METAPHYSICS. The subject matter of the set of fourteen books now called Metaphysics was referred to by Aristotle as "first philosophy" or "wisdom" or "theology" or "first science." A later editor grouped these works together under the heading *Ta meta ta phusika*, or "after the physics," referring to the books now known as the Physics. The title did not refer to the subject matter of the books but rather the order in which they were to be studied or in which they appeared in the collected works. That is, the "meta" did not signify that which is beyond the world of nature (*phusis*); although metaphysics as it is commonly understood certainly does deal with realities beyond nature, it is far from restricted to that domain.

One way in which Aristotle framed the subject and in which he was followed by Islamic philosophers was to speak of the study of being insofar as it is being. Physics and rhetoric, for example, also study beings, but not insofar as they are beings but with respect to other properties. Aristotle's reflections on the nature of what it means "to be" included questions about the status of "is" in statements such as "Socrates is wise" or "Socrates is a man" or "Socrates is." In languages such as Greek (and English), the natural language supports questions that differentiate between "being x" and just "being." Such languages have the copula "is/was" and the gerund "being" (*einai* or *ousia*) deriving from the verb "to be" (*to on*). Arabic, the main language of Islamic philosophy, does not have a separate word that functions as a connector between subject and predicate, however. In Arabic, the relationship in a nominal sentence between the subject and predicate is made clear without it. This is not to say that there are not words in Arabic that have some overlap with "to be," but these have a very different range of use than the verb "to be" and, unlike "being" in Indo-European languages, cannot be discussed as a

natural feature of language that it then explored philosophically with respect to questions such as "being qua being." Islamic metaphysics would come to talk primarily about *wujūd min haythu huwa wujūd* (*wujūd* qua *wujūd*), and in this sense *wujūd* corresponds roughly to "being" (and also "existence"), but *wujūd* does not have a place in Arabic that "being" does in English or *einai* and *ousia* have in Greek. *Wujūd* literally means "finding" or "foundness," and although other Arabic words were used variously for the same purpose, eventually *wujūd* and *mawjūd* (literally, "that which is found") became standard terms in Islamic metaphysics, occupying the same place that "being" does in the Western tradition.

Falsafah: **Al-Kindī, al-Fārābī, Ibn Sīnā.** Abū Yaʿqūb al-Kindī begins his *On First Philosophy* by describing philosophy as "knowledge of the realities of things insofar as human beings are able," and for him this was first and foremost knowledge of the First Cause. Al-Kindī gives prominence to the idea that to know something, it is necessary to know its cause, and since God is the Cause of all things, knowledge of God, the True One, is the highest kind of knowledge, and among the topics on which al-Kindī dwells at length is God's Unity and its relationship to multiplicity. Notably, al-Kindī did not, like the Peripatetics before and after him, accept the doctrine of the eternity of the world and espoused the creation of the world by God out of nothing after it had previously not existed, although unlike the dialectical theologians (*mutakallimūn*), he explained this in terms of emanation (*fayḍ*). Unlike later philosophers, al-Kindī believed the focus of First Philosophy was the First Cause, God, and he did not frame his metaphysics primarily as the study of being.

Al-Kindī did not write directly about the Qurʾān and *ḥadīth*, but he did not consider philosophy to be in fundamental conflict with religion, and indeed saw prophethood as being a superior and more perfect source of knowledge than philosophy. For him, religion and philosophy both had the same ultimate aim: knowledge of God. In his use of terminology, he seemed careful to ensure his philosophical language did not overlap excessively with that of the Qurʾān and *sunnah*; while some opponents of philosophy in the Islamic tradition have seen in this a rebellion against faith in favor of *falsafah*, it is more reasonable to assume that al-Kindī meant to affirm rather than deny the place of religion, wishing to avoid any appearance of desiring to upstage religion.

Abū Naṣr al-Fārābī frames metaphysics differently than al-Kindī, and notes that while the subject matter at hand is often referred to as theology or science of divine things (*al-ʿilm al-ilāhī*), it is not devoted exclusively to the study of God or divine beings, but to the study of being as such and to its principles and properties, which naturally includes theology but is not limited to it. From a certain point of view al-Fārābī's metaphysics can be seen as a synthesis of Aristotelian and Neoplatonic ideas. Al-Fārābī's vision of cosmogenesis shared with Aristotle's the vision of the celestial spheres, but whereas Aristotle believed that God was the Prime Mover of the spheres, for al-Fārābī, God was the origin of both the being *and* movement of the spheres. In contemplating Himself, God emanates the First Intellect. This Intellect contemplates God, thus emanating another intellect, but also contemplates itself, giving rise to an ethereal sphere. The next intellect contemplates God and emanates another intellect, and contemplates itself and gives rise to another sphere. After this process reaches the tenth intellect and ethereal sphere, one reaches the sublunar world of the four elements, the domain of generation and corruption beneath the incorruptible realm of the heavens.

(Ibn Sīnā would modify this double act of contemplation and describe cosmogenesis as a triple process in which the intellects contemplate God, contemplate themselves as necessary-by-another, and contemplate themselves as contingent, emanating respectively another intellect, a sphere, and a soul.)

Al-Fārābī was also generally believed to be the first Islamic philosopher to make extensive use of the distinction between existence or being (*wujūd*) and essence or quiddity (*māhīyah*), though this would be much more deeply and broadly systematized by Ibn Sīnā. To ask about a thing's *wujūd* is to ask whether it is, while to ask about its *māhīyah* is to ask what it is: Is it, and what is it? There is a further distinction between that whose existence is necessary (*wājib*), and that whose existence is possible or contingent (*mumkin*). God's existence is necessary because it is God's essence to exist; God could not *not* exist and still be God because His Essence is Existence. In this sense, because to be God is to exist, God's existence is necessary and he is referred to in Islamic philosophy as the Necessary Being (more literally, "necessary in existence" using the same grammatical link between noun and adjective in the phrase "red of face"). Things other than God that exist are contingent in their existence, meaning that there is nothing in their essence that demands that they exist or not exist. The essence of what it is to be a chair, chair-ness, demands neither that it actually exist nor not exist, and thus all chairs are contingent in their existence. A pink elephant is also contingent, in that it could exist but happens not to exist, but being a pink elephant demands neither existence nor nonexistence. In addition to necessity and contingency, there is also a third category, absurdity or impossibility (*imtināʿ*), which refers to those essences that could not possibly exist; examples of this third category include a second God, dry ocean, or married bachelor. This scheme frames the fun-

damental relationship between God and all other beings; not only is God the only Being that is necessary in itself, but because all other beings can equally be or not be, they stand in need of Necessary Being to bring them into existence. The idea of contingency/possibility (*imkān*) thus encompasses not only the relationship of an object's essence to its existence but also of each object's existence to the existence of God. The interplay between existence (*wujūd*) and essence (*mahīyah*), viewed through the three modes of necessity (*wujūb*), and contingency/possibility (*imkān*), and impossibility (*imtināʿ*), would eventually become the main parameters around which Islamic philosophers, theologians, and doctrinal Ṣūfīs would frame most issues related to ontology, epistemology, and cosmology.

Abū ʿAlī al-Ḥusayn ibn ʿAbd Allāh ibn Sīnā (Avicenna), in his introductory remarks to the *Metaphysics of Healing* (*al-Ilahīyāt min al-Shifaʾ*), lays out perhaps the important feature of metaphysics in the philosophical tradition, one which distinguishes it from dialectical theology (*kalām*). He differentiates between the "subject matter" (*mawḍuʿ*) and the "thing sought after" (*maṭlūb*) in a given field of study. In the case of metaphysics, God could not be the subject matter in the way that quantities are the subject matter of mathematics; quantities are taken as a given in mathematics, and one explores their properties. But in metaphysics, God's existence is among those matters that are "sought after" and is not taken as a given. Since there is no other field in which God could be sought after (e.g., politics, physics, mathematics, logic), and neither could God be properly the subject matter of these sciences, without metaphysics one would be left with a situation in which God's existence is either self-evident in the manner of sense perception or His existence is beyond any possibility of demonstration whatsoever. Ibn Sīnā thus concludes that this science ("first philosophy" or "true wisdom") is that science

wherein God's existence is to be investigated and sought after, since according to Ibn Sīnā, no science can seek to establish its own subject matter but must, in fact, assume it. In the case of metaphysics, that assumed subject matter is existence or being (*wujūd*). In other words, unlike al-Kindī, who assumed that the subject matter of metaphysics was the First Cause, and unlike the dialectical theologians (*mutakallimūn*) for whom the starting point was the truth of the Qurʾān and the veracity of the Prophet Muḥammad even though they provided proofs for this authenticity, in Ibn Sīnā's vision of metaphysics, God could not be assumed from the outset but would come to be known via the science of metaphysics that is the study of *wujūd* qua *wujūd*. Although *kalām* clearly deals with metaphysical questions, and indeed with ultimate questions overall, its starting point and mode of investigation are what differentiate it from metaphysics as it is generally defined. The focus in *kalām* is on the Will and Power of God, and its atomist metaphysics allows God's Power to be made central in all matters through His creation and re-creation of the accidents of atoms. The general aim of *kalām* is defense and articulation of faith, not an unrestricted exploration into the nature of things.

As for the further elaboration of the subject matter of metaphysics, after the study of being (*wujūd*), Ibn Sīnā the lists the main topics of concern: the nature of substance/essence and accident, universals and particulars, the four causes, genus and species, activity and passivity, priority and posteriority, and ultimately coming to the First Principle, God, and understanding how he is One and how he relates to the world, including the status of his Attributes. He describes the ultimate aim of pursuing metaphysics as reaching the good (*khayr*), and for him, all fields of knowledge have the common aim of human felicity in the Hereafter through the actualization of human perfection.

Al-Ghazālī's Attack Against Rationalist Metaphysics. While it is commonly held that Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī, usually regarded as the champion of Sunnī orthodoxy against the philosophers, attacked the tradition of Peripatetic philosophy and effectively banished it from "orthodox" Islam, this is simplistic and misleading. In his famous *Incoherence of the Philosophers* (*Tahāfut al-falāsifah*), al-Ghazālī does indeed seek to dismantle the claims of Ibn Sīnā and other Peripatetic philosophers, but with a focus on their demonstrative basis and not only their content. Al-Ghazālī sought to show that the philosophers' claim that rational knowledge and demonstration (*burhān*) were superior to religious and prophetic knowledge was false, and moreover that many of the doctrines that the philosophers themselves espoused were not defensible purely in terms of rational demonstration. In fact, of all the twenty doctrines of the philosophers that al-Ghazālī attacks in the *Incoherence*, only three rose to the level of actually opposing the truths of religion and entered into the domain of *kufr* or unbelief: the idea that the world was not created in time and has no beginning, that God's knowledge encompasses universals but not particulars, and that there will not be a true bodily resurrection on the Day of Judgment.

For al-Ghazālī, rational demonstration could not be the ultimate arbiter of knowledge. For him, the truest knowledge came from two sources: the revelation in the Qurʾān and in the *sunnah* of the Prophet, and personal unveiling that God bestows upon people traveling the spiritual path. This spiritual unveiling was always in harmony with and subordinate to revelation. Establishing this hierarchy of knowledge, which al-Ghazālī also discussed so memorably in his autobiography *Deliverance from Error* (*al-Munqidh min al-ḍalāl*), was his most lasting effect on philosophy and theology in the Islamic world. Indeed, if there was one theme that determined all of al-Ghazālī's

arguments against the philosophers, it was the systematic overreach of rational demonstration into realms where it was not competent to operate, whether this was in the realms of physics, metaphysics, or ethics. Al-Ghazālī's work did not banish reason, but it did ensure that within Islamic thought a pure rationalism would never take hold. Significantly, in the process of critiquing philosophers in his role as a defender of Sunnī creed, al-Ghazālī furthered the introduction of philosophical terminology into the world of dialectical theology. Al-Ghazālī was instrumental, though not alone, in popularizing and standardizing the general framework of *wujūd*/*māhīyah* and *wujūb*/*imkān* in the Islamic world. This did not change the essential content of Islamic dialectical theology (*kalām*), but it did give it a new articulation.

Al-Suhrawardī. One of the most important challenges to Peripatetic metaphysics came from Shihāb al-Dīn al-Suhrawardī, who went beyond al-Ghazālī's deconstruction of pure rationalism and attempted to articulate and incorporate supra-rational experience into an overall metaphysical system. For al-Suhrawardī, not only could one be granted mystical or spiritual knowledge by God, but there also was a way to articulate and communicate something of this experience in a coherent way. He thought that the knowledge possessed by the great Ṣūfīs was superior to that acquired by the philosophers such as Ibn Sīnā, and indeed he recounts a vision he had of Aristotle himself who told al-Suhrawardī that the great Ṣūfīs such as Ḥusayn ibn Manṣūr al-Ḥallāj and Abū Yazīd al-Bisṭāmī are the true philosophers, not the Peripatetics. Greater still would be that person who possessed both the mystical and rational understanding of reality combining the insights of both the Ṣūfīs and the philosophers, a category into which al-Suhrawardī placed himself.

Unlike most other Islamic philosophers, al-Suhrawardī's metaphysics of illumination (*ishrāq*) was not based on *wujūd* at all, but took light to be fundamental, and saw all of reality including God as various modes and levels of light and also darkness. Although later Islamic philosophy tended to frame al-Suhrawardī as upholding the fundamentality of essence over existence (in opposition to Mullā Ṣadrā Shīrāzī who held that essence was fundamental), al-Suhrawardī himself had questioned the very essence/existence distinction while pointing out that indeed existence was not a true predicate of anything. Later critics such as Mullā Ṣadrā said that al-Suhrawardī essentially transposed the attributes of existence (*wujūd*) onto light (*nūr*), but al-Suhrawardī likely did not view himself as being on one side of a debate over the fundamentality of essence or existence.

Al-Suhrawardī describes a hierarchy of lights that begins with the emanation from the Light of Lights (God), down a vertical chain that is similar to the Avicennian emanation of Intellects which are not limited to ten but are as numerous as the fixed stars, indefinite but not infinite in number. In addition to these, there are horizontal lights that are called "ruling lights" and that are the archetypes of things or "lords of species" (*arbāb al-anwāʿ*). The interaction of these vertical and horizontal lights gives rise to the lower beings of the world.

Al-Suhrawardī introduced important ideas in his theory of knowledge, notably the notion of *al-ʿilm al-ḥuḍūrī* or "knowledge by presence," an unmediated experience of the object of knowledge that implies a union or identity between the perceiver and the perceived. This union is not an aggregation of two separate entities but the realization of what al-Suhrawardī called an "illuminative relation" (*iḍāfah ishrāqīyah*), which is not a relation of separate things at all but the illumination by a light overflowing from the Source of lights, an idea that would be influential in later Islamic philosophy.

The School of Ibn al-ʿArabī. Although usually classified under Sufism or *ʿirfān* by most

definitions of metaphysics, the school of Muḥyī al-Dīn ibn al-ʿArabī must be included as an important an influential current within Islamic thought, not least because of its formative influence on the metaphysics of Mullā Ṣadrā. Ibn al-ʿArabī himself did not begin from Aristotle and would probably have disliked Ibn Sīnā's framing of metaphysics as the study of being qua being, since Ibn al-ʿArabī was less interested in establishing a systematic metaphysics in the manner of Ibn Sīnā and more inclined to find ways of articulating the insights and unveilings of the spiritual life. Although Ibn al-ʿArabī discussed in detail all the topics related to metaphysics, he did not begin from premises and develop his ideas transparently step-by-step, but presented his ideas fully formed.

Succeeding generations of thinkers who followed Ibn al-ʿArabī, however, would engage with the philosophical and theological tradition on the basis of a more systematic investigation into the nature of existence. In a famous correspondence between Ibn al-ʿArabi's disciple Ṣadr al-Dīn al-Qūnawī and the prominent Peripatetic philosopher Naṣīr al-Dīn al-Ṭūsī, a fundamental difference between the Peripatetics and the Akbarians comes to the fore ("Akbarians" derives from Ibn al-ʿArabī's title of *al-Shaykh al-Akbar*, or the Greatest Master). Al-Ṭūsī was emphatic that existence cannot be predicated of multiple substances except in a mental way; a single concrete thing cannot be predicated of multiple things. All existents share the general attribute of existence, but only as a merely mental universal. Moreover, while we can know God's existence in a general manner such that it may be demonstrated that God does exist, we do not know that existence in the way we know a table or a man.

For al-Qūnawī, the existence of God is also unknowable, but this unknowability also extends in a way to the existence of all things, which are described by the Akbarians as being "entifica-

tions" or "auto-determinations" (*taʿayyun*) of the Supreme Reality, which is itself at the level of "no-entification" (*lā-taʿayyun*). While the Akbarians do not say that the cosmos is identical with God, they hold that our commonsense understanding of being does not encompass the true relationship of the world with God, which is not characterized by complete otherness and which can only be fully understood through spiritual realization. In reality, the Supreme Essence of Self (*al-Dhāt*) in Itself is beyond the duality of Creator and creature, Lord and servant, subject and object. God's Knowledge of His own infinite Names and Qualities gives rise to the immutable identities (*al-aʿyān al-thābitah*) or archetypes of things, which are "forms in God's Knowledge," and it is these forms that are then manifested as created beings.

Later figures in the school of Ibn al-ʿArabī such as ʿAbd al-Razzāq Kāshānī and Dāʾūd al-Qayṣarī would formulate the metaphysical vision of Ibn al-ʿArabī beginning explicitly from an investigation into the nature of being qua being, arriving at conclusions very different from those of the Peripatetics but beginning in a sense with the same question and with similar assumptions about the self-evidentness of existence and the possibility of starting from that self-evidentness to discover and understand the Unity of God. Moreover, like the dialectical theologians, the Ṣūfīs eventually adopted the basic essence/existence framework that would come to be the philosophical lingua franca of the Islamic world.

Mullā Ṣadrā. In his metaphysical vision, Mullā Ṣadrā combined important elements from Peripatetic, Illuminationist, and Akbarian thought. Mullā Ṣadrā's basic ontology was Akbarian, and his three basic ontological doctrines of the oneness, fundamentality, and equivocality of existence can be found as early as the writing of al-Qayṣarī, although Mullā Ṣadrā developed it in an unprecedented way. Mullā Ṣadrā's doctrine of

existence was that there was only one existence, and that essences were none other than modes or aspects of existence itself. Mullā Ṣadrā took the notion of equivocality (*tashkīk*)—originally a logical notion used by the Peripatetics to explain how the predication of existence of both God and things was neither univocal nor homonymous, but was of a third kind of predication between the two—and transformed it into a metaphysical doctrine of hierarchy and gradation within existence. This was related to the notion of fundamentality (*aṣālah*), which states that existence is that which explains everything and which is explained by nothing else, and that essences are none other than instances of existence which the mind perceives as being separate, independent existents.

Mullā Ṣadrā also developed a doctrine of the unification of the intellector, intellect, and intellected that had prefigurations in the epistemology of al-Suhrawardī, but this epistemology was also linked with Mullā Ṣadrā's ontology in his doctrine of change-in-substance (*al-ḥarakah al-jawharīyah*). The relationship of substance to accident is a distinction going back to Aristotle, and in its most basic formulation referred to those things that are in other things (accidents) and those things that are predicated of nothing else (substances). In Peripatetic philosophy, accidents could change, but substance could not change without ceasing to exist. Substances could come into and out of existence, but they could not change. For Mullā Ṣadrā, changes in accidents necessarily brought about change in substance, and this was particularly important for the spiritual life of human beings, since each act of intellection or knowledge increased the intensity of one's *wujūd*, amounting to a change in one's substance.

Mullā Ṣadrā's metaphysics is also related to his highly original formulation of human eschatological destiny. The soul continues its journey of substantial change, but the conditions of the Hereafter are such that the body and reality into which souls are resurrected will be direct manifestations of souls themselves. This power of manifestation is not actualized by the vast majority of humanity in this world, and accounts for the miracles of saints, for example, but in the Hereafter the soul will manifest ineluctably in the form of a subtle body reflecting the state of good or evil of that soul.

In this latter respect, Mullā Ṣadrā can also be seen as the culmination of the development in Islamic thought of the notion of the world of the imagination (*ʿālam al-khayāl*), which has its roots in the Qurʾān, and began to be developed as early as al-Ghazālī in his Niche of Lights and also in the work of al-Suhrawardī, but which was expanded on greatly in the voluminous work of Ibn al-ʿArabī. Within human beings, the imaginational realm was that level between the deepest core of pure spirit and the outer realm of the natural body. It was the world of the soul, which is a "luminous body" or "bodily light." However, Ibn al-ʿArabī also spoke of the cosmic imagination, the realm of the cosmos corresponding to that intermediate level within human beings of which the human imagination is a part the way the human body is a part of the natural world; Ibn al-ʿArabī frequently quoted the saying that our bodily world was, in comparison with the imaginational world, like a ring cast into a vast wilderness. The elaboration of the notion of this independent intermediate world between spirit and body is one of the most noteworthy features of Islamic metaphysics.

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