Islamic Philosophy: Past, Present and Future

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Abstract
The aim of this paper is to critically assess the present state of Islamic philosophy in its main home, namely, Iran. However, since such a study requires some knowledge of the past developments of philosophical thought among Muslims, the paper briefly, though critically, deals with the emergence and subsequent phases of change in the views of Muslim philosophers from ninth century onward. In this historical survey I also touch upon the role played by other Muslim scholars such as theologians, mystics and jurists, in shaping Islamic philosophy. The last section of the paper, deals, not in great details, with one or two possible scenarios for the future of Islamic philosophy.

1. Introduction

In his discussion of the 'Myth of the Framework', Karl Popper argues that while the views of the proponents of the 'myth', 'contains a kernel of truth' in that 'discussion among participants who do not share a common framework may be *difficult*'[1], it is, as Popper emphasizes, by no means impossible. He then goes on to make the following important claim which is directly related to the topic of this paper. Popper rejects the views of those who maintain that discussion between adherents to different intellectual frameworks will never be fruitful:

> Against this I shall defend the directly opposite thesis: that a discussion between people who share many views is unlikely to be fruitful, even though it may be pleasant; while a discussion between vastly different frameworks can be extremely fruitful… I think that we may say of a discussion that it was the more fruitful the more the participants were able to learn from it. And this means: the more interesting questions and difficult questions they were asked, the more new answers they were introduced to think of, the more they were shaken in their opinions, and the

[1] Karl Popper, *The Myth of the Framework: in Defence of Science and Rationality* (Routledge, 1994), 35 (italics in original)

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> more they could see things differently after the discussion – in short, the more their intellectual horizons were extended.[2]

In this paper I am going to apply Popper's conjecture to the case of Islamic philosophy which emerged, partly as a response to the possibilities latent in the Quran and in the elaborations made by the Prophet and some great Muslim personalities such as the Prophet's son-in-law, Ali, of the Divine message; and partly as the result of an encounter between Islam, and a variety of non-religious cultures or cultures inspired by other religious doctrines different from Islam.

I will begin by discussing the role which was played by early *Kalam* (theology) in introducing substantive food for thought for the earliest Muslim philosophers. Next, I will focus on the influence of the Greek rational culture on the fate of the nascent Islamic philosophy. I will then continue my exploration concerning further evolutions of Islamic philosophy within the ecosystem of wider Islamic culture and with respect to the challenges posed to it by rival intellectual frameworks developed by theologians (*mutakllimun*), jurists (*fuqaha*), and mystics (*'urafa*).

This exploration takes us on a journey from the classic period in the Islamic civilisation (9th to 13th centuries CE) when earlier generations of Muslim philosophers were trying to develop a distinct philosophical framework fit for a religious culture. In this period Muslim philosophers entered into a virtual dialogue with their Greek and Hellenic counterparts whose views they had studied through translations made mostly by Christian priests and Jewish and Zoroastrian scholars.[3]

The next stop in our intellectual journey will be in Isfahan and Shiraz in 15th to 17th centuries where two philosophical schools, named after the two cities, elevated philosophical investigations within Islamic civilisation to a new height. In view of many commentators, these two schools represent purely indigenous philosophical developments in the land of Islam. The founding fathers of these schools and their followers and exegetes, contrary to the

[2] Popper, op. cit., 35–36

[3] Cf. Majid Fakhry, *A history of Islamic philosophy*, Columbia University Press, 2004; M. M. Sharif (ed.), *A History of Muslim Philosophy*, (two volumes) (Weisbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1963); Richard Walzer, 'The Rise of Islamic Philosophy', *Oriens*, **3**(1) (1950), 1–19; S. H. Nasr, & Oliver Leaman (eds), *History of Islamic Philosophy* (Routledge, 1996)

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earlier generations of Muslim philosophers, were not much interested in philosophical dialogue with their non-Muslim counterparts, past or present. Their dialogue was mostly with their fellow Muslims.[4]

In the last leg of our journey, I follow philosophical developments in Iran since 19th century and in the wake of an eventful encounter between a powerful West and an Islamic civilisation which had its heydays behind it. I shall discuss some of the more influential philosophical approaches introduced by Muslim philosophers in response to challenges posed by modernity.

The conclusion of my exploration is a resounding corroboration of Popper's thesis. Islamic philosophy, and on a larger scale, Islamic culture, both greatly benefitted from their 'discussions' and 'dialogues' with other cultures and other frameworks especially the more rational ones. Consonant with Popper's conjecture, I argue that, in all those periods when Muslim scholars were deprived of intellectual challenges of ideas and views which belonged to other cultures, their dialogue amongst themselves turned more and more introverted and became less and less engaged with issues outside a strictly religious and theosophical framework.

Two last explanatory notes before I begin my exploration.

First: I use the term 'Islamic philosophy' in a neutral way, meaning philosophical doctrines produced by thinkers who happen to be either Muslim or living in Muslim countries or both. This term can be used interchangeably with a similar term, Muslim philosophy, throughout this paper.

Secondly: To encapsulate a 1300 year history in the space of a short paper necessarily involves radical selections and a great deal of omission. For the purpose of the present paper, in view of the fact that the history of the earlier developments of Islamic philosophy is well documented, I have shifted the focus of my attention on more recent developments especially developments in the twentieth century and the first decade of the twenty-first century. However, even here I have had no choice but to be, at once, very brief and extremely selective in my treatment of various philosophers and their achievements.

[4] Seyyed Hossein Nasr, 'Persia and the Destiny of Islamic Philosophy', *Studies in Comparative Religion*, **6**(1) (1972); Henry Corbin, *History of Islamic Philosophy* (Kegan Paul International, 1962)

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2. Islamic Philosophy: A Brief, though Critical, Historical Survey

*1. The Beginning: Coming out of the Shadow of Theology (*Kalam*)*

Popper, whose conjecture concerning the fruitfulness of dialogue among diverse frameworks I use as a yardstick in this paper, discusses, in a yet another influential paper entitled, 'The Rationality of Scientific Revolutions',[5] a very important thesis concerning the growth of knowledge. According to Popper, all organisms learn through the mechanism of adaptation which in turn consists of a dual mechanism of instruction and selection, and constitutes a method of trial and error.[6]

The crucial point about this evolutionary/adaptive model is that instructions always come from within organisms. But selections and error elimination always come from without, from the environment. The environment also, by means of posing various challenges to the organism in question, introduces 'problems' for it. It is the organism's proposed 'solutions' (i.e. its responses to the challenges introduced by the environment) which will be assessed by the environment. If the 'solutions' are on the right track, organism's adaptive ability gets enhanced. If they are not, the proposed solutions will be rejected. This means that the organism has not been successful in its bid to adapt to the environment. Such an outcome could be costly for the organism.

'The organism' in question, to which the above evolutionary model is applied, can be a biological or a culturally and socially constructed entity such as a scientific theory or an intellectual tradition[7]. While, for biological organisms the environment will be their natural surroundings, for intellectual traditions other traditions and cultures play, at least to some extent, the role of the 'environment'.

Applying Popper's insight to the case of the emergence of philosophical traditions in Islamic civilisation, it is not difficult to see that instructions concerning the importance of rational thinking and making use of the power of the intellect are something which can be found in the main sources of Islamic civilisation, namely the

[5] Karl Popper, 'The rationality of Scientific Revolutions', in *The Myth of the Framework: in Defence of Science and Rationality* (Routledge, 1994), 1–32

[6] Ibid., 3

[7] Ibid.

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Quran and the tradition of the Prophet and, (in the case of the Shi'i Islam), also the traditions of Shi'i Imams.

There are many verses in the Quran in which Muslims are instructed to use their reason as their guide in exploring reality, studying natural phenomena, understanding various aspects of reality, and enriching their knowledge of God. The Quran has also reserved some of its harshest admonitions for those who do not use their intellects:

> Have they not pondered upon themselves? Allah created not the heavens and the earth, and that which is between them, save with truth and for a destined end. But truly many of mankind are disbelievers in the meeting with their Lord. (30:8)
>
> Have they not seen how We lead the water to the barren land and therewith bring forth crops whereof their cattle eat, and they themselves? Will they not then see? (32:27)
>
> ...and He lays abomination upon those who have no understanding [do not use their faculty of reasoning]. (10:100)

Similarly, plenty of the sayings quoted from the Prophet and Imams (in the case of the Shi'i Islam) are about the importance of reason and intellect and knowledge for living according to the Islamic standards. In this sense it can be argued that with respect to the question concerning the origin of rational approaches (in the extended sense of the term, 'rational') in Islamic civilisation, as against purely faith-based attitude of blind acceptance, one needs not to look further than the Quran itself and the main Islamic teachings.[8] These internal resources, however, as we shall see later, were further enriched, when Muslims embarked on a mission of digesting and incorporating into their own internal resources, wisdoms of other cultures.

As for the challenges, perhaps, the first intellectual challenges presented themselves to the early Muslims in the shape of political disputes concerning the issue of the succession of the Prophet who died in 632. The question which demanded a satisfactory answer was how Allah would want the believers to go about the task of choosing the political authority. In their efforts to respond to this question, early

[8] Morteza Motahari, *Ashnaei ba 'ulum-e Eslami* (An Introduction to the [classic] 'Islamic Sciences'), (Tehran: Sadra Publications, 1358/1979); Seyyed Hossein Nasr, 'The *Qur'an* and *Hadith* as source and inspiration of Islamic philosophy', *in History of Islamic Philosophy*, edited by Seyyed Hossein Nasr and Oliver Leaman (Routledge, 1996), 27–39; M. M. Sharif, 'Philosophical Teachings of the Quran', in M. M. Sharif (ed.), *A History of Muslim Philosophy*, Vol. 1, 136–154; Massimo Campanini, *An Introduction to Islamic Philosophy* (SEPS, 2009)

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Muslims were divided along different doctrinal lines; Sunnis, Shi'as, Kharijites, and Murji'ites were among the first sects which appeared in the newly established Muslim society[9].

The above political question soon gave rise to troubling theological questions concerning the standards which would demarcate a true believer and would determine the after-life station of those who would fall short of (some of) those standards. Out of these disputes and in the second half of the first century Hijri (Islamic calendar, 7th century Christian calendar) the first abstract problem, which was a bridge between theological issues and genuine philosophical problems, emerged. The problem in question was the dilemma of the free will and pre-destination (*qadar*) which, naturally in the context of a religious culture, was related to the issues of Divine justice and Divine power.[10]

Two rival schools of Kalam (theology) namely the Ash'arites and the Mu'tazilites were developed in response to the above problem. The Ash'arites maintained that God's omnipotence means that He directly intervenes in all aspects of the whole realm of being including what is related to human beings in their life in this world and in the hereafter. A direct corollary of this position was that man had no free will. The Mu'tazilites, on the other hand, argued for man's free will. They maintained that God has endowed human beings with the

[9] The first two sects gradually turned into the two largest sects in Islam which exist today and each are divided into a number of sub-sects. The latter two sects did not last long, though their ideas are still present in the intellectual ecosystem of Islamic doctrines. Kharijites were advocating a very strict adherence to their own literal reading of *shari'a* law and were intolerant and inflexible in imposing their desired order. Murji'ah, on the other hand, were of the view that, one should not condemn even the most corrupt and cruel individuals who regard themselves as Muslim; only God can pass judgement on their fate. Cf. Khalid Blankinship, 'The early creed', in *The Cambridge companion to classical Islamic theology*, edited by Tim Winter (Cambridge University Press, 2008), 33–54; Fakhry, *A history of Islamic philosophy*, op. cit.; Ignaz Goldziher, 'The Growth and Development of Dogmatic Theology', in *Introduction to Islamic Theology and Law* (Princeton University Press, 1981), 67–115

[10] Morteza Motahri, *'Adl-e Elahi* (Divine Justice) (Tehran: Sadra Publications, 1352/1973); Harry Wolfson, *The Philosophy of Kalam* (Harvard University Press, 1976); M. M. Sharif (ed.), *A History of Muslim Philosophy*, op. cit. (Book Three, Part 1, X & XI), 199–243; Josef van Ess, *The Flowering of Muslim Theology* (Harvard University Press, 1998/2006).

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power of intellect, which they regarded as man's inner prophet. Man, according to the Mu'tazilites, is free to choose his path and station in life. Of course, in the hereafter he will be judged according to the choices he has made in this life. It is for this reason that man should use his power of intellect as wisely and as extensively as possible. For the Mu'tazilites justice was an objective value; even God's deeds could and should be judged against such an objective criterion. The Ash'arites would not accept such a thesis. In their view this would mean limiting God's power. To preserve God's omnipotence they developed an alternative theory of justice and argued that justice is tantamount to whatever God does.[11]

For almost two centuries and before the emergence of systematic philosophical approaches amongst Muslims in the ninth century CE, it was the *Mutakallimun* (theologians) who were dealing with issues which were philosophical in nature. Early Muslim theologians however, were not in favour of imported philosophical ideas. In particular they were against Greek's philosophical thoughts. They even rejected Aristotelian logic since they regarded it to be like Aristotelian philosophy an anti-religious knowledge. In place of Aristotelian logic they developed a rudimentary, and to some extent, faulty system of logic. The following quotation from Ibn Khaldun's *Muqadimah* (Introduction) (written in 1377) provides an informative account concerning the Mukallimun's attitude towards logic. We should bear in mind that Ibn Khaldun was writing at a time when the Ash'arites had established themselves as the official theological doctrine in the world of Sunni Islam:

> Thus, (al-Ashʿari's) approach was perfected and became one of the best speculative disciplines and religious sciences. However, the forms of its arguments are, at times, not technically perfect, because the scholars (of al-Ashʿari's time) were simple and the science of logic which probes arguments and examines syllogisms had not yet made its appearance in Islam. Even if some of it had existed, the theologians would not have used it, because it was so closely related to the philosophical sciences, which are altogether different from the beliefs of the religious law and were, therefore, avoided by them.[12]

[11] Motahari, *'Adl-e Elahi*, op.cit., 24; Motahari, *Ashnaei ba 'ulum-e Eslami*, op. cit. chapter on *Kalam*. Goldziher, op. cit., ch. 3; Majid Khadduri, *The Islamic Conception of Justice* (John Hopkins University Press, 1984), ch. 3.

[12] Abd Al Rahman bin Muhammed ibn Khaldun, *The Muqaddimah*, Translated by Franz Rosenthal, Princeton University Press, 1967

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But later generations of theologians (*Mutkallimun*) realised that without logic they will not be able to avoid committing mistakes such as the fallacy of affirming the consequent which Abu Bakr al-Baqillani, one of the most prominent Asha'ri theologians, had committed. They adopted Aristotelian logic and applied it to theological as well as philosophical arguments. This approach gradually paved the way for a closer relationship between *Kalam* and philosophy.[13] As Ibn Khaldun reports [in his *Muqadimah* (Introduction) (written in 1377)]:

> After that, the science of logic spread in Islam. People studied it. They made a distinction between it and the philosophical sciences, in that (they stated that) logic was merely a norm and yardstick for arguments and served to probe the arguments of the (philosophical sciences) as well as (those of) all other (disciplines).
>
> (Scholars,) then, studied the basic premises the earlier theologians had established. They refuted most of them with the help of arguments leading them to (a different opinion). … This approach differed in its technical terminology from the older one. It was called "the school of recent scholars". Their approach often included refutation of the philosophers where the (opinions of the) latter differed from the articles of faith. The first (scholar) to write in accordance with the (new) theological approach was al-Ghazzali. He was followed by the imam Ibn al-Khatib [Fakhr Razi]. A large number of scholars followed in their steps and adhered to their tradition. The later scholars [however], were very intent upon meddling with philosophical works. The subjects of the two disciplines (theology and philosophy) were thus confused by them. They thought that there was one and the same (subject) in both disciplines, because the problems of each discipline were similar.[14]

(available on the internet at: http://thequranblog.files.wordpress.com/2008/07/al-muqadimmah-for-ibn-khaldoon1.pdf (accessed 10, Jan, 2013) footnotes suppressed; quoted in, Hussein Masumi Hamedani, 'Mian-e Falsafeh va Kalam: Bahthi dar Araa-e Tabi'ee-ye Fakhr Razi' (Between Philosophy and Kalam: A Discussion Concerning Fakhr Razi's Naturalistic Views), *Ma'aref* **3**(1) (1365/1988), 198–199.

[13] Masumi Hamedani, op.cit. 204; Motahari, *Ashnaei ba 'ulum-e Eslami*, op. cit. chapter on *Kalam*.

[14] Ibn Khaldun, *The Muqaddimah,* op. cit.

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What Ibn Khaldun is suggesting, as some scholars have pointed out, is that Islamic *Kalam* after a period of remaining alien to Islamic philosophy gradually came closer to it until it somewhat merged with it. From the time of Ghazzali (Algazel d. 1111), who first wrote a masterpiece in explaining the intentions of the philosophers[15] and tried to expose their incoherence by writing yet another epoch making work[16], and Fakhr Razi (d.1209), who obtained the nickname, the leader of sceptics (*Imam al-Moshakkekin*), onward, *Kalam* came very close to resemble philosophy and Islamic philosophy, which emerged in an intellectually hostile environment in which the theologians (*mutakallimun*), the mystics (*'urafa*), and the jurists (*fuqha*) were against it, also tend to pay more and more attention to theological and mystical issues and took a cautious approach towards the *fiqh*.[17]

II. Emergence of Islamic Philosophy– The Era of Philosopher-Scientist/ Philosopher-Technologist

Translation of scientific, mathematical, technological, cultural and philosophical achievements of ancient civilisations like the Greeks, the Indians and the Persians into Arabic, provided the educated Muslims of the classic period of Islam (3^{rd}–7^{th} centuries AH/9^{th} –13^{th} CE) with a rich intellectual heritage[18]. They soon managed

[15] Ghazzali, *Maqasid al falasifa* (The Intentions of the Philosophers 1094), (Arabic Text), ed. S. Dunya (Cairo: Dar al-Ma'arif, 1961). Available on line at: http://Ghazzali.org/books/maqasid-dun.pdf. A more recent edition has been prepared by Mahmood Biju (Damascus: Maktabat al-Sabah, 2000), Available at: http://Ghazzali.org/books/maqasid-bejou.pdf.

For other Arabic editions of the book which are available on line visit: http://www.maktabah.org/component/content/article/75-misc/931-maqasid-al-falasifah-aims-of-the-philosophers---by-imam-Ghazzali.html?directory=143

[16] Ghazzali, *Tahafut al falasifa* (The Incoherence of the Philosophers 1095). There are two English translations of this book, one by Michael E. Marmura, Brigham Young University, 2002, another, earlier, and somewhat abridged version by Sabih Ahmad Kamali (Pakistan Philosophical Congress, 1963)

[17] Masumi Hamedani (1998), op.cit.; Montgomery Watt, *Islamic Theology and* Philosophy, Edinburgh University Press, 1985; Ayman Shihadeh, 'From Al-Ghazali to Al-Razi: 6^{th}/12^{th} Century Development in Muslim Philosophical Theology', *Arabic Sciences and Philosophy* **15** (2005) 141–179.

[18] Lacy O'Leary, *How Greek Science Passed to the Arab* (Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1949); F. E. Peters, *Aristotle and the Arabs: The Aristotelian Tradition in Islam* (New York University Press, 1968); Joel L. Kraemer,

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to digest and internalise what they had learnt through these sources and embarked on developing new synthetic systems which were novel innovations informed by their newly gained knowledge through translated materials and in tune with the teachings of their religion.[19]

All great Muslim philosophers of the classic period were not only first rate thinkers with regard to abstract philosophical topics they were also excellent natural scientists or master technologists (usually in fields such as medicine or chemistry or logic & linguistics). This trend was so prevalent that the Quranic term, *Hakim*, which means 'wise or endowed with wisdom', and is one of God's names, soon came to refer to philosophers who were being regarded as wise individuals who were capable of curing people from their intellectual/spiritual ills as well as illnesses in their bodies.[20]

Even a quick glance at the fields of expertise of Muslim philosophers of the classic period, reveals the extent to which these scholars had combined philosophical thinking with other disciplines. For example, Al-Kindi (d. 873), the first Muslim philosopher, was also an astronomer, a physicist, a mathematician and a cryptographer; Farabi (Alpharabius d. 951) who was known as *Mu'alim al-thani* (the second teacher after Aristotle who was regarded as the first

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Humanism in the Renaissance of Islam: The Cultural Revival During the Buyid Age (Brill, 1992); Richard Walzer, *Greek into Arabic. Essays on Islamic Philosophy* (Oxford, Bruno Cassirer, 1962); Dimitri Gutas, *Greek Thought, Arabic Culture: The Graeco-Arabic Translation Movement in Baghdad and Early 'Abbasaid Society (2nd–4th 5th–10th c.)* (Routledge, 1998)

[19] S. H. Nasr, *Science and Civilization in Islam* (Harvard University Press, 1968); S. H. Nasr, *Islamic Science: An Illustrated History*, Kazi Publications, 1976; A. I. Sabra, 'The Appropriation and Subsequent Naturalization of Greek Science in Medieval Islam: A Preliminary Statement', *History of Science* **25**(3) (1987), 223–243; A. I. Sabra, 'Situating Arabic Science: Locality versus Essence', *Isis* **87**(4) (1996), 654–670; David Reisman, Felicitas Opwis (eds), *Islamic Philosophy, Science, Culture, and Religion: Studies in Honor of Dimitri Gustas* (Brill, 2006)

[20] Nasr, 'The Meaning and Concept of Philosophy in Islam', op. cit.; Morteza Motahari, *Ashnaei ba 'Ulum-e Eslami*, op. cit; Anisa Barkhah, 'Hikamt dar Falsafa Eslami' (Hikmat in the Islamic Philosophy), *Encyclopaedia of the World of Islam*, **13**, 752–760. Many of the entries of this Encyclopaedia are available online at: www.encylopaediaislamica.com.

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teacher) was logician, philosopher, chemist, psychologist, physicist, political philosopher, and musicologist; Abu Rayhan Biruni (Alberonius d. 1048) was astronomer, historian, botanist, pharmacologist, geologist, philosopher, mathematician, and geographer; Ibn Sina (Avicenna, d. 1037) was logician, philosopher, physician, chemist, geologist, psychologist, astronomer and philosopher of science; Ibn Rushd (Averroës, d. 1198) was philosopher, physician, physicist, astronomer, and psychologist; Nasir al-Din Tusi (d. 1274) was astronomer, physicist, chemist, mathematician, and logician. Other great figures in Islamic civilisation during its classic period were similarly polymaths and experts in a variety of disciplines.[21]

Scientific exchanges between Muslim philosophers and thinkers in this period testify to the extent and diversity of the areas of their expertise.[22] A case in point is the correspondence between Abu Rayhan Biruni and Ibn Sina over a number of philosophical, physical and cosmological issues. Abu Rayhan put eighteen questions to ibn Sina, ten of which were related to various issues in Aristotle's *De Caelo* (*al-Sama' wa'l-'Alam*).[23] This correspondence, which in the words of a contemporary Muslim philosopher 'marks one of the highlights of Islamic intellectual history and in fact medieval

[21] M. M. Sharif, *A History of Muslim Philosophy*, op. cit.; Nasr & Leaman, *A History of Islamic Philosophy*, op. cit.; Nasr, *Science and Civilization in Islam*, op. cit.; Nasr, *Islamic Science: An Illustrated History*, op. cit.; *Charles* Coulston Gillispie (ed.), *Dictionary of Scientific Biography* (Scribner, 1980); J. P. Hogendijk, A. I. Sabra (eds), *The Enterprise of Science in Islam: New Perspectives* (MIT, 2003)

[22] See H. Daiber, 'Masa'il wa-Adjwiba' in *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, new edition) (Brill, 1991, Vol. VI), 636–9

[23] Ibn Sina – Al-Biruni Correspondence, Translated by Rafik Berjak and Muzaffar Iqbal, available at: http://www.cis-ca.org/jol/vol1-no1/ibnsina-al-beruni-fp.pdf; *Al-As'ilah wa'l Ajwibah* (Questions and Answers): Al-Biruni and Ibn Sina, Arabic edited text with English and Persian introductions by Seyyed Hossein Nasr and Mehdi Mohaghegh (International Institute of Islamic Thought and Civilization, Kuala Lumpur, 1995); Also see, Mohsen Jahangiri, 'Khordeh Giran-e Ibn Sina' (Ibn Sina's Critics), in *Proceedings of Ibn Sina's Millennium Conference* (Publications of UNESCO's National Commission in Iran, 1979), 225–272. Prof. Jahangiri, besides the case of Ibn Sina–Abu Rayhan Biruni's correspondence, discusses other examples of intellectual correspondence/critical exchanges between Ibn Sina and his peers and responds to some of the well-known critiques of Sinaeian system.

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natural philosophy and science in general'[24] could be compared with Newton-Clark and Leibniz correspondence.[25]

In his letters, Abu Rayhan criticizes reasons given by Aristotle for denying levity or gravity to the celestial spheres and the Aristotelian notion of circular motion being an innate property of the heavenly bodies. Biruni also rejects Aristotle's reasoning for his assertion that if the heavens were to be elliptical rather than spherical, a vacuum would be created, and that the motion of the heavens begins from the right side and from the east. He also asks how is it that Aristotle considered the element fire to be spherical. He further asks about the transformation of elements into each other, the natural tendency of the four elements in their upward and downward movements. In his other questions he discusses theories of vision, the habitation on different quarters of earth, and how two opposite squares in a square divided into four can be tangential. There are further questions about vacuum, nature of heat and the burning of bodies by radiation reflecting off a flask filled with water. In this context he also asks if things expand upon heating and contract upon cooling, why does a flask filled with water break when water freezes in it? And that why does ice float on water?[26]

Ibn Sina in his replies tries to defend Aristotle's position. Both masters demonstrate that they are well familiar with not only the philosophy of their time but also the physics of the day. A point worth mentioning here is that they both make use of empirical and logical arguments, including the two important arguments of *reductio ad absurdum* and *modus tollens*.

Being at home with respect to both philosophy and sciences of the day had enabled Muslim philosophers to apply their power of intellect to a wide variety of real problems in different intellectual and practical fields. The achievements of Muslim philosophers and scholars were so impressive that some commentators have rightly termed the classic period of Islamic philosophy as the 'Renaissance of Islam'.[27]

[24] S. H. Nasr, 'Introduction', in *Al-As'ilah wa'l Ajwibah* (Questions and Answers), op. cit., quoted in Berjak and Iqbal, op. cit.

[25] *The Leibniz-Clarke Correspondence*, edited by, H. G. Alexander (Manchester University Press, 1956)

[26] Op. cit., Ibn Sina – Al-Biruni Correspondence, Trans. by Berjak and Iqbal.

[27] Adam Mez, *Die Renaissance des Islams* (Hildesheim, 1968; reprint of 1922 edition); English translation by S. K. Bakhsh and D. S. Margoliouth, *The Renaissance of Islam* (London, 1927), quoted in Joel L. Kraemer, 'Humanism in the Renaissance of Islam: A Preliminary Study', *Journal of*

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Muslim philosophers in this period welcomed acquiring knowledge from all sources. Al-Kindi for example, in his *Fi al-Falsafa al-Ula* (On First Philosophy), writes:

> We ought not to be ashamed of appreciating the truth and of acquiring it wherever it comes from, even if it comes from races distant and nations different from us. For the seeker of truth nothing takes precedence over the truth, and there is no disparagement of the truth, nor belittling either of him who speaks it or of him who conveys it. (The status of) no one is diminished by the truth; rather does the truth ennoble all.[28]

This was, of course in complete agreement with famous saying attributed to the Prophet emphasising the importance of seeking knowledge, such as, 'seek knowledge even if it is in China', or 'seeking knowledge is an ordinance obligatory upon every Muslim'. Muslim philosophers developed an approach to learning which can be dubbed 'religious humanism'. It was based on the idea of cultivating individuals through teaching them various sciences and good habits so that they acquire a personal quality which is called *adab*, a concept very close to the Greek notion of *paideia*.[29] According to philosophers the path to true education (*adab haqiai*) was only through philosophy (i.e. rational deliberation). Ibn Miskawayh (932–1030) a philosopher from Rey and a chancery official at the Buwayhid court, in his *Tahdhib al-akhlaq* (the Refinement of Character) and *Jawidan khirad* (Perennial Philosophy) places *Adab haqiai* higher than *adab shar'i* (religious education). According to him and other philosophers, it was only through the former path, which would include the latter, that salvation could be achieved.[30]

The outcome of the intellectual efforts of Muslim philosophers and scholars in the Golden age of Islam (9th–12th CE) was not only

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the American Oriental Society **104**(1) (1984) 135–164, (135). See also Kraemer's introduction to the second edition of his book, *Humanism in the Renaissance of Islam: The cultural Revival During the Buyid Age* (Brill, 1992).

[28] Al-Kindi, *Fi al-Falsafa al-Ula* (On First Philosophy), trans. by A. Ivry, Al-Kindi's Metaphysics (Albany, 1974), 58, quoted in Joel L. Kraemer, 'Humanism in the Renaissance of Islam: A Preliminary Study', op. cit., 149

[29] Ibrahim Moosa, 'Muslim Ethics?' in *The Blackwell Companion To Religious Ethics*, edited by William Schweiker (Blackwell, 2005), 237–243.

[30] Kraemer, op. cit. p. 151; Lenn Goodman, *Islamic Humanism* (Oxford University Press, 2003), 108–109

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greatly beneficial to the flourishing of Islamic civilisation but also provided European scholars with a rich reservoir of fresh ideas.[31] These ideas played a significant role in bringing about the European Renaissance. In the words of one Western scholar:

> Although there is not a single aspect of European growth in which the decisive influence of Islamic culture is not traceable, nowhere is it so clear and momentous as in the genesis of that power which constitutes the paramount distinctive force of the modern world, and the supreme source of its victory – natural sciences and scientific spirit. … The debt of our science to that of the Muslims does not consist in startling discoveries of revolutionary theories; science owes a great deal more to Muslim culture, it owes its existence. The ancient world was … pre-scientific. The astronomy and mathematics of the Greeks were a foreign importation never thoroughly acclimatized in Greek culture. The Greeks systematized, generalized, and theorized, but the patient ways of investigation, the accumulation of positive knowledge, the minute methods of science, detailed and prolonged observation and experimental inquiry were altogether alien to the Greek temperament. Only in Hellenistic Alexandria was any approach to scientific work conducted in the ancient world. What we call science arose in Europe as a result of new spirit of inquiry, of new methods of investigation, of the method of experiment, observation, and measurement, of the development of mathematics in a form unknown to the Greeks. That spirit and those methods were introduced into the European world by Muslims.[32]

Many of the works of Muslim scholars, philosophers, scientists, and theologians, were translated into Latin. Their counterparts in Europe greatly benefitted from the fruits of the intellectual labour of their colleagues in the Muslim world. The works of philosophers such as of al-Kindi, Farabi, Ibn Sina, and Ibn Rushd were eagerly studied by European scholars and their ideas were incorporated in the theses produced by these scholars. In the assimilation of Islamic

[31] George Saliba, *Islamic Sciences and the Making of European Renaissance* (Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 2007); J. P. Hogendijk, A. I. Sabra (eds), *The Enterprise of Science in Islam: New Perspectives*, op. cit.; Nasr, *Science and Civilization in Islam*, op. cit.

[32] Robert Briffault in *The Making of Humanity* (London: George Allen and Unwin Ltd., 1928), 190–1, quoted in M. M. Sharif, *A History of Islamic Philosophy*, vol. 22, 1355–56

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thought, as Charles Burnett has observed, several stages can be observed:

> First, there was an interest in Neoplatonic cosmology and psychology in the latter half of the twelfth century, which fostered the translation of texts by al-Kindi, al-Farabi, the Ikhwan al-Safa' and, especially, Avicenna (Ibn Sina). Second, the desire to understand Aristotle's philosophy resulted in the translation of the commentaries and epitomes of Averroes (Ibn Rushd) in the second quarter of the thirteenth century. …[Third] in the late fifteenth century, a renewed interest in the ancient texts led scholars to search out the most accurate interpretations of these texts, … they turned for new translations or retranslations of Avicenna and, in particular, Averroes. From the early sixteenth century, Arabic philosophical texts were again translated directly into Latin, Arabic speakers began to collaborate with Christian scholars and the foundations for the teaching of Arabic were being laid.[33]

But while the Latin west was benefiting from the views of Muslim thinkers and foundations for the Renaissance were gradually being laid, a dynamism of a different type was at work in the land of Islam.[34] I deal with this development in the next part of this paper.

[33] Charles Burnett, 'Islamic Philosophy- Transmission into Western Europe', *Routledge Encyclopaedia of Philosophy*, Version 1.0 (London: Routledge, 1998)

[34] George Saliba, *Islamic Sciences and the Making of European Renaissance,* op. cit.; A. I. Sabra (eds), *The Enterprise of Science in Islam: New Perspectives*, op. cit., Nasr, *Science and Civilization in Islam,* op. cit.; Dag Nikolaus Hasse, 'Influence of Arabic and Islamic Philosophy on the Latin West', *Stanford Encyclopaedia of Philosophy*, http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/arabic-islamic-influence/; Nayef Al-Rodhan, *The Role of the Arab-Islamic World in the Rise of the West* (Palgrave-Macmillan, 2012); Jonathan Lyons, *The House of Wisdom: How the Arabs Transformed Western Civilization* (Bloomsbury Publishing, 2010); Slaim Hassan (ed.), *1001 Inventions: The Enduring Legacy of Muslim Civilization* (National Geographic Society, 2012); Deborah Howard, *Venice and the East: The Impact of the Islamic World on Venetian Architecture* (Yale University Press, 2000); Jim Khalil, *Pathfinders: The Golden Age of Arabic Science*, Penguin, 2012; Michael Morgan, *Lost History: The Enduring Legacy of Muslim Scientists, Thinkers and Artists* (National Geographic Society, 2008).

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III. Decline of Scientific Spirit in Islamic Civilisation

Despite all the emphasis in the Quran and the sunna of the Prophet and Imams (in the case of Shiʿi Islam) on the importance of acquiring and developing knowledge, scientific and philosophical spirit in Islamic civilisation took a nose dive and experienced a gradual decline from the twelfth century onward. However, the seeds for this decline had already been sowed in the soil of Islamic intellectual life when in the middle of the ninth century al-Mutawkkil (d. 861) became caliph. He put in motion a programme of purging the rational theologians, the Muʿtazalites, and supporting their literalist rivals, the Ashʿarites. Philosophers like Kindi, who were at the receiving end of Mutawakkil's anti-rationality campaign and his policy of repression, also suffered a reversal of their personal fortune[35]. Given Mutawkkil's role in promotion of the orthodoxy and dogmatic approaches to theology, it is somewhat amusing to read the following entry in Wikipedia:

> **Al-Mutawakkil ʻAlā Allāh Jaʻfar ibn al-Muʻtasim** (*Arabic* المتوكل على الله جعفر بن المعتصم) (March 822 – 11 December 861) was an Abbasid *caliph* who reigned in *Samarra* from 847 until 861. He succeeded his brother *al-Wāthiq* and is known for putting an end to the Mihna "ordeal", the Inquisition-like attempt by his predecessors to impose a single *Mu'tazili* version of *Islam*.[36]

The dominance of the Ashʿari thought provided grist for the mills of those who maintained that Islam is a self-sufficient system in every respect, including knowledge production. The gradual but consistent and continuous ascendency of *fuqha* (jurists), *ʿurafa* (mystics), and *mutikallimun* (theologians) of Ashʿari persuasion, helped to create an intellectual environment in which rational thinking and scientific pursuits were regarded as either non-Islamic or not suitable for the believers and alien to the spirit of Islam. The following story about Abu Rayhan Biruni nicely shows the attitude of the clerics and theologians towards science and scientists. Abu Rayhan, as the story goes, 'was accused by a contemporary divine of heresy when he used the Byzantine (solar) calendar for an instrument he had invented for determining the times of the prayers. Al-Biruni retorted by saying,

[35] Majid Fakhry, *History of Islamic Philosophy* (Routledge, 1993), 68.
[36] http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Al-Mutawakkil, accessed: 31/1/13.

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"the Byzantines also partake of bread. Will you now promulgate a religious sanction against bread?"'[37]

By the time of the great Persian Ashʿari jurist, sufi-saint, and *mutikallim*, Abu Hamed Mohammad Ghazzali (d. 1111), the orthodoxy was firmly in place in all parts of Muslim lands in which one of the four Sunni schools of *fiqh* (jurisprudence) was being practiced. Ghazzali, who was for some years the head of the largest university (Niẓamiyeh) in Baghdad, in his capacity as a defender and promoter of the orthodoxy produced a number of extremely influential books which were hugely influential in the intellectual eco-system of both the Sunni and the Shiʿa worlds. Although, his influence on the latter's views was indirect. In his *Tahafut al-Falasifa* he argued against many of the main doctrines of the mashsha'i (Peripatetic) philosophers in their own terms. At the end of this long, important and carefully argued book, Ghazzali, in the very last page of the book which was titled, 'Conclusion', suddenly put on his other hat as a *faqih* and in the space of just one page, issued a fateful fatwa (religious edict) against philosophers and philosophy. He wrote:

> If someone says: "You have explained the doctrines of these [philosophers]; do you then say conclusively that they are infidels and that the killing of those who uphold their beliefs is obligatory?" we say: Pronouncing them infidels is necessary in three questions. One of them is the question of the world's pre-eternity and their statement that all substances are pre-eternal. The second is their statement that God's knowledge does not encompass the temporal particulars among individual [existents]. The third is their denial of the resurrection of bodies and their assembly at the day of judgment.[38]

He went on to suggest that there are seventeen other doctrines, including 'Their argument against God's attributes, Their argument that it is impossible that something should share a genus with God, Their argument that God is pure existence with no quiddity' which makes philosopher guilty of the lesser charge of heresy (*bid'ah*).[39]

Having declared philosophy as an unsuitable subject for study in the eco-system of Islamic culture, Ghazzali, in his *magnum opus*, *Ihya*

[37] Abdus-Salam has noted in his *Ideals and Realities* (World Scientific Publishing Co Pte Ltd, 1990), 197

[38] Ghazzali, *The Incoherence of Philosophers*, trans. by Michael Marmura, op.cit., 226

[39] Cf. Marmura (2002), op. cit. and Kamali (1963), op. cit.

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al-'Ulum al-Din (the Revival of Islamic Sciences) which is a forty-volume encyclopaedia of Islamic sciences of his day, introduced a new classification of sciences.[40] He divided sciences into two general groups, religious and non-religious. And made it clear that only the first group has intrinsic value. Religious sciences are those which 'have been acquired from the prophets and are not arrived at either by reason, like arithmetic, or by experimentation, like medicine, or by hearing, like language.'[41] Non-religious sciences 'are divided into praiseworthy (*Mahmoud*), blameworthy (*madhmum*), and permissible (*mubah*). Using another set of *fiqhi* (juristic) terminology, Ghazzali suggested that sciences, from another point of view, are further divided into two categories. One, whose study is compulsory for all Muslims (*Frad* ʿayn or *wajib* ʿ*ayni*). The other, which is *fard kifayah* or *wajib kifa'i*, which covers all those sciences whose study become compulsory if no one in the Islamic society study them. But if at least one individual studies them, then religious obligation will be lifted from others.[42] Ghazzali, then went on to explain that among the non-religious praiseworthy sciences there are some whose acquisition is *fard kifayah* (conditionally obligato) and he singled out medicine and arithmetic as two prime examples of those type of sciences which are indispensable for the welfare of this world.[43]

After defining *fiqh* (jurisprudence) as another type of science whose acquisition is conditionally obligatory, he raised the following question in the form of a dialogue with his reader:

> If you should say, "why have you regarded medicine and jurisprudence in the same way when medicine pertains to the affairs of this world, namely the welfare of the body, while upon jurisprudence depends the welfare of religion …?" then know that …

[40] Ghazzali, *Ihya' 'Ulum ad-Din* (Revival of Religious Sciences), edited by Hafiz Iraqi and Abd al-Rahim bin Hussain, Dar al-Nashr al-Arabi (n.d.p, n.p.p). There are many editions of Ghazzali's *magnum opus* in Arabic. English translations of the volumes of the *Ihya* are done by various translators. Many of these translations can be accessed on-line at http://www.ghazali.org/site/ihya.htm. Also see, The Revival of Religious Sciences, trans. by Bankey Behari, [No place of publication]: Sufi Publ. Co., 1964/1972

[41] Ghazzali, *Ihya' 'Ulum ad-Din* (the Revival of Islamic Sciences), Book 1, *The Book of Knowledge*, translated by Nabih Amin Faris, Islamic Book Service, 30. This text is available on line at: http://www.ghazali.org/site/ihya.htm

[42] Ghazazli, *Ihay',* Ibid, book 1, 30–38

[43] Ibid.

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> in fact the two sciences differ. Jurisprudence is superior to medicine on three counts; first because it is religious knowledge and unlike medicine, which is not religious knowledge, jurisprudence is derived from prophecy; second, it is superior to medicine because no one of those who are treading the road to the hereafter can do without it, neither the healthy nor ailing; while on the other hand only the sick, who are a minority, need medicine; thirdly, because jurisprudence is akin to the science of the road of hereafter, …[44]

Immediately after the above he makes it clear to the reader that: 'whenever the science of the road to the hereafter is compared with jurisprudence the superiority of the former is evident'.[45]

Ghazzali's classification of sciences was whole-heartedly accepted by both the Sunni and the Shiʿa Muslims. The latter produced a Shiʿatized version of Ghazzali's book under the title of *Mahajja al-Bida fi Tahdhib al-Ihya* (the clear path in refining ihya).[46]

The tendency of placing religious sciences on a higher plane than non-religious sciences was further amplified in the works of Muslim mystics (*ʿurfa*) and Sufis. In their teachings, non-religious sciences were regarded as tools and instruments whose purpose was to help Muslims in this life to dedicate themselves to the study of truly worthwhile sciences. The story of an alleged meeting between Ibn Sina and Abu Saʿid Abu al-Khayr (d. 1049), the great Persian mystic is very illuminating in this context. According to one version of the story whose authenticity cannot be corroborated, the two great scholars upon their first encounter remained in private conversation for three consecutive days, only took breaks for performing their daily prayers and having some sustenance. After the meeting, disciples of Ibn Sina asked him how he had found the mystic. Ibn Sina, reportedly, had replied that whatever he knew the mystic also knew not through philosophical arguments but by means of his mystical visions. Devotees of Abu Saʿid asked their master how he had found the philosopher. Abu Saʿid had replied, wherever he had gone in his mystical journeys he had seen the philosopher, in the shape of blind man, who was trying to find his way by means of his stick of reason.[47]

[44] Ibid., 39

[45] Ibid.

[46] Mulla Muhsin Faid Kashani, *Mahajja al-Bida fi Tahdhib al-Ihya*, edited by Ali Akbar Ghaffari, Qom, Intesharat-e Jameʿa Modarresin Qom, n.d.p.

[47] Mirza Abu'l Fazl Zanjani, et al. *Nameh Daneshvaran* (Intellectual Biographies of Scholars, 1296/1878), Vol. 1, 613

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To better appreciate the intellectual changes that took place between the 10th and 12th centuries from Farabi to Ghazzali, it would be useful to briefly compare Farabi's classification of sciences with that of Ghazzali's. In his *Ihsa al-'Ulum* (The Enumeration of Sciences), Farabi classified all known branches of knowledge of his time under five headings:

> **I. Science of language** (syntax, grammar, pronunciation and speech, poetry); **II. Logic** (including oratory [rhetoric] and study of poetry); **III. The preliminary sciences** (1. Arithmetic: practical and theoretical, 2. Geometry: practical and theoretical, 3. Optics, 4. Science of the heavens: Astrology; Astronomy, 5. Music: practical and theoretical, 6. Science of weights, 7. Science of tool-making); **IV. Physics** (sciences of nature) **and Metaphysics** (science concerned with the Divine and the principles of things); **V. Sciences of Society** (1. Politics, 2. Jurisprudence (law or *fiqh*), 3. Theology (dialectics or *Kalam* [apology])[48]

In the above table there is no mention of *irfan* (mysticism). For Farabi the most important sciences are metaphysics and physics. Philosophers, and not mystics or jurists or theologians, are held in the highest esteem and compared with the prophets. *Fiqh* and *Kalam* are regarded as practical sciences.

Another factor which was instrumental in the eclipse of rational trends in Muslim countries was closing of the door of *ijtihad* among the Sunni Muslims dealt another severe blow to the spirit of critical thinking in Islam. As Joseph Schacht has observed:

> By the beginning of the fourth century of the *hijra* (about 900 CE), … the point had been reached when the scholars of all schools [of *fiqh*] felt that all essential questions had been thoroughly discussed and finally settled, and a consensus gradually established itself to the effect that from that time onward no one might be deemed to have the necessary qualifications for independent reasoning in law, and that all future activity would have to be confined to the explanation, application, and, at the most, interpretation of the doctrine as it had been laid down

[48] Farabi, *Ihsa al-'Ulum* (Beirut: Dar wa Maktabata al-Hilah, 1375/1996), 15–16; I have used S. H. Nasr, *Science and Civilization in Islam*, 60–62, with some revision based on the original Arabic text. See also Majid Fakhry, *A History of Islamic Philosophy*, op. cit. Fakhry, somewhat misleadingly suggests that Fabari 'classifies them [sciences of his day] under eight headings'. (page 115)

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> once and for all. This 'closing of the door of *ijtihad*', as it was called, amounted to the demand for *taklid* [emulation], a term which had originally denoted the kind of reference to Companions of the Prophet that had been customary in the ancient schools of law, and which now, came to mean the unquestioning acceptance of the doctrines of established schools and authorities.[49]

To the above intellectual trends, social and political upheavals in Muslim countries should be added. The decline of the Buyid dynasty (934–1055) which was the prime-mover behind what Kraemer has dubbed 'the Renaissance of Islam' and the restoration of the orthodoxy by the Saljuqs (1016–1307), the animosity between the Abbasid dynasty (750–1258) in Baghdad and the Fatimid dynasty (909–1171) in Egypt, the Crusades (1095 and 1291), the invasion of the Moghuls, Hulago Khan (1218–1265) and later Taymour (Tamerlane, 1336–1405) all helped the creation of an environment which was not amenable to free and critical thinking.

The collective result of all the above factors was that philosophy as a discipline and a tradition died a sudden death among the Sunni Muslims in the Eastern flank of Islamic civilisation. Philosophical thinking, however, did not die away among Muslims. It followed two different paths in the eastern and western parts of Muslim lands. In Spain, Muslim philosophers such as Ibn Bajjah (Avempass, 1095–1143), Ibn Tufayl (1105–1185) and Ibn Rushd (Averroës, 1126–1198) continued the *Mashsha'i* (peripatetic) tradition.[50]

Ibn Rushd achieved fame among European scholars as master commentator of Aristotle works. He also established himself as a first rank philosopher by producing a philosophical defence of his fellow-philosophers against Ghazzali's devastating criticisms,[51] and

[49] Joseph Schacht, *In Introduction to Philosophy of Law in Islam* (Oxford University Press, 1984), 71–72, quoted in Wael B. Hallaq, 'Was the Gate of Ijtihad Closed?' *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, **16**(1) (1984), 3–41 (page 5). Hallaq tries to reject the view that the gate of *ijtihad* was closed among the Sunni Muslims. However, his arguments actually corroborate a sad historical fact.

[50] Cf. M. M. Sharif (1963), op. cit.; Nasr & Leamn (1996) op. cit; Fakhry (2003), op. cit.

[51] Ibn Rushd, *Tahafut al-Tahafut* (The Incoherence of the *Incoherence*), edited by Soleiman Donia (Cairo: Dar al-Ma'ariff, 1964); *Averroës' Tahafut al-Tahafut*, translated by Simon van der Bergh (The Trustees of the Gibb Memorial, 1954). See also, Majid Fakhry, *Averroës*

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further developing earlier theories of intellect, by suggesting a new model in which individuals' acquired knowledge after unification with the active intellect would lose their identities and instead would collaborate in creating a collective pool of knowledge and ideas. This view somewhat resembles Popper's notion of World 3.[52] However, with the collapse of Muslim dynasties in Spain in the late fifteen century, development of Islamic philosophy in the Sunni Islam came to an end and philosophical spirit vanished from its eco-system.

Even the heroic efforts of Ibn Rushd to show the compatibility between reason and religion[53] could not save philosophy and rational thinking from its fate. The orthodoxy would only endorse the application of reason strictly within the limits of religion alone. And even here, only a literal interpretation of religion was allowed. The victory of *Ahl Hadith* (the literalist transmitters of the tradition of the Prophet) meant that even the Quran could only be studied in the light of a literal or at most analogical understanding of the sayings and deeds of the Prophet.

Philosophy however, survived in the Shi'i Islam. It is to this development that we now turn.

(Ibn Rushd): His Life, Works, and Influence (One World, 2008). The efficacy and cogency of Ibn Rushd's Arguments against Ghazzali is disputed by some scholars. See for example, Josef Puig Muntada, 'Ibn Rushd vs. Ghazali: Reconsideration of a Polemic', *The Muslim World* **LXXXII**(1–2) (1992), 113–131

[52] Derek Gatherer, 'Meme Pools, World 3 and Averroës' Vision of Immortality' *Zygon* **33**(2) (1998), 203–219. Resemblance between Ibn Rushd's Active Mind and Popper's World 3 (third world) however, should not be exaggerated. With regard to W3 Popper points out that: 'Although man-made, the third world (as I understand the term) is superhuman in that its contents are virtual rather than actual objects of thought, and in the sense that only a finite number of the infinity of virtual objects can ever become actual objects of thought. We must beware, however, of interpreting these objects as thoughts of a superhuman consciousness as did, for example, Aristotle, Plotinus, and Hegel.' (Popper, *Objective Knowledge* (Oxford University Press, 1972), n8, 199)

[53] Ibn Rushd (Averroës), 'On the Harmony of Religion and Philosophy' in *The Philosophy and Theology of Averroes*, trans. Mohammed Jamil-al-Rehman, Baroda: A.G. Widgery, 1921; Majid Fakhry, 'Al-Farabi and the Reconciliation of Plato and Aristotle', *Journal of the History of Ideas* **26**(4) (1965), 469–478

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IV. From a predominantly rational mode of philosophising to developing novel systems of theosophy

A Closer look at the development of philosophical thought in Islam from its early stages onward reveals that the relationship between Philosophy, *Kalam* (theology) and *Irfan* (mysticism) has not been unambiguous and their boundaries have not been clear-cut. Such a study makes it clear that *Kalam* and *Irfan* have always had some sort of influence on rational approaches to philosophising and philosophers have always been acutely aware of the need for addressing the concerns of not only *Mutikallimun* and *'Urafa*, but also *Fuqha*. Exceptions to this rule have remained in a small minority.

Almost all of the first rank thinkers who contributed to development of intellectual heritage of Islamic civilisation were devout Muslims. This trait, amongst other things and as far as Muslim philosophers were concerned, meant that although they were bolder in their intellectual investigations than their theologian counterparts, nevertheless, they did not seem to be willing to go as far as to reject Islamic doctrines. Even someone like Muhammad ibn Zakariya Razi (Rhazes d. 925) who had critical views about prophets and prophecy was a God-fearing Muslim and a respected personality amongst his contemporaries and subsequent generation of Muslims. Some contemporary scholars in the West have appreciated this point and have noted that al-Razi 'far from being a heretic; … was simply an individualistic thinker, merely anti-establishment or anti-orthodox'.[54]

Religious outlook of these philosophers and thinkers had impacted upon their views. Many of these philosophers had developed ideas which were compatible with their religious beliefs. For example, al-Kindi, the first proper Muslim philosopher, using neo-Platonic ideas, had argued for a creator God and had rejected Aristotelian notion of the Prime Mover. He had also developed arguments against creation *ex nihilo* and also in defence of the possibility of the occurrence of miracles[55].

[54] Martin Plessner 'Heresy and Rationalism in the First Centuries of Islam', quoted in Joel L. Kraemer, 'Humanism in the Renaissance of Islam', op. cit., 160

[55] M. M. Sharif, *A History of Philosophy*, op. cit; Seyyed Hossein Nasr and Oliver Leaman (eds), *History of Islamic Philosophy*, op. cit.; Reza Akbarian, *Seyre-e Falsafa dar Iran-e Eslami* (Development of Philosophy in Iran) (Tehran: Entesharat-e Mu'asseseh Tahghighat va Tuse'ah 'Ulum-e Ensani, 2008)

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Likewise Farabi, while placing philosophers on the highest rung of the intellectual ladder equating them with prophets, developed an argument for the existence of God based on a difference between a necessary being that is self-subsistent and contingent beings which are dependent upon the necessary being. This is the third form of cosmological argument. The earlier two forms, as formulated by Aristotle, were based on the ideas of motion and potentiality.[56]

Ibn Sina, who is undoubtedly the greatest peripatetic philosopher in Islamic philosophy and more than any other Muslim philosopher has emphasised the importance of intellectual exploration of reality, was proud that for the first time he had been able to develop a completely novel argument for the existence of God. He dubbed this argument, '*Burhan-e Siddiqin* = the argument of the righteous'. The novelty of this argument lies in the fact that contrary to other arguments for the existence of God, like the cosmological argument or the argument from design whose starting points are existence of contingent beings and from there they argue for the need for positing a necessary or wise being, it concentrates on the notion of existence itself and demonstrates that this very notion, without any need for making use of the notion of contingent beings, suffices to prove the existence of God as a necessary being.[57] Ibn Sina goes even further than this in taking care of the religious sensitivities of his time; in his discussion of the vexed issue of resurrection he states that rationally he can only establish the resurrection of humankind souls but not their bodies; but then he goes on to emphasise that the bodily resurrection is warranted by *shar'* (religion) and 'there is no way to

[56] M. M. Sharif, *A History of Philosophy*, op. cit., 1371; Akbarian, *Seyre-e Falsafa dar Iran-e Eslami*, op. cit.

[57] Ibn Sina, *al-Isharat wa al-Tanbihat* (Remarks and Admonitions), ed. Sulayman Dunya (Cairo: Dar al-Ma'arif, 1957, 4 vols. Vol. 3), 66. See also, Toby Meyer, 'Ibn Sina's Burhan al-Siddiqin', *Journal of Islamic Studies* **12**(1) (2001), 18–39; Akbarian, op. cit. 2008. *Burhan-e Siddiqin* is perhaps the most famous and most important argument for the existence of God developed by Muslim philosophers. Since Ibn Sina's introduction of this argument, many of the great Muslim philosophers have tried to develop more complete versions of this same argument. These new versions, in view of their produces, were free from the shortcomings of the previous versions. A twentieth century Iranian philosopher, Mirza Mehdi Ashtiyani, in his commentary on a major philosophy text of nineteenth century, the *Manzumeh* of Haji Sabzevari (Tehran University Press in collaboration with McGill University Press, 1352/1973), has listed nineteen versions of this argument in the works of various Muslim philosophers.

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demonstrate bodily resurrection save through the way of *shari'a* [religious (Quranic) teachings] and assent to Prophetic sayings'.[58]

The last great Muslim polymath philosopher of the Golden age of Islam, namely, Khwaja Muhammad ibn Muhammad ibn Hasan Tusi, better known as Nasir al-Din Tusi (1201–1274), while producing scientific and philosophical doctrines, also assumed the mantle of a proper theologian and penned a number of important theological books. In fact, his *Tajrid al-I'tiqad* (Simplifying the Articles of Faith) has been regarded as one of the most important Shi'a theological books, on which both Shi'i and Sunni theologians have written commentaries.[59]

Mystical and Sufi tendencies were also discernible in the works of almost all Muslim philosophers of the classic period of Islam. In this respect it is worth noting in passing that Pythagoras and his mystical school were received more warmly than Thales and his school by Muslim scholars of the classic period and in particular *Ikhwan al-Safa* (the Brethren of Purity) who were one of the major forces behind the Renaissance of Islam in ninth-tenth centuries.[60] Muslim scholars were familiar with the pre-Socratic thinkers like Thales, Anaxagoras, Empedocles, Pythagoras, and Democritus, Heraclitus and Parmenides. However, Empedocles and Pythagoras received more attention. Muslims believed that Empedocles had

[58] Ibn Sina, *Kitab al-Najat* [The Book of Salvation], edited by Majid Fakhry (Beirut: Manshrat Dar al-Jadida al-Afaq, 1986), 326. See also Majid Fakhry, 'Islam' in Routledge Encyclopaedia of Philosophy of Religion, edited by Chad Meister and Paul Copan (Routledge, 2013), 76–86

[59] Nasir al-Din al-Tusi, Tajrid al-I'tiqad, Mashhad: Ja'fari, n.d.; Norman Calder, Jawid Mojaddedi, and Andrew Rippin provide a translation of al-Tusi's *Tajrid al-i'tiqad: Classical Islam: A Sourcebook of Religious Literature* (London: Routledge, 2003), Section 7.1.

[60] Popper compares and contrasts the impact of Pythagorean (mystical) and Ionian (Thales) rational schools and their attitude towards open, critical discussion on the subsequent development of knowledge. See his 'Back to Presocratics' in *Conjectures and Refutations* (Routledge, 1963/2002) 183–205. For Ikhwan al-Safa and their School see Joel Kraemer, *Philosophy in the Renaissance of Islam: Abu Sulayman al-Sijistani and his Circle* (Brill, 1986); Godefroid de Callataÿ, *Ikhwan al-Safa'A Brotherhood of Idealists on the Fringe of Orthodox Islam* (Oxford: One World, 2005); Nade el-Bizi, *Epistles of the Brethren of Purity: the Ikhwān al-Ṣafā' and their Rasā'il: an introduction* (Oxford University Press, 2008); Ian Richard Netton, *Muslim Neoplatonists: An Introduction to the Thought of the Brethren of Purity* (Routledge Curzon, 2002)

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'received instruction in wisdom from Luqman, the legendary sage mentioned in the Quran'[61] while the latter had been taught by Solomon. As Fakhry has observed, 'many of Pythagoras' moral aphorisms are given in the Arabic anthologies'.[62] Osman Baker has noted that in the classic period of the Islamic civilisation:

> In contrast to Peripatetic philosopher-scientists who emphasize logic and demonstration, the Hermetic-Pythagorean scientists and philosophers, who also played an important role in Islamic science, adopted from methodological approach that is based primarily upon a metaphysical and symbolic interpretation of things. This is the kind of approach used for example by Jabir ibn Hayyan in alchemy and by the Ikhwan al-Safa in the various mathematical sciences.[63]

Immediately after the above observation, Osman adds another remark which, though he does not develop it further, is directly relevant to the topic under discussion in this paper. He says, 'Certain elements of this method [metaphysical and symbolic interpretation of things] are also to be found in the scientific methodology of those scientists whom are usually identify with Peripatetic school such as Ibn Sina'.[64]

The case of Ibn Sina is of particular importance. Ibn Sina, the Persian philosopher is, as pointed out before, undoubtedly the greatest peripatetic philosopher in Islamic philosophy and his encyclopaedic philosophical work, *al-Shifa* is a paragon of rational thinking. Yet despite all his penchants for rational approaches later in his life and in his later works, he laid down the foundations of an intellectual legacy whose hallmark was an emphasis on mystical methods of acquiring wisdom in contrast to rational methods of acquiring knowledge.[65] Ibn Sina's later philosophy, known as *al-Hikmat al-Mashreqiyah* (The Eastern Philosophy) turned into the dominant trend of thought among subsequent generations of Muslim philosophers.[66]

[61] Majid Fakhry, *A History of Islamic Philosophy*, op. cit.

[62] Ibid.

[63] Osman Baker, 'Science', in S. H. Nasr and Oliver Leaman (eds), *A History of Islamic Philosophy*, op. cit., 942–3

[64] Ibid., 943

[65] Muslim philosophers make a distinction between wisdom, which they regard to be of Divine nature, and knowledge, which is produced by man's cognitive faculty. For a detailed discussion see S. H. Nasr, *Knowledge and the Sacred* (SUNY Press, 1989)

[66] The text of *al-Hikmat al-Mashreqiyah* is mostly lost. In what has remained, assuming its authenticity, Ibn Sina completely renounces his

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In turning away from his peripatetic phase towards his new philosophy, Ibn Sina made a move, which though mostly symbolic and formalistic, proved to be very influential: in his *Danishnama-yi 'ala'i*, which was the first encyclopaedia of philosophy written in Persian in the Islamic era he, for the first time in the history of Muslim intellectual thought, began his discussion with the section on metaphysics (*ilahiyat*) and from there proceeded to natural philosophy (*tabi'iyat*). This was in sharp contrast to the way Aristotle and many Muslim authors, including Ibn Sina in his other works on philosophy, would organise the chapters of their books; they would all start with a chapter on natural philosophy (physics) and then move on the metaphysics. Ibn Sina's innovation was emulated by the subsequent generations of Muslim philosophers who came to the scene few centuries after Ibn Sina. As Nasr has observed, 'Later Safavid and Qajar authors, among them Sadr al-Din Shirazi, Mulla Muhsin Faid [Kashani], and Hajji Mulla Hadi Sabzivari, have followed the precedent of the *Danishnamah*'.[67]

The unwanted consequence of this seemingly innocent change was an unfortuante influence on the further development of philosophy: later generations of philosophers and theologians, by and large, paid less and less attention to the study of natural philosophy. Instead, as we shall see below, most of them chanelled their energies into developing theosophical doctrines and systems of theosophy. The section on natural sciences and physics (*tabi'iyat*) in subsequent books on philosophy remained almost the same as it was at the time of Ibn Sina or thereabout. Few centuries after renunciation of peripatetic

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peripatetic phase: 'We have been inspired to bring together writings upon the subject matter which has been the source of difference among people disposed to argumentation and not to study it with the eyes of fanaticism, desire, habit, or attachment. We have no fear if we find differences with what the people instructed in Greek books have become familiar with through their own negligence and shortness of understanding. And we have no fear if we reveal to the philosophers something other than what we have written for the common people – the common people who have become enamoured of the Peripatetic philosophers and who think that God has not guided anyone but them or that no one has reached Divine Mercy except them.' From *Manṭiq al-Mashriqiyyīn* (The Logic of the Orientals) translated by S. H. Nasr, in *An Anthology of Philosophy in Persia*, volume 1, From *Zoroaster to ʿUmar Khayyām*, edited by S. H. Nasr and Mehdi Aminrazavi (London: I. B. Tauris, 2008), 321

[67] S. H. Nasr, *An Introduction to Islamic Cosmological Doctrines*, 187, n. 26.

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philosophy by Ibn Sina, many of philosophers and theologians had no competence in further developing in natural sciences. Apart from few exceptions, most of the rest, at best, could only explicate the achievements of their predecessors to their students, and at worse, did not have a good grasp of the issues discussed in the sections on *tabi'iytat*. Nevertheless, out of reverence for the past masters, they would dutifully reproduce these sections, now regarded as relics, in their own books on philosophy and *Kalam*.[68]

The main charctristic of Ibn Sina's new school, *al-Hikmat al-Mashreqiyah*, was its emphasis on the power of intuition and mystical experiences, as against rational thinking, as the most effective tool for exploring reality and acquiring knowledge about it.[69]

Al-Hikmat al-Mashreqiyah was further developed into a comprehensive philosophical system by another great Persian philosopher, Shahab/Shihab al-Din Suhrawardi (1158–1191), the founder of *Maktab-i Ishraq* (the School of Illumination) who was killed at the tender age of 38 by the *fatwa* (edict) of the orthodox jurists in Syria.[70] Suhrawardi's system was a novel synthesis of various trends of thought, including Platonic and neo-Platonic ideas, doctrines from the wisdom of ancient Persian sages (*Hukamaye-Pahlavi*), doctrines extracted from the Quran and the teachings of the Prophet. Suhrawardi also, introduced a whole set of new vocabularies into the discourse of Islamic philosophy. The central theme in his philosophy was the notion of light which, to some extent, represented the concept of *wujud* (being) in the earlier philosophies. God for example, was *Nur al-Anwar* (Light of Lights).[71]

[68] Masumi Hamadni, op. cit., 262

[69] It is interesting to note in passing that Ibn Sina's great detractor, namely Ghazzali, in his later life, just like Ibn Sina, developed a mystical approach in his books like *Mishkat al-Anwar* (Nich of Lights) in line with Ibn Sina's *al-Hikmat al-Mashreqiyah*.

[70] For Suhrawadri's life and work see S. H. Nasr, *Three Muslim Sages, Avicenna, Suhrawardi, Ibn 'Arabi* (Harvard University Press, Cambridge). For a comparison between Suhrawardi and Ibn Sina's philosophies see, Mehdi Aminrazavi, How Ibn Sinian Is Suhrawardi's Theory of Knowledge?, *Philosophy East and West* **53**(2) (2003), 203–214. Aminrazavi argues that the two philosophers adhered to the following hierarchy of knowledge: 1. Knowledge by definition; 2. Knowledge by sense perception; 3. Knowledge through *a priori* concepts; 4. Knowledge by presence; 5. Knowledge through direct experience: mysticism.

[71] Suhrawardi, *Himkmat al-Ishraq* (Philosophy of Illumination), translated by John Walbridge & Hossein Ziai (Brigham Young University Press,

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In his captivating works both in Persian and Arabic, Suhrawardi narrated an epic story on a metaphysical plane whose main hero was man who had fallen from the realm of light into the realm of darkness and was longing to get back to his origin. Suhrawardi's philosophical system was, in a sense, a somewhat rational reconstruction of various stages of this existential journey and an explanation of its cosmic scale and stages. The grand metaphysical plot of the story is an augmented neo-Platonic system: The whole realm of being is divided into three or four sub-relams which are sandwiched between the extereme poles of the Light of Lights, whose place in the geographical plane of this cosmic map is above and top, and darkeness, which represents *hyle* (matter) or mere potentiality and therefore nothingness, at the bottom or down. Suhrawardi writes:

> The Essence of the First Absolute Light [i.e. the Light of Lights], God, gives constant illumination, whereby it is manifested and it brings all things into existence, giving life to them by its rays. Everything in the world is derived from the Light of His essence … .[72]
>
> Know that the number of worlds according to people of wisdom is three. One is called the world of intellect (*'alam-i 'aqal*)… and one is called the world of soul ((*'alam-i nafs)* … and the other is called the world of body (*'alam-i jism*).[73]

And he writes elsewhere:

> I have correct experiences [which inform me that] the number of worlds is four. The world of dominant lights (*'alam-i anwar-i qahirha*) (i.e. intellects), the world of regent lights (*'alam-i anwar-i mudabbirha*) (i.e. souls), the world of purgatories (*'alam-i barazikh*) (i.e. the spheres and the elements), the world of darkened suspended images (*'alam-i suwar-i mo'alaq-i ẓulmani*).[74]

1999); Shahabuddin Suhrawardi, *Hayakal al-Nur* (The Shape of Light), trans. by Shaykh al-Halveti (Fons Vitae, 1986)

[72] Suhrawardi, Hikmat al-Ishraq, English translation of M. Smith, *Readings from the Mystics of Islam* (London, 1950), 79, quoted in S. H. Nasr, *Three Muslim Sages*, op. cit., 69

[73] Sheikh Shabuddin Suhrawardi, *Majmu'a Mossanafat* (Complete Works), ed. by S. H. Nasr (Tehran, Mu'assese Motaleat va Tahqiqat Farhangi (1372/1993), Vol. 2), 96, 65, quoted in, Parviz Abbasi Dakaei, 'Qorbat-e Sharqi va Ghorbat-e Gharbi', *Nameh Falsafa* **4** (1377/1998), 112

[74] Suhrawardi, *Hikmat al-Ishraq*, 232, 254, quoted in Dakaei, ibid.

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Man can obtain salvation by God's grace and through the assistance of the active intellect, which is identified as the archangel Gabriel, and also the spritual masters (*pirs* or *ulia*) which earth is never without them.

Suhrawardi had a profund influence on almost all the subsequent generations of Muslim philosophers. From Suhrawardi onward, Islamic philosophy, in a systematic fashion dedicated all its attention to theosophical issues, i.e. issues related to understanding God and His manifestations by means of rational argumentation, intuition and mystical experiences. It took as its main sources of exploration and investigation, the holy Quran and the teachings of the Prophet and the Shi'i Imams.

The result of a full-fledged promotion of a religious outlook in this new econiche in which the notions of *Vali* (friend, Guardian .pl. *Ulia'*) and *Vilayat* (friendship, guardianship) had prominent places was, as far as philosphy was concrened, the emrgence of two exteremly sophisticated intellectual schools, which introduced some of the finest systems of theosophy. These two schools are known as the School of Isfahan and the School of Shiraz. However, before discussing some of the main achievements of these schools, I need to say a few words about the views of a highly influential mystic whose ideas played some important role in the subsequent development of Islamic theosophy. The personality in question is Muhi al-Din al-Arabi, better known as Ibn Arabi.

Ibn Arabi (1165–1240), born in Moorish Spain, is one of the greatest Muslim Sufi masters and mystics.[75] In fact the only other mystic whose standing, fame and influence is equal to, if not slightly greater than, that of Ibn Arabi, is Jalal al-Din Muhammad Balkhi (1207–1273), known in the West as Rumi. While many common themes can be found in the ideas of the two grand Sufi masters, many significant differences could also be discerned in their views and approaches.[76]

Generally speaking, Sufis and mystics played two important roles in the intellectual life of Muslims. On the one hand, they introduced a badly needed element of tolerance and open-mindedness towards other cultures, religions, doctrines, traditions, and practices; and

[75] For Ibn Arabi's life and work see William Chittic, *Ibn 'Arabi: Heir to the Prophets* (One World, 2005)

[76] See William Chittick, *In Search of the Lost Heart: Explorations in Islamic Thought* (State University of New York Press, 2011); William C. Chittic, *The Sufi Doctrine of Rumi* (World Wisdom, 2005)

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that in an environment which was dominated by a literalist and orthodox approach to religious creed. On the other hand however, they, in a fashion not dissimilar to present day post-modern writers, opened up the floodgate to all sorts of unbounded interpretations and unbridled flights of fancy. The end result was further weakening of rational approaches which were caught between the rock of the dogmatism of the orthodoxy and the hard place of relativism of Sufism.

Ibn Arabi was a master story teller and a prolific writer. His *magnum opus*, *al-Futuhat al-Makkiyah* (The Mekkiyan Revelations) runs into many volumes.[77] Through his powerful writings he gave further credence to a cultural tradition which became prevalent in almost all fields of scholarly investigations in Islamic lands. The tradition in question was confirming one's knowledge claims not by resorting to rational argumentation but by citing one's visions and personal experiences. Ibn Arabi was very adept in this art of confirmation of knowledge claims. He begins both of his masterpieces, *al-Futuhat* and *Fusus al-Hikam* (the Gems of Wisdom) by narrating two dreams which he confirms as genuine and truthful visions (*al-roya al-sadiqa*). According to Ibn Arabi, in the course of these two visions, the Prophet revealed to him the contents of the two books. With this ingenious stratagem, Ibn Arabi outwitted all of his would-be detractors not only during his own time but throughout the centuries afterwards. With few exceptions, almost all subsequent scholars, whether Sunni or Shi'a, did their best to justify even the most exaggerated claims of Ibn Arabi, since apparently whatever is stated in Ibn Arabi's books, is the Prophet's wisdom and has got nothing to do with Ibn Arabi. It seems one of the important factors which made Ibn Arabi's views, despite his Sunni background, appealing to his Shi'i followers was his great emphasis on the significant role of the *ulia'* (Spiritual Guardians, Sufi Saints) in the great schemes of things. In his writings he placed *ulia'* on a higher plane than even the prophets, claiming that the former are concerned about unveiling truth whereas the latter concentrate on promoting the message and are not much concerned about disclosing truth.[78] Ayatollah Khomeini's theory of *vilayat al-faqih* (the

[77] Ibn Arabi, *Al-Futuhat al-Makkiyah fi Asrar al-Mulkiyah wa-l-Malikiyah*, edited by O. Yahia, 14 Vols (Cairo, 1972–91)

[78] Ibn Arabi, *Fusus al-Hikam*, translated, and annotated by *Mohammad* Ali Movahid & Samd Movahid (Tehran, Nashr-e Karnameh, 1385 Solar), 78

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Guardianship of jurists) is among many Shi'i doctrines influenced by Ibn Arabi.[79]

The intellectual trend towards combining mystical, gnostic, and illuminationist insights with the Quranic and Prophetic teachings, and rational thinking reached its zenith, as was stated above, in two influential philosophical Schools with distinct Shi'i flavour, namely the School of Isfahan and the School of Shiraz. The emergence of both of these Schools was greatly facilitated, if not became possible in the first place, because of the coming to power of the Safavids dynasty in Persia (1501–1736). The fact that Safavids belonged to a Sufi order which traced its lineage as well as its name to the great Sufi-saint, Sheikh Safi al-Din Ardibili[80], provides some explanation for their support of the two philosophical Schools which flourished during their reign, and for the general theosophical orientation of these schools.[81]

V. Schools of Isfahan and Shiraz

The founder of the School of Isfahan was Muhammad Baqir Damad (d. 1631), better known as Mir Damad. His difficult style of writing and his novel neologisms earned him a reputation not dissimilar to what is ascribed to Hegel in the West. He became known as the Third Teacher (*Mu'allim al-thalith*) after Aristotle and Farabi. Many popular anecdotes about his complex philosophical system were in circulation even during his own lifetime. According to one such story after his death the two angels, *nakir* and *monkar* who, according to popular Muslim beliefs, are in charge of interrogating deceased souls to ascertain whether they should be handed over to the angels of mercy or the angles of punishment, went to him and asked him about his deeds and his beliefs. Mir Damad's philosophical replies were so baffling that the poor angels could not make head or tail of them. In desperation they went to God and asked Him about this strange individual. God told them they better leave him alone

[79] See, Alexander Knysh, 'Irfan Revisited: Khomeini and the Legacy of Islamic Mystical Philosophy', in *Middle East Journal* **46**(4) (1992), 631–653

[80] S. H. Nasr, 'The School of Ispahan', in M. M. Sharif (ed.), *A History of Islamic Philosophy*, op. cit., 905

[81] For an informative account of the socio-political, economic and cultural situation in Iran during the Safavid period see *The Cambridge History of Iran,* edited by Peter Jackson (Cambridge University Press, 1986), Vol, 6.

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since the philosopher during his lifetime had said things which even God could have not comprehended![82]

Mir Damad's main project was to develop a system of philosophy based on the wisdom revealed by God to the prophets, known as the Yamani wisdom (*Hikmat-i Yamani*) in contrast to the rationalistic philosophy of the Greeks.[83] The name of Mir Damad's system was apparently inspired by a Prophetic *hadith* (tradition), namely, '*al-Imanu al-Yamani va al-Hikmatu al*-Yamaniyatu' (The true faith is the Yamani faith and the true wisdom is the Yamani wisdom).[84] Moreover, Yaman (Yemen) also has mystical connotations in gnostic literature in that it symbolizes the *mashriqi* (i.e. the oriental as well as the illuminated) side of the world and is therefore the source of divine illumination in contrast to the Occident, which is the source of Peripatetic [rationalistic] philosophy'.[85]

Following the precedent set by Ibn Sina in his *al-Hikmat al-Mashreqiyah*, Mir Damad, in his major philosophical writings such as *Qabasat* and *Jadhawat* relegated discussions of logic and themes in natural philosophy to the last chapters and began his discussions with issues concerning the notion of Being and its attributes following by chapters on the appeal to the Quran and the tradition of the Prophet and the Shi'i Imams to shed light on the intricacies of philosophical issues.

In the dispute among Muslim philosophers concerning the status of existence (*wujud*) and quiddity (*mahiyyat*) in the grand scheme of things, Mir Damad argued against Ibn Sina (in his Peripatetic phase) by endorsing the principality of quiddity (*mahiyyat*) and the accidental nature of existence (*wujud*). Among his philosophical innovations the notion of *huduth-i dahri* (*a* temporal createdness/coming into being/origination/emergence) which he contrasts with two other notions, namely, *huduth-i zamani* (temporal createdness or

[82] For Mir Damad life and work see, Hamid Dabashi, '*Mir Damad and the Founding of the School of Isfahan*', in S.H. Nasr and O. Leaman (eds) *History of Islamic Philosophy*, op. cit. ch. 34, 597–634; Oliver Leaman, *An Introduction to Medieval Islamic Philosophy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985); Seyyed Ali Mousavi Behbahani, 'Mir Damad: Falsafa, Sharh Hal va Naqd Asar uo' (Mir Damad: Philosophy, life and works), *Maqalat va Barrasiha,* Nos. 3–4, Autumn-Winter (1349/1970), 18–59).

[83] Nasr, 'The School of Ispahan', op.cit., 915

[84] Zahra Mostafavi, 'The Implications of the Theory of Dahr and *huduth-i dahri in Mir Damad's Hikmat-i Yamani*', *Journal of Religious Thought* (University of Shiraz, 2007), 22.

[85] Nasr. op. cit., 'the School of Ispahan', 915

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coming into being) and *huduth-i dhati* (essential createdness or originatation) deserves to be mentioned.[86] He maintained that all entities, apart from God, i.e., all contingent beings, have an unchanging existence in a realm which is called *dahr* (aeon). God is outside of this realm, his existence is *sarmadi* (without beginning and end). According to Mir Damad, all temporal beings, in any moment of their existence have a *dahri* counterpart. *Dahr* acts as a cosmic memory in which whatever is in God's mind has a copy.[87]

Mir Damad rational behind postulating this realm was his view that the notion of emanation, which had been devised in order to solve the problem of the existence of eternal yet contingent entities, could not do justice to God's unique position in the whole realm of being by placing Him over and above all other entities which were totally dependent upon Him. According to Mir Damad, in the theory of essential contingency, each contingent being before coming into being and in respect to its essence alone, is neither existent nor non-existent. This indifference of contingent entities towards non-existence, in Mir Damad's view, means that they are not absolutely non-existent and this is enough to imply that they enjoy some sort of existence, even before coming into the realm of being. By contrasting absolute non-existence with the *dahri* existence, Mir Damad, tried to argue that nothing but God deserves to be regarded as existent.[88]

Mir Damad's theory of *huduth-i dahri* was not further developed by his successors, despite the fact Mir Damad was able to provide solutions for a number of philosophical as well as theological issues including the problem of 'createdness of time', 'rejection of the Platonic realm of Ideas', the issue of God's foreknowledge, and the changes He effects in the grand design of things (*naskh va bada'*).[89]

The trend of emphasising on the significance of *ishraqi*, illuminationist and esoteric approaches to philosophy in contrast to more rational approaches, and giving priority to religious sciences in contrast to natural philosophy was further emphasised by another prominent member of the school of Isfahan, Sheikh Bahaei', who was

[86] See, Fazlur Rahman, 'Mīr Dāmād's Concept of Ḥudūth Dahrī: A Contribution to the Study of God-World relationship Theories in Safavid Iran', *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* **39**(2) (1980), 139–151

[87] Fazlur Rahman, op. cit., 139–142; Zahra Mostafavi, op. cit., Nasr, 'The School of Ispahan', op. cit., 916–917

[88] Fazlur Rahman, op. cit.; Zahra Mostafavi, op. cit., 25; Seyyed Ali Mousavi Behbahani, op. cit., 49–55

[89] Mostafavi, op. cit.; Seyyed Ali Mousavi Behbahani, op. cit., 55–58

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among the clerics migrated from Lebanon to Iran.[90] Sheikh Bahaei', a close friend and colleague of Mir Damad, was a true polymath in the tradition of philosophers of the Golden age of Islam; he was the foremost theologian and jurist of his time, an accomplished mathematician and astronomer who had published a widely read treatise on algebra, *Khulasah fi al-Hisab*, and several treatises on astronomy, a knowledgeable physicist, a skilful poet, an adept Quranic commentator, and a capable architect.[91] And yet, despite being well-versed in natural sciences and also maths and technology, in his poems which were critical reflections on his own life and achievements, poems, which were very influential due to their simple and powerful language, he openly and explicitly condemned not only rational philosophy but also all other sciences as mere waste of time, distractions from coming to know God, and obstacles in the way of gnostic experiences. In his *Nan and Halwa* (Bread and Sweet) he says (and I quote just a few lines):

> Formal science is nothing but altercation;
> It results in neither intoxication nor contemplation
> …
> There is no science but the Quranic Commentary and hadith
> The rest is the deception of the perverse Satan.
> The mysteries will never become known to thee,
> If thou hast for student a hundred Fakhr-i Razi.
> …
> How long wilt thou teach the wisdom of the Greeks?
> Learn also the wisdom of those who have faith.
> …
> How long wilt thou lick the bowl of Avicenna?
> Illuminate thy heart with resplendent lights.[92]

Islamic philosophy in the tradition of combining gnostic, religious and rational strands, reached its apex in the teachings of Sadruddin Muhammad Shirazi (1571–1640), better known as Akhund Mulla

[90] Devin J. Stewart, 'Notes on the Migration of ʿĀmilī Scholars to Safavid Iran', *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* **55**(2) (1996), 81–103. For Sheikh Bahaei' life and works see, Behnaz Hashemipour, ''Āmilī: Bahāʾ al-Dīn Muḥammad ibn Ḥusayn al-ʿĀmilī', in Thomas Hockey (eds). *The Biographical Encyclopedia of Astronomers, Springer Reference* (New York: Springer, 2007), 42–43; E. Kohlberg, 'BAHĀ'-AL-DĪN ʿĀMELĪ', *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, availabla at: http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/baha-al-din-ameli-shaikh-mohammad-b

[91] S. H. Nasr, 'the School of Ispahan'. op. cit., 910

[92] Quoted in Nasr, ibid., 911–2

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Sadra and also as *Sadr Al-Muti'allihin* (the foremost amongst the theosophists).[93] Mulla Sadra was contemporaneous with Descartes and was as influential a philosopher in Islamic culture as was Descartes in the context of European thought. However, the approaches of these two intellectual giants were poles apart. Whereas Descartes was well-versed in philosophy, theology, physics, maths, and had a deep and lasting effect on the development of medicine, despite the fact that he was not a physician[94], Mulla Sadra dedicated his whole intellectual energy to the development of perhaps the finest theosophical system ever introduced within the econiche of Islamic culture. He, like his predecessors in the gnostic tradition, maintained that the only worthwhile knowledge is theosophy. He explicitly criticised Ibn Sina for wasting his time composing works on mathematics and medicine[95].

Mulla Sadra's exquisite system in which rational thinking was combined with esoteric approaches and applied to the teachings of the Quran and the tradition of the Prophet and the Shi'i Imams, came to be known as *Hikmat al-Muta'aliyah* (The Transcendent Theosophy). It seems the use of the term *Hikamt* with its rich connotations in the Quran and the tradition of the Prophet and Imams, was chosen deliberately by the founders of the two Schools of Isfahan and Shiraz to name their respective philosophical systems in a bid to quell the concerns of the orthodox *fuqha* who wield a great deal of power, especially during the Safavid period.

Hikmat al-Muta'aliyah is rich with novel ideas and brimming with interesting arguments and fecund metaphors. It has long been

[93] For Mulla Sadra's life, works and philosophy see, S. H. Nasr, *Sadr aI-Din Shirazi and his Transcendent Theosophy: Background, Life and Works* (Tehran: Imperial Iranian Academy of Philosophy, 1978; Fazlur Rahman), *The Philosophy of Mulla Sadra (Sadr al-Din al-Shirazi)*, (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1975); James Winston Morris, *The Wisdom of the Throne: An Introduction to the Philosophy of Mulla Sadra* (Princeton University Press, 1981); Hossein Ziai, 'Mulla Sadra: his life and works', in S. H. Nasr and Oliver Leaman (eds), *A History of Islamic Philosophy*, op. cit., 635–642; Kamal, Muhammad, *Mulla Sadra's Transcendent Philosophy* (Ashgate, 2006); Kalin, Ibrahim, *Knowledge in later Islamic philosophy: Mulla Sadra on existence, intellect, and intuition* (Oxford University Press, 2010); Sayeh Maysami, *Mulla Sadra* (One World, 2013)

[94] G. A. Lindboom, *Descartes and Medicine* (Amsterdam, Editions Rodopi, 1978), reviewed in *Medical History*, 1980 January; 24(1): 111–112.

[95] S. H. Nasr, 'Sadr al-Din Shirazi (Mulla Sadra)', in M. M. Sharif (ed.), *A History of Muslim Philosophy*, op. cit., 935

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established as the received wisdom and official philosophical doctrine, or to borrow a not very accurate term from Thomas Kuhn, the dominant theosophical paradigm, in all of those Muslim seminaries in which philosophy is being taught.

Of course the road to success was not as easy for Mulla Sadra as was with his teacher, Mir Damad, who was a respected figure at the court of Safavid kings. In fact, under the pressure from the more orthodox *'ulama* (clerics) and *fuqha* (jurists), Mulla Sadra was forced to spend fifteen years in self-exile in a small village, Kahak, near the city of Qom, before being able to return to Shiraz and establish his School there at a seminary which is still up and running today.[96] It should be noted that some decades before Mulla Sadra other philosophers from Shiraz, such as Sadr al-Din Muhammad Dashtaki (1425–1564) and his son Ghyiath al-Din Mansur Shirazi (d. 1542) had established a school of philosophy, also known as the School of Shiraz. Mulla Sadra has discussed their views in some of his works.[97]

Like Suhrawadri and Mir Damad before him, Mulla Sadra presented a complete metaphysical system which provides explanation for every aspect of reality, whether God, angels, man, afterlife, the day of judgement, and so on. His system however, in contradistinction to the systems developed by his two eminent predecessors was based on the notion of existential primacy (*Taqaddum Rutbi*) of being (*wujud*) over quiddity (*mahiyyat*) or the principality (i.e. reality) of being and accidentally (non-reality) of quiddity.[98]

In constructing his own system, he tried to combine the best aspects of the views introduced by previous sages, whether the Presocratic or neo-Platonic or Peripatetic or *Ishraqi* philosophers, with the wisdom of Sufis and mystics like Ibn Arabi, and the arguments of the theologians, and the teachings of the Quran and the tradition of the Prophet and the Imams, in order to create a coherent theosophical system, while exposing, a rational manner, the shortcomings of the views of his eminent predecessors.[99]

[96] S. H. Nasr, *Sadr aI-Din Shirazi and his Transcendent Theosophy*, op. cit., 35–38

[97] H. Corbin, *History of Islamic Philosophy*, op. cit., 335–337

[98] Muhammad Kamal, *Mulla Sadra Transcendent Philosophy* (Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2006); David Burrell, 'Aquinas and Mulla Sadra on the Primacy of Existing', in Ali Paya (ed.), *The Misty Land of Ideas and the Light of Dialogue: An Anthology of Comparative Philosophy* (London: ICAS Press, 2013), 31–48

[99] Mulla Sadra has presented his metaphysical system in its developed form in his *magnum opus*, *al-Asfar al-Araba'a* (The Four Journeys) (Tehran: Entesharat-e Bonyad Hikmat Islami Sadra, 9 vols). Partial

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In the realistic outlook of Mulla Sadra the whole realm of being consists of just one reality, namely God. All the rest are His manifestations and therefore have no genuine reality on their own. God is the only necessary being, all the rest are contingent entities. For this particular type of contingency Mulla Sadra has coined a new term, *imakan-e Faqri* (contingency due to existential dependence) which was different from the common notion of contingency, namely, *imkan-e mahuwi*, contingency related to the quiddity or essence, which was used by previous philosophers.[100]

The general picture of Mulla Sadra's worldview was somewhat like the model presented by the neo-Platonic, though with many more added details and extra layers and structures plus a much more pronounced emphasis on the dual principle of unity in diversity and diversity in unity and primacy of being over quiddity.

God, as the only genuine, self-subsistent, being is the cause of all causes. But causes and effects are not different in essence: an effect is just an aspect of its cause. Moreover, since from unity only unity can issue forth, God's first emanation or manifestation, can only be a simple and unified being. This being is referred to by various names, including, the 'supreme intellect', 'the first emanation, and also *haghighat-e Muhammadiyah* (the reality of Muhammad). While the first two terms were common among philosophers of neo-Platonic tendency, this last description was an invention of Muslim mystics.[101]

Mulla Sadra introduced many novel themes and theories into Islamic philosophy and provided convincing solutions for many outstanding problems in not only the field of philosophy but also theology and mysticism. Apart from his doctrine of the unity and existential primacy of existence (*isalat al-wujud*), other doctrines such as the theory of substantial motion (*al-harakat al-jawhariyyah*); God' knowledge (including His knowledge of particulars); a general theory of knowledge; a novel theory concerning human soul; a theory

translations of this work are available. For example, Latima-Parvin Peerwani has translated the fourth intellectual journey; *Spiritual Psychology* (London: ICAS Press, 2008)

[100] Mulla Sdara, *Asfar*, the first Journey, op. cit.; Morteza Motahari, *Sharh-e Mabsut Manzumeh* (The Longer Commentary on Manzumeh), 3 Vols. (Tehran: Hikmat Publications, Tehran: 1366/1987); Morteza Motahari, *Dars hay-e Asfar* (The Teachings of Asfar) (Tehran: Sadra Publications, 1382/2003); Morteza Motahari, *Maqalat Falsafi* (Philosophical Papers) (Tehran: Sadra Publications, 2002)

[101] Mulla Sdara, *Asfar*, the first and the fourth journeys, op. cit.

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concerning time as the fourth dimension in material beings (though of course not in the sense discussed by Einstein); the theory of bodily resurrection; and rejection of the theory of reincarnation should be included in the long list of his achievements. Close harmony amongst various aspects of Mulla Sadra's philosophical system which has made his system a powerful intellectual tool stems from the unity of its author's thought.[102]

I will not be able to do justice to Mulla Sadra's numerous and rich achievements. Perhaps few words concerning his theory of Substantial Motion could provide a flavour of his approach. For Mulla Sadra, the primacy and principality of existence, means, among other things, that each entity has a personal or individual identity. Existence ought to be contrasted with non-existence. The more perfect an entity the richer its existence, in the sense that it is less contaminated with non-existence, is less dependent upon other beings, has less potentiality and possess more actuality. For non-material entities, their imperfection manifests itself in their absolute dependence upon God for their existence. But in the sub-lunar realm which is the abode of material entities, imperfection obtains an added feature. Here, the degrees of actuality and potentiality determine the degree of perfection of a particular entity with regard to its particular identity.

In this context, change means turning potentiality into actuality. Mulla Sadra argues that individual beings in the sub-lunar realm have their own distinct identities, are experiencing, on a continuous basis the process of actualisation of their potentialities. This process, first and foremost, happens in individual's existential substance and as a result changes in other categories such as quantity (*kamm*), quality (*kaif*), and place (*makan*) will be effected. Time is also a dimension which displays the above sequence of continuous and seamless turning of potentiality into actuality. Human soul is at the beginning just a mere potentiality, under favourable circumstances, it gradually emerges as a result of the interaction of the body of the newly conceived embryo with the environment. The process of actualisation of the potentials embedded in soul continues until the last moment the individual is alive and active. Since both the

[102] Mulla Sadra, *Asfar, the first journey,* op. cit.; Morteza Motahari, *Sharh-e Mabsut-e Manzumeh,* op. cit.; Abdolkarm Soroush, *Nahad Na-Aram Jahan* (The Never-at-Rest Essence of the Universe) (Tehran: Mu'assese Farhangi Sirat, 1378/1999); Mehdi Dehbashi, *Trans-substantial Motion and the Natural World* (ICAS Press, 2010)

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body and the soul have many different potentials, actualising particular aspects of such potentials becomes a matter of interaction between the individual and its environment. At the end of one's life in this world, one's soul leaves one's body and, depending on the degree of perfection it could have achieved while still in this world, it enters the realm of purgatory or higher up in the chain of being.[103]

In the period after the death of Mulla Sadra until the twentieth century, Islamic philosophy has mostly been a footnote to the Sadraeian system. Grand masters like Mulla Muhsin Faid Kashani, 'Abd al Razzaq Lahiji, Qadi Said Qomi, Mulla Ali Mudarris Zunuzi, Mulla Ali Nuri, Jahangir Khan Qashqaei and many more have, by and large, been busy explicating the intricacies of *Hikmat al-Muti'alliyah* and further developing its latent capacities and potentials. Apart from small steps from within the Sadraeian paradigm to better clarify this or that point or re-present or re-formulate this or that argument by improved versions, the only noteworthy development, which was only significant due to its pedagogical novelty, was the efforts of Mulla Haji Sabzevari (1797–1873), a nineteenth century philosopher to represent the whole of Sadra's system in term of easy to remember poems. His *Manẓumeh* (or collections of poems) became the standard textbook in all Persian speaking seminaries for teaching Sadra's philosophy.[104]

It is worth emphasising that parallel with the development of Sadraeian system which was the representative of rational approach among Muslim scholars, anti-rational movements and schools were also on the rise. Ironically the founder of one such movement, Sheikh Ahmad Ahsaei (the founder of Sheikhi movement) had produced an authoritative commentary on Mulla Sadra's *Asfar*.[105] Another influential figure was Muhammad Amin Astarabadi, the founder of Akhbari School in fiqh which advocates a literalist approach to fiqh and Islamic teachings. Mulla Sadra's

[103] Mulla Sadra, *Asfar*, op. cit., First, Third and Fourth Journey. Mulla Sadra's theory of human soul allows him to offer a novel solution for the vexed issue of mind-body problem. Since soul emerges from body and remains in touch with body until the end of life of the individual, the usual difficulties which beset a Cartesian model do not affect his model.

[104] Seyyed Hossein Nasr, *Islamic philosophy from its origin to the present: philosophy in the land of prophecy* (State University of New York Press, 2006); Morteza Motahari, *Sharh-e Mabsut Manẓumeh*, op. cit.

[105] S. H. Nasr, op. cit. 'Sadr al-Din Shirazi (Mulla Sadra)' 960

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son-in-law, Muhsin Fayd was among the main promoters of this school.[106]

Another interesting, though aborted development, was the efforts of an enlightened Qajar prince, Badi' al-Mulk Mirza, to introduce the views of Immanuel Kant to two grand masters of Islamic philosophy, Mulla Ali Mudarris Zunuzi and Mirza 'Ali Akbar Mudarris Yazdi and encourage them to respond to the challenges of the German philosopher by using the machinery of Islamic (mostly Sadraeian) philosophy. 'There is however, little evidence to show that any real dialogue and meeting of minds took place on this occasion. What caused the discussion on Kant's view to come close to some sort of 'dialogue of the deaf' was that, on the one hand, the prince was not competently familiar with Kant's views. And on the other, the masters, perhaps understandably, had stuck to their traditional canons and were not prepared to venture out of their intimate paradigm.'[107]

3. Islamic Philosophy in Iran in the 20th Century

In the early decades of the twentieth century, Iranian left-wing intellectuals, like their counterparts in other parts of the world who have been inspired by the Bolshevik revolution in Russia, embarked on an ideological crusade to promote various aspects of Marxism-Leninism and in particular Dialectical Materialism in Iran. These efforts received a great boost in 1941 with the formation of Soviet backed Tudeh party.

In reply to this ideological onslaught, one of the greatest masters of Islamic philosophy in modern times, Allameh Seyyed Muhammad Hussein Tabatabee (1904–1981), decided to expose the shortcomings of the Marxist ideology by critically assessing its philosophical doctrines. In early 1950s, Allameh began teaching a course of philosophy to a selected group of clerics chosen from among his best students. This course, based on twice-weekly sessions, lasted for about three years. During this period many philosophical aspects of Marxism and Dialectical Materialism were discussed. Allameh's lecture notes were edited and heavily annotated by his best disciple, Ayatollah Morteza Motahari (1920–1979), himself a renowned philosopher in

[106] Robert Gleave, *Scripturalist Islam: The History and Doctrines of the Akhbari Shi'i School* (Brill, 2007)

[107] Ali Paya & Malakeh Shahi, 'The Reception of Kant and his Philosophy in Iran', *Journal of Shi'a Islamic Studies* **3**(1) (2010), 25

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the tradition of Islamic Philosophy, and was published in five volumes, under the general title of *The Principles and Method of the Philosophy of Realism*.[108]

This book marked a watershed, though unfortunately not a turning point, in the long-standing tradition of Islamic philosophy. It was a watershed in the sense that after centuries of inward-looking, Muslim philosophers applied their talents and also the machinery of Islamic philosophy to an issue outside the usual set of theosophical problems. It did not however develop into a turning-point, in that it remained as, more or less, a one-off project. It did not give rise to systematic application of Islamic philosophy to other newly emerged issues in the Islamic communities. One notable exception was Ayatollah Motahari's subsequent efforts to replicate the model of his teacher, this time with a group of university Professors and students. During my last years of undergraduate studies as an electronic engineer at Sharif University of Technology and postgraduate years at the Department of Philosophy at the University of Tehran, I had the good fortune of attending these classes which continued until few months before the revolution of 1979. Below, I'll come back to the efforts of Ayatollah Motahari and few other philosophers to develop Islamic philosophy along a new and novel path.

The Principles and Method of the Philosophy of Realism consists of fourteen 'articles' each dealing with one important philosophical topic. The two Ayatollahs, Tabatabaee and Motahari did a thorough job in exposing epistemological shortcomings of Marxism and dialectical materialism. For example, they argued that Marxists' theory of knowledge leads to relativism and therefore fails to provide universal knowledge of reality. Dialectical materialism is also problematic in that accepting only one contradiction leads to an untenable epistemic position in which all sorts of bizarre claims can be made and there will be no way to examine them.

The book also for the first time in the history of Muslim philosophy, and almost two decades before David Lewis' *Convention: A Philosophical Study* (1969)[109], and four decades before John Searle's *Construction of Social Reality* (1995)[110] discussed the idea of knowledge about *etebariyat*, i.e. conventions and those socially

[108] Seyyed Mohammad Hossein Tababatabee & Morteza Motahari, *Usul-e Falsafa va Ravesh-e Realism* (The Principles and Method of the Philosophy of Realism) (Tehran: 1332/1953)

[109] David Lewis, *Convention: A Philosophical Study* (Harvard University Press, 1969)

[110] John Searle's *Construction of Social Reality* (Penguin Books, 1995)

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constructed realities whose function is to respond to man's non-cognitive needs, as against his cognitive needs which are taken care of by science/knowledge. Allameh introduced a highly original and detailed account of the structure of knowledge of conventions of all sorts. He divided the *etebariyat* into pre-social and post-social conventions/social constructions. The first group were, in Searle's parlance, products of individual volitive intentionalities, whereas the second group were products of collective volitive intentionalities. Under the first group Allameh introduced notions such as *wubjub* (necessity), *hosn va qobh* (goodness and badness), *intikhab-e akhaf va ashahl* (the principle of the least effort), *asl-e istikhdam va ijtima'* (the principle of exploitation and living in society), *asl-e mota-bi'at-e 'ilm* (the principle of following the guidance of knowledge). Under the second group Allameh included *asl-e melk* (the principle of ownership), *kalam* (language), *asl-e riyasat* (the principle of headship), *amr va nahy* (commanding and forbidding). Each of the above general categories is divided into a number of sub-categories. Allameh following a detailed explanation of each category discussed the relationship between our knowledge of *etebariyat* and the entities constructed by them[111].

He also discussed the famous argument concerning the impossibility of deriving an 'ought' from an 'is' first introduced by Hume. However, there is no evidence to suggest that Allameh was aware of Hume's argument. In the context of Islamic philosophy he seems to be the first philosopher who has discussed this issue.

The aim of Allameh Tabatabaee was to refute epistemic doctrines of Marxists who would present their views as 'scientific' and objective and did not seem to be aware of the fact that by linking individuals' knowledge of reality to their social classes, their theory of knowledge loses all its objective credibility. He also intended to expose Marxists fallacy of presenting socially constructed entities and the knowledge thereof as absolute and indubitable truth about material reality.

However, Allameh did not limit his criticism only to Marxists' doctrines, he also challenged the approaches of *Fuqha* (Muslim jurists) who, according to Allameh, had not differentiated between

[111] Seyyed Muhammad Hussein Tabatabaee, *Usul Falsafa Realism* (The principles of a Realist Philosophy), (Qom: Markaz Barrasi-ha-yi Islami, 1357 (solar)), chapter six. This single volume only contains Allameh Tabatabee's main essays without Ayatollah Motahari's footnotes and annotations.

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the normative status of the views they had discussed in their legal discussions and factual claims about reality.

Allameh Tabatabee and Ayatollah Motahari had developed their arguments from within a somewhat modified and expanded Sadraeian framework. Nevertheless, despite all its innovative and trailblazing aspects, *The Principles and Method of the Philosophy of Realism*, suffered from a number of shortcomings which have been inherent in the traditional Islamic philosophy since its inception. The three principal shortcomings of this system, as a whole, are as follows:

- Adherence to self-evident truths as the justificatory basis of all knowledge claims;
- Strong emphasis on attainment of certainty as the end goal of epistemic pursuits; and
- Insistence on the so-called '*ilm-I huduri'* (knowledge-by-presence) as the ultimate and most valuable type of knowledge.

However, subscription to the above three theses, as I briefly argue here, deprives Islamic philosophy from ridding itself from the shackles of a dogmatic outlook. For example, the insistence of Muslim philosophers to base their philosophies on the foundation of self-evident truth and seek justification for their knowledge-claims by resorting to this notion has made their systems vulnerable to all sorts of criticisms levelled at the validity of self-evident notions and the process of justification.[112]

Moreover, it seems Muslim philosophers, in their pursuit of achieving certainty, have fallen into the trap of a serious category mistake: they have mistakenly upheld the notion of *ilm-i huduri* 'knowledge by presence' as an epistemic notion. This notion is also referred to as the outcome of a process known as *itihad-i 'aqil va ma'qul* (the unity between the intellect and the intelligible) or *itihad-i 'alim va ma'lum* (the unity between the knower and the known). This process and its end result refer to an existential experiences and not an epistemic state in which we use language and concept to reconstruct our lived experiences.

However, of the three theses introduced above, perhaps the second one, i.e., an emphasis on attaining certainty, is the most important one. It seems such an emphasis on the role of certainty and its place in philosophical investigations is not unrelated to religious

[112] See David Miller, 'Overcoming the Justificationist Addiction', *Pazhoheshay-e Falsai* (Philosophical Investigations), 1(1) (1387/2008), 1–16.

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teachings in which the strength of believers' faith is gauged by their degree of certainty in God and in the truth of Islamic teachings. The notion of certainty, *yaqin*, is also emphasised in many of the Quranic verses. To make things even more complicated, the Quran introduces three different notions of *yaqin*, which imply a hierarchy, or various degrees, of certainty. These are known as *ilm al-yaqin* (lit. the knowledge of certainty = certainty due to acquired knowledge), *'ain al-yaqin* (lit. the eye of certainty = certainty obtained through direct encounter/ direct 'observable' evidence), and *haq al-yaqin* (lit. the truth of certainty = absolute, indubitable certainty).[113]

Now it seems these degrees of certainty are contrasted to epistemic concepts such as *shakk* (doubt), *ẓann* which is translated into 'surmise' and 'conjecture', and *wahm* (phantasm)[114].

Perhaps prior to the introduction of the views of critical rationalists such as Karl Popper and David Miller, almost all Muslim scholars, were, and the majority of them still are, of the view that certainty is not simply an epistemic state, in fact, its highest state; and failing to obtain it implies not only a serious defect in one's epistemological approach but more worryingly weakness in one's faith in God. It seems that the majority of Muslim scholars, including most, if not all, Muslim philosophers, have never considered the case that certainty is not an epistemic state but a psychological one, and that knowledge can be attained by means of constructing conjectures and projecting them to reality. Of few possible exceptions to this rule which I can mention here, one is Adib Pishawari (1882–1971), a student of Hajj Mulla Hadi Sabzavari, who in the following quatrain seems to come close to a critical rationalist position:

Whatever you have seen in the books,
Or have heard from knowledgeable people;
Is nothing but some myths concerning reality; However,
Reality is infinite and the number of our myths is always limited.

The other is Abu al-'Ala Ma'rri (973–1058) the blind poet-philosopher well known for his scepticism. He is reported to have said: 'Amma al-Yaqin, Fala Yaqin. Innama Aqsi' al-Ijtihadi an Azannu wa Ahdasa' (Concerning certainty, there is none. For my part, my utmost epistemic endeavour is directed towards making conjectures and hunches).

Apart from general understanding of the meaning of the concept of *yaqin* in the context of Islamic culture and its value and worth in the

[113] See, The Quran, 102: 5&7, 56:95, 69:51
[114] Tabatabaee, *Usul Falsafeh Realism*, op.cit., 115

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eyes of Muslims, it seems Muslim philosophers, who have always been accused by their fellow theologians, jurists and mystics, of introducing ideas and views which are alien to genuine Islamic teachings, have been extra careful to emphasise the importance of *yaqin* and also the fact that their philosophical systems are capable of achieving it.

However, the emphasis of various schools of Islamic philosophy on their ability to attain certainty as the end goal of their epistemic pursuit has not helped the position of these schools in the eyes of their opponents. The opponents, each in their own way, maintain that certainty can be obtained with much more effectiveness and greater ease through their own ways rather than moving along the torturous path of incomprehensible philosophical reasoning.

The literalists, of different types and orientations among both the Sunnis and the Shi'as, represent one such opponent group. They claim that certainty can be attained by closely following the sharia law. The second group, also of large variety, are the Sufis/Mystics who advocate mystical practices, in place of rational arguments, as the best way of acquiring certainty.

The literal and the mystical approaches, despite all their apparent differences, share a common epistemic attitude: they both, each in its own way, belittle rational approaches and maintain that the truth of faith cannot be attained by it. But when reason is pushed out of the scene, the stage is set for all sorts of non-rational, irrational, and anti-rational behaviours. I conjecture that the failure of Muslim philosophers with regard to the above three theses has played a major role in paving the way for the emergence of extremists (like jihadists) in the midst of Muslims.

Going back to our story of the evolution of Islamic philosophy in the twentieth century, some of the few noteworthy developments concerning the application of the machinery of Islamic philosophy to meet modern intellectual challenges and therefore preparing the ground for further progress of Islamic philosophy in new directions which I can report are the efforts of Ayatollah Motahari, Ayatollah Haeri Yazdi, and Ayatollah Misbah Yazdi (all three among Allameh Tabatabee's better known disciples), and Ayatollah Seyyed Muhammad Baqir Sadr in Iraq (who could also be regarded as one of Allameh's (indirect) disciples.[115]

Of the four figures named above, the approaches of Motahari and Sadr to these challenge were very different from those of Haeri and

[115] For bibliographies of these authors see the catalogue of the Iran's National Library at: http://opac.nlai.ir/opac-prod/search/briefListSearch.do

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Misbah. Motahari, as a philosopher with strong religious inclinations, did his best, until his assassination in the early days after the victory of the Islamic revolution, to provide a rational response to the challenges posed mostly by new generations of Marxist writers and activists in Iran. He also tried to respond to the challenges posed by the arguments of philosopher such as Sartre or Russell whose views on family life, which were being promoted by secular intellectuals in Iran, were not in line with Islamic morals. During his relatively short life, apart from many specialised works which were concerned with the elucidation of various aspects of traditional (i.e. Sadraeian) philosophy, he produced many books in response to various intellectual challenges introduced through imported ideas. In books such as *The Man and His Destiny, Divine Justice, Women's Rights in Islam, Reasons and Causes of Inclination towards Materialism and Atheism, A Critique of Marxism* and many others he tried to respond, in a rational fashion, to challenges introduced by modern ideas. His rational approach was informed by a philosophical-cum-theological reasoning. In the last years of his life he came to the conclusion that for Islamic philosophy to undergo a genuine revival it was of utmost importance that epistemological issues, which had always remained under the shadow of theosophical topics, to be taken seriously. He embarked on a project of producing an epistemological system based on the insights of Islamic philosophy.

However, despite dedicating a great deal of time and energy to this project, he was reluctant to publish anything on this subject. He did not feel that he knew enough about modern epistemological developments to be able to critically assess them. His unfamiliarity with Western languages, which would limit his sources to only Persian and Arabic translations of the Western philosophy, added to his frustration. Moreover, at the time, modern epistemological developments, especially in the Anglo-Saxon (Analytic) tradition, were absent from the curricula of the country's universities and there were not competent philosophers who could provide him with an in-depth understanding of these developments in his own language.

In the autumn of 1978 Ayatollah Motahari accompanied Allameh Tabatabee in the latter's trip to the UK for medical treatment. Apparently during his short stay and in discussion with some Iranian PhD students he had got a chance to get a general idea of some of the latest philosophical developments in the West. Almost immediately after his return to Tehran he asked me to visit him at his home where I used to go each weekend along with few others to receive private lessons in Islamic philosophy. I vividly remember

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the meeting because it coincided with the very day the Shah left Iran for the last time. In that meeting he strongly urged me to travel to the UK to do a PhD in the philosophy of science! It seems he had come to the conclusion that to develop a sound approach towards modern epistemologies, one needed to have first-hand knowledge of philosophy of science and its related fields.

In contrast to Ayatollah Motahari, Ayatollah Misbah, who is at present the Director of an influential right-wing conservative academic institute in Qom, took a more openly apologetic approach towards foreign isms. In his various works he, in the good old tradition of apologists, tried to show that traditional Islamic views, including the Sadraeian system are, by far, superior to all imported isms.

Ayatollah Haeri Yazdi, who, in those days, was the only Ayatollah with two doctorate degrees in philosophy from universities of Tehran and Toronto, was trying to combine his *usli* approaches[116] with his Sadraeian upbringing in dealing with the challenges posed to the traditional doctrines of Islamic philosophy due to the modern epistemic developments since Kant's Copernican Revolution. His arguments however, remained firmly within the framework of traditional Islamic philosophy and despite the novelty of his approach, failed to address modern challenges in a fruitful manner.

Ayatollah Sadr, who was executed along with his sister by the Baath regime in Baghdad, reportedly by Saddam Hussein's direct order, in April 1980, was, like Ayatollah Mutahari, concerned about developing proper philosophical response to the challenges presented by Marxism and other foreign ideologies or philosophical systems. Like Ayatollah Motahari, he also maintained that the intellectual facilities available in Islamic culture could help researchers to develop systems of thought which are free from the defects of Western philosophical schools.

In 1977, and in a trailblazing and influential book, *al-Ussus al-Mantaqiyah li'l Istiqra'* (The Logical Foundations of Induction) he took upon himself to develop an epistemological system based on the resources available in the Islamic intellectual milieu in order to

[116] *Usul* is a semantic machinery which assists *fuqha* (jurists) in their dealings with semantic entailments of the verses of the Quran and the traditions of the Prophet and Imams. Its relation to *fiqh* (Islamic jurisprudence) is more or less like the relation of logic to philosophy. It resembles the tools linguists and hermeneutists have developed to discuss meanings of the texts and/or speakers' meanings.

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suggest a solution to the vexed problem of induction.[117] The title of the book was however, a misnomer, since the author had no intention of providing logical foundations for induction and maintained that no such foundation can be found.[118]

For developing his novel and critical assessment of the problem of induction, Ayatollah Sadr, on the one hand, relied on the Arabic translation of Bertrand Russell's *Human Knowledge,* and on the other, made use of his detailed knowledge of *usul al-fiqh* and of Islamic philosophy.[119] He criticised Aristotle's and also mashsha'i (peripatetic) philosophers' proposed solution for the problem of induction, arguing that the principle of uniformity of nature, or its variances used by Aristotelians to justify induction, is not self-evident. It relies on induction.

Ayatollah Sadr then criticised Hume's and Mill's arguments. He rejected Hume's claim that causality cannot be established by empirical evidence and also rejected his pessimism concerning the impossibility of finding a solution for the problem of induction. As for Mill's view, he noted that while Mill was right in thinking that causality can be established by inductive means, he was wrong in linking the validity of inductive generalisation to causality.[120]

Having explained the failure of some of the well-known approaches to the problem of induction, Ayatollah Sadr introduced his own epistemological approach which he maintained could solve the problem once and for all. Ayatollah had dubbed his novel theory *Al-Naẓariyah al-Tawalud al-Dhati fi al-Ma'refat al-Bashariyah* (The Theory of Inherent Proliferation in Human Knowledge).[121]

[117] S. M. B. Sadr, *al-Ussus al-Mantaqiyah li'l Istiqra*, (Beirut: Dar al-Ta'aruf li'l Matbu'at, fourth imprint, 1977/1982)

[118] Prior to this book he had published another major work, *Falsafatuna* (Our Philosophy) to rebut the epistemological doctrines of Marxism. That book however, was mostly relying on arguments developed by Allameh Tabatabee and Ayatollah Motahari in *The Principles and Method of a Realist Philosophy*.

[119] The first Muslim philosopher who critically and thoroughly discussed Ayatollah Sadr's theory of induction was Abulkarim Soroush: 'Mabni Mantiqi Istiqra' az Naẓr-e Ayatollah Sadr' (The Logical Foundations of Induction from Ayatollah Sadr's Point of View), *Nashr-i Danish,* **15** (1362/1983), 22–43, I have heavily relied on his article in developing this part of the present paper.

[120] Sadr, *al-Ussus*, op. cit. pp. 69–81. Soroush, op. cit., 24–5

[121] Sadr, *al-Ussus*, op. cit., 123–131

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This novel theory is based on two pillars, namely, particular notions of certainty and a particular interpretation of probability developed in the light of an *usuli* concept. According to Ayatollah Sadr there are three types of certainties, namely: logical certainty; inherent (subject-based) certainty (*al-yaqin al-dhati*), and objective certainty (*al-yaqin al-mawdu'i*). Logical certainty pertains to the necessary relations between the conclusion of a valid syllogism and its premises and also necessary relations between subjects and predicates of tautologies. Inherent certainty refers to a subjective, psychological type of certainty. But the last type of certainty is achieved on the basis of accumulation of external evidence and the strength of this evidence.[122]

As for his particular interpretation of the probability he introduced a model in which a well-known notion from *usul al-fiqh*, namely, *al-'ilm al-ijmali*, which literally means un-detailed knowledge, was carefully crafted with some aspects of the classic (Laplacian) and the Frequency (von Mises) theories of probability without (so the Ayatollah argued) incorporating their weaknesses. The Ayatollah defined *al-'ilm al-ijmali* in the context of his own theory of probability as 'certain knowledge about an unidentified member of a certain set'.[123]

The Theory of Inherent Proliferation in Human Knowledge which is in itself extremely interesting since it shows how a traditional *mujtahid* and philosopher is grappling with an immensely important philosophical issue, boils down to the following claims for each of which the author provides detailed arguments[124]:

1. One begins one's knowledge pursuit about a particular subject-matter on the basis of a degree of *al-'ilm al-ijmali* about it. This is our opening hunch or conjecture. Some sort of relation of entailment exists among various parts of one's subjective knowledge which is the realm of subjective certainty. This knowledge can be expanded in a piecemeal manner by gradual increase in one's degree of rational belief;
2. One's degree of rational belief concerning a particular subject-matter, based on *al-'ilm al-ijmali* about that subject-matter, can be increased by the application of induction. In this stage due to accumulation of relevant evidence, one's objective certainty concerning the subject-matter under study also

122 Sadr, *al-Ussus*, op. cit., 321–334. Soroush, op. cit., 25–6
123 Sadr, *al-Ussus*, op. cit., 271–292
124 Ibid., 381–433

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increases. This stage is called the stage of objective proliferation of knowledge (*al-tawalud al-mawdu'i*)

3. In the last stage which is called the stage of inherent proliferation of knowledge (*al-tawalud al- dhati*) increase in the degree of probability and in the objective certainty combined with certain rules of entailment (which are not logical) described by Ayatollah Sadr in details leads to transformation of our initial conjecture into inherent (subject-based) certainty (*al-yqain al-dhati*) concerning the subject-matter of our research.

Ayatollah's Sadr's new subjective theory of induction of course, as some Muslim philosophers have argued, like all other suggested solutions for this problem, fails to achieve its goal.[125] Nevertheless, his bold efforts in developing, perhaps for the first time in the modern history of Islamic philosophy, a novel approach which radically enlarges the horizon of traditional thinking is worthy of praise.

Apart from the projects cited above which had taken, to varying degrees a problem-oriented approach in response to the newly-emerged challenges, the majority of activities in the field of Islamic philosophy whether in seminaries or universities were directed towards transmission and exposition of the views of the past masters. Among the better known expositors of Islamic philosophy in the second half of the twentieth century and the first decade of twenty-first century one should name the late Seyyed Jalal ad-Din Ashtiyani of whom I say few words later, Ayatollah Javadi Amoli in Qom who is the best student of Allameh Tabatabaee and has trained many seminary students in the Sadrraean tradition, and Professor Ibahim Dinani at the University of Tehran who has published, among many other titles, a three-volume cataloguing

[125] See Soroush, op. cit., 'Mabni Mantiqi …, pages 31–42; Some other writers have tried to either critically asses Ayatollah's Sadr's approach to induction or defend his approach against Soroush's criticisms. While both groups have relied on Soroush's arguments, the latter have failed to develop cogent defence of the Ayatollah's views. See A. Khosrow-Panah, 'mantiq-e Istiqra az Didgah Shahid Sadr' (The Logic of Induction from Martyr Sadr's Point of View), *Zehn*, **18** (1383/2004) 29–58; M. M. Hadavi-Tehrani, 'Mo'zal-e Istiqra az Negah-e Shahid Sadr' (The problem of Induction from Martyr Sadr's Point of View), *Keyhan-e Andishe*, **36**(130–147); M. M. Hadavi-Tehrani, 'Naqqadi Mabani Manteqi Istiqra' (Critique of the Logical Foundation of Induction), *Keyhan-e Andishe* **37**, 60–70

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and explicating philosophical principles used by all Muslim philosophers.[126]

In contrast to the rarity of the initiatives in making use of the resources of Islamic philosophy in a problem-oriented way to develop novel solutions for modern issues, efforts concerning introducing the heritage of Muslim philosophers, including publication of the works of the past masters, whether in original or in translations (including English translations) and explicatory books/papers on the views of the past masters, have thrived in the past fifty years. In such efforts scholars and academic centres outside of the Islamic lands have played a significant role. The following examples are just few cases in point. During the 1970s, Henri Corbin, with the support of L'Iran et la France Institut, and in collaboration with Seyyed Jalal ad-Din Ashtiyani, and some of other Iranian philosophers, foremost amongst them, Seyyed Hossein Nasr, launched a project whose aim was to introduce later philosophical developments in Iran, especially the achievements of the two schools of Isfahan and Shiraz, to the world outside of Iran. Corbin and his colleagues published a series of books entitled *Selections of the Works of Iranian Divine Philosophers, from the time of Mir Damad and Mir Findereski until Present*.[127] A similar project was pursued by Mehdi Mohahqiq at the Institute of Islamic Studies which was jointly run by Tehran University and the University of McGill in Canada. Among the publications of this Institute Toshihiko Izutsu's translation of Haji Sabzaevari's *Manẓumeh* is worth mentioning. Sabzaevari's *Manẓume* is unique in the sense that it is the only complete exposition of Mulla Sadra's philosophy which is compiled in shape of memorable poems rather than the usual prose form. For this reason it has been the main textbook of teaching Sadraeian philosophy in Seminaries since the later nineteenth century.

With regard to promotion of Islamic philosophy Seyyed Hossein Nasr should get a particular mention as not only one of the best expositors of this philosophy, especially its *al-Hikmat al-Mashirqiyah* strand, but also perhaps as one its most dedicated promoter in a global, and not only Islam-wide, arena. He has published individually and in collaboration with other Iranian and non-Iranian scholars,

[126] I. Dinani, *Qava'id Kolli Falsafi dar Falsafa Eslami* (General Philosophical Principles in Islamic Philosophy) (Tehran: Mu'asses Entesharat Elmi va Farhangi, 3 vols 1365/1386)

[127] S. J. Ashtiyani, et al, *Montakhabati az Asar-e Hokamay-e Elahi Iran az Mir damad va Fenderski ta Asr-e Hazer* (Tehran: L'Iran et la France Institut, 4 vols. 1350/1371)

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many papers, books and anthologies on Islamic philosophy and Muslim philosophers in Persian, English, French and Arabic. He has also translated many of the works of Muslim philosophers into, mostly English.

I do not venture to name other scholars (especially the Western scholars) who have been instrumental in developing studies about Islamic philosophy and translating many of the works of Muslim philosophers into European languages. Even citing the names of these scholars with a short introduction of their works exceeds the limits of a lengthy paper; it requires a tome which runs into hundreds of pages. Instead, I shall say few words about the development of Islamic philosophy in the Arab world.

Despite the fact that philosophy has not been a favourite subject in the larger Muslim world, books of Muslim philosophers, especially of the classic period, have always been in print in countries such as Egypt and Lebanon. Efforts for producing edited versions of the works of Muslim philosophers have also been going on in Arab countries on an almost continuous basis. Ibrahim Madkour and more than him Abd al-Rahman Badawi in Egypt ought to be mentioned as two representatives of the generations of editors of classical philosophical texts. In the west side of the Islamic world much attention has been paid to Ibn Rushd and his views in recent decades. Some Arab intellectuals maintain that Ibn Rushd's ideas could be used as a tool for reviving the rational tradition among the Sunni Muslims. Muhammed Abid al-Jabri is a better-known representative of this trend.[128]

4. The Future of Islamic Philosophy

Talking about future trends is always a risky business. Prediction of the future, as we all know, is not possible. I am not, therefore, going to attempt the impossible here. The best I can do is to suggest one or two plausible scenarios for the future development of Islamic philosophy.

But before sharing with you my own conclusion of gazing into my imaginary crystal ball, I should like to recount the account of another writer concerning the future of Islamic philosophy, namely, Muhammad Mian Sharif the editor of a two-volume *A History of Muslim Philosophy* first published in 1966. In the concluding part

[128] Muḥammad 'Abid Jabri, *Arab-Islamic Philosophy* (University of Texas Press, 1999)

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of his hefty tome which runs into almost 1800 pages, Sharif writes (and I am afraid it is a rather long quote):

> It is hazardous to foretell the future of peoples, nations, and cultures. This is particularly true in a world torn asunder by ideological conflicts and constantly under the shadow of total war. As it is, the fate of the whole human race is hanging in the balance and one spark of folly may set the whole world ablaze, thus falsifying all normal conjectures.
>
> However, unless such an all-pervading calamity befall mankind, one could make a guess about the future of Muslim culture and philosophical thought. The trends we have traced in the life of different Muslim countries … should give us a fair idea as to what the future may have in store for Muslim thought and culture.
>
> Owing to the developed means of communication, ideas travel easily now-a-days from one place to another, but they always require time to take root in a new soil. The two recent Western philosophies, Existentialism and Logical Positivism, have come to the East, but it will be some time before they penetrate deeply into the Muslim mind. But when they do penetrate the Muslim mind, they are likely to take, to a certain extent, a different shade. …
>
> It is very doubtful whether the ideas of a social history prevailing in the West will ever be accepted in the East, especially in the Muslim East. In the concluding remarks of part "E" of the Introduction we delineated the philosophy of history to which our study lends support. There we said that it has a negative as well as a positive aspect. Negatively, it is non-organismic, non-cyclic, and non-linear; and positively, it involves belief in social dynamics, in progress in human society though the ages by rises and falls, in the importance of the role of ethical values in social advances, in the possibility of cultural regeneration, in the environmental obstacles as stimuli to human action, in freedom and purpose as the ultimate sources of change, and in the mechanical determinism as an instrument in divine and human hands. This philosophy is as distinct from the philosophy of history advanced in Europe and the United States as from that which is accepted in the Soviet Union. We consider this philosophy in consonance with the teachings of Islam. We believe, it is this ideology in which lies the salvation of the world and not in the ideologies hotly defended and followed in the Western world.

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For my part, I must say, and no doubt I am benefiting from the wisdom of the experiences of the past few decades since Sharif's book, that I do not subscribe to either a historicist view of history, or a deterministic worldview, or an ideological, as against philosophical, outlook concerning the future of Islamic philosophy.

In my view, for Islamic philosophy to be able to play an efficient role in tackling real-life issues, it needs to reconnect with science and technology. It should regard science as a genuine companion in its knowledge pursuit, and not a mere means for justificatory purposes. It also needs to realise that 'certainty' does not belong to the realm of knowledge investigation. The spirit of critical and rational thinking, openness to ideas and views developed in other cultures and civilisation, and tolerance which was once strong among Muslim thinkers must be encouraged and enhanced once gain. Its choice of problems should also be considerably augmented and enriched by an attitude for combining abstract thinking with applied reasoning.

As far as the philosophical and cultural milieu in Iran is concerned, I can say, with some degree of optimism, that in recent decades and especially since the Islamic revolution in 1979, foundation for a radical change in intellectual and philosophical outlooks has gradually been laid in the country. While in the past, the majority of those young souls who would study philosophy, whether at seminaries or at universities, were, by and large, not academically well-equipped and not particularly apt for this field, but had opted for it out of necessity and not choice, in the years leading to the revolution and afterwards many talented students with good backgrounds in science, maths and engineering enrolled in philosophy courses. The introduction of modern trends of philosophical thought, beyond Existentialism and Logical Positivism, has also opened up new opportunities for philosophy students whether in seminaries or in universities to move out of the sphere of traditional teachings and experience new horizons.

Younger generations of philosophers are gaining confidence to challenge the entrenched norms of 'scholarly behaviour' which would discourage criticisms of one's teachers and professors' philosophical views.

Iranian students of philosophy are becoming more and more aware of the importance of relatively newly emerged philosophical fields such as applied philosophy. This awareness has helped them to better appreciate the need for adopting problem-oriented approaches in their philosophical endeavours.

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The fact that fuqha (jurists), despite enjoying a privileged status, have come under increasing pressure with regard to their monopoly over 'representing' the official face of Islam, has provided further breathing space for the emergence of new, critical trends of thinking in the country.

Another factor which could help the development of a more rational approach to Islamic philosophy in Iran and perhaps those other Muslim countries in which philosophy is gradually taking root is the activities of scholars (especially the Western scholars) outside Islamic countries.

Papers and books produced by these scholars, in a way, set some standards for Muslim philosophers to compare and contrast their own levels of scholarship with those of their foreign colleagues. It must be emphasised that in recent years and as a result of strong institutional support for scholarly activities in seminaries in Iran and a similar support for promotion of religious sciences, the number and quality of scholarly journals and publications which are dedicated to the elucidation of various aspects of Islamic philosophy has increased considerably.

Given the fact that neither philosophical nor scientific knowledge claims, as against technological techniques and know-how, could be regarded as culture-specific, such a newly developed philosophy, could only be regarded as 'Islamic philosophy' in the sense I explicated at the outset of this paper, namely, the outcome of intellectual endeavours of individuals who happen to be Muslim or live in Muslim lands or both and make use of, among many other resources, the intellectual machinery developed in Islamic civilisation. This philosophy, provided it upholds its critical and rational approach, could join force with other schools developed elsewhere in tackling problems which are regarded as challenges for modern men wherever they happen to be and to whatever sources of inspiration they happen to be attached.

Of course the above optimistic trends should not be over-emphasised. There are, as there have always been, anti-rational and anti-philosophical tendencies in Islamic societies in general and in their centres of learning in particular. A case in point, is a relatively new anti-philosophical school, known as *makatb-i tafkik* (lit. the Separationist School) based on the views of Sayyid Musa Zarabadi (d. 1353/1934), Mirza Mahdi Gharavi Isfahani (d. 1365/1946), and Shaykh Mujtaba Qazvini Khurāsānī (d. 1386/1966). This trend has powerful bases in many traditional seminaries inside and outside Iran and especially in Mashhad. *Tafkikis* strongly oppose philosophy in all its shapes and forms, even in the sanitised form of

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Mulla Sadra's *Hikmat al-Muta'aliah*. In their view even the Quran should be understood by the teachings of the Shi'a Imams.

Nevertheless, it seems to me that new trends, within the general framework of 'Islamic philosophy', are, slowly, but surely moving towards acquiring the critical mass required for making their presence felt. As for an approximate time-scale for reaching such a threshold, I better not hazard making any guess and end my future gazing here.

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