



# An Avicennian Engagement with and Appropriation of Mullā Ṣadrā Šīrāzī (d. 1045/1636)

*The Case of Mahdī Narāqī (d. 1209/1795)*

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## Abstract

Recent scholarship on Avicenna and Avicennism has tended to focus on the spread and dissemination of his ideas in the early centuries. However, the later readings and contestations of Avicennism especially from the Safavid period onwards have been broadly neglected. In this paper on the most important philosopher of eighteenth-century Iran, Mahdī Narāqī, I provide a case study of the enduring significance of Avicennism, but one which has been transformed by Mullā Ṣadrā's critical reading of Avicenna. Narāqī demonstrates how Avicenna had been transformed and how the metaphysical debates between Avicennism and Mullā Ṣadrā had led to new syncretical positions.

## Keywords

Avicennism – Mullā Ṣadrā – Narāqī – metaphysics – intellect – monism – incipience of the cosmos

A somewhat cursory intellectual history of Islamic philosophical traditions that focuses on the hegemonic authority of schools might yield the following threefold periodisation. The first would be an early 'golden age' beginning with the translation movement and the engagement with Neoplatonising Aristotelianism, critiquing but building upon the tradition of the commentators on Aristotle and on Plotinus, culminating in Avicenna.<sup>1</sup> This would be fol-

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1 Ulrich Rudolph et al (eds.), *Philosophy in the Islamic World, Vol. 1 8th–10th Centuries*, (Leiden: Brill, 2016).

lowed by an age of the ‘pandémie avicennienne,’ both the perpetuation and development of the Avicennian tradition starting with the first generation of his student Bahmanyār (d. 458/1067) and consolidating with the appropriation of Avicennism by the *kalām* tradition and the articulation of the thought of Naṣīr al-Dīn al-Ṭūsī (d. 672/1274), as well as the critiques of Avicenna by Shahrastānī (d. 528/1153), from an Ismaili apophatic perspective, Suhrawardī (d. 587/1191) from a more Platonic perspective, and Averroes (d. 595/1198) from a more ‘orthodox’ Aristotelianism.<sup>2</sup> The final stage (before the modern eclipse of ‘traditional’ philosophy in the Islamic world) would thus be the replacement of Avicenna with Mullā Ṣadrā Ṣīrāzī (d. 1045/1636) as the dominant philosopher of the Islamic traditions from the Safavid period, spreading even to the Ottoman and Indian contexts.<sup>3</sup> Of course, it is entirely possible for each period to have differing and rival conceptions of philosophy debating among themselves. My concern in this paper is to nuance this third period and consider the perpetuation and transformation of the differing modes of Avicennism. The contention is that Mahdī Narāqī’s espousal of Avicenna and critical engagement with Mullā Ṣadrā signalled less a doctrinaire espousal of Avicennism and more a promotion of a highly transformed Avicennism that was already influenced by a Sadrian reading of the work of the master.

Considered from the perspective of contemporary Islamic philosophy in Iran, it seems that the thought of Mullā Ṣadrā Ṣīrāzī (d. 1045/1636) is dominant. The plethora of comparative studies in which Mullā Ṣadrā represents Islamic philosophy as a dominant, triumphal figure, with any number of modern European thinkers seems to suggest as much.<sup>4</sup> Mullā Ṣadrā is championed as the Kant of Iran, and like Thomas Aquinas in the Catholic tradition is analytically, made more continental, is exegetically glossed, and is read for different purposes in identity politics.<sup>5</sup> Similarly, an examination of philosophical tradi-

2 Jean R. Michot, “La pandémie avicennienne au VIe/XIIe siècle,” *Arabica*, 10.3 (1993): 287–344; Ahmed al-Rahim, *The Creation of Philosophical Tradition: Biography and the Reception of Avicenna’s Philosophy from the Eleventh to the Fourteenth Century AD* (Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 2018).

3 Henry Corbin, *La philosophie iranienne islamique aux XVIIe et XVIIIe siècles* (Paris: Buchet Chastel, 1981); Christian Jambet, *Qu’est-ce que la philosophie islamique?* (Paris: Gallimard, 2011); Seyyed Hossein Nasr and Mehdi Aminrazavi (eds.), *An Anthology of Philosophy in Persia, Vol. 5: From the School of Shiraz to the Twentieth Century* (London: Tauris, 2015), esp. 119–528.

4 For example, Muḥammad Fanā’ī Aškivari, *Ma’qūl-i tānī: taḥlīlī az anwā’-yi mafāhīm-i kullī dar falsafa-yi islāmī va garbī* (Qum: Intiṣārāt-i mu’assasa-yi āmūzīš va pażhūhīšī-yi Imām Ḥumaynī, 1387 Š/2008); Alparslan Açıkgenç, *Being and Existence in Sadra and Heidegger: A Comparative Ontology* (Kuala Lumpur: ISTAC, 1993).

5 Sajjad H. Rizvi, *Mullā Ṣadrā and Metaphysics: Modulation of Being* (London: Routledge, 2009), 4–14. On the reception of Kant, see Roman Seidel, *Kant in Teheran: Anfänge, Ansätze und Kon-*

tions in the Qajar period demonstrates the first stage of his dominance when it was the study of his texts that displaced Avicenna from the core of the curriculum.<sup>6</sup> However, it took some time for the hegemony of the Şīrāzī thinker to become established and his work and key ideas were contested from a number of perspectives; for example, his views on the possibility, indeed the necessity for motion (and quantity and quality) to pertain to the category of substance (*ḥaraka ḡawharīya*, against Avicenna) which was an important corollary of his theory of the ontological priority of existence (*aşālat al-wuġūd*) and its modulation (*taşkīk*), were widely disputed.<sup>7</sup> In this paper, I will examine an important episode of Avicennian engagement with the thought of Mullā Şadrā, as expressed in the work of the eighteenth-century thinker Mahdī b. Abī Dharr Narāqī (d. 1209/1795) as an Avicennian philosopher inspired by Mullā Şadrā's reading of Avicenna but also critical of his more mystical intuitions about ontology. But first let us begin with the consideration of the Avicennian tradition in the Safavid period and the earliest such responses to Mullā Şadrā to make sense of the Avicennisms that Narāqī inherited.

## 1 Disputing Avicenna in the Safavid Period

These disputations began in the immediate generation of Mullā Şadrā's students including 'Abd al-Razzāq Lāhīġī (d. 1072/1661) who, on the basis of a defence of Avicennism, rejected the two key elements of Şadrian ontology in his work.<sup>8</sup> But in particular, it was the 'school' of Raġab 'Alī Tabrīzī (d. 1080/

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*texte der Kantrezeption in Iran* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2014). There are plenty of works that pit Mullā Şadrā against Kant. See the works of Murtażā Muṭahharī, such as his four volume commentary on the text of Mullā Hādī Sabzavārī (d. 1298/1873), *Şarḥ-i mabsūt-i manzūma* (Tehran: Intişārāt-i Hikmat, 1363 Ş/1985), and his notes on the lectures of 'Allāma Ṭabāṭabā'ī published in five volumes as *Uşul-i falsafa va-raviş-i ri'ālizm* (Qum: Intişārāt-i Şadrā, 1382 Ş/2003). Muṭahharī and Ṭabāṭabā'ī are known for their deployment of Mullā Şadrā against modern European philosophy—see Urs Gösken, *Kritik der westlichen Philosophie in Iran. Zum geistesgeschichtlichen Selbstverständnis von Muḡammad Ḥusayn Ṭabāṭabā'ī und Murtażā Muṭahharī* (Munich: Walter de Gruyter, 2014).

6 Sajjad H. Rizvi, "Hikma muta'āliya in Qajar Iran: Locating the Work of Mulla Hadi Sabzawari," *Iranian Studies*, 44.4 (2011): 473–96; and *idem*, "Alī Nūrī," in *Philosophy in Qajar Iran*, ed. by Reza Pourjavady (Leiden: Brill, 2018), 125–78, as well as the other contributions in the same volume.

7 'Alī-Rizā Zakāvati Qarāġuzlū, "Sayrī dar naqd-i afkār-i Mullā Şadrā dar čahār qarn-i aḡir," *Āyīna-yi pażūhiş* 10.57 (1378 Ş/1999): 14–21.

8 'Abd al-Razzāq Lāhīġī, *Gawhar-i murād*, ed. by Zayn al-'Ābidīn Qurbānī Lāhīġī (Tehran: Daftar-i tablīġāt-i islāmī, 1388 Ş/2009), 192–6; *idem*, *Şawāriq al-ilhām fi şarḥi Ṭaġrid al-kalām*, ed. by

166g) which rejected the Šadrian theory of existence often on the grounds that there could be no analogy between Creator and created—they preferred a more apophatic approach to philosophy as one can see in Tabrīzī's two main texts on the nature of God, *Proof of the Necessary* (*Itbāt-i vāǧīb*) and the *Fundamental Principle* (*Aṣl al-aṣīl*).<sup>9</sup> In the latter text, Tabrīzī posits four objections. First, he rejected the analogy between the term 'existence' posited for the contingent and for the necessary based on the Arabic Neoplatonic axiom *ex uno non fit nisi unum*.<sup>10</sup> Second, he critiqued the ontological priority of existence by arguing that quiddities are instantiated without existence, and hence they are 'made' (*maǧ'ūla*) by God directly without any need for existence.<sup>11</sup> This broadly follows the position of Ġalāl al-Dīn Dawānī (d. 908/1502) on *maǧ'ūliyat al-māhīya*, although Tabrīzī does not invoke his authority.<sup>12</sup> Third, he rejected

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- Akbar Asad 'Alī-zāda (Qum: Mu'assasa-yi Imām Šādiq, 1391 Š/2012), I, 143–60, 221–4, III, 171–180; *idem*, *al-Kalima al-tayyiba*, ed. by Ḥamīd 'Aṭā'ī Naẓarī (Tehran: Mu'assasa-yi paẓū-hiṣī-yi ḥikmat wa falsafa-yi Īrān, 1391 Š/2012), 130–2, 133–6; Corbin, *La philosophie iranienne islamique*, 103–9.
- 9 Raǧab 'Alī Tabrīzī, *Itbāt-i vāǧīb*, in *Muntaḥabātī az āṭār-i ḥukamā'-yi ilāhī-yi Īrān*, ed. by Sayyid Ġalāl al-Dīn Ašṭiyānī (Qum: Daftar-i tablīgāt-i islāmī, 1378 Š/1999), I, 239–58; Raǧab 'Alī Tabrīzī, *Aṣl al-aṣīl*, ed. by 'Azīz Ġavānpūr Hiravī and Ḥasan Akbar Bayraq (Tehran: Anǧuman-i mafāḥīr wa āṭār-i farhangī, 1386 Š/2007); Nasr and Aminrazavi (eds.), *An Anthology of Philosophy in Persia*, 285–304; Corbin, *La philosophie iranienne islamique*, 83–95.
- 10 Tabrīzī, *Aṣl al-aṣīl*, 26–9. The axiom is best known through Avicenna, *The Metaphysics of the Healing*, ed. and tr. by Michael Marmura (Provo, UT: Brigham Young University Press, 2005), book IX, chapter 4, 328; and *al-Išārāt wa-l-tanbīhāt ma' šarḥay*, ed. by Maḥmūd Šihābī (Qum: Našr al-balāga, 1375 Š/1996), III, 122; and his student Bahmanyār, *Kitāb al-taḥṣīl*, ed. by Murtaḍā Muṭaḥḥarī (Tehran: Tehran University Press, 1375 Š/1996), 531–2. Cristina d'Ancona has suggested that the roots of the axiom lie in the Arabic Plotinus and Proclus—see "Ex uno non fit nisi unum Storia e preistoria della dottrina avicenniana della prima intelligenza," in *Per una storia del concetto di mente*, ed. by Eugenio Canone (Firenze: L.S. Oschki, 2007), 29–55. There are other earlier echoes, for example in the possibly apocryphal Fārābīan commentary on the 'so-called treatise of Zeno': *Šarḥ risālat Zīnūn*, ed. by Ḥāmid Nāǧī Iṣfahānī, in *Ganǧina-yi Bahārīstān Ḥikmat 11*, ed. by 'Alī Awǧabī (Tehran: Kitābhāna, mūza wa markaz-i asnād-i Maǧlis-i Šūrā-yi Islāmī, 1387 Š/2008), 128. For a study that questions the attribution of this text to Fārābī, see Josep Puig, "Un tratado de Zenón el Mayor. Un comentario atribuido a al-Farabi," *La Ciudad de Dios* 201 (1988): 287–321.
- 11 Tabrīzī, *Aṣl al-aṣīl*, 55–60, 68–9.
- 12 Reza Pourjavady, "Jalāl al-Dīn al-Dawānī (d. 908/1502), Glosses on 'Alā' al-Dīn al-Qūshjī's Commentary on Našīr al-Dīn al-Ṭūsī's *Tajrīd al-i'tiqād*," *The Oxford Handbook of Islamic Philosophy*, ed. by Khaled el-Rouayheb and Sabine Schmidtke (New York: Oxford University Press, 2017), 415–37, esp. 422–3, 428–9; Ġulām-Ḥusayn Ibrāhīmī Dīnānī, *Ġalāl al-Dīn Dawānī: fiṣṣūf-i dawq al-ta'alluh* (Tehran: Intiṣārāt-i Hirmis, 1395 Š/2016), 18–20, 59–90.

the Ṣadrian position of motion in the category of substance. Fourth, he denied a mental mode of existence (*wuḡūd dīhnī*)—an issue that was broadly accepted in the Avicennian tradition stemming from Naṣīr al-Dīn al-Ṭūsī (d. 672/1274).<sup>13</sup> However, he did accept the Ṣadrian position on the infallibility of knowledge by presence.<sup>14</sup> Dawānī's positions were broadly eclipsed from the Iranian milieu in this period, which may account for why the tendency associated with Tabrīzī did not survive.<sup>15</sup> In this sense, the *Essence of Philosophy* (*Ayn al-ḥikma*) of Mīr Qawām al-Dīn al-Rāzī al-Ṭīhrānī (d. 1093/1683), despite being more philosophically sophisticated and Avicennian than that of his teacher Tabrīzī, was the last gasp of the school that rejected Ṣadrian innovations in metaphysics and insisted upon the radical ontological and semantic distinction between God and the cosmos.<sup>16</sup> The exception were the Ḥwānsārīs in the seventeenth century whose positions on existence were reminiscent of Dawānī. It was thus left to the mainstream Avicennian tradition to adapt to Ṣadrian positions and to retain a critical attitude.

Therefore, most of the critiques of the metaphysics of Mullā Ṣadrā came from the mainstream Avicennian tradition in their commentary cultures on the *Cure* (*al-Šifā'*) and *Pointers and Reminders* (*al-Išārāt wa-l-tanbīhāt*), and via the commentary tradition on the pithy *kalām* text *Sublimation of Belief* (*Tagrīd al-i'tiqād*) of Naṣīr al-Dīn al-Ṭūsī, and its two commentaries, the 'old' by Šams al-Dīn al-Iṣfahānī (d. 749/1348) and the 'new' by 'Alī al-Qūšḡī (d. 879/1474). That 'orthodox Avicennian' tradition was unhappy with the Ṣadrian shift towards a more thoroughly neoplatonising and mysticising approach to philosophy, moves which were arguably part of the Safavid mainstream through its embrace of the pseudo-Aristotelian *Theologia Aristotelis* and works attributed to al-Fārābī (d. 339/951) associated with the dossier of Plotinus, Proclus and others in Arabic Neoplatonism.<sup>17</sup> The Safavid period was one attuned to the conscious revival of classical heritages, Hellenic and Šī'ī, the former because all

13 Tabrīzī, *Aṣl al-aṣil*, 60–6.

14 Tabrīzī, *Aṣl al-aṣil*, 86–9.

15 Pourjavady, "Jalāl al-Dīn al-Dawānī (d. 908/1502)," 433–5; *contra* Robert Wisnovsky, "Avicenna's Islamic reception," in *Interpreting Avicenna*, ed. by Peter Adamson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 190–213, esp. 209.

16 Mīr Qawām al-Dīn al-Ṭīhrānī Rāzī, *Ayn al-ḥikma wa-ta'liqāt*, ed. by 'Alī Awḡabī (Tehran: Intiṣārāt-i kitābhāna, mūza va markaz-i asnād-i Maḡlis-i Šūrā-yi Islāmī, 1378 Š/1999); Corbin, *La philosophie iranienne islamique*, 206–18. His contemporary did much the same—see 'Alī-qulī b. Qaraḡḡāy Ḥān, *Ihyā'-yi ḥikmat*, ed. by Faṭīma Fanā, 2 vols. (Tehran: Mirāt-i maktūb, 1377 Š/1998).

17 Reza Pourjavady and Sabine Schmidtke, "An Eastern Renaissance? Greek Philosophy under the Safavids," *Intellectual History of the Islamicate World*, 3 (2015): 248–90.

philosophy was ultimately a prophetic revelation and inheritance and the latter because it was the direct legacy of prophecy.

Thus far, as El-Rouayheb observed, we have tended to ignore the critics of Mullā Ṣadrā, especially from the Avicennian tradition, in the intellectual history of the early modern Islamic East.<sup>18</sup> Therefore, we need to re-examine that tradition especially in light of the challenge of Mullā Ṣadrā. He fundamentally undermined Avicenna and Avicennism in a number of ways: he displaced Avicennian substance metaphysics and its hylemorphism with a more process oriented metaphysics of existence in which category theory became redundant; he shifted epistemology away from the binarism of what the external and internal senses perceive and the distinction within intellection between abstraction from sense data and reception of the universals from the transcendental active intellect towards a more monistic reading of knowledge as states of existence and faculties of the soul; and he set aside the Avicennian compromise on the spiritual resurrection of the person sitting alongside the scriptural account of corporeal resurrection with his own hybrid theory of the body of the afterlife being ‘created’ by the human soul as instrument of the divine. His ideas and method were radically different, even when located in Avicennian paradigms and questions.

As Wisnovsky has shown, Mullā Ṣadrā inherited a reading of Avicenna’s *Metaphysics* of *al-Šifā’* and *al-Iṣārāt wa-l-tanbīhāt* that was mediated in the first case by the Šī‘ī tradition of ‘Allāma Ibn al-Muṭahhar al-Ḥillī (d. 725/1325) and the Safavid thinkers and in the latter case by the dual heritage of Naṣīr al-Dīn al-Ṭūsī and his influential commentary *Resolving the Difficulties in the Pointers* (*Ḥall muškilāt al-iṣārāt*) and Faḥr al-Dīn al-Rāzī (d. 606/1210) and his more critical adoption of Avicenna in his own commentary on *Pointers* and his other works.<sup>19</sup> In fact, it was the impact of the latter upon the *kalām* traditions, both Sunnī and Šī‘ī that defined Avicennism in the early modern period.<sup>20</sup> For the

18 Khaled El-Rouayheb, *Islamic Intellectual History in the Seventeenth Century: Scholarly Currents in the Ottoman Empire and the Maghreb* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 361.

19 Robert Wisnovsky, “Avicennism and Early Exegetical Practice in the Commentaries on the *Ishārāt*,” *Oriens* 41 (2013): 349–78; *idem*, “Avicenna’s Islamic reception,” Jon McGinnis, “Naṣīr al-Dīn al-Ṭūsī (d. 1274) *Sharḥ al-ishārāt*,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Islamic Philosophy*, ed. by el-Rouayheb and Schmidtke, 326–47; Ayman Shihadeh, “Al-Rāzī’s (d. 1210) Commentary on Avicenna’s *Pointers*,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Islamic Philosophy*, ed. by el-Rouayheb and Schmidtke, 296–325.

20 Robert Wisnovsky, “One Aspect of the Avicennian Turn in Sunnī Theology,” *Arabic Sciences and Philosophy* 14 (2004): 65–100; Heidrun Eichner, *The Post-Avicennian Philosophical Tradition and Islamic Orthodoxy: Philosophical and Theological Summae in Context*, Habilita-

later tradition in the East, al-Ṭūsī is a pivotal figure since it was his twin contribution to the reading of Avicenna's metaphysics—the postulation of a mode of existence called the mental (*dihni*) and that existence is said of in many ways in a graded or modulated manner (*taškik al-wuġūd*)—that was taken up in the language of ontology.<sup>21</sup> However, it was Mullā Ṣadrā who transferred these key notions into commitments to a particular vision of reality—the modulated singularity of existence (*ḥaqīqa wāḥida muṣakkaka*) was not just about the semantics of the term 'existence' but constituted a description of an actual metaphysics.<sup>22</sup> The *Pointers* tradition was then filtered down through the 'adjudication' (*muḥākama*) of al-Ṭūsī's student Quṭb al-Dīn Taḥṭānī (d. 766/1365), favouring his teacher, followed by the influential glosses of Mīrzāġān Bāġnawī (d. 994/1585). The other important strand of the Avicennian tradition came through the *Tagrīd* of al-Ṭūsī and the *Glosses* of al-Šarīf 'Alī Ġurġānī (d. 816/1414) on the 'old' commentary of Šams al-Dīn al-Iṣfahānī, the two *Glosses* of Ṣadr al-Dīn Daštakī (d. 903/1497) and the three of Ġalāl al-Dīn Dawānī (d. 908/1502) in response on the 'new' commentary by Qūšġī, and then the *Glosses* of Šams al-Dīn Ḥafrī (d. 957/1550) on the proof for the existence of God section (*al-maqṣad al-tālīt fī itbāt al-ṣāni'*) of the 'new' commentary.<sup>23</sup> Ḥafrī was an influential confluence of the two strands because he also wrote a set of glosses on Taḥṭānī's adjudication on *Pointers*.<sup>24</sup> These internal debates in Šīrāz were particularly vehement on the first section of the *Tagrīd* on the ontology (especially whether God could be characterised by 'absolute existence' or *wuġūd muṭlaq*) and on the third section on the divine attributes. We see glimpses of the Daštakī-Dawānī debates in the work of Mullā Ṣadrā himself, but certainly in the many subsequent *marginalia* of the later Safavid period on two *Glosses*: *Glosses* on Dawānī's 'older' Gloss (*ḥāšiya qadīma*) starting with the generation of the students of Dawānī all the way through to the post-Safavid period, broadly

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tionsschrift, Halle, 2009; *eadem*, "Handbooks in the Tradition of Later Eastern Ash'arism," in *The Oxford Handbook of Islamic Theology*, ed. by Sabine Schmidtke (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 494–514.

- 21 Ṭūsī did not invent these concepts in the Avicennian tradition; however, he emphasised their centrality to reading Avicennian metaphysics—see Avicenna, *al-Iṣārāt wa-l-tanbihāt ma' ṣarḥay*, III, 6–7, 17–8.
- 22 Wahid Amin, *Naṣīr al-Dīn Ṭūsī and the Avicennan Tradition: Metaphysics and Mental Existence*, D.Phil. dissertation, Oxford, 2016.
- 23 Šams al-Dīn Muḥammad Ḥafrī, *Ta'liqa bar Ilāhīyāt-i ṣarḥ-i Taġrīd-i Mullā 'Alī Qūšġī*, ed. by Firūza Sā'atčīyān (Tehran: Mīrāt-i maktūb, 1382 Š/2003).
- 24 Šams al-Dīn Muḥammad Ḥafrī, *Ḥāšiya al-muḥākama bayn ṣarḥay al-iṣārāt*, ed. by 'Abd Allāh Nūrānī in *Ganġīna-yi Bahāristān: Ḥikmat I*, ed. by 'Alī Awġabī (Tehran: Intiṣārāt-i kitābhāna, mūza va markaz-i asnād-i Maġlis-i Šūrā-yi Islāmī, 1379 Š/2000), 137–99.

divided into those who defended Dawānī's positions (earlier and then moving beyond Iran) and those who criticised or went further (especially later and among those who remained in Iran), and Glosses on Ḥafīrī throughout the seventeenth century between students of Mīr Dāmād and Mullā Ṣadrā, including those who perpetuated the Dawānī-Daštakī debates. Often commentaries and independent treatises on the same topic cluster around one another as texts are creatures of conversations. Before one can have a fuller intellectual history of the reception of Avicennism through *kalām* commentaries, one would have to study these texts that on the whole are extant in multiple copies.

The Avicennian tradition in the Safavid period could not ignore the impact of Mullā Ṣadrā's glosses on *al-Šifā'*. Most of the Avicennian works in the period before were focused on the commentary cycles of *al-Išārāt* and the *Tağrīd*. The revived interest in the *Metaphysics* of *al-Šifā'* of Avicenna began in Šīrāz with *Cure for the Hearts* (*Šifā' al-qulūb*) of Ġiyāṭ al-Dīn Daštakī (d. 949/1542), who devoted most of his glosses to the definition of philosophy and ontology of book 1 (he wrote a larger set of glosses entitled *Gardens of pleasure* [*Riyād al-riḍwān*] prior to *Šifā'* but it does not seem to be extant),<sup>25</sup> and ran on through the glosses of Mīrzāgān Bāgnawī Šīrāzī, a student of the philosophers of Shiraz, Mīr Dāmād (d. 1040/1631), and his student Sayyid Aḥmad 'Alawī (d. c. 1060/1650); in fact it would not be an exaggeration to say that Mīr Dāmād and his students, taking on the mantle of the Daštakīs, defined the Avicennian tradition for the period.<sup>26</sup> The popularity of both the *Metaphysics* of *al-Šifā'* and *al-Išārāt* is well attested in the sources that mention many teachers of these texts and *marginalia* and commentaries. There were even translations into Persian of these texts by Sayyid 'Alī b. Muḥammad al-'Urayḍī al-Imāmī (d. 1120/1708) who had studied with Ḥusayn Ḥwānsārī.<sup>27</sup>

25 Ġiyāṭ al-Dīn Maṣṣūr Daštakī, *Muṣannaḡāt*, ed. by 'Abdullāh Nūrānī (Tehran: Anḡuman-i mafāḥir va āṭār-i farhangī, 1386 Š/2007), II, 377; *idem*, *Šifā' al-qulūb wa-tağawḥar al-ağsām*, ed. by 'Alī Awğabī (Tehran: Intišārāt-i kitābhāna, mūza va markaz-i asnād-i Mağlis-i Šūrāyi Islāmī, 1390 Š/2011); Āqā Buzurg Ṭīhrānī, *al-Darī'a ilā taṣānīf al-Šī'a* (Beirut: Dār al-aḡwā, 1983), XI, 325.

26 Daštakī, *Muṣannaḡāt*, II, 377–490; Ibn Sīnā, *al-Šifā' (al-ilāḥiyāt): ma' ta'liqāt Ṣadr al-mu-ta'allihīn, Mīr Dāmād, al-'Alawī, al-Ḥwānsārī, al-Sabzawārī, Mullā Sulaymān, Mullā Awliyā' wa-ğayrihim*, ed. by Ḥāmid Nāğī Işfahānī (Tehran: Anḡuman-i mafāḥir va āṭār-i farhangī, 1383 Š/2004); Ahab Bdaiwi, *Shī'i Defenders of Avicenna: An Intellectual History of the Daštakī Philosophers of Shiraz*, Ph.D. dissertation, Exeter, 2014; Robert Wisnovsky, "Avicennism and Early Exegetical Practice." This is not to deny the influence of Dawānī on Mīr Dāmād, but rather to indicate that the Daštakīs ushered in a 'Šī'i Avicennism' whose leadership Mīr Dāmād adopted.

27 Sayyid Aḥmad al-Ḥusaynī, *Talāmīdat al-'Allāma al-Mağlisī wa-l-muğāzūn minhu* (Qum: Kitābhāna-yi Āyatullah Mar'ašī Nağafi, 1410/1989), 44; Muḥammad Riżā Zādhūš, *Dīdar bā*



However, the glosses of Mullā Ṣadrā were well known, extensive, widely attested and posed a challenge.<sup>28</sup> Extant in the manuscript libraries of Iran, there are a number of codices from the seventeenth century including an acephalous holograph (MS Mar‘ašī Qumm 914).<sup>29</sup> His commentary runs to the end of chapter 5 of book 6 of the *Metaphysics* on causality and providence, hence missing out the following books on the proof for the existence of God as the necessary existence, on governance and on eschatology. He also consistently continues the commentary tradition in the East of *al-Iṣārāt* by defending al-Ṭūsī’s reading and criticizing al-Rāzī’s objections. By contrast, the *Key to the Cure* (*Miftāḥ al-šifā’*) of ‘Alawī, an extensive commentary by the son-in-law of Mīr Dāmād, has seven extant codices from the 17th century including the holograph (MS Mağlis-i šūra-yi Islāmī Tehran 1789) but is barely cited in the commentary tradition of subsequent generations.<sup>30</sup> This could also be because he defends Avicennian positions attacked and rendered irrelevant (insofar as they were little discussed afterwards since the debate had moved on) by Mullā Ṣadrā such as his defence of Avicennian eschatology from book 10, a minimalist reading of divine simplicity in chapter 4 of book 8, and his defence of Avicenna’s theory of God’s knowledge of particulars in chapter 6 of book 8, which Mullā Ṣadrā sets aside for his use of the identity theory of knowledge (within a discussion on knowledge by presence—*ilm huḍūrī*).<sup>31</sup> Since he was writing around the same time as Mullā Ṣadrā, it is also quite likely that he was not aware of his reading or did not consider it significant enough to engage.

An example of the influence of Mullā Ṣadrā’s glosses can be seen soon after his death in the glosses on the *Metaphysics* of *al-Šifā’* by Muḥammad Bāqir Sabzawārī (d. 1090/1679), a leading court theologian and himself a student of Ḥusayn Ḥwānsārī, Mīr Abū-l-Qāsim Findiriskī (d. 1050/1641), and of other students of Mīr Dāmād, as well as being a leading court jurist under ‘Abbās II.<sup>32</sup>

*fiṣūfān-i Sipāhān* (Tehran: Mu‘assasa-yi pažūhišī-yi ḥikmat u falsafa-yi Īrān, 1391 Š/2012), 161; Ivana Panzeca, “On the Persian translations of Avicenna’s *Ilāhiyyāt*,” *Documenti e studi sulla tradizione filosofica medievale* 28 (2017): 553–67.

28 Mullā Ṣadrā Šīrāzī, *Šarḥ wa ta’līqāt ‘alā Ilāhiyyāt al-Šifā’*, ed. by Nağaf-quli Ḥabībī (Tehran: Intiṣārāt-i Bunyād-i ḥikmat-i islāmī-yi Ṣadrā, 1382 Š/2003).

29 Muṣṭafā Dirāyatī (ed.), *Fihristvāra-yi dast-nivišt-hā-yi Īrān [Dinā]* (Qum: Al-Hādī, 1389 Š/2010), IV, 308–9.

30 Dirāyatī, *Fihristvāra*, IX, 1037–8.

31 Sayyid Aḥmad al-‘Alawī, *Miftāḥ al-Šifā’*, in *Muntaḥabātī*, ed. by Āštīyānī, II, 39–54, 73–90, 115–43; Mullā Ṣadrā Šīrāzī, *al-Ḥikma al-muta‘āliya fi-l-asfār al-‘aqliya al-arba‘a*, ed. by Sayyid Muḥammad Ḥāminihī et al. (Tehran: Intiṣārāt-i Bunyād-i ḥikmat-i islāmī-yi Ṣadrā, 1383 Š/2004), IX, 199–223, VI, 91–97, VI, 184–217, 251–67, III, 339–47, 481–529.

32 al-Ḥurr al-‘Āmilī, *Amal al-‘āmil fi ‘ulamā’ Ğabal ‘Āmil*, ed. by Sayyid Aḥmad al-Ḥusaynī al-Aṣkiwarī (Nağaf: al-Maṭba‘a al-Ḥaydariyya, 1966), I, 250–2.

Eight manuscripts are extant of his commentary that runs to book 8 of the *Metaphysics*. Sabzawārī consistently cited Mullā Ṣadrā as ‘one of the scholars’ (*ba’d al-fuḍalā’*) or ‘chief of the great scholars’ (*Ṣadr al-afāḍil*). At the same time, he criticised his brother-in-law and teacher (or at the very least fellow student of Findiriskī) Ḥwānsārī on a number of points and supported the positions of Mullā Ṣadrā. On some points he tried to adjudicate between the two; for example, on whether existence that is the subject of metaphysics is an abstract concept (‘absolute existence’ or ‘being *qua* being’), or whether it primarily refers to substance (*ḡawhar*) or whether to God as the ultimate referent for existence, Sabzawārī suggested that the difference between the two was really a semantic squabble (*munāqiṣa lafẓīya*).<sup>33</sup> Sabzawārī approvingly quoted Mullā Ṣadrā arguing that metaphysics does not just study substances but being *qua* being and secondarily provides the subjects of all the other sciences, a position that is critiqued by Ḥwānsārī to whom Sabzawārī responds.<sup>34</sup> Most importantly, Sabzawārī considers Ḥwānsārī’s objections to be misplaced because they seek to defend Avicenna by sticking faithfully to the text as an exegetical exercise. According to him, Ḥwānsārī fails to appreciate that Mullā Ṣadrā’s glosses are concerned with the philosophical meaning and explanation of the issues that Avicenna discusses and not of Avicenna himself (*lā tafṣīr ṣarīḥ al-laḡẓ*).<sup>35</sup> Sabzawārī did not study directly with Mullā Ṣadrā or even with any of his students as far as we know; however, it is clear through his copious citations of the Šīrāzī thinker that he considered him to have fundamentally altered the Avicennian tradition—away from the legacy of Mīr Dāmād—and to have presented a novel and critical way of reading Avicenna. It was this new reading to which Ḥwānsārī and others objected.

It might be useful to catalogue the challenge that Mullā Ṣadrā’s reading posed by considering some of the key issues of dispute with Avicenna in his major works, the *Transcendent Philosophy of the Four Journeys of the Intellect* (*al-Ḥikma al-muta’āliya fi-l-asfār al-‘aqliya al-arba’a*) completed in 1037/1628, and his *Gloss on the Metaphysics of al-Šifā’* completed some time between 1041/1631 and 1044/1634, in which he often refers back to the former work. As such, they are works that represent his mature thought, and it is possible that the incompleteness of his glosses may be due to the fact that he died in 1045/1636.

33 Mullā Ṣadrā, *Šarḥ*, I, 23–4; Sabzawārī, *Hāšiya*, in *Muntaḥabātī*, ed. by Āštiyānī, II, 550–1; Ḥwānsārī, *Hāšiya*, in *Muntaḥabātī*, ed. by Āštiyānī, I, 377.

34 Mullā Ṣadrā, *Šarḥ*, I, 49–50; Ḥwānsārī, *Hāšiya*, I, 378; Sabzawārī, *Hāšiya*, II, 566–7.

35 Sabzawārī, *Hāšiya*, II, 574–5 and 581–2, citing Mullā Ṣadrā, *Šarḥ*, I, 50.

There are three broad areas in which his position was at odds with Avicenna. The first concerns the nature of the structure of existence and its modulation. Whilst allowing for modulation of the concept of existence, Avicenna denies that modulation pertains to the reality of existence or even is an essential feature of existence.<sup>36</sup> Al-Ṭūsī goes further by allowing for that semantic modulation to cover the intensification and debilitation of existence, and Mullā Ṣadrā cites these three ways in which modulation occurs: by precedence, by priority, and by intensity (*al-awlawīya*, *al-aqdamīya*, *al-ašaddīya*).<sup>37</sup> Mullā Ṣadrā therefore critiqued Avicenna for failing to see through the logic of the semantics of modulation. In his critique of the Avicennian position, he once again stipulates that “existence is a simple reality and nature that differs in varying degrees of perfection and imperfection and intensity and debility and priority and posteriority, all of which pertain to its very essence. [...] It is the principle of realities and their essence. [...] If you have realised this, and your heart has opened to it and you have practised your reason on this, then many further subjects of knowledge will be disclosed to your heart.”<sup>38</sup> Therefore, realising the modulated nature of existence opens the ways for resolving many other philosophical *aporiai*.

Second, he took Avicenna (and his followers) to task for failing to understand the nature of the soul and its rational faculty, and in particular for understanding that intellection involves a process of union between the intellecting substance and what is intellected.<sup>39</sup> He cites the important passages in *Pointers* and in the *De Anima* (*fī l-nafs*) of *al-Šifā'* on the denial of the identity thesis.<sup>40</sup> Avicenna's confusion arises from a mistaken conception of the union of the two as well as epistemological infallibilism. As elsewhere, Mullā Ṣadrā's inspiration comes from the Neoplatonic *Theology of Aristotle*.<sup>41</sup>

Third, his position on the essential nature of motion as a feature of existence was contrary to Avicenna. The controversy of motion in substance was recognised early on along with a classic Avicennian criticism that the accidental motion of bodies in this sublunary sphere is an effect of the eternal

36 Ibn Sīnā, *al-Šifā': ilāhīyāt*, ed. by Ğ. Anawātī, Sa'īd Zāyid, Ibrāhīm Madkūr et al. (Cairo: al-Hay'a al-miṣrīya al-'amma li-l-kitāb, 1960), I, 34; Mullā Ṣadrā, *Šarḥ*, I, 129–31.

37 Ibn Sīnā, *al-Išārāt wa-l-tanbīhāt ma' šarḥay*, III, 32–4; Mullā Ṣadrā, *Šarḥ*, I, 129.

38 Mullā Ṣadrā, *Šarḥ*, I, 499–500.

39 Mullā Ṣadrā, *Aṣfār*, III, 339.

40 Mullā Ṣadrā, *Aṣfār*, III, 347–51, citing Ibn Sīnā, *al-Išārāt*, III, 292–296, and Ibn Sīnā, *al-Šifā': fī l-nafs*, eds. Ğ. Anawātī, Sa'īd Zāyid, Ibrāhīm Madkūr et al. (Cairo: al-Hay'a al-miṣrīya al-'amma li-l-kitāb, 1960), 212–3.

41 Mullā Ṣadrā, *Aṣfār*, III, 343, citing (ps.-)Aristotle, *Uṭlūḡīyā*, in *Aflūṭīn 'ind al-'arab*, ed. by 'Abd al-Raḥmān al-Badawī (Cairo: L'Institut français, 1947), *mīmar* VIII, 117.

motion of the celestial spheres. This is pre-empted along with the affirmation that motion in the category of substance is an essential feature of the renewal of natural bodies insofar as they are existent. The very definition of substance goes beyond Avicenna; substances are not just primary referents of existence that exist by virtue of themselves and do not exist in any other substrate, but rather are units of becoming in the hierarchy of contingency that are qualified by the receptivity to change and are constantly in flux.<sup>42</sup> Mullā Ṣadrā put forward at least nine arguments in favour of motion in the category of substance.<sup>43</sup> Three should suffice to demonstrate the critique of Avicenna, since most of the arguments revert to these. The first and most important relates to how substance is the subject, ground and cause of change. All accidental change is predicated on the changing nature of the substance, since it is the substance that is consistently renewing: “The proximate cause for motion must be the ever-renewing existing thing of a fixed essence, and the proximate cause of every type of motion can only be nature that is a substance constituted by the body and occurrent by a species. [...] Therefore it is clear that every body must be an ever-renewing existence.”<sup>44</sup> The point about the ever-renewing nature of existence is tied to his notion of the constant ‘renewal of creation’ (*ḥalq ʿadīd*) that he draws from Ibn ‘Arabī.

The second is that all accidental qualities pertain to the individuated substance that is the referent for the corporeal essence and its changing qualities: “The existence of every corporeal nature is essential to it such that the substance that is continuous, changing, temporal and locational is so by that essence. So quantities and colours and places must be changeable by the existence of the particular individuated corporeal substance and that is motion in substance.”<sup>45</sup> A parallel argument to this is based on the notion of time and its course.

The third relates to the nature of change and how the graduated nature of change as opposed to once and for all discrete changes requires the substrate of that change to be a stable essence of an existent substance in flux, and the ultimate substrate is prime matter.<sup>46</sup> Once again he appeals to something beyond

42 Avicenna, *The Physics of the Healing*, ed. and tr. by Jon McGinnis (Provo, UT: Brigham Young University Press, 2009), book III, II, 260–1; Mullā Ṣadrā, *Aṣfār*, v, 6–10.

43 ‘Abd al-Rasūl ‘Ubūdiyat, *Dar āmadi bih niẓām-i ḥikmat-i Ṣadrā’ī* (Qum: Mu’assasa-yi Imām Ḥumaynī, 1391 Š/2012), I, 323–7. See Mullā Ṣadrā, *Aṣfār*, III, 61–2, 101–2, 104, 177–8, IV, 274, VII, 290–2, VIII, 11–2, and *al-Šawāhid al-rubūbiya fi-l-manāhiḡ al-sulūkiya*, ed. by Sayyid Muṣṭafā Muḥaqqiq Dāmād (Tehran: Bunyād-i ḥikmat-i islāmī-yi Ṣadrā, 1382 Š/2003), 108.

44 Mullā Ṣadrā, *Aṣfār*, III, 74–5.

45 Mullā Ṣadrā, *Aṣfār*, III, 113.

46 Mullā Ṣadrā, *Aṣfār*, IV, 459.

analytic argument by saying that all those with sound mystical intuition recognise that motion must pertain to the substrate before it affects the accidents.<sup>47</sup> The arguments on motion show that Mullā Ṣadrā has little utility for categoriology or for substance metaphysics as such. The link between his arguments for motion in substance and modulation in existence is clear: any change and differentiation in the structure of existence must be predicated on the simple fact that the essential nature of existence is in flux and differentiation but also a principle of unity. This goes flatly against the metaphysical pluralism of Avicenna and his Aristotelian substance metaphysics. Ṣadrīan monism in a sense overwhelms all other considerations as these three challenges show. Insisting upon metaphysical pluralism motivates most of the Avicennian responses.

## 2 Mahdī Narāqī

### 2.1 *Life*

Muḥammad Mahdī b. Abī Darr Narāqī (d. 1209/1795) was arguably the most important philosopher of the eighteenth century and a prolific thinker who engaged critically with the work of Mullā Ṣadrā as well as continuing the Avicennan tradition through his commentaries especially on the *Metaphysics* of *al-Šifa*.<sup>48</sup> In particular one might say it was Mullā Ṣadrā's monism that irked him most. Born in Narāq around 1146/1732, he initially studied in Kāšān (where he later returned to teach), and then trained in Iṣfahān with two thinkers with a reputation for philosophy. The fact that he studied with renowned teachers in Iṣfahān some twenty years after the Afghan occupation suggests the recovery of the city's intellectual milieu and the uninterrupted teaching, transmission and debate on philosophical arguments from the late Safavid period.

47 Mullā Ṣadrā, *Aṣfār*, IV, 457.

48 A recent study is probably the best introduction to his philosophy: Reza Pourjavady, "Mullā Mahdī Narāqī," in *Philosophy in Qajar Iran*, ed. by Pourjavady, 36–65. For his biography, see Mirzā Ḥasan Ḥusaynī Zunūzī (d. 1218/1803–4), *Riyāḍ al-ḡanna: min al-rawḍa al-rābī'a*, ed. by 'Alī Rafī'ī (Qum: Kitābkhāna-yi Āyatullāh Mar'āšī Naḡaḡī, 1370 Š/1991), IV, 567–74; Mirzā Muḥammad b. Sulaymān Tunikābunī (d. 1302/1885), *Qiṣaṣ al-'ulamā'*, ed. by Muḥammad Riḍā Barzigār Ḥālīqī and 'Iffat Karbāsī (Tehran: Intiṣārāt-i 'ilmī u farhangī, 1389 Š/2010), 168–70; Sayyid Ḥasan al-Ṣadr (d. 1354/1935), *Takmilat Amal al-āmīl*, ed. by Ḥusayn 'Alī Maḥfūz, 'Alī al-Dabbāḡ and 'Adnān al-Dabbāḡ (Beirut: Dār al-aḍwā', 1986), V, 492–6; Āqā Buzurg Tīhrānī (d. 1391/1970), *Ṭabaqāt al-'ām al-Šī'a*, ed. by 'Alī-Naqī Munzawī (Beirut: Dār iḥyā' al-turāt, 2009), XII, 543–4; Ġulām-Ḥusayn Ḥudrī, *Ta'mmulī bar sayr-i taṭawwūrī-yi ḥukamā wa ḥikmat-i muta'āliya* (Tehran: Mu'assasa-yi pażūhišī-yi ḥikmat u falsafa-yi Irān, 1391 Š/2012), 319–3; Zādhūš, *Didār bā fiṣṣūfān-i Sipāhān*, 212–4.

His teachers in philosophy were primarily two. The first was Muḥammad Ismā'īl b. al-Ḥusayn Māzandarānī Ḥwāğū'ī (d. 1173/1760), who is often invoked in a lineage that connected the philosophers of Isfahan in the Safavid period with an establishment of Ṣadrian philosophy in the Qāğār period, despite the fact that most of his works are very much of a juristic and theological nature.<sup>49</sup> On the question of the creation of the cosmos he sided with Mīr Dāmād's notion of creation at the mediate level of perpetuity (*ḥudūt dahrī*, albeit on scripturalist grounds) and not Mullā Ṣadrā in his treatise on the *Invalidity of Imaginary Time* (*Ibtāl al-zamān al-mawhūm*).<sup>50</sup> That text is a direct response to Ğamāl al-Dīn Ḥwānsārī's own defence of imaginary time and critique of Mīr Dāmād.<sup>51</sup> As one manuscript (MS Princeton New Series 749) suggests, it began life as a gloss on Ḥafīrī's gloss on the 'new' *Šarḥ al-Tağrīd*. Even his Persian text on existence reflects a critical rejection of monism on scripturalist grounds (being incompatible with the true teachings of the Qur'an and the Imams), rejecting Mullā Ṣadrā's position on the ontological priority of existence (without naming him), and asserting that the unity of existence (*waḥdat al-wuğūd*) cannot be philosophically reasoned.<sup>52</sup> Most of Ḥwāğū'ī's works are scripturalist and theological in nature, but in one case, a treatise entitled the *Guidance of the Heart to Elements of the States of the Afterlife* (*Tamarat al-fu'ād ilā nabad min aḥwāl al-ma'ād*), he defended Mullā Ṣadrā's eschatology of the different bodies of the afterlife, created and re-created by the power of the human soul corresponding to those bodies, as an implicit critique of Avicennism.<sup>53</sup> He similarly responded to the standard critique of Mullā Ṣadrā that accused him of believing in metempsychosis (*tanāsuḥ*) by another method.<sup>54</sup> He did demonstrate his knowledge of the Avicennian tradition, especially the commentary cycle on the *Tagrīd al-i'tiqād* of al-Ṭūsī, but he tied those discussions closely to *ḥadīṭ* to elucidate his points. Ḥwāğū'ī represented a certain tendency, influenced by Mullā Ṣadrā, that considered the teachings of certain

49 Sayyid Muḥammad Bāqir Mūsawī al-Ḥwānsārī (d. 1313/1895), *Rawḍāt al-ğannāt fi aḥwāl al-'ulamā' wa-l-sādāt* (Beirut: al-Dār al-Islāmiyya, 1991), I, 114–9; Mīrzā Muḥammad 'Alī Mudarris-i Tabrīzī (d. 1373/1954), *Rayḥānat al-adab fi tarāğim al-ma'rūfīn* (Tehran: Čāp-ḥāna-y Šafaq, 1954), II, 105–6; Āqā Buzurg Ṭīhrānī, *Ṭabaqāt a'lām al-Šī'a*, IX, 62–4; Ḥudrī, *Ta'mmulī bar sayr-i taṭawwuri-yi ḥukamā va ḥikmat-i muta'āliya*, 274–81.

50 Ismā'īl Ḥwāğū'ī, *Ibtāl al-zamān al-mawhūm*, in Ğalāl al-Dīn Davānī, *Sab' rasā'il*, ed. by Sayyid Aḥmad Tūysirkānī (Tehran: Mīrāt-i maktūb, 1381 Š/2002), 241–83.

51 Ğalāl al-Dīn Davānī, *Sab' rasā'il*, 229–237.

52 Ismā'īl Ḥwāğū'ī, *Risāla fi waḥdat al-wuğūd*, ed. by Rahīm Qāsimī, in *Mīrāt-i ḥawza-yi Isfahān: daftar-i avval* (Isfahan: Ustānlarī-yi Isfahān, 1383 Š/2004), 138–41.

53 Ḥwāğū'ī, *Tamarat al-fu'ād*, in *Muntaḥabātī*, ed. by Āštīyānī, III, 229–306.

54 Ḥwāğū'ī, *Tamarat al-fu'ād*, in *Muntaḥabātī*, ed. by Āštīyānī, III, 264–89.

key *ḥadīth* on ontological and cosmological matters to be entirely homologous with philosophical doctrines, usually of Neoplatonic provenance. Interestingly, Mullā Ṣadrā is nowhere mentioned in the text.<sup>55</sup> Narāqī referred to Ḥwāğū'ī as 'our teacher the verifier' (*ustādunā al-muḥaqqiq*) in his *Ġāmi' al-afkār*.<sup>56</sup> A contemporary source quoted him as having either studied or read or taught the *Metaphysics* of the *Šifā'* at least thirty times and having memorised the entire text.<sup>57</sup> Another contemporary source remembered him as foremost a philosopher (*ḥakīm*) and theologian (*mutakallim*).<sup>58</sup> Nevertheless, it is clear that as a philosopher, his student eclipsed him.

The second teacher was probably Muḥammad Zamān Kāšānī (d. c. 1172/1759).<sup>59</sup> He had *iğāzas* from Sayyid Muḥammad Ḥusayn Ḥātūnābādī (d. 1151/1739) dated 1147/1734, Mullā 'Abd al-Raḥīm b. Ġa'far (d. 1154/1741) the grandson of Muḥammad Bāqir Sabzawārī who had briefly served as Šayḥ al-Islām of Iṣfahān under Nādir Šāh (r. 1736–1747), and Mīrzā Muḥammad Bāqir b. 'Alā' al-Dīn Muḥammad Gulistāna (d. after 1120/1708).<sup>60</sup> We do not know much about Kāšānī but some of his philosophical writings have survived. He wrote a gloss on Ḥwānsārī's supergloss on Ḥafrī's gloss on the *Šarḥ al-Tağrīd* of Qūšğī. Other works of his included treatises in law and a short critique of Sunni traditionalist hermeneutics known as the *balkafa* ('without asking how' on the modality of properties ascribed to God) entitled *Guidance of the Righteous and Errors of Those Who Do not Ask How* (*Hidāyat al-mustaršīdīn wa-taḥṭī'at al-mubalkafīn*) dated 1166/1753, which, on closer scrutiny, is probably more of a critique of Ḥwāğū'ī's scripturalist approach to theology.<sup>61</sup> In his major work entitled *Mīr'āt al-zamān* dated 1162/1749, he defended the position of the notion of 'imaginary' time (*al-zamān al-mawḥūm*), an issue of debate in his time starting with Ġamāl Ḥwānsārī in the generation before him in his commentary on the Dawānī gloss

55 Ḥwāğū'ī, *Tamarat al-fu'ūd*, in *Muntaḥabātī*, ed. by Āšṭiyānī, 111, 294–5.

56 Mahdī Narāqī, *Ġāmi' al-afkār wa-nāqid al-anzār*, ed. by Mağīd Ḥādī-zāda (Tehran: Intišārāt-i ḥikmat, 1381 Š/2002), I, 210.

57 Shaykh 'Abd al-Nabī al-Qazwīnī (d. c. 1197/1783), *Tatmīm Amal al-āmil*, ed. Sayyid Aḥmad al-Ḥusaynī al-Aškiwarī (Qum: Kitābhāna-yi Āyatullāh Mar'asī Nağafi, 1986), 67–8.

58 Zunūzī, *Riyāq al-ğanna*, II, 72–3.

59 Ḥwānsārī, *Rawḍat al-ğannāt*, VII, 119–21; Ḥudrī, *Ta'mmulī bar sayr-i taṭawwuri-yi ḥukamā va ḥikmat-i muta'āliya*, 269–70; Zādhūš, *Didār bā fīlsūfān-i Sipāhān*, 189–90.

60 Sayyid Mahdī Rağā'ī, *al-Iğzāt li-ğam' min al-'ulamā' wa-l-fuqahā' wa-l-muḥaddīṭīn* (Qum: Kitābhāna-yi Āyatullāh Mar'asī Nağafi, 1386 Š/2008), 19–28; al-Ḥusaynī, *Talāmīdat al-Allāma al-Mağlisī*, 93; Zādhūš, *Didār bā fīlsūfān-i Sipāhān*, 189; Āqā Buzurg Tīhrānī, *Ṭabaqāt a'lām al-šī'a*, IX, 94–5, 198–200, 426.

61 Muḥammad Zamān Kāšānī, *Hidāyat al-mustaršīdīn wa-taḥṭī'at al-mubalkafīn*, MS Mağlis-i šūrā-yi islāmī Tehran 1966, fols. 17<sup>a</sup>–32<sup>b</sup>, completed 1166/1752.

on the *Šarḥ al-taḡrīd* of Qūšǧī, and then by his contemporary Ismāʿīl Ḥwāǧūʿī who criticised it in his *Ibtāl al-zamān al-mawhūm*.<sup>62</sup>

From these teachers, we can deduce that Narāqī had a decent grounding in Avicennian thought, tinged with influences from Mullā Ṣadrā, and a desire to connect that study with broadly theological and jurisprudential concerns, as was often the case in the early modern period in which philosophy was rarely compartmentalised from other disciplines in the Islamic East. As a polymath who wrote on a variety of issues and genres, Narāqī was described by his student as one who “unifies in himself the rational and the scriptural” (*ǧāmiʿ al-maʿqūl wa-l-manqūl*).<sup>63</sup>

Spending his final years teaching in Kāšān, Narāqī died on 8 Šaʿbān 1209/28 February 1795, according to the biography written by his son Aḥmad in 1227/1812. His body was transported to Naǧaf and buried near the shrine. There was no student with a significant standing to take on his legacy, despite the fact that his philosophical ideas and influences were the most interesting in the early Qāǧār period (and demonstrated a deep knowledge of the thought of philosophers who came before). He achieved fame at a time when Kāšān was flourishing but Iṣfahān had recovered and the centre of culture and power was gravitating further north. Narāqī represented the culmination of an Avicennan tradition. While his commentary on *al-Šifaʿ* was read, it seems a Ṣadrīan reading of Avicenna prevailed. The success of his contemporary ʿAlī Nūrī’s establishment of Mullā Ṣadrā at the heart of the curriculum meant that at least for two generations Avicennism was eclipsed from the intellectual landscape of Iran until late in the Qāǧār period; the only Gloss on the *Metaphysics* of *al-Šifaʿ*, and that too a rather brief one on book 1, was written by Mīr Muḥammad Ḥusayn Ḥātūnābādī who explicitly sought to revive the reading of Ḥwānsārī albeit perhaps in vain.<sup>64</sup> Certainly, that school of Avicenna seemed long gone by the time of Narāqī’s death.

## 2.2 Works

Narāqī taught for many years in Kāšān and was a prolific writer including a series with the title ‘Friend of’ (*Anīs*) that he wrote in Persian to make theology and Šīʿī law comprehensible to the merchant classes. At a time of the increasing

62 Muḥammad Zamān Kāšānī, *Mirʿat al-zamān*, ed. by Mahdī Dihbāšī (Tehran: Anǧūman-i mafāḥir va āṭār-i farhangī, 1384 Š/2005).

63 Muḥammad Ġaʿfar Kabūdarāhangī “Maǧdūb ʿAlī Šāh” (d. 1238/1823), *Mirʿat al-ḥaqq*, ed. Ḥāmid Nāǧī Iṣfahānī (Tehran: Intišārāt-i Mawlā, 1383 Š/2004), 70.

64 Mīr Muḥammad Ḥusayn b. ʿAbd al-Bāqī Iṣfahānī Ḥātūnābādī, *Ḥāšiyat al-Šifaʿ*, ms Marʿašī Qum 4838, autograph, foll. 1–2.



dominance of the school of Mullā Ṣadrā, he remained an important Avicennian voice and followed the work and philosophical method of Ṭūsī, writing a number of studies in astronomy and mathematics including *al-Mustaṣṣā fi 'ulūm al-hay'a*, a large and comprehensive text on astronomy in Arabic in four chapters, *Muḥaṣṣal masā'il al-hay'a*, six chapters on astronomy, *Tahrīr* (Persian explanatory translation) of Ṭūsī's version of the *Sphaerics* of Theodosius of Bithynia (d. c. 100 BCE), *Tawḍīḥ al-iškāl*, a Persian translation of Ṭūsī's work on Euclid (*Tahrīr Uqlidūs*), and some *Glosses* on the *Almagest* (*al-Mağisṭī*) of Ptolemy.

In philosophy and theology, his major works included the following, starting with the commentaries on Avicenna and the Avicennian tradition. His commentary on the *Metaphysics* of *al-Šifa'* of Avicenna covers the most glossed sections of the first two books (*maqāla*) ending in chapter 4 of book 2. He demonstrated an excellent understanding of the Avicennian tradition through his critical use of the views of Bahmanyār, Našīr al-Dīn al-Ṭūsī, Faḥr al-Dīn al-Rāzī and Quṭb al-Dīn Taḥṭānī Rāzī.<sup>65</sup> He deployed Faḥr al-Dīn al-Rāzī as a representative of the Avicennian tradition—just as Mullā Ṣadrā did before—through his *Eastern Discussions* (*al-Mabāḥiṭ al-mašriqiya*); for example, when he wished to cite an Avicennian authority on the principle that once a thing becomes non-existent, it cannot return to its prior state (*i'adat al-ma'dūm*).<sup>66</sup> He also cited the Šīrāzī philosophers, Sayyid Ṣadr al-Dīn (often just named as *al-Sayyid*) and Ġiyāṭ al-Dīn (*Ġiyāṭ al-ḥukamā'*) Daštakī, as well as Šams al-Dīn Ḥafri; in fact there is a strong sense in which he might be citing their views via *al-Asfār* of Mullā Ṣadrā. Often it seems that he adjudicates between the Ḥwānsārīs and Mullā Ṣadrā preferring the former at times, supporting the latter as well; this is at times done through a defence of the Šīrāzī philosophers against Ḥwānsārī (since Mullā Ṣadrā supported the positions of the Šīrāzīs).<sup>67</sup> He consistently refers to Mullā Ṣadrā as the Šīrāzī mystic (*al-'arif al-Šīrāzī*).<sup>68</sup> Further, he demonstrates his own independence from the Ṣadrian and Avicennian traditions, criticising al-Ṭūsī's position on explaining the empirical nature of causality, or Avicenna himself rejecting *taqlīd*, or claiming at times that Mullā Ṣadrā failed to understand Avicenna.<sup>69</sup>

65 Mahdi Narāqī, *Šarḥ al-ilāhīyāt min kitāb al-Šifā'*, ed. by Ḥamid Nāgī Iṣfahānī (Qum: Hamā-yi-š-i Mullā Narāqī, 1380 Š/2001), 1, 363, 449, 457, 724, 25, 417, 523, 737, 332, 327, 764.

66 Narāqī, *Šarḥ al-ilāhīyāt min kitāb al-Šifā'*, 1, 459, citing Faḥr al-Dīn al-Rāzī, *al-Mabāḥiṭ al-mašriqiya fi 'ilm al-ilāhīyāt wa-l-ṭabī'iyāt* (Tehran: Maktabat al-Asadī, 1966), 1, 47–8.

67 Narāqī, *Šarḥ al-ilāhīyāt*, 1, 764–8.

68 Narāqī, *Šarḥ al-ilāhīyāt*, 1, 147, 151, 165.

69 Mahdi Narāqī, *Šarḥ al-ilāhīyāt*, 1, 63, 11, 809, 1, 154, 194.

His other major philosophical commentary was *Compendium of Thoughts and Critique of Opinions* (*Ġāmi' al-afkar wa-nāqid al-anzār*), completed in Kāšān in Rabī' I 1193/1779, on the proofs for the existence of God and Avicennian metaphysics. Although it appears to be an independent treatise that is incomplete, it is in effect a gloss on the commentary cycle of *Tağrīd al-i'tiqād*. In *Qurrat al-'uyūn* completed in 1182/1768, Narāqī said that he wrote *Ġāmi'* on the commentary cycle on Avicenna's *al-Išārāt wa-l-tanbihāt*.<sup>70</sup> This suggests that the *Ġāmi'* was probably commenced more than a decade before its completion date. Although the cycle of *al-Išārāt* is mentioned often (but not as frequently as the *Metaphysics* of *al-Šifā'*), he stated in the introduction that he would discuss the nature of God and his attributes following the commentaries on the 'New Commentary' (*šarḥ ġadīd*) on the *Tağrīd al-i'tiqād* by 'Alī al-Qūšġī.<sup>71</sup> As we mentioned above, the third section (*al-maqṣad al-tālīt*) of the *Tağrīd* on the proof for the existence of a creator (*itbāt al-šāni'*) was a much glossed text that reflected the Avicennian tradition; most of the Safavid and later glosses built upon the one by Ḥafri who focused his analysis on the three attributes of power (which includes how God creates and the relation between God and the cosmos or the eternal and the mutable), knowledge, and speech, along with an Avicennian proof for divine simplicity.<sup>72</sup> Nārāqī followed these emphases: his work is divided into three sections (*abwāb*)—the first two on kataphatic affirmations of God's power and knowledge, and the third on apophatic denials of what God is not that follows the analysis of divine simplicity. These are prefaced by the long discussion on establishing the existence of God which examines some of the key assumptions in the Avicennian argument: the impossibility of an infinite regress, the nature of causality, the process of preponderance whereby a cause brings into existence something that was previously indifferent to existence and non-existence, and the different ways in which philosophers, theologians and Sufis demonstrate the existence of God.<sup>73</sup> If one keeps in mind the typology of arguments that are mentioned by al-Tūsī in his *Šarḥ al-išārāt*, then the naturalistic argument from motion is missing.<sup>74</sup>

He wrote a few independent treatises. *Cooling of the Eyes* (*Qurrat al-'uyūn*), a treatise on existence and essence that attracted the critical attention of 'Alī

70 Mahdi Narāqī, *Qurrat al-'uyūn fi-l-wuġūd wa-l-māhīya*, ed. by Ḥasan al-'Ubaydī (Beirut: al-Maḥaġġa al-baydā', 2009), 54.

71 Narāqī, *Ġāmi' al-afkar*, I, 1.

72 Ḥafri, *Ta'liqa bar Ilāhīyāt*, 99–155, 169–99, 207–19.

73 Narāqī, *Ġāmi' al-afkar*, I, 4–148; see also Firouzeh Saatchian, *Gottes Wesen—Gottes Wirken: Ontologie und Kosmologie im Denken von Šams al-Dīn Muḥammad al-Ḥafri (gest. 942/1535)* (Berlin: Franz Schwarz Verlag, 2011), 128–96.

74 Ibn Sīnā, *al-Išārāt wa-l-tanbihāt*, III, 66–7.

Nūrī and Shaykh Aḥmad al-Ahsā'ī, was completed in Rabī' II, 1182/1768 and in some ways acts as a companion work to *Ġāmi' al-afkār*.<sup>75</sup> There are fourteen discussions ranging from the ontological priority of existence and the modulation of existence to how it is existence that is emanated from God, but it also contains an important critique of the views of Dawānī on existence (section twelve) and a refutation of the monist doctrine of the unity of existence (*waḥdat al-wuġūd*) in section thirteen.<sup>76</sup> It is precisely those last few chapters on the unity of existence that mark out the distinction of this treatise, and they constitute the longest section of the text. His critique actually drew on Mullā Ṣadrā's criticism of the position of Ṣadr al-Dīn Qūnawī (d. 673/1274) via that of 'Alā' al-Dawla al-Simnānī (d. 736/1336), and he provided seven ways of making sense or 'correcting' the concept of the unity of existence.

He also has a trilogy of texts in Arabic in descending complexity of argument and length of discussion that all begin with an ontological preliminary on the nature of existence and essence. The first is *Flashes from the Divine Empyrean* (*al-Lama'āt al-'aršīya*).<sup>77</sup> In the introduction he announced five sections: on existence and essences (general ontology), on the attributes of God and divine agency, on the nature of his creation and the emanation of the cosmos, on the nature of the human soul and its activities, and on prophecy and resurrection. However, the text seems incomplete as it finishes with the discussion on Mīr Dāmād's notion of perpetual creation at the end of section three. The second section overlaps with elements of *Ġāmi' al-afkār* and the first section is his most detailed exposition of his general ontology where the broad influence of Mullā Ṣadrā's tripartite doctrine of the ontological priority of existence, its modulation and its emanation is clear (*aṣālat al-wuġūd*, *taškik al-wuġūd* and *maġ'ūliyat al-wuġūd*).

Then its epitome is *Divine Flash on Transcendental Philosophy* (*al-Lum'a al-ilāhīya fi-l-ḥikma al-muta'ālīya*) on the Ṣadrian tradition.<sup>78</sup> It is divided into five sections (*bāb*) with each further divided into flashes (*lum'a*): existence and essence (including the Ṣadrian arguments for the ontological priority and modulation of existence and the chain of existence as the direct creation of God); proof for the existence of God (following the Avicennian model of the Nec-

75 The newer edition by al-'Ubaydī includes the glosses on Bīdābādī responding on the question of monism—see Narāqī, *Qurrat al-'uyūn*, 263–73.

76 Mahdī Narāqī, *Qurrat al-'uyūn*, ed. by Sayyid Ġalāl al-Dīn Āštīyānī (Tehran: Institute of Philosophy, 1978), 138–60, 161–235.

77 Mahdī Narāqī, *al-Lama'āt al-'aršīya*, ed. by 'Alī Awġabī (Tehran: Intišārāt-i kitābhāna, mūza va markaz-i asnād-i Maġlis-i Šūrā-yi islāmī, 1381 Š/2002).

78 Mahdī Narāqī, *al-Lum'a al-ilāhīya wa-l-kalīmāt al-waġīza*, ed. by Sayyid Ġalāl al-Dīn Āštīyānī (Tehran: Institute of Philosophy, 1978), 51–129.

essary existence) and his properties, especially knowledge, power and speech; emanation and cosmogony including the Şadrian notion of nobler possibility (*imkān ašraf*), Platonic forms and the nature of the creation of the cosmos (*ḥudūt al-‘ālam*); the nature of the soul and its lives, including a refutation of metempsychosis, and affirmation of the ontological status of the realm of similitudes (*‘ālam al-mitāl*); and prophecy and his mission (but there is no discussion of the imamate).

Finally, the shortest version is its epitome *Pithy Words (al-Kalimāt al-waǧīza)*,<sup>79</sup> which is divided into six sections: existence and properties of essence, including a discussion of the nature of creation, on individuation, on the analogy of existence and the different considerations (*i’tibārāt*) of essence; on the existence of God, his knowledge, agency and speech; on emanation and cosmogony, including the nature of the creation of the cosmos and how the argument of Mīr Dāmād is better than either the notion of imaginary time (*al-zamān al-mawhūm*) or the Sadrian notion of motion in substance;<sup>80</sup> on the nature of the soul and refutation of metempsychosis; on prophecy; and on the imamate and its rational incumbency based on the principle of divine facilitating grace (*lutf*).

### 2.3 Thought

Narāqī was a thoughtful critic of Mullā Şadrā, following him on some issues and not on others. For example, a question that was of debate in the Safavid period following the philosophers of Şīrāz was the consideration of the God-world relationship through the existence-essence distinction that pertained to contingents in the Avicennian tradition. Narāqī sided with Mullā Şadrā on two related points here: when considering contingent beings which were conceptual composites of existence and essence, it was the former that was ontologically prior, the Şadrian doctrine known as the ontological priority of existence (*aşālat al-wuǧūd*); concomitantly therefore, what is produced by God is existence and not essence (*maǧ‘ūliyat al-wuǧūd*).<sup>81</sup> The ultimate referent for existence, on the basis of which we have a derivative concept of existence and which we then apply to contingents, is God insofar as he is a simple reality (*ḥaqīqa basīṭa*) devoid of an essence (*muǧarrad ‘an al-māhīya*).<sup>82</sup> The mind then analyses the two aspects of each contingent as its existence (the deriva-

79 Narāqī, *al-Lum‘a al-ilāhīya*, 133–55.

80 Narāqī, *al-Lum‘a al-ilāhīya*, 148.

81 Narāqī, *Ġāmi‘ al-aḥkām*, 1, 439; *idem*, *al-Lama‘āt al-‘arşīya*, 19–22; *idem*, *Qurrat al-‘uyūn*, 57–60.

82 Narāqī, *al-Lama‘āt al-‘arşīya*, 5.

tive concept of it) and its essence, holding them to be mentally and conceptually distinct.<sup>83</sup> He seems to hold that the conceptual distinction of essence and existence in the phenomenal world does not map onto reality; like Mulla Sadra, he does not think that essences exist in extramental reality.<sup>84</sup> If it were essences that were ontologically prior, that would entail an infinite regress of non-existent things and nothing would exist.<sup>85</sup> Essences insofar as they are universals do not exist *in re* and that by which something is what it is in its individuation is due to existence and not essence.<sup>86</sup> Concomitantly, he holds that the different existents are related to one another through the semantics of modulation; existence is said of in many ways arranged in a modulated manner (*mušakkaka*).<sup>87</sup> On a related issue of ontology, he agrees with Mullā Ṣadrā's presentation of nobler possibility which is the manner in which causality works in the hierarchy of existence whereby the nobler causes what is lesser, and the lesser desires the nobler; this is ultimately a proof for the intelligible realm and the hierarchical nature of emanation.<sup>88</sup> Yet, he recognises, like others before him from the Avicennian tradition that Mullā Ṣadrā was not an 'orthodox' adherent of Avicennism, and he consistently refers to him as the Shirazi mystic (*al-ʿarif al-širāzī*).<sup>89</sup> One further point on which he differs with Avicenna and broadly agrees at one level with Mullā Ṣadrā is in his affirmation of the reality of Platonic forms drawing upon Suhrawardī as well as the *Theology of Aristotle*, thus in a sense defending what he considers to be 'orthodox' Aristotelianism against Avicenna.<sup>90</sup>

He upheld the Sadrian infallibilist position on epistemology, which is based on the identity thesis (*ittiḥād al-ʿāqil wa-l-maʿqūl*) and 'knowledge by presence' (*ʿilm ḥuḍūrī*).<sup>91</sup> Consistent with Mulla Sadra and other thinkers of a broadly Platonist persuasion in the Safavid period, but contrary to Avicenna, he affirms the existence of an ontological realm known as the 'world of images' (*ʿālam al-miṭāl*).<sup>92</sup>

Nevertheless, he is critical of a number of Ṣadrian positions. First, while he adopted the notion of modulation in existence (*taškīk al-wuḡūd*), follow-

83 Narāqī, *al-Lamaʿāt al-ʿaršīya*, 8–9.

84 Narāqī, *Qurrat al-ʿuyūn*, 54–8.

85 Narāqī, *al-Lamaʿāt al-ʿaršīya*, 6.

86 Narāqī, *al-Lamaʿāt al-ʿaršīya*, 9.

87 Narāqī, *al-Lamaʿāt al-ʿaršīya*, 23.

88 Narāqī, *al-Lamaʿāt al-ʿaršīya*, 403–13.

89 Narāqī, *Qurrat al-ʿuyūn*, 109, 121, 178, 190, 196, 197, 201.

90 Narāqī, *al-Lamaʿāt al-ʿaršīya*, 446–55; Mullā Ṣadrā, *Aṣfār*, VI, 178–228.

91 Narāqī, *Qurrat al-ʿuyūn*, 76–8; Narāqī, *al-Lamaʿāt al-ʿaršīya*, 12–4.

92 Narāqī, *Qurrat al-ʿuyūn*, 111–5.

ing Ṭūsī, he considered it to be merely a logical concept and not something that pertains to actuality, nor is it something which is essential to the reality of existence, and in fact in doing so he might be reflecting a more ‘orthodox’ Avicennism stemming from Naṣīr al-Dīn Ṭūsī.<sup>93</sup> He explicitly ruled out the possibility of a singular but modulated reality of existence, not least because of his opposition to ontological monism.<sup>94</sup>

Second, his most important disagreement lies in the issue of the hypostatic unity of existence. While accepting the possibility of a mystical intuition for the unity of existence (*waḥdat al-wuḡūd*), he does not think it can be rationally demonstrated or known.<sup>95</sup> He asserts that the Sufi contention that God is absolute existence (*wuḡūd muṭlaq*) and that existence is something singular, simple and undifferentiated (*amr basīṭ šaḥṣī*) both violate our common sense observations (*mušāhada*), intellect (*‘aql*) and intuition that, in actuality, there is a multiplicity of existents in reality.<sup>96</sup> This is, as he says, despite the fact that “all great Sufis” agree that the intellect should decide such matters.

But it is not just the simple notion of the unity of existence that is undifferentiated and that seems to come from Qūnawī that he criticises. He critiqued Mullā Ṣadrā’s version of monism as well as Ibn ‘Arabī’s—that is the main thrust of his treatise the *Cooling of the Eyes*. He argues concomitantly that the issue of the simple reality being all things (*basīṭ al-haqīqa kullu l-ašyā*) is not established.<sup>97</sup> He did not approve of the extension of Avicenna’s point about divine simplicity in a monist direction. It seems that his own sympathies lay with a metaphysical exposition that is a more Avicennian version of Mulla Ṣadrā. To critique the point, he posited the following argument. Consider the concept of Zayd and the concomitant concepts that we may have—that Zayd is a human, that he is a writer and that he is not a horse. All of these cannot be at the same level united as one, because the law of the excluded middle does not allow for Zayd to be some existence (a writer) and some non-existence (not-horse) at the same time.<sup>98</sup> With Avicenna, he affirms the actual plurality of contingent existents.<sup>99</sup> He cited previous critics of Mullā Ṣadrā on the issue of unity, drawing upon Ḥwānsārī and Muḥammad Tunikābunī known as Fāzil-i

93 Narāqī, *al-Lama’āt al-‘aršīya*, 22–5; *idem*, *Qurrat al-‘uyūn*, 65–70; *idem*, *al-Lum’ā al-ilāhīya*, 79; *idem*, *Šarḥ al-ilāhīyāt*, I, 426–9.

94 Narāqī, *al-Lama’āt al-‘aršīya*, 30–1.

95 Narāqī, *Qurrat al-‘uyūn*, 218–21; *idem*, *Ġāmi’ al-afkār*, I, 138–41.

96 Narāqī, *Ġāmi’ al-afkār*, I, 139–41.

97 Narāqī, *Qurrat al-‘uyūn*, 205.

98 Narāqī, *Qurrat al-‘uyūn*, 202.

99 Narāqī, *Qurrat al-‘uyūn*, 115–20.

Sarāb (d. 1124/1713); he also cited Ḥwānsārī's contention that the Sadrian position reflects the dominance of poetic language over rational content.<sup>100</sup> And in an implicit critique of the Ṣadrian equation of knowledge and existence, he contended that the fallacy of the unity of existence reverts to the conflation of ontology and epistemology.<sup>101</sup>

Narāqī suggested that Mullā Ṣadrā has been misled by Ḥafīrī and quoted in detail the latter's position that only God exists and everything else is merely a mental conceptualisation that we have from the conceptualisation of God's existence; and that God is hidden and contingents are the manifest, but in actuality they are indistinct since the hidden and manifest are aspects of the same thing.<sup>102</sup> Narāqī cannot accept such dissolution of the ontological distinction between the creator and the created. He summarises the position in the following manner:

The doctrine of the Sufis and explicit sayings of many recent scholars is that existence and the existent are one but that this singular existence is taken in different considerations whereby the levels of that existence are only considerations posited in the mind because reality across all levels is one. The mentally posited distinction is sometimes negatively conditioned (*bi-ṣarṭ lā-ṣay'*), sometimes unconditioned (*lā bi-ṣarṭ'*) and sometimes conditioned (*bi-ṣarṭ ṣay'*) due to the descent of existence from the highest level to the remainder. [...] Contingent existences are conceptualisations in the mind, manifestations and disclosures of the Real existence and rays of his light and shadows of his illumination.<sup>103</sup>

Part of the problem for Narāqī is Mullā Ṣadrā's claim that he knows this on the basis of a mystical intuition and not on the basis of rational proof; and the fact that he uses poetical language by describing contingents as mirrors of the divine.<sup>104</sup> But more significantly, although Ṣadrā does not say so explicitly, in effect the Sufi position of unity makes the totality of existence into an essence that can be conditioned in three ways and seems to point towards the onto-

100 Narāqī, *Qurrat al-'uyūn*, 234–5.

101 Narāqī, *Qurrat al-'uyūn*, 217.

102 Narāqī, *Qurrat al-'uyūn*, 181–3; Ḥafīrī, *Sitt rasā'il fī itbāt wāǧib al-wuǧūd bi-l-dāt wa fī l-ilāhīyāt*, ed. by Firūza Sā'atīyān (Tehran: Intišārāt-i kitābhāna, mūza va markaz-i asnād-i Maǧlis-i Šūrā-yi islāmī, 1390 Š/2011), 152–3.

103 Narāqī, *Qurrat al-'uyūn*, 185–7.

104 Narāqī, *Qurrat al-'uyūn*, 190.

logical priority of essence (*aṣālat al-māhīya*). Furthermore, it conflates two possible senses of ‘absolute existence,’ the former being a concept abstracted from one’s observation of contingent essences and the other being the actual pure existence of the divine.<sup>105</sup> This is one of the reasons why he rejected Mullā Ṣadrā’s appropriation of the modalities of essence for an analysis of existence. Mullā Ṣadrā takes the three considerations of essence (*lā bi-ṣarṭ, bi-ṣarṭ lā ṣay’, bi-ṣarṭ ṣay’*) from the *Metaphysics* of *al-Šifā’* and applies them to the three ways in which to consider existence while retaining its unity, and which he calls absolute (*mutlaq*), delimited (*muqayyad*) and deployed existence (*munbasiṭ*).<sup>106</sup> Narāqī summarised his objection:

As for these three levels of existence, I mean reality taken negatively conditioned, reality unconditioned and reality with a condition, either they must be distinct in actuality (*fī l-wāqī’*) and the fact itself (*naḥs al-amr*) or they must be distinct simply in the mind and in consideration. If it is the former, then unity of existence is not realised because the existence of the Necessary is one thing, and the existence of contingents another. And that third mode of existence—existence deployed (*munbasiṭ*) is another thing again. But none of the Sufis claim this nor does the mystic [Mullā Ṣadrā] claim so as is clear in the passages presented. If it is the latter, as seems to be explicit in the writings of Sufis and resembles what is quoted above from the mystic [Mullā Ṣadrā], then there is no distinction between these levels in actuality but only in mental consideration, and thus one could apply Real existence to the first level or to the second or any, and how can one grasp one thing from these differences?<sup>107</sup>

The problem is that Sufis—and he cites Ibn ‘Arabī as well as Mullā Ṣadrā’s approval—sometimes use unconditioned reality of existence and sometimes negatively conditioned reality of existence to apply to God. This reverts to the old problem of the conflation of two senses of absolute existence mentioned.

Third, on the incipience of the soul, Narāqī rejects the Sadrian doctrine that the soul is corporeal in its incipience and argues for its spiritual incipience (*rūḥanīyat al-ḥudūt*) consistent with the Avicennian tradition.<sup>108</sup> In fact, the

105 Narāqī, *Qurrat al-‘uyūn*, 172.

106 Ibn Sīnā, *al-Šifā’: al-ilāhīyāt*, I, 213–9; Mullā Ṣadrā, *Asfār*, II, 15–6, II, 330–2, 346–7.

107 Narāqī, *Qurrat al-‘uyūn*, 175–8.

108 Narāqī, *al-Lum’a al-ilāhīya*, 96–101.



radical distinction between body and the soul and the fact that the soul does not become corrupted or non-existent with the corruption of the body means that its origins and its final state are non-material and non-corporeal in reality. Part of the reason is that one thing cannot become another—and Narāqī rejected motion in substance.<sup>109</sup>

Furthermore, on the question of the incipience of the cosmos, he sets aside Mullā Ṣadrā's theory of motion in substance as a means for reconciling an eternal cosmos with God's creative agency, and opts instead, following his teacher Ḥwaḡū'i, for Mīr Dāmād's notion of perpetual creation (*ḥudūt dahrī*).<sup>110</sup> In the *Flashes from the Divine Empyrean*, he begins by setting out three positions: the philosophers hold that the cosmos is posterior to God in a purely logical sense insofar as it is preceded only by the very essence of God; the theologians hold that the cosmos is posterior to God in time and hence it is preceded by non-existence in time; and the third is a recent position—and he means that of Mīr Dāmād—that the cosmos begins in perpetuity (*dahr*) so that it is properly preceded by non-existence and there is a separation (*infikāk*) from the divine essence.<sup>111</sup> He deals with various objections to the theory of Mīr Dāmād. Consider the following two. First, the divine essence insofar as it is a perfect cause is sufficient for the cosmos; positing any separation either by time or by perpetuity would violate the notion of the perfect cause. Second, God is the most perfect thing that can be conceived and therefore it would not be appropriate to consider when divine agency and causation began and when it ended. In both cases, positing a separation between God and the cosmos is considered to be a postulation of deficiency in God. Narāqī responds by saying that the separation defends the contingency of the cosmos since it is precisely that contingency which constitutes a relative deficiency. It is therefore not the perfection of God that is at stake but ensuring the contingency of the cosmos.<sup>112</sup> Finally, in his summary of why this is the best way to understand the incipience of the cosmos, he appeals to the authority of the *Theology of Aristotle*: the foundations and pillars of the cosmos, such as the celestial spheres and the elements, do not exist in time (*zamān*), rather they exist in perpetuity (*dahr*).<sup>113</sup>

109 Narāqī, *Šarḥ al-ilāhīyāt*, II, 730–754.

110 Narāqī, *Ġāmi' al-afkār*, I, 178–243; *idem*, *Šarḥ al-ilāhīyāt*, 92–5.

111 Narāqī, *al-Lama'āt al-'aršīya*, 468–9.

112 Narāqī, *al-Lama'āt al-'aršīya*, 470–1.

113 Narāqī, *al-Lama'āt al-'aršīya*, 484.

### 3 Conclusion

Narāqī represented a developed and transformed Avicennism and provides further evidence for the dossier of how commentatorial traditions do not simply defend doctrines but developed them in dynamic ways. Narāqī saw Mullā Ṣadrā as a reasonable reader of Avicenna but he was critical of some key issues, not least of metaphysical monism, returning to the text of Avicenna and his earlier commentators. Significantly, he perpetuated the reading of Avicenna on creation that considered Mir Dāmād's solution of creation at the level of perpetuity to be the most reasonable understanding of Avicenna's insistence on the contingency and necessity of the cosmos as well as the denial of the theological doctrine of *creatio ex nihilo* in time. Nevertheless, Narāqī represented in some ways the last moment of the significance of the Avicennian tradition as it was being replaced by Mullā Ṣadrā. In later generations, the critiques of Mullā Ṣadrā were broadly ignored by the mainstream of the seminarian study of philosophy and even in the philosophy departments of the Iranian universities. Similarly, when one looks at the works of contemporary Avicennians such as Yaḥyā Yaṭribī or those editing and writing on the Avicennian tradition such as Ḥasanzāda Āmulī, it is clear that they have been extensively influenced by the Sadrian tradition—and this was already clear in the work of Narāqī. The case study of the thought of Mahdī Narāqī shows how Avicennisms were constantly in the process of changing and shifting—and it demonstrates one of the key insights of the late Pierre Hadot about how the history of philosophy often develops through processes of creative misreadings of the forebears.

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