most Muslim philosophers, however belong to the third group. According to Ghazālī, this group believes God has knowledge of universals only. Ghazālī reconstructs their argument as follows.

In order to know the particulars one must have knowledge of multiplicity. However, knowledge of multiplicity entails multiplicity in the divine essence. But God’s knowledge must be one and immutable. Therefore, God cannot have knowledge of the particulars. But since knowledge of the genera and species does not imply change nor does it entail plurality in God’s knowledge, God knows the universals only.594

Against this background, Avicenna developed a unique theory according to which God knows the particulars in a universal way. He denied that God, whose sole


594 For a detailed summary of the views of the three groups discussed, see Ghazālī, Maqāṣid al-falāṣifa, ed. Maḥmūd Bījū (Damascus, 2000), pp. 112-130.
activity consists in self-reflection, could be described by attributes that are additional to His essence. When one speaks of God as knowing, this description merely signifies His self-reflection, which is the cause of the emanation of the world. Avicenna says that God knows His essence (‘ālim bi-dhātihi) and that His knowledge, capacity for knowledge, and knowing are one and the same. In other words, the conceptual plurality, which Avicenna dislikes vehemently, has no basis in reality. Speaking about this, Avicenna says: ‘ilmahu wa-ma’lūmiyatahu wa-‘ālimiyatahu shay‘un wāḥid.

Furthermore, God according to Avicenna, knows that which is other than Him (‘ālim bi-ghayrīhi) and He knows all intelligibles (ma’lūmāt) in a universal way; that is, God knows all other existents through one universal, unchanging knowledge. Moreover, God knows all the genera and species in a universal way, since He is pure existence. Likewise He is immaterial and hence all intelligibles lay bare before Him. Avicenna says that since God’s essence is the cause of all existents, by knowing His essence, He knows all His effects since knowledge of the cause necessitates knowledge of the effect. But why should God according to Avicenna know or be knowing? Avicenna explains that the First is living. This is intuitive, he says. And every living being knows his essence. The First knows His essence; thus


597 Ibn Sīnā, ‘al-Risāla al-‘arshiyā’, p. 248. This seems to equate to a version of the identity thesis which can be traced back to Aristotle. See, for example, Lloyd Gerson, “The Unity of Intellect in Aristotle’s ‘De Anima’”, in Phronesis 49 (2004), pp. 348-373.


599 Avicenna’s view on God’s knowledge is succinctly and masterfully summarised by Ghazāl in: Ghazālī, Maqāṣid al-falāṣfā, p. 115ff.
is knowing (‘ālim) and living (ḥayy). God is therefore necessarily cognizant of His own being.⁶⁰⁰

In his attempt to explicate the intent of the philosophers, Ghazālī explains Avicenna’s position,⁶⁰¹ arguably more cogently than Avicenna himself. Ghazālī explains that according to Avicenna and those who follow him, knowledge is defined as the imprinting of immaterial forms in the dhāt. These are the forms of things known (maʿlūm) and intellected (maʿqūl). That which is imparted onto the soul is knowledge (ʿilm), and the locus that receives this knowledge is the knower (ʿālim). The known, the intellected, and the knower are necessarily immaterial.

Ghazālī uses the following example to make the point clear. A human being is knowing or knows his soul because the soul is immaterial. He does not require mediating forms in order for him to become cognizant of his soul, the knowledge of which is grasped intuitively. In the case of God, or the Necessary Being, He too is immaterial but His immateriality is more intense. In other words, He is absolute immateriality unlike the human soul which although immaterial it nevertheless is attached to the physical body. The First (al-awwal) is completely free from materiality, or any hints of materiality. Hence cognizance of His essence is characterized by a lack. Based on such philosophical reasoning, Ghazālī says the philosophers were thus led to believe that God is the knower of all intelligibles.⁶⁰²

Does knowledge of multiples, however, not entail change in the divine

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⁶⁰¹ Although in his later writings Ghazālī denounced many of the metaphysical doctrines of the falāsifī, by whom he meant Avicenna, he restrained from explicitly criticising their arguments in his Maqāṣid al-falāsifa. The main aim of this work was to present the doctrines of the philosophers so as to criticise them in his later works. Hence the Maqāṣid served as a precise summary of philosophy (it is said to be an Arabic version of Avicenna’s Persian Dānashnāma-yi ‘Alā’ī). In the Medieval Latin west, however, the content of the Maqāṣid was believed to be Ghazālī’s own thought. As a result, the image of the ‘Philosopher Algazel’ was created.

essence? Avicenna says that God knows many intelligibles through undifferentiated and universal knowledge. In his view this does not entail the occurrence of plurality in the *dhāt*. Ghazālī explains this point quite cogently. He reminds the reader that according to Avicenna, God is knowing of all genera and species. Using an interesting analogy, Ghazālī says a *faqīḥ*, for example, is said to know in one of three ways. In the first instance, he is said to have detailed and minute knowledge of every intellectual query. Based on this knowledge the *faqīḥ* is able to instantly recall all the theoretical matters pertaining to *fiqh*. In the second instance, our *faqīḥ* is said to be a renowned practitioner of *fiqh*; he is well versed in the subject, and after many years of practice, his ability to recall *fiqh*-related knowledge has become a course of habit. His strength lies in his ability recall the general frameworks of *fiqh* from which he is able to deduct positive law. This quality is called *malaka* (possession), and it is mental. The knowledge the *faqīḥ* is said to possess in the second case is one and undifferentiated unlike the knowledge he is said to have in the first case, which is many and differentiated. In the third instance, the knowledge our *faqīḥ* is said to possess occupies a median position, somewhere between the first and second scenarios. This third scenario is most unique, claims Ghazālī. Suppose our *faqīḥ* stumbles across a heated debate between two learned individuals in which neither party can settle the debate about the origins of the cosmos. According to one party, the world was created, whereas the other thinks it is pre-eternal. Ghazālī says that at that moment our *faqīḥ* is confidently certain that he knows the ‘correct’ answer. The *faqīḥ* can speak with authority and bring the matter to a close. But even though he knows the correct answer, it nevertheless

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603 It would appear that by *fiqh* Ghazālī is referring to wider, more general concerns for intellectual traditions that are not confined to legal matters.

needs to be demonstrated discursively through proper philosophical argument. At the initial moment when the *faqīḥ* intuitively realizes that he posses the knowledge for the correct answer to the unresolved problem, his knowledge is said to be undifferentiated, or universal. When the *faqīḥ* proffers the correct view, he presents his argument discursively, demonstrating in the process his differentiated and detailed knowledge of the subject matter. He moves from one state, in which he has undifferentiated knowledge (ʿilm *ijmālī*), to another, in which he has differentiated knowledge (ʿilm *tafṣīlī*).\(^{605}\)

According to the Peripatetics, detailed and differentiated knowledge such as in the first example above is impossible. Two or more sets of detailed, differentiated knowledge cannot occur at once at the same moment in the soul. One cannot fully grasp detailed and differentiated knowledge of mathematical calculus, for instance, exactly at the same moment when one has detailed and differentiated knowledge of the chemical composition of human cells. It is impossible to demonstrate such detailed knowledge of two different subjects exactly at the same time. Hence the human soul is said to have knowledge of many things and intelligibles, but this knowledge is undifferentiated, or universal. However, through contemplation and ratiocination, the soul is able to generate detailed and differentiated knowledge from the undifferentiated and universal knowledge in its possession (*malaka*). It can move from knowledge of the universal to knowledge of the particular. In the case of God, Avicenna and those who follow him argue that God knows particulars in a similar fashion to the third scenario involving the example of *faqīḥ* above.\(^{606}\) However, the intelligibles that God knows are infinite in number. When we


\(^{606}\) Ghazālī, *Maqāṣid al-falāṣifā*, p. 117.
speak of God as ʿālim, we refer to Him being simple, one, and transcendent. He has the potential, so to speak, to know every intelligible at once. Although His essence is simple, It (i.e. the essence) is the source from which emanates differentiated knowledge. So by knowing His essence He knows all intelligibles. This knowledge of particulars is universal. It is similar to the knowledge of the faqīḥ who stumbles across the heated debate between the two interlocutors and who knows the answer to the problem at hand only in a universal manner.⁶⁰⁷

Avicenna’s theory of God’s knowledge of the particulars did not sit well with the later Ash’ari mutakallimūn. Ghazālī, for instance, described Avicenna’s position as ‘the ultimate in repugnancy’ (fi ghāyat al-shaṅā’a).⁶⁰⁸ In the eleventh discussion of the Incoherence, Ghazālī states:

We say: Inasmuch as existence for the Muslims is confined to the temporally originated and the eternal, there being for them no eternal other than God and His attributes, [all things] other than Him being originated from His direction through His will, a necessary premise regarding His knowledge became realized for them. For that which is willed (al-murāḍ) must necessarily be known to the willer (al-murād). On this they built [the argument] that everything is known to Him because all [things] are willed by Him and originated by His will. Hence there is no generated being that is not originated by His will, nothing remaining [uncreated] except Himself. And as long as it is established that He is a willer, knowing what He wills, He is necessarily a living being. And with any living being that knows another, knowing himself takes priority. Hence, for [Muslims] all existents are known to God, and they came to know this in this way after it became evident to them that He wills the temporal origination of the world.⁶⁰⁹

Hence Ghazālī believed that there was dissonance between the orthodoxies of Muslim scripture and what Avicenna said. In the eyes of Ghazālī the ‘correct’ belief regarding the origins of the world must concord with the doctrine of creation ex nihilo. Although he agrees with Avicenna that the First does not exist in matter (al-

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⁶⁰⁸ Ghazālī, Maqāṣid al-falāṣīfā, p. 129.

⁶⁰⁹ Ghazālī, The Incoherence of the Philosophers, p. 128.
āwal lā mawjūd fī mādda), Ghazālī does not, however, agree with the philosophers’
saying that whatever does not exist in matter is a pure intellect (ʿaql maḥḍ); for in
Ghazālī’s view this saying amounts to a contradiction. He writes:

If by your statement that the First does not exist in matter it is meant that He is neither
body nor imprinted in a body, but rather He is self-subsistent without being spatial or
specified with spatial position, this is admitted. There remains your statement that that
which has this description is a pure intellect. What, then, do you mean by the “intellect”? If
you mean by it that which apprehends intellectually the rest of things, this would be the
very thing sought after and the point at dispute. How, then, did you include it in the
premises of the syllogism for [establishing] what is being sought after? If you mean by it
something else – namely, that it apprehends itself intellectually – some of your philosopher
brethren may concede this to you, but it amounts that whatever conceives itself conceives
another, in which case it would be asked, “why do you claim this, when it is not necessary?”
If it is [attained through] reflection (naẓariyyan), what demonstration is there for it?610

From the above, it appears that Ghazālī is highlighting the logical incoherence of
arguments advanced by Avicenna, and he accuses the latter of improper use of
syllogistic deduction. For example, when speaking about the pure intellect which
has all the intelligibles laid bare before it, Avicenna says:

If this is in matter, then it [i.e. the intellect] does not apprehend things intellectually. It is
not in matter. Therefore, it apprehends things intellectually.611

To which, Ghazālī responds:

This [way of arguing] consists in adding the contradictory of the antecedent. But, as all
agree, adding the contradictory of the antecedent does not yield a valid conclusion. This is
similar to one’s saying: ‘If this is human, then it is an animal. It is not human. Therefore it is
not an animal’. For it may not be a human, but a horse, whereby it would be an animal.612

Now, it should be noted that Ghazālī believes God knows His essence and the genera

610 Ghazālī, The Incoherence of the Philosophers, p. 129. This further confirms that in the view of Ghazālī
the problem with Avicenna is not metaphysical argumentation but its improper use leading to
heretical doctrine. On this, see Alexander Treiger, ‘Al-Ghazālī’s classifications of the sciences and
1-32.

611 This view is correctly ascribed to Avicenna in the Incoherence. See Ghazālī, The Incoherence of the
Philosophers, pp. 129-130; Ibn Sīnā, al-Ishārāt, pp. 328.

612 Ghazālī, The Incoherence of the Philosophers, p. 130. Here Ghazālī is referring to the ‘happening by
coincidence’ when the antecedent and the consequent both happen to be true with no immediate
apparent necessary connection between them, as in the statement, ‘If man exists, then horse also
exists.’ On this, see the relevant discussion on al-qiyyūs in Ibn Sīnā, al-Shifā’, vol. 2, p. 234. Cf. N.
and species in a detailed way. However, he accuses Avicenna and those who follow him of being unable to substantiate their argument with philosophical proof, namely that God knows the genera and species in a universal way.

In the end, Ghazālī maintains that from the point of view of religion, the theory of the philosophers is irrelevant; for according to their claim God cannot know whether a man obeys or disobeys Him, or whether a man becomes a heretic or a true believer. That is because God can know only the obedience or the disobedience and the belief or the unbelief in general terms.

In later times, other Ashʿari thinkers like Rāzī attacked Avicenna’s theory of God’s knowledge of particulars. In the relevant chapter of the Mabāḥith, Rāzī sets out to refute the philosophers whose hidden spokesman is Avicenna, and those early mutakallimūn who were influenced by them.613 The arguments adduced by Rāzī that God knows Himself and others, including all and every particular intelligible as well as future events, rest on strict theological conceptions and not philosophical argument. In this regard, Rāzī advances four proofs: first, that God’s knowledge of particulars can be proven when we consider God’s acts. Every act of God particularly in the microcosmic level shows perfection in design and will, since perfection is seen in the particulars, it follows that God knows particulars necessarily. Second, that the element of individualization is either an integral part of the essence of a thing, or a possible essence (māhiyya mumkina). Since God, according to the philosophers, knows the essences, He must know the particulars. Rāzī uses the philosophers’ idea that the knowledge of the cause entails the knowledge its effect in order to show that God’s knowledge of His essence implies

His knowledge of the individual things that are the effects of His knowledge. Third, that knowledge of things is a quality of praise and perfection. Given that God is the greatest among all existents, He is necessarily more entitled to be qualified by such qualities of perfection.\textsuperscript{614} Fourth, that when we examine human predisposition (\textit{fitra}), we notice that humans beseech God for mercy in time of distress even if they deny His knowledge of the particulars; this serves as proof for His knowledge of the particulars, Rāzī argues. Binyamin Abrahamov points out that the use of such argument in the context of philosophical debate seems odd, though there are indeed earlier precedents of this mode of reasoning in the writings of some early Ash'ari theologians, including Ash'arī himself.\textsuperscript{615}

Be that as it may, Rāzī's proofs do not seem definitive and thus require further scrutiny. Regarding the first, the supposition that a perfect act entails knowledge of the particulars can be rejected on the ground that in nature, for example, we observe perfect acts of animals to which we cannot ascribe knowledge.\textsuperscript{616} Similarly, in the second proof Rāzī seems to ignore the definition of an essence and the conditions of individualization, namely accidents, which cannot be part of the essence or the essence itself. As for the third proof, one can ask: does God's quality of praise necessitate knowledge of the particulars if it contradicts

\textsuperscript{614} Abrahamov, 'Fakhr al-Dīn Rāzī on God's Knowledge', pp. 136-141. This principle, that 'whatever praise predicated of created things is more likewise applicable to the creator' is similarly invoked by Mīr Ṣadr al-Dīn in his discussion on God's knowledge of the particulars. See relevant section below. Abrahamov observes that Rāzī ascribes to the philosophers the notion that God's essence is a particular; hence God knows His particular essence and no other. In the relevant section of the \textit{Mabāhiḥ}, Rāzī divides the particulars into four classes: 1. particulars which neither change nor are composed of form and matter, for example God and the intellects; 2. Particulars which do not change but which are composed of form and matter, such as the celestial spheres; 3. Particulars which change but which are not composed form and matter, for example the accidents which come into being; 4. Particulars which change and which are composed of form and matter, such as the bodies which are generated and corrupted. See Michael Marmura, 'Some Aspects of Avicenna's Theory of God's Knowledge of Particulars', in \textit{JAOS} 82 (1962), pp. 299-312, at p. 305.

\textsuperscript{615} Abrahamov, 'Fakhr al-Dīn Rāzī on God's Knowledge', p. 140.

\textsuperscript{616} Abrahamov, 'Fakhr al-Dīn Rāzī on God's Knowledge', p. 140.
another quality of praise that is assigned to God, namely incorporeality?

Interestingly, Rāzī perhaps aware of the futility of the first three proofs includes a fourth proof, which he seems to prefer, even though it seems to rest on speculative assumptions. The fourth proof is as follows:

As for those who adhered to the view that God knows the particulars [i.e. Rāzī himself], they adduced some proofs of this view:

a. They said: We have proved that God makes perfect actions, and we have explained that whoever makes such actions must know them, therefore God necessarily knows the actions He makes. It is also known that perfection is seen only in the particulars (al-ashkhāṣ al-juzʿiyā) which were brought into existence. Hence it is demonstrated that what proves His being knowing itself proves His being knowing of the particulars.

b. The individual and particular thing (al-shayʿ al-shakhsī al-juzʿ?) has an essence and [and element of] individualization and distinction. This element is either an integral part (ʿayn), the knowledge of the essence is the knowledge of the ʿayn. This [element of] individualization, from the point of view of its being this integral part, will be known, even if the individualization of this individual is different from this essence, since this individualization is also an essence of the possible essence. The philosophers admitted that the knowledge of the cause (illa) necessitates the knowledge of the effect (maʿlūl). Thus God's knowledge of His peculiar essence necessitates His knowledge of the things through which this individualization and this distinction (taʿayyun) take place. Therefore He necessarily knows this individualization as much as it is individualization. Thus it is proved that their view that the knowledge of the cause necessitates the knowledge of the effect obliges them to admit that God knows the individual things inasmuch as they are these individual and distinct things.

c. The third argument concerning His being knowing of the distinct particulars is: The knowledge of things is a quality of praise and perfection and the ignorance of them is a quality of imperfection. Now, since God is the most perfect and the most sublime of all the existents, He is necessarily more entitled to be qualified by qualities of perfection and sublimity than to be qualified by qualities of imperfection.

d. We observe that if the people of this world, the righteous and the wicked (zindīq), the Muslim and the unbeliever (mulḥid), are afflicted by suffering, they beseech God for mercy and ask Him to save them from this suffering even if they are the most extreme deniers of His being knowing of the particulars. If this happens to someone he will necessarily set about praying, beseeching mercy from God and submitting to Him. This proves that the basic disposition (al-fīṭra al-asliyya) attests that the Lord of the world (ilāh al-ʿālam) has power over the things (lit. objects of His power) and knows the secret and the hidden things. It is known that the testimony of the fīṭra is more acceptable than these hidden disjunctions (taqṣīmāt khaṭfiyya) and obscure proofs, which are to be sought; therefore one must definitely assert that the Lord of the world knows the particulars and is capable of supplying [man's] needs. I think that Ibrahim said to his father: "O my father, why do you worship that which neither hears nor sees, nor benefits you in anything? "Only because his father belonged to the religion of the philosophers and denied God's power and

617 In other words, it has something which particularizes it and distinguishes it from others.
knowledge of the particulars. Certainly Ibrahim said to his father these words [on account of his father’s religion]. This is my opinion on this subject. And God knows best.  

Unsurprisingly, Mīr Šadr al-Dīn rejects Rāzī’s criticisms of the philosophers, particularly the latter’s attacks on Avicenna. So how does Mīr Šadr al-Dīn respond to these criticisms? He advocates an argument whereby God is said to know the particulars universally, that is, God’s knowledge of the particulars is differentiated but not bound by senses or corporeality. Moreover, God’s knowledge of the particulars is akin to intellectual cognition, it can conceive of multiple existents all of which derive from one entity. He writes:

To proof this [we say]: sensible, not intellectual, cognition prevents conceptualization of multiple entities. Do you not realize that when you see a ghost/shadow (shabah) from a distance but you cannot discern its precise nature (lit. ‘its individuation’) and you become doubtful whether it [the ghost/shadow] is a cow, horse, or another animal; this ghost/shadow prevents you from conceptualizing multiples, that is, your mind prevents you considering many like it. But when you encounter something and then relay what you learned about that thing to another person in a way so that that person should know what you know, except he did not see what you saw. In your case, [what you know] is particular and could not be used to conceive multiples [like it]; whereas the person to whom you relayed the knowledge of the thing you saw, knows [that thing] in a universal way, he can also conceive multiples [of that thing], even though what you both know is the same thing.

Hence the nub of Mīr Šadr al-Dīn’s argument draws on the distinction between sensible and intellectual cognition. The former yields knowledge of particulars in a particular way. The senses are limited and thus incapable of envisaging many particulars in a particular way. Whereas the latter, that is, intellectual cognition, is not hampered by the limitation of senses, it yields knowledge of particulars in a universal way. Its ability to conceptualize rest on intellectual, and hence unlimited,

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mechanisms.\textsuperscript{620}

It follows then that God’s knowledge of the particulars is similar to the person whose knowledge is based on intellectual, not sensible, cognition. In the example above the person who witnesses the ‘sensible’ ghost is said to have particular knowledge of it; whereas the person who hears about this encounter, intellectual and not sensibly, is said to have universal knowledge of the ghost, since he is bound neither by the senses nor corporeality. Thus in the view of Mīr Ṣadr al-Dīn, God knows the particulars in a universal way but this universal mode of cognition encapsulates the particular too. For this reason, he claims that this view is compatible with both the views of the mutakallīmūn and the falāsifa.\textsuperscript{621} For the former insist that God must know all the particulars, while the latter claim God can only know the particulars in a universal way. In his view, his argument reconciles these two positions; for universal knowledge of something particular includes particular knowledge of that particular.

In a closing remark, Mīr Ṣadr al-Dīn goes on to accuse Ghazālī and later Ashʿarīs like Rāzī of having misunderstood Avicenna when the latter said God knows the particulars in a universal way. In Mīr Ṣadr al-Dīn’s view, the pronouncements of disbelief (\textit{kufr}) against Avicenna were ill considered and hasty.\textsuperscript{622}

\textsuperscript{620} Compare with Aristotle, \textit{Metaphysics}, I, part ii: ‘such and so many are the notions, then, which we have about Wisdom and the wise. Now of these characteristics that of knowing all things must belong to him who has in the highest degree universal knowledge; for he knows in a sense all the instances that fall under the universal. And these things, the most universal, are on the whole the hardest for men to know; for they are farthest from the senses’.


2.6: On God’s will

Unlike the previous sections, where Mīr Ṣadr al-Dīn draws much influence from Avicenna, in his discussion on God’s will Mīr Ṣadr al-Dīn relies on the formulations of Ţūsī and, to a lesser extent, Ḩillī. As such, and perhaps without been aware of it, Mīr al-Dīn adopts the position of the school of Abū l-Ḥusayn al- Başrī on the notion of God’s will; for the latter is known to have influenced Ţūsī and Ḩillī.

Starting with the early Muʿtazilis, we find that they disagreed among themselves about the nature of the divine will. Writing in his Maqālat, Ashʿarī tells us that Abū l-Hudhayl maintained that God’s will to create a thing is not identifiable with God’s creation of that thing (irādatihī li-mafʿūlatihī laysat bi-makhlūqa ‘alā al-ḥaqiqā). What constitutes creation (khalq) in the view of Abū l-Hudhayl is God’s will to create a thing together with the creative imperative ‘be’ (kun) vis-à-vis the thing to be created. In another passage, Ashʿarī adds that Abū l-Hudhayl (and some of his followers) held that God’s will does not inhere in a place (mawjūda lā fī makān). Why Abū l-Hudhayl used the term mawjūda is not entirely clear, however. Richard Frank proffers two possible reasons: First, Abū l-Hudhayl may have used the term mawjūda to describe God’s act of willing because he did not want to imply the passive notion of generation inherent in the term muḥdatha (generated), since he did not conceive the will as created or generated. Second, Abū l-Hudhayl may have used the term mawjūda in order to avoid the application of the terms wujūd and

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624 Ashʿarī, Maqālāt, vol. 1, p. 266.

625 Ashʿarī, Maqālāt, vol. 1, p. 266.

mawjūd to God’s essence. It is possible therefore that he used the term mawjūda of God’s will in a very strict sense to designate its existence as something distinct from His essence.627 Perhaps for this reason Abū l-Hudhayl stated that God is willing through a will which is created metaphorically (fi’l-majāz).628

Abū ʿAlī al-Jubbāṭi and Abū Hāshim held similar views to Abū l-Hudhayl. They maintained that God’s attribute of willing is a separate attribute of act which is additional to His knowledge of the benefit of the act (al-irāda amr zāʿid ʿalā al-dāʿī lā al-fiʾl).629 Abū Hāshim also held that the will does not inhere in a locus or substrate (lā fi maḥall).630 The views of Abū l-Hudhayl, Abū ʿAlī, and Abū Hāshim formed the basis of the position of the Başran Muʿtazilis. It was they who maintained that God is knowing through a temporal will (irāda ḥāditha) which does not inhere in a substrate.631

The Baghdāḍī Muʿtazilis advocated a different take on God’s will. Naẓẓām adopted a via negativa position on God’s will. His view formed the basis of the later Baghdāḍī position.632 Ashʿarī informs us that Naẓẓām stated that with regards to God’s acts, His will and His creation (or action) of those acts are identical. But with regard to acts by humans, God’s will is identical with the command (al-amr).633 And when God wills an event that is to transpire in the future, His will is the same as His

629 Ibn al-Malāḥimī, Kitāb al-fāʿiṣq, p. 42.
deciding the occurrence of the event. For example when God wills the day of judgement (murîd al-sâ’â), His will is the same as His deciding the event (hâkîm bi-dhâlik).634

As for the Ash’arî position, Abû l-Hasan al-Ash’arî maintained that the divine will is pre-eternal and inheres in the divine essence (ṣifa azaliyya qâ’ima bi-dhâtihi).635 Ash’arî further held that the divine will is an essential attribute and that it must embrace everything (murîd li-kull shay’) which can be truly known. Moreover, since God is the creator of everything, there cannot be in God’s dominion anything which He does not will.636 According to Ash’arî the will is identical to the creative imperative which in turn is identical to the act of creation. He writes:

The meaning of God’s willing the thing is that He makes it. Thus He really wills it in the sense that He makes it (ma’na anna Allâh ta’âla arâda al-shay’ innahu fâ’alahu wa-huwa murîd lahu fi’l-haqîqa bi-ma’na innahu fâ’il lahu).637

Others such as Juwayni also stated that God is willing through a pre-eternal will (murîd bi-irâda qadîma).638 As for such later Ash’aris as Râzî, like his predecessors, Râzî held that God’s will is an essential attribute and pre-eternal (irâda qadîma).639

Râzî also stated that Him being willing is different to Him being knowing, a view also held by the Başran Mu’tazilis. Râzî writes:

Our view [on the matter] (wa-madhhabunâ): is that God is willing, and this is an additional attribute to Him being knowing (ṣifa zâ’ida’ alâ kawnihi ’âliman). This is the view upheld by the majority of the Başran Mu’tazilis (madhhab jumhur al-başrîyyîn min al-mu’ tazîla).640

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635 Shahrastâni, al-Milal, vol. 1, p. 82; Baghdâdî, al-Farq, p. 322.
638 Juwayni, Kitâb al-irshâd, p. 94.
Rāzī brings forward an argument which says God’s will is distinct from His knowledge and other attributes. He writes:

We find that some actions of God are prior to others (mutaqaddima). Other actions are posterior to what has come before it. It is indeed rational for something to be prior or posterior. If it is such then it follows that this priority and posteriority must necessarily be contingent upon a preponderator (murajjiḥ) and particularizing agent (mukhassṣis). This is because it is impossible for something to be preponderated without a preponderator (imtināʿhuṣūl al-rujān lāʾan murajjiḥ). Following this, we say: that preponderator is either the attribute of power, the attribute of knowledge, or another attribute. It cannot be the attribute of power, for the nature of power is to ‘bring into existence (al-ījād). It cannot be knowledge, for knowledge follows the occurrence of an event. If it [the preponderator] is the same as the attribute of knowledge then it will follow the occurrence of an event, which in turn follows the occurrence of another event ad infinitum. It [the preponderator] must therefore be something else. That something acts as a particularising agent and as a preponderator. [The attributes of] life, speech, hearing, and sight cannot play this role.

There must be another attribute which is other than these attributes. Its specific role is to preponderate and to particularize. This attribute is what is called ‘the will’.  

Rāzī’s argument was echoed later by Ṭūsī and Ḩillī. Writing in the Tajṛid, Ṭūsī states:

The particularizing of some contingents by bringing them into existence at a specific time is proof that He is willing (wa-takhṣīs ba ʾd al-mumkināt bīl-ījād fi waqṭ yadalluʿ alāʿ irādatiḥ taʿala).  

However, unlike Rāzī, Ṭūsī and Ḩillī denied that God has determined things eternally and that He wills through a pre-eternal will. Commenting on Ṭūsī’s proof, Ḩillī adopts the same position as Ṭūsī and argues that God’s will acts as the mukhassṣ of the action, and that it is distinct from His attributes of power and knowledge. Ḩillī writes:

And the proof [regarding the attribute of will] is that God brought some contingents into existence and not others when both had equal relation to the [attribute of] power.

Whence does the proof put forward by Rāzī, Ṭūsī, and Ḩillī derive? Ḩillī provides us with a clear indication that Ṭūsī (and prior to him Rāzī) adopted the proof from Abū l-Ḥusayn al-Ḥarārī. The position of Abū l-Ḥusayn al-Ḥarārī regarding God’s will is

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642 Quoted in: Ḩillī, Kashf al-murād, p. 401.


644 Ḩillī, Kashf al-murād, p. 402.
described as follows by Ibn al-Malāḥimī:

And our teacher Abū l-Ḥusayn [al-Baṣrī] said in his book al-Taṣaffūḥ, reporting from some [of his] teachers that: ‘the will is pure motive (al-irāda hiya al-dāʾī al-khāṣṣ) for actions in the realms of the seen and the unseen (i.e. in the case of humans and God)’. This is the saying we selected [as the correct view] in [our book] the Mu’tamad.645

We read in the Mu’tamad that Abū l-Ḥusayn al-Baṣrī holds that the will is additional to the motive for action in the realm of the seen. With regards to God, Abū l-Ḥusayn al-Baṣrī stated that God’s motive for an action is grounded in His knowledge of what is best for His creation or obligatory upon Him. Abū l-Ḥusayn al-Baṣrī defines the motive for action as the murajjiḥ and mukhaṣṣīṣ.646

Writing against this background, Mīr Šadr al-Dīn defines the will as the motive to do the best action. Following Ţūsī, Mīr Šadr al-Dīn writes:

The will of an animal is an inclination (shawq) to acquire the desired; or, a motive (dāʾī) to acquire that which is well suited for it according to its power of estimation or power of reasoning. Given that it is the etiquette of rational men (al-ʿuqalā’) to describe their Creator with that the most noble of two opposite limits (bi-ma huwa ashraf tarafay al-naqiḏ), and given that they count everything that is brought into existence by a willing agent (yūjad bi-irāda) [to be] more noble than that from which action proceeds without will (min ghayr irāda), it follows that everything that comes into being, according to them, is the result of willful action. It [i.e. the will] is more specific than knowledge. It [i.e. knowledge] is reliant on it [i.e. will]. This is because something unknown cannot be willed [i.e. to will something that thing must first be known to the willing agent]. And something may be known but not willed.647

The argument formulated by Mīr Šadr al-Dīn above is taken verbatim from the formulations of Ţūsī in the Sharḥ masʿalat al-ʿilm.648 Ţūsī argument was clearly based on the proof provided by Abū l-Ḥusayn al-Baṣrī. It follows then that on the notion of God’s will, Mīr Šadr al-Dīn is following a purely Muʿtazili notion derived indirectly, through Ţūsī, from the school of Abū l-Ḥusayn al-Baṣrī.

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645 Ibn al-Malāḥimī, Kitāb al-fāʾiq, p. 43.


648 For the matching passage see, Naṣīr al-Dīn al-Ṭūsī, Sharḥ masʿalat al-ʿilm, ed. ’Abd Allāh Nūrānī (Mashhad, 1385 H/1965), p. 44.
Following Țūsī, Mīr Ṣadr al-Dīn explains that God’s will is based on absolute knowledge of what is good and beneficial, another position he seems to inherit indirectly from the school of Abū l-Ḥusayn al-Baṣrī. In the proof provided by Mīr Ṣadr al-Dīn we find an interesting approach which is seemingly original with him. He invokes a philosophical principle similar to the disjunctive formula employed by early Muslim theologians. He explains that when faced with two opposing terms, often contradictory, the rationalists always select the ‘most noble of the two’. In other words, God is either willing or not willing. The former is the more noble option (ashraf), whereas the latter is repugnant and cannot apply to God. Therefore God is said to be willing (murīd).

2.7: On God’s life

Mīr Ṣadr al-Dīn stated based on rational and scriptural proof that God is living. His rational proof can be traced back to the school of Abū l-Ḥusayn al-Baṣrī.

Prior to Mīr Ṣadr al-Dīn, the Muʿtazilis counted the attribute of life (ḥayāt) among the attributes of essence. They disagreed, however, over the meaning of living (ḥayy) and its connection to God’s attribute of power (qudra). On the one hand, the Baṣran Muʿtazilis maintained that the statement ‘God is living’ is not entailed by His power, that is, God being living does not necessarily mean He is powerful. ʿAbd al-Jabbār took the position that God is living but not through the attribute of life (ḥayyun bi-lā ḥayāt) and that Him being living does not mean He is

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650 On the use of the disjunctive method in early kalām debates, see M. Abdel Haleem, ‘Early kalām’, in History of Islamic Philosophy, pp. 72-73.

corporeal, while his student Ibn Mattawayh adds that God being living is additional to Him being powerful (zāʾida ‘alā kawnu hu ṣādiran). The Badghādis, on the other hand, held that God being living entails Him being powerful (innahhu hayy, innahu ṣādir). This position was taken up by Muḥammad al-İskāf (d. 240/854).

For Ash'arī the proof for God being living is similar to the proof for Him being knowing. Both of these are pre-eternal attributes which inhere in the essence. Ash'arī writes:

When we observe man as he is and saw that he is an embodiment of wise configuration, such as the life arranged in him by God, and his hearing and sight...[by observing these traits] we see proof that the one who made what we have mentioned could not have made it without knowing its mode and nature...the impossibility of that proves that well-wrought works can be produced only by one who is knowing. It is likewise true that works can be produced only by one who is powerful and living.

Following Ash'arī, Juwaynī argued along the same lines to prove that God is living. Juwaynī writes:

After it has been established that God is knowing, it follows necessarily that He is living. A rational person who observes the [world of] creation will come to the conclusion that the [world of] creation has a maker. Concomitantly, that person will also conclude that God is living.

Later Ash'aris such as Rāzī reach similar conclusions. For Rāzī the attribute of life is a real attribute which inheres in the divine essence (qā'ima bi-dhātihi). However, Rāzī employs a different approach to his Ash'ari predecessors. He writes:

We have demonstrated that God is knowing and powerful, and there is no meaning to Him being living except that He is knowing and powerful. This means that it is impossible

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653 Ibn Mattawayh, Kitāb al-majmūʿ, p. 121.


655 Ash’arī, Maqālāt, vol. 1, p. 256.

656 Shahrastānī, al-Milal, vol. 1, p. 82.

657 Ash’arī, Kitāb al-luma’, p. 10.

658 Juwaynī, Kitāb al-irshād, p. 63.
(imtinā) for Him not to be knowing and powerful. It is also known that an impossibility is a non-existent attribute (ṣifa 'adamiyya); negation of that non-existent attribute is thus negation of the statement entailed in that impossibility. Concomitantly this establishes the reverse of the statement, that is, it is possible for something that is knowing and powerful to be living. Thus God being living is an established attribute.\textsuperscript{659}

By the same token, Ṭūsī and following him Ḫillī argued that God is powerful and knowing and from this it follows necessarily that He is living. Ṭūsī writes that ‘every powerful and knowing agent is necessarily living, too’.\textsuperscript{660} However, for Ṭūsī and Ḫillī the attribute of life is additional to the essence. Ḫillī explains:

The attribute of life is additional to the essence...and since we have demonstrated that God is knowing and powerful it follows necessarily that He is living.\textsuperscript{661}

The proofs put forward held by Rāzī, Ṭūsī, and Ḫillī were based on the same proof brought forward by Abū l-Ḥusayn al- Başrī and his followers. Abū l-Ḥusayn was the first to argue that God is living based on the double negation argument. In other words, Abū l-Ḥusayn held that Him being living means that it is not impossible for Him to be powerful and knowing. Ibn al-Malāḥimī explains his teacher’s position as follows:

Know that the one being living is the one for whom it is not impossible to be powerful and knowing. And since we have demonstrated that God is powerful and knowing, it follows necessarily that He is living.\textsuperscript{662}

For Mīr Ṣadr al-Ḏīn, the proof that God is living rests on the same conceptions taken up Ṭūsī and Ḫillī, who followed Abū l-Ḥusayn al- Başrī. Mīr Ṣadr al-Ḏīn holds that since it has been demonstrated that God is powerful and knowing, it follows necessarily that He is living. He writes:

The sound proof that has been adduced to confirm that God is living is what has been

\textsuperscript{659} Rāzī, \textit{al-Arba'īn}, vol. 1, p. 218; idem, \textit{Maʿālim}, p. 56.

\textsuperscript{660} Quoted in: Ḫillī, \textit{Kashf al-murād}, p. 401.

\textsuperscript{661} Ḫillī, \textit{Kashf al-murād}, p. 401.

\textsuperscript{662} Ibn al-Malāḥimī, \textit{Kitāb al-fāʾiq}, p. 36.
argued by the reasonable folk (al-ʿuqalāʾ). [They] describe Him with the most noble of the two opposite terms (al-ashraf min ẓaraḵay al-naqāḏ). When they described Him with [the attributes of] knowledge and power, they realized that that which does not posses life cannot be characterized as being knowing and powerful; thus they describe Him as living because the attribute of living is more noble than that to which it is opposed, namely death.663

However, further to this rational proof Mīr Ṣadr al-Dīn falls back on a tradition by the Shiʿī Imām Muḥammad al-Bāqir, which in the view of Mīr Ṣadr al-Dīn concords with the proof above. Mīr Ṣadr al-Dīn writes:

How great are the words of that member of the Household of Prophethood (ahl bayt al-nubuwwa) peace be upon him, who said: ‘He has not been named knowing (ʿāliman) and powerful (qādiran) except for that He has bestowed (wahab) knowledge to the scholars and power to the powerful. All that which you conjure up in your minds [about God] through scrupulous contemplation is in fact created and constructed [in the mind] just as you are created and constructed. God the Creator is the giver of life.’

Hence God is characterized as living because He is the giver of life. Life according to Mīr Ṣadr al-Dīn is the opposite state of non-being and non-cognizance. It is interesting to note that while Mīr Ṣadr al-Dīn’s proof is Muʿtazili in nature, the addendum to the proof is scriptural and of Shiʿī provenance. Later in the passage Mīr Ṣadr al-Dīn states that the most reliable way to confirm that God is living is by paying heed to the statement by al-Bāqir. Mīr Ṣadr al-Dīn brings his argument to a close by making reference to the Qur’anic verse: ‘Glory be to thy Lord, the Lord of Glory, above that they describe!’664

How do we, then, make sense of Mīr Ṣadr al-Dīn’s proof which marks a shift from exclusive reliance on the rational method to reliance on rational argument and scripture? Could this signal an epistemological turn in his thought?

Ghiyāth al-Dīn tells us that in his father’s view the argument advanced by al-Bāqir was believed to be a philosophical proof consistent with the philosophical speculations of rational thinkers. Indeed this is an instance of an attempt to find

664 Qur’an, 37:180.
harmony between philosophical speculations and philosophical Shi’ism, for
according to the Dashtakīs the proof formulated by al-Bāqir is an example of a
syllogistic argument.665

2.8: On God’s hearing and seeing

On the question of God being hearing and seeing Mīr Ṣadr al-Dīn relies on scriptural
evidence as sufficient proof. He brings similar formulations to Ṭūsī and Ḥillī, and
directs his critique against the Ash’arī position.

The early Mu’tazilis were divided on the issue of God being hearing (samʿ) and seeing (baṣr). Abū Hāshim and his followers maintained that it is not impossible for God to perceive the perceivable (iḍrāk al-masmūʿ wa-l-mubṣir) provided the condition for perception is present.666 The Bahshamiyya further stated that God is said to be eternally hearing (samīʿan) and seeing (baṣīran). When the conditions which make Him hearing and seeing exist it is impossible for Him not to be eternally hearing (sāmiʿan) and seeing (bāṣīran). Ash’arī ascribes this view to Abū ‘Alī al-Jubbātī.667 The Baghdādis proffered a different view. Iskāfī and Ka’bī are reputed to have said that God is eternally hearing and seeing, except that God’s perception refers to His knowledge of what humans hear and see.668

For the Ash’aris, the attributes of hearing and seeing are pre-eternal and subsist in the divine essence.669 Ash’arī explains that God is hearing and seeing

666 Ibn al-Malāḥimī, Kitāb al-fā’iq, p. 36; idem, Kitāb al-muʾtamad, p. 193.
669 Shahrastānī, al-Mīlāl, vol. 1, p. 82; Baghdādī, al-Fārq, p. 322.
because the one who is characterized as living cannot be qualified by defects that prevent Him from perceiving. He writes:

We say that God is hearing (samīʿ) and seeing (baṣīr) because He is living. This is because whoever is described as living cannot be qualified by such defects as silence and blindness and other similar defects. Thus God is hearing and seeing.\textsuperscript{670}

Juwaynī adopts the same view as Ashʿarī. He asserts that God is hearing and seeing because that is a rational position to take. Juwaynī explains:

The proof that He is hearing and seeing is based on the fact that He is living as we have shown. And a living being can be qualified as hearing and seeing. If a living being is not qualified as hearing and seeing then He must have a defect...but God cannot have a defect. Therefore He is hearing and seeing.\textsuperscript{671}

For Rāzī, however, God being hearing and seeing is established through scriptural evidence (al-dalāʿ il al-samʿiyya). He states:

Scriptural evidence point to Him being hearing and seeing and reason augments this assertion. Bearing in mind that these two forms of perception belong to the attributes of perfection (ṣifat al-kamāl), and since God must be qualified by the most perfect of attributes, we are obliged to affirm these [two] attributes [i.e. hearing and seeing].\textsuperscript{672}

Similarly, Ṭūsī and Ḥillī maintained that God is hearing and seeing based on scriptural evidence. Ṭūsī says 'scriptural evidence describe Him as perceiving'.\textsuperscript{673} Ḥillī adds:

The proof that He is hearing and seeing is based on scriptural evidence. The Qur’an speaks of this and the consensus of the Muslims confirms it.\textsuperscript{674}

As for the later Muʿtazili view, Ibn al-Malāḥimī tells us that his teacher Abū l-Ḥusayn al-Baṣrī opposed the Baṣran Muʿtazili view and agreed with the Baghdādī Muʿtazīls. Ḥillī tells us that Abū l-Ḥusayn al-Baṣrī upheld the Baghdādī view in

\textsuperscript{670} Ashʿarī, Kitāb al-lumaʿ, p. 11.

\textsuperscript{671} Juwaynī, Kitāb al-irshād, p. 73.

\textsuperscript{672} Rāzī, Maʿālim, p. 58; idem, al-Arbaʿīn, vol. 1, p. 239.

\textsuperscript{673} Quoted in: Ḥillī, Kashf al-murād, p. 402.

\textsuperscript{674} Ḥillī, Kashf al-murād, p. 403; Schmidtke, The Theology of al-ʿAllāma al-Ḥillī, p. 199.
stating that God being hearing and seeing refers to His knowledge of what humans hear and see.\(^{675}\)

Mīr Šadr al-Dīn adopts the same view as Ṭūsī and Ḥillī. In Mīr Šadr al-Dīn’s view we know that God is hearing and seeing based on scriptural evidence.\(^{676}\) He states that the Qur’an and ḥadīth literature are replete with references that describe God as hearing and seeing. This, Mīr Šadr al-Dīn writes, is self-evident and does not require elaboration and rational proof.\(^{677}\)

Mīr Šadr al-Dīn’s proof is clearly aimed at refuting the view of Ashʿarī and his followers who held that the attributes of hearing and seeing inhere in the essence. Mīr Šadr al-Dīn writes:

I say: there is no doubt that hearing (ṣamā’) and seeing (ibṣār) are a special type of knowledge [i.e. God’s knowledge]. They carry an element of specificity that allows them to unveil intelligibles [before God]. Whoever posses this type of specific knowledge is said to be hearing (ṣamī’an) and seeing (baṣīran). And the hearing (ṣam’) and seeing (baṣr) are terms used to characterise something that is capable of hearing (ṣamā’) and seeing (ibṣār). Furthermore, since it has been established already that God knows of all things through His essence [i.e. through knowledge of His essence], it is not impossible for God to know the objects of perception in the same manner as the [human] senses; except [God ‘hears’ and ‘sees’] through His essence. Hence knowledge of His essence includes these two dimensions [namely, ‘hearing’ and ‘seeing’]. [We say this] because there is no established proof in the scripture that says God ‘hears’ and ‘sees’ through the senses. And when God’s knowledge is said to include these two dimensions it is not impossible for Him to be [qualified as] hearing and seeing...this [proof] confirms that God hears and sees; for He does not ‘hear’ or ‘sees’ through intermediaries (such as the senses) but by knowing His essence. And as such this does not entail the existence of multiple co-eternals in the divine essence, for both [the attributes of] hearing and seeing, like knowing, are identical to the divine essence.\(^{678}\)

Commenting on this passage, Ghiyāth al-Dīn explains that his father had Dawānī in mind when he elucidated this proof.\(^{679}\) Dawānī did not agree with Mīr Šadr al-Dīn’s view that hearing and seeing are part of God’s knowledge (ʿilm). Rather, Dawānī

\(^{675}\) Ḥillī, Kashf al-murād, p. 403.


believed that hearing and seeing are independent attributes that are additional to the divine essence. Dawānī even criticised Ashʿarī for not making this point clear enough in stating that these two attributes are additional to the divine essence.

Dawānī writes:

I wonder why al-Shaykh al-Ashʿarī said what he said given his characteristic trait and method which is usually loyal to the apparent reading of the scriptures’ (wa-layt shīrī ma-l-bā’īth li’ll-shaykh al-Ashʿarī ’alā dhālik? mā a shaymatuḥu wa-tārīqatūhu al-muḥāfiẓa’ alā zawāhir al-nuṣūṣ).680

2.9: On the nature of the Qurʾān

What is the nature of the Qurʾān? Was it created in time? Or has it always been (qadīm)? Traditional Muslim authorities have always insisted that the Qurʾān is the word of God.681 According to most of the Sunni mutakallimūn, the Qurʾān is the uncreated word of God. Writing in his famous credo, which was to represent the orthodox Sunni position in later times, Abū Jaʿfar al-Ṭaḥāwī (d. 321/932) says:

We do not dispute [the soundness of] the Qurʾān. We testify that it is the word (kalām) of the Lord of the Universe. It was revealed to al-rāḥ al-amīn [i.e. Angel Gabriel] who taught it to the Master of Messengers Muhammad peace be upon him and his progeny. Verily! It is the word of God. It bears no similitude to words uttered by those created. We do not believe in its createdness nor do we speak contrarily to the Muslim multitudes (jamāʿat al-muslimīn).682

Ṭaḥāwī’s last statement is indicative of the magnitude of the debate regarding the nature of the Qurʾān. Muslims were divided on this issue. Some alleged that the

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682 Abū Jaʿfar al-Ṭaḥāwī, Bayān’ aqīdat uhl al-sunnah wa-l-jamāʿa [also known as al-ʾAqīda al-Ṭaḥāwīyya] (Beirut, 2005), p. 20.
Qur'an was created, while others held it be pre-eternal. Commenting on this historical epoch, Mīr Ṣadr al-Dīn writes:

It has been widely reported on the authority of the prophets that He - God – is a speaker (mutakallim). And the veracity of the prophets has been demonstrated through miracles [which they performed]. [That He is a speaker can be proven] without recourse to the speech of God since reliance on His speech [to prove that He is a speaker] would lead to an infinite regress. Generally speaking, the notion that God is a speaker is not disputed between the [Muslim] sects and madhāhib. However the point in which differences arise is regarding the meaning of God’s speech, and whether it is pre-eternal or created.\(^{683}\)

In this passage Mīr Ṣadr al-Dīn explains that since speech is predicated of God, He is therefore said to be a speaker.

Muslims agree that the Qur’an is the speech (kalām) of God, but that is the only extent of their agreement. Hishām b. al-Ḥakam said the Qur’an is not a creator nor created (al-qur’ān lā khāliq wa-lā makhlūq).\(^{684}\) Some of his later followers added that it is better to be cautious and avoid uttering the statement that, ‘the Qur’an is not created’, for it is an attribute and an attribute cannot be described (wa-lā yuqāl ghayr makhlūq lī-annahu ṣifā wa-l-ṣifā lā tūṣaf).\(^{685}\) Moreover, it is reported that Hishām b. Ḥakam told his followers that ‘the Qur’an may be termed according to two categories (darbayan): first, if you want that which is heard (al-masmū‘), then God has created sounds which [enunciate] the written letters; second, if you want the Qur’an, then it is the action of God which is similar as [God’s] knowledge. It [i.e. the Qur’an] is not He neither is it other than He (lā huwa huwa wa-lā ghayrihi).\(^{686}\)


\(^{684}\) Ash’arī, Maqālāt, vol. 1, p. 114.


The Kharijis, however, maintained that the Qur’an was created. While the Hanbalis held that God’s words are brought forth by way of ‘letting them be without how’ and that the Qur’an is not created, and anyone who believes that the words or their utterance (lafz) are created will fall into disbelief (kufr). Rather, the majority of the Ḥanbalīs said that God’s speech is words and sounds that inhere in His essence and are eternal. The Murji’is were divided into three camps. Some rejected the createdness thesis, others upheld it, while some said the Qur’an is the word of God but it is neither created nor uncreated (lā-naqāl innahu makhlūq wa-lā ghayr makhlūq).

The early Mu’tazilis broke into six camps. The first camp said the speech of God is a body (jism) and thus the Qur’an is created. The second, headed by Naẓẓām, said the Qur’an is a body made up of broken letters that produce sounds when recited. However, the recitation (qirā’ā) is not the Qur’an. According to the third camp, the Qur’an is a created body that can be found in many locations at once. It is present when the letters and the writing that forms it are organized accordingly. This view is attributed to Abū l-Hudhayl. Whereas the fourth camp said the Qur’an is a created body but remains in the same location (the Preserved Tablet) in which it was created. This view is attributed to Ja’far b. Ḥarb and the majority of Mu’tazilis of

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Baghdad. The fifth camp, the followers of Mu‘ammar, asserts that the Qur’an is an accident (‘ard), which is produced by humans during recitation. God is a speaker, that is, He is a ‘maker of speech in others’. The sixth camp, mainly followers of Iskāfī, held that the Qur’an is a created accident that can be found in many locations at once. Moreover, Iskāfī held that God is a speaker because ‘speaker’ suggests incarnation and the act of speaking is identical with what is said. Ibn al-Malāḥimī speaks of another view, which he adopts. He states that Abū Hāshim and his followers held that the Qur’an is made up of letters and sounds but it does not persist when recited.

As for the Ash‘arī view, Ash‘arī maintained that the expressions (al-i’tibārat) and the sensible pronunciations (al-alfāz), which are conveyed by the angel to the prophets, are created. However, the pointers (dalālāt), which point to the pre-eternal speech (al-kalām al-azalī), are uncreated. One must distinguish between what is recited (al-maqrū‘) and the recitation (al-qirā‘a), the former is pre-eternal while the latter is created.

Other Ash‘aris such as Juwaynī said God is a speaker. His speech is pre-eternal and that it inheres in the divine essence, which Juwaynī and other Ash‘aris

698 Ash‘arī, Kitāb al-luma‘, p. 15.
699 Ash‘arī, Kitāb al-luma‘, pp. 17, 23.
700 Shahrastānī, al-Mīlal, p. 108.
Moreover, according to Bāqillānī the speech of God is mental and an attribute of His essence which cannot be exhausted. Words are pointers to it but it is neither created nor originated. The recitation is created, though what is recited or read remains uncreated.

For Ghazālī, the speech of God is a pre-eternal attribute which inheres in the divine essence and is not separate from Him (ṣifā qadīma qāʾima bi-dhāt Allāh ghayr munfaṣila ‘anhu). Insofar as it is an entitative determinant (maʾnā), which inheres in the divine essence, the divine speech is pre-eternal. But insofar as it is sounds that are originated and sensibly pronounced, it is created. The pre-eternal Qurʾān, writes Ghazālī, is that which is read (al-maqrūʿ), it is with God but the arrangement of it took place in time. And while God’s speech is contained in the Qurʾān, the pre-eternal attribute which point at it is not there. For instance, the word ‘fire’ is in the Qurʾān, but this does not imply that ‘fire’ existed from all eternity; otherwise it would burn the Qurʾān.

Rāzī would later echo Ghazālī’s assertions by stating that God is a speaker and His speech, insofar as it is an entitative determinant, is pre-eternal and is directed by His will. Rāzī brings six proofs to establish that the Qurʾān is pre-eternal. Most of them invoke scriptural evidence primarily from the Qurʾān. The proof which relies on reasoning alone states that in relation to God, speech is an attribute of perfection. Had the speech been created then God’s essence would have

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701 Juwaynī, Kitāb al-irdhād, pp. 99, 104; Ashʿarī, Kitāb al-luma’, p. 22.
703 Ghazālī, al-Iqtiṣād, p. 113.
704 Ghazālī, al-Iqtiṣād, p. 114.
705 Rāzī, Muḥāṣṣal, p. 184.
be qualified by a lack before the creation of the speech. But this is impossible for
God. Hence His speech is pre-eternal.\footnote{Rāzī, \textit{Ma‘ālim}, p. 65; idem, \textit{al-Arba‘īn}, vol. 1, pp. 255-258.}

Ḥillī informs us that Ṭūsī adopted the view the Bahshamiyya,\footnote{Ḥillī, \textit{Kashf al-murād}, p. 403.} which was
also adopted by the school of Abū l-Ḥusayn al-Ṭabarī.\footnote{Ibn al-Malāḥimī, \textit{Kitāb al-fā‘īq}, p. 190.}

Against this background, Mīr Ṣadr al-Dīn proceeds to offer his view on the
nature of the Qur’an. He directs his critiques against the Ash’aris. He summaries the
views of the Mu’tazilis, with whom he seems to agree:

They [i.e. the Mu’tazilis] consider the Qur’an nothing more than sensible pronunciation. In
doing so they offer the following proofs: a. the Qur’an describes itself as ‘blessed recital’
(\textit{dhikr mubārak}), that is, a sensibly recited prayer; b. it is written in Arabic, which is to be
recited sensibly; c. the decent of revelation (\textit{tanzīl}) was recited too; d. the Qur’an says the
speech of God is that which is recited and heard. For instance, they refer to the saying ‘so
God’s speech may be heard’ (\textit{ḥattā yusma’ kālām Allāh});\footnote{Qur’an 9:6.} and e. the Qur’an was inscribed on
earthly codices (\textit{maṣīḥif}), which are made of matter, hence the Qur’an is created.\footnote{Dashtakī, ‘\textit{Risāla fī ithbāt al-bārī}, in \textit{Muṣannafūt}, vol. 2, pp. 936.}

The summary primarily describes the views of the Bahshamiyya. According to Mīr Ṣadr al-Dīn, neither scripture nor rational argument rejects the claim that the
Qur’an is sensible pronunciations.\footnote{Dashtakī, ‘\textit{Risāla fī ithbāt al-bārī}, in \textit{Muṣannafūt}, vol. 2, p. 937.} For him the Qur’an is intrinsically multifaceted
and exists in multiple ontological modalities, a view similar to some Baghdādī
Mu’tazilis such as Iskāfī.

Turning to the Ash’aris, Mīr Ṣadr al-Dīn rejects the doctrine of \textit{kālām nafṣī}. In
his view this doctrine is at odds with the basic tenets of Ash’ari theology. His
refutation may be summarized as follows. The \textit{kālām nafṣī} is said to be an attribute
which inheres in the divine essence. There is no doubt that in terms of its
ontological modality, the kalām nafṣī is either a mental or real existent. If mental then this is impermissible because the Ashʿaris deny mental existence altogether. If however it is real, then this entails affirming contraries (unity and multiplicity), since the kalām nafṣī insofar as it is God’s essential speech refers to multiple real existents.\textsuperscript{712}

Put in different terms, Mīr Ṣadr al-Dīn explains that the divine speech, which the Ashʿaris call kalām nafṣī, refers to many entities including, for example, nouns, commands, prohibitions, etc. All of these entities are said to be real. If the Ashʿaris insist on affirming the reality of kalām nafṣī they will concomitantly affirm the existence of multiple real entities in the divine essence while at the same time claiming to uphold God’s unity. This is a contradiction. Hence the doctrine of kalām nafṣī is invalid.\textsuperscript{713}

Centuries before, the school of Abū l-Ḥusayn al-Baṣrī opposed the doctrine of kalām nafṣī. Ibn al-Malāḥīmī states that those who uphold the doctrine of kalām nafṣī end up affirming unity and multiplicity at the same time.\textsuperscript{714} Ṭūsī adopted the same position. According to him the doctrine of kalām nafṣī is inconsistent with rational deduction (ghayr maʿqūl).\textsuperscript{715}

Be that as it may, Mīr Ṣadr al-Dīn opines that neither the Muʿtazilis nor the Ashʿaris failed to fully grasp the true nature of the Qur’an.\textsuperscript{716} Mīr Ṣadr al-Dīn explains that the Qur’an refers to the totality of different ontological manifestations


\textsuperscript{714} Ibn al-Malāḥīmī, Kitāb al-fāʾiq, pp. 182–184.

\textsuperscript{715} Quoted in: Ḥillī, Kashf al-murāḍ, p. 403.

of God’s exhaustive and absolute knowledge of all things, past, present, and future.

In its most basic form the Qur’ān is what is sensibly uttered, while its most noble expression is contained in the ‘Preserved Tablet’ (al-lawḥ al-maḥfūẓ). He writes:

I say: the letters are means through which sounds are produced (hay’āt ʿāriḍa līl-ʾaṣwāt). Sounds are movements of air molecules (wa-l-sawt ḥarākat al-hawāʾ). The movement of air molecules is a special movement (ḥarāka makhṣūṣa) which, concomitantly, means the letters subsist in the air and are therefore constitutive of speech...what is evident is that air does not subsist in the speaker (mutakallim)...therefore the relation of speech to the speaker is not one of subsistence [i.e. former in latter] but of relation [which does not involve subsistence] so that [one can say] the speaker is able to particularize letters and distinguish one from the other. The same applies to words and [constructed] sentences. Such [capacity to] particularize and distinguish [between speech] applies to vocal and written speech...It has already been discussed that writing is [defined as] the [process of] converting sensible pronunciations [into written form] through enunciated letters (ḥurūf hijāʾ). And some said that that which is uttered (maḥfūẓ) is [also] written (maktūb)...in the same vain [it can be said], a speaker is one who particularizes and distinguishes letters of speech vocally. Similarly, a speaker is also one who particularizes and distinguishes [letters of speech] through forms of writing.

While this is a Muʿtazili position, the remainder of the passage shows that for Mīr Ṣadr al-Dīn the idea that the Qur’ān is the speech is God is metaphorical, or simply a rhetorical device.

What is evident is that the [meaning of the Qur’ān] that is commonly held by the multitudes (jumhūr al-nās) is more generic than the two [definitions] mentioned already. The statement, ‘he said such and such’ can apply to those who can distinguish between letters. Similarly, it can be applied to those who particularize letters through forms of writing. Do you not see that some say, ‘the Shaykh [Avicenna] said (qāl) such and such in the Ishārāt [wa-l-tanbihāt] and such and such in the Shifā’. There are many similar examples, which are more than can be enumerated. Likewise the act of speech (takkullum) refers to something more general than the two [examples mentioned]. Since the act of speech is more general [in definition] than two examples mentioned, [it can be said] the creator transcribed the Qur’ān in the ‘Preserved Tablet’ so that He speaks through it (mutakallim bihi). Therefore the statement, ‘God speaks through the Noble Qur’ān’, means, in order to speak, God does not require the aforementioned means. It is like the one who transcribes legal injunctions and about whom it can be said, ‘he speaks through these legal injunctions’.

If you say: God’s speech through the Qur’ān is an expression of His writing in the ‘Preserved Tablet’, and His [act of] writing is either pre-eternal or generated. If it is pre-eternal then through the relation of concomitance multiplicity arises; and if it is generated then through the relation of concomitance God becomes the locus of generated things.

I say: we opt for the former [i.e. pre-eternal] but this does not entail affirmation of co-etrnals because His writing of the Qur’ān in the ‘Preserved Tablet’ is reduced to His knowing of particularized letters, words, and the construction of sentences; and [His

knowing of the] distinction between words and everything else in existence.

Hence the remarks of the Second Teacher [i.e. Fārābī] in the Fuṣūṣ: God’s first knowledge of His essence is indivisible, and His second knowledge is identical to His essence. If His knowledge increases, proliferation of knowledge does not occur in His essence.\(^\text{718}\)

Thus the Qur’an is sensible pronunciation insofar as it exists in spatial-temporal structures. However for Mīr Ṣadr al-Dīn this description of the Qur’an is not exhaustive; for the Qur’an is more than letters and sounds.

In conclusion, we have seen that in Mīr Ṣadr al-Dīn we encounter a philosopher who was much influenced by Avicenna in issues pertaining to philosophy proper, while in philosophical theology he drew influence from Ṭūsī and Ḥillī who were in turn were influenced by the Mu’tazīli school of Abū l-Ḥusayn al-Baṣrī and his followers.

We also saw that Mīr Ṣadr al-Dīn took to challenge the centuries-old dominance of Ash’ari philosophizing in western Iran by attacking ideas associated with Ash’ari kalām, such as, for example, the doctrine of kalām nafṣī. And finally, we saw that as well expressing a pronounced penchant for Avicennan metaphysical speculations he was also attentive to philosophical Shi’ism.

CHAPTER 3:
A SHIʿI PHILOSOPHER IN EARLY SAFAVID IRAN:
THE LIFE, TIMES, AND WRITINGS OF SAYYID GHIYĀTH AL-DĪN MANṢŪR
DASHTAKĪ (d. 948/1541)

3.1: General introduction

In the previous chapter, we demonstrated that Mīr Ṣadr al-Dīn, an avowedly
Avicennan philosopher with some Shiʿi-Muʿtazili proclivities, took it upon himself
to challenge the intellectual dominance of Ashʿari kalām in western Iran, a
centuries-old phenomenon dating back to Seljuq times. Mīr Ṣadr al-Dīn trained a
number of students who went to become philosophers in their own right. His most
famous student was his son, Ghiyāth al-Dīn.

Unlike his father, Ghiyāth al-Dīn lived in an era during which the new political
powers of Iran, the Safavids, proclaimed Shiʿism as the official religion of the realm,
ending centuries of Sunni political dominance. Under the Safavids, Ghiyāth al-Dīn
wrote some of his most important works such as the Kashf al-ḥaqāʾiq al-
Muḥammadiyya, the Ḥujjat al-kalām lī ṣidāḥ maḥājjat al-islām fiʿl-maʿād, the Mirʾāt al-
ḥaqāʾiq wa-mujlī al-daqāʾiq, and the Manāẓil al-sāʾirīn wa-maqāmāt al-ʿārifīn, all of which
demonstrate clearly an epistemological intent to bring various modes of enquiry
together under the general rubric of philosophy. In Ghiyāth al-Dīn we encounter a
hierarchical project, so to speak, which may be summarised as follows: first, to
reformulate Avicennan metaphysical speculations anew by emphasizing the
primacy of the syllogistic and demonstrative method; second, to dismiss as an
invalid epistemology the kalām method of later Ashʿari thinkers, namely the
dialectic argument, which involves knocking down someone else’s premise instead of constructing one’s conclusion from true and certain premises; and third, to introduce philosophical Shi‘ism and the teachings of the Shi‘i Imams that discuss rational matters as an alternative intellectual discourse to the later Ash‘ari consensus. Indeed the addition of mysticism and philosophical Shi‘ism to the Avicennan tradition which characterized Ghiyāth al-Dīn’s epistemological project was the major difference between him and his father who did not engage in any discussion on theoretical mysticism.

During Ghiyāth al-Dīn’s time the later Ash‘ari tradition was represented chiefly by Dawānī. Determined to undermine the last major Ash‘ari representative in Shiraz, Ghiyāth al-Dīn spent the most part of his early career writing critiques of Dawānī’s works. These range from critiques of the latter’s philosophical, theological, and mystical works, to his astronomical, mathematical, legal, encyclopedic, and occult. This would seem to indicate that in the view of Ghiyāth al-Dīn, Dawānī’s writings and ideas were considered to represent a broader and bigger project that dominated Shiraz’s intellectual landscape.

Beyond Dawānī, Ghiyāth al-Dīn devotes entire sections in such major writings of his as the Kashf al-ḥaqāʾiq in order to refute the main doctrinal arguments of Ash‘ari luminaries. For example, he takes constant pains to refute the central arguments in the following Ash‘ari works: Rāzī’s Muḥaṣṣal, Shahristānī’s Nihāyat al-aqdām, Ījī’s al-Mawāqif, Taftāzānī’s Sharḥ al-ʾaqāʾid al-nasafiyya, Jurjānī’s Sharḥ al-mawāqif, and Dawānī’s Iṭḥāb al-wājib and his Ḥawāshi upon the Tajrīd.\footnote{Cf. Dashtaki, ‘Kashf al-ḥaqāʾiq’, in Muṣannafūt, vol. 2, pp. 763, 764, 774, 780, 784, 790-80, 806, 816-819, 822, 837-838, 854, 855, 867, 888, 889-90, 892, 898-899, 901, 914, 928, 931, 934, 938, 941, 942, 948, 950, 952, 953, 958.}
Ghiyāth al-Dīn did not author many independent works but he certainly wrote more than his father. In fact Ghiyāth al-Dīn wrote on issues outside of philosophy and theology. He is known to have authored works on mathematics, logic, mysticism, history, legal theory, occultism, medicine, Qur’anic exegesis, Arabic grammar, Persian poetry, and spiritual psychology.\footnote{See Appendix B.}

Some of his works were dedicated to the Safavid rulers such as Shah Ismā‘īl. We know he led a successful career as a court official under the reign of Shah Ismā‘īl, sometimes accompanying the shah on his travels and expeditions. But under the reign of Shah Ṭahmasp (r. 930/1524-984/1576), Ghiyāth al-Dīn ran into trouble with the figure of Shaykh ʿAlī al-Karakī, the émigré Arab jurist who moved to Iran from Jabal ʿĀmil at the request of the Safavids. After quarrelling with Karakī over a legal matter, Ghiyāth al-Dīn was relieved of his official duties and retired to Shiraz where he spent the remainder of his life writing and teaching at the Madrasa-yi Manṣūriyya.

Despite some recent studies in Persian, the life, times, and writings of Ghiyāth al-Dīn remain a desideratum in modern western scholarship. This is due to the fact that the post-Avicennan philosophical tradition, with few exceptions, has received little scholarly attention, and remains so to this day. This is particularly true of the Timurid period.

It follows therefore that a detailed study of his life, political career, and intellectual endeavours is much needed. In this chapter I will attempt to achieve the following: (i) to provide a detailed account of Ghiyāth al-Dīn’s early life and learning, which will undoubtedly provide us with new insights about the culture of learning in late Timurid and early Safavid Iran; (ii) to provide an intellectual and
political biography; (iii) to examine in brief the lives, works, and major writings of his most important students, thus giving us an insight into the Dashtakī legacy in the Safavid period, which will surely help us assess or gauge the extent to which Ghiyāth al-Dīn acted as the physical link and mediator between early Safavid philosophy and the later tradition that culminated with the philosophers of Isfahan.

3.2: Early life and learning

Sayyid Manṣūr Dashtakī, commonly known as Ghiyāth al-Dīn,\(^{271}\) was born in 866/1462 in the quarter of Dashtak in the city of Shiraz. This date is confirmed by a number of sources, not least by his son Ṣadr al-Dīn Muḥammad, known as Ṣadr al-Dīn IV.\(^{272}\)


\(^{272}\) Qummī, Khulāṣat al-tawārīḵh, vol. 1, p. 226. Based on Ghiyāth al-Dīn’s genealogy the first to bear the title Ṣadr al-Dīn (i.e. Ṣadr al-Dīn I) was Sayyid Muḥammad b. Iṣḥāq (d. 767/1366), one of Ḥillī’s students. He was also known as Ṣadr al-Dīn al-Awwal. The second Ṣadr al-Dīn in the Dashtaki clan was Sayyid Muḥammad b. ʾĪbrāhīm (d. 828/1424), known in the genealogical literature as Ṣadr al-Dīn al-Thānī (Ṣadr al-Dīn II) (Fāsīyī, Fārs-nāma, vol. 2, p. 1039; Ṭīhrānī, Ṭaḥqāqāt al-šī ā: ʾIḥyāʾ al-dāthir min al-qarn al-ʾashḥir, p. 177). The third Ṣadr al-Dīn (i.e. Ṣadr al-Dīn III) was Mīr Ṣadr al-Dīn Dashtakī, Ghiyāth al-Dīn’s father. Hence properly speaking, Ghiyāth al-Dīn’s son was Ṣadr al-Dīn IV (i.e. Ṣadr al-Dīn al-Rābiʿ). That being said, some biographers and historiographers refer to Ghiyāth al-Dīn Dashtakī’s son as Ṣadr al-Dīn II. See, for instance, Khwānsārī, Rawdat al-jannāt, vol. 7, p. 170. Some modern authors, however, reserve the title Ṣadr al-Dīn III for Mīr Ṣadr al-Dīn Dashtakī, Ghiyāth al-Dīn’s father. See, for instance, the editor’s introduction in: Dashtakī, ʾIḥrāq hayāk̔l al-nū, pp. panjāh u šīh.
The issue of Ghiyāth al-Dīn’s confessional identity presents us with fewer problems than it did with his father. There is contemporary and later evidence that suggest Ghiyāth al-Dīn was Shi‘i who belonged to the Twelver persuasion. We have already examined some contemporary evidence, such as the waqfīnāma, when we explored the question of Mīr Ṣadr al-Dīn’s confessional identity. Similarly, we looked at later evidence such as the Dashtakī teaching of the Fīqh al-Riḍā. Such evidence relates to Ghiyāth al-Dīn indirectly. In what follows next we will briefly examine contemporary and later evidence that relate directly to Ghiyāth al-Dīn.

**Contemporary internal evidence**

Writing in his Īmān al-īmān, Ghiyāth al-Dīn devotes a section to eschatology and the end of times. Towards the end of the discussion he lists the signs which herald the Day of Judgement. One of these signs, he explains, is the end of the occultation of the Mahdī and his re-appearance along with Jesus son of Mary. He writes:

The signs of the Hour (al-sā‘a) are the appearance of the Dajjāl, the emergence of Gog and Magog, the occurrence of three eclipses, and the rising of the sun from west. These will herald the return of Jesus and the return of the Mahdī, peace be upon him, from occultation.

The reference to the occultation and re-appearance when the figure of the Mahdī is mentioned is a theme upheld exclusively by Twelver Shi‘is. In another work that deals with theology, Ghiyāth al-Dīn states that the Day of Judgement will not transpire until the Mahdī returns from his occultation. He writes:

Know that the signs of the end of times will be many...one of them is the return of the Mahdī from occultation.

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723 The Dajjāl is the malevolent creature in human form who appears at end of times as the apocalyptic opponent of Jesus.


In addition, when Ghiyāth al-Dīn list the names of the Rāshidūn caliphs in his Arabic annals of history entitled Badāyi’ al-ṣanāyi’, he does not afford any special reverential sentiment to Abū Bakr, ‘Umar, and ‘Uthmān, but singles out ‘Alī as the only one worthy of the title amīr al-mu’minīn, a clear indication, one may argue, of his Shi’i allegiances. In fact throughout his works, Ghiyath al-Dīn graces the names of the Shi’i Imāms with benedictions such as ‘alayh al-salām and a’immat al-hudā. These benedictions are reserved exclusively for ‘Alī, Ḥasan, Ḥusayn, Muḥammad al-Bāqir, and Fāṭima. For instance, when he mentions Muḥammad al-Bāqir in a discussion about mysticism, Ghiyāth al-Dīn writes:

Muḥammad b. ‘Alī al-Bāqir, peace be upon him and his noble fathers...for he is [i.e. al-Bāqir] about whom the Prophet told his companion Jābir b. ‘Abd Allāh al-Anṣārī. Indeed it was al-Bāqir is the one who split knowledge open.

In another work on Qur’anic exegesis Ghiyāth al-Dīn speaks about ‘Alī, Fāṭima, Ḥasan, and Ḥusayn with reverence, and describes them as the exemplars. He writes:

Those who give away from that which have, these are the truly charitable ones and the ones who will find reward in the hereafter...we read in the exegetical literature that the following Qur’anic verse, ‘all have degrees according to what they have done; thy Lord is not heedless of the things they do’, was revealed about the Family of Muḥammad, peace be upon him and his progeny...This [relates to the incident] when Ḥasan and Ḥusayn, peace be upon them, along with Fāṭima, peace be upon her, and ‘Alī, peace be upon him, gave away their flour to feed the poor bread. The next morning the Commander of the Faithful, peace be upon him, and his sons, peace be upon them, saw the Messenger of God who took pity on them when he saw that the looked pale and weak after they gave their food away to the poor. What great souls! Look at these noble individuals! Indeed this is the power of a cultivated soul...

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726 The Badāyi’ remains in manuscripts form. For the locations of extant manuscripts, see Barakat, Kitāb-shināṣf, pp. 120-121.


729 Qur’an 6:132.

In the same work, Ghiyāth al-Dīn says one of the ways to interpret the ‘disjoined letters’ (al-ḥurūf al-muṣṣaṭṭa‘a) that appear at the beginning of some Qur’anic chapters is to apply the view held by some Shi‘is. He writes:

[When the broke letters are added up] and after omitting letters that appear more than once, the following phrase can be constructed: ‘Alī is the path of truth that we firmly grip’ (ʿAlī širāt al-ḥaqq numṣikhu).\(^{731}\)

Moreover, in his commentary upon maqāmāt al-ʿārifīn (On the Stations of the Mystics), the ninth namaṭ of Avicenna’s al-Ishārāt, Ghiyāth al-Dīn expounds a mystical programme with a conspicuous Shi‘i colour, where Shi‘i scriptures are invoked to substantiate mystical claims. He writes:

What I mean by patience is to bear patience against travesties, to accept whatever God destines for us, and not to express anger when calamity befalls us. One should pay heed to the example [set by] Muḥammad al-Bāqīr, peace be upon him and blessings be upon his fathers, who said, ‘I accept whatever God destines for me, whether it is old age or youth and health or death.’\(^{732}\)

Similarly, in his Mirʾāt al-ḥaqāʾiq, Ghiyāth al-Dīn displays palpable Shi‘i sentiment when he states in the prologue:

And blessings be upon Muḥammad’s progeny, the ones who lit the world of darkness with their spiritual lights.\(^{733}\)

In another work, Ghiyāth al-Dīn comments on the formula ‘peace be upon Muḥammad and his progeny’ by stating:

This is recited in order to come closer to God. One adds the phrase ‘and his progeny’ because it is a way to honour the prophet.\(^{734}\)

In matters relating to theology, Ghiyāth al-Dīn adopts a view consistent with Twelver Shi‘i theology in his discussion on Imamate. He writes:


\(^{733}\) Dashtakī, ‘Mirʾāt al-ḥaqāʾiq’, in Muṣannafūt, vol. 1, p. 75.uiok

And the truth is that the Imamate has to be established through both rational (aqlan) and transmitted (samīn) proofs.735

Later evidence

Had Ghiyāth al-Dīn not been Shi‘i, as suggested by some,736 it would be have been strange for his son, Ṣadr al-Dīn IV, to describe his father as ‘the one who brings victory to the religion of the Shi‘a’ and ‘the epitome of the teachings of the Twelve Imāms’.737

Ṭīhrānī informs us that according to some sources Ghiyāth al-Dīn was said to have authored a work on Imāmate. In it he defends the doctrinal framework of

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735 Dashtakī, ‘Imān al-Imān’, in Musammafāt, vol. 1, p. 56. Commenting on this, Pourjavadī (Philosophy in Early Safavid Iran, pp. 26-27) observes that in the next sentence of the same passage Ghiyāth al-Dīn seems to counter the established Twelver Shi‘i doctrine of Imamate. In that passage mentioned by Pourjavadī, Dashtakī says:

‘The truth of the matter is that knowledge of the Imām and supporting him insofar as one is capable is a rational and scriptural necessity. The said Imām must posses the said qualities, especially justice. This is a rational necessity. However, if there is no such Imām who posses the said qualities, then it is necessary to elect a caliph or a commander or a king whose role will be to safeguard the divine law, and to establish justice and good politics (wa-l-ḥaqq inna ma mafṣat al-imām wa-l-‘ānātahu bimā tayasar wājiban ‘aqlan wa-sam’an wa-yajib ittisāfahu bimā dhukir siyāmā al-‘adāla ‘aqlan wa-in lam yajid imāman mawṣūfān bimā dhukir fa-yajib naṣb khalīfa aw amīr wa-malik yaqīm maqāmahu fi al-muḥāfaṣa ‘alā qawānīn al-sharī’ wa-l-‘adāla wa-ḥasan al-siyāsā).’

However, a careful reading of the Arabic excerpt above shows that in the first part of the sentence, Ghiyāth al-Dīn endorses the Twelver Shi‘i theory of Imamate; in the second part of the same passage, he says if such an Imām is not present then his [i.e. the Imām’s duty; notice the possessive pronoun (damīr)] is carried forward, i.e. maqāmahu falls to a temporal ruler (khalīfa aw amīr). Such assertion by Dashtakī does not contradict the established post-Ghayba Twelver Shi‘i theology of Imamate and guardianship. On this, see for example, Muḥsīn Kādīvār, Nazariya-hā-yi dawlat dar fiqh-i shī‘a (Tehran, 1376 Sh/1998). In addition in the same excerpt Ghiyāth al-Dīn refers to Dawānī (d. 908/1502) as ba’d al-qāṣīrīn min al-mu‘āṣīrīn, which would suggest that Dawānī was alive at the time. From this we conclude that the work was written either towards the end of the Timurid period, or in the early days of the Safavid ascension to power. If the former then Ghiyāth al-Dīn would not have been in a position to express his Shi‘i beliefs openly, though he hints that his belief on Imamate concords with the views of the ‘ītha ‘ashāriyya’; if the latter, then it could be argued that Ghiyāth al-Dīn was cautious of Ismā‘īl Ṣafavī’s messianic claims as well as the theological idiosyncrasies of the Qızılbash. Thus it is highly likely that due to prudential considerations Ghiyāth al-Dīn asserted that when the Imām is absent the his duties may be delegated to a temporal ruler like Ismā‘īl.

736 Abisaab, Converting Persia, p. 18.

737 See the epilogue of his Risālat al-dhikrā in MS Majlis 4875. Khwānsārī quotes the entire passage of the Risāla in his Rawdāt al-jannāt, vol. 7, pp. 179, 180ff. Of course a counter argument to this can validly suggest that Ghiyāth al-Dīn’s son had good reason to paint his father as Shi‘i in the Safavid period. However the evidence we presented for Ghiyāth al-Dīn’s Shi‘ism cannot simply be brushed aside in favour of circumstantial and conjectural counter evidence.
Twelver Shi’ism, the importance of having a living Imam present in the world, and the necessity of following an infallible guide in matters of religion. In the same work Ghiyāth al-Dīn is said to cite many polemical arguments from the writings of the Twelver Shi’i thinker and polymath Sayyid Ibn Ṭāwūs (d. 664/1265). Ṭihrānī, however, suspects that this work belongs to Ghiyāth al-Dīn’s son, Sayyid Sharaf al-Dīn al-Dashtakī (d. 984/1576).738

Similarly, Ṭihrānī tells us that Ghiyāth al-Dīn issued an ijāza to a certain Sālik al-Dīn Muḥammad b. Najm al-Dīn to transmit a well-known invocation prayer attributed to the eighth Shi’i Imām ‘Alī al-Ridā, known as the prayer of barakat al-sibā’, which further adds to Ghiyāth al-Dīn’s Shi’i credentials.739

Further still, we find that a certain Muḥammad Ḥāfiz al-Īṣfahānī, author of the encyclopedic treatise called Natījat al-dawla, probably written between 928/1522 and 950/1543,740 dedicates his work to the ‘fourteen infallibles’ (i.e. the Twelve Imāms plus the Prophet Muḥammad and his daughter Fāṭima) and ‘their servant’ Ghiyāth al-Dīn. This suggests, one may argue, that Ghiyāth al-Dīn’s contemporaries considered him to be Shi’i.741

A further indication that Ghiyāth al-Dīn was recognised as Shi’i by his contemporaries is when prince Yūsuf Qarā Qūyūnlū requested that he succeed his

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738 Ṭihrānī, al-Dhārīʾaʾa, vol. 2, p. 330. It is not clear which works of Ibn Ṭāwūs were cited by Ghiyāth al-Dīn. However given the nature of the said content, a likely source for Ghiyāth al-Dīn to consult, assuming the work was indeed written by him, would have been Ibn Ṭāwūs’ Bināʾ al-maqaṣa al-Fāṭimiyya fi naqd al-risāla al-Uthmāniyya. On this last, see Asma Afsaruddin, A Shi’i polemic against al-Jahiz: the bina’ al-Maqala al-Fatimiyya of Ahmad ibn Tawus, Unpublished Ph.D. Dissertation (John Hopkins University, 1992).

739 Ṭihrānī, al-Dhārīʾaʾa, vol. 8, p. 187. Ṭihrānī tells us that he saw a copy of this ijāza in a collection of ijāzāt known as Kanz al-sālikīn.

740 This work has been edited and published as: Muḥammad Ḥāfiz al-Īṣfahānī, Sīh risāla dar ikhtirāʾ āt-i ṣanʿat: sūrat, dastgāh-i rawgān-kishī, ‘natījat al-dawla’, ed. T Bīnish (Tehran, 1350 Sh/1971).

741 Ṭihrānī, al-Dhārīʾaʾa, vol. 24, p. 49.
father as the mutawalli of the Shāh-i Chirāgh. The prince refers to Ghiyāth al-Dīn as follows:

The chosen sayyid, the elected helper, the luminous moon in the dead of night, the flag of guidance, the guide of the Muslims, the meek servant of God, the one who is obeyed by great sultans, the one who untangles difficult problems related to God's speech, the key to understanding the prophetic traditions, the object of beauty among the pure progeny [of Muhammad], the supporter of Alid mysteries... 

Khwānsārī points out that after the rise of the Safavids, Ghiyāth al-Dīn’s commitment to Shi‘ism was expressed openly and ‘leaves no doubt that he belonged to the Shi‘i faith’. In addition, Khwānsārī reports that in some of his medical writings, some of which written before the rise of the Safavids, Ghiyāth al-Dīn would often prefix his statements with the formula ‘our companions the Imāmīs report on the authority of the Household [of Muhammad], who report on the authority of the Messenger of God’ (rawā aṣḥābunā al-imāmiyya ‘an ahl al-bayt ‘an rasūl Allāh). This would seem to indicate Ghiyāth al-Dīn’s preference for hadīths of Shi‘i provenance.

Finally, the Safavid era historian Shushtarī reports that when the Ottomans sent a letter to the Safavid court to protest against the ritual cursing (la’n) of the Sunni caliphs, Ghiyāth al-Dīn was asked by Shah Ṭahmasp to draft the response. Responding to the Ottoman protestations against the cursing of the three caliphs, Ghiyāth al-Dīn wrote:

As for the ritual cursing of the caliphs, know that they were servants (khuddām) of our


3.2.1 Ghiyāth al-Dīn’s teachers

Ghiyāth al-Dīn was noted for his scholarly acumen and intellectual rigour. Ḥasan Beg Rūmlū (b. 937/1530-31), the celebrated historian of the Safavid court during the reign of Shah Ṭahmasp, refers to Ghiyāth al-Dīn as ‘the one who mastered the transmitted and rational sciences, the Third Teacher, the ustād al-bashar, and the Eleventh Intellect (al-‘aqī al-ḥādī ʿashar).’

Indeed the sources inform us that as a child Ghiyāth al-Dīn was known to have displayed remarkable levels of intelligence. In Muḥarram 879/ May 1974, when the Qarā Qūyūnlū prince Yūsuf invited Mīr Ṣadr al-Dīn to take up the chair at the Shāh-i Chirāgh complex in Shiraz, Ghiyāth al-Dīn, who was thirteen-years-old at the time, was named the heir apparent to the post. An indication that Ghiyāth al-Dīn was respected for his scholarly insight even at that young age is found in the lavish titles prince Yūsīf confers upon him. The prince wrote:

The philosopher who in his youth triumphed over Avicenna and the great one whose rank became higher than Aristotle. [And] the one who combined the two positions [i.e. religious and political], the Third Teacher, the sayyid, the succour of goodness, guidance, truth, and certainty, the master of investigators, Mansūr (al-ḥakīm al-ghālib shāban ʿalā al-shaykh al-raʿīs

745 Shushtarī, Majālsī al-muʿminūn, vol. 2, p. 233; Khwānsārī, Rawḍāt al-jannāt, vol. 7, p. 182. Shushtarī and Khwānsārī report that the Ottoman letter contained two questions, to which Ghiyāth al-Dīn, writing on behalf of the Safavids, responded: 1. On what basis do you curse the three caliphs? 2. Why do permit your subjects to prostrate before you [i.e. the practice of sajda to the Shah]? Ghiyāth al-Dīn’s answer to the second question was: ‘we prostrate to the Shah as a sign of our gratitude; this is just like the prostration of the angels before our grandfather Adam; likewise we prostrate before Shah because God has blessed us with this righteous king who will defeat the enemies of God’. Cf. Rasūl Ja’fariyān, Ṣafavīyā dar ārās-i dīn: fārhang va siyāsat (Qum, 1379 Sh/2001), vol. 1, p. 93.

746 Rūmlū, Ḥasan al-tawārīkh, p. 303.


748 See the ‘Waqfna’ma’, in Muṣannafāt, vol. 1, p. 85.
In 884/1479, the then eighteen-year-old Ghiyāth al-Dīn seems to have had reached an advanced level of learning to the extent that he felt confident enough to challenge his father’s contemporary and rival Dawānī to a public debate. It is said that soon after Dawānī completed writing his Sharḥ al-hayākil al-nūr, 750 he was confronted in public by a young Ghiyāth al-Dīn who had prepared a list of critical questions regarding the content of the work. Not wanting to engage the young boy, Dawānī politely refused to answer the questions posed to him by Ghiyāth al-Dīn. 751

A precocious child, Ghiyāth al-Dīn’s writing career took off in 884/1479 when at the age of eighteen he composed his first work. It was entitled al-Lawāmī’ wa-l-maʿāriǧ, a short treatise on the subject of astronomy which, according to Shushtarī, and following him Kākāyī, was modelled on the Tuhfā-yi shāhī of Qūṭb al-Dīn Shīrāzī. 752 The sources indicate that by the time Ghiyāth al-Dīn reached the age of twenty he had already mastered an array of Islamic sciences, most notably falsafa and kalām. 753 Notwithstanding the hagiographical tone of these accounts, the parallels between Ghiyāth al-Dīn and Avicenna are most interesting, especially since the latter claims in his autobiography that by the age of eighteen he had already

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749 See the ‘Waqfānāma’ in Muṣannafat, vol. 1, p. 85.


mastered all the Islamic sciences. As well as composing works in the transmitted and rational sciences, Ghiyāth al-Dīn is also known to have written on subjects like occultism, astronomy, magic, natural sciences, medicine, mathematics, and mysticism. One may speculate, based on his the extensiveness the subjects he covers in his writings, that the accounts which portray Ghiyāth al-Dīn as being a prodigiously gifted child are fairly accurate representations of his versatility and erudition.

This in mind, one is prompted, then, to ask about his early education. Who were Ghiyāth al-Dīn's teachers? What kind of education did he receive during his early life?

Modern biographers have said very little, if anything, about his pedagogical background, except that he was a student of his father. The external historical evidence suggest that Ghiyāth al-Dīn spent most of his life in Shiraz, and it is likely that most of his education took place in his hometown at the Madrasa-yi Manṣūriyya. One piece of internal evidence, however, seems to suggest that Ghiyāth al-Dīn spent some time in Tabriz. In a fleeting remark Ghiyāth al-Dīn informs us that he spent some time in Azerbaijan while his father was alive. The reasons for his sojourn in Azerbaijan remain unknown, however.

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755 Kākāyī, for example, does not address this question and remains silent about Ghiyāth al-Dīn's early training. In a chapter dedicated to Ghiyāth al-Dīn's life and works, he does not mention anything about his teachers. See Ghiyāth al-Dīn Mansūr Dashtakī va falsafa-i 'irfān, pp. 67–98.


757 Dashtakī, 'Kashf al-ḥaqā‘iq', in *Musannafat*, vol. 1, 794. Dashtakī says: 'my father wrote his glosses on the *Tajrīd* during the time I was away in Azerbaijan' (fī-t-zaman al-ladhī kuntu fī bilād ʿAdharbāyjān).
The sources do not reveal much about his early training except that he studied falsafa, kalām, and other rational sciences, under his father.\footnote{758} In the transmitted sciences, it is probable that he attended some classes in fiqh and adabīyāt (belle lettres) with his father’s cousin, Sayyid Majd al-Dīn al-Ḥaqq Ḥabīb Allāh al-Dashtakī.\footnote{759} Some of the other contemporaneous and notable scholars in the transmitted sciences in Shiraz, with whom Ghiyāth al-Dīn could have studied, include: ‘Abd Allāh b. Maymūn al-Jīlī al-Kirmānī, Ruhn al-Dīn Rūzbahān al-Wā’īz al-ʿAmrī, Šafī al-Dīn al-Ījī, and Muḥyī al-Dīn al-Kūshkinārī al-Anṣārī.\footnote{760} There is no evidence whatsoever, neither in his works nor in later biographical accounts, to suggest that Ghiyāth al-Dīn studied with any of these thinkers. In fact, he would have most likely wanted to keep clear from these Sunni Ashʿari thinkers, given his vehement rejection of the tradition.

It is plausible that Ghiyāth al-Dīn studied Qur’anic exegesis with his father’s uncle Sayyid Niẓām al-Dīn Dashtakī, who was known as sultān al-mufassirīn.\footnote{761} However, given that Niẓām al-Dīn was Mīr Ṣadr al-Dīn’s teacher in tafsīr, a more likely scenario is that Ghiyāth al-Dīn studied tafsīr under father.

Ghiyāth al-Dīn appears to have been well versed in the natural sciences, particularly in astronomy. This is demonstrated by the fact that in 927/1521, while


\footnote{759} This is not certain since Majd al-Dīn Dashtakī was one of his father’s teachers, though it is plausible that Ghiyāth al-Dīn may have attended some of his classes too. See Dashtakī, ‘Kashf al-haqāʾiq’, in Muṣannaft, vol. 1, p. 69.

\footnote{760} We learn the names of these scholars from Dawānī who studied hadīth with them in Shiraz. See Dawānī, ‘Unmūdajh al-ulūm’, in Thalāth rasāʾīl, pp. 276-278 [cited in: Pourjavady, Philosophy in Early Safavid Iran, p. 6].

\footnote{761} This title is ascribed to him by Ṣadr al-Dīn Dashtakī IV. See ‘Ijāza’, in Muṣannaft, vol. 1, p. 70.
staying at the camp of Shah Ismāʿīl near Mount Sahan in Azerbaijan, he was invited by the shah to lead the reconstruction efforts of the Marāgha observatory, which was built by Ṭūsī in 658/1259. Convinced that a certain planetary alignment would bring worldly benefit, Ghiyāth al-Dīn advised the shah to delay the repair works by thirty years until the cycle of Saturn comes to a full circle, which has an orbital period of approximately thirty years.

It is remarkable that the names of his teachers in astronomy (and in the natural sciences) remain largely unknown to modern scholarship. In fact, both the biographical and historiographical literature say very little about his pedagogical training in the natural sciences. It is improbable that he studied astronomy and the other sciences with his father, for the latter does not appear to have been versed in these subjects. A plausible but yet to be established scenario is that Ghiyāth al-Dīn attended classes on astronomy and the sciences in the intellectual and cultural centres of Azerbaijan, perhaps in Tabriz, where he had, as mentioned earlier,

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264 In the eighth/fourteenth century, Tabriz was one of the most significant intellectual hubs in the eastern lands of the Islamicate world, thanks to the Il-Khānid grand vizier Rashīd al-Dīn Faḍl Allāh who helped build the university city of Rabʿ-ī Rashīdī. Some of the notable thinkers who lived or taught in Tabriz in this period include the likes of Shams al-Dīn al-Khusrawshāhī, a committed Avicennan who composed a précis of the Shiḥṣ. However, the most valuable information we have on the intellectual and philosophical activity in Tabriz in the said period comes from the recently discovered manuscript Safna-yi Tabrīz (The Vessel of Tabriz), which is a vast compendium bound together in a single work and copied by Abū l-Majd Muḥammad Tabrīzī Malakānīl-Qarashī in the early decades of the eight/fourteenth century. It includes over two hundred works that cover an array of disciplines from fiqh, kalām, tasfīr, falsafa, ‘irfān, and music. This work has been published in facsimile form under the supervision of Nasrollah Pourjavady (Tehran, 2003). Whether this intellectual activity, with its focus on philosophy and the natural sciences, persisted into the ninth/fifteenth and tenth/sixteenth centuries, so that it would have produced students under whom Ghiyāth al-Dīn could have studied astronomy remains, for the most part, terra incognita. Recent studies have, however, attempted to overcome this desideratum. See, for instance, Judith Pfeiffer
spent some time.

It was in falsafa and kalām where Ghiyāth al-Dīn excelled and left a permanent imprint on the later course of Islamic intellectual history, particularly in the Shi‘i milieu of post-Timurid Persianate societies. An indication that his particular forte was in the philosophical traditions is attested by the high praise afforded to him by his contemporaries and later biographers. He was oftentimes described as the ‘Seal of Philosophers’ (khātim al-ḥukamā’),765 the ‘Aristotle of his Time’ (Aristā dahrīhī),766 the ‘Eleventh Intelect’ (al-‘aqī al-ḥādi ‘ashar),767 the ‘Third Teacher’ (al-mu’alla al-thālīth),768 ‘The Teacher Par Excellence’ (ustād al-bashar),769 the ‘Philosopher who, in his Youth, Triumphed over Avicenna’ (al-ḥakīm al-ghālib shāban ‘alā al-shaykh al-ra’īs), and ‘The Leading Erudite of his Time in Philosophy and Theology’ (awḥad ‘aṣrīhī fi’l-ḥikma wa-l-kalām).770

Bearing this in mind, what kind of philosophical and theological training did he receive? Based on his writings, there is every reason to believe that Ghiyāth al-

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767 Fāsāyī, Fārs-nāma, vol. 1, pp. 98-103; Tīhrānī, A’lām al-shī‘a : ihyā‘ al-dāthir min al-qarn al-‘ashir, pp. 256-257. In the parlance of Islamic philosophy the eleventh intellect is employed as a superlative in reference to the ten intellects in Avicenna’s philosophy.

768 Rūmlū, Aḥsan al-tawārīkh, p. 303; Qummī, Khulāṣat al-tawārīkh, vol. 2, p. 296. It would appear that Ghiyāth al-Dīn was the first Safavid era philosopher to be called the Third Teacher (before Mir Dāmād). The first Teacher was Aristotle, followed by Fārābī, the Second Teacher.

769 Rūmlū, Aḥsan al-tawārīkh, p. 303; Qummī, Khulāṣat al-tawārīkh, vol. 2, p. 296; Fāsāyī, Fārs-nāma, vol. 1, pp. 98-103. The earliest instance of this title being attributed to Ghiyāth al-Dīn can be found in his son’s ijāza to the latter’s student. See the text of the ijāza in Muṣannafūt, vol. 1, p. 60, where Ṣadr al-Dīn IV, writing about his father Ghiyāth al-Dīn, says: ‘it was he [i.e. Ghiyāth al-Dīn] who promulgated the hidden aspects of the sciences and philosophical wisdoms as a result of which he became known as the ‘teacher par excellence’ (wa-huwa min ashā‘ gawwāmīd al-‘ulām wa-l-ḥikam wa-nashar bi-ḥayth liqība ustād al-bashar).

Dīn studied the Ishārāt and the Shifāʾ of Avicenna under his father. When discussing an Avicennan idea, Ghiyāth al-Dīn would often cite his father to whom he refers as al-ustādī. This would seem to suggest a pedagogical relationship where the former studied under the tutelage of the latter. Interestingly, we now know that Mīr Šadr al-Dīn owned an exquisite copy of Avicenna’s Shifāʾ which contained the books of logic, physics, and metaphysics, and which was copied by a certain Maḥmūd b. ‘Alī al-Kāshānī in 718/1318-19, and which later came in the possession of Ghiyāth al-Dīn.\(^{771}\)

It is also highly likely that Ghiyāth al-Dīn read Ṭuṣī’s Tajrīd along with Ḥillī’s Kashf al-murād with his father; for Ghiyāth al-Dīn devoted a significant part of his career writing glosses and super-glosses upon the Tajrīd and its various commentaries, including glosses on the celebrated commentary by Qūshchī.

Unlike his father who was a committed Avicennan, Ghiyāth al-Dīn made an effort to engaged with the philosophy of illumination. He composed a protracted commentary upon Suhrwardī’s Hayākil al-nūr, entitled Ishrāq hayākil al-nūr.\(^{772}\) It remains unknown, however, whether Ghiyāth al-Dīn received his training in the illuminationist tradition from a philosophy master in Shiraz or elsewhere in Iran, or whether he studied the works of Suhrwardī by himself without any pedagogical guidance.

In the kalām subjects, Ghiyāth al-Dīn would most probably have studied

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771 This manuscript is preserved in the Reza Library of Rampur, MS 397/8, listed as Hikmat 112. It is also listed in: Imtiaz Ali Khan Arshi, *Catalogue of Arabic Manuscripts in the Rampur Raza Library* (Rampur, 1971), vol. 4. According to the manuscript evidence, this particular copy was in the possession of Mīr Šadr al-Dīn first, who then passed it on to Ghiyāth al-Dīn, who then gave it to his son Šadr al-Dīn IV, until it eventually reached Fāṭḥ Allāh Shīrāzī, a relative of Ghiyāth al-Dīn, who settled India where he became the ‘intellectual ancestor of the Farhangī Maḥallīs and Khayrābdīs’ and who ‘is said to have been largely responsible for promoting the study of rationalism in the region’. See Asad Q. Ahmed, ‘The Shifāʾ in India I: Reflections on the Evidence of the Manuscripts’, in *Orients* 40 (2012), pp. 1-24, at p. 45, fn. 9; Pourjavady, *Philosophy in Early Safavid Iran*, p. 23, fn. 144.

Ghazālī’s *Iḥyāʾ* among other theological texts. Another indication that Ghiyāth al-Dīn studied the *Iḥyāʾ* is based on the fact that when he wanted to refute Ghazālī’s views on resurrection he relied almost exclusively on this text, going to great lengths to attack its content and its reputation.⁷⁷³

Shushtarī notes that a significant number of Ghiyāth al-Dīn’s writings were intended as direct refutations of Dawānī’s ideas, which can easily be ascertained by a quick glance at the titles of Ghiyāth al-Dīn’s extant writings. This suggests that Ghiyāth al-Dīn studied Dawānī’s writings, if only for the purposes of refuting them.⁷⁷⁴ The works of Dawānī which Ghiyāth al-Dīn read, probably under his father, would have included *Unmūdhaj al-‘ulūm*,⁷⁷⁵ and the *Risāla fi ithbāt al-wājib* (known as *ithbāt al-wājib al-dawānīyya*).⁷⁷⁶

An astute logician, Ghiyāth al-Dīn studied the logical treatises which formed the core component of the standard syllabi in the Islamicate world. He appears to have studied the following works: the logic section (i.e. the Arabic *Organon*) of the *Shifāʾ*, the *Ādāb al-munāẓara* by Ijī; Taftāzānī’s *Tahdhīb al-maṭṣiq*; and Qazvīnī Kātimī’s *al-Risāla al-shamsiyyah fi’l-qawa’id al-maṭṣiqiyya*. This is based on his writings on the subject of logic in which he demonstrates thorough familiarity with the above works.⁷⁷⁷ However, the names of his teachers in logic remain unknown, though it is

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⁷⁷³ This will be discussed in the next chapter.


⁷⁷⁶ Ghiyāth al-Dīn wrote a refutation of this work. See Appendix B.

⁷⁷⁷ See his writings on logic in Appendix B.
probable that he studied the above works under his father. What is certain, however, is that Ghiyāth al-Dīn became acquainted with the logical sophistry known as the Liar Paradox (shubhat jadhr al-aṣamm) through his father, who debated Dawānī on this issue.

3.3: Ghiyāth al-Dīn under the Safavids

There is evidence to indicate that Ghiyāth al-Dīn was in still in Shiraz as late as 900/1494. In his Mirʾāt al-ḥaqāʾiq, a work on philosophical-mysticism, he explains that though he completed the work on 30 Rabīʿ I 895/21 February 1490, some addendums were made in 900/1494 whilst still at Shiraz.778 Like his father, Ghiyāth al-Dīn kept amicable relations with the incumbent rulers of his time, both with the Āq Qūyūnlū and the Qarā Qūyūnlū Turkic rulers. We already know that in Muḥarram 879/ May 1474, the Qarā Qūyūnlū prince Yūsuf b. Jahānshah invited Mīr Šadr al-Dīn and his son Ghiyāth al-Dīn to take up a teaching post in Shiraz.

But it was the Āq Qūyūnlū rulers who reigned over Shiraz for much of Ghiyāth al-Dīn’s early life. It would appear that Ghiyāth al-Dīn kept good relations with the rulers of this dynasty. In the addendums of the Mirʾāt al-ḥaqāʾiq there is a dedication to the Āq Qūyūnlū sultan Abū l-Muẓaffar.779 However, evidence indicate that as early as Muḥarram 879/ May 1474, the Qarā Qūyūnlū rulers recognized Ghiyāth al-Dīn as a capable young Shiʿi philosopher.

With the rise of the Safavids, Ghiyāth al-Dīn had risen to prominence as one of the leading authorities in the philosophical sciences who was recognised as a Shiʿi

thinker and who, along with his students, stood out as the chief proponent of Avicennan philosophy in the early Safavid period. It is therefore to the Safavids that we now turn.

Historians have noted that the intellectual milieu in the eastern parts of the Islamicate world – especially as we near the eleventh/seventeenth century - has its roots in the religious controversies that marked much of the Ilkhanid period. Indeed during the Ilkhanid period different religious traditions co-existed side-by-side, amounting almost to freedom of religious beliefs and reciprocal toleration. Shi'i beliefs particularly in their Twelver persuasion dominated court life and urban cities. During the reigns of Ghazān-Khān (reg. 670/1271-704/1304) and Uljeitū (reg. 679/1280-716/1316), Twelver Shi'ism prospered. Michel Mazzaoui notes that 'as a Muslim school with a recognised set of principles and a highly elaborate system of dogma, Twelver Shi'ism could be applied side by side with an established system of government like that under the Ilkhānid'. After the death of Ghazān-Khān in 703/1304, his successor and brother, Uljeitū, became disenchanted with Sunnism and adopted Twelver Shi'ism in 709/1309-10, but he made no effort to impose it.

However, the prevalence of Twelver Shi'ism was not to last. Decades later,

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782 The reign of the Ilkhanid Mongols sought to incorporate certain elements of Twelver Shi'ism by calling on the services of such high-ranking jurists and philosophers as Tūsī and Hīlīlī. Cf. ‘Šī'ism under the Mongols’ chapter in: Mazzaoui, *The Origins of the Šafawīds*, pp. 22-40.


the Mongols, under Abū Saʿīd, reverted to the ‘Sunni synthesis’, though the Shiʿi ʿulamāʾ carried on the struggle of winning over the central government to Twelver Shiʿism, especially in the years following Ḥillī’s death in 725/1325. Soon thereafter, particularly in the eighth/fourteenth and ninth/fifteenth centuries, Twelver Shiʿism, now considered reprehensible by the ruling elite, found temporary refuge among the Sufi ṭariqas and the ghulāt movement. This confluence between Shiʿism, Sufism, and ghulūwāt marks an important epoch in the intellectual history of Persian-Islamic societies. Proffering an alternative narrative, Rasūl Jaʿfariyān notes that a number of Sufis and some ghulāt currents present in the region adopted popular Shiʿi practices and beliefs in order to advance their own agendas.

Indeed the confluence between Shiʿism, Sufism, and the ghulūwāt traditions was best exemplified in the Safavid movement. Originally founded as a Sufi ṭariqa by Shaykh Ṣafī al-Dīn al-Ardabīlī (d. 735/1334), a local Sufi divine and the eponymous founder of the Safavids, the movement gained prominence during the eighth/fourteenth century when Ṣafī al-Dīn’s descendants, sultans Junayd (d. 864/1460) and his son Ḥaydar (d. 893/1488), transformed the movement into a

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786 Some of these scholars include the likes of Muḥammad b. Makkī al-ʿĀmilī, known as ‘al-Shahīd al-Awwal’ (executed in 786/1384) and ʿĀḥmad b. Fahd al-Ḥillī (d. 841/1437).


788 Ṣafī al-Dīn Ardabīlī was initiated into Sufism by Shaykh Tāj al-Dīn ʿĪbrāhīm al-Zāḥidī (d. 700/1300), a murshid in Gilan whose daughter Ṣafī al-Dīn married. Ṣafī al-Dīn later became the pir of the Zāḥidī order after the demise of his murshid and father-in-law. After his death the order changed its name to Ṣafawīyya/Safawīyya to honor their new pir. Ibn al-Bazzāz (d. 794/1391-2), author of Ṣafwat al-ṣafā, a work of hagiography, and a disciple of Ṣafī al-Dīn, describes Ṣafī al-Dīn as a ‘man of great learning, wisdom, piety, and popularity’. See Ibn Bazzāz, Ṣafwat al-ṣafā (Tehran, 1997), p. 12. Ṣafī al-Dīn’s role in the Ṣafawīyya was not confined to founding the order and giving it its name. He helped established a firm basis for future developments through the great number of supporters which he won for it and the prosperity with which he endowed it. See H. R. Roemer, ‘The Safavid period’, in P. Jackson and L. Lockhart (eds.), The Cambridge History of Iran Volume 6, pp. 189-350, at p. 193. On the life of Ṣafī al-Dīn and the socio-political background in which he lived, see Maryam Mīr ʿĀḥmadī, Dīn u madḥhab-i dar ‘asr-i ṣafāvī (Tehran, 1363 Sh/1984), pp. 37-38.
fierce military force to be reckoned with.\textsuperscript{789} Under Ḥaydar the bulk of the Safavid movement were nomadic Oghuz Turkic-speaking clans known as the Qizilbash (lit. ‘Red-Heads’). The Qizilbash were fierce warriors, spiritual followers of Ḥaydar, and a source of the Safavid military and political power.\textsuperscript{790} At Ḥaydar’s death his son Ismā‘īl was hidden by supporters, first at Ardabīl and then for some years in Lāhijān under the protection of Mīrzā ‘Alī Karkiya, a Zaydi Shi‘i from a noble family that had ruled the area since the late eighth/fourteenth century.\textsuperscript{791}

In the following years, Ismā‘īl became the spiritual and political leader (\textit{murshid-i kāmil}) of the Safavid movement. Indeed the Safavids’ military, political and religious objectives coalesced during the reign of Ismā‘īl, who relied heavily on the Qizilbash.\textsuperscript{792} In 907/1501, Ismā‘īl led an army of devout Qizilbash soldiers and conquered Tabriz, the then Āq Qūyūnlū capital, where he declared Twelver Shi‘ism the official religion of the realm. The sources describe Ismā‘īl’s entry into Tabriz as follows:

On Friday, the exalted king went to the congregational mosque of Tabriz and ordered its preacher, who was one of the Shi‘ite dignitaries, to mount the pulpit. The king himself proceeded to the front of the pulpit, unsheathed the sword of the Lord of Time, may peace be upon him, and stood there like the shining sun.\textsuperscript{793}


\textsuperscript{791} Newman, \textit{Safavid Iran}, p. 11.

\textsuperscript{792} Mansūr Šīfatgul, \textit{Ṣākhtūr-i nəḥād va andīsha-yi dīnī dar Irān-i ʿāsr ʿ safavī} (Tehran, 1381 Sh/2003), p. 72ff.

Determined to propagate Shi‘i teachings, Ismā‘īl relied on the local Shi‘i ‘ulamā’ to help establish the religious foundations of the Safavid Empire. The first encounter between Shah Ismā‘īl and our philosopher Ghiyāth al-Dīn took place in 909/1504 when the former captured Shiraz and issued a farmān exempting the endowment income of the Madrasa-yi Manṣūriyya from taxation. Shah Ismā‘īl’s tax exemption would seem to suggest that the Madrasa-yi Manṣūriyya was still active in the said period, which would still place Ghiyāth al-Dīn in Shiraz circa 909/1504, for he was the head of the school, a position which he inherited from his father and which also seems to attest local prominence on the part of Ghiyāth al-Dīn.

In fact evidence suggests that Ghiyāth al-Dīn kept warm relations with Shah Ismā‘īl as well as his Qizilbash forces. This further supports the claim that Ghiyāth al-Dīn was Shi‘i; for the Qizilbash did not tolerate any form of Sunnism. It is very telling that a noted Sunni theologian such as Dawānī, who often added the title ‘al-Ṣiddiqī’ to his name, since he claimed descent from the first Sunni caliph Abū Bakr, felt an urgent need to distance himself from Sunnism in his Persian treatise the Nūr al-hidāya.

Despite his nominal acceptance of Twelver Shi‘ism, Dawānī found little if any support or endorsement in the Safavid court. On the other hand, Ghiyāth al-Dīn, enjoyed the support of Shah Ismā‘īl and his Qizilbash. In the opening sermon of his

794 Fasāyī, Fārs-nāma, vol. 1, p. 370. ‘Abd Allāh Nūrānī claims that Ghiyāth al-Dīn met Ismā‘īl somewhere in Azerbaijan prior to the death of Mīr Ṣadr al-Dīn in 903/1498 (Muṣannafat, vol. 1, pp. 22-23). Nūrānī bases his claim on an incidental remark by Ghiyāth al-Dīn in the latter’s Kashf al-ḥaqīq, where after commenting on a particular section of his father’s glosses on the commentary of the Tajrīd, in which Mīr Ṣadr al-Dīn discusses the nature of the human soul, Ghiyāth al-Dīn says he was in Azerbaijan at the time of his father writing these glosses. It is not clear, however, which sets of glosses Ghiyāth al-Dīn was referring to. The first glosses upon the Tajrīd written by Mīr Ṣadr al-Dīn were penned in 882-3/1477-8, ten years before Ismā‘īl was born (b. 892/1487), the second glosses were written in 887/1487, the year of Ismā‘īl’s birth, and the third set in 896/1490-1, when Ismā‘īl was three years old. If a meeting did take place between Ghiyāth al-Dīn and Ismā‘īl it would have taken place around the same time Mīr Ṣadr al-Dīn wrote his third glosses in 896/1490-1. If true, as Nūrānī claims, it would have been rather odd for a scholar of Ghiyāth al-Dīn’s calibre to meet with a three year-old toddler.
Persian treatise entitled *Risāla-yi qawā'id*, Ghiyāth al-Dīn dedicates a special prayer to Shah Ismāʾīl whom he describes as ‘the just sultan and the obliterator of injustice’ (*al-sultān al-ʿādil wa-l-ladhī afaqān al-jūr*), as well as referring to him as the ‘king of the world’ (*shāh-i jahān*). In addition, Ghiyāth al-Dīn dedicated another Persian treatise on medicine, entitled *Tarjumat al-shāfiyya*, to Shah Ismāʾīl.

In 914/1508 Ghiyāth al-Dīn appears to have played an instrumental role in the invasion of Baghdad when Shah Ismāʾīl sent his armies to wrest control of the city from the local governor Amīr Dhū l-Fiqār, who opposed the Safavids and refused to pay allegiance to the shah. According to Shushtarī, Ghiyāth al-Dīn prepared special prayers (*adʿiya*) and talismans (*tilismāt*) in order to cause the death of the governor. There are no other historical sources that corroborate this claim, except Shushtarī who hints that Ghiyāth al-Dīn accompanied the shah’s army during the course of the invasion.

Although far from being an ideological mainsay for the Safavids, Ghiyāth al-Dīn played a part in the court’s project to propagate Shiʿism. In their quest for religious authenticity, the Safavids turned to the learned elite, the ʿulamāʾ, to institute a ‘proper, court-sanctioned religious socialization for both educated and

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795 The opening sermon of the *Risāla* is quoted in extenso in: *Muṣannafāt*, vol. 1, p. 22. The editor (i.e. Nūrānī) does not provide any codicological details about this work, nor does he list the locations of the extant manuscripts.

796 *Muṣannafāt*, vol. 1, p. 22.


798 Shushtarī, *Majāls al-muʾminīn*, vol. 2, p. 232. The special prayers and talisman were supposedly written down by Ghiyāth al-Dīn in his now lost *Qānūn al-ṣaltāna*, which is not listed among his works by anyone else but Shustarī. Of course there is no reason to suspect Ghiyāth al-Dīn’s engagement with the occult and lettrism. Both he and his father are said to have engaged in occult and magical practices, and, if the sources are to be believed, wrote something on the subject. See appendices A and B.
common Persians’. One of the most important religious functions within the Safavid state was that of the ṣadr, a typically a Persian function that was almost always take up by a sayyid. This was also the case under the Timurids, the Qarā Qūyūnlū and Āq Qūyūnlū. Like his pre-Safavid counterparts, the Safavid ṣadr’s role remained limited to managing the properties, finances and staff of the religious endowments (mawqāfāt), as well as being the chief judicial officer for the religious courts (manāṣib sharʿiyā).

The first Safavid ṣadr, appointed in 906/1501, was Shah Ismāʿīl’s tutor from Lāhijān. When Ismāʿīl passed away in 930/1524, his son Ṭahmasp succeeded him. It was under the reign of Shah Ṭahmasp (reg. 930/1524-984/1576) that Ghiyāth al-Dīn was appointed to the prestigious office of ṣadr in 936/1529. However he shared this function with the Iraqi scholar Sayyid Niʿmatallāh al-Ḥillī (d. 940/1533). Both men had a turbulent relationship with Karakī, the celebrated Arab émigré scholar who was one of the first jurists to immigrate from Jabal ‘Āmil to Persia, though he

799 Abisaab, Converting Persia, p. 11.
801 Floor, ‘The ṣadr’, p. 461. According to Roger Savory the ṣadr was responsible, among other things, for the dissemination of Shi‘ism. See Savory, ‘The Principle Offices’, p. 79, fn. 10. However, as Floor and others have shown, some of the early ṣadrs were often Sunnis in disguise. For example, Mīr ʿAbd al-Bāqī (ṣadr in 918/1512-919/1513) was the shaykh of the Niʿmatollāhī ṣāriqa, while Sayyid ʿAbd Allāh (ṣadr in 921/1515) was the shaykh of the Dhahabī one. See Floor, ‘The ṣadr’, p. 463; Hamid Algar, ‘Naqshbandīs and Safavids: A Contribution to the Religious History of Iran and Her Neighbors’, in Michel Mazaoui (ed.), Safavid Iran and Her Neighbors (Utah, 2003), pp. 9-13; Abisaab, Converting Persia, p. 16.
802 Newman, Safavid Iran, p. 17.
804 Hence, technically speaking, Ghiyāth al-Dīn was nīm-ṣadr (half-ṣadr).
spent some time in Najaf in the interim. Karakī was later given the title of al-Muḥaqiq al-Thānī (the Second Investigator). His association with the Safavid court began soon after the capture of Tabriz. In his earlier years, Karakī studied in Syria and Cairo. In 909/1504, Karakī settled in Najaf and received regular stipends after entering the service of the Safavid court. In 910/1505 he accompanied Shah Ismā’il to Isfahan. In 914/1508, the Safavids captured Baghdad and freed Karaki who was at the time imprisoned by the Āq Qūyūnlū.

The sources describe Karakī as an avowed defender of the Safavid’s anti-Sunni Shiʿism. When Shah Ismāʿīl captured Herat in 916/1511, Karakī composed a work called Nafaḥāt al-lāhūt fī la’n al-ǰibt wa-l-ṭāghūt, in which he advanced an argument for the permissibility of openly cursing and vilifying the three Sunni caliphs.

Determined to partake in the Safavid project to convert the Persian populace to Shiʿism, Karakī become responsible for assessing whether the doctrinal beliefs and theological stances of local preachers and clerics of prominence were consistent with those expounded by the Twelver Shiʿi theologians. Under Shah

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810 Rumlū, Aḥsan al-tawārīkh, p. 249; Ja’fariyān, Nishū’ wa-suqūṭ, pp. 81-87.
Ṭahmasp, Karakī gained unrivalled eminence when the shah bestowed a variety of honorific titles upon him, most notably ‘the mujtahid of the Age’ (mujtahid al-zamān).⁸¹¹ Between 936/1530 and 940/1533, Shah Ṭahmasp sought to make Karakī the supreme religious authority in Iran. In Dhū l-Ḥijjah 939/July 1533, Shah Ṭahmasp issued an edict (farmān) which granted Karakī extensive powers over the šadrs, and over all state functionaries alongside suyārghāl (land grant) and tax immunities.⁸¹² The edict was issued shortly after Niʿmatallāh al-Ḥillī, the incumbent šadr, clashed with Karakī over some religious matters, which resulted in the former being banished from court.⁸¹³

At that time the Persian clerical elite were no keen on Karakī. They felt that Shah Ṭahmasp’s attempt to subordinate all religious functionaries to Karakī’s authority was insulting.⁸¹⁴ Despite the Persian opposition, the language used by Shah Ṭahmasp in the farmān make it clear that according to the Safavid monarchs Karakī is to be regarded as the ‘Seal of the Mujtahīd, Proof of Islam, Guide of the People, and the Deputy of the Imam’ (nāʿīb al-imām).⁸¹⁵ In addition, all state officials and Persian notables were required to recognise Karakī as ‘their guide and model’

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⁸¹¹ Abisaab, Converting Persia, p. 16.

⁸¹² One of Karakī’s roles in the newly established empire was to train the Safavid court officials in the intricacies of the Shi’ī faith. As such, the shah paid him a rather generous salary of seventy seven dinars, where each dinar was the equivalent of a small slab of gold. Said Amir Arjomand, ‘The Mujtahīd of the Age and the Mullā-bāshī: An Intermediate Stage in the Institutionalization of Religious Authority in Shi’īte Iran’, in Said Amir Arjomand (ed.), Authority and Political Culture in Shi’ism (New York, 1988), pp. 80–97, at p. 81; Ja’farīyān, Nishūʾ wa-suqūṭ, p. 83ff.


and to obey him in all affairs.\footnote{Shushtarī, Majāls al-
muʿ mínīn, vol. 2, p. 231; Abisaab, Converting Persia, pp. 17-18; Newman, Safavid Iran, p. 37.}

Immensely irritated by Karakī’s meddling in the religious functions of the state, Ghiyāth al-Dīn, now the chief šadr after Ḥillis’s dismissal, clashed with Karakī on issues ranging from the proper method to determine the direction of prayer (qibla) to the content of the formulaic language one should use when issuing a fatwa.\footnote{Fasāyī, Fārs-nāma, vol. 2, p. 938ff.} However, according to one source the relationship between Ghiyāth al-Dīn and Karakī was not always acrimonious. We are told that soon after Karakī arrived in Iran, he began to attend Ghiyāth al-Dīn’s classes on philosophy and theology, which focused on Qūshchī’s commentary upon the Tajrīd. To reciprocate Karakī’s goodwill gesture, Ghiyāth al-Dīn attended Karakī’s classes on fiqh, which focused on Ḥillis’s Qawā id al-ḥākim.\footnote{Shushtarī, Majāls al-
muʿ mínīn, vol. 2, p. 231; Khwānsārī, Rawdāt al-jannāt, vol. 7, p. 167. Commenting on Ghiyāth al-Dīn’s ring-stamp, Khwānsārī reports: ‘the ring-stamp of his noble ring read, ‘the supporter of sharīʿa, Maṃsūr [Dashtakī]’ (wa-kān naqsh khātamahu al-sharīʿ ‘nāṣir al-sharīʿ a Maṃsūr’).} The supposed reconciliation between Karakī and Ghiyāth al-Dīn appears in the later historical sources only. There is no contemporary evidence to suggest such reconciliation took place.

However, hostility between the two grew when Ghiyāth al-Dīn insisted on adding the phrase nāṣir al-sharīʿa Maṃsūr to his official ring-stamp (khātam).\footnote{‘Two Decrees of Shāh Ṭahmāsp’, p. 251.} Vested with new authority as the supreme religious guide of the Safavid realm, Karakī would not have taken lightly Ghiyāth al-Dīn’s attempt at self-aggrandizement; for it would seem to imply, at least in the mind of Karakī, that Ghiyāth al-Dīn was the doyen of legalistic studies within the Safavid territories. The feud between the pair reached its peaked when Karakī, acting as the supreme mujtahid of the realm,
ordered all prayer-leaders in western Iran and Iraq to change the direction of the *qibla*, claiming that Tumurid-era method of calculating the direction of the prayer to be invalid as it was not carried out in accordance with Shi’i *fiqh*.

Unconvinced by Karakī’s argumentation, Ghiyāṭh al-Dīn, who opposed Karakī’s meddling in the religious affairs that fell under the purview of the *ṣadr*, decided to issued a response in the form of an Arabic treatise, entitled *Maʿrifat al-qibla*.

In this work Ghiyāṭh al-Dīn argues that the proper method one must employ to determine the direction of prayer should rely on astronomical tables and mathematical calculations, a task which could be undertaken only by a person skilled in these disciplines. However, when the matter remained unresolved, an indication that Ghiyāṭh al-Dīn’s treatise did not persuade Karakī to change his mind, the case was taken before Shah Ṭahmasp, who agreed to settle the matter once and for all, providing Karakī and Ghiyāṭh al-Dīn held a public debate in his presence.

The debate took place in 938/1532. Rather than being a scholarly exchange between two of the most senior religious figures in the Safavid realm, it turned into a heated and aggressive polemic. Both parties hurled insults at each other in the presence of the shah. According to one report, Ghiyāṭh al-Dīn initiated the debate when he stated that the method of determining the direction of prayer requires knowledge of astronomy and mathematics and must be proven with geometric illustration. But he pointed out, ‘al-Shaykh al-Karakī knew neither subject well’, insinuating that Karakī was a simpleton. As a result, Karakī became especially

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enraged.\textsuperscript{823}

Karakī riposted by citing the Qur’anic verse, ‘the fools among the people will say: what has turned them from their qibla which they had?’\textsuperscript{824} Following this, tempers flared up and Ghiyāth al-Dīn, no doubt angered by Karakī’s insinuation that he was foolish, responded in kind by citing the Qur’anic verse, ‘And even if you bring to those who have been given the Book every sign they would not follow your qibla, nor can you be a follower of their qibla, neither are they the followers of each other’s qibla, and if you follow their desires after the knowledge that has come to you, then you shall most surely be among the unjust.’\textsuperscript{825}

In the end the shah sided with Karakī and agreed to have his method of finding the qibla direction put into practice.\textsuperscript{826} Soon thereafter, Ghiyāth al-Dīn was dismissed from the office of šadr and was replaced with Mu’izz al-Dīn Muḥammad al-Iṣfahānī,\textsuperscript{827} one of his students, perhaps an attempt by the shah to further undermine Ghiyāth al-Dīn for opposing Karakī.

Shortly later Ghiyāth al-Dīn moved back to Shīraz where he spent the remainder of his life teaching and writing at the Madrasa-yi Manṣūriyya.\textsuperscript{828} Aged seventy-two and back in his hometown, he lived the rest of his days in private, leading a recluse lifestyle where he refused to meet anyone but his family and close friends. He avoided politics and even advised his sons to steer clear from the Safavid


\textsuperscript{824} Qur’an 2:142.

\textsuperscript{825} Shushtarī, Majālīs al-muʾminīn, vol. 2, p. 231; Fasāyī, Fārs-nāma, vol. 2, pp. 190-191. The verse recited by Ghiyāth al-Dīn was from Qur’an 2:145.

\textsuperscript{826} Abisaab, Converting Persia, p. 18.

\textsuperscript{827} Rumlū, Aḥsan al-tawārīkh, p. 303ff.

It would appear that towards the end of his life Ghiyāth al-Dīn was paranoid of being contracted with syphilis. Rumlū writes:

He was very afraid of the disease ātāshak (lit. ‘small fire’), or syphilis, which was very common during those days, and for that reason he had become very hateful of the entire world.  

After an illustrious career, Ghiyāth al-Dīn passed away on 6 Jumāda I 949/18 August 1542 in his hometown of Shiraz. He was buried in the Madrasa-yi Manṣūriyya alongside his father. His mausoleum survives till this day.

3.4: Ghiyāth al-Dīn’s students

Ghiyāth al-Dīn trained a number of students who went on to become recognized philosophers in their own right, including most notably such thinkers as Fakhr al-Dīn al-Sammākī and Jamāl al-Dīn Maḥmūd al-Shīrāzī, who trained the first generation of the philosophers of Isfahan, namely Mīr Dāmād and Shaykh Bahāʾī, respectively. Unfortunately many of Ghiyāth al-Dīn’s students remain largely unknown to modern scholarship. In what follows we will make some general observations about their lives, thought, and works. A detailed study of Ghiyāth al-Dīn’s students is beyond the remit of the present dissertation. And to further complicate matters, the biographical and bibliographical information provided in the historical sources are, for the most part, scant and offer little more than cursory

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830 Rumlū, Aḥsan al-tawārikh, pp. 312-315; Rasūl Jaʿfariyān, Nishāʿ wa-suqūṭ, p. 84.
831 There is some dispute about Ghiyāth al-Dīn’s exact year of death. There are three possible dates: 940/1533, 944/1537, or 949/1542. Shushtarī and Khwānsārī suggest he died in 948/1541 (Shushtarī, Majāils al-muʿminīn, vol. 2, p. 233 and Khwānsārī, Rawdāt al-jannāt, vol. 7, p. 167). However, Kāzirūnī suggests that Ghiyāth al-Dīn died in 944/1537 (Kāzirūnī, Sullam al-samāvāt, p. 200). Fāsāyī has provided an exact date of 6 Jumāda I 949/18 August 1542, citing information from a note written by Sayyid Nīẓām al-Dīn Dāshkhātī on the margins of Ghiyāth al-Dīn’s Kashf al-haqāʾiq. This date is corroborated by Ḥājī Khalīfa, Kashf al-zunūn, vol. 1, p. 350.
details. Be that as it may, the following section should, it is hoped, serve as a useful starting point for future studies.

In the foregoing it was shown that following the rise of the Safavids, the religious-political landscape of Iran underwent important and lasting transformations, one which saw the rise of intellectual and political Shi’ism. The emergence of an intellectual tradition which is at once Shi’i and philosophical during the early Safavid period prefigures, one can argue, the major developments in the later Safavid period which reached its peak in the writings of the philosophers of Isfahan.

One may assert with some confidence that the figure of Ghiyāth al-Dīn was central during this transitory period. He appears to have acted as the main link between the early and later Safavid philosophy, a claim which shall become more apparent in the next pages.

Reading through the medieval biographical and bibliographical sources the following were said to be students of Ghiyāth al-Dīn:

1. Sayyid Ṣadr al-Dīn Muḥammad Dashtakī IV;
2. Abū l-Khayr Taqī al-Dīn Muḥammad al-Fārsī;
3. Mīr Qāsim al-Gonābādī;
4. Mīr Fakhr al-Dīn Sammākī al-Astarābādī;
5. Qādī Mīr Sharaf Jahān;
6. Mīr Maḥmūd al-Shūlīstānī;
7. Kamāl al-Dīn Ḥusayn Ḍamīrī al-Īṣfahānī;
8. Shaykh Ḩāmed Fanā’ī al-Khalkhālī;
9. Muḥammad Ḥub al-Dīn al-Baghdādī;
10. Mīr Abū l-Fath Khurasānī al-Qazvīnī;
11. Muṣliḥ al-Dīn Muḥammad al-Lārī;
12. Kamāl al-Dīn Ḥusayn al-Ardābīlī; and
1. Sayyid Ṣadr al-Dīn Muḥammad Dashtakī IV

Ghiyāth al-Dīn had two sons, the elder Sayyid Sharaf al-Dīn ‘Alī is largely unknown in the biographical literature. Those who have written about Sharaf al-Dīn describe him as a deeply religious person known for his piety and asceticism.833

Much more is known about the younger son of Ghiyāth al-Dīn. His name was Abū Naṣr Muḥammad Dashtakī al-Ḥusaynī, commonly known as Ṣadr al-Dīn Dashtakī. As for his year of birth the sources do not mention any dates, but we do know something about his early life. According to one anecdote, admittedly rather late, Ṣadr al-Dīn was partial to wine drinking in his youth. It is said that one day he visited the gravesite of his grandfather Mīr Ṣadr al-Dīn while drunk, a move which greatly angered his father Ghiyāth al-Dīn. After being rebuked by his father, Ṣadr al-Dīn abandoned wine drinking in order to lead a life of piety and devotion.

Khwānsārī writes:

It should be known that never in history have we witnessed an act of repentance greater than that of this man [i.e. Ṣadr al-Dīn] who is surely favoured by his Lord...He later followed the paths set by his ancestors and became a source of pride for his father [i.e. Ghiyāth al-Dīn].834

From the above it would seem reasonable to conclude that in his youth Ṣadr al-Dīn led an impious lifestyle which did not concord with his family’s scholarly stature. Some years later after the wine-drinking incident he penned a short Arabic treatise called al-Dhikrā on the prohibition of drinking wine and its adverse effects on bodily functions. Interestingly, in the prologue he lists his chain of hadīth transmitters which starts with his father, whom he describes as ‘the exemplary representative of the twelve [Shi’i] Imāms’. The chain includes the likes of Ḥillī and Mufīd. Ṣadr al-Dīn writes:

I narrate on the authority of my father [i.e. Ghiyāth al-Dīn], who narrates on the authority of his father [i.e. Mīr Ṣadr al-Dīn], who narrates on the authority of his father...who narrates on the authority of al-ʿAllāma al-Ḥillī...who narrates on the authority of al-Shaykh al-Al-Mufīd.835

Following the death of Ghiyāth al-Dīn, Ṣadr al-Dīn inherited the teaching mantle at the Madrasa-yi Manṣūriyya.836 Based on the available evidence,837 one can assume that Ghiyāth al-Dīn was Ṣadr al-Dīn’s main teacher in philosophy and theology; for there is no counter evidence to suggest he attended classes elsewhere in Shiraz.

Ṣadr al-Dīn authored a number of works on philosophy, Qur’anic exegesis, and law, some of which are now lost.838 His known works include: (1) Taḥqīqāt, a Persian treatise on philosophy, which includes a discussion on the relationship between the body and soul;839 (2) Taṣfīr āyat al-kursī, an Arabic commentary on the Throne Verse, which contains a discussion on the linguistic aspect of the verse in question;840 (3) al-Dhikra, an Arabic treatise on the prohibition of wine consumption, completed on 24 Rabīʿ al-Awwal 961/27 February 1554 at the Madrasa-yi Manṣūriyya, though it was transcribed in final form on the ‘auspicious day’ of Ghdīr, that is, 18 Dhū l-Ḥijja 962/3 November 1555;841 (4) Shāfiʿ-yi ḥashr, a Persian commentary on the fifty-ninth chapter of the Qur’ān, namely surat al-ḥashr, which blends Shi‘ī scriptural exegesis with mystical hermeneutics. Ṣadr al-Dīn began


836 That he inherited his father’s mantle as head of the Madrasa-yi Manṣūriyya is attested to in Ghiyāth al-Dīn’s ijāza to his son, known as Risāla fī'l-khilāfā. See Šushtarī, Majālis al-mu minīn, vol. 2, p. 231; Ṭihrānī, al-Dharaḵ, vol. 1, p. 252.

837 See the margins of Ṣadr al-Dīn in: Dashtakī, ‘Ḵashf al-ḥaqaqiq’, in Mūsannafat, vol. 2, p. 739. We learn from Ṣadr al-Dīn himself that he attended his father’s classes in philosophy and theology.


840 Barakat, Kitāb-shināsī, p. 238.

841 Barakat, Kitāb-shināsī, p. 239.
writing this work in Muḥarram 959/January 1552, it was completed on 9 Rabīʿ al-Awwal 959/5 March 1552; and (5) Jawāhīrāma, a Persian treatise on mineralogy, which is now lost.

As for Ṣadr al-Dīn’s date of death, the sources do not reveal much. Corbin, and following him Kākāyī, speculates without revealing his sources a date of 961/1553. However, this cannot be accurate since Ṣadr al-Dīn issued an ʿijāza to Sayyid ʿAlī Yazdī in 973/1565. Based on this, we can only speculate that Ṣadr al-Dīn passed away some time after 973/1565.

2. Taqī al-Dīn Muḥammad Fārsī

Abū l-Khayr Muḥammad Taqī b. Muḥammad Fārsī was an astronomer and scientist who lived in Shiraz in the late Timurid and early Safavid period. Early in his career he was a student of Mīr Ṣadr al-Dīn. The exact nature of their relationship is unclear, but it is known that Fārsī attended Mīr Ṣadr al-Dīn’s classes on philosophy at the Madrasa-yi Manṣūriyya. Fārsī studied astronomy under Ghiyāth al-Dīn. We also know that he was a close friend of Khafrī.
An indication that Fārsī was Shiʿi is based on the diction of the prose used in the prologue of his Asāmīʿ al-ʿulām, a dictionary of the etymology of the sciences and their definitions, where he claims that ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib was the fountainhead of all Islamic learning, including philosophy and science.\(^{850}\)

The works of his which we know of are as follows: (1) ṣāḥifat al-nūr fīʾl-ḥikma, a Persian treatise on Euclidean geometry and Ptolemaic astronomy, which was abridged into a shorter work in 979/1572;\(^ {851}\) (2) āḡāz va anjām, a Persian treatise on astronomy; and (3) ʾiḥkām al-ʾahkām, an Arabic treatise on astronomy.\(^ {852}\) Fārsī died after 958/1550.\(^ {853}\)

3. Mīr Qāsim Gonābādī

Born in 930/1524, his full name was Sayyid Muḥammad b. Qāsim b. ʿAbd Allāh al-Ḥusaynī, known also as Mīr Qāsim Gonābādī.\(^ {854}\) He was a Shiʿi Sufi poet who lived in Shiraz between 900/1495 and 948/1542.\(^ {855}\) His father, known as Amīr Qāsim, was a respected local official from Gonābād. During Mīr Qāsim’s stay in Shiraz he attended Ghiyāth al-Dīn’s classes on philosophy, which focused on the Tajrīd, mathematics, and the natural sciences.\(^ {856}\) Mīr Qāsim dedicated his poetry to the Safavid shahs.

\(^{850}\) Ṭihrānī, al-Dharīʿa, vol. 2, pp. 9-10.

\(^{851}\) Muṣannafāt, vol. 1, p. 92.

\(^{852}\) Ṭihrānī, al-Dharīʿa, vol. 1, p. 291.


\(^{855}\) Qazvīnī, Tadhkira-yi maykhāna, p. 169.

\(^{856}\) Qazvīnī informs us that Mīr Qāsim read Qūshchī’s commentary (he does not specify which one) on the Tajrīd with Ghiyāth al-Dīn while in Shiraz. Qazvīnī, Tadhkira-yi maykhāna, p. 169.
Ismāʿīl and Ṣahmāsp. In fact we know that the latter became a close friend of Mīr Qāsim.⁸⁵⁷

In the bio-bibliographical literature Mīr Qāsim is most famous for being the author of the Persian panegyric known as the shāhnāma-yi Qāsimī, which contains no fewer than five thousand verses dedicated to Shah Ismāʿīl.⁸⁵⁸ Mīr Qāsim’s other known works include Khusraw va shīrīn and Laylā va majnūn, both on Persian tragic romance, presumably based on the celebrated works, by the same title, of Shaykh Niẓāmī Ganjavī (d. 1209/606).⁸⁵⁹ Beside the present biographical data, little else is known about him, except that prior to his death in 982/1575 he purchased a plot of land in Mashhad to be near the shrine of ʿAlī al-Riḍā.⁸⁶⁰

4. Mīr Fakhr al-Dīn Sammākī Astarābādī

His full was Sayyid Muḥammad b. Ḥusayn al-Ḥusaynī Sammākī. He hailed from the town of Sammāk, near present-day Astarābād.⁸⁶¹ Born in 918/1512,⁸⁶² Sammākī was an accomplished Shiʿī exegete and philosopher who wrote glosses on Qūshchī’s commentary upon the Tajrīd. In them, Sammākī takes it upon himself to defend the philosophical positions of Mīr Ṣadr al-Dīn against the critiques leveled by Dawānī.⁸⁶³

⁸⁵⁷ Qazvīnī, Tadhkīra-yi maykhāna, p. 169.


The sources describe him an astute thinker equally competent in the rational and transmitted sciences, someone who earned the reputation of being a ‘problem fixer’ (ḥallāl al-mashākīl).

In fiqh, Sammākī studied under Karakī. Later, Sammākī served as the Shaykh al-Islām of Sabzavār during the reign of Shah Ṭahmasp and may have acted as the local mujtahid. Sammākī is said to have been in correspondence with Zayn al-Dīn al-ʿĀmilī (d. 965/1558), known as the ‘Second Martyr’. The two exchanged letters regarding fiqh problems. In the manuscript tradition these exchanges are known as al-ʿAsīla al-Sammākiyya or Jawābāt al-Sammākī.

Once in Mashhad, Sammākī trained a number of students some of whom went on to become important philosophers in the later Safavid period: Mīr Dāmād, the founder of the so called school of Isfahan; Žāhir al-Dīn Mīrzā Sayyid Ibrāhīm b. Qawwām al-Dīn al-Hamadhānī al-Ḥusaynī, commonly known as Qāḍī Zāde (d. 1026/1617) due to the fact that his father was a respected judge in Hamadan. Qāḍī zāde was a close friend and colleague of Shaykh Bahāʾī and with

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865 Rumłū, Aḥsan al-tawārīkh, p. 490.
867 Ţihrānī, al-Dhārīʿa, vol. 2, p. 86; vol. 5, p. 206. For the locations of extant copies of these works, see Ţihrānī, al-Dhārīʿa, vol. 5, p. 206. Some of the legal problems discussed were the purity or lack thereof of the dirt which builds up under one’s finger nails especially when in the state of impurity resulting from sexual intercourse or ejaculation; whether extremely sick persons are fully cognizant of their actions; and whether the dead skin of humans is ritually impure.
whom he corresponded regularly;\(^{870}\) and Nūr al-Dīn Muḥammad Qāḍī al-Īṣfahānī (d. 1000/1592).\(^{871}\)

Given Sammākī’s place in early Safavid philosophy, it may be argued that was an important link between the early and the later Safavid philosophical tradition. He stands out as one of the earliest Safavid thinkers who embodied the harmony between Avicennan philosophy and Shi‘ism. In his major exegetical writings, Sammākī employs an exegetical method which blends Shi‘i hermeneutics with Avicennan philosophical enquiry. For instance, in the discussion on the Necessary Being, he seeks to demonstrate that what ‘Alī and the other Shi‘i Imāms said about God is perfectly harmonious with Avicenna’s philosophical speculations.\(^{872}\)

Sammākī’s known major works include: (1) Ādāb al-munāzara, or Ādāb al-bahth, an Arabic treatise on argumentation completed on Šafar 958/February 1551. In it he outlines the correct methods of disputation and proper argumentation. Judging by the number of extant manuscript copies, this work appears to have been especially popular in western Iran during the later Safavid period.\(^{873}\) (2) Ḥāshiya ‘alā sharḥ al-tajrīd, a collection of three sets of Arabic glosses upon Qūshchī’s commentary of the Tajrīd. The first set of glosses, completed in 941/1534, discuss the proofs for the Necessary Being. In them, Sammākī agrees with the proofs brought forth by Mīr Šadr al-Dīn and Ghiyāth al-Dīn, namely to argue for the existence of the Necessary Being from the contingency of the cosmos, that is, the

\(^{870}\) Afandī, Riyāḍ al-‘ulamā’, vol. 1, p. 22.


\(^{873}\) For the locations of these extant manuscripts, see Barakat, Kitāb-shināsī, pp. 209-211.
radical contingency argument championed by Avicenna. The second set of glosses, completed in 965/1557, provides a detailed discussion on substances and their nature. In the third set of glosses, completed in 970/1562 and dedicated to Shah Tahmasp, Sammākī turns his focus on the discussion of essence (al-māhiyya) and causality (al-illa wa-l-ma’lūl). In these glosses Sammākī criticizes Dawānī, suggesting that he like Ghiyāth al-Dīn did not agree with Dawānī on matters of philosophy and theology. (3) Ḥāshiya `alā al-fawā’id al-ḍiyā’iyya, these are Arabic glosses upon al-Fawā’id al-ḍiyā’iyya, an exposition of Arabic syntax by the celebrated mystic and poet, 'Abd al-Raḥmān Jāmī (d. 898/1492). (4) Tafsīr āyat al-kursī, an Arabic philosophical commentary on the ‘Throne Verse’, completed in 952/1545, which includes an extensive discussion on the Necessary Being. There Sammākī levels scathing attacks on the Ash’ari theologians, often echoing Mīr Ṣadr al-Dīn’s criticisms. As mentioned previously, in this work Sammākī refers to Mīr Ṣadr al-Dīn as one of the ‘Shī ḥa Ithnā ‘Ashariyya’ and the one ‘who defeated the Ash’ari theologians’. (5) Ḥāshiya `alā sharḥ hidāyat al-ḥikma, these are Arabic glosses on Ḥusayn b. Muʿīn al-Dīn al-Maybūdī’s commentary on Abhari’s Hidāyat al-ḥikma. Sammākī died in 980/1572 or 984/1576.
5. Qādı Mīr Sharaf Jahān

Born on 28 Rabī’ II 912/17 September 1506, Sayyid Mīrzā Sharaf Jahān Qazvīnī was a Sufi poet who attended Ghiyāth al-Dīn’s classes on philosophy in Shiraz.⁸⁸⁰ He left behind thousands of Persian verses on philosophical mysticism. Not much is known about his life, except that may have attended some of Dawānī’s classes, too.⁸⁸¹ He died in 970/1563.⁸⁸² We know nothing about his writings, not even their titles.

6. Mīr Maḥmūd Shūlistānī

Not much is known about Shūlistānī except that his full name was Sayyid Mīr Maḥmūd. He was born in the town of Kāzirūn, a district of Shiraz, and studied philosophy under Ghiyāth al-Dīn.⁸⁸³ In a colophon in one of the manuscripts of the Rawḍ al-jīnān fi sharḥ irshād al-adhḥān, a work of fiqh written after 949/1542 by Zayn al-Dīn b. ‘Alī al-‘Āmilī (d. 965/1557), which covers the subject of ritual purity, we learn that Shūlistānī was alive then and that he was counted among the students of Āmilī in fiqh.⁸⁸⁴

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⁸⁸³ Munshī, Tārīkh-i ‘ālam, p. 148.
⁸⁸⁴ Tihrānī, al-Dhārī‘a, vol. 11, p. 275; idem, Ţabaqāt a’lām al-shī‘a, vol. 5, p. 552.
7. Kamāl al-Dīn Ḫusayn Ḍamīrī Iṣfahānī

Iṣfahānī was known to be a Sufi poet who composed panegyrics for the Safavid shahs. In Shiraz he attended Ghiyāth al-Dīn’s classes on mathematics. One of Ḍamīrī’s works, which is known to us, is called Bahār va khazān, a Persian poem written in the form of manẓūma. Ḍamīrī died in 973/1566.

8. Shaykh Aḥmad Jamāl al-Dīn Fanāʿī Khalkhālī

Khalkhālī was another Sufi who studied under Ghiyāth al-Dīn in Shiraz. Khalkhālī lived and taught philosophy in Qazvīn. He was also a student of Khafrī and Kamāl al-Dīn Lārī. Little is known about him in the Safavid sources. According to one modern source, Khalkhālī was said to have composed over one thousands verses of Persian poetry. Genealogically, Khalkhālī claimed descent from the famous Persian Sufi poet Abū Yazīd al-Bīstāmī (d. 260/874). Khalkhālī died in 985/1578.

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891 Ṭihrānī, al-Dharīʿa, vol. 9, III, p. 848.
892 Ṭihrānī, al-Dharīʿa, vol. 9, III, p. 848.
9. Muḥammad Quṭb al-Dīn Baghdādī

Commonly known as Qāḍī ʿUghlī, Quṭb al-Dīn Baghdādī was according to one Safavid source one of Ghiyāth al-Dīn’s most gifted students.²⁹³ He was said to be primarily a philosopher, secondarily theologian,²⁹⁴ though we know virtually nothing about his philosophical insights, not even the titles of his works. He passed away on 27 Rajab 970/22 March 1563 during a visit to Qazvīn.²⁹⁵

10. Mīr Abū l-Fatḥ Khurāsānī Qazvīnī

His full name was Sayyid Abū l-Fatḥ b. Mīrzā Muḥammad Khurāsānī Qazvīnī. His mother was al-Sharīf al-Jurjānī’s daughter, while his father, Mīr Makhdūm, was the author of the famous anti-Shīʿ polemic the Nawāqid al-rawāfiḍ.²⁹⁶

Shushtarī wrote a famous rebuttal to the Nawāqid, called Maṣāʾib al-nawāṣib. In the Maṣāʾib, we learn from Shushtarī that Mīr Abū l-Fatḥ converted to Twelver Shiʿism and abandoned the ways of his father (azhar al-madhhab al-ḥaqq al-manṣūr).²⁹⁷ Moreover, Shushtarī writes that Mīr Abū l-Fatḥ became an ardent supporter of the ‘precedence of the right of the Ahl al-bayt over the companions’, someone who compared those who privilege the companions over the Ahl al-bayt to those who privilege prohibited acts over permissible ones (taqdim al-ṣāḥb ʿalā al-āl ka-taqdim al-

²⁹³ Qummī, Khulāṣat al-tawārikh, p. 440.
²⁹⁴ Qummī, Khulāṣat al-tawārikh, p. 440.
²⁹⁵ Qummī, Khulāṣat al-tawārikh, p. 440.
²⁹⁷ Shushtarī, Maṣāʾib, vol. 1, p. 69.
Khwānsārī lavishes Mīr Abū l-Fatḥ with abundant praise, describing him as the ‘righteous son of that audacious nāšib’ [i.e. Mīr Makhdūm]. Khwānsārī also refers to Mīr Abū l-Fatḥ as ‘our master, the Imāmī Shi‘i without any shred of doubt’ (sayyidunā al-jalīl al-shī‘ī al-imāmī bi-lā kalām).  

In the philosophical sciences, Mīr Abū l-Fatḥ received his training under the tutelage of Ghiyāth al-Dīn, with whom he read the Tajrīd of Ṭūsī. According to one Safavid source, Mīr Abū l-Fatḥ’s writings include the following: (1) Ḥāshiya `alā tahdīb al-maštīq, a set of Arabic glosses upon Dawānī’s commentary upon Taftāzānī’s logical treatise; (2) Ḥāshiya `alā kanz al-`irfān, an Arabic set of glosses upon the Kanz al-`irfān, which is an important work of Shi‘i tafsīr written by Miqdād al-Siyūrī (d. 828/1425), and which focuses on the use of legal injunctions in the Qur’ān; (3) Ḥāshiya `alā tahdīb usūl al-fiqh, an Arabic set of glosses upon an unknown work of legal methodology; (4) Ḥāshiya `alā sharḥ al-maštālī, an Arabic set of glosses upon Maštālī’s anwār wa-l-ḥikma wa-l-maštīq by al-Qādī Sirāj al-Dīn Maḥmūd b. Abī Bakr Urmāwī (d. 688/1290); (5) Sharḥ-i bāb-i ḥādī-yi ‘ashar, a Persian commentary upon al-Bāb al-ḥādī ‘ashar by Ḥillī, which is one of the key creedal texts in the Twelver Shi‘i tradition.

In addition, Ṭihrānī tells us that Mīr Abū l-Fatḥ wrote an Arabic commentary on the celebrated Uṣūl al-kāfī around 961/1554, which would make it the first of its kind in the Safavid period, predating the efforts of Mullā Šadrā by many decades.

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902 Ṭihrānī, Ṭabaqāt a’lām al-shī‘a, vol. 4, p. 172. Ṭihrānī has seen a copy of the manuscript in the Āstān-i Quds Raḍawī. In his study of al-Kāfī and its reception in later times, ‘Abd al-Ghaffār does not
Despite the fair amount of biographical and bibliographical information, the sources do not tell us anything about the later years of Mīr Abū l-Faṭḥ’s life, not even the date of his death.

11. Muṣliḥ al-Dīn Muḥammad Lārī

Born around 900/1494, Muḥammad b. Ṣalāḥ b. Jalāl b. Kamāl, commonly known as Muṣliḥ al-Dīn al-Lārī, was one of Ghiyāth al-Dīn’s most famous Sunni students. An itinerant scholar, Lārī’s travels took him to Mecca and to India, where he became ṣadr in the court of the second Mughal Emperor Humāyūn (reg. 936/1530-946/1556). In 967/1560, Lārī was in Constantinople, where he entered the service of the Ottoman sultan Sulaymān ‘the Magnificent’ (reg. 926/1520-973/1566), and took up the mantle of teaching at the madrasa of Khusraw Pāshā. We do not know much about his teaching career there, except that he authored a number of works while in Constantinople. Lārī’s stay in Istanbul was sometime between 964/1556 and 967/1559-60. Later, possibly after sultan Sulaymān’s death, Lārī travelled to Baghdad and eventually settling in Āmid where he died in 979/1571.


Lārī’s early training in the philosophical sciences took place in Shiraz under Ghiyāth al-Dīn.908 He also studied mathematics, theology, and the tafsīr of Bayḍāwī with Khafrī909 and Kamāl al-Dīn Ḥusayn Ardabīlī.910 A list of his major writings reveals him to be a figure influenced by Dawānī’s vision of the nature of things, that is, a philosophical worldview committed to an understanding of the cosmos through the lens of philosophical Ashʿarism.911 In the philosophical sciences, Lārī wrote: (1) Ḥāshiya ‘alā tahdīb al-maṭṭiq wa-l-kalām li-l-Dawānī;912 (2) Ḥāshiya ‘alā sharḥ Maybūdī li-hidāyat al-ḥikma;913 (3) Ḥāshiya ‘alā tawāli` al-anwār;914 and (4) Ḥāshiya ‘alā sharḥ Dawānī al-qadīm.915 Other works include: (6) Ta`līqāt ‘alā tafsīr Bayḍāwī;916 (7) Ḥāshiya ‘alā muṭawwwal Taftāzānī;917 (8) Risāla fi `ilm al-hay`at;918 (9) Ḥāshiya ‘alā anwār al-shāfi`ī;919 (9) Mi`rāt al-adwār wa-mirqāt al-akhbār, also known as Tārīkh-i Lārī, a Persian work on world history containing a detailed section on the origins of the Ottomans and

908 This is based on Lārī’s testimony in the introduction of his Samples of the Sciences. See Pourjavady, ‘Muṣliḥ al-Dīn al-Lārī’, p. 319.


other Muslim dynasties. Lārī dedicated this work to sultan Sulaymān. He also wrote a few glosses on works of Sunni ḥadīth, including: (10) Ḥāshiyā ʿalā sharḥ Jāmī and (11) Sharḥ ḥadīth Tirmidhī.\(^\text{921}\)

12. Kamāl al-Dīn Ḫusayn Ardabīlī

Ardabīlī, commonly known as Ḫusayn Ilāhī, was born in the city of Ardabīl. He was the son of Sharaf al-Dīn ʿAbd al-Ḥaqq, who according to the testimony of Ardabīlī appears to have entered court service of an unspecified dynasty. This is based on information Ardabīlī’s teacher ‘Aṭāʾ Allāh al-Dashtakī provides in his ijāza to the former, in which Ardabīlī’s father is referred to as al-ṣāḥib al-muʿazzam wa-l-ṣadr al-mukarram.\(^\text{922}\) According to Afandī, Ardabīlī began his studies in his hometown under the tutelage of a certain ʿAlī Āmūlī.\(^\text{923}\) As a young man, Ardabīlī became a close acquaintance of sultan Ḥaydar Ṣafavī (d. 892/1487).\(^\text{924}\) According to Khwānsārī, Ḥaydar Ṣafavī instructed Ardabīlī to travel to Shiraz to further his learning.\(^\text{925}\) Once in Shiraz, Ardabīlī studied under Dawānī who issued the former with an ijāza to teach his Shawākil al-ḥūr fi sharḥ hayākil al-nūr. The ijāza was issued on 14 Jumādā I

\(^{920}\) The ninth of the ten chapters of this work has been edited as: Muṣliḥ al-Dīn Muḥammad Lārī and ʿArif Nawshāḥī (ed.), ‘Mirʾāt al-adwār wa-mirqāt al-akhbār’, in Maʿārif 13 ii (1375 Sh/1997), pp. 91-113.


\(^{923}\) Afandī, Riyāḍ al-ʿulamā’, vol. 2, p. 98 [cited in: Pourjavady, Philosophy in Early Safavid Iran, p. 41].


\(^{925}\) Khwānsārī, Rawdāt al-jamātāt, vol. 2, pp. 319-320 [cited in: Pourjavady, Philosophy in Early Safavid Iran, p. 41].
892/8 May 1487. During his stay in Shiraz, Ardabīlī attended some of Ghiyāth al-Dīn’s classes at the Madrasa-yi Maṣūriyya. Although the sources do not specify which subjects he studied under Ghiyāth al-Dīn, one can assume that he read philosophy and theology, given that his major writings show thorough familiarity with Ṭūsī’s Tajrīd and the Ithbāt al-wājib genre.

Some time before 899/1493, Ardabīlī moved to Herat where he was in the service of the Timurid vizier Amīr ‘Alī Shīr Nawāṭī (d. 902/1496-7). Once there, Ardabīlī became a student of ‘Aṭāʾ Allāh under whom he studied the transmitted sciences while focusing on hadīth. In 899/1492, ‘Aṭāʾ Allāh, we are told by Afandī, issued Ardabīlī with an ijāza. This suggests that Ardabīlī moved to Herat before that date.

Following the rise of the Safavids, Ardabīlī built close relations with Shah Ismāʿīl to whom he dedicated three works: (i) the Khulāsa-yi fiqh, a Persian work on Shiʿi fiqh; (ii) the Manhaj al-faṣāḥa fi sharḥ nahj al-balāgha, which as the title shows is an Arabic commentary on the Nahj al-balāgha; and (iii) Ṭāj al-manāqib fi ṣadāʾ il-aʿīma al-ithnāʿ ashar, a work on the merits of the Twelve Imāms. On this last, Afandī explains that Ardabīlī was one of the first thinkers during the reign of the

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926 Afandī, Riyāḍ al-ʿulamāʾ, vol. 2, pp. 103-104 [cited in: Pourjavady, Philosophy in Early Safavid Iran, p. 41].
928 Pourjavady, Philosophy in Early Safavid Iran, p. 41. Nawāṭī served as vizier under the Timurid sultan Ḫusayn Mirzā Bāyqarā.
931 Barakat, Kitāb-shināšī, p. 236. According to Barakat, there is one extant copy of this work in: Āyat Allāh Marʾashī Library, Qum, MS 4031. An unknown scribe copied the manuscript in Rajab 1071/March 1661.
932 Ṭihrānī, al-Dhārīʿa, vol. 9, p. 92; Pourjavady, Philosophy in Early Safavid Iran, p. 42.
Safavids to write works in Persian promoting the Shi‘i faith. Moreover, according to Țihrānī, Arbâbî may have even authored a Turkish treatise on the subject of Imāmate, which was later translated into Persian.

Following the death of Shah Ismā‘îl in 930/1524, Arbâbî became acquainted with Shah Țahmasp, whom he met in Qazvīn. Arbâbî’s stay in Qazvīn proved disastrous when he, acting as a mujtahid, declared as forbidden the Friday Prayer during the occultation of the Twelfth Imām, a move which greatly angered the Shi‘i nobility, leading some to accuse him of being Sunni. Following this, Arbâbî retired to Ardabil where he passed away in 950/1543.

As for Arbâbî’s oeuvre, it is possible to construct a full list of his works based on a testimony by Afandî who claims to have seen an ijāza issued by Arbâbî to one of his students Kamâl al-Dîn Ibîrîhîm Šafavî in which Arbâbî list his writings. The list is as follows: (1) Ḥâšiya ‘alâ sharḥ-mawāqîf; (2) Ḥâšiya ‘alâ sharḥ al-matâlî; (3) Ḥâšiya ‘alâ sharḥ Quṭb al-Dîn Shîrāzî ‘alâ al-shamsiyâ; (4) Ḥâšiya ‘alâ sharḥ al-hidâya li’l-Maybûdî; (5) Ḥâšiya ‘alâ ḥâšiyat ‘allâma Dawânî ‘alâ al-tajrîd; (6) Ḥâšiya ‘alâ ḥâšiyat sayyîd Šadr al-Dîn Dashtkâ ‘alâ al-tajrîd; (7) Sharḥ al-tadhkîra [of Ťüsî]; (8) Ḥâšiya ‘alâ sharḥ tâhûr uqlîdis [of Ťüsî]; (9) Sharḥ ithbât al-wâjîb li’l-Dawânî; (10) Ḥâšiya ‘alâ qawâ’id al-aḥkâm [of Ťûlî]; (11) Jawâhir al-taḥqîq; (12) Ḥâšiyâ ‘alâ ḥâšiyat


Dawānī 'alā ithbāt al-‘aql [of Ṭūsī]; (13) Khulāṣa-yi fiqh; (14) Manhaj al-faṣāḥa fi sharḥ nahj al-balāgha; and (15) Tāj al-manāqib fi faḍā’il al-a’imma al-ithnā ‘ashar.937

13. Jamāl al-Dīn Maḥmūd Shīrāzī

Jamāl al-Dīn Maḥmūd b. Ya’qūb Shīrāzī was one of Ghiyāth al-Dīn’s most famous pupils. He was said to have a penchant for Avicennan metaphysics and the study of ḥadīth.938 Whilst in Shiraz, which he visited twice, Jamāl al-Dīn studied the following under Dawānī: the Tajrīd, Avicennan metaphysics, focusing on the ithbāt al-wājib genre, and ḥadīth.939 In fact, Jamāl al-Dīn transmitted prophetic traditions on the authority of Dawānī.940 Following the death of Dawānī in 908/1502, Jamāl al-Dīn began to attend Ghiyāth al-Dīn’s classes on the Tajrīd in the Madrasa-yi Manṣūriyya. It is not known, however, if he attended any other classes in Shiraz, but evidence suggest he stayed there for a long period. Following the death of Ghiyāth al-Dīn in 949/1542, Jamāl al-Dīn left Shiraz for Tabriz having been invited by Qāḍī Jahān, Shah Ṭahmasp’s vizier, to tutor his son Mīrzā Sharaf.941 However, when Qāḍī Jahān died in 960/1552, Jamāl al-Dīn stopped tutoring Mīrzā Sharaf, which suggests he may have been the recipient of Qāḍī Jahān’s patronage.

937 Afandī, Rīyāḍ al-‘ulamā’, vol. 2, pp. 101-102 [cited in: Pourjavady, Philosophy in Early Safavid Iran, pp. 43-44]. According to Barakat, only four works of Ardabīlī are extant. For locations of these extant manuscripts, see Barakat, Kitāb-shināsī, pp. 234-236.


Jamāl al-Dīn returned to Shiraz once again where taught medicine, Avicennan philosophy, and Ṭūsī’s Tajrīd. This is further corroborated by Shushtarī who claims to have studied Ghiyāth al-Dīn’s al-Shāfiyya, a work on medicine, under Jamāl al-Dīn in the Madrasa-yi Manṣūriyya.

For some unknown reasons but probably due to the civil unrest which griped Shiraz and its environs, Jamāl al-Dīn left Shiraz for Isfahan some time after 965/1557. Once in Isfahan he along with his family was the subject of incessant harassment by the city’s locals. This may have been due to his views on certain philosophical matters, which some hardnosed jurists considered blasphemous.

While in Shiraz, and later in Isfahan, Jamāl al-Dīn went on to train the following students: Aḥmad b. Muḥammad, the famous Shi‘i jurist, popularly known as al-Muqaddas al-Ardabīlī (d. 993/1585); Mullā Ṭābrāzī al-Yazdī (d. 981/1573), the author of the celebrated glosses known as Ḥāshiyyat Mullā Ṭābrāzī al-Yazdī; Ṭābrāzī b. Wāḥid b. Ṭābrāzī, who was one of Shushtarī’s teachers; Mullā Maḥmūd Yazdī; Mullā Mīrzā Jān Ḥusaynī; Mullā Ṭābrāzī al-Yazdī; Afḍal al-Dīn Muḥammad al-Ṭābrāzī (d. 984/1576); Mullā Muḥammad Sharīf Isfahānī; Mullā Aqā-jān Shīrwanī; and Shāh Abū Muḥammad Shīrāzī.

Jamāl al-Dīn’s writings include: (1)

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942 Shushtarī, Firdaws dar tārīkh-i Shushtar, vol. 1, p. 56.
944 Shushtarī, Firdaws dar tārīkh-i Shushtar, vol. 1, p. 56.
945 In the later years Yazdī moved to and settled in Najaf where he taught logic and philosophy. See Muḥammad Ḥirz al-Dīn, Maʿārif al-rījāl fī tarājim al-ʿulamāʾ wa-l-udābāʾ (Qum, 1984), vol. 2, p. 6.
947 Listed in: Qazvīnī, Tatmīm amal al-āmil, p. 100.
Sharḥ itḥbāt al-wajib li ’l-Dawānī;\(^{948}\) (2) Qidam wa-ḥudāth al-aṣām; (3) Ḥāshiya ‘alā sharḥ al-Dawānī al-qadīm;\(^{949}\) (4) Sharḥ al-maṭālī; and (5) Khalq al-a’māl.\(^{950}\)

Jamāl al-Dīn died in 962/1555.\(^{951}\)

In conclusion, in the foregoing discussion we were able to show that Ghiyāth al-Dīn Manṣūr Dashtakī undertook his philosophical and theological training in Shiraz under the instruction of his father Mīr Ṣadr al-Dīn. We know that he attended his father’s classes in the Madrasa-yi Maṣūriyya, where he most likely studied the metaphysics section of Avicenna’s Ishārāt, the ilāhiyyāt of the Shifā, and the relevant metaphysical discussions of the Najāt.

In the theological sciences, we mentioned that there was circumstantial evidence to suggest Ghiyāth al-Dīn studied the works of Ghazālī, Rāzī, Ijī, and Jurjānī. More certain is the fact that Ghiyāth al-Dīn read the works of Dawānī independently; for according to the sources when he was eighteen years of age he prepared a list of critical remarks on Dawānī’s Sharḥ hayākil al-nūr.

However, Ghiyāth al-Dīn’s pedagogical masters in the fields of medicine, astronomy, and mathematics, remain unknown. Unlike his father, he wrote important works on medicine, some of which were taught in the later Safavid period. Moreover, Ghiyāth al-Dīn’s writings on the subject of astronomy coupled with his knowledge of the astronomical tables and viewing observatories, suggest

\(^{948}\) There are at least three extant copies of this work in the libraries of Qum and Tehran. For the locations of these extant manuscripts, see Barakat, Kitāb-shināṣī, p. 207.

\(^{949}\) Tihrānī, al-Dhārī’a, vol. 6, p. 9. For the locations of extant manuscripts of this work, see Barakat, Kitāb-shināṣī, p. 208.

\(^{950}\) For the locations of the extant manuscript of this work, see Barakat, Kitāb-shināṣī, p. 208.

\(^{951}\) Shushtarī, Fīrdaws dar tārīkh-i Shushtar, vol. 1, p. 56; Qazvīnī, Tatmīm amal al-āmil, p. 100.
he took the subject seriously, but there is little evidence to suggest he studied under a known teacher.

It was also seen that a number of Ghiyāṭh al-Dīn’s students continued to promulgate a vision of the cosmos and the nature of things chiefly through an Avicennan and Shīʿi lens. Some of these students acted as intermediaries between the Dashtakī circle and those later Safavid philosophers. Moreover, one notices that a number of Sufi figures, most of whom remain unknown to modern scholarship, attended some of Ghiyāṭh al-Dīn’s classes. Some chose to study Avicennan metaphysics while others showed more interest in the natural sciences, especially mathematics. Whatever their reasons, their deciding to receive pedagogical instructions from Ghiyāṭh al-Dīn further supports our claim that Ghiyāṭh al-Dīn was considered an important polymath by his contemporaries, someone who was comfortable in an array of intellectual disciplines.
CHAPTER 4: 

The Incoherence of the Ash’aris: Sayyid Ghiyāth al-Dīn Manṣūr Dashtakī on falsafā, kalām, and ‘irfān

4.1: General Introduction

In the last chapter we examined the life and times of Ghiyāth al-Dīn who succeeded his father as head of the Madrasa-yi Manṣūriyya in Shiraz. Having witnessed the rise of the Safavids in Iran and the subsequent establishment of Shi’ism as the official religion of the realm, Ghiyāth al-Dīn became an active participant in the court life of the new Shi’i polity.

Some modern studies tend to portray Ghiyāth al-Dīn as little more than a religious functionary of aristocratic origins within the Safavid court.952 One of our primary concerns here is demonstrate that in addition to his political services Ghiyāth al-Dīn also led a career as an accomplished philosopher and mystic who gained support and recognition from the political rulers of his time. Ghiyāth al-Dīn took the baton from his father as the chief defender of Avicenna metaphysical speculations, and became a fierce critic of Ash’ari kalām. Like his father, Ghiyāth al-Dīn saw in Dawānī an Ash’ari theologian working in the footsteps of Ghazālī and Rāzī, someone who simply did not understand the arguments put forward by Avicenna and, moreover, someone who perpetrated a distorted understanding of Avicennan philosophy.

952 See, for instance, Newman, Safavid Iran, pp. 37-38; Abisaab, Converting Persia, p. 18; Mitchell, Politics of Practice, p. 103. Mitchell claims that Ghiyāth al-Dīn was ‘vociferously opposed to the Usūlīs’ of his time such as Karakī. There is, however, no evidence to support this claim. Nowhere in Ghiyāth al-Dīn’s extant writings do we find such anti-usūlī sentiment.
In 908/1502 Dawānī passed away. In the years that followed, Ghiyāth al-Dīn continued to promote Avicennan philosophy and wrote a number of short works summarizing Avicenna’s philosophical ideas. Rarely did he reach a conclusion and advance an argument that did not have its roots in Avicenna. The only exception here is that unlike Avicenna, who rarely delved into confessional theology, we find in Ghiyāth al-Dīn a committed Shi’i thinker who openly spoke about the harmony between the teachings of the Shi’i Imāms and rational philosophical enquiry.

As for his aversion to Ash’arī kalām, Ghiyāth al-Dīn went a step further than his father. In his Ḥujjat al-kalām, he accused Ghazālī of falling into disbelief because of the latter’s position on bodily resurrection. In the Kashf al-ḥaqā’iq, Ghiyāth al-Dīn turns his attention to Rāzī, whom he accuses of distorting Avicenna’s argument and of misleading students of philosophy.

In his other works, Ghiyāth al-Dīn signals a mystical turn. In his Manāzil al-sā’irīn, Ghiyāth al-Dīn sets out his mystical programme. In doing so, he stands outs as one of the earliest Shi’i figures in the Safavid period to attempt reconciliation between philosophy, mysticism, and Shi’ism.

This in mind, what we hope to achieve in this chapter is the following: (i) to explore Ghiyāth al-Dīn’s conception of philosophy and its place in his thought; (ii) to examine Ghiyāth al-Dīn’s counter rebuttals of the later Ash’arī critiques of Avicenna, particularly on the notion of necessity and the necessary being; (iii) to examine his major writings which discuss the issue of divine speech and the nature of the Qur’ān, where he sets out to critique Ash’arī positions; and (iv) to provide a general outline of his mystical programme and focus on his attempt to wed philosophical Shi’ism with Avicennan rationality and non-Sunni mysticism.
The selection of the above topics is significant enough to dwell on briefly. Firstly, many of Ghiyāth al-Dīn’s philosophical arguments simply echo those of his father. For instance, the Kashf al-haqā’iq, by far his longest philosophical work and primarily intended as an anti-Ash’āri polemic, serves as little more than an explication of Mīr Ṣadr al-Dīn’s ideas. Secondly, his other works such as the Tajrīd masāʾil al-ḥikma, are intended as summaries of Avicennan metaphysics (and physics). As such, Ghiyāth al-Dīn does not care much for original argument in these works. The topics identified above do however show to some extent an independence of judgement and an attempt at original interpretations of philosophical issues. That is, an independence from both Avicenna and Mīr Ṣadr al-Dīn, and attempts at original interpretations which appear original with Ghiyāth al-Dīn. Many of the background discussions on the issues that will be discussed next have already been explored and analysed in chapter two. There will be no reason to repeat here.

4.2: The conception of philosophy (ḥikma)

In true Aristotelian fashion, Ghiyāth al-Dīn, following the Muslim Peripatetics, describes the subject matter of metaphysics as ‘the study of being qua being’ (al-mawjūd bi-mā huwa mawjūd). In other places he describes this science as ‘first philosophy’ (al-falsafā al-ūlā), in others he simply calls it ‘wisdom’ (ḥikma).

This last, namely ḥikma, occupies a central position in his definition and conception of the role of philosophy and metaphysical speculations. In order to

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955 I use the terms ḥikma, philosophy, and wisdom interchangeably.
understand what Ghiyāth al-Dīn means by the term ḥikma, we must first explore the different meanings and conceptualizations of the term by tracing its general trajectory in the course of Islamic intellectual history, starting with its etymological origin, which can be traced back to the pre-Islamic era, and its lexicographical usage in classical Arabic literature. Following this, we will investigate the various conceptions of ḥikma in different intellectual contexts, focusing on the mystical and the philosophical.

The term ḥikma is a noun derived from the root ḥ-k-m (ḥakama, yahkumu, hukm).⁹⁵⁶ According to the Arabic lexicographers, the primary meaning of this root is manaʿa (‘to prevent, restrain, or withhold’). The expression ḥakamat al-lijām (‘the metal in a beast’s bridle’) represents, arguably, one of the earliest usages of the root ḥ-k-m. Here, the metal bridle that is attached to the camel’s nose is used to control its movement, so that the beast is prevented from disobeying its rider (tamnaʿahu ‘an mukhālafat rākibahu). In this sense, all other usages according to al-Jawhari (d. 393/1002) derive from this concrete example.⁹⁵⁷

In addition, the prevention or restraint in question could also be from restraint from injustice (zulm), ignorance (jahl), or foolishness (safah). Concomitantly, ḥikma may be defined as justice (ʿadl), knowledge (ʿilm), or forbearance (ḥilm), respectively.⁹⁵⁸

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⁹⁵⁶ The conception of the term ḥikma in Islamic intellectual history has been the subject of a through investigation by Hikmet Yaman on which the following discussion will largely be based. See Hikmet Yaman, The Concept of Hikmah in Early Islamic Thought, Unpublished Ph.D. Dissertation (Harvard University, 2007).


In the mystical literature, ḥikma is understood to be a product of ascetic practice, the ultimate good of committed servitude to God, which emerges as a result of pious behavior.\footnote{I include the Sufi conception of ḥikma for the chief purpose of comparing and contrasting it with Ghiyāth al-Dīn’s conception, especially since in the Manāzil Ghiyāth al-Dīn attempts to formulate a non-Sufi conception of ḥikma.} Al-Ḥārith al-Muḥāsibī (d. 243/857) explains:

If a servant becomes an ascetic in this world, he inherits three characteristics (khishāl): honour (ʿizz) without being immersed in social gatherings, wealth (ghinā) without the possession of property, and knowledge (ʿilm) without [formal] learning (taʿallum).\footnote{Al-Ḥārith b. Asad Al-Muḥāsibī, al-Qaṣd wa-l-rujūʿ ilā Allāh, ed. ʿAbd al-Qādir Aḥmad Aṭā (Cairo, 1980), p. 88 [Quoted in: Yaman, The Concept of Hikmah, p. 184].}

Other Sufis proffer more sophisticated definitions of ḥikma. Al-Ḥākim al-Tirmidhī (d. 300/912), for instance, distinguishes between what he calls al-ḥikma al-ʿulyā (the highest form of ḥikmā) and al-ḥikma al-mahdūda or al-ḥikma al-qāṣira (the limited ḥikma). The former, writes Tirmidhī, is associated with the friends of God (awliyāʾ ʿAllāh), whereas the latter describes the wisdom of the untrained multitudes. Tirmidhī identifies the highest ḥikma with knowledge of the prophets and saints. It is knowledge of the esoteric which is one of the characteristics of the prophets and saints. Tirmidhī speaks of another and higher dimension of ‘the highest ḥikmā’, the ḥikmat al-ḥikma.\footnote{Yaman, The Concept of Hikmah, p. 204.}

In the philosophical literature, that is, where the rationalistic discourse is privileged over mystical intuition, the term ḥikma signifies something different, though not radically different from the conception upheld by the Sufis. In the parlance of Islamic philosophy, ḥikma is synonymous with falsafa.\footnote{It was a common convention among the earliest Arabic translation movement to render the Greek work ‘sophia’ as ʾḥikma’; or, to Arabize the whole compound of ‘love of wisdom’ (philosophy) and ‘lover of wisdom’ (philosopher) as falsafa and faylasif, respectively. For the most part, classical and medieval Muslim historians of philosophy did not distinguish between the terms ḥikma and falsafa. See, for example, Ibn al-Nadim, al-Fihrist (Beirut, 1929), pp. 336-337 and ʿAlī b. Muḥammad Jurjānī} Except,
however, *hikma* is said to encompass knowledge which reaches beyond the purview of *falsafa* and *ʿilm*.\(^{963}\) It was typical for Muslim writers to use the term *ḥakīm* to describe a savant or a person of extensive learning. The famous Greek sages Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle, for instance, were oftentimes described as *ḥukamāʾ* in order to highlight the fact that they excelled in various fields of knowledge, not just philosophy.\(^{964}\)

Writing on this, Abū Yūsuf Yaʿqūb al-Kindī (d. 260/873), one of the earliest Muslim philosophers, explains that the ultimate goal of *hikma* is knowledge of God and as a corollary function the imitation of the actions of God (*al-tashabbuh bi-ʿafāl Allāh*). For this reason, Kindī explains, the ancients described *ḥikma* as ‘the arts of arts’ (*ṣināʿat al-ṣināʿāt*) and ‘the wisdom of all wisdoms’ (*ḥikmat al-ḥikam*).\(^{965}\) Hence

\(^{963}\) Generally, the majority of definitions of *ʿilm* in Islamic learning particularly in the later Ashʿarī tradition were ‘based on the assumption that the explanation of a subjective mental (psychological) process in its relationship to the objective, the mastery of concrete data, somehow suffices to grasp the nature of knowledge.’ Hence many Ashʿarī thinkers define knowledge as the ‘process of knowing and identical with the knower and the known, or it is an attribute enabling the knower to know’. Ghazālī, for example, defined *ʿilm* as ‘that through which one knows’. Others Ashʿarī thinkers such as Juwaynī said ‘knowledge is that through which the object known (al-*maʿlūm*) is known’. Āmidī said ‘knowledge is that which necessitates that he in whom it subsists the name of knower’. Some other Ashʿarī thinkers, however, expressed slightly different terms to define knowledge. Bāqillānī said ‘knowledge is the cognition of the object known as it is (*alā ma-hawa bih*).’ See Rosenthal, *Knowledge Triumphant*, pp. 52-53. Rāzī placed more emphasis on the role of knowledge rather than its definition. Rāzī said, ‘knowledge is that noble act which seeks to understand God and His attributes’. See Rāzī, *al-Maṭālib al-ʿāliya*, vol. 1, p. 37.

\(^{964}\) Yaman, *The Concept of Hikmah*, p. 246.

the term ḥikma in the view of Kindī is relatable to epistemological and spiritual-ethical concerns and the ḥakīm should be perfect in virtue (kāmil al-faḍila) and posses sound cogitative faculty (al-qūwa al-mufakkira).966

For Fārābī the terms falsafa and ḥikma are interchangeable. Writing in his Taḥṣīl al-saʿāda, he speaks of the history of philosophy as simply the history of ḥikma, which in his view is of prophetic and divine provenance. He writes:

It is said that this science existed anciently among the Chaldeans, who are the people of Iraq, subsequently reaching the people of Egypt, from there transmitted to the Syrians and then to the Arabs. Everything comprised by this science was expounded in the Greek language, later in Syriac, and finally in Arabic. The Greeks who possessed this science used to call it true wisdom and the highest wisdom. They called the acquisition of it ‘science’, and the scientific state of mind ‘philosophy’ (by which they meant the quest and the love for the highest wisdom). They held that potentially it subsumes all the virtues. They called it the science of sciences, the mother of sciences, the wisdom of wisdoms, and the art of arts.967

A true ḥakīm writes Fārābī is one who posses ‘both the theoretical sciences and the faculty for exploiting them for the benefit of all others according to their capacity.’968

What kind of knowledge should one pursue to become a ḥakīm? According to Fārābī one should seek to understand the nature of things, to discover knowledge of the reality of their existence, and to recognize that existents have essences, qualities, and quantities. In addition ḥikma comprises the knowledge of the hierarchical and causal relationship between the One Existence (wujūd wāḥid) and the remote as well as the proximate causes. Similarly, ḥikma will make one understand and realize that the One is the First, the Real Existent (al-awwal fiʾl-haqīqa). It helps man understands that the existence of the Real is not contingent.


upon anything else but necessary—due-to-itsel. Ḥikma says Fārābī is ‘the most noble knowledge’ (afḍal al-ʿilm) of ‘the most noble existents’ (li-afḍal al-mawjūdāt). \(^{969}\)

In the centuries that followed, Avicenna inherited the mantle of philosophy in the Islamicate world. That Avicenna’s legacy produced a sophisticated philosophical system that appeared to many to surpass even abrogate previous philosophy could hardly be disputed, and his importance in the intellectual history of Islam is generally recognized. For this reason, Avicenna’s conception of Ḥikma and falsafa like many of his ideas overshadowed the conceptions brought forth by Kindī and Fārābī.

Generally speaking, Avicenna employs the terms Ḥikma and falsafa interchangeably. He defines Ḥikma as:

The perfection of the human soul (istikmāl al-nafṣ al-ḥisnānīyya) through the conceptualization of things (bi-taṣawwur al-umūr) and the assent of theoretical and practical realities (wa-l-taṣdiq bi-l-ḥaqiq al-naṣāriyya wa-l-ʿamaliyya) insofar as is humanly possible (ʿalā qudrat al-taṣq al-basharīyya). \(^{970}\)

In turn, Ḥikma is divided into two categories, the theoretical (al-Ḥikma al-naṣāriyya) and practical (al-Ḥikma al-ʿamaliyya). The former seeks to perfect the theoretical faculty of the soul through the attainment of the active intellect (bi-ḥuṣul al-ʿaql bi-l-fīl), that is, to be in a state of conjunction with al-ʿaql al-faʿāl. Whereas the latter, writes Avicenna, seeks to perfect the soul through ethical-moral actions (akhlāq).

The subject matter of Ḥikma is the existent qua existent (al-mawjūd bi-māhuwa mawjūd). The primary function of divine wisdom begins by investigating al-mawjūd al-muṭlaq, that is, God in religious speak. It then proceeds to investigate the

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\(^{969}\) Yaman, The Concept of Hikmah, p. 293.

principles of other sciences and their underlying causes. So central is the Necessary Being in the pursuit of *ḥikma*, it is more befitting, says Avicenna, to define *ḥikma* as ‘the best knowledge of the best known’, or simply ‘knowledge of God’ (*maʿrifat Allāh*).\(^{972}\)

**Ghiyāth al-Dīn on *ḥikma* and *wujūd***

Ghiyāth al-Dīn’s conception of *ḥikma* echoes much of what Avicenna said on the subject. As we saw, for Avicenna the purview of *ḥikma* encompassed metaphysics, physics, ethics, and psychology. However, Ghiyāth al-Dīn employs the term as a general descriptor for two branches of knowledge: (i) physics, or *al-ʿilm al-ṭabīʿi*; and (ii) metaphysics, *al-ilāhiyyāt*.\(^{973}\) Interestingly, logic, or *mantīq*, is not part of the labyrinth of philosophical and natural sciences that constitute *ḥikma*. According to Ghiyāth al-Dīn, logic is an important propaedeutic science to *ḥikma* but not integral to it.\(^{974}\)

In his explications on the *Ishārāt*, Ghiyāth al-Dīn says *ḥikma* is of two types, theoretical and practical. On the one hand, practical wisdom (*ḥikma*) is:

Concerned with the acquisition of knowledge and ratiocinative inquiry, a discipline of the mind that involves mental exercises and the making of judgements in order to acquire knowledge of all existents and to understand their true essences beyond phenomenal appearances.\(^{975}\)

On the other hand, practical wisdom is:

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To act upon knowledge acquired through cognition and ratiocinative inquiry, a transformative practice, a way to perfect the soul and one which seeks to cultivate piety in order to resemble or enact divine qualities, that is, to live in accordance with divine ethics (al-takhalluq bi-akhlāq Allāh).  

Physics

Starting with the first part of ḥıkma, that is, physics, it is defined as follows:

The science that investigates physical bodies insofar as they are physical objects (ʿilmun bāḥithun an aḥwāl al-ṭabīʿi min ḥayth innahu dhū tabīʿa). Physics consist of eight arts, or fanūn, knowledge of which is required as the first step to acquiring ḥīkma. These are: (i) the audition of cosmos, or better still, listening to nature (samāʿ al-kiyān); (ii) the heavens and earth (al-samāʿ wa-l-ʿālam); (iii) generation and corruption (al-kawn wa-l-fasād); (iv) the celestial phenomena (al-āthār al-ʿalawiyya); (v) minerals (maʿādin); (vi) the soul (al-nafs); (vii) plants (nabāt); and (viii) living things (ḥayawān).

An aspiring ḥakīm is required to grasp the main underlying principles of physics, as outlined above. Like Aristotle, and following him Avicenna, Ghiyāth al-Dīn explains that there are general principles of change that govern all natural bodies. This includes living and inanimate, celestial and terrestrial, and includes all motion, change with respect to size or number, qualitative change of any kind, and the generation and corruption of things. In order to delineate these underlying principles, each art, or fan, is summarized thusly by Ghiyāth al-Dīn:

The art of understanding the heavens and earth, for example, requires acceptance or knowledge that the heavens are in constant motion, planets are essentially luminous (muḍrā bi-dhawātihā), and that their motion follows an elliptical orbit. The art of celestial

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978 This is one of the Arabic titles of Aristotle's physics (Φυσική ἀκρόασις or phusike akroasis or Physicae Auscultationes). See Istvan Bodnar, 'Aristotle's Natural Philosophy', in Edward N. Zalta (ed.), The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy (Spring 2012 Edition).

phenomena is premised on an understanding that vapour is generated by the luminous rays of the sun (\textit{min ishrāq al-shams}). Moreover, changes in seasons which cause the changes in weather, are caused by the movement of the sun and the celestial bodies. For example, rain, snow, wind, thunder, earthquake, the formation of rainbows, the trajectory of meteoroids, and the arrangement of the Sagitta, as well as other constellations, is caused by the gravitational pull of the sun and other celestial objects.\footnote{Dashtakī, ‘\textit{Tajrīf maṣāʾīl al-ḥikma},’ in \textit{Muṣannafāt}, vol. 1, p. 11.}

Similarly, regarding the complex system of plant reproductive morphology, Ghiyāth al-Dīn writes:

Plants receive nutrition (\textit{yataghadhā}), they are begotten and beget (\textit{yatawallad wa-yūlād}), and can thus belong to sexual taxonomies, that is, they have different sexes,\footnote{According to modern science, plants particularly flowers may be described as ‘bisexual’ or ‘hermaphroditic’; others can be ‘unisexual’, that is, a plant in which either the stamens or the carpels are missing. Some plants produce male flowers while others, female. The complexity of plant reproduction has led scientists to coin an array of terminologies, such as Androdioecious (which have male traits), Androgynomonoecious (which have male and female traits), and Dichogamous (which has different sexes develop at different times). See S. C. Barret, ‘The evolution of plant sexual diversity,’ in \textit{Nature Reviews Genetics} 3 (2002), pp. 274-284.} including male and female (\textit{fiḥi dhakar wa-unthā}).\footnote{Dashtakī, ‘\textit{Tajrīf maṣāʾīl al-ḥikma},’ in \textit{Muṣannafāt}, vol. 1, p. 13.} Other livings things (\textit{al-ḥayān}) follow similar reproductive morphology, some reproduce sexually while others asexually. Moreover, living beings are willful and mobile (\textit{yatharrak bi’il-irāda}), some require oxygen to sustain life, particularly humans, while amphibians and fish breathe under water (\textit{wa-minhu mā-yadṭar ilā istinshāq al-mā’ ka-l-samak}).\footnote{Dashtakī, ‘\textit{Tajrīf maṣāʾīl al-ḥikma},’ in \textit{Muṣannafāt}, vol. 1, p. 15.}

In addition, the anatomy of every mammal has within it a sevum (\textit{wa-kul ḥayawān shāhīm}) such that every animal’s brain contains lipids, or fatty acids (\textit{fa-damāghahu daṣīm}). The process of digestion in living beings is fourfold:

First, digestion that takes place inside the stomach (\textit{al-ḥaḍm al-awwal al-ladhī fi’il-ma’dā}); second, digestion that takes place inside the liver (\textit{al-kabd}), which results in the release of urine (\textit{al-bawl}); third, the secretion of fluids by the sweat glands (\textit{al-ʿarq}); and fourth, the production of semen (\textit{al-manī}).\footnote{Dashtakī, ‘\textit{Tajrīf maṣāʾīl al-ḥikma},’ in \textit{Muṣannafāt}, vol. 1, p. 13.}

On this last, Ghiyāth al-Dīn quotes Aristotle who reputedly said, ‘women are incapable of discharging semen’ (\textit{wa-dhahab al-mu’allim al-awwal annahu laysa li’il-mar’a manī bi’il-ḥaqīqa}). Rather, Aristotle is quoted as saying ‘they [i.e. women] produce semen-like liquid which is devoid of reproductive power’ (\textit{laysa fīhā qūwa}
Like Avicenna, Ghiyāth al-Dīn notes that the art of psychology is primarily interested in the causes belonging to living bodies. On the final art, regarding the soul, Ghiyāth al-Dīn begins by pointing out that the closer one’s temperament (mazāj) to moderation (i’tidāl), the nobler (ashraf) the soul becomes. Ghiyāth al-Dīn writes:

Moderated temperaments become recipients of divine effusion which proceeds from the First, the Necessary Being. Certain bodies perceive sensibly, and move about voluntarily, as well as taking in nourishment, growing, and reproducing.  

Echoing the Avicennan definition of the soul, Ghiyāth al-Dīn explains that given the difference between the natural activities of different kinds of bodies, living bodies must have some other principle or cause in addition to the corporeality. The principle or cause out of which these activities issue is called the soul (nafs).  

For Ghiyāth al-Dīn, the human body and the soul are two distinct substances, one material while the other immaterial. Hinting clearly at substance dualism, which is of Avicennan provenance, Ghiyāth al-Dīn is keen to underscore the close relationship between the human body and its soul. 

Paraphrasing Avicenna’s discussion in the Shifāʾ, in the psychology section, Ghiyāth al-Dīn sets out to explain the powers of the soul with respect to bodily functions. Although there are multiple powers associated with the soul of living beings, Ghiyāth al-Dīn sees them all as closely interrelated, indeed even forming a

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hierarchy. It soon becomes clear that each of the lowers souls is a condition for what follows, similar to the relation of ‘ruler and ruled’ advocated by Avicenna. For Ghiyāth al-Dīn, the hierarchy begins with the lowest power of the soul, the vegetative (al-nabāṭiyya), which is responsible for nutrition, growth, and reproduction (ma-yaghdu wa-ya’anmu wa-yatakammal wa-yatawallad).989

Moving up the hierarchy, Ghiyāth al-Dīn then addresses the appetitive and irascible faculties, which are closely related to the power of perception (idrāk), the most significant activity of animals. Perception involves the percipient being impressed by the form (ṣūra) of that object. He says:

The form is something that both the external and internal senses perceive (al-ḥiss al-zāhir wa-l-ḥiss al-bāṭin). The external is made up of five senses: seeing, touching, tasting, smelling, and hearing. The internal is made up of the imaginative (khayāl), estimative (wahm), and retentive (ḥāfiza).990

The most perfect animal form, Ghiyāth al-Dīn adds, is that of the human (atam al-hayawānāt huwa al-īnsān), for humans have the power to think in abstraction. In addition to the power of reason, which Ghiyāth al-Dīn calls theoretical intellect (al-qūwa al-fikriyya al-naẓariyya), humans are also said to posses the power of practical intellect (al-qūwa al-fikriyya al-ʿamaliyya), which is responsible for crafts and other psychic qualities, which are immaterial. These include risibility (al-ḍāḥk) and shyness (hayā).991 Through rational thinking, humans are thus able to ascertain the existence of the Necessary Being, and concomitantly come to appreciate the wisdom of God (ḥikmat al-bārī). Ghiyāth al-Dīn writes:

Pay close attention to the wisdom of God, do you not see how He created man from a clot of despicable water (min nutfa min māʾ muḥīn), then [He made the clot into] a lump (thumma ‘alqa), then lump of bones (thumma mugha), then bones (ḥūman), then flesh (laḥman), then

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He fashioned it into another creation (thumma ansha’ahu khalqan ākhar), then He endowed it with a power through which man is able to ascend to the realm of malakūt.\footnote{Dashtakī, ‘Tajrīd masā’il al-ḥikma’, in Muṣannafūt, vol. 1, p. 17.}

For Ghiyāth al-Dīn Physics covers a range of general issues, ranging from motion, causation, place and time, to systematic explorations and explanations of natural phenomena across different kinds of natural entities. It contains all there is to know about the cosmos, including knowledge of the human soul and its different faculties and psychological qualities. Its end goal is to witness the beatific illuminations that proceed from the divine lights (min anwār al-jawāhir al-rawḥāniyya). He writes:

Glory be to God, who created light, sees through light, and guides through light to the station of light (fa-subḥān man khalaq al-nūr wa-baṣār bi’l-nūr wa-hadā bi’l-nūr ilā al-nūr).\footnote{Dashtakī, ‘Tajrīd masā’il al-ḥikma’, in Muṣannafūt, vol. 1, p. 17.}

**Metaphysics**

The second part of ḥikma is the science of divinalia or al-ilāhiyyā. For Ghiyāth al-Dīn, metaphysics is a science that investigates the existent insofar as it exists (al-mawjūd bi-ma huwa mawjūd). Metaphysics, Ghiyāth al-Dīn writes, is predicated on six arts or funūn.\footnote{Dashtakī, ‘Tajrīd masā’il al-ḥikma’, in Muṣannafūt, vol. 1, p. 19.} The first art, the fountainhead of the science of divinalia, consists of existence (wujūd) or the study that seeks to understand that which is found (lit. al-mawjūd). According to Ghiyāth al-Dīn existence is:

Univocal (ma’nā wāḥid), self-evident (badīhi), and insofar as our mental abstraction is concerned additional to the essences of things.\footnote{Dashtakī, ‘Tajrīd masā’il al-ḥikma’, in Muṣannafūt, vol. 1, p. 19.}

Although a common theme in Islamic philosophy, the assertion that existence requires no mediating terms to explain it is quite important for Ghiyāth al-Dīn’s overall purpose to proof the existence of the Necessary Being. Echoing Avicenna,
Ghiyāth al-Dīn explains that existence is meant to be known independently of experience, that is, existence is known a priori (i.e. it is bādīḥī). Ghiyāth al-Dīn writes:

Existence is amongst the primary intelligibles inscribed (tartasim) on the intellect without the need for second-order conceptualizations. Since all attempts to define primary concepts leads to infinite regress (tasalsul) or tautology (dawr), human beings take primary concepts as self-evident, which require no mediating terms.996

One notices that Ghiyāth al-Dīn is merely rehearsing Avicenna’s famous opening proposition in the Najāt which says, ‘there is no doubt that there is existence’ (lā shakka anna hunā wujūdan).997 Indeed in arguing that existence is intuited in the mind foremost, Avicenna was trying to rid metaphysical speculations of physics. Similarly, one notices a similar approach in the writings of Ghiyāth al-Dīn, though he is far less explicit in stating his aims, except when he asserts that existence being additional to essence is something intuited primarily in the mind.998 He writes:

Existence insofar as the mental activity is concerned is additional to the essences [of things] (al-wujād bi-ḥasab al-taṣawwur zāʾidan ’alā al-māhiyyāt).999

As well as being self-evident, existence is:

Equal to [or coextensive with] subsistence and thingness (wa-huwa [i.e. al-wajād] murādīf liʾl-thubūt wa-musāwiq liʾl-shayʿiyya).1000

Commenting further, Ghiyāth al-Dīn explains that there are two types of existence.

He writes:

Existence is of type modes: mental (dhīhnī) and extra-mental or external (khārijī). Or [we can say] Existence refers to two ontological states both of which are real. However, as a mental

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notion, existence is comparable to a universal, it is applicable to many objects univocally while remaining abstract and generic.\footnote{Dashtaki, ‘Tajrid masal’il al-hikma’, in Mu‘assanat, vol. 1, pp. 20–21.}

Here Ghiyāth al-Dīn appears to be anticipating the famous concept-reality distinction of existence (\textit{māfhi‘ūm wa-\textasciitilde{haqiqat al-wujūd}) championed by Mullā Ṣadrā.\footnote{Ṣadr al-Dīn Shīrāzī, \textit{al-Hikma al-mutā‘āliya}, vol. 1, p. 249ff.}

For Ghiyāth al-Dīn and Mullā Ṣadrā existence as a concept is a generic term predicated of concrete existents univocally. It is an all-inclusive ontic reality which applies to all things that exist.

Ghiyāth al-Dīn asserts that the reality of existence is extra-mental, every substance is in fact a unique being that partakes in the all-encompassing reality of existence, for existence cannot leave anything out, though not all existents share the same intensity of existence, some are more intense than others. To underscore his claim that existence is gradational or modal, Ghiyāth al-Dīn employs the term \textit{tashkīk}, he writes:

[More intense] existence is predicated of things beneath it gradationally. It proliferates as places in which it inheres proliferate (\textit{muqawalun ‘alā ma-taḥtahu bi‘l-tashkīk mutakathirun bi-takathur al-mawḍūʻ āt}).

In addition, existence partakes in temporality. Ghiyāth al-Dīn explains:

[Existence is] either pre-eternal (\textit{qādīm}) or temporally originated (\textit{ḥadīth}); and either prior (\textit{muqaddam}) or posterior (\textit{mu‘akkhar}). The priority of existence occurs either through a causal agent (\textit{bi‘l-‘illiyya}) or naturally (\textit{bi‘l-‘ab}). Alternatively, the ontological status of things or existents is according to their rank in the hierarchy of intellects (\textit{al-ratba al-‘aqliyya}) or rank of nobility (\textit{bi‘l-sharaf}).\footnote{Dashtaki, ‘Tajrid masal’il al-hikma’, in Mu‘assanat, vol. 1, p. 20.}

That things of the same set can be predicted by \textit{tashkīk} was a common theme in medieval Islamic philosophy. In Islamic intellectual history, Fārābī was arguably the first philosopher to discuss the homonymy of being. Later, Avicenna would argue that being can be characterised by five sets of priority-posteriority relationships,
namely by rank (martaba), by nature (ṭab‘), by nobility (sharaf), by time (zamān), and by essential causes (‘illa dhātiyya). This idea was later adopted by Ṭūsī who accepted the idea that being admits of degrees. Even Suhrawardī famously argued that the hierarchy of light is mushakkak.¹⁰⁰⁴

To recap, the term ḥikma according to Ghiyāth al-Dīn encompasses discussions on physics, psychology, and metaphysics. But it is this last, namely metaphysics, which essentially defines ḥikma. It is the study of existence which encapsulates the true meaning of ḥikma which as Ghiyāth al-Dīn points out is an exercise in ontology and epistemology; for an understanding of ḥikma leads to an understanding of existence which leads to an understanding of the ultimate source of existence, the Necessary Being, to which we shall now turn.

4.3: Ghiyāth al-Dīn on the Necessary Being

Ghiyāth al-Dīn considered the study of the Necessary Being to be the highest and most noble pursuit of all the ḥikma sciences. The historical and conceptual background to this issue has already been discussed in chapter two. In the following we will content ourselves with Ghiyāth al-Dīn’s conception and some of the later Ash’ari formulations he challenges.

Starting with the Necessary Being, Ghiyāth al-Dīn explains that any attempt to prove the existence of the Necessary being must demonstrate philosophically that among all the existents there must be an existent whose existence is necessary

¹⁰⁰⁴ Rizvi, Mullā Ṣadrā and Metaphysics, pp. 42-46.
due to its essence (ayyu bayān thubūtahu wa-taqrīr dalīl vujūdahu bi-an yubayin anna min al-mawjūdāt ma-huwa wājibun bi’l-dhāt). He writes:

If the existence of an existent, any existent, is confined (inḥāṣar) to an existence that is contingent, then that existent and every other existent cannot exist at all. Since the subsequent is manifestly false (al-tālīf zāhir al-buṭlān), the antecedent is also false. Thus the claim of the sophists that ‘all existents are false illusions and imaginations (anna al-mawjūdāt kulahā awḥām wa-khayālāt bāṭila)’ is itself nothing but false illusions and imaginations.

From the above it becomes clear that Ghiyāth al-Dīn is attempting to demonstrate, in true Avicennan fashion, that contingent existents are ontologically impoverished entities which in order to come into being require an external existent or preponderator (murajjih). This requirement which Ghiyāth al-Dīn terms ihtiyāj is characterized by contingency (imkān). The framing of the problem in Ghiyāth al-Dīn’s discussion makes it evidently clear that he is a follower of Avicenna. There is little to suggest that he drew influence from other traditions. There are no traces, for instance, of the later Mu’tazili school of Abū l-Ḥusayn al-BAṣrī, at least not in this discussion. Indeed the school of Abū l-Ḥusayn put forward a somewhat similar argument. Ibn al-Malāḥīmī recalls two proofs by Abū l-Ḥusayn which, as discussed in chapter one, show that the latter relied on the argument that the world is created by a matter (amr) who must be a free choosing, powerful, and pre-eternal agent. The terminology used by Ibn al-Malāḥīmī who quotes Abū l-Ḥusayn, are however different to those employed by Ghiyāth al-Dīn. Ibn al-Malāḥīmī relies on notions such as free choosing (fāʾ il mukhtār) which do not feature in the Avicennan proof.

Ghiyāth al-Dīn, however, relies exclusively on the Avicennan principles of causality and necessity.


To proceed with his proof, he invokes the principle that something cannot come into being by itself since every contingent (mumkin), whether pre-eternal or temporally originated, must have an equal relation to existence and non-existence (nisbat al-wujūd wa-l-ʿadam ilā al-mumkin wāḥid). So before an existent, say A, comes into being, A’s probability of coming into being must be equal to its probability of not coming into being. According to Ghiyāth al-Dīn, this relation of relative equality is of chief importance without which one cannot establish a sound philosophical proof for the existence of the Necessary Being.1007

So how does A come into being if its chances of coming into being are equal to its chances of not coming into being? In order for A to come into being something must ‘swing’ the balance or scales in favour of existence. Put differently, another existent must break the relation of indifference which A has to both existence and non-existence. Only then will A come into being. Commenting on this, Ghiyāth al-Dīn says:
That which tipped the balance in favour of A coming into being must necessarily exist.1008

This assertion is based on the Avicennan principle which says:
If something does not exist, it cannot bring another into being (anna al-shayʾ ma-lam yūjad lam yūjīd).1009

But this begs the question: if another existent tipped the ontological balance in favour of A coming into being, what, one may ask, brought that existent into being?
In and of itself A is intrinsically incapable of causing its own existence. A cannot bring itself into being by breaking the relation of indifference it has to existence

1009 This principle is part of the discussion on the priority and posteriority of causes that Avicenna discusses in the ilāhiyāt section of the Shīfā. See Ibn Sīnā, al-Shīfā: al-ilāhiyāt, vol. 1, pp. 163-169.
and non-existence, for this would amount to a contradiction, since something which did not always exist cannot bring itself into being, otherwise this would lead to situation where a thing’s cause is also its effect, an outcome which was shown to be manifestly false by Avicenna in his discussion on causality.\textsuperscript{1010}

Hence by stating that an existent which preponderates or tips A in the direction of existence must itself also require another existent to tip it in the direction of existence, Ghiyāth al-Dīn shifts the argument in favour of the radical contingency doctrine. If every existent required a preponderator to bring it into being and in turn if every preponderator required another preponderator to bring it into being \textit{ad infinitum}, then without terminating the chain of preponderators would never come to an end. Here Ghiyāth al-Dīn’s argument appears cosmological rather than ontological; for its main thrust hinges on the reasoning that an infinite regress leads to an absurdity, echoing the Aristotelian principle of \textit{infinitum actu non datur}. Relying on the idea that a terminate chain of contingent existents cannot sustain itself, Ghiyāth al-Dīn writes:

\begin{quote}
And since it is wholly absurd to claim that an actual infinity is possible, which is the subsequent of the foregoing argument, the antecedent must also be absurd and therefore false. That is to say an infinite chain of contingent existents or preponderators is therefore impossible; for the chain must terminate at a preponderator whose existence is necessary. Concomitantly, an existent whose existence is necessary exist.\textsuperscript{1011}
\end{quote}

This being whose existence is necessary is God. A corollary question that arises from the above is that does the Necessary Being in question need to be necessary in all aspects? That is to say is the attribute or quality of necessity (\textit{wujūb}) which is predicated of the Necessary Being a philosophical concomitant? In Ghiyāth al-Dīn’s view the attribute or quality of necessity is necessarily predicted of the Necessary

\textsuperscript{1010} See the section on \textit{hudūth} in: Ibn Sīnā, \textit{al-Shifāʾ: al-ilāhiyāt}, vol. 1, pp. 163-165.

\textsuperscript{1011} Dashtakī, ‘\textit{Kashf al-ḥaqāʾiq}’, in \textit{Muṣannafāt}, vol. 2, p. 755.
Being. For Ghiyāth al-Dīn, necessity is a philosophical concomitant one which is entailed in his definition and conception of the Necessary Being. This is based on the following position taken by Avicenna, who said:

The Necessary Being—due to Its Essence (wājib al-wujūd bi-dhātīhi) is necessary in all aspects. Otherwise if He was a necessary being in one aspect (wājib al-wujūd min jiha) and contingent being in another (wa-min jiha mumkin al-wujūd), then it follows that one aspect will be part of Him [i.e. part of His essence] and another will not be part of Him. Thus His essence will be a contingent existence which is reliant on an [extraneous] cause. If so, He will not be an absolute Necessary Being (fa-lam yakun wājib al-wujūd bi-dhātīhi muṭlaq). But that His being is necessary will be dependent on other causes. However, the Necessary Being is not posterior to another awaited existence (wujūdun muntaẓaran) [which makes it necessary]. But whatever is said to be contingent is in fact necessary [in the case of the Necessary Being], for His will is not delayed.1012

To this end Ghiyāth al-Dīn composed an entire work on the subject in order to provide a corrective to the later Ashʿari view as it was represented by Rāzī who, in Ghiyāth al-Dīn’s word ‘willfully distorted Avicenna’s argument’.1013

Centuries before, Ṭūṣī writing in his Talkhīṣ al-muḥāṣṣal explains that Rāzī did not agree with the philosophers’ claim that the notion of necessity, as an attribute or quality predicated of the Necessary Being, is necessarily entailed. Ṭūṣī adds that Rāzī’s disagreement over this issue is indicative of a bigger ‘battle’ between the philosophers and the theologians.1014

Indeed in the relevant section of the Muḥāṣṣal, Rāzī objects to the philosophers’ claim that the Necessary Being is necessary in all aspects (wājib min

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1013 Dashtakī, ‘al-Kamāl fi sifāt Allāh al-muta’āl’, in Muṣannafat, vol. 1, p. 136. It is clear that Ghiyāth al-Dīn has Rāzī in mind, for when he presents the Ashʿari view which he finds problematic, he is paraphrasing from Rāzī’s Muḥāṣṣal, though he does not explicitly say so.

1014 Ṭūṣī writes: ḥādhīhi al-mas’ala hiya al-mā’ara bayn al-mutakallimīn wa-l-falāṣifa. See Ṭūṣī’s comments in margins in: Rāzī, Muḥāṣṣal, p. 70.
According to Rāzī, the philosophers, by whom he means Avicenna, who discusses this problem in the sixth faṣl of the ilāhiyāt section of the Shifā', are unable to prove that the notion of necessity insofar as the Necessary Being is concerned is entailed. Rather, they the philosophers, writes Rāzī, articulate an incoherent argument or proof. Rāzī writes:

Let us suppose that Him being characterized [as Necessary] can only be established when and only when something extraneous (amr khārij) or lack thereof, is present before the divine essence. It follows therefore that His essence [for it to be complete] is dependent on that extraneous something. But that which is dependent on another (al-mawqūf alā al-ghayr) is dependent on that thing being present (mawqūf alā hudūr dhālik al-ghayr). Hence the Necessary-due-to-Its-Essence (al-wājib li-dhātihi) is dependent on another, which makes it Contingent-due-to-Its-Essence (mumkinan li-dhātihi). But this is the opposite of what they wish to establish (hādhā khalaf).

Commenting on the above, Ghiyāth al-Dīn explains that Rāzī’s primary objective is to show that instead of demonstrating that the Necessary Being is necessary in all aspects, the philosophers end up doing the complete opposite; for according to Rāzī, the proof demonstrates in fact that the Necessary Being is characterized by an entity which is temporally originated. Before delving into his refutation of Rāzī, Ghiyāth al-Dīn says:

We shall turn to this objection [by Rāzī] now. But regarding the proof of the Ra’īs [i.e. Avicenna], these [Ash’ari theologians] have inadvertently or willfully overlooked the main point. Clearly irked by what he considers a deliberate misreading of Avicenna on the part of Rāzī, Ghiyāth al-Dīn further adds:

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1015 That Rāzī had Avicenna in mind is attested by both Tūsī and Ghiyāth al-Dīn, especially since the latter cites the same objection by Rāzī when he discusses Avicenna’s proof that the Necessary Being is necessary in all aspects. See Dashtakī, ‘Shifā’ al-qulūb’, in Muṣannafat, vol. 2, p. 463.


1017 Rāzī, Muḥaṣṣal, p. 70.


And these [Ash‘ari] theologians say things which are contradictory even opposite to what they really claim. Whoever wishes to see their errors let him peruse their theological works and see [the many errors] they contain (wa-fīhā ma-fīhā).\footnote{Dashtakī, ‘al-Kamāl fi ʂifāt Allāh al-muta‘āl’, in Muṣannafūṭ, vol. 1, p. 138.}

Ghiyāth al-Dīn then writes that the Ash‘ari objections to Avicenna’s proof are not only incongruous but also lack philosophical clarity:

In the end, I could not understand what they wrote. I could not comprehend it and I do not want to comprehend it (wa-īnī lā afhamahu wa-lā ashtahi an afhamahu). Whoever thinks he can understand their [incongruous] arguments, let him try.\footnote{Dashtakī, ‘al-Kamāl fi ʂifāt Allāh al-muta‘āl’, in Muṣannafūṭ, vol. 1, p. 138.}

So how does Ghiyāth al-Dīn understand Avicenna’s proof that the Necessary Being is necessary in all aspects? And how does he refute the objections of later Ash‘ari thinkers chief among whom was Rāzī? He begins by stating the basic premise:

The Necessary Being is necessary in all aspects (wājibun min jamī‘ jihātihī). This necessity is entailed by His essence. This means that He cannot be in a state (ḥāl) or have an attribute (ṣifā) which is not from His very essence (mansha‘ahu nafs dhātihī).\footnote{Dashtakī, ‘al-Kamāl fi ʂifāt Allāh al-muta‘āl’, in Muṣannafūṭ, vol. 1, p. 144.}

Ghiyāth al-Dīn takes a further step and argues that through the Necessary Being all contingencies are effected (wa-lā mumkin ghayr ma‘lūlātihī).\footnote{Dashtakī, ‘al-Kamāl fi ʂifāt Allāh al-muta‘āl’, in Muṣannafūṭ, vol. 1, p. 145.} Moreover, we are reminded time and time again, that every attribute of perfection which characterizes a quality of the Necessary Being is due to His essence (fa-kul ʂifā wa-kamāl yahṣul wa-yakūn lahu) and cannot for that matter occur without His essence (la-yakūn lahu illā min dhātihī).\footnote{Dashtakī, ‘al-Kamāl fi ʂifāt Allāh al-muta‘āl’, in Muṣannafūṭ, vol. 1, p. 145.}

Ghiyāth al-Dīn explains that the notions of necessity and perfection are entailed by the divine essence. Hence, he writes:

God is perfect and necessary because these two existential attributes are in fact coterminous with the divine essence. They are neither additional to it, for that would imply...
multiplicity, nor are they compounded together with the divine essence, for that would
defy an axiomatic principle in philosophy, namely that God is simple (baṣīṭ). Rather,
necessity and perfection are simply manifestations or qualities of the divine essence. They
predicated of God in order to underscore the fact that He is the opposite of contingent,
namely necessary, and opposite of impoverished, namely perfect.\(^{1025}\)

Continuing with his assertion that the Necessary Being is simple, Ghiyāth al-Dīn
maintains that the essence of a thing that is one, or in unicity, does not undergo
change through its own essence (\(al\)-\(shay\)' \(al\)-\(wāhīd\) \(lā\) \(yataghayr\) \(dhāt\)ahu \(bi\)-\(dhātihi\)).

Moreover, its essence cannot take away (\(salb\)) that which makes it necessary. To
explain this last, which he terms ‘one of life’s most self-evident principles’, Ghiyāth
al-Dīn considers the following example:

A rational and sensible man who is trained in the philosophical sciences will never indulge
in self-harm, nor would he ever take away his life willfully. Such man will not take away
that which is essential for living. However, some ignoramus person is more likely to take
away his own life willfully. Such people suffer from corrupt delusions (\(tawḥīḍ\) \(fāṣīda\)).
When contrasted, the rational philosopher is said to posses a pure and simple soul, one
which acts willfully and is not influenced by extraneous corruption. Corruption is evil
thoughts and influences which are external to the soul (\(asbāb\) \(khārijyya\)). The soul of the
ignoramus man is more likely to become susceptible to evil thoughts.\(^{1026}\)

The underlying message of this rather labored metaphor is that the Necessary Being
like the rational philosopher posses an essence which is absolute and simple. His
essence will not therefore take away that which is essential, namely it being
necessary; for to do so would be irrational and unwise. Based on this, one can
conclude that like a rational philosopher, the divine essence of the Necessary Being
is the source of Him being necessary, and it will not be the cause of its own
privation.

Determined to defend Avicenna against Rāzī’s accusations of incoherency,
Ghiyāth al-Dīn brings forth another argument to counter Rāzī’s objection. He
prefaces his argument with the statement ‘existents exist’. Ghiyāth al-Dīn asserts


that existents are either necessary or contingent. But a series of contingent existents cannot sustain itself unless it terminates with an existent whose existence is necessary due to its own essence. This last stipulates that the Necessary Being must be necessary in all aspects; for to suggest otherwise would be to admit the possibility of an infinitely regressing chain of contingent existents. Hence the Necessary Being is necessary in all aspects.\textsuperscript{1027}

Upon scrutiny one observes that Ghiyāth al-Dīn’s argument rests on the following conceptions or philosophical principles, which can be traced back to Fārābī and Avicenna. First, to demonstrate that the Necessary Being is necessary in all aspects, Ghiyāth al-Dīn invokes the principle which says, ‘a thing’s cause is more noble than its effect’, which Fārābī, and following him Avicenna, termed \textit{qā’idat al-imkān al-ashraf}.\textsuperscript{1028} According to Avicenna, the hierarchy of existents begins with the world of intellects, followed by the world of souls, then celestial bodies, and down to prime matter. The most noble of existents are those which rank high in the vertical hierarchy of existence. Each existent is said to be more noble, or \textit{ashraf}, than the one below it.\textsuperscript{1029}

Building on this, Ghiyāth al-Dīn adds that the Necessary Being is certainly more noble than every other existent, all of which rank below Him in the vertical hierarchy of existence. The higher one climbs in vertical hierarchy, the less reliant or contingent one becomes upon other contingents. In the final analysis, the highest existent, that is, the most noble, is not contingent upon another because it is necessary. God, or the Necessary Being, is thus more noble than all other


\textsuperscript{1028} For this principle, see Ibn Sīnā, \textit{al-Shifā’: al-ilāhiyyāt}, vol. 2, p. 435.

existents, for He is the noblest and highest existent. It follows therefore that God is absolutely necessary.  

A second version of this principle is known as qāʿidat al-akhaṣṣ, the principle of the most particular. It was supposedly formulated later by Mullā Şadrā who claims to have been the first Muslim philosopher to delineate this version of the argument. Mullā Şadrā writes:

The proof is based on the principle of qāʿidat al-imkān al-ashraf and qāʿidat al-imkān al-akhaṣṣ; the first was formulated by and inherited from the First Teacher [i.e. Aristotle], while the second is our own invention which we managed with God’s support (amma al-awwal fa-muwarratha ‘an al-mu’allim al-awwal wa-amma al-thāniya fa-nahnu wādi’uhā bi-‘awn Allāh).  

Be that as it may, Mullā Şadrā’s formulations does bear quite a lot of resemblance to Ghiyāth al-Dīn’s version which was also termed qāʿidat al-mumkin al-akhaṣṣ. According to Ghiyāth al-Dīn’s version, the most particular contingent (al-mumkin al-akhaṣṣ) cannot come into being unless there is an existent which is more noble than it. It follows then that all particular existents are dependent on the existence of the noblest existent, namely the Necessary Being, which must therefore be necessary in all aspects.  

The rational philosopher example used earlier is based on the principle that a rational agent does not inflict self-harm willfully. When applied to the Necessary Being this is the equivalent of saying that the divine essence of the Necessary Being does not take away (salb) its own notion of necessity. Commenting further, Ghiyāth al-Dīn writes:

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Surely someone who knows the secrets of the cosmos does not willfully do something that he does not agree with (alladhī ya’lam al-sirr lā yārḍā bī-mā lā yārḍā). It follows that the Necessary Being does not willfully debase Himself to the level of contingency since He is a rational agent who possesses perfect knowledge of the secrets of the cosmos. He is said to be necessary in all aspects since the occurrence of any aspect of contingency in the divine essence is irrational.

To recapitulate, according to Ghiyāth al-Dīn it was necessary to provide a corrective to Rāzi’s reading of the Avicennan argument that the Necessary Being is necessary in all aspects. In doing so, Ghiyāth al-Dīn makes frequent references to Rāzi in contexts which suggest that latter failed to properly understand Avicenna. He brings the discussion to a close with the following condemnatory remarks, intended for Rāzi in particular and philosophizing Ashʿari theologians in general:

The objections brought forth by the later theologians are meaningless. Those folk are nothing but soi-distant philosophers (mutafalsifa) who have no place in philosophical discussion nor are they capable of understanding ḥikma.

4.4: Ghiyāth al-Dīn on the nature of the divine speech

In his Arabic treatise on the nature of God’s speech, entitled al-Kalām fi tābyīn kalām Allāh al-‘allām, Ghiyāth al-Dīn explains that to discuss this subject is to follow the way of the noble scholars (al-kalām fi‘l-kalām min sunan al-kirām). The multiple views of this issue have already been discussed in chapter two. In what follows we will content ourselves with Ghiyāth al-Dīn’s critique of the later Ashʿari position.

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1036 For further details on this work, see Appendix B.
We are told by Ghiyāth al-Dīn that despite their labored efforts to probe the baffling intricacies of this problem, past generations of Muslim thinkers failed to reach conclusive outcomes. Ghiyāth al-Dīn goes on to say that when he was imbued with mystical knowledge which lifted the veil of uncertainty he felt obliged to present his mystical findings in a manner comprehensible to rational and precocious minds. He writes:

I came to know something through the subtleties of innovative realities and I desired to present and elucidate [these mystical findings] to the precocious [minds]. (wa-inni āšbaḥtu 'ārifan bi-shay' min badā'i al-daqqā'iq wa-nubadh min laṭā'if al-ḥaqā'iq fa-aradtu naẓmiḥā wa-tabyīnihā wa-nathraḥā tabṣiratan lī'l-ظلمā' wa-l-adḥkiyā').

In a prototypical move, Ghiyāth al-Dīn begins his argument by stating that he intends to refute the later Ashʿarī view. In doing so, he explains that one is in fact challenging the prevalent and dominant view. He adds that the views of philosophizing Ashʿarī thinkers, represented by the likes of Ghazālī, Rāzī, Shahrastānī, and Ījī, have misled the Muslim multitudes, chiefly because their argument that divine speech is pre-eternal is at odds with God’s transcendence and unity. Ghiyāth al-Dīn goes as far as to accuse Ashʿarī and Ījī, for instance, of imitating the view of the Hanbalīs. On this Ghiyāth al-Dīn writes:

This is the view of the Hanbalīs and those who imitate their ways such as the author of the Ṣawāqīf, who said ‘God’s speech is made up of letters and sounds’ and al-Ashʿarī, who said ‘God’s speech is an entitative determinant which inheres in the essence’.

Two key Ashʿarī texts stand out in Ghiyāth al-Dīn’s discussion: Ghazālī’s al-Iṣṭiṣād and Ījī’s al-Mawāqīf. This is unsurprising and seems like an apt choice given the

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centrality of these two works in the later development of Islamic intellectual history. The *lqṭīṣād* is where Ghazālī expresses his Ashʿarī theology in detail. According to Ghazālī himself this work contains the essentials of Ashʿarī theology, and was intended as a defence of Ashʿarī dogma. As for the second work, the *Mawāqīf*, it was arguably the last systematic defence of the Ashʿarī creed composed in western Iran, one which became the subject of an important and influential commentary by another Shiraz based theologian, namely Jurjānī.

To proceed with his argument, Ghiyāth al-Dīn notes that rather than proffering proofs and explications which have little to do with the Islamic scriptures, discussion regarding the nature speech (*kalām*) must strive to elucidate what is outlined in the *sharīʿa* (*mā-warada fiʿl-sharīʿa*). From the context, it is quite clear that by *sharīʿa* Ghiyāth al-Dīn is referring to the primary Islamic scriptures, namely the Qurʾān and the *ḥadīth* literature. One is tempted to interpret this as an epistemological shift in our thinker’s methodological concerns, since it betrays *prima facie* a scripturalist turn. However, the truth of the matter becomes clearer when Ghiyāth al-Dīn states that when the matter of the divine speech is under

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1042 Ghazālī, *lqṭīṣād*, p. 179.


1044 This is alluded to by Ījī in the opening sermon of the *Mawāqīf*. See ‘Aḍūd al-Dīn al-Ījī, *Mawāqīf fi ʾilm al-kalām* (Beirut, 1999), pp. 5-6.

1045 On the influence of Ījī’s *Mawāqīf* in the eastern lands of the Islamicate world, see Ahmad Mahmūd Sebhi, *Fī ʾilm al-kalām: ḍirāsah falsafyya li-ʿarāʾ al-firaq al-islāmiyya fī uṣūl al-dīn: al-ashāʿ ira* (Beirut, 1985), p. 357ff. To the best of our knowledge there were five known commentaries on the *Mawāqīf*. They were written by: Jurjānī, Shams al-Dīn al-Kirmānī, Sayf al-Dīn al-Abhari, ʿAlāʾ al-Dīn ʿAlī al-Tūsī, and Haydar al-Harawi. The earliest of these was most probably that by Kirmānī since he was a student of Ījī. Jurjānī’s commentary appears to have been the most popular since it received no fewer than eight super-commentaries and a host of super-super-commentaries. On these commentaries and their super commentaries, see Abd Allāh al-Suhyalī, *Bahth naqd al-Mawāqīf fi ʾilm al-kalām liʿAḍūd al-Dīn al-Ījī* (Cairo, 2004), pp. 1-25. Cf. van Ess, *Die Erkenntnislehre des ’Adudaddin al-Iṣti‘*.

consideration, the apposite method to define the subject must surely derive inspiration from the primary Islamic scriptures, not from futile semantic innovations which have no basis in the shari’a (wa-al-kalām fī’l-kalām bi’l-ma’nā al-’urfī lā fī ma’nā jadīd ghayr sadīd iṣṭilāḥī).

As the discussion proceeds we learn that the ‘semantic innovations’ he was referring to where in fact the formulations put forward by Ghazālī and those who follow him. Perhaps by relying on scripture to refute the Ghazālī position Ghiyāth al-Dīn had hoped to show the multitudes and the laity that the later Ash‘ari doctrines as represented by Ghazālī are incompatible with the basic tenets of the faith.

In his conception of speech and its variant modalities, Ghiyāth al-Dīn follows the views of the Bahshamiyya. He writes:

Speech is that which sensibly pronounced (lafẓ masmūʿ), read (maqrūʿ), and recited (matluʿ). As for the divine speech (kalām Allāh), it is that which is created by God’s power in a body (jism) that is receptive to bodily configurations (qābil li’l-tashakkul) and capable of emitting sounds to form meaningful expressions (wa-l-takayyuf bi’l-ṣawt ʿibāra). And unlike speech, writing (al-kitāb) is what is receptive to letters being inscribed on it (qābil li’l-naqsh).

Based on this premise Ghiyāth al-Dīn says one is able to describe God as a speaker (mutakallim), for a speaker is one who composes (munshi) speech. But Ghiyāth al-Dīn cautions against the claim that the speaker is the locus in which speech inheres or subsists (lā maḥalahu al-ladḥī qāma bihi). This idea, he says, is advocated by the Ash‘ari theologians particularly Ghazālī and Ījī who maintained that divine speech is an entitative determinant (ma’nā qāʾīm). Commenting further, Ghiyāth al-Dīn writes:

Contrary to Ash‘ari claims that say a human speaker is one in whom speech inheres or through whom speech is vocalized, we say that this view is based on a misconception (ishtibāḥ) and requires further scrutiny.

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It would appear that Ghiyāth al-Dīn had the following formulations by Ghazālī and Ījī in mind when he criticized the Ashʿarī position. On the nature of divine speech, Ghazālī writes:

Our saying that God is a speaker means that the attribute of speech inheres in His essence. Had this attribute not inhered in God’s essence how can He then be described as a speaker? And how can we say: He is willing, knowing, and speaking? Had speech not inhered in God’s essence God cannot be a speaker.1050

Echoing Ghazālī’s formulations, Ījī would later confirm that speech inheres in the divine essence. Ījī writes:

[Divine speech] is an entitative determinant which is other than the expressions because different localities and temporal frameworks yield different expressions...[Divine speech] is not the same as [the attribute of] knowledge nor is it the same as the will. It is in fact an attribute which inheres in the essence. Indeed we say this [attribute] is pre-eternal (nazʿam innahu qadīm) because we reject the claim that generated things can inhere in the divine essence...this is the speech which inheres [in God the speaker].1051

Here Ghiyāth al-Dīn accuses the Ashʿaris of committing a linguistic error which led them to believe that the divine speech is an entitative determinant. Their theologians assumed erroneously that the term speaker (mutakallim) is a derived noun (mushtaq) from speech (kalām) which is the gerund (maṣdar).1052 For this reason, Ghiyāth al-Dīn writes, the Ashʿaris assumed that kalām inheres in the mutakallim since according to the rules of Arabic grammar the gerund inheres in the derived noun.

But the truth of the matter, according to Ghiyāth al-Dīn, is that term kalām is an indeclinable verb (fiʿl jāmid). It is not the source or origin of the derivation of mutakallim (laysa bi-maʾkhadh wa-lā mabdaʾ ishtiqāq). In actuality, mutakallim is derived from takallum not kalām.1053

1051 Ījī, Kitāb al-mawāqif, p. 294.
To work out the correct view on this issue, Ghiyāth al-Dīn states that one must to pay heed to his words, for surely they reflect the ‘victorious view’ (al-ra’y al-manṣūr). He writes:

God is a speaker through speech He composed by His power in an addresser (mutakallim bi-kalām anshā’ahu bi-qudratihī fi qā’il). Unlike the speech composed by man which needs to take place in the proximity of a cluster of air molecules, God speaks without such conditions; for the angel hears Him (al-malak yasma’ahu) and comprehends His speech, and the prophet hears the angel (wa-l-nabī yasa’mā minhu). This hearing is done through a body which emits sounds [i.e. capable of emitting sounds] or through a body in which writing is inscribed. It is narrated that Moses, peace be upon him and our prophet, ‘heard the Torah and saw it inscribed on the tablet’ (sama’ al-tawrāt wa-ra’āhū manqāshan fī’l-awāh). 1054

What emerges from the above is that Ghiyāth al-Dīn’s definition of divine speech eschews the Ash’ari argument that kalām is an entitative determinant. Ghiyāth al-Dīn brings his definition in line with scriptural consideration; he does this in order to prepare the ground for the following discussion point: is the divine speech created or pre-eternal?

Before delving into the main discussion Ghiyāth al-Dīn remarks that the Ash’ari belief that God posses an attribute called kalām which is co-eternal with Him and additional to His essence is nothing but imaginative discourse that has no basis in the scriptures. Such assertions lack intellectual substance (qawl bi-ghayr ‘ilm). 1055

In his view to predicate of God simultaneously the attribute of speech which is supposedly pre-eternal and another which is sensibly pronounced (malfūz) is to speak of two not one divines speeches. He states that the scriptures have not confirmed this. He then engages in reduction ad absurdum whereby he reduces the Ash’ari argument of al-kalām al-nafsī to an absurdity. He describes al-kalām al-nafsī doctrine as nonsensical and irrational (ghayr ma’qūl wa-lā maqūl).

Ghiyāth al-Dīn explains that for the Ashʿaris to persist in this claim would be to engage in fallacious argument, one which violates the basic tenets of pristine monotheism and divine transcendence. He goes as far as to accuse the Ashʿaris of being audacious and stubborn (lā yakhlūʿ an jarāʾa). He writes:

It is better for the Ashʿari theologians to remain silent over this matter than to mislead the Muslim multitudes and [in doing so they will] incur divine wrath (wa-l-ahwaṭ al-sukāt ʿan hādhā al-kalām). Surely one must pay heed to the saying of Prophet Muḥammad who said, ‘set aside matters which induce doubt for those which do not’.

How, then, does Ghiyāth al-Dīn answer the question regarding the nature of the Qurʾan? He writes:

What is undoubtedly true is that the Qurʾan insofar as it recited and read is the speech of God. And based on traditions reported by sound authorities the Qurʾan descended gradually (nazala dafʿtan). It descended to the heavens until it was finally revealed to Prophet Muḥammad. A more plausible scenario for the cosmic origins of the divine speech is that when God created or originated the cosmos all the modes of divine speech were contained in the Preserved Tablet (al-lawḥ al-maḥfūz).

Ghiyāth al-Dīn’s objective is clear. He is proposing an alternative reading of the cosmic origins of the divine speech so as to avoid the perils, in his view, entailed in admitting the existence of co-eternals that inhere in the divine essence. He upholds the notion of divine transcendence and avoids a scenario whereby the divine essence is said to contain multiple existents.

He explains that there are different modes of divine speech. Each prophet received an allocated share from the Preserved Tablet. God assigns this share accordingly depending on location and temporality. In other words, revelation is the allocation of pieces of knowledge from the totality of the divine speech that is contained in the Preserved Tablet. In the context of the Qurʾan, Ghiyāth al-Dīn

explains that in relation to the creation of mankind, the Qur’an is pre-eternal (qadim idāft), that is, its existence is ontologically prior to that of the sublunary world. However, in and of itself the Qur’an is created and not pre-eternal (ḥādīth ghayar azalī).

Hence for Ghiyāth al-Dīn, the Qur’an is created in time and it is predicated of that which is written down (al-maktab), sensibly pronounced (malfūz), recited aloud (matlu), and committed to memory (mahfūz). To suggest that the Qur’an is pre-eternal while its manifestation in the sublunary world is created is in fact absurd. So absurd is the Ash’ari claim, says Ghiyāth al-Dīn, it deserves little if any scrupulous assessment.

If the historical or codified Qur’an descended gradually, whence did it descend from? Ghiyāth al-Dīn responds by stating that the source of its (i.e. the codified Qur’an) origin is the Preserved Tablet.

Ghiyāth al-Dīn tells us that the most common explanation for the phenomenon of Qur’anic descent (nuzūl al-qur’ān) is the one that describes descent as manifestation (zuhūr). Though he does explicitly say so, Ghiyāth al-Dīn seems to be referring to the paradigm of nuzūl as zuhūr, which has its roots in the exegetical writings of Ibn ’Arabī. According to the latter, the divine speech is manifested to individuals worthy of hearing it. Those who hear it, namely prophets, undergo an

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1060 Dashtakī, ‘al-Kalām fī tabyīn kalām Allāh al-‘allām’, in Muṣannafat, vol. 1, p. 294. Here Ghiyāth al-Dīn appears to be responding, at least in part, to Rāzī’s claim that belief in the pre-eternity of the divine speech is an essential article of faith. See Rāzī, Muḥaṣṣal, p. 184.
epistemological and ontological transformation, one that moves them from a state of mystery to a state in which the divine speech is fully realized.\textsuperscript{1061}

Indeed according to the overwhelming Muslim view, the descent of divine speech, or revelation, is the sole preserve of prophets, though the Qur’an refers to some non-prophetic individuals who received \textit{wahy}.\textsuperscript{1062}

But what do we make of Ghiyāth al-Dīn’s implicit claim that the most common explanation for the phenomenon of Qur’anic descent has its roots in Akbarian metaphysics? According to Yahya Michot the most common view regarding the phenomenon of Qur’anic descent is in fact that held by the Sufis and some later Muslim theologians. Michot explains that this view is an adaptation of the ‘Avicennan prophetology’. Avicenna famously argued that ‘after a purely immaterial contact between, on the one hand, the soul of the prophet and, on the other, the angelic intelligence or the heavenly soul in charge of our sublunar world, the mental faculties at work in shaping the revealed message into a human discourse as imaged and evocative as the Qur’an are exactly the same as those in dreams and follow similar patterns.’\textsuperscript{1063}

For Ghiyāth al-Dīn, however, the phenomenon of descent entails something slightly different. The argument he brings forward is closer in meaning and conception to the ‘true message of the \textit{shari‘a}’ (\textit{al-shari‘a al-ḥaqqa}). He suggests interpreting \textit{nuzūl} in its original linguistic conception where it denotes ‘rest’ or


\textsuperscript{1062} In the chapter of the Story, for instance, it reads, ‘So We revealed to Moses’ mother, ‘suckle him, then, when thou fearest for him, cast him into the sea, and do not fear’ (Qur’an 28:7).

'settling in the most apt destination’, though not ‘temporary rest’ as the original Arabic word implies. He writes:

When the divine speech is manifested, it finds rest in the person of the prophet Muhammad who then commits it to memory, realises it, actualises it, and finds solace in its content (yahfažahu wa-yuṭma an bihū).1064

According to Ghiyāth al-Dīn, this phenomenon is relatable to the Persian idiom: be jā-ya khūd rasīd.1065 The descent of revelation or divine speech is thus understood in mystical rather than psychological terms, a view which is removed and distant from the Ashʿari and, to a lesser extent, the Muʿtazili point of view.

4.5: Eschatology

In one of his most extensive theological writings, the Ḥujjat al-kalām li-iḍāh maḥajjat al-islām, Ghiyāth al-Dīn undertakes to defend the Avicennan thesis regarding bodily resurrection, personal identity, and individual immortality against the critiques of Ghazālī and Rāzī, focusing on the Tahāfut al-falāsifa and the Arbaʾīn fī ṣūṣūl al-dīn, respectively.

In the later parts of this work, Ghiyāth al-Dīn shifts the discussion and attacks some of the theological underpinnings of Ghazālī, accusing the latter of advancing arguments contrary to the Islamic scriptures particularly on the issue of metempsychosis (tanāsukh).1066 The thoroughness and assertiveness in which Ghiyāth al-Dīn presents his argument and counter argument indicates that he was deeply dissatisfied with the mutakallimūn position on eschatology and its related issues.

1066 For further bibliographical details about this work, see §3.4.4 in Appendix B.
It will be shown that much of what Ghiyāth al-Dīn says on eschatology echoes the views of Avicenna and Ṭūsī, but in some instances our thinker offers interesting and arguably original remarks which neither Avicenna nor Ṭūsī attended to. In order to fully appreciate Ghiyāth al-Dīn’s main argument, we shall have to attend to the eschatological views of Avicenna and Ṭūsī.

But first what can we say about lexicographic meaning of resurrection (maʿād)? How was the term understood among the later Ashʿari theologians?

**Maʿād**

According to the Arabic lexicographers, *maʿād* describes the process of ‘the return and final destiny in the hereafter, that is, the return of creation [i.e. humans]’ (*al-maʿād biʾl-faṭḥ al-murjaʾ wa-l-maṣīr wa-l-ākhira, maʿād al-khalq*).\(^{1067}\) According to the author of *Lisān al-ʿarab*, *maʿād* relates to *ʿawd* (return) which is a cognate of the divine attribute of *al-muʿīd* (‘the one who brings back’). In the exegetical literature, *al-muʿīd* is almost always accompanied by the attribute of *al-mubdiʾ* (‘the originator’).\(^{1068}\) In theological parlance *maʿād* takes on a more specific eschatological meaning. It refers to the return of human beings to their original state based on the Qurʾanic verse, ‘on the day when We shall roll up heaven as a scroll is rolled for the writings; as We originated the first creation, so We shall bring it back again – a promise binding on Us; so We shall do’.\(^{1069}\) Commenting on this verse, Rāzī defines *maʿād* as:

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\(^{1069}\) Qurʾān 21:104.
An expression referring to the [Godly act of] taking the dead out of the graves and bringing them back to life’ (ibāra ‘an ilḥāʾ al-mawtā wa-īkrājihihi min qubūrīhīm) after all their original bodily parts have been gathered together (baʿd jamʿ al-ajzāʾ al-aṣliyya).\(^{1070}\)

Similarly, the later Ashʿari theologian Taftāzānī explains that:

\textit{Maʿād} describes the process of life after death and the return of human bodily parts to their original state after disintegration (al-ilḥāʾ baʿd al-mawt wa-l-jamʿ baʿd al-tafrīq).\(^{1071}\)

According to Rāzī, the crux of the debate regarding resurrection is whether something that becomes non-existent (maʿdūm) can return to existence by reassuming its former personal identity. Rāzī holds the philosophers in general and Abū l-Ḥusayn al-Ṯarī in particular for being responsible for popularizing the idea that once an existent becomes non-existent, it will never return to its original state (iʿādat al-maʿdūm muḥāl).\(^{1072}\)

Yet when we find that the followers of Abū l-Ḥusayn such as Ibn al-Malāḥimī disagreed with Avicenna for stating that once an existent becomes non-existent, it will find its original configuration again. Ibn al-Malāḥimī writes:

And for his saying [i.e. Avicenna] that the intellect rules against (al-ʿaql yadfaʿ) the return of the non-existent to [its original] existence, we say to him that this is merely an implausibility (istibṭād) hinged on your belief that once an essence becomes non-existent it will be impossible for it to return to that [original] existence...but as for those who uphold that essences other than God are generated, they will not rule as implausible the return of the non-existent to existence (la yastabʿ id iʿādat al-maʿdūm ilā al-wajād).\(^{1073}\)

Philosophers have held on to similar definitions of maʿād as the aforementioned.

Avicenna writes that maʿād is the return of a thing to its original state after it departed from that state (al-ḥāl al-ladhī kān ʿalayh al-shay ʿān fih fa-bāyānahu faʿād

\(^{1070}\) Rāzī, al-Arbaʿīn, vol. 2, pp. 39-40; idem, Maʿālim, p. 128ff.


\(^{1072}\) Rāzī, al-Arbaʿīn, vol. 2, p. 39. Rāzī notes that in his time all the surviving rationalist theologians (i.e. the Mutazilis) belonged either to the Bahshamiyya or the Husayniyya (named after Abū l-Ḥusayn al-Ṯarī). See Rāzī, lʾiqādat fīraq al-muslimīn wa-l-mushrikīn (Cairo, 1978), p. 42.

\(^{1073}\) Ibn al-Malāḥimī, Kitāb al-ʾaʾīq, pp. 462-463.
Ṭūsī explains that the underlying defining principle of maʿād is the return of the original parts of a thing to their original state (al-wājib fiʾl-maʿād huwa iʿādat tilka al-ajzāʾ al-ašliyya). Ghiyāth al-Dīn follows Avicenna and Ṭūsī. He says maʿād is ‘the return of bodily parts to their original state’. Mullā Ṣadrā would later write that:

Maʿād means the return (al-maʿād bi-maʾnā al-ʿawd) and the going back of a thing to the original state from which it left, such as the saying, ‘that everything returns to its origins’ (kamā qīl kul shayʿ yurjaʿ ilā ašlihi).

The Nature of the Soul

Of central concern in the debate on resurrection is the nature of the soul and whether it is material (jīsmāniyya) or immaterial (rūḥāniyya or mujarrada). In the Qurʾān, however, the nature of soul is said to be unknown or mysterious. For instance:

They will question thee concerning the Spirit. Say: The Spirit is of the bidding of my Lord. You have been given knowledge nothing except a little.

Commenting on this verse, the Safavid era jurists and muḥaddith, Niʿmat Allāh al-Jazāʾirī (d. 1112/1701) writes:

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1079 Qurʾān 17:85.
The existence of the soul is known but its precise nature is unknown (ma’lumat al-wujūd majhulat al-kayfīyya), and just as one is incapable of grasping the true nature of God, the true nature of the soul is similarly elusive. This is the meaning of the saying, ‘he who knows himself knows his Lord’ which confirms that one will never know one’s Lord nor one’s soul (fa-‘alā hadhā ma’na qawlihi man ‘arafa nafsahu fa-qad ‘arafa rabahu min bāb ta’liq al-muḥāl al-muḥāl).\textsuperscript{1080}

Among the early theologians, many asserted that the soul is material. Naẓẓām for example is reported to have said the soul is a subtle body (jism latīf) which permeates man entirely; man is therefore identical with it. In Naẓẓām’s view, the soul, however, is not located in the heart but interlaced with all man’s limbs.\textsuperscript{1081} Hishām b. Ḥakam apparently said ‘the soul is a subtle body which is related to the heart’ (huwa jism latif yakhtas bi l-qalb).\textsuperscript{1082} Later theologians, such as Juwaynī and Taftāzānī would go on to say that the soul is a subtle body which is interlaced with sensible bodies (al-rūḥ aṣṣām latifā mushābika līl-aṣṣām al-maḥṣūsā).\textsuperscript{1083}

\textbf{Avicenna and Ṭūsī on the Soul}

Rejecting this view, the falāsīfa and Shi’i-Mu’tazilī theologians upheld the doctrine of the soul’s immateriality (tajarrud). Muḥīd, for instance, maintains that the soul is immaterial, a view which according to him was upheld by some Mu’tazilis as well as the Banū Nawbakht (wa qawli fīh qawl Mu’tammar min al-mu’tazila wa-banī Nawbakht min al-shī’a).\textsuperscript{1084}

Among the falāsīfa, Avicenna upheld the doctrine of immateriality and advocated substance dualism in the case of the soul. In other words, for Avicenna

\begin{quote}
\textsuperscript{1080} Ni’mat Allāh al-Jazā’irī, Nūr al-barāḥīn (Qum, 1417 H/1996), p. 93.
\textsuperscript{1081} Ash’arī, Maqāllātī, vol. 2, p. 28; van Ess, ‘Abū Eshḥāq Naẓẓām’, in EI.,
\textsuperscript{1083} Juwaynī, Kitāb al-irshād, p. 377; Taftāzānī, Sharḥ al-maqaṣīd, vol. 5, p. 88ff.
\textsuperscript{1084} Muḥīd, Awā’il al-maqaṣīd, p. 183.
\end{quote}
the human body and the soul are two distinct substances, the former is material while the latter is immaterial. He explains:

We state that the substance that is the receptacle for the intelligibles is neither body nor does it subsist in a body such that it is a faculty of the body or a form of the body in any way.\footnote{Ibn Sīnā, ‘On the Soul’, p. 36.}

Yet despite Avicenna’s body-soul dualism, he states that there exists a close relationship between body and soul. The soul possesses multiple powers which influence bodily functions, such as the external and internal sense both of which require a body and altogether cease with the destruction of the body.\footnote{McGinnis, \textit{Avicenna}, pp. 93–94.}

Following Avicenna, Ṭūsī would later uphold the soul-body dualism of Avicenna when he says that the soul is not part of the body (lit. ‘it is not conjoined to the body’) \textit{(al-nafs laysat al-badan)}. Ṭūsī brings forward three proofs to demonstrate the validity of his assertion. Commenting on this claim, Ḥillī outlines and elaborates on the proofs as follows:

First, man may forget or become neglectful \textit{(yaghfal)} of the existence of his body, its limbs and organs, both internal and external, while remaining cognizant of his essence and soul. Second, had the soul been part of, or conjoined to, the body it would have shared properties with other souls since all bodies share properties with other bodies insofar as they are physical bodies \textit{(kull jism ‘alā al-īṭāq fa-īmmahu mushārik li-ghayrihi min al-ajsām fī-l-jismīyya)}. But each individual soul is unique and does not share its properties with other souls. It follows that the consequent of the argument is false. Therefore the antecedent is also false. Third, the physical limbs and bodily parts of man are constantly undergoing change. Despite all these changes, be it growth or loss of organs, man still retains his personal identity \textit{(al-hawīyya bāqiyya)}. This confirms that the soul is separate from the body and does not partake in the body’s physicality and its concomitant changes. Therefore the soul is immaterial.\footnote{Quoted in: Ḥillī, \textit{Kashf al-murād}, pp. 276–277. It is evident that Ṭūsī is following Avicenna who, in order to refute the Mu’tazili claim that resurrection belongs to bodies only, argued that the identity of man resides in his soul. Cf. Ibn Sīnā, \textit{al-Risāla al-adḥawīyya fī amr al-ma’ād} [Epistola sull vita futura], ed. Francesca Luchetta (Padova, 1969), pp. 54–63.}
On the possibility of bodily resurrection

Avicenna points out that some theologians, whom he refers to as ‘dialecticians’ (ahl al-jadal), subscribe to the doctrine that resurrection belongs to bodies only. He writes:

Those who uphold that resurrection is for the body only are a group of dialecticians who believe that the body alone is animal and human through life and a humanity created in it. These [latter] are two accidents, death being their non-existence in them or that [i.e., an accident] which is contrary to them. In the second life there is created in that body life and humanity after it had decayed and disintegrated, and that very same human returns to life.1088

Although it is not clear which ‘dialecticians’ Avicenna has in mind, it has been suggested that he was in fact referring to some of the Başran Mu’tazilis such as Abū ‘Alī al-Jubbāʾī who similarly argued that ‘life’ and ‘humanity’ are accidents of the body which in the process of resurrection are annihilated and then re-created.1089 To counter this claim, Avicenna brings forth an argument which says human personal identity resides in the soul. The basis of the argument rests on Avicenna’s conception of the soul as an immaterial substance. He explains that if the soul were the body, that is, if the soul were conjoined to the body, then the resurrection of the body alone would do little more than produce a look-alike of the original human. Since human bodily parts are constantly undergoing change, whether growth or loss of limb, the body in and of itself cannot account for the identity of the same person in different moments in time.1090 It follows then that in Avicenna’s view an individual’s personal identity is accounted for by the soul. This is contrary to the theologians’ claim that human identity is in virtue of the human body.


1090 Ibn Sīnā, al-Risāla al-ṣ̄awwiyya, pp. 41-43.
For Avicenna, the reality of bodily resurrection is best understood through an orthodox reading of the Islamic scriptures. Writing in the *Najāt*, which was primarily intended as a philosophical minimum needed to distinguish someone from the laity (*li-man yu‘athir an yatamayaz ‘an al-‘āmma*),1091 Avicenna says that the bare doctrinal necessity entailed by resurrection is that it can only be confirmed by the truthfulness of the scripture (i.e. Qur’an) and prophecy, both of which according to him confirm that *ma‘ād* entails bodily resurrection. This is an axiomatic truth to which all believers must adhere even if sometimes human imagination fails to grasp this essential article of faith.1092 Most striking about this statement is that Avicenna appears to be privileging *taqlīd* over rational enquiry or simply admitting, albeit indirectly, that bodily resurrection cannot be proven philosophically. This begs the following question: by opting for a scripture-based position on bodily resurrection was Avicenna merely trying to placate the orthodox theologians? Or does this scriptural-turn highlight an often-misunderstood aspect of his personal piety?

Commenting on this point, the late Iranian philosopher Sayyid Jalāl al-Dīn Āshtiyānī (d. 2005) states that in some manuscripts of the *Najāt* Avicenna’s statement reads, ‘it is necessary to know that resurrection is what is accepted by the scripture’, while in others it is ‘it is necessary to know that resurrection is what is reported by the scripture’. If the latter statement is indeed the original, says Āshtiyānī, then one is led to believe that Avicenna was skeptical about the reality of bodily resurrection.1093 In the Safavid period Mullā Ṣadrā would argue that a close

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1091 Avicenna explains in the introduction that ‘some of the brothers who wished to understand the basics of ḥikma asked him to pen a work which when studied would place them above the level of the laity and closer to the level of the elite (al-khāṣṣa)’. See Ibn Sīnā, *al-Najāt*, p. 2.


reading of one particular passage in the Shifāʾ will reveal Avicenna to be a convinced believer in the reality of bodily resurrection. Mullā Ṣadrā writes:

The Shaykh [i.e. Avicenna] gives a subtle hint (ishāra khafiyya) in the last sections of the ilāhiyyāt of the Shifāʾ which confirms his belief in bodily resurrection where he says, ‘the imagined forms (al-ṣuwar al-khayāliyya) are not weaker than the senses’.

This according to Mullā Ṣadrā confirms Avicenna’s belief in the reality of bodily resurrection; for Avicenna made this principle a prerequisite for the argument that bodily resurrection can be proven from the doctrine of the immateriality of the soul.1094

Centuries before, Tūsī put forward a similar argument. He stated that bodily resurrection is necessitated by the divine principle that ‘God must necessarily fulfill all promises made’, a principle which Tūsī calls wujūb ifāʿ al-waḍ wa-l-ḥikma yaqtaḍī wujūb al-baʿt.1095 Commenting on Tūsī’s statement, Ḥillī would later say:

This principle [by Tūsī] is predicated on two premises. First, God has said in the scriptures that He shall recompense good deeds and punish evil ones (wa ad bīl-thawāb wa-tawāʿad bīl-ʿiqāb). Secondly, God has apprised believers that there is benefit or harm in doing or not doing certain acts, and that following such an appraisal would inflict hardship upon the individual believers. By overcoming or succumbing to such hardship, the individual believer is rewarded or punished thusly; otherwise God becomes an oppressor (wa-ilā la kān zālim). All Muslim theologians agree that God is not or cannot be an oppressor. In the hereafter, believers will be held accountable for their deeds through reward or punishment. Punishment stipulates pain (ālām) being inflicted upon the body. It follows then that bodily resurrection must necessarily take place for this punishment to be meted out; for pain is primarily a function of the body.1096

What is clear from Tūsī’s argument is that bodily resurrection is an instantiation of the divine justice, an eschatological occurrence which is confirmed by ‘the religion of Muḥammad’.1097

1095 Ḥillī, Kashf al-murād, p. 548.
1096 Ḥillī, Kashf al-murād, pp. 548-549.
1097 Ḥillī, Kashf al-murād, p. 549. The original phrase used by Tūsī is dīn Muḥammad.
Centuries later, Ghiyāth al-Dīn, following Avicenna and Ṭūsī, would articulate similar arguments in defence of bodily resurrection against the claims of the theologians. But unlike Avicenna and Ṭūsī who attacked the views of the Muʿtazilis, the brunt of Ghiyāth al-Dīn’s argument was directed at Ashʿari theologians chief amongst whom was Ghazālī. The reason being according to Ghiyāth al-Dīn was that Ghazālī’s view on resurrection and related subjects like metempsychosis were popular and widely accepted in Shiraz in the late Timurid and early Safavid period. It is therefore to Ghiyāth al-Dīn’s arguments on eschatology that we now turn.

4.5.1: Ghiyāth al-Dīn on resurrection and metempsychosis

In the opening sermon of his Ḥujjat al-kalām, Ghiyāth al-Dīn asserts that belief in bodily resurrection is one of the essential articles of faith (min ʿdarūriyyāt al-dīn), a defining tenet upon which all believing Muslims agree. Those who deny it are described as ‘the band of deniers’ (al-shardhama al-munkirīn).¹⁰⁹⁸

Ghiyāth al-Dīn further writes about those who deny bodily resurrection:

Some ignoramuses claim that bodily resurrection is impossible because [they claim] that which ceases to exist cannot return to its original existence especially after undergoing disintegration, dismantling, and disfiguration (tafarruq wa-tamazzuq wa-tashattut). These people are unworthy of being called ‘scholars’ but rather one ought to identify them as ‘imitators of scholars’.¹⁰⁹⁹

Playing the devil’s advocate, Ghiyāth al-Dīn states that the Ashʿari counterargument to the above claims does not sufficiently prove that bodily resurrection is possible

nor does it confirm the reality of other eschatological events such as the reintegration of disintegrated and scattered bodily parts.\footnote{It will become evident in the discussion that when he condemns the Ash'aris for failing to adequately counter the claims of those who deny bodily resurrection, Ghiyāth al-Dīn has Ghazālī in mind.} He writes:

The apparent meaning of these verses [with which the Ash'aris furnish their counterargument] merely shows that [in being resurrected] man will return with bodily parts. But they do not clearly state whether the resurrected bodily parts are the original ones. In fact, one may read the verses in question in a manner which counters their [i.e. the Ash'ari] argument (\textit{bal yumkin an yustafād min shay' min hādīh ma-yukhālīf hādīh}).\footnote{Dashtakī, ‘\textit{Ḥuujat al-kalām li-ṭādāḥ maḥājjat al-islām},’ in \textit{Muṣanaffūt}, vol. 1, p. 154.}

Centuries before, Ghazālī developed an argument in favour of bodily resurrection which, as Ghiyāth al-Dīn notes above, rests on a reading of such Qur'ānic verses as:

\begin{quote}
So glory be to God in your evening hour and in your morning hour. His is the praise of the heavens and earth, alike at the setting sun and in your noontide hour. He brings forth the living from the dead, and brings forth the dead from the living, and He revives the earth after it is dead; even so you shall be brought forth.\footnote{Qur'ān 30:19.}
\end{quote}

For Ghazālī, the reality of bodily resurrection is dependent on divine power and ties in with the belief in monotheism. That is to say, Ghazālī, as Taftāznī would later explain, was of the opinion that in order to confirm the possibility of bodily resurrection occurring in the hereafter, one does not need to provide rational proof but rather it suffices to fall back on the primacy of Qur'ānic verses such as the one above.\footnote{Taftāznī, \textit{Sharḥ al-maqāṣid}, vol. 5, p. 90. Regarding Ghazālī’s position, Taftāznī writes: \textit{wa-innamā lam yashrābahu fi kutubihi khathīr sharḥ lammā qāl innahu zāhir lā yahḍī lā ziyādā.} On the list of Qur’ānic verses which later Ash'aris, following Ghazālī, rely upon to confirm the reality of bodily resurrection, see Taftāznī, \textit{Sharḥ al-maqāṣid}, vol. 5, pp. 92, 95, 96.} This being the case, Ghazālī famously attacked the \textit{falsīfah} for supposedly denying the reality of bodily resurrection and for their argument for the incorruptibility of the human souls after death. Ghazālī writes:
On refuting their denial of bodily resurrection and the return of the spirits to bodies...they said: the soul endures everlastingly after death either in a pleasure so great that it is beyond description or in a pain so great that it [also] is beyond description. \(^{1104}\)

That being said, elsewhere in his writings Ghazālī teaches that resurrection is both bodily and spiritual, and that the human soul is immaterial and does not become corrupt after death, an eschatological position demarcated in the *ḥyāʾ ‘ulām al-dīn*.

Ghazālī writes:

Verily the soul does not annihilate nor does it cease to exist nor does it become corrupt after death (*inna al-nafs lā yataṭarraq ilayhā al-fanāʾ wa-l-ʿadam wa-l-fasād wa-l-hilāk*).\(^{1105}\)

Noting this apparent contradiction or incoherence in Ghazālī’s writings, Ghiyāth al-Dīn turns the argument against Ghazālī and accuses him of holding on to doctrines which are at odds with the Islamic scriptures. Ghiyāth al-Dīn writes:

Verily! Ghazālī made clear in a number of his works that bodily resurrection means that the soul which was separated from the body will return to another [i.e. different] body [from the original]. Moreover, he denied that the original bodily parts will be resurrected.\(^{1106}\)

Indeed Ghazālī famously argued that a resurrected soul will return to a different body to the one it was associated with before death; that is, it will reside in a look-alike or replica of what had been not what is identical with what had been. Ghazālī writes:

For once life and the body become annihilated, then the commencing of their creation would consist of bringing into existence a replica of what had been, not what is identical with what had been. Indeed, what is [normally] understood by the ‘return’ is [the circumstance] where one supposes the endurance of something and a renewed existence of something. [This is] just as, when one says, ’So-and-so returned to being generous’, it means that the generous person continues to exist, abandoned being generous, then returned to [this state] – that is, he returned to the initial [state] in terms of genus, but [the state itself] is numerically other. It would thus be in reality a return to what is similar, not to the same thing.\(^{1107}\)

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\(^{1104}\) Ghazālī, *The Incoherence*, p. 208.

\(^{1105}\) Ghazālī, *ḥyāʾ ‘ulām al-dīn* (Cairo, 1998), vol. 4, p. 605ff.


Quoting the same passage in his Hujjat al-kalām, Ghiyāth al-Dīn points out that Ghazālī was all too aware that his view on bodily resurrection bears much resemblance to the doctrine of metempsychosis.

To remedy this ‘error’, Ghiyāth al-Dīn proceeds to provide a ‘corrective’ to Ghazālī’s reading of resurrection which was intended primarily for Ghazālī’s ‘admirers’.1108

Firstly, Ghiyāth al-Dīn states:

The truth regarding maʿād is that material bodies are resurrected and will return to their original form as they were before death. Whoever denies this doctrine has indeed fallen into disbelief (kufr). Moreover, whoever states that the returned bodies are in fact replicas of the original has denied the reality of resurrection and has gone against many scriptural passages which confirm the aforementioned position.1109

A further indication that Ghiyāth al-Dīn considers Ghazālī’s view to be at odds with the Islamic scriptures comes to the fore when Ghiyāth al-Dīn writes:

The true belief regarding maʿād is that the human soul returns to the body from which it separated (ilā al-badan al-ladhi fāraqahu). Whoever subscribes to this doctrinal position will find refuge on the day of requital (yawm al-jazāʾ). Such an individual has truly become a believer (muʾminan ḥaqqan).1110

Despite this, Ghazālī, according to Ghiyāth al-Dīn, ‘denies many of the essential doctrines of faith’ (yankur kathīran min ẓarāriyyāt al-dīn).1111

Secondly, Ghiyāth al-Dīn points out that the Qur’anic verses in which resurrection is mentioned make it explicitly clear that maʿād entails the return of

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1108 Dashtakī, ‘Hujjat al-kalām li-īḍāḥ maḥajjat al-islām’, in Muṣannafūt, vol. 1, p. 163. Here, Ghiyāth al-Dīn accuses Ghazālī of upholding the doctrine of metempsychosis which Ghazālī himself acknowledged in the Tahfūf where he writes: ‘As regards your second [claim of] rendering [the third alternative] impossible, in that this constitutes transmigration [i.e. metempsychosis], there is no need to squabble about terms. What the religious law has conveyed [as true] must be believed. Let it be “transmigration”.’ See Ghazālī, The Incoherence, p. 220.


human souls to their original, not replica bodies. To augment his argument, Ghiyāth al-Dīn cites the following verses:

He says, 'Who shall quicken the bones when they are decayed?'\(^{1112}\)

And:

To Him shall you return, all together – God’s promise, in truth. He originates creation, then He brings it back again that He may recompense those who believe and do deeds of righteousness, justly.\(^{1113}\)

One notices that like Ṭūsī, Ghiyāth al-Dīn is selecting scriptural verses which highlight the interdependency between divine justice, resurrection, and eschatological recompense. That is to say, resurrection is seen by Ghiyāth al-Dīn as an eschatological necessity through which the divine promise of retribution is materialized. Those who fell astray through transgression will receive the deserved punishment which includes physical pain (ālām) being inflicted on bodies. This, says Ghiyāth al-Dīn, is the fulfillment of divine wisdom and justice (al-ʿadāla).\(^{1114}\)

Thirdly, Ghiyāth al-Dīn states that the prophetic reports regarding bodily resurrection and other related eschatological events are plenty. He explains:

Most [of these reports] are explicit in stating that men and women will recognize each other in the hereafter at the moment when everyone is resurrected and awaits judgement. People will not be resurrected in new or replica bodies but will maintain the original. Their bodies will never tire nor will they grow old nor will they experience pain nor sickness (watilka al-abdān lā tuḍʿ af wa-lā tushīb wa-lā tublā sālimatan ´an al-amrād).\(^{1115}\)

Ghiyāth al-Dīn concludes the discussion by turning the argument against Ghazālī and accuses him of attacking the falāsifā without justification. Ghiyāth al-Dīn writes:

I say this: what he [i.e. Ghazālī] says [regarding bodily resurrection] opens the door of taʿwil to a level which invites pernicious conclusions. He [i.e. Ghazālī] has gone too far in this method. His [reading of prophetic] traditions is imaginative and delusional (makhāʾil

\(^{1112}\) Qurʾan 36:78.

\(^{1113}\) Qurʾan 10:4.


khayyalaha). How does he [then] insist on calling Fārābī and Avicenna disbelievers? How does he [dare] accuse the philosophers of being disbelievers for their argument that the world is pre-eternal and for their [supposed] denial of bodily resurrection? Has he not realized that the philosophers said no such thing and do not deserve [to receive these] accusations of disbelief? And let us suppose that the philosophers did say what he accuses them of saying. Why [then] does he not exercise tawil (yu’awwil) as he often does in his own writings?

And since he is the imam who is followed by humanity (lammā kān huwa al-imām al-mutta’ab fi’l-anām) and [since humanity] considers whatever he says to be a proof [for the validity] of Islam (wa-ittakhadhu mā-lahu min al-kalām ḥujjatan fi’l-islām), why did he withhold from charging with disbelief and issuing a fatwa against those pseudo-philosophers who denied bodily resurrection altogether…[why did he not issue a fatwa against] the ishrāqiyyūn who said the soul when it separates from the body will attach itself to a prototype body (badn mithāli)?

Ghazālī is thus accused of methodological inconsistency and hypocrisy and even becoming the subject of ridicule. Engaging in further polemic, Ghiyāth al-Dīn observes that Ghazālī’s use of hermeneutical exegesis is employed eclectically which is used by Ghazālī to justify his position on bodily resurrection but ignored altogether when other philosophical problems arise. Ghiyāth al-Dīn even hints that Ghazālī’s condemnations of Fārābī and Avicenna were probably motivated by reasons which have little to do with scholarly matters; for according to Ghiyāth al-Dīn, Ghazālī’s ruling against Fārābī and Avicenna has no basis in religious law. In the end, Ghiyāth al-Dīn explains that he does not hold a personal animosity towards Ghazālī but considered it his religious duty to highlight the ‘correct belief’ regarding bodily resurrection; for people nowadays have placed Ghazālī on such a high pedestal that many of his ‘errors’ have gone unnoticed. Ghiyāth al-Dīn writes (rather sarcastically):

Let it be known that the objective of our words is to outline the essentials of the faith and to correct the beliefs of the Muslims (taṣḥīḥ ‘aqid al-muslimīn). Our objective is not to condemn the Imam of Mankind and the Proof of Islam (imām al-anām wa-ḥujjat al-islām). He is nobler than that, especially since the multitudes believed in his veracity and have taken him as their imam (wa-ittakhadhāhu imāman) and have accepted his words as equal to

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1116 Dashtakī, ‘Ḥujjat al-kalām li-īḍāḥ maḥajjat al-islām’, in Muṣanafāt, vol. 1, p. 188.
religion and Islam (wa-ka‘lāmahu dīnan wa-islāman) so much so that many people assign him to a higher status than prophets (yu‘ʃaddilānahu ‘alā al-anbiyā‘) and they read and interpret prophetic traditions in a way so as to make sure they conform to his words and expressions.\textsuperscript{1118}

To recapitulate, Ghiyāth al-Dīn follows the Peripatetics in stating that human souls are immaterial and live everlastingly after death. On the day of reckoning, our souls will be reunited with our resurrected bodies which remain the same as they were before death. The scriptures confirm this but Ash‘ari theologians like Ghazālī depart from this position. Their argument that human souls will find refuge in new replica bodies is contrary to the scriptures. This belief has misled the multitudes for centuries especially those great many who imitate the sayings of Ghazālī without due consideration. The truth of the matter, according to Ghiyāth al-Dīn, is that Ghazālī often employed hermeneutical methods which were misplaced and irrational, and relied on weak prophetic traditions which in fact have no historical basis.\textsuperscript{1119}

4.6: Ghiyāth al-Dīn and Imāmī Philosophical-mysticism

Generally, the Islamic mystical tradition is two-dimensional. On the one hand, practical mysticism invites its followers to focus on praxis and inner purification, to lead an ascetic life-style, to cultivate piety, and to pursue and acquire virtue. Inextricably linked, theoretical wisdom, on the other, is concerned with


\textsuperscript{1119} For instance, Ghiyāth al-Dīn writes: ‘Ghazālī narrates many reports which have no known narrators and have no isnād’. See Dashtakī, ‘Ḥujjat al-ka‘lām li-‘iḍāḥ maḥājjat al-islām’, in Muṣannafūt, vol. 1, p. 194.
philosophical matters and the modes of enquiry through which an in-depth understanding of the ultimate reality of the universe is attained.\footnote{Alexander Knysh, \textit{Islamic Mysticism} (Leiden and Boston, 2000), pp. 301-304.}

In what follows an attempt will be made to explore the contours of Ghiyāth al-Dīn’s mystical programme and his attempt to link philosophical mysticism chiefly rooted in non-Sufi spirituality and praxis with Avicennan rationalism and the teachings of the Shi’i Imāms, a model which we term Imāmī philosophical mysticism.\footnote{Of relevance here is the recent doctoral study by Ata Anzali which explores the rise of Shi‘i mysticism in the Safavid context. See Ata Anzali, \textit{Safavid Shi‘ism, the Eclipse of Sufism and the Emergence of ‘irfān}, Unpublished Ph.D. Dissertation (Rice University, 2013). Unfortunately, I have not as of yet been able to read this study.}

In one of his earliest written works, the \textit{Mirʿāt al-ḥaqāʾiq}, Ghiyāth al-Dīn briefly touches upon some mystical themes such as spiritual psychology and eschatology using an ubiquitous illuminationist diction.\footnote{According to Ghiyāth al-Dīn, this work was first completed on 30 Rabī’ I 895/21 February 1490 but was modified later in 900/1494 whilst still in Shiraz. See Dashtakī, ‘Mirʿāt al-ḥaqāʾiq wa-mujlī al-daqaqīq’, in \textit{Muṣannafât}, vol. 1, p. 97. For further details on this work, see Appendix B.} In the epilogue of the \textit{Mirʿāt al-ḥaqāʾiq}, Ghiyāth al-Dīn describes one of his mystical experiences and spiritual visions on the last day of Rabī’ I 895/21 February 1490. He claims to have witnessed the ‘glowing oriental lights’ arising from the horizons which later inspired him to write this work. As intriguing as this claim is, in the \textit{Mirʿāt al-ḥaqāʾiq} Ghiyāth al-Dīn does not discuss his mystical thought or programme in detail nor does he engage in an elaborate discussion on esoteric doctrine and philosophical mysticism. This was to come later in his \textit{Manāzil al-sāʿirīn wa-maqāmāt al-ʿārifīn} (henceforth: \textit{Manāzil}). The \textit{Manāzil} is Ghiyāth al-Dīn’s only surviving work that is devoted entirely to philosophical mysticism. In it Ghiyāth al-Dīn expounds a mystical programme which bears the imprint of a Shi‘i thinker and where Shi‘i
scriptures are invoked in order to substantiate mystical claims and confirm the findings of rational and demonstrative arguments. However, Ghīyāth al-Dīn was not the first Shi‘i thinker to blend Shi‘ism with philosophical mysticism. There were precedents, which are significant enough for us to dwell on briefly.

**Imāmī Philosophical Mysticism**

Arguably it was the figure of Ṭūsī who set the earliest precedent for a Shi‘i or Imāmī philosophical mysticism insofar as Shi‘i intellectual history is concerned. Indeed Ṭūsī played a distinguished role in the rapprochement between Shi‘ism and mysticism.1123 Muṣṭafā Kāmil al-Shaybānī argues that it was Ṭūsī who inaugurated ‘the third period’ of Twelver Shi‘ism, one that saw an increased interest on the part of Shi‘i thinkers in philosophy and Sufism along with fiqh and kalām.1124

Ṭūsī’s intimate knowledge of the mystical tradition is evinced by the number of works he composed on the subject.1125 In 624/1227 he was asked by the Nāṣir al-Dīn Muḥtashim (d. 665/1257), the Ismā‘īlī governor of Quhistān, to translate into Persian the Sufi treatise of Zubdat al-ḥaqāʾiq by ‘Ayn al-Quḍāt al-Hamadānī (d. 525/1131).1126 But it was under the reign of Abaga (r. 665/1265–680/1281), Hulagu’s son and successor, that Ṭūsī wrote most of his works on Sufism and kalām.1127

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1126 Hassan Mahmud Abdel-Latīf, Naṣīr al-Dīn al-Ṭūsī and his Tajrīd al-ʿītiqād, Unpublished Ph.D. Dissertation (SOAS, 1977), vol. 1, p. 188. Ṭūsī’s translation is now lost.

1127 Abdel-Latīf, Naṣīr al-Dīn al-Ṭūsī, vol. 1, p. 79.
Scholars such as Vladimir Ivanow and Marshall Hodgson have questioned the authenticity of some of Ṭūsī’s Sufi works such as the *Mirāt al-muḥaqiqīn* and the *Rawdāt al-qulāb*. However, studies by Hassan Abdel-Latif, Muḥammad Mudarrisī Zanjānī, and more recently Jalal Badakhchani have shown that while some of Ṭūsī’s Sufi works are of questionable authenticity others are more determinate. The determinate works include the *Āghāz va anjām*, or *al-Mabda’ wa-l-ma’ād*, *Awṣāf al-ashrāf*, and the *Gushāyishnāma*. In these works, Ṭūsī does not hesitate to express his belief that the mystical tradition is the path to achieve the salvation of man.

Ṭūsī’s profoundest expression on theoretical mysticism is to be found in his *Hall mushkilāt al-īshārāt*, composed in 644/1246. It is the only mystical work of his to have an explicit date of composition. In it Ṭūsī deals with the section on Sufism in Avicenna’s *Īshārāt*. Ṭūsī follows the arrangement of the original text which has been divided into three parts (*anmāt*), each one containing several chapters: the first *namaṭ* (eighth in the whole work) deals with the nature of physical and intellectual pain and pleasure. Its aim is to show that seekers of spirituality will attain happiness only through Sufi training. The second *namaṭ* on Sufism is on *maqāmāt al-ʿarifīn*, the states through which the mystic passes in order to find union with the divine. The third and final *namaṭ* is on the *asrār al-āyāt*. Following Avicenna, Ṭūsī tries to interpret these miracles according to the laws of nature. And he also

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tries to interpret prophetic revelation and Sufi intuition in light of spiritual
psychology. Nonetheless, though Tusī states in some sections explicit disagreement with
Avicenna, the general nature of this work and the overarching spiritual theme,
however, is clearly influenced by Avicenna’s ideas on Sufism.

What are we to make of Tusī’s apparent Sufi proclivity? According to
Madelung ‘there is no evidence that he [i.e. Tusī] ever became a practicing Sufi’. It is perhaps the spiritual framework rather than its intellectual content that
attracted Tusī to Sufism. After he left the Ismāʿīlīs, Tusī rejoined the Twelver Shi‘i
community and took it upon himself to defend Twelver Shi‘ism and its intricate
theological and spiritual tenets.

Around the same time as Tusī, intellectual activity flourished in the region of
Bahrain, where philosophy and theology were privileged over legal theory and
jurisprudence. The three leading protagonists of this period were: Kamāl al-Dīn Ibn
Sa‘āda al-Baḥrānī (d. 640/1242), Jamāl al-Dīn ‘Alī b. Sulaymān al-Baḥrānī (d.
670/1271), and Kamāl al-Dīn Maytham al-Baḥrānī (d. 700/1300). Thanks to them
Twelver Shi‘ism became heavily impregnated with rationalism and theoretical
mysticism where the figure of the Imām in his historical and archetypal conception
was closely identified with philosophical mysticism.

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1135 Madelung, ‘Naṣīr ad-Dīn Tūsī’s Ethics between Philosophy, Shi‘ism, and Sufism, p. 83. Cf.
Pahlavān, “Irfān-i Khawāja Naṣīr al-Dīn Tūsī”, p. 253. Similar observations are made by ‘Arīf Tāmīr in
1136 Madelung, ‘Naṣīr ad-Dīn Tūsī’s Ethics between Philosophy, Shi‘ism, and Sufism, p. 83ff; Abdel-
Latif, Naṣīr al-Dīn al-Tūsī, vol. 1, p. 79.
1137 On these thinkers and their works, see Oraibi, Shi‘ī Renaissance, pp. 35-45. Cf. Hassan Ansari and
Sabine Schmidtke, ‘al-Shaykh al-Tūsī: His Writings on Theology and Their Reception’, in F. Daftary
Though the philosophers of Bahrain expressed great interest in the metaphysical doctrines of Avicenna,\(^ {1138}\) it is their writings on philosophical mysticism which are of relevance to the present section. Arguably, it was the philosophers of Bahrain who were the first Shi‘i thinkers to interpret the Sufi concept of walāya in light of Shi‘i Imāmology.\(^ {1139}\) After many centuries of hostility towards Sufism in the Shi‘i world,\(^ {1140}\) the philosophers of Bahrain made an attempt to reconcile theoretical Sufism and philosophical Shi‘ism. In fact, the project entailed an attempt to demonstrate that much of Sufism is original with the Shi‘i Imāms. Maytham is known to have said that Sufis derive their knowledge from ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib.\(^ {1141}\) This type of knowledge, Maytham argued, is better understood by the generic and theologically neutral term ʿirfān since ṭaṣawwuf was often equated with Sunnism.\(^ {1142}\) Careful steps were taken by the philosophers of Bahrain to distance Shi‘i mystical philosophy from the excesses of Ibn ʿArabī including the latter’s belief in incarnation and the faith of the Qur’anic figure of Pharaoh, who died a believer according to Ibn ʿArabī.\(^ {1143}\) Mystical enquiry had to be grounded in reason and the dictums of the Shi‘i Imāms especially in the figure of ʿAlī whose sayings were used as a framework for mystical enquiry.

It is this attachment to the figure of the historical and archetypal Imām on the part of the philosophers of Bahrain that paved the ground for a Shi‘i-centric

\(^ {1138}\) Cf. Oraibi, Shi‘i Renaissance, p. 60ff.

\(^ {1139}\) Oraibi, Shi‘i Renaissance, pp. 209-217.


\(^ {1141}\) Oraibi, Shi‘i Renaissance, p. 175.

\(^ {1142}\) Oraibi, Shi‘i Renaissance, p. 175.

\(^ {1143}\) Oraibi, Shi‘i Renaissance, pp. 179-180.
theory of nubuwwa and walayā, prophethood and sainthood, respectively. To grasp the true meaning of these twin pillars of Shi‘ism, one must turn to the mystical paradigm of wahdat al-wujūd, the transcendental unity of existence. According to this doctrine, multiplicity of creatures is in fact manifestations of the unity of truth. Ontological unity is the origin of phenomenological multiplicity.\textsuperscript{1144}

In the view of the philosophers of Bahrain, sainthood is more perfect than prophethood.\textsuperscript{1145} Maytham explains that prior to Islam there was a conflict between the ṭarīqa and the shari‘a famously encapsulated in the Qur’anic encounter between Moses and Khīḍr. The former followed the outer appearance of the law while the latter acted according to esoteric, recondite knowledge. Khīḍr killed an innocent boy for apparently no reason. Moses objected and deemed the murder unjust because, Maytham writes, he judged the situation according to exoteric, apparent knowledge. The perpetrator of the murder, however, that is, Khīḍr, acted according to recondite knowledge.\textsuperscript{1146} With the advent of Islam, exoteric and esoteric knowledge, that is, Prophethood and sainthood, entered a harmonious phase. The role of the prophet is to draw people to the exoteric, external, and apparent judgements of the revealed law. Saints, however, are masters of initiation who provide us with insights into the esoteric, internal, and mystical realities. Sainthood can be obtained through acquired sciences, al-‘ulūm al-kasbiyya, or granted through mystical knowledge, al-‘ilm al-ladunnī, or a combination of both.\textsuperscript{1147}

The appropriation of Akbarian doctrine for the Shi‘i cause became more

\textsuperscript{1145} Oraibi, Shi‘ī Renaissance, p. 214.
\textsuperscript{1147} Oraibi, Shi‘ī Renaissance, p. 211.
pronounced in the late eighth/fourteenth century as evinced in the writings of the understudied figure Sayyid Ḥaydar al-ʿĀmulī (d. 787/1385), who upon his arrival in Najaf in 751/1350 revived interest philosophical mysticism. Prior to his arrival, Āmulī led a career as a court official, he was made a confidant then a minister of Fakhr al-Dawla Ḥasan b. Keykhusraw b. Yazdegerd (r. 734-50/1333-1349), the last ruler of the Kīnkhwārīya branch of the Bavândid dynasty. In 750/1349, the year of Fakhr al-Dawla’s assassination, Āmulī left Iran and set out on a journey to the shrine cities of Iraq. Āmulī describes his itinerary as follows:

After a long travel I arrived in Baghdad and visited the sacred shrines of the resting-place of amīr al-muʾminīn ʿAlī, peace be upon him, the resting-place of al-Ḥusayn, Mūsā [al-Kāẓim], [Muḥammad] al-Jawād, and Sāmarra, peace be upon them all. I resided there [i.e. Iraq] for a whole year (sana kāmila). Then I set out on a journey to the Kaʿba with the intention of performing ḥajj. I was a poor man of little means (faqīr maʾa ʿadam al-tamakun). And I [also] visited the Messenger of God and the four Imāms in Medina. I then returned to Iraq and settled in Najaf.

Āmulī then tells us that at the time of his arrival there was no known philosophical activity in Najaf, though he does speak of a so-far unknown strand of philosophical mysticism, one which is grounded in the mystical tradition of Khawāja Ṭāb Ṭalhib al-Anṣārī (d. 481/1088) and Ibn ʿArabī. Āmulī writes:

[When in Najaf] I was preoccupied with spiritual exercises, seclusion, and supererogatory prayers. I immersed myself in the true esoteric sciences (al-ʿulūm al-ḥaqīqiyya al-laduniyya) leaving aside the formally acquired ones. There was no one [in Najaf] capable enough to teach the [esoteric] sciences; except, however, there was one [capable] individual. [His spiritual state was] complete and he had true knowledge (maʿrifah) but he was unknown to the people [of his time] (khāmil al-dhikr bayn al-nās). He was a waʾīl among the awliyāʾ of God. His name was ‘Abd al-Raḥmān al-Qudsī. With him I read the Manāẓil al-sāʾ irīn [of Anṣārī] along with its commentary; then I read the Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam [of Ibn ʿArabī] with its commentary. Following this I read other treatises with him. A long period of time elapsed [before I finished my studies with him] (wa-maḍāʿ ālā ḥādhā zamān), after which the true knowledge contained in the books of Sufism, both elaborate and abridged, were unveiled before me, all thanks to him [i.e. Qudsī] and [thanks to] the blessings I received from being in the vicinity of the Presence of Truth (ḥaḍrat al-ḥaqq), peace be upon him [i.e. ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭalhib].

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1148 Etan Kohlberg, ‘Āmulī’, in El.,


1150 Āmulī, al-Muqaddamāt, p. 536.
Following his training Āmulī led concerted efforts to delineate the central aspects of the Shi’i faith using mystical language expressed chiefly in Akbarian diction. He was a proponent of the thesis that the teachings of the Shi’i Imāms and Sufism are in harmony. He famously opined that every true Shi’i to whom Āmulī refers as muʾmin mumtaḥan is also a Sufi and vice versa. The Imāms, he argued, ‘are invested with mystical knowledge’ and are ‘the guides not only of the Shi’i community but also of all those who seek the mystical path’. In Āmulī’s mystical philosophy, greater emphasis was laid on esoteric Shi’ism and Sufi metaphysical thought à la Ibn ʿArabī. Āmulī struck a careful balance between philosophical Shi’ism and Sufi metaphysics. His doctrine of Tawḥīd is founded on Ibn ʿArabī’s unity of existence paradigm and Shi’i mystical theology. To explain, Āmulī distinguishes between exoteric (ẓāhir) and esoteric (bāṭin) monotheism. The former is theological, exemplified by the profession of faith (lā ilāha illa Allāh) which bears witness to the divine Unity, and which is taught by the prophets. The latter, known as tawḥīd wujūdī, is ontological and according to which nothing exists except God (laysa fiʿl-wujūd siwa Allāh).

Unlike the theological and exoteric monotheism, esoteric and ontological monotheism bears witness to the unity of being. It is this which is invoked by the awliyāʾ who pass on its secrets from one initiate to another.

Now, one may justifiably ask what in Āmulī’s theory of ontological monotheism is of significant relevance to Shi’ism? According to esoteric Shi’i doctrine, the cycle of prophecy is closed but succeeded by the cycle of spiritual initiation or walāya. Commenting on this, Corbin writes:

The Seal of prophecy was the last prophet-messenger, Muhammad. The Seal of the walayah

1151 Corbin, History of Islamic Philosophy, vol. 2, pp. 334-335.

1152 Kohlberg, ‘Āmulī’.
is the Muhammadan Imamate, in the dual person of the First Imam, the Seal of the absolute walayat (khātam al-walayat al-muṭlaqa), and the Twelfth Imam, the Seal of the post-Muhammadan walayat.  

Āmulī argues that it is the Twelfth Imām, the Mahdī, who is the Seal of absolute walāya. With the advent of the Mahdī, ontological unity will finally be vindicated.  

Thus the figure of the Imām occupies an onto-epistemological role in Āmulī’s mystico-philosophy.

Another instance of an attempt to wed Shi’ism to mystical strands in Islam can be seen in the figure of the Shi’i thinker Ibn Abī Jumhūr al-Aḥsāʿī (d. after 906/1501), who was a contemporary of Ghiyāth al-Dīn. Aḥsāʿī’s writings represent arguably the earliest instance of the grand intellectual synthesis between ‘Mu’tazilite and Ash’arite kalām, Peripatetic and Illuminationist philosophy and philosophical mysticism’, which were brought together in harmony ‘in an unprecedented and unique manner’.

This in mind, what can we then say about Ghiyāth al-Dīn’s philosophical mysticism and its relation to Shi’i Islam? We now turn to the Manāzil.

**The Manāzil**

The exact date of composition of the Manāzil is unknown. Kākāyī opines that it was definitely written in the Safavid period some time after the death of Mīr Ṣadr al-Dīn in 903/1498 and Dawānī in 908/1502. Ghiyāth al-Dīn’s turn of phrase in the work

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1156 Ghiyāth al-Dīn Maṃsūr Dashtakī va falsafa-i `ırfān, p. 132.
is explicitly Shi‘i, which would further suggest he wrote it when the Safavids were already in power. In addition, in a number of passages Ghiyāth al-Dīn refers to other works of his such as the Riyāḍ al-ridwān (now lost)\textsuperscript{1157} and al-Ḥikma al-Manṣūriyya (now lost) both of which, as he notes in the Kashf al-ḥaqā’iq al-Muḥammadīyya, were written in the later period of his life. Moreover, a colophon at the end of the MS Isfahan written by a certain Muḥammad al-Qārī Sulaymān who claims to have been a student of one of Ghiyāth al-Dīn’s students (he does not specify which), the Manāzīl was first copied in Muḥarram 949/April 1542,\textsuperscript{1158} a year after Ghiyāth al-Dīn passed away, which would gives us a terminus post quem of c. 947/1540 (bearing in mind that the Kashf al-ḥaqā’iq was completed in 947/1540).

**Variant titles**

Following its composition, the Manāzīl has been known by another title. In his Majālis al-mu’minīn Shushtarī refers to the work as Maqālāt al-‘ārifīn.\textsuperscript{1159} Modern bibliographers, however, such as Ṭihrānī, refer to the work as Manāzīl al-sā’irīn.\textsuperscript{1160}

**Aim of the book**

The very name of the Manāzīl implies quite clearly that author intends to discuss the mystical states and stations aspiring mystics or wayfarers ought to undertake in order to reach divine union. In the preliminary section, Ghiyāth al-Dīn states:

> The objective of the ratiocinative sciences is to reach [spiritual perfection]. This [state] can only be attained by focusing all of one’s attention on God and by leaving behind all worldly

\textsuperscript{1157} In fact Ghiyāth al-Dīn tells us that the Manāzīl was intended as an addendum to the Riyāḍ. See Dashtakī, ‘Manāzīl al-sā’irīn wa-ma QAqlāt al-‘ārifīn’, in: Ghiyāth al-Dīn Manṣūr Dashtakī va falsafa-i ʿirfān, ed. Qāsim Kākāyī, pp. 139-183, at p. 150.

\textsuperscript{1158} Ghiyāth al-Dīn Manṣūr Dashtakī va falsafa-i ʿirfān, pp. 182-183.

\textsuperscript{1159} Shushtarī, Majālis al-mu’minīn, vol. 2, p. 232.

\textsuperscript{1160} Ṭihrānī, al-Dhari’a, vol. 21, p. 391.
distractions. This [spiritual] state is not reached through deductive syllogisms (al-istidlālāt) or polemical argumentation (al-mujādalāt). No doubt these are preparatory means and pointers intended to help us reach utmost perfection (al-sabīl ʿilā al-wusūl wa-l-bulūgh ʿilā ghāyat al-kamāl) and to find the righteous path (al-sabīl).\[1161]

This reveals that, on the one hand, the author does not reject the efficacy of the rational method, for he considers rational studies to be a propaedeutic to proper mystical enquiry. On the other hand, he appears to privilege mystical enquiry rooted in ascetic practice and inner purification over the preferred epistemological technique of the philosophers, namely the syllogistic method.

**Style**
The prose employed by Ghiyāth al-Dīn in the *Manāzil* is dense, pithy, and at times difficult to follow, unlike other works of his that deal with philosophy proper and theology. These latter works are lucidly written employing a literary style that is cogent and easy to follow. Whereas in the prologue of the *Manāzil*, Ghiyāth al-Dīn makes it clear that his aim is to provide pointers for the mystics (ishārāt al-ʿurāfāʾ) and subtle remarks for ‘those who seek guidance’.\[1162]

**Sources**
Like most of his medieval predecessors, Ghiyāth al-Dīn does not always mentions his sources and the figures from whom he quotes directly. There are, however, some obvious exceptions. His main source of influence in the *Manāzil* is Tūsī whose work, the *Awṣāf al-ashrāf*, he follows very closely. Many passages in the *Manāzil* can be found verbatim in the *Awṣāf*, even though Ghiyāth al-Dīn does not always admit this. A close reading of the text will show that Ghiyāth al-Dīn’s influences can be

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classified into three categories: philosophical, theological, and scriptural. In the philosophical, his main influence is Avicenna’s *al-īshārāt*, drawing much influence from the ninth *namat*. In some passages Ghiyāth al-Dīn refers to the illuminationist ideas of Suhrawardī without specifying the names of works to which he is referring, though we now know that he drew some influence from Suhrawardī’s *Kalimat al-taṣawwuf*.\textsuperscript{1163}

As for the theological influences, Ghiyāth al-Dīn engages with Rāzī more than any other *mutakallim*. Though he agrees with Rāzī in some areas, he is for the most part critical of Rāzī’s reading of Avicenna, apparently focusing on Rāzī’s critical commentary of the *Ishārāt*.

Scripturally, Ghiyāth al-Dīn quotes traditions attributed to ‘Alī and Muḥammad al-Bāqir. The two traditions quoted have a Shi‘i provenance and both can be found in Kulaynī’s *Uṣūl al-kāfī*.

Another tradition cited by Ghiyāth al-Dīn is attributed to the Prophet Muḥammad; it discusses the reality of existence and can be found in most *ḥadīth* canons.\textsuperscript{1165} In some passages, Ghiyāth al-Dīn cites verses of the Qur’an, and Arabic and Persian poems from such poets as Ḥallāj, Rūmī, and Ḥāfiz, intended it seems as little more than textual adornments.\textsuperscript{1166}

\textit{Content}

For Ghiyāth al-Dīn philosophical rationalism is a means to an end. It is an essential but preparatory science which carves out the path towards spiritual perfection, the


\textsuperscript{1165} Dashtakī, ‘Manāẓil al-sā’irin wa-maqāmāt al-‘ārifin’, p. 171.

\textsuperscript{1166} See, for example, Dashtakī, ‘Manāẓil al-sā’irin wa-maqsāmāt al-‘ārifin’, pp. 165, 159, 153.
**summum bonum** at which all human action and contemplation is directed. The path towards spiritual perfection involves four preparatory journeys. Every one of the four journeys is divided into smaller journeys.\textsuperscript{1167} The similarities between this and the *Asfār* of Mullā Șadrā are quite striking.

**First journey**

The aspiring mystic (*al-ʿārif*) embarks on the first journey by leading an ascetic lifestyle not by total abandonment of worldly pleasure and other mundane activities, such as earning a living, but by being in complete control of one's ability to lead a lifestyle that is both worldly and other-worldly. This is the true meaning of *zuhd*, the secret of the secrets, of which many people are not aware.\textsuperscript{1168} Citing a famous tradition attributed to ‘Alī, Ghiyāth al-Dīn says:

If the ascetic and the worshiper seek God out of desire for reward or out fear of punishment (*qaṣd al-thawāb aw al-ʾitīnāb ‘an al-ʿadhāb*), then he is neither ascetic nor devout but [behaves like] a petty trader and lowly servant.\textsuperscript{1169}

For Ghiyāth al-Dīn, the underlying principle of worship and asceticism is desire for union or conjunction with the First Beloved (*al-ḥaq al-awwal*) during which, Ghiyāth al-Dīn says:

The mystic ‘is the truth and the truth is him’ (*fa-yakān al-ḥaq lahu wa-huwa li-l-ḥaq*) where he becomes a witness to the divine splendor. Yet such experience or communion is ephemeral, it does not last except in the case of the prophets and the [Shi’i] Imāms.\textsuperscript{1170}

\textsuperscript{1167} Dashtakī, ‘*Manāzil al-sāʾirīn wa-maqāmāt al-ʿārifīn*’, p. 151.

\textsuperscript{1168} Dashtakī, ‘*Manāzil al-sāʾirīn wa-maqāmāt al-ʿārifīn*’, p. 151.

\textsuperscript{1169} Dashtakī, ‘*Manāzil al-sāʾirīn wa-maqāmāt al-ʿārifīn*’, p. 152.

When the aspiring mystic recognizes and accepts the superiority of the prophetic mystical experience over other human experiences of the divine, he can set forth in the second journey.

**Second journey**

It begins foremost by recognition that prophets are veracious men sent by God so that humankind can manage their affairs. Ghiyāth al-Dīn adds that prophets were sent in order to demarcate the contours of ethical action as well as spiritual activity. The chief focus of the second journey is to ascertain the veracity of the prophet through rational enquiry by relying on deductive syllogisms, which according to Ghiyāth al-Dīn is best exemplified in the writings of Avicenna.\(^{1171}\)

Once the correct path is identified, Ghiyāth al-Dīn says, the mystic must then embark on a series of minor journeys which focus on praxis. The first phase of the minor journeys is as follows: first, the mystic must be determined; second, he must be truthful in everything he does (\(al-\text{ṣidq fi'\text{l mawāţin kulahā}\)); third, he must constantly engage in repentance; fourth, he must become a true representative of God; and fifth, he must be sincere in his worship and reliant on none other than God. The second phase of the minor journeys begins with: first, patience; second, complete and absolute reliance on God (\(tawakkul\)); third, contentment (\(riḍā\)); and fourth, submission (\(taslīm\)).\(^{1172}\)

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\(^{1171}\) Dashtakī, ‘\(\text{Mānāzil al-sā’irīn wa-maqāmāt al-‘ārifīn}\)’, pp. 154-159.

\(^{1172}\) Dashtakī, ‘\(\text{Mānāzil al-sā’irīn wa-maqāmāt al-‘ārifīn}\)’, pp. 161-163.
Third journey

In the third phase of the minor journeys, the aspiring mystic must once again fall back on theoretical knowledge that combines rational enquiry with the teachings of the Shi‘i Imāms. First, he must understand that faith is premised on tranquility and spiritual assurance (al-īṭmīnān); this is verified by reason and philosophy. Second, he must understand the true meaning of repentance, as per the instructions of the Prophet and the Imāms. Third, he must understand the importance of holding oneself accountable (muḥāsaba). Fourth, he must understand that patience is to accept whatever God ordeals (al-tahammul). To grasp this last, the mystic, Ghiyāth al-Dīn explains, must pay heed to the saying of Muḥammad al-Bāqīr who is reported to have said, ‘I willingly accept whatever God destines for me. If He destines good health, then let it be. If He destines death, then let it be’. ¹¹⁷³

Warning against the perils of an asceticism that is not grounded in rational knowledge, Ghiyāth al-Dīn says:

Acting ascetically without philosophical knowledge is surely destined to lead one into the path of misguidance’. This is an imitation of the ways of the Sufis. ¹¹⁷⁴

Here Ghiyāth al-Dīn appears to be criticizing the Sufi method of ascetic practice.

Indeed even in his other writings Ghiyāth al-Dīn ridicules Sufism when he says:

He [Ghazālī] has fallen back on the Sufis – but these [Sufis] are not pure (wa-mā laḥun min al-ṣafā). ¹¹⁷⁵

Fourth journey

After completing the minor journeys of the third journey, the mystic sets off into the fourth and final journey, which is made up of hierarchical stations. At the


lowest station, the mystic attains happiness as a result of philosophical contemplation and practical action. At the highest station, the mystic is no longer cognizant of his existence but is only aware of the absolute existence of the Truth (al-ḥaqq). This station, Ghiyāth al-Dīn writes, is called fana’ (spiritual annihilation). The mystic can no longer utter the individualistic term ‘I’ but rather he becomes ‘We’, a clear allusion to the mystical paradigm of the unity of being, though Ghiyāth al-Dīn does not use such term.\footnote{Dashtakī, ‘Manāzil al-sā’irīn wa-maqāmāt al-‘ārifīn’, pp. 176-178.}

To recapitulate, in one of his earliest works, the Mīrāt al-ḥaqā’iq, Ghiyāth al-Dīn demonstrates a penchant for mystical enquiry aided by philosophical reasoning but falls short of setting out a detailed mystical programme. In a later work, the Manāzil al-sā’irīn, he develops a systematic philosophical mysticism programme grounded Avicennan spirituality and the teachings of the Shi’i Imāms. Admittedly, Ghiyāth al-Dīn’s Imāmī philosophical mysticism programme is concise and brief and at times lacking in depth and philosophical detail. Be that as it may, it is arguably the earliest mystical programmes in western Iran that was developed independently of Sunni Sufism and which seems to have heralded the later Safavid models which culminate in the writings of the philosophers of Isfahan.\footnote{Worthy of note is the claim by Nasr who claims that Ghiyāth al-Dīn speaks specifically of a ‘Shi’ite gnosis’ (al-‘irfān al-shī‘ī) in the Manāzil. Upon close examination of the text the term is nowhere to be found, however. See Nasr, Philosophy from its Origins, p. 204.}

What conclusions can we draw from the thought of Ghiyāth al-Dīn? First, it was shown in the foregoing that there was a thriving philosophical activity in Iran during the early decades of the Safavid period. It was shown that Ghiyāth al-Dīn was the main torch carrier of this Avicennan revival, which began in earnest in the late

\footnote{Dashtakī, ‘Manāzil al-sā’irīn wa-maqāmāt al-‘ārifīn’, pp. 176-178.}

\footnote{Worthy of note is the claim by Nasr who claims that Ghiyāth al-Dīn speaks specifically of a ‘Shi’ite gnosis’ (al-‘irfān al-shī‘ī) in the Manāzil. Upon close examination of the text the term is nowhere to be found, however. See Nasr, Philosophy from its Origins, p. 204.}
Timurid period and which was spearheaded by Mīr Ṣadr al-Dīn. We managed to
demonstrate that Ghiyāth al-Dīn mediated the reception the Avicennan conceptions
of reality, philosophy, and the nature of things into the Safavid period, arguably
paving the ground for the later philosophical developments.

As well as defending the Avicennan project, Ghiyāth al-Dīn devoted much of
his works to writing critiques against the major figures of the later Ashʿari tradition,
focusing as his father often did on Ghazālī and Rāzī and those who inherited their
legacy in Shiraz, such as Ījī and Dawānī. Lastly, by setting out a mystical
programme, which was impregnated with Avicennan philosophical mysticism and
Shiʿi ideas, Ghiyāth al-Dīn stands out as the earliest Safavid era thinker to blend
Shiʿism with Avicennan philosophical mysticism. In doing so he relied on terms
such as ʿirfān, not taṣawwuf. He was not the first Shiʿi thinker to do so. Others such as
Ṭūsī, the philosophers of Bahrain, Āmulī, and Aḥsāʾī preceded him. There is no
evidence, however, that Ghiyāth al-Dīn knew of the philosophers of Bahrain, Āmulī,
or Aḥsāʾī, for he never cites them or alludes to them in his writings.
Conclusion

C.1: Philosophy in the late Timurid period

It has been shown that there was an active philosophical milieu in western Iran particularly in Shiraz between the ninth/fifteenth and tenth/sixteenth century. Two figures deserve our attention here: Sayyid Ṣadr al-Dīn Dashtakī, popularly known as Mīr Ṣadr al-Dīn, and his son and intellectual heir Sayyid Ghiyāth al-Dīn Mansūr Dashtakī. Mīr Ṣadr al-Dīn lived during the late Timurid period, an era that was fraught with uncertainty and one which saw many internecine strife, incessant revolts and counter revolts.

In chapter one, we examined the life of this thinker. We learnt that Mīr Ṣadr al-Dīn hailed from a family of scholars that included philosophers, exegetes, and mujtahids. We saw that his training took place in Shiraz under religious and philosophical authorities that traced their pedagogical ancestry back to such celebrated polymaths as Avicenna, Ṣūr, and Ḥillī. From the outset of his career and right up until the year of his death, Mīr Ṣadr al-Dīn took constant pains to promulgate the philosophy of Avicenna; indeed his vision of reality and the nature of things was firmly grounded in the Avicennan tradition, which he never criticised and accepted as indubitable and the universalistic, a mode of enquiry which advances rationalistic theses about the origins of the cosmos, the realm of the divine, God, human agency, etc. In addition, we saw that on the question of divine attributes Mīr Ṣadr al-Dīn adopted purely Mu‘tazili notions which can be traced
back to Abū l-Ḥusayn al-Baṣrī. There are no direct references to Abū l-Ḥusayn in his works. The more likely scenario is that he adopted Abū l-Ḥusayn’s ideas indirectly through Ṭūṣī and Ḥillī.

That Mīr Ṣadr al-Dīn was influenced by Avicenna, Ṭūṣī, Ḥillī, and, indirectly, Abū l-Ḥusayn was evident when we examined in close detail his only major philosophical opus, the Risāla fī ithbāt al-bārī. It was shown that the overarching theme of this work was predicated on the following concerns: firstly, a desire to reformulate the major doctrines of Avicennan philosophy, including proofs for the existence of the Necessary Being, the essence-attribute problem, and causality. Secondly, to refute the later Ashʿari critiques of Avicennan metaphysical speculations, focusing chiefly on the attacks by Rāzī. Thirdly, to demonstrate that Avicennan rationality goes hand in hand with philosophical Shiʿism, an approach which we termed ‘Shiʿi consciousness’.

Despite the uncertainty that characterised much of the late Timurid period, and the ever-ambiguous confessional parameters, which made it difficult to distinguish sectarian identities, it was shown that Mīr Ṣadr al-Dīn most probably belonged to the Shiʿi faith and was indeed an active participant of its scholarly tradition. The presence of a Shiʿi Avicennan thinker in late Timurid Iran has shown us that the later philosophical traditions in Safavid Iran did not emerge from nowhere, nor did it suddenly explode into the scene. The ground was made fertile so to speak by Mīr Ṣadr al-Dīn and his circle of students who mediated the arrival and reception of an Avicennan tradition that was closely wed to Shiʿism.

Similarly, we saw that Mīr Ṣadr al-Dīn trained a number of philosophers and Shiʿi thinkers who went on to become noted authorities in their own right. We examined the life and works and general thought of his most famous students. First,
we looked at Mullā Shams al-Dīn Khafrī, a Shi‘ī philosopher who worked in the Avicennan tradition and who authored a number of works such as the Risāla fī ithbāt al-bārī and the Asfār al-arba‘a of which later Safavid philosophers such as Mullā Ṣadrā were aware.¹¹⁷⁸ This last work discusses the four journeys of mystical wayfaring in a language that combines philosophy with mysticism, and which appears to have had a bearing on one of the most important philosophical works in the later Safavid period, namely the Asfār of Mullā Ṣadrā. It was further shown that in his Risāla fī waḥdat al-wujūd, which surveys the views of Sufis on the famous doctrine of the unity of being,¹¹⁷⁷ Khafrī can be regarded as one of the earliest Shi‘ī thinkers of the Safavid era to engage with Akbarian metaphysics.

Second, we turned our attention to Najm al-Dīn Nayrizī, who although a capable Avicennan philosopher who went on to become an established Shi‘ī theologian, he argued that kalām produces more certainty than falsafa.¹¹⁸⁰ That is not to say that Nayrizī did not make contributions to philosophy, however. His most significant writings were in the philosophical sciences, including the Risālat ithbāt al-wājib, which deals with the three modalities of existence, namely necessary, possible, and non-existence. The Risāla follows the same structure and line of argument as that of his teacher Mīr Ṣadr al-Dīn, sparing no effort to attack the Ash‘ari views on the essence-attributes problem.¹¹⁸¹

It will remain for future studies to explore the question of how the ideas of Mīr Ṣadr al-Dīn and his circle of students were received and debated in the later

¹¹⁸⁰ Pourjavady, Philosophy in Early Safavid Iran, p. 44, fnt. 41.
¹¹⁸¹ Barakat, Kitāb-shināsī, p. 125.
Safavid period. But suffices to say here that we were able to demonstrate that in the late Timurid period Mīr Šadr al-Dīn can be considered the intellectual heir to Avicenna and Ṭūsī. He was indeed a committed Avicennan philosopher who took constant pains to defend Avicenna against his Sunni detractors. How his ideas were received and mediated by the generation of philosophers in Safavid Iran and elsewhere will remain to be seen pending future studies.

C.2: Philosophy in the early Safavid period

The Mīr Šadr al-Dīn legacy was inherited and perpetuated by his most famous student Ghiyāṯ al-Dīn. Unlike his father, Ghiyāṯ al-Dīn lived in an era in which the new political powers in Iran, the Safavids, proclaimed Shi’ism as the official religion of the realm. Under the Safavids, Ghiyāṯ al-Dīn wrote some of his most important works such as the Kashf al-ḥaqāʾiq al-Muḥammadiyya, the Ḥujjat al-kalām, the Mirʾāt al-ḥaqāʾiq, and the Manāẓil al-sāʾirīn, all of which underscore his attempt to provide Avicennan metaphysical speculations with a new stimulus against what he considered to be a misreading on the part of later Ashʿari thinkers represented chiefly, in his view, by Ghazālī, Rāzī, Ḥāfiz, and Dawānī.

It was shown that, like his father, Ghiyāṯ al-Dīn went to great lengths to demonstrate that the later Ashʿari method of reading Avicennan philosophy was invalid. Ghiyāṯ al-Dīn spent the most part of his career writing critiques of Dawānī’s works, ranging from critiques of latter’s philosophical, theological, and mystical to his astronomical, mathematical, legal, encyclopedic, and even occult. Ghiyāṯ al-Dīn saw in Dawānī a soi-disant philosophizing Ashʿari figure and an ignoramus who is incapable of grasping the basic tenets of philosophy.
But as we saw Ghiyāth al-Dīn was determined to attack the entire Ashʿari enterprise, to undermine its intellectual foundation and the pillars upon which it rests. In his *Kashf al-ḥaqāʾiq al-Muhammadiyya*, Ghiyāth al-Dīn attacks Rāzī’s *Muḥāṣṣal*, Shahrastānī’s *Nihāyat al-aqdām*, Ījī’s *Mawāqif*, Tatfāzānī’s *Sharḥ al-aqāʾid al-Nasafiyya*, Jurjānī’s *Sharḥ al-mawāqif*, and Dawānī’s *Ithbāt al-wājib* and his Ḥawāshī upon the *Tajrīd*.

We also saw that Ghiyāth al-Dīn did not author many independent works, but he did, however, write on many issues outside of philosophy and theology; for instance, he authored works on mathematics, logic, mysticism, history, legal theory, occultism, medicine, Qurʾanic exegesis, Arabic grammar, Persian poetry, and spiritual psychology. His attention on the sciences marks a departure from the approach undertaken by his father, who did not write anything on these subjects.

Lastly, we saw that Ghiyāth al-Dīn had a pronounced penchant for mysticism, which according to him marks the culmination of philosophical reasoning. In his *Manāzil al-sāʾirīn*, he develops a systematic philosophical-mystical programme based on Avicenna’s writing on mysticism in the *Ishārāt* and on the teachings of the Shiʿī Imāms, which we argued was one of the earliest Imāmī philosophical mysticism in western Iran in the Safavid period, one which developed independently of Sunni Sufism.

We saw that linking Ghiyāth al-Dīn to the so called school of Isfahan were a number of his own students; many of whom went on to become recognized philosophers in their own right, including most notably such thinkers as Sammākī and Shīrāzī, who trained the first generation of philosophers in the school of Isfahan, namely Mīr Dāmād and Shaykh BahāĪ, respectively. Sammākī, for example, was an accomplished Shiʿī exegete and philosopher who wrote important glosses on
Qūshchī’s commentary upon the *Tajrīd*; in these glosses Sammākī defends the position of Mīr Ṣadr al-Dīn and attacks those of Dawānī.

**C.3: Avenues for future research**

I hope that that present study has paved new ground for future research on post-Avicennan philosophical traditions in the late Timurid and early Safavid period. While our focus was on the Dashtakī philosophers of Shiraz, I believe that future studies on the Dashtakī-Dawānī debate are much needed. An attempt to reconstruct the debates between Mīr Ṣadr al-Dīn and Dawānī and between Ghiyāth al-Dīn and Dawānī will add to our existing knowledge of philosophical activity in the said period.

Moreover, monographic studies on the students of Ghiyāth al-Dīn who went on to become authorities in Islamic philosophy would further contribute to our knowledge of post-Avicennan philosophy. A number of themes and ideas will need further investigation. These include the development of Avicennan metaphysics, its reception, and the presence of strands of later Muʿtazili ideas.

Finally, a detailed study of the reception of the philosophical ideas of the philosophers of Shiraz in India in the proceeding centuries after their death will undoubtedly add further to our knowledge about philosophy in the subcontinent and the transmission of knowledge in late medieval Islamicate societies.  

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APPENDIX A:

AN ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY OF THE WORKS OF MĪR ṢADR AL-DĪN: SOME PRELIMINARY NOTES

A.1: General introduction

Mīr Ṣadr al-Dīn was not a prolific author. Even his son Ghiyāth al-Dīn was all too aware that his father's wrote far less than his fierce rival Dawānī. Ghiyāth al-Dīn writes:

It was his noble habit (kānat ʿadatu al-sharīfa) to produce original theses; when he relied on the work of others, he would always cite his sources, contemplating often [what his predecessors said]. For this reason he decided to write most of his works in the form of glosses, this is because his glosses contain explanations that cannot be found in other works and commentaries. Although he wrote fewer and shorter works than those great scholars and magisterial philosophers, the original ideas that he advanced were far greater than and more superior to those of others. This is evident to all of those who pay heed to his writings.\(^\text{1183}\)

Mīr Ṣadr al-Dīn wrote works on a variety of subjects, many of which await publication. His writing career began some time between 869/1465 and 879/1475. His last work was composed a few months before his murder in 903/1498. The number of his works as it is known to date comprises 17 Arabic and 5 (or possibly 6) Persian works. Only one of these works has been edited and printed; the reminder of his oeuvre remain, to date, in manuscript form, most of which is housed in the major libraries of Iran (Tehran, Mashhad, and Qum), while few are situated in Istanbul, and handful of works attributed to him can be found in the Amīr al-Mu’minīn library in Najaf, the Khuda Bakhsh Oriental Public Library in India, and

The list I provide below is based on almost exclusively Iranian manuscripts, which are listed in Barakat’s excellent but not exhaustive Kitāb-shināsī-i maktāb-i falsafī-i shīrāz and in Fāsāyī in his Fārs-nāma-yi Nāṣīrī. I have supplemented this list from other sources (such as the Khuda Bakhsh Library) and made corrections where necessary; each work is briefly summarized and all known MS copies are listed, along with their incipit and explicit. Finally, where possible I have cited bibliographical details of works which have been edited and published.

The following appendix is divided into four sections. The four sections describe works written by Mīr Ṣadr al-Dīn in the following categories: 1) Philosophy; 2) Logic; 3) Law and exegesis (fiqh and tafsīr); and 4) Miscellaneous. I have tried to establish the chronological order of Mīr Ṣadr al-Dīn’s works by relying on information provided in the colophons of extant manuscripts, dates of composition found in biographical and bibliographical sources, and on internal evidence in the works themselves. An attempt has been made to give the exact titles of works. If different titles occur, I have stated their variant. Similarly, I have tried to list the name of the transcriber/copyist along with the location of composition where possible.

1184 The Āmīr al-Muʾīnīn library has undergone major administrative changes since 2003. The philosophy and theology holdings have yet to be catalogued properly; this information is based on my visits to Najaf in 2012 and 2014.
A.2: List of works by Mīr Ṣadr al-Dīn

Mīr Ṣadr al-Dīn’s oeuvre covers the gamut of transmitted and rational sciences. His most elaborate writings, however, focus primarily on falsafa and kalām. Furthermore, almost all of his oeuvre is made up of glosses, super-glosses, and marginalia (ta’līqāt).

A.2.1: Works on philosophy

1) Risāla fī ithbāt al-wājib wa-ṣifātihi (Arabic)
   Treatise on the Proof of the Necessary and His attributes

This work is an elaborate treatise on the proof of the Necessary Being along with an elaborate discussion on the essence-attribute problem. Mīr Ṣadr al-Dīn completed this work in Shiraz in Dhū l-Ḥijja 902/August 1497, shortly before he was murdered on 17 Ramaḍān 903/9 May 1498, making it his last written work. The treatise was dedicated to the last Āq Qūyūnlū ruler sultan Aḥmad Govde b. Ughurlu Muḥammad b. Ūzūn Ḥasan (d. 902/1497). The work contains twelve sections (fuṣūl) and an epilogue (khātima). The work was the subject of a later, extensive commentary by Ghiyāth al-Dīn, entitled Kashf al-Ḥaqāʾiq al-Muḥamadiyya (Unveiling the Muḥammadan [i.e. Mīr Ṣadr al-Dīn] Realities). The commentary was completed by Ghiyāth al-Dīn with the assistance of his son Ṣadr al-Dīn IV, over the course of four months, on 11 Muḥarram 947/18 May 1540.
Incipit:

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم... و هذه رسالة في البهجة والرضا...

Explicit:

و ما يكون في نفس الأمر و من غير تعقل النفس هو التوحيد. و الحمد لله أوبا و أخرا و ظاهرا و باطنا.

Variant title: Risāla fī ithbāt al-bārī or Ithbāt al-wājib or ithbāt wājib al-wujūd bi'l-dhāt.

Manuscripts:

1. MS 1237, Mashhad University Faculty of Theology, Mashhad (49ff, nastaʿlīq of Muḥammad Šādiq b. Ṭāhir Allāh al-Ḥusaynī, copied on 3 Jumāda I 1068 H).
2. MS 174/1, Markaz-i Iḥāʾ, Qum (4v-35r, nastaʿlīq, copyist unknown, copied in Dhū l-Qa'da 1018).
3. MS 1556/1, Tehran University Central Library (2r-23r, nastaʿlīq, copyist unknown, copied in 13th century H); MS 1147/1 (1v-7r, nastaʿlīq, copyist unknown, copied in 10th century H).
5. MS 20, Āstān-i Quds-i Raḍāvī, Mashhad (24ff, nastaʿlīq of Muḥammad Ḥusayn b. Qāsim al-Ṭabīṣī, copied in 903 H or 943 H).
7. MS 5094/1, Marʿashī Library, Qum (1v-46r, nastaʿlīq of Ṭāhir Allāh al-Wāsiʿ Najīb b. Muḥammad Amīn Ṭabīb, copied in 1042 H); MS 6607/1 (1v-22r, naskhī of Muḥammad Muʾmin b. Jalāl al-Dīn Muḥammad al-Kāshānī, copied in Qum in 1027 H); MS 7036/37 (269v-279r, copyist unknown, copied in 11th century H); MS 9371/2 (14v-49r, nastaʿlīq, copyists unknown, copied in 11th century H).
8. MS 2761, Shahīd Ṭāhir Allāh Pāshā, Istanbul.

2) *Al-Ḥashiya 'alā al-sharḥ al-jadīd li'l-tajrīd* (Arabic) 

*Glosses on the New Commentary of the Tajrīd*

According to ʿAlī Ṣadrāyī Khuyī, Mīr Ṣadr al-Dīn was the first philosopher in Shiraz to write glosses upon Qūshchī’s commentary upon the *Tajrīd*. The exact date of completion of this work is unknown; however, it was certainly completed between 879/1474 or 880/1475, the year Dawānī composed his first glosses, which also coincided with the reign of sultan Yaʿqūb. Mīr Ṣadr al-Dīn’s glosses serve as an expository to Qūshchī’s popular commentary on Ṭūṣī’s *Tajrīd*. The full title of the *Tajrīd* is *Tajrīd al-iʿtiqād* (*The Epitome of Faith*), also known as *Tajrīd al-kalām fī ʿaqīḍa ʿal-islām*. The work was intended as a Twelver-Shīʿi creed and is divided into six chapters, or *maqāṣīds*:

- Chapter One (*al-*umūr al-ʿāmma) deals with existence, non-existence, essence, and causality.
- Chapter Two (*fiʿl-*jawāhir wa-l-ʿrād) deals with substances, bodies, accidents, and knowledge.
- Chapter Three (*fiʿl*-ithbāt al-sāni) deals with metaphysics, including the proof of God’s existence, God’s attributes, and God’s actions.
- Chapter Four (*fiʿl-*nubuwwa) deals with prophecy, the veracity of prophets, and the prophethood of Muḥammad.
- Chapter Five (*fiʿl*-imāma): deals with general theory imamate and the Imāms of Twelver-Shīʿism.
- Chapter Six (*fiʿl*-maʿād): deals with resurrection, penitence and punishment, and intercession.

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In the post-Mongol period, the Tajrīd became a central and influential canon of philosophical-theology; it became the subject of great many commentaries (shurūh), super-commentaries (sharḥ al-shurūh), glosses (ḥawāshi), and super-glosses (ḥawāshi al-ḥawāshi). Two important commentaries stood out in the said period: 1) Tasdīd al-qawāʾid fī sharḥ tajrīd al-aqāʾid, written by Shams al-Dīn Maḥmūd al-Isfahānī (d. 745/1345), also known as al-Sharḥ al-qadīm in scholarly nomenclature; and 2) al-Sharḥ al-jadīd ‘ālā al-tajrīd, written by ‘Alā Dīn ‘Alī Qūshchī. The famous rivalry between Mīr Ṣadr al-Dīn and Dawānī was played out in a number of rebuttals and counter rebuttals written in the form of glosses and super-glosses upon Qūshchī’s al-Sharḥ al-jadīd. In the manuscript tradition, these exchanges are grouped in the same majmūʿa and are known as al-Ṭabaqāt al-Jalāliyya [Dawānī] wa-l-Ṣadriyya [Dashtakī].

Incipit:

صدر كلام أرباب التجريد و ختم مقال أصحاب التوحيض حمد فرد تفرد بالابتداء و الانتهاء... قوله هو العلم بإحول بالمبدأ و المعاد أراد بالمبدأ كل ما يوجد أوله و يقابل منهته و آخره كما أن الأول بهذا المعني منحصر في الباري تعالى

Explicit:

قوله و يلزم أن يكون السهمان ... فيه نظر إذا غاية ما لزوم أن يكون موقع السهمين في أحد المرتبين واحدا... و ذلك لأن اتحاد الموضوعين و تعددهما ليسا بالقياس إلى شيء واحد كذا الحال إذا كان المراد باتحاد السهمين اتصالهما إذا لا محدود في أن يتصل السهمان على مرن و ينفصلا على مرآئا آخر

Variant title: sometimes known by its Persian title as Ḥashiya bar sharḥ-i jadīd.

Manuscripts:

1. MS 1755, Majlis-i Shūrā-yi Millī, Tehran (nastaʿlīq, copyists unknown, copied in 10th century H); MS 67/1 (156ff).
2. MS 1327, Kitābkhāna-yi Vazīrī, Yazd (88ff, copyists unknown, copied in 11th century H).
3. MS 101, Āstān-i Quds-i Raḍāvī, Mashhad (184ff, naskhī, copyists unknown, date unknown); MS 118 (110ff, nastaʿlīq, copyist unknown, date unknown). This MS is incomplete, but it was probably copied shortly after Mīr Ṣadr al-Dīn’s death in 903/1498 as indicated in the colophons; MS 6606 (282ff, nastaʿlīq, copyist unknown, date unknown). The last part of this MS is missing; MS 14109 (copied in 1019 H).

4. MS 1365, Shahīd Muṭahharī, Tehran (390ff); MS 1368 (272ff, copied by Mīrzā ʿAlī b. Asad Allāh on 23 Shaʿbān 970 H); MS 1369; MS 8302.

5. MS 1424, Mashhad University Faculty of Theology, Mashhad (nastaʿlīq, copyist unknown, date unknown). Parts missing, title of work provided in the margins.

These glosses are unpublished.

3) Al-Ḥāshiya al-jadīda ʿalā al-sharḥ al-jadīd liʿl-tajrīd (Arabic)
The New Glosses on the New Commentary of the Tajrīd

These new and revised glosses comprise Mīr Ṣadr al-Dīn’s rebuttals to Dawānī after the latter wrote his first set of glosses in 879/1474 or 880/1475. The present work was completed in 886/1482 during the reign of sultan Yaʿqūb. In it, Mīr Ṣadr al-Dīn levels scathing attacks against Dawānī and his student Kamāl al-Dīn Lārī, who wrote a postscript to Dawānī’s first set of glosses upon Qūshchī’s commentary. In the introduction of the present work, Mīr Ṣadr al-Dīn accuses Dawānī of reaching ‘flimsy conclusions’ and misleading his students and peers with incongruous philosophical argument.

Incipit:

صدر كلام ارياب التجريد، ختم مقال أصحاب التوحيد حمد احد من الانتهاء و الابناءه... قوله اى على الله و أصحابه الذين هم موقفون بزيادة الكرم... قال الشارخ فيما كتب على الحائطة قبل لم يرد به معنيا بل ما يتناول متعددا ... و فيه نظر لأن افعل التفضيل إذا اضيف فله معنى...
Explicit:
قوله و عند أخرين، في نسبة هذا الكلام إما إلى ضعفه فإن اختلاف الاعتبار بالجنس عند اختلاف الجهة غير بين و لا مبين و كذا قوله الإشبي المذكورة من الاعتبار غير بين و لا مبين.


Manuscripts:
1. MS 2499, Marʿashī, Qom (228ff, naskhī, copyist unknown, copied on Dhū l-Ḥijjā 964 H?); MS 1048 (541ff, naskhī, copyist unknown, copied on 1261 H); MS 3204 (146ff, nastaʿlīq); MS 4686 (284ff, nastaʿlīq, copied in 11th century H). First section missing; MS 7908 (254ff, nastaʿlīq of Zayn ʿābīn b. ʿAlī al-Ḥusyanī, copied on the last day of Shawwāl 962 H).
2. MS 102, Āstān-i Quds-i Raḍavī, Mashhad (51ff, nastaʿlīq, but text illegible). Last section missing; MS 473.
3. MS 1756, Majlis-i Shūrā-yi Millī, Tehran (copied in 13th century H); MS 1998 (616pp., naskhī, copied in 11th century H); MS 3337 (naskhī of Abū l-Maʿālī b. Muḥammad Dawānī, copied in 1047 H). First section missing.
4. MS 1116, Tehran University Central Library (218ff). Glosses only cover al-umūr al-ʿāmma of the Tajrīd; MS 6833 (183ff, nastaʿlīq, copied in 10th century H). Both sides have sections missing; MS 6220 (333ff, nastaʿlīq, copied in 11th century H). Note by catalogue editor claims this is the third set of glosses by Mīr Ṣadr al-Dīn; however the introduction is based on that of his second set of glosses, known as Tajrīdāt al-ghawāshi wa-tashdīdāt al-ḥawāshi.

These glosses are unpublished.

4) Al-Ḥāshiya ʿalā sharḥ ḥikmat al-ʿayn (Arabic)
Glosses on the Commentary of The Philosophy of Essence

These are Mīr Ṣadr al-Dīn’s glosses upon Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad b. Mubārakshāh Bukhārī’s commentary upon Kātibī Kātibī’s Ḥikmat al-ʿayn. Kātibī was a renowned Sunni philosopher and logician. He was a contemporary of Ţūsī and a pupil of Abharī, who himself was a distinguished pupil of Rāzī. Abharī’s Kitāb al-hidāya, a
sophisticated exposition of Avicennan philosophy, was the subject of a number of commentaries, most notable of which were those written in the Safavid period by Kamāl al-Dīn Mīr Ḥusayn Maybūdī (executed 909/1504) and Mullā Ṣadrā. Kātibī taught philosophy and logic in Juwayn and later in Maragha, where he helped found the famous observatory with Ťūsī; moreover, he was encircled by a number of notable philosophers, including Qutb al-Dīn Shīrāzī. Kātibī’s Hikmat al-ʿayn is usually read with the commentary of Bukhārī. Both Bukhārī and Kātibī were said to have been influenced by the ideas of Rāzī; for example, Kātibī rejected the proof for the Necessary Being based on the impossibility of infinite regress. The exact date of completion of the present work is unknown; however it is probable that Mīr Ṣadr al-Dīn completed these glosses sometime between 886/1482 (completion date of his last set of glosses upon Qūshchī’s commentary) and 902/1497 (completion date of his R. fī itḥbāt al-wājib).

Incipit:

بسم الله، قوله تصور ووجودي بديهي قبل يمنع تصوره وحوائجه يمنع مماثلته الماهية الذهنية...

Explicit:

بها يتصف المعدل والدائر الموازنة لما مر إلی آخره ما ذكره. تمت الحاشية المنسوبة لمبر صدر الدين محمد شیرازی.

Variant title: Ḥāshiya bar sharḥ-i ḥikmat-i ʿayn

Manuscripts:

1. MS 105, Āstān-i Quds-i Raḍavī, Mashhad (35ff, nastaʿlīq, date unknown).

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1187 On the life and thought of Maybūdī, see Alexandra Whelan Dunietz, Qadi Husayn Maybudi of Yazd: Representative of the Iranian Provincial Elite in the Late Fifteenth Century, Unpublished Ph.D. Dissertation (University of Chicago, 1990).
2. MS 3737, Khuda Bakhsh Oriental Public Library, Patna (8ff, nasta’īq, date unknown).

This work is unpublished.

5) Risāla fi’l-wujūd al-dhīnī (Arabic)
A Treatise on Mental Existence

Discussions on wujūd (at once being and existence) have dominated philosophical and mystical discourse in the Islamicate world for more than eleven centuries. Both Fārābī and Avicenna had much to say about wujūd in and of itself and in its relation to māhiyya (quiddity or essence); in fact, writing in his Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikma, Fārābī was the first to distinguish wujūd from māhiyya. Likewise, Avicenna, who was influenced by Fārābī, makes this distinction the cornerstone of his ontology and treats it amply in many of his Peripatetic works, especially in the Shifāʾ, Najāt and Ishārāt. Ṭūsī and Rāzī were the first Muslim thinkers to divided wujūd into two types: al-wujūd al-khārijī, which is objective (or external) existence; and al-wujūd al-dhīnī, which is mental existence. Al-wujūd al-dhīnī represents the existence of subjects in the human mind when are they are imagined and function as subjects for predicates in propositions. Mental existents may or may not have extension in the external reality. The multiple connotations of wujūd and its ontological priority over māhiyya were indeed widely discussed between Mīr Ṣadr al-Dīn and Dawānī. In this short treatise, whose date of composition is unknown, Mīr Ṣadr al-Dīn advanced his views on mental existence.

Variant title: Risāla fi’l-wujūd.
This work is lost.

A.2.2: Works logic

1) Al-Ḥāshiya ʿalā sharh al-shamsiyya (Arabic)
Glosses on the Commentary of the Shamsiyya

The present work is a series of short glosses upon Bukhārī’s commentary of Kātibī’s al-Risāla al-shamsiyyah fīl-qawā’id al-maṇṭiqiyya (The Treatise Dedicated to Shams al-Dīn concerning the Principles of Logic). By the beginning of the eighth/fourteenth century, the Shamsiyya was standard textbook of logic in most, if not all, Sunni centres of learning.\(^{1188}\) The work was composed at the height of the ‘Golden Age of Arabic logic’.\(^{1189}\) Kātibī’s treatise was intended to bring coherency and focus to the discipline of logic which, prior to the composition of the Shamsiyya, covered a range of topics; for example, Arabic works on logic prior to the Shamsiyya tended to deal with all the subjects covered in the Organon; however, the Shamsiyya narrowed down the breadth of topics traditionally covered and concentrated on formal questions. The work attracted a number of commentaries, glosses, and super-glosses; in fact, down to the twentieth century the Shamsiyya was ‘commonly the first substantial text on logic’ in the traditional Muslim madrasa. Unsurprisingly, the Shamsiyya was very popular in Shiraz in post-Mongol times; major philosophers and theologians such as Qutb al-Dīn Rāzī, Jurjānī, and Dawānī have all written glosses upon the Shamsiyya. The Shamsiyya is divided into four chapters and a conclusion:

Chapter One: On introduction to logic and its subject matter;


Chapter Two: On terms and utterances;

Chapter Three: On propositions and the rules governing propositions;

Chapter Four: On syllogisms; and Conclusion: on syllogistic matter (al-mādda al-qiyāṣiyya). Given that his fierce rival Dawānī composed glosses upon the Shamsiyya, it is not surprising that Mīr Ṣadr al-Dīn’s did the same. Mīr Ṣadr al-Dīn’s most innovative contribution in these sets of glosses is to be found in his discussion on categorical propositions and predication (ḥaml). The date of composition is unknown, however.

Incipit:

احق منطقة يعرف عما في الضمائر الفضلاء و اصح قول شارح لما سرائر العرفاء احمد من تفرد بوجه...

Explicit:

بل ببين ان الحكم عليه في عمومه تارة و في خصوصية أخرى.

Variant titles: Ḥāshiyat al-shamsiyya

Manuscripts:

1. MS 1027, Āstān-i Quds-i Raḍavī, Mashhad (141ff, nastaʿlīq, copied in Muḥarram 956 H).
2. MS 3844, Marʿashī, Qom (141ff, naskhī, copied in 11th century H); MS 8459 (82ff, nastaʿlīq, copied on 17 Jumāda I 883 H in Tabrīz).
3. MS 387/2, Dāʿirat al-Maʿārif, Tehran (16v-61r, nastaʿlīq, copied on Monday 16 Jumāda II 907 H); MS 359/1 (1v-52v, nastaʿlīq, copied in 1035 H).

This work is unpublished.
2) \textit{Risāla fī ḫall al-mughālaṭā al-mashhūra bi-jadhr al-aşamm} (Arabic)

\textit{A Treatise on Solving the Famous 'Liar Paradox'}

The present work is an attempt by Mīʿāṣ al-Dīn to cut the Gordian knot of medieval Arabic logic, namely the famous 'Liar Paradox'. In the manuscript tradition, the exchanges between Dawānī and Mīʿāṣ al-Dīn, edited by Qarāmalī, are known as \textit{Mukātabāt wa-fawāʿid Dawānī wa-Dashtākī}. The incipit of this collection is as follows:

الذالک المذکارة علی حوالی تلك الرسالتين نلا یكون بعدا من هذئا

The \textit{Mukātabāt} of these exchanges between Dawānī and Mīʿāṣ al-Dīn may also be found in the following holdings:

a. \textit{Majmūʿā} 6025, Marāshī, Qom (18v-23v, nastaʿlīq of Sayyid Mājdī al-Ibrāhīm Ḥusaynī Kāshānī, copied in madrasa-yī ʿImādiyya in Kāshān on Sunday 13 Shaʿbān 1153 H). The \textit{Majmūʿa} includes also the views of Ibn Kammūnā and Tūsī on the subject of the liar paradox. The fourth correspondence, presumably that of Mīʿāṣ al-Dīn, is, however, missing. Some sections have been repaired.

b. \textit{Majmūʿā} 6616, University of Tehran Central Library, Tehran (pp. 56-59 in the collection, nastaʿlīq of ʿAlī Fath Allāh Ḥusaynī, copied on 26 Shaʿbān 1072 H). Includes possible autograph of either Dawānī or Mīʿāṣ al-Dīn.

c. \textit{Majmūʿā} 1257, University of Tehran Central Library (Sayyid Muḥammad Mishkat unit) (pp. 15-18 in the collection, naskhī of ʿAlī Naqī Ḥājjī Muḥammad Amīn Qāḍī Saravī, copied sometime between 1085-1097 H). There, the notes of Mīʿāṣ al-Dīn appear to have been transcribed by one of his students whose name is unclear.

Around 899/1494 the correspondences between Dawānī and Mīʿāṣ al-Dīn came to an end. In the same year, 899/1494, Mīʿāṣ al-Dīn composed an independent work on the Liar Paradox entitled \textit{Risāla fī ḫall al-mughālaṭā al-mashhūra bi-jadhr al-aşamm} (present work). Before proceeding to outline his view on the subject, Mīʿāṣ al-Dīn
surveys the views of his predecessors, who, in his opinion, failed to resolve the paradox. He pays particular attention to the efforts of Taftāzānī, Kātibī, Samargandī, Ṭūsī, Jurjānī, Ibn Kammūnā, and Dānnī, all of whom failed spectacularly, according to him.

Incipit:

بعد حمد من عليه تيسر العسير يسير، والصلاة على نبي بعلم الأولين و الأخرين خير، يقول فقرر حصير بصدر الشيرازي شهير: قد سهلت عن المغالطة المشهورة التي تجري فيها عقول العقلاء، ولا ينكر على افتضاحها فحول الأذكياء، اعيب علماء الأعصار و أعجزت فضلاء الأسوار. فأذكر ما أفاده العلماء فيها مع ما عليه أولا، ثم أحلها بعون الله تعالى خلا.

Explicit:

فأعرف ذلك و تأمل في الكلام، فإن هذا المقام من مزائل أقدام أفهم الأعلام. ولم أرى في مقامات السهر حتى قصي ساهم تحقيقها الوطير، و بُلّغت في التبيان والتصحيح حتى أمرت بأن أطيق المصباح فقد ظل الصباح ومن الله الهداءة والتوافق، وهو يهدي إلى سواء الطريق.

Variant title: Risālat jadhr al-aṣamm

Manuscripts:

1. MS 5924/4, University of Tehran Central Library (nastaʿlīq, copied in 1254 H); MS 1928 (26ff, copied by Ṣafī al-Dīn in 946 H). Good copy.
2. MS 3923/31, Majlis-i Shūrā-yi Millī, Tehran; MS 3923/33.
3. MS 11112/8, Marʿashī, Qom (84ff, nastaʿlīq, copied in 13th century); MS 11112/10 (nastaʿlīq, copied in 13th century H).
4. MS 688, Malik.
5. MS 11138, Vazīrī, Yazd (199ff, naskhī of Ibn Maḥmūd Nūr Allāh Maybūdī, copied in 965 H). Good copy.

MSS copies based on selected discussions on Liar Paradox found in Mīr Ṣadr al-Dīn’s glosses upon Qūshchī’s Sharḥ:

2. MS 850/6, Majlis-i Shūrā-yi Millī, Tehran (date copied and name of copyist unknown).
This work is published:

On the Mukātabāt between Mīr Šadr al-Dīn and Dawānī see:

  For the second edition see, Majmū’-yi rasā’il-i falsafī, ed. Ḩāmid Nājī ʾĪsfahānī (Tehran, 1389/2010).


On Mīr Šadr al-Dīn’s independent work:


On the collection of Mukātabāt, which includes the independent treatises of both Dawānī and Dashtākī, including a useful history of the paradox in the Islamicate world, see:

- Dawāzda risāla dar pārāduks-i durūghū, ed. Āḥad Farāmarz Qarāmalikī [with the assistance of ʿAṭayyibāʾ ʿArif Nīyā] (Tehran, 1386 Sh/2007).

3) Al-ḥāshiya al-jadīda ʿalā ḥāshiyyat Mīr Sayyid Sharīf ʿalā sharḥ al-maṭāliʾ (Arabic)
The New Glosses on the Glosses of Jurjānī on the Commentary of the Maṭāliʾ al-anwār

This work is Mīr Ṣadr al-Dīn’s second set of super-glosses upon Jurjānī’s famous commentary on the Maṭāliʾ al-anwār fī lḥikma wa-l-maṭāq. The Maṭāliʾ was composed by the renowned Shafi’i jurist and logician al-Qāḍī Sīrāj al-Dīn Maḥmūd b. Abī Bakr Tūnakī Urmawī (d. 688/1290); the work is divided as follows:

Part One: On logic;
Part Two:

Section One: On general issues (*fi’l-*umūr al-ʿāmma)

Section Two: On substances (*fi’l-*jawāhir)

Section Three: On accidents (*fi’l-*ʿarāḍ)

Section Four: On metaphysics specialis (*fi’l-*ʿilm al-ilāhī al-khāṣṣ).

Part one deals with philosophical logic, while in part two an attempt is made to find harmony between falsafa and kalām. The most celebrated, and perhaps most important, commentary written on the Maṭālīʿ was Lawāmiʿ al-asrār fī sharḥ maṭālīʿ al-anwār, penned by the famous polymath Quṭb al-Dīn Rāzī. Rāzī’s commentary was well received in Shiraz and was the subject of a number of glosses and super-glosses. Jurjānī was the first Shirazi thinker to write glosses upon the Lawāmiʿ; in the manuscript tradition, these glosses are known as al-Ḥāshiya al-kubrā. Dawānī wrote the first set of super-glosses on Jurjānī’s glosses in 892/1487; shortly after, possibly in the same year, Mīr Šadr al-Dīn followed suit. In 893/1488, Dawānī wrote his second set of super-glosses; again, shorty after, Mīr Šadr al-Dīn wrote the second set of his super-glosses.

Incipit:

بسمه، رب توأم بالخير و السعادة و وفق للاتمام قوله لما كان الجميل متناولا للاتمام فان قيل ستعرف العلامة

بان الجميل هنذا محمود به كما هو المتبادر إلى الفهم.

Explicit:

فيذم أن لا يوجد أصلا بدون المطابقة مستلزم للمطابقة غير مسلم و الله اعلم بالصواب.

Variant title: Ḥāshiya ḥāshiya lawāmiʿ al-asrār fī Sharḥ maṭālīʿ al-anwār or Tanwīr al-maṭālīʿ.
Manuscripts:

1. MS 6802, University of Tehran Central Library (243ff, naskhi of Maḥmūd b. Niʿmat Allāh Jīshānī, copied on 1 Jumādā 970 H).
2. MS 7312/3, Marʿashī, Qom (61v-138v, naskhi, date unknown). The name of this MS is Tanwīr al-Maṭāliʿ and may actually be the work of Dawānī.

This work is unpublished.

4) Ḥāshiya ʿalā tajrīd al-mantiq (Arabic)
    Glosses on the Précis of Logic

In the introductory section of the Tajrīd, Ṭūsī provides a useful précis of the basic principles of logic, known as Tajrīd al-mantiq. This work Mīr Ṣadr al-Dīn is made up of glosses on the Tajrīd al-mantiq. It focuses on the famous principle of presupposition, known in Arabic as thubūt shayʿ li-shayʿ in farʿu thubūt al-muthbati lahu. It indicates that the realization of a predicate for a subject is secondary to the realization of that subject itself. Before Mīr Ṣadr al-Dīn, many Muslim thinkers grappled with this problem, not least Fārābī, Avicenna, Rāzī, Ṭūsī, Suhrawardī, and Dawānī. The argumentations brought forth by Mīr Ṣadr al-Dīn in these glosses appear to have influenced Mullā Ṣadrā, who offered a radical solution to the problem based on the argument that wujūd is ontologically prior to māhiyya. Mullā Ṣadrā challenges the idea that existence is an abstract notion that does not have a referent in reality so that quiddity could be qualified by it; he further argues that the principle of presupposition also applies to abstraction. Moreover, Mullā Ṣadrā argues that existence is a criterion for the truth of the derivative in affirmative categorical propositions. This view appears in similar form in Mīr Ṣadr al-Dīn’s glosses upon Tajrīd al-Mantiq.
Incipit:

۳۷۰

 Explicit:

۳۷۰

Variant title: Ḥāshiyat tajrīd al-kalām

Manuscripts:

۳۷۰

1. MS 1701, Maʿāshī, Qom (121ff, copied by Muḥammad Ḥasan b. Ghūlām Ḣusayn in Muḥarram 908 H in Mashhad). The first folio is missing.

This work is unpublished.

۳۷۰

5) Ḥāshiyā ʿalā ḥāshiyat lawāmīʿ al-āsrār fī sharḥ maṭālīʿ al-anwār
(Arabic)
Super-glosses on the Illuminative Secrets of the commentary of the Radiant Lights

These are Mīr Ṣadr al-Dīn’s super-glosses upon the Lawāmīʿ al-āsrār by Quṭb al-Dīn Rāzī, which is a commentary upon the section of logic in the Maṭālīʿ al-anwār by Urmawī.

This work is lost.
6) *Risāla fi’l-fayyād* (Arabic)

*Treatise on the Effusive*

This is a short treatise on logic, probably written as a study aid for his students at the Madrasa-yi Manṣūriyya.

This work is now lost.

A.2.3: Works on *fiqh* and *tafsīr*

1) *Ḥashiya 'alā al-kashšāf li'l-Zamakhsharī* (Arabic) [*Tafsīr*]

*Glosses on the Kashshāf of Zamakhsharī*

The present work is a series of glosses upon the celebrated work *al-Kashshāf*, composed by the Mu'tazili exegete Abu l-Qāsim Zamakhsharī (d. 537/1143). The chief focus of the *Kashshāf* is on the grammatical, lexicographical and rhetorical features of the Qur'an, including also discussions on the variant readings and its supposed miraculous nature (*i̲jāz*). The *Kashshāf* earned universal admiration in Muslim intellectual circles, most notably among the philosophers and theologians.¹¹⁹⁰

Incipit:

الحمد لله الذي أنزل على عبده الكتاب و جعله نورا و هدى لأولى الألباب و الصلاة على من أدنى فصل الخطاب و الله و أصحابه خير آل...

Explicit:

فإذا استعمل في الله فمعناه منعني القدير و في اليسير بمعنى المنكشف و المكتف للقدره...

¹¹⁹⁰ Cf. Wilferd Madelung, 'al-Zamakhsharī', in *EI²*. 
Variant title: Ḥāshiya ʿalā tafsīr al-kashfāf.

Manuscripts:


This work is unpublished.

2) Taʿlīqāt ʿalā taysīr al-fiqh (Arabic) [Fiqh]

Scholia on the Book of ‘Jurisprudence Made Easy’

This work is lost.

3) Ḥāshiya ʿalā sharḥ mukḥtaṣar al-uṣūl (Arabic) [uṣūl al-fiqḥ]

Glosses upon the Commentary of the Abridged Principles

These are Mīr Šadhr Dīn’s set of glosses upon Šīr’s commentary upon Ibn al-Ḥājib’s Mukḥtaṣar muntahā al-wuṣūl wa-l-ʿamal fī ʿilmay al-uṣūl wa-l-jadal.1191

This work is lost.

A.2.4: Miscellaneous works

1) Ḥāshiyat al-muṭawwal (Arabic)
   **Glosses upon the Muṭawwal**

The bibliographical details of this work remain unknown, except that it is a work of adab, or belles lettrism. It is probably the case that this work comprises of glosses upon one of two commentaries (one, al-Muṭawwal; two, al-Mukhtasār) written by Taftāzānī upon the famous work of adab and grammar known as Talkhīṣ al-miftāḥ fī l-maʿānī wa-l-bayān written by Jalāl al-Dīn Muḥammat b. ‘Abd al-Rahmān al-Qazvinī al-Shāfiʿī (d. 739/1338), known simply as Khaṭīb Dimashq, which in turn is an abridgement of Miftāḥ al-ʿulūm written by Abī Yaʿqūb b. Yūsuf b. Muḥammad b. ‘Alī al-Sakākī (d. 626/1228).

This work is lost.

2) Risāla fī taḥqīq al-ḥurūf (Arabic)
   **Treatise on the Science of Lettrism**

This is a work on ʿilm al-ḥurūf (the science of lettrism). ʿIlm al-ḥurūf encompasses a range of occult disciplines, including metaphysics, cosmogony, physics, alchemy, magic, and numerology. Both Mīr Ṣadr al-Dīn and his rival Dawānī expressed interest in ʿilm al-ḥurūf. However, Mīr Ṣadr al-Dīn’s work on the subject appears to be lost; whereas, Dawānī’s Risāla-i tuḥfā-yi rūḥānī fī khavāṣṣ al-ḥurūf is extant but remains in manuscript form.\(^{1193}\)

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\(^{1192}\) For the lithograph edition see Die Rhetorik Der Araber, ed. A. F. Mehren (Vienna, 1853). This work has been edited and published in more recent times. See Jalāl al-Dīn b. ‘Abd al-Rahmān, Talkhīṣ al-miftāḥ fī l-maʿānī wa-l-bayān wa-l-badīʿ, ed. Yāsīn al-Ayūbī (Beirut, 2002).

\(^{1193}\) Barakat, Kitāb-shināṣī, p. 82.
3) Risālat al-zubrūbīnāt (Arabic)  
*Treatise on Matching Arabic Phrases with Corresponding Numerical Values*

Al-zubrūbīnāt is the occult tradition of mystical numerology, similar to ‘ilm al-jafr, which was practiced by some Muslim thinkers in medieval times;¹¹⁹⁴ it starts by selecting a meaningful Arabic sentences such as La ilāha ilā Allāh followed by assigning a numerical value, the assignment of values is based on a preset table of corresponding letters and numerals; for example, the letter alif is assigned numerical value 1, bāʾ = 2, tāʾ = 3, and so on and so forth. The date of composition of this treatise is unknown.

This work is lost.

4) Istikhrāj asāmī al-aʿīma bi-ḥīsāb al-ḥabjad (Arabic)  
*Extracting the Names of the [Shiʿi] Imāms from the Arabic Alphabet*

The bibliographical details of this work are unknown; its attribution to Mīr Ṣadr al-Dīn seems posthumous, though its connection to Mīr Ṣadr al-Dīn cannot be ruled out completely. The chief aim of this exercise in mystical numerology is to extract all the names of the Twelve Imāms from the Arabic alphabet.

**Manuscripts:**

1. MS 976/8, Mashhad University Faculty of Theology (nastaʿlīq, copied in 1180 H).

¹¹⁹⁴ On this science, see Yūsuf Najafi Gilānī, Bayān al-āyāt dar ‘ilm-i zabrubīnāt (Rasht, 1953).
This work is unpublished.

5) Ithnā ʿashariyya (Persian)
   Twelvers

This is a short Persian treatise on the significance of the number twelve, which includes a section on the Twelve Shīʿī Imāms.

Incipit:

سبس بن قیاس سراو مالک الملكی است جل شأنه كه به طولع خورشید نبوت محمدي ظلمت كفر براند

Explicit:

 теплоی و حسن ماب.

Manuscripts:

1. MS 7424, University of Tehran Central Library (86ff, nastāʾīq, copied in the 12th century H).
2. MS 2145/2, University of Tehran Central Library.

This work is unpublished.

6) Jawāhir-nāma (Persian)
   A Treatise on Gemmology

Corbin attributes this work to Ṣadr al-Dīn IV, Mīr Ṣadr al-Dīn’s grandson; according to other sources, however, including Ghiyāth al-Dīn, Mudarris, author

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1195 Corbin, History of Islamic Philosophy, vol. 2, pp. 336-337.
of Rayhānat al-adab,\textsuperscript{1197} and Kākāī,\textsuperscript{1198} this work belongs to Mīr Šadr al-Dīn. It possible, however, that both Mīr Šadr al-Dīn and his grandson, Šadr al-Dīn IV, wrote works on gemmology bearing the same title.\textsuperscript{1199} At any rate, this was probably Mīr Šadr al-Dīn’s first ever written work, composed in 879/1475 and dedicated to Üzûn Ḥasan at the request of his son sultan Khalîl. The work deals with gemmology; it includes discussions on the disposition of special stones, precious gems, metals, and minerals. It is divided into an introduction, two sections, and a conclusion:

- Introduction: On the materials and minerals;
- Section One: On substances;
- Section Two: On desert plants;
- Conclusion: On composition of metals and other materials.

Incipit:

سیاس و ستانیش بی انداده و قیاس صناعی راکه جوهری صنعاش بازار کاپیش را به جوهر توایت و سیارت بیارایست.

Explicit:

و بیچ متقلا و از آهن چهل متقلا و نیم باشید و الله اعلام بالصوراب و الهه المرجع و المأب.

Variant title: \textit{Risāla fi'lı-jawāhir}.

Manuscripts:

1. MS 7354/2, Majlis-i Shūrā-yi Millī, Tehran (103v-160r, nasta'īq, undated); MS 2166 (nasta'īq); MS 2167 (22ff, naskhī).

\textsuperscript{1197} Mudarris, Rayhānat al-adab, vol. 3, p. 426.

\textsuperscript{1198} Ghiyāth al-Dīn Manṣūr Dashtakī va falsafa-i 'ırfān, p. 40.

\textsuperscript{1199} Ghiyāth al-Dīn Manṣūr Dashtakī va falsafa-i 'ırfān, p. 40.
2. MS 6234, Mar’ashī, Qom (22ff, nastalīq). Last part missing; MS 11073 (77ff, nastalīq-shikaste, copied on Wednesday 4 Rajab 1256 H); MS 8302/1 (2v-90r, Nasta’līq of ʿAbd al-Ṣamad, copied at the end of Ramadān 1092 H); MS 9208 (145ff, naskhī, copied in 13th century H).

7) Risāla-yi dar qaws u qazah yā hāla (Persian)

_Treatise on the Formation of Rainbows_

This treatise explains how rainbows (qaws u qazah) are formed based on the laws of refraction and reflection. In it Mīr Ṣadr al-Dīn explains that natural events must be understood in the context of divine providence, phenomena which believers must understand and appreciate. The date of composition is unknown, however.

Incipit:

بعد از تبریک و تیمین به نام مبدعی که به محض جوید ذرات کائنات را از کتم عده به شهرستان وجود فرستاد...

Explicit:

بدين سطور الحقاق نمايند و الله اعلم و احكم.

Manuscripts:

1. MS 5890/6, University of Tehran Central Library (naskhī, copied on 1084 H);
2. MS 5911/10 (naskhī, copied in 13th century H).

This work is unpublished.
8) *Risāla-yi dar ʿilm-i falāḥat* (Persian)
   *A Treatise on the Science of Farming*

This is another of Mīr Ṣadr al-Dīn’s early works; it offers instructions on farming, agriculture, and the irrigation of water canals (*qanavāt*). This work was composed shortly after 876/1472.

This work is lost.

11) *Ādāb al-munāẓara* (Arabic)
   *The Etiquettes of Debate*

No stranger to intellectual disputation, Mīr Ṣadr al-Dīn often engaged in public disputations with his rival Dawānī, at other times these disputations took the form of written exchanges. It would have been befitting, therefore, for our thinker to instruct his students on the art of disputation or debate. This short treatise instructs students of knowledge on the proper method of debate and argumentation. The date of composition is unknown.

This work is lost.
APPENDIX B:
A PRELIMINARY SURVEY OF GHIYĀTH AL-DĪN’S WRITINGS

B.1: General introduction

In the relevant section of his Majālis al-mu’minīn, Shushtarī enumerates with some
details the writings of Ghiyāth al-Dīn Manṣūr Dashtakī. Shushtarī explains that his
reason for doing so was to counter the claims of two contemporaries, Abū l-Ḥasan
al-Kāshānī (d. 966/1558) and Mīrza Jān al-Shīrāzī (d. 994/1585). Both Kāshānī and
Shīrāzī, Shushtarī informs us, ‘stole the ideas and writings of Ghiyāth al-Dīn and
presented them as their own’.1201

Further still, Shushtarī reports that Kāshānī in particular lifted entire
passages even whole arguments from Ghiyāth al-Dīn’s Sharḥ hayākīl al-nūr and
claimed some of Ghiyāth al-Dīn’s proofs for the existence of God as his own. While
others, presumably Shīrāzī, stole occult formulas and talisman prayers from
Ghiyāth al-Dīn’s esoteric writings on magic and occultism.1202

Determined to put the record straight, particularly since both Kāshānī and
Shīrāzī claimed that very few of Ghiyāth al-Dīn’s were available during the Safavid
period, Shushtarī wrote a refutation, entitled al-Radʿ alā risālat al-Kāshī, to Kāshānī’s
Risāla fī ithbāt al-wājīb, going to great lengths to prove that this work was in fact
plagiarised and its contents and arguments stolen from Ghiyāth al-Dīn’s Sharḥ

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1200 On Shīrāzī, see Ḥājjī Khalīfā, Kashf al-ṣunūn, vol. 1, p. 832.

mawla‘nā abī l-ḥasan al-kāshānī wa-l-mawlā mīrzā jān al-shīrāzī, min aflat il hādhā al-ʿasr, ḥayth kānā
yantahilān min kutubhīhī [i.e. Ghiyāth al-Dīn] ghayar al-mutadāwila ma-yārīdān, thumma yaqūlān inna hu lā
yūjād min muṣannafat al-amīr Ghiyāth al-Dīn al-madhkhūr siwa al-ism. Khwānsārī’s original source for
this account was Shushtarī, though Khwānsārī’s account is longer.

Soon after Shushtarī penned his refutation, we are told that Kāshānī retracted his arguments and re-wrote his Risāla omitting the sections he copied from Ghiyāth al-Dīn’s work. Notwithstanding the problem of historicity, for it is difficult to assess these claims without examining Kāshānī’s Risālā, which is now lost, Shushtarī’s report does at the very least seem to indicate that Ghiyāth al-Dīn’s ideas and writings were popular and known to the scholarly community in the Safavid period shortly after his death in 949/1542.

Ghiyāth al-Dīn’s oeuvre covers the entire gamut of the transmitted and rational sciences; he engages with esoteric themes, occult traditions, natural sciences, history, mathematical sciences, astronomy, ethics, political theory, belle-letrism, poetry, Arabic grammar, and medicine.

Shushtarī attributes thirty works to Ghiyāth al-Dīn, most of which survive but remain in manuscript form. Modern biographers have attributed twice as many works to Ghiyāth al-Dīn; in some cases almost three times as many as the pre-modern biographers. Nūrānī, who has edited twenty works, attributes seventy five writings to Ghiyāth al-Dīn: two works on belle-letrism, eleven on logic, fifteen on mathematics, four on medicine, twenty seven on falsafa and kalām, six works on

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Qur’anic exegesis, and fifteenth miscellaneous works, which cover subjects like
astronomy, ethics, the etiquettes of debating, and Arabic grammar.\textsuperscript{1207}

Kākāyī attributes eighty works to Ghiyāth al-Dīn, though some of the titles
appear to be repetitions. The works listed by Kākāyī include thirty on philosophical
subjects, such as metaphysics, kalām, discussions on the human soul, theoretical
mysticism, and spiritual psychology. In addition, Kākāyī lists eleven works on
astronomy, and ten on ethics and logic.\textsuperscript{1208}

Awjabī, who edited our thinker’s Ḳiṣḥaḥ ḥayākīl al-nūr, attributes fifty-three
works to Ghiyāth al-Dīn, seven of which are on Qur’anic exegesis, six on logic,
including the writings on the proper etiquettes of debating, twenty works on falsafa
and kalām, seven on mysticism, four on mathematics, two on geometry, nine on
astronomy, three on medicine, two encyclopaedic works, and three on belle-
letrism.\textsuperscript{1209}

Barakat attributes eighty-two works to Ghiyāth al-Dīn: twenty-three on
falsafa and kalām, nine on astronomy, four on ethics, seven on Qur’anic exegesis,
four on logic, and a host of miscellaneous works, ranging from history and medicine
to Arabic grammar and ʿusūl al-fiqh.\textsuperscript{1210}

In what follows we will provide a preliminary survey of the writings of
Ghiyāth al-Dīn. We will discuss the nature of these works, provide information on
the locations of extant manuscripts, and determine the date and place of
composition for each work, unless there is a lack in historical information. The vast
majority of Ghiyāth al-Dīn’s writings remain in manuscript form. Only twenty of

\textsuperscript{1207} Muṣannafāt, vol. 1, pp. 103-106.

\textsuperscript{1208} Ghiyāth al-Dīn Mansūr Dashtakī wa falsafa-ī ḵīrān, pp. 82-91.

\textsuperscript{1209} Dashtakī, Ḳiṣḥaḥ ḥayākīl al-nūr, pp. 56-64.

\textsuperscript{1210} Barakat, Kitāb-šināsī, pp. 114-171.
these have been edited and published. The reminder of his oeuvre remain to date in manuscript form, most of which is housed in the major libraries of Iran (Tehran, Mashhad, and Qum), a significant some in Istanbul, Turkey, and handful in the Amīr al-Mu’minīn library in Najaf, Iraq, and a considerable collection in the Khuda Bakhsh Oriental Public Library in India, and the Garrett Collection of Arabic Manuscripts in the Princeton University Library.

Ghiyāth al-Dīn’s writings focus primarily on the metaphysical speculations Avicenna. Ghiyāth al-Dīn’s marked interest in Avicennan philosophy was closely followed by his pronounced penchant for Islamic theological traditions, focusing on Ashʿarī and Shiʿi kalām. Ghiyāth al-Dīn expressed interest in Islamic mysticism and also wrote on the ishrāqi tradition. Ghiyāth al-Dīn was not, however, an avowed illuminationist philosopher who dabbled with Islamic Peripateticism, as some have claimed.\textsuperscript{1211}

\textsuperscript{1211} Nasr, \textit{Islamic Philosophy from its Origins}, p. 199.
B.2: Works on philosophy

In kalām and falsaφa, Ghiyāth al-Dīn composed the following works:

1. Ittbīb al-wājib ta‘āla;\(^{1212}\)
2. Al-ishārāt wa-l-talwiḥāt, or, al-Tajrīd, or al-Tajrīd fi’l-ḥikma;\(^{1213}\)
3. Ishrāq hayākīl al-nūr li-kashf žulmāt shawākīl al-ghurūr, or Ishrāq hayākīl al-nūr ‘an žulmāt shawākīl al-ghurūr;\(^{1214}\)
4. Ḥujjat al-kalām li-idāh maḥājāt al-ʿislām;\(^{1215}\)
5. Al-Ḥāshiya ‘alā sharḥ al-ishārāt, or Ishrāf lata‘if al-ishārāt, or Laṭā‘if al-ishārāt;\(^{1216}\)
6. Al-Ḥāshiya ‘alā ittbīb al-wājib al-dawānīyya;\(^{1217}\)
7. Tajrīd al-ghawāshī, or Tajrīd al-ghawāshī wa-tahrīr al-ḥawāshī;\(^{1218}\)
8. Al-Radd ‘alā risālat al-zawrā, or Ḥāshiya ṭrisālat al-zawrā;\(^{1219}\)

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9. Al-Risāla al-rūḥiyya;¹²²⁰
10. Tajawwur al-ajsām, or Risāla fīl-nafs wa-l-hayuwālā, or Risāla fīl-haywulā wa-l-ṣūrā, or Risāla fī ju' lā yatajaza';¹²²¹
11. Al-Ḥāshiya' alā ilāhiyāt al-shiţfā;¹²²²
12. Kashf al-ḥaqāq il-muḥammadiyya, or Sharḥ ithbāt al-wājib li-Ṣadr al-Dīn Đashtakī;¹²²³
13. Sharḥ al-tawālī',¹²²⁴
14. Riyyād al-ridwān;¹²²⁵
15. Al-Muhākamāt bayn al-ḥawāshī al-qadīma wa-l-jadīda;¹²²⁶
16. Diyā al-‘ayn, or al-Ḥāshiya' alā sharḥ ḵikmat al-‘ayn, or Diyā al-‘ayn wa-l- ḵayādīyya;¹²²⁷

¹²²¹ For the locations of extant manuscripts, see Barakat, Kītāb-shīnāsī, p. 144.
¹²²² This work has been published as part of the Majmūʿ at-i rasā il-i Fārsī, ed. Jalīl Sāghruwānīyān (Mashhad, 1372 Sh/1993), pp. 45-54. Cf. Ṭihrānī, al-Dhārī, vol. 11, p. 196; idem, Ṭabaqāt al-ʿālām al-shīṭā, vol. 4, p. 256. For the locations of extant manuscripts, see Barakat, Kītāb-shīnāsī, pp. 144-145.
¹²²³ This work has been edited and published in: Majmūʿa-yi gunjīna-yi bahārāstān', in ḵikmat 1 (1379 Sh/2000), pp. 165-186. See also Ṭaqī Buzurg Ṭihrānī, al-Dhārī al-a Ṭaṣānīf al-shīṭā, vol. 24, p. 266.
17. Al-Mashāʾīq fi ithbāt al-wājib, or Risālat al-mashāʾīq; 1228
18. Uṣūl al-aʿaqāʾd fi uṣūl al-dīn, or İmān al-İmān; 1229
19. Ḥāshiyat ummūdaj al-ulūm; 1230
20. Al-Ḥikma al-maṣluğunā al-lamīʿa biʾl-lawāmīʿ al-nūriyya; 1231
21. Dalīl al-hudā fi uṣūl al-dīn; 1232
22. Al-Kamāl fi ṣifāt Allāh al-mutaʿāl, or al-Kamāl al-ilāhiyya; 1233
23. Al-Sunan al-sanīyya; 1234
24. Al-Âmālī, or Âmāl al-İmān; 1235
25. Tājrīd al-ghawāshi; 1236
26. Risāla-yi dar taḥqīq rūḥ-i insānī; 1237 and
27. Al-Maʿārif al-maṣlungūna. 1238

1228 Shushtarī, Majālis al-muʾīnin, vol. 2, p. 232; Khwānsārī, Rawḍat al-jannāt, vol. 7, p. 169; Ṣhrānī, al-Dhārīʿa, vol. 21, p. 11; Ghiyāth al-Dīn Maṣrūr Dashtakī wa falsafaʾī ʿirfān, ed. Qāsim Kākāyī, p. 88; Barakat, Kitāb-shināsī, p. 164. For the locations of the extant manuscript of this work, see Ṣhrānī, al-Dhārīʿa, vol. 21, p. 32. Ṣhrānī has seen several manuscripts of this work in Turkey, though his claim that Shushtarī speaks of this work in the Majālis is not true. This work is different to number 1 above. It is a response to Muḥammad b. Zakariyāʾ Rāzīʾs famous ‘doubts’ (shukāk) about the existence of God.

1229 This work has been edited and published in: Muṣanaffāt, vol. 1, pp. 41-58. While at least one manuscript of this work survives today, none of the medieval biographers list it among Ghiyāth al-Dīn’s works. However, it is included in Ghiyāth al-Dīn’s oeuvre by modern biographers. See Muṣanaffāt, vol. 1, p. 104. For the location of the extant manuscript of this work, see Barakat, Kitāb-shināsī, pp. 118-119; Muṣanaffāt, vol. 1, p. 107.


1231 This work appears to be lost. See Muṣanaffāt, vol. 1, p. 104; Ghiyāth al-Dīn Maṣrūr Dashtakī wa falsafaʾī ʿirfān, p. 86.

1232 This work has been edited and published in: Muṣanaffāt, vol. 1, pp. 61-72. Cf. Muṣanaffāt, vol. 1, p. 105; Ghiyāth al-Dīn Maṣrūr Dashtakī wa falsafaʾī ʿirfān, ed. Qāsim Kākāyī, p. 86. For the location of extant manuscripts of this work, see Muṣanaffāt, vol. 1, p. 108; Barakat, Kitāb-shināsī, pp. 142-143.

1233 This work has been edited and published in: Muṣanaffāt, vol. 1, pp. 135-150. Cf. Ḥājjī Khalīfā, Kashf al-ẓunūn, vol. 1, p. 886; Muṣanaffāt, vol. 1, p. 105; Ghiyāth al-Dīn Maṣrūr Dashtakī wa falsafaʾī ʿirfān, p. 87. For the location of extant manuscripts of this work, see Barakat, Kitāb-shināsī, p. 146.

1234 This work is lost. See Muṣanaffāt, vol. 1, p. 105.

1235 See Ghiyāth al-Dīn Maṣrūr Dashtakī wa falsafaʾī ʿirfān, p. 82. For the locations of the extant manuscripts of this work, see Barakat, Kitāb-shināsī, p. 119.


1237 According to Kākāyī there is an extant copy of this work in the Āstān-ī Quds-ī Radavī Library in Mashhad. See Ghiyāth al-Dīn Maṣrūr Dashtakī wa falsafaʾī ʿirfān, p. 86.
In what follows next will shed further light on some of the major philosophical works listed above.

B.2.1: Ithbāt al-wājib taʿāla and Al-Ishārāt wa-l-talwīḥāt

As for the first title in the list above, the Risāla fi ithbāt al-wājib, it is an Arabic treatise written in Shiraz, which Ghiyāth al-Dīn most likely completed shortly before or immediately after his father’s death in 903/1498.

Ghiyāth al-Dīn’s other major writings in philosophy include Al-Ishārāt wa-l-talwīḥāt, also known as Tajrīd masāʾ il al-ḥikma.¹²⁴⁰ This work is a précis or summary of the main philosophical arguments of Avicenna’s al-Ishārāt. In the opening sermon, Ghiyāth al-Dīn explains that he was asked by some dear to him (baʿḍ al-aḥbāb) to compose a short introductory text on ḥikma.¹²⁴¹ The first part covers the natural sciences and includes the topics of plants, animals, human soul; the second part deals with metaphysics, covering themes like existence, causality, the necessary being; the final part moves onto philosophical theology where Ghiyāth al-Dīn engages with arguments about predestination, divine providence, and the essence-attribute problem. Given that the work was intended as a short summary of Avicennan philosophy, one would expect it to focus on its intended objectives. Instead the voice of the author comes out vividly, sometimes delving into polemics,

¹²³⁸ This work is lost.
¹²³⁹ Barakat, Kitāb-shināṣī, p. 157.
¹²⁴⁰ Number 2 in the list above.
particularly when Ghiyāth al-Dīn attacks Ash'ari kalām and uses terms like ‘repugnant’ when referring to their doctrine on God’s attributes. The date of composition is unknown. However it was probably written early in his career, since it exhibits the hubris of young and ambitious thinker; for instance, in the opening section Ghiyāth al-Dīn claims to offer a better explanation for the existence of physical bodies than did Aristotle.

B.2.2: Ishrāq hayākīl al-nūr li-kashf ẓulumāt shawākīl al-ghurūr, or Ishrāq hayākīl al-nūr ‘an ẓulumāt shawākīl al-ghurūr

This is one Ghiyāth al-Dīn’s lengthiest works, which contains a blend of ishrāqī and discursive arguments. It was completed in 886/1481 when Ghiyāth al-Dīn was eighteen, and intended as scathing rebuttal to Dawānī’s Shawākīl al-ḥūr fī sharḥ hayākīl al-nūr, a commentary upon Suhrawardī’s Hayākīl al-nūr. The Ishrāq hayākīl al-nūr by Ghiyāth al-Dīn is a point-by-point refutation of Dawānī’s commentary. In it, Ghiyāth al-Dīn challenges Dawānī’s definition of the term haykal and Dawānī’s explanations of Suhrawardī’s proofs for the existence of the Necessary Being, among other things. Dawānī’s commentary was completed on 11 Shawwāl 872/4 May 1468.

Scholars count the Hayākīl al-nūr as one of Suhrawardī’s most important treatises. Some of Suhrawardī’s commentators have suggested that the extensive

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use of the word *haykal*, or luminous body, is in indication that the Master of Illumination may have been influenced by the Iṣmāʿīlis.\(^{1245}\)

**B.2.3: Ḥujjat al-kalām li-iḍāḥ maḥajjat al-islām**

For the most part this work engages in polemic. It written in Arabic and was most likely completed some time between 903/1498 and 908/1502, since early on in the text Ghiyāth al-Dīn refers to his father in terms which suggest he is already dead, and to Dawānī (d. 908/1502) as his living contemporary.\(^{1246}\)

This work, like many others, is a critique of Ashʿari *kalām*. It attacks the writings of Ghazālī that deal with bodily resurrection. It is divided into four sections, *maqālāt*, and a short segment which answers the Ashʿari theologians' critique of the philosophers regarding the issue of bodily resurrection. A scripture-centric treatise, it makes a number of bold and controversial claims. First, Ghiyāth al-Dīn accuses the early Muslim philosophers of failing to properly understand the Qurʾānic verses regarding bodily resurrection (*al-ḥashr al-jismānī*). He categorizes that period, presumably the philosophers who came before Avicenna, as that of *al-jāhiliyya al-ūlā*, or the first age of ignorance. The early Muslim philosophers are condemned especially for their supposed claim that the Qurʾānic verses which seemingly support bodily resurrection should be read allegorically.\(^{1247}\)

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Second, on numerous occasions throughout the text Ghiyāth al-Dīn warns the Muslim multitudes against accepting what Ghazālī has to say about matters pertaining to doctrine, or 'aqīda.¹²⁴ According to Ghiyāth al-Dīn, many Muslims, learned or otherwise, have placed Ghazālī on such a high pedestal that his status and authority has become more celebrated and normative than the Prophet of Islam. He ridicules those who ‘consider Ghazālī an Imam whose voice is normative and place his ideas on par with Islam itself’.¹²⁴ Ghiyāth al-Dīn explains that while some philosophers were wrong to deny bodily resurrection, Ghazālī is himself guilty of advocating theological beliefs that are at odds with the Muslim scriptures. For instance, when Ghazālī says the bodies with which we will be resurrected are different to the bodies of our birth, he is contradicting the established Muslim beliefs and going against the sayings of the Prophet.¹²⁵ As many before him, Ghiyāth al-Dīn even accuses Ghazālī of relying on weak reports or solitary transmitted traditions (akhbār al-āḥād).¹²⁵¹

Third, Ghiyāth al-Dīn asserts that when Ghazālī discusses the theory of bodily resurrection in his Iḥyāʾ ‘ulūm al-dīn and in the Fayṣal al-tafriqa bayn al-islām wa-l-zandaqa, he is in fact doing so as a philosopher, or rather he was a soi-disant philosopher (mutafalsif).¹²⁵²


B.2.4: Usul al-‘aqīd fī usūl al-dīn, or īmān al-īmān

In this work Ghiyāth al-Dīn outlines the basic doctrinal tenets of Islam based on a Shi‘i-Mu‘tazili reading of God, Prophethood, Imamate, creation, human agency, and the theory of al-husn wa-l-qubh. It was probably composed sometime before 908/1502, the year of Dawānī’s death, for he refers to the latter as ‘one of our famous contemporaries who has [intellectual] shortcomings’ (ba‘d al-qāṣirīn min al-mu‘āṣirīn).1253

Although this work encompasses a complete survey of the major philosophical-theological issues listed above, Ghiyāth al-Dīn directs a number of critical remarks towards the Ash‘ari beliefs. For example, commenting on the theory of al-husn wa-l-qubh, that is, whether reason or scripture can determine the inherent value of human actions, Ghiyāth al-Dīn concurs with the views of the Shi‘a and the Mu‘tazilis, but describes the Ash‘ari position as ‘neither rational nor acceptable’ (ghayr ma‘qūl wa-lā maqbūl).1254

On the section on God and His attributes, Ghiyāth al-Dīn again criticises the arguments advocated by Ash‘ari theologians who believe in the co-eternity of the divine attributes.1255 On the issue of Prophethood, Ghiyāth al-Dīn argues that Prophethood is a rational necessity; this view, he says, is in concordance with the belief of the Shi‘a and Mu‘tazilis.1256 Similarly, Ghiyāth al-Dīn asserts that Muḥammad was error-free (ma‘ṣūm) before and after the proclamation of prophethood, a view which he says is supported by the Shi‘a and Mu‘tazilis.

However, the Ashʿaris disagree, for in their view Muḥammad was not maʿṣūm before the message.\footnote{Dashtakī, ‘Uṣūl al-ʿaqqāʾīd fī usūl al-dīn’, in Muṣannafat, vol. 1, pp. 54–44.} The proofs for prophecy are three, writes Ghiyāth al-Dīn. First, the teachings of the prophets must be rational; a true prophet does not teach the multitudes that God is a duality, for example. Second, the prophet must invite people to uphold virtue and reject vice. Third, all prophets must bring a sign, supernatural or miraculous.\footnote{Dashtakī, ‘Uṣūl al-ʿaqqāʾīd fī usūl al-dīn’, in Muṣannafat, vol. 1, p. 54.}

Regarding first creation, Ghiyāth al-Dīn maintains that Adam was the first human to be created. But the historical Adam mentioned in the Qurʾan was preceded by ‘thousands upon thousands of Adams’. To support this view, Ghiyāth al-Dīn cites the fifth Shiʿi Imam Muḥammad al-Bāqīr, suffixing his name with the benediction ‘alā ābāʾihi al-kirām wa-ʿalayh al-taḥiyya wa-l-salām.’\footnote{Dashtakī, ‘Uṣūl al-ʿaqqāʾīd fī usūl al-dīn’, in Muṣannafat, vol. 1, p. 53.}

On the issue of existence, Ghiyāth al-Dīn writes that existence is self-explanatory, or a truism that does not require mediating terms (badīhi). In turn, existence is either necessary or contingent. The former is uncaused and does not require an effector. Whereas the latter is contingent upon another existent from without; that is, an existent which is extraneous to it. In true Avicennan fashion, Ghiyāth al-Dīn explains that a series of temporally originated contingents must necessarily terminate with a necessary existent, which must be one, uncaused, and absolute.\footnote{Dashtakī, ‘Uṣūl al-ʿaqqāʾīd fī usūl al-dīn’, in Muṣannafat, vol. 1, p. 45.}
B.2.5: Tajrid al-ghawashi, or Tajrid al-ghawashi wa-tahrir al-hawashi

This not a single work but a series of Arabic super glosses by Ghiyath al-Din upon Dawani’s glosses upon the section of the soul in Qushchi’s commentary (sharḥ) upon Tus’s Tajrid. According Ghiyath al-Din’s son, Sadr al-Din IV, his father began delivering a series of lectures on the 12 Shawwal 946/20 February 1540 in the Madrasa-yi Manshiyya in Shiraz during which Ghiyath al-Din defended the Peripatetic position on the nature of the human soul against the ‘distortions and contaminations’ of Dawani, who by this time had been long dead.\textsuperscript{1261}

Throughout these super glosses, which were finalized by Sadr al-Din IV on the 18 Ramaadan 960/28 August 1553,\textsuperscript{1262} years after his father’s death, Ghiyath al-Din accuses Dawani of misunderstanding Mir Sadr al-Din’s theory on the unification between the body and soul (ittihad al-nafs ma’a al-badn), which according to Ghiyath al-Din concords with the views of Farabi, Avicenna, Bahmanyar, and Tus.\textsuperscript{1263}

In the final analysis, Ghiyath al-Din asserts that Dawani, who believed that the human soul is an abstract substance (jawhar mujarrad), is not sufficiently trained in philosophy to understand the complex philosophical arguments contained in major works like the Isharat and its various commentaries; this, Ghiyath al-Din continues, is due to his propensity to make opaque (ghawashi) philosophical ideas which are otherwise apparent to real philosophers, but not so to Ash’ari theologians like Dawani.\textsuperscript{1264}


B.2.6: *Kashf al-ḥaqāʾiq al-muḥammadiyya*, or *Sharḥ ithbāt al-wājib li-Ṣadr al-Dīn Dashtakī*

This is Ghiyāth al-Dīn’s *magnum opus* and his last ever work. Written in Arabic but interspersed with many Persian verses, this is an elaborate commentary upon Mīr Ṣadr al-Dīn Risāla fī ithbāt al-wājib wa-ṣifātihī. Ghiyāth al-Dīn completed the *Kashf* with the assistance of his son Ṣadr al-Dīn IV, who transcribed what his father said. It was delivered as a series of lectures in the Madrasa-yi Manṣūriyya in Shiraz beginning in Ramaḍān 946/January 1540 and was eventually completed on 11 Muḥarram 947/18 May 1540.

In addition to the commentary on each of the twelve sections, Ghiyāth al-Dīn added three introductory sections (*maṭālib*) and eight concluding remarks (*fuṣūl*). The three *maṭālib* are: section one, brief discussion regarding the standard formula *al-ḥamd wa-l-shukr*; section two, on the spiritual-ontological levels of the human soul, which uses a mystical turn of phrase; and section three, on the philosophical-psychological notion of temperament, or *mizāj*. As for the concluding remarks, which Ghiyāth al-Dīn calls *dhayl fuṣūl al-kashf*, they are: remark one, on causality and efficiency (*fāʾiliyya*); remark two, on the emanation of the temporal from the pre-eternal (*ṣudūr al-fāʾ ilʿan al-qadīm*); remark three, on the

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1265 See §2.2.1 in Appendix A.

1266 See the margins of Ṣadr al-Dīn IV in: Dashtakī, ‘*Kashf al-ḥaqāʾiq*’, in *Muṣannafāt*, vol. 2, p. 739.


1268 Dashtakī, ‘*Kashf al-ḥaqāʾiq*’, in *Muṣannafāt*, vol. 2, pp. 739-750.


1271 Dashtakī, ‘*Kashf al-ḥaqāʾiq*’, in *Muṣannafāt*, vol. 2, pp. 967-970.
composition of the body, which is made of matter (hayūla) and form (ṣūra); remark four, on the celestial bodies and elements (al-aflāk wa-l-ʿanāṣīr); remark five, on the human soul (al-nafs al-insāniyya), in which Ghiyāth al-Dīn asserts that the human soul is detached from the body and that it was created separately (al-nafs al-insāniyya mujarrada ḥāديثa bidūn al-badan); remark six, on bodily resurrection; here Ghiyāth al-Dīn defends his father’s position that bodily resurrection involves the return of the soul to its original bodily parts, not in new bodies; remark seven, on prophecy (al-nubuwwa); and remark eight, a short biography of Mīr Ṣadr al-Dīn, which is the earliest and most reliable bio-bibliographical account we have on Mīr Ṣadr al-Dīn. 

The sections and concluding remarks added by Ghiyāth al-Dīn to Mīr Ṣadr al-Dīn’s original Risāla are, however, brief and succinctly expressed; when put together they do not occupy more than ten pages in modern print, some are as short as a sentence or even one line. The commentary, on the other hand, is extensive and detailed.

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B.2.7: *Al-Kamāl fī ṣifāt Allāh al-muta‘āl, or al-Kamālāt al-ilāhiya*

In this work Ghiyāth al-Dīn explores the essence-attribute problem, focusing on the notions of necessity (*wujūb*) and perfection (*kamāl*), both of which, according to him, characterize the Necessary Being without entailing multiplicity in the divine essence, for neither notions is an entitative or positive determinant (*ma‘nā qā‘im*).

This work was written probably shortly before 949/1542, for in one of the earliest manuscripts of this work there is some evidence to suggest it was written with the assistance of his son Ṣadr al-Dīn IV, who came to his father’s assistance when the later was of old age. An important feature of this work is that it encapsulates the primary objectives of Ghiyāth al-Dīn’s project. It is divided into four sections. In the introduction, Ghiyāth al-Dīn outlines his two primary objectives: first, to highlight the logical incoherency of the later Ash’ari critiques of the Peripatetic tradition in general and Avicennan in particular; second, to provide a corrective reading of the Peripatetic tradition in general and Avicennan in particular.

Structurally, the chapters are broken down into three tier hierarchy: first, Ghiyāth al-Dīn quotes the summary provide by the later Ash’ari theologians of the philosophers’ position on whether the Necessary Being is necessary in all respects (*wājib al-wujūd wājib min jamī‘ jihātihi*); second, Ghiyāth al-Dīn considers the counter-Asha’ri position, or their critiques of the philosophers’ view; third, Ghiyāth al-Dīn

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1277 Given the theme of the work, namely on the notions of necessity and perfection, Ghiyāth al-Dīn takes this opportunity to describe the Ahl al-bayt using the following formula: ‘peace be upon them, the folk of generosity, perfection, virtue, and effusive merit’. See Dashtakī, ‘Al-Kamāl fī ṣifāt Allāh al-muta‘āl’, vol. 1, p. 135.


1279 Dashtakī, ‘Al-Kamāl fī ṣifāt Allāh al-muta‘āl’, in Muṣannafat, vol. 1, p. 135. Interestingly, Ghiyāth al-Dīn is explicit in stating that his prime focus in this work will be on ‘the muta‘akhkhirin’ [i.e. later] Ash’ari theologians.
elucidates his own view on the subject, often citing Avicenna, Ḥāfażī, Bahmanyār, and Mīr Šadr al-Dīn, as the chief representatives of the Peripatetic tradition.\footnote{1280}

As one would expect Ghiyāth al-Dīn uses harsh language to refer to the Ashʿari theologians. More than anyone else, Razī seems to bear the brunt of such condemnatory descriptions. For instance, when considering the logical inconsistency of the theologians claim that the divine attributes are additional to the divine essence, Ghiyāth al-Dīn appears to be quoting directly from Rāzī’s \textit{Muḥaṣṣal}.\footnote{1281} Elsewhere in this work, Ghiyāth al-Dīn says of the later Ashʿari theologians that ‘they failed to properly comprehend the ideas of al-Shaykh al-Raʾīs’\footnote{1282} and ‘their views are often contradictory’\footnote{1283} and ‘they have not been able to grasp [the intricacies of] philosophy’.\footnote{1284}

\section*{B.3: Works on logic}

1) \textit{Taʿdīl al-mīzān};\footnote{1285}

2) \textit{Al-Hāshiya ‘alā tahdīb al-manṭiq al-dawānīyya};\footnote{1286}

\footnotetext{\footnote{1280} Dashtakī, ‘Al-Kamāl fī ṣifāt Allāh al-mutaʿal’, in \textit{Musannafūt}, vol. 1, pp. 139-142, 143, 146, 149, 150. There, Ghiyāth al-Dīn cites a number of Peripatetic works, including Avicenna’s \textit{Shifāʾ}, the \textit{Naḥāj}, the \textit{Mabda wa-l-maʿād}, and Mīr Šadr al-Dīn’s \textit{Risāla fī iṭḥāb al-ḥālīb}.


B.4: Works on mysticism and ethics

1) Manāzil al-sāʾirīn, or Maqālāt al-ʾārifīn (mysticism);¹²⁹¹

2) Al-Ḥikma al-ʾamaliyya fiʾl-tahdhib wa-l-tadbīr wa-l-siyāsa (ethics);¹²⁹²

3) Akhlāq-i Manṣūrī (Persian);¹²⁹³


¹²⁹⁰ It has recently been edited and published in: Musannaft, vol. 2, pp. 1071-1096. This work was completed on Jumādā II 942/December 1535. It is a short Arabic treatise on logic intended for aspiring students. For the locations of extant manuscripts of this work, see Musannaft, vol. 1, p. 112.


¹²⁹² This work was edited by Nūrānī in: Dashtākī, ’al-Ḥikma al-ʾamaliyya’, in Maqālāt 57 & 58 (1374 Sh/1995), pp. 101-130 and again in: Musannaft, vol. 2, p. 1105-1132. It was completed in 949/1542. For the location of extant manuscripts of this work, see Musannaft, vol. 1, p. 112.

¹²⁹³ This work was first edited and published by Nūrānī in: Dashtākī, ’Akhlaq-i Manṣūrī’, in Maʿārif 13 li (1385 Sh/2006), pp. 97-160 and again in: Musannaft, vol. 1, p. 157-238. This work is the first section of a larger Persian work called jām jahān-nāmā. See Shushtarī, Majālīs al-muʾminīn, vol. 2, p. 232;
4) Risālat al-khilāfā;\(^{1294}\)

5) Qānūn al-saltāna;\(^{1295}\)

6) Risāla fil-sayr wa-l-sulāk;\(^{1296}\)

7) Al-Tašawwuf wa-l-akhlāq.\(^{1297}\)

B.5: Works on Qur’ānic exegesis and Shi’ī ḥadīth compilation

1) Maṭla’ al-‘irfān;\(^{1298}\)
1a) Tafsīr kalīmāt muqaṭṭa’tā,\(^{1299}\)
1b) Tafsīr āyat subhān al-ladhī asrā’,\(^{1300}\)
1c) Tafsīr āyat wa-law kān min ‘ind ghayr Allāh;\(^{1301}\)

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\(^{1294}\)This work contains Ghiyāth al-Dīn’s will to his son Šadr al-Dīn IV. See Shushtarī, Majālis al-mu’minīn, vol. 2, p. 231; Khwānsārī, Rawdāt al-jannāt, vol. 7, p. 169; Tīhrānī, Ṭabāqāt ‘alām al-shī‘a, vol. 4, p. 256. This work is lost.


\(^{1296}\)This may be the same as Ādāb al-baḥth. See Tīhrānī, al-Dharrā, vol. 6, p. 9, vol. 13, p. 54; idem, Ṭabāqāt ‘alām al-shī‘a, vol. 4, p. 256.


\(^{1298}\)This work has been edited and published in: Muṣannafat, vol. 2, pp. 299-374. This is a short selection of short exegetical treatises on the Qur’an. In the incipit, Ghiyāth al-Dīn writes: innā hādhihi risāla min rasā‘ īl maṭla’ al-‘irfān al-ladhī nazamtuḥā wa-raṣaṣṭuhu taṣfīrān li-ayāt al-qur’an. Cf. Tīhrānī, al-Dharrā, vol. 21, p. 156; idem, Ṭabāqāt ‘alām al-shī‘a, vol. 4, p. 257; Barakat, Kitāb-shināšī, p. 165.

\(^{1299}\)For the location of extant manuscripts of this work, see Barakat, Kitāb-shināšī, p. 128.

\(^{1300}\)This work has been edited and published in: Muṣannafat, vol.2, pp. 357-374. This work investigates the nature of Muhammad’s Night Journey. For the location of the extant manuscript of this work, see Barakat, Kitāb-shināšī, pp. 126-127.
1d) Ṭuḥfat al-fatā fī tafsīr hal atā, or Tafsīr sūrat hal atā, or Tafsīr sūrat al-insān;\(^{1302}\)

1e) Fī tafsīr al-ḥurūf al-ma‘ajama fī awā’il al-qur‘ān;\(^{1303}\)

2) Al-Ḥāshiya ‘alā awā’il tafsīr al-kashshāf;\(^{1304}\)

3) Sharḥ al-ṣaḥīfa al-kāmila;\(^{1305}\)

4) Ādāb qirā‘at al-qur‘ān;\(^{1306}\)

5) Tahlīliya;\(^{1307}\)

6) Tafsīr surat ḥamd;\(^{1308}\)

7) Al-Kalām fī tibyān kalām Allāh al-‘ālām.\(^{1309}\)

\(^{1301}\) This work discusses the veracity and truthfulness of Muhammad’s message. For the location of the extant manuscript of this work, see Barakat, Kitāb-shināsī, p. 126.


\(^{1303}\) It has been edited and published in: Muṣannafat, vol. 2, pp. 350-356. This work explains the meaning of the ‘broken letters’ of the Qur‘ān.


\(^{1305}\) This work is a commentary upon the Shi‘i psalm of al-ṣaḥīfa al-sajjādiyya which is attributed to the fourth Shi‘i Imam Zayn al-ʿAbidīn. See Amin, Aṣyān al-shī‘a, vol. 10, p. 141. This work is lost.

\(^{1306}\) A short treatise whose date of composition is unknown, this work explains the etiquettes of Qur‘ān recitation and the spiritual rewards associated with this act. For the location of extant manuscripts of this work, see Barakat, Kitāb-shināsī, p. 114.

\(^{1307}\) Tiḥrānī, al-Dhārī‘a, vol. 4, p. 516; idem, Tabaqāt ‘alām al-shī‘a, vol. 4, p. 256. Tiḥrānī has seen a copy in Najāf. Dawānī wrote a similar work with the same exact title.

\(^{1308}\) Barakat, Kitāb-shināsī, pp. 127-128.

\(^{1309}\) This work has been edited and published in: Muṣannafat, vol. 1, pp. 271-296. It was completed posthumously on 20 Shawwāl 961/18 September 1554. For the location of extant manuscripts of this work, see Muṣannafat, vol. 1, p. 109. In this work Ghiyāth al-Dīn discusses the nature of divine speech and as such directs criticisms at Ash‘arī and Ḥanbali positions.
B.6: Works on mathematics

1) Al-Asās;\textsuperscript{1310}

2) Al-Tabṣira fi'l-manāzīr;\textsuperscript{1311}

3) Takmilat al-majāṣī\textsuperscript{1312}

4) Sharḥ ashkāl al-ta'sīs, or Sharḥ risālat ashkāl al-ta'sīs li-Shams al-Dīn Samarqandī;\textsuperscript{1313}

5) Kifāyat al-ṭālib fi 'ilm al-ḥisāb;\textsuperscript{1314}

6) Ḍawābīt al-ḥisāb.\textsuperscript{1315}

B.7: Works on astronomy

1) Risāla fi taḥqīq al-jihāt;\textsuperscript{1316}

\textsuperscript{1310} This work deals with Euclidean geometry and follows the ideas of Ţūsī. Its exact date of composition is unknown but it was probably written when Ghiyāth al-Dīn was in his youth, as was often the case with his mathematical and astronomical works. See Khwānsārī, Rawḍāt al-jannāt, vol. 7, p. 170; Fāsāyī, Fārs-nāma, vol. 1, p. 22; Mudarris, Rayhānāt al-adāb, vol. 4, p. 258; Ţīhrānī, al-Dhārī'ā, vol. 2, p. 4; idem, Ṭabaqāt al-lām al-shī'a, vol. 4, p. 258; Ziriklī, al-'Ālām, vol. 7, p. 304.

\textsuperscript{1311} This work, which is now lost, is likely to be a commentary upon Ţūsī's Tahrīr al-manāzīr.

\textsuperscript{1312} Ţīhrānī, al-Dhārī'ā, vol. 4, p. 416; idem, Ṭabaqāt al-lām al-shī'a, vol. 4, p. 256; Ziriklī, al-'Ālām, vol. 7, p. 304. This work is an Arabic addendum to Claudis Ptolemy's Almagest (al-majāṣī). This is a second-century A.D. mathematical and astronomical treatise on the motion of the stars and celestial objects. Throughout the Islamic medieval era, this work was regarded as an important source of knowledge on the ancient mathematical sciences. It was widely studied, too, in the Latin West and was known by its Latin title Syntaxis mathematica. See Michael Hoskin, The Cambridge Concise History of Astronomy (Cambridge, 1999), p. 44ff.


\textsuperscript{1314} This work is an Arabic treatise on introductory mathematics. See Barakat, Kitāb-shināsī, p. 159.

\textsuperscript{1315} This work is an abridgment of the Kifāyat al-ṭālib. See Ţīhrānī, al-Dhārī'ā, vol. 15, p. 119, vol. 18, p. 94. For the locations of extant manuscripts of this work, see Barakat, Kitāb-shināsī, pp. 155-156.

2) Al-Ḥāshiyya ‘alā sharḥ al-mulakhkhāṣ, or al-Ḥāshiyya ‘alā sharḥ al-Chaghmīnī;\(^{1317}\)

3) Risāla fi ṣan‘at taṣṭīḥ al-usṭīrlāb, or Taṣṭīḥ al-usṭīrlāb;\(^{1318}\)

4) Al-Safīr al-ghabrā’ wa-l-khaḍrā’;\(^{1319}\)

5) Al-Lawāmī’ wa-l-ma‘ārjī;\(^{1320}\)

6) Ma‘rifat al-qībla;\(^{1321}\)

7) Miṣṭāḥ al-munajjinīn;\(^{1322}\)

8) Hayʿat;\(^{1323}\)

9) Nubath min nukat masā’il kitāb al-samā’ wa-l-ʿālam min al-shawāriq.\(^{1324}\)

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\(^{1319}\) This work was completed on 20 Shabān 906/11 March 1501. See Shushtarī, Majāls al-muʾminin, vol. 2, p. 231; Khwānsārī, Rawdāt al-jannāt, vol. 7, p. 169; Ṭihrānī, al-Dhāri’a, vol. 12, p. 192, vol. 25, p. 257; idem, Ṭabaqāt ‘alām al-shī’a, vol. 4, p. 256. For the location of extant manuscripts of this work, see Barakat, Kitāb-shināṣī, pp. 150-152.

\(^{1320}\) This is Ghiyāth al-Dīn’s first written work, which he completed in 884/1479 when he was eighteen years old. It is a short treatise on the subject of astronomy. See Shushtarī, Majāls al-muʾminin, vol. 2, p. 231; Khwānsārī, Rawdāt al-jannāt, vol. 7, p. 169; Fasāyī, Fārs-nāma, vol. 1, p. 22; Mudarrīs, Rayḥānāt al-adab, vol. 4, p. 260; Ṭihrānī, al-Dhāri’a, vol. 18, p. 94. For the location of extant manuscripts of this work, see Barakat, Kitāb-shināṣī, pp. 162-164.

\(^{1321}\) This work was completed circa 938/1532. It is an Arabic treatise on how to determine the direction of the qībla; it is divided into four chapters (maqāṣid): chapter one, determining the direction of the qībla; chapter two, tools used to determine the direction of the qībla; chapter three, prayer times; and chapter four, determining the direction of prayer when pressed for time. It was written as a response to Karaki’s edict according to which all mosques in Khurasan and western Iran were ordered to change the direction of the qībla. See Shushtarī, Majāls al-muʾminin, vol. 2, p. 231; Khwānsārī, Rawdāt al-jannāt, vol. 7, p. 169; Fasāyī, Fārs-nāma, vol. 1, p. 22; Mudarrīs, Rayḥānāt al-adab, vol. 4, p. 260; Ṭihrānī, al-Dhāri’a, vol. 17, p. 42. For the location of extant manuscripts of this work, see Barakat, Kitāb-shināṣī, pp. 167-168.

\(^{1322}\) This work was probably completed in 927/1521. See Ṭihrānī, Ṭabaqāt ‘alām al-shī’a, vol. 4, p. 257.

\(^{1323}\) Ṭihrānī, Ṭabaqāt ‘alām al-shī’a, vol. 4, p. 257.
B.8: Works on medicine

1) Maʿālīf al-shifāʾ;\(^{1325}\)
2) Al-Shāfiyya;\(^{1326}\)
3) Ḥāshiyaʿ alā al-shāfiyya;\(^{1327}\)
4) Risāla fī ʿilm katf al-ghanam.\(^{1328}\)

B.9: Works on the Adabīyāt

1) Al-Ḥāshiyaʿ alā miftāḥ al-ʿulām;\(^{1329}\)
2) Khulāsah al-talkhīs;\(^{1330}\)
3) Diwān shīr;\(^{1331}\)

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1325 A selection of passages from another work by Ghiyāth al-Dīn called al-Shawāriq. For the location of the extant manuscript of the Nubath, see Barakat, Kitāb-shināsī, p. 171.


1327 Barakat, Kitāb-shināsī, p. 137.


1329 This work is Ghiyāth al-Dīn’s glosses on Miṣfāt al-ʿulām fī l-maʿānī wa-l-bayān by Abī Yaʿqūb al-Khwārizmī, commonly known as Sirāj al-Dīn al-Sakākī (d. 626/1229), which deals with syntax, morphology, eloquence, and semantic definitions, including a short discussion on the Liar Paradox sophistry. See Mudarris, Rayhānat al-adab, vol. 4, p. 260; Ṭehrānī, al-Dhārīʿa, vol. 6, p. 214; Ziriklī, al-ʿĀlām, vol. 7, p. 304. For the extant manuscript of this work, see Barakat, Kitāb-shināsī, pp. 138-139.

4) Jumla-yi kāfīya dar ma‘rifat māhiyat-i shī‘r u qāfīya (Persian);\textsuperscript{1332}

5) Ma‘ālim al-arīb fi dirāyat lisān al-‘arab.\textsuperscript{1333}

B.10: Miscellaneous works

1) Jām jahānnamā (Persian);\textsuperscript{1334}

2) Badāyi‘ al-šānāyi‘;\textsuperscript{1335}

3) Ḥāshiyā ‘alā sharḥ mukhtaṣar al-uṣūl;\textsuperscript{1336}

4) Khal‘ al-badan;\textsuperscript{1337}

5) Mawd‘ al-nār.\textsuperscript{1338}

\textsuperscript{1331} See Āqā Buzurg Ṭehrānī, al-Dhārī‘a iša taṣānīf al-shī‘a, vol. 9, p. 1109; idem, Ṭabaqāt al-lām al-shī‘a, vol. 4, p. 256.

\textsuperscript{1332} This is a work on Persian rhythmic poetry, known as qāfīya. For the location of the extant manuscript of this work, see Barakat, Kitāb-shināsī, p. 130.

\textsuperscript{1333} This is a short treatise consisting of twelve points on correct use of Arabic syntax and morphology. For the locations of extant manuscripts of this work, see Barakat, Kitāb-shināsī, pp. 166-167.

\textsuperscript{1334} This is an encyclopaedic work in Persian which contains short discussions on mathematics, natural sciences, philosophy, and ethics, most likely intended for the non-learned class. See Mudarris, Rayhānāt al-adāb, vol. 4, p. 258; Ṭehrānī, al-Dhārī‘a, vol. 5, p. 24; idem, Ṭabaqāt al-lām al-shī‘a, vol. 4, p. 256. For the locations of extant manuscripts of this work, see Barakat, Kitāb-shināsī, pp. 129-130.

\textsuperscript{1335} This is a work of history written in chronological form beginning from Adam until the year 902/1497, which would suggest it was written by Ghiyāth al-Dīn before the rise of the Safavids. See Ṭehrānī, al-Dhārī‘a, vol. 3, p. 65. It is divided into four sections: section one, on the history of the prophets starting from Adam to Muḥammad; section two, on the kings and dynasties of Iran; section three, on Muḥammad and the four caliphs (here Ghiyāth al-Dīn reserves the use of the title ‘the commander of the faithful’ to ‘Ali only), the Umayyads, ‘Abbasids, Saffarids, Samanids, Seljuqs, and Salghurids; section four, on the transformation of kingship from the time of the ‘Abbasids to the Timurids, Āq Qiyūnlū and Qārā Qiyūnlū. Moreover, this work contains many useful biographical information including dates of death. For the locations of extant manuscripts of this work, see Barakat, Kitāb-shināsī, pp. 120-121.

\textsuperscript{1336} This work consists of glosses upon Ḩājī’s commentary on Ibn Ḥājīb’s Mukhtaṣar. For the location of the extant manuscript of this work, see Barakat, Kitāb-shināsī, p. 132.

\textsuperscript{1337} In this work Ghiyāth al-Dīn attempts to demonstrate his ability to separate the body from the soul, at least in theory, which appears to strike a chord with the famous saying attributed to Suhrawardi in some of the sources in which Suhrawardi reputedly said, ‘a true ḥakīm is one who is capable of separating his body from his soul (khal‘ al-badan)’ (see, for example, Muḥammad al-Sanad, Buhārī fi qira‘ at al-naṣṣ al-dīnī (Qum, 2009), p. 51). This work was completed in Sha‘bān 923/September 1517. See Ṭehrānī, al-Dhārī‘a, vol. 7, p. 241.
This work discusses the nature of fire flames. See Barakat, Kitāb-shināsī, p. 171.
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