

## ESTABLISHING THE PRINCIPLES

### *Tamhīd al-Qawā'id*

Translated for this volume by Joseph Lumbard based upon two semi-critical editions of Ibn Turkah Iṣfahānī's *Kitāb tamhīd al-qawā'id fi sharḥ qawā'id al-tawhīd*, ed. Jalāl al-Dīn Āshtiyānī (Qumm, 1381 Sh.); ed. Ḥasan Zādih Āmulī (Qumm, 1381 Sh.).<sup>1</sup>

Praise be to God who made the places obscured by the shadows of His magnificence, loci in which are disclosed the lights of His beauty, differentiating what is undifferentiated among the inherent properties (*aḥkām*);<sup>2</sup> who made the forms of His self-disclosures (*tajalliyāt*)<sup>3</sup> places in which the suns of realities arise, completing what is universal among the blessings. So they became, for both His servants who receive His loving-kindness and for those opposed to Him who are distant from Him, the loci wherein the stars of the Gnostic sciences (*ma'ārif*) arise and in which the foremost gifts (*'awārif*) set,<sup>4</sup> granting the desires that the tongue of preparedness<sup>5</sup> expresses.

Glory be to Him for a non-manifest whose hiddenness has no cause other than the extremeness of manifestation through the illuminations of His tribunes and what the manifestation of lights, through coverings, necessitates from among the flashes of luminiscences. Magnificent is His task (*sha'n*),<sup>6</sup> which is manifest without a cause<sup>7</sup> for its becoming manifest, and without its being (*kawn*) penetrating into

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1. Major discrepancies between the editions will be noted in the footnotes.

2. The *aḥkām* or 'ruling properties' refer to the determining principles through which all manifestations of the created order or cosmos come into existence. This process of manifestation is referred to as the differentiating of what is undifferentiated because the ruling properties are differentiated in the cosmos but are manifest in an undifferentiated mode in the highest of the heavenly spheres.

3. From the perspective of Ibn Turkah, following from the teachings of Ibn 'Arabī, all existent things are self-disclosures of the Divine Itself, Who manifests Himself in the world, but still remains utterly beyond it. See William Chittick, *The Self-Disclosure of God* (Albany, NY, 1998).

4. Āshtiyānī's footnote explains: 'That is rising in relation to the receivers of loving-kindness and setting in relation to the people of opposition' (p. 161).

5. The idea of preparedness is closely related to that of self-disclosure. The extent to which anything receives God's self-disclosure is pre-determined by its 'preparedness'. This pertains to one's knowledge of God, but moreover, to one's ontological status.

6. The use of the word task is derived from the Qur'ānic verse, 'Every day He is upon a task' (55:29). As Sachiko Murata explains: 'These 'tasks' of God are the things or realities or entities considered as specific activities of the 'Reality of Realities'—God inasmuch as he embraces all realities and entities without exception.... In the broadest sense 'tasks' designate everything in God that gives rise to the multiple things of the universe.' *Chinese Gleams of Sufi Light* (Albany, NY, 2000), p. 120.

7. Here I have followed the Āshtiyānī edition which reads *'lā 'illata'* (p. 162). The Āmulī edition reads *'li ahlihī'* (to His people) (p. 6).

the non-manifest aspects of His veils and the duskiness of darkness that follows necessarily upon it.

A non-manifest which is hardly hidden,  
And a manifest which is hardly apparent.<sup>1</sup>

Prayers and blessings upon Muḥammad, the locus from which every good is dispersed, that which opens every opening and seals every closing. He is the radiant light that is not corrupted by the blemishes of shadows and the obfuscations of clouds.

Do not cast the shadow of otherness in his sun,  
For it is sun, it is shadow, it is shade.

Prayers and blessings also upon his family and companions, the niche that comprises every variagation and the lamp that gathers every shadow.

To proceed: As for the issue of attesting to unity (*tawḥīd*) according to what the witnesses verify and following what the verifiers<sup>2</sup> witness from the highest unveiling and from clear viewing (*‘iyān*), it—the moment at which those with intellects perceive—is among that to which the torchbearers of proofs and demonstrations<sup>3</sup> do not lead, except those whom God supports with a light from Him, whom He grants success with His guidance to it, from among those who attain the two degrees of intellectual demonstration and sapiential witnessing, those who succeed on the paths of exalted knowledge and sound unveiling, whom God has delivered from the constrictions of rhetorical and demonstrative introductory matters to the realms of the unveiling inrushes (*al-wāridat al-kashfiyyah*) and the proclamations of observation through the beauty of following the Prophets—God’s blessings and peace upon them all. The Prophets are the connections to the subtle bonds of reali-

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1. This appears as verse in the Āmulī edition (p. 6) and as prose in the Āshtiyānī edition (p. 162).

2. *Muḥaqqiqūn* (verifiers) is a term taken from early Sufi texts. Ibn ‘Arabī identifies the verifiers as those who have attained to unveiling (*kashf*) and are able to see things as they are in themselves (*kamā hiya*). He did not often refer to himself and those of his ilk as Sufis, but preferred the term *muḥaqqiqūn*: ‘I mean by “our companions” those who possess hearts, witnessings and unveilings, not the worshippers or ascetics, and not all Sufis, save those among them who are the people of truths and verification (*taḥqīq*).’ *al-Futūḥāt al-Makiyyah*, n.e. (Cairo, 1911; repr. Beirut, n.d.), vol. 1, p. 261.

3. i.e. theologians and philosophers.

ties (*raqā'iq al-ḥaqā'iq*),<sup>1</sup> from the entity of gathering (*'ayn al-jam'*)<sup>2</sup> to the locus of differentiation, and intermediaries for the descent of realities from the heaven of holiness to the station of descending, especially he among them who consoles—a *fair example*<sup>3</sup>—the first of them in existence and rank, the last of them sent in time, Muḥammad; he who is the ultimate objective of objectives, whose exalted traditions are the spring of perfections and the source of happiness—the best of blessings and most beautiful greetings upon him and his family.

Thus you see that when his noble people try to verify the realities of *tawḥīd* they reconcile the intellectual demonstration and the transmitted scriptures to an extent which could not be greater, as they obliterate the ambiguities of some of the philosophers who fail to make what sound vision bestows upon them coincide with what descends upon them from the pure text.<sup>4</sup> Likewise, in the rest of the real sciences and the Gnostic certainties they have clarified the places where they err and displayed the matters upon which they stumble through that by which the place of obscurity is made clear and the small star is distinguished from the sun. All of that is a ray from intelligence encompassing a pitch-dark night.

Our time<sup>5</sup> has born witness to its utmost perfection.<sup>6</sup> The family tree of its advance has ripened and the time for harvesting its fruits has arrived, and the mask has been removed from seclusions of its virgins with what illuminates the pages of its days from the traces found in the heavenly descended books and the exalted unveiling gospels. By my life! You will find that what the great ones only attained to after years of training their souls with severe exhausting exercises by day and night has become a conversational tidbit for the elite and the masses. That the dis-

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1. The *raqā'iq* (sing. *raqīqa*) are the subtle forms of existence that connect different levels of existence. They are 'ladders' by which forms in the lower world are connected to their likenesses (*mithāl*) in the higher worlds. To perceive them is to see things as they are, for one sees the manner in which things are connected to their higher origins. For a further explanation of *raqā'iq* see William Chittick, *The Sufi Path of Knowledge* (Albany, NY, 1989), p. 406, n.6.

2. The 'entity of gathering' (*'ayn al-jam'*) refers to the first stage of God's self-disclosure, which is identical to the last stage of return to Him. The first stage is represented by the name Allāh, which is the 'gathering name' (*al-ism al-jāmi'*) in which all other divine names and created realities are 'gathered'. In the Divine Essence all things are present in a completely undifferentiated mode of existence prior to their deployment in the lower levels of manifestation and differentiation. The level of gathering is the first level that is discernibly different.

3. 'A fair example' (*uswat<sup>um</sup> ḥasanat<sup>um</sup>*) is a term appearing three times in the Qur'ān: 33:21, 60:4 and 60:6. In the second and third instances it refers to 'Abraham and those with him' (60:4). But in Islamic texts it is almost always used in reference to 33:21 which refers to the Prophet Muḥammad: 'There is for you in the Messenger of God a fair example for those who hope for God and the last day and remember God much.'

4. i.e. the Holy Qur'ān.

5. Ḥasan Zādih Āmulī observes that the meaning of 'our time' is the Islamic era as a whole, not the time of Ibn Turkah himself (p. 9, n. 3).

6. i.e. The combination of intellectual demonstrations and transmitted scriptures.

semination of which was divulged through the spilling of the blood of great men has become as well-known as the afternoon sun.

To summarize, what is not possible for one who seeks perfection is to traverse the stages of his journey without removing the two sandals.<sup>1</sup> Nor can anyone turn round its axis except by folding in both feet—rather, by stripping off the two powers. Its secrets are heard from their straps and the abundance of its intricacies are gleaned from the subtle bonds (*raqā'iq*) of their warp and weft by gleaning the intangibles of its realities from the nets of their perceiving. So with the two faculties of sense-intuition (*wahm*)<sup>2</sup> and intellect (*'aql*) and the ordering of what they perceive through the auspices of these moments and times, the person of understanding arrives at it and stumbles upon it. He arrives at the most magnificent of certainties and stumbles upon the first of all that is self-evident.

How much is all that appears in the two fields,  
While the sign and affair are clearer than fire upon a minaret.

What was desired by the ancient sages (*hukama'*)—who are from the group of the pure, the prophets and saints—according to revelation, and Hermes, called Idris [in the language of revelation], and Pythagoras, called Seth, and the Divine Plato—was none but this. But the later ones among the companions of the First Teacher (Aristotle)—I mean the peripatetics—when they limited the path of examination and the seeking of true wisdom to sheer proof and mere research, the veils of dark ambiguities formed from the rules of disputation upon which they established their methodologies prevented them from realizing that which is the truth in that magnificent affair.<sup>3</sup> Those among them who claim the benefit of verification or delineation make one wonder. They only come with the addition of obstacles and criticism. Then through the process of gradual deterioration their writings become a collection of darkneses, one upon the other. So, none but a few escaped from their desolation: 'And God did not oppress them, but they oppressed themselves' (16:38).

As for the treatise composed by my master and grandfather, Abū Ḥāmid Muḥammad al-Iṣfahānī, who is known as 'Turkah', it includes certain demonstrations and the luminous proofs regarding the origin of *tawḥīd* in conformity with what the

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1. The sandals here representing the life of this world and the next. The reference is taken from Qur'ān 20:2, when God tells Moses to remove his sandals because he is 'in the Holy Valley (*al-wādī al-muqaddas*)'.

2. *Wahm* (sense-intuition) refers to the third of four modes of perceiving: *ḥiss* (sense-perception), *khayāl* (imagination), *wahm* and *'aql* (intellect). *Ḥiss* perceives particular things in the outside world through the sense organs, *khayāl* perceives particulars internally, *wahm* perceives universals in the form of particulars, and *'aql* perceives universals themselves. So here Ibn Turkah is referring to the two modes of perceiving universals.

3. i.e. The questions of *tawḥīd*.

verifiers claim. The author has done his utmost to obliterate these doubts with the subtleties of his clarification and taken great pains to tame these damages with the power of his exposition (*tibyān*), to the extent that no spoiling blemish regarding what is true among these certainties will remain for one with the slightest training in intellectual matters. But due to the depth of his penetration into sapiential matters (*ḥikmiyyāt*) and the extent of his involvement with the sciences of demonstration, the understanding of most of those who infer (*al-mustafidīn*) are cut off from the goals of his noble objectives, and the perceptions of the rest who seek guidance are barred from the springs of his august lessons. So during my sessions with some of those among the sincere brothers who share in investigation, I tried to remove the mask of brevity from the faces of the secluded maidens of these expressions with the clearest explanation (*bayān*) and to spread its exalted benefits and fulfil its wonts, alluding to most of the principles of the people of unveiling (*ahl al-kashf*) and the sources of their rulings, indicating the complications of these researches and the universality of their objectives, preserving the terms and expressions which circulate among them, attentive to what is considered appropriate among their technical terms and metaphors, cautious of understanding the opposite of what is sought. This led to striking upon examination of iniquity, and after its completion was named ‘The Book Facilitating Explanation of the Treatise: “The Laws of *Tawḥīd*”’.

[The author of ‘The Laws of *Tawḥīd*’], Abū Ḥāmid Muḥammad al-İşfahānī, said ‘Praise be to His vicegerent and blessings upon His Prophet Muḥammad and his family. Verily, establishing the problem of *tawḥīd* in the manner of the Gnostics (*al-‘arīfūn*) the manner, to which the verifiers allude, is among the most recondite problems to which the thoughts of the speculative remonstrating scholars do not reach. Nor do the minds of the eminent researchers among the speculators perceive it.’

I say: know that the context in which this treatise is here begun comprises the issue of what necessarily comes first as regards writing and composing and also includes what indicates the objectives of this treatise, summarizing what is required for teaching and appraising (*tafḥīm*). That is because the discussion is based upon two issues.

First: The affirmation of the oneness and necessity of absolute existence and the limitation of what merits praise among the universal attributes in it (existence). His saying: ‘Praise to His vicegerent’ is an allusion to that.

Second: The affirmation that the absolute reality, although all existents are loci for its manifestation, in all of its degrees it is a oneness, the whole of which is only manifest in the real human species, who verify the aforementioned degrees through tasting and witnessing. Among them is one who is distinguished as the loci of manifestation and reflection [of the Divine qualities] by virtue of sealing and completion—peace and blessings upon him and his family. His saying ‘Blessings upon him’ is an allusion to that.

Then his saying, ‘...in the manner of the Gnostics’ is an allusion to the later Muḥammadan Saints—may God be content with them—who openly divulge it and disclose it by composing and reciting poetry and prose, who demonstrate is affirmation through reason and revelation for those who are perceptive. And his saying, ‘the manner to which the verifiers allude’ is an allusion to those who came before, such as the Prophets—the Mercy of God upon them—and their pupils, the saints among the hermeticists and the ancient philosophers (*al-ḥukamā’ al-qudamā’*) who do not aim for it in the majority of their expressions except in a manner of hinting and intimation, following in every era what the perceptions of its people dictate, descending to the level of their understanding, and only indicating it through an intimation in which there is a form of covering and concealing, so that all of their words are universally beneficial for both the elite and the commons.

His saying, ‘the speculative remonstrating scholars’ is likely intended to the theologians, just as his saying, ‘the eminent researchers’ is directed toward a group among the peripatetic philosophers.

Abū Ḥāmid Muḥammad al-Iṣfahānī said: ‘Most of them claim that certainty regarding it [*tawḥīd*] indicates consolidation of a bad temperament in the objects of the soul faculties [resulting] from deviation of the sound corporeal matters and the black bile overpowering the primary noble organs, since certainty in the baselessness (*buṭlān*) of all intellectual, sensorial, primal, and natural properties follows the performance of onerous endeavours and practices that arise from the whispers of the imagination (*al-khayāl*) not possible for anyone except through the appearance of that initial cause (*al-sabab al-ḥadīth*) and testing it against what we have mentioned regarding the unseemly illness.’

I say: Know that it is the custom of the author—as is known from the examination of the rest of his books—to first determine, upon establishing the areas of investigation, the argument of the adversary, according to what it demonstrates about him with the firmest examination, and to strive to establish its rules (*qawā’id*) and erect its intricacies as much as possible. Then he undertakes to examine the sources of its doubts and ambiguities and determine the components of its obscurities. So he wanted to follow his customary practice in this treatise. Therefore he began it with that by which the adversary could demonstrate the depravity (*fasād*) of their path for reaching the unveiling they seek and their Gnostic sapiential sciences—named the path of purification and withdrawal (*takhliya*). That is because he is here in the position of conveying the perspective regarding the path of demonstration, so he must introduce it in accordance with the rest of the researches and sayings.

His clarification is that certainty in the realness of this issue [*tawḥīd*] indicates that the temperaments (*amzija*) of the soul faculties, upon which perceivings depend, has deviated from its origin, rather bad temperament (*mizāj*) has been consolidated within them, and that which requires treatment persists. If it is not treated then when one is completely certain of it, the root cause and the path by

which one arrives at that certainty is the defectiveness (*ikhtilāl*) of the perceiving faculties. And there is no doubt that every path which is an expression of the defectiveness of the perceiving faculties is but a path to ignorance and deficiency, to say nothing of its reaching the sciences of certainty and the real perfections.

Were you to say, 'How is it possible to demonstrate through certain knowledge—which is from the soul qualities—despite the deviation of the objects of the soul-faculties' temperaments—which are from the body qualities?'

We say that it is from demonstration through the affirmation of what is caused by verification of the cause—now known as proof (*burhān*) by the people of speculation (*ahl al-naẓr*).

The clarification of causality is apparent, for the defectiveness of the objects of the soul faculties—I mean the organs for the mental thought instruments which are for the insight (*al-baṣīra*) that discerns and judges things as they are through the parts of the eye and the stages of the faculty of vision—is the cause of the defectiveness of the perceptions of these objects, just as the defectiveness of a part of the eye necessitates defectiveness of its perceptions. That is because each perceiving that is through the intermediation of one of the bodily instruments is no doubt through the judgment of a hidden subtle bond (*raqīqa khafiyya*)<sup>1</sup> and the intermediary of an adjoining correlation (*munāsaba*)<sup>2</sup> between the nature of that instrument and the mode of perceiving. If not, then what other instrument would be suited for it?

Then it is necessary that the deviation of the temperament of this instrument from its balanced reality require the baselessness of the judgment of something when that thing is absent. Thus, due to its remoteness from the correlation (*munāsaba*)<sup>3</sup> there occurs defectiveness and corruption in the perceiving. So whenever the temperament deviates, the perceptions necessarily deviate from their true sound origin (*aṣliḥā al-qawīm*) and their straight way, especially when that deviation is consolidated and persistent.

Let it not be said that this only occurs if the issue is one of the forms and partial meanings that the soul perceives through the intermediary of the bodily faculties and the instruments pertaining to matter. If they are from the universals that the

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1. In place of 'hidden subtle bond' Āshtiyānī's edition reads 'through the subtle bond of reality' (*raqīqati haqīqatin*) (p. 201).

2. *Munāsaba* (correlation) is sometimes synonymous with *raqīqa* (subtle bond). That appears to be the case here. See Ibn 'Arabī, *al-Futūḥāt al-Makiyyah*, vol. 3, p. 260.

3. In Islamic metaphysics *ta'ayyun* (entification) refers to the manifestation (*zuhūr*) of a thing as a self-disclosure (*tajallī*) of the Divine. Entification is simply that by which one thing is differentiated from another and thus fully its own self or entity. The term seems to have been coined by Ibn 'Arabī and then made a technical philosophical term by his foremost disciple, Ṣadr al-Dīn Qūnawī (d. 1274). The entifications are the different levels of manifestation or 'self-disclosure' that make up the created order from the first self-determination of the Divine Essence (the Essence itself being beyond entification) to the pebbles on the sea shore.

soul intelligizes without the intermediation of anything from the instruments, then how could this demonstration be complete?

That is because we say, by way of concession that this issue [*tawḥīd*] is among the universals, we do not concede that all universals are only intelligized by the soul without the intermediation of the instruments. For among the universals are those things that it intelligizes through the instruments by extracting them from the particularities and deleting the distinctive characteristics; and it is called a universality after multiplicity. And if we conceded that—but we do concede that this demonstration applies only to the soul’s perceiving this matter—rather, it is only through consideration of what is required by the raising of what is witnessed and what is first. Therefore, he demonstrated this by saying, ‘since certainty in the futility of all intellectual [sensual, primal, and natural properties]...’ The explanation of that is that certainty in the baselessness of the issue of *tawḥīd* is certainty in the baselessness of all kinds of certainties from what is intellectually proven, what is analogous to that, the sensible [properties] derived from direct witnessing, the primal [properties] which are what pertains to immediate awareness (*wijdān*). And that, according to their claim that the judgment of the mutual distinction of the quiddities (*māhiyyāt*) and the mutual difference of the entifications (*ta‘ayyunāt*)—in accordance with that follows necessarily from these introductory matters—negates the judging of this issue when raised to (*rāfi‘a ilā*) the judgments of separation and distinction.

Then the appearance of the marks of illness—when preceded by engaging in their causes—requires sound intuition (*ḥads*) and a mind directed to the level of that unseemly illness [to treat it]. Therefore, he preceded that demonstration by saying, ‘follows the performance of onerous endeavours and practices’, which is an expression for sleeplessness and hunger, the two detachers that are necessary for the black bile to rule over the fundamental noble mental organs that are the support for the rest of the intellectual perceiving and the fundamental origin for the form<sup>1</sup> that determines the reality pertaining to the human species.

Abū Ḥāmid Muḥammad al-Iṣfahānī said: ‘But the affair is quite different from what they suppose, rather it is the opposite of what they imagine.’

I say: That is because what they demonstrated regarding *tawḥīd*, which is based upon the bad temperaments of the objects of the soul faculties, is only an indication of the healthiness of these temperaments and their soundness. For the perceiving of the perceptive faculties and the sensory organs, when it follows the thing itself and their judgement of things as they are, simply indicates the soundness of the temperaments of the faculties’ objects. Because the issuing of actions from the objects is free of deficiency it is only an indication of their healthiness. So

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1. Here the term ‘form’ (*ṣūra*) is used in the philosophical sense wherein it denoted the eternal reality of a thing, or the ‘intelligible reality’ of a thing that can be perceived by the actualized human intellect. See note 25.

the matter is as it is in the aforementioned demonstration: ‘... quite different from what they suppose, rather it is the opposite of what they imagine.’ Since what they claim to be the indication of the bad temperament of the object of the perceiving of those who are fully certain of this issue (i.e. *tawhīd*) is in fact the indication of the consolidation of the bad temperament of the objects of the perceiving of those who have failed to attain the degree of certitude.

That is because every faculty and foundation—be it natural, animal or of the soul—when it fulfils the objective particular to it, then falls short of it, this objective, in following from it, is only that at the level of a bad temperament which is accidental to it and deviates from its origin (*aṣl*). For were that temperament and its nature left free of obstacles, it would be drawn to its completeness, then its objective would follow upon it. And there is no doubt that the objective of the perceiving soul faculties is only to perceive things as they are. So when this objective falls short of it that is due to the level of bad temperament. It is thus apparent that the matter of bad temperament arising is the opposite of what they imagine.

Were you to say: ‘The claim that the issue of *tawhīd* is as mentioned from all the perceiving which are of things as they are and that the intended objective of the soul faculties is the first issue and the subject of debate, then how is the demonstration regarding it sound according to their way?’

We would say: These matters are presented in accord with the subject at hand in order to prove them according to the position appropriate to it in the course of writing what is customary for them in affirming matters pertaining to speculation.

Abū Ḥāmid Muḥammad al-Iṣfahānī said: ‘I wanted to write a treatise in which I clarify reality of the way (*madhhab*) of the Gnostics and the falsity of those who cast lies and accusations [against them]. I further wanted this treatise to contain the quintessence of what has come to me through inspiration (*ḥads*) regarding this affair, and to comprise the cream of cream of what I have concluded by reflecting upon this issue. We decided to establish this affair in the way of the speculative [philosophers] and to follow the way of debate with the accusers, and to affirm it with strong arguments by which to refute the accusation of the deniers and intensify the desire of the seekers.

‘O God, place us among the victorious who are saved, not among the lost who are rejected. O brothers of attaining (*taḥṣil*), race to attaining the real perfection and the everlasting subsistence before the inevitable annihilation and the everlasting extinction overcomes you. Hasten in your lives before natural death hastens you on. Seek aid from Him in all affairs and rely upon Him if you are believers.’

I say: Know that it is the habit of the author to support all the realities pertaining to taste and unveiling upon intuition in accordance with the method of the people of speculation, despite disparities in expressions (*‘ibārāt*). For them there is no equivalent to thought (*fikr*) other than intuition, as will be verified later. The remainder of what is mentioned here is clear.

Then he addresses the exhortation to ‘the brothers of attaining’, that is those among the people of speculation who have insight due to the proximity of their preparedness to avail themselves of the sapiential Gnostic sciences and their receptivity to the effusion of the real perfections by advancing from imaginal forms and partial sensations to intellectual meanings (*ma‘ānī ‘aqliyyah*) and universal gnosis (*al-ma‘ārif al-kuliyyah*), and being free from the noose of established customs which lead one to mistake the rulings pertaining to illusional particularities for universal realities, based upon the intellect and its receptivity to speculations and allusions in the place of receiving certainties and intelligibles. But due to their inability to attain real perfection—because of their confining the species of perfection to the summoning of partial conventions that are inscribed in the bodily instruments and the corporeal faculties enfolded within their objects—upon the extinction of the elemental configuration,<sup>1</sup> that development does not fully benefit them. And their seeking to have real perfection follow immediately upon eternal subsistence in the text is an allusion to this.

### Concerning the Participation of Existence in both Meaning<sup>2</sup> and Notion<sup>3</sup>

Abū Ḥāmid Muḥammad al-Işfahānī said: ‘Know that existence is comprised entirely of particular existences, not according to the expression, but according to the meaning (*ma‘nā*), as we have made clear in our other books.’

I say: In so far as the reality of existence is self-evident in what-ness (*halliyyah*) and in what-is-itness (*māhiyyah*),<sup>4</sup> as has been clarified previously, it begins in its ruling properties (*aḥkām*) and precedes participation because it is closer to

1. A ‘configuration’ (*nasha’*) refers to a world (*‘ālam*) or one of the various cosmic realms. Here ‘the elemental configuration’ refers to the lowest world, that of the four elements.

2. The word *ma‘nā* is here translated as ‘meaning’, but its meaning is far more nuanced. As William Chittick writes: ‘It designates not abstract, mental notions, or ideas in the modern sense, but rather concrete, spiritual realities that exist independently of the mental faculties in the realm of the First Intellect. The term is used more or less synonymously with reality (*ḥaqīqa*), quiddity (*māhiyyah*), and fixed entity (*‘ayn thābita*). It is thus a synonym for form (*şūra*) in the philosophical sense, but not in the Sufi sense. In philosophical usage... form is contrasted with matter (*māddah*). The forms are the *ma‘qūlāt*, the ‘intelligibles’ or eternal realities that come to be known when the intellect is actualized. In the Sufi usage, meaning is a thing’s reality with God or the First Intellect, whereas form is the things outward appearance. Thus ‘meanings’ in the Sufi sense are the same as ‘forms’ in the philosophical sense.’ Mullā Şadrā, *The Elixir of the Gnostics*, translated, introduced and annotated by William Chittick (Provo, UT, 2003), p. 101, n. 15.

3. This section heading is not part of the original text, but is added by Ashtiyānī (p. 205). I have followed him in this because it marks a natural break within the original text.

4. We have translated *māhiyyah* throughout as ‘quiddity’, but have here translated in the literal sense as ‘what-is-it-ness’ to bring out the correlation with ‘*halliyyah*’ or ‘whatness’, a rarely used Arabic word deriving from the interrogative particle ‘*hal*’ which has no direct translation in English, but turns a statement of fact into a question when placed at the beginning of an Arabic sentence.

the ruling properties as regards the reality and as regards the point to which all other properties and issues sought in this treatise, such as existence and oneness, return.

So although the evidentness of the reality necessitates the evidentness of its participation, nonetheless, the author has here reported in various insightful manners, all of which increase one's insight, that the concept of existence is known immediately. If it does not participate among all existents, the absence of everything entirely would not be made necessary of its being absent from the entirety. Rather that is false, because we know necessarily that everything that does not have the notion of being immediately known is completely negated.

It should not be said that what is clarified in the rest of his books is only the participation of the meaning (*ma'nā*) of existence according to the technical vocabulary of the Peripatetics, because his discussion with the Peripatetics in these books is according to their methods. Therefore that clarification (*bayān*) does not necessitate the participation of existence in accordance with the meaning which concerns us here when we clarify the difference between the two meanings, according to the two technical usages.

We say that what the author is claiming regarding the two meanings of existence is none other than the real [meaning] which the seekers of truth (*muḥaqqiqūn*) claim, not the conceptual [meaning], as is the opinion of some later [philosophers]. After the clarification of the decrepitude and defectiveness that this opinion comprises and apprising [one] of the destruction of principles and the absence of order that results there from, it has been affirmed, in other than what is found in his book, that the meaning of existence with which we are dealing is the real meaning. That is made clear in those matters which the one who reflects does not hesitate to recognize if he comes upon the principles of their craft and knows them, with certainty and resolute verification of what is true, from plunging into that deep research, as he says in his book *al-I'timād (The Reliance)* after completing the replies to what the Master of Illumination (Shihāb al-Dīn al-Suhrawardī) and others posed regarding the conceptuality of existence (*i'tibāriyya al-wujūd*).

If you know this, then we say: If what this eminent author intended by what he mentioned is that the verification in the entities (*a'yān*) has no verification in the entities added to itself then it is true, but that does not require that it itself be a conceptual thing. But if by that he intended that its reality is only necessitated by something among the conceptual notions (*al-mafhūm al-i'tibārī*), and from the joining of the two affairs there results a conceptual thing, we are not opposed to that. But that does not require that existence itself be a conceptual thing. If by that he intended the self-same verification from the intelligible concepts (*al-i'tibārāt al-aqliyyah*), then it is clear that this is not so, because each one of the quiddities existing in an entity is a verification and an entified verification itself would be among those things which are real, because there is no doubt that that through

which the real thing abides and by which it is verified must be real. And if the two are the same quiddity, then that verification is either the very quiddities themselves or a part of them due to its participating among them all. So it is not simply a conceptual thing.

Furthermore, if entified existence does not have a reality in the entities, then the quiddities realized in the entities would be realized, in their entity, in the mind. Then the realizing in the mind would be better suited to be conceptual and there would be no opposition between mental and external quiddities, except through conceptualization (*i'tibār*), and if existence were sheer intelligible meanings that would require either the negation of things being instanced [with existence] or that quiddities be instanced [with existence]. In addition, when we realize verification in entities, it is impossible that that verification not be verified in the entities. So it is verified in the entities.

It might be said: 'Were that sound, then it would be sound to say that it is impossible for the existence of an occurrence non-existent at present to exist, for it would exist and would not be non-existent at present.'

We say: We do not submit to the futility of what you have concluded, since existence does not admit non-existence, just as it (non-existence) does not admit existence. Rather, what admits non-existence is the quiddity. But it only becomes non-existent through the cessation of its association with existence. The truth is that just as external existence (*al-wujūd al-ʿaynī*) is immediately apparent, so too, its verification in entities is known immediately. But doubt regarding things like this may arise, not because of obscurity and inscrutability, but because of the intensity of clarity and disclosure.

Know that if the intelligent one who is aware of the principles of the craft (philosophy) encompasses all the subjects that I have presented here, then perhaps the truth of this matter will shine upon him. As for the explanation of the claim regarding what is witnessed through strong intuition (*al-ḥads al-qawī*) and clear proof, that is in our book entitled *The Invincible Wisdom (al-Ḥikmah al-manīʿa)*. He also mentioned in a section of *The Guiding Wisdom (al-Ḥikmah al-rashīdiyyah)*: 'So if you make entified existence like the rest of the negations and additions, then we will make all of the remaining notions follow their course, rather they are more properly put among the tribe of conceptual things (*al-i'tibārāt*).<sup>1</sup> Then we make existence itself a real source for all that is other than it among the entities.'<sup>2</sup>

Regarding another issue from *The Guiding Wisdom*, Abū Ḥāmid Muḥammad al-Iṣfahānī said: 'There is no doubt that the qualification of the quiddities by entified existence in the entities requires that existence occur in those entities, in op-

1. The Āmulī reads *i'tibāriyyāt* (p. 53). *I'tibārāt* is printed in the Āshtiyānī edition, though *i'tibāriyyāt* is noted as an alternative (p. 207).

2. Both Āshtiyānī and Āmulī agree that this is a citation from *The Guiding Wisdom*, but do not give an exact citation. The work appears to be unavailable at present.

position to that reality of which is this existence itself or its necessary concomitant. Perhaps the pure<sup>1</sup> have doubts regarding this matter, not due to its hidden-ness and abstruseness, rather because of the intensity of its manifestation...’ These were his words.

Upon the removal of the mask from these faces from which the lights of verification arise one has no doubts that what shines upon him regarding the meaning (*ma‘nā*) of existence is distinct from the opinions of the later philosophers, especially among the Peripatetics among them.

It should not be said: ‘How is that, when we have seen him follow in their tracks in the clarification of their objectives and the ordering of their proofs? Then he began declaring some false and following others.’

That only occurs with the coordination of technical vocabulary and the agreement between the two customs. Because we claim that his illumination is in accord with what the onlooker attains to after condescending to participate in their customary discourse, following the principles of their craft<sup>2</sup> and improving upon it and verifying it to the greatest possible extent, then sifting what is indispensable from the various types of deficiency and derangement, supported by demonstrations around which the blemishes of illusions do not circle. Among those things by which the investigation is distinguished from the clothes of systematization is that the controversy regarding this [outer] form is confined to expression only and that the meaning (*ma‘nā*) which the philosophers claim to consider is what the author has clarified as being real in the aforementioned ways. So that what they claim is real among the quiddities, he claims is real through relations and concepts. So they do not specify the word ‘existence’, in all of its degrees and divisions, as being from one of the two existences [entified or conceptual] and apply it universally to existences as being entified. They are far removed from what the verifiers maintain regarding generality (*‘umūm*) and particularity (*khuṣūṣ*) in accordance with what I have indicated in the introduction.<sup>3</sup> As for what the author claims according to what is known from the scrutiny of his words, existence is particular only without being general.<sup>4</sup> When this is established, then his discussion with them is through,

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1. Text reads *azkiyā’* (those who are pure), though *adhkiyā’* (those who are intelligent) may be the proper reading.

2. Both editions read ‘*Ṣaḥībihim*’ (their companions) but note that *ṣinā‘atihim* is in an alternative manuscript. I have chosen the alternative.

3. Āshtiyānī notes: ‘For the existence of things in the manner of the real oneness which is the level of unicity (*al-aḥadiyyah*) is existence according to the verifier, not the philosopher. And its existence in the manner of multiplicity and the heedlessness (*ghaflah*) of oneness is existence according to the philosopher, not the verifier. So the point of agreement is the existence of things through external existences which pertain to themselves.’

4. Āshtiyānī notes: ‘In accordance with the claim that the quiddities are modes of existences; for all that is existence according to the philosopher is existence according to the verifier, not the opposite.’

This sentence in the text is very poorly edited and makes little sense in the printed edition.

as is his deducing in accord with them. Because what is established for the general is no doubt established for the particular.

### Regarding the Necessity of Existence<sup>1</sup>

Abū Ḥāmid Muḥammad al-Iṣfahānī said: ‘It is clear that its reality, in so far as it is itself, does not admit non-existence into its own essence, due to the impossibility of any two opposites being qualified by the other, and the impossibility of a nature being transformed into another nature. And when non-existence is impossible in its essence, it [itself] is necessary in its essence.’

I say: After the affirmation of participation of the meaning (*ma'nā*) of existence, he commences with the clarification of its necessity, which is one of the objectives [of philosophy]. The affirmation of that is that the reality of existence, in so far as it is it [self], does not admit non-existence in its essence. This results in the reality of existence being necessary in its essence. As for the greater, it is apparent. As for the lesser, that is because if the reality of existence admits non-existence in its essence then it is possible for it to be qualified by it, and if it is possible for it to be qualified by it then it is not necessary that it be impossible. But the latter is false, as it is deemed necessary that it be inconceivable. That is because what is qualified would then not be in need of remaining in its reality upon its being qualified by non-existence from the start. And if it were remaining [in that state] it would be necessary that one of the two contraries be qualified by the other. If it did not remain [in that state] the transformation of the nature of existence into the nature of on-existence would be necessary, and both of these are clearly impossible.

This is what suffices the author for the affirmation of the necessity of existence, since a little suffices one who is perspicacious and much does not suffice the ignorant. But it is possible to affirm it in many ways. We will undertake some of them as enlightenment for those who reflectively observe (*al-nāzirīn*) and to arouse the desire of the insightful among them.

First: Absolute existence is a simple uncaused existent. All that which is like this, is necessary in its essence. As for its being existent, that is because if it were non-existent it would be necessary that something be qualified by its contrary, and what is qualified abides through its qualifier, and something does not abide with what negates it. As for its being simple, that is because if its components are existent, existence would then have to precede itself. If they were non-existent, its non-existence would be necessary. As for its being uncaused, that is because if it were not so it would be necessary for a thing to precede itself, as necessarily follows from the fact that the existence of the cause must precede what is caused. As for a

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This is the closest approximation I could make.

1. This heading does not appear to part of the original text, though it does appear in both critical editions. Āmulī adds ‘and this is the second issue’ to the heading (p. 55).

clarification that all that for which these properties are established is necessary in itself, that is evident.

Second: If it were not necessary, it would be possible or impossible, following necessarily from the classification of notions (*mafhūmāt*) under the three categories, [possible, impossible and necessary]. The first [category] is inconceivable since the possible thing does not admit both existence and non-existence in its essence, and something does not admit both itself and its contradiction. The second [category] is also inconceivable, since what is impossible is non-existent and existence is existent, as has previously been explained, and because its impossibility requires the negation of existences, as follows necessarily from the necessity of the qualification of the particular by that by which the absolute general (*al-‘āmm al-muṭlaq*) is qualified. Some of the later [philosophers] have undertaken to reply to this. Among them are those who chose the second alternative and made the meaning of the qualification of something by existence that if it occurs to the mind it is qualified by existence. Just as external things are qualified by necessity and possibility, although neither has external ipseity, so too, existence would have no external ipseity. For that they rely solely upon the explanation of the eminent Naṣīr al-Dīn Ṭūsī (d. 672/1274) that it is among the secondary intelligibles;<sup>1</sup> and you have learned what defects lie in this. Alas for this eminent one, was he not content with the particulars of the issues to the exclusion what was transmitted from the great masters of unveiling and the prominent guiding Imams, because it is among the convincing [arguments]. How did he convince himself regarding this important issue with transmission from some of the eminent reflectors, clinging to what he acquired from sheer conjecture and being content with it.

Among them there are also those who choose the first alternative, exaggerating what it implies to the extent that if absolute existence took on non-conditionality (*lā bi-sharṭa shay’*)—I mean the universal nature—it would not be a single thing, but multiple things, since absolute existence verifies the existence of the necessary and the possibilities.<sup>2</sup> So some of absolute existence would be necessary and of

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1. Secondary intelligibles are notions which have no corresponding existent in the external world. They are divided into logical secondary intelligibles and philosophical secondary intelligibles. The latter is what the author is here addressing. For philosophical secondary intelligibles the occurrence is in the mind, but the qualification is derived from a real existent. Ibn Turkah is arguing against those who believe that existence is merely a philosophical secondary intelligible, because quiddity precedes existence ontologically and existence is therefore a notion derived from quiddity.

2. For later Islamic philosophers, existents are of three different kinds: negatively conditioned (*bi-sharṭ lā shay’*), non-conditioned (*lā bi-sharṭa shay’*), and conditioned by something (*bi-sharṭ shay’*). Absolute existence must be negatively conditioned, is a second stage of existence which is intermediate between absolute existence and relative, conditioned existence. This intermediate stage is referred to as ‘unfolded existence’ wherein the absolute existence begins the process of unfolding itself in different delineated manifestations, but is still absolute existence. Ibn Turkah is here criticizing those who misunderstand the level of unfolded existence, seeing it as a form of

some it would be a particular possibility. It is not hidden to anyone who has the least experience with their ways that this multiplicity is only conceived for what this nature verifies among individual things. And as for the very reality of that notion which is the universal nature, it has no multiplicity and no plurality.

Third: Existence is existent, as has been previously demonstrated.<sup>1</sup> If it were not necessary, it would be possible, for its cause is inevitably existent, so it is either itself of a division among its divisions. [But] all of these require that something precede itself.

They have sometimes also responded to this by claiming that its cause is but a division among its divisions, and that something to the fact that the cause must be preceded by existence and that the impossible precedence in each of their estimations is absurd. Sometimes they have replied that absolute existence is not a single thing such that it would have a single cause. Rather the necessary is an absolute existent and all of the possibilities are an absolute existent, so the cause of every absolute existent is another absolute existent, until one arrives at an absolute existent with no mover beyond it.

You know the deficiencies in this. I have only related the account of their argument in order that the sagacious one may be aware that so long as the intellect is in its sound mode (*fi ṭarzihi al-salīm*), free of conventional judgements and customary considerations, the clarifications of proofs will not benefit it, nor will theoretical demonstration bring it to certainty. So what is going on with these eminent [philosophers]? Despite their plunging into the affair of disputation and the great extent to which they follow the path of researching and theorizing, you see them failing to rely upon the clear truth, in spite of their proofs pursuing this course; and they ride the mount of possibility and guessing.

Fourth: Existence is existent, its existence is itself and all that is such is necessary in its essence. As for its being existent, that is in what has preceded. As for its existence being itself, that is because if not for that, it would either be a part of it or outside of it. The first leads to existence being composed [of parts], and the falsity of this has been explained. The second necessitates the implausible chain of infinite regression.

Fifth: The existent is a thing which has existence; and is what has existence too general to be the entity of existence or other than it, in opposition to the nature of existence? So the thing is confirmed in itself because what cannot be eliminated from the essence does not influence what is outside of it—and that for which existence is affirmed without the intermediary of another thing, that is necessary.

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existence which is conditioned by something and thereby posing multiplicity in the absolute itself. For a fuller explanation see Toshiko Izutsu, *The Fundamental Structure of Sabzawārī's Metaphysics*, chapter 7, 'The structure of the Reality of Existence.'

1. i.e. from the argument that if it were non-existent it would need to be qualified by something through opposition to it and the thing qualified abides with the qualification and something does not abide with its negation.