

Notes

1. As stated in the introduction to the earlier volume of this series, *Islamic Spirituality: Foundations*, throughout this volume the term man is used not in its meaning of male but as the human being corresponding to *homo*, *vir*, or *Mensch* or as far as Islamic terms are concerned, *al-insān* in Arabic.

2. For reasons mentioned in our introduction to the previous volume (p. xxix n. 2), we have refrained from using the traditional Islamic terms of honor and respect for the Quran, the Prophet of Islam, and other prophets. In Islamic languages, the Quran is usually referred to as the Noble or Glorious Quran (*al-Qur'ān al-karīm* or *al-majīd*). After the name of the Prophet of Islam, who will be referred to throughout this volume with a capital P, the formula *salla'llāhu 'alayhi wa sallam* (blessings and peace be upon him) or one of its variants is uttered, while the formula *'alayhi's-salām* (peace be upon him) is used for other prophets and in Shī'ism also for the Imams.

3. The system of transliteration for Arabic and Persian is given on p. xxx of the first volume. We have left words in other Islamic languages such as Turkish and Malay in the form provided by the authors. The question of transliteration from various Islamic languages is a complex one, and there is no single system covering all the different languages of the Islamic world which would be acceptable to all Western scholars.

Part One

ISLAMIC SPIRITUALITY AS MANIFESTED IN SUFISM IN TIME AND SPACE

Prelude: The Spiritual Significance of the Rise and Growth of the Sufi Orders

SEYYED HOSSEIN NASR

THE TRUTH AND REALITY of the inner teachings of Islam became crystallized mostly in Sufism. Sufism therefore embodies more than any other facet of Islam the various aspects of Islamic spirituality, although this spirituality also manifests itself in the religious life of Shari'ite Sunni Muslims, in Shi'ite piety as well as in the intellectual and artistic life of Islam. Within the world of Sufism itself, the traditional teachings were transmitted from generation to generation going back to the origin of the revelation as seen in the essays in the previous volume of this Encyclopedia devoted to the foundations of Islamic spirituality. It was only later in the history of Sufism that the orders or *ṭuruq* (pl. of *ṭarīqah*) appeared on the scene and became the main depositories and guardians for the teachings of Sufism.

During the first four to five centuries of Islam, Sufi instruction was transmitted by an individual master around whom disciples would gather. Gradually the downward flow of time and further removal of the Muslim community from the source of the revelation necessitated a more tightly knit organization revolving once again around the master (called *shaykh*, *pīr*, or *murshid*), and usually named after the founder, but based on a definite set of rules of etiquette and behavior, litanies, forms of meditation, etc. Gradually Sufi orders appeared throughout the Islamic world having at the heart of their teachings the truth of Divine Unity (*al-tawḥīd*) and methods of reaching the Truth based on the invocation (*dhikr*) of various Divine Names and the acquiring of virtues (*faḍā'il* or *iḥsān*), which alone allow the *dhikr* to penetrate into the depth of the human soul and which are at the same time the fruit of the *dhikr*.

Each order emphasized some element of the path and adapted itself to various ethnic and psychological climates in a vast world which included such different human types as Arabs and Berbers, Nigerians and Persians, Turks and Malays. While the basic practices of *dhikr* and the Shari'ite foundation remained the same for all orthodox orders, other elements of the path, including the use of artistic forms ranging from music and poetry to the sacred dance, differed from order to order. As a result, an incredibly rich diversity of spiritual possibilities came into being in the Islamic world, which enabled men and women of very differing ethnic, mental, and psychological types to participate in the teachings of Sufism. At the same time the orders guaranteed the perpetuation of the teachings of Sufism, the continuity of initiation and initiatic transmission, and brought into being organizations that could protect the flame of Sufism in the storm of outward human life with all its vicissitudes.

During the nine centuries since the beginning of the organization of the Sufi orders, numerous orders have appeared in various parts of the Islamic world. Some have remained of importance in only one locality, and others have spread over vast areas. Some have lived for a short period only to decay and then die out, and others have survived over the centuries and continue to attract disciples to this day. Among the surviving orders some still make possible traveling upon the path (*sulūk*), whereas others only provide the grace of Sufism (*tabarruk*) without the possibility of a vertical ascent. In the major orders one can observe the occasional decay and death of one branch and the birth of another branch through the appearance of a veritable master. It is also possible for an order to be dormant and in a state of decadence only to be revived at a later time, as long as the chain of initiation and the initiatic transmission have remained intact.

A work such as the present one cannot deal with all the Sufi orders that have existed or continue to exist in the Islamic world.¹ The manifestations of Islamic spirituality in the form of Sufism have been presented by treating separately the major orders and schools and then adding complementary essays for various regions of the Islamic world. In this way it is hoped that most of the central manifestations of Sufism have been covered and that the teachings and history of the major orders have been brought out in an integral manner.

It is important to add, however, that despite the overwhelming importance of the orders as the major depositories of Sufi teachings during the past eight or nine centuries, the teachings of individual masters who cannot be identified with a particular order remain important. This is true not only of the earlier centuries, when Sufism was identified with the teachings of individuals, but also of later times, when the orders had already become

established. Such a major figure as Ibn 'Arabī did not establish a specific *ṭarīqah*, although there is a distinct Akbarian current to be found during later centuries and he wielded great influence among members of several orders.² There are also a variety of Sufi figures guided by al-Khidr, the ever-living "prophet of initiation" or by members of the "invisible hierarchy" who form a part of the Sufi universe.³

The choice of the orders that have been treated separately in this section is based on several factors: their long history, geographical spread, impact on Islamic society, and intellectual and artistic significance. Some of the oldest orders such as the Rifā'iyyah have not been treated separately because of their relatively limited geographical extension, although the order has been mentioned in the discussion of Sufism in the Arab world. Others like the Tijāniyyah have also not been treated separately, since, although such an order has spread over large areas, it is of fairly recent origin. In any case, the limitation of space forced a choice upon us that has resulted in the present treatment of the orders. What is certain is that the orders that have been treated separately are all major orders which have had a profound impact on Islamic history. They have been vibrant centers and guardians of Islamic spirituality and esoteric teachings starting with the Qādiriyyah Order, the most universal of all Sufi orders, whose centers are spread from the Philippines to Morocco.

Notes

1. A number of historical works have surveyed the Sufi orders throughout the Islamic world, the most thorough being J. Spencer Trimingham, *The Sufi Orders in Islam* (London: Oxford University Press, 1971). But even this work is not complete; moreover, there is no single work that covers the history of all the Sufi orders thoroughly. For the organization of the orders, see L. Massignon, "*ṭuruq*" in the old *Encyclopaedia of Islam*.

2. That is why a separate chapter has been devoted to Ibn 'Arabī and his school despite the fact that he did not establish a distinct Sufi order such as the Shādhiliyyah or Qādiriyyah, both of which espoused his teachings during later centuries.

3. This issue has been dealt with in chapter 10, "Sufism and Spirituality in Persia."

The Qādiriyyah Order

KHALIQ AHMAD NIZAMI

The Founding of the Order and Its Characteristics

THE QĀDIRIYYAH ORDER, so named after Shaykh 'Abd al-Qādir Jilānī (470/1077–561/1166), occupies a preeminent place in the spiritual history of Islam. Although its organizational structure came into prominence several decades after the death of the saint, its teachings had a profound influence on the thought and behavior of many Muslims during the lifetime of the Shaykh, who came to be looked upon as an ideal of spiritual excellence and achievement. Later generations, however, developed all sorts of legends surrounding his personality, and the real nature of his spiritual activity became shrouded in innumerable miracle stories woven around him by his followers and circulated by his biographers, such as 'Alī ibn Yūsuf al-Shattānawfī (d. 713/1314).¹

Shaykh 'Abd al-Qādir was endowed with a remarkable power of persuasion and eloquence, and he used these gifts to extricate people from excessive engrossment in material pursuits by awakening their spiritual sensibilities. In inculcating a respect for moral and spiritual values, he found the supreme talisman of human happiness, and to it he dedicated his whole life. His intensely religious way of life and sincerity of purpose impressed his contemporaries, who thronged around him. Himself punctilious in obedience to every minute detail of Islamic Law (*Shari'ah*), he demanded from his followers strict adherence to it. He looked upon the *Shari'ah* as a *sine qua non* for all spiritual advancement and culture. This approach not only bridged the gulf between the jurists (*faqīhs*) and the mystics (Sufis) but also created a balance between varying degrees of emphasis laid on the spirit and the letter of Islamic Law.

The saint's association with the Hanbalī school of Islamic jurisprudence shaped his attitude in many matters of religious significance. He often cites in his works and sermons Imam Ahmad ibn Hanbal (d. 241/855) and draws

ideological sustenance from him. His adherence to Hanbalī law, to which later reformists like Ibn Taymiyyah (635/1263–728/1328) and Muhammad ibn 'Abd al-Wahhab (1115/1703–1201/1787) also adhered, saved him from much of the criticism to which other mystic teachers were subjected by the externalist scholars. In fact he made *fiqh* (jurisprudence) and *tasawwuf* (mysticism) supplement each other and created an identity of approach among the jurists and the mystics. While propounding his mystical ideas, he never lost sight of their juristic implications, and in explaining juristic principles he underlined their spiritual value.

The Shaykh looked upon "showing people the way to God" not only as the leitmotif of all mystic effort but as a legacy of the Prophetic mission, which it was incumbent upon all Muslims to continue under all circumstances. He tackled the problem of imbuing people with spirituality from the point of view of both knowledge and faith and used the media of *madrasah* (college) and *ribāt* (hospice) for this purpose. A careful study of his sermons as contained in *al-Fath al-rabbānī* ("Divine Victory"), some of which were delivered in the *madrasah* and some in the *ribāt*, would illustrate the subtle difference of orientation and emphasis. Like most religious figures of medieval Islam who became centers of a revival movement, Shaykh 'Abd al-Qādir believed that he was divinely inspired and ordained to guide people on the path of spirituality. This consciousness of his mission gave not only a depth but also a sense of divine purposiveness to his efforts. He considered himself an agent of God for the moral and spiritual resuscitation of society.

The Regeneration of Islamic Society and the Expansion of the Order

In the era in which 'Abd al-Qādir lived, his mystic activity contained a response to the challenges of the time. Adam Mez's *The Renaissance of Islam* portrays the condition of Muslim society in the fourth/tenth century.² The disintegration of Muslim political power and the degeneration of Muslim morals weakened the fabric of society while materialistic pursuits froze the heat of spiritual life. The innumerable sects that appeared during this period were expressions of intellectual anarchy and religious confusion rather than indications of spiritual virility and intellectual curiosity. The horrifying activities of the Assassins, the endless internal broils among the Seljuq princes, the disintegration of the Abbasid power, and the holocaust caused by the Crusades had created an atmosphere in which Muslim society needed moral animation and spiritual resurrection.

Shaykh 'Abd al-Qādir's movement for the spiritual regeneration of

society crossed the boundaries of Iraq and reached many countries, initially in the form of a vigorous religious activity by individual mystic teachers, later in the form of the *ṭarīqah* (small body of like-minded people devoted to the spiritual life) propagating the Qādirī mystic ideals, and subsequently as a *silsilah* (chain of a spiritual order) aiming at a mass effort for the spiritual culture of humanity and society. Initially the Qādirī teachings spread in and around Baghdad, but later on Arabia, Morocco, Egypt, Turkestan, and India came under their influence and large numbers of people entered the fold. The social milieu and the religious background of these regions being different, the order was confronted with diverse problems of response and adjustment. In African countries, it had to adjust to the conceptual framework of the tribes, and many customs and ceremonies of the earlier period were continued under new rubrics of Qādirī ideals and practice; in Ghur, Gharjistan, Bamiyan, Khurasan, and Central Asian regions where the Karrāmiyans dominated the religious scene,³ Qādirī activities paved the way for the rejection of anthropomorphic ideas and attracted people toward the "personal God" without physical features. In many areas the activity and doctrinal orientation of the Qādirī saints were determined by the nature of activities of other mystic orders which had reached these areas earlier.

Because the crystallization of the Qādiriyyah Order did not take place during the lifetime of the saint, many of the spiritual exercises and litanies that were later consolidated into a system were not initiated by the Shaykh himself. Significantly enough, these spiritual exercises absorbed the attention of the people more than the thought of the saint.⁴ The Shaykh's books being in Arabic, their direct impact on people of non-Arab regions was limited. Persian commentaries and translations of his works no doubt appeared in India and other countries, but the standard of spiritual life and the doctrines preached by the Shaykh were so elevated that it was beyond the capacity of ordinary individuals to follow them meticulously. Later generations, consequently, relied more on the *litanies* of the Qādiriyyah Order than on the *teachings* of the Shaykh.

The Organization of the Order and Its Spread

As stated earlier, the Shaykh combined in his person the twin roles of a mystic mentor and a college teacher, but after him the two functions became separated. His son 'Abd al-Wahhāb (552/1151–593/1196) succeeded him in the *madrasah*, and his other son 'Abd al-Razzāq (528/1134–603/1206-7)

turned to spiritual discipline and looked after the *ribāt*. It was he who built near the grave of his father a mosque with seven gilt domes. Hulagū's sack of Baghdad (658/1258) brought to an end both the *madrasah* and the *ribāt*, and the Shaykh's descendants became scattered and dispersed. Thereafter, those associated with his family turned their attention to organizing the order in different regions. Those of his family members who remained in Baghdad constituted what has been called "the moral center of the order"; others settled in Cairo and Aleppo. 'Alī ibn Ḥaddād carried his mystic ideas and his discipline to Yemen. In Syria, Muḥammad al-Baṭā'inī of Baalbek popularized his religious ideas. In Egypt, Muḥammad 'Abd al-Ṣamad worked for the propagation of the order. According to E. Mercier, the order was prevalent in Berbery in the sixth/twelfth century and was in close contact with the Fātimids, who ruled there until 566/1171.⁵ A. Le Chatelier says that the Shaykh's religious and mystical ideas were taken to Morocco, Egypt, Arabia, Turkestan, and India during his own lifetime by his own sons,⁶ but this assertion has not been confirmed by contemporary sources. It took several centuries for the order to reach some of these countries.

In India, for instance, the order did not make any significant impact before the tenth/sixteenth century. North Africa saw the rise of the Jilālah communities, which attributed great spiritual and supernatural powers to the saint. Such developments were criticized by Ibn Taymiyyah and Ibrāhīm al-Shātibī.⁷ The order was introduced in Fez by the descendants of the Shaykh, Ibrāhīm (d. 592/1196) and 'Abd al-'Azīz. Their descendants later migrated to Spain, but before the fall of Granada in 897/1492 all of them returned to Morocco. In Asia Minor and Istanbul, the order was introduced by Ismā'il Rūmī (d. 1041/1631). He founded some forty *takiyyahs* (Sufi centers in Turkish) in that region and a *khānqāh* (Sufi center in Persian—also transliterated as *khānaqāh*) known as *Qādirī-khānah*. In Arabia *zāwiyahs* (Sufi center in Arabic) were set up at Jedda, Madina, and Mecca. There was a time when the entire Nile Valley was studded with Qādirī centers, and Cairo was an important center of the Qādiriyyah Order. In Africa, Khar-toum, Sokoto, and Tripoli had numerous *zāwiyahs* of the Qādirīs. The Qādirī missionary activity has been particularly noticed among Berbers. In fact, the sack of Baghdad by Hulagū in 658/1258, the fall of Granada in 897/1492, and the rise of the Ottoman Empire in 923/1517 are the three major developments of the Islamic world in the background of which the history of the Qādiriyyah Order may be traced in Africa, Central Asia, and Turkestan.

As the order spread out in different regions, many sub-branches and offshoots also appeared, but these were designated by the name of the local Qādirī saints. For instance, in Yemen, the 'Urabiyyah after the name of

'Umar ibn Muḥammad al-'Urabī (tenth/sixteenth century), the Yāfi'iyah after the name of 'Afif al-Dīn 'Abd Allāh al-Yāfi'ī (718/1318–768/1367), and the Ahdaliyyah after the name of Abu'l-Ḥasan 'Alī ibn 'Umar al-Ahdal; in Syria, the Dā'ūdiyyah after the name of Abu'l-Bakr ibn Dā'ūd (d. 806/1403); in Egypt, the Fāridiyyah after the name of 'Umar ibn al-Fārid (d. 632/1235); and in Turkey, the Asadiyyah after the name of 'Afif al-Dīn 'Abd Allāh ibn 'Alī al-Asadī. These offshoots of the Qādiriyyah Order became known after the names of their immediate founders but retained their affiliation with the central figure of the *silsilah*.

The Life of the Founder

The district of Gilan lies in northern Iran south of the Caspian Sea. Here, in a village called Nif (*Bahjat al-asrār*, 88),⁸ Shaykh 'Abd al-Qādir was born in 470/1077–78. His line of descent is traced to Imam Ḥasan (the grandson of the Prophet). His maternal grandfather, Sayyid 'Abd Allāh Sumā'ī was a pious and saintly person. 'Abd al-Qādir's father having died early, Sumā'ī looked after the orphan's upbringing. It was at the age of eighteen (in 488/1095), that 'Abd al-Qādir left Gilan for Baghdad, which was then humming with unprecedented intellectual activity and where the renowned Nizāmiyyah College, founded in 457/1065, was in its full bloom. He did not, however, like to study at this seminary and completed his education with other teachers of Baghdad. His truthful character and the impact that it was to make on those who happened to come into contact with him were evident from his very early years. It is said that when he left his native place for Baghdad, his mother gave him forty gold coins—his share in the patrimony—and safely stitched them in his cloak. Her parting advice to his son was to be always truthful and honest. 'Abd al-Qādir promised to abide by it.

On the way robbers intercepted the caravan and plundered it. One of the robbers asked 'Abd al-Qādir if he had anything with him. He replied that he had forty gold coins. The robber did not believe it and moved on. One after the other robbers asked him and he gave the same reply. The leader of the gang interrogated him further and asked him to show where the money was. He placed his cloak before him and the robber found the money concealed there. Startled and puzzled at this truthfulness, the robber asked him why he had disclosed it; he could say that he had nothing and thus save this money. 'Abd al-Qādir replied that he had made a promise to his mother to be truthful under all circumstances. The revelation came as a terrible shock to the leader of the gang and he fell at his feet and repented for his conduct saying: "You keep the promise you made to your mother

and we forget the promise that we made to our Creator." The gang returned the entire plunder to the owners and repented for their sins.

'Abd al-Qādir spent his early years in Baghdad under extremely straitened circumstances, but starvation and penury could not dampen his zeal for knowledge. He studied with particular care *Ḥadīth* (sayings of the Prophet), *fiqh* (law), and literature. Names of his sixteen teachers of *Ḥadīth* and five teachers of *fiqh* have come down to us from Shaṭṭanawfī (*Bahjat al-asrār*, 106). It was in Baghdad that he became attracted to the Ḥanbalite school of Islamic jurisprudence. He received his spiritual training from Shaykh Abu'l-Khayr Ḥammād ibn Muslim al-Dabbās (d. 525/1131),⁹ a saint who was illiterate but renowned for his spiritual excellence. His reputation at this time was one of a jurist, and the Sufi circles resented his admission to the mystic fold. But since some of the Ḥanbalite jurists of this period were inclined toward mysticism, this resentment was short-lived. Qāḍī Abū Sa'īd Mubārak al-Mukharrimī, head of a school of Ḥanbalite law in Baghdad, is reported to have initiated Shaykh 'Abd al-Qādir into the mystic discipline and to have conferred upon him his mystic robe.

Having completed his academic and spiritual training in Baghdad, he took to seclusion and spent eleven years in the ruins near Baghdad away from human company. In the words of Henri Bergson this seclusion of a mystic is "like the repose of a locomotive standing in a station under steam pressure." When he came out, he turned with great vigor and enthusiasm to public speeches. Apart from his own spiritual intuition in the matter, he was advised by Khwājah Yūsuf Ḥamadānī (d. 534/1140)¹⁰ to preach in public. All contemporary and later writers refer to his extremely powerful role as a preacher. Unlike many mystics who impressed people by individual attention and personal care, the Shaykh addressed huge crowds and brought about a change in their lives. In the long and checkered history of Islamic mysticism, hardly any saint can match him so far as mass appeal and stentorian impact are concerned. In fact, with his advent begins a new phase in the history of Islamic mysticism, when mass activity is inaugurated and the mystic teachers of *dā'irahs* (small mystic centers of like-minded persons) and *zāwiyahs* (centers for mystics to live and pray) come out into the open and address huge congregations and convey their message of spiritual and moral enlightenment to the people at large. According to Shaṭṭanawfī, the number of those who attended his sermons reached seventy thousand (*Bahjat al-asrār*, 92). These figures may be exaggerated, but the popular response to his sermons was no doubt tremendous, and people came to him from Mesopotamia, Persia, and Egypt. According to his son, 'Abd al-Wahhāb, he delivered sermons three times a week: on Friday morning and Tuesday evening in his college, and on Sunday morning in his hospice. Four hundred

scribes recorded whatever he uttered (*Bahjat al-asrār*, 95).¹¹ Jews and Christians also came to his meetings and were so moved by his orations that often they embraced Islam then and there. Speaking about his impact as a preacher, Abu'l-Faraj al-Jawzī, a contemporary writer, says that his hearers sometimes died of emotions. People gave up their sinful activities and adopted the path of morality and virtue as a result of his exhortations (*Bahjat al-asrār*, 96).

The Shaykh's teacher Qādī Abū Sa'īd Mubārak al-Mukharrimī was in charge of a large *madrasah*, which he entrusted to his pupil. The Shaykh took such interest in its development that the area became almost a *madrasah* town. The Shaykh himself used to instruct in several religious sciences. With the *madrasah* on one side and the *ribāt* on the other, the Shaykh had all the necessary instruments for the dissemination and propagation of his ideas. He delivered sermons for forty years (521/1127–561/1165) and gave lessons in religious sciences and pronounced religious opinion as *muftī* for thirty-five years (*Bahjat al-asrār*, 95). Thus, in his person he combined the mystical zeal for spiritual life with the adherence of a *faqīh* (jurist) to Islamic Law. Though his ideological commitment seems to have been with the Hanbalite school, he was not exclusive in his approach, and according to a report he acted as the guardian of the tomb of Imam Abū Hanīfah.

The doubt cast on his position as a mystic teacher (*Sūfī*) during his lifetime is based on misunderstanding. The Shaykh's entire approach was mystical, and he looked after a community center for giving instruction in mystic discipline. But since the regular organization of *silsilahs* was a later phenomenon, his mystic efforts also did not crystallize into a well-knit system. In his *Ghunyat al-tālibīn* (*That Which Is Sufficient for Seekers*) there is a very profound and penetrating discussion of the mystical ideal.

The Shaykh's family life began at a very advanced age. He married at the age of fifty-one and according to one report had forty-nine children. He was so meticulous in following the laws of the *Sharī'ah* in every minute detail of his life that even the food prepared for him was strictly according to *Sunnah* (practice of the Prophet). It is said that even grain was particularly cultivated for him (*Bahjat al-asrār*, 104).

'Abd al-Qādir as the Supreme Pole

According to traditional Sufi teachings, there exists a hierarchical system of saints who control the entire world order. Hujwīrī says: "But of those who have power to loose and to bind and are the officers of the Divine Court there are three hundred, called *Akhyār*, and forty called *Abdāl*, and seven,

called *Abrār*, and four called *Awtād*, and three called *Nuqabā*, and one called *Qutb* or *Ghawth*."¹² Ibn 'Arabī calls Shaykh 'Abd al-Qādir the *qutb* (or Pole) of the times;¹³ generally among the people he is known as *al-Ghawth al-a'zam* (the greatest *ghawth*), which places him at the apex of the mystical hierarchy. His contribution to spirituality in Islam cannot be exaggerated. He initiated a powerful movement for the spiritual culture of Muslim society. Some of the founders of mystic orders—like Khwājah Mu'īn al-Dīn Chishtī and Shaykh Najīb al-Dīn 'Abd al-Qādir Suhrawardī—were influenced by his mystic ideas and had benefited from his company. The Shaykh is reported to have remarked: "My foot is on the head of every saint." While in the case of other mystics such utterances made in a state of spiritual exhilaration have become the subject of criticism, his remark was taken seriously and according to Jāmī some of the eminent saints of the age actually put their heads under his feet.¹⁴

The Works of 'Abd al-Qādir

Shaykh 'Abd al-Qādir's mystic and religious ideas are contained in the following works: (1) *al-Ghunyah li-tālibī tariq al-haqq* (*That Which Is Sufficient to the Seekers of the Path of Truth*)¹⁵ (generally known as *Ghunyat al-tālibīn*), a comprehensive work on the duties enjoined by Islam and the Islamic way of life; (2) *al-Faṭḥ al-rabbānī*,¹⁶ a record of sixty-two sermons delivered by him during the years 545/1150–546/1152; and (3) *Futūḥ al-ghayb* (*Victories of the Invisible*),¹⁷ a record of seventy-eight sermons compiled by his son 'Abd al-Razzāq. C. Brockelmann has listed twenty-four titles of manuscripts ascribed to Shaykh 'Abd al-Qādir.¹⁸ A critical study of these manuscripts would, however, reveal the apocryphal nature of some of the treatises ascribed to him by later generations.

While the large number of legends and litanies attributed to him reveal the nature of popular and credulous appraisals of his personality, the treatises ascribed to him throw light on the interpretations put on his teachings by the succeeding generations. Both of these may be important in estimating the popular response to his teachings, but a real assessment of his thought and spiritual ideals can be made only in the light of his three main works listed above.

The *Ghunyat al-tālibīn* was written in response to the request of his followers and friends for a detailed exposition of his religious views. Unlike the two other works, the *Futūḥ al-ghayb* and *al-Faṭḥ al-rabbānī*, this is a complete work on Islamic Law and mystical thought. The compilers of his sermons, however, had to work under certain limitations. They could not take down every word that he uttered. Gaps and lacunas were inevitable and

a coherent exposition of ideas remained a pious wish of the recorders. Sometimes the scribes recorded powerful sentences that the Shaykh uttered to emphasize his point of view, leaving aside the argument that preceded those remarks. In the two collections of his sermons, the Shaykh appears as a totally otherworldly person, but in the *Ghunyat* his views have a greater balance between the spiritual and mundane obligations of life. His discussions pertaining to faith, charity (*zakāt*), fasts, and *hajj* (pilgrimage) are followed by details of etiquette and decorum to be followed in daily life. The last portion of the book contains an exposition of his mystic ideas. It was within this framework—faith, devotion to God, and dealings with human beings—that the Shaykh interpreted his approach to religion and morality. In a section of this work he deals with sects that he considered to have gone astray.

The sermons contained in *Futūh al-ghayb* have a somewhat thematic arrangement but contain no dates. It is possible that discussions on particular themes dispersed in different assemblies were arranged and put together by the compiler under one heading. The *Fath al-rabbānī* contains an account of forty sermons of the Shaykh delivered either in the *khānqāh* or in the *ribāt* in 545/1150. It is thus an account of the Shaykh's assemblies held only in one year and that too with long gaps. The scribe has not been able, and in fact could not be expected, to reproduce verbatim the speeches of the Shaykh. Naturally therefore gaps have been filled by the translators and commentators of his works.

The need to popularize his views and the insistence of Shaykh 'Abd al-Wahhāb Qādirī Shādhilī of Mecca and Shāh Abu'l-Ma'ālī of Lahore led Shaykh 'Abd al-Ḥaqq Muḥaddith of Delhi to translate *Futūh al-ghayb* into Persian. The *Ghunyat* was translated into Persian by 'Abd al-Ḥakīm Sialkotī (d. 1068/1657). Many abridgments, recensions, and commentaries of his works have also appeared.

The biography of the saint was compiled more than a hundred years after his death by 'Alī ibn Yūsuf al-Shattānawfī (d. 713/1314) and named *Bahjat al-asrār* (*Splendor of Secrets*). Then followed the accounts prepared by Dhababī (d. 748/1348), Taqī al-Dīn al-Wāsiṭ (d. 744/1343), al-Yāfi'ī (d. 768/1367) and others. Adulation and credulity have marred the historical value of many of the hagiological works written about the saint.

Mystical and Metaphysical Teachings of the Shaykh

Shaykh 'Abd al-Qādir's spirituality had its roots in his concept and experience of God. For him God was neither a theological myth nor a logical abstraction of unity but an all-embracing personality present in man's



1. Sufis studying and contemplating in a garden.

ethical, intellectual, and aesthetic experience. He felt as if he were always in His Presence. This consciousness of the Divine Presence around him was the guide and motive of his active waking life and gave it a transcendent value. The Prophet's exhortation to people "to pray as if you see Him; and if you see Him not then He sees you" was the motto of his life and he translated it into practice. His sermons illustrated the extent of his own realization of the Omnipresence of God. He believed that this realization purged and purified the heart of an individual and put it in tune with the world of the Spirit (*al-Faḥ al-rabbānī*, XXIII 133). He did not, however, allow this consciousness to blur the distinctness of the Creator and the creation. His discussions about *fanā* (annihilation) and *baqā* (subsistence) were also careful insofar as they scrupulously avoided any pantheistic implications, although many later Qādirī saints, such as Miḡān Mīr (d. 1045/1635) and Mullā Shāh Badakhshānī (d. 1071/1661) of India were not so careful.¹⁹

One day when Shaykh 'Abd al-Qādir's mind was in a state of ferment, he said to himself:

I want a death which has no life in it and
a life which has no death in it.

Then he began to explain:

So I was asked what kind of death it is that has no life in it and what kind of life it is that has no death in it. I said: "The death that has no life in it is my death from my own species . . . so that I do not live in any of these and am not found in them. And as for the life that has no death in it, it is my life with the act of my Lord in such a manner that I have no existence in it and my death in it is existence with Him." Since I have attained understanding, this has been the most precious of all purposes of mine. (*Futūḥ al-ghayb*, 167)²⁰

As a result of the teachings of Muḡammad ibn Karrām, anthropomorphic ideas were current in certain regions of Central Asia and Iran.²¹ The Shaykh firmly combatted such ideas. "Our Creator is on the 'arsh (heavenly throne) but He has no body" (*al-Faḥ al-rabbānī*, XIX, 124).

The ideal life in the eyes of the Shaykh was one which was absolutely devoted and dedicated to God. For this purpose alone did God create mankind, as the Quran says, "I have not created *jinn* and mankind except to serve Me" (LI, 56). The more a man strives to "live for the Lord," the nearer he comes to realizing the divine purpose of life. One has to surrender his life, his will, and his material means to God if he aims at divine realization. "God-conscious existence" gives man spiritual strength; it lifts him from mundane struggles for petty gains and joys of life to a life of spiritual solace and serenity and sets him in tune with the real source of spiritual power (*al-Faḥ al-rabbānī*, XXI, 122-25).

An introspective study of one's own self is the first step in the direction of divine realization. "Whoever understands his own self, also understands God," said the Shaykh. This interiorization of spiritual experience paves the way for a deeper study of both noumena and phenomena. Creation points to the existence of its Creator, "because creation indicates the existence of the Creator and strong power is an indication of the wise actor behind it; because all things are in existence through Him. And it is this which is reported from Ibn 'Abbās in his explanation of the word of God: 'God has subjected to you whatever is in the heavens and earth'" (XXXI, 20) (*Futūḥ al-ghayb*, ed. Muḡammad 'Ālam Qaysarī, 151-54). This power, however, comes to man when he identifies himself with the Divine Purpose of Existence and leads a life in consonance with the Divine Will. The Divine Will is revealed in the *Sunnah* (sayings and doings of the Prophet). So whoever follows it meticulously and in all details of life in effect subordinates himself to the Divine Will.

The Shaykh looked upon this world as a veil (*ḥijāb*) that hides from view the world of the hereafter. The more one involves his heart in this world and all that it has to offer, the greater become the thickness and darkness of the veil between him and the noumenal world (*al-Faḥ al-rabbānī*, XXI, 122).

Whoever desires spiritual progress must come out of his "self" and develop an attitude of detachment toward all things worldly and material. Engrossment in material pursuits deadens man's spiritual sensibilities and makes his heart irresponsible to divine communications. In developing his ideas about "detachment," the Shaykh went to the extent of saying that unless one cuts oneself off completely, both physically and mentally, from the world around him and stops putting reliance on his own effort, action, and intelligence, his spiritual being remains dormant.

Spiritual life, he used to say, is not possible unless one controls his natural urges and adopts the path of the Law (*Sharī'ah*). In every matter, whether it is related to food and drink, dress and marital relationship, or habits and predilections, one has to subordinate himself to the injunctions of the Law. He recited this Quranic verse in support of his exhortations: "Whatever the Messenger gives you, take; Whatever he forbids you, give over" (LIX, 7) (*Futūḥ al-ghayb*, 159).

The Sources of Man's Thoughts

The Shaykh was of the opinion that transient ideas (*khāṭirāt*) which flash across the mind originate from any one of the following sources: (1) *nafs* (lower soul), (2) *shayṭān* (Devil), (3) *rūḥ* (Spirit), (4) *malak* (angel), (5) *'aql* (intellect-reason), (6) *yaqīn* (certitude). Ideas which owe their origin to the

lower soul and the Devil lead man astray; those arising out of the Spirit and generated by angels are the genuine and truthful ideas and lead one to the path of righteousness and piety. Ideas that are created by reason may be either good or bad. A discriminating eye alone can make the distinction. Ideas that emanate from certitude are the source of spiritual solace and come to the saints, martyrs, and truthful people. The development of a man's spiritual personality ultimately depends on the care and meticulousness with which he analyzes the source of such transient ideas (*Ghunyat al-tālibīn*, 220-22).²² The Shaykh laid down ten principles for the guidance of those who wished to lead a life of piety: (1) Abstain from speaking ill of an absent person. (2) Refrain from developing a suspicious attitude against anybody. (3) Abstain from gossip and whispering. (4) Abstain from looking at things prohibited. (5) Always utter the truth. (6) Always be grateful to God. (7) Spend money in helping people who deserve help. (8) Abstain from running after worldly power and status. (9) Offer five time prayers regularly. (10) Follow the *Sunnah* of the Prophet and cooperate with Muslims (*Ghunyat*, 275-76).

While developing his views about the path of spiritual progress, the Shaykh highlights the role of a spiritual mentor. He compares the spiritual teacher to a wet nurse who feeds the baby (*Futūḥ al-ghayb*, trans. Ahmad, 54). The Shaykh is needed only so long as one is infested with low desires and mean purposes. When one overcomes these baser appetites, the need for the Shaykh also disappears (*Futūḥ al-ghayb*, 54). What follows from this discourse is that although the guidance of a spiritual master is absolutely indispensable in the early stages of one's spiritual career, it is not required for all of one's life. Once the Shaykh has weaned a disciple away from earthly attractions, the need of his guidance comes to an end.

Determinism and Free Will

The Shaykh's discussions about determinism and free will were frequent, but while he talked about free will as far as human responsibility for actions is concerned, he basically advocated that destiny has decreed everything and that God's Will predominates in determining one's course of action.

On Dhu'l-Hijjah 12, 401/July 7, 1011, he saw a dream which again emphasizes the same attitude toward evil. He says:

I saw Satan the accursed in a dream as if I were in a big crowd and I intended to kill him. Then he said to me, "Why are you going to kill me and what is my sin? If providence sets the evil in motion I have no power to change it and transform it into good. And if providence sets the good in motion I

have no power to change and transform it into evil. And what is there in my hand?" I found his appearance resembling that of a eunuch, soft in speech, a line of hairs fringing his chin, miserable looking and ugly faced, as if he were smiling before me, full of shame and fear. (*Futūḥ al-ghayb*, 65)

It seems as if the Shaykh's attitude of extreme otherworldliness emanated from his faith in determinism. At times he was so distressed at the attitude of his contemporaries, whom he found weltering in the mire of sordid materialism, that he preached total renunciation of worldly pursuits and went to the extent of saying that as soon as a child was able to suck the stone of dates, one's responsibility to look after his children came to an end. At another place he says: "Teach some craft to your son and then turn your attention from him to prayers of the Almighty" (*al-Faḥ al-rabbānī*, XXII, 130). Such expressions of disgust seem to have been prompted by excessive indulgence of the people in material pursuits and worldly struggles. In his *Ghunyat al-tālibīn*, however, he takes a more practical view toward family affairs, although spiritual obligations are never ignored.

Trials in Life

Referring to divine purpose in inflicting calamities on pious people, the Shaykh states that God tries and tests believers in proportion to the firmness of their faith. *Rasūls* (prophets), *nabīs* (apostles), *abdāls* (saints entrusted by God with the administration of the world), *walīs* (saints) were and are all put to tests and tribulations (*Futūḥ al-ghayb*, 66). These divine trials and calamities are a source of strength for their hearts and create confidence in them, establish their faith in the Lord, generate patience, and weaken the animal self and its desires (*Futūḥ al-ghayb*, 67).

Sometimes, however, calamities come as punishment for violation of Divine Law or for the commission of sin. Sometimes the divine purpose in sending calamities on man is to refine his nature and reform his ways (*Futūḥ al-ghayb*, 128). If patience in calamities is not linked with deep and unshakable faith in God, it can lead to frustration and pessimism. The Shaykh believed that good and evil were both acts of God and cited the following Quranic verse in support of his view: "God has created you as well as what you do" (LXXXVII, 96). It is therefore incumbent upon every human being to bear all calamities with patience and fortitude. To grudge and grumble is not the prescribed way. "Hold on to patience even if you get exhausted through your cheerful submission to and harmony with God. Hold on to cheerful resignation to and concord with Him" (*Futūḥ al-ghayb*, 66).

The Posthumous States

The Shaykh's account of hell to which the evildoers would be condemned is full of horrible scenes of punishment and torture.

When the curtain would be lifted from hell, squalls would burst and smoke would spread everywhere and the sinners would painfully smell its offensive fetor. Nineteen angels would be wardens of hell and every angel would be assisted by seventy thousand assistants. . . . Every one would be with a cane in hand. When the angel would order, hell would start breathing like the braying of horses. It would emit fire and its flames would rise and spread as if they would swallow all. . . . The sparks coming out would be as numerous as the stars on the sky. Every spark would be like a cloud rising from the west. . . . There would be seven sectors of hell. . . . The seventh one would have pits, fire, smoke, snakes, scorpions in it. Its trees would have fruits, each having seventy thousand insects in it. . . . Hell has seven gates—every gate has seventy jungles, each jungle is spread over a distance of seventy years; the pits have seventy chasms—each full of snakes, scorpions, dragons, etc. . . . The wardens of hell would be armed with terrible weapons, iron rods, whips and chains. The scenes of torture would make the eyes of people turn stone blind. Their flesh would burn and fall down from their bodies; the brain would melt; puss would gush out of their bodies. (*Ghunyat*, 307–20)²³

After describing the horrors of hell in several pages, the Shaykh refers to sins that would be punished in hell and particularly refers in this connection to adultery, theft, false evidence, polytheism, and tyrannical behavior toward human beings.

The Shaykh's account of heaven is as luring and enchanting as his account of hell is horrible and awe-inspiring. He says that in heaven there would be beautiful gardens laid out all around with trees laden with fruits. The roots of trees would be of gold and their branches would be silvery. The fruits would be softer than butter, sweeter than honey, and better in smell than *kastūrī* (a fruit). The palaces in heaven would be made of pearls, diamonds, and precious stones. Thousands of servants and a *houri* would be in attendance in each palace. In the mirror-like skin of *houris* one would be able to see one's own face. "The greatest pleasure for people in heaven," remarks the Shaykh, "would be the vision of God" (*Ghunyat*, 321–39). The descriptions of hell and heaven given by the Shaykh in his discourses and sermons reveal his tremendous power of exposition and his capacity to move the people.

Social Attitude and Ideals

Sharp awareness of contemporary social problems determined the nature and direction of the spiritual activities of the Shaykh. From the middle of

the fifth/eleventh century, to use the terminology of A. Toynbee, Muslim society became a prey to "schism of the soul" and "schism of the body-politic." The Shaykh was deeply disturbed at this degeneration of Muslim morals and the intellectual anarchy that characterized the thought and behavior of the Muslim people. He found in the spiritual resurrection of society the panacea for all its ills and concentrated all his energies in strengthening the spiritual fiber of the community which, in his opinion, ultimately determined the stability and well-being of the social order.

Shaykh 'Abd al-Qādir used to say that time is like a pregnant woman; no one knows what is in its belly (*al-Fath al-rabbānī*, 57).²⁴ This pithy sentence may be interpreted as an indication of the Shaykh's ideas of determinism, but in the context of his discussions it has far wider implications. He emphasized that human action and behavior ultimately assume a concrete shape and there is no escape from the process of cause and effect. One has to reap the consequences of one's actions. Time gives birth to what a man's own efforts have generated.

To strive for the welfare of society is, in the eyes of Shaykh 'Abd al-Qādir, a religious and spiritual obligation. He widened the horizon of spiritual effort when he identified "service of mankind" with the highest spiritual activity of man. He looked upon all people as "children of God on earth" (*al-Fath al-rabbānī*, 19) and found in helping the poor and the needy the real spirit of religious devotion. "Whoever fills his stomach while his neighbor starves is weak in his faith" (*al-Fath al-rabbānī*, 109). He advised his followers to desire for others what they desired for their own selves and to abstain from wishing for others what they did not wish for themselves (*al-Fath al-rabbānī*, 107). He quoted the Quranic verse "Surely God loves the doers of good to others" (III, 133) and derives from it the principle that service to mankind is an act of spiritual value. His philanthropic spirit reaches its sublimity when he says that "he would like to close the doors of hell and open those of paradise to all mankind."²⁵ It is incumbent upon whoever desires to tread the path of righteousness and piety first to abstain from doing anything tyrannical against human beings and second to perform his duties toward them with care and consideration (*Ghunyat*, 295–96). Quoting a saying of the Prophet from his wife Hadrat 'Ā'ishah, he says that human errors and sins are of three categories: (a) sins one commits against oneself—God may pardon such acts; (b) sins committed against God by developing polytheistic concepts—God would not forgive such sins against Him; (c) tyrannical acts perpetrated upon other human beings—God would not forgive even a small item of such tyrannical actions (*Ghunyat*, 262–63).

In his *Ghunyat* he equates hypocrisy with polytheism (*Ghunyat*, 478). People with hypocritical temperaments will incur divine displeasure. Even

a scholar (*‘ālim*) who does not act upon his knowledge is guilty of hypocrisy. He warned people against the company of those *‘ūlamā’* who did not act upon the knowledge they had acquired (*al-Fath al-rabbānī*, 83). He particularly condemns people who are like lambs in appearance but are really wolves in thought and action (*Ghunyāt*, 480).

Although at times the Shaykh exhorts people to cease being entangled in the struggle to acquire worldly means—an attitude born of the painful realization that people were becoming too engrossed in mundane affairs—he was opposed to parasitism and advised the people to (a) live on permitted sources of income, (b) earn their bread with their own effort, and (c) share with others whatever they earned. But he advised his followers not to place complete reliance on people through whom they received their sustenance nor on the arts and crafts that helped them in earning their bread (*al-Fath al-rabbānī*, 47, 27, 19, 130, 145, 160ff.).

The Shaykh gave a wide berth to the rulers of the day and held that most of their wealth was acquired through illegal means and exploitation.²⁶ Any contact with the ruler was, therefore, looked down on by him as a negation of the true spirit of religion. Although the Abbasid caliphs were anxious to seek his blessings, he never encouraged their visits. Sultan Sanjar is reported to have offered the province of Sistan (in southern Persia) for the expenses of his *khānqāh*, but he declined the offer with this verse on his lips: "My face may turn black like the canopy of Sanjar, / If except poverty I desire anything from Sanjar's country."²⁷

Notwithstanding his critical attitude toward rulers, he believed that the type of rulers that a people had was what they deserved in accordance with their own life and character. "As you are, so shall be your rulers," he used to say. His constant advice to the people was that if they reformed their own thought and behavior, their rulers would also be good (*al-Fath al-rabbānī*, 51).

Litanies and Rituals of the Qādiriyyah Order

During the course of its expansion, the Qādiriyyah Order developed many litanies and rituals, particularly when it spread in Turkey, Egypt, India, and Africa. The origin of some of the rituals has been ascribed to Shaykh ‘Abd al-Qādir,²⁸ while others are obviously later accretions. Symbols have sometimes been adopted to highlight special features of the order in different areas. The Turkish Qādirīs have adopted a green rose as their symbol. When a candidate is admitted to the order, the Qādirī shaykh attaches to his felt cap a rose of eighteen sections, with Solomon's Seal in the center. This cap is called *tāj* (crown),²⁹ and is highly coveted in mystic circles.

In Egypt the Qādirīs use white turbans and white banners. Some fishermen

who are members of the order carry upon poles nets of various colors when they move in a procession. In Morocco some Qādirīs recite invocations (*dhikr*) to the accompaniment of instruments. In Tangier the Jilālah, when they make vows, deposit white cocks in the *zāwiyah*. These are called *muharrar* and are not killed.³⁰

Some relics of Shaykh ‘Abd al-Qādir were taken to different regions and a halo of sanctity came to surround these places. In Uchh there is a turban claimed to have belonged to the saint.³¹

Invocation and Contemplation

Of the spiritual practices adopted by the Qādiriyyah Order, *dhikr* (reciting the Name *Allāh*) is the most important.³² Various degrees of intensity and emphasis are involved in the performance of *dhikr*. There is *dhikr* with one stroke, two strokes, three strokes, and four strokes. *Dhikr* with one stroke means repeating the Name *Allāh* with long drawn breath firmly, as if from high above, with force of heart and throat, and then stopping so that the breath returns to normal. This is to be repeated continuously for a long time. The *dhikr* with two strokes means sitting in the posture of prayer and invoking the Name *Allāh* first on the right side of the breast and then on the heart. This is done repeatedly without interval and with force. It is deemed effective in developing concentration of heart and in dispelling worries and distractions. The *dhikr* with three strokes is performed sitting cross-legged and repeating the Name *Allāh* first at the right side, second at the left, and the third time on the heart. The third stroke is to be with greater intensity and is to be continued longer. The *dhikr* with four strokes is also performed sitting cross-legged and consists of uttering the Name *Allāh* first on the right side, second on the left, the third time toward the heart, and the fourth time in front of the breast. The last stroke is expected to be stronger and longer.

These *dhikr* practices can also be performed by groups, loudly or silently, sitting in circles after morning and afternoon prayers. If a man utters *Allāh* four thousand times a day regularly for two months, he is usually expected to have qualified for some kind of spiritual experience.

After *dhikr* the Qādirīs recommend *pās-i anfās*, which means regulating the breath in such a way that in the process of inhaling and exhaling, the Name *Allāh* circulates automatically in the body. Then comes the *murāqabah* (contemplation). One is advised to concentrate on some Quranic verse or Divine Quality and become completely absorbed in contemplation.

Some of the practices developed by the later followers register local influences and are inexplicable with reference to the saint's own ideas and

ideals. For instance the followers of the Qādiriyyah Order in North Africa, who are called *Gilānīs*, have developed the practice of the *khalwah* (spiritual retreat) in a very special manner. Reeds are planted between heaps of stones, rags are attached to them by women, and benzoin and styrax are burnt. Both men and women visit this type of *khalwah* and pray for the fulfillment of their wishes.

An almost inevitable concomitant of such practices was the deification of the saint by extreme groups. Those who did not go to that length attributed a remark to him: "All the saints are under my feet"³³—an expression that, if uttered by the Shaykh, could best be interpreted as referring to an extreme condition of spiritual elation without any other implications.³⁴ But later admirers wrote to defend his position and sought to establish his pre-eminent place in the mystical hierarchy. Even an otherwise very cautious and critical scholar such as Shaykh 'Abd al-Ḥaqq Muḥaddith of Delhi paints the Shaykh in colors borrowed from these exaggerated hagiological tales. The greatness of Shaykh 'Abd al-Qādir lay not in his miracles, but in his "God-conscious" existence and dedication to the supreme ideal of Islamic mysticism: to realize God, to show people the way to God, and to bring happiness to disturbed hearts and distracted souls.

Notes

1. He is the author of *Bahjat al-asrār* (Cairo, 1304).
2. A. Mez, *The Renaissance of Islam*, trans. Salahuddin Khuda Bakhsh and D. S. Margoliouth (London: Luzac, 1937).
3. K. A. Nizami, *Some Aspects of Religion and Politics in India during the 13th Century* (Aligarh: S. Nural Hasan, 1961) 48–49.
4. That is why a number of works on invocations and litanies are attributed to him. *Evradi Sherifeh* (Constantinople, 1869) is one such collection.
5. E. Mercier, *Histoire de l'Afrique septentrionale* (Paris: E. Leroux, 1881–91) 3:14.
6. A. Le Chatelier, *Les confreries musulmanes du Hedjaz* (Paris: E. Leroux, 1887) 35.
7. *I'tisām*, I, 348ff. (Reprint of the 1914 Cairo edition by Dār al-Manār).
8. Yāqūt Ḥamawī, however, says that he was born at Bashtir (*Mu'jam al-buldān*, II, 187). 'Abd al-Mahāsīn names a village between Baghdad and Wasit as his birthplace (Abū al-Mahāsīn Yūsuf ibn Taghribirdī, *al-Nujūm al-zāhirah*, ed. Popper, *Annals* [Berkeley: University of California Press, 1909]).
9. For a biographical notice, see Jāmī, *Nafahāt al-uns* (Lucknow, 1915) 456–58.
10. A very distinguished saint of the time who influenced many founders of spiritual orders. For a biographical notice, see *Nafahāt al-uns*, 337–39.
11. If this figure is correct, the surviving record of his speeches is infinitesimally small. One whose speeches were preserved by so many people must leave a fairly large number of records.
12. Hujwīrī, *Kashf al-mahjūb*, trans. R. A. Nicholson (London: Luzac, 1911) 214.
13. Ibn 'Arabī, *al-Futūḥāt al-makkiyyah* (Beirut: Dār Ṣādir, n.d.) I, 262.

14. *Nafahāt al-uns*, 457–58. See also 'Abd al-Ḥaqq Muḥaddith Dihlawī, *Akhhār al-akhyār* (Delhi: Matba' Mujtabā'ī, 1331 A.H.) 10.
15. Cairo, 1322/1905.
16. Cairo, 1302/1884.
17. Text on the margin of *Bahjat al-asrār* (Cairo, 1304/1886), trans. W. Braune (Leipzig: W. de Gruyter, 1933).
18. C. Brockelmann, *Geschichte der arabischen Literatur* (Weimar: E. Felber, 1898) 1:435.
19. For Miyān Mīr, see Dārā Shikoh, *Sakīnat al-awliyā'*, ed. S. M. R. Jalālī Nā'inī and D. Tarachand (Tehran: 'Ilmī Press, 1965).
20. Except where noted, citations of this work are from the English translation by Aftab-ud-Din Ahmad (Lahore: Sh. M. Ashraf, 1958).
21. For Muḥammad ibn Karrām and the Karrāmiyyah doctrines, see Abu'l Fath al-Shahrastānī, *Book of Religions and Philosophical Sects* (*Kitāb al-milal wa'l-niḥal*) (London: Society for the Publication of Oriental Texts, 1846) 85–96.
22. Delhi, 1979.
23. This and the following citations of this work are from the translation by Amanullah Arman.
24. This and the following citations of this work are from the translation by 'Ashiq Ilahi.
25. His *Ghunyat* breathes a spirit of deep humanism and concern for the welfare of society.
26. 'Abd al-Ḥaqq Muḥaddith Dihlawī, *Akhhār al-akhyār*, 17.
27. *Ibid.*, 198.
28. The litanies ascribed to Shaykh 'Abd al-Qādir in *al-Fuyūdāt al-rabbāniyyah* are cited on the authority of 'Abd Allāh ibn Muḥammad al-'Ajāmī, who lived some 185 years after the saint.
29. J. P. Brown, *The Dervishes: Or Oriental Spiritualism* (London: Oxford University Press, 1927) 98.
30. G. Salmon, *Archives marocaine* (1905) 2:108.
31. *Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics*, 1:69.
32. For details, see Walī Allāh Dihlawī, *Intibāh fi salāsīl-i awliyā'* Allāh (Delhi, 1311 A.H.) 21–17; *Qawl al-jamīl* (Kanpur, 1291 A.H.) 34–45.
33. Shaykh 'Abd al-Ḥaqq Muḥaddith Dihlawī, *Tanbīh al-'arif bi mā waqa' fi'l-'awārif*, ms, Rampur Library; see K. A. Nizami, *Ḥayāt-i Shaykh 'Abd al-Ḥaqq Muḥaddith Dihlawī* (Delhi: 1953) 180–81.
34. Shaykh Shihāb al-Dīn Suhrawardī holds this view.

The Shādhiliyyah and North African Sufism

VICTOR DANNER

The Background

SUFISM REAFFIRMED ITSELF in a decisive fashion in the seventh/thirteenth century, which allowed the works of Ibn 'Arabī (d. 638/1240) and the new Sufi orders of the day to come to the fore. The political and dynastic readjustments made in both the East and the West of the Islamic world provided a new social framework or political state of affairs within which Sufism could exert a revitalizing spirit within the community as a whole. In the West the end of the Almohades gave rise to several dynastic regimes. Under one of these, the Hafsids of Tunis, the Shādhilī Order of Sufism began its existence.¹ In the middle of the century, the Ayyūbid power in the East disintegrated and there came upon the scene the great Mamlūk state. The Mamlūks stopped the westward march of the Mongols and transplanted to Cairo the caliphal institutions that had been eradicated by the Mongol conquest of Baghdad in 656/1258, some months before the death of the founder of the Shādhiliyyah, the Imam Abu'l-Hasan al-Shādhilī. His order would flower under the Mamlūks in Egypt and elsewhere in the Near East in the latter part of that century. But the origins of the Shādhiliyyah were in the same Maghrib (Spain, Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, and parts of Libya) that saw so many other great manifestations of the Sufi way of life. More or less contemporaneous with the founder of the Shādhilī Order were such luminaries as Abū Madyan Shu'ayb al-Maghribī (d. 594/1197), Ibn 'Arabī (d. 638/1240), 'Abd al-Salām ibn Mashīsh (d. 625/1228), Ibn Sab'īn (d. 669/1271), and al-Shushtarī (d. 688/1270), just to mention a few.

The role of the Maghrib in the spiritual life of Islam prior to the seventh/thirteenth century remains a largely unstudied question,² but its role after that epoch seems clear enough. Practically all of the previously mentioned Sufis wound up in the East. The Shādhilīs themselves, after their initial start

in the Maghrib, put out new roots in the East in the very lifetime of the founder. For centuries after, down to the present day, the order would furnish a steady stream of shaykhs moving from the Maghrib to the eastern or other parts of the Islamic world. The brilliance of the personalities and schools of the seventh/thirteenth century makes us aware of the eastward migration of Sufism almost as if it had suddenly begun in that time. The paucity of records for the period from the third/ninth to the sixth/twelfth centuries accounts in part for the lack of historical studies of Maghribī Sufism in the early days. But also the concentration of attention on the eastern types of Sufism has stymied the understanding of what actually took place in Maghribī Sufism prior to the days of Ibn al-'Arīf (d. 536/1143).³ The foundations of Sufism in the Maghrib came, of course, from the East, as did Islam. Yet the peculiar genius of Islam in the West, its life-style, its calligraphic art, its mosque architecture, and the lucidly crystalline nature of its urban architecture—to say nothing of its Mālikism—existed from the very early generations of Islam. These general traits were reinforced when, with the rise of the Abbasids in the second/eighth century, the West cut itself off from the East and began to develop organically in its own fashion. It was in such an ambiance that Shādhilism arose in the seventh/thirteenth century.

The Life and Works of Abu'l-Hasan al-Shādhilī

In the history of Islam, there are numerous Sufi types. The universality of the Sufi tradition balks at any attempt to reduce it to a single, controllable pattern. Nominalistic and antinomian Sufism have always coexisted. Over the centuries, however, there has emerged a type of Sufi master who embodies in his person what one could call "normative Sufism." This Sufi is characterized by a kind of spiritual sobriety, so to speak, that excludes all flamboyance and singularity. While his mind is fixed on the Real (*al-Haqq*), he affirms nevertheless the relative validity of both the Law and the dogmas of Islam. Such a Sufi tends to be self-effacing and to pass unnoticed by ordinary Muslims. It is he who is the characteristic flower of Sufism and the one who typifies the contemplative path throughout the centuries. Altogether of a different stamp is al-Hallāj (d. 309/922), who is well known outside the Islamic world but who can in no way be considered as embodying the normative Sufi typology before or after his time.⁴ The agonies, the persecutions, and the eventual martyrdom on the gibbet of this great Sufi saint contrast with the absence of all drama and pathos in the lives of the Sufis who follow the usual way. It is this normative Sufism, nevertheless,

that furnishes the real measure of the spiritual path in Islam. That is the kind of Sufism that characterizes the founder of the Shādhiliyyah, who nonetheless exercised a tremendous influence on the world around him and, through his order (or his *ṭarīqah*, "spiritual path," "Sufi order"), on the history of Islam.

He was born in the region of Ghumārah, near present-day Ceuta, in northern Morocco, in the year 593/1197, at a time when the Almohades had reached the end of their vigor.⁵ A *sharīf* of Ḥasanid descent, he was a Mālikī who wandered far afield in search of knowledge. Immensely learned, even as a young man, he was famous for his ability to engage in legal argumentation with the religious scholars of his day. It was in a hermitage on top of Jabal al-ʿAlam, near Tetuan, that he met the shaykh who was to have the greatest influence on his life, ʿAbd al-Salām ibn Mashīsh (d. 625/1228), subsequently known as "the Pole of the West," just as ʿAbd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī (d. 561/1166) would be called "the Pole of the East." Remaining with his master for a while, Abu'l-Ḥasan then departed for Shādhilah, in Tunisia, on orders from his teacher; and from there he received the name of al-Shādhilī. After intense spiritual exercises in the Jabal Zaghwan region, he was ordered in a vision to teach Sufism.

Accordingly, he set up his first *zāwiyah* in Tunis in the year 625/1228, just when the new governor and future founder of the Ḥafṣids, Abū Zakariyyā', arrived there too. His new *ṭarīqah* was a stunning success, drawing masses of people from all walks of life, including the sultan's family. On one of his trips to the East, an Ayyūbid sultan conferred on him and his descendants, by way of a religious endowment, one of the enormous towers that arose from the walls formerly encompassing the city of Alexandria in Egypt. In the year 642/1244, the shaykh, once again in obedience to a vision, left the Maghrib for the last time and, accompanied by other Sufi shaykhs and many of his own disciples, moved to Alexandria, where he established both his residence and the *zāwiyah* of his order in the tower the Ayyūbid sultan had given him. On the top floor he lived with his family; another floor was converted into a tremendous mosque where he gave public instruction; and yet another floor was turned into a great *zāwiyah* for his disciples, with cells for meditational retreat. In Egypt, likewise, his order met with great success, drawing into its ranks many court officials, great religious scholars like ʿIzz al-Dīn ibn ʿAbd al-Salām (d. 660/1262) or the Shāfiʿī traditionist al-Mundhirī (d. 656/1258), a host of Sufi figures, and individuals from different levels of society. In the year 646/1248, he became blind, and it was in that state that he participated, in his own way, in the Battle of al-Manṣūrah in Egypt, which stopped the Seventh Crusade headed by Saint Louis of France, one of the few instances in history where saints in opposing armies actually clashed without

knowing of one another's presence. Shortly before Shaykh Abu'l-Ḥasan started on his last pilgrimage to Mecca, the city of Baghdad fell to the conquering Mongols, thus ending the long reign of the Abbasids there and ushering in a new epoch in the history of Islam. The shaykh was accompanied by a mass of his disciples; but he fell ill in the eastern desert of Egypt, in a place called Humaythirah, and there he died in the year 656/1258.

The shaykh never composed any books or treatises on Sufism, but he did compose litanies (*ahzāh*, pl. of *hizb*), which are prayers of a mystical origin containing Quranic formulations as well as particular Sufi inspirations.⁶ These were immediately diffused throughout the Islamic world. Since then, they have become some of the most widely used litanies in Islam and are considered to possess special graces. They have names that he or others gave to them, such as *Hizb al-bahr* (*Litany of the Ocean*) or *Hizb al-anwār* (*Litany of Lights*), and the like. Well over a dozen of them are famous and have been glossed by eminent Sufi teachers of later times. They are said to possess certain theurgical properties, and the shaykh claimed that he received them from the mouth of the Prophet in visions. Their fundamental teaching has to do with the Oneness of Allah (*tawḥīd*) and the spiritual consequences that flow therefrom in the soul of the believer. Both mystical and non-mystical Muslims can find their own levels within the litanies, and that is no doubt why they have been so popular over the centuries. But apart from that pedagogical function, they seem to have been used by the early and later Shādhilis as themes of meditation on death, the hereafter, purification, vigilance, detachment, patience, and the Attributes of God. We read in one Sufi text that they were used three times a day—in the morning, in the afternoon, and in the evening—which implies that they functioned as part of the Shādhilī methods of concentrating the mind on the Divinity. It was perhaps in relation to these meditations that the other compositions by the shaykh, the *dawāʾir* (pl. of *dāʾirah*, "circle"), are to be situated. These were geometric representations, generally of circles within squares or vice versa, containing Quranic verses or Divine Names or the names of the archangels, which seem to have been used as visual supports of meditation. The same *dawāʾir* had theurgical functions too, as protective amulets and talismans, and the shaykh prescribed them for some of his disciples. They were transmitted by later Shādhilis through a regular chain of authorities going back to the founder of the order. The Shādhilī biographer, Ibn ʿIyād, in his *al-Mafāḥir al-ʿAlīyah* (*Lofty Glorifications*) gives examples of these *dawāʾir*. A considerable amount of the material found in the cosmological work called *Shams al-āfāq fī ʿilm al-ḥurūf wa ʿl-awfāq* (*The Sun of the Horizons concerning the Science of Letters and Harmonies*) by ʿAbd al-Raḥmān al-Buṣṭāmī (d. 858/

1454), goes back to Shaykh Abu'l-Ḥasan through one of his greatest disciples, Shaykh Abu'l-'Azā'im, who died in Tunis at the age of 116 (718/1318). The cosmology in question is purely esoteric and related to the Divine Names of Allah and a number of disciplines, such as alchemy and astrology, in their symbolic meanings. This cosmological, talismanic, and theurgical development of the *darwā'ir*, in conjunction with the symbolism of the Arabic letters, must not be confused with either black magic (*al-sihr al-aswad*), which is sorcery, or with white magic (*al-sihr al-abyad*), which is more positive in nature, to be sure, but is still not of a purely theurgical characteristic, for this has spiritual graces and blessings as its fruits. Moreover, all of this constitutes a secondary development of the symbolism of the *darwā'ir* anyway, a kind of popular extension of what must have had meditational values or higher meanings for Sufi adherents.

Shādhilī Teachings

The *ṭarīqah* that Shaykh Abu'l-Ḥasan established was based on the metaphysical and spiritual contents of the Islamic doctrine of the absolute Oneness of Allah (*tawḥīd*). The goal of his path was the gnostic realization of Allah, gnosis (*ma'rifah*) implying perfect wisdom and sanctity of soul in the contemplative. The *ma'rifah* he preached reposed on simple faith, on the strictures of the Law (*Sharī'ah*), and on the dogmatic formulations of Ash'arism as regards creed (*'aqidah*). Although the gnosis in question also had cosmological implications in a spiritual sense, it was in no way enshrouded in the complex philosophical notions of *wahdat al-wujūd* ("Oneness of Being") propounded by Shaykh Abu'l-Ḥasan's contemporary, Ibn 'Arabī (d. 638/1240),⁷ although the Shādhilī masters defended the Shaykh al-Akbar against his detractors, particularly against Ibn Taymiyyah (d. 728/1328), the Hanbalī canonist of later times. Moreover, the *tawḥīd* taught by Shaykh Abu'l-Ḥasan carried with it the implication of "remembering God" (*dhikru'llāh*), or the invocation of the Divine Name *Allāh*, the prime spiritual art of concentration in Sufism. The two, *tawḥīd* and *dhikr*, constituted the essential pillars of his way, the former with respect to doctrine, the latter with respect to spiritual methodology. Yet it was not in these two elements that one can discern a difference between his Sufi order and the others of his day or earlier: they were all more or less based on the same Quran and *Sunnah* of the Prophet, on the same Islamic teachings and practices as seen from an esoteric viewpoint, varying only in emphases or accents and applications. True, the gnostic teachings of the Shādhiliyyah set them apart from the orders that stressed devotionism and asceticism carried to great lengths; but there were, of course, other orders of the day, such as the

Qādiriyyah, the Suhrawardiyyah, and the like, that were gnostic also and that approached things from an intellectual, not an emotional or sentimental, attitude.⁸

Rather, it was in the external self-effacement of the early Shādhilīs that we must look for differences and contrasts with other Sufi communities of the times. The Shādhilī Order was not discernible from the outside. Although its masters gave public lectures on *tasawwuf* from time to time, which made their presence in a given locality obvious, the members of the order, the rank and file, were not distinguishable from the generality of Muslims. In the days of Shaykh Abu'l-Ḥasan, a number of his disciples became eminent shaykhs in Tunisia and elsewhere in the Maghrib. All of them had disciples, as one can well imagine; but their tracks in history cannot be pinpointed because they had no visible signs of adherence to the Shādhiliyyah. If we did not know through one of the biographical accounts of the early masters of the order that the Sultan al-Malik Mu'izz al-Dīn (d. 655/1257) had been a disciple of Shaykh Abu'l-Ḥasan, there would have been no way of discovering this either from the practices of the sultan or from his external garb.

Likewise, the *zāwiyahs* of the order were nowhere obvious, the masters very often holding forth in their own homes, as did Shaykh Abu'l-Ḥasan himself when he founded his path in Tunis or when he later moved to one of the towers of the wall surrounding Alexandria. For the *zāwiyahs* of the Shādhilīs had none of the semi-official characteristics of the imposing *khān-qāhs* built by the rulers of the day for the other Sufi orders. In a similar effort toward discretion, the *fuqarā'* of the order wore no distinctive garments, such as the *khirqah* or the *muraqqa'ah*, which were the coarse, patched-up woolen garments of the other orders. They had no bowl or staff, nor did they lead wandering, eremitical lives as mendicants. Quite the contrary, they dressed like all other Muslims did; and some of them, like the founder of the order himself, very often wore magnificent clothing, so that more than one ascetic would have reason to wonder if he were in the presence of a genuinely spiritual person or not. Their garments reflected the particular social class to which they belonged, whether it was that of a shoemaker, a doctor of the Law, a minister, a professor, or some other group. There was a reason for that effacement of the *faqīr* in the professional world around him: the rule of the early Shādhilīs was that all members of the order must gain their livelihood through the exercise of a trade or a profession. They were not to flee from the world to lead a contemplative life as recluses; rather, they followed the contemplative life in the very midst of society, in their actual professions or trades. Those disciples who had no means of livelihood were frowned upon. All in all, the Shādhilī way was a kind of remanifestation of the *tawḥīd* or *dhikr* of the early Islamic community in

the time of the Prophet, when there were no distinguishing marks among the Muslims that separated the contemplatives from the faithful who followed a life of action: the inner life of the Spirit was accentuated, while externally everyone seemed to follow his own particular calling in the world. It is for this reason that the historical traces of the Shādhilīs in early times are practically impossible to track down in Spain, Morocco, Algeria, and elsewhere, unless one already knows in advance the names of certain masters or of their disciples.

The Early Successors of Shaykh Abu'l-Ḥasan al-Shādhilī

Shortly before he passed away, in 656/1258, Shaykh Abu'l-Ḥasan designated Abu'l-'Abbās al-Mursī as his successor in the order. The latter was born in Murcia, Spain, in the year 616/1220, the same city that witnessed the births of Ibn 'Arabī and Ibn Sab'īn, this last coming into the world only a few years before al-Mursī himself. At the age of around twenty-four, al-Mursī set out for the pilgrimage to Mecca with his family, but his ship foundered off the Algerian coast. He lost his parents in the calamity, and he narrowly escaped death by swimming to shore with his brother. After wandering for a while in North Africa, they finally encountered Shaykh Abu'l-Ḥasan and joined his order. Shortly afterward, in the year 642/1244, the shaykh moved the center of his *ṭarīqah* from Tunis to Alexandria. In Egypt, al-Mursī proved to be what the shaykh had anticipated and became a teacher of the path himself. After Shaykh Abu'l-Ḥasan's death, in 656/1258, al-Mursī moved into the great tower that the founder of the Shādhiliyyah had used as residence, mosque, and *zāwiyyah*, and remained there until his death (686/1288) some thirty years later, seldom moving out to travel about in Egypt. Whereas Shaykh Abu'l-Ḥasan al-Shādhilī had no compunction of mind in mingling with the officials of state in his days, if he felt that some just cause could be served thereby, Shaykh Abu'l-'Abbās al-Mursī was made of a different cloth altogether and would have nothing to do with officials of any kind, refusing all provisions or stipends offered him by the Mamlūks. Occasionally, he ventured forth to Cairo, like his teacher, to lecture on *taṣawwuf* before the principal religious scholars of his day, but in general he occupied himself with the affairs of the *ṭarīqah* until his death. Also like his master, he wrote no books or treatises on Sufism and considered all such works to be nothing but foam cast up on the shores of the infinite ocean of spiritual realization; but, like his teacher, he did compose *ahzāb*, some of which are still in circulation. Perhaps the most widely known of his disciples in the Islamic world at large is the legendary al-Būṣīrī (d. 694/1295), the Egyptian

poet of Berber origins who is famous for his two great poems in praise of the Prophet, the "Mantle Poem" (*al-Burdah*) and the *Hamziyyah*, both of which are recited every year on the Prophet's birthday. The other great Sufi disciples of al-Mursī are not well known in the Islamic world, but they play an important role in Near Eastern Sufism. Among them is Shaykh Yāqūt al-'Arshī (d. 732/1332), the Alexandrian teacher of Abyssinian origins whom Ibn Baṭṭūṭah visited in 725/1325 during his travels in the East. Still another was the incomparable Shaykh Najm al-Dīn al-Isfahānī (d. 721/1321), the Persian disciple of al-Mursī, whose long residence at Mecca spread the Shādhilī Order among the pilgrims. He was the Shādhilī teacher of the Sufi al-Yāfi'ī (d. 768/1367), and it was through the latter that the Shī'ite Sufi order of the Ni'matu'llāhiyyah is connected with the Shādhiliyyah. Finally, there was Shaykh Ibn 'Atā' Allāh (d. 709/1309), who is the third eminent Shādhilī master in most of the chains of transmission for the order, but who is also the first of the early teachers to write down the doctrines of the order in books that have since become indispensable for understanding the perspectives of the Shādhiliyyah in those days.

Shaykh Abu'l-'Abbās al-Mursī's long tenure as guardian over the affairs of the Shādhiliyyah was contemporaneous with the reign of al-Malik al-Zāhir Baybars (658/1260–676/1277), who brought the Mamlūks to the pinnacle of power and success in Egypt and Syria. The time for a fresh outpouring of Sunni Islam was at hand. The old caliphal seat at Baghdad was transferred by him to Cairo in 659/1261, converting Egypt into the prestigious center of the Islamic community. Then, turning his attention to Sunnism, he consecrated the four Sunni schools of jurisprudence as having equal voice with the ruler, thus sounding the death knell for other schools, such as the Zāhirī and the Shī'ite. He crushed once and for all the power of the so-called Assassins (the Ismā'īlīs) of the Near East; he regained numerous lands from the Christians of the Levant; and, by reuniting Egypt and Syria, he laid the foundations for the brilliant Mamlūk cultural manifestations in the arts and architecture that were to have such lasting influences in the region. But the Mamlūks were also the patrons of Sufism, and it was in that regenerated sociopolitical atmosphere that the influence of the early Shādhilī masters made itself felt on the world around them.

The early Shādhilīs were concerned not only with the teachings and practices of Sufism but also with the Law of Islam and the creedal forms of belief, or with what is usually called exoteric Islam. They were Sunni Muslims, and, although Sufism as such has nothing to do with theological dogmatism, they nevertheless tended to favor the Ash'arite school of theology, one of the important currents of creedal formulations in Islam. But the Ash'arism they adhered to was perhaps not quite the same as that

preached by Abu'l-Hasan al-Ash'arī (d. 324/935), since by the seventh/thirteenth century other great figures, such as al-Ghazzālī (d. 505/1111), had added their own contributions to the school, changing its nature somewhat. When all is said and done, Ash'arism was not too far removed from the rather strict system of beliefs embodied in Ḥanbalism. Ash'arism allowed for a limited use of reasoning, whereas the Ḥanbalī school of thought rejected all speculative theology and defended its particular interpretations of the Quran through a powerful display of dogmatic voluntarism. Although the Shādhilīs of those days were Ash'arites, this does not mean that their Sufism was Ash'arite dogmatism, nor does it mean that they themselves were dogmatists. In the eyes of the early teachers, Ash'arism was perhaps a better approach to the articles of belief than Ḥanbalism. But they did not require their disciples to be Ash'arites, nor can their Sufism be reduced to a merely theological program of studies. Thus, the fact that Abu'l-'Abbās al-Mursī studied the *Irshād* of Imam al-Ḥaramayn al-Juwaynī (d. 478/1085), the Shāfi'ī theologian of Ash'arite inspiration, because it contained theology (*uṣūl al-dīn*), must not mislead us into thinking that Ash'arism was an indispensable element of his *ṭarīqah*.

In many ways, the Shādhilī path was a reform in the spiritual and religious sense of that word. It was not an iconoclastic or puritanical reform that brutally sought to destroy the external institutions of Islam in the name of a return to the ways of the pious ancestors (*salaf*). But in its own way it did point an accusatory finger at the exaggerated formalism and literalism of the exoteric Islam of those days, just as it also had something to say against the armies of ascetics and wandering *fuqarā'*, who moved under the banners of Sufism and who could not all be sincere treaders of the path, to say the least. Perhaps out of all the great Sufi orders that saw the light of day in the seventh/thirteenth century, the Shādhiliyyah most conformed not simply to normative Sufism, in the sense previously defined, but also to normative Islam, if only because the Shādhilī initiates, unlike those of other orders, never stood out in the midst of the faithful and could thus easily pass unperceived more or less like the early Muslim contemplatives of Umayyad times, when Islam was still pristine and fresh.

Mālikism among the Shādhilīs

Although Sufism in its Shādhilī guise represents the spiritual path (*ṭarīqah*), it is worth recalling that early Shādhilism was based on the Mālikī school of jurisprudence, and this association between the two would continue largely undisturbed down to the present day. Not only was the founder of the order a Mālikī, but the Maghrib, in which Shādhilism first saw the light

of day, was a vast region stretching from Spain to the Libyan desert near Egypt that was uniformly Mālikī in coloration. Although it is not surprising that the origins of Shādhilism, in Tunis, were under the governance of Mālikism, it may come as a surprise to learn that the second center of the order, Alexandria, was likewise a stronghold of Mālikī jurisprudence in Egypt. The city of Alexandria was then second in importance only to Cairo. It was a port city on the Mediterranean, a point of entrance to and exit from Egypt. It was also a great fortress, with immense walls—a double series of them, to be exact—surrounding it, giant towers arising from them at regular intervals. We have already seen that, in one of those towers, Shaykh Abu'l-Ḥasan al-Shādhilī established his home and *zāwiyah*. In the Mamlūk period, those towers would often serve as places of confinement for persons deemed to be troublemakers; thus, Ibn Taymiyyah spent some time in one of them, although under comfortable conditions of exile. Alexandria was also a trading mart; Christian merchants and consuls from distant lands had their quarters there; and, indeed, within the symmetrically laid out streets (a plan that was peculiar to the city), a tremendous amount of commercial activity was always going on.

Mālikism was firmly implanted in the city precisely because it was the meeting-place between the West of the Islamic community and the East, and had been for centuries. In the course of time, many Maghribīs had settled in the city and brought with them their Mālikism. A flourishing colony of Muslims from the Maghrib was to be found there, and inevitably influences from both the East and the West joined forces within its walls. The Ayyūbids built *madrasahs* in the city for the teaching of Mālikism, and great authorities in the *madhhab* were to be found in the city, some of whom, like Ibn al-Ḥājib (d. 646/1248) or Ibn al-Munayyir (d. 683/1285), were actually disciples of Shaykh Abu'l-Ḥasan al-Shādhilī. A young Mālikī would begin as a boy with the Quranic school (the *maktab*), and then go on afterward to a local religious college (*madrasah*) or to the private home of an Alexandrian religious scholar for further instruction. Like the other schools of jurisprudence, Mālikism had developed its own manuals and textbooks over the centuries, and these formed the fundamental core of instruction. All of the early Shādhilī masters—and this holds true even for the later ones—had studied their Mālikī jurisprudence from such works, and a number of them, including Shaykh Abu'l-Ḥasan himself, were past masters of Islamic Law. Moreover, as was previously mentioned, some of the eminent authorities of Mālikism were influenced by the early Shādhilī teachers; thus, the famous Mālikī *faqīh*, Ibn al-Ḥājib (d. 737/1337), the author of the *Madkhal*, knew Shaykh Ibn 'Atā' Allāh quite well, and he often cites the words of Shaykh Abu'l-Ḥasan al-Shādhilī. In fact, Shaykh Ibn 'Atā' Allāh was himself

considered to be one of the foremost figures in Mālikī jurisprudence in his day, thus perpetuating the dynasty of religious scholars founded by his grandfather in Alexandria.

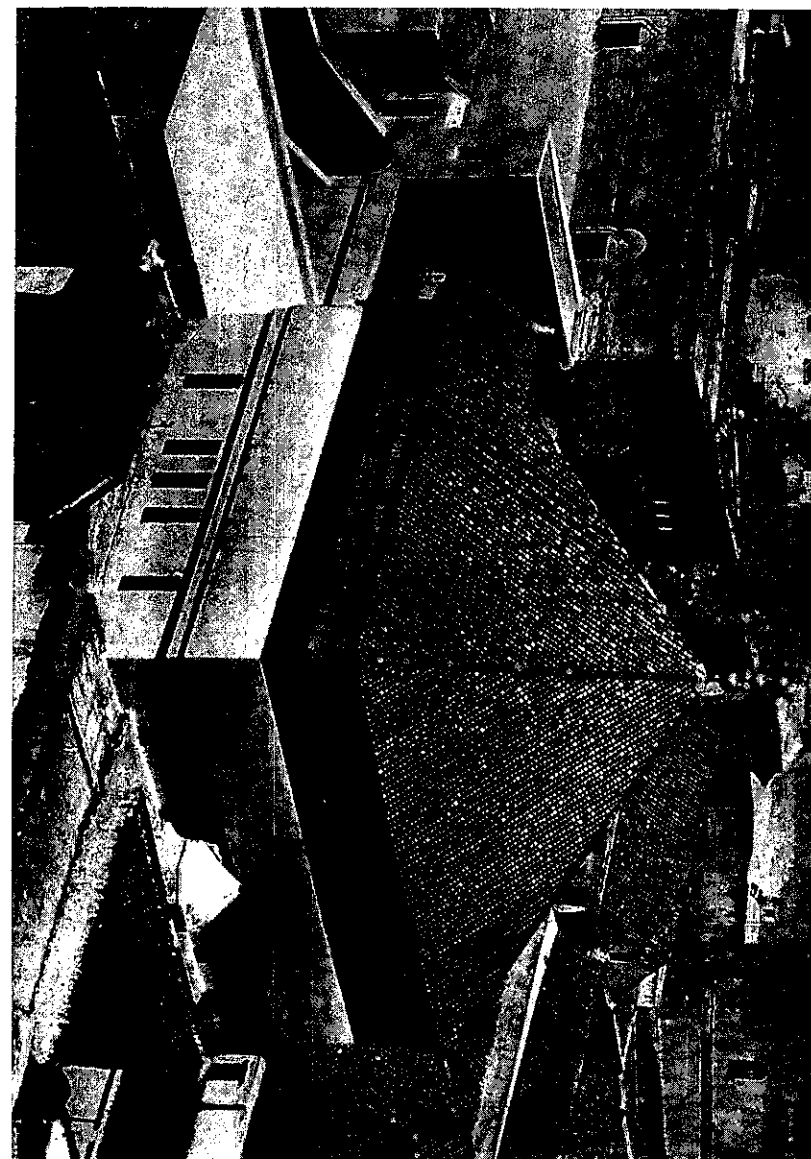
The Sufi Heritage of Shādhilism

While Mālikism was the dominant *madhhab* of the early Shādhilīs, their Sufism, as we can see in the works of Shaykh Ibn 'Atā' Allāh, was not limited to any one particular school of thought. Shādhilī intellectuality fastened on the gnostic works of earlier teachers, such as the *Khatm al-walāyah* (*Seal of Sanctity*) of al-Hakīm al-Tirmidhī (d. ca. 285/898), or the *Mawāqif* (*Spiritual Stoppings*) of the fourth/tenth century Sufi al-Niffarī. Nor did it recoil at the words and deeds of the martyred Sufi al-Ḥallāj (d. 309/922), who was viewed as a saintly sage and not as some eccentric in the path. Great respect was held for the *Qūt al-qulūb* (*The Nourishment of Hearts*) of Abū Ṭālib al-Makkī (d. 386/996), a work that was said to confer spiritual light on its readers. Similarly, the *Ihyā' 'ulūm al-dīn* (*The Revival of the Religious Sciences*) by al-Ghazzālī (d. 505/1111) was much appreciated; its author was ranked among the eminent saints of Islam.

It is possible that Shaykh Abu'l-Ḥasan al-Shādhilī actually had contacts with Ibn 'Arabī, given the former's numerous travels in the Near East. We are on surer ground when it comes to the Shaykh al-Akbar's disciple, Ṣadr al-Dīn al-Qūnawī (d. 673/1275), author of numerous works in the same spirit of *wahdat al-wujūd* as characterized by his master. He came to Cairo to meet the Shādhilī sage, so that we do know that the two Sufi schools of thought—analogue versions of metaphysical *tawhīd*, to be sure—met briefly in their early period. Moreover, the Shādhilīs were vigorous defenders of Ibn 'Arabī's teachings, as we see in the tumultuous confrontation between Shaykh Ibn 'Atā' Allāh and the Ḥanbalī fundamentalist critic of the Shaykh al-Akbar, Ibn Taymiyyah, in the Citadel of Cairo early in the eighth/fourteenth century. In this connection, it is well worth remembering that the acerbic remarks made by Shaykh Ibn 'Atā' Allāh against the doctors of the Law who restrict the meaning of the Islamic message to the level of their own comprehension really apply, first and foremost, to the Ḥanbalī canonist.

In the days of Ibn Taymiyyah, it was not unusual for many of the religious scholars to have Sufi masters; we have already seen this in the case of some of the well-known doctors of the Law attached to the early Shādhilī masters. Ibn Taymiyyah was no exception to the general rule; he too had his Sufi teacher. But this must not lead us to believe that the Ḥanbalī *faqīh* was something of an esoterist in his own right, for it is clear from his very

2. The tomb of Moulay Idrīs, the Patriarch of North African Sufism, in Fez in Morocco.



ritings that the contemplative esoterism of Islam was not altogether to his king. Even those Sufis of whom he approved, such as the founder of the Ṣādirīyyah, 'Abd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī (d. 561/1166), were acceptable only to the degree that they embraced Ḥanbalī creedal positions, which was the case of Shaykh 'Abd al-Qādir, and not to the extent that they embodied in their teachings or persons the contemplative nature of the Sufi path. For the Shādhilī teachers to defend the Shaykh al-Akbar against the attacks of Ḥanbalīs or religious scholars belonging to other schools of jurisprudence is not the least surprising: his *wahdat al-wujūd*, in the final analysis, was the same as their own teachings on *tawḥīd*. They were themselves intellectuals and highly speculative in their doctrinal elaborations. Shaykh Ibn 'Atā' Allāh has left us a kind of catalogue of the only subjects that his master, Shaykh Abu'l-'Abbās al-Mursī, used to speak about: the Great Intellect (*al-'aql al-akbar*), the Supreme Name, the Names of God, the letters of the alphabet, the circles of the saints, the stations of those who have certitude, the angels near the Throne, the sciences dealing with the inner mysteries, the graces in invocations, the "day" of those in the graves, the question of self-direction, the science of cosmology, the science of God's Will, the question of God's "Grasp" (*qabḍah*) and of the men belonging to it, the sciences of the "solitary saints" (*afrād*), the Day of Resurrection and God's dealing with His servants with gentleness and gracefulness, and the existence of God's revenge. In other words, while the first two Shādhilī teachers did not leave behind books, they nevertheless discussed more or less the same subjects we find treated in the works of the Shaykh al-Akbar, who put down his writings in inspirations similar to those that the other shaykhs uttered in assemblies surrounded by their intimate disciples. The gnostic positions of Ibn 'Arabī found a ready echo in the teachings of the Shādhilīs, whose intellectual way is best summarized in Shaykh Abu'l-'Abbās al-Mursī's rejection of the cult of charismatic phenomena: the greatest miracle, he claimed, was in the purification of the intellect in the heart.

To that body of Sufi literature antedating or contemporaneous with the first two teachers of the Shādhiliyyah, there soon came to be added the works of Shaykh Ibn 'Atā' Allāh himself: *Kitāb al-ḥikam* (*The Book of Aphorisms*), a summary of the Sufi way in its perennial elements;⁹ *al-Tanwīr* (*Isqāt al-tadbīr*) (*Illumination on Rejecting Self-Direction*), an exposition of the errors to be found in all egocentric self-direction; *Lata'if al-minan* (*The Subtleties of Grace*), a biographical sketch of the first two Shādhilī masters; *al-Qaṣd al-mujarrad fī ma'rīfat al-ism al-mufrad* (*The Sole Aim Concerning Knowledge of the Unique Name*), an excellent spiritual and metaphysical discussion of the Divine Name *Allāh* and the other Names; *Miftāḥ al-falāḥ wa miṣbāḥ al-arwāḥ* (*The Key of Success and the Lamp of Spirits*), a compendium

on the remembrance of God in the widest sense of the word *dhikr*; and a number of other, minor works. The whole corpus of his writings came to be the dominant Shādhilī writings precisely because he was the first of the early teachers to put pen to paper and expound the doctrines of the order. Others later on would also compose works of different sorts; these were added to the ensemble of writings within the Shādhilī tradition that would be referred to and cited by later generations as authoritative expositions of the order's teachings.

The Spiritual Movement Eastward

The already mentioned trait of Maghribī Sufism to move from West to East in the Islamic world can be seen not only in the life and travels of the Shaykh al-Akbar, who wound up in Damascus, but also in the teaching career of Shaykh Abu'l-Ḥasan al-Shādhilī himself, who moved from Tunis to Alexandria. Other Shādhilī teachers in subsequent centuries would follow in his footsteps, or else their disciples would settle here and there in the East. How to account for this phenomenon? Of course, one can point to Mecca as the pilgrimage center of the Islamic world, so that it is only natural that Sufis, like other Muslims, should go eastward; but it is one thing to go on the pilgrimage and return, and another thing to go to the East and stay there. Initially, the movement of Sufism was the reverse: it came from different parts of the eastern world of Islam and settled in the lands of the Maghrib with the same waves that brought Islam to the region. We know very little about that earlier period of Sufism, because historians, both Muslim and non-Muslim, tend to concentrate on events and sects or movements that broke out in the Near East, the homeland of the faith. The Maghrib became, in due time, an independent cultural entity, with its own style of life, its own artistic forms, and its own sociopolitical system, which set it off altogether from the eastern regions of Islam, so much so that Ibn 'Arabī, when he arrived in Egypt from the Maghrib, found that the Sufis there were unaware of Sufism in the Maghrib. Perhaps it would be closer to the mark to say that the archaic nature of Islam, its primordial character, had been preserved within the Maghribī bastion and leavened with infusions of Sufism coming from the East until finally the West, by virtue of having maintained a reservoir of spirituality within its ancient forms of Islam, was in a position to reverse the movement and to influence the East, to say nothing of the African South.

We should bear in mind that the Maghrib, more than any other part of the Islamic world, developed an extraordinary Islamic civilization that preserved the earlier Umayyad culture that was purely Arab and gave to it

a startlingly original imprint in the course of time. Even after the Christian Reconquest of Spain had come to an end in the ninth/fifteenth century, North Africa remained a real bastion of Sufi spirituality,¹⁰ especially when one realizes that, after that epoch, the Near East began a long, slow decline. The gradual weakening of the Ottoman and Safavid empires heralds that coming spiritual decadence. It is within this context that we can understand the movement of Shādhilism, in later times, from the Maghrib to the East, reawakening in the eastern lands the spirit of gnostic *taṣawwuf*, particularly in the Arab region. The Maghrib, as was said, had changed roles with the East, a process that began with the founder of the Shādhiliyyah, one of the greatest Sufis of Islam, whose *ṭarīqah* would become a powerful force for the regeneration of Islam in century after century down to the present day, testifying in that manner to the central part that Shādhilism would play in the midst of vast areas of the Islamic community.

The Shādhilī Branches of Later Times

A great *ṭarīqah* like the Shādhiliyyah can be compared to a tree: as it grows from a sapling to a fully matured tree, it throws out branches, and these in turn sometimes develop still other, lesser branches. The same holds true for the Sufi orders: originally, they are named after their founders, such as 'Abd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī, as mentioned in the last chapter, but as time goes by the main trunk gives rise to branches, likewise named after their founders. It is not a question here of a schismatic movement or of some sort of sectarianism; rather, it is that the new branch, by virtue of some outstanding quality in its founder—or perhaps even a fresh reorientation within the framework of the order—receives a new name. We see this in the eighth/fourteenth century, in Egypt, with the Shādhiliyyah: a branch emerged called the Wafā'iyyah, founded by Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad Wafā' (d. 760/1359), who was known as Bahr al-ṣafā' ("The Ocean of Purity") and was the father of the illustrious 'Alī ibn Wafā' (d. 807/1404). The Wafā'iyyah developed in their own way as the generations passed, spreading into parts of the Near East outside of Egypt. After the ninth/fifteenth century, they wore their own type of Sufi garments, as if the original unobtrusive style of the Shādhiliyyah no longer was observed or was applicable, for a number of reasons. Likewise, they gradually took on an institutional life that was certainly much more complex and rigid than was the case for the earlier Shādhiliyyah.

Much the same can be said of the numerous other branches that emerged from the parent trunk of the order: the Ḥanafīyyah, the Jazūliyyah, the Nāṣiriyyah, the 'Isawiyyah, the Tihāmiyyah, the Darqāwiyyah, and the

like, correspond to readaptations and readjustments of the original Shādhilī message. Very often they arose because historical and social circumstances called for a Sufi response of a special type. It is not easy to determine in every single case what might have been the causal relationship between the historical milieu and the rise of one of these branches. The Jazūliyyah, for example, which goes back to the famous Imam al-Jazūlī (d. ca. 875/1470), one of the patron saints of Marrakesh, seems to have arisen largely as a powerful devotional manifestation of love for the Prophet, as we can see in his well-known litany on the Prophet, *Dalā'il al-khayrāt* (*The Signs of Benedictions*), which has been recited since his day in great parts of the Islamic world. By then, the spiritual substance of Morocco was in need of a powerful symbol to allow it to dedicate itself once again to the roots of its collective well-being. And what more regenerative a source could be found than the love of the Prophet? Especially was this the case in view of the *jihād* that was then going on against the Portuguese colonies on the coast that threatened the security of *dār al-islām*. But also—and this needs to be stressed—the devotional fervor generated by the *Dalā'il al-khayrāt* was a testimony to its otherworldly origins; and thus it was a kind of celestial message that the Jazūliyyah were destined to spread over other Islamic lands.

If we look at the causes that might have given rise to the Zarrūqiyyah, named after its founder Shaykh Aḥmad Zarrūq (d. 899/1493), they probably have to do with the restoration of piety and conformity to the Law. Not only was the shaykh an indefatigable commentator on the *Hikam* of Ibn 'Aṭā' Allāh, writing something like thirty glosses, but he was also a great traveler. Wherever he went, he inculcated the strict observance of the Law as a necessary accompaniment to the contemplative path. His works on Sufism, like the *Qawā'id al-taṣawwuf* (*The Principles of Sufism*), demonstrate a meticulous regard for legal rules that strikes one at first glance as inappropriate in a contemplative esoterist; but, after reflection, one discerns here and there in his book that he is seeking to reestablish some kind of balance between the Law and the Path, so that neither of the two will impinge on the other's domain. The Zarrūqiyyah, no doubt, considered the balancing of Sufism and the Law as an indispensable quality in the would-be *faqīr*, something that he had to be aware of, or something that he had to assimilate.

The branching out of different orders from the original Shādhilī trunk also implied adaptations to a variety of spiritual vocations. Although the Shādhiliyyah retained throughout the centuries a characteristic intellectual orientation, with time, some of the orders, like the 'Isawiyyah, established by the tenth/sixteenth-century shaykh Muḥammad ibn 'Īsā, were hardly intellectual in nature. Like the Rifā'iyyah of the Near East, the 'Isawiyyah

engaged in practices designed to demonstrate the immunity of their adherents to fire, swords, scorpions, and so on. No doubt all of this had a certain disciplinary function with some of the shaykhs of the order; but sooner or later the pursuit of such immunities became an end in itself, so that the order was reduced simply to a kind of exhibitionism in the minds of many Muslims. It drew into its ranks a particular mentality, not only in Morocco, of course, where it originated, but also in Egypt and elsewhere. It is generally the likes of the Rifā'iyyah and the 'Isawiyyah that, on a popular plane, give to Sufism a circuslike ambience that was certainly not intended by their founders. But it was easy for the critics of Sufism, particularly the religious scholars of puritanical bent, to point to such orders as examples of the deviations and subversions of Islam which Sufism produces. Nevertheless, and whatever might be the opinions of the strait-laced believers and scholars concerning such orders, they served the purpose of integrating into Sufism various classes of society that might otherwise have been left out of its precincts altogether. In any case, not all such deeds as characterize the 'Isawiyyah, for example, can be attributed to motivations that are incompatible with the spiritual life: everything depends on the teacher and how such unconventional practices are seen by him within the deeper perspective of the order. Without him, of course, the practices succumb easily to the charge of charlatanism or fraud and lose their real value.

The Question of Maraboutism

A peculiarity of Moroccan Sufism is something called Maraboutism.¹¹ In parts of the Moroccan regions, pious hermits or missionaries would establish their hermitages in order to raise the religious standards of the local population. The religious edifice they used was called a *ribāt*, and the ascetic teacher was a *murābit*, from which the French derived the word Marabout. The pious missionary would leave behind a legacy of saintliness and grace (*barakah*) attaching not only to the place but also to his descendants. Fusion with Sufism turned some of these places into *zāwiyahs*, presided over by the descendants of the original hermit. When the families were also descendants of the Prophet, or the *sharīfs* of Morocco, who were mostly of Idrīsid lineage, there was an amalgamation of Sufism, Maraboutism, and Sharīfism revolving around the key term of *barakah*, the grace that emanates from a person, who can be a holy man or a descendant of the Prophet, or both together at one and the same time. It is at times an inextricable association of Sufism properly speaking, the cult of saints, and the honor due the *sharīfs* as descendants of the Prophet, for all three categories have something to do with spiritual grace (*barakah*) in one way or another, not only in

Morocco, but elsewhere in the Islamic world. But what makes for Maraboutism, especially as it manifested itself in late medieval Morocco, was the combination of all these elements. Not that Sufism in Morocco was uniquely in alliance with Sharīfism; on the contrary, as in other parts of the Muslim world, it had its own independent existence as a contemplative path and was in no need of Maraboutism. Nevertheless, side by side with that contemplative version of Sufism is the socioreligious phenomenon of Maraboutism that has left its imprint on the Moroccan scene. Even dynasties of a political nature, like the Sa'dians of the tenth/sixteenth century, came to power with the help of the religious leaders of Sharīfian status. Sooner or later, the entire religiopolitical structure of the country was tinged with Sharīfism. Only the descendants of the Prophet could be entrusted with ruling powers, and this carried over into other domains, affecting even Sufism. While all of this particular blending of Sufism and Maraboutism is a characteristic of Morocco, the fact of the matter is that in other Islamic lands one finds elements that are similar: the cult of Sufi saints' tombs exists all over the Islamic world, as does the notion that the descendants of the Prophet are possessed of a certain grace.

The constants of the Sufi path—its doctrines on *tawhīd*, its methods of concentration having to do with the *dhikr* 'Llāh, its initiatic transmission, and the like—can be detected in all ages within the rich variety of its historical forms. The Sufi contemplative way has nevertheless certain essential characteristics without which it ceases to be Sufism. At what point Maraboutism was no longer Sufism, in the strict sense of that word, is something that is not easy to determine. What is evident throughout the centuries of the Sufi tradition is that all kinds of customs and practices grafted themselves onto the core of Sufi teachings and methods and became identified with Sufism as such, whereas in reality they are merely peripheral or tangential aspects of the path and in any case are not central. One can imagine a religiomilitary society, like the medieval *futuwwah*, being integrated into the Sufi path, just as one can imagine artisanal guilds that function as expressions of Sufism in the arts. Such activities in no way constitute an essential aspect of Sufism, for we know quite well that Sufism can very easily exist without them. Thus, the societal manifestations of Sufism—including the sacred forms of Maraboutism—cannot really be included in a definition of the essential nature of the path. There is Sufi poetry, Sufi architecture, Sufi music, Sufi dance, and so on, but these are outpourings of a contemplative path that is centered on a spiritual realization of Allah through direct knowledge or love. They are the fruits of the path, but not the path itself. Similarly, the numerous practices of a negative characteristic, such as the use of drugs, that crept into some of the decadent orders cannot

be ascribed to Sufism as such. These are abuses and corruptions that the eminent shaykhs of the path have always inveighed against because they detract from the reputation of the authentic spiritual way of Islam and tend to confuse the outsider in his estimation of the contemplative life. That the religious scholars of the community have seized upon such corruptions by way of criticizing all Sufism is understandable, for many of the '*ulamā*' have never had more than a very limited grasp of the nature of the Islamic message to begin with. In their eyes, the multiple manifestations of Sufism are simply heretical forms of the Islam that they recognize as legitimate. But one must be careful not to include all of the '*ulamā*' in this assessment: many of them—including the most illustrious—not only understood that Sufism was the spiritual content of Islam but also were themselves members of Sufi orders. In sum, it is of great importance not to confuse the essential in Sufism with the accidental, not to give the societal elements of the path more than their proper due. There is a historical side to the path, to be sure, but the path as such is intrinsically transhistorical by nature, for the simple reason that its teachings and practices are all centered on the absolutely Real (*al-Haqq*), which transcends the entire creation.

The Thirteenth/Nineteenth-Century Revival in the Maghrib

After the gradual collapse of the Ottoman, Safavid, and Mughal empires in Turkey, Persia, and India, respectively, a period of decadence set in over great regions of the Islamic world. The brilliant cultural achievements of those dynasties in the arts, the sciences, the architectural forms, and in intellectual life in general now came to an end. The inner spiritual resources of the Islamic East had been largely consumed in the intellectual and artistic manifestations of the tenth/sixteenth and eleventh/seventeenth centuries. It is simply not possible for great dynasties to go on indefinitely producing cultural flowerings one after another with no finality to the process. It is true that the fruits of civilization—the arts and architecture, the sciences, literature, great political, military, or economic systems—are not always the result of spiritual vitality: they can also stem from reservoirs of purely psychical powers that lie dormant in people until leaders appear who know how to tap those sources of strength. Such was not the case for the previously mentioned dynasties: their achievements were largely the consequences of strong spiritual currents, as we can see so clearly in their arts, for the arts mirror the collective soul. The same arts also mirror the decline, and this involves the attenuation of the spiritual vitality of a people in different ways.

What made the decadence that came over the Islamic community all the

more dangerous was that the process of decline coincided with the coming of the modern Western secular civilization produced by the French Revolution and the Industrial Revolution of Europe. Western civilization, which had already begun the task of stripping Europe of its Christian culture, now pounced on the Islamic world in the form of colonialist systems that brought secularism and materialism in all their guises to that community. This accelerated the interior decadence of Islamic culture and added a new corrosive and destructive power that could not be stopped altogether but could only be slowed down temporarily or even neutralized partially. Yet the establishment by the West of colonies all over the Islamic world ensured that the traditional civilization there would have to contend unequally with the powerful industrial and materialistic culture coming from the West.

One part of the Islamic world that retained a spiritual vibrancy was the Maghrib, even though in the latter half of the thirteenth/nineteenth century France would establish its colonial regime in Algeria and Tunisia.¹² At the very moment that France was beginning to colonialize parts of North Africa, a veritable spiritual rebirth was taking place in the Maghrib, which proved that the decadence existing elsewhere in *dār al-islām* was not uniform throughout the community. When Western Europe, through the French Revolution, was destroying its own Christian world, the Maghrib was undergoing a spiritual efflorescence under the direction of the Shādhilī masters of the day. Previous Shādhilī regenerations had occurred in the eleventh/seventeenth century with the Nāṣiriyyah of Shaykh Muḥammad ibn Nāṣir and one or two other branches. But at the end of the twelfth/eighteenth century, a powerful spiritual rebirth took place under yet another branch of the Shādhilīs, the Darqāwā, founded by the Sharīf Mawlay al-'Arabī al-Darqāwī (d. 1239/1823).¹³ This new branch sought to restore the purity of early Shādhilism through a return to an equilibrated view of the Law (*Sharī'ah*) and the Path (*tarīqah*), which was what characterized the first teachers.¹⁴ Numerous branches would in turn emerge out of the Darqāwā and have a profound influence not only in North Africa but also in the Hijaz, Turkey, and in the Levant.¹⁵ These were the Būzīdiyyah, the Kattāniyyah, the Harrāqiyyah, and the Madaniyyah, and some of these would in turn give rise to still other branches. Thus, the Madaniyyah, founded by Muḥammad Hasan ibn Ḥamzah al-Madanī (d. 1363/1846) of Medina, spread out from Libya, but it created the Raḥmāniyyah in the Hijaz and the Yashrutiyyah in the Levant. In addition, other Shādhilīs would move southward into Africa.¹⁶ From all of this proliferation of Sufi orders in different directions, revivals of the inner life of Islam took place. Of course, no revival is permanent, and for that reason history records numerous ups and downs within the annals of the Islamic faith. Nevertheless, the

thirteenth/nineteenth-century revivals here and there in the community were carried out very often under the pressures of European colonialism, which was then beginning to make itself felt in a number of Islamic lands. It is this which confers upon the Maghribi spiritual reformation of the time a good deal of its cyclical importance, for it was being carried out very often under the colonialist systems that the imperialist powers of Europe brought to the Islamic countries.

The Fourteenth/Twentieth Century

Among the many branches of the Shādhiliyyah that arose in the past century or so, the one that would have a very impressive flowering is the 'Alawiyyah. This was founded by the Algerian shaykh Aḥmad al-'Alawī, who died in 1934, and whose Shādhilī lineage takes him back to Abu'l-Ḥasan al-Shādhilī through Mawlay al-'Arabī al-Darqāwī.¹⁷ Shaykh Aḥmad al-'Alawī was thought to embody in his person the renovator (*mujaddid*) of Islam for this epoch, in accordance with the words of the Prophet to the effect that a reviver of his community would appear at the beginning of each century.

The Algerian master was at once a great saint, metaphysician, scholar, and poet. He pointed in his teachings to the "transcendent unity" which underlies the formal diversity of religions and respected the truly pious Christians who came to see him. Yet he was fully aware of the false suppositions upon which modernism is founded and spoke against any compromise with the secularist and humanistic tendencies prevalent in the modern world. He combined in himself the manifestation of quintessential Sufism seen in his several works on Sufi metaphysics with the deepening of Islamic ethical norms through an aura of sanctity which attracted a large number of disciples from near and far.

Indeed, the 'Alawiyyah had a direct hand in the regeneration of Islam, not only in the Maghrib but elsewhere in the community, or wherever Shādhilism spread. The shaykhs who emerged from the 'Alawiyyah, most of whom were direct disciples of Shaykh al-'Alawī, wound up in different parts of the Islamic world. Likewise, the order has played an extremely important role in the intellectual revival of Islam along traditional lines. The hundreds of thousands of disciples who were members of the order themselves came from different parts of the Maghrib as well as from other parts of the Islamic world. We do not need much imagination to see how these individuals, once returned to their own lands, were indirectly involved in the reformatory work of the founder himself.

It was always in that fashion, as a general rule, that the Sufi masters affected the populations of their day: their disciples, their books, and their

own spiritual influence would generate a kind of transformation of the milieu around them, so that a collective psychical substance would result that was receptive to the influences of the Spirit—or at least was much more porous to its presence than had been previously the case. This would result in widespread consequences, not only in the moral attitudes of the population but also in the fruits of their hands, in the arts and architecture, and even in the intellectual lucubrations of the principal thinkers of their time. It was in that way that spiritual rebirths took place in the long history of Islam, and it was in the absence of such influences that we find numerous periods of decline and stultification.

Shādhilism in general has also played a most remarkable role in the revival of Western traditional intellectuality in the twentieth century. We see a clear-cut example of this in the famous French thinker, René Guénon, himself a Shādhilī known in the Muslim world as Shaykh 'Abd al-Wāhid Yahyā. His numerous works on the metaphysical underpinnings, the cosmological aspects, and the spiritual foundations of the great religions of the world have had an incalculable influence on a large number of Westerners, especially those in search of the spiritual path, since the end of the First World War. Shaykh Aḥmad al-'Alawī, for his part, directly influenced yet another Western authority on the traditional spiritual life, Frithjof Schuon, who knew the Algerian master personally. Schuon's own numerous works on Islam and the other great religions of the world have perpetuated into our times the theses of the great medieval Sufis on the universality of revelation and have shed further light on the principal arguments found in the brilliant school of metaphysicians left behind by René Guénon. This entire current of Western intellectual and spiritual life, which continues to vibrate at the present day and to produce many important formulations of doctrine, could not have existed without an initial Shādhilī impetus and guidance.¹⁸

Given that the Shādhiliyyah have always considered their *ṭarīqah* to possess a central role in the unfolding of the spiritual life of the community—they have actually affirmed that the axial sage of the epoch (*qutb al-zamān*) would always be found in their midst—it is clear that the last word on the order cannot yet be said. This is all the more so in that the order has now taken root in Europe and North America and has begun yet another revival of the traditional intellectual spirit, this time based on the Quranic teaching, long dormant, of the universality of revelation, with all that this implies in a metaphysical and spiritual sense.

Notes

1. On the rise of Shādhilism, see R. Brunschvig, *La Berbérie orientale sous les Hafṣides des origines à la fin du XV siècle* (Paris: A. Maisonneuve, 1947) 2:322–30.

2. See A. M. M. Mackeen, "The Early History of Sufism in the Maghrib Prior to Al-Shādhilī (d. 656/1258)," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 91 (1971) 398–408.
3. His *Maḥāsīn al-majālis* (*The Beauties of Spiritual Gatherings*), on the inner life and the contemplative virtues, has been translated by W. Elliott and A. K. Abdulla into English (Amersham, England: Avebury, 1980).
4. See L. Massignon, *The Passion of al-Hallāj, Mystic and Martyr of Islam*, trans. H. Mason (4 vols.; Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1982).
5. See E. H. Douglas, "Al-Shādhilī, a North African Sufi, According to Ibn Ṣabbāgh," *Muslim World* 38 (1948) 257–79; and A. M. M. Mackeen, "The Rise of al-Shādhilī (656/1258)," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 91 (1971) 477–86.
6. Examples of these litanies can be found here and there in C. Padwick's *Muslim Devotions* (London: S.P.C.K., 1961).
7. For Ibn 'Arabī's ideas, see T. Burckhardt, *An Introduction to Sufi Doctrine* (Wellingborough, England: Thorsons, 1976), Part Two, 57–97; and M. Asín Palacios, *El Islam cristianizado* (Madrid: Editorial Plutarcho, 1931), a long account of Ibn 'Arabī's life and teachings.
8. O. Depont and X. Coppolani's *Les Confréries religieuses musulmanes* (Algiers: A. Jourdan, 1897) has a wealth of material on the orders, as does J. Spencer Trimingham's *The Sufi Orders in Islam* (London: Oxford University Press, 1971).
9. See P. Nwyia, *Ibn 'Aṭā' Allāh (m. 709/1309) et la naissance de la confrérie ṣādiliite* (Beirut: Dār al-Mashreq, 1972), a translation and study of the *Hikam*; and V. Danner, *Sufi Aphorisms* (New York: Paulist Press, 1978), for an English version of these famous spiritual maxims.
10. North African Sufi spirituality influenced also Spanish Christian mysticism indirectly, as we see in Asín Palacios, "Ṣadhilīs y alumbrados," vols. 9 (1944) to 16 (1951) of *Al-Andalus*, and his *Saint John of the Cross and Islam*, trans. H. W. Yoder and E. H. Douglas (New York: Vantage, 1981).
11. See E. Lévi-Provençal, s.v. "Shorḩā'"; *Encyclopedia of Islam*, 1st ed.
12. T. Burckhardt gives numerous translations from Sufi and other works that depict the spiritual vitality of Morocco in its traditional setting (*Fes, Stadt des Islam* [Olten: Urs Graf Verlag, 1960]).
13. In *Letters of a Sufi Master* (Bedfont, Middlesex: Perennial Books, 1969), T. Burckhardt has translated some of al-Darqāwī's treatises on the spiritual path.
14. See J. L. Michon, *Le Soufi marocain Ahmad ibn 'Aṭība et son mi'rāj* (Paris: J. Vrin, 1973), for a study of one of the Darqāwī teachers who sought to restore primitive Shādhilism to the order.
15. F. de Jong's *Turuq and Turuq-Linked Institutions in Nineteenth-Century Egypt* (Leiden: Brill, 1978) has numerous references to the Shādhilīs in that country and their social and religious structures.
16. See B. Martin, *Muslim Brotherhoods in Nineteenth-Century Africa* (Cambridge: University Press, 1976).
17. A biographical and doctrinal treatment of the great Sufi shaykh is to be found in M. Lings, *A Sufi Saint of the Twentieth Century* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1975). See also his article on the Algerian sage in *The Encyclopedia of Islam*, 2nd ed., s.v. "Ahmad b. 'Alīwa."
18. 'Abd al-Halīm Maḥmūd, former rector of the Azhar in Cairo, who knew Guénon personally, has written an important Arabic work on contemporary Shādhilism, wherein he mentions the work of Guénon as a Western offshoot of Shādhilī intellectuality: *al-Madrasah al-shādhiliyyah al-ḥadīthah wa imāmuhā Abū'l-ḩasan al-Shādhilī* (Cairo: Dār al-kutub al-ḩadīthah, 1968).

Ibn 'Arabī and His School

WILLIAM C. CHITTICK

Life, Works, and Influence

IBN 'ARABĪ (560/1165–638/1240) is probably the most influential author of works on Sufism in Islamic history. Known in the Arabic world as Ibn al-'Arabī with the definite article *al*, he indicates in his autographs that his full name was Abū 'Abd Allāh Muḩammad ibn al-'Arabī al-Ṭā'ī al-Hātīmī. He was called Muḩyī al-Dīn, "The Revivifier of the Religion," and al-Shaykh al-Akbar, "The Greatest Master." Though he is not considered the founder of a Sufi order, his influence quickly passed beyond his immediate disciples to all Sufis who expressed their teachings in intellectual or philosophical terms. He was able to combine the various esoteric currents existing within the Islamic world—such as Pythagoreanism, alchemy, astrology, and different viewpoints within Sufism—into a vast synthesis shaped by the Quran and the *Sunnah* of the Prophet.

Ibn 'Arabī's father 'Alī was apparently employed by Muḩammad ibn Sa'īd ibn Mardanīsh, the ruler of Murcia in Spain. In 567/1172 Murcia was conquered by the Almohad dynasty and 'Alī took his family to Seville, where again he seems to have been taken into government service. His high social standing is indicated, among other things, by the fact that one of his wife's brothers, Yahyā ibn Yughān, was the ruler of the city of Tlemcen in Algeria. More interesting is the fact that this uncle renounced all worldly power in the midst of his reign and became a Sufi and an ascetic. Ibn 'Arabī mentions two other uncles who were also Sufis.

In his youth Ibn 'Arabī was employed as a secretary by the governor of Seville and married a girl named Maryam from an influential family. When he was thirty he left Spain for the first time, traveling to Tunis. Seven years later, in 597/1200, a vision told him to go to the East. In 599/1202 he performed the pilgrimage at Mecca and became acquainted with a shaykh

from Isfahan, whose beautiful and spiritually accomplished daughter became, like Dante's Beatrice, his inspiration in the composition of the *Tarjumān al-ashwāq* (*Interpreter of Desires*). Also in Mecca he met Majd al-Dīn Ishāq, a shaykh from Malatya whose yet unborn son was to be Ṣadr al-Dīn al-Qūnawī (606/1210–673/1274), Ibn 'Arabī's greatest disciple.

Accompanying Majd al-Dīn back to Malatya, Ibn 'Arabī stayed for a time in Mosul, where he was invested with the power of spiritual initiation by Ibn al-Jāmi', who himself had received it from the hands of al-Khidr. For some years Ibn 'Arabī traveled from city to city in the regions of Turkey, Syria, and Egypt, and the holy cities of Mecca and Medina. In 608/1211–12 he was in Baghdad, perhaps accompanied by Majd al-Dīn, who had been sent there by Sultan Kay Kā'ūs I (607/1210–616/1219) of Konya on a mission to the caliphal court. Ibn 'Arabī himself was on good terms with this sultan and wrote him a letter of practical advice. He was also a companion of the ruler of Aleppo, al-Malik al-Zāhir (582/1186–615/1218), a son of Saladin (Salāh al-Dīn al-Ayyūbī).

In 620/1223 Ibn 'Arabī settled down permanently in Damascus, where a circle of disciples, including al-Qūnawī, served him until his death. According to a number of early sources, he had married Majd al-Dīn's widow, al-Qūnawī's mother. Among those who studied with him during this time was the Ayyūbid Muzaffar al-Dīn (d. 635/1238), the ruler of Damascus. In a precious document dated 632/1234, Ibn 'Arabī grants him permission (*ijāzah*) to teach his works, of which he lists 290; he also mentions seventy of his own masters in the sciences, noting that the list is incomplete. It is clear from this source that, as a complement to his Sufi studies, Ibn 'Arabī had spent long years learning the exoteric sciences such as the seven recitations of the Quran, Quranic commentary, jurisprudence, and especially *Ḥadīth*.

Ibn 'Arabī's outward life demonstrates nothing very exceptional for a Muslim man of learning. His special place in Islamic history is determined more by his life's inward events, his writings, and his encounters with spiritual men. In this respect, his youthful meeting with the great philosopher Ibn Rushd (Averroes) is of great symbolic importance, since it demonstrates the wide gulf Ibn 'Arabī perceived between the formal knowledge of the "men of reason" and the mystical "unveiling" (*kashf*), or vision of spiritual realities with the eye of the heart, that characterizes his own doctrines and teachings. It is significant that Ibn 'Arabī says he was a "beardless youth" when the meeting took place. Though certain authorities have inferred from an ambiguous passage in his *Futūḥāt* that he did not enter Sufism until he was twenty, the meeting with Ibn Rushd certainly took place before he had reached this age, and in recounting it he alludes to specifically Sufi

practices that he had undertaken. Ibn Rushd "had wanted to meet me because . . . of what had reached him concerning the 'opening' (*fath*) God had given me in the spiritual retreat (*khalwah*).¹ The spiritual retreat, performed exclusively by the Sufis, is never undertaken without initiation and the guidance of a shaykh; "opening," defined for example as "the unveiling of the uncreated Lights," is constantly mentioned in the works of Ibn 'Arabī and his followers as a primary goal of the Sufi. One of Ibn 'Arabī's closest disciples, Ismā'īl ibn Sawdakīn, relates that when his master first entered the Path, he went into the spiritual retreat in the early morning and attained to opening before dawn. He remained in the retreat for fourteen months and received, through an overpowering attraction to God (*jadhbah*), everything that he was later to write down in his works. Al-Qūnawī's disciple al-Jandī (d. ca. 700/1300) provides a similar account on the authority of his master.² These points help to explain the significance of the exchange that took place during Ibn 'Arabī's meeting with Ibn Rushd:

He said to me, "Yes." I replied, "Yes," and his joy in me increased. When I perceived why he had become happy, I said, "No." He became constricted, his color changed, and he began to doubt himself. He asked, "How have you found the situation in unveiling and the Divine Effusion? Is it the same as is given to us by rational consideration (*al-nazar*)?" I replied, "Yes and no. Between the yes and the no spirits fly from their matter and heads from their bodies." . . . He used to thank God that in his own time he had seen someone who had entered the spiritual retreat ignorant and had come out as I had come out, without study, discussion, investigation, or reading.³

The idea put forth by certain authorities that Ibn 'Arabī's initial spiritual growth took place at the hands of al-Khidr is unfounded. In fact, his earliest encounter with the "Men of the Unseen World" was with Jesus, as he states repeatedly, and his first spiritual master, Abu'l-'Abbās al-'Uryabī, was dominated by Christ's spiritual influence.⁴ Jesus is considered the "Seal of Universal Sanctity," while Ibn 'Arabī, at least in certain passages of his works, claimed to be the "Seal of the particular, Muḥammadan Sanctity" (see below), so the connection between the two is not fortuitous.

Ibn 'Arabī relates innumerable inward experiences and visions that helped determine the course of his life and the nature of his teachings; a number of these have been translated into English in *Sufis of Andalusia*. Here allusion can be made to a few similar accounts provided by al-Qūnawī. Ibn 'Arabī tells us that his decision to go to the East resulted from a command he received during a vision of the Divine Throne. Al-Qūnawī's account makes clear that he had known about this journey when he first decided to leave Spain permanently. Arriving at the Mediterranean, he decided not to sail without knowing the details of what was to come. He turned his

attentiveness toward God with total presence and was shown everything that would happen to him inwardly and outwardly until the end of his life. "Then I set sail on the sea, with vision and certainty. What has happened has happened and what will come to be will come to be, without defect or deficiency." In a similar vein al-Qūnawī writes that the great saints have knowledge of what is destined to come about. Hence, they never pray for something whose existence is not predestined. "I witnessed that in our shaykh for many years in innumerable things. He told me he once had a vision of the Prophet, who said, 'God answers your prayers more quickly than you can utter them!'" Again, al-Qūnawī writes that Ibn 'Arabī used to contemplate the objects of God's knowledge at the ontological level of that knowledge itself. He would gaze at anyone whose innermost reality he desired to perceive and then "give news about his future becoming until his final resting place. . . . He was never wrong."⁵

Ibn 'Arabī's Works

In his comprehensive study of the 850 different works attributed to Ibn 'Arabī, Osman Yahya estimates that 700 are authentic and that of these, over 400 are extant. Though many of these are only a few pages long, many more are full-sized books, and the *Futūḥāt* alone contains more words than most authors write in a lifetime. Ibn 'Arabī provides the reason for his almost miraculous output. He never set out to write a single book. "On the contrary, influxes from God have entered upon me and nearly burned me alive. In order to find relief . . . I have composed works, without any intention on my own part. Many other books I have composed because of a divine command given during a dream or unveiling."⁶

Among Ibn 'Arabī's well-known works are the following:

(1) *al-Futūḥāt al-makkiyyah* (*The Meccan Openings*). This compendium of all the religious and gnostic sciences in Islam is a vast and bewildering ocean of inspirations. Among the subjects treated are the meanings of all the Islamic ritual observances, the stations and states the travelers undergo on their journey to God and in God, the significance and nature of each ontological level in the cosmos, the spiritual and ontological meaning of the letters of the Arabic alphabet, the meaning of different Quranic verses and *ḥadīths* from the points of view of various stations of mystical knowledge, the sciences embraced by each of the ninety-nine Names of God, and the "psychological" states of those travelers who are dominated by the spiritual influences of various prophets.

(2) *Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam* (*The Ringstones of Wisdom*). Judging from the more than one hundred commentaries written on this work and the great esteem

in which it has always been held by Ibn 'Arabī's followers, one can accept H. Corbin's view that it is "no doubt the best compendium of Ibn 'Arabī's esoteric doctrine."⁷ In al-Qūnawī's view, it is "one of the most precious shorter writings of our shaykh."⁸ Basing himself on the Quran and the *Ḥadīth*, Ibn 'Arabī discusses the divine wisdom revealed to twenty-seven different prophets or Words of God from Adam to Muḥammad; he shows how each prophet is the theophany of the wisdom implied by one of the Divine Names. The first to comment on the *Fuṣūṣ* was al-Qūnawī, although he discusses only the general themes of each chapter.

A second early commentator was 'Afīf al-Dīn al-Tilimsānī (d. 690/1291), a direct disciple of Ibn 'Arabī and then a constant companion of al-Qūnawī; so close were they that al-Qūnawī willed all of his own works to 'Afīf al-Dīn. In his commentary he deals with a few salient points which appear unclear or with which he is in disagreement (such as the question of the immutability [*thubūt*] of the entities). Undoubtedly, the most influential of the commentators was al-Jandī, who tells us that when al-Qūnawī was explaining to him the preface of the work, he was overcome by his spiritual influence and was given an opening through which the purport of the whole work was revealed to him. When apprised of this experience, al-Qūnawī told him that the same thing had happened to him when Ibn 'Arabī had begun to explain the work to him.

A famous commentator is al-Jandī's student al-Kāshānī (d. 730/1330); T. Izutsu's outstanding exposition of Ibn 'Arabī's ontology is based largely on al-Kāshānī's work. More influential in Iran and the eastern lands of Islam has been the commentary of al-Kāshānī's student al-Qayṣarī (d. 751/1350), who directed a *madrasah* in Anatolia. Bābā Rukn al-Dīn Shīrāzī (d. 744/1344) studied with both al-Kāshānī and al-Qayṣarī and wrote the first Persian commentary. Sayyid Haydar Āmulī (d. ca. 786/1384) in *Nasṣ al-nuṣūṣ* (*The Text of Texts*) integrated the *Fuṣūṣ* into the context of Shī'ite gnosis. 'Abd al-Raḥmān Jāmī (d. 898/1492) wrote both an Arabic commentary on the *Fuṣūṣ* and a mixed Persian and Arabic commentary on Ibn 'Arabī's own summary of the *Fuṣūṣ*. In India Muḥibb Ilāh Ilāḥābādī (d. 1058/1648) wrote commentaries on the *Fuṣūṣ* in both Arabic and Persian; his many works on Ibn 'Arabī's teachings earned him the title of "the Second Ibn 'Arabī." In the Turkish-speaking part of the Islamic world 'Abd Allāh of Bosnia (d. 1054/1644), known as 'Abdi Efendi, wrote several Arabic treatises showing a remarkable spiritual and intellectual affinity with al-Qūnawī and is the author of commentaries on the *Fuṣūṣ* in Arabic and Turkish, both of which have been published. Perhaps the most widely read commentary on the *Fuṣūṣ* in the Arab world was written by the prolific Sufi author 'Abd al-Ghanī al-Nābulusī (d. 1143/1730); his care to define and

explain practically every single word and his often questionable interpretations suggest that already by his time the general ability to read and understand the *Fuṣūṣ* in the Arab world had severely declined.

(3) *Tarjumān al-ashwāq*. This short divan of love poetry referred to above was the first of Ibn 'Arabī's works to be translated into English. It is particularly famous because he himself wrote a commentary on it to prove to certain exoteric 'ulamā' that it dealt with spiritual truths and not profane love. Ibn 'Arabī is also the author of at least two other divans and many thousands of verses scattered throughout his prose works; he is one of the best and most productive of all Arab poets.

(4) *Shajarat al-kawn* (*The Tree of Engendered Existence*). Developing the symbolism of the Quranic verse, "a good word is like a good tree . . ." (XIV, 24), this relatively short treatise on cosmology, extant in English translation, describes the Prophet Muḥammad as the embodiment of the Perfect Man.

Among the many works wrongly attributed to Ibn 'Arabī, *Risālat al-ahadiyyah* (*The Treatise on Unity*) has been translated into English. It has recently been shown to be the work of Awḥad al-Dīn Balyānī; though influenced by Ibn 'Arabī, Balyānī interprets a number of his teachings in a manner unacceptable to the mainstream of his school.

Ibn 'Arabī's Influence

Ibn 'Arabī's doctrines have been taught either in conjunction with a practical spiritual method, or independently as "mystical philosophy." It is highly likely that Ibn 'Arabī himself taught his own works both to initiated Sufis and to those who were intellectually attracted to Sufism but had not taken the practical step of swearing allegiance to a shaykh. The chief disciple to whom he transmitted both his spiritual and intellectual authority was al-Qūnawī; all sources agree that he was the major spokesman for Ibn 'Arabī's teachings. Al-Qūnawī himself refers to his special role in recounting a vision of Ibn 'Arabī fifteen years after his death. He asked from him the "attainment of the direct vision of that theophany after which there is no veil and which does not endure for any other Perfect Man," that is, apart from Ibn 'Arabī. After granting this request, Ibn 'Arabī tells him that he has had many sons and disciples, especially the son of his own loins, Sa'd al-Dīn (d. 656/1258, the author of a divan), "but what you have asked was not made possible for any of them. How many sons and disciples have I killed and then revived! But he who died, died, and he who was slain, was slain, and none of them attained to this!"⁹

Al-Qūnawī is the author of about thirty works, of which five or six are

of central importance for the spread of Ibn 'Arabī's teachings, since they determined how he was to be interpreted by most of his followers. In style of expression, he stands at the antipodes of his master. While Ibn 'Arabī's works are torrents of inspiration, continual flashes of light often with no apparent interconnection, al-Qūnawī provides a model for the systematic and rational formulation of ideas, though he constantly deals with the world of unveiling. In the words of the great Sufi poet Jāmī, "It is impossible to understand Ibn 'Arabī's teachings concerning the Oneness of Being in a manner consistent both with intelligence and with the religious law without studying al-Qūnawī's works."¹⁰ Among the most important of these are *Miftāḥ al-ghayb* (*The Key to the Unseen*), a systematic account of Ibn 'Arabī's metaphysics and cosmology; *Tafsīr al-fātiḥah* (*Commentary on the Opening Chapter of the Quran*), an exposition of the nature of the "three books" (the Quran, the cosmos, and man); and a correspondence with Naṣīr al-Dīn al-Ṭūsī (d. 672/1274), the foremost representative of Ibn Sīnā's Peripatetic philosophy. In this last work, al-Qūnawī demonstrates concurrences between Ibn 'Arabī's teachings and those of the Peripatetics, while clearly showing where they diverge.

Al-Qūnawī directed a flourishing center in Konya, where he was a close friend of Rūmī, though he represents a very different mode of formulating Sufi teachings. Scholars came from much of the Islamic world to study *Hadīth* with him. Often, after delivering a formal lecture on this subject in Arabic, he would change to Persian and comment on Sufi poetry. This was his method in teaching the great *Poem of the Way* of Ibn al-Fārid (d. 632/1235). Al-Qūnawī's disciple al-Farghānī (d. 695/1296) took careful notes during these lectures and then rewrote them in the form of the Persian work *Mashāriq al-darārī al-zuhār* (*Orients of Radiant Stars*), to which al-Qūnawī added a short introduction. Later al-Farghānī revised his own work in Arabic with the title *Muntahā'l-madārik* (*The Utmost Limit of Perception*); concerning the latter work Jāmī writes, "No one else has ever been able to explain the intricacies of the Science of Reality with such interconnectedness and order."¹¹

Another important disciple of al-Qūnawī was al-Jandī, referred to above; his Persian *Nafḥat al-rūḥ* (*The Breath of the Spirit*) provides valuable information concerning the practices connected with Ibn 'Arabī's teachings. A third student, Fakhr al-Dīn 'Irāqī (d. 688/1289) was inspired by al-Qūnawī's lectures on the *Fuṣūṣ* to write *Lama'āt* (*Divine Flashes*), a digest in exquisite Persian prose of Ibn 'Arabī's teachings on metaphysics and divine love. A fourth, Abū Bakr 'Alī al-Malaṭī or al-Siwāsī is known only because he transmitted al-Qūnawī's power of initiation to later Sufis.¹² Among later members of the same *silṣilah* is Muḥammad ibn Muḥammad Shīrīn.

Maghribi (d. 809/1406-7), whose Persian *divan* has long been highly esteemed for its exposition of Ibn 'Arabī's teachings. Famous later masters descended from Ibn 'Arabī's line include the prolific Moroccan author Abu'l-'Abbās Aḥmad known as al-Zarrūq (d. 899/1493), and the *amīr* 'Abd al-Qādir al-Jazā'irī (d. 1300/1883), exiled from Algeria to Damascus by the French for his role in leading the resistance to their rule and author of a number of important works.

Outside of the small number of *silsilahs* that trace a line of descent to Ibn 'Arabī, practically all Sufis who have expressed themselves in intellectual terms have followed the lead of his school. Even those Sufis who opposed certain of his teachings, such as 'Alā' al-Dawlah Simnānī (d. 736/1336), employed his terminology and concepts. In the same way, Rūmī's commentators lived in Ibn 'Arabī's intellectual universe and employed his teachings to explain those of their own master. Besides the commentators on the *Fusūs* mentioned above, the majority of whom are also authors of independent works, Ibn 'Arabī's most important followers include 'Abd al-Karīm al-Jīlī (d. ca. 832/1428); in contrast to most authors of this school, he shows relatively little influence from al-Qūnawī and represents an independent reinterpretation and revivification of Ibn 'Arabī's teachings. The most famous of his thirty or so works is *al-Insān al-kāmil* (*The Perfect Man*). In contrast, the writings of Shah Ni'mat Allāh Walī (d. ca. 832/1429; see chapter 7) are dominated by the influence of al-Qūnawī's followers, especially al-Kāshānī and al-Qayṣarī. Shaykh Maḥmūd Shabistārī (d. 720/1320) is famous for his one-thousand-verse Persian poem *Gulshan-i rāz* (*The Rose-garden of Mystery*); its lengthy commentary by Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad Lāhijī (d. 912/1506-7) is one of the most masterly presentations of Ibn 'Arabī's teachings in Persian.

In the Arab world 'Abd al-Wahhāb al-Sha'rānī, who died in Cairo in 973/1565, did much to popularize Ibn 'Arabī's teachings through more than fifty works written in an easily intelligible style. Two figures in Turkey well known to historians for their political role but not yet widely recognized as members of Ibn 'Arabī's school are Qāḍī Burhān al-Dīn (d. ca. 800/1398), the sultan of Sivas and author of an important summary of al-Qūnawī's teachings, and Sultan Mehmet, the conqueror of Istanbul (855/1451-886/1481). At the latter's command, several important commentaries were written on al-Qūnawī's works and his *Miftāḥ al-ghayb* was translated into Persian.¹³ Among the numerous followers of Ibn 'Arabī who lived in the subcontinent, one should mention Muḥammad ibn Faḍl Allāh Burhānpūrī (d. 1029/1620), who wrote a ten-page "Gift addressed to the Prophet's Spirit," which is a summary of Ibn 'Arabī's teachings seen largely through the eyes of Jāmī. It was the object of several commentaries both in the Arab

countries and farther east, was translated into Javanese, and according to its English translator, is one of the most important texts for the history of the development of Sufi thought in Indonesia. Although Burhānpūrī's famous contemporary Aḥmad Sirhindī (d. 1034/1624) criticized Ibn 'Arabī on certain points, he supported him on many others and must be considered an adherent of his school. In Indonesia, Ḥamzah Fansūrī (fl. tenth/sixteenth century) wrote extensively on Ibn 'Arabī's doctrines. In Iran and farther east, numerous figures who are known primarily as philosophers, such as Ṣā'in al-Dīn Turkah Isfahānī (d. ca. 836/1432) and Mullā Ṣadrā (d. 1051/1641), were deeply influenced by Ibn 'Arabī's teachings. Finally, let it be mentioned in passing that Asín Palacios and others have suggested that Ibn 'Arabī exercised considerable influence in the medieval West, especially on Raymund Lull and Dante.

Ibn 'Arabī's Teachings

In formulating his teachings, Ibn 'Arabī made use of every available source, beginning with the Quran and the *Ḥadīth*. He borrowed extensively from the written and oral tradition of Sufism that had been developing for several hundred years; his works are a vast repository of references to the words of earlier shaykhs, including such lesser-known but important Andalusian masters as Ibn Masarraḥ (d. 319/931) and Ibn Qasī (d. 546/1151). He made free use of the terminology of the philosophers, especially those belonging to the more esoteric schools, such as the Ikhwān al-Ṣafā' and various pre-Islamic schools such as Hermeticism and Neoplatonism. He was thoroughly versed in *Kalām*, especially Ash'arism. But all these schools of thought were so many building blocks that became part of Ibn 'Arabī's own intellectual edifice; his repeated testimony and the very nature of his writings and influence show that his unveiling and mystical perception gave a new form to the raw material with which he worked.

Most of Ibn 'Arabī's works remain unedited, unpublished, and/or unstudied. Though the *Futūḥāt* was first printed in the nineteenth century, a critical edition has begun to appear only recently. Even if this were finished, years of effort on the part of a large number of scholars would be needed before a thorough analysis of its contents could be carried out, and there would still remain his other works. Thus, all scholars who have attempted to explain Ibn 'Arabī's thought have pointed out the tentative nature of their endeavors. Nevertheless, certain central themes, highlighted for example in the *Fusūs*, can be discerned throughout his works. We can be sure of their primary importance because they were emphasized by his immediate disciples and followers. These same themes have been taken up

and elaborated upon by generations of Sufis and philosophers. It is to some of these that we will limit our attention here.

The Divine Names

As early as 1914, Asín Palacios saw that "the whole of the *Futūhāt* is based on "belief in the esoteric virtue of the divine names."¹⁴ Other authorities, such as T. Burckhardt, H. Corbin, and S. H. Nasr, have in their turn called attention to the primary importance of the Names in Ibn 'Arabī's doctrines. According to the Quran and the *Hadīth*, God is the Merciful, the Wise, the Generous, the Forgiving, the Living, the Hearing, the Avenger, and so on. His Names epitomize the knowledge of Him that has been revealed to mankind; through them we can grasp something of the Divine Nature, though we must remember the Prophet's saying: "Meditate upon God's blessings [e.g., upon the effects of His Bounty and Generosity], but not upon His Essence (*dhāt*)," since God as He is in Himself is unknowable to us, at least in terms of discursive thought. Here we should recall Ibn 'Arabī's well-known teaching concerning transcendence and immanence—or, more precisely, "incomparability" (*tanzīh*) and "similarity" (*tashbīh*): On the one hand, God is unknowable; on the other, we can understand Him through the Names. True knowledge of Him must combine the two points of view. Ultimately, this coincidence of opposites can be grasped only at the stage of unveiling. The apparent incompatibility of the two standpoints is one reason that the highest stage of mystic knowledge is often referred to as "bewilderment" (*ḥayrah*).

Everything we can know about God, and ultimately everything we can know about "other than God" (*mā siwa' Llāh*)—that is, "the world" or "the cosmos" (*al-ālam*)—is prefigured by the Names. They delineate God's perfections inasmuch as He is Being (*al-wujūd*) and the source of all that exists. Ranked in a hierarchy, some are broader in scope than others; the "Universal Names" are said to number 99, 300, or 1001, whereas the "particular Names" in the last analysis correspond to all things. Hence Ibn 'Arabī can say that the Divine Names are infinite in keeping with the infinity of the creatures (*Fusūs*, chap. 2).

The formula "In the Name of God, the All-Merciful, the All-Compassionate," which begins practically every chapter of the Quran, mentions three Names: *Allāh*, *al-Rahmān*, and *al-Rahīm*. The latter two both derive from the word *rahmah*, "mercy" (which in turn derives from the same root as *rahim*, "womb"). For Ibn 'Arabī, mercy is Being. When God says, "My Mercy embraces all things" (Quran VII, 156), this means, "I bestow existence on all things," since existence is the only quality in which all things share.

In a *ḥadīth* the Prophet refers to the "Breath of the All-Merciful" (*nafas al-Rahmān*). According to Ibn 'Arabī, the All-Merciful's exhalation of His Breath is equivalent to the bestowal of existence (*ījād*). In the same context he and his followers constantly quote the *ḥadīth* in which God says, "I was a Hidden Treasure and I wanted to be known, so I created the creatures that I might be known." The Hidden Treasure refers to the possibilities of outward manifestation prefigured by the Names. Since "God encompasses all things in knowledge" (Quran LXV, 12), the Hidden Treasure corresponds to all things as known by Him before their creation.

The All-Merciful, whose very nature is to have mercy on all things (*al-ashyā'*) and thus bring them into existence, feels distress (*kurbah*) within Himself; by the "possibility" (*imkān*) the things possess to display their own special qualities, they beg Him to bestow existence upon them. So God "exhales" and relieves His distress; He deploys His Breath and the cosmos is born. But this is not a simple exhalation. It is articulated speech: "Our only word to a thing, when We desire it, is to say to it 'Be,' and it is" (Quran XVI, 40). The myriad types and grades of existents can be divided into letters, words, phrases, sentences, and books. Ibn 'Arabī and others have developed a complicated cosmology based on the symbolism of letters and words understood in this ontological sense.

The "things embraced by God's Knowledge" (*al-ma'lūmāt*) are also referred to as the "nonexistents" (*al-ma'dūmāt*), the "immutable entities" (*al-a'yān al-thābitah*), and the "possible things" (*al-mumkināt*). They are "non-existent" as long as they remain only in God's Knowledge and do not appear in the world, "immutable" since He knows them for all eternity, and "possible" because He may or may not bestow existence upon them in any given circumstances. They are also called "concomitants" (*lawāzim*) of the Names. All of these "realities" (*ḥaqā'iq*) can be divided into the "divine" (*ilāhī*), which are the Names and the immutable entities, and the "engendered" (*kaawnī*), which are the entities when given existence by the Breath.

The Universal Divine Names or Attributes can be classified from a number of points of view. According to one such classification, four of them are the most fundamental, the "pillars" (*arkān*) of Divinity: Will, Knowledge, Power, and Speech. Other formulations add three more Attributes—Life, Generosity, and Equity—to give the "seven Leaders" (*al-a'immat al-sab'ah*). The remaining Names derive from these four or seven. The Leaders or Pillars are then embraced by the Name Allah, the All-Comprehensive Name (*al-ism al-jāmi'*) that points to the Divine Essence.¹⁵

The hierarchical relationship among the Names is reflected in the structure of the cosmos, which is composed of descending levels of existence (*marātib*), though from creation's viewpoint they are ascending. Thus, we

have the "arc of descent" (*qaws al-nuzūl*) and the "arc of ascent" (*qaws al-su'ūd*), which together make up the "Circle of Existence" (*dā'irat al-wujūd*). At each descending level, different realities interrelate or "marry" (*nikāh*) to bring about the production of succeeding levels. Ibn 'Arabī envisages this hierarchical structure from several different standpoints. In the scheme illustrated by the diagrams accompanying the creation myth (I-V), he describes each higher reality as active and masculine in relation to the next lower reality, which is passive and feminine. The higher is in a state of undifferentiation (*ijmāl*), while the lower is in a state of differentiation (*tafṣīl*). Thus, for example, the Supreme Pen contains all spiritual realities in undifferentiated form; then it deploys them in their differentiated details by writing them out in the Guarded Tablet. But Ibn 'Arabī indicates that every reality in the scheme is a pen from one point of view and a tablet from another.

The One and the Many

The Names, and so also the immutable entities, are no different in their existence from God Himself; there is only one Being, God, who is called by many Names, each of which denotes one of His ontological modes. But God in His very Essence, which is beyond the limitation implied by any of the Names, is One in a different sense than God considered as the Possessor of Names (*dhāt al-asmā'*). Here lies a distinction fundamental to Ibn 'Arabī's teachings. At the beginning of chapter 7 of the *Fuṣūṣ*, he writes, "Know that He who is called Allah is one in His Essence and all through His Names." He often refers to the Oneness of the Essence as *al-ahadiyyah* ("Exclusive" or "Absolute Unity") and the Oneness of the Names, through which God is all, as *al-wahdāniyyah* ("Inclusive" or "Infinite Unity"), although for the second kind his followers usually prefer the term *al-wāḥidiyyah*.

Ibn 'Arabī is well known as the founder of the school of the "Oneness of Being" (*wahdat al-wujūd*). Though this teaching permeates his works, he does not himself employ the term. One of the first members of his school to use it in a technical sense is al-Farghānī, who normally contrasts it with the "Manyness of Knowledge" (*kathrat al-'ilm*): One in His Reality, God possesses the principle of manyness in His knowledge. He is One and All.

In God's knowledge, the nonexistent things are known in all their differentiated details. This is the level of the "Most Holy Effusion" (*al-fayḍ al-aqdas*) or the "Unseen Theophany" (*al-tajallī al-ghaybī*). It is also the level of the Hidden Treasure and the "distress" of the All-Merciful. The manifestation of the Hidden Treasure, or the exhalation of the Breath, is called the

"Holy Effusion" (*al-fayḍ al-muqaddas*) or the "Visible Theophany" (*al-tajallī al-shahādī*). The entities, still nonexistent and immutable within God's Knowledge, are manifested outwardly within the various levels of existence.

The One Being does not, through the manifestation of the entities, become many beings, since Being is a single reality. True, the entities are now provisionally called "existents" (*mawjūdāt*) or "engendered things" (*kā'ināt*), but Being/Existence retains Its original property of nondelimitation (*itlāq*) and transcendence. Light remains eternally unaffected by Its outward effusion, just as the sun is unaffected by its rays. As Ibn 'Arabī and his followers explain through many images, "the entities have never smelt—and will never smell—the fragrance of existence." "The possible existents remain nonexistent in their original state; existence is nothing but the Being of God" (*Fuṣūṣ*, chap. 8). The entities we perceive are only the different modalities of the One Being. In the words of al-Qūnawī,

The greatest obscurity and veil is the plurality that arises in the One Being because of the effects of the immutable entities within It. People imagine that the entities become outwardly manifest in existence and through existence. But only their effects (*athar*) become manifest in existence. Manifestation and outwardness belong only to Being, but on condition of having become plural through the effect of the entities.¹⁶

Each entity displays a perfection of Being, thus veiling and revealing It at one and the same time: "God made the creatures like veils (*ḥijāb*). He who knows them as such is led back to Him, but he who takes them as real is barred from His Presence" (*Futūḥāt*, II, p. 460). As long as we do not perceive the things for the veils that they are, the whole world is naught but fantasy.

Everything engendered in existence is imagination (*khayāl*)
—but in fact it is Reality.

Whoever understands this truth has grasped the mysteries
of the Way. (*Fuṣūṣ*, chap. 16)

One mark of the essential nonexistence of all "existent" things is that they must be recreated at each instant. According to Ibn 'Arabī, God places dreams in the animal world so that people may witness the ontological level of Imagination and come to know that there is another world, similar to the sensory world. Through the rapid transformations of imaginal forms in dreams, God wants to show us that the sensory world is changing at every instant. "If the world were to remain in a single state for two units of time, it would possess the attribute of independence from God. 'But men are in doubt as to the renewed creation' (Quran L, 15)" (*Futūḥāt*, III, p. 199).

Here two basic meanings of the term "imagination" can be discerned. In

the first sense, everything that is "other than God" is "imaginary" and in the ultimate sense unreal. This is the level of "nondelimited imagination" (*al-khayāl al-muṭlaq*), which Ibn 'Arabī identifies with the Breath of the All-Merciful. Through it "That which can not possibly exist [since it is not Allah, the only Being there is] comes to exist" (*Futūḥāt*, II, p. 312). "The reality of imagination is change in every state, and manifestation within every form. There is no true being that does not accept change except Allah. So there is nothing in realized existence (*al-wujūd al-muḥaqqaq*) except Allah. As for everything else, that is in imaginal existence. . . . So everything other than the Essence of God is imagination in the process of change" (*Futūḥāt*, II, p. 313). It is from this point of view that all things in the world must be "interpreted" (*ta'bīr*) as if they were dreams (*Fuṣūṣ*, chap. 9).

Second, "imagination" refers to an ontological realm between the spiritual world and the corporeal world, also called the "isthmus" (*barzakh*) and the world of "image-exemplars" (*mithāl*). Here spiritual realities become manifest as sensory forms, and, after death, the attributes and moral qualities of men become personified. Just as the animal soul acts as the means whereby the disengaged (*mujarrad*) spirit can maintain a connection with the corporeal body, so the world of imagination acts as an intermediary between the disembodied spirits and the corporeal world. This intermediate world is in turn divided into two kinds of imagination, one of which is "contiguous" (*muttaṣil*) to our psyches, and the other of which is "discontiguous" (*munfaṣil*).

The difference between contiguous and discontiguous imagination is that the former disappears with the disappearance of the imaginer, while the latter is a self-subsistent ontological level which continuously acts as a receptacle for disengaged meanings and spirits, to which it gives corporeal forms, though only in accordance with their specific characteristics. Then contiguous imagination derives from discontiguous imagination. (*Futūḥāt*, II, p. 311)

The nature of the realities that become manifest within nondelimited imagination or the cosmos is determined by their preparedness (*isti'dād*), that is, the extent to which they are able to act as receptacles (*qābil*) that display the perfections of Nondelimited Being. Preparedness in turn is determined by the "Lord" (*rabb*) of each existent, the particular Name that governs it, its immutable entity. "The All becomes entified in keeping with each existent; then that entification (*ta'ayyun*) is that thing's Lord. But no one takes from Him in respect of His Absolute Unity" (*Fuṣūṣ*, chap. 7). The difference between the prophets and saints on the one hand and ordinary people on the other is that the former are loci of manifestation (*mazhar, majlā*) for Universal Names, while the latter manifest particular Names.

The former display the myriad perfections of Being, while the latter only display a few, and these imperfectly.¹⁷

Closely connected to the entity's preparedness is the question of "destiny" (*qadar*). Since each existent thing is determined by its Lord, its destiny is foreordained. But the "mystery of destiny" (*sirr al-qadar*) is that God does not do the foreordaining; on the contrary, the entity foreordains itself. The entity, after all, is in essence a nonexistent object of God's Knowledge. God did not make (*ja'l*) it the way it is, since it is uncreated—He has known it for all eternity. "So no one possesses in himself anything from God, nor does he have anything from any other than himself" (*Fuṣūṣ*, chap. 2). God's only role is to bring the entity from nonexistence in knowledge to existence in the world, that is, to show mercy upon it through His Breath. Once in existence, the entities themselves determine how they will act and what their ultimate destiny will be. "So let them blame none but themselves, and let them praise none but themselves: 'God's is the conclusive argument' (Quran VI, 149) through His Knowledge of them" (*Fuṣūṣ*, chap. 8).

Here Ibn 'Arabī distinguishes between God's engendering command (*al-amr al-takwīnī*), through which He gives existence to the entity, and His prescriptive command (*al-amr al-taklīfī*), through which He requires men to follow the religious law. In the practical terms of human experience, men freely choose whether or not to follow the latter. Since they cannot know their destiny until it overcomes them, they must follow the command of God and trust in Him; but in the final analysis, their ends are determined by their beginnings. This is one significance of such Quranic verses as "To your Lord you shall return" (VI, 164).

In the same context, Ibn 'Arabī states that men worship "the God created by their beliefs." Men can only conceive of Nondelimited Being—God—to the extent allowed by their own preparedness, which is determined by their immutable entity, their Lord. The prophets and saints are theophanies of God's Universal Names, through which they know and realize Him. In the same way the sciences and laws which they bring for mankind are manifestations of these Names—this is the whole theme of the *Fuṣūṣ*. Other men are theophanies of particular Names, which do not manifest the same ontological perfections. Thus, their "beliefs" concerning God will be determined by their own preparedness for knowledge and existence. In effect, the God they worship—their own Lord—will be "created" by their limited preparedness. Only the greatest prophets and saints—the Perfect Men—worship God as such, since they are loci of manifestation for the All-Comprehensive Name *Allāh*.

Each "existent" in the world is a mixture of existence and nonexistence, or of light and darkness. To the extent that it exists, it is a theophany of

Being; to the extent that it is nonexistent, it is a veil over Reality. "So you are situated between existence and nonexistence, or good (*khayr*) and evil (*sharr*)" (*Futūḥāt*, II, p. 304). "Existence is light, while nonexistence is darkness. We are in existence, so we are encompassed by good" (*Futūḥāt*, III, p. 486). God or Nondelimited Being is Sheer Good (*al-khayr al-mahd*); hence the Prophet said, "All good is in Thy hands, while no evil is ascribed to Thee." Ibn 'Arabī concludes that evil has no fundamental reality, even though it is totally relevant to our everyday lives; otherwise, religion would have no role to play and God's prescriptive command would be meaningless.

To whom can evils be ascribed? For the cosmos is in the hand of Sheer Good, which is Total Being. However, the possible existent can be envisaged as nonexistent; to the extent this is so, evil is ascribed to it. For it does not possess in its very essence the property of Necessary Being; hence evil befalls it. (*Futūḥāt*, III, p. 315)

The creatures are given existence through the Breath of the All-Merciful, and in the end they return to Mercy. "God showed us favor through the Name All-Merciful, thus bringing us out of evil, which is nonexistence, to good, which is existence. . . . So from the beginning, He entrusted us to Mercy" (*Futūḥāt*, II, p. 157). From this point of view Ibn 'Arabī maintains that hell itself is a mercy and that the chastisement (*'adhāb*) of the unbelievers will eventually be changed to "sweetness" (in accordance with the root meaning of the word *'adhāb*; cf. *Fuṣūṣ*, chap. 10).

Instead of attributing evil to nonexistence, al-Qūnawī follows the lead of many passages in the *Futūḥāt* by calling attention to the ontological qualities evil does in fact reflect and the manner in which religion protects mankind from evil's consequences. The various phenomena connected with religion and salvation—such as the prophets, the Scriptures, religious teachers, mosques, faith, the remembrance of God, and piety—are loci of manifestation for the Divine Name the Guide (*al-Hādī*), while phenomena that manifest evil—such as satanic men and *jinn*, unbelievers, immorality, and thoughts that turn the mind away from God—display the properties of the Name the Misleader (*al-Mudill*). Al-Qūnawī is thus able to discuss suffering and damnation without minimizing their practical significance. In this context, he recalls Ibn 'Arabī's definition of evil as "that which is incompatible with man's goal and disagreeable to his nature and constitution" (*Fuṣūṣ*, chap. 11). Al-Qūnawī remarks that when the soul leaves the state of equilibrium established by the *Sharī'ah* and the *tarīqah*, it falls under the sway of the Names of Severity, such as the Misleader, the Wrathful, He-who-harms (*al-Dārr*), and the Avenger. "As a result, the effects of these Names become manifest in this world, or in the next world, in forms disagreeable

to the soul, such as suffering, chastisement, illness, punishment, distance from God, and veils."¹⁸

As the theophany of Sheer Good, the cosmos is the locus of beauty and the object of love (*maḥabbah*). The root of all love, whether for God or for "others," is God's Love, through which the world was created. In the *ḥadīth* of the Hidden Treasure, God does not in fact say that He "wanted" to be known, but that He "loved" (*ahbabtu*) to be known. "Through this Love God turned His Will toward the things in the state of their nonexistence . . . and said to them 'Be!'" (*Futūḥāt*, II, p. 167). In God Himself, Love, Lover, and Beloved are one, since the nonexistent objects of Love are none but the perfections of His own Self. So also in creation, Love manifests Itself in all things, each and every one of which is both lover and beloved.

Nothing is loved in the existents except God, since He is manifest within every beloved to the eye of every lover. And nothing exists but lovers. So all the cosmos is lover and beloved, and all is reducible to Him. . . . No one loves any but his own Creator, but he is veiled from Him by the love of Zaynab, Su'ād, Hind, Laylā, the world, dirhams, position, and all other objects of love. (*Futūḥāt*, II, p. 326)

Ibn 'Arabī's teachings on love, expressed poetically by such figures as 'Irāqī, extend explicitly to the domain of sexuality. He views man's contemplation of God in himself and in woman during the sexual act as one of the highest forms of spiritual vision (*Fuṣūṣ*, chap. 27).

The Perfect Man

The Perfect Man, a key term in Ibn 'Arabī's vocabulary, is the all-comprehensive engendered existent (*al-kawn al-jāmi'*) discussed at the beginning of the *Fuṣūṣ*. Ontologically the origin and goal of the cosmos, he is also the model of spiritual perfection and the guide of men. In his inmost reality, he is known as the Cloud (*al-'amā'*). The Prophet was asked, "Where was God before He created the creatures?" He replied, "In a cloud, neither above which nor below which was any space." The Cloud in fact is the All-Merciful Breath, the theophany of Sheer Being, within which letters and words become articulated. The Cloud surrounds God "before" He creates the creatures and is thus the intermediary between Him and them; it is the Reality of Realities (*ḥaqīqat al-ḥaqā'iq*), within which all immutable entities are englobed.

But the Perfect Man is both "all-comprehensive," in the sense that he embraces all realities, and "engendered," that is, he belongs to the world of created things, at least in his outward dimension. He is an isthmus (*barzakh*)

between God and the cosmos, since he comprehends both the divine and the engendered realities. In God, the One and the Many are united; in the cosmos the Many are dispersed, but in the Perfect Man the One and the Many are reunited in the midst of their very separation and dispersion.

As al-Qūnawī makes explicit, the Perfect Man contains within himself the "Five Divine Presences," the five universal levels where God makes Himself known. Al-Qūnawī enumerates these as (1) the Reality of Realities, or the Presence of Knowledge; (2) the World of the Spirits; (3) the World of Imagination; (4) the World of Corporeal Bodies; (5) the All-Comprehensive Presence, that is, the Perfect Man in his total deployment. The Perfect Man is the macrocosm, while individual man is the microcosm. "God only created the cosmos outside of man to strike an example for him and so that he might know that everything manifest in the world is inside himself, while he is the goal. . . . In him all the Divine Names and their effects are displayed" (*Futūḥāt*, III, p. 417).

If the Perfect Man is the ontological prototype of both the cosmos and the individual man, he is also man perfected, the human state realized in its full breadth and depth. According to the Prophet, "Allah created Adam upon His own Form"; in the Quran God says, "He taught Adam the Names, all of them" (II, 31). As the Name that embraces all other Names, *Allāh* is the Reality of Realities. To say that man is created upon Allah's form means that God is the "meaning" (*ma'nā*) or immutable entity of mankind, while man is God's outward form or existent entity; though other things also reflect Him, they do so incompletely, since they manifest lesser Names. But it is only the Perfect Man who is able to live up to this human potential and truly actualize this station. He alone is the "vicegerent of Allah" (*khalīfat Allāh*; cf. Quran II, 30). A human being who does not attain perfection in this world is only a "rational animal," not a "man." He is related to humanity as a corpse is related to a living person. "He is a man in shape, not in reality, for a corpse lacks all faculties. Thus is he who does not attain perfection. . . . Only the Vicegerent is worthy to act as a receptacle for (all) the Divine Names" (*Futūḥāt*, II, p. 441).

According to the Quran, God "governs the Command (*al-amr*) from heaven to earth; then it ascends to Him in a day whose measure is a thousand years of your counting" (XXXII, 5). This descent of the Command is the exhalation of the All-Merciful's Breath. When it reaches its lowest point, at the level of mankind, it reverses. If a man is destined to become a Perfect Man, he will enter the spiritual path, through which he can return to his Source and complete the Circle. Then he becomes established at the "Point at the Center of the Circle" (*nuqṭah wasat al-dā'irah*), also known as the station of Equilibrium (*al-i'tidāl*), since the Perfect Man is equidistant from each and every reality, whether created or uncreated. Having realized

the full human potential, he manifests the All-Comprehensive Name *Allāh* and escapes the domination of every limited Name and entity. Al-Qūnawī writes that Equilibrium is the center from which no one deviates except him who is attracted to what is less than himself. "If a man veers away from the Center to one side because of an attracting and overpowering affinity, and if the property of certain Names and levels predominates so that he leaves Equilibrium, . . . then he will worship God from the standpoint of that [limited] Name's level. . . . It will become the utmost limit of his hopes . . . unless he passes beyond it."¹⁹

The spiritual stature of the Perfect Men, those who truly act as God's vicegerents, explains the meaning of such Quranic verses as "He has subjected to you what is in the heavens and what is in the earth, all together, from Him" (XLV, 13; cf. *Fuṣūṣ*, chap. 16).

¹⁹ Through the activity of his mind every human being is able to create in his imagination that which has no existence in the outside world; this is the situation with all of us. But through his concentration (*himmah*) the gnostic creates that which possesses existence outside of the locus of his concentration so long as his concentration continues to preserve it. (*Fuṣūṣ*, chap. 6)

If the saints normally refrain from employing this power, it is because of their knowledge that everything occurs according to God's Will. "Whenever the gnostic does exercise his concentration in the world, it is because of a divine command; he does so because he is compelled to do so, not out of free choice" (*Fuṣūṣ*, chap. 13).

In order to turn his concentration toward its ultimate object and actualize its creative power, man must follow the path of purification and perfection. For Ibn 'Arabī, as for all Sufis, the basis of this path is the practice of Islam. He takes the daily prayers, the fast during Ramadan, etc.—in short, the "pillars" of Islam—for granted. In words of advice to disciples, we even find him telling them, "Do not play with your beard or any part of your clothing during the ritual prayer . . . , and make sure that your back is straight when you bow down" (*Futūḥāt*, IV, p. 497). A work like *Kunh mā lā budd minhu'l-murīd*, translated into English as *Instructions to a Postulant*, shows that he considered the sincere and scrupulous practice of both the mandatory commands of the *Shari'ah* and the supererogatory acts recommended by the *Sunnah* as the *sine qua non* of all Sufism.

Ibn 'Arabī also explains in great detail the practices specific to Sufism, which amount to extensions and intensifications of the required practices of Islam. Al-Jandī summarizes Ibn 'Arabī's teachings in ten principles: (1) constant ritual and moral purity, (2) unceasing remembrance/invocation (*dhikr*) of God, (3) the elimination of all distracting thoughts, (4) constant examination of conscience (*murāqabah*), (5) daily review of one's actions

(*muhāsabah*), (6) attentiveness to the inward consciousness of one's shaykh, (7) hunger, (8) vigil, (9) silence, and (10) inward humility and tears. If there is anything remarkable about these instructions, it is that they are basically the same as those found in most other Sufi orders.

The Seal of the Muḥammadan Saints

Islam calls the Prophet of Islam the "Seal of Prophecy," meaning among other things that no prophet will come after him until the end of time. In a number of passages, Ibn 'Arabī speaks of two "Seals of Sanctity": the Seal of General Sanctity, or Jesus when he returns at the end of time, and the Seal of Muḥammadan Sanctity. Sometimes Ibn 'Arabī declares that he himself is the latter, and most of his followers held this to be the case; elsewhere he implies that someone else is this seal, as in a passage where he says that the Seal of Muḥammadan Sanctity is an Arab whom he met in the year 595/1198-99. He goes on to explain the function of this person:

Just as, through Muḥammad, God has sealed the prophecy of Law-giving, so, through the Muḥammadan Seal, He has sealed the sanctity which derives from the Muḥammadan inheritance, not that which derives from other prophets—for among the saints there are those who inherit from Abraham, Moses, and Jesus. Such will continue to be found after the Muḥammadan Seal; but after him, there will no longer be found any saint "upon the heart of Muḥammad ('*alā qalb Muḥammad*')." (*Futūḥāt*, II, p. 49)

One of the clearest explanations of how Ibn 'Arabī's title as the Seal of Muḥammadan Sanctity was understood by those of his followers who ascribed it to him is provided by al-Jandī. He writes that true knowledge of God's Essence, Attributes, and Acts and of the realities of things as they are in God's Knowledge cannot be acquired in the most perfect and complete manner from secondary stations, sources, and doctrines, but only from the doctrines of, first, the Seal of the Prophets, and second, the Seal of the Saints, who is the perfect inheritor of Muḥammad. The spiritual vision of the seals comprehends all spiritual perceptions, contains all doctrines, and encompasses all stations and levels. Just as there must be a Name more perfect and comprehensive than all others—that is, the Name *Allāh*—so also there must be a prophet and a saint more perfect than all other prophets and saints, and these are the seals.²⁰

The claim that Ibn 'Arabī was the Seal of the Muḥammadan Saints thus implies that his teachings embrace all Islamic teachings. And, in fact, practically every intellectual formulation of Sufism after him derives directly or indirectly from his own works or those of his followers. In this respect, at least, it is difficult to dispute this claim. In the words of Seyyed Hossein Nasr, Ibn 'Arabī "has provided over the centuries the precious doctrinal

language in terms of which Sufi masters have sought to expound the mysteries of gnosis,²¹ and to explain their vision of the Truth as gained through mystical perception and the unveiling of the Uncreated Lights.

Notes

1. Although the name of this sage in Arabic is Ibn al-'Arabī, he is often referred to as Ibn 'Arabī among his Muslim disciples and also in European languages. We have therefore kept the Ibn 'Arabī version throughout the Islamic volumes of this series.—Ed.

2. M. Profitlich, *Die Terminologie Ibn 'Arabīs im "Kitāb wasā'il as-sā'il" des Ibn Saudakīn* (Freiburg im Breisgau: Klaus Schwarz Verlag, 1973), Arabic text, p. 21. Al-Jandī, *Sharḥ fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam* (ms), commentary on the word *mubashshirah* in the *khutbah*; also *Nafḥat al-rūḥ* (ms Istanbul, Hacı Mahmud 2447) f. 23b.

3. *Al-Futūḥāt al-makkiyyah* (Beirut: Dār Ṣādir, n.d.) I, 153-54.

4. Ibn 'Arabī's encounter with Jesus in the spiritual world and his repentance (*tawbah*) at his hands are mentioned by Ibn 'Arabī in *al-Futūḥāt al-makkiyyah*, I, 155.26; III, 43.20, 341.22; IV, 77.30. On al-'Uryabī's connection to Jesus, see I, 223.21 (cf. II, 365.19); he is the same as the Abū Ja'far "Uryani" discussed as no. 1 in R. W. J. Austin, *Sufis of Andalusia* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1971). See Michel Chodkiewicz, *Le Sceau des saints* (Paris: Gallimard, 1986) 98-99.

5. Al-Qūnawī's three accounts are found respectively in al-Jandī, *Sharḥ fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam*, commentary on the second chapter; al-Qūnawī, *al-Nuṣūṣ*, appended to al-Kāshānī, *Sharḥ manāzil al-sā'irīn* (Tehran: Ibrāhīm Lārījānī, 1315/1897-98) 284; al-Qūnawī, *al-Fukūk*, on the margin of the previous work, 233.

6. Ibn 'Arabī, *Fihrist al-mu'allafāt*, ed. A. E. Affīf, "The Works of Ibn 'Arabī," *Revue de la Faculté de Lettres de l'Université d'Alexandrie*, 8 (1954) 194.

7. H. Corbin, *Creative Imagination in the Sūfism of Ibn 'Arabī* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1969) 73.

8. Al-Qūnawī, *al-Fukūk*, 184.

9. Al-Qūnawī, *al-Nafahāt* (Tehran: Shaykh Ahmad Shīrāzī, 1316/1898-99) 152-53.

10. Jāmī, *Nafahāt al-uns*, ed. M. Tawḥīdīpūr (Tehran: Sa'dī, 1336/1957) 556.

11. *Ibid.*, 559. For an excerpt, see p. 71 below.

12. This name is to be found in different forms in a number of *silsilahs*; see Claude Addas, *Ibn 'Arabī* (Paris: Gallimard, 1989) 374-77. See also M. Chodkiewicz (trans.), Emir Abd al-Kader, *Écrits spirituels* (Paris: Seuil, 1982) 183. A *silsilah* apparently drawn up by 'Alī himself or by one of his disciples is found appended to three manuscripts of al-Qūnawī's works in Istanbul: Şehid Ali Paşa 1441/1, Yeni Cami 1196/1, Laleli 1499/1.

13. On these two figures, see W. Chittick, "Sultān Burhān al-Dīn's Sufi Correspondence," *Wiener Zeitschrift für die Kunde des Morgenlandes* 73 (1981) 33-45.

14. M. Asín Palacios, *The Mystical Philosophy of Ibn Masarra and His Followers*, trans. E. H. Douglas and H. W. Yoden (Leiden: Brill, 1978) 174-75.

15. See "An Islamic Creation Myth," p. 70 below.

16. Al-Qūnawī, *al-Nuṣūṣ*, 299.

17. See "The Lord of Men and the Lords of Men," p. 71 below.

18. Al-Qūnawī, *Marātib al-taqwā*, Istanbul mss Şehid Ali Paşa 1340/3, Carullah 1001/3, Feyzullah 2163.

19. *I'jaz al-bayān fī tafsīr umm al-Qur'ān* (Hyderabad-Deccan: Osmania Oriental Publications Bureau, 1949) 271.

20. Al-Jandī, *Nafhat al-rūh*, f. 4b.
 21. S. H. Nasr, *Three Muslim Sages* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1964) 121.

Excursuses

An Islamic Creation Myth

The Names gathered together in the Presence of the Named and, gazing upon their own realities and meanings, sought the outward manifestation of their properties. They desired that their own entities might become mutually distinct through the effects that they make manifest. The Creator, who makes ordainments, the Knower, the Governor, the Deployer, the Producer, the Form-giver, the Nourisher, the Life-giver, the Slayer, the Inheritor, the Grateful, and all the rest of the Divine Names gazed upon their own essences but found none created, none governed, none deployed, none nourished. So they said, "What can be done so that these entities might become outwardly manifest? For through them our properties and authority are deployed."

So the Names, having seen their own entities, . . . had recourse to the Name the Producer. They said, "Perhaps you can give existence to our entities so that our properties may appear and our authority be established. For at the moment we reside in an ontological degree that allows us no effectivity." The Producer replied, "That depends upon the Powerful, for I am under His sway. . . ."

Then the Names had recourse to the Powerful, who said, "I am under the sway of the Willing. I can not bring into existence a single one of your entities without His designation. The possible existent in itself is not sufficient for me. First the command of the Commander must come from its Lord. Once He commands that a possible existent enter into engendered existence—once He says to it 'Be!'—then I will be able to act upon it. . . . So have recourse to the Name the Willing. Perhaps He will choose the side of existence over the side of nonexistence. Then I will join with the Commander and the Speaker and give you existence."

[After hearing similar words from the Willing, the Names proceed to the Name the Knowing, who tells them that the entities under their sway are indeed destined for outward manifestation. But first courtesy (*adab*) must be observed.]

So all the Names came together in the Presence of the Name *Allāh* . . . and told Him about their state. He said, "I am the Name that comprehends all your realities and I denote to the Named (*al-musammā*), who is an All-Holy Essence, possessing qualities of perfection and transcendence. Stay here while I enter upon the object of my denotation. So the Name *Allāh* entered that Presence and repeated the words of the possible existents and the Names. He was told, "Go out, and tell all the Names to undertake among the possible existents what their realities require. . . ."

So the Name *Allāh* went out, next to Him the Name the Speaking, acting as His spokesman to the possible existents and the Names. He related to them what the Named had said. So the Knowing, the Willing, the Speaking, and the Powerful

undertook their tasks and the first possible existent became outwardly manifest. (Ibn al-'Arabī, *al-Futūḥāt al-makkiyyah* [Beirut: Dār Ṣādir], n.d., I, 323)

The Lord of Men and the Lords of Men

The Universal Name "Lord" courses through all other Names, whether universal or particular, principal or derivative, down to the least of the derivatives. It manifests itself in every Name in keeping with the properties of that Name. . . . The Name from which any human being derives his existence . . . is in reality his "Lord". . . . It will also be his place of return and his ultimate end. The theophanies he receives in keeping with his states within this world's plane, and his vision of God in the next world, are tied specifically to this Name and take place through it.

But . . . "Lordship" has two properties, one general and one specific. The general property derives from the fact that, for example, the Name *Allāh* is related to all worlds and ontological levels and to all their inhabitants, in respect both to the receptive reality, i.e., the entity, and to the existence that it receives. Hence the Lordship attributed to the Name *Allāh* is all-comprehensive. This is indicated, for example, by God's words, "Praise belongs to *Allāh*, the Lord of the worlds" (Quran I, 1). . . . As for the specific property pertaining to Lordship, that is what we said above: Whenever a thing's existence becomes entified from the Presence of a Name, that Name is its specific Lord. This is why we find that in the Quran and the *Ḥadīth*, vision of God is attributed only to Lords ascribed to various levels. For example, "Upon that day faces will be radiant, gazing upon *their* Lord" (LXXV, 23). . . .

The source of the outward existence of the Perfect Men among the prophets and saints is the Ocean of the Second Entification, i.e., the level of the Name *Allāh* in respect of the Second Isthmus, which englobes the seven principle Names, which in turn embrace the realities of each Perfect Man. However, a faint trace of that Perfect Man's distinguishing characteristics remains, so his Lord is the Second Entification in respect of the faint trace peculiar to him. Then the source of the existence of those prophets, messengers, and saints who are near to the Perfect Men in receptivity, preparedness, scope, universality, spiritual perception, and contemplation is those Seven Principles themselves, but in respect of their manyness and their special relationship with particular effects and properties. . . . Finally the existence of other human beings below the prophets and saints in rank derives from the tributaries of these Oceans, i.e., these Seven Principles, or the rivers of the tributaries, or the streams of the rivers, or the brooks, or the pools, or the tankards, or the jugs, or the infinite drops. So their original entification and their ultimate return follow their preparedness as determined by their Lords.

As for our Prophet Muhammad—God bless him and give him peace—he possesses the Supreme Watering Place, which is the First Theophany. That is his Light and his Lord. It is the source, origin, return, and end of all Names and all entifications within knowledge and existence. That is why God says, addressing the Prophet specifically, "Surely unto thy Lord is the ultimate end" (Quran LIII, 43), and, "Surely

unto thy Lord is the return" (Quran XCVI, 8). (al-Farḡhānī, *Muntaba'l-madārik*, Cairo: 'Abd al-Rahīm al-Bukhārī, 1293/1876, I, 43-44).

I. The Divine Names and the Cosmos

(See diagram I, p. 75.)

The outward existence of the entities presupposes these nine Names. The Living is the "Lord of the Lords," while the next four are often called the Four Pillars, though sometimes the Four Pillars are said to include the Living. They are the principle of all "quaternary" in creation. Among the correspondences Ibn 'Arabī points out are the following:

Attribute	Existent	Element	Humor	Power of the Soul
Knowledge	First Intellect	Earth	Melancholy	Sustaining
Will	Universal Soul	Air	Blood	Attracting
Power	Universal Nature	Water	Phlegm	Repulsing
Speech	Materia Prima	Fire	Choler	Digesting

He-who-governs and He-who-deploys are the "primary Names related to the cosmos"; the other Names are called the Seven Leaders or the Seven Mothers and are their daughters. Just as the spirit "governs" the body, while the body "deploys" the properties of the spirit, so the Unseen World becomes manifest from He-who-governs, while the visible world becomes manifest from He-who-deploys. By means of these two Names God creates male and female, activity and passivity, generation and corruption. The Generous and the Just bring about the existence of well-being and misfortune, the Garden and the Fire, profit and loss. (al-Futūḥāt al-makkiyyah, I, 100, 120, 260; II, 232, 430, 685; III, 198, 427, 441)

II. From the Cloud to the Dust

(See diagram II, p. 76.)

The first creatures to become manifest within the Cloud are the Enraptured Angels; their attention is turned totally toward God such that they have no knowledge of any "others." Through a special theophany, one of them, called the First Intellect or the Supreme Pen, is given knowledge of everything that will come into engendered existence until the Day of Resurrection. Perceiving the Perfect Man in the Cloud, it turns its attention toward creation to bring his potentiality into actuality. There it sees its own shadow, the Universal Soul, whom it "marries," just as Adam married Eve. According to another image, it looks for something upon which to write and the Guarded Tablet is born from its search. The union of the Pen and the Tablet gives rise to the Throne, where the All-Merciful Breath, having created all things, comes to rest: "The All-Merciful sat Himself upon the Throne" (Quran XX, 5). The Tablet possesses two basic attributes, which manifest He-who-governs and He-who-deploys: knowledge of itself and action; the latter is attributed to it just as light is attributed to the sun. Knowledge is connected to destiny; action to

the bestowal of existence upon the known entities; the first is the father, the second the mother. Universal Nature has no existence as such, only through the ontological modalities prefigured in the Soul: heat (which is a manifestation of Life), dryness (Will), cold (Knowledge), and wetness (Speech). In a similar way, the Dust exists not in itself but through the forms that appear within it as a result of Nature's activity. (Futūḥāt, I, 139-40; II, 427-31; III, 90, 390, 399, 420-21, 429-30)

III. From the Dust to the Footstool

(See diagram III, p. 77.)

The marriage of Nature and Materia Prima results in the birth of the Universal Body; its length reflects the Intellect, its breadth the Soul, and its depth the Void, which it fills. Within the Body's compass God brings all the world's forms into existence in an order that comes to be known as "time." The first sensory form to appear is the Throne; supported by four columns, it encompasses all sensory existents. Its parents, the Intellect and the Soul, look upon it with the eye of mercy, the attribute that defines its nature. Within the Throne stands the Footstool, upon which God places the Foot of Surety (Quran X, 2) and the Foot of the All-Compeller (*ḥadīth*), the first of which is in the Garden, and the second in the Fire. The Two Feet mark the division of pure mercy into mercy on the one hand and mercy mixed with wrath on the other. God mixes these two because He wants to manifest all the opposites embraced by His Names, such as He-who-exalts and He-who-debases, the Contractor and the Expander, and the Bestower and the Taker. (Futūḥāt, II, 433-37; III, 431-32)

IV. From the Footstool to the Sphere of the Fixed Stars

(See diagram IV, p. 78.)

On the underside of the Footstool, God creates a transparent, spherical body divided into twelve parts. It is referred to by the verse "By the heaven of the constellations!" (Quran LXXXV, 1). In each constellation dwells an angel; the twelve of them play the same role toward the inhabitants of the Gardens as the elements play for the inhabitants of the earth. Hence each angel is related to one of the four elements: earth, air, water, and fire. When the Shī'ites refer to the infallibility of the Twelve Imams, says Ibn 'Arabī, in fact they are referring to these angels. The angels construct six of the Gardens, while, according to the *ḥadīth*, God constructs Eden with His own hand. Each of the Gardens has 100 degrees, reflecting the Divine Names (the ninety-nine "Most Beautiful Names" plus the Greatest Name); the number of stations in each Garden is equivalent to the number of verses in the Quran. The floor of the Gardens is the surface of the sphere of the fixed stars, which in turn is the roof of hell. Hell, however, does not become manifest until the Day of Resurrection, "The Day the earth shall be changed into other than the earth, and [in the same way] the [seven] heavens [shall be changed]" (Quran XIV, 48), since they become the locus of hell. (Futūḥāt, II, 440; III, 433-35)

V. From the Sphere of the Fixed Stars to the Darkness

(See diagram V, p. 79.)

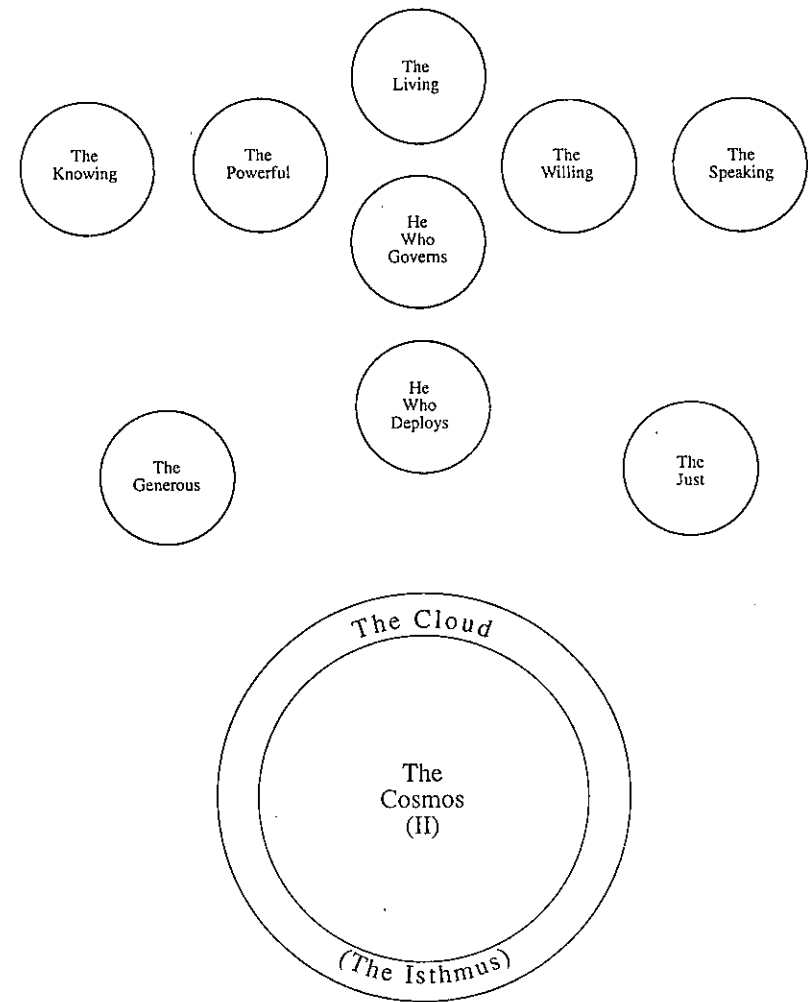
The twenty-eight mansions of the moon correspond to the twenty-eight letters that become articulated in the Breath of the All-Merciful. To each of them pertains a Divine Name, a letter of the Arabic alphabet, and an ontological level (see the diagram in Burckhardt, *Mystical Astrology According to Ibn 'Arabi* [Gloucestershire: Beshara, 1977] pp. 32-33). Each constellation possesses thirty treasures of generosity (cf. Quran XV, 21), from which it sends down effusions upon the four elements, which combine in varying proportions to yield the three kingdoms. The last existent is animal man, who comprehends all created realities, just as the Perfect Man comprehends all uncreated realities. The latter is the Pillar extending from earth to heaven upon which the world's preservation depends (cf. Quran XIII, 2). The seven spheres reflect the Seven Leaders and have affinities with various other realities:

Sphere	Planet	Attribute	Prophet	Day of the Week	Clime
1	The Moon	Life	Adam	Monday	7
2	Mercury	Will	Jesus	Wednesday	6
3	Venus	Knowledge	Joseph	Friday	5
4	The Sun	Hearing	Enoch	Sunday	4
5	Mars	Sight	Aaron	Tuesday	3
6	Jupiter	Power	Moses	Thursday	2
7	Saturn	Speech	Abraham	Saturday	1

The seven earths are referred to in the Quran (LXV, 12), while the Water, Air, and Darkness upon which they rest are mentioned in a *hadith*. Below the earths, which mark the lowest limits of the world embraced by the Throne, is the Water about which God says, "His Throne is upon the Water" (Quran XI, 7). The Water is in fact ice; it rests upon frigid Air that is exhaled by the Darkness. This last is the Unseen, which none knows but God. (*Futūḥāt*, I, 155; II, 438-40; III, 432, 437)

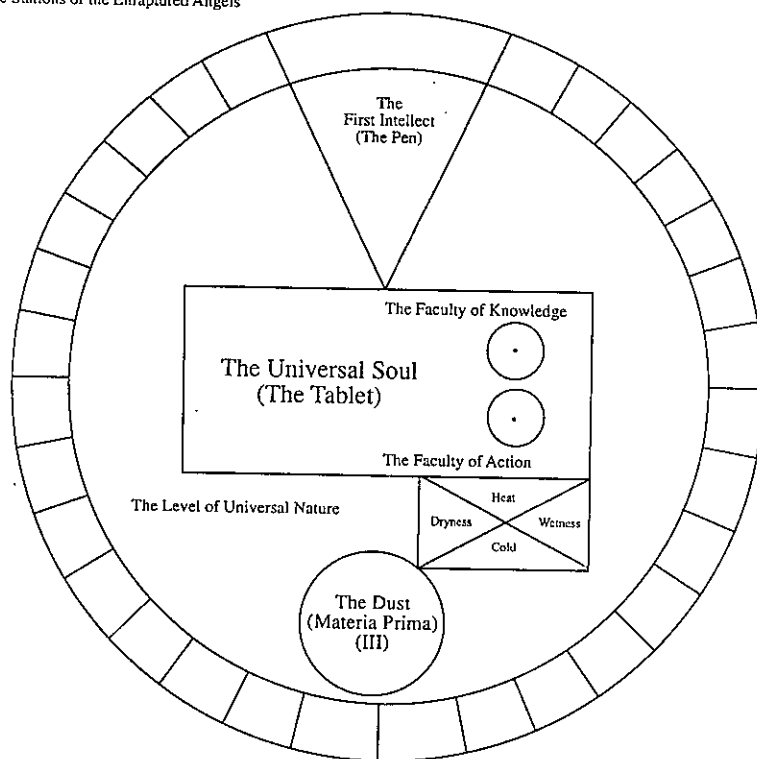
I. The Divine Names and the Cosmos

(Diagram I)

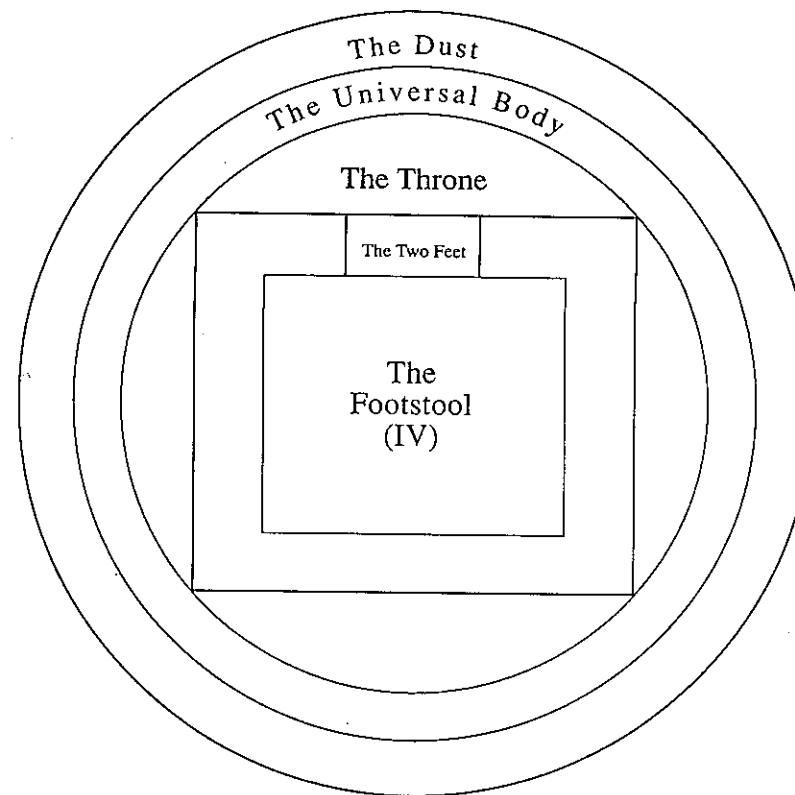


II. From the Cloud to the Dust (Diagram II)

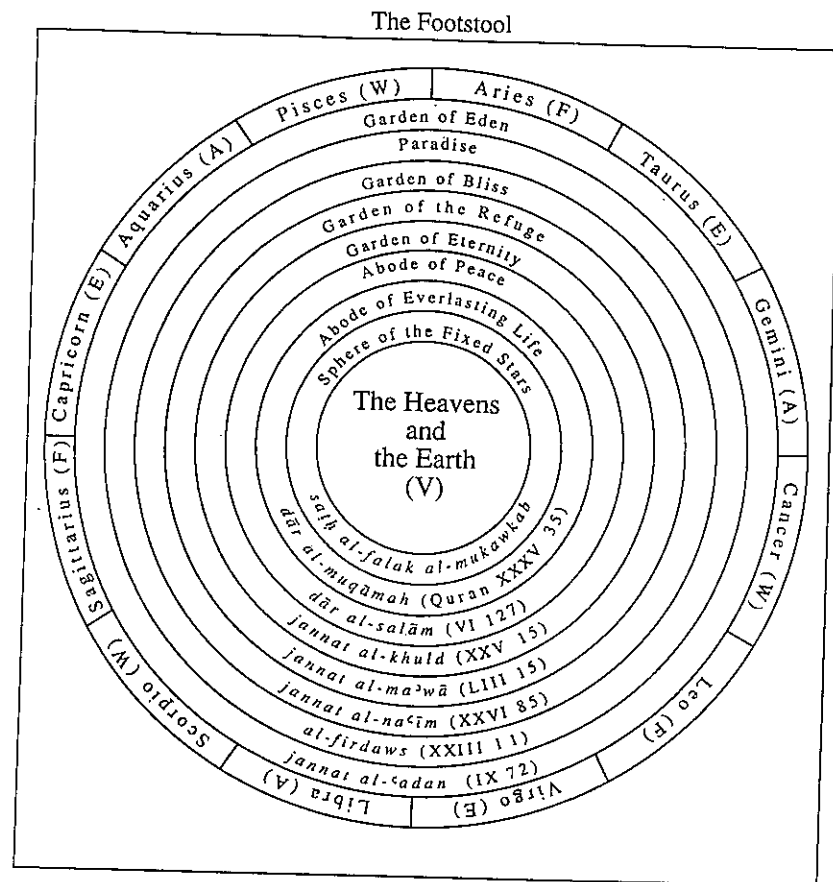
The Stations of the Enraptured Angels



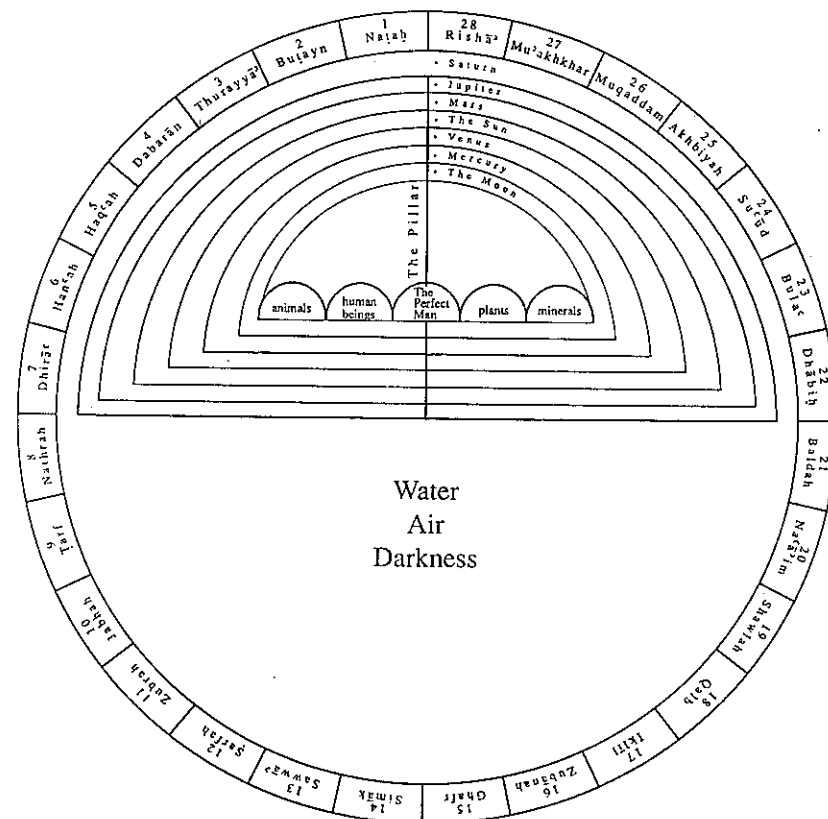
III. From the Dust to the Footstool (Diagram III)



IV. From the Footstool to the Sphere of the Fixed Stars
(Diagram IV)



V. From the Sphere of the Fixed Stars to the Darkness
(Diagram V)



Najm al-Dīn Kubrā and the Central Asian School of Sufism (The Kubrawiyyah)

MUHAMMAD ISA WALEY

ONE OF THE MOST TURBULENT PERIODS in the history of the Muslim world was compensated by a phenomenal expansion and flowering of Sufism. During the later twelfth and the thirteenth centuries A.D. (550–700 A.H.) there occurred the cataclysmic Mongol invasion, the destruction of the Baghdad caliphate, and innumerable concomitant disasters. Yet Muslim saints and scholars flourished to an extent rarely seen since the early days of the Community of Islam, and many major Sufi orders were founded or revived: these include—to name but a few—the Qādiriyyah, Rifāʿiyyah, Suhrawardiyyah, Shādhiliyyah, and Mawlawiyyah, as well as the Kubrawiyyah *ṭarīqah* (order) which is the subject of the present essay.

The Kubrawiyyah derives its name from Najm al-Dīn Kubrā (d. 618/1221), founder of the order. From its beginnings in the Central Asian region of Khiva (then known as Khwarazm) to the south of the Aral Sea—where it survives to this day—it spread, with its offshoots, to Persia, Afghanistan, India, and even to China. During its long history the Kubrawiyyah produced several masters of great eminence who in addition to training disciples left for posterity a body of writings many of which are as yet unpublished. These works contain some highly interesting and innovative elaborations of Sufi methodology and doctrine. The contribution of Kubrā and certain of his successors in what has come to be known as the Central Asian school of Sufism to the phenomenology and analysis of spiritual vision and gnosis merits the attention of all who are interested in visionary experience and its place in spirituality.

Najm al-Dīn Kubrā: His Life and Spiritual Masters

Abu'l-Jannāb Najm al-Dīn ibn 'Umar al-Kubrā, founder of the Kubrawiyyah, was born at Khwarazm in about 540/1145. Najm al-Dīn's intellectual powers became evident at an early age. While still a student, he acquired the nickname *Kubrā* (literally, "the greatest"), an abbreviated form of the Quranic phrase *al-tāmmat al-kubrā*, "the Greatest Calamity" (LXXIX, 34). This appellation apparently alluded to the formidable talents which made Najm al-Dīn the downfall of those who contended with him in disputation. Having received the normal formation in the Islamic religious sciences, Kubrā left Khwarazm to pursue his studies in other lands, as was the wont of many medieval scholars. His chief interest at that time was in the science of *Ḥadīth*, which he studied for several years in Persia and Egypt.

At some time between 573/1177 and 576/1180, however, an interest in esoteric matters was kindled in Najm al-Dīn. He was initiated into the Suhrawardiyyah Order in Egypt by a shaykh named Rūzbihān al-Wazzān al-Miṣrī. According to one account, this followed—or else coincided with—a vision of the Prophet. At all events, we know from Najm al-Dīn's own writings that he had undergone at least one striking spiritual experience in his childhood.¹ Nonetheless, he continued for some time to pursue the study of Prophetic Tradition. The turning point in Kubrā's life may have been his encounter at Tabriz with a certain Bābā Faraj Tabrizī, whose bearing greatly impressed him and who urged him to forsake the pursuit of exoteric knowledge in favor of the Sufi path.

Najm al-Dīn's first Sufi master was Ismā'īl al-Qaṣrī (d. 589/1193), at Dizful in western Persia. But after he had spent only a short while there, Ismā'īl advised him to go to 'Ammār ibn Yāsir al-Bidlīsī. This shaykh, who died in 582/1186, was the disciple of Abu'l-Najīb al-Suhrawardī; his treatise entitled *Bahjat al-tā'ifah* (*Splendour of the Tribe*) is extant in manuscript. Kubrā underwent spiritual retreats (*khalwah*) with both Qaṣrī and Bidlīsī, and his writings include accounts of some experiences with them. Next, Kubrā returned to Egypt on the orders of 'Ammār; here Rūzbihān al-Miṣrī continued Najm al-Dīn's training until he pronounced him qualified to initiate and instruct disciples of his own. During this period Najm al-Dīn married Rūzbihān's daughter.

Probably between 581/1185 and 586/1190, Rūzbihān sent Najm al-Dīn back to Khwarazm. The remainder of Kubrā's life was devoted to the spiritual path and the training of disciples. These were relatively few in number, but such was their stature that Najm al-Dīn was to earn a second epithet: *Walī-tarāsh*, "Fashioner of Saints." He also wrote a number of

treatises, the most important of which is the *Fawā'ih al-jamāl wa fawātih al-jalāl* (*Aromas of Beauty and Preambles of Majesty*). We shall have occasion to refer several times to this key Arabic text, which constitutes a personal record of Najm al-Dīn's visionary experiences combined with a guide to the theory and practice of the Sufi path for initiates. Najm al-Dīn Kubrā died at Urgench, near Khwarazm, in 618/1221, when the city was overrun by the Mongol army. It is related that Najm al-Dīn was offered protection if he took refuge with the Mongols, but he refused and fought to defend the city, earning the further glory of a martyr's death in battle. The founder of the Kubrawiyyah became, as it were, a patron saint in Central Asia; his memory continues to be venerated in and around Khiva.

The Affiliation of the Kubrawiyyah

Like all the authentic orders of Sufism, the Kubrawiyyah possesses an *isnād* or spiritual pedigree tracing the succession of shaykhs back to the Prophet himself, this being an indispensable condition for the transmission of the initiatic *barakah* or blessing. According to the Kubrawīs' spiritual genealogy, the principal line of descent runs through 'Ammār al-Bidlīsī and Rūzbihān al-Misrī to Abu'l-Najīb al-Suhrawardī. He in turn was a disciple of Ahmad Ghazzālī, whose initiatic line descends through such figures as Abū Bakr al-Nassāj and Abū 'Alī Rūdbārī to Abu'l-Qāsim al-Junayd of Baghdad (d. 297/902), one of the most renowned Sufis, whose name appears in the lines of the Shādhilī, Qādirī, and other orders. An alternative genealogy, current among the Shi'ite offshoots of the Kubrawiyyah, includes the names of the first eight Imams of the Shi'ah. The various branches of the Kubrawiyyah will be discussed briefly later in this essay.²

Kubrā's Methodology: The Discipline of the Order

Like all masters of authentic Sufism, Najm al-Dīn Kubrā insisted on certain prerequisites in those whom he accepted as disciples. A sound knowledge of the essentials of Islamic theological doctrine and law was required. The disciplinary rules of the Kubrawiyyah were founded on the Eight Principles laid down in the third/ninth century by Junayd of Baghdad, to whom Najm al-Dīn frequently refers (six times in the *Fawā'ih* alone).

The Eight Principles are similarly cited and expounded in treatises by several later Kubrawī masters, including Baghdādī, Rāzī, Simnānī, and Badakhshī.³ As transmitted by Kubrā himself, the first five rules of Junayd

prescribe constant observance of the following: ritual purity (*wudū'*), fasting (*sawm*), silence (*ṣamt*), seclusion (*khalwah*), and invocation or recollection (*dhikr*) of God using the formula *lā ilāha illa'llāh*. Sixth: the disciple must keep his heart forever fixed upon the shaykh, abandoning his own will entirely, and refer to him for interpretation and guidance concerning any spiritual experiences he may have. Seventh: all thoughts and mental impulses (*khawāṭir*) are to be put aside the moment they occur. Finally, the disciple must surrender entirely to the Will of God and never refuse what He imposes upon him; and he must neither pray to be granted paradise nor spare from hell.

These rules are added to and commented on by Kubrā in a work on Sūfi methodology which bears the title *Risālah ila'l-hā'im al-khā'if min lawmat al-lā'im* (*Epistle to the Dozing [Seeker] Fearful of the Blamer's Blame*).⁴ The two additional rules are to take the bare minimum of sleep and to observe moderation in eating and drinking when breaking the (daytime) fast. In the same treatise Kubrā touches on several other important aspects of Sufi doctrine and method. Another treatise, *al-Uṣūl al-'asharah* (*The Ten Principles*), circulated widely both among Kubrawīs and in other orders. Among the more significant commentaries on the text are those composed in Ottoman Turkish by Ismā'il Haqqī Burūsawī, who belonged to the Khalwatiyyah *ṭarīqah* and in Persian by 'Abd al-Ghafūr Lārī.

Although most of the principles of discipline outlined above are more or less self-explanatory, others call for some comment. We shall take up those points further on in this essay. One reason for enumerating the Principles of Junayd here is to emphasize their importance to the methodology of an order that stresses solitary retreat and gnosis. The impulsion to court visionary experience, which arises from the lower soul's desire for self-aggrandizement, is one of the greatest dangers that can beset the initiate—let alone the seeker who attempts the esoteric path without the guidance of a qualified spiritual master.

Kubrā on the Microcosm and Its Faculties

In this and the following sections we shall explore the main distinctive elements of Najm al-Dīn Kubrā's theory, description, and empirical analysis of the initiatic Sufi path: the journey to God being in reality an inward one. Inevitably, our exposition owes much to the work on this subject by Henry Corbin.⁵ In a brilliant and wide-ranging study, Corbin examines the leit-motif of gnostic vision as reflected in the works of Najm al-Dīn Kubrā and his successors of the Central Asian school of Sufism, at the same time relating these both to the "visionary recitals" of the *ishraqī* shaykh Shihāb

al-Dīn Suhrawardī and Rūzbihān Baqlī and to a number of cognate elements of Zoroastrian, Manichaean, and other gnostic doctrines.

One of the cornerstones of Kubrā's understanding of the initiatic path is the doctrine that everything that exists in the macrocosm (in Islamic terminology the terms used are, according to the context, *al-insān al-kabīr*, "the great man," or *al-insān al-kāmil*, "perfect man") exists also within every individual human being; each man is none other than the microcosm (*al-insān al-ṣaghīr*, "small man"). Thus, the seeker's journey to God is an inward journey which, like the Divine Being Itself, has no limit.

Know that the lower soul, the Devil, and the Angel are realities that are not external to you. You *are* they. So, too, Heaven, Earth and the Divine Throne are not located outside you; nor are Paradise, Hell, Life or Death. All of these exist within you, as you will realize once you have accomplished the initiatic journey and become pure. (*Fawā'ih*, par. 67:32)

You can only see or witness an object by means of some part of that same object. As we said, it is only the mine whence it came which a precious stone sees, desires, and yearns for. So when you have a vision of a sky, an earth, a sun, stars, or a moon, you should know that the particle in you which has its origin in that same mine has become pure. The more pure you become, the purer and more radiant will be the sky that appears to you, until in the last stages of the journey you travel within the Divine Purity. But Divine Purity is limitless, so never think that there is not something more exalted still ahead. (*Fawā'ih*, par. 60:28–29)

All the realms of principal and manifested existence, then, are to be found within the human soul. Were that not the case, the possibility of gnosis would not exist. This is evident in the light of one of the cardinal metaphysical doctrines relating to epistemology. An object can be known only by a cognate subject: like is known only by like. Furthermore, it is by virtue of the innate and spontaneous attraction of like to like that man, as theomorphic creature containing the Spirit of the Divine, is moved and enabled to seek God or the Transcendent Selfhood.

According to a *ḥadīth qudsī* (a Sacred Tradition, related from the Prophet but comprising the very words of God), "Neither My heaven nor My earth has space to contain Me; yet the heart of My truly-believing servant containeth me." This *ḥadīth*, not surprisingly, is widely quoted by Sufis; it is a statement of the vastness and elevation of the human state and the responsibility (*amānah*) that it entails. In respect of his primordial creation, every man is potentially a "truly believing servant." This dictum further adumbrates, without explicitly stating it, an aspect of the supreme mystery: ultimately, the seeker has no identity apart from that of the Sought. Najm al-Dīn broaches this subject at the very beginning of the *Fawā'ih al-jamāl*:

Know this, my dear friend—may God grant you success in achieving that which He loves and is pleasing to Him: the Goal (*murād*) is God, and the seeker (*murīd*) a light proceeding from Him. God never acts unjustly towards anybody. Every individual contains a Spirit, which comes from God, and possesses intelligence; and [God] "has made" for him "hearing, sight and hearts" (Quran XLVI, 26).⁶ All men are in a state of [spiritual] blindness save those from whom God has removed the veil. That veil is not something external to them, but is indeed part of them; for it consists of the darkness of their [individual] existences. (*Fawā'ih*, par. 1:1)

With this last sentence Najm al-Dīn introduces the question of the imperfections of the soul, and in the paragraphs immediately following he describes the means by which the initiate is to undertake the necessary task of self-purification. In Islamic spirituality, this process is often called "spiritual combat." The foundations of Kubrā's method are theoretical knowledge, initiation, the ascetic disciplines of Junayd and *dhikr*. The latter term here denotes the systematic invocation of God by means of the *shahādah*, or testimony of faith, or the Divine Name. It is essential that the initiate be fully aware of what this practice entails and be prepared accordingly. Like the spiritual masters of certain other traditions, the Sufi shaykhs teach that in the *dhikr* God renders Himself mysteriously present in the Divine Name. Therein lies the secret of the grace and power of the "Way of Invocation" to bestow salvation, purity, and gnosis.

Visionary Apperception: Photisms and Their Analysis

By means of the practices outlined above, the Kubrawī initiate begins to progress along the path. In his *Fawā'ih*, Najm al-Dīn Kubrā describes some of the visionary phenomena that he himself witnessed and analyzes their significance. Such manifestations of light are not to be courted. Rather, they are signs of grace, as our author demonstrates, and they provide clear indications as to the stage which the witnessing initiate has reached on his inward journey. Following the terminology employed by Corbin, we shall henceforth refer to these apparitions of light as "photisms." The teachings of Kubrā and his successors concerning photisms form perhaps the most distinctive feature of the Central Asian school of Sufism.

In order to avoid any misunderstanding, it must be stressed that photisms are objective realities of a subtle type and not hallucinations. They are related to the phenomena known as auras, which are perceived not by the physical eyes but by those faculties of the Spirit which one might term "the suprasensory senses." Photisms may even be said to be more "real" than the

objects of visual sense perception, for they pertain to a higher order of existence. The faculty that perceives and interprets them is the Spiritual Imagination, whose field of activity is not the realm of corporeal existence but the world of "imaginal forms," also known as *mundus imaginalis*, or the world of image-ideas (*'ālam al-mithāl*). In the hierarchy of being, the imaginal world is situated between the archetypal and the sensory.

At first dark and turbid, the visions of light perceived by the seeker gain in lucidity and beauty as he progresses. The faculties of spiritual vision likewise gain in strength in accordance with the purity of the initiate. They have their center in the various points (*latīfah*), comparable to the *chakras* of yogic doctrine, figuratively located in various areas of the body. The aim of the shaykh is to transmute the human substance of the disciple. In Kubrā's words: "Our method (or path, *tarīq*) is the method of alchemy. It is essential that the subtle center (*latīfah*) of light be released from beneath those mountains (i.e., the four elements of corporeal existence)" (*Fawā'ih*, par. 12:5). Although the use of the word "alchemy" in connection with the spiritual path is not uncommon, Kubrā here seems particularly to have in mind the fact that, as he puts it elsewhere, "mystical experience (*dhawq*) is caused by a transformation of the being, and of the Spirit . . . this involves a transmutation of the faculties of sense-perception. The five senses are changed into senses of another kind" (*Fawā'ih*, par. 42:19).

Here one can quote only one or two of the many passages of the *Fawā'ih* in which our author describes the forms and colors of photisms corresponding to the various spiritual states (*ahwāl*) and stations (*maqāmāt*) of the path. In the following passage, Kubrā is concerned with the circles of light pertaining to each of the three states of the soul:

Know that "the soul that incites" [to evil-doing] (*al-nafs al-ammārah*) has a sign which renders it perceptible to spiritual vision. It is a large, pitch-black circle which first rises in front of you, then fades away, then rises before you again like a cloud. As it reappears, something is revealed at its edges which is like the crescent moon when one of its horns becomes visible through the clouds. Next, it turns into a complete crescent. When it [the commanding soul] has begun to accuse itself [i.e., has been transformed into the "accusing soul" (*al-nafs al-lawwāmah*)] it rises alongside the right cheek as if it were a red sun whose heat is felt on the cheek; sometimes, though, it is perceived next to the ear, sometimes next to the forehead, and sometimes above the head. This "accusing soul" is the intelligence (*'aql*).

As for the "pacified soul" (*al-nafs al-mutma'innah*), it too possesses a sign perceptible to spiritual vision. It sometimes rises before you like the circle of a great fountain from which light pours forth. Alternatively, you may visualize it, in the realm of the suprasensory, as a circle representing your face, composed of pure light, like a polished mirror. When the circle of light rises

towards your face and your face disappears in it, then your face is the "pacified soul." On the other hand, you sometimes perceive the circle far away in the suprasensory, and there are a thousand stages of journey between you and the circle of the "pacified soul." Were you to approach any one of those intermediary stages, you would catch fire. (*Fawā'ih*, parr. 55-56:26)

Elsewhere, Kubrā speaks of awesome visions in which the mystic beholds with his own eyes (of subtle vision) what he has hitherto known only in theory, by means of reason:

When you see before you a vast expanse opening out toward the distance, there is clear air above you and you see on the far horizon colors such as green, red, yellow, and blue, know that you are going to pass through that air to where those colors are. The colors appertain to spiritual states. Green is the sign of the life of the heart [this being the highest state]. The color of pure fire indicates the life of "spiritual concentration" (*himmah*), which denotes power [of actualization]. If this fire be dark, that betokens the fire of exertion and shows the seeker to be weary and afflicted after the battle with the lower ego and the Devil. Blue is the color of the life of the ego. Yellow is the color of lassitude. All these are suprasensory realities that speak with him who experiences them in the two languages of inner tasting (*dhawq*) and visionary apperception. These are two reliable, mutually corroboratory witnesses: what you behold with inner vision you also experience within yourself, and what you experience inwardly you also behold with inner vision. (*Fawā'ih*, par. 13:6)

Najm al-Dīn Kubrā's interpretation of the colors of light apparitions was elaborated upon by some later Kubrawī masters. Foremost in this respect were Najm al-Dīn Dāyah Rāzī and 'Alā' al-Dawlah Simnānī, whose work will be discussed below.

Love and Union: "The Heavenly Witness"

Reference has already been made to the reciprocal nature of the mystic's quest of the Supreme Reality. Najm al-Dīn Kubrā teaches that the mutual relationship of love between the seeker and the Sought calls into existence, in the *mundus imaginalis*, a being to which Kubrā variously refers by the names "Person of light," "Suprasensory Guide," and "Heavenly Witness" (*Fawā'ih*, par. 66:32). As with the other manifestations of light, the form in which this being appears to the disciple indicates the latter's spiritual state. At the outset, it is not the "Person of Light" who will be seen but a black form that will be manifested—this being a projection of the darkness of one's individuated existence, of the "soul inciting to evil." When, however, the initiate attains the state of complete purity in which he is vouchsafed

the vision of the green light, the circle of the face reflected before him in visionary apperception becomes pure and extraordinarily luminous, and is accompanied by a sunlike form.

This Face is in reality your own face and this sun is the Sun of the Spirit which oscillates within your body. Then your entire body is immersed in purity, and at that moment you see before you a person made of light, who generates lights. The spiritual traveller, too, then experiences his entire body as generating lights. It may be that the veil will fall from all individuality, so that you see totality through the totality of your body. The faculty of inner vision is opened first in the eyes, then the face, then the breast, then the whole body. This person of light in front of you is called by the People [Sufis] "the Suprasensory Guide" and is also known as "the Suprasensory [Personal] Master" or "the Suprasensory Scales [of Judgment]" (*Fawā'id*, par. 66:31–32)

The last-mentioned expression leads us to an element in the gnosis of Najm al-Dīn Kubrā which has a further, eschatological significance. As we have seen, the "Person of Light" who guides the initiate is his own beloved, his guide to Heaven—and is none other than himself. Linking this doctrine to Zoroastrian metaphysics and eschatology, Corbin has demonstrated the principle common to both systems.⁷ The vocation of all humans (not of initiates alone) being the quest for the True Self, such an *alter ego* in the form of a luminous personification potentially exists for every human being. Whether or not the encounter with the Truth takes place during one's earthly life, it must needs come to pass in the hereafter. If man has betrayed the trust which the human state entails, he will be met in the *barzakh*, the isthmus between this world and the next, by the dark shadow of his own spiritual emptiness. The perfected initiate, however, has already found his heavenly guide and partner in the lower world.

Majd al-Dīn Baghdādī and His Followers

We may now pass on from Najm al-Dīn Kubrā to consider some of his outstanding successors. Majd al-Dīn Baghdādī hailed from a village in Khurasan called Baghdadak. Little is known of his life, which in the account by Jāmī is overshadowed by the circumstances of his death in 616/1219.⁸ According to Jāmī, Majd al-Dīn was drowned in the River Oxus by the Mongols as foretold by Kubrā, whom Majd al-Dīn had disobeyed. Whether or not that is correct, Majd al-Dīn was one of Kubrā's authorized representatives, responsible for the formation of many disciples. From his treatise *Tuhfat al-barārah* (*Gift for the Godly*) we know that Majd al-Dīn, like his teacher, was engaged in the interpretation of the colors and images occurring in gnostic visions and dreams.

One of Majd al-Dīn Baghdādī's disciples was Najm al-Dīn Dāyah, to be discussed below; it is noteworthy that although Baghdādī died before Kubrā, Dāyah never mentions the latter in his writings, apparently regarding Baghdādī as his only shaykh. Also probably a follower of Majd al-Dīn was Farid al-Dīn 'Attār of Nayshapur (d. ca. 617/1220), one of the greatest Persian Sufi writers. In his *Mantiq al-tayr* (*Logic of the Birds*, known also as *Conference of the Birds*) and other major poems, 'Attār explores with profound perceptiveness and feeling the awesome perils and the majestic epiphanies of Divine Beauty entailed in the initiate's quest for the Transcendent Self. In one part or another of his didactic poem *Asrār-nāmah* (*The Book of Secrets*), 'Attār sets out some principles for the spiritual life. Not only do these visibly parallel the Kubrawiyyah Order's "rules of Junayd" already discussed; four of them are identical.⁹

"Sultan of the Scholars": Bahā' al-Dīn Walad

It is probable, though not certain, that Bahā' al-Dīn Walad of Balkh was another of Najm al-Dīn Kubrā's immediate disciples. Best known as being the father of the great Mawlānā Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī (see the next chapter in this volume), he is a significant figure in his own right whose work would repay further study. Bahā' al-Dīn was born ca. 540/1145 at the ancient city of Balkh, now in northern Afghanistan. His learning in the exoteric sciences of religion earned him the title *sultān al-'ulamā'*, "Sultan of the Scholars," and some prestige at the court of the Khwārazmshāh, ruler of the region. Either court intrigues or the threat of the Mongols, or both, impelled Bahā' al-Dīn to migrate westward with his family. After traveling through the central Islamic lands, he taught at *madrasas* in various parts of Asia Minor. He finally settled at Konya, where he died in 628/1231, to be succeeded—first as professor, later as Sufi master—by his son Jalāl al-Dīn.

Renowned as a preacher, Bahā' al-Dīn Walad was a strong personality who possessed eloquence and also a vivid spiritual imagination. Fortunately, a large compilation of his discourses, *Ma'ārif* (*Divine Knowledge*), has survived.¹⁰ The discourses reveal a great deal concerning the author's personality, his teachings, his interpretation of the Quran and *Hadīth*, and his deep influence on the thought and style of Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī. They show Bahā' al-Dīn to have possessed some of that ecstatic tendency which is often said (although this is a broad generalization) to characterize the Sufism of Khurasan in contrast to the more "sober" Sufism of Iraq. The language is plain and direct, the message for the most part straightforward, although sometimes opaque. Many chapters of the *Ma'ārif* open with the text of a

Quranic verse or phrase, or a tradition, which provides the theme for exposition. Bahā' al-Dīn Walad often alludes to his own meditations, inspirations, and visions; the following passages may be cited by way of illustration:

I was saying, "Glory to my Lord, the Immense" [when] He said, "I have at My court lords such as the stars, the moon, the sun, and those who are masters on the face of the earth. But that lordship [alluded to in the glorification] is not for them. Every few days I dismiss them from their lordly position. For they are minor lords, whereas I am the Immense Lord." (*Ma'ārif*, sec. 160; ed. Furūzānfar, 1:252-53)

The striking imagery of the next passage illustrates the affinity between Bahā' al-Dīn Walad and his son Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī:

Now whenever I look at something, and my eye alights upon the Earth, the formal universe, the various parts of my body, or the inanimate constituents of the world, I look on each one of these objects as a peachstone containing Divine Gardens. These Gardens provide sustenance for the nurturing of those who possess a spirit and intellect; besides nourishing their understanding, love, taste, true companionship, and hearing, the Gardens provide a myriad refreshing delights. (*Ma'ārif*, sec. 113; ed. Furūzānfar, 2:159)

Najm al-Dīn Dāyah Rāzī: Life and Work

Yet another disciple of Kubrā to emerge as an influential figure himself was Najm al-Dīn Abū Bakr Rāzī (573/1177-654/1256), often known as Najm al-Dīn Dāyah. Leaving his native city of Rayy (south of present-day Tehran) in 599/1202-3, he traveled widely before reaching Khwarazm. There he became the disciple of Kubrā, who put him under the guidance of Majd al-Dīn Baghdādī. In 618/1221 the impending menace of the Mongol invasion impelled Dāyah to take refuge in Asia Minor. He spent most of the remainder of his life either there or at Baghdad. In addition to his other work, Najm al-Dīn Dāyah undertook a diplomatic mission for the Abbasid caliph with the aim of concerting various Muslim rulers' resistance to the Mongols.

Najm al-Dīn Rāzī is one of the outstanding Sufi authors of the seventh/thirteenth century; his influence was widespread and lasting beyond the Kubrawiyyah Order. The first work to mention is his *Baḥr al-ḥaqā'iq* (*The Ocean of Divine Realities*), an esoteric commentary on the Quran, which although extant in manuscript still remains unpublished. This represents the continuation of a commentary which Najm al-Dīn Kubrā planned, but which (in written form, at least) only reached the early



3. The Kubrawī Sufi master Majd al-Dīn al-Baghdādī.

verses of sura II. Dāyah's *tafsīr* covers the Quran from there down to sura LII. It fell to another Kubrawī master, 'Alā' al-Dawlah Simnānī, to complete what is one of the greatest monuments of Quranic *ta'wīl*, or hermeneutics. The most celebrated of Najm al-Dīn Dāyah's works, however, is entitled *Mirṣād al-'ibād min al-mabda' ila'l-ma'ād* (*The Path of God's Servants from the Beginning until the Return to Him*).¹¹ It exists in two recensions and a shorter adaptation.¹²

The Path of God's Servants: Exposition and Symbolism

Like many of the prose classics of Persian Sufi literature, the *Mirṣād* was almost unknown in the West until recently. In a sense it may be said to parallel the work of Abū Hāmid al-Ghazzālī inasmuch as the author affirms the centrality of the perspectives of Sufism in the context of a lucid and systematic exposition of Muslim doctrine. At the same time, its profundity and expository style at times recall the *Mathnawī-yi ma'navī* (*The Spiritual Mathnawī*) of Najm al-Dīn Dāyah's renowned contemporary Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī. The main themes treated in *Mirṣād al-'ibād* are these: the hierarchical degrees of existence; the nature and purpose of religion, prophethood, and revelation; laws and rituals and their significance; doctrines, methods, stages, and states of the Sufi path; the nature of the soul; the spiritual tendencies and needs of different types of men; and ethics and its link with eschatology.¹³

Also deserving of attention is the brilliance of Najm al-Dīn Dāyah's style of exposition. Were Dāyah's Quranic commentary alone insufficient proof of his spiritual eminence, it is evident from his lucid metaphysical, cosmological, and psychological exposition of the nature and purpose of existence. Dāyah employs symbolism and imagery drawn largely from natural phenomena and everyday life. Such figurative and symbolic language provides keys to unlock something of the hidden meaning between principles and phenomena, and the correspondences and links between the lower and the higher levels of being. Such is the nature and meaning of symbolism. Far from being luxuries, symbolic language and corresponding spiritual insights provide the heart and soul with vital nourishment. For Islamic spirituality, the prototype of such symbolism and imagery is the figurative and allusive language of the noble Quran itself.¹⁴

As an example of Najm al-Dīn Dāyah Rāzī's parabolic exposition, let us take the chapter of the *Mirṣād* devoted to a difficult and subtle question: "concerning the original creation of the various spirits, and the degrees of knowledge thereof." Dāyah begins by recapitulating the Islamic doctrine that

God's first creation was *al-Rūḥ al-muḥammadī*, the Muḥammadan Spirit (this term in Islamic cosmology corresponds to the Universal Intellect). From it, God successively created the spirits of the prophets, saints, believers, unbelievers, the angels, *jinn* (subtle beings possessing souls), demonic beings and animals. Dāyah continues:

These degrees and stages (of manifestation of spirits) are comparable to the processes whereby a sugar merchant extracts raw white sugar from cane: he boils it a first time, and extracts white sugar candy; a second, and extracts white sugar; a third, and extracts brown sugar; a fourth, and extracts caramel; a fifth, and extracts black loaf sugar; and after the sixth boiling there remains only a very dark black residue known as treacle. (*Mirṣād*, ed. Riyāḥī, 38)

After pointing out that each of these refined products of sugarcane has its own peculiar qualities and uses, Najm al-Dīn Dāyah explains that the simile in question casts light not only on the hierarchical order of spirits and created beings but also on the problem of the essential nature of the Spirit.

Now, with regard to the question of the essential nature of the Spirit, our predecessors have said a great deal without going far towards broaching even its elementary aspects. Here once again the analogy with sugar can be applied. The seven types of sugar product possess seven attributes: whiteness, blackness, lightness, darkness, subtlety, density, and sweetness. The Spirit is a subtle essence appertaining to God Himself and is honored in an exclusive manner by the possessive suffix "My" in the words "of My Spirit."¹⁵ The Spirit likewise has seven attributes: these are luminosity, love, knowledge, forbearance, intimacy (with God), permanence and life. From each one of these, further attributes proceed. . . . (*Mirṣād*, 42)

Najm al-Dīn Dāyah develops this analysis at considerable length. However, we must now turn our attention to his teachings on two subjects already touched upon in relation to Najm al-Dīn Kubrā: "photisms"—luminous phenomena appearing to the "Eye of the Spirit"—and the "Man of Light."

The Phenomena of Light

The section of Dāyah's *Mirṣād al-'ibād* devoted to the methodology of Sufism contains three chapters (17–19) on the nature and analysis of visionary apperception.¹⁶ In the first, Dāyah discusses the differences between dreams and waking visions. In relation to the former, it is necessary to distinguish in the first place between dreams inspired by Satanic influences and dreams that are "sound," and, second, between those whose meaning is literal and those of which part or all needs interpretation. Where waking visions are concerned, Najm al-Dīn Dāyah shares the viewpoint of

exoteric Islam: these can only benefit the visionary if he be a monotheist in the strictest sense. "Monks, philosophers and Brahmins," as he terms them, may enjoy visions as a result of asceticism; but being veiled from the lights of the attributes of Divine Unity, they are unable to transcend the human state and are ultimately led to perdition.

For the true believer, visions possess three potential benefits. First, they show him his present spiritual state or degree, for whatever attribute prevails in his heart is invested by the faculty of spiritual imagination with a form which the vision manifests to him. Thus, for example, a leopard represents arrogance, a donkey lust, and a fox deceit, while visions of walking on air or witnessing angels or celestial lights betoken corresponding spiritual stations. The second benefit of such visions is that they engender in the initiate a "taste" for the pure, subtle realm of the Spirit and the angels by virtue of which he is increasingly induced to love and yearn for the inner rather than the outer, gross world. Third, such visions from the unseen are essential if the initiate is to attain to the total self-effacement (*fanā'*) which is the gateway to "perpetual abiding" (*baqā'*), the end and purpose of the path. It is conceivable that some could traverse certain earlier stages of the Way without direct guidance. By its very nature, however, the state of "non-being" (*fanā'*) cannot be gained by the seeker's own efforts: any striving on his part depends on, and hence affirms, his own existence. Therefore, the realization of *fanā'*—and hence of *baqā'* too—necessitates the seeing of luminous visions deriving from the sanctity of the shaykh, the Prophetic Presence, or the Divine Attributes pertaining to the Dominical Presence.

Nūr al-Dīn Isfarā'inī: Modes of Spiritual Communication

In all forms of esotericism, the maintenance of a close relationship and communication between teacher and disciple is a matter of vital importance. As far as the Kubrawīs of Central Asia are concerned, this is spelled out repeatedly in their writings. An interesting case is that of the exchange of letters, over a period of some thirty-five years, between two shaykhs of the Kubrawiyyah: Nūr al-Dīn 'Abd al-Rahmān Isfarā'inī Kasirqī (639/1242–717/1317) and his pupil and successor 'Alā' al-Dawlah Simnānī (d. 736/1336).¹⁷ Although Simnānī is the more renowned of the two men, the titles of 150 works by Isfarā'inī are known, and his stature is evident from his surviving letters, which often address complex questions of doctrine and hermeneutics, and from his *Kāshif al-asrār* (*Unveiler of Mysteries*), which contains an interpretation of many aspects of the path as well as reflections on his own spiritual life that are both eloquent and instructive.¹⁸

In addition to written and spoken communication, there is the possibility of suprasensory communication between master and disciple. Sufi literature abounds in examples of this, and Najm al-Dīn Kubrā in *Fawā'ih al-jalāl* (sec. 36) describes how he asked his shaykh 'Ammār al-Bidlīsī a question and received the latter's reply by this means. According to Majd al-Dīn Baghdādī, one of the categories of inspiration (*khātir*), between which one must learn to distinguish, is "the inspiration from the shaykh" (*Fawā'ih*, ed. Meier, *Anhang*, 288). Nūr al-Dīn Isfarā'inī, in reply to a question concerning three types of "indication" or "suggestion" (*ishārāt*) transmitted by the shaykh, states that the disciple can distinguish between the three (although they are fundamentally one and the same) once he can recognize those inspirations which derive from the lower soul or the Devil. When this point has been reached, the physical presence of the shaykh is no longer essential to the *murīd*, who thenceforth may continue to benefit from his guidance even if the shaykh be no longer materially alive, provided that he loves the shaykh and observes the conditions of discipleship.¹⁹ Guidance and inspiration may then come inwardly, from the *alter ego* or *shaykh al-ghayb*, as Najm al-Dīn Kubrā also taught.²⁰

The Bākhharzīs and the Spiritual Retreat

Two Kubrawīs who each had a significant role in the development of Sufi teachings were Sayf al-Dīn Bākhharzī and his grandson Abu'l-Mafākhir Yahyā. Sayf al-Dīn established a Kubrawī *khānqāh* at Bukhara, in which he witnessed the embracing of Islam by Berke, the Mongol Khan of the Golden Horde, one of the most powerful rulers of the time.²¹ In this way the Kubrawiyyah played its part in safeguarding the future position of Islam in that region. The eighth/fourteenth century Arab traveler Ibn Baṭṭūṭah visited the Kubrawī *khānqāh* at Urgench and also that of Bākhharzī, where he attended a *samā'* at which Persian and Turkish Sufi poems were sung.²²

Sayf al-Dīn is quoted extensively in Yahyā Bākhharzī's treatise on Sufi doctrine and methodology, of which only the second part, *Fuṣūṣ al-ādāb* (*Bezels of Refinement*), has been published.²³ This is a work of great interest, covering in detail many aspects of the path. Here we shall examine a single aspect of the *Fuṣūṣ al-ādāb*: the chapters on the practice of *khalwah* (Persian *khalwat*), or retreat. As already noted, *khalwah* occupies an important place in the methodology of the Kubrawiyyah and more than one member of the order devoted short treatises to the subject. Yahyā Bākhharzī's exposition, being full and fairly typical, serves as a convenient example to consider.

The section of *Fuṣūṣ al-ādāb* on *khalwah* is divided into three chapters

(*faṣṣ*). In the first, Bākharzī is chiefly concerned with citing justifications and precedents for the practice of retreat with reference to the Quran and the Prophetic Sunnah, as is normal in Sufi treatises. He also quotes from Sayf al-Dīn and other Sufi masters; and he explains why the traditional duration of the *khalwah* is forty days. We may single out for interest the exposition given of this claimed *ḥadīth* (the source is not given): "He [God] kneaded the clay of Adam with His Hands for forty mornings." Bākharzī explains that since the human spirit, or reality (*ḥaqīqat*), has been thoroughly mixed (the number forty is, of course, symbolic) with the four elements of corporeal existence, a like period is required to disengage the spirit from these veils. Until this has been accomplished, the seeker cannot undertake the spiritual journey to the Unseen.

Sayf al-Dīn's second chapter on *khalwah* discusses the spiritual benefits and revelations which the Sufi may experience. Attention is drawn to the dangers that may attend the *khalwah* if performed by one who is insufficiently prepared or instructed by his preceptor. Also emphasized is the importance of observing scrupulously the prescriptions of worship and other acts prescribed by the *Sharī'ah*.

The third and final chapter is entitled "On entry upon forty-day retreat, its nature, and the method of ascetic rigor and spiritual striving." Bākharzī enumerates and expounds the ten principles taught by Najm al-Dīn Kubrā. He also discusses in detail such questions as the following: the importance of offering the ritual prayer regularly and in congregation even during the retreat; the five categories of thought or inspiration (*khāṭir*); and the extent and method of reducing the consumption of food. Unusually, Bākharzī deems it permissible for less-experienced disciples to interrupt from time to time their invocation, normally constant, of the formula *Lā ilāha illa 'Llāh* ("No god but God"). At intervals they may perform other acts of worship such as reciting the Quran; they may also remain bowing or in prostration for an hour or two at a time while performing supererogatory prayers in the retreat. The *khalwah* is but one of many facets of Sufi methodology treated in Bākharzī's manual.

'Alā' al-Dawlah Simnānī: Life, Work, Doctrine

Reference has already been made to 'Alā' al-Dawlah Simnānī as the disciple of Nūr al-Dīn Isfarā'inī. But Simnānī is himself one of the foremost figures in the history of the Kubrawiyyah and indeed in Persian Sufism. Born in 659/1261 at Simnan, some distance to the east of Tehran, he served Arghūn, the Mongol Īl-khān of Iran, for twelve years. Discussions with Buddhist

priests of the court of Arghūn led Simnānī to an interest in mysticism. According to his own account, he learned through spiritual visions that the Buddhists were unable to attain the ultimate goal because they lacked the essential doctrinal framework of unity, that is, the religion of Islam.²⁴ Having finally extricated himself from the court, Simnānī went to seek guidance from the Sufis and thereafter devoted himself to the Way. As we have seen, he found a master who was expert in the interpretation of visions. After receiving investiture as shaykh from Nūr al-Dīn Isfarā'inī in 689/1290, he established near Simnan a *khānqāh* named Ṣūfī-ābād-i Khudādād ("God-given Sufi center"); here many followers gathered about him until his death in 736/1336.

'Alā' al-Dawlah left behind a sizable corpus of writings, of which only three can be mentioned here, as well as a very beautiful *Dīwān* or collection of lyric poems. *Chihil majlis* (*Forty Gatherings*) contains an eyewitness account of forty discourses of Simnānī on aspects of Sufism; the teachings are leavened and illustrated with many anecdotes of the spiritual life of 'Alā' al-Dawlah and some of his predecessors. The same applies also to *al-'Urwah li-ahl al-khalwah wa'l-jalwah* (*The Bond concerning the People of Spiritual Retreat and Spiritual Manifestation*), a lengthy treatise of which two versions exist, in Persian and in Arabic.

The most original feature of 'Alā' al-Dawlah's work is his commentary on the Quran, which is highly esoteric. Nevertheless, his strictly orthodox attitude on matters relating to the transcendence of God calls for mention. While on a journey, he took exception to some doctrines asserted by Ḥājji Hasan Āmulī, decided him to be a *kāfir* and almost succeeded in having the man killed. Simnānī also criticized some facets of Ibn 'Arabī's "unitarian" doctrine of *waḥdat al-wujūd*.²⁵ The critique of the *Shaykh al-Akbar* by Ahmad Sirhindī of the Naqshbandī Order, who some three hundred years after Simnānī posited the alternative doctrine of *waḥdat al-shuhūd* ("unity of consciousness"), seems to have been based partly on Simnānī's views.²⁶ Yet the extent and significance of Simnānī's strictures should not be exaggerated; in his *Chihil majlis* he quotes the dictum of Sa'd al-Dīn Hamūyah, a fellow Kubrawī shaykh, that Ibn 'Arabī was "a boundless ocean."

Simnānī, *Tafsīr*, and "The Prophets of Your Being"

The most important part of Simnānī's literary and doctrinal legacy is contained in his esoteric commentary on the Quran. Simnānī not only completed the commentary begun as *'Ayn al-hayāh* (*Fountain of Life*) by Najm al-Dīn Kubrā and later continued down to sura LI under the title *Bahr*

al-haqā'iq (*The Ocean of Divine Realities*) by Najm al-Dīn Dāyah Rāzī (see above); he also further elaborated certain of the doctrines formulated by those masters. Once again, it was H. Corbin who analyzed the characteristics of 'Alā' al-Dawlah's Quranic *ta'wīl* and their relation to earlier Kubrawī teachings about photisms, their link with the stations of the path to God, and the "Man of Light." The starting point of Simnānī's approach to *tafsīr* is that all events and objects of perception in the outer world have their correspondences in the inner. Time unfolds in two modes: time without (*zamān āfāqī*) and time within the soul (*zamān anfusī*). Every individual's knowledge and understanding of Reality depend, axiomatically, on his or her state of inward being, and vice versa. The noble Quran, the Divine Word, possesses seven esoteric meanings. Those who deny the outward meanings, relating to the domain of human events, are characterized by Simnānī as *bātinīs* (heretical esoterists); those who deny the inner meanings, relating to the celestial inner world, are negators of truth and are obscurantist fools; only those who embrace both the inner and outer are Muslims in the true sense.

According to Simnānī, the Quranic Text possesses seven levels of esoteric meaning, each corresponding to one of the subtle centers of light (*latīfah*). The reader will recall that these are organs of suprasensory perception which are dormant until activity is engendered by the practices of the Sufi path. Each represents a stage in the seeker's progress toward realization and may be accompanied (as we have seen in the work of Najm al-Dīn Kubrā) by visions of colored lights. Furthermore, Simnānī teaches that each of these suprasensory faculties also corresponds to the mysterious reality (*ḥaqīqah*) of one of the prophets. 'Alā' al-Dawlah's prophetology in some respects recalls that of Ibn 'Arabī, whose *Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam* (*Bezels of Wisdom*) interprets many Quranic verses in such wise as to relate some twenty-seven prophets to specific aspects of the Divine Word or Wisdom. For Simnānī, the Quranic accounts of the prophets are to be interpreted both literally and also, especially, on the level of "inward time." Macrocosmically, the seven subtle organs and their associated prophets correspond to the seven hierarchical domains of being as classically schematized by Islamic cosmology. These are, in ascending order, the World of Nature (*tabī'ah*), Forms (*suwar*), Inner Meaning or Perception (*ma'nā*), the Angels and Imagination (*mala-kūt*), the Dominion or Supraformal (*jabarūt*), the Divine Being (*lāhūt*), and the Divine Essence (*ḥāhūt*). This theory is elaborated in great detail; what follows is no more than a short synopsis.

The first and lowest of the organs of suprasensory perception is termed the *latīfah qālbiyyah* (subtle center of the mold). It represents the genesis

within the spiritual wayfarer of a new body or mold (*qālib*), this being the "resurrection body" of Muslim eschatology whose nature is subtle. Because of its link with the creative process, this first subtle center is named "the Adam of your being" (*Ādam wujūdīk*). The color of the corresponding photism, or light apparition, is black shading into smoke-gray.

Next in ascending order comes the organ of the soul in its animative aspect (*latīfah nafsāniyyah*). In terms of the path, it represents the conflict between the spiritual and the passional elements of the individual like that of Noah and his defiantly disbelieving people. Hence this *latīfah* is "the Noah of your existence." It is heralded by a blue light-apparition.

Progress on the spiritual way potentiates the existence of a new self, a new and true identity. In the third stage, this identity is engendered in embryonic form, like a pearl within its shell, in the subtle organ of the heart (*latīfah qalbiyyah*). Because of the spiritual begetting which this *latīfah* betokens, it is termed "the Abraham of your existence." The photism is red in color.

In Sufi terminology the *sirr*, or secret, is a subtle faculty of supraconscious perception. It is the *sirr*, Simnānī teaches, that is the locus of intimate discourse with God (*munājāt*). As Moses is known to Muslims as *Kalīm Allāh* ("he who spoke with God"), this fourth *latīfah* represents "the Moses of your being." Its photism is white, which recalls the miraculous White Hand of Moses mentioned in the Quran.

The fifth subtle organ of perception relates to the Spirit (*rūḥ*). On account of its high rank, it is endowed with the kingly office of vicegerent (*khalīfah*) of God. The *latīfah rūḥiyyah* is "the David of your existence," and the associated photisms are yellow.

Higher still is the *latīfah khaṣiyyah*: the subtle body of the *khaṣī*, or arcane mystery, by which Simnānī understands the faculty whereby the aid of the Holy Spirit (*rūḥ al-quds*) is rendered to those approaching the degree of *nabī*, or divinely inspired prophet. This represents "the Jesus of your existence." Simnānī points to a peril that attends this stage of the path. He warns that the Muslim seeker may misunderstand his *fanā'* (effacement of individuality) as complete identity with the Godhead, while Christians, conversely, take God Himself as having fallen into the human condition. The perceptions of celestial light associated with the *khaṣī* are a luminous black, entirely distinct from the ordinary black which is the absence of light. The nature of this luminous blackness is also described by Najm al-Dīn Dāyah Rāzī, in *Mirṣād al-'ibād*, and by Maḥmūd Shabistarī, author of the famous Persian metaphysical poem *Gulshan-i rāz* (*The Garden of Divine Mysteries*); these two, however, ascribe it to the final rather than the penultimate stage of the Sufi path.²⁷

The seventh and highest suprasensory organ is the *latīfah ḥaqīqiyyah* (the

subtle body of the truth). This is the seeker's True Self (*anā'iyyah*), mysteriously not other than the Divine Self, which began to form within the matrix of the Abrahamic third *latīfah*, that of the heart. The Blessed Prophet Muḥammad, descendant of Abraham both physically and spiritually (as *ḥanīf* and *muslim*, according to the Quran) represents pure, primeval religion. The *latīfah ḥaqqīyah*, then, is "the Muḥammad of your existence"; its photism, says Simnānī, is an effulgent emerald green in color.

Regarding the hermeneutics (*ta'wīl*) of the Sacred Book, Simnānī exhorts the Kubrawī Sufi to interpret and meditate on each Quranic allusion to one of the seven prophets in question by having recourse to the corresponding *latīfah*. For example, he links the relation between the third and seventh subtle centers, those of Abraham and Muḥammad, to two verses: III, 61 and IV, 124.

The foregoing represents no more than a bare outline of the highly complex and articulated theories of 'Alā' al-Dawlah Simnānī. It may, nonetheless, serve to indicate the importance of this Kubrawī shaykh's contribution to Sufi metaphysical thought and methodology.²⁸

Sa'd al-Dīn Ḥamūyah

At this point we must move backward in time in order to discuss one more Kubrawī shaykh who was the direct disciple of Najm al-Dīn Kubrā. Sa'd al-Dīn Ḥamūyah, or Hammū'ī, is cited quite frequently in Sufi literature but has received less attention from scholars than his stature seems to warrant, and his work remains largely unpublished. Ḥamūyah and his rather better-known disciple 'Azīz al-Dīn Nasafī are two of the most illustrious Kubrawī shaykhs. Not the least interesting aspect is that both were Imami Shī'ites.

Sa'd al-Dīn was born in 587/1191. During his youth, he lived for a time near Damascus, where he enjoyed discussions with Sadr al-Dīn Qūnawī, who was to become the most outstanding pupil and interpreter of Muḥyī al-Dīn ibn 'Arabī. It is not clear if Sa'd al-Dīn actually met Ibn 'Arabī, his high opinion of whom was noted above. At the age of thirty, Ḥamūyah received authorization from Kubrā to take disciples of his own. His *khānqāh* at Bahrabad, in northeastern Iran, became the center of one of the most influential branches of the Kubrawiyyah, remaining so for some time after his death in 650/1252-53. When the Īl-khān Ghāzān Khān, son of Arghūn, announced his conversion to Islam in 694/1295, Ḥamūyah's son Ṣadr al-Dīn Ibrāhīm was summoned to the Alburz mountains in order to act as witness.²⁹

Ḥamūyah composed numerous works, chiefly in Arabic, including verse (some quatrains and ghazals are extant); they are particularly difficult to

understand fully because of the variety of allusions and subtleties they contain.³⁰ His surviving writings, as well as the evidence of Nasafī and others, show Sa'd al-Dīn to have specialized in expounding the theoretical principles of the Way and of Imami Shī'ah philosophical cosmology including the doctrines regarding *walāyah*, the Imams' function of extending the cycle of the prophethood of Muḥammad. Some elements of Ḥamūyah's thought are known to us from citations in the works of Nasafī. An important element in Sa'd al-Dīn Ḥamūyah's viewpoint is his close devotion to the Hidden Imam. We may also mention his interest in the mysterious science of the letters of the alphabet and in symbolic diagrams.

'Azīz al-Dīn Nasafī: Shī'ism and "The Perfect Man"

All the Kubrawī masters devoted attention to the actual technique of *dhikr* in addition to its doctrines. An example of the technical instructions is the following, from the sixth treatise in 'Azīz al-Dīn Nasafī's *Insān-i kāmil*, on *dhikr* in retreat:

Know that invocation (*dhikr*) represents for the traveler on the Path what milk does for any infant. The wayfarer must have received his invocation by direct instruction (*talqīm*) from the shaykh . . . he must commence by purifying himself and performing the prayer of thanks after the minor ablution. He should then sit down facing the *qiblah*. Some say that one should sit down cross-legged, since that is more comfortable; others, that one should kneel as in the ritual prayer, this being closer to respectful comportment [before God]. Our Shaykh used to sit cross-legged, as did his companions. Whilst invoking, the disciple must close his eyes tightly. During the early years [of discipleship] he should recite the *dhikr* aloud, but once the *dhikr* has passed beyond his tongue and established itself inwardly, so that the heart itself begins to invoke, it is fitting for him to recite it softly. It takes a long time for the *dhikr* to establish itself inwardly and for the heart to start invoking. As already stated, he must strive to be aware whilst invoking, and practise the negation and affirmation according to the degree of his knowledge. For his invocation he must prefer the formula *lā ilāha illa 'Llāh* ("No god but God"), and each time that he says "*illa 'Llāh*" he must strike with the [initial] *alif* of *illā* the flesh on his left side with sufficient force to cause pain.³¹

Nasafī then explains that during prolonged *dhikr* in *khalwah* the disciple will lose his voice and suffer pain. After some days, though, his voice will return and the pain subside. This indicates that the *dhikr* is becoming interiorized as desired. The real expert can tell immediately on hearing a man's invocation whether the heart itself has begun to invoke.

The Kubrawīs in India: Sayyid 'Alī Hamadānī, His Successors, and the Firdawsiyyah

The first offshoot of the Kubrawiyyah Order to reach India was known as the Firdawsiyyah. One of the successors of Sayf al-Dīn Bākhazī (see above) was Badr al-Dīn Samarqandī. It was his successor, Najīb al-Dīn Muḥammad, who migrated to Delhi, where he died ca. 699/1300. The best-known figure to emerge from the Firdawsiyyah was Ahmad Yahyā Manērī (d. 772/1371), whose Sufi letters circulated widely.³²

More significant for the destiny of Sufism—indeed of Islam—in northern India was the advent of Sayyid 'Alī Hamadānī. Born at Hamadan, western Persia, in 714/1314, 'Alī Hamadānī was descended from Zayn al-'Ābidīn, the Fourth Imam of the Shī'ah, and was the disciple of two *khalīfahs* of 'Alā' al-Dawlah Simnānī. At the age of twelve he became a Sufi and thenceforth spent much of his life traveling, until at length in about 782/1380 he arrived in Kashmir. For some six years he propagated Islam and the Kubrawī Way to great effect in Kashmir and in neighboring Badakhshan, accumulating a large following.

Sayyid 'Alī Hamadānī called himself "a second 'Alī" and has been described as a Shī'ite. In fact, however, the Hamadāniyyah Order, as the Kashmirī Kubrawīs came to be known, remains Sunni to this day. Sayyid 'Alī Hamadānī died in 786/1385 while on his way back to Persia via Afghanistan. An account of his life was written by one of his disciples, Nūr al-Dīn Badakhshī.³³

Later History of the Kubrawiyyah

The Hamadāniyyah line founded by Sayyid 'Alī also had lasting offshoots of Shī'ite persuasion. Following the murder of Hamadānī's successor Ishāq Khuttalānī (ca. 826/1423), the succession was disputed between Ishāq's nominee, Muḥammad Nūrbakhsh and 'Abd Allāh Barzishābādī. Both branches flourished in Persia: the Nūrbakhshiyyah lasted into the Safavid period, while the Barzishābādī faction, also known at one time as the Ightishāshiyyah, or "rebels," developed into the Dhahabiyyah Order. The reason for this nomenclature is unknown. Although the Dhahabiyyah was described by an early thirteenth/nineteenth-century traveler as being in decline, it is still in existence; its center is Shiraz, and other *khānqāhs* are located at Tehran and Tabriz. There are two branches, associated respectively with two twentieth-century shaykhs: Sayyid Muḥammad Riḍā Āqā

Sharīfī Majd al-Ashrāf, and Wahīd al-Awliyā³⁴, and there are still many active members of the order, especially in Shiraz, where they have produced a large number of works during the past few decades.

Of the later history of the Kubrawiyyah in Central Asia we know rather little.³⁵ The order remained active at Saktari, not far from Bukhara, at least until the early eleventh/seventeenth century. Remarkably, an offshoot is known to have established itself for a time in eastern or Chinese Turkistan.³⁶ It is probable that the Kubrawiyyah was largely supplanted, in the course of the ninth/fifteenth century, by the Naqshbandiyyah, which at that time became enormously influential in the western regions of Central Asia and remains a force to be reckoned with even in the Soviet period.

Despite the vicissitudes of history, recent studies by Soviet scholars, to whose sponsors the continuing vigor of Sufism in Central Asia is a matter of some concern and perplexity, show that the Kubrawī Order is far from dead.³⁷ The spiritual and intellectual heritage of Najm al-Dīn Kubrā and the Central Asian school lives on elsewhere, in treatises and in the perpetual life of the Sufis.

Notes

1. *Fawā'ih al-jamāl wa farwātiḥ al-jalāl*, ed. F. Meier (Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner, 1957) par. 107.
2. For full details of the Kubrawiyyah genealogy, see R. Gramlich, *Die schiitischen Derwischorden Persiens: Erster Teil: Die Affiliationen* (Wiesbaden: Abhandlungen für die Kunde des Morgenlandes, 1965).
3. Listed by F. Meier in his introduction to *Fawā'ih*, 248.
4. Text published with several others in a critical edition by M. Molé under the title: "Traité mineurs de Naḡm al-Dīn Kubrā," *Annales islamologiques*, 4 (Cairo: Institut Français d'Archéologie Orientale, 1963) 1-78.
5. H. Corbin, *L'Homme de lumière dans le soufisme iranien* (Paris: Présence, 1984; Eng. trans. by N. Pearson: *The Man of Light in Iranian Sufism* [Boulder: Shambhala, 1978]).
6. The wording of several other Quranic verses is almost identical.
7. See Corbin, *Man of Light*, 89-92.
8. *Nafahāt al-uns*, ed. M. Tawhīdī-pūr (Tehran: Kitābfurūshī-yi Sa'dī, 1336/1957) 424-28.
9. See C. Tortel's introduction to her French translation of *Asrār-nāmāh: Le Livre des secrets* (Paris: Deux Océans, 1985) 15-21.
10. *Ma'arīf: majmū'a-yi mawā'iz wa suḥbanān-i... Bahā' al-Dīn Walad*, ed. B. Furūzānfar (2 vols.; 2nd ed.; Tehran: Ṭahūrī Bookshop, 1352/1973).
11. Edited with a study by Muḥammad Amīn Riyāhī (Tehran: Bungāh-i Tarjamah wa Nashr-i Kitāb, 1352/1973).
12. *Marmūzāt-i asadī dar mazmūrāt-i dā'ūdī*, ed. M. R. Shafī'ī (Tehran: McGill University Institute of Islamic Studies, Tehran Branch, 1352/1973).
13. For a fuller description and analysis, see the introduction and translation by H. Algar of this work entitled, *The Path of God's Bondsmen from Origin to Return* (Delmar, NY: Caravan Books, 1983).

14. See, e.g., Quran LXIX, 21.
15. Referring to the infusion into Adam of the Divine Spirit (Quran XV, 29).
16. *Mirṣād*, ed. Riyāhī, 299–329.
17. *Mukātabāt-i 'Abd al-Rahmān Isfarāyīnī bā 'Alā' al-Dawla-yi Simnānī* (Correspondence spirituelle échangée entre Nuroddīn Esfarāyēnī et son disciple 'Alāoddawleh Semnānī), ed. H. Landolt (Tehran and Paris: A. Maisonneuve, 1972).
18. *Kāshif al-asrār*, ed. and French translation by H. Landolt: *Nuruddin Isfarayini: Le Révélateur des mystères* (Paris: Verdier, 1986).
19. *Rasā'il al-nūr*, in manuscript. See H. Landolt, introduction to *Mukātabāt*, 20–21.
20. See Landolt, introduction to *Mukātabāt*, 21.
21. Ibn Khaldūn, *Ibar* (Bulaq: Bulāq Press, 1837) 534; J. Richard, "La conversion de Berke et les débuts de l'Islamisation de la Horde d'Or," *Revue des études islamiques* 35 (1967) 173–79.
22. Ibn Baṭṭūṭah, *al-Rihlāh* (Cairo: Maṭba'ah Wādī al-Nīl, 1287/1870) 3:5–6.
23. *Awrād al-aḥbāb wa fuṣūṣ al-ādāb, jild-i duvvum: Fuṣūṣ al-ādāb*, ed. Īraj Afshār (Tehran, 1345/1967).
24. H. Landolt, "Simnānī on Waḥdat al-wujūd," introduction to *Mukātabāt*, 94.
25. Ibid.
26. J. S. Trimingham, *The Sufi Orders in Islam* (London: Oxford University Press, 1971) 95; see also K. Nizami, "The Naqshbandiyyah," chapter 8 in this volume.
27. H. Corbin, *Man of Light*, 126–28.
28. For a fuller account, see H. Corbin, *En Islam iranien* (Paris: Gallimard, 1972) 3:275–355.
29. Dawlatshāh Samarqandī, *Tadhkirat al-shu'arā'*, ed. E. G. Browne (London: Luzac, 1901) 213; Rashīd al-Dīn Faḍl Allāh, *Tārīkh-i ghāzānī*, ed. K. Jahn (Leiden: Brill, 1940) 79.
30. See Najīb Māyil Harawī's introduction to his edition of Ḥamūyah's *Miṣbāḥ al-taṣawwuf* (Tehran: Intishārāt-i Mawlā, 1362/1983) 36–37.
31. Nasafī, *Insān-i kāmīl*, ed. M. Molé (Tehran and Paris: A. Maisonneuve, 1341/1962) 106–10; see also Nasafī, *Le Livre de l'homme parfait*, trans. I. de Gastines (Paris: Fayard, 1984).
32. See Sharafuddin Manerī, *The Hundred Letters*, trans. P. Jackson (New York: Paulist Press, 1980).
33. Nūr al-Dīn Badakhshī, *Khulāṣat al-manāqib*, trans. J. K. Teufel as *Eine Lebensbeschreibung des Scheichs 'Alī-i Hamadānī* (Leiden: Brill, 1962).
34. Gramlich, *Schīitische Derwischorden*, 18–26.
35. For a summary of the available evidence on the later history of the Kubrawiyyah, see H. Algar's article on Kubrā in *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd ed.
36. Muḥammad Tawāḍu', *al-Ṣīn wa'l-islām* (Cairo, 1364/1945) 112.
37. E.g., G. P. Snegarev, *Relikty domusul'manskiikh verovanii i obriadov u Uzbekov Khorezma* (Moscow: U.S.S.R. Academy, 1969) 269, 433; S. M. Demidov, *Sufizm v Turkmenii: evolutsiia i perezhitki* (Ashkhabad, 1978) 32–38. See also A. Bennigsen and M. Broxup, *The Islamic Threat to the Soviet State* (London: Croom Helm, 1983) 76.

Rūmī and the Mawlawiyyah

WILLIAM C. CHITTICK

JALĀL AL-DĪN RŪMĪ, known in the East as Mawlānā ("our lord," from which is derived the word Mawlawī), was born on 6 Rabi' I 604/30 November 1207 and died on 5 Jumādā II 672/17 December 1273. No doubt the best known of the Sufi poets, he has inspired constant interest among Western scholars and seekers for over a hundred years. In the East his poetry has been popular at all levels of society wherever the Persian language has been known, from Turkey to India; his works have provided practical instruction for generations of Muslims at every level of spiritual aptitude; and the Mawlawī Sufi Order that he founded has played a major role in the religious and cultural life of Turkey from Ottoman times to the present. From his own lifetime on, superlatives have been heaped upon his person and poetry; here we can refrain from repeating these while attempting to summarize his historical setting and spiritual message.

The History of the Mawlawiyyah

Rūmī's life story has often been told and need not be discussed here in any detail. His father, Bahā' al-Dīn Walad (d. 628/1231), a well-known and learned divine residing in Balkh in present-day Afghanistan, preached to the faithful about the necessity of spiritual rejuvenation as the context for all moral action; at the same time he was a Sufi master, so he also trained a group of followers in the discipline of the spiritual path. His *Ma'ārif* (*Gnostic Sciences*), a collection of sermons and meditations on Quranic verses, combines the ethical tone of the preacher with the visionary imagery of the contemplative. In ca. 615/1218, with the Mongols gradually approaching Balkh, Bahā' Walad left for the pilgrimage to Mecca with his family and many followers; Balkh was destroyed in 617/1220. Bahā' Walad stayed for some time in Syria and then moved to Karaman in present-day Turkey,

where Jalāl al-Dīn was married, his wife giving birth to a son, Sulṭān Walad, in 623/1226. Bahā' Walad was soon invited by the Saljuq ruler, 'Alā' al-Dīn Kayqubād, to come to his capital at Konya, some sixty miles northwest of Karaman, and there he settled in about 627/1228. When Bahā' Walad died on 18 Rabī' II 628/23 February 1231, Jalāl al-Dīn was appointed to take over his official duties. At this point Rūmī was already learned in the sciences of his day, especially jurisprudence, theology, and Arabic and Persian literature, and he was thoroughly familiar with the Sufi ethical teachings constantly stressed in his father's writings. He also must have been well advanced on the path of realizing the inward significance of the outward forms of ritual and practice; but the sources suggest that he only began to dedicate himself to methodical Sufi training around the year 629/1232, when Burhān al-Dīn Muḥaqqiq Tirmidhī (d. 638/1240–41), a disciple of his father, came to Konya and undertook his spiritual instruction. Rūmī continued to fulfill the functions of a respected man of knowledge, wearing the clerical dress and ministering to the religious and spiritual needs of the populace for several years; but on 26 Jumādā II 642/29 November 1244—note that the exact date has been preserved—an event took place that was to transform him outwardly and inwardly: Shams al-Dīn of Tabriz came to Konya.

Shams-i Tabrīzī

Shams is certainly one of the most mysterious and enigmatic figures in Sufism; it is not without reason that Sulṭān Walad likens him to Khidr and Rūmī to Moses (*Walad-nāmah*, 41).¹ The recent publication of Shams's *Maqālāt* (*Discourses*), which were apparently noted down by someone close to both him and Rūmī, should put to rest speculation that Shams was some sort of supernatural apparition rather than a human being. Shams speaks of having seen and recognized Rūmī fifteen or sixteen years earlier in Syria when Rūmī had gone there to study (ca. 630–34/1233–37). He mentions a spiritual awakening he had experienced as a child that set him apart from others; when his father questioned him about his strange behavior, he compared himself to a duckling hatched among chickens. "So, father, I see the ocean: It has become my mount; it is my homeland and spiritual state. If you belong to me or I to you, then come into the ocean; otherwise, stay with the chickens" (*Maqālāt*, 78).² Of his father he could say, "He was a good man and had a certain nobility . . . , but he was not a lover of God. A good man is one thing, a lover something else" (*Maqālāt*, 124).

According to the traditional accounts, and as Shams himself indicates, he was directed to Rūmī through a dream. It is said that Rūmī was aware of

his coming and went out to meet him; they sat opposite each other in front of a shop for some time without speaking. Finally Shams asked Rūmī a question about the comparative stations of the Prophet and Bāyazīd Bastāmī, and Rūmī answered by explaining the incomparable superiority of the former. Then they embraced and "mixed like milk and sugar." For six months they were inseparable, and Rūmī's way of life changed completely; the transformation of the great divine was noted by the whole city, especially when he abandoned his clerical garb, ceased teaching and delivering sermons, and began to attend regular sessions of *samā'*. Sulṭān Walad says that when Shams invited Mawlānā Jalāl al-Dīn to participate in a special form of *samā'*, "Mawlānā took it as his rite (*madhhab*) and orthodoxy (*ra'y-i durust*)—his heart blossomed into a hundred gardens" (*Walad-nāmah*, 17).

Rūmī himself alludes to the change that he underwent in such verses as the following:

My hand always used to hold a Quran, but now it holds Love's flagon.
My mouth was filled with glorification, but now it recites only poetry and songs. (D 24875–76)

Rūmī's total devotion to Shams incited the jealousy of some of his followers; the unfriendly atmosphere they created made Shams leave Konya after a stay of about sixteen months. In his sorrow, Rūmī cut himself off from practically everyone; soon his disciples realized that they were even more deprived of his presence than before. When a letter came from Shams in Syria, Rūmī sent him a number of ghazals, describing his state in Shams's absence:

Without your presence, *samā'* is forbidden; like Satan, revelry is accursed.
I wrote not a single ghazal without you; when your message arrived,
The pleasure of hearing (*samā'*) it brought five or six into verse. (D 18457–59)

Rūmī sent Sulṭān Walad after Shams, who this time remained in Konya until 645/1247–48, when he disappeared. According to one of the earliest accounts, now accepted by many scholars, he was murdered by jealous disciples. The involvement of Rūmī's son, 'Alā' al-Dīn, in the plot would explain the coldness of his father's relationship with him and the fact that Rūmī refused to attend his funeral when he died in 658/1260. But Rūmī exhibited no signs that he thought Shams was dead, nor did he withdraw into himself as he had at Shams's first disappearance. Instead he devoted himself to *samā'* and to singing songs of heartache and separation. Still hoping to find Shams, on two occasions he went to Damascus looking for him. During his second trip, at least two years after Shams's disappearance, he

came to the conclusion that Shams would only be found within himself. In the words of Sulṭān Walad,

He said, "Though in body I am far from him, without body and spirit we two are one light. . . .

Since I am he and he is I, why do I seek? We are one—now I will sing of myself" (*Walad-nāmāh*, 60–61)

Many of Rūmī's own verses make the same identification; his constant praise of Shams must be viewed as praise of his own Self.

Shams of Tabrīz is in fact a pretext—it is I who display the beauty of God's Gentleness, I.

To cover up, I say to the people, "He is a noble king, I am but a beggar. . . ."

I am obliterated in Shams's beauty—in this obliteration, there is neither he nor I. (D 16532–35)

What manner of person was Shams? This question was already being asked by his contemporaries, and in a sense one could say that Rūmī devotes thousands of verses to answering it, though he usually keeps in view the otherworldly side of Shams's nature. Shams himself was well aware that most people considered his appearance and manner strange or even outrageous.

These people are justified in being unfamiliar with my way of talking. All my words come in the mode of Grandeur (*kibriyā*)—they all appear as baseless claims. The Quran and Muḥammad's words come in the mode of need (*niyāz*), so they all appear as meaning (*ma'nā*). Hence people hear words from me that are not in the mode of seeking or need—my words are so high that when you look up, your hat falls off. (*Maqālāt*, 147).

Remarks like the following must have scandalized the more sober members of Rūmī's entourage:

I speak two kinds of words: dissimulation (*nifāq*) and truth (*rāstī*). In the case of my dissimulation, the souls and spirits of all the saints hope to meet and sit with me; but as for that which is true and without dissimulation—the spirits of the prophets wish that they might have lived during my time to share my companionship (*subbat*) and listen to my words. (*Maqālāt*, 108)

Shams shows no surprise at the effect his presence had on Rūmī: "The sign that a person has attained to companionship with me is that companionship with others becomes cold and bitter for him—not such that he continues their companionship in spite of its having become cold, but such that he is no longer able to bear it" (*Maqālāt*, 75). Shams was fully aware of Rūmī's spiritual stature and found it natural that Rūmī alone should realize his true worth: "In this world I have nothing to do with the common people

(*'awāmm*)—I have not come for their sake. I take the pulse of those who guide the world to God" (*Maqālāt*, 84).

He explains his relationship with Rūmī in a parable:

A merchant had fifty agents who traveled in every direction on land and sea and traded with his property. But he set out in search of a pearl, knowing that there was a certain pearl diver. He passed by the diver, and then the diver came after him. The nature of that pearl was hidden between the merchant and the diver. The merchant had earlier seen a dream concerning the pearl, and he trusted his dream, like Joseph. . . . Today that diver is Mawlānā, the merchant is myself, and the pearl is between us. (*Maqālāt*, 119)

Prefiguring many verses of the *Diwān* named after him, Shams compares himself and Rūmī to the sun and the moon:

Mawlānā is the moonlight; eyes cannot reach the sun of my existence, except by means of the moon. The sun is so bright and radiant that eyes cannot bear to look at its light, nor can the moon reach the sun, unless the sun reaches the moon. "Eyes cannot embrace Him, but He embraces the eyes" (Quran VI, 153). (*Maqālāt*, 120)

It is clear from certain of Shams's remarks quoted above and from other passages in his *Maqālāt* that he made no claim to be Rūmī's spiritual guide in the usual sense of the word—Rūmī was already a great pearl diver when Shams set out to meet him. In fact, Shams states explicitly that there was no master-disciple relationship in either direction: "When I came to Mawlānā, the first condition was that I should not come as a shaykh. God has not yet brought to earth the man that can act as Mawlānā's shaykh. Nor am I someone who can be a disciple—I have passed beyond that stage" (*Maqālāt*, 33). It is also true that Rūmī influenced Shams in ways similar to Shams's influence on him: "I speak well and talk sweetly, inwardly I am bright and radiant. I was water, seething and turning in upon myself and beginning to stink, until Mawlānā's existence struck upon me—then that water began to flow and it keeps on flowing, sweet, fresh, and pleasant" (*Maqālāt*, 245–46).

Whatever the secret of Shams's existence, there can be no doubt that one of the happy consequences of his meeting with Rūmī was the latter's incredible outpouring of poetry. Rūmī's *Diwān-i Shams-i Tabrīzī*, containing his collected ghazals and other miscellaneous verses, comprises some forty thousand lines, and his *Mathnawī*—called by Jāmī the Quran in the Persian language—includes about twenty-five thousand verses more. The *Diwān* consists mainly of love poetry, celebrating the joys of union with the Beloved and the agonies of separation from Him. In general, the ghazals average eight to ten lines and represent the spontaneous expression of

particular spiritual states; they were often composed while Rūmī was participating in the *samāʿ* and are usually appropriate for musical accompaniment. In contrast, the *Mathnawī* consists of a single poem in six books written over a period of some sixteen years; it contains over three hundred long and short anecdotes and stories drawn from a wide variety of sources and retold to illustrate various dimensions of the spiritual life. As in the *Diwān*, love remains the central theme, but the *Mathnawī* was written with the conscious intention of elucidating "the roots of the roots of the roots of religion"—the spiritual essence of Islam—in relatively didactic language. Since it is designed to guide disciples and lovers of God on the spiritual path, it differs in style from the ghazals of the *Diwān*, which are largely extemporaneous expressions of spiritual perceptions. The poems in the *Diwān* pertain to all periods of Rūmī's spiritual unfolding after the coming of Shams, whereas the *Mathnawī* appears as the intentional testament of the saint who has reached the highest stages of human perfection and has returned to this world to guide others to God.

Rūmī has also left three relatively short prose works. *Fihī mā fihī* (translated into English as *Discourses*) covers many of the same themes as the *Mathnawī*. *Majālis-i sabʿah* (*Seven Sermons*) was apparently written down long before the coming of Shams; the sermons are mystical in tone, but have a strong moralistic and ethical emphasis, like Bahāʾ Walad's *Maʿārif*. Finally, about 150 of Rūmī's letters have been preserved; many of these were written to high officials on behalf of disciples or friends looking for jobs, redress of some grievance, or various other favors. In general the letters are interesting for the light they throw on the social role that the head of a great Sufi order had to play.

Rūmī's Followers

Two of Rūmī's companions deserve special mention. Shaykh Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn Zarkūb (d. 657/1258) was a goldsmith without formal education who had been Muḥaqqiq Tirmidhī's disciple and whose daughter became the wife of Sulṭān Walad. Two or three years after Shams's disappearance, Shaykh Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn became Rūmī's closest companion and remained so until his death. He is the object of praise of over fifty of Rūmī's ghazals. Ḥusām al-Dīn Chalabī (d. 683/1284–85) became Rūmī's closest companion after Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn's death. He had been a favorite disciple for many years, and when Shams was living in Konya he had been given the important duty of looking after his affairs and acting as an intermediary between him and various people who wanted to meet him. A dated ghazal (D 1839) is dedicated to him already in Dhu'l-qa'dah 654/November 1256, and modern scholars

have marshaled strong evidence to show that the *Mathnawī*, which Rūmī dedicated and dictated to Ḥusām al-Dīn, was begun some eighteen months before Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn's death.

In 672/1273, when Rūmī was nearing the completion of the *Mathnawī*'s sixth book, which he had already announced would end the work, his health began to decline seriously, though his physicians were unable to diagnose any specific illness. He left the *Mathnawī* unfinished; one of his last ghazals, composed on his deathbed, begins with this line:

How should you know what kind of King is my inward companion? Look not at my yellow face, for I have legs of iron! (D 1426)

At Rūmī's death, Ḥusām al-Dīn was his caliph, that is, his highest ranking disciple, in charge of directing most of the affairs of the order. Nevertheless, Ḥusām al-Dīn came to Sulṭān Walad and asked him to take his father's place as the supreme spiritual guide. According to his own account, Sulṭān Walad replied as follows:

During my father's time, you were his caliph—no change can now be allowed.

You were the leader and I the follower; the king himself made this known to us.

You are our caliph from first to last, our leader and shaykh in the two worlds. (*Walad-nāmāh*, 123)

Ḥusām al-Dīn remained supreme master of the order until his death ten years later. The disciples then gathered around Sulṭān Walad and installed him in Ḥusām al-Dīn's place. He undertook a vigorous expansion of the order, sending caliphs throughout Anatolia. He also codified the characteristic Mawlawī rites and rules of dress and behavior. His *Diwān*, three *mathnawīs*, and collected "Discourses" cannot compare to the works of his father on any level, yet they provide important and straightforward clarifications of many of Rūmī's central teachings. Sulṭān Walad states that one of his purposes in beginning his first *mathnawī* (in 690/1291) was to tell of the spiritual stations and miraculous deeds of those who have lived "in our own times," just as his father's *Mathnawī* was concerned with the deeds of earlier generations. He also points out that Shams al-Dīn, Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn, and Ḥusām al-Dīn were not well known, but would become famous through his accounts. It is certainly true that Sulṭān Walad's works are one of the most important sources for the early history of the order, rivaled only by Sipah-sālār's *Risālah* and Aflākī's *Manāqib al-ʿārifīn* (both written in the years 718–19/1318–19).

Concerning Sulṭān Walad, Rūmī said, "You are the closest of mankind to me in physical constitution and character (*khalqan wa khulqan*)" (*Walad-*

nāmah, 3), and people often mistook them for brothers. Indeed, perhaps Sultān Walad's most important contribution to the Mawlawiyyah was his transmission of the human qualities of his father: after Sultān Walad's death in 712/1312 three of his four sons ('Arif Chalabī, d. 719/1319; 'Ābid Chalabī, d. 729/1329; and Wājid Chalabī, d. 733/1333) followed him successively as masters of the order, and his daughter, Muṭahharah Khārūn, was the mother of another master. Except for two sons of 'Ābid Chalabī and Muṭahharah's son, all other masters of the order down to recent times have been descendants of 'Arif Chalabī (whose mother, in contrast to his siblings, was the daughter of Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn Zarkūb).

It would be impossible to provide even a brief outline of the subsequent expansion and influence of the Mawlawī Order here. Suffice it to say that the Mawlawīs played a major role in the history of the Ottoman Empire, spiritually, culturally, and also politically. The development of Turkish music is intimately connected with the Mawlawī "rites" (*ā'in*), and many of the greatest Turkish calligraphers have been members of the order. Turkish poetry owes a great deal, both stylistically and thematically, to Rūmī's Persian verse; a master like Mehmed Esad Ghālib (d. 1218/1799) can only be understood in the context of the *Mathnawī*. The political role of the order becomes especially apparent during the reign of Sultan Selim III (1789–1808), who was himself a Mawlawī dervish whose musical talents allowed him to compose an *ā'in*.

Rūmī's radiance was not held back by the boundaries of the Ottoman Empire. As A. Schimmel has amply demonstrated, to speak of his influence is to speak of the development of poetry in all major Islamic languages except Arabic and of the popular expansion of the Sufi orders.³ The vast majority of Muslims at all social and educational levels have always appreciated the beauty of poetry and its subsidiary arts, such as music and calligraphy. Wherever these have been valued from Turkey to India, Rūmī has been a central figure.

Rūmī's Sources

Schimmel has shown that a vast range of works are reflected in Rūmī's poetry and ideas, beginning with the Quran and the *Hadīth*;⁴ here it will be sufficient to allude to the influence of various earlier Sufis. Besides those figures who were so important in shaping all later formulations of Sufi teachings, such as al-Ghazzālī, it seems that two major strands of influence can be discerned: First, there are the great Sufi poets who preceded Rūmī, in particular Sanā'ī (d. 525/1130–31) and, to a lesser degree, 'Attār (d. ca. 618/1221). The former is often praised by Rūmī; Shams held that he

was "marvellously detached from self: his words are the words of God" (*Maqālāt*, 156).

The other major strand of influence is that of Rūmī's own immediate masters and companions, in particular his father, Bahā' Walad, and Shams-i Tabrizī, both of whose works influenced him in numerous specific instances, as the editors of the *Ma'ārif* and *Maqālāt* have shown. More importantly, these two masters prefigure in their own personalities two complementary dimensions of Rūmī's spirituality. Bahā' Walad's *Ma'ārif* is infused with the emphasis on love and beauty that characterizes Rūmī and the Mawlawiyyah in general; God's Attributes of Gentleness (*lutf*) and Beauty (*jamāl*) set the tone throughout. In contrast, Shams's *Maqālāt* are often marked by displays of Severity (*qabr*) and Majesty (*jalāl*). In one passage, Shams alludes to the fact that Mawlānā reveals God's Gentleness, while he himself displays both Gentleness and Severity (*Maqālāt*, 74). If it is true that Rūmī used to carry his father's *Ma'ārif* with him and study it constantly until Shams forbade him to read it, Shams's act may have symbolized his intention to strengthen within Rūmī the capacity to display the Attributes of Majesty and Severity. Here one should recall the close connection, obvious in Rūmī's teachings, between Severity and the pain and heartache of separation. Indeed, separation from Shams may have been necessary before Rūmī could realize this Attribute fully. Moreover, the many ghazals in which Rūmī displays the divine Majesty and Grandeur while speaking in the first person seem to pertain to the latest period in his life, when he had fully realized Shams al-Dīn—"religion's Sun"—within himself; it can rightly be said that in these ghazals Rūmī speaks from such a high vantage point that, looking up at him, "one's hat falls off." In brief, one might say that Bahā' Walad's influence on Rūmī was "feminine," whereas Shams's was "masculine"; Bahā' Walad was Rūmī's father "in form" (*dar sūrat*) but his mother "in meaning" (*dar ma'nā*), whereas Shams was his spiritual father.

Rūmī and Ibn 'Arabī

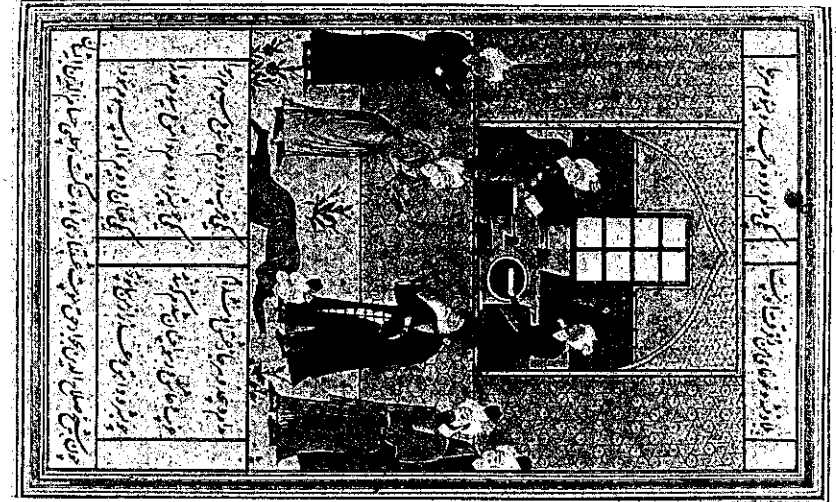
It has often been suggested or stated explicitly that Rūmī was influenced by Ibn 'Arabī and/or his followers, but this judgment has been based largely on speculation and can safely be rejected. It is true that Ṣadr al-Dīn al-Qūnawī (d. 673/1274), Ibn 'Arabī's son-in-law and foremost disciple, was one of Rūmī's close friends, but Rūmī was far too advanced spiritually to come under the influence of "friendship," even that of a great master. (Nor is there any sign that al-Qūnawī was influenced by Rūmī.) Sīpāhsālār reports that Rūmī became a "companion" of Ibn 'Arabī during the years Rūmī stayed in Damascus (ca. 630–34/1233–37), and it would indeed be strange if

there had been no contact whatsoever. But again, the question of influence must be discussed separately from that of contact or companionship. It is not without significance that certain passages in Rūmī's biographies and Shams's *Maqālāt* suggest that the Mawlawī shaykhs looked upon the systematized theosophy characteristic of Ibn 'Arabī and his followers with disdain; the differences in style are so consistent and deep that it would be inconceivable for these not to reflect a fundamental difference in perspective. The spiritual resources of Islam are certainly broad enough to embrace both of these oceans of spirituality, without excluding other possibilities as well.

Henry Corbin overstates his case when he says that "it would be quite superficial to dwell on the contrast between the two forms of spirituality cultivated by Mawlānā and Ibn 'Arabī."⁵ For those who look at Sufism from the perspective of the spiritual needs of the twentieth century, this judgment may be true, but profound differences remain in the texts; nor should one forget that the two forms of spirituality are, generally speaking, aimed providentially at two different types of mentality. Ibn 'Arabī's complicated theosophy, no doubt grounded in practice to the same extent as Rūmī's "religion of love," appealed primarily to those who had undergone the technical training of the Islamic sciences, especially theology and philosophy. It provided sophisticated answers to sophisticated questions. In contrast, Rūmī's spirituality attracted everyone who could appreciate beauty and music, whatever one's educational level. Rūmī employed the most ordinary phenomena and experiences of everyday life as imagery to explain the profoundest levels of metaphysics and spiritual psychology. He also employed a wide variety of technical terms, but these were drawn primarily from the language spoken by the people, not that of the philosophers and theologians. Hence the Mawlawī dervishes came from every level of society; they ranged from the most educated to the illiterate, the richest to the poorest, the governing elite to the street sweepers. Any Muslim with "taste" (*dharwq*) could follow Rūmī's way (although not necessarily understand the *Mathnawī*), but only a small minority would have the necessary specialized training to understand the doctrines of Islam as expounded by Ibn 'Arabī. An anecdote related to this author by the contemporary Iranian *hakīm* Sayyid Jalāl al-Dīn Āshtiyānī conveys the contrast between the two modes of expression succinctly: After listening to Rūmī explain a point of doctrine to his disciples, al-Qūnawī asked him, "How are you able to express such difficult and abstruse metaphysics in such simple language?" Rūmī replied, "How are you able to make such simple ideas sound so complicated?"

It must also be kept in mind that there could be no question of spiritual links between Rūmī and Ibn 'Arabī of the master-disciple kind, since two clear and distinct lines of transmission (*silsilah*) can be discerned. Hence, the

4. The Sufi master and poet Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī.



5. The meeting of Rūmī and Shams-i Tabrīzī.



problem comes down to one of doctrinal links, in the sense that Rūmī might have borrowed certain formulations from Ibn 'Arabī. Anyone who reads works by the two masters will see similarities, but these can be traced to sources earlier than Ibn 'Arabī. Nor is it true that because "references to the works of Ibn 'Arabī are frequent in the abundant commentaries on the *Mathnawī* produced in India and in Iran," it is therefore "necessary to study these commentaries if we wish to learn what Mawlānā's spirituality meant to his mystic following."⁶ During Rūmī's own lifetime and through the time of Sultān Walad, no reference was made to Ibn 'Arabī's teachings in order to clarify Rūmī's. Thus, for example, Aḥmad Rūmī's *Daqā'iq al-ḥaqā'iq* (written in 720/1320) explains in a relatively systematic manner many of Rūmī's important teachings; each of its eighty chapters is preceded by a quotation from the Quran or the *Hadīth*, illustrated by verses from Rūmī's *Mathnawī* or *Diwān* and amplified by the author's own poetry. Works such as this demonstrate that Rūmī's verses do not need to be explained through Ibn 'Arabī's terminology and ideas; Rūmī's works are in fact self-sufficient, especially when accompanied by the practices that went along with them. Moreover, if Rūmī were indeed a follower of Ibn 'Arabī, one would expect other followers of Ibn 'Arabī to quote his poetry in their works, since it is exquisitely suited to express many of their teachings. But, in fact, none of Ibn 'Arabī's immediate followers who wrote in Persian and quoted Persian verse (i.e., al-Qūnawī, 'Irāqī, Farghānī, and Jandī) ever quotes from Rūmī. At the very least this suggests that in their view Rūmī did not share their perspective.

Why, then, do Rūmī's commentators insist on interpreting his ideas in terms of Ibn 'Arabī's teachings? The major reason is that intellectual discourse had come to be dominated by Ibn 'Arabī's modes of expression. Thus, to "explain" Rūmī's views meant to translate a poetical idiom with its own characteristic imagery and technical terminology into a more intellectual mode of expression largely determined by the concepts and terms of Ibn 'Arabī's school. There is no fundamental incompatibility between the two modes of spirituality, but to translate one form of expression into another meant a dilution of the specific virtues and, in particular, the spontaneity of the former.

The mere fact that Rūmī's commentators refer to Ibn 'Arabī's teachings does not mean that all Rūmī's followers understood him in such terms. Most commentaries were written precisely by and for scholars trained in the Islamic sciences, that is, "intellectuals." But the vast majority of disciples in most orders, drawn as they were from every level of Islamic society, would have been satisfied with the poetry itself without feeling any need for "explanation." The beauty of the poetry when recited or sung was sufficient

"commentary" on its intellectual content. Even today when Sufi orders meet in places like Iran and listen to the recitation of the *Mathnawī*, every dervish appreciates the beauty of the poetry, which makes available the intellectual content in a direct manner, but few are interested in technical explanations of the intellectual bases of Rūmī's thought.

Finally, perhaps it still needs to be stressed that there is no evidence in Rūmī's works of influence by Ibn 'Arabī or al-Qūnawī. Even Henry Corbin, the outstanding proponent of harmony between the two modes of spirituality among those who have studied the texts, never claims any direct influence, since none of Ibn 'Arabī's original terminology or discussions is found in Rūmī's works.

The Religion of Love

When Ibn 'Arabī speaks of the "religion of love" in the famous poem from his *Tarjumān al-asrār*, he is alluding to the nonspecificity or "nonidentification" of the heart of the Perfect Man, who experiences continuous theophanies of the Divine Essence, theophanies that "never repeat themselves." Hence, his heart becomes "a receptacle for every form, a pasture for gazelles, a cloister for Christian monks." Once one has understood what this means in the context of Ibn 'Arabī's teachings, it would not be totally inaccurate to say that Rūmī is alluding to the same thing when he says, for example, that "the intellect is bewildered by the Religion of Love" (D 2610). But to consider the meaning of the term "religion of love" as identical in the two instances would be to ignore certain fundamental differences in perspective between the two schools. Thus, for Rūmī love, along with the beauty and joy that it implies, is the heart and marrow of religion, the central theme of all spirituality, whereas for Ibn 'Arabī, love is a possible mode of realizing the Nondelimited Truth. When reading Rūmī, one is constantly pulled toward the experience of love as the central reality beyond any possible conceptualization; when reading Ibn 'Arabī, one does not feel that Love is all-important. The emphasis is on the experience and comprehension of Ultimate Reality, but love is not necessarily the primary means to achieving this, while the theoretical description of that Reality and of the means to reaching It remains a central concern.

In no sense did Rūmī attempt to set down, in the manner of his friend al-Qūnawī, a metaphysical or theological system, or a comprehensive philosophy of the nature of existence. His aim is to tell of the wonders of love and to "open a door to the Unseen world for the creatures" (D 14324). Above all, he wants to ignite the fire of love in the heart of man: "The worst of all deaths is to live without love" (D 13297).

How long this talk, these figures of speech, these metaphors? I want burning, burning—accustom yourself to that burning.

Ignite the fire of love in your spirit and burn away all thoughts and concepts! (M II 1762–63)

The overwhelming impression that the reader receives from studying Rūmī's works is the necessity and urgency of following the spiritual life and abandoning oneself to the Divine Mercy. But this does not mean that no coherent "philosophy of existence" underlies his works. Quite the contrary: His clear perception of man's place in the universe helps make his message so persuasive.

Rūmī does not set out to discuss metaphysics, theology, cosmology, anthropology, or psychology, but his views on all these become clear while he sings the praises of Love; in retrospect numerous commentators have recognized a coherent world view underlying his poetry and have attempted to clarify it from their own perspectives. But in doing so they invariably throw water on the burning fire of his poetry.

The Quranic doctrine of *tawhīd* shapes everything that Rūmī says. As Schimmel remarks, "one may say without exaggeration that Rūmī's poetry is nothing but an attempt to speak of God's grandeur as it reveals itself in the different aspects of life."⁷ This, precisely, is the essence of *tawhīd*: to show that everything sings the praises of the One, since all multiplicity is ultimately reducible to Unity.

Rūmī's world view has been outlined in detail elsewhere;⁸ here one can only allude to a few of its distinguishing characteristics. Like other Sufis, Rūmī sees the universe as the theophany of God's Names and Attributes, while man or Adam, "the lord of 'He taught the Names'" (M I 1234), carries God's Trust because he is made in His image. The Divine Attributes can be divided into two categories, those of Mercy (*rahmat*) or Gentleness, and those of Wrath (*ghadab*) or Severity, though only the former is intrinsic to God's very Essence, since "My Mercy precedes My Wrath."

As theophanies of all the Names and Attributes, human beings embrace both Gentleness and Severity. In general, the prophets and saints maintain a perfect balance between the two Attributes, but since Gentleness or Mercy is in fact prior, it dominates over them. In contrast, God's Wrath dominates over the unbelievers. In the same way the angels are theophanies of Gentleness and Mercy, whereas the satans are theophanies of Severity and Wrath; microcosmically, the intellect (*'aql*) pertains to Gentleness, whereas the ego (*nafs*) manifests Severity. The ordinary human situation, as perceived by Rūmī, is for man to have faith in God and practice his religion, yet to be caught in the struggle between angel and devil, intellect and ego, since it is

not yet clear whether Mercy or Wrath will determine any particular individual's resting place in the next world, that is, whether he will enter paradise or hell. "The saints are waiting to bring the believers into their own houses and make them like themselves, while the satans are also waiting to drag them down toward themselves to 'the lowest of the low' (Quran XCV, 5)."⁹

The cosmic drama, at the center of which stands man, results from the manifestation of the Hidden Treasure: "I loved to be known, so I created the creatures." The Love and Mercy that lie at the base of the creative urge bring the universe into existence and determine its final end; Wrath comes into play only in subordination to Mercy and with Mercy in view. Thus Rūmī defends the function of Iblīs in the cosmic harmony and shows that evil is a necessary concomitant of the world's creation; but never does he claim that Iblīs is equal to Adam, hell to paradise, or the ego to the intellect, since Mercy and Gentleness remain forever the precedent Attributes.

Unique among the creatures, man is able to choose the path he is to follow in the unfolding of the primordial possibilities embraced by the Hidden Treasure. Rūmī's appeals to everyday experience provide some of the most convincing arguments in Islamic literature for man's free will and responsibility. Moreover, the overall thrust of his works—to encourage his fellow humans to enter the spiritual path—would be meaningless without human freedom. "Man is mounted upon the steed of 'We have honored Adam's children' (Quran XVII, 70): the reins of free will are in the hands of his discernment" (M III 3300).

Rūmī's view of man's relationship to God, discussed or alluded to in innumerable passages in his works, provides a comprehensive doctrine of the nature of existence. A second dimension of his teachings has to do with the path man must follow to attain spiritual perfection and actualize the form upon which he was originally created; here Rūmī describes the attributes and the practices—such as prayer, fasting, and the remembrance of God—of the spiritual warrior, who "cuts the throat of sensuality" (D 36120) and "rides his stallion joyfully into a sea of blood" (D 18700). Then a third major dimension of Rūmī's works describes in a vast range of imagery and symbolism the various degrees of spiritual development leading to the station where man may rightfully say with al-Hallāj, "I am the Real."

The One Beloved

While affirming that Love cannot be defined, Rūmī describes its qualities and attributes in a thousand images and anecdotes. In summarizing his words, one might say that Love is a divine power that brings the universe

into existence, motivates the activity of every creature, and wells up in the human heart to establish unity in the midst of multiplicity. Ultimately, Love is God as Creator, Sustainer, and Goal of the universe; it is the One Reality that reveals itself in infinite forms.

Intimately connected with Love is beauty or loveliness, that which is lovable. Probably no Sufi order emphasizes beauty in theory and in practice as much as the Mawlawiyyah. Certainly Sufis in general are the first to recall the Prophet's saying, "God is beautiful, and He loves beauty," but the Mawlawīs have been especially thorough in drawing all the consequences of this teaching for the spiritual life. In the context of Rūmī's teachings, "God is beautiful" means that "There is none beautiful but God"; true (*ḥaqīqī*) beauty belongs to Him alone, while the beauty of all other things is "derivative" or "metaphorical" (*majāzī*).

Love for God has struck fire in the spirit's bush, burning away all derivative realities. (D 36080)

Everything lovable derives its reality from the divine Beloved, the only reality that truly is; this is perhaps the central theme of Bahā' Walad's *Ma'ārif*. A typical passage speaks of God's Beauty as follows:

"Glory be to God!" means this: O God, how pure and holy Thou art! For every contour of the houris and the black-eyed beauties, the loveliness of all kinds of animals, the freshness and sparkle of all flowers, herbs, sweet waters, and blowing winds, all joys, all hopes, are spots on the face of Thy unique Beauty, dust and debris in Thy lane.¹⁰

Rūmī repeats his father's message in numerous verses, though his insistence that we derive the consequences for our spiritual lives is clearer and more compelling. The Way of Love is to discern the True Beloved from the false, to cut away everything illusory and evanescent with the sword of the *shahādah*—"no god but God"—and to turn totally toward the One Beloved.

Listen! Open a window toward Joseph, then behold a delightful spectacle! "To love God" is to open that window, for the Friend's Beauty brightens the breast.

Always look toward the face of the Beloved! This is in your own hands—listen to me, my friend!

Open the way into the depths of your own self! Banish any perception that thinks of "others"! (M VI 3095–98)

The lover discerns that there is only a single Beloved; "others" are veils over the Real.

Love is that flame which, when it blazes up, burns away everything except the Beloved.

It drives home the sword of "no god" to slay "other than God"... (M V 588–589).

The mistake of worldly people is not their love for things of this world but their inability to perceive that all things of this world are but shadows of the true Beloved.

The bird is flying on high, while its shadow runs across the ground, flying like a bird.

The fool hunts that shadow, running until he becomes exhausted, Not knowing that it is the reflection of the bird in the sky, unaware of the shadow's source. (M I 417–19)

Imperfect loves, loves for "other than God," will eventually disappoint the lover, since only God is real. Felicity lies in discerning this truth in the present life and attaching ourselves to the One Beloved here and now. But we will not find the Beloved in the world around us. This is the message of many anecdotes in the *Mathnawī*, such as the famous story of the Sufi who sat in a beautiful garden meditating, only to have a busybody interrupt and tell him to gaze upon the marks of God's Mercy in the garden.

The Sufi answered, "Mercy's marks are in the heart, O self-seeker! On the outside are only the marks of the marks." (M IV 1362)

Similarly, Rūmī begins a ghazal as follows:

Without thinking I mentioned the name of roses and gardens—that Rose-Faced Beauty came and slapped me on the mouth!

"I am the Sultan, I am the Spirit of all rosegardens. In the face of a Presence like Me, do you think of so-and-so?

You are My tambourine—do not let yourself be beaten by just anyone! You are My flute—beware, do not play just anyone's tune!" (D 21748–50)

Heartache and Joy

For the spiritual traveler, the goal is to reestablish the human connection with the Gentleness, Love, and Mercy that brought man into existence. Since "this world is the house of God's Severity" (M VI 1890), he must cling to the Gentleness that pertains to the other world. In cosmological terms, the contrast between the lower and the upper worlds, or material and spiritual existence, is expressed in such pairings as body and spirit, form and meaning, outward and inward, dust and air, foam and ocean; in general, all these pairs correspond to Severity and Gentleness ("in general," since Rūmī sometimes takes other relationships into account).

The cosmological relationship between Gentleness and Severity manifests itself spiritually and psychologically in the contrast between "union"

(*wiṣāl*) and "separation" (*firāq*). Nearness to God and union with Him result from Mercy and Gentleness, whereas distance and separation from Him are the consequence of Wrath. Spiritual perfection involves a harmony between these two Attributes, always with Mercy taking precedence. Initially man is caught in the "House of Severity" and seeks Gentleness:

His Mercy is prior to His Wrath. If you want spiritual priority, go, seek the prior Attribute. (M IV 3205)

But finally, when the traveler reaches the station of sanctity, he combines the two Attributes in a harmonious balance, since he has actualized the theomorphic form upon which he was created. Thus Rūmī speaks of the perfect guide on the path, the shaykh:

At one moment the wave of his Gentleness becomes your wing, at the next his Severity's fire carries you forward. (M IV 545)

In the process of attaining to spiritual perfection, the lover will traverse a path that carries him through alternating experiences of separation and union, or "contraction" (*qabd*) and "expansion" (*bast*). Rūmī's ghazals speak of various degrees of these experiences in a great variety of images, the most common being those of "derivative love" (the beautiful face, the tresses, the kiss), wine drinking (the cup, intoxication, sobriety), and the garden (flowers, spring, autumn).¹¹ The imagery is not chosen arbitrarily; rather, it grows up as it were "naturally" because of the possibilities and limitations of human language within the context of Islamic civilization and, more specifically, because the experiences themselves assume a particular imaginal form within the given context. Rūmī discusses the nature of "imagination" (*khayāl*) in great detail; here a single quotation must suffice:

First there were intoxication, loverhood, youth, and the like; then came luxuriant spring, and they all sat together.

They had no forms and then became manifested beautifully within forms—behold things of the imagination assuming form!

The heart is the antechamber of the eye: For certain everything that reaches the heart will enter into the eye and become a form. (D 21574–76)

Much of Rūmī's poetry must be understood as an attempt to render spiritual and "imaginal" perceptions intelligible to those who have not perceived them. His father before him had devoted a good portion of the *Ma'ārif* to the same task. For example, we read there as follows:

In my every part streams of light flow like molten gold. . . . All my thoughts and tastes come into existence from God and all have turned their faces toward Him. He is like a handsome king sitting in the midst of young brides: one nibbles on his back, another bites his shoulder, and still another presses

herself against him. Or [my thoughts are] like children who surround their young father like pearls and play with him; or they are like pigeons and sparrows circling the person who feeds them and landing upon him wherever they can. Just as all existents, like motes, turn round about God's Beauty, so my ideas and thoughts turn round about God.¹²

Rūmī's message is that all joy and all delight are found in God, and that God is to be found at this moment in the heart. The following ghazal, employing typical imagery, is perhaps more explicit than most:

Have you heard about the Emperor's edict? All the beauties are to come out from their veils.

His words were these: "This year I want sugar *very* cheap."

Wonderful year! Splendid, blessed day! Wonderful Emperor! Splendid, laughing fortune!

It is now forbidden to sit in the house, for the Emperor is strolling toward the square.

Come with us to the square and see a joyful banquet, manifest and hidden.

Tables have been set, abundant blessings spread out: halva and roasted fowl.

Serving boys stand like moons before the saki; minstrels play tunes sweeter than life.

But love for the King has delivered the spirits of the drunkards from saki and table.

You say, "Where could this be?" I answer: "Right there, at the very point where the thought of 'Where' arose." (D 1903)

But it is not easy to turn in upon oneself and establish contact with the innermost core of one's being. To do so, one must follow the discipline laid down by the prophets and saints. The Mawlawī path is grounded firmly in the *Sharī'ah* and the *sunnaḥ*, centering upon the remembrance (*dhikr*) of the Beloved through various outward and inward supports, ranging from prayer and fasting to music and dance. Discipline is central, for without the practice of religion one will never be able to leave the confines and limitations of one's own individuality and enter into the Divine Presence: "Since you are not a prophet, enter the Way!" (M II 3453).

Our distance from God stems from our own self-existence, our mistaken impression that we are somehow independent of our Source. The ego veils us from perceiving the spirit and what lies beyond; like Iblīs, we see only the outward side of things. We must actualize the inward angelic light known as the Intellect, which by its very nature is a "finder of God" (M III 3195). Then the ego, which is one in origin with Satan (M III 3197, 4053), can be overcome. At the same time, we need to avoid the calculating attitude of the "partial intellect" (*'aql-i juz'ī*), which is still veiled by the ego's clouds, and abandon ourselves to infinite Love. At the final stages of the Path,

"everything other than God"—even the Universal Intellect itself, since it too is a created reality—must be left behind.

Escape from the Ego

In the context of Rūmī's spiritual psychology, the life of the ego is the death of the spirit; union with the lower world is separation from God. Pain and heartache derive from our illusory selfhood and our distance from Self. To pass beyond Wrath and reach the Mercy which is the source of all, we must escape from the ego and dwell in the heart. Pain and suffering, then, are the necessary concomitants of the life of the ego. They cannot be overcome on this level of existence, but must be transformed inwardly into the joy that lies at the center of the heart. In fact, true pain can be known only by the prophets and saints, since they alone are given a vision of things as they are in themselves. As Rūmī often remarks, until a bird has drunk fresh water, it will never realize that it lives on brine; until the traveler tastes union, he will never understand that he dwells in the infinite heartache of separation. "Whoever is more awake has greater pain" (M I 629). Hence also, the greatest misfortune a human being can suffer occurs when he does not feel the pain of separation:

He that is without pain is a brigand, for to be without pain is to say "I am God." (M II 2521)

As long as we have no pain, we will not strive for ease; as long as we have no love, we will not seek the Beloved.

Where there is pain, cures will come; where there is poverty, wealth will follow. . . .

Spend less time seeking water and acquire thirst! Then water will gush forth from above and below. (M III 3210, 12)

To acquire thirst and pain, we must realize our own imperfection and inadequacy—or, rather, our utter nothingness before the One Reality. Rūmī's central teaching, like that of other Sufis, comes down to this: "Remove self from the midst, so that you may grasp Self in your embrace!" (D 12280). Our selfhood is empty and illusory, yet we remain bound to it. Once it has been nullified and annihilated through the discipline of the Path and the fire of love and desire, nothing remains but God. As Rūmī expresses it, employing the words of the *shahādah*:

After "no god," what else remains?
There remains "but God," the rest has gone. Bravo, great, idol-burning Love!
(M V 589–90)

Selfhood, then, is separation; selflessness is union and human perfection. A typical ghazal calls the seeker to this realization:

Revelers, beg the minstrel for wine! Come to pleasure, ask for the song of the reed!

Become royal riders on the steed of delights, fortunate men! Pass beyond heartache's horse with galloping revelry!

O you who sit with self, annihilate intellect, awareness, and foresight with pure wine from the Vat of Oneness!

Behold a new spring with gardens and meadows of a hundred colors—abandon the cold, dryness, and adversity of December!

When you see decapitated corpses row upon row, you will be apostates, O lovers, if you weep and wail!

You must seek the Chinese Idol in China—what kind of intellect tells you to go to Rayy?

At the Ruins of Subsistence in the *samā'* of the spirit's ear, abandon this childlike repetition of the alphabet!

Fill your skull's cup with the unmixed eternal wine—for God's sake, roll up the carpet of intellect and circumspection!

O lovers, come out of the attributes of selfhood—obliterate yourselves in the vision of the Living God's Beauty!

Along with Shams al-Dīn, the lord of kings, king of Tabrīz, sacrifice your spirit! For his sake, dedicate yourself to God! (D 747)

God's Mercy

Rūmī and those of his followers who have been faithful to his teachings tell us that God's Love, Mercy, and Gentleness pervade the cosmos and determine our destinies. The universe is fundamentally good and beautiful, though our own self-centeredness may prevent us from seeing this. God's Mercy hides behind the veil of every manifestation of Wrath, pulling us toward our ultimate felicity. But it remains for us to open ourselves to the "precedent Attribute," lest we remain forever veiled. Our task as humans is to return to the Mercy from which we arose and thus to integrate all multiplicity into Oneness and to see all phenomena as veils upon the Beloved's Face. Speaking for the saints who are mankind's guides on this path, Rūmī sings:

Accustom yourself to us, not to the unaware! Don't be a donkey—why do you sniff at the tail of every she-ass?

Your beginning and end are eternal Love—don't be a whore, taking a different husband every night.

Set your heart upon that Desire from which it can never be detached. Lion-man, don't make your heart the dog of every lane!

When in pain, you seek a remedy—turn your eyes and heart toward the Remedy, not to this and that.

Run not like a camel toward every thornbush—abandon not the garden, spring, meadow, and stream.

Pay attention! The Emperor has set out a kingly banquet. For God's sake, don't continue to starve in this dustbin!

Our polo-playing Prince has come onto the field—make your heart and spirit a ball before His horses!

Wash your face clean—don't blame the mirror! Refine your gold—don't blame the scales!

Part your lips only toward Him who gave you lips, run only toward Him who gave you feet! Know that the faces and hair of these beauties are false—don't call them "moon-faced, silken locked"!

Cheeks, eyes, and lips were loaned to a clod of earth—don't be so eager to look lovingly on the eyeless.

Love's beauty called out, "The *samā'* will last forever"—shout and dance only in pursuit of that beauty!

Breathe no more words, poet, or breathe them silently beneath your lips. Speech is a veil—make it a single veil, not a hundred! (D 1992)

Notes

1. Citations are from *Wālad-nāmāh*, ed. J. Humā'ī (Tehran: Iqbāl, 1316/1937).
2. Citations are from *Maqālāt-i Shams-i Tabrīzī*, ed. M. 'A. Muwaḥḥid (Tehran: Dānishgāh-i Šan'at-i Āryāmihr, 2036/1977).
3. A. Schimmel, *The Triumphal Sun* (London: Fine Books, 1978) 367ff.
4. *Ibid.*, 37ff.
5. H. Corbin, *Creative Imagination in the Sūfism of Ibn 'Arabī* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1969) 70.
6. *Ibid.*, 71.
7. Schimmel, *Triumphal Sun*, 225.
8. See W. Chittick, *The Sufi Path of Love: The Spiritual Teachings of Rumi* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1983).
9. Rūmī, *Fihī mā fihī*, ed. B. Furūzānfar (Tehran: Amīr Kabīr, 1348/1969) 78; see also Chittick, *Sufi Path*, 86.
10. *Ma'ārif*, ed. B. Furūzānfar (Tehran: Chāpkhāna-yi Majlis, 1333/1954) I, 111–12.
11. See Chittick, *Sufi Path*, Part III; cf. Schimmel, *Triumphal Sun*, Part II; and "Sun Triumphal—Love Triumphant: Maulana Rumi and the Metaphors of Love," in her *As Through a Veil: Mystical Poetry in Islam* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1982) 83–133.
12. *Ma'ārif*, 134–35.

The Chishtiyyah

SAYYID ATHAR ABBAS RIZVI

History

THE ORIGIN OF THE CHISHTIYYAH ORDER goes back to the third/ninth century. It originated in the town of Chisht, from which it received its name, some one hundred kilometers east of Harat in modern Afghanistan. The order, however, achieved fame only in India. Other branches, which spread to Transoxiana and Khurasan did not survive long. The Chishtiyyah trace their lineage back to Ḥasan al-Baṣrī (21/642–110/728). They believe that Ḥasan was 'Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib's disciple, a doctrine which they defend spiritedly. Of the later Sufis, the Chishtiyyah give a prominent place to Abū Sa'id ibn Abī'l-Khayr (357/967–440/1049). He was born and died at Mayhana (the present Me'ana near Sarakhs) but lived for a long time in Nayshapur. The hard ascetic exercises practiced by some Chishtīs, such as hanging head downward into a well continuously for forty nights, are a legacy from this shaykh. His teachings also inspired the Chishtīs to devote themselves unquestioningly to their *pīrs* (spiritual guides), to prostrate themselves before their *pīrs* and to practice self-abasement and service to mankind.

The founder of the Chishtiyyah Order in India was Khwājah Mu'in al-Dīn Ḥasan. No information is available regarding his early life. On the basis of his death, which occurred on 6 Rajab 633/16 March 1236, when he was reputed to be ninety-seven years old, it is presumed that he was born in 536/1141–42 in Sijistan (Sistan). He was fifteen years old when his father died. The Khwājah inherited a garden and a water mill, but he left his property to adopt a life of study and travel. At Harwan, a suburb of Nayshapur, he became the disciple of the greatest contemporary Chishtiyyah *pīr*, Khwājah 'Uthmān Harwanī. For about twenty years, he accompanied his *pīr* to various places and later traveled independently. In Baghdad he visited the Qādiriyyah Sufi, Shaykh 'Abd al-Qādir Jīlānī and other eminent Sufis. Leaving there, he traveled through Iraq and Iran and arrived

in the Ghazni region at the age of fifty-two. There his Chishtiyyah *pīr*, Khwājah 'Uthmān, met Khwājah Mu'in al-Dīn again and encouraged him to leave for India. Sufism was already firmly established there in the Punjab and Sind.

Leaving Ghazni for India, Khwājah Mu'in al-Dīn went to Lahore and then to Delhi. Later he moved to Ajmer, which was annexed to the Delhi sultanate in 592/1195-96 and had a Muslim governor. The Khwājah settled in Ajmer fort. His simple and ascetic life was an inspiration to both the Turkic warriors and the Hindu converts to Islam. In ca. 606/1209-10 the Khwājah married the daughter of a brother of the local governor. He also took a second wife, the daughter of a local Hindu chieftain who had been taken as a prisoner of war.

Medieval and modern scholars recount fantastic miracles supposedly performed by the Khwājah at Ajmer. Modern scholars also assert that he eradicated the Hindu practice of untouchability and converted a large number of Hindus to Islam. The Khwājah's known character and sayings however, do not corroborate any of the legends about him. The rules of spiritual life he carved out are as follows: (1) One should not earn money. (2) One should not borrow money from anyone. (3) One should not reveal to anyone nor seek help from anyone if one has eaten nothing, even for seven days. (4) If one gains plenty of food, money, grain, or clothing, one should not keep anything until the following day. (5) One should not curse anyone; if anyone is very hurt, one should pray to God to guide one's enemy toward the right path. (6) If one performs a virtuous deed, one should consider that the source of the virtue is either the kindness of one's *pīr*, the intercession of the Prophet Muhammad on one's behalf, or the Divine Mercy. (7) If one performs an evil deed, one should consider one's evil self responsible for the action and try to protect oneself from such deeds. Fearing God, one should be careful to avoid actions which may involve oneself in evil. (8) Having fulfilled all the above conditions, one should regularly fast during the day and spend the night in prayer. (9) One should remain quiet and speak only when it is imperative to do so. The *Sharī'ah* makes it unlawful both to talk incessantly and keep totally silent. One should utter only such words as those which please God.¹ The Khwājah's teachings became the cornerstone of the superstructure of Chishtiyyah life, although adjustments and modifications were made from time to time.

In close contact with Khwājah Mu'in al-Dīn during his lifetime was his young disciple, Shaykh Hamīd al-Dīn Sūfī (d. 673/1274), who made the rural surroundings of Nagawr in Rajasthan the center of his activity. Another of Khwājah Mu'in al-Dīn's disciples, Khwājah Quṭb al-Dīn Bakhtiyār Kākī, settled in Delhi, which Sultan Shams al-Dīn Iltutmish

(607/1211-633/1236) had made his capital. Quṭb al-Dīn had chosen in Baghdad to become Khwājah Mu'in al-Dīn Chishtī's disciple, although Shaykh 'Abd al-Qādir Jilānī as well as the eminent founders of the Suhrawardiyyah and Kubrawiyyah orders also lived there. After leaving Baghdad, Quṭb al-Dīn spent a long time traveling and arrived in Delhi only ca. 618/1221. There he became immensely popular. The '*ulamā*' failed to make Sultan Iltutmish stop Khwājah Quṭb al-Dīn's assemblies of *samā'* (Sufi music and dance, literally, audition).

On 14 Rabī' I 633/27 November 1235, he died in a state of ecstasy aroused by the following verse in the *samā'*:

The martyrs of the dagger of *taslim* ("surrender")
Each moment get a new life from the Unseen World.

Khwājah Quṭb al-Dīn's successor, Shaykh Farīd al-Dīn Mas'ūd "Ganj-i Shakar" (popularly known as Bābā Farīd) was born at Kahtwal, near Multan in 571/1175-76. He received his education at a local seminary, but it was his mother's pious life that influenced his future the most. After obtaining initiation from Khwājah Quṭb al-Dīn, he practiced hard ascetic exercises. He spent forty nights in prayer while he hung, head downward in a well, with his legs tied to logs at the top. This exercise, said to have been invented by Shaykh Abū Sa'id ibn Abī'l Khayr, was known as *chilla-yi ma'kūs* ("inverted forty-day retreat"). For a long time he lived in Hansi in the Hisar district west of Delhi but finally he settled down in Ajodhan (Pak Pattan), where he died on 5 Muḥarram 664/17 October 1265. Bābā Farīd was in touch with a wide cross-section of society; even the Nath Yogis called on him and uninhibited discussion on Ultimate Reality took place. He wrote poetry in Arabic, Persian, and the local Punjabi dialect. His spiritual sensitivity is reflected in the following verses which he frequently repeated:

I pray to live only for the sake of loving Thee,
I wish to become dust and dwell eternally under Thy feet.
My principal expectation from both worlds is that
I should die and live for Thee.²

Bābā Farīd's successor, Shaykh Nizām al-Dīn Awliyā', who lived in Delhi until his death on 18 Rabī' II 725/3 April 1325, crystallized the Chishtī traditions in northern India. The order was also introduced into the Deccan during his lifetime. The shaykh possessed a deep understanding of human nature from his experience in dealing with all types of people. His visitors were generally more than satisfied with his advice. His inspired knowledge, known in mystic language as '*ilm-i ladunnī*', greatly helped those who sought his help. Even the '*ulamā*', many of whom were notorious for their

enmity toward Sufis, were overwhelmed by his conversation. The shaykh was a master of the Sufi method of teaching by anecdotes.

Shaykh Nizām al-Dīn's favorite disciple was Amīr Khusraw. He was born in 651/1253 at Patyali, about 250 kilometers east of Delhi. He belonged to a distinguished family of administrators and warriors but was passionately fond of writing poetry. He had commenced composing verses at the age of eight. Amīr Khusraw wrote historical *mathnawīs* and produced an enormous corpus of *ghazals*. He was also the composer of a number of musical modes and melodies and a master musician. Moreover, he wrote verses combining Hindi dialects with Persian. The death of his *pīr* shocked him so deeply that he only survived him by six months.

Shaykh Nizām al-Dīn Awliyā's spiritual successor was Shaykh Naṣīr al-Dīn of Awadh, who became known as the Chirāgh or "Lamp" of Delhi. Sultan Muḥammad ibn Tughluq (725/1325–752/1351) tried to compel him and other distinguished disciples of Shaykh Nizām al-Dīn to help streamline the administration and arouse popular interest in his grandiose schemes. They refused to obey him and suffered great hardship. Most of them were forced to move from Delhi to Devagiri (Dawlatabad), which the Sultan had made his second capital. The shaykh died on 18 Ramaḍān 757/14 September 1356.

At the time of Shaykh Naṣīr al-Dīn's death, the disciples of Bābā Farīd and Shaykh Nizām al-Dīn Awliyā had established many new Chishtiyyah centers. Of these, the most important was the Ṣābirīyyah branch, founded by Bābā Farīd's disciple, 'Alā' al-Dīn 'Alī ibn Aḥmad Ṣābir (d. 691/1291), at Kaliyar in Saharanpur east of Delhi. His successors established branches in Lanipat, Rudawli (east of Lucknow) and Gangoh (Saharanpur). Aḥmad 'Abd al-Ḥaqq (d. 839/1434), who lived at Rudawli, was well known. He promoted Bābā Farīd's custom of writing poetry in the local dialect. This was perfected by Shaykh 'Abd al-Quddūs Gangōhī (d. 944/1537), a distinguished Sufi of this order. Shaykh 'Abd al-Quddūs's *Rushd-nāmah* (*The Treatise on Right Conduct*) contains some Hindi verses written by his predecessors as well as a large number of his own compositions. They highlight the similarities between the Chishtiyyah Sufi and Nath Yogi teachings. The most notable among the successors to Shaykh 'Abd al-Quddūs Gangōhī's order was Shaykh Muhibb Allāh Sadrpūrī of Allahabad (d. 1058/1648). Shaykh Muhibb Allāh was decidedly the most learned Chishtī interpreter of Ibn 'Arabī's *wahdat al-wujūd*.

Shaykh Nizām al-Dīn's disciples founded Chishtiyyah centers in Jawnpur, Malwa, Gujarat, and the Deccan. Shaykh Sirāj al-Dīn (d. 759/1357) made

Gawr in Bengal the center of his activity. Nūr Quṭb-i 'Ālam (d. 813/1410) of Pandwa was the most distinguished Sufi of this branch. In Dawlatabad, the Chishtiyyah center was established by Shaykh Nizām al-Dīn's disciple, Shaykh Burhān al-Dīn Gharīb (d. 741/1340). The local ruler of the Khandesh dynasty was so impressed by the shaykh that he named Burhanpur after him.

The most famous Sufi in the Deccan, however, was Shaykh Naṣīr al-Dīn Chirāgh Dihlawī's *khalīfah* ("successor"), Sayyid Muḥammad ibn Yūsuf al-Ḥusaynī, popularly known as Khwājah Bandah Nawāz or Gīsū Darāz (d. 825/1422). After Tamerlane's massacre in Delhi in 801/1398, Gīsū Darāz left the area and moved to Gujarat; from there he went to the Deccan. Around 815/1412–13, he arrived in Gulbarga at the advanced age of ninety. He survived for only ten years more but firmly established the Chishtiyyah center there. He was a prolific author and a poet. Toward the end of his life, he abandoned the ideas of Ibn 'Arabī and became an exponent of the beliefs of Shaykh 'Alā' al-Dawlah Simnānī.

Among Shaykh Nizām al-Dīn Awliyā's disciples, Mawlānā Shihāb al-Dīn acted as his *imam* (prayer-leader). Shaykh Shihāb al-Dīn's first disciple, Shaykh Rukn al-Dīn, was not well known, but his disciple, Ma'sūd Bakk (d. 836/1432) was a profound scholar. He had no inhibitions in expressing ideas based on *wahdat al-wujūd* in his works. His *Dīrwān*, called *Nūr al-yaqīn* (*Light of Certainty*), and the prose work entitled *Mir'āt al-'ārifin* (*Mirror of Gnostics*) are very important contributions to Sufi literature.

Mas'ūd Bakk's contemporary, Sayyid Muḥammad Ḥusaynī ibn Ja'far al-Makkī, renounced his position in state service to become a Sufi and traveled throughout Arabia, Persia, and Iraq. A collection of his letters, some dated 824/1421 and 825/1422, embody his keen observations on both spiritual and worldly life. He believed that gaining mastery of *fiqh* had kept him as far away from the true faith as a dog from a mosque.

Toward the beginning of twelfth/eighteenth century, the Nizāmiyyah branch of the Chishtiyyah in Delhi was reinvigorated by the leadership of Shāh Kalīm Allāh Jahānābādī (d. 1142/1729). Mawlānā Fakhr al-Dīn, the son of Shāh Kalīm Allāh's disciple Shāh Nizām al-Dīn, directed the Nizāmiyyah-Chishtiyyah center in Delhi from 1165/1751–52 till his death in 1199/1785. He tried to infuse a balanced spiritual life into Delhi, which was now torn by Sunni-Shi'ite controversies. His disciples established new centers in the Punjab, Bareilly, and Rajasthan.

At present all the Chishtiyyah centers in the Indian subcontinent are actively engaged in disseminating the Chishtiyyah way of life and spiritual discipline.

Chishtī Literature

There is a mass of Chishtī literature, most of which is in Persian. Chishtī Sufis also wrote in local dialects, particularly in their poetry, but some treatises were composed in Arabic. Below we mention some important works in different categories of Chishtī literature.

Malfūzāt (Conversations)

The early Chishtiyyah before Shaykh Naṣīr al-Dīn Chirāgh-i Dihlī did not write any books, or so the shaykh asserts.⁴ Nevertheless, apocryphal Sufi *malfūzāt* began to appear from Shaykh Nizām al-Dīn Awliyā's time on. These were designed to serve the popular demand for Chishtiyyah anecdotes. The anonymous authors of these apocryphal books were neither conversant with historical facts nor with the spiritual environment of the great Sufis whose conversations they ventured to fabricate. Their works tend to give the impression that the Chishtiyyah were endowed with incredible miraculous powers, that they had crushed Hindu spiritual power and had made Islam triumphant throughout India.

In Shawwāl 708/March 1309, Shaykh Nizām al-Dīn Awliyā' admitted to his disciple, Amīr Ḥasan Sijzī, that he had tried to write down Bābā Farīd's discourses but had been unable to record a single word. Amīr Ḥasan then produced a draft he had prepared of the shaykh's lectures over thirteen months. After reading the draft, the shaykh approved it and filled in a few gaps. The first authentic account of Shaykh Nizām al-Dīn Awliyā's discourses, from 3 Sha'bān 707/28 January 1308 to 19 Sha'bān 722/2 September 1322, was thus written by Amīr Ḥasan Sijzī. It was given the title *Fawā'id al-fu'ād* (*Benefits of the Heart*). These are not daily or even weekly accounts. Amīr Ḥasan's official duties kept him outside Delhi, but, during his stay in the capital, he attended the shaykh's assembly at least once a week. The most closely covered period is the year 708–9/1308–9.

Usually the lectures answered questions put by those gathered around the shaykh. They dealt with a variety of subjects, religious, social, political, and economic. The shaykh's answers, which took the form of a sermon, included references to the Quran, *Hadīth*, anecdotes, and the sayings of earlier Sufis, and they were intended to satisfy the spiritual and ethical needs and emotions of the audience. They were not necessarily derived from authentic sources. These discourses never included an analysis of opposing views and were believed to be infallible.

Like the *Fawā'id al-fu'ād*, the discourses of Shaykh Naṣīr al-Dīn Chirāgh-i

Dihlī, as recorded by his disciple Ḥamīd Qalandar in the *Khayr al-majālis* (*The Best of Gatherings*), are not dated. Nevertheless, they are more voluminous. Earlier, a section of *malfūzāt* written by the shaykh's nephew had so disappointed the shaykh that he had rejected the draft. Although he had sufficient confidence in Ḥamīd, the shaykh regularly supervised the work himself. The *Khayr al-majālis* gives a lively account of Shaykh Naṣīr al-Dīn's spiritual life against a background of political, social, and economic change. These two *malfūzāt* works set the mold for other scholars who recorded the conversations of their *pīrs*.

Biographical Literature

The earliest known biography of an Indian Chishtī is the *Siyar al-awliyā'* (*Biographies of the Saints*) by Sayyid Muḥammad ibn Mubārak 'Alawī Kirmānī (d. 770/1368–69), known as Mīr Khwurd. The Kirmānī family was deeply devoted to Bābā Farīd and Shaykh Nizām al-Dīn Awliyā'. They served the shaykh from his youth till his death. Mīr Khwurd himself flourished during the shaykh's last days and after his death lived in the company of the shaykh's disciples. Around 727/1327, he was forced to move from Delhi to Dawlatabad with the other 'ulamā' and Sufis of Delhi. A few years later, when he returned to Delhi, he was filled with nostalgic memories of the spiritual environment of Shaykh Nizām al-Dīn Awliyā's days. He therefore wrote the *Siyar al-awliyā'* as a monograph on Shaykh Nizām al-Dīn Awliyā', his teachings, and his disciples. The biographical notes on the Sufi *pīrs* preceding the shaykh, are given only as an introduction. The work draws heavily on the *Fawā'id al-fu'ād*, the *Khayr al-majālis*, and other sources no longer available. It is loaded with a large number of verses, some of which are hardly essential, and the style is verbose.

Ḥamīd ibn Faḍl Allāh, known as Jamālī (d. 942/1536), was a Suhrawardī Sufi and poet. He had traveled the Islamic world widely and collected the traditions of the Indian Sufis prevalent in various regions. His *Siyar al-ʿarīfīn* (*Biographies of Gnostics*) includes anecdotes of the Chishtī Sufis in Persia and Iraq, which, although common knowledge in his days, are not necessarily correct.

From the tenth/sixteenth century on, the apocryphal Sufi *malfūzāt* of earlier Sufis were frequently used by authors who were interested mainly in the stories of miracles and freely gave vent to their own imagination in elaborating them. The *Jawāhir-i farīdī* (*The Jewels of Farīd*) by 'Alī Asghar ibn Shaykh Mawdūd completed in 1033/1623, and the *Siyar al-aqtāb* (*Biographies of Poles*) by Ilāhdiyah, begun in 1036/1626–27 and completed in 1056/1646–47, describe incredible Chishtiyyah miracles.

Some of the eleventh/seventeenth and twelfth/eighteenth century biographical works deal with contemporary saints such as the *Chishtiyya-yi bihishtiyyah* (*Heavenly Chishtīs*) of 'Alā' al-Dīn Muḥammad Chishtī Barnāwī (eleventh/seventeenth century). This contains an account of Barnawa Sufis, while *Manāqib-i fakhrīyyah* (*Virtues of Fakhr al-Dīn*) by 'Imād al-Mulk Ghāzī al-Dīn Khān Firūz Jang (d. 1215/1800) comprises a biography of Mawlānā Fakhr al-Dīn. Another biography, the *Manāqib-i sulaymānī* (*The Virtues of Sulayman*) by Ghulām Muḥammad Khān Jhajjarī, written in 1255/1839–40, gives an account of Khwājah Muḥammad Sulaymān Chishtī of Tawnsa (d. 1267/1850). Equally interesting is the *Manāqib al-mahbūbayn* (*Virtues of the Two Beloveds*) by Najm al-Dīn Nāgawrī, which contains the history of some twelfth/eighteenth-century Chishtīs.

Some general biographical works such as the *Akbbār al-akhyār* (*Annals of Pious Men*) by Shaykh 'Abd al-Ḥaqq Muḥaddith Dihlawī (d. 1052/1642–43), the *Gulzār-i abrār* (*The Garden of the Godly*) by Muḥammad Ghawthī Shattārī and the *Mir'āt al-asrār* (*Mirror of Secrets*) by 'Abd al-Rahmān Chishtī (d. 1094/1683), provide reliable records. The *Ma'ārij al-wālāyah* (*Ascensions of Sanctity*) by 'Abd Allāh Khweshgī Qasūrī is an early twelfth/eighteenth-century work, but it deserves special mention because it contains reproductions of a number of important treatises which no longer survive.

Maktūbāt (Letters)

Letters from Chishtīs, particularly those of Sayyid Nūr Quṭb-i 'Ālam, Shaykh 'Abd al-Quddūs Gangōhī, and Shāh Kalīm Allāh Jahānābādī, give interesting glimpses of their spiritual beliefs and environment.

Hindi Poetry

Chishtī poems in Persian also reveal the spiritual life of the order. More important, however, are the Chishtī poetical works in Hindi. The Hindi verses of Shaykh Ḥamīd al-Dīn are quoted in his *malfūzāt*, entitled *Surūr al-sudūr*, (*Joy of Breasts*), which was compiled by his grandson. In 772/1370–71, Mullā Dāwūd, who came from Dalmau in Rae Bareilly district near Lucknow, commenced his famous *mathnawī*, *Chandā'in*, in Hindi and completed it in 781/1379–80. He was a successor to Shaykh Zayn al-Dīn, who, in turn, was the son of the sister of Shaykh Naṣir al-Dīn Chirāgh-i Dihlī. His story is based on a local folktale, but the spiritual significance of the romance in the *Chandā'in* is very deep. It highlights the constant Sufi effort to be united with the Divine in a symbolic form. In 990/1583 Quṭbān, a Sufi who lived in Jawnpur, wrote a Hindi *mathnawī*, *Mrigāwatī*. The story

revolves around an Elysian beauty called Mrigāwatī. In this *mathnawī*, Quṭbān describes the Essence as Light and calls it Niranjan "Eternal Soul." Defining Muḥammad as the cause of creation, the poet compares Islamic cosmological concepts with those of the Hindus.

A high standard of perfection in Hindi *mathnawī* was attained by Malik Muḥammad Jā'isī (of Jā'is in Rae Bareilly near Lucknow), who in 947/1540–41, wrote the *Padmāvatī*. Reconciling Yogic concepts with Sufi ideas, the *Padmāvatī* set a model for the Hindi *mathnawīs* written by later Sufis. Jā'isī himself wrote more than a half dozen Hindi *mathnawīs* of deep symbolic significance. Non-Chishtīs also frequently drew on the verses of Jā'isī, and other Sufi poets who wrote in Hindi, to defend their spiritual concepts and doctrines.

Chishtiyyah Spiritual Life

The Chishtīs mingled freely with the common people and did not build *khānqāhs* with four walls and gateways. Instead they constructed simple halls with mud walls covered by thatched roofs for their disciples. These were called *jamā'at-khānah* and were the principal center of their spiritual and social life. The halls had no furniture except torn mats and blankets. A string bed was supplied only to distinguished mystics and 'ulamā'. A separate cell for the Sufi leader's or shaykh's meditation was attached. The shaykh's family lived in a simple house containing one or two rooms near the *jamā'at-khānah*. The shaykh and the members of the *jamā'at-khānah* lived on *futūh*, or unsolicited gifts. In the early years of Bābā Farīd's stay at Ajodhan, a *zanbīl* (a basket made of palm leaves hung round the neck), was carried by some members of the *jamā'at-khānah* twice a day to the town and the offerings placed in it were shared by all. The Bābā preferred to eat the bread from the *zanbīl* in order to be more fully integrated into the life of his *jamā'at-khānah*. He also refused to allow small amounts of money for household needs to be borrowed, although this was permitted by other Chishtī shaykhs, including his own teachers. Nothing received as *futūh* was kept by the Chishtīs for longer than a day. Any surplus was distributed to the poor. The Sufi emphasis is on trust in God. Each new day brought a new hope in God and concern for future needs was seen as opposed to this trust.⁵

Visits by Nath Yogis to the Bābā's *jamā'at-khānah* on three different dates are recorded in Shaykh Nizām al-Dīn Awliyā's conversations. Other anecdotes indicate that the Chishtī *jamā'at-khānah* was open to all kinds of visitors, and ideas on a very wide range of topics were exchanged.

Social Ethics

According to the Chishtīs, the first lesson of Sufism was not related to prayers or organized rituals, but began with the mastery of the maxim "Do as you would be done by." The Chishtī *pīrs* accepted that family responsibilities entailed involvement in worldly affairs and that few men were capable of becoming totally dedicated ascetics. But they opposed those who acquired more money than they needed. Although it might appear that supporting a family was a worldly occupation, certain material goods were essential. For instance, clothes were necessary to cover the body, but spare garments could not be kept. The indiscriminate distribution of goods, however, was also extravagant. Only charity to please God had spiritual merit.⁶

Khwājah Mu'īn al-Dīn took two wives at an advanced age in order to follow the Prophet Muhammad's traditions of leading a family life, but Shaykh Nizām al-Dīn favored celibacy. He believed that marriage was permissible for a Sufi, but that celibacy was preferable as it called for a degree of determination. Those totally involved in divine contemplation had no need to marry, since contemplation left no room for sexual desire, and the eyes, tongue, and limbs would be completely protected from sin. If a Sufi was unable to attain this absorption and obliterate the sex drive, then he should marry. The essence of mystic contemplation was found in the heart. Those who were completely absorbed in God were totally affected. If their heart was disturbed by other matters, a reaction would be felt throughout their whole being.⁷

The Chishtīs encouraged people to work in trade and commerce as a means of earning their living. They also approved of farming and practicing crafts. They insisted that these occupations be followed honestly although they should not interfere with spiritual exercises. The Chishtīs believed that working for the government provided an opportunity to serve mankind.⁸ Bābā Farīd's favorite son was in the army and various distinguished disciples of Nizām al-Dīn Awliyā', such as Amīr Khusraw and Amīr Ḥasan, held important positions under the contemporary ruler. The Chishtīs opposed government service, however, insofar as it made people authoritarian, reckless, greedy, and cruel. They also contended that government servants were dependent on worldly authorities, which was contrary to the Sufi practice of trust in God.

Chishtī Rituals

Disciples were generally initiated after they had attained a fair knowledge of the *Sharī'ah*. The *ṭarīqah*, or the Sufi path, required an advanced spiritual

discipline. Like other Sufi orders, the Chishtīs also administered *tawbah* (repentance) before initiation, *dhikr-i khafiy* (mental recollection), *fikr* (reflection or meditation), *murāqabah* (mystical contemplation), and *chillah* (forty days of retreat). These, however, had a unique significance for the Chishtīs. For example, to them, *tawbah* meant a complete revolution in life. It combined the past, present, and future. The repentance of past sins did not mean simply feeling guilty but involved offering compensation to all who had been wronged. For example, if someone had taken ten *dirhams* (ā coin) from another, the simple repetition of *tawbah* was not sufficient. It was essential to repay the amount and take steps to please the person who had been robbed. If someone abused another, it was necessary to go to the person concerned, apologize, and try to please him. A drunkard was required to distribute sherbet and water to complete his *tawbah*.⁹ *Tawbah* for the present meant regret for past sins and *tawbah* for the future involved the determination to refrain from further wrongdoing.

Dhikr is the rhythmical repetition of God's Name in order to feel the Divine Presence throughout one's being. Generally one of the ninety-nine Names of God is invoked. Bābā Farīd had translated *Hurwa* "He" into Hindi and invented a Hindi formula of *dhikr* in order to make his local disciples penetrate deeply into its significance.

The Chishtī *dhikr* was incomplete without recollection in the heart in the presence of one's *pīr* or spiritual guide. The practice amounted to a belief that the shaykh's spirit was divinely inspired both in its emanation and in its power.

According to the twelfth/eighteenth-century Chishtī Sufi Shāh Kalīm Allāh Jahānābādī, *dhikr* was an Attribute of God. When Sufis performed *dhikr*, they turned to the Divine Essence, for *dhikr* was the product of *ma'rifah*, or gnosis, and love. When they practiced *fikr*, they were involved in an examination of the self, time, and ecstasy. In short, according to Shāh Kalīm Allāh, *dhikr* was the most perfect, lofty, and pure of the two states and led to union with God.¹⁰

The Chishtiyyah developed carefully the technique of *pās-i anfās* (controlled breathing) on the pattern of the sitting postures of the Hindu Yogis and Siddhas (perfect sages). To Shaykh Naṣir al-Dīn Chirāgh-i Dihlī, the essence of Sufi discipline was controlled breathing. This should be practiced during meditation. Each breath was related to the mystic state. When breathing was controlled, thoughts were not diffused nor was time ill-used. Initially, breath control was deliberate, but later it became automatic. A Sufi could count his breaths and the perfect Sufi was a *sāhib-i anfās*, "the master of articulated breath." The Siddhas, who were faultless Yogis, also measured their breaths. One dervish claimed that he had learned concentration from

watching a cat waiting in front of a mouse hole. The cat had such full control over its breathing that not a single whisker moved.¹¹

The Chishtiyyah practiced *samāʿ* (see chapter 25 of this volume) to arouse spiritual ecstasy. This was a most controversial issue. The Chishtiyyah were, however, inspired by the following justification by Hujwīrī:

In short, all foot-play (*pāy-bāzī*) is bad in law and reason, by whomsoever it is practised, and the best of mankind cannot possibly practise it; but when the heart throbs with exhilaration and rapture becomes intense and the agitation of ecstasy is manifested and conventional forms are gone, that agitation (*idtirāb*) is neither dancing nor foot-play nor bodily indulgence, but a dissolution of the soul. Those who call it "dancing" are utterly wrong. It is a state that cannot be explained in words: "without experience no knowledge."¹²

The Spiritual Significance of the Chishtiyyah Order

The Chishtiyyah belong to the Sunni branch of Islam. To them the first four successors to the Prophet Muḥammad are paragons of spiritual eminence, righteousness, and self-sacrifice. They strictly follow the *fiqh* of Abū Ḥanīfah but, like all Sufis, the world view of the early Chishtiyyah was not restricted to the letter of the law; it was concerned mainly with its spirit. They believed that out of the first four caliphs, it was 'Alī on whom the Prophet Muḥammad chose to bestow the *khirqah* (patched cloak) which he had received on the night of *mi'rāj* (ascent to Divine Proximity).¹³ The early Chishtiyyah drew heavily on the teachings of 'Alī and his eleven successors (the twelve Shī'ite Imams) for their spiritual regeneration. Following 'Alī, they believed that God manifests "His Essence by His Essence." Khwājah Mu'in al-Dīn Ḥasan Sijzī asserts:

When like a snake I shed my slough and perceived attentively, I found that lover, beloved and love were identical. In the realm of Divine Unity there is no distinction between them. The pilgrims circumambulate the Ka'bah but the hearts of the 'arifs (gnostics) circumambulate the heavens and the Hijaz of Divine Majesty. They yearn for beatific vision.¹⁴

It was only after the death of Khwājah Mu'in al-Dīn Ḥasan that the impact of the doctrine of *wahdat al-wujūd* (unity of being) of the great Ibn 'Arabī began to be felt by the Indian Sufis. This doctrine deeply impressed the Chishtīs from the end of the eighth/fourteenth century on. The doctrine of *wahdat al-wujūd* was most exuberantly expressed in the work of Mas'ūd Bakk. Its framework enabled the Chishtī Sufis to enter into a meaningful dialogue with the Hindu ascetics. This had commenced in the

eighth/fourteenth century and was widely prevalent from the ninth/fifteenth to the thirteenth/nineteenth centuries.

The Sufi literature in Hindawi, or the local dialects of the subcontinent, made a distinctive contribution in this field and tried to bridge the gulf between Islamic and Hindu mysticism. The Chishtī shaykh, Ḥamīd al-Dīn Sūfī Nāgawrī, blamed linguistic problems and difficulties in communication for the failure to realize that "Reality is One." An object can assume hundreds of different forms and be known by the same number of names, but this does not alter the fact that they all emanate from the One.¹⁵ The *Rushd-nāmah* by Shaykh 'Abd al-Quddūs Gangōhī seems to have overcome the problems of terminologies and hurdles of dialects. The *sine qua non* of spiritual life to Shaykh 'Abd al-Quddūs, his contemporary Hindu sages, and the Nath Yogis is to discipline the body, the senses, and the mind. Their mutual objective is to transmute the physical body into a rarified state enabling it to obtain tranquillity. The Nath Yogis describe the Supreme Creator as *Alakh-Nāth* (the Inconceivable or Unseeable Lord) or as *Niranjana* (the Eternal). Shaykh 'Abd al-Quddūs also uses the name *Alakh Niranjana* (the Unseeable and the Eternal) in the same sense. He says that his Lord is *Alakh Niranjana* and those who are able to comprehend Him are lost to themselves. In another verse, the shaykh identifies *Niranjana* with *Khudā* ("God" in Persian) and calls Him the Creator of different worlds.

The Nath Yogic *sahaja* (the state of bliss) is of great significance to Shaykh 'Abd al-Quddūs. It leads to the achievement of ontological immortality or the Sufi *baqā'*. In a state of perfect equilibrium, it transcends perceptual knowledge with positive and negative experience. The Nath in such a state is simultaneously both meditator and meditation with Divinity as object. This idea was predominant in the Sufism of Khwājah Mu'in al-Dīn Chishtī but, from the eighth/fourteenth century on, it was represented in the *Hama ūst* ("All is He") framework of *wahdat al-wujūd*.

The Prophet Muḥammad is the last of the prophets in the Islamic system, but in the framework of the doctrine of *wahdat al-wujūd*, as explained by Shabistarī in the *Gulshan-i rāz* (*The Garden of Divine Mysteries*), the *mīm* (M) of Muḥammad is a great mystery. Shaykh 'Abd al-Quddūs also could not comprehend Muḥammad by the mere crying of his name. To him Muḥammad and *Aḥad*, which means "the One" or "God," are the same, and everyone in the world is misled because of a failure to understand the true significance of the intervening *mīm* (M) in the words Aḥmad (a name of the prophet Muḥammad) and *Aḥad*. The Chishtiyyah discourage the mechanical invoking of the name of Muḥammad or Allah. They urge the development of spirituality after Muḥammad and the death of the self before the death of the earthly body.¹⁶

Like other followers of *waḥdat al-wujūd*, the Chishtiyyah identify Reality with Being and assert that, in the stage of nondetermination (*lā ta'ayyuni*), Being is the Absolute per se. They deny, however, that Divine Self-manifestation and determination imply a belief in the unification of the world with God (*ittiḥād*), or His descent or incarnation (*ḥulūl*) into existence. Therefore, Sufis seeking God should first obey the Prophet Muḥammad (in both word and deed, inwardly and outwardly) and then move on to contemplation of the Unity of Being. Shāh Kalīm Allāh Jahānābādī, says that mystical union (*waṣl*) means denial of everything except God, indifference to all phenomenal existence, and absorption and extinction in the *Berangī*, or the Absolute. Initially this state appears as "unconsciousness" and a trancelike state resembling death, except that in death one does not enjoy the Divine Mystery, whereas in mystic "unconsciousness" one's whole being partakes of it.

When the seeker emerges from this stage of partaking of the Divine Mystery, even though it may last for no longer than an hour, he is known as *walī* (protege or friend of God), one who has attained knowledge of the Divine. The mystic completes his course of mystical ascension if he tends to destroy his self when contemplating the Essence. He strays from the correct path by ignoring this goal and casting his eyes to the right and left and involving himself with other determinations.¹⁷

The earlier Chishtīs believed that Sufism demanded humility, modesty, patience, fortitude, and the cleansing of the heart from all conceit. Self-abnegation involved careful concern not to offend others, and, in the event of this happening, sincere and plentiful apologies were essential. According to Shaykh Nizām al-Dīn Awliyā', there would be no end to hatred and strife if animal soul (*nafs*) met animal soul; animal soul should, however, be met with the heart (*qalb*). It was customary, the shaykh said, to meet evil with evil and good with good. The dervishes, however, offered good will on all occasions, whether meeting with evil or good.¹⁸

To Shaykh Nizām al-Dīn Awliyā', Islam was not an empty round of prayers and rituals but a highly ethical code. To illustrate this he told a story concerning Shaykh Bāyazīd Bastāmī and his Jewish neighbor. The Jew was questioned after Bastāmī's death as to why he had not converted to Islam. The Jew answered that if by Islam was meant the path of Bastāmī, it was because he could not follow such a difficult course; if, on the other hand, his inquisitors implied following their way, he would be ashamed to pursue it.¹⁹

Shaykh Nizām al-Dīn Awliyā' was deeply impressed with the devotion of the Brahmins to their faith and urged his disciples to follow their example. He watched the crowds of Hindus bathing in the Jamuna with interest and

passed no adverse comments. Although his main concern was to improve the conditions of the Muslims, he also tried to help the Hindus. Amīr Ḥasan tells a story that illustrates this. Ḥasan's servant bought a slave girl for five *tankās* in Devagiri. The time came for them to leave for Delhi with the army. The distraught parents begged to be allowed to buy their daughter back even if it cost twice as much as the servant had originally paid for her. The sum was paid by Amīr Ḥasan himself and the girl returned to her family. Shaykh Nizām al-Dīn approved of the Amīr's action because his teacher, Mawlānā 'Alā' al-Dīn Uṣūlī, had set a precedent. At one time the Mawlānā had owned a female slave who had been parted from her son in Katiḥar. When the Mawlānā learned of her sorrow at the separation, he gave her some food and told her to return home. Shaykh Nizām al-Dīn was greatly impressed by this policy, although he knew the 'ulamā' disapproved of it.²⁰

Mas'ūd Bakk wrote that a true devotee did not concern himself with the difference between the seventy-two sects of Islam; instead he was concerned with the illumination concealed at the door of the Divine, not the veil hiding it. It was the objective, not faith or sectarianism, which was all-important to the seeker. To Mas'ūd Bakk faith was the vehicle for the attainment of the objective, and *kufr* (infidelity) made the objective unobtainable because it meant involving oneself with other objects. Those who worshiped themselves naturally neglected to adore God; those who ignored themselves worshiped the Truth (*Ḥaqq*). On the assumption that all names referred to the One Name, Mas'ūd Bakk contended that in all forms only the One Face was concealed and that in all religions only One Road was hidden. All religions would appear identical if only the subtle truth of this path, gleaned from these different forms, were understood.²¹

Another distinguished Sufi, dwelling on the idea that the paths to God were as numerous as human souls, Ḥusaynī ibn Ja'far, a contemporary of Mas'ūd Bakk, classified human souls into three groups. The first category comprised the common Muslims whose right path was a scrupulous observance of the *Sharī'ah*, although he believed that the true goal did not lie at the end of this path. In the second group, he placed people who performed hard ascetic exercises with a view to purifying the self and the heart and to changing their natural disposition. This was an inward-looking path and was suitable only for the pious and holy. The third category included the spiritual elite who had reached the stage of understanding *lābūt* (Divinity).²²

Defining *kufr* (infidelity), Ja'far claimed that in its common form it contradicted the *Sharī'ah*, but its most significant aspect involved worship by the carnal soul. All externalists, he asserted, were guilty of this type of

infidelity. A true perception of *kufṛ* was required for a realistic understanding of Satan. *Kufṛ* and *īmān* (faith) were merely two veils, and a seeker who remained involved in arguments about them would be unable to understand God. The true seeker should be neither a *kāfir* (infidel) nor a "Muslim," but a lover and an axis around which both *kufṛ* and *īmān* revolved.²³

An interpretation of paradise was given by Khwājah Bandah Nawāz Gīsū Darāz. He claimed that paradise was an awareness of the "Divine Form" hidden in human beings. He interpreted the Sufi *ḥadīth* "He who knows himself knows his Lord" as referring to the consciousness of the secret archetype by which God manifests Himself in and through human beings. The awareness of this reality amounted to achieving the pleasure of paradise. For Gīsū Darāz the Day of Resurrection would reveal no secrets.²⁴

Influence

The spiritual influence of the Chishtiyyah on society was far-reaching. Political developments in the eighth/fourteenth century, however, resulted in some of them becoming missionaries. Khwājah Bandah Nawāz Gīsū Darāz, for example, learned Sanskrit in order to enter into polemical discussions with the Brahmins, whom he claims to have defeated. Shaykh 'Abd al-Quddūs Gangōhī wrote to Sultan Sikandar Lōdī (894/1489–923/1517), Bābur (932/1526–937/1530), and Humāyūn (937/1530–947/1540 and 962/1555–963/1556) demanding they inject Sunni orthodoxy into their administration. These actions were, however, a minor aspect of Chishtī life; the Chishtī majority strictly adhered to the tradition of peaceful coexistence.

The Mughal emperors from Akbar (963/1556–1014/1605) to the end of the dynasty in 1274/1857 were deeply attached to the Chishtiyyah. Some Chishtīs entered the imperial service, but the leading *pīrs* maintained their independence and treasured the spiritual traditions of their ancestors. Khwājah Mu'īn al-Dīn's tomb at Ajmer became an important center for pilgrims after his death. The tomb of the great founder and those of his spiritual descendants all over the subcontinent attract to this day hundreds of thousands of devotees throughout the year. The death anniversary ('*urs*') of the Chishtī *pīrs* is observed at their tombs with great ceremony. The *samā'* gatherings held there transport those of spiritual bent into ecstasy, and there is no dearth of people who gain spiritual satisfaction from these ceremonies.

The impact of modern scientific thought and twentieth-century political developments in the subcontinent has not been able to kill Sufism. The richness and the range of the Sufi message both in prose and in poetry continue to arouse interest in knowledge, action, and humanity. That message

reveals those universal aspects of Reality as all sages and saints of different religions, including Muslims, perceived them and directs torn personalities and split minds to a more fruitful way of life.

Notes

1. Farīd al-Dīn Muḥammad, *Surūr al-ṣudūr* (Habibganj Collections, Mawlānā Āzād Library, Aligarh University Manuscript) 51–52.
2. Ḥamīd Qalandar, *Khayr al-majālis* (Aligarh, 1959) 224.
3. Ḥusaynī ibn Ja'far, *Baḥr al-ma'ānī* (India Office Library; London: Ethé, 1867) f. 37a.
4. Ḥamīd Qalandar, *Khayr al-majālis*, 150.
5. Mīr Khwurd, *Siyar al-awliyā'* (reprint; Lahore, 1978) 76.
6. Ḥasan Sijzī, *Fawā'id al-fu'ād* (Bulandshahr).
7. *Ibid.*, 171.
8. Ḥamīd Qalandar, *Khayr al-majālis*, 156–57.
9. Ḥasan Sijzī, *Fawā'id al-fu'ād*, 154–55.
10. Shāh Kalīm Allāh Jahānābādī, *Kashkūl-i kalīmī* (Delhi, 1315/1897–98) 8–12.
11. Ḥamīd Qalandar, *Khayr al-majālis*, 59–60.
12. Hujwīrī, *Kashf-al-maḥjūh*, trans. R. A. Nicholson (London: Luzac, 1911) 416.
13. Mīr Khwurd, *Siyar al-awliyā'*, 18–19.
14. *Ibid.*, 55–56.
15. Farīd al-Dīn Muḥammad, *Surūr al-ṣudūr*, 69.
16. S. A. A. Rizvi, *A History of Sufism in India* (New Delhi: Munshiram Mansharlal, 1978) 1:335–41.
17. Shāh Kalīm Allāh Jahānābādī, *Kashkūl-i kalīmī*, 3–4.
18. Ḥasan Sijzī, *Fawā'id al-fu'ād*, 139.
19. *Ibid.*, 197.
20. *Ibid.*, 215–16, 179–80.
21. Mas'ūd Bakk, *Mir'āt al-'arīfin* (India Office Library; London: Ethé, 1854) f. 160a.
22. Ḥusaynī ibn Ja'far, *Baḥr al-ma'ānī*, ff. 154b–155b.
23. *Ibid.*, f. 37a.
24. Gīsū Darāz, *Istiqām al-sharī'ah* (India Office Library; London: Ethé, 1861) f. 20b.

The Nimatullāhī

JAVAD NURBAKHS

THE NIMATULLĀHĪ ORDER,¹ one of the most well-known Sufi orders, has many followers in the United States, Europe, and especially Persia at the present time. As the name suggests, the order was founded by Shāh Ni'mat Allāh Walī, a renowned master of the Ma'rūfiyyah Order, which is known as the mother of the orders (*umm al-salāsīl*). This is due to the fact that almost all the orders of Sufism were started by Ma'ruf Karkhī, after whom the Ma'rūfiyyah Order is named. It must, however, be remembered that nearly all the orders consider 'Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib, the son-in-law of the Prophet, as the first master of the spiritual path.

Masters of the Nimatullāhī Order

The spiritual chain of the Nimatullāhī Order from 'Alī up to Shāh Ni'mat Allāh is as follows:

1. 'Alī ibn 'Abī Ṭālib (d. 41/661)
2. Ḥasan al-Baṣrī (21/642–110/728)
3. Ḥabīb al-'Ajamī (d. 119/737)
4. Dā'ūd al-Ṭā'ī (d. 165/781)
5. Ma'rūf al-Karkhī (d. 200/815-16)
6. Sarī al-Saqāṭī (d. 253/867)
7. Abu'l-Qāsim al-Junayd (d. 298/910)
8. Abū 'Alī Rūdbārī (d. 322/934)
9. Abū 'Alī al-Kātib (d. after 340/951)
10. Abū 'Uthmān al-Maghribī (d. 373/984)
11. Abu'l-Qāsim al-Gurgānī (d. 469/1076)
12. Abū Bakr al-Nassāj al-Tūsī (d. 487/1094)
13. Ahmad Ghazzālī (d. 520/1126)
14. Abu'l-Faḍl al-Baghdādī (d. 550/1155)
15. Abu'l-Barakāt (d. 570/1174)

16. Abu'l-Su'ūd al-Andalusī (d. 579/1183)
17. Abū Madyan (d. 590/1194)
18. Abu'l-Futūḥ al-Sa'īdī
19. Najm al-Dīn Kamāl al-Kūfī
20. Abū Bakr Ṣālih al-Barbarī
21. 'Abd Allāh al-Yāfi'ī (d. 768/1367)
22. Shāh Ni'mat Allāh Walī (731/1331–834/1431)

The Life and Works of Shāh Ni'mat Allāh

Nūr al-Dīn Shāh Ni'mat Allāh Walī, the *qutb* (pole) of those who realize Oneness, the best of those perfected, was one of the greatest Sufi masters and most renowned mystics of the eighth/fourteenth and ninth/fifteenth centuries.² His teachings spread to all the followers of the Spiritual Path (*ṭarīqat*) of Islam. In truth, it can be stated that he was the reviver of the Spiritual Path of Muḥammadan Poverty (*faqr-i Muḥammadī*) throughout all the Muslim lands, especially Persia and the subcontinent. Moreover, it was the order bearing his name that was able, in the twelfth/eighteenth century, to revive the *ṭarīqat* in Iran and to quench the thirst of those who were searching for mystical truth.

Shāh Ni'mat Allāh was born on 14 Rabī' al-awwal 731/1331, in Aleppo in present-day Syria. His father, Mīr 'Abd Allāh, was one of the great Sufi masters of his time. His mother was of the royal lineage of Fars, in southern Persia. It is said that during his childhood Shāh Ni'mat Allāh memorized the whole of the Quran and had a great capacity for comprehending spiritual truths and expressing mystical meanings. He writes:

Know for certain that the knowledge
in which they instructed my heart
Wasn't taught anywhere.

What the shaykh of the forty-day retreat
never realized at the age of thirty
Was revealed to me at the age of three.

Although in his youth he studied both theosophy (*ḥikmat-i ilāhī*) and scholastic theology (*kalām*), he was discontent with the lack of application that he discovered in those who pursue these disciplines, and so he set out in search of a perfect master and an enlightened guide. He encountered many of the great spiritual teachers of his day, until at last he found his own master in Shaykh 'Abd Allāh al-Yāfi'ī. Shaykh Yāfi'ī, whom Shāh Ni'mat Allāh considered to be the chief among the saints of the world, was endowed not only with esoteric perfection but also with such a great

mastery of exoteric knowledge that he was considered one of the greatest jurists and historians of his time.

Shāh Ni'mat Allāh served Shaykh al-Yāfi'ī for seven years. Blessed by the grace of Shaykh al-Yāfi'ī's presence and the *barakah* (grace) of his breath, Shāh Ni'mat Allāh attained the rank of a master after having been a disciple. After taking leave of Shaykh al-Yāfi'ī, Shāh Ni'mat Allāh began his second period of travels through different countries. This time, however, he went as a spiritual pole of his age, quenching the spiritually thirsty by the grace of his breath, directing the hands of the seekers and soothing the pain of the lovers of God. In this second period of travels, Shāh Ni'mat Allāh first set out toward Egypt and then went to Transoxania, where he settled in Shahrisabz near Samarqand. It was on this journey that an encounter took place between Shāh Ni'mat Allāh and Tamerlane. Tamerlane, like Genghis Khan, was a savage conqueror who tyrannized Persia during his reign from 771/1335 to 807/1405. Tamerlane did not appreciate the worth of Shāh Ni'mat Allāh. Therefore, to avoid trouble, Shāh Ni'mat Allāh decided to leave Shahrisabz and set out for Harat.

In Harat, Shāh Ni'mat Allāh married the granddaughter of Mīr Husayn Harawī (d. 720/1329), whose questions had prompted Mahmūd Shabistārī to compose *Gulshan-i rāz* (*The Garden of Divine Mystery*). The issue of this marriage was both a physical and a spiritual son, Burhān al-Dīn Khalīl Allāh (born 885/1373), who succeeded Shāh Ni'mat Allāh as the *qutb* of the order.

From Harat, Shāh Ni'mat Allāh traveled to Mashhad, residing for a while in Yazd and Baft, and then settling in Kubana. From there he went to Kirman, then to the nearby town of Mahan, where he remained for almost all of the last twenty-five years of his life, sometimes living in Kirman and sometimes in Mahan. During Shāh Ni'mat Allāh's stay in Mahan, his fame spread to most areas of Persia and India, and those longing to meet him would make the pilgrimage there. However, Ahmad Shāh Bahmanī, the king of the Deccan, had requested Shāh Ni'mat Allāh to come to India. In response, Shāh Ni'mat Allāh sent his grandson, Shāh Nūr Allāh, thus providing the basis for the subsequent transfer of the Nimatullāhī Order to the Deccan in India and Shāh Khalīl Allāh's later exodus there.

Shāh Ni'mat Allāh lived nearly a hundred years. On 23 Rajab 732 A.H. (21 April A.D. 1332), he "vacated his *khirqah*" in Kirman. His body was carried by government officials, servants, dervishes, and nobles, shoulder to shoulder, to Mahan, and was there entombed.³

Say then, here was a "Shah," free from this world,
who went,
Who when he heard the call "Return"
from the Truth,

Surrendered his soul, with a heart alive
in Love, and went.⁴

'Abd al-Razzāq Kirmānī had written:

His lordship [Shāh Ni'mat Allāh] was outstanding among the great people of his time in the field of discourse and exceptional among the masters of spiritual struggle (*mujāhadah*) of his day. There was neither pride nor laxity in his nature; he was totally devoid of all greed and blameworthy qualities. He was always courteous and civil, and he never neglected, either inwardly or outwardly, the observation of the proper manners and behavior necessary for the performance of the exact requirements of the Muhammadan Spiritual Path. He chose his words with hesitation, speaking with gravity yet constancy, never raising his voice or using unbecoming words. His perfect morality inclined him to regard all human beings as worthy of being treated with good-will.⁵

Shāh Ni'mat Allāh, in addition to directing large numbers of disciples, spent his free time in farming, making his occupation a model for his disciples to emulate and visibly demonstrating to his followers that the best form of austerity and the most excellent way to purify the heart and purge the self was by service to society and kindness to other human beings.

My friend! Remember God and invoke
his Name constantly;
If you are able, work within your "work."⁶

By Divine Grace, this tradition of kindness to people and service to society has caused the state of "expansion" (*bast*) to prevail over that of "contraction" (*qabd*)⁷ in the hearts of the Nimatullāhī Sufis. By his own actions, Shāh Ni'mat Allāh demonstrated that retirement from the world and laziness resulted solely in apathy, lethargy, and depression, and that social activity and association with people, combined with service to them in the Name of God, resulted in contentment and expansion of the soul and mind. Following his example, the Nimatullāhī Sufis abandoned seclusion and retreat as a mode of life; the vulture of apathy, lethargy, and depression flew off, while in its place the falcon of joy spread its wings in the sky of the heart.

Another of Shāh Ni'mat Allāh's "innovations" was his prohibition against the wearing of any particular costume or publicly appearing in any special Sufi attire. It was his opinion that inner and spiritual affairs had to be free from any kind of show and pretense, colorlessness being far closer to God than black or white. In the words of a Sufi poet:

The king's associates are liberated
from black and white.

Adorned with the vestment of the
Divine Attributes,
They're beyond cloak and cap.⁸

Shāh Ni'mat Allāh insisted on following his predecessors in not separating the *ṭarīqat* from the Divine Law (*Sharī'at*) because of his belief that the Truth (*ḥaqīqat*) could only be attained through the integration of both. To quote his own words:

The *Sharī'at* is knowledge of the theory of religion,
the *ṭarīqat* its application.
And if you combine theory and practice sincerely,
Solely for the sake of God, that is the *ḥaqīqat*.⁹

One of the most important steps taken by Shāh Ni'mat Allāh, however, was that he did not consider Sufism limited to a certain group of people. In contrast with other Sufi masters of his time, who accepted only some seekers of God and rejected others as unworthy, he left his door open to all seekers, instructing in the way of Love (*mahabbat*) all those in whom he perceived a longing for the school of Unity. Shāh Ni'mat Allāh regarded all people as being equally deserving and in need of the school of Sufism. He said, "All those whom the saints have rejected, I will accept, and, according to their capacity, I will perfect them." Celebrating these ideas in verse, Ridā Qulī Khān Hidāyat wrote:

Trusting in the knowledge of God, that pivot
of all saints, Shāh Ni'mat Allāh, declared:
"Any disciple on the path of Ultimate Attainment
who all the other masters have cast away,
Liberate him from the bait and snare of the world
and send him to me. Though by others he was rejected
and turned away, I'll accept him into the holy poverty of God
and make him drunk as befits him."¹⁰

After he was sixty years old, Shāh Ni'mat Allāh began to compose poetry.¹¹ It is said that the poetry of Shāh Ni'mat Allāh reveals the same fluency of expression and directness of meaning that have been reported about his discourses:

If the unity of the essence of God
manifests itself,
Like a knower, I'll declare it openly.
And if the images of multiplicity appear in imagination,
I'll deny them and refuse to say two.¹²

Yet the greatness and fame of Shāh Ni'mat Allāh do not by any means rest

upon his poetry. This "Shāh" in reality was not a poet; rather he was a gnostic (*'ārif*) and a mystic who clothed Reality (*ḥaqīqat*) in the garment of verse. The poems of Shāh Ni'mat Allāh have a purely gnostic content and are the expressions of the state of a person who has spent a lifetime engaged in the sorrow of Divine Love. Like an infatuated and distraught lover, he stands before his Beloved enraptured in praise:

Ah! We're prisoners
in the shackles of an immense passion,
Afflicted, tormented,
manacles on our ankles!

We are *les misérables*
in the desert of love,
Skilled in the field
of riot and revolution.

Sometimes we're thunder,
sometimes bolts of lightning.
Sometimes we're clouds,
sometimes the sea.

Sometimes earth-like,
abased and debased,
Sometimes sky-like,
exalted and transcendent.¹³

The main form on which Shāh Ni'mat Allāh expended most of his inspiration was the lyric or *ghazal*. The poems that he wrote in other verse forms such as the *qasīdah* (ode), *tarjī'-band* (strophe poem), *mathnawī* (rhyming couplet), and the *rubā'ī* (quatrain) are insignificant in comparison with his lyric poetry or *ghazals*. Though it may seem that the poems of Shāh Ni'mat Allāh are repetitious, upon reflection it becomes apparent that he was in fact expressing but a single Reality while experiencing different spiritual states. It is one Truth (*ḥaqīqat*) expressed in different forms, ornamented and communicated by intuitive vision to lovers according to their respective capacities. His poetry is the chant of the ode of life; it is a tune of the flute of being, a melody of the music of God:

The wave, the sea and the bubble
are all one.
All is one, nothing else,
whether less or more.

In most of his poems, Shāh Ni'mat Allāh speaks in some manner of the unity or identity of the "seer" (*nāzīr*) with the "Seen" (*manzūr*), or the

"witness (*shāhid*) with the "Witnessed" (*mashhūd*), or the "seeker" (*tālib*) with the Sought (*matlūb*). Often he dwells on the lover, the Beloved, and Love. The meaning of these metaphors, however, revolves around one single idea: the transcendent unity of being (*waḥdat al-wujūd*):¹⁴

According to our faith, lover and Beloved are one;
To us, what is desire?
The desirer and the Desired are one.

They tell me, "Seek Him in His essence."
But how should I seek?
Seeker and Sought are one.¹⁵

These ideas on the transcendent unity of being, which Shāh Ni'mat Allāh set to verse in his *Dīwān* of poetry, were also expressed by him in his prose treatises. Other subjects dealt with in these treatises related to the more practical aspects of the spiritual path and to other esoteric doctrines of Sufism. Of the many treatises of Shāh Ni'mat Allāh, 130 have thus far been located, edited, and published in four volumes by Khaniqahi-Nimatullahi Publications in Tehran.¹⁶

The Continuation of the Nimatullāhī Order from the Ma'rūfiyyah Order

Although the Nimatullāhī Order is essentially a continuation of the Ma'rūfiyyah Order, after the death of Shāh Ni'mat Allāh, the name of the order was altered for some of the following reasons: (1) Shāh Ni'mat Allāh attracted a vast number of disciples from every walk and class of society. He was a powerful and great propagator of the principles and ideas of Sufism both as a master in the sphere of popular culture and as a poet and an author in the field of its most advanced philosophical and literary expressions. (2) He encouraged Sufis to work and involve themselves with social activities, and he discouraged them from hiding away in seclusion and retreat. (3) He insisted that his disciples should wear clothes according to the times and the place in which they lived. He prevented his disciples from wearing a particular type of clothing. (4) He encouraged the Sufis to observe faithfully the exoteric practices of the *Sharī'ah*. (5) Unlike other masters, he did not turn anyone away who came to him for the love of God, but instructed them according to their capacity in the path of self-purification. (6) He prohibited his disciples from the use of opium and hashish at a time when these were used by some ordinary people and certain Sufis as well.

After the death of Shāh Ni'mat Allāh, his son and successor, Shāh Khalīl Allāh I, the twenty-third master in the initiatic chain of the order, chose to

live in the Deccan, India. This resulted in the settlement of the Nimatullāhī masters in the Deccan up to the time of Sayyid Ma'sūm 'Alī Shāh Deccani, who moved back to Persia.

Nimatullāhī Masters Who Lived in India from Shāh Khalīl Allāh to Sayyid Ma'sūm 'Alī Shāh

23. Shāh Khalīl Allāh I (775/1373–860/1455)
24. Shāh Ḥabīb al-Dīn Muḥibb Allāh I (d. 914/1508)
25. Shāh Kamāl al-Dīn I
26. Shāh Khalīl Allāh II (d. 925/1508)
27. Shāh Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad I
28. Shāh Ḥabīb al-Dīn Muḥibb Allāh II
29. Mīr Shāh Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad II
30. Mīr Kamāl al-Dīn 'Aṭīyyat Allāh II
31. Mīr Shāh Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad III
32. Mīr Mahmūd Deccani
33. Shams al-Dīn Deccani
34. Sayyid Ridā 'Alī Shāh Deccani
35. Sayyid Ma'sūm 'Alī Shāh Deccani (martyred 1211/1796)

The Life and Works of Sayyid Ma'sūm 'Alī Shāh

Ma'sūm 'Alī Shāh is particularly important in the revival of the Nimatullāhī Order in Persia. Mīr 'Abd al-Ḥamīd, or Ma'sūm¹⁷ 'Alī Shāh, as he was known in the *ṭarīqat*, was born in Hyderabad, India. His ancestors were wealthy members of the aristocracy. After having undergone the conventional education in exoteric learning, he hastened to devote himself to the masters of rapture and mystical states (*arbāb-i wajd wa ḥāl*), sincerely submitting himself to the service of Ridā 'Alī Shāh Deccani. He served his master for many years until he reached the rank of mastership and received permission to guide others.

In India, before becoming a Sufi, Sayyid Ma'sūm 'Alī Shāh was said to have possessed great wealth, power, and prestige. It is reported that whenever he ventured forth, eight men would follow in procession behind him carrying gold and silver staves. When he first came to see Ridā 'Alī Shāh together with this impressive retinue, Ridā 'Alī told him to return the next day alone. In response, Sayyid Ma'sūm immediately gave away everything he had, only then setting out for the *khānqāh* of Ridā 'Alī. Having given away all his belongings, he was so poor that all he could find to take as an

offering to Ridā 'Alī was some camel dung (for fuel), which he picked up along the way. As Nizām 'Alī Shāh¹⁸ has written in the *Jannat al-wiṣāl* (*The Paradise of Union*):

So he set out, this unique man,
hastening for the King's court,
Alone and unequalled, seeking
the Divine Grace,
And bringing only camel-droppings
as an offering.

By the order of Ridā 'Alī Shāh, in 1190/1775 Sayyid Ma'sūm traveled to Persia by way of the Sea of Oman. Upon reaching Shiraz, a number of people submitted to him, among whom were Fayḍ 'Alī Shāh and Nūr 'Alī Shāh.¹⁹ After disciplining and perfecting these two disciples, Ma'sūm 'Alī Shāh gave them each the authority (*ijāzah*) of guidance and delivered over to Nūr 'Alī Shāh the affairs of the Nimatullāhī Order.

Ma'sūm resided peacefully in Shiraz with his disciples for two or three years until Karīm Khān Zand, the ruler of Fars who had made Shiraz his capital, began to turn against him. Karīm Khān had fallen under the influence of a man named Jānī, an Indian who coveted a higher place in the court and who sought to have Ma'sūm expelled from Shiraz. Jānī had bribed some of the attendants at the Khān's court to support him in this venture. One day when Karīm Khān left the city for a tour of the countryside, Jānī, together with some of the attendants of the court whom he had bribed, approached Karīm Khān and, after paying homage to the ruler, declared in the guise of being a devoted friend and servant:

There is in your city
A fire-worshipping dervish.
Sometimes he claims Divinity,
Sometimes says he's a Shāh,
Sometimes a beggar.
A sorcerer — he steals hearts.
He's a descendant of the "King of
Najaf."²⁰
Like moths about candles,
Men gather about him.
O fortunate monarch, if in the city
This man remains, it's certain
he'll rob you
Of crown and throne.²¹

Upon saying this, Jānī had the group that he had brought with him give

testimony as to the truth of what he had said. The king believed these allegations and ordered that Ma'sūm 'Alī Shāh and his disciples be banished from Shiraz. Accompanying Ma'sūm in leaving the city were Fayḍ 'Alī Shāh, Nūr 'Alī Shāh, Mushtāq 'Alī Shāh, Naẓār 'Alī Shāh, and Darvīsh Husayn 'Alī.

Ma'sūm and his disciples then made their way from Shiraz to Isfahan. At this time, there was anarchy in every section of the country, 'Alī Murād Khān (a relative of Karīm Khān Zand) making claims for his own kingship in Isfahan. The Qājār tribe, with the assistance of their leader, Āqā Muḥammad Khān Qājār, had risen to defend 'Alī Murād Khān, hoping to conquer and rule Arak and Fars. For a short time, 'Alī Murād Khān had been forced to flee from Isfahan, and groups of Sufis of the Jalālī Order had at his departure celebrated and reveled in the marketplace and on the streetcorners of that city. Thus 'Alī Murād Khān held a general grudge against all dervishes, so that when he regained power in Isfahan and slanderers reminded him that Ma'sūm 'Alī Shāh and his followers, like the Safavids,²² might also have aspirations toward political power, he turned against them.

The superintendent of police in Isfahan along with Rustam Khān and Aṣlān Khān, two brothers who were close confidants of 'Alī Murād Khān, were authorized to expel Ma'sūm and his disciples with the utmost humiliation from the *khānqāh* of Fayḍ 'Alī Shāh, where they were staying. Government agents assaulted the Sufi house and pillaged everything they had. Ma'sūm 'Alī Shāh and Nūr 'Alī Shāh were then taken in chains to the house of the police captain.

Finally, Sayyid Ma'sūm, accompanied by Nūr 'Alī Shāh and a few devoted disciples, was expelled from Isfahan. They took the road to Kashan, intending to reach Khurasan. It is related that when they stopped to rest under a tree in Murchih-khurt, a village between Isfahan and Kashan, Ma'sūm bowed his head in contemplation for an hour and when he raised it declared, "the police captain has not yet finished bothering us. A few of our limbs still have to be cut off. Anybody who wants to save himself can leave." Upon hearing this, two horsemen sent by the governor of Isfahan galloped up. One cut off the ears of Nūr 'Alī Shāh and Ma'sūm 'Alī Shāh, taking back the cropped ears to Rustam and Aṣlān Khān; the other took the two Sufis in custody through Kashan to Tehran.

Āqā Muḥammad Khān Qājār, however, who had been under the surveillance of Karīm Khān Zand earlier while staying in Shiraz, had become an intimate confidant of Ma'sūm 'Alī Shāh through contact with a famous mullah and thought well of the Sufis. Upon learning of Ma'sūm's circumstances, he arranged for the dervish to be treated with respect and generosity

and to journey to the holy city of Mashhad at his expense. Thus, Ma'sūm 'Alī Shāh traveled to Mashhad along with some of his closest disciples, including Nūr 'Alī, Husayn 'Alī, Mushtāq 'Alī, Naẓar 'Alī, Ṣafā 'Alī, and Shawq 'Alī.

After making the pilgrimage to the tomb of Imam Ridā in Mashhad, Ma'sūm and his disciples set out for Harat where many of the nobles of that area became his disciples, including Prince Fīrūz al-Dīn Afghān, Muḥammad Kāzīm Khān Shāmlū, and Aḥmad Khān Taymūrī. After a short stay there, the best of Ma'sūm's disciples who accompanied him, including Nūr 'Alī, Husayn 'Alī, Mushtāq 'Alī, Rawnaq 'Alī, and Sayyid Mazhar 'Alī, were dismissed from his presence. Ma'sūm 'Alī Shāh then set out for Kabul, Zabul, and India.

After traveling through these lands, Sayyid Ma'sūm traveled by sea to Iraq, taking up residence in Najaf. Shortly thereafter he moved to Karbala', where he resided once again in the company of Nūr 'Alī, Rawnaq 'Alī, Majdhūb 'Alī, and Ridā 'Alī.

After a while, Sayyid Ma'sūm resumed his travels and set out to make the pilgrimage to the tomb of Imam Ridā in Mashhad. When he reached Kirmanshah, however, Āqā Muḥammad 'Alī Bihbahānī—an Iraqi theologian and scholar fanatically opposed to the Sufis and the son of Muḥammad Bāqir Bihbahānī—had Ma'sūm 'Alī arrested and imprisoned. The author of the *Ṭarā'iq al-ḥaqa'iq* (*Paths of Truths*) writes:

It has been related from the most reliable persons in Kirmanshah as well as from other sources that Sayyid Ma'sūm was martyred and then buried in the garden of the 'Arsh-i Barīn, where there now exists a building, and that this deed was done at his [Bihbahānī's] insistence.²³

As is obvious from all of the foregoing, Sayyid Ma'sūm 'Alī Shāh must be considered one of the renewers of the Nimatullāhī Order in Persia. It should be noted that Sufism had been on a steady decline in Persia ever since the end of the Safavid era. The Afghān invasion, the frequent military expeditions of Nādir Khan, and the rule of the Zand dynasty had all caused the people to pay less and less attention to spirituality. At the time of the arrival of Ma'sūm 'Alī Shāh, nothing but the mere name remained of the Safavid Sufi orders. A small number of people in Mashhad from the Nūrbakhshī Order and a small group of Dhahabī dervishes in Shiraz were all that remained. The coming of Ma'sūm 'Alī Shāh, his spiritual charisma, and the readiness of the Persian people after all the years of murder, bloodshed, and misbehavior on the part of a small number of the exoteric '*ulamā*', all caused the progress and reviviscence of the school of Sufism and

gnosis. It seemed that everywhere that Sayyid Ma'sūm and his companions placed their feet, people unconsciously inclined toward Sufism. From then on, the masters of the Nimatullāhī Order settled in Persia, after many centuries in India.

Ma'sūm 'Alī Shāh's age at the time of his martyrdom (1211/1796) was said to have been a little over sixty. Concerning his outward appearance, the author of the *Ṭarā'iq* has written:

He was a man of pleasing countenance and graceful appearance. He always wore the costume of the Sufis and left his hair disheveled and uncombed. He was weak physically and of a short stature. He was long in thinking and deliberating, and short in words. He never inclined towards anything of the world or any of its vanities, nor ever attempted to amass wealth. Whatever was given in charity to him, he immediately distributed among the dervishes, never accepting more than a single portion for himself, considering himself one of the dervishes.²⁴

Masters of the Nimatullāhī Order after Ma'sūm 'Alī Shāh

The spiritual chain of the Nimatullāhī Order from Ma'sūm 'Alī Shāh until the present day is as follows:

1. Nūr 'Alī Shāh (d. 1212/1797)
2. Husayn 'Alī Shāh Isfahānī (d. 1234/1818)
3. Majdhūb 'Alī Shāh (d. 1239/1823)
4. Mast 'Alī Shāh (d. 1253/1837)
5. Raḥmat 'Alī Shāh (d. 1278/1861)
6. Munawwar 'Alī Shāh (d. 1301/1883)
7. Wafā 'Alī Shāh (d. 1336/1918)
8. Ṣādiq 'Alī Shāh (d. 1340/1922)
9. Mūnis 'Alī Shāh (d. 1373/1953)
10. Nūr 'Alī Shāh II (Javad Nurbakhsh)

Divisions of the Nimatullāhī Order in Persia

After the death of Raḥmat 'Alī Shāh, two of his representatives (shaykhs),²⁵ Ṣafī 'Alī Shāh and Muḥammad Kāzīm, known as Sa'ādat 'Alī, rejected the mastership of Munawwar 'Alī Shāh, the legal successor of Raḥmat 'Alī Shāh, and provided the basis for the Gunābādī lineage and the Ṣafī 'Alī Shāhī brotherhood.

The Ṣafī 'Alī Shāhī Brotherhood

After the death of Raḥmat 'Alī Shāh, Ṣafī surrendered himself to Munawwar 'Alī Shāh but after some time for various reasons their paths became separated. After this separation, Ṣafī 'Alī Shāh's disciples, including Zahr al-Dawlah, founded the Society of Brotherhood (*anjuman-i ukhuwat*), which became an influential organization within Persian society as a whole. The first members of the Society of Brotherhood were:

1. Zahr al-Dawlah (President)
2. Sayyid Muḥammad Khān Intizām al-Dawlah
3. Sālār Amjad
4. Nizām al-Dawlah
5. Yamīn al-Mamālik
6. Nizām al-Lashkar
7. Mirzā Muḥammad 'Alī Khān Nuṣrat al-Sulṭān
8. Mirzā 'Alī Akbar Khān Surūsh
9. Mīr Bāqir Khān Ṣafāmanish
10. Mirzā 'Abd al-Wahhāb Jawāhirī
11. 'Alī Ridā Ṣabā

Many of these men were eminent figures of their day and their presence in the Society of Brotherhood did much to extend the influence of Sufism in the Persian upper classes. An important point to note here is that Ṣafī 'Alī never appointed a successor for himself.

The Gunābādī Lineage

Hājī Muḥammad Kāzim, known as Sa'adat 'Alī, was a shaykh in the order of Raḥmat 'Alī Shāh but, as mentioned, did not surrender himself to Munawwar 'Alī Shāh, the legal successor to Raḥmat 'Alī. While in Mashhad, Hājī Mullā Sulṭān Gunābādī met Sa'adat 'Alī and became his disciple and founded the Gunābādī lineage. After the death of Hājī Muḥammad Kāzim, his son Hājī Mullā 'Alī, and after him, his son Muḥammad Ḥasan, known as Ṣāliḥ 'Alī, and after him, his son Tābandih, successively claimed the leadership of the Gunābādī lineage. The latter is the present head of that lineage in Persia.

The Nimatullāhī Order Today under Javad Nurbakhsh

Javad Nurbakhsh was born in Kirman, Iran. He completed his early schooling in that city, often skipping grades and always the top student in his

class. At the age of sixteen he was initiated into the Nimatullāhī *ṭarīqah* by Āqā Murshidī, one of the shaykhs of Mūnis 'Alī Shāh. Finishing secondary school, he moved to Tehran to complete his studies in the University of Tehran, attending to his master, Mūnis 'Alī Shāh, during his free time. At age twenty he was appointed by Mūnis to the position of shaykh and over the next two years composed three slim volumes in honor of his master, called the *Gulzār-i Mūnis* (*The Garden of Mūnis*), concerning various aspects of theoretical and practical Sufism. The final volume of this work appeared in 1949.

In 1952 he received his M.D. and moved to Bam, west of Kirman, where he was appointed head of the town clinic. There, on June 15, 1953, when Mūnis 'Alī Shāh passed away in Tehran, J. Nurbakhsh received news of Mūnis 'Alī Shāh's posthumous investiture of him as *qutb* of the Nimatullāhī Order. For the last thirty-four years, Javad Nurbakhsh (Nūr 'Alī Shāh II) has directed the affairs of the Nimatullāhī Order, during which time he has supervised the construction of more than one hundred Sufi houses or *khānqāhs* in the major cities and towns throughout Persia.

Javad Nurbakhsh has been the author or editor of over ninety publications in Persian, printed in Tehran by Khaniqahi Nimatullahi Publications (Intishārāt-i Khānqāh-i Ne'matu'llāhī). These publications fall basically into two categories: (1) compositions by J. Nurbakhsh and (2) critical editions of the prose and poetical works of classical Sufi writers.²⁶ J. Nurbakhsh has also published many articles on psychology, consideration of which is, however, beyond the scope of this article.²⁷ It should also be mentioned that the Nurbakhsh Library in Tehran houses one of the largest collections of ancient manuscripts and books on Islamic mysticism in Iran, the complete index of which was published in 1973 by Ibrāhīm Dībājī.²⁸ From 1962 until 1977, Javad Nurbakhsh practiced psychiatry as professor at Tehran University and the head of one of the country's leading psychiatric hospitals. He also spent some time studying and doing research in this field at the Sorbonne. He is one of the first Sufi authorities to be well versed at once in the traditional science of the soul and modern psychiatry.²⁹

The Nimatullāhī Order in the West

Javad Nurbakhsh made his first visit to the United States in 1974, and, in response to the requests of an increasing number of American disciples, in 1975 he established the first Nimatullāhī Sufi house (*khānqāh*) in the United States in New York City. This was followed by a number of other centers in several other American cities. During the past decade, the number of

khānqāhs has continued to increase in America, and an important *khānqāh* in London has become the center for the order in the West.

Javad Nurbakhsh has resided in London since 1983, at which time he initiated a series of publications in Persian.³⁰ Two series of these works deserve particular mention, since they comprise an important contemporary chapter in this ancient tradition of Sufi literature: (1) *Ma'ārif-i šūfiyyah* (*The Gnosis of the Sufis*), a concise description of the basic theosophical concepts of classical Sufi authors in seven volumes (four of which have been translated into English); and (2) *Farhang-e Nurbakhsh*, a fifteen-volume encyclopedia of Sufi terminology that discusses in detail the esoteric meaning of the poetic symbolism in the Sufi lexicon (three volumes have been translated into English under the title *Sufi Symbolism*). Furthermore, a learned journal, *Sufi*, dedicated to the study of the literature, philosophy, and practice of Sufism, has recently begun publication in London in Persian and English, reaffirming the basic and perennial tenets, metaphysical grounds, and poetic truths of Islamic spirituality.

Nimatullāhī Spirituality and Contemplative Disciplines

The Nimatullāhī Order stresses the fraternity and equality of all human beings, unbiased respect for all the religions of the world, as well as service and love of all humanity regardless of differences in creed, culture, and nationality. In this order the practice of Sufism aims to create in the outer personality (*zāhir*) a highly ethical character, and in the interior soul (*bātin*) it aims to guide hearts to concentrate on human qualities and virtues and to achieve a unitarian insight and vision. Any propagation of Sufism should aim at the reality of Islam so that an attitude of love may be generated capable of unifying followers of divergent faiths. By the energy of Sufism, sectarian differences and disagreements are eliminated, since the Sufi directs his or her attention toward the sphere of Divine Unity (*tawhīd*), regarding everyone from this standpoint in fraternity and equality.

Nimatullāhī contemplative disciplines consist of five basic practices: (1) *dhikr-i khafti* (interior invocation or prayer of the heart), (2) *fikr* (contemplation, reflection), (3) *murāqabah* (meditation), (4) *wird* (litany, supplication), and (5) *muhāsabah* (self-examination).³¹ The Nimatullāhī Sufis congregate twice a week in the Sufi house wherein ritual prayers (*salāt*, *namāz*) are conducted. This is followed by the Sufi assembly (*majlis*). A period of silent meditation is first observed and then the mystical poetry of the great masters in the Persian Sufi tradition, such as Rūmī, 'Irāqī, Maghribī, or Shāh Ni'mat Allāh is sung, sometimes with musical accompaniment. In the

Nimatullāhī *ṭarīqat* the practice of musical audition (*samā'*) is quite a living tradition.³² Although the silent or nonvocal remembrance of God (*dhikr-i khafti*) is the major emphasis of this order, several times a year special gatherings of the Nimatullāhī *fuqarā'* are held, known as *dīk jūsh*, wherein the vocal remembrance (*dhikr-i jaliy*) is practiced.

Obedience to and faith in the master, as well as fidelity (*wafā*) to the order are also fundamental principles. In the relationship of the disciple to the master, the master is conceived of as a mirror reflecting the disciple's attention and devotion back toward God, rather than directing it at himself, so as to foster an idolatrous "cult of personality."

The Nimatullāhī Order particularly emphasizes service (*khidmat*) within the Sufi house itself. This service is performed according to an ancient and well-defined code of etiquette (*adab*), for as it is sometimes said, "the whole of Sufism is *adab*" (*al-tasawwuf kulluhū 'ādāb*).³³ The attitude of the Sufi in this service is one of altruistic "purity" (*ṣafā*) so that in interactions with others each Sufi considers himself below the other. Furthermore, the Sufis are generally encouraged to seek proximity to God, the Creator (*al-Khāliq*) through service to His creatures (*khalq*) in society. According to the dictum "Selfhood is blasphemy even if it be holy" (*khudī kufr ast agar khud pārsā'ist*), the Sufis' service has worth only to the degree that it is selfless and altruistic. Insofar as selfishness and egocentricity are the natural enemies of all spirituality, from the unitarian standpoint of the Nimatullāhī Sufis, giving offense to a person is an offense to the Creator, whereas feeling offended by a creature is tantamount to maintaining an attitude of polytheism before the One Creator.

The teachings of the Nimatullāhī Order remain alive today. Within Persia this order is by far the most widespread of the Sufi orders, and it continues to attract a large number of people in Europe and America and even in certain regions of the Islamic world such as black Africa, where this strongly Persian Sufi order had not penetrated until today.

Notes

1. Since the name of this order has become known in the West as the Nimatullāhī, this form will be used throughout this essay rather than Ni'mat Allāhī or Ni'mat Allāhiyyah, which would be the correct transliteration according to the system adopted in this book.

2. The historical sections of this article have been adapted from the author's *Masters of the Path: A History of the Masters of the Nimatullahi Sufi Order* (New York: Khaniqahi Nimatullahi Publications, 1980) 39–81.

3. His beautiful mausoleum in Mahan remains a great center of pilgrimage to this day.

4. See *Kullīyyāt-i ash'ār-i Shāh Ni'mat Allāh Walī Kirmānī* (*The Complete Poetical Works of Shāh Ni'mat Allāh Walī Kirmānī*), ed. J. Nurbakhsh (Tehran: Intishārāt-i Khāniqāh-i Ni'mat Allāhī, 1968; 6th reprint, 1982) *ghazal* 424.
5. 'Abd al-Razzāq Kirmānī, *Tadhkirah dar manāqib-i ḥadrat-i Shāh Ne'mat Allāh Walī*, in *Matériaux pour la biographie de Shāh Ni'matullāh Walī Kirmānī*, ed. J. Aubin (reprint; Tehran: Tahūrī Bookshop, 1983) 26.
6. See the editor's introduction, *Kullīyyāt-i ash'ār-i Shāh Ni'mat Allāh Walī Kirmānī*, 12.
7. Classical Sufi texts speak of these two contrasting states of soul, which are technical terms in the Sufi lexicon treated by the author in his *Sufism: Fear and Hope, Contraction and Expansion, Gathering and Dispersion, Intoxication and Sobriety, Annihilation and Subsistence* (New York: Khaniqahi Nimatullahi Publications, 1982).
8. See editor's introduction, *Kullīyyāt-i ash'ār-i Shāh Ni'mat Allāh Walī Kirmānī*, 14.
9. *Kullīyyāt-i ash'ār-i Shāh Ni'mat Allāh Walī Kirmānī*, 880, *rubā'i* 79.
10. See the editor's introduction, *Kullīyyāt-i ash'ār-i Shāh Ni'mat Allāh Walī Kirmānī*, 15.
11. Although the *Dīwān* of Shāh Ni'mat Allāh has been published often in Iran, the most complete edition is that by J. Nurbakhsh, cited above.
12. See the editor's introduction, *Kullīyyāt-i ash'ār-i Shāh Ni'mat Allāh Walī Kirmānī*, 19.
13. *Kullīyyāt-i ash'ār-i Shāh Ni'mat Allāh Walī Kirmānī*, *tarjī'*-band I, 715.
14. See chapter three in this volume on Ibn 'Arabī and the school in which this basic metaphysical doctrine was first explicitly elaborated.
15. *Kullīyyāt-i ash'ār-i Shāh Ni'mat Allāh Walī Kirmānī*, *rubā'i* 52, 876.
16. *Risālahā-yi Shāh Ni'mat Allāh Walī Kirmānī* (*The Complete Treatises of Shāh Ni'mat Allāh Walī Kirmānī*) (4 vols.; Tehran: Intishārāt-i Khāniqāh-i Ni'mat Allāhī, 1976-78).
17. *Ma'sūm* means inerrant and sinless.
18. Nizām 'Alī Shāh was one of the shaykhs of Majdhūb 'Alī Shāh (a later *qutb* of the Nimatullahi Order) and the author together with Nūr 'Alī Shāh and Rawnaq 'Alī Shāh of the *Jannat al-wiṣāl*, ed. J. Nurbakhsh (Tehran: Intishārāt-i Khāniqāh-i Ni'mat Allāhī, 1969) 862.
19. Before Fayḍ 'Alī Shāh's encounter with Ma'sūm, he had been a shaykh of the Nurbakhshiyyah, another Sufi order, and had directed a *khānqāh* in Isfahan. Nūr 'Alī Shāh was the next *qutb* of the order.
20. I.e., a descendant of 'Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib.
21. *Jannat al-wiṣāl*, ed. Nurbakhsh, 109.
22. The Safavids were originally a Sufi order which became a dynasty of Shī'ite kings who ruled Persia from 905/1500 to 1135/1722.
23. Muḥammad Ma'sūm Shirāzī, *Tarā'iq al-ḥaqā'iq*, ed. Muḥammad Ja'far Mahjūb (3 vols.; Tehran: Kitābkhāna-yi Sanā'ī, 1940) 3:175.
24. Ibid.
25. The term "shaykh" is used in the Nimatullahi Order to refer to the main representative of the supreme master or *qutb* of the order. In other Sufi orders the master is usually called "shaykh" while the representative is called *muqaddam* or *khalīfah*.—Ed.
26. Complete lists of these publications are provided in the bibliography to this volume.
27. See Ibrāhīm Hāshimī, *A Bibliography of Persian Books in Psychology and Education* (Tehran, 1350/1971) s.v. "Nurbakhsh."

28. *Fihrist-i nuskhahā-yi khatṭī-yi kitābkhāna-yi Nurbakhsh* (*Khāniqāh-i Ni'mat Allāhī*) (Tehran: Intishārāt-i Khāniqāh-i Ni'mat Allāhī, 1971 [vol. 2], 1973 [vol. 1])
29. This section is adapted from extracts of a biography of J. Nurbakhsh composed by some of his disciples.
30. See the bibliography.
31. See J. Nurbakhsh, *In the Paradise of the Sufis* (New York: Khaniqahi Nimatullahi Publications, 1979).
32. See J. Nurbakhsh, *In the Tavern of Ruin: Seven Essays on Sufism* (New York: Khaniqahi Nimatullahi Publications, 1978) chapter 4.
33. Ibid., 67.

The Naqshbandiyyah Order

K. A. NIZAMI

The Silsilah and Its Features

PERHAPS NO MYSTIC ORDER in the long and checkered history of Islamic mysticism has had such far-reaching impact on the attitude of Muslim peoples in different regions as the Naqshbandiyyah. Named after Khwājah Bahā' al-Dīn Muḥammad Naqshband (717/1317-791/1389), a native of Bukhara, the order first established itself in Central Asia and then spread out to Turkestan, Syria, Afghanistan, and India. In Central Asia not only important towns but even small villages came to have Naqshbandī *takiyyahs* (mystic corners) and hospices which carried on brisk religious activity. In the tenth/sixteenth century the Naqshbandī Order reached India, and a new phase of its spiritual activity began under the leadership of Shaykh Aḥmad of Sirhind (972/1564-1033/1624), known as Mujaddid-i Alf-i Thānī (Reformer of the second millennium).¹ According to Emperor Jahāngīr (1014/1605-1037/1628) his disciples reached every town and city of the Mughal Empire.² Under him the influence of the Naqshbandī Order traveled back to Turkish lands with renewed vigor. The Naqshbandī center of Sirhind (in the Punjab) eclipsed in importance many Naqshbandī centers of Central Asia. Early during the thirteenth/nineteenth century, a Naqshbandī saint of Delhi—Shāh Ghulām 'Alī (1156/1743-1240/1824)—had his disciples spread over "Rum, Syria, Baghdad, Egypt, China and Abyssinia."⁴ One of his disciples, Mawlānā Khālid Kurdī, revitalized the Naqshbandiyyah in Syria and sent his followers far and wide.⁵ The network of Naqshbandī *khānqāhs* covered several continents, and its saints worked both in national and international perimeters.

Muslim reaction to Western presence in many countries during the thirteenth/nineteenth century found its expression in the activities of the Naqshbandī saints. The revivalist movements in Turkey and West Asia owed their intellectual support and sustenance to the Naqshbandiyyah. Sayyid

Aḥmad Shahīd (d. 1247/1831), leader of the Mujāhidīn movement in India, was a Naqshbandī.⁶ The renowned Arab reformer Muḥammad Rashīd Ridā (1282/1865-1354/1935) followed the Naqshbandī teachings in his early years.⁷ Snouck Hurgronje has noted the influence of the Naqshbandiyyah even in Sumatra, Java, and Borneo.⁸ To this day, in fact, the order is a factor of importance in the life of the Muslim people of several countries. The publication of a Naqshbandī journal, *Sohbet Dergisi*, from Istanbul, though shortlived (1952-53), was an expression of continuing Turkish interest in the ideas of the order.

Throughout its history the Naqshbandī Order had two prominent characteristics determining its role and impact: (1) strict adherence to Islamic Law (*Shari'ah*) and the traditions of the Prophet (*Sunnah*); (2) determined effort to influence the life and thought of the ruling classes and to bring the state closer to religion. Unlike other Sufi orders, it did not adopt an isolationist policy toward the government of the day. On the contrary, it encouraged confrontation with political powers in order to change their outlook. "The King is the soul and the people the body. If the King goes astray, the people will follow suit," Shaykh Aḥmad Sirhindī used to say.⁹ The approach of the other orders, which gave greater importance to society than the government in their reformist efforts, was "As you are, so shall be your rulers." The Naqshbandīs, however, laid the responsibility squarely on the rulers and considered their reform a prerequisite to the reform of society.

Organizationally, an important aspect of the Naqshbandiyyah is its spiritual affiliation with Ḥaḍrat Abū Bakr, the first caliph. Though a few of its sub-branches have traced their origin to Ḥaḍrat 'Alī also,¹⁰ the main affiliation of the order has remained with Abū Bakr. Many other Sufi orders trace their origin to 'Alī alone and consider him to be the main fountain of spiritual life in Islam.

Spiritually, the Naqshbandiyyah stand out in visualizing a whole universe of spiritual experience and adventure. They have laid out with great conceptual clarity a world of spiritual development indicating the stages and stations (*ahwāl wa maqāmāt*) through which a mystic adventurer has to pass. Perhaps no other Sufi order has ever attempted this task so meticulously.

One other distinctive feature of the Naqshbandī saints was their "consciousness of mission." Most of them believed that they were divinely ordained to play their role in history. From Khwājah Bahā' al-Dīn Naqshband to Shāh Ghulām 'Alī of Delhi, different concepts of *mujaddid* (renewer), *qayyūm* (lasting), *qā'im* (steadfast), and *mahdī* (the guided one) determined the nature and scope of their activities.

Notwithstanding the great reverence that Naqshbandīs generally had for their spiritual mentors, they displayed unusual freedom of thought in giving

up any idea or practice of their shaykh if they found it at variance with their own understanding of the *Sharī'ah* or the *Sunnah*. Shaykh Ahmad Sirhindī disagreed with his mentor Khwājah Bāqī Bi'LLāh as well as all elders of the order on the question of the "oneness of being" (*wahdat al-wujūd*), while Shāh Walī Allāh's father emphasized his faith in the "oneness of being," ignoring Shaykh Ahmad's views. Mīrzā Mazhar declared the Vedas to be a revealed book and explained away the polytheistic character of many Hindu practices, while Shāh Ghulām 'Alī, his disciple, disagreed with these ideas. The concept of *tasawwur-i shaykh* (visualizing the image of the shaykh in meditation) was popular among the Naqshbandiyyah, but Sayyid Ahmad Shahīd rejected it. Thus, a certain independence of thought always characterized the Naqshbandiyyah. Taken as a whole, these distinctive features provided the Naqshbandī saints with direction and a motive power for their activities.

Khwājah Bahā' al-Dīn Naqshband: The Founder

Khwājah Bahā' al-Dīn Naqshband, the founder of the order, was born at Kushk-i Hinduwan, a village near Bukhara.¹¹ He received instruction in Sufism from Muḥammad Bābā of Sammās (a village three miles from Bukhara). Later he visited Bukhara, Samarqand, and other adjoining towns. At Nasaf he studied under Amīr Kulāl and, after his death, lived for several years with 'Arif al-Dikīrānī, a successor of Amīr Kulāl. For about twelve years he lived in Samarqand in the service of Sultan Khalīl and, when in 748/1347 the ruler was overthrown, he went to Ziwartun. There, as a part of his mystic training, he looked after herds of animals for seven years and spent another period of seven years in road mending. The purpose of such exercises was to deepen the sources of compassion and philanthropy and to awaken a sense of service in the entrant to the mystic fold. He died in his native village in 791/1389.

The Khwājah popularized his order in Central Asia and attracted people belonging to different walks of life. Though some incidents of his contact with the rulers and the nobles are recorded, he generally avoided mixing with them.¹² He did not like to partake of food with them, as he considered the sources of their income illegal.¹³ Despite all this, he was held in high esteem by the rulers. It is said that once when Tīmūr's procession was passing through the streets of Bukhara, the carpets of the saint's *khānqāh* were being dusted; Tīmūr stood there till the cleaners had finished their work.¹⁴

The saint had some land in his native village which he caused to be cultivated through some person,¹⁵ but never involved himself in cultivation. He lived a simple life and when asked why he did not have a slave

or slave-girl, he replied: "Ownership does not go with sainthood." According to Jāmī, the Khwājah used to say that his mystic path was *al-'Urwat al-wuthqā* (the firmest bond), which meant holding fast to the ways of the Prophet and his Companions.¹⁶ The saint's remark that it is easy to reach the highest pinnacle of the knowledge of monotheism (*tawhīd*), but it is difficult to attain gnosis (*ma'rifa*) shows the subtle distinction that he made between spiritual knowledge and spiritual experience.¹⁷ From what Ṣāliḥ has recorded about his life and activities, it appears that he was deeply concerned with the moral and spiritual training of his disciples and did not like them to have ill will or strained relations with anyone. Once he sought forgiveness from a person on behalf of a disciple by rubbing his face at his door.¹⁸

According to Shāh Walī Allāh, the details of spiritual discipline as laid down by Khwājah Bahā' al-Dīn Naqshband for his disciples were based on a thorough appreciation of the Turkish character and were therefore rigorous and exacting.¹⁹

Antecedents of the *Silsilah*: The Khwājagān

Khwājah Yūsuf Hamadānī (440/1048–534/1140), a seminal personality in the early history of the *silsila-yi Khwājagān* (the initiatic chain of the order), influenced a number of eminent saints who later became founders of independent orders.²⁰ Well versed in Islamic Law and a follower of the school of Imam Abū Hanīfah, Khwājah Yūsuf taught at Baghdad, Isfahan, Khurasan, Samarqand, and Bukhara. Subsequently he turned to spiritual culture and started delivering sermons. Four of his successors, Khwājah 'Abd Allāh Barqī, Khwājah Ḥasan Andaqī, Khwājah Ahmad Yisiwī, and Khwājah 'Abd al-Khālīq Ghujdawānī played important roles in the history of the order.²¹ The organization of the *silsilah* was the result of the efforts of Khwājah Ahmad; its doctrines emanated from Khwājah 'Abd al-Khālīq Ghujdawānī.

Khwājah Ahmad Yisiwī (d. 561/1166) is called *ātā* (father) by the Turks out of respect for his role in their spiritual history.²² Farīd al-Dīn 'Aṭṭār reverentially refers to him as "the spiritual mentor of Turkistan (*pīr-i Turkistān*)."²³ He was born at Yisi and received his early education there. Later he moved to Bukhara and joined the spiritual discipline of Shaykh Yūsuf Hamadānī. In 555/1160 he succeeded him as the chief saint of the hospice. He is reported to have converted large numbers of Turks to Islam.²⁴ Tīmūr built his tomb, which has remained through the ages a place of pilgrimage for Turks and Mongols and has recently been renovated by the Kazakhstan government.²⁵ It was through the successors of Khwājah Ahmad, Maṣṣūr Ātā (d. 593/1197), Sa'īd Ātā (d. 615/1218), and others that the order spread in Transoxiana, Khwarazm, Khurasan and the rest of

Persia, Anatolia and other places.²⁶ Hājji Biktāsh and Sari Saltuq also joined it.²⁷

Apart from his place in the history of Islamic mysticism in Turkey, Khwājah Ahmad occupies a position of eminence in the history of Turkish literature. He is called Father of Turkish poetry, as it was he who first started composing verses in that language. His collection of poems, called *Diwān-i Hikmet*, is very popular among the Turks.²⁸

Khwājah 'Abd al-Khālīq (d. 575/1179) was born at Ghujdwan, modern Gighduvan in Uzbekistan, which was a brisk center of trade, its weekly markets attracting people from neighboring villages.²⁹ As a consequence, the people were generally materialistic in their outlook. The Khwājah used to criticize their ways vehemently. "You have *zunnārs* [the sacred threads of idol worshipers] hidden inside your bodies," he told them. His mystical thought finds expression in his treatises (1) *Risāla-yi tarīqat* (*Treatise on the Spiritual Path*), (2) *Naṣīhat-nāmah* (*Treatise of Advice*), and (3) *Risāla-yi ṣāhibiyyah* (*The Ṣāhibiyyah Treatise*).³⁰

His spiritual will and testament (*Naṣīhat-nāmah*) contains the following instructions to his descendants:

Learn Islamic jurisprudence (*fiqh*) and the traditions of the Prophet (*ahādīth*). Do not mix with illiterate mystics. . . . Offer prayers in congregation. . . . Do not seek after fame. . . . Do not accept any office. . . . Do not be a surety for anybody. . . . Do not go to the court. Do not mix with rulers or princes. . . . Do not construct a *khānqāh*. . . . Do not hear too much mystic music. . . . Do not condemn mystic music. . . . Eat only what is permitted. . . . So far as you can, do not marry a woman who wants material comforts. . . . Laughter kills one's heart. Your heart should be full of grief, your body as if of an ailing person, your eyes wet, your actions sincere, your prayers earnest, your dress tattered, your company dervishes, your wealth poverty, your house the mosque and your friend God.³¹

Khwājah Ghujdawānī provided the Naqshbandiyyah with its mystic practices by consolidating the thought of the preceding saints of the order in the form of aphorisms which later became the cornerstone of the mystical thought of the order. These principles were the following:

1. *hūsh dar dam*: conscious remembrance of God as one inhales and exhales one's breath.

2. *nazar bar qadam*: keeping an eye on every step that one takes. It meant that every movement was regulated and directed toward achievement of some divine purpose.

3. *safar dar waṭan*: introspective study of oneself, that is, an effort to investigate and explore, analyze and understand one's own universe of internal experience.

4. *khalwat dar anjuman*: solitude when in company, that is, carrying on spiritual practices internally and being alone with God while outwardly busy with people.

5. *yād kard*: recollection.

6. *bāz gard*: restraining one's thought.

7. *nigāh dāsh*: keeping a watch on the drift and direction of thought.

8. *yād dāsh*: treasuring God in memory through concentration.

Saints who followed 'Abd al-Khālīq Ghujdawānī wove around these aphorisms a whole philosophy of mystic discipline and added the following three concepts to it:

9. *wuqūf-i 'adadi*: keeping an eye on the heart's remembrance of God so that concentration is not disturbed.

10. *wuqūf-i zamānī*: keeping an account of how one spends one's time; thanking Him for the time spent in good works and repenting for wrongs done.

11. *wuqūf-i qalbī*: keeping the heart in a state of alertness, responsive to divine communication.

These practices, which are aimed at regulating the entire inner life of man, may not have been new in spirit or content, but they gave clear and categorical expression to fleeting moments of spiritual experience and identified every spiritual state, permanent or transitory.

Among the disciples of 'Abd al-Khālīq Ghujdawānī, Khwājah Ahmad Siddiq, Khwājah Awliyā' Kabīr, and Khwājah Sulaymān Karmaynī were active and dynamic figures.³² They extended the influence of the order in Bukhara and its neighboring areas. Khwājah Muḥammad Bukhārī, a disciple of Khwājah Sulaymān's disciple Shaykh Abū Sa'īd Bukhārī, wrote *Maslak al-ʿarifīn* (*The Regulations of the Gnostics*), a book of great value on the doctrines of the order.³³ Another important figure of the *silsilah* was Khwājah 'Alī Rāmītīnī, whose spiritual eminence has been praised by no less a person than Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī.³⁴ The Naqshbandīs generally refer to him as *Hadrat-i 'azīzān*.³⁵ He had correspondence with Shaykh 'Alā' al-Dawlah Simnānī. His following remark is quoted in Naqshbandī sources: "Had there been at that time a single descendant of Khwājah 'Abd al-Khālīq Ghujdawānī living on this earth, Maṣṣūr could never have been hanged." Once Khwājah 'Alī was asked why he practiced the repetition of the Name *Allāh* loudly (*dhikr-i jaliy*). He replied: "For a novice loud repetition of the Name *Allāh* is needed; advanced mystics could do it through (silent repetition in) the heart."

The way he entered Khwarazm and settled there throws light on his method of spiritual training and work. When at the gate of Khwarazm, he sent some of his disciples to the Shah with a message: "A weaver dervish

stands at the gate of your city. If you permit him, he would come; otherwise he would go elsewhere." The king and his courtiers laughed at this request and the king, in a light mood, acceded to it by putting his signature to an edict. The saint entered the city and settled in a lonely corner. Every morning he went out to the labor market and engaged some laborers. Throughout the day he instructed them in the principles of Islamic hygiene and taught them the way to offer prayers and repeat continuously the Name *Allāh*. At the end of the day he gave them their wages and let them go home. In this way he continued to impart religious and spiritual education to laborers. In the course of time the circle of his admirers increased. Some courtiers created suspicion in Khwārazm Shah's mind about his increasing popularity. The Shah would have expelled him, but the saint showed the *farmān* or royal edict to the Shah and was allowed to live there. He died in Khwarazm working ceaselessly for the spiritual culture of the people of the region.

The teachings of all these saints and their religious and spiritual ideals were consolidated and channeled into a movement by Khwājah Baha' al-Dīn Naqshband.

Successors of Khwājah Naqshband

Muhammad Pārsā and 'Ubayd Allāh Ahrār

Among the disciples of Khwājah Bahā' al-Dīn Naqshband, Khwājah 'Alā' al-Dīn 'Aṭṭār and Khwājah Muḥammad Pārsā were the most outstanding. Khwājah 'Aṭṭār (d. 803/1400) had shared the burden of his master in looking after the spiritual training of the new entrants to the mystic fold.³⁶ He developed a persuasive and inspiring method of spiritual instruction. Khwājah Muḥammad Pārsā recorded the master's table talks, as they contained the essence of Naqshbandī doctrine presented in practical terms. According to him, of the ten stages of spiritual progress, nine could be covered by earning a livelihood through personal effort and from permitted sources. He preferred cultivation to trade.³⁷

Khwājah Muḥammad Pārsā (d. 822/1419) accompanied his master on *hajj* and received his spiritual training during the journey.³⁸ He was very fond of the *Mathnawī* of Rūmī and used to consult it even for omen and augury. Citing elder saints as his authority, he used to say that one should always pray to God with the same fear and faith with which a dying person turns to Him in supplication.

Khwājah Muḥammad Pārsā displayed both ingenuity and psychological insight in describing his experiences of the enjoyment of the Infinite. Iqbāl

remarked in one of his lectures: "But it is really religious Psychology, as in 'Irāqī and Khwājah Muḥammad Pārsā, which brings us much nearer to our modern way of looking at the problem of space and time."³⁹ A careful study of Khwājah Pārsā's thought, which takes his exegetical work also into consideration, would reveal the depth and originality of his ideas. Ulugh Beg, Shāh Rukh, and other Central Asian princes treated him with respect on account of his scholarship and piety.

An important aspect of the literary and religious activity of the followers of Khwājah Bahā' al-Dīn was their interest in Quranic studies. Some of them, like Khwājah Muḥammad Pārsā and Ya'qūb Charkhī, wrote commentaries on the Quran in order to attract people to a study of the basic source of the Faith.⁴⁰

In influence and material means Khwājah 'Ubayd Allāh Ahrār (806/1403–896/1490) was perhaps the most powerful saint of the order. He was born at Shash (Tashkand) in 806/1403 during the month of Ramaḍān. Kāshifī says that he did not suck milk from his mother's breast during the first forty days, as she did not have proper ablutions at that time. If anybody planned anything for him which was a deviation from the traditions of the prophet, it never materialized. He was one year old when the ceremony of shaving his head (*'aqīqah*) was arranged in a way that was not consistent with the tradition of the Prophet. Exactly on the day of celebration, the death of Tīmūr occurred and the whole function was disturbed.⁴¹

In his boyhood he saw Jesus Christ in a dream and fell at his feet. Jesus pulled him up and said: "Do not be worried, we will train you." Khwājah Ahrār interpreted this dream to mean that he would be blessed with the power to revive dead hearts as Christ used to revive dead bodies.⁴²

Khwājah Ahrār had little interest in formal education during his youth and frustrated all efforts of his maternal uncle, Khwājah Ibrāhīm, to arrange regular and methodical instruction for him. He was taken to Samarqand for this purpose, but to no avail. His father, Khwājah Maḥmūd Shāshī, was a man of very small means. He cultivated some land at Gulshan. Khwājah Ahrār spent his early years under extremely straitened circumstances. With an old and tattered garment (*qabā*) on his body, he lived in Shahrukhiyyah in a house that was below the road level so that rain water would run into it and it would become uninhabitable. During winter days half of his body remained cold for want of clothing. This early period of destitution and penury, which was in sharp contrast to his later affluence and plenty, remained ever present in his mind, and he developed a keen concern for the poor and the destitute. Throughout his life, he never accepted *futūḥ* (unasked-for gifts), which were permitted for mystics.

After visiting many important saints in Transoxiana and Herat, Khwājah

Ahrār returned to his homeland and took to cultivation. With a pair of bulls which he shared with a partner, he started ploughing the fields. Very soon his economic position began to improve. Eventually he came to own thirty-three hundred villages (*mazra'ah*) and many extensive farms. Even the famous village of Pashaghar once belonged to him.⁴³ Jāmī refers to his villages in his *Yūsuf wa Zulaykhā* (*Joseph and Potiphar's Wife*). Kāshifī once stayed with one of his clerks at Qurshi and was informed by him that in a single village of that area three thousand laborers and double that number of bulls were engaged every year for irrigating the land. From the villages in Samarqand alone eighty thousand *maunds* of corn went to Sultan Ahmad Mīrzā as land tax (*'ushr*, i.e., one-tenth of the produce).⁴⁴ Jāmī says in a verse that when poverty desired to appear in the garb of royalty, it came in the form of 'Ubayd Allāh Ahrār.

In the history of the Naqshbandī Order no other saint has ever possessed so much land, property, or wealth as Khwājah 'Ubayd Allāh Ahrār. He was respected by high and low alike. Respectful references to him are found in contemporary histories and records. Bābur looked to him as the source of his spiritual guidance and solace.

Khwājah Ahrār, who possessed an extremely humble and humane temperament, received his visitors with great humility. His urbanity, culture, and courtesy were almost proverbial. He disdained haughtiness and pride and cited a saying of the Prophet to this effect: "Behaving with pride toward the proud is like spending money in charity." He considered pride an obnoxious habit and cited an incident from the life of Abū Yazīd to highlight its evil effect on a mystic. While walking in a street, he came across a dog with a wet body and tried to save his skirt from getting polluted. The dog said, "If your skirt had touched my body, a little water would have cleaned it, but what about the filth that you have put on your skirt by considering yourself purer than myself. Which water would clean this?"⁴⁵ Khwājah Ahrār believed that pride and arrogance lowered a man's moral stature and weakened his spiritual fiber. Service of mankind was of supreme spiritual value in his opinion, and his concern for the poor and the down-trodden won for him the love and affection of the people.

Once an epidemic broke out in Samarqand. The Khwājah, who was staying at the *madrasah* of Mawlānā Quṭb al-Dīn Ṣadr, looked very devotedly after the patients and did not hesitate to wash their soiled beds. This continued to such a degree that he himself fell victim to the disease. But he did not stop looking after those who needed more care. "Different have been the gates," he used to say, "through which people have reached their spiritual goals; in my case it has been the door of service [to mankind]." A person was cruel and pitiless, in his eyes, if his heart did not throb in

sympathy with those in distress and pain. Even cruelty to animals should touch the chords of sympathy in the human heart. He mentioned the story of a saint whose body started bleeding at the sight of a horse which was being whipped.

Though possessing considerable material means, Khwājah Ahrār did not attach his heart to worldly things and believed that the secret of human happiness lay in contentment, which he explained as the attitude of that person who lived in a jungle where there was no water, no companion, and no hope of getting food from any source, and yet he maintained his peace of mind.

Khwājah Ahrār's source of spiritual inspiration was Ibn 'Arabī, whose views he often cited in his assemblies. He was also an admirer of Rūmī, and in elucidation of his own mystical concepts, he relied on the *Mathnawī*. The Naqshbandī saints of this period, particularly Khwājah Ahrār, played a very important role in popularizing the *Mathnawī* in Central Asia.

Two aspects of Khwājah Ahrār's thought deserve particular mention. First, he believed in the development of man after death (*taraqqī ba'd al-mawt*).⁴⁶ For him death was merely a stage in the process of man's growth; he continued to grow even after his death. This idea, which was taken up by his followers also, had an impact on human character and perspective. Second, the Khwājah believed that even fossils and rocks have life and respond to human action. He referred to Ibn 'Arabī's researches in this regard and expressed the view that stones and rocks accept the influence of man.⁴⁷

The Khwājah's spiritual discipline was based on his conviction that the purpose of human life was to be busy with the remembrance of God at all times. This did not mean that a person could cut himself off from all contact with society and sit in a corner meditating and praying. It meant an attitude of mind which, while attending to all routine works of life, remained really engaged with God. In fact, *dhikr* (remembrance of God) should permeate one's whole being. He quoted Khwājah Muḥammad 'Alī Ḥakīm Tirmidhī, who said that the life of the heart depends on remembering God day and night. He once punished his servants who were talking while putting wood in the stove to heat water for ablutions. He expected them to be busy with God even while doing odd jobs. When he permitted visitors to go back to their homes, he advised them to keep busy in contemplation all the way and take stock of their involvement with God at every stage of their journey. While he laid great emphasis on the remembrance of God, he did not permit penitences or fasts beyond a point. Excessive indulgence in them, he used to say, created mental imbalance.

Despite all the consideration that he had for his visitors, he did not like

to associate with people who were opposed to mystic ways (*bīgānah*). He believed and quoted Khwājah Ahmad Yisiwī in support of his views that even if an article belonging to one hostile to the mystic way of life remained in the *khānqāh*, it disturbed concentration in prayers.

Khwājah Ahrār did not like to see the mystics dressed shabbily or neglecting the cleanliness of their bodies. "Unless a spiritual teacher possesses outward comeliness, he can neither infuse love in the hearts of his followers nor inspire them," he used to say. In support of his views he cited the practice of the Prophet, who combed his beard and put on an attractive headdress before he came out.

The Khwājah advised his visitors that once they selected a spiritual mentor they were obliged to put full faith and reliance in him. Lack of faith in the spiritual guide obstructed the growth of one's spiritual personality. But he rejected the view that nothing could be achieved without a spiritual mentor. He cited from the Quran: "This day have I perfected for you your religion and completed My favor on you and chosen for you Islam as a religion" (III,5). He said that the Quran and the traditions of the Prophet were enough for guidance and the idea of the indispensability of a shaykh was not valid. On the question of celibacy, his attempt was to reconcile two palpably contradictory positions. Although he expressed full faith in the sayings of the Prophet and the Quranic verses which enjoined married life, he put forward arguments in favor of celibacy. He said that prophets could marry because they had full control over their time and their thoughts and there was no risk of their becoming distracted. Marriage was necessary for the common man also, because he needed the satisfaction of his animal soul. For the middle category, in which he included the mystics, celibacy was preferable. "A single breath," he used to say, "that one draws from inside with God is better than seventy-two thousand sons." He said that in recommending celibate life to his followers, he was guided by the exigencies of the time.

According to the Khwājah, the real work of a mystic was not merely concentration and meditation but a continuing effort to subordinate all his actions to a supreme ideal and to infuse that spirit into all his actions. Being in the Divine Presence and the mental concentration that came to an individual as a result of his own struggle upon the mystic path were more abiding than spiritual states that appeared spontaneously. Communication through the tongue was more important than influencing the hearts of people through spiritual communication. Had it been otherwise, prophets would not have used their tongues to attract people but would have relied on their spiritual powers to bring about change in people's lives.

A bold and activist strain appeared in the thought of Khwājah Ahrār when he talked about resistance to injustice and tyranny. When a man with a just cause is confronted with any difficult situation, two courses are open to him: either to adopt a low-lying posture and save himself or to fight the evil with full determination, regardless of the consequences. Technically the first course is called that of *rukhsat*, and the second '*azīmat*. The Khwājah told his followers that those who acted on '*azīmat* were superior to those who acted on *rukhsat*. It was a spiritually impoverished personality which adopted the course of least resistance; '*azīmat* was the path of the spiritually powerful.

Spiritual exercises should be indulged in only to the extent that one retained joy in them and did not become stale. He told his disciples to dispel from their hearts both attraction of heaven and fear of hell. Love of God alone, he used to emphasize, should be the leitmotif of all spiritual activity.

Khwājah Ahrār considered it necessary to keep contact with the rulers and influence them for the good. Once he was told in a dream that the law of the Prophet (*Sharī'at*) would be strengthened through the rulers. This determined the direction of his thought and activity. He used to say: "If we had concentrated on admitting people to spiritual discipline, no spiritual leader of these days would have found a single disciple for himself. But we have been entrusted with another responsibility. We have to protect the Muslims from the [highhandedness of the] tyrants. For this reason we have to keep contact with the rulers and captivate them."⁴⁸ With this approach his contact with the ruling classes increased continuously. The Timūrid princes treated him with deep respect. They used to receive him "standing at a distance with their eyes fixed on the ground."⁴⁹ Yūnus Khān, Sultān Ahmad Mīrzā, 'Umar Shaykh Mīrzā and others referred their internecine conflicts to him for arbitration. Bābur's father, 'Umar Shaykh Mīrzā, was his disciple.⁵⁰ Referring to his father's devotion to the saint, Bābur remarks: "As his Highness the Khwājah was there, accompanying him step by step, most of his affairs found lawful settlement."⁵¹ Before his conquest of Samarqand, Bābur saw him in a dream, lifting him above the ground and predicting his occupation of Samarqand.⁵² Khwājah Ahrār's sons Khwājakā Khwājat and Khwājah Yahyā also had close relations with Bābur.⁵³

Khwājah Ahrār did not leave any literary work except a booklet which he wrote at the insistence of his father, Khwājah Mahmūd Shāshī, entitled *Risāla-yi wālidiyyah* (*Treatise Presented to the Father*). Bābur translated this Persian treatise into Turkish verse during a period of his illness. He believed that as Būsīrī, the author of the poem *Qasīda-yi burdah*, was rid of his paralytic disease upon composition of that poem, so would he recover from illness on versifying Khwājah 'Ubayd Allāh Ahrār's work.⁵⁴

'Abd al-Rahmān Jāmī

In the literary and spiritual history of the Naqshbandiyyah, Mawlānā 'Abd al-Rahmān Jāmī (827/1414–898/1492) stands out as one of its outstanding figures. In 832/1419 when Khwājah Muhammad Pārsā visited Herat, Jāmī's father, Nizām al-Dīn, took him to the saint. He was only five years of age at that time, but he was so deeply impressed by the aroma of spiritual serenity and grandeur that hallowed Khwājah Pārsā that throughout his life he remembered his features.

After completing his education in traditional subjects, Jāmī joined the discipline of Khwājah Sa'īd al-Dīn Kāshgharī (d. 864/1459), a *khalīfah* of Khwājah Bahā' al-Dīn Naqshband. For years he subjected himself to penances under his supervision. When Kāshgharī died, Jāmī joined the discipline of Khwājah 'Ubayd Allāh Ahrār and gave to one of his *mathnawīs* the title *Tuhfat al-Ahrār* (Present to Ahrār). It was with him that he learned difficult portions of Ibn 'Arabī's *al-Futūḥāt al-makkiyah* (Meccan Revelations). Strangely enough, one of the greatest exponents of Ibn 'Arabī's thought had learned the great mystic's works from one whose formal education did not go beyond a few elementary books.⁵⁵ Jāmī, however, used to send his disciples from Khurasan to Khwājah Ahrār for guidance and inspiration. The Khwājah told them: "When Mawlānā Jāmī is there, why do you take the trouble of coming over to me? How strange it is that a river of light flows in Khurasan and people come rushing here to receive light from a candle!"

Jāmī's chief contribution to Sufism lies in presenting the thought of Ibn 'Arabī in more intelligible terms and in writing commentaries on the works of Ibn 'Arabī, Rūmī, Pārsā, etc. which elucidated many abstruse concepts of the oneness of being (*wahdat al-wujūd*). Jāmī's own poetic compositions also helped in propagating such concepts and ideas. During his lifetime, he was looked upon as an authority on Ibn 'Arabī and people from regions as distant as the Deccan wrote to him for elucidation of the mystical concepts of Ibn 'Arabī.⁵⁶

Jāmī's *Nafahāt al-uns* (Breath of Familiarity) has not only preserved the account of many saints of Central Asia and Persia but has also inspired many others to attempt similar compilations. Encouraged by him, Kāshifī wrote his *Rashahāt* (Sprinklings), which is invaluable for reconstructing the history of the Naqshbandī Order.

Jāmī's mystical attitude was determined by his deeply aesthetic temperament. He believed in divine and cosmic love ('*ishq*') as a necessary condition for all spiritual advancement. Though this emotion was basically mystical and cosmic, at times it appears that it became erotic, and appreciation of things beautiful made his love appear sensual and mundane. But in his day

an impression had developed that the love of some human being ('*ishq-i majāzī*') was necessary for developing the love of God ('*ishq-i ḥaqīqī*'). Love centralized and integrated a personality by giving it an emotional peg. A mystic mentor's task was made easy when a man was in the grip of '*ishq-i majāzī*', because he could cut his connection at one point and divert his emotions toward '*ishq-i ḥaqīqī*'. As for one who did not experience '*ishq-i majāzī*' but was desirous of traversing the mystic journey, his mentor would have to sever his connection with the world at too many points. But this whole approach, whatever its psychological basis, involved grave risks, and Khwājah Bāqī Bi'LLāh told his disciples that even Jāmī had dispensed with it in his later life.

The Naqshbandī *Silsilah* in India and the Role of Khwājah Bāqī Bi'LLāh

In the closing years of the tenth/sixteenth century, the center of Naqshbandī activity, as well as its intellectual gravity, shifted to India. Khwājah Bāqī Bi'LLāh (971/1563–1012/1603) was born in Kabul.⁵⁷ He traveled in Transoxiana, Samarqand, Bukhara, Kashmir, etc., and then came to India. In his own words, he "brought the sacred seed (of the order) from Samarqand and Bukhara and sowed it in the fertile soil of India." Fully conversant with the Naqshbandī principles of organization and its methods of training, he bestowed equal attention on the common man and Mughal nobles. During the short span of five years that he was destined to work in India, he conveyed the message of the *silsilah* to the '*ulamā*', the Sufis, the *māliks* (landowners), and the *mansabdārs* (officials) with equal effectiveness. His discerning eye selected the best talent in different spheres—Nawāb Muradā Khān among the political figures,⁵⁸ Shaykh Ahmad Sirhindī among the Sufis, and Shaykh 'Abd al-Haqq among the '*ulamā*'.

What endeared Khwājah Bāqī Bi'LLāh to the people was his extremely amiable personality. People came to him not merely for mystic training but also for that spiritual bliss and solace which are the deepest longing of the human heart. Like the Naqshbandī saints of Central Asia, he was addressed as Ḥadrat-i Ishān. His *khānqāh* was a big establishment where food and stipend were given to the inmates. But he extended his hospitality to others for three days only. In his view permitted sources of livelihood and faith in one's spiritual guide were necessary prerequisites for spiritual training. The following proceedings of his meeting held on 23 Dhi'l-qa'dah 1009/17 May 1601 throw light on the principles of his discipline:

I [the compiler] was privileged to kiss the ground [received access to meeting with the saint]. Conversation turned to the circumspection that should be

exercised in the matter of food. [The Khwājah said: "One should not merely satisfy himself that the food before him is permitted. One should see to it that the wood, the water, and the cooking utensils used are all from permitted sources of income. The cook also should be a God-conscious person. Cooking should be done at the proper time with a heart conscious of God and His Presence. Food prepared without due care generates a smoke inside which closes the sources through which divine benediction descends [upon the human heart]. Pious souls which are the reflection of divine grace do not come near such a heart. . . . People with weak minds should take food which is soft [easily digestible] and invigorates the mind. For instance, if a man with a feeble mind makes bread of barley his diet, aridity will affect his mind and stop the passage of [divine] benediction. . . . There is a bounty [of God] which specifically pertains to the mind. When dryness gets into the brain [as a result of uncongenial food], this bounty cannot reach there. So be very cautious in the matter of your food. Do not eat food which does not suit your temperament. Do not observe many [supererogatory] fasts which cause the weakness of mind. People endowed with spiritual unveiling (*kashf*) should be extra cautious about it and should take care to make their mind vigorous. Often the dryness of mind leads to deceptive [spiritual] revelations.

At this stage a man submitted that such and such a person—he named a notable contemporary saint—has said that your good self keeps away his followers from faith in earlier saints and thinks that their spiritual well-being depends on this [segregation]. [The Khwājah] replied: "It is not so. When I find that some aspirants for spiritual training are fickle in their faith, I advise them to concentrate on one [saint and one order]. There is a lot of discussion on this subject in mystic treatises. One [author] says: 'One who remains at one place, is [virtually] everywhere; and one who is everywhere is [really] nowhere.' Another writer says: 'Hold to one door and hold it fast.' Others have said: 'Oneness of objective is a prerequisite of the mystic path' and so on.

"This being the truth of the matter, why should not I tell them and save them from distraction? Those who come to me, come for their [spiritual] benefit and not for any other purpose. . . . No one else has the faith which we have in the Chishtiyyah, the Qādiriyyah and the Suhrawardiyyah [saints]. But the people of India in general have a faith in [these saints of different orders] which borders on *shirk* (polytheism). In our view the saints of these orders have [so] lost themselves in God (*fanā' fi'llāh*) [that their separate existence has ceased], but these people consider them as independently existent and effective."⁵⁹

A staunch believer in the doctrine of the oneness of being of Ibn 'Arabī, Bāqī Bi'llāh explained away the criticism of 'Alā' al-Dawlah Simnānī as a result of a misunderstanding. The claim of the followers of Shaykh Ahmad Sirhindī that he had accepted the other theory propounded by Shaykh Ahmad lacks confirmation.

Khwājah Bāqī Bi'llāh breathed his last when he was hardly forty. Some time before his death he showed his palm to his wife and said: "See, my life line has come to an end." What the Khwājah had achieved at that age was

really remarkable. He had effectively delivered the message of the Naqshbandiyyah in India and had prepared the ground for its further expansion. Though he ran a large *khānqāh*, when he breathed his last his property comprised one rupee in cash, a few books, a horse, and an ordinary carpet.⁶⁰

Khwājah Bāqī Bi'llāh used the medium of poetry also to communicate his ideas, mostly of the school of the oneness of being, but elucidating other mystical concepts also.⁶¹ In his table talks the spirit of his discipline is made clear in a single sentence: "Not mystic emotions but adherence to *Shari'at* Law should be the ideal." His eldest son, known as Khwājah Kalān, wrote *Mablagh al-rijāl* (*Perfection of Men*) in which he discussed some contemporary trends of thought and religious sects in India and Persia. His younger son, Khwājah Khurd, wrote a treatise, *Ta'lim-i sālik* (*Instruction of the Traveler upon the Path*) providing basic instruction to the entrants of the mystic fold.⁶²

Shaykh Ahmad of Sirhind and Shaykh 'Abd al-Haqq Muhaddith of Delhi were eminent disciples of Khwājah Muhammad Bāqī. Shaykh 'Abd al-Haqq concentrated on academic work and looked after the seminary where the traditions of the Prophet (*ahādith*) were the main subject of instruction.⁶³ He wrote about sixty books on different religious themes and prepared also the first reliable biographical dictionary of the Indian mystics, the *Akhhār al-akhyār* (*Annals of Pious Men*).

Mujaddid-i Alf-i Thānī and the Reorganization of the Naqshbandiyyah

Shaykh Ahmad was born in 971/1563 in Sirhind, a town in the Punjab.⁶⁴ After completing his education there, he came to Agra for further studies and came into contact with Abu'l-Faḍl and Fayḍī, who were to enjoy great prestige at the court of Akbar. He is reported to have helped Fayḍī in writing his Arabic commentary on the Quran, known as *Sawāṭi' al-ilhām* (*Radiance of Inspiration*). This work has the amazing peculiarity of containing no letter with a dot—and the Arabic alphabet has fifteen dotted letters! At the age of twenty-eight he went to Delhi and joined the circle of Khwājah Bāqī Bi'llāh's disciples.

Shaykh Ahmad's position is unique in the intellectual history of the Naqshbandī Order. While adhering to the basic and fundamental principles of the order, he gave its doctrines a new orientation by discarding the doctrine of the oneness of being (*wahdat al-wujūd*) as propounded by Ibn 'Arabī and accepted by almost every important saint of the Naqshbandiyyah, like Khwājah Bahā' al-Dīn Naqshband, Khwājah 'Ubayd Allāh Ahrār, and Mawlānā Jāmī. His predecessors had not merely accepted the ideas of

Ibn 'Arabī, but in fact the key and kernel of their higher thought was derived from his *al-Futūḥāt al-makkiyyah* (Meccan Revelations) and *Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam* (Bezels of Wisdom). Shaykh Ahmad declared: "We do not need the *Futūḥāt al-makkiyyah*; we need the *Futūḥāt al-madaniyyah* (Medinan Revelations)" and rebutted Ibn 'Arabī's doctrines of the oneness of being, propounding the other concept of *tawḥīd* generally termed *wahdat al-shuhūd* (unity of consciousness). Burhān Ahmad Fārūqī explains the implications of his thought as follows:

The Mujaddid insists that there is absolutely no relation between the world and its unique Creator except that the world has been created by Him and is a sign that indicates His hidden attributes. All other assertions, viz., *ittiḥād* or union or identity, *iḥāṭa* or comprehension or *ma'īyyat* or co-existence are due to *sukr* or the ecstatic condition of mystics. Those who have reached the higher state of *ṣabw* or sobriety are free from such so-called *ma'ārif* or cognitions. True, they too came across such cognitions in the course of their mystic journey; but they have left them behind and they criticise them in the light of Revelation. Indeed, to speak of the relations of *ittiḥād* or union, *'ainiyyat* or identity, etc. between God and the World is an awful misconception. It is a misconception of this sort: Suppose a highly accomplished man invents an alphabet and certain sounds to display his ingenuity and capacity. Someone comes forward and maintains that the alphabet and the sounds are identical with the inventor.⁶⁵

Shaykh Ahmad propounded his ideas so cogently and based them on his personal spiritual experience that after him the doctrine of *wahdat al-shuhūd* became the doctrine of the Naqshbandī saints. In India the mystic doctrine till then was based mainly on the doctrine of *wahdat al-wujūd*, and a number of commentaries had been written on the works of Ibn 'Arabī. It was but inevitable that a conflict of mystical concepts took place as a result of Shaykh Ahmad's exposition of his doctrine. Even the French visitor François Bernier noticed the controversy that was raging in Indo-Muslim religious thought in those days.⁶⁶

Shaykh Ahmad, like preceding Naqshbandī saints of Central Asia, demanded from his disciples meticulous adherence to the Quran and the traditions (*Sunnah*) of the Prophet. He was opposed to all innovations that were not confirmed by the practice of the Prophet and dubbed them *bid'at*. He trenchantly criticized the attitude of mind which looked to any source of inspiration except the Prophet.⁶⁷ This approach led him to criticize Akbar's religious experiments.

Akbar had had long discussions with different religious thinkers in his Hall of Religious Discussions. He had inquired into the religious principles and practices of Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism, Zoroastrianism, and Christianity. In his *Dīn-i ilāhī* (Divine Religion) he made an attempt to mix

elements of different religions and to evolve a new eclectic system of thought with himself as its head. Shaykh Ahmad considered these experiments a serious blow to the monotheistic principles of Islam and made up his mind to oppose them. His three volumes of letters (containing 534 letters) show that he had approached eminent Mughal nobles of the period and had established intellectual understanding with them. When Jahāngīr ascended the throne, one of the closest supporters of Shaykh Ahmad's point of view, Nawāb Murtaḍā Khān Shaykh Farīd, elicited a promise from the Emperor that he would "defend the law of Islam."⁶⁸ The impact that Shaykh Ahmad had on the Mughal emperors and their religious attitude may be gauged from the fact that Aurangzeb received his spiritual instruction from the sons and grandsons of Shaykh Ahmad. Shaykh Ahmad's spiritual eminence as well as the Timūrid tradition of looking to the Naqshbandī Order as their spiritual umbrella determined the attitude of Aurangzeb.⁶⁹ Even the Chishtī saints realized the Naqshbandī hold on Aurangzeb's mind, and Shāh Kalīm Allāh of Delhi told his disciples in the Deccan that they were trying in vain to influence the religious outlook of Aurangzeb.⁷⁰

Apart from his concept of *wahdat al-shuhūd*, which gave a new direction to Muslim mystical thought in India and elsewhere, Shaykh Ahmad's contribution in the broader framework of mystical thought was in two directions: (a) he gave greater exactness to mystical terms already current in mystical circles and added some new terms to the mystical vocabulary with very clear connotations; (b) he described his personal spiritual experience with such clarity and guided his followers on the mystic path with such confidence that he made the world of spirit look like a world of tangible reality. Iqbal was constrained to observe that some of his letters give us an idea of "a whole universe of inner experience."⁷¹ No earlier saint had penetrated the world of spirit in this manner. In fact, his predecessors became either mythical or abstruse while describing their spiritual experiences. Shaykh Ahmad's clarity of thought invested the world of spiritual experience with a touch of realism which is unique. We may quote the same letter through which Iqbal illustrated his point of view. The experience of one 'Abd al-Mu'min was thus described to the shaykh:

Heaven and Earth and God's Throne and Hell and Paradise all have ceased to exist for me. When I look around I find them nowhere. When I stand in the presence of somebody I see nobody before me: God is infinite. Nobody can encompass Him, and this is the extreme limit of spiritual experience. No saint has been able to go beyond this.

The shaykh said in reply:

The experience which is described has its origin in the ever-varying life of the *qalb* (heart); and it appears to me that the recipient of it has not yet passed even one-fourth of the innumerable "stations" of the *qalb*. The remaining three-fourths must be passed through in order to finish the experiences of this first "station" of the spiritual life. Beyond this "station" there are other "stations" known as *rūh* (Spirit), *sirr-i khafiy* (hidden secret) and *sirr-i akhfā* (the most hidden secret). Each of these "stations," which together constitute what is technically called '*ālam-i amr*' ("the world of Divine Command"), has its own characteristic states and experiences. After having passed through these "stations," the seeker of truth gradually receives the illuminations of the "Divine Names" and "Divine Attributes" and finally the illuminations of the Divine Essence.⁷²

No reader of Shaykh Aḥmad Sirhindī's letters, however, can fail to notice that in describing some of his spiritual experiences, particularly those which relate to his own self, he has become controversial. His views about two individuations—the bodily-human and the spiritual-angelic—for the Prophet⁷³ and the process of "Muḥammad" becoming "Aḥmad" belong to this category and have evoked considerable criticism.

The Descendants of Shaykh Aḥmad Sirhindī

In the history of Islamic mysticism, there has hardly been any saint whose sons and grandsons have involved themselves in mystical work as keenly as the descendants of Shaykh Aḥmad Sirhindī: his four sons, Muḥammad Ṣādiq, Muḥammad Sa'īd, Muḥammad Ma'sūm, and Muḥammad Yahyā, and their descendants. A consciousness of mission and an urge to reform and regenerate society in the light of Islamic Law motivated their activities.

Khwājah Muḥammad Ma'sūm (1008/1599–1069/1668) pursued his father's mission with such enthusiasm that the Naqshbandī sources credit him with having enrolled nine hundred thousand disciples.⁷⁴ The figure may be exaggerated, but it indicates the extent of his influence. When he went on the *hajj* in 1068/1657, a large number of disciples accompanied him.⁷⁵ His spiritual experiences during his stay in the Hijaz were recorded by his son, Muḥammad 'Ubayd Allāh, in *Hasanāt al-ḥaramayn* (*Virtues of the Two Harams*).⁷⁶ While in Mecca he sought divine guidance in resolving the contradictions in the statements of Shaykh Aḥmad Sirhindī regarding the position of the *Ka'bah*:

As the writings of Mujaddid-i Alf-i Thānī contain diverse opinions about the position of the *Ka'bah*, the saint [Khwājah Ma'sūm] was always anxious to resolve them. . . . He sought divine help in this matter. One day he told his sons in Mecca in a complacent mood: I have been able to understand the reality [of the *Ka'bah* in my spiritual experience]. I felt that the *Ka'bah* was

superior to all realities and that the "realities" of all things prostrated before it and that all ranks and levels of creation, even prophethood and apostleship, alighted from the *Ka'bah*. . . . When I went deeper into my experience, I came to realize the secret that despite all its high position, ascension and progress are not inherent in it; these are the characteristic of man. No one shares this [power of ascension] with man. . . . Thus, though the sacred *Ka'bah* is superior to the realities of all the individuals of the creation, spiritual progress and ascension are the [exclusive] privilege of man, and [from this point of view] some spiritually perfect individuals have precedence over it. On this account the *Ka'bah* keeps an eye on their spiritual illuminations.

One other difference between perfect persons and the *Ka'bah* was made clear to me, and that difference is based on station and status. Though angels etc. are superior to man, what constitutes real superiority is known to man [alone]. As in the world of *majāz* [allegory] the status of *ḥaqīqat* [the truth] becomes obvious, the slaves and the servants are closer to the kings, but the status enjoyed by the *wazīrs* is not the fortune of the slaves.⁷⁷

One of his spiritual experiences at Medina was as follows:

It was felt that the person of the Prophet is the Center of all the creations (*ālam*) and from the high Heavens (*arsh*) to the earthly center all the creatures—angels, houris, men, *jinn* and all the various *tabaqāt* [orders] of the creation of God—are dependent on the Prophet and receive spiritual benedictions from him. No doubt the real giver of spiritual blessings is God, but all the blessings are conferred through the Prophet. All matters of grave importance pertaining to this and the other world are executed through him. I witnessed that from the mausoleum of the Prophet blessings and rewards are being bestowed day and night as if the mouths of the *maskizab* [water bag] have been opened. God says: "We have sent you [the Prophet] as blessings for all the world." This blessing includes universal mercy and benediction. Submitting problems to the Prophet and praying for their redress and solution are really in the nature of seeking his intercession. To seek redress of problems without the intercession of the Prophet amounts to disobedience and is troublesome.⁷⁸

Khwājah Muḥammad Ma'sūm worked within the perimeters laid down by his father, Shaykh Aḥmad Sirhindī, and mostly explained or applied his views to new situations. In a letter to one of his disciples he refers to the controversies of the day and defends his role as a reformer determined to extricate people from sin and immorality:

The general view that the principle of the Sufis is to avoid meddling in the ways of the people so that nobody's displeasure or ill-will is incurred is wrong and mischievous. Such a view is fraught with many evils. . . . To tell the people to follow the right path and to warn them against sinful acts is an obligation which should be discharged. If a person loves or hates people for the sake of God, his stature is raised to that of the martyrs. Some so-called

Sufis are really outside the circle of the *Sharī'at*. . . . The Naqshbandī saints believe in strict adherence to the ways of the Prophet (*Sunnah*). They disdain innovations. Abandoning (the duty of) dissuading people from sin and attracting them towards piety amounts to giving up the ways of the order. . . . Khwājah Mu'īn al-Dīn Chishtī exhorted his disciples to advise and admonish people and create in them fear of divine punishment on the Day of Judgment. Shaykh Muhyī al-Dīn ibn 'Arabī, who is the leader of the mystics of the *waḥdat al-wujūd* school, criticised his contemporary Sufis who indulged in music. . . . Shaykh 'Abd al-Qādir Gilānī has a chapter in his book dealing with "commands to do what is right and lawful" and "prohibition of what is wrong and unlawful."

If God had approved of non-interference with the ways of the people, He would not have sent prophets. . . . My grandfather, Shaykh 'Abd al-Aḥad, was an advocate of *waḥdat al-wujūd* and an exponent of the *Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam* [of Ibn 'Arabī] but he was firm in his adherence to the *Sharī'at*. . . . Khwājah Aḥrār believed in *waḥdat al-wujūd* yet he was firm in following the *Sharī'at*. . . . Shaykh Muhyī al-Dīn ibn 'Arabī who had the position of *ṣāhib-i asnād* [possessor of chains of transmission] in *Ḥadīth* and held the status of a *mujtahid* in juristic matters, used to say: "Some saints expect people to scrutinize their actions day and night; I say they should scrutinize even the ideas that flash across their mind (*khāṭirāt*). . . ."

If non-interference in the life of the people had been the practice and view of the followers of *waḥdat al-wujūd*, Mawlānā 'Abd al-Raḥman Jāmī would not have exhorted people to advise and admonish, as he has done in his *Silsilat al-dhahab* (*The Golden Chain*). . . . People who believe in "non-interference" and in a policy of peace with all, are good towards Jews, yogis, Brahmans, heretics, etc. and have contact and company with them, but they cause trouble to and torture people who believe in the faith. Their peace with all is strange: they have ill-will towards the followers of Muḥammad and love and good will for non-Muslims.⁷⁹

Khwājah Muḥammad Ma'sūm claimed himself to be the *qayyūm* (lasting or permanent figure) of the age.⁸⁰ As such he had a special responsibility toward the reform of contemporary society. The concept of *qayyūmiyyat* (permanence), which was later developed by the Naqshbandīs to assign an exaggerated role to the saint, created some doctrinal confusion in Naqshbandī circles.⁸¹ The *Rawḍat al-qayyūmiyyah* (*The Garden of Permanence*) reveals the effect of this concept both on the organization of the order and the individual approach of the Naqshbandī saints.

The way in which Shaykh Aḥmad Sirhindī and his followers narrated their spiritual experiences publicly in letters and treatises and tried to fathom the depth of the ocean of mystic experience was fraught with serious implications and could lead to intellectual anarchy and emotional confusion. What saved the Naqshbandīs from this eventuality was (a) their repeated and persistent emphasis on adherence to the *Sunnah* of the Prophet, and (b) their open declaration that spiritual experience of a mystic

had no social implication and that *ilhām* (inspiration of a mystic) was not binding on other people. This led them to make a clear distinction between the "prophetic consciousness" and the "mystic consciousness." While the consciousness of a prophet had social and religious significance for all people, the mystic consciousness was relevant for that mystic alone and that too within the framework of the *Sharī'ah* and with awareness of the danger of deceptions and imperfect sensibilities lurking throughout his experience.

Among the followers of Shaykh Aḥmad Sirhindī and Khwājah Ma'sūm, there were many persons who belonged to countries outside India. For instance, Mawlānā Murād (d. 1132/1720), a native of Bukhara, joined the discipline of Khwājah Muḥammad Ma'sūm.⁸² After receiving spiritual training, Mawlānā Murād went to Damascus, where Sultan Muṣṭafā II treated his family with deep respect. A number of colleges, like the Madrasat al-murādiyyah and the Madrasat al-naqshbandiyyat al-barrāniyyah, were established by the descendants of Mawlānā Murād. It was entirely due to Shaykh Aḥmad Sirhindī and his sons and followers that for the first time India found itself in a position to pay back the debt that it owed to outside countries in the realm of mystical thought. The letters of Shaykh Aḥmad Sirhindī were translated into the Arabic and the Turkish languages. It appears from *Tārīkh-i manāzil-i Bukhārā* (*History of the Houses of Bukhara*) that a channel in Afghanistan was named after a descendant of the Mujaddid and its income was sent to the shrine of the Mujaddid at Sirhind.⁸³

The Naqshbandī Order in Persia

In Persia the Naqshbandī Order is said to have received a setback in influence as a result of the rise of the Safavid dynasty (906/1501–1151/1738).⁸⁴ Seyyed Hossein Nasr has, however, brought to light other aspects of the matter when he informs us about Wā'iz Kāshifī. "Although a Sunni, [he] was a Naqshbandī Sufi and the author of Shi'ite devotional works which became extremely popular, especially the *Rawḍat al-shuhadā*, which has given its name to the typically Shi'ite practice of *rawdah* in which the martyrdom of Husayn and other members of the household of the Prophet (*ahl al-bayt*) is celebrated." He then observes: "All these figures were instrumental in preparing the intellectual background for the Safavid renaissance which was based on both Shi'ism and Sufism."⁸⁵ The Safavid attitude toward Sufism, however, needs a comprehensive and critical study. The circumstances in which some Sufis of the Mughal period, particularly the Naqshbandīs, produced polemical literature against Shi'ism were created by both the Indian and the Persian situation.⁸⁶ But this phenomenon

pertains to the 11th/17th–12th/18th centuries and cannot be pushed back in space or time.

The Later Influence of Sirhindī

Among those spiritual descendants of Shaykh Aḥmad who made a contribution to the teaching and organization of the order, the names of Shāh Walī Allāh (1114/1703–1176/1762), Mīrzā Mazhar Jān-i Jānān (1112/1700–1195/1781), Shāh ‘Abd al-‘Azīz (1159/1746–1239/1824), Sayyid Aḥmad Shāhid of Rae Bareli (1200/1786–1247/1831), Shāh Ghulām ‘Alī (1156/1743–1239/1824), and Mawlānā Khalid Kurdi (b. 1190/1776) deserve special mention.

Shāh Walī Allāh headed a seminary, Madrasa-yi Rahīmiyyah, named after his father Shāh ‘Abd al-Rahīm.⁸⁷ For more than a half century he worked there for the moral and spiritual regeneration of Muslim society and ushered in an intellectual renaissance of the Muslims. Muḥammad Iqbāl thinks that he was perhaps the first Muslim who felt the urge of a new spirit in him.⁸⁸ Rising above the traditional exposition of the theological categories of thought, he adopted a comprehensive and integralistic approach which looked at man and his environment from all possible angles—spiritual, biological, psychological, moral, and economic. He evaluated carefully the role of religion in building up the morally autonomous personality of an individual and in establishing a healthy moral order of society. He believed that Islam provided the best opportunity for the self-realization of man. He considered himself *qā’im al-zamān* (the steadfast pole of the times)—in essence a claim to the *qayyūmiyyat* of the Naqshbandīs—and said that he was directed by the Prophet in a dream on 5 May 1731 in Mecca to overthrow all systems (based as they were on exploitation).⁸⁹

Shāh Walī Allāh believed that a man cannot realize the best in him unless he develops faith in God. He thought that old and traditional defenses of religion were fast crumbling and a new scholastic approach (*‘ilm-i kalām*) was the crying need of the hour. Religion had to be explained both as a code of personal morality and as a social ideal.

If Shaykh Aḥmad Sirhindī laid great emphasis on *‘ālam*s as stages and station of the spiritual development of an individual, Shāh Walī Allāh developed his theory of *al-mala’ al-a’lā* (an assembly of angels where human activities in the world below find prior reflection), and, going a step further than Shaykh Aḥmad, he tried to show that there was close spiritual connection between what happened in *al-mala’ al-a’lā* and in this world. He wove the higher mystic experience with the destiny of man on this planet and propounded his theory of the spiritual evolution of man based

on the continuity of human life hereafter. He presents the operation of Allah’s emanations (*tajalliyyāt*) in the physical world in such a manner that our life in this world and in the world hereafter appears as a continuous process, carrying with it the result of our actions on this planet. Like Browning’s Grammarian he believed that “Man is forever.” Man’s biological development might have come to a halt, but his spiritual evolution goes on, and death is only a turning point, not an end of the journey. What appears as a brief hint in the mystical thought of Khwājah ‘Ubayd Allāh Aḥrār becomes a whole philosophy of the growth of human soul in the works of Shāh Walī Allāh.

Though a follower of Shaykh Aḥmad Sirhindī’s order, Shāh Walī Allāh took a momentous step by attempting a reconciliation between the thought of Ibn ‘Arabī and Shaykh Aḥmad Sirhindī.⁹⁰ This he did in the same spirit in which Khwājah Bāqī Bi’-llāh had reconciled the thoughts of ‘Alā’ al-Dawlah Simnānī and Ibn ‘Arabī. Shāh Walī Allāh considered the difference between their attitudes as one of simile and metaphor. In fact, his mystic philosophy could hardly be adjusted within the framework of any other theory except the *wahdat al-wujūd* in the validity of which he, like his ancestors, had firm faith.

Shāh Walī Allāh dealt with the efforts of man in the social sphere under the following headings: organization of livelihood, organization of professions, organization of home, organization of trade, and cooperation. According to him, the ultimate aim of all human efforts should be the creation of an international community, free from all types of tensions and exploitation. He calls the human individual “small man” and humanity as a whole “big man” and works out on this basis the idea of the unity and oneness of mankind, which again derives its strength from the philosophy based on the oneness of being. In the history of the Naqshbandiyyah, the contribution of Shāh Walī Allāh was remarkable for its spiritual depth and social impact.⁹¹

Shāh Walī Allāh’s son, Shāh ‘Abd al-‘Azīz, elucidated and explained the thought of his father, as Khwājah Muḥammad Ma’sūm had elucidated the thought of Shaykh Aḥmad Sirhindī. Under Shāh ‘Abd al-‘Azīz, the Naqshbandī *silsilah* became more and more involved in the political struggles of the day. He gave a religious verdict declaring all land occupied by the British to be a war zone (*dār al-ḥarb*),⁹² toward the retrieving of which all effort should be directed. This was a call for action against foreign domination, and his wishes materialized when Sayyid Aḥmad of Rae Bareli joined the circle of his disciples and launched a movement from the frontier town of Balakot to Calcutta for the liberation of the country from British occupation. The Indian branch of the Naqshbandī Order fell in line with

the anticolonial activities of the Naqshbandīs in other lands.

Sayyid Ahmad used the Naqshbandī doctrines and mystic discipline to organize his movement—which incidentally had to deal with Sikh authority in the Punjab and the Frontier regions—but the main thrust of which was against the British domination of the country.⁹³ For the first time in the history of Indian Islam, he took an oath of allegiance (*bay'at*) from people for waging a religious war (*jihād*). He used the mystic relationship of disciple (*murīd*) and spiritual master (*murshid*) to build an army of warriors inspired by religious zeal and prepared to lay down their lives for the cause. His movement came to be known as the Mujāhidin Movement.⁹⁴ Sayyid Ahmad fell fighting at Balakot (1247/1831), but his followers looked upon him as Mahdī-yi ākhir al-zamān (The Mahdī Coming at the End of Time) and believed that he had not been killed but would reappear to lead the forces of Islam to victory.⁹⁵

The resistance movement in India in 1273/1857 was organized by many *mujāhids*, generally called Wahhābis by the British writers. They were, in fact, the followers of Sayyid Ahmad Shahīd. Though some Chishtī-Ṣābirī saints also played a part in the struggle, the real dash and drive of the movement came from the Naqshbandīs inspired by the ideals of Sayyid Ahmad of Rae Bareilly.

A famous Naqshbandī saint contemporary with Shāh Walī Allāh in Delhi was Mīrzā Mazhar Jān-i Jānān.⁹⁶ He confined his work to the spiritual sphere alone, whereas Shāh Walī Allāh and his son Shāh 'Abd al-'Azīz had a wider range of activities, covering the academic, spiritual, and political fields. Mīrzā Mazhar attracted the Afghan tribes, particularly the Rohillas, to the mystic fold. He took a bold step toward the reorientation of the Naqshbandī attitude to the Hindus. He declared the Vedas to be a revealed book and provided a rationale for some of the Hindu practices and institutions that were earlier considered to be polytheistic.⁹⁷

Mīrzā Mazhar's chief disciple and follower in Delhi was Shāh 'Abd Allāh, popularly known as Shāh Ghulām 'Alī, whose impact on the Naqshbandiyyah was far more important than any of his contemporaries.⁹⁸ According to Sir Syed, who had personally seen him and whose family owed spiritual allegiance to him, people from Abyssinia, Syria, Asia Minor, Afghanistan, and other places came to receive spiritual instruction from him.⁹⁹ Five hundred inhabitants of the *khānqāh* were daily supplied meals from his kitchen. Hundreds of people joined his *ḥalqahs*—circular arrangement for disciples to sit and invoke loudly the Name of Allah. These *ḥalqahs* filled the entire surroundings with spirituality, and people who joined these people who joined these assemblies carried Naqshbandī ideas and practices to their homes to propagate them further.¹⁰⁰

Later Naqshbandī Influence outside of India

One of the most outstanding among the foreign disciples of Shāh Ghulām 'Alī was Khālīd Kurdī, whose grave in Damascus is a place of pilgrimage.¹⁰¹ The present Qādī of Damascus, Mufti Kaftaro, is a spiritual descendant of the saint. The descendants of 'Abd al-Ghaniy al-Nābulūsī (1050/1640–1142/1730) and Khālīd Kurdī played an important role in the spiritual life of the people in Damascus. Yūsuf Genč Pāshā, a Kurdish governor of Damascus, came under Naqshbandī influence and issued decrees aimed at rigid enforcement of religious law.

In Turkey the popularity of the Naqshbandiyyah during the twelfth/eighteenth century is testified to by Mouradja d'Ohsson. According to J. P. Brown, there were fifty-two *takiyyahs* of the Naqshbandiyyah in Istanbul alone.¹⁰² The thirteenth/nineteenth century saw the order active almost from Calcutta to Istanbul. The revolt against Ottoman rule in 1297/1880 was organized by 'Ubayd Allāh Naqshbandī.

The Naqshbandīs organized their movements from the *madrasahs* and the *masjids*. The *takiyyahs* and *khānqāhs* were there to help but were not in the forefront of struggle. In Baghdad Madrasat al-'Abbāsiyyah was an active center of Naqshbandī activity; in Delhi, Naqshbandī political struggle was organized from the Madrasah-yi Raḥīmiyyah, the Masjid-i Akbarābādī, and the Masjid-i Shāhjahānī.

In Central Asia the Naqshbandīs organized resistance to foreign rule on a large scale. At Andijan, Aush, Namangan, and Marghilan, Naqshbandī saints like Ismā'īl Khān Tore and Muḥammad 'Alī led the rebellious movements in 1313/1895–1316/1898. The following account given by Héléne Carrère d'Encausse is revealing:

An ishan of the Sufi brotherhood of the Naqshbandi, Muhammad Ali... had a reputation for wisdom, holiness, and charity... With the help of disciples attracted to him, he had erected a madrasah, two mosques and a library and his power was substantial. Around him gradually gathered Muslims who, for the most part, had been prominent figures before the conquest, and who had been deprived of their functions and often ruined by the Russians. Most important, the movement which the ishan would take over was very amply organized and financed by the Naqshbandi brotherhood. For the first time since 1865, it was no longer a matter of a spontaneous uprising, nor an uprising still looking for an ideology, but of a prepared holy war, beginning according to a plan and not haphazardly on some pretext.¹⁰³

The Russians liquidated them completely.

In the Caucasus the Naqshbandīs resisted the Russian conquest and its leader Shamil sought to establish an imamate so that the Muslims could live

according to Islamic Law (*Shari'ah*). Sayyid Ahmad Shahid of Rae Bareilly also aimed at the establishment of the imamate at Balakot. In the struggle of 1273/1857 the Naqshbandis were in the forefront. The revival of the Naqshbandiyyah in Turkey, Afghanistan, Central Asia, and other places in recent times is a phenomenon of great significance and reveals the extent to which the order has and is expected to fulfill the spiritual needs of the people.

Today the Naqshbandi Order is active not only in Afghanistan, where some of the *mujahidin* groups are associated with it, and in Turkey, where it is at the forefront of Islamic intellectual activities. It has also spread to Europe and America, where several Naqshbandi masters such as the Cypriot Shaykh Nazim have established Sufi centers which have drawn many disciples to themselves. It also continues to be active among the Muslims of the Soviet Union, where it has played a vital role in the preservation of Islam under exceptionally difficult conditions. Altogether, it can be said with certainty that the Naqshbandi Order continues to be one of the most vibrant and spiritually significant of Sufi orders today, as it has been since its founding by Khwajah Bahā' al-Dīn Naqshband seven centuries ago.

Notes

1. According to a tradition of the Prophet recorded by Abū Dā'ūd: "On the eve of every century God will raise a person in the *ummah* (Muslim community) who will renew the religion." Shaykh Ahmad, who was born in 972/1564, was considered as Mujaddid-i Alf-i Thānī. This was considered his special role, and it determined also his position in the mystic calendar. 'Abd al-Hakīm Siālūtī (d. 1066/1656), who popularized the works of Mullā Šadrā Shīrāzī in India, was the first to use this title for him. See B. A. Faruqi, *The Mujaddid's Conception of Tawhīd* (Lahore: M. Ashraf, 1940) 103.
2. *Tuzuk-i Jahāngīrī* (Sir Syed edition) 272-73.
3. For an account of his life, see Sir Syed, *Āthār al-sanādīd* (Karachi, 1966) 207-12; Ra'ūf Ahmad, *Jawāhir-i 'alawīyyah* (Urdu translation; Lahore) 241.
4. *Āthār al-sanādīd*, 209.
5. A. Hourani, *The Emergence of the Modern Middle East* (London: Macmillan, 1980) 73ff.
6. For accounts of his life, see Abu'l-Hasan 'Alī Nadwi, *Sīrat-i Syed Ahmad Shahīd* (Lahore, 1958); Ghulām Rasūl Mehr, *Syed Ahmad Shahīd* (Lahore, 1952).
7. A. Hourani, *Arabic Thought in the Liberal Age* (London: Oxford University Press, 1962) 225.
8. C. Snouck Hurgronje, *Mekka in the Latter Part of the Nineteenth Century* (London: Luzac, 1931).
9. Shaykh Ahmad Sirhindī, *Maktūbāt-i Imām Rabbānī* (Nawal Kishore, 1877) 2:135.

10. Kāshifī, *Rashahāt* (Kanpur, 1912) 4-6; J. S. Trimingham, *The Sufi Orders in Islam* (London: Oxford University Press, 1971).
11. For his life, see Jāmī, *Nafahāt al-uns* (Lucknow, 1915) 345-49; *Rashahāt*, 53-57. Kushk-i Hinduwān later came to be known as Kushk-i 'Arifān. Naqshband literally means, "a painter, embroiderer, one who adorns." If his ancestors were embroiderers, the name may be a reference to the family profession; otherwise it is an indication of his spiritual quality to print the Name of God upon a disciple's heart. The expression *naqshband-i hawādīth* is an epithet of God.
12. Šālīh ibn Mubārak Bakhārī (ed.), *Anīs al-tālibīn* (Lahore, 1323 A.H.) 35.
13. Ibid.
14. Shaykh Ahmad Sirhindī, *Maktūbāt-i Imām Rabbānī*, 2:162.
15. *Anīs al-tālibīn*, 127.
16. Jāmī, *Nafahāt al-uns*, 347. E. Motet's remark in *Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics* (New York: Scribner, 1919) 10:726, that the Khwājah was "an eclectic reformer (combining Sunnite orthodoxy, Shī'ism and Ismā'īlī teachings)" is incorrect.
17. Jāmī, *Nafahāt al-uns*, 348.
18. *Anīs al-tālibīn*, 108-9.
19. Shāh Walī Allāh, *Tafhīmāt-i ilāhiyyah*, 1:86.
20. Jāmī, *Nafahāt al-uns*, 337-39.
21. Ibid., 339.
22. Besides *Rashahāt* (8), see M. Fuad Koprülü's article in *Islam Ansiklopedisi* (Istanbul: Millî Eğitim Basımevi, 1987) 1:210-15; and F. Iz's article in the *Encyclopedia of Islam* (new edition) 1:298-99. In 1898 a detailed article, mainly based on *Rashahāt*, *Khazīnat al-asfiyā*, and *Mir'āt al-asrār*, appeared in *Bulletin de l'Académie Impériale des Sciences de St. Petersburg*, September T-IX, No. 2.
23. After Khwājah Ahmad, the title *ātā* came to be used as a mark of respect added to the name of all his important spiritual descendants, e.g., Maṣṣūr Ātā, Sa'īd Ātā, Ḥakīm Ātā, Zangī Ātā, etc. See *Rashahāt*.
24. Farīd al-Dīn 'Aṭṭār, *Manṭiq al-tayr* (Tehran, 1287 A.H.) 158. The Turks themselves refer to him as *Ḥadrat-i Turkistān*.
25. See V. V. Barthold's article "Turkistan," in *Encyclopedia of Islam*, 4:896.
26. Yazdī, *Zafar-nāmah* (Calcutta) 9-10. For the present-day condition, see G. A. Pougatchev Kova, *Chefs-d'oeuvre d'architecture de l'Asie centrale* (Paris: UNESCO, 1981) 102.
27. For accounts, see *Rashahāt*, 9ff.
28. For details about the order, see J. K. Birge, *The Bektashi Order of Dervishes* (London: Luzac, 1937). For their political role, see E. E. Ramsaur, "The Bektashi Dervishes and the Young Turks," *Moslem World* (1942) 7-14.
29. *Hikmet* means religious poems. The *Dīwān* was published from Kazan. Some scholars have doubted its authenticity; see E. J. W. Gibb, *A History of Ottoman Poetry* (London: Luzac, 1958) 1:71ff.
30. *Rashahāt*, 18-27.
31. Published with commentary by S. Nafīsī in *Farhang-i Īrān zamīn* 1/1 (1332/1953) 70-100.
32. *Rashahāt*, 20; *Tārīkh-i gharībāh* (ms.), ff. 19b, 20a.
33. See *Rashahāt*, 27-32.
34. *Rashahāt*, 32. A unique manuscript of this work is in the possession of the writer of these lines.
35. Jāmī, *Nafahāt al-uns*, 341. Ramitīn was a small town near Bukhara.

35. The Naqshbandīs generally gave some title to their saints—*ātā*, *ḥaḍrat*, *‘azīzān*, etc. At one stage the epithet *ḥaḍrat-i īshān* (or simply *īshān*) came to be used for every saint of the order. The title *ḥaḍrat-i īshān* was perhaps inspired by the practice of referring to the Prophet as *ān ḥaḍrat*.
36. Jāmī, *Nafahāt al-uns*, 349–52; see also *Sayings and Miracles of ‘Alā’ al-Dīn ‘Attār*, ms. in British museum, Rieu ii, 862b.
37. *Rashahāt*, 86.
38. Jāmī, *Nafahāt al-uns*, 352–56; *Rashahāt*, 57–63.
39. *Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam* (Lahore: M. Ashraf, 1944) 135.
40. For the manuscript, see C. A. Storey, *Persian Literature: A Bio-Bibliographical Survey* (London: Royal Asiatic Society, 1971) 8–9.
41. Tīmūr died on 17 Sha‘bān 807/18 February 1405.
42. *Rashahāt*, 221–22.
43. *The Bābur-Nāma*, trans. A. S. Beveridge (London: Luzac, 1921) 97.
44. It appears that some tax exemption was also given to the Khwājah. Referring to Aḥmad Mīrẓā of Samarqand, Bābur says: “Moreover the dependents of his (late) Highness Khwāja Ubaid’lāh, under whose protection formerly many poor and destitute persons had lived free from the burden of dues and imposts, were now themselves treated with harshness and oppression. . . . Oppressive exactions were made from them, indeed from the Khwāja’s very children” (*Bābur-Nāma*, 41).
45. *Rashahāt*, 230.
46. *Ibid.*, 262.
47. *Ibid.*, 252.
48. *Ibid.*, 295.
49. *The Tārīkh-i Rashīdī*, trans. E. D. Ross (London: Sampson Low & Co., 1895) 97.
50. *Bābur-Nāma*, 33.
51. *Bābur-Nāma*, 34. See also K. A. Nizami, “Naqshbandī Influence on Mughal Rulers and Politics,” *Islamic Culture* 39 (1965) 42–43.
52. *Bābur-Nāma*, 132.
53. *Ibid.*, 149, 98.
54. *Ibid.*, 620.
55. Khwājah Aḥrār himself used to say that his regular education did not go beyond a page or two of *Miṣbāḥ naḥw* (*Rashahāt*, 232).
56. Maḥmūd Gawān, *Riyād al-insbā*, Shaykh Chand (Hyderabad, Daccan, 1948) 19–23, 152–57; 167–72; 207–11, 227–32; 300–304; 365–66.
57. For his life, see Hāshim Badakhshānī, *Zubdat al-maqāmāt* (Kanpur: Nawal Kishore, 1307 A.H.).
58. Nawāb Murtaḍā Khān was an eminent Mughal noble. For an account, see S. M. Ikram, *Rūd-i kawthar* (Karachi: Firoz Sons, 1968) 178–89.
59. Anonymous, *Kalimāt-i tayyibāt*, being a collection of the conversations of Khwājah Bāqī (Delhi, 1332 A.H.).
60. *Ibid.*, 61, 63.
61. *Mathnawī-yi Ḥaḍrat Khwājah Bāqī Bi’Llāh*, ed. Aḥmad Ḥasan Naqshbandī Amrohvī (Hyderabad-Deccan, 1328 A.H.).
62. Urdu translation (Lahore, 1341 A.H.).
63. See K. A. Nizami, *Ḥayāt-i Shaiikh ‘Abd al-Ḥaqq Muḥaddith Dīblawī* (Delhi, 1953).
64. For biographical accounts, see Hāshim Badakhshānī, *Zubdat al-maqāmāt*; Badr al-Dīn Sirhindī, *Ḥaḍrat al-quḍs* (Lahore, 1971). For his thought, see Faruqī, *The*

- Mujaddid’s Conception of Tawḥīd*; for assessment, see Abul-Ḥasan ‘Alī Nadwī, *Tārīkh-i da‘wat-o-‘azimat*, vol. 4 (Lucknow: Nadwat al-‘Ulamā’, 1980); Y. Friedmann, *Shaykh Aḥmad Sirhindī: An Outline of his Thought and a Study of his Image in the Eyes of Posterity* (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1971).
65. B. A. Faruqī, *The Mujaddid’s Conception of Tawḥīd*, 134–35. This analysis is based on Shaykh Aḥmad’s letters, vol. 1, Epistle Nos. 31, 287.
66. François Bernier, *Travels in the Mogul Empire (1656–1668)*, ed. A. Constable (London: Constable’s Oriental Miscellany, 1891).
67. The Mujaddid wrote a number of books, but his basic ideas are best revealed in his letters, *Maktūbāt*. His book *Ithbāt al-nubuwwah* is also very significant, as it attacks Akbar’s attempt at assuming a prophetic role from a very fundamental angle—the relative position of kings and prophets. It may be pointed out that many Muslim scholars of that period expressed their views on that theme. Shaykh ‘Abd al-Ḥaqq Muḥaddith discussed it in his life of the Prophet, *Madārij al-nubuwwah* (Delhi, 1269 A.H.).
68. Nawāb Murtaḍā Khān, *Akbar and the Jesuits*, I, 204.
69. Khwājah Muḥammad Ma‘ṣūm, Shaykh Muḥammad Sa‘īd, Khwājah Sayf al-Dīn, and Ḥujjat Allāh Muḥammad Naqshband II had not only contact but regular correspondence with Aurangzeb. See *Maktūbāt-i Khwājah Muḥammad Ma‘ṣūm* (Kanpur: Nizāmī Press, 1304 A.H.); *Maktūbāt-i sa‘īdiyyah* (Lahore, 1385 A.H.); *Wasīlat al-qabūl ila’Llāh wa’l-rasūl* (Hyderabad-Sind, 1963); *Maktūbāt-i sayfiyyah* (Hyderabad Sind, n.d.). See also Nizami, “Naqshbandī Influence on Mughal Rulers and Politics,” 49–50.
70. *Maktūbāt-i kalīmī*, Letters of Shāh Kalīm Allāh of Delhi (Delhi: Matba‘i Yūsufī, 1301 A.H.) 75.
71. *Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam*, 193.
72. *Ibid.*, 192–93.
73. Neatly described by A. Schimmel in her *Islam in the Indian Sub-Continent* (Leiden: Brill, 1980) 92.
74. For biographical details, see S. Zawwār Ḥusayn Shāh, *Anwār-i ma‘ṣūmiyyah* (Karachi, 1980); for Khwājah Muḥammad Ma‘ṣūm’s thought, see three volumes of his letters: *Wasīlat al-sa‘ādah*, *Durrat al-tāj*, and *Maktūbāt-i Khwājah Muḥammad Ma‘ṣūm* (Lucknow, 1960).
- On the number of disciples, see Muḥammad Iqbāl Mujaddidī in his introduction to *Ḥasanat al-ḥaramayn*, by Muḥammad ‘Ubayd Allāh, 18, on the authority of *Manāqib-i aḥmadiyyah*.
75. The figure given is highly exaggerated as it is said that seven thousand disciples proceeded on the *hajj* pilgrimage with him. *Rawḍat al-qayyūmiyyah*, which is the source for this information, is not very dependable about figures and dates.
76. The Naqshbandīs took keen interest in recording such spiritual experiences. Shāh Walī Allāh also wrote his famous *Firyūd al-ḥaramayn* to describe his spiritual experiences in Hijaz. The tenor of such treatises apart, the fact is significant that in times of crisis of any type, the Naqshbandīs turned to Medinah for inspiration and spiritual guidance. Shaykh ‘Abd al-Ḥaqq Muḥaddith went to Hijaz disgusted with the atmosphere created by Akbar’s religious experiments; many Naqshbandī saints went to Hijaz before and after 1273/1857. Some of them came back after refurbishing themselves spiritually. Their role after their return was determined, consistent, and objective-oriented.
77. *Ḥasanat al-ḥaramayn*, 177–78.
78. *Ibid.*, 192.

79. *Durrat al-tāj*, as translated by Maulvi Nasīm Aḥmad Farīdī, *Maktūbāt-i Khwājah Muḥammad Ma'sūm Sirhindī*, 87–100.

80. *Qayyūm* in Naqshbandī parlance would mean one on whom the stability, reform, and resurgence of that age depend. The Mujaddid had himself indicated that his role of *qayyūm* would devolve on his son Muḥammad Ma'sūm (*Maktūbāt-i Imām Rabbānī*, vol. 3, Letter 104). See also Syed Zawwār Ḥusayn, *Anwār-i ma'sūmiyyah* (Karachi, 1980) 33ff.

81. For a critical evaluation of the concept of *qayyūmiyyat*, see S. M. Ikram, *Rūd-i Kawthar*, 292–304. *Mujaddid, mahdī, qayyūm, qā'im al-zamān* are all expressions of the same consciousness of mission.

82. On Mawlānā Murād, see H. A. R. Gibb in *The Encyclopedia of Islam* (old edition), Supp. 155; A. Hourani, *The Emergence of the Modern Middle East*, 80–81.

83. Ḥāfiẓ Muḥammad Faḍīl Khān, *Tārīkh-i manāzil-i Bukhārā*, trans. and ed. I. H. Siddiqi (Srinagar, 1981) 4, 27.

84. See A. Hourani, *The Emergence of the Modern Middle East*, 75–89.

85. S. H. Nasr, *Sufi Essays* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1985) 115–16.

86. Shaykh Aḥmad Sirhindī wrote a short treatise entitled *Risālah dar radd-i rawāfiḍ*. Shāh Walī Allāh did not enter the controversy in that manner. As usual, he exercised a moderating influence between two extreme views and produced his historical evaluation of the role of *khilāfat* in his *Izālat al-khifā' 'an al-khulafā'*.

87. Several works on Shāh Walī Allāh have appeared in English and Urdu. The most perceptive and thought-provoking study, however, remains that of Mawlānā 'Ubayd Allāh Sindhī.

For the account of Shāh 'Abd al-Rahīm, see Walī Allāh, *Anfās al-'arifīn* (Delhi).

88. *Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam*, 97.

89. See K. A. Nizami, "Shah Waliullah of Delhi: His Thought and Contribution," *Islamic Culture* 54 (1980) 141–52.

90. He wrote a small treatise *Fayṣalah waḥdat al-wujūd wa'l-shuhūd* (Decision concerning the Unity of Being and Consciousness).

91. See *Hujjat Allāh al-bālighah* for a thought-provoking discussion of *irtifāqāt-i ma'āshīyyah* and *irtifāqāt-i ilāhiyyah*.

92. *Fatāwā-yi 'azīzī* (Delhi: Muṭtabai Press, 1904) 1:17, 185; also *Malfūzāt-i Shāh 'Abd al-'Azīz*, 58.

93. In a letter addressed to the Raja of Gwalior, Syed Aḥmad clearly states this supreme objective of his struggle. See Abul-Ḥasan 'Alī Nadwī, *Musalmanon kay tanazzul say dunya ko kiya nuqsan poncha*, 273–74.

94. Ghulām Rasūl Mehr has given details about the persons involved in the struggle in the supplementary volumes to his study of the life of Syed Aḥmad, entitled *Sarguzasht-i mujāhidīn* (Lahore, 1956). In the words of W. C. Smith, this work "seems to mark a new stage in Urdu historiography" (*Islam in Modern History* [Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1957] 52n).

95. Ghulām Rasūl Mehr, *Syed Aḥmad Shahīd*, 2:443–55.

96. For his life, see Nā'im Allāh Bahra'ichī, *Bishārat-i mazhariyyah*, ms. British Museum, Rieu Vol. 1, 363a; Nā'im Allāh Bahra'ichī, *Ma'mūlāt-i mazhariyyah* (Kanpur, 1275 A.H.); also Nabahānī, *Jam' karāmāt al-awliyā'* (Beirut, 1329 A.H.) 1:388–89.

97. *Kalimāt-i ṭayyibāt* (being a collection of the letters of Mīrẓā Mazhar, Shāh Walī Allāh, etc.) (Moradabad, 1303 A.H.) 37–40.

98. For his life, see Ra'ūf Aḥmad, *Jawābir-i 'alawiyyah*; also Sir Syed, *Āthār al-sanādīd*, 209–12.

99. *Āthār al-sanādīd*, 209.

100. *Durr al-ma'ārif*, being conversations of Ghulām 'Alī compiled by Ra'ūf Aḥmad (Bareilly, 1304 A.H.).

101. A. Hourani, *The Emergence of the Modern Middle East*, 75–89; see also K. A. Nizami, *Tārīkh-i maqālāt* (Delhi, 1965) 215–20.

102. J. P. Brown, *The Dervishes: Or Oriental Spiritualism* (London: Oxford University Press, 1927).

103. H. Carrère d'Encausse in *Central Asia: A Century of Russian Rule*, ed. E. Allworth (London: Columbia University Press, 1967) 168.

Theology, Philosophy, and Spirituality

S. H. NASR

The Significance of *Kalām* in Islamic History

EVERY INTEGRAL RELIGION has within it intellectual dimensions that may be called theological, philosophical, and gnostic—if this latter term is understood as referring to a knowledge that illuminates and liberates. Islam is no exception to this principle and has developed within its bosom all three types of intellectual activity, each possessing a millennial tradition with numerous illustrious representatives. The relative significance of each dimension is, however, not the same in Islam and Christianity, nor do the categories correspond exactly to schools into which their names are translated in a European language such as English.

In the Islamic intellectual universe, there exists first of all *al-ma'rifah* or *al-'irfān* (gnosis). Then there is *falsafah*, which is itself derived from the Greek *philo-sophia* and corresponds to philosophy in the older sense of the term, before it became limited to its positivistic definition. This school in turn became transformed for the most part in later centuries into *al-hikmat al-ilāhiyyah* (literally, *theo-sophia*). Finally, there is *kalām*, usually translated as theology, whose propagators, the *mutakallimūn*, were referred to by Thomas Aquinas as the *loquentes*. The significance of these intellectual dimensions is not the same as corresponding perspectives in the West. This is especially true of *kalām*, which does not at all occupy the same central role in Islamic thought as theology does in Christianity. Furthermore, the Islamic schools have interacted with each other in a totally different manner from what one observes in the Christian West. Gnosis has played a more central role in the Islamic tradition than it has in the West, and the destiny of philosophy has been very different in the two worlds despite their close affinity in the European Middle Ages. As for theology, it has continued to harbor over the centuries the profoundest religious and spiritual impulses

of Christianity, whereas in Islam it has always been more peripheral—although much that is considered to be theology in the West is to be found in Islamic philosophy.

In Christianity not only has theology attempted to provide a rational defense for the faith, but it has also sought to provide access to the highest realms of the life of the spirit, as one finds in the mystical theology of Dionysius the Areopagite or, in the Protestant context, in the *Theologica Germanica* of Martin Luther. Such has never been the case in Islam, where *kalām*, which means literally “word,” continued to be “the science that bears responsibility of solidly establishing religious beliefs by giving proofs and dispelling doubts.”¹ The deepest spiritual and intellectual expressions of Islam are not to be found in works of *kalām*. Yet this science is important for the understanding of certain aspects of Islamic thought and must be treated in any work seeking to deal with the manifestations of Islamic spirituality.

Early Kalām

Traditionally, ‘Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib, the cousin and son-in-law of the Prophet, is credited with having established the science of *kalām*, and his *Nahj al-balāghah* (*Path of Eloquence*) contains the first rational proofs of the unity of God, following upon the wake of the Quran and the *Ḥadīth*. Already in the first Islamic century, the early community was confronted with such problems and questions as the relation between faith and works, who is saved, the nature of the Quran, and the legitimacy of political authority, all of which became crystallized later into the structure and concerns of *kalām*. Moreover, the debates held in Syria and Iraq between Muslims and followers of other religions—especially Christians, Mazdaeans, and Manichaeans, all of whom had developed philosophical and theological arguments for the defense of the tenets of their faith—caused the Muslims to seek to develop a rational edifice of their own for the protection and defense of Islam. This response to the theology of other religions is particularly true for the case of Christianity, whose theology directly challenged the young faith of Islam to construct its own theological edifice. Greco-Alexandrian philosophy, which early Christian thinkers had already encountered and with which Muslims were also becoming acquainted was also an important factor in the formation of the early schools of *kalām*.

The rapid spread of Islam had brought diverse groups within the fold of the Islamic community and necessitated a clear definition of the creed to prevent various kinds of error. Because of the emphasis of Islam upon the Divine Law and its practice, these creeds are not as important as the *credo*

in traditional Christianity, but they are nonetheless of significance for an understanding of the early theological concerns of the Islamic community. These creeds include the *Fiqh al-akbar* (“The Great Knowledge”) and the *Wasiyyah* (“Testament”) either by or based upon the teachings of Imam Abū Ḥanīfah (d. 150/767), who was also the founder of one of the major Sunni schools of Law. These creeds emphasize above all else the unity of God and His power over human life. They usually also emphasize the importance of gaining knowledge of God to the extent possible. There were later theologians who insisted that every Muslim must know as many proofs for the existence of God as he is able to master.

The Mu‘tazilites

The first systematic school of *kalām* grew out of the bosom of the circle of traditional scholars of the Quran and *Ḥadīth* in the second/eighth century and came to be known as the Mu‘tazilite. Its founder, Wāṣil ibn ‘Arā’ (d. 131/748), is said to have been a student of the famous scholar of *Ḥadīth* and Sufism in Basra, Ḥasan al-Baṣrī, but he separated from his master and established his own circle in that city.

The Mu‘tazilites, who were seen as the freethinkers and rationalists of Islam by early Western Islamicists, dominated the theological scene in Iraq for more than a century and developed an imposing theological edifice based on emphasis on the use of reason and the importance of human free will. The outstanding Mu‘tazilites were either from Basra, for example, Abū ‘l-Hudhayl al-‘Allāf (d. 226/840), Abū Ishāq al-Nazzām (d. 231/845), and the famous literary figure ‘Amr ibn Bahr al-Jāhiz (d. 255/869); or from Baghdad, among whose leaders were Bishr ibn al-Mu‘tamir (d. 210/825) and Abū ‘Alī al-Jubbā‘ī (d. 303/915). After al-Ma’mūn, early in the third/ninth century, the fortunes of the Mu‘tazilites began to wane, and soon they were replaced as the dominant school of *kalām* by the Ash‘arites. They did not completely die out, however, but continued to survive for another two centuries in various parts of the heartland of the Islamic world, as can be seen in the vast Mu‘tazilite encyclopedia of the Persian theologian Qādī ‘Abd al-Jabbār, composed in the fifth/eleventh century. Their school survived even longer in the Yemen, where their teachings became adopted by the Zaydīs of that land.²

In the history of Islamic thought the Mu‘tazilites came to be known for five principles or affirmations (*al-uṣūl al-khamsah*), which in fact summarize their basic teachings. These are unity (*al-tawḥīd*), justice (*al-‘adl*), the promise and the threat (*al-wa‘d wa’l-wa‘id*), in-between position in relation to a Muslim who commits a sin (*al-manzilah bayn al-manzilatayn*), and

exhorting to perform the good and forbidding to commit evil (*al-amr bi'l-ma'rūf wa'l-nahy 'an al-munkar*).

The Mu'tazilites possessed a rationalistic concept of the unity of God, and as a result they emphasized God's transcendence in such a manner as to reduce God almost to an abstract idea. In an atmosphere in which a great deal of debate was taking place concerning the meaning of God's Attributes and Qualities as mentioned in the Quran, they sought to avoid all possible anthropomorphism. As a result, they claimed that man cannot understand the real meaning of such Divine Attributes as Hearing or Seeing and that such Attributes have no reality of their own. Rather, they are identical with the Divine Essence. They also denied the possibility of knowledge of God's Nature. In denying any reality to Attributes, the Mu'tazilites also denied the eternity of the Quran as the Word of God. This view became their most famous and contested thesis because of its sociopolitical implications.

The Mu'tazilites also emphasized justice to the extent that they became known as the "people of unity and justice." Justice for them meant that God, being All-Wise, must have a purpose in the creation of the universe and that there is objective justice and good and evil in God's creation even if one puts aside the teachings of the Divine Law (*al-Sharī'ah*) concerning good and evil. Because God is just and good and cannot go against His Nature, He must always act for the best and is just. Furthermore, God does not will evil. Rather, evil is created by human beings, who have been given by God the freedom to act in either a good or an evil manner. They are therefore responsible for their actions and will be rewarded or punished by God accordingly.

The third principle, *al-wa'd wa'l-wa'id*, which means literally "promise and threat," refers to the ultimate fate of various classes of people, namely, the believers (*mu'minūn*), those who are nominally Muslims but who have committed sin (*fāsiqūn*) and those who are unbelievers (*kuffār*). The Mu'tazilites had a severe view of sin and condemned both sinners and infidels to the punishment of hell. For the Mu'tazilites, faith (*īmān*) was not only the assertion of the unity of God and consent to the truth of religion with the heart. It was also the avoidance of any grievous sins.

A major problem that confronted the early Islamic community was the question of who was saved and who was a Muslim. Was the sole condition faith, or was it necessary also to practice the tenets of the religion and avoid what was forbidden by the *Sharī'ah*? Amid this debate, the Mu'tazilites had to express their position clearly, which they did in the fourth of their five principles, one that follows directly from the principle of promise and threat. Their "in-between" position for sinners, *al-manzilah bayn al-manzilatayn*, asserts that the Muslim sinner (*fāsiq*) occupies a position

between the believer and the unbeliever and is still a member of the Islamic community in this world although condemned to damnation in the world to come.

Finally, the Mu'tazilites emphasized the principle of *al-amr bi'l-ma'rūf wa'l-nahy 'an al-munkar*. This well-known Islamic principle, emphasized also by several other schools, asserts that man not only must exhort others to perform the good but also must forbid people from committing evil. It implies an active attitude toward the establishment of a religious order and a morality that is not simply a matter of private conscience but involves Islamic society as a whole.

The Mu'tazilites were the first group of Muslim thinkers to apply rational arguments systematically to various questions of religion and even natural philosophy. They also knew some of the tenets of Greek thought, which was being translated into Arabic at the time of their intellectual activity in Baghdad in the third/ninth century and had a share in the introduction of Hellenic and Hellenistic thought into the Islamic intellectual world. Most of the Mu'tazilites devoted themselves to purely theological and politico-theological questions, and all were concerned with ethics. They in fact developed a "rational ethics," for which they became well known in later Islamic history.³ A few were also interested in physics or natural philosophy, chief among them al-Nazzām, who developed the theory of leap (*tafrāh*) to explain the possibility of motion over a space that is infinitely divisible. He is known also for the theory of latency and manifestation (*kumūn wa burūz*), according to which God created everything at once in a state of latency and then gradually various forms from minerals to animals became actualized or manifested. Abu'l-Hudhayl al-'Allāf developed the theory of atomism, which became central in Ash'arite theology. It is above all for the development of a rational theology that the Mu'tazilites are known in the history of Islamic thought. In this way, they influenced not only later Sunni theological thought but also Shī'ite thought and Islamic philosophy.

Al-Ash'arī and Early Ash'arism

During the third/ninth century, following Ma'mūn's policy of making Mu'tazilism compulsory and introducing a test of faith in these doctrines (*mihnah*), a strong reaction set in against the "rationalist" *kalām* of the Mu'tazilites. The strict followers of the *Ḥadīth* and the jurists (*fuqahā'*), especially the followers of Imam Ahmad ibn Ḥanbal, opposed all rational proofs of the tenets of the faith. Muslims were asked to accept the doctrines of the faith without asking how (*bilā kayf*), but this extreme

reaction against the rationalist tendencies of the Mu'tazilite *kalām* could not last indefinitely. The emphasis of the Quran on the use of the intellect (*al-'aql*) necessitated the creation of a theology that would use rational arguments and be at the same time orthodox and acceptable to the Islamic community at large. It was to this task that Abu'l-Hasan al-Ash'arī addressed himself, founding a new theological school which became the most widespread in the Sunni world. This school has come to be known in the West as that of orthodox theology, although the term orthodox in Islam has levels and nuances of meaning beyond the confines of Ash'arism.

Abu'l-Hasan al-Ash'arī was born in Basra around 260/873 and died in Baghdad around 330/941. During his younger days, he was a student of the famous Basrean Mu'tazilite al-Jubbā'ī, but at the age of forty, possibly as the result of a dream of the Prophet, he turned against Mu'tazilite teachings and sought to return to the authentic teachings of the Quran. He went to the mosque of Basra and stated:

He who knows me, knows who I am, and he who does not know me, let him know that I am Abu'l-Hasan 'Alī al-Ash'arī, that I used to maintain that the Quran is created, that eyes of men shall not see God, and that the creatures create their actions. Lo! I repent that I have been a Mu'tazilite. I renounce these opinions and I take the engagement to refute the Mu'tazilites and expose their infancy and turpitude.⁴

Following this public statement made at the age of forty, al-Ash'arī set out to develop a theology that used reason in the defense of the tenets of the faith and remained loyal to the *dicta* of revelation while making use of dialectic. He composed more than ninety works, many of which have survived. Among the most famous are *al-Ibānah 'an usūl al-diyānah* (*Elucidation Concerning the Principles of Religion*), in which he sought to draw to his side the extreme "traditionalists," who were opposed to the use of dialectic in matters of religion; *Kitāb al-luma'* (*The Book of Light*), which contains the principles of Ash'arite *kalām*; and *Maqālāt al-islāmiyyīn* (*Doctrines of the Muslims*), a later work, which sets out to describe the views of various theological schools and sects.⁵

Al-Ash'arī sought to charter an intermediate course between two extremes: that of Mu'tazilite rationalists, who made revelation subservient to reason, and that of "externalists" of different persuasions, who rejected the role of reason completely and remained satisfied with the purely external meaning of the verses of the Quran and the teachings of the *Hadīth*. One of the great Ash'arite theologians of later centuries, al-Juwaynī, stated in fact that al-Ash'arī was not really a theologian (*muktakallim*) but a reconciler of the two extreme views prevalent in Islamic society at his time.

To combat the extreme views of the day, al-Ash'arī held, against the view of the Mu'tazilites, that the Divine Attributes were real but added that they were not like human attributes as claimed by the anthropomorphists. He believed that on the Day of Judgment man could see God, but without there being an incarnation (*ḥulūl*) of God in a human or nonhuman form. He believed that the Quran was uncreated and eternal; yet its ink and paper, individual letters and words were created. Again in contrast to the Mu'tazilites and their extreme opponents on this matter (the Murji'ites), al-Ash'arī believed that the Muslim who sins is in God's Hands and can be forgiven by God and go to paradise or he can be punished in hell for a temporary period. Also against the view of Mu'tazilites, who believed that the Prophet could not intercede for Muslims before God, and the extreme Shi'ites, who believed that the Prophet and 'Alī could intercede for Muslims on their own, al-Ash'arī held that the Prophet could intercede on behalf of a sinner but with God's permission.

Altogether, al-Ash'arī sought to create a moderate position in nearly all the theological issues that were being debated at that time. He made reason subservient to revelation and negated the free will of man in favor of a voluntarism which deprives man of his creative free will and emphasizes the omnipotence of God in a way that goes beyond even the text of the Quran. In the Sacred Book, on the one hand, God's omnipotence and omniscience are constantly emphasized, and, on the other, human beings are held responsible for their actions. In emphasizing the doctrine of voluntarism, al-Ash'arī in a sense reduced the Divine Nature to the Divine Will and conceived of God as an All-Powerful Will rather than the Supreme Reality which *is* and also *will*s.⁶

Ash'arism is concerned not only with specifically religious issues but also with epistemology and the philosophy of nature. The most salient feature of Ash'arism in this domain is the justly famous atomism, which has also come to be known as occasionalism, a doctrine that was refuted explicitly by Thomas Aquinas.⁷ Developed mostly by his student Abū Bakr al-Bāqillānī, who was the most important of the early Ash'arites after the founder of the school, this thoroughgoing atomism takes away from the created world and all things in it their specific nature. All things are composed of atoms (*juz' lā yatajazzā*, literally, the part that cannot be further divided), which are themselves without extension. Space is likewise composed of discontinuous points, and time of discontinuous moments. There is no causality. Fire does not burn because it is in its nature to do so but because God has willed it. Tomorrow He could will otherwise and as a result fire would cease to burn. There is no such thing as the nature of fire. What in fact appears to us as cause and effect—for example, fire causing a

piece of cotton to burn—is nothing but a habit of the mind (*‘ādah*), because we have seen fire being brought near a piece of cotton and the cotton then being in flames.⁸ God is the only cause; it is His Will that makes fire burn the cotton. Miracles are in fact nothing other than the breaking of this habit of mind (literally, *khāriq al-‘ādah*, which is one of the Arabic terms for miracles).

Ash‘arism dissolves all horizontal causes in the vertical cause which is God’s Will. It thereby reduces the whole universe to a number of atoms moving in a discontinuous time and space in a world where nothing possesses any specific nature. No wonder then that Ash‘arism was strongly opposed to Islamic philosophy, which sought to know the cause of things leading finally to the Ultimate Cause. Ash‘arism did not contribute to the flowering of Islamic science, because most Islamic scientists were also philosophers and very few were *mutakallim* or Ash‘arite theologians.

Māturīdism and Ṭahāwism

Several other contemporaries of al-Ash‘arī sought, like him, to formulate a theology that would be acceptable to the majority of Muslims, among them Abū Ja‘far al-Ṭahāwī from Egypt (d. 321/933) and Abū Mansūr al-Māturīdī (d. 337/944) from what is now known as Central Asia. The former was a great scholar of *Ḥadīth* and *fiqh* and developed a more “dogmatic” theology. The latter was given more to “speculative” theology; both were Ḥanafīs and sought to follow the theological as well as juridical views of Imam Abū Ḥanīfah. This is especially true of al-Ṭahāwī, whose theology is in reality another version of the theological thought of Imam Abū Ḥanīfah. Al-Māturīdī held a position in many ways close to that of al-Ash‘arī but with more value placed on reason than his contemporary would allow. For example, he considered it incumbent upon all human beings to seek to know God whether they followed the Divine Law or not, whereas al-Ash‘arī believed that it was as a result of following the injunctions of the *Sharī‘ah* that man was required to seek to know God. For a whole century, Ash‘arism remained popular only among the Shāfi‘ites, while Māturīdism and to some extent Ṭahāwism held sway among the Hanafīs. But finally Ash‘arism triumphed over its rivals, mostly thanks to the work of the later Ash‘arites, especially al-Ghazzālī, although not all the theological works of al-Ghazzālī can be considered as Ash‘arite. It became widespread in Persia and other eastern lands of the Islamic world as well as in the Maghrib, where Ash‘arite teachings became influential under the Almohads, whose founder, Ibn Tumart, was a disciple of al-Ghazzālī.

Later Ash‘arism

It was the later Ash‘arites or the people whom Ibn Khaldūn called the theologians of the *via nova*,⁹ who opened a new chapter in the history of *kalām* and made possible its spread throughout the Islamic world. These “later theologians” (*muta‘akhkhirūn*) include Imam al-Haramayn al-Juwaynī (d. 478/1085), the author of the classical work of Ash‘arism, *Kitāb al-irshād* (*The Book of Guidance*); his student Abū Ḥamid Muḥammad al-Ghazzālī (d. 505/1111), the most celebrated of all Muslim theologians and an outstanding figure in the history of Sufism, who wrote numerous theological works, especially *al-Iqtisād fi’l-i‘tiqād* (*The Just Mean in Belief*), which is of a more specifically Ash‘arite nature than his other works; and Abū’l-Faḥ al-Shahristānī (d. 548/1153), the author of *Nihāyat al-iqdām* (*The Extremity of Action or Summa Philosophiae*). This later Ash‘arism, which became more and more philosophical during later centuries, reached the peak of its development through Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī (d. 606/1209), perhaps the most learned of all Ash‘arite theologians,¹⁰ with the *Sharḥ al-marwāqif* (*Commentary upon the Stations*), the commentary being by Mīr Sayyid Sharīf al-Jurjānī (d. 816/1413) and the text by ‘Aḍud al-Dīn al-Ījī (d. 756/1355). This work, which marks the peak of philosophical *kalām*, is taught to this day in such centers of Islamic learning as al-Azhar, along with the works of Sa‘d al-Dīn al-Taftāzānī (d. 791/1389), who represented a competing school of *kalām* that was more opposed to Islamic philosophy while seeking itself to deal with the issues of philosophy.

There were other notable Ash‘arite theologians of the later period, for example, Muḥammad al-Sanūsī (d. ca. 895/1490), whose short “creed,” *al-Sanūsīyyah*, is popular to this day; Jalāl al-Dīn Dawānī (d. 907/1501), at once theologian and philosopher, who is said to have embraced Twelve-Imam Shi‘ism toward the end of his life; and many other figures whose summaries and commentaries have been studied over the centuries. But the peak of this philosophical Ash‘arite *kalām* was reached in the ninth/fifteenth century, and the later authors represent for the most part the continuation of the teachings of the earlier masters. The most important development in the later centuries was the wedding of Ash‘arism and Sufism that is found among so many of the later Ash‘arites including al-Sanūsī.

Kalām in the Modern World

Until the last century, many manuals of Ash‘arite *kalām* continued to appear summarizing the earlier classics, for example, the manual *Jawharat al-tawḥīd* (*The Substance of Unity*) by the thirteenth/nineteenth-century Egyptian scholar al-Bājūrī. But it was also at this time that a number of

Sunni thinkers inaugurated the modernist period in the Islamic world and some sought to resuscitate *kalām* as a way of reviving Islamic religious thought. Foremost among these modern scholars of *kalām* was Muhammad 'Abduh (d. 1323/1905), who in his *Risālat al-tawhīd* (*The Treatise of Unity*) delineated the "new theology" which paid greater attention to the use of reason and revived certain Mu'tazilite theses. His path was followed by several later Egyptian scholars, including the early fourteenth/twentieth-century figure Shaykh Muṣṭafā 'Abd al-Rāziq (d. 1366/1947), who, like 'Abduh, became a rector of al-Azhar University. Similar attempts to formulate a modern *kalām* were carried out in India by such well-known modernist thinkers as Sayyid Ahmad Khan (d. 1316/1898) and Syed Ameer Ali (d. 1347/1928). Even Muḥammad Iqbāl (d. 1357/1938), although more a philosopher than a *mutakallim*, could be included in this group if one considers his *Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam*. To what extent these and similar works reflect Islamic spirituality is another matter. Whatever one's view might be of these tendencies, one can say with certitude that they reflect more the concern for an apologetic defense of Islam and the accommodation of modernity than the expression of Islamic spirituality.

The Message of Ash'arism

When one ponders the message of Ash'arism and its spiritual significance, one becomes aware of the central concern of this school—to bring the reality of God into the everyday world by making intelligence subservient to the Will of God. It also reduces man to that aspect of his being which is in obedience to God because it is determined by God, not the aspect of man as a free being with a freedom which is granted to him by God by virtue of his being created in "His form" and as a creature who is the central reflection of God's Names and Qualities.

Omnipotentism [of the Ash'arite school], which in practice denies the human mind all capacity to understand Divine motives, and which refers our intelligence to Revelation alone, has the function of suggesting that it is "God alone who knows," but it does this arbitrarily *ab extra* and forgets that, if it is indeed God who is always the thinker, then He is also the thinker in us and in pure intellection or inspiration. . . . But Ash'arism thinks only of one thing: to make the immensity of God concretely present in the world; and it is perfectly realistic in its presentiment that for the average man the acceptance of higher truths passes through the will and not through the Intellect, and that consequently it is the will that must receive the shock; this shock, both crushing and sacramental, is provided precisely by all but blind omnipotentism.¹¹

Ash'arite voluntarism or omnipotentism possesses a positive aspect, although against the reality of human intelligence and freedom and impervious to God's Nature, which is Pure Goodness, while emphasizing His will. It emphasizes the presence of God in the day-to-day life of man and the assertion of His Will in the running of the world that surrounds man. To achieve this end fully, the Ash'arites posited the previously mentioned atomism or occasionalism, which reduces the reality of the phenomenal world to nothingness and holds that the world is annihilated and recreated at every moment thereby reasserting the dominance of God's Will over all things and at all moments. This atomistic doctrine, which stood opposed to the view of the Islamic metaphysicians, philosophers, and scientists, follows nevertheless a direction in a sense totally opposed to that of modern science, which since the scientific revolution has accepted only "horizontal" causes in the explanation of phenomena, denying all "vertical" causes. In contrast, Ash'arism denies all "horizontal" causes and helped to create an ambience in which a secular science such as that of the seventeenth century could not possibly have taken root.

In summary, the purpose of this doctrine—or this atomism or occasionalism—is to remind us constantly that God is present and active in all things, and to suggest to us that this world here below would only be a discontinuous chaos were it not for the Divine Presence. Regarded in this way, Ash'arite atomism is a reminder of the Divine Presence, or an introduction of the transcendent—of the marvelous, one might say—into everyday life. Man must feel that faith is something other than ordinary logic and that it sees things in terms of God and not in terms of the world; and by this fact, the believer is himself not entirely of this world, his faith is not a "natural" thought, but a "supernatural" assent; what is divinely true seems absurd to unbelievers, who follow only an earth-bound process of thought. According to this perspective, the unbeliever thinks in a horizontal direction, according to the "straight path"; and this divine transparency of earthly things—since the Divine Cause is everywhere and since it alone is really present—confers on faith a sort of concrete and sacramental mystery, in short, an element of the marvelous which makes of the believer a being marked by the supernatural. From the point of view of metaphysics, this is an unnecessary luxury, since the intellect has resources other than pious absurdity; but from the theological point of view it doubtless marks a victory. In a word, if unbelief in the form of atheistic scientism admits only physical causes and denies the transcendent causality which works in them, Ash'arism has replied in advance, and has done so radically, by denying physical causes; it is like a surgical operation or a preventive war. The Renaissance certainly could not have hatched in an Asharite climate.¹²

Ash'arite atomism also possesses a metaphysical significance beyond its immediate theological meaning. There is at once continuity and

discontinuity between the Divine Principle and its manifestations. The Ash'arites emphasize this discontinuity, whereas the Islamic philosophers in general accentuate the continuity. This discontinuity is not only of cosmological significance. It also reflects, on the level of cosmic reality, the discontinuity between the Supreme Principle as Beyond-Being and Being as the immediate Principle of cosmic reality. Ash'arite atomism also echoes on the theological level a discontinuity or atomism that is to be seen in the Arabic language itself, in which one observes an intuitive leap from one idea to another or even from the subject to the predicate, whereas Indo-European languages possess a plasticity and continuous flow that is reflected also in the metaphysical expositions of people who think in such languages. A metaphysical treatise in Arabic by an Arab gnostic like Ibn 'Arabī is like a series of discontinuous bolts of lightning striking a mountaintop, whereas—to use an example within the citadel of Islam—the Persian metaphysicians like Mullā Ṣadrā present a more systematic and flowing exposition of metaphysics as if pouring honey from a jar.

It is remarkable that despite its "anti-intellectualism" Ash'arism not only became the prevalent *kalām* in the Sunni world but also became combined in certain circumstances with Sufism, at whose heart lies the gnosis which is illuminative knowledge actualized with the help of revelation through the immanent intellect whose symbol is the heart. One need only think of al-Ghazzālī, who was more responsible than any other figure for the spread of Ash'arism beyond its early confines in the Arab East although, as mentioned already, not all of his theological works are of an Ash'arite character. This great theologian was not only an eminent Sufi but also one who wrote many luminous pages concerning intellection through the heart and the cultivation of *al-ma'rifa* or Divine Knowledge. Many a later Sufi figure, including several of the important figures of North African Sufism, was to continue this wedding between Ash'arism and Sufism. Yet, many other Sufi masters and authorities of Islamic gnosis stood against Ash'arism and criticized its limitations severely, as did the Islamic philosophers, many of whom during later centuries did not believe that Ash'arism possessed the intellectual requirements necessary for dealing with the questions of God's Names and Qualities or other problems related to *theo-logia* in the original sense of this term.

Ash'arism, while not ceasing to oppose both the Islamic philosophers and certain types of Sufi metaphysics, nevertheless continued to discuss the basic philosophical and metaphysical issues dealt with by its adversaries. Its later treatises deal with such questions as being and non-being, necessity and contingency, the relation of the one to the many, substance and accidents—all of which were treated also by Islamic philosophers. Ash'arism also deals

with the "science of God" (*ilāhiyyāt*), which is so amply treated in works of theoretical Sufism such as those of Ibn 'Arabī and Ṣadr al-Dīn al-Qunawī. Ash'arism thus became one of several major schools of Islamic thought vying with the theosophers and gnostics, who dealt with matters of more direct spiritual concern than the Ash'arites. Ash'arism nevertheless provided a rational defense of the tenets of the faith and created a climate in which religious truths were real and the Will of God reigned supreme. For those who wanted to know God as well as obey His will, Ash'arism appeared either as an impediment or, at best, the walls of the city of Divine Knowledge; they protected the city, and one had to pass beyond them in order to reach the treasures of the city itself, the city to which the Prophet referred when he said, "I am the city of knowledge and 'Alī is its gate."

Shī'ite Kalām

In addition to Sunni *kalām*, there developed in Islam other schools of *kalām* associated with the Ismā'īlīs and Twelve-Imam Shī'ites. As for the Zaydīs, the third school of Shī'ism, they adopted more or less Mu'tazilite *kalām* as a result of which this form of *kalām* lasted in Yemen, the home of Zaydī Shī'ism, long after it had ceased to exist as a notable school of thought elsewhere in the Islamic world. Ismā'īlī thought, both philosophical and theological, developed early in the history of Islam, and the two remained close to each other. Some of the earlier Ismā'īlī thinkers, for example, Ḥamīd al-Dīn al-Kirmānī (d. ca. 408/1017) and Nāṣir-i Khusraw (d. between 465/1072 and 470/1077), were more philosophers than theologians. Others, including Abū Ḥatīm al-Rāzī (d. 322/933) and al-Mu'ayyid bi'llāh al-Shīrāzī (d. 470/1077), were more theologians than philosophers. But both groups dealt with the major themes of Ismā'īlī thought, such as the ontological status of the "unknowable" God or *Deus absconditus*, the celestial archetype of Adam, the relation between the function of prophecy (*nubuwwah*) and initiatic power (*wilāyah*), and esoteric hermeneutics (*ta'wīl*).¹³

Twelve-Imam Shī'ite *kalām*, however, developed much later. The early concern of Twelve-Imam Shī'ite thinkers was mostly *Ḥadīth*, Quranic commentary, and jurisprudence, although earlier Shī'ite thinkers, including Shaykh al-Mufīd (d. 413/1022), must also be considered as theologians. It was, however, only in the seventh/thirteenth century that the first systematic treatise on Twelve-Imam Shī'ite *kalām* was written by none other than the celebrated mathematician and philosopher, Naṣīr al-Dīn al-Tūsī (d. 672/1273). This is probably the only instance in history in which the major theological text of a religious community was composed by a scientist

of the order of Naṣīr al-Dīn. The work of Ṭūsī entitled *Tajrīd al-i'tiqād* (*Catharsis of Doctrines*) became rapidly the standard theological text, and more than a hundred commentaries came to be written on it before this century. Perhaps the most notable commentary is the *Kashf al-murād* (*The Unveiling of the Desired*) by Jamāl al-Dīn 'Allāmah al-Hillī (d. 726/1326), who is the most notable Shī'ite *mutakallim* after Ṭūsī.

In studying this major opus, one can see clearly how Twelve-Imam Shī'ite *kalām* differs in its concerns from Ash'arism. The work begins with a discussion of being and non-being and modes and grades of being. It develops an elaborate ontology that reminds one more of the ontology of Ibn Sīnā than the atomism of al-Ash'arī.¹⁴ The work then proceeds to a discussion of quiddity or essence, which complements that of existence. Finally, the first section of the work turns to the relation between cause and effect and the discussion of causality in general. Again, in this basic issue, the work confirms the reality of horizontal causality in direct opposition to the Ash'arite view.

The second section (*maqṣad*) of the work turns to the discussion of substance and accidents. Once again in contrast to Ash'arism, the *Tajrīd* rejects all forms of atomism and asserts along with Ibn Sīnā that a body can be divided *ad infinitum* potentially but that such a division can never be actualized. Ṭūsī also confirms the reality of substances that are free of all potentiality and entanglement in matter and are immortal. These substances include both the intellect (*al-'aql*) and the human soul (*nafs*), which for Shī'ite *kalām* is an immortal substance and not a perishable configuration of atoms as in Ash'arism. Ash'arism does not accept a reality for the soul independent of the body but believes that the soul is recreated by God at the Day of Judgment along with the resurrection of the body.

It is only in the third *maqṣad* that Ṭūsī turns to theology properly speaking, in contrast to general metaphysics, with which he is occupied in the first two sections of the book. In the third, fourth, and fifth sections he turns to God, prophecy, and imamology respectively, dealing with general Islamic doctrines first and turning to the specifically Shī'ite doctrines concerning the Imam only in the fifth *maqṣad*. Finally, in the sixth and last section, he turns to questions of eschatology (*al-ma'ād*), explaining both the metaphysical and theological meaning of general Islamic eschatological doctrines and the theological meaning of specific Islamic images and symbols used in the explanation of complex posthumous realities. This manner of treating theological subjects became a model for many a later treatise, and many theologians and philosophers began to distinguish between *al-ilāhiyyāt bi ma'na'l-'āmm* (metaphysics in its general sense, corresponding

to the first two sections of Ṭūsī's work) and *al-ilāhiyyāt bi ma'na'l-khāṣṣ* (theology dealing with the nature of God, prophecy, and other specifically religious issues).

From the time of Ṭūsī to the Safavid period in the tenth/sixteenth century, a number of Shī'ite scholars of *kalām* appeared, some of whom, like Sayyid Haydar Āmulī (d. after 787/1385), were also Sufis. Others, including Jalāl al-Dīn Dawānī, who was first a Sunni theologian and later turned to Shī'ism, were at once theologians and philosophers. During the Safavid period, Islamic philosophy associated with the School of Isfahan eclipsed *kalām*. But strangely enough, during the latter part of Safavid rule, the most famous students of the greatest of Safavid philosophers, Ṣadr al-Dīn Shīrāzī (d. 1050/1640)—Mullā Muhsin Fayḍ Kāshānī (d. 1091/1680) and 'Abd al-Razzāq Lāhijī (d. 1071/1660)—were more scholars of *kalām* than philosophers. This is especially true of Lāhijī, the author of *Gawḥar-murād* (*The Sought Jewel*) and *Kitāb al-mashāriq* (*The Book of Orients*), which are two of the most important later texts of Shī'ite *kalām*. This tradition continued into the Qajar and even the Pahlavi period, but the main arena of Shī'ite thought became dominated more by philosophy or theosophy (*ḥikmah*) on the one hand and the science of the principles of jurisprudence (*'ilm al-uṣūl*) on the other—not to speak of jurisprudence itself. To understand fully later Shī'ite *kalām*, it is necessary to turn not only to texts of *kalām* following the tradition of Ṭūsī, but also to those major works of theosophy (*al-ḥikmat al-ilāhiyyah*) which deal with all the traditional problems of *kalām* and claim to possess the intellectual means necessary to deal with these problems more than did the *mutakallimūn* themselves.

Islamic Philosophy: Its Meaning and Significance in the Islamic Intellectual Tradition

In the Islamic perspective, the intellect (*al-'aql*) and the spirit (*al-rūḥ*) are closely related and are two faces of the same reality. Islamic spirituality is inseparable from intellectuality as traditionally understood; and those who have been concerned with the intellect in the Islamic cultural citadel and those concerned with the world of the spirit form a single family with profound affinities with each other. This fact is certainly true of the Islamic philosophers who have been considered by most Western scholars of Islam as well as anti-intellectualist elements within the Islamic world to be peripheral and outside of the main current of Islamic intellectual life. In reality, however, Islamic philosophy constitutes an important component of the Islamic intellectual tradition, and the Islamic philosophers belong to the same spiritual universe as the gnostics (*'urafā'*) among the Sufis.

Furthermore, Islamic philosophy has played an important role in the development of *kalām*, not to speak of the Islamic sciences such as mathematics, astronomy, and medicine, which have been inseparable from Islamic philosophy throughout their history.¹⁵

To understand the significance of Islamic philosophy, it is necessary to go beyond the prevalent Western view, according to which Islamic philosophy began with al-Kindī and terminated with Ibn Rushd (the famous Latin Averroes) with Ibn Khaldūn representing an interesting postscript.¹⁶ Moreover, one must understand this philosophy as Islamic and not Arabic philosophy, for, although some of its great representatives such as al-Kindī and Ibn Rushd were Arabs, the majority, including such major figures as Ibn Sīnā, Suhrawardī, and Mullā Ṣadrā, were Persian. Especially during the later centuries, the main home of Islamic philosophy was Persia and adjacent areas of the Islamic world such as Muslim India, which had close links with Persian culture. This philosophy is also Islamic not only because different Muslim peoples cultivated it but because it is related by its roots, dominating concepts, and determining world view to the Islamic revelation, which also molded the mind and soul of those intellectual figures who developed this philosophy.

Some figures within the Islamic world wrote works on philosophy, for example, Muḥammad ibn Zakariyyā' al-Rāzī (d. ca. 320/932), but their philosophy was not Islamic in this sense of being related in its principles to the Islamic revelation and functioning in a universe in which revelation looms as a blinding reality upon the horizon. The main tradition of philosophy from al-Kindī and al-Fārābī to Shāh Walī Allāh of Delhi and Sabziwārī, however, was Islamic in that it was integrally related to the principles of the Islamic revelation and an organic part of the Islamic intellectual universe.¹⁷ Moreover, this philosophical tradition did not die eight centuries ago with Ibn Rushd but has continued as a living tradition to this day.¹⁸ To understand Islamic spirituality fully, one must gain some knowledge of this long philosophical tradition, which may be called "prophetic philosophy,"¹⁹ although a full discussion of this tradition requires a separate volume and lies outside the scope of an encyclopedia devoted to spirituality as such and not to philosophy.

Early Peripatetic (Mashshā'ī) Philosophy

The best-known school of Islamic philosophy, the *mashshā'ī* or Peripatetic, which is a synthesis of the tenets of the Islamic revelation, Aristotelianism, and Neoplatonism of both the Athenian and Alexandrian schools, was founded in the third/ninth century in the rich intellectual climate of

Baghdad by Abū Ya'qūb al-Kindī (d. ca. 260/873). The so-called philosopher of the Arabs was a prolific author who composed over two hundred treatises, in which he dealt with the sciences as well as philosophy, beginning a trend that characterizes the whole class of Muslim sages who were philosopher-scientists and not only philosophers.²⁰ His main concern was the discovery of the truth wherever it might be. In a famous statement that has been repeated often over the centuries and characterizes all Islamic philosophy, he said:

We should not be ashamed to acknowledge truth and to assimilate it from whatever source it comes to us, even if it is brought to us by former generations and foreign peoples. For him who seeks the truth there is nothing of higher value than truth itself; it never cheapens or abases him who reaches for it, but ennobles and honours him.²¹

It was this universal conception of truth that has always characterized Islamic philosophy—a truth, however, that is not bound by the limits of reason. Rather, it is the illimitable Truth reached by the intellect which al-Kindī, like other Islamic philosophers, distinguished clearly from reason as the analytical faculty of the mind. This intellect is like an instrument of inner revelation for which the macrocosmic revelation provides an objective cadre. The Islamic philosophers considered the call of the truth to be the highest call of philosophy, but this did not mean the subservience of revelation to reason, as some have contended. Rather, it meant to reach the truth at the heart of revelation through the use of the intellect, which, in its macrocosmic manifestation usually identified with the archangel of revelation, Gabriel, is the instrument of revelation itself. The treatise of al-Kindī on the intellect known as *De intellectu* in the Latin West points to the significance that the doctrine of the intellect was to have for later Islamic philosophers and even many Latin scholastics.

Al-Kindī was also deeply interested in the relation between religion and philosophy or faith and reason. In his classification of the sciences, he sought to create harmony between divine and human knowledge and wrote the first chapter in the long history of the relation between faith and reason which occupied nearly all Islamic philosophers for the next millennium. Al-Kindī also helped create the Arabic philosophical terminology that soon became a powerful vehicle for the expression of Islamic philosophy. Much of the translation of Greek philosophical works was made in Baghdad during his lifetime. He knew in fact some of the translators, and it is said that the summary of the *Enneads* of Plotinus, which came to be known to Muslims as the *Theology of Aristotle*, was translated for him by Ibn al-Nā'imah al-Ḥimṣī. In any case, one of the major achievements of al-Kindī

was the molding of the Arabic language as a vehicle for the expression of philosophy, as one sees in his celebrated treatise *Fi'l-falsafat al-ūlā* (*On Metaphysics*). Although some of the terminology used by him was rejected by later philosophers writing in Arabic, he remained a pioneer in the creation of Arabic philosophic vocabulary and the father of Islamic philosophy. He was the first devout Muslim who knew Greco-Alexandrian philosophy well and sought to create a philosophical system in which this philosophy was integrated into the Islamic world view with its emphasis on the unity of God and the reality of revelation.

Al-Kindī's immediate students were mostly scientists, and his real successor as the next major figure in early *mashshā'ī* philosophy did not appear until a generation later in Khurasan. He was Abū Naṣr al-Fārābī (d. 339/950), who was born and raised in Farab in Central Asia in a family of Turkish background living within a Persian cultural milieu. He was already a famous philosopher when he came to Baghdad for a short period at mid-life only to migrate once again westward to settle in Damascus, where he spent the rest of his life. At once a logician and musician, metaphysician and political thinker, al-Fārābī formulated *mashshā'ī* philosophy in the form it was to take in later Islamic history.

Al-Fārābī was attracted to the spiritual life from an early age and was a practicing Sufi. He was also one of the greatest theoreticians of music in Islam and a composer some of whose compositions can still be heard in the repertory of Sufi music in India. Yet, he was an acute logician who commented on all the logical works of Aristotle. He also composed *Fi ihṣā' al-'ulūm* (*On the Enumeration of the Sciences*), which classified and categorized the sciences and left a deep impact on later Islamic thought. It was entitled *De Scientiis* in the West. Al-Fārābī in fact came to be known as the "Second Teacher" (*al-mu'allim al-thānī*) not because he taught philosophy or the sciences but because he was the first to enumerate and delineate clearly the sciences in the context of Islamic civilization, as Aristotle, the first teacher, had done for the Greek sciences.²²

Al-Fārābī knew Aristotle well and in fact wrote commentaries not only on the Stagirite's logical writings but also on his cosmological works. Al-Fārābī's commentary on the *Metaphysics* exercised a great influence on Ibn Sīnā. But al-Fārābī was not interested so much in pure Aristotelianism as in synthesizing the teachings of Aristotle and Plato and the Neoplatonists within the universal perspective of Islam. This intellectual effort is seen most of all in his *Kitāb al-jam' bayn ra'yay al-hakīmayn Aflātūn al-ilāhī wa Aristū* (*The Book of Accord between the Ideas of the Divine Plato and Aristotle*).

Al-Fārābī was also the founder of Islamic political philosophy in which he sought to harmonize the idea of the philosopher-king of Plato with the

idea of the prophet in monotheistic traditions. His definitive masterpiece, *Kitāb ārā' ahl al-madīnat al-fādilah* (*The Book of the Opinions of the Citizens of the Virtuous City*), influenced not only later political philosophical thinkers such as Ibn Rushd but the *mutakillimūn* as well. This major opus was supplemented by several works on practical philosophy and ethics, including *Kitāb taḥṣīl al-sa'ādah* (*The Book of the Attainment of Happiness*), which established al-Fārābī once and for all as the prime authority in this domain of philosophy in Islam.

From the spiritual point of view, the *Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikmah* (*Bezels of Wisdom*) of al-Fārābī, sometimes attributed to Ibn Sīnā, is of particular significance. Besides being rich in technical vocabulary,²³ this work represents the first important synthesis between speculative philosophy and gnosis in Islam. Many commentaries have been written on it, and it is taught to this day in Persia as a text of both philosophy and gnosis.²⁴ The work reflects the mind and soul of al-Fārābī, in whom critical philosophical analysis was combined with intellectual synthesis and in whose perspective both the musical and logical dimensions of reality were combined without any contradiction, both issuing from that *coincidentia oppositorum* which is realized in gnosis alone.

Al-Fārābī's most famous immediate student was Yahyā ibn 'Adī, a Christian theologian, but his real successor in the field of Islamic philosophy was Abū 'Alī Sīnā (the Latin Avicenna), who lived two generations after him. Between these two giants of Islamic thought there stand a number of figures who are of some importance in the development of *mashshā'ī* philosophy. In Baghdad, the imposing figure was Yahyā ibn 'Adī's student Abū Sulaymān al-Sijistānī (d. 371/981), who was most of all a logician. His circle drew to itself philosophers as well as men of letters such as Abū Ḥayyān al-Tawhīdī (d. 399/1009).²⁵ Meanwhile the locus of philosophical activity was shifting to an ever-greater degree to Khurasan, where the most significant figure preceding Ibn Sīnā was Abū'l-Ḥasan al-'Āmirī (d. 381/992), known for his works on ethics as well as the philosophical defense of Islam, particularly in his *al-I'lām bi manāqib al-islām* (*Declaration of the Virtues of Islam*), which is unique in *mashshā'ī* literature for its manner of defense of the Islamic religion.

Al-'Āmirī trained a number of scholars and philosophers, including Ibn Muskūyah (usually pronounced Miskawayh) (d. 421/1030), known especially for his major work on philosophical ethics, the *Tadhīb al-akhḷāq* (*Purification of Morals*) and a doxography entitled *Jawīdān-khīrad* in Persian or *al-Hikmat al-khālidah* in Arabic (*Eternal Wisdom* or *Philosophia Perennis*). This book marks a genre of philosophical writing in which sayings of sages

of antiquity—not only Greek but also Indian and Persian—were assembled to point to the permanence and universality of the truth asserted in its final form in the Islamic revelation and developed by Islamic philosophers. This type of writing continued during later centuries with such figures as Ibn al-Fātik, who lived in Egypt in the fifth/eleventh century, Shams al-Dīn Shahrāzūrī (d. ca. 680/1281), who was a commentator of Suhrawardī, and the Safavid philosopher Qutb al-Dīn Ashkiwarī and pointed to the significance of the idea of the *philosophia perennis* among Islamic philosophers long before Steuco and Leibnitz wrote of it and made it famous in the West.²⁶

Islamic Peripatetic or *mashshā'ī* philosophy reached its peak with Ibn Sīnā, who is perhaps the greatest and certainly the most influential Islamic philosopher and in a sense the father of specifically medieval philosophy to the extent that this philosophy is concerned basically with being. This incredible intellectual figure, who was at once a philosopher and the most famous physician of the period the West calls the Middle Ages, was a Persian born in Bukhara in 370/980. He wandered most of his life in various Persian cities, especially Rayy, Isfahan, and Hamadan, and finally died from colic in the latter city in 428/1037 at a relatively young age.²⁷ Despite a tumultuous life marked by externally unsettled conditions in Persia, Ibn Sīnā composed more than two hundred works, including the monumental *Kitāb al-shifā'* (*The Book of Healing*), which is an encyclopedia of Peripatetic philosophy and science. He also wrote *al-Qānūn fi'l-tibb* (*The Canon of Medicine*), which is the most celebrated single work in the history of medicine. His philosophical works include also the *al-Najāt* (*Salvation*), *al-Mabda' wa'l-ma'ād* (*The Beginning and the End*), his last philosophical masterpiece, *al-Ishārāt wa'l-tanbīhāt* (*Directives and Remarks*), and a number of visionary recitals that concern his "Oriental Philosophy."

In his *mashshā'ī* works crowned by the *Shifā'*, Ibn Sīnā created that final synthesis of Islam with Aristotelian and Neoplatonic philosophy which became a permanent intellectual dimension in the Islamic world and survives as a living philosophical school to this day. Toward the end of his life, however, he criticized *mashshā'ī* philosophy including his own as being the common philosophy meant for everyone, while pointing to the philosophy that he considered to be for the intellectual elite, which he called "Oriental Philosophy" (*al-hikmat al-mashriqiyyah*). This philosophy is oriental because it is related to the world of light and not because of the geographic Orient. It is based on the illumination of the soul as well as ratiocination and sees the cosmos as a crypt through which the true philosopher must and sees the journey with the help of the guide, who is none other than the Divine Intellect. The language of this philosophy is eminently symbolic rather

than discursive. It points to a path that was to be followed fully and to its ultimate end a century and a half after Ibn Sīnā by the founder of the School of Illumination (*al-ishrāq*), Shihāb al-Dīn Suhrawardī.²⁸ Ibn Sīnā was therefore at once the elaborator of the most complete and enduring version of *mashshā'ī* philosophy and himself the guide to the threshold of that philosophy or theosophy of illumination which marked the indissoluble union between philosophy and spirituality.

After Ibn Sīnā, *mashshā'ī* philosophy became temporarily eclipsed in the eastern lands of Islam as a result of the attacks of Ash'arism against it. Journeying to the western lands of Islam, it experienced a period of marked activity. Some of the students of Ibn Sīnā such as Bahmanyār ibn Marzbān (d. 458/1066), the author of *Kitāb al-tahsīl* (*The Book of Attainment*), continued the teachings of the master well into the fifth/eleventh century. Moreover, the few important philosophers of the sixth/twelfth century, such as Abu'l-Barakāt al-Baghdādī (d. ca. 560/1164), whose *Kitāb al-mu'tabar* (*The Book of What Is Established by Personal Reflection*) contains important ideas in the domain of physics as well as epistemology, and 'Umar Khayyām (d. ca. 526/1132), at once poet, metaphysician, and mathematician, were deeply influenced by and indebted to Ibn Sīnā.²⁹

Avicennan Ontology and Cosmology

The philosophy of Ibn Sīnā, which marks the peak of Islamic Peripatetic philosophy, is based on ontology, and Ibn Sīnā has been called the "philosopher of being" and the founder of what is characteristically medieval philosophy whether it be Jewish, Christian, or Islamic.³⁰ For Aristotle, existence is a "block without fissure," whereas for the Islamic philosophers, God is Pure Being and transcends the chain of being and the order of cosmic existence while the existence of the world is contingent. To distinguish Pure Being from the existence of the world, Ibn Sīnā made the fundamental distinction between necessity (*wujūb*), contingency (*imkān*), and impossibility (*imtinā'*). The Necessary Being is that reality which must be and cannot not be, the reality whose nonexistence would imply contradiction. There is only one such reality, and that is the Necessary Being (*wājib al-wujūd*) which is the God revealed in monotheistic religions. Impossible being (*mumtani' al-wujūd*) is that quiddity which cannot exist objectively, for that would imply contradiction. All beings apart from the Necessary Being are contingent beings (*mumkin al-wujūd*); considered as quiddities they could exist or not exist. This distinction is one of the most fundamental in the whole history of philosophy. It influenced deeply all

later Islamic philosophy and even theology. It also traveled to the West to become one of the key concepts of philosophy. This basic distinction was itself related to the basic distinction between existence (*wujūd*) and quiddity (*māhiyyah*), which is also central to medieval ontology.³¹

The contemplation by the Necessary Being of Itself generates the First Intellect; and the First Intellect's contemplation of the Necessary Being as well as of itself as contingent being and as necessitated by the Necessary Being (*al-wājib bi'l-ghayr*) leads to the generation of the Second Intellect, the Soul of the First Sphere and the First Sphere. The process continues in this manner until the Tenth Intellect and the Ninth Sphere and its Soul are generated. This Ninth Sphere is the sphere of the Moon in accordance with the nine heavens of Ptolemaic astronomy as modified by Muslim astronomers. Below that level stand the spheres of the four elements governed by the Tenth Intellect, which is the "giver of forms" (*wāhib al-ṣuwar*) for all the existents in the sublunar region.³²

The sublunar region is also organized in a hierarchical order consisting of the three kingdoms crowned by man, who represents the point of return to the Origin. By means of knowledge, he can ascend through the levels of cosmic manifestation to gain union with the Active Intellect (*al-'aql al-fa'āl*). His mind ascends from the state of potentiality to actuality in which it becomes *intellectus in actu*. The universe consists of a vast hierarchy beginning with the ten Intellects which emanate from each other and ultimately from the Necessary Being. Below them stand the sublunar beings stretching from the *materia prima* to man, in whom the arc of ascent commences, terminating with the return to the purely intelligible world. The universe is generated through contemplation and returns to its origin through knowledge. The world is not created in time because time is a condition of the world, but it is not eternal in the sense that God is eternal. There is, rather, a basic distinction between the world and God, for God is the Necessary Being in need of nothing but Itself while all existents are contingent in themselves, gain their existence from the Necessary Being, and remain in utter poverty in their own essence. The Avicennan universe is one that preserves the transcendence of God through the radical distinction between necessity and contingency and at the same time emphasizes the emanation of the levels of cosmic existence from the Necessary Being as a result of the very nature of the Origin which generates the universe like the sun which radiates light by its very nature.

Ismā'īlī and Hermetico-Pythagorean Philosophy

During the early centuries of Islamic history, Islamic philosophy was not confined to the *mashshā'ī* school, which is the best known of the early

schools and is usually considered to be synonymous with Islamic philosophy as such. Even before al-Kindī, one can observe the beginning of Ismā'īlī philosophy, which was to have a long and fecund history. In this tradition, philosophy is identified with the inner truth of religion and possesses an esoteric character. As a result, Ismā'īlism became not only a congenial ground for the development of philosophy but an impetus for the growth and cultivation of a distinct philosophical tradition which, while dealing with basic Islamic themes such as unity (*al-tawhīd*) and the reality of a sacred book, differed in many ways from Islamic Peripatetic philosophy.

The earliest text of this school dates back to the second/eighth century and is known as the *Umm al-kitāb* (*The Archetypal Book*). It purports to be the record of a conversation held between Imam Muḥammad al-Bāqir (d. 115/733), the fifth Shī'ite Imam, and three of his disciples and reflects Shī'ite gnosis in its earliest forms of elaboration. The work emphasizes the esoteric science of letters (*al-jafṛ*) so prevalent in early Shī'ite circles and expounds a cosmology based on the number five and reminiscent of certain Manichean cosmological schemes.

The systematic elaboration of Ismā'īlī philosophy came two centuries later with such figures as Abū Ya'qūb al-Sijistānī (who died sometime after 360/971), the author of the *Kashf al-mahjūb* (*Unveiling of the Veiled*), Ḥamīd al-Dīn al-Kirmānī, whose *Rāḥat al-'aql* (*Repose of the Intellect*) is the most systematic work of this early school of Ismā'īlī philosophy, and the works of the greatest Ismā'īlī philosopher, Naṣir-i Khusraw. This celebrated Persian poet and philosopher wrote all his philosophical works in Persian rather than Arabic.³³ His most important opus is the *Jāmi' al-hikmatayn* (*The Sum of Two Wisdoms*), in which he compares and contrasts the philosophy derived from the Islamic revelation with Greek philosophy.

Ismā'īlī philosophy continued to flourish in both Persia and Yemen even after the downfall of the Fātimids in Egypt. In Persia, Hasan al-Ṣabbāḥ declared the "Grand Resurrection" in the mountain fortress of Alamut in 557/1162 and established the new Ismā'īlī Order in the formidable fortresses of northern Persia. Consequently, a new period of Ismā'īlī history began, during which Ismā'īlism and Sufism came closer together. In fact, certain Sufis such as the poets Sanā'ī and 'Aṭṭār as well as Qāsim-i Anwār (d. 837/1434) are claimed by the Ismā'īlīs as their own. The Ismā'īlīs even wrote commentaries on certain major Sufi works such as the *Gulshan-i rāz* (*Rose Garden of Divine Mysteries*) of Shabistārī. Also during this period important Ismā'īlī philosophical tracts were composed in prose, mostly in Persian, such as the well-known *Taṣawwūrāt* (*Notions*), attributed to Naṣir al-Dīn al-Ṭūsī, and the tradition continued well into the tenth/sixteenth century.

In Yemen, a form of Ismā'īlism that was closer to the Fātimids continued, culminating in the works of the nineteenth "missionary" (*dā'i*) of the Yemen, Sayyidnā Idrīs 'Imād al-Dīn (d. 872/1468). Interesting enough, this branch of Ismā'īlism was finally to make its home in India along with the continuation of the Alamut tradition, which has become known since the last century as the Āghā-Khānīd. The Yemeni authors followed by and large the theses presented in the earlier classical philosophical works of Ḥamīd al-Dīn and Nāsir-i Khusraw, whereas the tradition of Alamut represented more the close link between imamology and mystical experience, between Ismā'īlī theosophy and Sufi metaphysics.

While Ismā'īlī philosophy was developing, a number of works of Hermetic and Neo-Pythagorean inspiration appeared that have been claimed by some to be of Ismā'īlī inspiration and by others to belong more generally to Shī'ite circles—in fact to Islamic esoterism itself. The Hermetic corpus was translated into Arabic and was known to both alchemists and many philosophers.³⁴ Jābir ibn Ḥayyān, who lived in the second/eighth century and is the father of Islamic alchemy, wrote many philosophical works that are of Hermetic inspiration. This was to continue among later alchemists such as Abū'l-Qāsim al-'Irāqī, 'Izz al-Dīn al-Jaldakī, and Abū Maslamah al-Majrītī.³⁵ One must remember that both the *Turba Philosophorum* and the *Picatrix* were translated into Latin from Arabic and that there is a copious Islamic Hermetic literature of considerable philosophical importance. On the one hand, the visionary recitals of Ibn Sīnā reflect Hermetic prototypes, whereas the works of Suhrawardī are replete with references to Hermes and Hermeticism. On the other hand, one can see Hermetic themes in the works of many Sufis from Ḍhu'l-Nūn al-Misrī to Ibn 'Arabī.

Neo-Pythagorean philosophy too found a place in the Islamic intellectual citadel early in the history of Islam. The concern with the symbolism of numbers in early Shī'ite and Sufi circles points to this fact, and in the fourth/tenth century there appeared a major work entitled the *Rasā'il ikhwān al-ṣafā'* (*Epistles of the Brethren of Purity*), which contains an elaborate summary of philosophy, cosmology, and the natural sciences bound together by the unifying thread of Pythagorean mathematical symbolism.³⁶ Although this work is also claimed by many scholars to be of Ismā'īlī origin, it issued from a more general Shī'ite background and wielded an influence reaching nearly all sectors of Islamic intellectual life, including such a figure as al-Ghazzālī, who had read the work. Islamic spirituality has an inner link with what has been called "Abrahamic Pythagoreanism," as seen in the sacred art of Islam. This inner link has manifested itself in many forms in philosophical expositions throughout Islamic history and among

numerous philosophers and is far from being confined to the Brethren of Purity. Furthermore, one can see its manifestation not only in the eastern lands of Islam but also in Andalusia in the works of Ibn al-Sīd of Badajoz (d. 521/1127), whose works, especially the *Kitāb al-ḥadā'iq* (*The Book of Circles*), are concerned with mathematical symbolism.

The metaphysics expounded by the classical Ismā'īlī philosophers such as al-Sijistānī, Ḥamīd al-Dīn al-Kirmānī, and Nāsir-i Khusraw and followed for the most part by the later Yemeni school is based not on Being, as is the case with Ibn Sīnā and his followers, but on the Supreme Principle or Originator (*al-Mubdī'*) which is Supra-Being, beyond all categories and delimitations including even being. It lies even beyond the negation of being. Being is the first act of *al-Mubdī'*, the command stated in the Quran when God says, "But His command, when He intendeth a thing is only that he saith into it: Be! and it is" (XXXVI, 81). This *kun* or *Esto* is the origin of the chain of being, of all realms of existence. It is the One (*al-wāḥid*), and the Originator or *al-Mubdī'* is the maker of oneness (*al-muwahḥid*), which is also called the Mystery of mysteries (*ghayb al-ghuyūb*). The Supreme Principle has the function of "monadizing" and unifying all beings, and unity or *al-tawḥīd* "then takes on an aspect of monadology. At the same time that it disengages this Unifying Principle from all the *ones* which it unifies, it is by them and through them that it affirms It."³⁷

The first being, which is called also the "First Originated" (*al-mubda' al-awwal*), is the Word of God (*Kalām Allāh*) and the First Intellect. From it emanate the beings in the hierarchy of existence according to the basic Ismā'īlī concept of limit or degree (*ḥadd*). Each being has a *ḥadd* by virtue of which it is delimited (*mahdūd*) in a hierarchy of beings or "monads" unified by virtue of the unifying act of the Originator. This hierarchy stretches from the celestial pleroma created by the imperative *kun* and called the World of Origination (*'ālam al-ibdā'*) or the World of Divine Command (*'ālam al-amr*) to the world of creation (*'ālam al-khalq*). According to the earlier Ismā'īlī philosophers, followed by the Yemeni school, emanation of lower states of being (*inbi'āth*) commences with the First Intellect. The relation of all the lower levels of being reflects the rapport between the first limit (*al-ḥadd*) and the first delimited (*al-mahdūd*), namely, the First Intellect and the Second Intellect which proceeds from it and has its limit in it. This dual relationship is referred to by the Ismā'īlīs as *sābiq* (that which comes before) and *tālī* (that which follows) and is considered to correspond to the Pen (*al-qalam*) and the Guarded Tablet (*al-lawḥ al-mahfūz*) of Quranic cosmology. This archetypal relationship is reflected in the lower states of being and has its counterpart on earth in the rapport

between the prophet (*al-nabī*) and his inheritor (*al-wasī*), who is the Imam.

In the procession of the Intellect, the Third Intellect is the Celestial Adam (*al-Ādam al-rūḥānī*), who is the archetype of humanity. The Celestial Adam, however, refuses to see the *ḥadd* which defines his horizon as leading through hierarchy to the Originator and thereby seeks to reach the Originator directly. He falls as a result into the worst metaphysical idolatry of setting himself up as the Absolute. He finally awakens from this stupor and realizes his error, but as a result he has already passed by the procession of the Celestial Intellects and finds himself as the Tenth Intellect. This drama in heaven is the origin of time. Celestial Adam must now redeem himself with the help of the Seven Intellects separating him from his original station and degree. These Intellects are called the "Seven Cherubim," and they indicate the distance of his fall. Time is in a sense "retarded eternity," and henceforth the number seven becomes the archetypal number governing the unfolding of time.

The Ismā'īlīs have a cyclic view of history dominated by the number seven. There are seven cycles, each with its own prophet followed by his Imam. Within Islam, it was after the sixth Shī'ite Imam, Ja'far al-Ṣādiq, that the Ismā'īlīs parted from the main branch of Shī'ism, considering Ismā'il as their seventh Imam. The number seven has henceforth continued to be of major significance in their sacred history as well as in their cosmology.

It must be recalled that Ismā'īlī philosophy is based on the principle of *ta'wīl* or esoteric hermeneutic interpretation. Everything has an outward (*al-zāhir*) and an inward (*al-bātin*) aspect, and *ta'wīl* is the process of going from the outward to the inward. In the domain of religion, the outward is represented by the prophet and the inward by the imam. The role of philosophy is precisely to make possible the discovery of the inward or the esoteric. Its language is therefore eminently symbolic, and its function ultimately esoteric. In the context of Ismā'īlism, philosophy became synonymous with the truth (*al-ḥaqīqah*) lying at the heart of religion, which establishes rites and practices on the exoteric level with the ultimate aim of leading man to that knowledge which the Ismā'īlī philosophers and theologians considered to have been expounded in their works for the intellectual elite among their community.³⁸

Islamic Philosophy in the Western Lands of Islam

Islamic philosophy had a shorter life in the western lands of Islam than in the East, but even in that faraway region of the Islamic world—and especially in Andalusia—there appeared many illustrious Islamic philosophers who left an indelible mark on Western philosophy while creating an important

chapter in the history of Islamic philosophy itself. The founder of this chapter in the history of Islamic thought was Ibn Masarraḥ (d. 319/931), the mysterious founder of the school of Almería, who was both mystic and philosopher and who led a group of disciples in the Cordovan Sierra until his death. His works are for the most part lost, and only two, *Kitāb al-taḥṣirah* (*The Book of Penetrating Explanations*) containing the key to his metaphysical teachings, and the *Kitāb al-ḥurūf* (*The Book of Letters*) dealing with "mystical algebra," are known to have circulated among his disciples. His influence was nevertheless immense, and his teachings have been reconstituted by M. Asín Palacios, thanks to many later references to him.³⁹

At the heart of Ibn Masarraḥ's teachings stands a cosmology named after Empedocles and often referred to as pseudo-Empedoclean and insistence on the esoteric character of philosophy and even psychology. His doctrines emphasized the absolute simplicity and ineffability of the absolute Being, the emanation of the levels of existence, the hierarchization of souls, and their emanation from the Universal Soul. The so-called pseudo-Empedoclean cosmology is especially interesting because of its vast influence on later Andalusian Sufism, from Ibn al-'Arīf and Ibn Barraḡān to Ibn 'Arabī, as well as on later Islamic philosophers such as Mullā Ṣadrā and also Jewish philosophers such as Solomon ben Gabirol. Empedocles was seen by Ibn Masarraḥ as the first of the great Greek philosophers, followed by Pythagoras, Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle. Empedocles was viewed almost as a prophet who had received his teachings from Heaven. The cosmology attributed to him is based on the theory of hierarchic emanation of five substances: the *materia prima* (which is the first of intelligible realities and is not understood in the same way as the Aristotelian *materia prima*), the Intellect, the Soul, Nature, and *materia secunda*. The *materia prima* is "intelligible matter" existing in actuality and the first emanation of the Divine, while the Divine Principle Itself is above this schema, much like the Originator (*al-Mubdi'*) of the Ismā'īlīs. Ibn Masarraḥ also mentions the well-known Empedoclean theory of the two cosmic energies, namely, love and discord, which he, however, interprets in a very different manner by using the term *qabr* (which means dominion or victory and has an astrological color) rather than discord. What was basic to Ibn Masarraḥ's teachings, however, was the idea of "intelligible matter," which stood opposed to the teachings of both the Aristotelians and the Neoplatonists and is seen elaborated later by Ibn 'Arabī, who speaks of "spiritual matter."

One of the major early intellectual figures of Islamic Spain was Abū Muḥammad 'Alī ibn Hazm (d. 454/1063). At once jurist, moralist, historian, theologian, and philosopher, he represents a remarkable intellectual

presence in the Cordova of the fifth/eleventh century. He was a Zāhirite in jurisprudence and a theologian of note who remained sharply critical of the Ash'arites. His vast literary output, marked often by seething attacks on his opponents, touches on many branches of Islamic learning including comparative religion and philosophy.⁴⁰ His *Kitāb al-fisal fi'l-milal wa'l-ahwā' wa'l-nihāl* (*The Book of Critical Detailed Examination of Religions, Sects, and Philosophical Schools*) is considered by many to be one of the first works in the field of comparative religion, along with the *Tahqīq mā li'l-hind* (*India*) of al-Bīrūnī. Ibn Ḥazm's *Tawq al-ḥimāmah* (*The Ring of the Dove*), translated many times into European languages, is the most famous Islamic treatise on Platonic love.⁴¹ In this beautifully written work, Ibn Ḥazm follows upon the wake of earlier Muslim Platonists such as the Persian philosopher Muḥammad ibn Dā'ūd al-Isfahānī (d. 297/909) and echoes the teachings of Plato in the *Phaedrus*. The beauty of the soul attracts it to a beautiful object, and, as a result of the existence in the beautiful object of something corresponding to the nature of the soul, love is created. One finds in Ibn Ḥazm a full development of Platonic love, which marks him as a notable philosopher in addition to being a jurist and theologian and makes him a congenial companion of the *fedeli d'amore* among the Sufis despite certain differences of perspective.

The first major follower of eastern *mashshā'ī* philosophy in Spain was Abū Bakr ibn Bājja, the famous Latin Avempace, who had a great influence on Ibn Rushd and Albert the Great as well as on many Jewish philosophers. Originally from northern Spain, he led a difficult life in a Spain torn by local wars; he settled in Fez in Morocco, where he became vizier and was finally imprisoned and died in 533/1138. Ibn Bājja was an accomplished physician, astronomer, physicist, and natural historian as well as philosopher, but his work remained incomplete and much of it perished. He is, however, quoted extensively by later authorities, and one can surmise from these sources his importance in the anti-Ptolemaic astronomy and cosmology being developed in Spain in the sixth/twelfth century as well as his crucial role in the history of the critique of the Aristotelian theory of projectile motion.

As far as the spiritual significance of his work is concerned, one must turn to his major opus the *Tadbīr al-mutawahhid* (*Regimen of the Solitary*) which is one of the most significant works of Islamic philosophy in the Maghrib.⁴² In this work, the author speaks of the perfect state which is created not by external transformations, reforms, or revolutions but by the inner transformation of those individuals who have become inwardly united with the Active Intellect (*al-'aql al-fa'āl*) and whose intellects are completely in act. These individuals are solitary figures, strangers, and exiles in a world that

is comprised for the most part of human beings who cannot raise their gaze to the realm of the purely intelligible. Ibn Bājja opposed explicitly the Ghazzālīan type of mysticism and proposed a more intellectual and detached form of mystical contemplation. Yet in many ways he belongs to the same family as Sufi gnostics, and his *Tadbīr* is reminiscent of the *Occidental Exile* of Suhrawardī and the *gharīb* or stranger to the world emphasized in so many Sufi works. Unfortunately, this major opus was never completed, and we do not know how Ibn Bājja envisaged the termination and completion of the actualization of the intellect in the solitary figure who becomes inwardly united with the Active Intellect which is at the same time the Holy Spirit.

If Ibn Bājja was particularly drawn to the teachings of al-Fārābī, his successor upon the philosophical scene in Spain, Abū Bakr Muḥammad ibn Ṭufayl of Cadiz, was especially attracted to Ibn Sīnā. Ibn Ṭufayl was also a physician and scientist as well as a philosopher, and, like Ibn Bājja, he even became vizier in Morocco, where he died in 580/1185. He was also a friend of Ibn Rushd and asked the great commentator to undertake a study and an analysis of the works of Aristotle. He was known as Abubacer in the Latin West, but his major opus, *Ḥayy ibn Yaqzān* (*Living Son of the Awake*), did not become known to the scholastics. It was translated into Hebrew and later in the seventeenth century into Latin as *Philosophus autodidactus*, a work that had much influence on later European literature and is in fact considered by some to be the source of inspiration for the Robinson Crusoe story as well as certain forms of seventeenth-century mysticism concerned with the inner light. This major philosophical romance takes its title from the earlier work of Ibn Sīnā but seeks a path toward inner illumination in a manner similar to that of Suhrawardī, who was Ibn Ṭufayl's contemporary. It is of interest to note that at the beginning of his work Ibn Ṭufayl refers to the "Oriental Philosophy" which Ibn Sīnā was seeking in his later works and which Suhrawardī restored.

In Ibn Ṭufayl's "initiativ romance," the names in the Avicennan recitals are retained but their function changes. Ḥayy ibn Yaqzān himself is the hero of the story rather than the Active Intellect. He appears in a mysterious manner through spontaneous generation from a matter that is made spiritually active by the Active Intellect. He is helped and brought up by a gazelle as a result of the sympathy (*sympathia*) which relates all living beings together. As he grows up, he begins to attain knowledge first of the physical world, then of the heavens, the angels, the creative Demiurge, and finally of the Divine Principle and the universal theophany. Upon reaching the highest form of knowledge, he is joined by Absāl from a nearby island

where he had been instructed in religion and theology. After mastering Hayy's language, Absāl discovers to his astonishment that all he had learned about religion is confirmed by Hayy in its purest form. Together they try to educate the people of the nearby island from which Absāl had come but few understand what they say.

Far from being a treatise on naturalism denying revelation, as some have claimed,⁴³ *Hayy ibn Yaqzān* is a work that seeks to unveil within man the significance of the intellect whose illumination of the mind is like an inner revelation that cannot but confirm the truths of the outer revelation. Hayy is the solitary of Ibn Bājjah, whose inner experience to reach the truth through the intellect—a truth that is then confirmed to be in accord with the religious truths learned by Absāl—points to one of the major messages of much of Islamic philosophy. That message is the inner accord between philosophy and religion and the esoteric role of philosophy as the inner dimension of the truths expounded by revealed religion for a whole human collectivity. The eminently symbolic language of *Hayy ibn Yaqzān* also indicates the esoteric character of veritable philosophy, whose meaning cannot be exhausted by the outer meaning of its language and mode of exposition.

It is in the light of this background that one must examine the attempt of the most celebrated of the Islamic philosophers of Spain, Abu'l-Walid ibn Rushd, to reconcile religion and philosophy. The philosopher who became a central intellectual figure in the Latin West under the name of Averroes was born in Cordova in 520/1126, where he was to become the chief judge (*qādī*) later in life. But the political situation of Andalusia changed and Ibn Rushd fell from political favor. He spent the last part of his life in Marrakesh, where he died in 595/1198.

This greatest speculative philosopher of the Maghrib was to have two distinct destinies. In the West he became known as the commentator par excellence of Aristotle: hence the words of Dante, "Averrois che'l gran commento feo" (*Divine Comedy*, Inferno; iv, 144). It was through his eyes that the West saw Aristotle, and by mistake he became known as the author of the double truth theory and the inspiration for a politicized Averroism. He even came to be known as the symbol of a rationalism opposed to religious faith, a view that continued into the modern period, as seen by the classical work of the nineteenth-century French rationalist E. Renan.⁴⁴ Averroes became a major figure in Western intellectual history, and in fact most of his works have survived not in the original Arabic but in Hebrew and Latin. As a result, there came into being a distinct school known as Latin Averroism.⁴⁵

The Muslim Ibn Rushd was quite a different figure. Besides seeking to

present the pure teachings of Aristotle, his main aim was to harmonize religion and philosophy. But his real thesis was not "double truth" but recourse to *ta'wīl*, which is so important for the understanding of the whole Islamic philosophical tradition. According to this doctrine, there are not two contradictory truths but a single truth which is presented in the form of religion and, through *ta'wīl*, results in philosophical knowledge. Religion is for everyone, whereas philosophy is only for those who possess the necessary intellectual faculties. Yet, the truth reached by one group is not contradictory to the truth discovered by the other. The principle of *ta'wīl* permits the harmony between religion and philosophy.⁴⁶ The whole thrust of the philosophy of Ibn Rushd, who was at once a pious Muslim and an authority in the *Sharī'ah* and a great philosopher, was to harmonize faith and reason.

One of Ibn Rushd's most important works was his response to al-Ghazzālī's attack against the philosophers contained in the latter's *Tahāfut al-falāsifah*. Ibn Rushd took up the challenge of defending Islamic philosophy and sought to respond to al-Ghazzālī point by point in his *Tahāfut al-tahāfut* (*Incoherence of the Incoherence*), which is one of the major works of Islamic philosophy.⁴⁷ This work did not have the influence of al-Ghazzālī's attack, but it did not go without a further response by later Islamic thinkers.

Ibn Rushd revived Aristotle, but he did not have the influence of the Peripatetic Ibn Sīnā, whom he criticized in many ways. Ibn Rushd was especially opposed to Ibn Sīnā's theory of emanation and emphasis on the soul of the spheres as well as his doctrine of the intellect and the relation of the soul with the Active Intellect. The result of Ibn Rushd's critique was the banishment of the angels, of the *Anima caelestis*, from the cosmos. The influence of Averroes in the West could not but help in the secularization of the cosmos, preparing the ground for the rise of a totally secularized knowledge of the natural order. Islamic philosophy itself, however, chose another path. It revived Avicennan philosophy rather than following Ibn Rushd and turned to the Orient of Light through the works of Suhrawardī and set out on a path whose first steps had been explored by Ibn Sīnā himself.

With the death of Ibn Rushd something died—but not Islamic philosophy, as has been claimed by Western students of the Islamic philosophic tradition for seven centuries. Philosophy began a new phase of its life in Persia and other eastern lands of Islam, while its sun set in the Maghrib. But even in the western lands of Islam, there appeared at least one other major philosophical figure, 'Abd al-Haqq ibn Sab'īn, who hailed from Murcia, spent the middle part of his life in North Africa and Egypt, and lived the last period of his life in Mecca, where he died ca. 669/1270. He

had definitely pro-Shī'ite tendencies and expounded openly the doctrine of "the transcendent unity of being," which caused him to fall into difficulty with exoteric religious authorities both in the Maghrib and Egypt. Even in Mecca, where he was supported by the ruler, he was attacked from many quarters, and the circumstances of his death remain a mystery. Some have said that he was forced to commit suicide, others that he committed suicide before the Ka'bah to experience the ecstasy of union,⁴⁸ and still others that he was poisoned.

Ibn Sab'īn was at once a philosopher and a Sufi and a follower of the Shawdhiyyah Order, which went back to the Andalusian Sufi from Seville Abū 'Abd Allāh al-Shawdhī and was characterized by its mixing of philosophy and Sufism. Ibn Sab'īn had an extensive knowledge of both traditions. He knew well the early classical Sufis of Baghdad and Khurasan such as al-Junayd, al-Hallāj, Bāyazīd, and al-Ghazzālī as well as the earlier Andalusian masters such as Ibn Masarraḥ, Ibn Qasī, and Ibn 'Arabī, who like him was born in Murcia, traveled to North Africa and Egypt, and lived for some time in Mecca. But Ibn Sab'īn is not a direct follower of the School of Ibn 'Arabī, some of whose later representatives he was to meet in Egypt.

Ibn Sab'īn also knew well both the eastern philosophers such as al-Fārābī and Ibn Sīnā and the Andalusian ones such as Ibn Bājjaḥ, Ibn Ṭufayl, and Ibn Rushd. He even knew Suhrawardī, whom he, however, classified with the Peripatetics and criticized severely along with nearly all the earlier philosophers and many of the earlier Sufis. Ibn Sab'īn was a follower of the doctrine of "absolute Unity" according to which there is only the Being of God and nothing else. He criticized the earlier Islamic thinkers for not having reached the level of this "absolute Unity." He is in fact probably the first person to use the term *wahdat al-wujūd*.

It is also of interest to note that Ibn Sab'īn had extensive knowledge of Judaism, Christianity, and even Hinduism and Zoroastrianism as well as Greek philosophy including Hermeticism. He was furthermore considered a master in the "hidden sciences,"⁴⁹ especially the science of the inner meaning of letters and words. His highly difficult writings often contain "kabbalistic" sentences whose meaning cannot be understood save through recourse to these sciences. These writings include also treatises on the hidden sciences as well as works devoted to philosophy and practical Sufism.

Many of Ibn Sab'īn's works are lost, but a few survive and bear witness to the depth and fecundity of his thought. The most significant of his philosophical works is the *Budd al-'ārif* (*The Object of Worship of the Gnostic*), which starts with logic and terminates with metaphysics and must be considered the synthesis of his metaphysical teachings.⁵⁰ But his most influential work as far as the Western world is concerned is *Ajwibah yamāniyyah*

'an as'ilat al-siqilliyyah (*Yemeni Answers to Sicilian Questions*), which consists of answers to four philosophical questions sent by Emperor Frederick II. The work was translated into Latin and became well known in scholastic circles.

Ibn Sab'īn must be considered along with Suhrawardī and Ibn 'Arabī as a master of Islamic spirituality who combined the purification of the soul with the perfection of the intellectual faculties, who created a synthesis between spiritual life and speculative thought, between Sufism and philosophy. As the last great representative of the Maghribī-Andalusian school of Islamic philosophy, Ibn Sab'īn embodies that synthesis between the practical spiritual life and intellectual doctrine that one finds in Ibn Masarraḥ, who stands at the origin of this school.⁵¹ The West may have seen in the Islamic philosophy of Spain a pure Aristotelian rationalism with which it was fascinated but which it feared. In the light of the integral tradition of Islamic philosophy, however, it is this synthesis between practical Sufism and philosophy as metaphysics and gnosis which represents the central message of this school. The journey of Ibn Sab'īn to the East and his death in the holy city of Mecca, the heartland of Islam, is itself symbolic of the wedding of that knowledge which transforms and illuminates and the spiritual practice which opens the heart to the reception of such a knowledge. If with the journey of Ibn Sab'īn, the light of this type of philosophy became dimmed in Andalusia, it shone already brightly in the eastern lands of Islam thanks to the teachings of the master of the School of Illumination, Suhrawardī, whose commentators and students were Ibn Sab'īn's contemporaries.

Suhrawardī and the School of Illumination (al-Isbrāq)

The complete harmonization of spirituality and philosophy in Islam was achieved in the School of Illumination (*al-isbrāq*) founded by Shaykh al-isbrāq Shihāb al-Dīn Suhrawardī. Born in the small village of Suhraward⁵² in Western Persia in 549/1153, he studied in Zanjan and Isfahan, where he completed his formal education in the religious and philosophical sciences and entered into Sufism. He then set out for Anatolia and settled in Aleppo, where as a result of the opposition of certain jurists he met his death at a young age in 587/1191. Suhrawardī was a great mystic and philosopher and the restorer within the bosom of Islam of the perennial philosophy, which he called *al-hikmat al-'atīqah*, the *philosophia priscorum* referred to by certain Renaissance philosophers, whose origin he considered to be divine. He saw veritable philosophy—or one should rather say theosophy, if this word is understood in its original sense and as still used by Jakob Boehme—

as resulting from the wedding between the training of the theoretical intellect through philosophy and the purification of the heart through Sufism. The means of attaining supreme knowledge he considered to be illumination, which at once transforms one's being and bestows knowledge.⁵³

During his short and tragic life, Suhrawardī wrote more than forty treatises, the doctrinal ones almost all in Arabic and the symbolic or visionary recitals almost all in Persian. Both his Arabic and Persian works are among the literary masterpieces of Islamic philosophy. His doctrinal writings, which begin with an elaboration and gradual transformation of Avicennian Peripatetic philosophy, culminate in the *Hikmat al-ishrāq* (*The Theosophy of the Orient of Light*), which is one of the most important works in the tradition of Islamic philosophy.⁵⁴ His recitals include some of the most beautiful prose writings of the Persian language, including such masterpieces as *Fī ḥaqīqat al-‘ishq* (*On the Reality of Love*) and *Āwāz-i par-i Jibra’īl* (*The Chant of the Wing of Gabriel*).⁵⁵ Few Islamic philosophers were able to combine metaphysics of the highest order with a poetic prose of almost incomparable richness and literary quality.

Suhrawardī integrated Platonism and Mazdaean angelology in the matrix of Islamic gnosis. He believed that there existed in antiquity two traditions of wisdom (*al-ḥikmah*), both of divine origin. One of these reached Pythagoras, Plato, and other Greek philosophers and created the authentic Greek philosophical tradition which terminated with Aristotle. The other was disseminated among the sages of ancient Persia whom he calls the *khusrawāniyyūn*, or sages who were followers of the Persian philosopher-king Kay Khusraw. Finally, these traditions became united in Suhrawardī. Like many Islamic philosophers, he identified Hermes with the prophet Idrīs, who was given the title Father of Philosophers (*wālid al-ḥukamā*) and was considered to be the recipient of the celestial wisdom which was the origin of philosophy. It was finally in Islam, the last and primordial religion, that this primordial tradition became restored by Suhrawardī as the school of Illumination (*al-ishrāq*).

The Master of Illumination insisted that there existed from the beginning an "eternal dough" (*al-khamīrat al-azaliyyah*), which is none other than eternal wisdom or *sophia perennis*. It is hidden in the very substance of man ready to be "leavened" and actualized through intellectual training and inner purification.⁵⁶ It is this "eternal dough" which was actualized and transmitted by the Pythagoreans and Plato to the Sufis Dhu'l-Nūn al-Miṣrī and Sahl al-Tustarī and through the Persian sages to Bāyazīd al-Bastāmī and Manṣūr al-Hallāj and which was restored in its full glory by Suhrawardī, who combined the inner knowledge of these masters with the intellectual

discipline of such philosophers as al-Fārābī and Ibn Sīnā. Suhrawardī, however, never mentions historical chains connecting him to this long tradition of wisdom but insists that the real means of attainment of this knowledge is through God and His revealed Book. That is why he bases himself so much on the Quran and is the first major Muslim philosopher to quote the Quran extensively in his philosophical writings.

Suhrawardī created a vast philosophical synthesis, which draws from many sources and especially the nearly six centuries of Islamic thought before him. But this synthesis is unified by a metaphysics and an epistemology that are able to relate all the different strands of thought to each other in a unified pattern. What is most significant from the point of view of spirituality is the insistence of *ishrāqī* philosophy on the organic nexus between intellectual activity and inner purification. Henceforth in the Islamic world, wherever philosophy survived, it was seen as lived wisdom. The philosopher or *ḥakīm* was expected to be not only a person possessing cerebral knowledge but a saintly person transformed by his knowledge. Philosophy as a mental activity divorced from spiritual realization and the inner life ceased to be accepted as a legitimate intellectual category, and Islamic philosophy became henceforth what *sophia* has always been in Oriental traditions, namely, a wisdom lived and experienced as well as thought and reasoned.

Although as a result of his violent death Suhrawardī and his doctrines were not visible for a generation, the teachings of the School of Illumination reappeared in the middle part of the seventh/thirteenth century in the major commentary by Muhammad al-Shahrāzūrī (d. sometime after 687/1288) on the *Hikmat al-ishrāq*. This was followed by the second major commentary on this work by Quṭb al-Dīn al-Shīrāzī (d. 710/1311). The latter must be considered one of the major intellectual figures of Islam, at once physicist and astronomer, authority in logic and medicine, commentator on Ibn Sīnā and Suhrawardī.⁵⁷ His *Durrat al-tāj* (*Jewel of the Crown*), which is a vast philosophical encyclopedia mostly along Peripatetic lines, is well known, as is his commentary on the *Canon of Medicine* of Ibn Sīnā and several major astronomical treatises. But Quṭb al-Dīn al-Shīrāzī's most enduring philosophical work is his commentary on the *Hikmat al-ishrāq*, which resuscitated the teachings of Suhrawardī and is read and studied in Persia and Muslim India to this day. After him a long line of *ishrāqī* philosophers appeared in both Persia and the Indian subcontinent, where the influence of Suhrawardī has been very extensive. Suhrawardī established a new and at the same time primordial intellectual dimension in Islam, which became a permanent aspect of the Islamic intellectual scene and survives to this day.

What Is Ishrāqī Philosophy?

Ishrāqī philosophy—or theosophy, to be more precise—is based on the metaphysics of light. The origin and source of all things is the Light of lights (*nūr al-anwār*), which is infinite and absolute Light above and beyond all the rays which it emanates. All levels of reality, however, are also degrees and levels of light distinguished from each other by their degrees of intensity and weakness and by nothing other than light. There is, in fact, nothing in the whole universe but light. From the Light of lights there issues a vertical or longitudinal hierarchy of lights which comprises the levels of universal existence and a horizontal or latitudinal order which contains the archetypes (sg. *rabb al-naw'*) or Platonic ideas of all that appears here below as objects and things. These lights are none other than what in the language of religion are called angels. Suhrawardī gives names of Mazdaean angels as well as Islamic ones to these lights and brings out the central role of the angels in cosmology as well as in epistemology and soteriology.⁵⁸

The word *ishrāq* in Arabic itself means at once illumination and the first light of the early morning as it shines from the east (*sharq*). The Orient is not only the geographical east but the origin of light, of reality. *Ishrāqī* philosophy is both "Oriental" and "illuminative." It illuminates because it is Oriental and is Oriental because it is illuminative. It is the knowledge with the help of which man can orient himself in the universe and finally reach that Orient which is his original abode, while in the shadow and darkness of terrestrial existence man lives in the "occident" of the world of being no matter where he lives geographically. The spiritual or illuminated man who is aware of his "Oriental" origin, is therefore a stranger and an exile in this world, as described in one of Suhrawardī's most eloquent symbolic recitals *Qissat al-ghurbat al-gharbiyyah* (*The Story of the Occidental Exile*). It is through reminiscence of his original abode that man begins to have a nostalgia for his veritable home and with the help of illuminative knowledge that he is able to reach that abode. Illuminative knowledge, which is made possible by contact with the angelic orders, transforms man's being and saves him. The angel is the instrument of illumination and hence salvation. Man has descended from the world of the "signeural lights" and it is by returning to this world and reunifying with his angelic "alter-ego" that man finds his wholeness once again.

Ishrāqī philosophy depicts in an eminently symbolic language a vast universe based on the symbolism of light and the "Orient," which breaks the boundaries of Aristotelian cosmology as well as the confines of *ratio* defined by the Aristotelians. Suhrawardī was able to create an essentialistic

metaphysics of light and a cosmology of rarely paralleled grandeur and beauty which "orients" the veritable seeker through the cosmic crypt and guides him to the realm of pure light which is none other than the Orient of being. In this journey, which is at once philosophical and spiritual, man is led by a knowledge which is itself light according to the saying of the Prophet who said *al-'ilmu nūr* (knowledge is light). That is why this philosophy, according to Suhrawardī's last will and testament at the end of his *Hikmat al-ishrāq*, is not to be taught to everyone. It is for those whose minds have been trained by rigorous philosophical training and whose hearts have been purified through inner effort to subdue that interior dragon which is the carnal soul. For such people, the teachings of *ishrāq* reveal an inner knowledge which is none other than the eternal wisdom or *sophia perennis* which illuminates and transforms, obliterates and resurrects until man reaches the pleroma of the world of lights and the original abode from which he began his cosmic wayfaring.

Between Suhrawardī and the School of Isfahan

The period stretching from the seventh/thirteenth to the tenth/sixteenth century is characterized by the ever-greater rapprochement between various schools of Islamic philosophy as Persia becomes the main arena for activity in Islamic philosophy. Early in this period, Ibn Sīnā's philosophy was resurrected by Naṣīr al-Dīn al-Tūsī, who is one of the foremost Islamic *mashshā'ī* philosophers. His commentary on the *Ishārāt wa'l-tanbīhāt* and his response to the criticisms of Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī against Ibn Sīnā had a much greater influence on later Islamic philosophy than the *Tahāfut al-tahāfut* of Ibn Rushd. Tūsī was the leading light of a whole circle of philosophers including not only the already mentioned Qutb al-Dīn al-Shīrāzī, but also Dabīrān-i Kātibī Qazwīnī (d. 675/1276) the author of the *Hikmat al-'ayn* (*Wisdom from the Source*). Another well-known Peripatetic philosopher of the same period who needs to be mentioned is Athīr al-Dīn Abharī (d. 663/1264), whose *Hidāyat al-hikmah* (*Guide of Philosophy*) became popular during later centuries, especially with the commentary of Mullā Ṣadrā.

Perhaps the most distinctive philosopher of this period who is said to have also been related to Naṣīr al-Dīn was Afdal al-Dīn Kāshānī (d. ca. 610/1213) known also as Bābā Afdal. An eminent Sufi whose tomb is a locus of pilgrimage to this day, Bābā Afdal was a brilliant logician and metaphysician. He wrote a number of works in Persian which rank along with the Persian treatises of Suhrawardī as among outstanding masterpieces of Persian philosophical prose.⁵⁹ His works represent yet another wedding

between Sufism and philosophy, and they are based on a self-knowledge or autology that leads from the knowledge of the self to the Self according to the prophetic *ḥadīth*, *man 'arafa nafsah* "faqad 'arafa rabbah" (he who knows himself knows his Lord).

Parallel with the revival of Peripatetic philosophy by Tūsī and *ishrāqī* theosophy by his colleague at Maraghah, Quṭb al-Dīn Shīrāzī, theoretical Sufism of the school of Ibn 'Arabī spread rapidly in the East,⁶⁰ while philosophical *kalām* was developing greatly. During the next three centuries important philosophers appeared who tried to synthesize these various schools of thought. Some, like Dawānī, were at once scholars of *kalām* and *ishrāqīs*. Others, like the Dashtakī family of Shiraz, were followers of Ibn Sīnā and Suhrawardī. Still others, like Ibn Turkah Isfahānī (d. ca. 835/1432), who is a major figure of this period, was an *ishrāqī* interpreter of Peripatetic philosophy and a gnostic of the School of Ibn 'Arabī. These figures prepared the ground for the grand synthesis between the four schools of *ishrāq*, *mashshā'*, *'irfān*, and *kalām*, which, however, was not achieved until the Safavid period with the establishment of what has become known as the School of Isfahan.

Mullā Ṣadrā and the School of Isfahan

Three centuries of the drawing together of the various schools of Islamic thought culminated in the Safavid period in Persia with the School of Isfahan, associated with the Safavid capital which was its center. The most important figure of this school was Ṣadr al-Dīn Shīrāzī, known as Mullā Ṣadrā, but the founder was Mīr Dāmād (d. 1041/1631), theologian, philosopher, mystic, and poet.⁶¹ A rigorous philosopher who taught the philosophy of Ibn Sīnā, which he interpreted in an *ishrāqī* manner, he was also a mystic who wrote of his ecstatic experiences and a fine poet who used the pen name *ishrāq*. Concerned most of all with the question of time, which he discussed extensively in his masterpiece, the *Qabasāt* (*Firebrands*), he represents the beginning of that synthesis of the schools of philosophy, theology, and gnosis which characterizes later Islamic philosophy.

Mīr Dāmād had a number of notable contemporaries on the philosophical scene. His friend in Isfahan Shaykh Bahā' al-Dīn al-'Amīlī (d. 1030/1622) was a scientist, jurist, theologian, architect, and poet and was of great importance in the intellectual life of the age of Mīr Dāmād. His other notable contemporary, Mīr Abu'l-Qāsim Findiriskī (d. 1050/1641) was more important from the philosophical point of view. This remarkable figure taught the works of Ibn Sīnā in Isfahan while spending much of his time in India, where he encountered Hindu pundits and yogis. He wrote

little, but what he did write is of unusual significance. His works include a metaphysical study of human society, *Risālay-i sinā'iyyah* (*Treatise on the Arts*); a work on alchemy; a celebrated poem summarizing his metaphysical views; and a commentary on the *Yoga-Vasīṣṭha* based on the Persian translation of Nizām al-Dīn Panīpātī.⁶²

Islamic translations and studies of Hindu metaphysical and philosophical texts are remarkable intellectual and spiritual events pointing to contact between the Abrahamic and Indian spiritual worlds before modern times. This tradition goes back to al-Bīrūnī's Arabic translation of the *Patañjali Yoga* followed by numerous translations into Persian over the centuries of the *Rāmāyana*, the *Mahābhārata*, the *Bhagavad-Gītā*, and also the Upanishads.⁶³ Not only the Muslims of India but also Persian Muslims were aware of the Hindu intellectual universe. It is, nevertheless, most remarkable that a man like Mīr Findiriskī should teach the *Shifā* of Ibn Sīnā in Isfahan and comment on texts of yoga in India. This is proof of the fact that he breathed in an intellectual universe that stood not only geographically but also spiritually between the Mediterranean Sea and the Ganges River. He was the master of a philosophy which had also been studied by the medieval schoolmen and which in the West had developed in the direction of a nominalism and finally a skepticism that stood at the very antipode of Mīr Findiriskī's world view. How difficult it is to imagine his European contemporaries being interested seriously in Hindu metaphysics and—even if this were to be the case—to combine this interest with the love for St. Thomas and St. Bonaventure! The parting of ways in the intellectual destinies of Islam and the West can be seen in the distance that separates the masters of the School of Isfahan from their contemporary Renaissance and seventeenth-century European philosophers.

Nowhere is this difference to be seen more starkly than in the writings of Mullā Ṣadrā, the foremost figure of the School of Isfahan, whom many consider to be the greatest of all Muslim metaphysicians. This remarkable figure was born in Shiraz about 979/1571, studied with Mīr Dāmād and other masters of the day in Isfahan, then retired for some ten years to a village near Qum, and finally returned to Shiraz, where he spent the last thirty years of his life writing and training students who came to him from as far away as North Africa and Tibet. He died in Basra in 1050/1640 while returning from his seventh pilgrimage on foot to Mecca.⁶⁴

Mullā Ṣadrā incorporates that Suhrawardian ideal according to which the perfect philosopher or theosopher (*ḥakīm muta'allih*) must have undergone both intellectual training and inner purification. Later Islamic philosophy in fact bestowed the title of *Ṣadr al-muta'allihīn* upon Mullā Ṣadrā, meaning foremost among theosophers. Indeed, he does represent the perfection of

this Suhrawardian norm. A master dialectician and logician as well as a visionary and seer, Mullā Ṣadrā created a perfect harmony between the poles of ratiocination and mystical perception. Through the intellect wed to revelation he reached a *coincidentia oppositorum*, which embraces the rigor of logic and the immediacy of spiritual unveiling. Like the *Hikmat al-ishrāq*, which begins with logic and ends with mystical ecstasy, Mullā Ṣadrā wove a pattern of thought that is logical and immersed in the ocean of the light of gnosis. He called this synthesis—which he considered to be based specifically on the three grand paths to the truth open to man, namely, revelation (*wahy* or *sharʿ*), intellection (*ʿaql*), and mystical unveiling (*kashf*)—*al-hikmat al-mutaʿāliyah* or the transcendent theosophy. His synthesis represented a new intellectual perspective in Islamic philosophy, a perspective which has had numerous followers especially in Persia and India but also in Iraq and certain other Arab lands over the centuries.

Mullā Ṣadrā composed some fifty books, almost all in Arabic, of which the most important is *al-Asfār al-arbaʿah* (*The Four Journeys*), which remains the most advanced text of traditional Islamic philosophy in the *madrasahs* to this day. It includes not only his own metaphysical and cosmological views and the most extensive treatment of eschatology found in any Islamic philosophical text; it also deals with the views of various schools of thought both Islamic and pre-Islamic. It is a veritable philosophical encyclopedia in which the influence of the Avicennan school, of Suhrawardī and Ibn ʿArabī, and of *kalām* both Sunni and Shīʿite is clearly discernible. But above and beyond these sources one can detect in this work, as in Mullā Ṣadrā's other writings, the great influence of the Quran and the sayings of the Prophet and the Shīʿite Imams. His Quranic commentaries such as the *Asrār al-āyāt* (*The Secrets of the Verses of the Quran*) are the most important contributions made to Quranic studies by an Islamic philosopher, and his commentary on the Shīʿite collection of *Ḥadīth*, the *Uṣūl al-kāfi* of Kulaynī, is one of his philosophical masterpieces. But these works also reveal the central significance of the Quran as the source of philosophical meditation for Islamic philosophers and of the sayings of the Prophet and the Imams as sources of inspiration for later Islamic philosophy.⁶⁵ Among Mullā Ṣadrā's major achievements is the creation of a perfect harmony between faith and reason or religion and philosophy and the achievement of the goal of some nine centuries of Islamic theology and philosophy.

No other Islamic philosopher has dealt in depth with matters of faith ranging from the basis of ethics to eschatological imagery depicted in the Quran and *Ḥadīth* as has Mullā Ṣadrā. Nor have any of the philosophers dealt as thoroughly as he with all the questions which concerned the

scholars of *kalām*. In fact, Mullā Ṣadrā claims that the *mutakallimūn* did not possess the divine knowledge (*al-maʿrifah*) necessary to deal with the questions they were treating and that therefore their activity was illegitimate. It was for the *ḥukamā-yi ilāhī* (literally, "the theosophers") to deal with such questions and to provide the answers for the enigmas and complex problems contained in religious teachings. Much of what Christians understand by theology would find its counterpart in Islamic thought in the writings of Mullā Ṣadrā rather than the Ashʿarites, except that his is a "theology" always immersed in the light of divine knowledge, of gnosis, and not only of rational arguments concerning the tenets of the faith. Mullā Ṣadrā's "transcendent theosophy" is in fact philosophy, theology, and gnosis and draws from all these schools as they developed during the earlier centuries of Islamic intellectual history.

In his youth Mullā Ṣadrā followed the "essentialist metaphysics" of Suhrawardī, but as a result of a spiritual experience combined with intellectual vision he brought about what Corbin has called "a revolution in Islamic philosophy" and formulated the "existential metaphysics" by which he has come to be known. This metaphysical edifice, which is incomprehensible without a knowledge of Avicennan ontology and Suhrawardian cosmology and noetics, is based on the unity (*wahdah*), principiality (*aṣālah*), and gradation (*tashkīk*) of being (*wujūd*). There is only one reality, which participates in grades and levels. The reality of each thing comes from its *wujūd* and not its quiddity or essence (*māhiyyah*).⁶⁶ The quiddities are nothing but limitations imposed on *wujūd*, which extends in a hierarchy from the dust to the Divine Throne. God Himself is the Absolute Being (*al-wujūd al-mutlaq*) who is the origin of all realms of existence and yet transcendent vis-à-vis the chain of being. Moreover, there is unity of all being not so much in the general *wahdat al-wujūd* sense according to which there is only One Being, God, and nothing else even exists. Rather, Mullā Ṣadrā speaks of a unity that is more similar to the unity between the sun and the rays that emanate from it.

This vast ocean of being—or rather becoming—moreover, is in constant movement toward its Divine Origin in what Mullā Ṣadrā calls transsubstantial motion (*al-ḥarakat al-jawhariyyah*). He has the vision of a cosmos in constant becoming moving toward its entelechy or perfection (*kamāl*). This movement must not, however, be construed in an evolutionary sense, for Mullā Ṣadrā asserts categorically the reality of the Platonic ideas or the immutable archetypes of all things existing in the world below. The higher states of being do not belong to a future time. They are real and present here and now to be realized by man, who forms the vertical axis of cosmic existence.

This vertical progression in the scales of being is achieved most of all through knowledge. Knowledge transforms the being of the knower, as from another point of view knowledge depends on the mode of the knower. Mullā Ṣadrā points to the principle of the identity of the intellect and the intelligible (*ittiḥād al-‘āqil wa’l-ma‘qūl*) to emphasize the inner link between knowing and being. In fact, in the supreme form of knowledge, being is knowledge and knowledge being, as the dichotomy between the object and the subject is transcended.

In ascending the scales of being, man not only traverses the physical and spiritual or intelligible realms of reality but also the realm between the two, which Islamic metaphysicians have called the "world of imagination."⁶⁷ Mullā Ṣadrā insists on the reality of this world both macrocosmically and microcosmically and insists on its survival after man's death. He provides an ontological status for a realm spoken of already by Suhrawardī in its microcosmic aspect and emphasized greatly by Ibn ‘Arabī, who speaks of the creative power of imagination.⁶⁸ It was, however, Mullā Ṣadrā who treated this world in a thoroughly metaphysical and cosmological manner, bringing out its significance in both the descending and the ascending arcs of universal existence.

It is in fact in this intermediate realm that eschatological events referred to in the Quran and *Hadīth* take place.⁶⁹ Mullā Ṣadrā dealt extensively with this issue in many of his works. Not only did he devote independent treatises to this subject, such as the *Risālah fi’l-ḥashr* (*Treatise on Resurrection*), but also the extensive fourth "journey" or *saḡar* of his masterpiece, the *Asfār al-arba‘ah*, is devoted to the soul (*nafs*) and its journey from the womb to its resurrection in the Divine Presence. No Islamic philosopher has ever dealt with the vast ocean of the soul and its posthumous development with such thoroughness as Mullā Ṣadrā. Those who search for an Islamic counterpart to the major treatises on eschatology found in other religions such as Hinduism and Buddhism must turn to later Islamic philosophy, especially the teachings of Mullā Ṣadrā and his students. They bring out the inner meaning of the teachings of the Quran, *Hadīth*, the sayings of the Shī‘ite Imams concerning eschatology, and also of such earlier Sufis as Ibn ‘Arabī, who also wrote extensively on the subject.

Mullā Ṣadrā created a vast metaphysical synthesis in which strands from many earlier schools of Islamic thought were woven together in a rich tapestry of many hues and shades, dominated by the unity of Ṣadrian ontology and metaphysics. In Mullā Ṣadrā one finds not only peaceful coexistence, but complementarity and harmony between the tenets of faith or revelation, intellection, and mystical vision or unveiling. This last major school of Islamic philosophy achieved in a sense the final elaboration of the

synthesis of modes of knowledge toward which Islamic philosophy had been moving since its earliest patriarchs such as al-Kindī began to philosophize in a world dominated by the reality of prophetic revelation and characterized by the inalienable wedding between the intellect as the instrument of inner illumination and the reasoning faculty of the human mind.

Islamic Philosophy after Mullā Ṣadrā

Mullā Ṣadrā has remained the dominating figure in the continuing tradition of Islamic philosophy to this day, although his school was not the only one to have followers during the succeeding centuries. Avicennan and Suhrawardian schools flourished side by side with that of Mullā Ṣadrā, marking a rich and varied philosophical life which did not by any means die out but has rather witnessed a renaissance during the past few decades, especially in Persia.⁷⁰ Mullā Ṣadrā's most famous immediate students, for example, ‘Abd al-Razzāq Lāhijī (d. 1072/1661) and Mullā Muḥsin Fayḍ Kāshānī (d. 1091/1680), devoted themselves mostly to the purely religious sciences such as *Hadīth* or to *kalām* and pure gnosis and did not write on the "transcendent theosophy," mostly because of opposition to Mullā Ṣadrā among some of the exoteric 'ulamā'.⁷¹ But they were well versed in this school of thought and trained a number of students who kept the tradition alive. One of them, Qādī Sa‘īd Qummī (d. 1103/1692), is known both for his philosophical writings, including his commentary on the *Enneads* of Plotinus, and for his explanation of the inner meaning of the Islamic acts of worship, to which he devoted one of his major works, the *Asrār al-‘ibādāt* (*The Mysteries of the Acts of Worship*).⁷²

It was, however, the little-known figure Mullā Muḥammad Ṣādiq Ardistānī (d. 1134/1721) who served as the bridge between the school of Mullā Ṣadrā in the Safavid era and its revival during the Qajar period. Because the oral tradition is very important in the transmission of traditional Islamic philosophy, the chain of masters and students linking later generations of philosophers to the earlier authorities is of much significance.⁷³ In the case of the school of Mullā Ṣadrā, the link of transmission goes through Ardistānī, who was exiled from Isfahan at the end of the Safavid period and took refuge in Qum during the period of turmoil marking the transition from the Safavids to the Afsharids and the Zands.

It was not until the Qajar period and the early thirteenth/nineteenth century that the school of Mullā Ṣadrā was revived fully again in Isfahan by Mullā Ismā‘īl Khājū‘ī (d. 1173/1760) and Mullā ‘Alī Nūrī (d. 1246/1830), who is especially significant as the great commentator upon the *Asfār*

and as the one who taught Mullā Ṣadrā's philosophy to some three generations of students stretching over a period of seventy years. The Qajar period was also witness to a number of other well-known philosophers such as Mullā 'Alī Zunūzī (d. 1307/1890), who in his *Badāyi' al-hikam* (*Marvels of Wisdom*) sought to provide Islamic answers to certain of the Kantian antinomies presented to him by a Persian student who had returned from Europe. He is perhaps the most creative philosopher of the period.⁷⁴

The most celebrated philosopher of the day, however, was Hājji Mullā Hādī Sabziwārī (d. 1289/1878), a great saint, philosopher, and poet. He wrote the *Sharḥ al-manzūmah* (*Commentary upon the Rhyming Composition*), which summarizes the principles of Mullā Ṣadrā's philosophy, and numerous other philosophical and gnostic works in both Arabic and Persian, including a commentary on the *Mathnawī* of Rūmī.⁷⁵ He was also known as a revered saintly figure throughout Persia, and even the king went to visit him in his home in Sabziwar in Khurasan.

During the Qajar period Tehran gradually became the center for the study of Islamic philosophy, and most of the outstanding masters of the later Qajar and the Pahlavi periods such as Mīrzā Mahdī Āshtiyānī (d. 1373/1953), Sayyid Muhammad Kāzīm 'Aṣṣār (d. 1394/1975), and Sayyid Abū'l-Ḥasan Qazwīnī (d. 1394/1975) taught in Tehran. After the Second World War, Qum also became an important center for the teaching of Islamic philosophy, thanks mostly to 'Allāmah Sayyid Muhammad Ḥusayn Ṭabāṭabā'ī (d. 1402/1981), whose *Usūl-i falsafah wa rawish-i ri'ālism* (*The Principles of Philosophy and the Method of Realism*) is the most important philosophical response issuing from the background of Ṣadrīan metaphysics to Marxism.⁷⁶ These and other masters in turn trained a number of students such as Murtaḍā Mutahharī (d. 1399/1979), Sayyid Jalāl al-Dīn Āshtiyānī, and Mahdī Hā'irī Yazdī, who have kept this tradition alive to this day.⁷⁷ In fact, starting in the 1950s there occurred a revival of interest in Islamic philosophy in Persia revolving around the figure of Mullā Ṣadrā, a renaissance that continues to this day as this later Islamic philosophical tradition encounters the challenges of Western thought, begins a dialogue with other schools of thought within the Islamic world, and becomes better known as a living intellectual tradition in the West.⁷⁸

Of course, Persia has not been the only land in which Islamic philosophy has survived during later centuries, although it has definitely been the main arena for activity in Islamic philosophy. The school of Mullā Ṣadrā spread rapidly into India soon after his death, and although the history of Islamic philosophy in the Indian subcontinent has yet to be written, one can see

the presence of Mullā Ṣadrā's thought in the writings of most of the outstanding intellectual figures of the subcontinent such as Shāh Walī Allāh of Delhi. His metaphysics bears the unmistakable mark of the "transcendent theosophy," as does his attempt at synthesizing the various strands of Islamic thought.

Likewise in Iraq, the Islamic philosophical tradition continued to flourish and has not ceased to this day, as can be seen in the works of Muḥammad Bāqir al-Ṣadr (d. 1400/1980).⁷⁹ The revival of Islamic philosophy in Egypt and other Arab countries goes back to Jamāl al-Dīn Aṣṭrābādī, known as al-Afghānī (d. 1315/1897), who began to teach it while at al-Azhar in Cairo during the late thirteenth/nineteenth century. He also originally belonged to the school of Mullā Ṣadrā, whose works he had studied while in Tehran.

It was the destiny of Islamic philosophy to become finally wed to gnosis in the bosom of the revealed truth of Islam. When one studies later Islamic philosophers, one realizes immediately this wedding between ratiocination and inner illumination, between intellection and spiritual experience, between rational thought and sanctity. This final union characterizes the ultimate nature and destiny of Islamic philosophy, which, besides its great importance in the domains of logic, mathematics, and the natural sciences, has always been concerned with the supreme science and that knowledge which is inseparable from inner realization. That is why Islamic philosophy has been and remains to this day an important element in the vast and multidimensional universe of Islamic spirituality.

Notes

1. This is the definition given by 'Aḍud al-Dīn al-Ījī, one of the later masters of the science of *kalām*, in his *Mawāfiq* (*Stations*) (translated in the article of G. C. Anawati entitled "Kalām" in the new *Encyclopedia of Religion* [New York: Macmillan, 1987] 8:231).

2. On the Mu'tazilites, see J. van Ess, "Mu'tazilah," in the *Encyclopedia of Religion*, 10:220–29; W. Montgomery Watt, *The Formative Period of Islamic Thought* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1973); A. Nader, *Le Système philosophique des mu'tazila* (Beirut: Editions Les Lettres Orientales, 1956); and R. Frank, *The Metaphysics of Created Being According to Abū'l-Hudhayl al-'Allāf* (Istanbul: Nederlands Historisch-Archaeologisch Instituut in Het Nabije Oosten, 1966); idem, *Beings and their Attributes* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1978). On Islamic *kalām* as a whole, see M. Horten, *Die philosophischen Systeme der spekulativen Theologen in Islam* (Bonn: F. Cohen, 1912); H. A. Wolfson, *The Philosophy of the Kalam* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1976); L. Gardet and G. C. Anawati, *Introduction à la théologie musulmane*, vol. 1 (Paris: J. Vrin, 1970); J. Windrow Sweetman, *Islam and Christian Theology* (2 vols.; London: Lutterworth, 1945).

3. See G. Hourani, *Islamic Rationalism: The Ethics of 'Abd al-Jabbār* (London: Oxford University Press, 1971).

4. Trans. M. Abdul Hye in his "Ash'arism," in *A History of Muslim Philosophy*, ed. M. M. Sharif (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1963) 1:223.

5. This work is one of the most exhaustive among a whole class of writings in Islam, usually called *firaq* or "sects" literature associated with the names of al-Nawbakhtī, al-Baghdādī, Ibn Ḥazm, al-Shahristānī and others. Al-Ash'arī's work is among the most thorough and detailed work in this category of religious writings usually composed by scholars of *kalām*.

6. On the metaphysical critique of Ash'arite voluntarism, see F. Schuon, *Christianity/Islam: Essays on Esoteric Ecumenism*, trans. G. Polit (Bloomington, IN: World Wisdom Books, 1981) 203ff.

Many studies and translations have been made of al-Ash'arī. See, e.g., W. C. Klein, *The Elucidation of Islam's Foundation* (New Haven: American Oriental Society, 1940), which contains a translation of *al-Ibānah*; R. J. McCarthy, *The Theology of al-Ash'arī* (Beirut: Imprimerie Catholique, 1953), which contains a study of al-Ash'arī and the translation of two of his creeds; D. Gimaret, *La Doctrine d'al-Ash'arī* (Paris: Les Éditions du Cerf, 1990); and D. B. Macdonald, *Development of Muslim Theology: Jurisprudence of Constitutional Theory* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1926).

7. On Ash'arite atomism and occasionalism, see the still valuable work of S. Pines, *Beiträge zur islamischen Atomenlehre* (Berlin: A. Heine, 1936); and M. Fakhry, *Islamic Occasionalism* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1958). Ash'arite atomism was not new in Islam in the sense that certain Mu'tazilites had already developed such a theory. But it became much more elaborated than before by the Ash'arites and was made a cornerstone of their theological system.

8. The Islamic philosophers refuted this view strongly, as seen in the arguments offered by Averroes in his *Incoherence of the Incoherence* against al-Ghazzālī on this issue. See S. H. Nasr, *Science and Civilization in Islam* (Cambridge: Islamic Texts Society, 1987) 307ff. It is of interest to note that David Hume used the same argument as the Ash'arites to refute causality and even mentioned the example of fire and cotton given by al-Ghazzālī and referred to by Averroes. Needless to say, Hume did not reach the same conclusion as the Ash'arites, because he did not see the Divine Will as the cause of all things.

9. This is the translation of *kalām al-muta'akkehīrīn* given by G. C. Anawati in his article on *kalām* (new *Encyclopedia of Religion* 8:238).

10. He was well versed in Islamic philosophy as well as in medicine, astronomy, and even the "hidden sciences" (*al-'ulūm al-gharībah* or *khafīyyah*). See S. H. Nasr, "Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī," in *A History of Muslim Philosophy*, ed. M. M. Sharif, 1:642–56. On later Islamic theology, see also Horten, *Die philosophischen Systeme*; J. van Ess, *Die Erkenntnis Lehre des 'Aḍudaddīn al-Īrī* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1966); and Gardet and Anawati, *Introduction à la théologie musulmane* 1:76ff.

11. F. Schuon, *Christianity/Islam*, 221.

12. *Ibid.*, 220–21.

13. Some of these ideas have been treated already by A. Nanji in his article "Ismā'ilism" in the previous volume of this encyclopedia on Islam, *Islamic Spirituality: Foundations* (ed. S. H. Nasr; World Spirituality 19; New York: Crossroad, 1987) 179–98. See also H. Corbin (with S. H. Nasr and O. Yahya) *Histoire de la philosophie islamique* (Paris: Gallimard, 1964) 110ff.

14. See *Kashf al-murād fi sharḥ tajrīd al-i'tiqād*, trans. and commented upon by Abū'l-Hasan Sha'rānī (Tehran: Kitābfurūshī-yi islāmiyyah, 1351 A.H. solar). On Shī'ite theology, especially of the earlier period before it became systematized by Ṭūsī, see W.

Madelung, *Religious Schools and Sects in Medieval Islam* (London: Variorum Reprints, 1985) VII–XV.

15. We have elsewhere elaborated these issues relating to the significance of Islamic philosophy in Islam; see S. H. Nasr, "The Meaning and Role of Philosophy in Islam," *Studia Islamica* 36 (1973) 57–80.

16. This view survived from the Latin philosophers to constitute the framework for modern works on Islamic philosophy, including the classical books of S. Munk, T. De Boer, G. Quadri, and many others. Even more recent writers with such breadth and depth of scholarship as H. Wolfson were interested primarily in early Islamic philosophy. Likewise, works dealing with the history of Western philosophy—whether they specialize in the Middle Ages, as in the case of E. Gilson, or treat the whole of Western philosophy, as in the case of F. Coplestone, B. Russell, and others—usually have a small chapter about "Arab philosophy" to provide the missing link between the philosophy of antiquity and Latin scholasticism, but there is no interest in Islamic philosophy itself.

17. Certain Pakistani and Indian scholars writing in English distinguish between Muslim and Islamic: the former concerns whatever is created or cultivated by Muslims even if not related to the religion of Islam, and the latter concerns what is related directly to the Islamic revelation. They then refer to Islamic philosophy as Muslim philosophy. Even if this distinction between Muslim and Islamic be accepted, most of the philosophy cultivated by Muslims should be called Islamic rather than Muslim because, whatever its origin, the philosophy in question was digested and integrated into the Islamic intellectual universe if that universe is seen in its total breadth and depth and not only in a sectarian manner or from a purely juridical point of view.

18. Early in this century, gradually a number of works began to be devoted to post-Ibn Rushdian Islamic philosophy, as seen in several works of M. Horten such as *Die philosophischen Ansichten von Rāzī und Ṭūsī* (Bonn: Hanstein, 1910) and his works on Muḥlā Ṣadrā; see also the well-known early opus of M. Iqbal, *The Development of Metaphysics in Persia* (London: Luzac, 1908). But these works remained incomplete and often contained blatant errors. It was only after the Second World War that, thanks to the pioneering work of H. Corbin followed by others such as S. H. Nasr and T. Izutsu, later Islamic philosophy became gradually known in the West—although even to this day the error of limiting Islamic philosophy to its first phase of development up to Ibn Rushd continues in many quarters. Concerning Corbin and his significance as a scholar of Islamic thought, see *Mélanges offerts à Henry Corbin*, ed. S. H. Nasr (Tehran: Imperial Iranian Academy of Philosophy and Tehran University, 1977); and *L'Herne—Henry Corbin* (Paris: Edition de l'Herne, 1981). See also H. Corbin, *En Islam iranien* (4 vols.; Paris: Gallimard, 1971–72); *idem* (with S. H. Nasr and O. Yahya), *Histoire de la philosophie islamique*; S. H. Nasr, *Three Muslim Sages* (Delmar, NY: Caravan Books, 1975) and several essays on later Islamic philosophy in *A History of Muslim Philosophy*, ed. M. M. Sharif. T. Izutsu has devoted a number of important studies to Sabziwārī and Mīrzā Mahdī Āshtiyānī; see, e.g., *The Metaphysics of Sabzavari* (Delmar, NY: Caravan Books, 1977). M. Fakhry in his *A History of Islamic Philosophy* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1983) devoted a few pages to later Islamic philosophy, but most of the work follows earlier models of Western scholarship on Islamic philosophy.

It is of some interest to note that a major work in Spanish by M. Cruz Hernández (*Historia del pensamiento en el mundo islámico* [2 vols.; Madrid: Alianza Editorial, 1981]) gives serious consideration to later Islamic philosophy, and Corbin's *Histoire de*

la philosophie islamique, which has been translated into most of the important European languages, does not as yet have an English translation.

19. The term *philosophie prophétique* was used quite correctly by Corbin to describe Islamic philosophy, which functions in a universe dominated by the presence of a revealed book that is not only the source of religious law and ethics but also the fountainhead of knowledge and a means of access to the truth.

20. See Nasr, *Three Muslim Sages*, chap. 1.

21. Translated by R. Walzer in his "Islamic Philosophy," in *The History of Philosophy, Eastern and Western*, ed. S. Radhakrishnan (London: Allen & Unwin, 1953) 2:131.

22. The title "teacher" (*mu'allim*), which was also to be used later by Thomas Aquinas and other scholastics, is not of Greek origin. It is Islamic and refers in this context to the function of defining and classifying the sciences. See S. H. Nasr, "Why was al-Fārābī called the Second Teacher?" trans. M. Amin Razavi, *Islamic Culture* 59/4 (1985) 357-64.

23. Al-Fārābī was particularly interested in the question of the relation of words to their meaning, as seen in his important opus *Kitāb al-hurūf* (*The Book of Letters*) (ed. M. Mahdi; Beirut: Dār El-Machreq, 1969). Arabic philosophical vocabulary owes its final crystallization to him more than to anyone else.

24. One of great masters of traditional Islamic philosophy in Persia during this century, Mahdī Ilāhī Qumshā'ī, taught this text with two levels of meaning, one philosophical (*falsafī*) and one gnostic (*'irfānī*). See his *Hikmat-i ilāhī khāss wa 'āmm* (Tehran: Mu'assasa-yi maṭbū'āt-i islāmī, 1345 A.H. solar) 2:1-232.

25. For a description of the climate of Baghdad and the teachings of al-Sijistānī, see J. L. Kramer, *Philosophy in the Renaissance of Islam: Abū Sulaymān Al-Sijistānī and his Circle* (Leiden: Brill, 1986).

26. The term was actually used before Leibnitz by Agostino Steuco, who lived in the sixteenth century. It is interesting to note that Steuco used the term *antiqua* as well as *perennis*, the former corresponding to Suhrawardī's *al-hikmat al-'atīqah* or *philosophia antiqua*.

27. There is a vast literature on Ibn Sīnā in Islamic as well as European languages. As far as the spiritual significance of his philosophy is concerned, see H. Corbin, *Avicenna and the Visionary Recital*, trans. W. Trask (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1960); S. H. Nasr, *Three Muslim Sages*, I; idem, *An Introduction to Islamic Cosmological Doctrines* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1964; London: Thames & Hudson, 1987) 177ff., which also contains an extensive bibliography of primary and secondary sources concerning him.

28. For the significance of the "Oriental Philosophy" of Ibn Sīnā, see Corbin, *Avicenna*, 271ff.; and Nasr, *Islamic Cosmological Doctrines*, 185-91.

29. It is important to note that this gnostic, often misconstrued in the West as a hedonist, translated the sermon of Ibn Sīnā on Divine Unity (*al-tawḥīd*) from Arabic to Persian.

30. A. M. Goichon, "L'Unité de la pensée avicennienne," *Archives Internationales d'Histoire des Sciences* 20-21 (1952) 290ff.

31. See Nasr, *Islamic Cosmological Doctrines*, 198ff.

32. This scheme is described in the *Shifā'* of Ibn Sīnā. See Avicenne, *La Métaphysique du Shifā'*, vol. 2, trans. G. C. Anawati (Paris: J. Vrin, 1985) 137ff. It is summarized in Nasr, *Islamic Cosmological Doctrines*, 202ff.; see also A. Davidson, "Alfarabi and Avicenna on the Active Intellect," *Viator: Medieval and Renaissance Studies* 3 (1972) 134-54.

33. Persian was an important language for this whole philosophical tradition. Even the *Umm al-kitāb* has reached us in an archaic Persian translation rather than Arabic; see *Ummu'l-Kitāb*, ed. and trans. P. Filippini Ronconi (Naples: Istituto Universitario Orientale, 1966).

34. See S. H. Nasr, *Islamic Life and Thought* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1981) 102ff. ("Hermes and Hermetic Writings in the Islamic World").

35. On Islamic alchemy and its philosophy, see H. Corbin, *L'Alchimie comme art hiératique*, ed. P. Lory (Paris: Edition L'Herne, 1986); P. Lory, *Alchimie et mystique en terre d'Islam* (Paris: Verdier, 1989); P. Kraus, *Jābir ibn Ḥayyān* (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1986); Nasr, *Science and Civilization in Islam*, 242-82.

36. See Nasr, *Islamic Cosmological Doctrines*, Part 1; see also I. R. Netton, *Muslim Neoplatonists: An Introduction to the Thought of the Brethren of Purity* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1982).

37. Corbin et al., *Histoire de la philosophie islamique*, 119; see also W. Madelung, "Aspects of Ismā'īlī Theology: The Prophetic Chain and the God beyond Being," in *Ismā'īlī Contributions to Islamic Culture*, ed. S. H. Nasr (Tehran: Imperial Iranian Academy of Philosophy, 1977) 51-65.

38. It is important to remember that many important Ismā'īlī philosophical and theosophical treatises were kept hidden from the public at large and did not become publicly available until recently.

39. See M. Asín Palacios, *Ibn Masarra y su escuela: Orígenes de la filosofía hispano-musulmana* (Madrid: Imprenta Ibérica, 1914); translated somewhat imperfectly by E. Douglas and H. Yoder as *The Mystical Philosophy of Ibn Masarra and His Followers* (Leiden: Brill, 1978). On Islamic philosophy in Spain, see M. Cruz Hernández, *Historia del pensamiento en el mundo islámico*; see also T. Burckhardt, *Moorish Culture in Spain*, trans. A. Jaffe (London: Allen & Unwin, 1972) chap. 9, which treats the spiritual significance of Islamic philosophy in Spain.

A number of scholars such as S. M. Stern have criticized and refuted Asín's views concerning "Empedoclean cosmology" without their views altering appreciably the description of the thought of Ibn Masarra as reconstructed by Asín and others who have followed him.

40. There are numerous works devoted to Ibn Ḥazm, especially in Spanish. See M. Asín Palacios, *El cordobés Aben hazam: Primer historiador de las ideas religiosas* (Madrid: Imprentas de Estanislao Maestre, 1924); idem, *Aben hazam de Cordoba y su historia crítica de las ideas religiosas* (6 vols.; Madrid: Ediciones Turner, 1984).

41. See *The Ring of the Dove: A Treatise on the Art of Arab Love*, trans. A. J. Arberry (London: Luzac, 1953).

42. See M. Asín Palacios, *El régimen del solitario* (Madrid and Granada: Imprentas de la Escuela de Estudios Arabes de Granada y Francisco Roman Camacho, 1946). See also D. M. Dunlop, "Ibn Bājja's *Tadbīr al-Mutawahhīd* (Rule of the Solitary)," *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* 40 (1945) 61-81.

43. This is an interpretation given to the text by many scholars in the West over the centuries. For the latest example of this interpretation, see S. S. Hawi, *Islamic Naturalism and Mysticism, a Philosophic Study of Ibn Tufayl's Ḥayy bin Yaqzān* (Leiden: Brill, 1974). See also Ibn Tufayl, *Ḥayy ibn Yaqzān*, trans. L. E. Goodman (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1983).

44. In his *Averroës et l'averroïsme* (Paris: Michel Levy Frères, 1861), Renan makes of Averroës a "freethinker" opposed to the submission of reason to faith and the ancestor of modern rationalism and skepticism. There is an extensive European literature on

Averroes; see, e.g., O. Leeman, *Averroes and His Philosophy* (London: Oxford University Press, 1988).

45. The Latin translations followed Hebrew ones and go back to the seventh/thirteenth century and the efforts of Michael Scot. The Latin texts of Averroes's commentaries on Aristotle are being published by the Mediaeval Academy of America in the series *Corpus philosophorum medii aevi corpus commentariorum Averrois in Aristotelem*.

46. See G. Hourani, *Averroes, On the Harmony of Religion and Philosophy* (London: Luzac, 1961). This is the translation of the *Faṣl al-maqāl*, Ibn Rushd's most important treatise on the relation between philosophy and religion.

47. See S. van den Bergh, *Averroes' Tahāfut al-tahāfut ("The Incoherence of the Incoherence")* (2 vols.; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1954).

48. This seems most unlikely, because Ibn Sab'īn was a pious Muslim who followed the *Sharī'ah*, which forbids suicide. All of these views are discussed by A. al-Taftazānī in his *Ibn Sab'īn wa falsafatuhū l-sūfiyyah* (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-Lubnānī, 1973). This is by far the most thorough and detailed study of Ibn Sab'īn, who has not been studied extensively in the West. For references in Western languages, see Corbin et al., *Histoire de la philosophie islamique*, 2:366–68; Cruz Hernández, *Historia*, 2:249–57.

49. See chap. 23 in this volume, "The Hidden Sciences in Islam," by Jean Canteins.

50. This is one of the few works of Ibn Sab'īn to have been studied and translated into a Western language. See E. Lator, "Ibn Sab'īn de Murcia y su 'Budd al-ʿArif,'" *Revista al-Andalus* 9/2 (1944) 371–417.

51. Cruz Hernández refers to the school represented by Ibn Sab'īn as "gnosofia" (*Historia*, 2:249). This school, sometimes referred to as the Sab'iyyah, was represented after Ibn Sab'īn by the great Sufi poet al-Shūstārī, who was a student of Ibn Sab'īn.

52. This village in the Zagros mountains south of Zanjan is also the original home of the Suhrawardī family of Sufis, to whom Shaykh al-ishrāq was not, however, related.

53. On Suhrawardī, his life, and works, see Corbin, *En Islam iranien*, vol. 2; Nasr, *Three Muslim Sages*, chap. 2; idem, "Suhrawardī," in *A History of Muslim Philosophy*, ed. M. M. Sharif, 2:372–98; Corbin, *Histoire de la philosophie islamique*, 284ff.

54. See Suhrawardī, *Le Livre de la sagesse orientale*, trans. H. Corbin; ed. C. Jambet (Paris: Verdier, 1986).

55. The beautiful recitals of Suhrawardī have been translated into elegant French by H. Corbin as *L'Archange empourprée* (Paris: Fayard, 1976); they have also been translated much less successfully into English by W. Thackston as *The Mystical and Visionary Treatises of Suhrawardī* (London: Octagon Press, 1982).

56. See Suhrawardī, *Opera Metaphysica et Mystica*, vol. 1, ed. H. Corbin (Tehran and Paris: A. Maisonneuve, 1976) 503; see also G. Dayyānī, *Shu'ā'i andīshah wa shuhūd-i falsafa-yi Suhrawardī* (Tehran: Intishārāt-i hikmat, 1364 A.H. solar).

57. See S. H. Nasr, "Quṭb al-Dīn Shīrāzī," in *Dictionary of Scientific Biography*, ed. C. Gillespie (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1976) 247–53.

58. For an explanation of the complex angelology of Suhrawardī, which is discussed in many of his works, especially the *Hikmat al-ishrāq*, see Corbin, *Les Motifs zoroastriens dans la philosophie de Suhrawardī*, vol. 3 (Tehran: Société d'Iranologie, 1946); see also Nasr, "Suhrawardī," in *A History of Muslim Philosophy*, ed. M. M. Sharif, 2:383–91.

59. All of his extant works have been critically edited and published by M. Minovi and Y. Mahdavi in the *Musannafāt* (2 vols.; Tehran: Tehran University Press, 1952–58). On this remarkable figure, see S. H. Nasr, "Afḍal al-Dīn Kāshānī and the Philosophical World of Khwājah Naṣīr al-Dīn Tūsī," in *Islamic Theology and Philosophy: Studies in Honor of George F. Hourani*, ed. M. E. Marmura (Albany: State University of New

York Press, 1983) 249–64; and W. Chittick, "Bābā Afzal al-Dīn Kāshānī," *Encyclopedia Iranica*, 3:285–91.

60. See chap. 3 in this volume, "Ibn 'Arabī and His School," by W. C. Chittick.

61. See H. Corbin, "La confession extatique de Mīr Dāmād," in *Mélanges Massignou* (Damascus: Institut français de Damas, 1956) 1:331ff.; Corbin, *En Islam iranien*, 4:9–53; also S. H. Nasr, "The School of Isfahan," in *The History of Muslim Philosophy*, ed. M. M. Sharif, 2:904–32. For a general survey of philosophy and theology during the Safavid period, see S. H. Nasr, "Spiritual Movements, Philosophy and Theology in the Safavid Period," in *The Cambridge History of Iran*, vol. 1, ed. P. Jackson and L. Lockhart (Cambridge: University Press, 1986) 656–97.

62. On 'Amīlī and Mīr Findiriskī, see Nasr, "The School of Isfahan," in *The History of Muslim Philosophy*, ed. M. M. Sharif, 2:909–14, 922–26; also Nasr, "Mīr Findiriskī," in the new *Encyclopedia of Islam*.

63. By Dārā Shukūh (Shikoh), to which reference was made in chap. 19 of this volume. See D. Shayegan, *Hindouisme et soufisme* (Paris: La Différence, 1979).

64. During the last few decades, Mullā Ṣadrā has finally become known in the West, and there are a few works in European languages that analyze many aspects of his thought, although much still needs to be done in this field. See M. Horten, *Das philosophische System von Shīrāzī (1640f)* (Strassburg: K. J. Trübner, 1913); H. Corbin, *En Islam iranien*, 4:54–122; Corbin's French introduction to Mullā Ṣadrā's *Le Livre des pénétrations métaphysiques* (Paris: Verdier, 1988); S. H. Nasr, *The Transcendent Theosophy of Sadr al-Dīn Shīrāzī* (Tehran: Imperial Iranian Academy of Philosophy, 1978); idem, "Sadr al-Dīn Shīrāzī," in *A History of Muslim Philosophy*, ed. M. M. Sharif, 2:932–61; and F. Rahman, *The Philosophy of Mulla Sadra* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1976), which gives a somewhat overrationalistic interpretation of Mullā Ṣadrā. Only one of Mullā Ṣadrā's works is available in English: *Wisdom of the Throne*, trans. J. Morris (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1981). There is an extensive literature on him written mostly in Persian; see the introduction of S. H. Nasr to Mullā Ṣadrā's *Si aṣl* (Tehran: Tehran University Press, 1961).

65. Although the synthesis achieved by Mullā Ṣadrā was carried out within the Shī'ite universe of Safavid Persia, his philosophy cannot be confined only to the Shī'ite world. Many of his followers in India were Sunni, and his *Asfār* was translated into Urdu not by a Shī'ite but by a Sunni Indian scholar.

66. On *wujūd* and *māhiyyah* in Islamic philosophy and the question of principiality (*aṣālah*), see S. H. Nasr, "Wujūd and māhiyyah in Islamic Philosophy," *International Philosophical Quarterly* 29 (1989) 409–28; also T. Izutsu, *The Fundamental Structure of Sabzawari's Metaphysics* (Tehran: McGill University Institute of Islamic Studies, Tehran Branch, 1968).

67. To prevent any confusion with the current, popular meaning of this term, and following Corbin, perhaps one should refer to it as the "imaginal world" or the *mundus imaginalis*.

68. See H. Corbin, *Creative Imagination in the Sūfism of Ibn 'Arabī* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1969); and the major study of Ibn 'Arabī's metaphysics by W. Chittick, *The Sufi Path of Knowledge* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1989). See also chap. 3 in this volume.

69. These are discussed in the previous volume in this series; see W. C. Chittick, "Eschatology," in *Islamic Spirituality: Foundations*, 378–409.

70. The extensive philosophical activity of the period stretching from Mīr Dāmād and Mullā Ṣadrā on can be gauged in part by the vast anthology of the philosophy of this era planned and prepared by H. Corbin and S. J. Ashtiyānī in seven volumes, of

which only four appeared, the project having come to a standstill after Corbin's death. See *Anthologie de la philosophie iranienne* (4 vols.; Paris and Tehran: A. Maisonneuve, 1972–78); see also Corbin, *La Philosophie iranienne islamique aux XVII et XVIII siècles* (Paris: Buchet/Chastel, 1981), which contains Corbin's French prolegomena to the Arabic and Persian volumes. The four existing volumes, which cover the time span up to the Qajar period, bear witness to the remarkable philosophical activity during a period when, according to the Western historiography of Islamic philosophy, philosophical activity was supposed to have come to an end in the Islamic world.

71. It is of interest to note that both Lāhijī and Fayḍ Kāshānī were also fine poets and composed *diwāns* replete with metaphysical poetry.

72. See H. Corbin, *En Islam iranien*, 4:72ff.

73. It is mostly thanks to the efforts of S. J. Āshtiyānī that the history of the transmission of the teachings of Mullā Ṣadrā has come to be known. See his Persian introduction to *Sharḥ risālat al-mashā'ir* of Mullā Ṣadrā by Mullā Muḥammad Ja'far Lāhijānī (Mashhad: Mashhad University Press, 1964) 37ff.

74. On this period, see Corbin, *Histoire de la philosophie islamique*, 476ff.

75. On Sabziwārī, see S. H. Nasr, "Sabziwārī," in *A History of Muslim Philosophy*, ed. M. M. Sharif, 2:1543–56; and M. Mohaghegh and T. Izutsu, *The Metaphysics of Sabzavari* (Delmar, NY: Caravan Books, 1977). See also the introduction of S. J. Āshtiyānī to his edition of Sabziwārī, *Rasā'il* (Mashhad: Mashhad University Press, 1970) and the English preface of S. H. Nasr.

76. On Ṭabāṭabā'ī, see the introduction of S. H. Nasr to Ṭabāṭabā'ī's *Shi'ite Islam* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1975). On Islamic philosophy in Persia during this century, see the Persian introduction of S. J. Āshtiyānī to Mullā Ṣadrā, *al-Shawāhid al-rubūbiyyah* (Mashhad: Mashhad University Press, 1967) 124–44; and S. H. Nasr, *Islamic Philosophy in Contemporary Persia: A Survey of Activity during the Past Two Decades* (Salt Lake City: Middle East Center, University of Utah, 1972).

77. Among these well-known contemporary philosophers, Muṭahharī was given more to social thought than the others, although he did also write on logic and metaphysics. Several of his works have been rendered into English during the past few years. See, e.g., his *Fundamentals of Islamic Thought*, trans. R. Campbell (Berkeley: Mizan Press, 1985). Āshtiyānī has devoted a lifetime to editing and commenting on classical texts of later Islamic philosophy and gnosis, although he has also written independent works on these subjects. Ḥā'irī alone among the class of originally traditionally trained philosophers also knows Western philosophy well and has spent years in Western universities studying and even teaching both Islamic and Western philosophy and has written a number of major works on Islamic philosophy in confrontation with and in relation to Western philosophy. One of these works, *Epistemology in Islamic Philosophy*, has been translated into English and is to be published soon.

78. See Corbin, "The Force of Traditional Philosophy in Iran Today," *Studies in Comparative Religion* 2 (Winter 1968) 12–26.

79. Like 'Allāmah Ṭabāṭabā'ī, he sought to provide an Islamic response to the challenges of Western philosophy; see his *Our Philosophy*, trans. S. Inati, with preface by S. H. Nasr (London: Muhammadi Trust, 1987).

The Hidden Sciences in Islam

JEAN CANTEINS

WE PROPOSE, IN THIS CHAPTER, to bring to light the spiritual significance of the "hidden sciences," but not to delve into these sciences, for that would not be possible in the space allotted. These sciences are represented in most traditions under the names alchemy, astrology, etc., and some authors, such as P. Ruska and J. Kraus, have made known the essentials of the Islamic domain in such a way that it is not at all a *terra incognita*. The Islamic specificity of these sciences does not differentiate them a great deal from their Occidental or Far Eastern equivalents. The terminology is not an obstacle inasmuch as one makes use of the Greek, which the Arabic copies to a large extent in this domain.

By "hidden sciences" (*al-'ulūm al-khaṭiyyah*) must be understood diverse traditional sciences that for reasons intrinsic (esoteric sciences taught by means of the oral tradition) or extrinsic (sciences that modernism has relegated to the rank of out-of-date disciplines and has placed in obsolescence, with the result that what one can know of them—especially of the texts that are incomprehensible for want of the necessary deciphering or because of ignorant scribes—is presented as a degraded residue and in many cases as practically unusable) do not figure in the programs of universities and are not made the subjects of official instruction.

That is not to say, however, that these sciences do not make up or no longer make up part of the patrimony of Islam. The magisterial transmission has not entirely ceased, even though today it resembles a clandestine teaching nourishing a subterranean current that is difficult to discern. It must be remembered that Sufism no longer has an official status in a number of Muslim countries; although it is not overtly prohibited, it has only an officious character in those lands. The Sufi milieus have been the conservatories of an authentic tradition of certain of these sciences, and

although this tradition is no longer integral, it is not fossilized. This presence and perennity relative to the interiority and to the protective shelter of Sufism are explained by the congruence of finalities, but pertain as well without doubt to the fact that these sciences offer the appropriate means of expressing esoteric truths—and whoever says esoterism says “polysemy”—which modern sciences, with their unequivocal stance, are lacking. Indeed, Sufism has an elaborate terminology that is sufficient in itself, but the act of signifying is a demanding process. One must understand that the Sufi authors—and not the least of them—had utilized the resources of these sciences in order to expose certain views with the desired precision, tonality, or suggestive profundity. We think here most particularly of the science of letters (*al-jafā*). This sacred science—characteristic of the Semitic world—is considered to be the key to all the other sciences, and for this reason we give it preference.

In Islam as elsewhere, these sciences, inasmuch as they are manifestations of suprarational thought, appear to be experiencing a rebirth of interest in them. It is deplorable that the literature to which they give rise resorts too often to occultism, but what is important, and is to be stressed, is the significance of the “return swing of the pendulum” which this rebirth marks. Taking into account the extreme richness of the Arab and Persian patrimony in these matters, it is not utopian to look for the flourishing of these forms of “analogous thought,” which are, in the final analysis, the sciences called “hidden.” Every “analogue” will rejoice in this.

The Science of Letters

The science of letters, which rests on a sacred language, has necessarily a metaphysical foundation. This consists in comparing the universe to a book in which the letters are “Immutable Essences.” From these Divine Essences or Ideas results the Book of the World, which is compared to the Logos. This Book is still called the “cosmogonic Quran” (*al-qurʾān al-takwīnī*), as opposed to the Quran composed of a collection of revealed verses (*al-qurʾān al-tadwīnī*). This “genesis” of the cosmos takes as its basis the celebrated *ḥadīth* “I was a Hidden Treasure [*kanz*, a word with the same initial letter as *kun*, “Be!”], the creative command, as Ibn ‘Arabī remarked] and I desired to be known; therefore, I created the world.” This “Hidden Treasure” corresponds, in the process under consideration and in conformity with scriptural symbolism, to the formless and primordial point prior to the emanation, properly speaking, of the letters of the alphabet.¹ Limiting oneself to the Islamic domain (because one encounters parallel formulations in Philo of Alexandria, the gnostic Marcos, and many others), one finds this

doctrine mentioned in the celebrated mystical poem the *Gulshan-i rāz* (*The Rose Garden of Divine Mysteries*) of Shabistārī. “For the one whose soul is the place of theophany, the whole of the universe is the Book of God Most High. The accidents are His vowels and the substance His consonants” (verses 200–209). Paraphrasing the *Ikhwān al-Safā*, Y. Marquet was able to write in a more elaborate manner:

The Universe is the Book written by the Pen . . . on the Tablet . . . or, if one wishes, they are the Forms which by virtue of Divine Will the Universal Intellect furnishes to the Universal Soul. The lines bursting forth from this Book preserve its content: “It is through them that the emanation of their powers will be made” on that which is above (the celestial sphere). In fact, beginning with these lines and emanating from them, the simple and luminous spiritual “things” will be formed which will be found in the echelons subordinate to the Universal Soul. Then each of these lines will be established at a rank from which it will not depart; they will remain ordered in their respective places like those of a real book. . . .²

The best summation, however, is given us by Ibn ‘Arabī in terms that will allow us to dispense with other quotations:

The Universe is a vast book; the characters of this book are all written, in principle, with the same ink and transcribed on to the eternal Table by the Divine Pen; all are transcribed simultaneously and inseparably; for that reason the essential phenomena hidden in the “Secret of Secrets” were given the name of “transcendent letters.” And these transcendent letters, that is to say, all creatures, after having been virtually condensed in the Divine Omniscience, were carried down on the Divine Breath to the lower lines and composed and formed the manifested Universe.³

The science of letters rests on an esoteric usage and interpretation of letters of the Arabic alphabet considered triply as ideophonic (preponderance of sonoral symbolism), ideographic (preponderance of graphic or “hieroglyphic” symbolism), and arithmologic (each letter having a numerical value in such a way that the science of letters does not go without a science of numbers).⁴

Abū Ishāq Qūhistānī has characterized the importance of the science of letters by saying that it is the “root of all the other sciences.”⁵ One could say schematically that the science of letters involves the following: (1) divine and metaphysical or metacosmic symbolism; (2) universal or macrocosmic symbolism by virtue of correspondences between letters and “astrological” givens (celestial spheres, planets, zodiacal signs, lunar mansions, etc.), on the one hand, and “physical” givens (elements, “natures,” etc.), on the other; (3) human and individual or microcosmic symbolism by virtue of physiological correspondences (organs of the body, “temperaments,”

etc.), from which comes its correlation with chiromancy etc. Its particular status has been defined well by Tirmidhi:

All the sciences are contained in the letters of the alphabet, for the beginning of science is indeed the Divine Names from which come forth the creation and governance of the world. . . . Now the Divine Names themselves precede the letters and return to the letters. This hidden treasure of science is known to the saints alone whose intelligences receive understanding from God and whose hearts are attached to God and are ravished by His Divinity, there where the veil is lifted before the letters and the attributes. . . .⁶

Like "knowledge of the virtues of numbers and names," the science of letters is designated by the term *ṣimiyā*, but the "magical" or divinatory applications by which *ṣimiyā* is most known have caused them to be discredited—with good reason. We will not treat them here, except by this brief allusion. These applications are for the most part in a degenerate state, as seen in the "art of talismans" (amulets, pentangles, magic squares), geomancy (*'ilm al-raml*), and the mysterious and scholarly onomatomancy (*zā'irajah*). Ibn Khaldūn himself speaks of this subject in a fashion so confusing that it is necessary to renounce it despite the efforts of V. Monteil (*Muqaddimah*, III) to penetrate its mysteries. In order summarily to situate it, one may say that it probably inspired the Art of Combination of Ramon Lull.⁷

The Arabic term *ṣimiyā* is derived from the Greek *sēmeion*, "sign." Insofar as it is a "science of signs," the science of letters is capable of intermixing with semiological sciences—although the ends and the means differ radically. It is remarkable in this respect that the science of letters—without awaiting de Saussure and the others—recognized in the alphabet, beyond the linguistic instrument which it obviously is, another system of codes with an incomparable plasticity in the resources of indefinite combinations. One can apply to it in all appropriateness the term "metalanguage," as employed in its discipline by modern authors.

The science of letters intends in effect to go beyond the purely "phenomenal" understanding of things by attaching itself to the "noumenal" content. In other words, it intends to uncover behind the contingent fact, the corresponding archetype, and this is an additional reason for according it a privileged position.

Furthermore, the search for the archetype and symbolic transparency goes through a structural understanding. These relations to certain currents of contemporary thought are mentioned here in order to suggest modern "readings" of this ancient science of letters and to show that those considered it to be out-of-date were anxious gravediggers and for the most part gave proof only of their prejudice and profane spirit—not to mention a lack of culture.

When one speaks of the science of letters in Arabic (and the same is true for Hebrew), one generally has in mind only the consonants, the only letters which these languages include in their alphabets. The vowels are considered to be accessory sonoral modalities, "stamps" that have as their object the "coloring" of the consonants with a fixed sonority. The consequence of this is that in the Arabic context—contrary to that which occurs, for example, in the Greek context, where the seven vowels play a preponderant role—the science of letters has, with rare exceptions, neglected vowels. σ

In order to understand this attitude, it is helpful to specify that for the Semite in general the consonant-vowel relationship reflects the relationship between the Essence and the attributes (*dhāt/sifāt*). The consonant (*ḥarf*, pl. *ḥurūf*, from which comes the phrase *'ilm al-ḥurūf* to designate this science) is to the vowel (*ḥarakah*, "motion") what "substance" (*jawhar*) is to "accident" (*'arad*). In terms of metalinguistics, the sum total of the consonants represents sound as such, taken in its invariable multiplicity in conformity with the diffraction of the Word from which a particular language arose. Vowels represent only accessory "modifications" or "alterations" proper to the syntax (declensions, conjugations, etc.) of this language. Thus considered, the consonant is a pure given (Niffarī goes so far as to make of it a hypostatic entity); the vowel a practical given.

Far from wishing to take a stance opposed to that of tradition, but because vowels are open to an interesting interpretation, we begin with the vowels. In Arabic there are three "vocalizations": *a*, *u*, and *i*, called respectively *fathah*, *ḍammah*, and *kasrah*. They are noted (optionally) by conventional signs of very summary orthography: primitively by a dot, like the Hebrew vowel points, placed either above (*a*), at the same level (*u*), or below (*i*) the consonant to be vocalized. Later on, they were denoted with the signs in use today: an oblique stroke above the consonant (*a*), a comma also above (*u*), and an oblique stroke below (*i*).

On the last syllable of words, vocalization has an "inflecting" function, the cases and moods being determined by the "timbre" of this syllable. This has led to the use of the same name for inflection and vowel: the vocalization *u* (nominative and indicative) is called "raised" or ascendant; the vocalization *i* (indirect case) is called "lowered" or descendant; and, between the two, the vocalization *a* (direct and subjunctive cases) is called "planed" or intermediate. The position of the vocalic signs, nouns and qualifiers (to which it would be necessary to add the locations of articulation: *a* [the throat], *i* [the palate], and *u* [the lips]) thus defines three cohesive tendencies which "qualify" the consonantic entity in a manner analogous to the three *gunas* of the Hindu tradition.

This structuring of being (the whole of the alphabetic corpus insofar as

it is a symbol of the whole of Reality) is still more evident with *alif*, *wāw*, and *yā*, which, although consonants, act also as *matres lectionis*—that is, they serve to render the three corresponding long vowels *ā*, *ī*, and *ū*. In this function they have a hybrid status—neither vowel nor consonant, a fact that has brought about the exegesis of grammarians. They say that the *a* with *alif* is characterized by “sublimation,” the *i* with *yā* by “precipitation,” and the *u* with *wāw* by the intermediary state. Sublimation and precipitation come under the classification of alchemical terminology; as for the intermediate state, *i’tirād*,⁸ it implies a completely different context. *I’tirād* connotes the word ‘*ard*’ (“width”), which in its Sufi sense means “amplitude,” that is, all amplification in the horizontal dimension of a given “state of being” taken as the point of reference or “horizon.” The dimension of “amplitude” induces the complementary dimension of “exaltation,” polarized in the vertical according to the two inverse meanings of “height” (for *a*) and of “depth” (for *i*). This structural trinity expresses a diversification. Diversification can be of a metaphysical order: it concerns “movements or orientations of the Spirit”: descending movement by the (apparent) distance from the Principle, which measures the depth of the possible horizontal movement, of which the amplitude measures the expansion, and, finally, ascending movement of “return” toward the Principle or height. It can be of an ontological order, as in the reference mentioned above. It can also be of a ritual order, and from there derives a Sufi perspective.

The exegesis of the three basic postures of prayer assumes a truly initiatic coloring. In the *Fusūs al-hikam* (*Bezels of Wisdom*), Ibn ‘Arabī explains them from two points of view. Existentially, prayer includes three movements: an ascending movement, corresponding to the standing position of the supplicant; a horizontal movement, corresponding to the inclined position; and a descending movement, corresponding to the prostrate position. Principally (in this case, Ibn ‘Arabī says, it concerns the prayer that God “prays upon us”), the three movements concern the “creative movements” (Ibn ‘Arabī employs the expression “existentiating theophanies”) of God to know: the “intentional” (descending) movement toward the world here below in order to manifest it, the (ascending) movement toward the upper world, and the horizontal movement. Thus the master of Islamic theosophy presents the gripping idea of a symmetry between divine service (*‘ibādah*) and the creation of the world (*ibdā’*), the attitudes of the supplicant imitating in an individual mode the “gestures” which God the Creator accomplished in a universal mode.

More simply, Ismā‘īl Ḥaqqī, Ibn ‘Arabī’s Ottoman commentator, breaks down the prayers by considering the orthographic symbolism not only of the three *matres lectionis* but of the ternary *alif*, *lām*, *mīm*, one of the set

of initial letters figuring at the head of several *sūrah*s of the Quran of which we will speak later. Such a view ended by becoming in some way a common ground, since it was equally enunciated with regard to the three letters comprising the Name Allah: *alif*, *lām*, *hā*, upon which Ismā‘īlī gnosis did not hesitate to graft an exegesis for which the key is given by the structure of the cross. We will content ourselves by mentioning the existence of such an exceptional—indeed, even paradoxical—correspondence in Islam by reason of the proscription of this symbol by Muslim exoterism. We cannot treat here the facts contained in a highly questionable work in which R. von Sebottendorf has exposed a so-called method of spiritual realization which he supposedly learned of in Turkey at the beginning of this century. It concerns pseudo-alchemical lucubrations, which we mention here only in view of a possible correspondence between the ternary *a-i-u* and the ternary Mercury-Sulfur-Salt.

In conclusion we note the eminent structural properties of vowels. We have presented Arabic vocalization as a trinity, and in doing so we have passed over in silence a fourth modality: the absence of “motion.” This state is marked by the *sukūn*, the sign of “rest” or of “quiescence” of the consonant. This fourth modality—which is phonetically conceivable only in relation to the three others for which it is, so to speak, the “empty” counterpart—is systematically neglected by the symbolic. But it does have a place in a quadripartite vision of things. To keep to the symbolism of the prayers, we emphasize that the *sukūn* takes into account an attitude that was not considered: the seated position, at once a time of “pause” or of immobility between two movements and a synthesis of the three other attitudes of the supplicant. Furthermore, the coming to the fore of a vocalic “fourth term” orients the exegesis toward quaternary correspondences (elements, “natures,” directions, etc.). An example of this is the application presented by the appendix of the *Kitāb al-tadhkirah* (*The Book of Memorial*) of Dā‘ūd al-Anṭākī, in which the twenty-eight letters of the Arabic alphabet are differentiated into four series of seven letters according to the double criterion of “timbre” and “nature”: *a*=warm, *sukūn*=cold, *u*=dry, and *i*=humid. Being aware of the esoteric preoccupations of Anṭākī and of the disciple who was the author of the appendix, one is able to foresee the speculations, particularly alchemical ones, of which such a cleavage is capable.

The Letters of the Alphabet

The letters of the alphabet, the essential signs and providential instruments of the Sacred Science, are twenty-eight in number. The number twenty-

eight, congruent with four and seven ($28 = 4 \times 7$, and 28 is the "Pythagorean sum" of 7), immediately suggests a relation with the lunar mansions. There result from it diverse cross-references of a cosmological order, to which we will make allusion later on. The connection between the number of letters and the lunar mansions is sufficiently remarkable that it is emphasized and exploited. Thus Tirmidhī (*Khatm al-awliyā*), question 142) states that the number of letters was primordially set at twenty-eight owing to the number of lunar mansions. Ibn 'Arabī was to make this point more explicitly by "localizing" in the moon—the intermediary between heaven and earth—the "prophetic" residence of Adam and by specifying that the manifestation *par excellence* of the mediating function of the heavenly body is the differentiation of the *unique* primordial sun (in the manner of Adam as the "*unique* man") in articulated language.

As can be foreseen from its reference to the duration of a lunar cycle, the number twenty-eight, the total of the letters, was considered to be composed of two equal halves of fourteen letters each, based on the model of the waxing and waning phases of the moon, estimated at fourteen days each. There are numerous other divisions made by grammarians as well as by exegetes, but it is not a question of expanding the above. The most remarkable among them is that which divides the alphabet into "luminous" letters and "obscure" letters. In the correspondence to the lunar cycle, it is the invisible mansions of the southern hemisphere that are identified with the fourteen "luminous" letters (namely: *a, b, r, l, q, y, s, ṣ, ṭ, k, m, n*, and *h*) "since their spiritual light corresponds to the hidden light of these mansions." As for the visible mansions of the northern hemisphere, they correspond to the fourteen "obscure" letters, namely, the remaining letters of the alphabet. A long tradition, from Ibn Sīnā to the Ikhwān al-Safā', from Jābir to the Pseudo-Majrītī, has echoed this point of view. This is shown by a characteristic passage of the *Ghayāt al-hakīm* (*The Goal of the Sage*, known in the Middle Ages under the Latinized title of *Picatrix*):

If the letters are 28 in number, the reason for this is that this number is a perfect individual made up of a spirit and a body. There are 14 (luminous) letters which are found at the beginning of the *sūrah*s of the Quran. They represent the spirit and just as the spirit is hidden, so the secret of these letters is hidden as well. It is at the same time the number of the invisible stations of the moon. On the other hand, the other letters (called obscure) which never figure at the beginning of the *sūrah*s represent the body and correspond to the visible stations of the moon. . . . There is the mystery of the Quran.⁹

The luminous letters are found at the beginning of twenty-nine *sūrah*s of the Quran, isolated or in a group as initial letters (their number varying from one to five). Scholars of Arabic and orientalists have been wondering

for centuries about the presence and role of these initial letters without reaching the least consensus concerning them. By all appearances verse III,7, dealing with passages of the Quran having more than one meaning (*mutashābihāt*), applies to these letters: "And no one *knows the interpretation* [of these passages] *except God and those rooted in Science*." Such is the "reading" made by the Sufis of this verse by extending to "*those rooted in Science*" the capacity of understanding and interpretation of the stated passages. As Tirmidhī wrote: "In the *Fawātih* of the suras, there is an allusion to the meaning of the sura, known only to the Sages of God on His earth . . . men whose hearts have reached His essential solitude from which they have received this knowledge, that of the consonants of the alphabet."¹⁰ Although dealing with such a subject is a delicate matter, we risk doing so with the hope not of giving an exhaustive explanation of it—such a thing is humanly impossible—but of suggesting an appropriate approach to the subject.

The initial letters are a theophany of the Uncreated in the created. The Quran, the scriptural manifestation of the uncreated Divine Word, belongs as the Book to the created order. The uncreated Word is not able to be expressed without recourse to the created letter. The letter is not the Word but its reflection. The Revelation is a superhuman effort at the transmutation of the Uncreated into the created. In the course of this process, the coagulation of the Word into a spoken and written sacred language—here Arabic—was left in suspense at certain points in the Quran where the divine impact is conserved, so to speak, in a state of the least crystallization, of the least literary hardening.

The initial letters take into account this state of "undifferentiation." They are not vocalized and, since they cannot be articulated, are not given to "recitation." With regard to manifestation, the initial letters are therefore imperfect or incomplete (= *non finis*). They have an apophatic dimension that distinguishes them from the rest of the Book. The Quran can be *recited* in all the verses wherein the Muḥammadan receptacle contained integrally the Divine Message; it can, on the contrary, be only *spelled*—as by someone who does not understand what he is reading—there where the earthly and human receptacle was in some way less sealed off. The Prophet gave a sonoral vestment, clear and comprehensible, to the inaudible Word of God except in the initial letters where the Word remained relatively "naked" and was received as so many broken peals of the primordial Sound.

The initial letters are the part of the Book that has kept something of the celestial state in which was found the Revelation before its descent into Muḥammad. It is that to which the tradition refers when it emphasizes that

the initial letters concern the Divine Science transmitted directly to Muḥammad in a time span (so brief) during which no archangel was able to serve as intermediary or interpreter between God and the Prophet. On this subject it is reported that when Gabriel *descended* with *khy's* (the initial letters of the nineteenth *sūrah*), to each letter that he enumerated, the Prophet added, "I know." Finally Gabriel exclaimed, saying, "How dost thou know something which I myself do not know?"

If one considers them more specifically in the framework of the mystery of the Revelation, the initial letters are the mediating boundary between the Divine Word and the Quran as the Book for the believers. They are an intermediary stage accidentally or providentially (according to the appreciation of the above-mentioned mystery) interposed between the Principle (God, the Divine Name, etc.) and the manifestation: that is, this same Divine Name developed, differentiated in conformity with the economy of the Message revealed to men and in the form of the Book—from whence comes the name *sūrah* (literally, "order," "ordered"), therefore, a group of *ordered* "sayings."

Letters of the Alphabet and Human Hands

Considered as the filigree of the alphabet, the numbers 28 and 14 are the symbolic values of the whole and of the half. We have just seen how the Quranic initial letters concern one half—implicitly preminent—of the alphabet. From these speculations one can extract a highly affirmed dichotomy between the two halves (of the letters) concerned. This tendency is particularly aided and shaped by chiromy. It can be observed that each hand, made up of five fingers, includes fourteen phalanxes (the name of the hand, *yad*, equals 14); the two hands therefore total twenty-eight phalanxes, being as letters of the alphabet in such a manner that one can imagine them to be distributed as if they were in the "crucible" of the printer.

The distribution between the two hands would consequently have to divide the alphabet into letters of the right hand and letters of the left hand. Where this distribution would lead can easily be conceived from the fact that there is a difference of value attached from time immemorial to the right (of good augur) and to the left (of bad augur).¹¹ Without going so far as do some rather Manichaeic interpretations, let us note that the preceding distinction between luminous and obscure letters is congruent with that of the letters of the right hand and the left hand. The right and the left correspond respectively to the south and the north and are applied consequently to the southern and northern hemispheres of the lunar mansions.

From the point of view of chiromy, the left hand points to "nature," the sum total of the traits that define what is innate. It is related to the *passive* aspect as well as to the *past*. It is the part of predestination. The right hand points to what is acquired, the total of the modifications brought to heredity. What is acquired, in permanent becoming, comes to complete and correct the givens of the left hand, relatively immutable. The right hand is related to the active aspect; it is the hand of the future.

The remarkable numerical coincidence between the phalanxes and the letters potentializes the presence of Divine Names in the articulations of the two hands. The initiatic symbolism of the "union of the hands," at the time of the linking of the disciple to the spiritual master, confirms this idea of the theophoric hand. In brief, all this occurs as if the "union of the hands" had as its aim to awaken the sacred letters of the Name from sleep in the articulations and to *articulate* them (we stress the coincidence which the vocabulary notes between the act of elocution and the movement of the fingers) in the hand, albeit in a nonsonorous manner—therefore in a solely potential fashion, which then remains for the disciple to actualize. Since the hands make up the sum total of the letters, the composition of all of the Names is found therein in full force.

The Kabbala has made clear the appropriateness of this by distributing the Name YHVH expanded into twenty-eight letters upon the phalanxes of the *two hands*. If such a disposition is not possible without distortions or expedients with regard to the Name *Allāh*, it is so with the Name *Hwwa* expanded into fourteen letters on *one hand*, and this would be done in order to relate it to the mystery according to which, in the union of the hands at the time of the initiatic pact, the two hands which the master places above the hand of the disciple are like "two right hands" (and not one left hand and one right hand in conformity with physiology). The anatomical bipolarization inherent in the profane human state is thus symbolically annulled and transcended. Because of the "union of the hands" (this expression is synonymous with "invocation"), the distribution and therefore the division of the letters between those of the right (hand) and those of the left (hand) become meaningless when the Sacred Name is recomposed.¹²

To this incursion into chiromy from the angle of the science of letters one could add another facet. It is said that the principal lines of the hand sketch a figure that has the form of the number 18 (18) on the right hand and 81 (81), the inverse, on the left hand. The total, 99, is the number of the Divine Names—we mean the innumerable essential Divine Qualities leading back to a canonically determined series of soteriological and criteriological Names mentioned in the Quran. To these ninety-nine traditional Names must be added *Allāh*, which makes them one hundred.

This fact brings about the appearance of a new relation between the science of the hand ('ilm al-kaff, *kaff*, another name for hand=100) and the science of letters and names, a relation made particularly evident by the fact that the Muslim rosary is made up of 99+1 elements concretely: ninety-nine beads plus the hundredth one, which is of a larger size; it is a structure remarkably congruent with that of the Names.

Conjointly with this projection of the twenty-eight letters in terms of the microcosm of the structural properties of the two hands, there exists a representation comparatively macrocosmic—indeed, metacosmic—of these letters on a celestial “sphere” or rather on a group of concentric “spheres” whose hierarchy and arrangement were expounded by Ibn ‘Arabī in the order of his “theory” of the “Divine Breath” (*nafas al-Rahmān*). This cannot be explained in detail here, but it involves different levels of reality woven upon the twenty-eight letters of the alphabet.

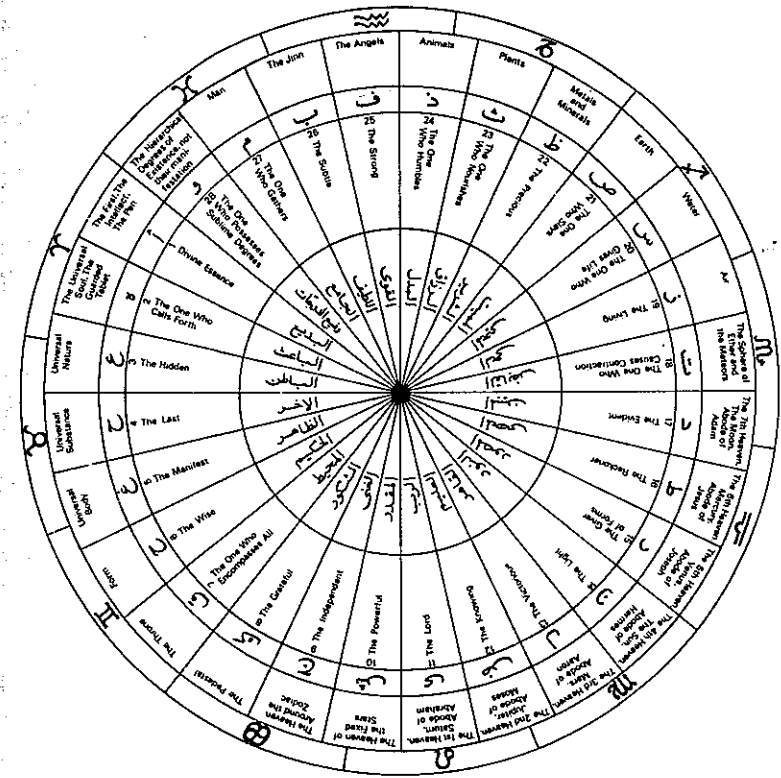
Schematically one can distinguish a divine level, a suprahuman or universal level, and a human level, represented respectively by the Divine Names, the cosmic degrees, and the twenty-eight letters of the alphabet. The letters are arranged following the order of phonetic emanation such as was established by the grammarian Sibawayh. Ibn ‘Arabī contented himself with combining *alif* and *hamzah* to obtain the number 28, necessary to the “economy” of the exposition. The sequence that develops, beginning with the most internalized phonemes, the gutturals, through the most externalized, the labials—that is, from *hā*’ to *mīm*—is framed by *alif* as the first degree (corresponding to the breaking of silence, to the sonoral eruption of *hamzah*) and by *wāw* as the final degree.

The Breath of the Compassionate and the Letters of the Alphabet

The theory starts with the idea of an expansion (what Ibn ‘Arabī calls breadth) from a unique and primordial Reality. In conformity with the sonoral symbolism, from the Divine Breath proceed first of all the Names or Qualities, before even the creation of the world. At their “request,” the Breath intervenes determining all of the “cosmic degrees,” as a kind of easing or “relaxation” forming emanation into a hierarchy from the manifestation of the First Intellect to the creation of man.

These twenty-eight cosmic degrees are distributed into four quarters of seven. The first quarter, which is principal, extends according to an ascending progression from the vernal equinox to the summer solstice marked by the Throne and the polar letter *qāf*. The two succeeding, or intermediary quarters, extend from the summer solstice to the winter solstice, thus

Illustration A



following a descending progression. They symbolize the whole of the formal world, which ends with the degree of the earth; they have for a center the sun and the letter *nūn* (the fourteenth letter linking the two halves of the phoneme series) situated at the autumnal equinox. The fourth quarter, once again ascending, ends with man (the letter *mīm*). The final degree (the letter *wāw*) accounts for the possibility of reintegration of all emanation in the initial degree (the letter *alif*).

Reintegration does not mean reunion. The cycle is not closed again exactly upon itself; the end is not rejoined by the beginning. Emanation proceeds in open spirals and not in closed circles. If it did not, parallel cyclical processes such as those of the sun and the moon would come to

an end at the same time, with the result that their evolutionary relationship would cease and they would no longer have a *raison d'être*—or, to paraphrase the *sūrah Yā' Sīn*, “nor doth the night outstrip the day” (Quran XXXVI, 39).¹³ This unequal superposition of sequences (which makes, for example, each of the “signs” of the Zodiac [*burūj*] to cover seven thirds of the lunar mansion) explains the nonrepetition of the cycles and rhythms, and it is upon this law that astrology is founded and, by extension, all the secondary divinatory sciences. Other examples could be given of this nonrepetition, the *sine qua non* of the continuum and of the diversity of the manifested. Let us cite, for the astronomical domain, the precession of the equinoxes, from which results the current time lag between the signs of the zodiac and the twelve corresponding constellations, the reestablishment taking place at the end of each major revolution.

For a good representation of the theory of the Divine Breath we will refer to the accompanying synoptic diagram (Illustration A), which is borrowed from T. Burckhardt.¹⁴ In the absence of longer development, it will allow a view of the whole of the different “spheres” and degrees in question.

In this diagram, the *alif* must be considered separately from the other letters. We have said that, like *hamzah*, it marks the irruption of sound. It is the principle of sonoral manifestation of which all the other letters are differentiated symbols. It is necessary, therefore, to consider that the sequence of letters begins with *hā'* and ends with *wāw*, bringing out the two letters of the Divine Name *Huwa*. In the Sufi milieu, this Name has as much prestige as the Name *Allāh*, if not more. It is not possible to deal with the science of letters without speaking of the Science of Names. This can be treated only briefly in the present chapter; we will leave aside the esoteric expansions upon the “Supreme Name,” *al-ism al-a'zam*, to which it ordinarily leads.¹⁵

Illustration B



The Science of Names

In order to bear in mind certain subtle interferences and structural considerations, we will take as our point of departure the Name *Allāh*. In brief, it can be said that the expanded form of this Name is the (first) *shahādah*—*lā ilāha illa' Llāh* (there is no divinity but God)—and that the shortened form is *Huwa*—He. The Name *Allāh* is represented in traditional calligraphy in the accompanying illustration. It is a tetragram composed of *alif*, *lām*, *lām*, and *hā'*. As a tetragram, it would necessarily be written *Allh*. This could be grating; therefore, the form is *Allāh*. Three letters alone compose it: *alif*, *lām*, and *hā'*. *Alif* is a vertical line and represents the masculine, active principle (or injunctive, from the point of view of the symbolism of sonoral energy); this meaning is reinforced by the dot above it, of which it is a sort of vertical projection.¹⁶ Its numerical value, 1, is in fact the symbol of Unity. The last letter, *hā'*, which is approximately a circle, represents the feminine, passive principle, and this meaning is reinforced by the crown (in the geometric sense of the term) above it. Between the initial rectitude of *alif* and the final, completely encircled form of *hā'*, the two *lāms* constitute an intermediary stage assuring a sort of written transition.

We have just made allusion to the two signs, the dot and the crown which come above the *alif* and the *hā'*. The most plausible explanation is that the dot recalls a potential *hamzah* systematically left in an unmanifested state from a sonoral as well as a graphic point of view, and that the crown is the stylization of a miniature *hā'* added to indicate that the final *hā'* of the Name is a radical letter forming part of the tetragram and not an accessory letter (such as the indication of the feminine, for example). The dot and the crown are proportioned in such a way that they can interlock one into another and be fitted so precisely that they blend together in forming a single circle. Their coincidence makes clear the coincidence of the extremes, *alif* and *hā'*. This means that the Name *Allāh* cannot but join the essential aspect—the dot—and the substantial aspect—the crown; the two determinations of Being naturally supported by the polar letters *alif* and *hā'*. This coincidence can be considered the result of two inverse processes: the involutive or centripetal process in the case of the conjunction of the dot in the crown converging toward the unique Point (*stricto sensu* a circle, an “aggrandized dot”—if one can be allowed this geometric heresy), which is none other than the Name; and the evolutive or centrifugal process in the case of the separation of the dot from the crown diverging from the primordial Point, which is none other than the Name. They proceed from the Name and end there; the Name is at once their beginning and their end. They develop outside of it and are resolved in it, reciprocally annulling each

other in the immutable heart of the Name, the place of the intersection of all the processes located not only outside of time and space but still more outside of all contingency.

The specificity of the *shahādah* appears in the turn of the phrase which Arabic syntax calls *istithnā* ("exception"), denoted by the particle *illā* (= *in lā*, "if it is not") the transcendent content of which is hidden in the internal structure of the formula. In brief, several connections based on reflection (in the optic sense) and symmetry (the "balance," Jābir would say) articulate the *shahādah* and reveal in it the complex interior equilibrium which the traditional distinction takes into account only imperfectly, in an unequivocal manner, in the "negative" clause: *lā ilāha* (the initial *lā*, the particle of negation) and the "positive" clause: *Allāh* (the initial *al*, the definite article and beginning of *Allāh* > *al-ilāh*).¹⁷ The *shahādah* makes it evident that the Name *Allāh*, the symbol of the Universal Being as much as it is an affirmation, contains in an implicit or subjacent manner the symbol of the absolute indetermination of Non-Being (the negative particle buried within the word *al-ilāh* decomposed and recomposed in *lā* and *ilāh*:

$$\begin{array}{c} \text{ilāh} \\ \text{عَالِهَ اَلَا} \\ \downarrow \\ \text{lā} \end{array}$$

As the Name *Allāh* includes four letters, the *shahādah* includes four words, and these words are composed exclusively of the same letters as the Name: *alif*, *lām*, *hā'*. We will note only the connection of the last letter of the Name and the last word of the formula: *Hā'* and *Allāh*. Just as the formula concludes with the Name *Allāh*, the Name concludes in its turn with the letter *hā'* by a kind of common convergence of the formula and the Name toward the same letter. *Hā'* marks a kind of ending; it is identified with exhalation (the most profound sound), with the last breath of the dying. *Hā'* thus makes a counterpart to the initial *alif* of *Allāh* (comparable to the first cry). An expression of Ipseity, *hā'* prolongs indefinitely sound and breath in the self. It can be said that *hā'* is, in a concentrated form, the Name *Huwa* inserted into *Allāh*, as *Allāh* is itself inserted into the *shahādah*. Inversely, it can be said that the Name *Huwa* is expanded in the Name of four letters, *Allāh*, itself expanded in a formula of four words, the *shahādah*. One finds oneself in the presence of a series of successive interconnections which Arabic orthography makes particularly clear:

$$\left[\left[\left[\text{عَالِهَ اَلَا} \right] \text{وَالِهَ اَلَا} \right] \text{وَالِهَ اَلَا} \right]$$

The inherent nature of *Huwa* (we propose this form by analogy with that of *Allāh*) in *Allāh* explains the rather enigmatic presence of the crown above its final letter. It can be added here that it is a question of a "signature" (in the Bohemian sense of the word) of Self, precisely of the "*huwa*-ness" of *Allāh*, that is to say, of its connection with the absolute and universal Ipseity. It is this which several Sufis have recalled by showing the inherent nature and the permanence—or perennity—of *Huwa* in *Allāh*. In effect, by successive amputations of the Name one obtains *LLH* (*lillāh*, "to *Allāh*"), *LH* (*lahu*, "to Him") and finally *H* (*hū*, "He"), these being so many states of the Divinity whose enumeration expresses a progressive "reduction" to Ipseity: the *Huwiyyah*, an abstract term beginning with *Huwa* and equivalent to the scholastic term "aseity."

Ritually, one observes this "reduction" in the *ḥadrah* or danced *dhikr*. The Name *Allāh*, at first clearly articulated, loses the first syllable and then is progressively reduced to a strongly exhaled breath like a death rattle. At this stage there is no longer conscious articulation; the final phoneme *hā'* itself disappears, diluted and mixed with the vital breath which escapes every act of will. The dancer no longer articulates; it cannot even be said that he "breathes" the Name. Rather, he is "breathed" by It: the Self has then absorbed the self.

The Divine Name *Huwa* is formed of the two letters *hā'* and *wāw* whose respective numerical values, 5 and 6, are traditionally those of the Earth and Heaven or, on the human plane, of the feminine and the masculine. Their total, 11, is the number of hierogamy, the number of the androgyne. The "Pythagorean sum" of 11, 66, is at once the number of the Name *Allāh* (1+30+30+5) and of the original couple, Adam and Eve (*Ādam wa Ḥawā'*: 45+6+15). This situates *Huwa* at the intersection of two axes, that of sacred onomastics and that of primordial androgyny. The Earth and Heaven can still be symbolized by two so-called "magic" circles having respectively as center *hā'* or the number 5 and *wāw* or the number 6. These expanded circles have respectively as their total value the numbers 45 and 54, the sum of which, 99, is related, as we have already seen, to the totality of the Divine Names—another testimony, from the angle of arithmology, of the synthetic quality of *Huwa*.

Remarks concerning Alchemy

Throughout these pages we have had the occasion to evoke diverse aspects relating to astrology, alchemy, etc. We have taken the side of approaching these sciences through the specifically Semitic perspective of the science of letters considered, let us remember, from an epistemological point of view,

as the key science. By comparison, the other sciences result from borrowings from and adaptations of foreign currents and particularly from Alexandrian Hermeticism.¹⁸ They would imply, therefore, from the point of view of methodology, a completely different approach. It is not possible to treat each of these sciences in depth; however, some complementary considerations on alchemy can find a place here.

The alchemy of which we speak here is not reducible to a sort of craftsmanship of metals and to laboratory work centered on the art of fire. (*Mutatis mutandis*, the activities of the blacksmith, potter, glassblower, etc. are not without connection to those of the alchemist.) Rather, it concerns a "mysticism" that utilizes the metallurgical process (physical and chemical) as symbolic support and interprets it, systematically, through analogy, in a spiritual perspective. For a Westerner the image that is most suggestive of this "way" is without doubt that of the alchemist in prayer (*oraison*) in his "lab-oratory," as the Latin adage *laborare orare* states. In the Islamic context an equivalent connotation is expressed in the declaration of 'Alī that alchemy is the sister of prophecy.

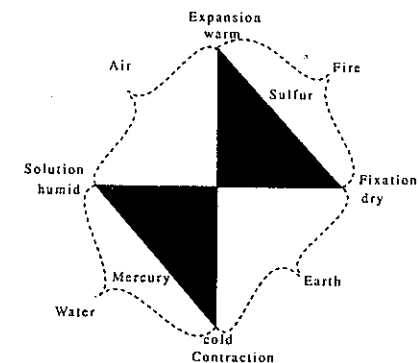
In such a perspective alchemical transmutation concerns not metals but the soul. The quest and the long "operative" process—common ground of the treatises on alchemy—are nothing other than the struggle to realize the Self, the Eternal Being, through the self. It is to this difficult "work" (in the full alchemical sense of the word) upon oneself that the "transmutation" of lead into gold applies, symbol of the primordial state (Arabic *fiṭrah*). Such a "transmutation" cannot occur spiritually without the direction of a master—the veritable human catalyst equivalent to what alchemy has designated as the "Philosopher's Stone."

There would be nothing in particular therein, and the "alchemical way" would not be distinguishable from other "mysticisms," if its means for attaining the goal common to all the ways were not completely original. Alchemy has recourse to no metaphysical, theological—indeed ethical—argument. Its method is essentially cosmological: the human soul in order to bear perfection is treated as a "substance" which supposes a profound knowledge of the analogies between "metallic" (exterior) and psychic (interior) domains. Furthermore, its objective character identifies alchemy as a path of gnosis rather than as a path of love. The formulation of alchemical treatises—the written part being the tip of the iceberg; the oral part, fundamentally, being invisible and, so to say, lost—rather insists on the Zen *koan*, logically incomprehensible (that is not to say, as do the profane, an unreadable and literally contradictory lucubration). The alchemist expresses himself through symbols. All of his language is in code. This coding has not failed to utilize the science of letters, and only a few rare

initiates of the Great Art are capable of "reading" without misinterpretation; the majority form part of what has been called the "glassblowers."

We have evoked speculations concerning the four elements: earth, water, air, fire. It must be understood that this does not concern, for the alchemist, what scientists designate by these names but rather "qualities" or modalities through which the *materia prima* is capable of manifesting and differentiating itself. The process that alchemy "performs" for the Earth, astrology performs similarly for Heaven—starting from the astral givens. The two sciences stem from the same perspective, and their paths, which are complementary, closely interfere. The four elements—without forgetting the four "natures," hot, cold, dry, humid, from which they emanate—correspond to the states of the soul. Let us imagine them placed on a wheel or a "sphere." All "art" (Arabic *sinā'ah*) is to escape from the permanent process of transformations (coagulation, dissolution, etc.) and to reach the hub, the point where all movement ceases and wherein it is said that water becomes fire, fire water, earth air, and air solid. In this immobile center, this mysterious quintessence is comprehensible and *a fortiori* realizable only from a metaphysical point of view: this is an alchemy that is pure spirituality.

In order to arrive at this end—or "completion"—alchemy proceeds through the "bodies," and among them the couple Mercury-Sulfur is the object of very special consideration. They can best be compared to the couple Yin/Yang, the Taoist symbol of the two complementary principles. Mercury is the feminine principle; Sulfur the masculine principle. Islamic esoterism has identified Sulfur with the "Divine Command" or "Order," to the original *kun* through which the world, by means of the Divine Will, was brought forth from chaos and formed an "ordered" whole. (This is the meaning of the Greek *kosmos*, generally translated by the Arabic *kawn*, "that which exists.") Mercury represents the "Universal Nature," *ṭabī'at*



al-kull, the passive and plastic counterpart of the preceding. From the hierogamy of Sulfur and Mercury—corresponding in the microcosmic realm to the couple spirit/soul—Salt naturally issues, corresponding to the body. This hierogamy is sometimes imagined in the form of the two protagonists: Man and Woman (the King and the Queen, the Father and the Mother, etc. of which the treatises speak), sometimes also in the form of an androgynous entity (the “Rebis of alchemy”). All these aspects are found structured in the preceding diagram.

The Alchemy of Happiness

We do not wish to conclude this chapter without taking into account the text of Ibn ‘Arabī which comprises chapter 167 of the *Futūḥāt al-makkiyyah* (*The Meccan Revelations*). The title of this chapter, “Of the Knowledge of the Alchemy of Happiness” (*kīmiyā’ al-sa’ādah*) and Its Secrets,” is by itself strongly evocative of spiritual alchemy. The hermeneutics of the Existentiating Divine Command, *kun*, to which Ibn ‘Arabī surrendered himself, “sets off the demiurgic properties of the letters which make up [this imperative]” and attest to “the truly divine nature of spiritual alchemy which the ‘Science of Letters’ uses. It is precisely this miraculous science which Jesus owns. . . . Like the demiurge which animates and organizes a preexistent matter, Jesus the Alchemist borrows a lump of clay with which to fashion the bird into which he then breathes the Spirit of Life¹⁹ because Jesus is the Spirit of God.”²⁰ It is with this remarkable parable concerning Jesus in whose person and function Ibn ‘Arabī brings together the science of letters and “demiurgy” (to be understood as “the alchemical science of the production of beings,” in brief, spiritual alchemy), that we will conclude this all too brief outline, hoping that we have given to the reader the desire to delve deeper into this spiritual Reality. This is achieved especially through a “transparent” vision of things, that is, by a personal meditation on what is beyond the senses, whether it be a question of letters or of the world of appearances.

Translated by Katherine O’Brien

Notes

1. Here is, for example, the way in which Ibn ‘Aṭā’ Allāh describes the formation of *alif*, the first letter, by means of emanation from the Point: “When the Point willed to be named *alif*. . . it extended itself . . . and descended . . . and became this *alif*. . . .” And in a still more suggestive fashion: “It is said that the first thing that Allah created was a Point which He looked at . . . the Point melted [for fear under the Divine Gaze]

and flowed downward in the form of *alif*” (*Traité sur le nom Allāh*, trans. M. Gloton [Paris: Les Deux Océans, 1981] 137–38).

2. Y. Marquet, “Imāmat, Résurrection et Hiérarchie selon les Ikhwān al-Ṣafā” *Revue des études islamiques* 30 (1962) 49ff.

3. Quoted by R. Guénon in his *Symbolism of the Cross*, trans. A. Macnab (London: Luzac, 1975) 68.

4. Being unable to deal with this science, let us cite on this subject this formula from al-Būnī: “Numbers symbolize the spiritual world and letters symbolize the corporeal world.” He develops this some pages further along as follows: “Know that the secrets of God and the objects of His Science, the subtle and the gross realities, the reality of on-high and of the here-below, and those of the angelic world are of two kinds, numbers and letters. The secrets of the letters are in the numbers and the theophanies of the numbers are in the letters. Numbers are the realities of on-high due to spiritual entities and letters belong to the circles of the material and angelic realities. Numbers are the secret of words and letters the secret of actions. Numbers are the World of the Pedestal” (*Shams al-ma’arif al-kubrā* [Cairo, n.d.] 1:78). Because they are quantitative and qualitative symbols, numbers are the keys to the comprehension of the intelligible world; like letters, they have as their end an arrangement that considers reality essentially in its connections with harmony (proportions and music). In this regard this “science” is a direct descendant of the Pythagorean tradition.

5. Abū Ishāq Quhistānī, *Haft bāb-i pīr*, trans. V. Ivanow (Bombay: Ismaili Society, 1959) 60.

6. From al-Tirmidhī’s *Nawādir al-uṣūl* (ms).

7. See Ibn Khaldūn, *Discours sur l’histoire universelle (al-Muqaddima)*, trans. V. Monteil (Paris: Sindbad, 1967); and D. Urvoy, *Penser l’Islam* (Paris: J. Vrin, 1980) 9, 111, 162–64.

8. The current meaning of the verbal noun *i’tirād* is opposition, incidence, insertion. In his quotation, M. M. Bravman (*Materialien und untersuchungen zu den phonetischen Lehren der Araber* [Dissertation, Göttingen, 1934]) translates this word by *mittenhindurchgehen*, “that which comes in the middle”; the adverb *hindurch*, giving the idea of “something which is crosswise,” is expressed in the root *arada*.

9. See al-Majrīṭī, *Ghāyat al-ḥakīm*, quoted in H. Corbin, *L’Alchimie comme art hiératique*, ed. P. Lory (Paris: Edition de l’Herne, 1986) 175.

10. From the *Nawādir al-uṣūl*, quoted by L. Massignon in *The Passion of al-Hallāj, Mystic and Martyr of Islam*, trans. H. Mason (4 vols.; Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1982) 3:95–96.

11. See Quran LVI, 7–14, on the “Companions of the Right” and of “the Left.”

12. In this idea of “recomposition” of a lost, unknown, and secret Name is implied the tradition of the Supreme Name of which the reality and the pronunciation would be known to only a few initiates. It concerns a persistent esoteric tradition found throughout the whole Semitic world.

13. One can see in the passage from the Quran referred to here a synthesis of what came before. The complete verse is as follows: “It is not for the sun to overtake the moon, nor doth the night outstrip the day. They float each in an orbit.”

14. T. Burckhardt, *Mystical Astrology according to Ibn ‘Arabī*, trans. B. Rauf (Gloucestershire: Beshara Publications, 1977) 32–33.

15. See n. 12.

16. See n. 1.

17. I am following here the economy of diverse graphic equations found in my essay “Lo specchio della *Shahāda*,” *Conoscenza Religiosa* 4 (October–December 1980) 317–56.

18. One of the oldest mentions of the *Emerald Table*, the epitome of the Hermetic Revelation, is found in Jābir ibn Ḥayyān, at the end of the *Kitāb sirr al-khalīqah* (*The Book of the Secret of Creation*).

19. Cf. Quran III, 49: "I have come to you with a sign from my Lord [It is Jesus who is speaking]. I am going, for you, to create from clay a type of bird; I breathe into it and it becomes a bird with the permission of God. . . ." This passage refers to a miracle related particularly in the *Gospel of Childhood*.

20. S. Ruspoli, *L'Alchimie du bonheur parfait* (Paris: L'Île Verte, 1981) 65-68.

Sacred Music and Dance in Islam

JEAN-LOUIS MICHON

A Controversial Question

"**O** LORD! Make us see things as they are!" asked the Prophet when addressing himself to his Lord.¹ The same prayer was to be repeated later over and over by devout Muslims desiring to judge objectively a more or less ambiguous situation. These words are therefore well placed at the beginning of an essay on the art of music such as it was and such as it is still practiced in the countries of *dār al-islām*. Few subjects have been debated or have raised as many contradictory emotions and opinions as the statute (*ḥukm*) of music vis-à-vis religious law and at the heart of Islamic society. In fact, the debate is not yet over and, no doubt, never will be because it concerns a domain in which it seems that Providence wanted to give Muslims the greatest possible freedom of choice and of appreciation. No Quranic prescription explicitly aims at music. The *Sunnah*, the "customs" of the Prophet, cites only anecdotal elements, none of which constitutes a peremptory argument either for or against musical practice. The third source of Islamic Law, the opinion of doctors of the Law, spokesmen recognized by social consensus, varies extremely ranging from a categorical condemnation of music to its panegyric while passing through various degrees of acceptance and reservation.

To understand how such divergent positions could have arisen and been expressed in the same context on the subject of Islamic thought and ethics, it is useful to refer to their interpreters who knew how to take into consideration ideas at once metaphysical, philosophical, or theosophical as well as the imperative of the Muslim ethic, both individual and social. To this category belong the Ikhwān al-Ṣafā', the Brethren of Purity, whose vast encyclopedia of philosophy, science, and art, compiled in the fourth/tenth century, contains a precious epistle on music.²