The Sufi Doctrine of Man

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TEXTS AND STUDIES

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The Sufi Doctrine of Man

Ṣadr al-Dīn al-Qūnawī's Metaphysical Anthropology

By

Richard Todd

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Richard Todd
Edinburgh, June 2013

Abbreviations

EI[2]	*Encyclopaedia of Islam, Second Edition*
EI[3]	*Encyclopaedia of Islam, THREE*

Works by Ibn ʿArabī

Fuṣūṣ	*Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam*, ed. A. ʿAfīfī, Beirut 1980
Futūḥāt	*al-Futūḥāt al-makkīya*, ed. O. Yahia, Beirut 1998

Works by Qūnawī

As'ila	*al-As'ila* published in *Murāsalāt*
Fukūk	*al-Fukūk fī mustanadāt ḥikam al-Fuṣūṣ*, ed. M. Khvājavī, Tehran 1992
Hādiya	*al-Risāla al-hādiya* published in *Murāsalāt*
Iʿjāz	*Iʿjāz al-bayān fī taʾwīl umm al-Qurʾān,* ed. M. Ahmed, Hyderabad 1988
Miftāḥ	*Miftāḥ al-ghayb* published with *Miṣbāḥ al-Uns*, ed. M. Khvājavī, Tehran 1995
Mufṣiḥa	*al-Risāla al-mufṣiḥa* published in *Murāsalāt*
Murāsalāt	*al-Murāsalāt bayn al-Qūnawī wa al-Ṭūsī*, ed. G. Schubert, Wiesbaden 1995
Murshidīya	*al-Risāla al-murshidīya*, MS Berlin We. 1806(1)
Nafaḥāt	*al-Nafaḥāt al-ilāhīya al-qudsīya*, MS Berlin We. 1662
Naftha	*Nafthat al-maṣdūr wa tuḥfat al-shakūr*, MS Leiden Or. 544
Nuṣūṣ	*al-Nuṣūṣ fī taḥqīq al-ṭawr al-makhṣūṣ*, ed. J. Ashtiyānī, Tehran 1983
Sharḥ al-Aḥādīth	*Sharḥ arbaʿīn ḥadīthan*, MS Leiden. Or. 920
Tarjumah	*Tarjumah-i Nafaḥāt-i ilāhīyah*, trans. M. Khvājavī, Tehran 1996
Ummahāt	*Ummahāt al-mawāṭin*, MS Istanbul Şehid Ali Paşa 1344(5)

Work by Ṭūsī

Ajwiba	*al-Ajwiba* published in *Murāsalāt*

Glossary of Philosophical and Sufi Terms

ʿadam	non-existence
aflāk	celestial spheres
aḥadīya	non-duality
ahl al-naẓar	rationalists
aḥwāl	states, conditions
ʿālam	world, cosmos
ʿālam al-ajsām	world of bodies, corporeal domain
ʿālam al-arwāḥ	world of spirits
ʿālam al-mithāl	world of subtle exemplars
ʿālam al-shahādah	the visible world
al-ʿamā'	the Primordial Mist
amr	command, order; thing
ʿanāṣir	elements
ʿaql	intellect, intelligence; reason, rational faculty
al-ʿaql al-awwal	the First Intellect
al-ʿaql al-faʿāl	active intellect
al-ʿaql al-muqayyad	the shackled intellect hindered by cogitative thought
aqṭāb	poles, chiefs of the spiritual hierarchy
aʿrāḍ	accidents, non-essential attributes
ʿārifūn	gnostics
al-ʿarsh al-muḥīṭ	the All-Encompassing Throne
asbāb	causes, occasions
aṣl	origin
athar	trace, effect
aʿyān	concrete essences; concrete beings
ʿayn	essence; being
ʿayn thābita	immutable essence
awliyā'	saints
baqā'	permanence
al-barāzikh	common boundaries; states of limbo
barzakh	common boundary, isthmus
barzakh al-barāzikh	the supreme boundary between the absolute and the conditioned
bukhār	steam, vapour
burhān	syllogistic proof, rational demonstration
al-dahr	fate, eternity
dhāt	essence

dhawq	taste, direct experience or insight
dhikr	invocation
al-falak al-aʿẓam	the supreme celestial sphere
falāsifa	medieval Islamic philosophers, Arabic Aristotelians
falsafa	medieval Islamic philosophy, Arabic Aristotelianism
fanāʾ	evanescence, effacement
farāgh	emptiness, void
fatḥ	spiritual opening, grace, intuition
fayḍ	emanation, effusion
faylasūf	Muslim philosopher, Arabic Aristotelian
fiṭra	pristine nature
futuwwa	Islamic chivalry
ghāya	teleological end
al-ghayb	the non-manifest
al-ghayb al-muṭlaq	the absolute non-manifest
ghidhāʾ	nutrition
habāʾ	dust; matter
ḥadd fāṣil	dividing line
ḥaḍra	presence; dignity
ḥaḍarāt	presences
ḥakīm	philosopher, sage
ḥaqāʾiq	essences
ḥaqīqa	essence, underlying reality; truth
al-ḥaqīqa al-muḥammadīya	the Muḥammadan reality, the Prophet's archetypal essence
al-ḥaqq	the True, the Real, God
ḥaraka	motion
al-ḥaraka al-qasrīya	forced or violent motion
al-ḥaraka bi-l-ṭabʿ	natural motion
hayākil	structures, bodies
hayūlā	hylé, matter
hayūlānī al-waṣf	like prime matter, non-differentiated
ḥayra	confusion, perplexity
ḥuḍūr	presence of mind
ḥukm	statute; rule, sway, dominion
ḥukamāʾ	philosophers, sages
al-ḥukamāʾ al-awāʾil	the ancient philosophers
ijtidhāb	attraction
ikhtiṣāṣ	spiritual distinction
ʿilla	cause

al-ʿilla al-ghāʾīya	final cause
al-ʿilla al-ūlā	the First Cause
ʿillīya	causality
ʿilm	knowledge, science
ʿilm al-ḥurūf	the science of letters, a form of divination
al-ʿilm al-ilāhī	divine science, metaphysics
al-ʿilm al-ṣaḥīḥ	true knowledge
imdād	help, divine succour
imkān	contingency, possibility
ʿināya	providence
insān	human being
al-insān al-ḥaqīqī	the true human being, who has actualised mankind's specific perfection
al-insān al-kāmil	the perfect human being
insilākh	casting off, shedding the body
iqtidār	power; divine omnipotence
irtisām	inscription
ishārāt	subtle hints, allusions
al-ism al-jāmiʿ	God's All-Embracing Name
istīdāʿ	lodging
istiʿdād	predisposition
istiḥāla	transmutation
istijlāʾ	revealing, bringing to light
istiqrāʾ	induction
istiqrār	settling; conception
iʿtidāl	equilibrium, balance
ittiḥād	union, fusion
ittiṣāl	conjunction
ithbāt al-wājib	proving the existence of the Necessary Being
iʿtibārāt	relative standpoints
iṭlāq	absoluteness, absence of constraint, freedom
jadhb	attraction, attractive force
jadhabāt	attractive forces
jamʿ	synthesis
jamʿīya	all-embracing nature, comprehensiveness
jawāhir	substances
jawhar	substance in which attributes inhere
jism	body
jism al-kull	Universal Body, the principle of corporeality
al-jism al-muṭlaq	Absolute Body; identical with Universal Body

juzʾī	individual
kalām	speech; scholastic theology
kamāl	perfection, entelechy
kamāl al-ākhirīya	the perfection of the last
kāmil	perfect, whole
karāmāt	graces, marvels
kashf	unveiling, intuition
kayfiyāt	qualities
khalīfa	successor, deputy, vicegerent
khalq	creation
al-khāṣṣa	the élite
khayāl	imagination, illusion
khulūṣ	liberation, freedom
khuṣūṣ	distinction, specificity
khuṣūṣīyāt	specificities
kullī	universal
kummal	perfect human beings
al-kursī	the Pedestal
lā taʿayyun	non-determination, indeterminacy
laṭīfa insānīya	the spiritual faculty specific to humans; see *al-nafs al-nāṭiqa*
al-lawḥ al-maḥfūẓ	the Guarded Tablet
maʿād	return, spiritual *reditus*
maʿānī	meanings, intelligible realities
mabdaʾ	origin, principle, spiritual *exitus*
madad	help, divine succour
maʿdin	mineral; source
maʿdūm	non-existent
maḥall	locus; vessel of consciousness
māhiya	quiddity, "whatness"
majdhūb	attracted
majlā	locus of manifestation; mirror
majlis	assembly, gathering
majʿūl	made, created
maʿnan	meaning, intelligible reality
manāqib	hagiography
maʿnawī	intelligible
maqām	spiritual station
maqāmāt	spiritual stations
martaba	rank, degree
maṣdar	source

mawāṭin	homelands; worlds; eschatological realms
mawjūdāt	beings, existents
maẓhar	locus of manifestation
miʿrāj	spiritual ascent
miʿrāj al-taḥlīl	the ascent of unbinding or dissolution, anagoge
mizāj	mixture, blend, temper, temperament
al-muḥiṭ	in Ptolemaic astronomy the outermost celestial sphere
mufāriq	separate from matter, incorporeal
mufassirūn	scriptural exegetes
muḥaqqiqūn	verifiers; the pre-eminent figures in any field
muḥdath	originated
mujādhabāt	attractions, attractive forces
mujāhadāt	spiritual disciplines, mortification
mujarrad	abstract, removed from matter
mūjid	existentiator, cause or bestower of existence, God
mumkināt	contingent beings; possibilities
munājā	colloquy, intimate conversation
muqallid	imitator, conformist
muqayyad	shackled, constrained
mustabṣir	unprejudiced seeker of truth
mustawdaʿ	lodging-place
mutaʿayyin	determinate
mutakallimūn	scholastic theologians
mutaṣawwifūn	Sufi initiates
mutawahham	imaginary
muṭlaq	absolute, unconstrained
al-muwalladāt	born of the elements, the kingdoms of nature
nafas al-raḥmān	the breath of the All-Merciful = universal existence
nafkh	inbreathing
nafs	soul
al-nafs al-kullīya	the Universal Soul
al-nafs al-nāṭiqa	the speaking soul, the rational soul
nashʾa	genesis, regeneration
nashʾa ʿunṣurīya	the elemental genesis
nashaʾāt	geneses, regenerations
naẓar	speculation, study, rational inquiry
nikāḥ	marriage, wedding, sexual union
nisba	relationship, ratio
nisba ʿilmīya	the cognitive relationship, the divine mind, a hypostasis of the Divine Essence

nubuwwa	prophethood
al-qadr al-mushtarak	the common measure = existence
qalaq	anxiety, angst
al-qalam al-aʿlā	the Sublime Pen
qalb	heart, the seat of man's spiritual faculties
qawābil	receptacles
qiyāma	resurrection
qubūl	receptivity
quṭb al-zamān	the pole of the times, the chief of the esoteric hierarchy
al-quwwa al-mufakkira	the cogitative faculty
raḥma	mercy
raḥma khāṣṣa	specific mercy = providence
raḥma shāmila	comprehensive mercy = existence
raqīqa	subtlety, delicate thread
riyāḍāt	spiritual exercises
rūḥ	spirit
al-rūḥ al-ḥayawānī	the vital spirit
al-rūḥ al-ilāhī	the Divine Spirit
al-rūḥ al-kullī	the Universal Spirit
al-rūḥ al-mudabbir	the governing spirit
rūḥānīya	spiritual modality
saʿāda	happiness, eudaimonia
salāma	soundness; salvation
sālik	wayfarer; initiate
sālikūn	wayfarers; initiates
al-samāʾ al-dunyā	the lowest heaven
shaʾn	affair, thing
sharʿ	law
sharāʾiʿ	revealed laws
sharīʿa	revealed law
shurūṭ	conditions
shuʾūn	affairs
al-sidra	the Lote Tree
sirr	secret, mystery
al-sirr al-ilāhī	the divine secret, the divine ground of the soul
sirr al-qadr	the secret of destiny
silsilat al-tartīb	the chain of causal succession
sulūk	following the spiritual path
ṣūra	form

taʿaqqul	intellection
taʿayyun	determination
al-taʿayyun al-awwal	the first determination
al-taʿayyun al-thānī	the second determination
taʿayyunāt	determinations
ṭabāʾiʿ	natures, natural qualities
ṭabīʿa	nature
tadbīr	governance, management
tadhakkur	recollection, reminiscence
tafrīgh al-maḥall	emptying the vessel of consciousness
tafriqa	state of mental and spiritual dispersion
tafṣīl	detail, differentiation
taḥaqquq	realisation
taḥarrur	liberation, freedom
ṭāʾifa	sect, community
tajallī	self-disclosure, theophany, epiphany
al-tajallī al-dhātī	the self-disclosure of the Essence, the essential theophany
tanāsukh	reincarnation
tanazzulāt	revelations
taqlīd	imitation, conformism
ṭarīq	way; initiatic path
ṭarīqa	way, method; initiatic path; Sufi order
tarkīb	composition
tasalsul	infinite regress
taswiya	arranging, harmonising
taṣarruf	right of disposal; theurgy
tawajjuh	orientation
ṭawr al-fikr	the domain of cogitative thought
thubūt	fixity
ʿunṣur	element
ʿunṣur al-ʿanāṣir	the element of elements, the supreme element or quintessence
waḥda	unity, oneness
waḥda ḥaqīqīya	true unity
waḥdat al-wujūd	the oneness of Being
wāhib al-ṣuwar	the bestower of forms = active intellect
al-wajh al-khāṣṣ	the specific face connecting the contingent being to its necessary principle
wāqiʿa	event; vision
wasāʾiṭ	intermediaries

wijdān	consciousness
wujūb	necessity
wujūd	Being; existence
al-wujūd al-ʿāmm	universal existence
al-wujūd al-maḥḍ	pure Being
al-wujūd al-muṭlaq	absolute Being
yaqīn	certitude
zāwiya	Sufi lodge
ẓuhūr	appearance, manifestation

Notes on Transliteration

Arabic and Persian terms have been transliterated according to a modified version of the system used by the *International Journal of Middle East Studies*. Words with a familiar English form (such as shaykh, sultan, Sufi, hadith, etc.) have been used in that form. Where names take the form of a *nisba*, the definite article (*al-*) has been omitted after the first occurrence.

Introduction

1 Ṣadr al-Dīn al-Qūnawī

Ṣadr al-Dīn al-Qūnawī (d. 673/1274) was the foremost disciple of the great Andalusī mystic, Muḥyī-l-Dīn Ibn ʿArabī (d. 638/1240) and played a pivotal role in disseminating his teachings. Although less famous than his master, Qūnawī has traditionally been recognised both as a key interpreter of Ibn ʿArabī's work and as a sophisticated metaphysician in his own right. Yet for almost half a century now, since Osman Yahia's[1] and Henri Corbin's[2] respective studies on Ibn ʿArabī first brought the figure of his chief disciple to the wider attention of western scholarship, there has emerged no full-length examination of Qūnawī's thought.[3]

The reasons why such a study has proved elusive may well lie, as William Chittick has suggested,[4] both in the fact that Qūnawī has been overshadowed by Ibn ʿArabī, and in the famously difficult character of his works, the most important of which have often been considered even more complex than those of his master. To these very plausible factors we would add another more general consideration, namely, whatever their relative complexity, the fact remains that until quite recently only two of Qūnawī's works had actually been edited, while the rest existed, as indeed more than half still do, in the form of long-lost lithographs or as part of the vast heritage of unedited Islamic manuscripts, to which, it may be noted, many of the works of Ibn ʿArabī himself still belong.

As for the studies undertaken on Qūnawī so far, they fall into two groups: those devoted to his works and thought and those chiefly concerned with the part he played in Ibn ʿArabī's milieu. For the moment we shall restrict our attention to the former, as the second group will be dealt with in the chapter on Qūnawī's life and times.[5] In order, then, to underline the dearth of material

1 *Histoire et classification de l'œuvre d'Ibn ʿArabi*, Damascus 1964.

2 *Creative Imagination in the Sūfism of Ibn ʿArabī*, Princeton 1969, p. 69–71.

3 Although the need for one has repeatedly been noted: see, for example, S.H. Nasr, *Three Muslim Sages*, New York 1975, pp. 80, 96; W. Chittick, 'The Last Will and Testament of Ibn 'Arabi's Foremost Disciple and Some Notes on Its Author' in *Sophia Perennis* 4/1 (1978), p. 43; C. Addas, *Quest for the Red Sulphur*, Cambridge 1993, p. 232; G. Elmore, 'Sadr al-Din al-Qunawi's personal study-list of books by Ibn al-'Arabi' in *Journal of Near Eastern Studies*, 56: 3, 1997, p. 161.

4 'The Last Will', p. 43.

5 See *infra*, p. 13, note 3.

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on Qūnawī's doctrines it should suffice to remark that the only studies on aspects of his thought to have been published in a western language so far have been three brief articles by William Chittick[6] and Gudrun Schubert's introduction to her edition of Qūnawī's correspondence with Naṣīr al-Dīn al-Ṭūsī.[7] Besides these, it is true, there exist two full-length works, though they lie outside the categories of "published" and "western" respectively. The first is Stephan Ruspoli's unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, entitled 'La clef du monde supra-sensible' (Paris IV 1978), which consists of a critical edition and partial translation of Qūnawī's *Miftāḥ ghayb al-jamʿ*. The second is Nihat Keklik's Turkish monograph, *Sadreddin Konevi'nin felsefesinde Allah-Kâinât ve Insan* (Istanbul 1967), which was, prior to the current work, the sole full-length academic study on Qūnawī to have been published in any language.

2 Qūnawī's Anthropology in Context

With the foregoing in mind, the present work sets out to provide an analysis of one of the defining strands of Qūnawī's thought – his anthropology, or doctrine of man. Marked by a generally Islamic view of man's intrinsic excellence, Ṣadr al-Dīn's anthropology focuses not only on the nature of human beings in their earthly state and afterlife but also, and more fundamentally, on the metaphysical principles underpinning their existence and teleological end. For Qūnawī, then, as for his master before him, the study of man is grounded in a primarily *metaphysical* understanding of human nature. In the works of Ibn ʿArabī and his school,[8] as is well known, this understanding reaches its apogee in the concept of *al-insān al-kāmil* or the perfect human being, conceived of as a theophanic manifestation in which God contemplates the hidden treasures of His Essence and through whom the world's existence is sustained. "The vicegerency (*khilāfa*)", says Ibn ʿArabī, "befits none save the perfect human being alone, for [God] has made his outer form from

6 'Sadr al-Din Qunawi on the Oneness of Being' in *International Philosophical Quarterly,* XXI, I, 1981, 171–184; 'The Five Divine Presences: From al-Qunawi to al-Qayseri' in *Moslem World* 72, 1982, 107–128; 'The Circle of Spiritual Ascent according to al-Qunawi' in P. Morewedge, ed., *Neoplatonism and Islamic Thought*, New York 1992.

7 *Al-murāsalāt bayna Ṣadr al-Dīn al-Qūnawī wa Naṣīr al-Dīn al-Ṭūsī / Annäherungen. Der mystisch-philosophische Briefwechsel zwischen Ṣadr ud-Dīn-i Qōnawī und Naṣīr ud-Dīn-i Ṭūsī*, ed. G. Schubert, Wiesbaden 1995.

8 For an overview of this school and its key figures see W. Chittick, 'The School of Ibn 'Arabī' in S.H. Nasr and O. Leaman, eds., *History of Islamic Philosophy; Part I*, London 1996, p. 510–526.

the forms and realities of the cosmos, and has made his inner form after His own image".[9]

But this is not a doctrine without precedent. Indeed, for both Qūnawī and his master its roots are enshrined in the scriptures, with the Qur'ān itself affirming man's status as the summit of creation, superior even to the angels by dint of knowledge:

> {And when thy Lord said to the angels, 'I am making a vicegerent in the Earth'. They said 'Wilt Thou set therein one who will do corruption there, and shed blood, while we proclaim Thy praise and call Thee Holy?' He said, 'I know that which ye know not'. And He taught Adam all of the names, then He presented them to the angels and said, 'Tell Me the names of these, if you speak truly.' They said, 'Glory to Thy Transcendence! We know not save what Thou hast taught us. Thou art the All-Knowing, the All-Wise.'}[10]

The idea that the human being encapsulates the cosmos is one that can be found, of course, in other intellectual traditions too, most notably the Hermetic corpus, the influence of which is clearly discernible in early and medieval Islam.[11] Accordingly, we find the concept of man as microcosm being echoed by different authors and schools, from the early 'Abbasid period onwards. Such for example is the view of human nature set forth in the *Sirr al-khalīqa* (*The Secret of Creation*),[12] a Hermetic work traditionally ascribed to the first-century Neopythagorean philosopher, Apollonius of Tyana (Ar. Bālīnās), but more probably composed by an anonymous Arab author in the ninth century C.E.: "by participating", we are told, "in every single nature, the human being is the middle of all natures, whether intelligible or sensible".[13] And such too is the

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9 *Fuṣūṣ*, p. 55. The first chapter of the *Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam*, from which the quotation above is taken, is generally regarded as the *locus classicus* for the Akbarian doctrine of the perfect man. See also *Futūḥāt*, vol. I, p. 170–171.

10 Qur'ān, II, 30–32. For Qur'ānic quotations I have used A.J. Arberry's *The Koran Interpreted* (Oxford 1983) in conjunction with the Arabic text. For the sake of clarity, however, I have modified Arberry's translations on occasions.

11 For a detailed study of Islamic Hermetism see K. Van Bladel, *The Arabic Hermes: from pagan sage to prophet of science*, Oxford 2009. See also V. Cornell, 'The way of the axial intellect: the Islamic hermetism of Ibn Sabʿīn' in *Journal of the Muhyiddin Ibn ʿArabī Society* 22 1997, pp. 41–79.

12 On the *Sirr al-khalīqa* see Van Bladel, *The Arabic Hermes,* p. 170, note 23.

13 Pseudo-Apollonius of Tyana, *Sirr al-khalīqa wa ṣanaʿat al-ṭabīʿa*, ed. U. Weisser, Aleppo 1979, p. 403.

view expounded by the most celebrated Arab litterateur of his age, ʿAmr ibn Baḥr al-Jāḥiẓ (d. 869/255),[14] in the following passage from his *magnum opus* the *Kitāb al-Ḥayawān* or *Book of Living Things*:

> Dost thou not know that they called the human being – for whose sake was created the heavens, the earth and all that lies between, even as the Almighty has said {He made subject to you what is in the heavens and what is in the earth, all of it from Him}[15] – the 'microcosm, son of the great cosmos', because they found in him all the forms contained in the world: they found in him the five senses and the five objects of sense-perception; they noted that he eats both grain and meat, thus combining the sustenance of beasts of burden and beasts of prey … They called him the microcosm because they found him capable of depicting all things with his hand, and of imitating all sounds with his mouth, and because his limbs are apportioned according to the twelve signs of the zodiac and the seven planets. In him, likewise, are yellow bile, which is the product of fire; black bile, the product of earth, blood, the product of air; and phlegm, the product of water; and in harmony with his four humours were tuned the four strings [of the lute]. Wherefore, they deemed him a small cosmos (*ʿālam ṣaghīr*), for in him are all of the world's parts, mixtures and natures.[16]

Likewise, more than a century after al-Jāḥiẓ, we find the anonymous authors of the *Rasāʾil Ikhwān al-Ṣafāʾ*[17] expressing the same basic idea[18] in noticeably similar terms:

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14 For references to Hermes in al-Jāḥiẓ's *Kitāb al-Tarbīʿ wa-l-tadwīr* see Van Bladel, *The Arabic Hermes*, p. 167. For a discussion of the intellectual background to the *Kitāb al-Tarbīʿ* see J. Montgomery, 'Al-Ǧāḥiẓ and Hellenizing Philosophy' in C. D'Ancona, ed., *The Libraries of the Neoplatonists*, Leiden 2007.

15 Qurʾān, XLV, 13.

16 Jāḥiẓ, *Kitāb al-Ḥayawān*, ed. M. Ḥalabī, Cairo 1939–45, vol. I, p. 212–214.

17 For a comprehensive study of the Ikhwān al-Ṣafāʾ and their doctrines see Y. Marquet, *La Philosophie des Ikhwân al-Safâ*, Algiers 1973. See also I. Netton, *Muslim Neoplatonists: An introduction to the Thought of the Brethren of Purity*, London 1982; and S.H. Nasr, *An introduction to Islamic cosmological doctrines: conceptions of nature and methods used for its study by the Ikhwān al-Ṣafāʾ, al-Bīrūnī, and Ibn Sīnā*, London 1978.

18 For their part, the Ikhwān al-Ṣafāʾ explicitly ascribe the origin of this doctrine to the "scriptures of Hermes, who is the prophet Idrīs, upon him be peace". See *Rasāʾil Ikhwān al-Ṣafāʾ*, ed. K. Zirikli, Cairo 1928, vol. I, p. 297.

> When the ancient philosophers scrutinised this corporeal world with their eyes, perceived its phenomena with their senses, and then meditated upon its states and conditions with their intellects … they found no part thereof more perfect in structure or form, nor more closely resembling the whole than the human being: for composed as he is of a corporeal body and a spiritual soul, they found in the structural configuration of his body semblances of all that exists in the bodily world, be it the wondrous composition of its heavenly spheres, the divisions of its zodiac, the movements of its planets, the composition of its elements, the different substances of its minerals, the manifold forms of its plants, or the marvellous structures of its animals. And they found, too, in the various categories of spiritual creatures – be they angels, *jinn*, mankind, demons, or the souls of animals – and in their action upon the world a resemblance to the human soul and the way in which its powers flow through the structure of the body. Hence, such aspects of human forms having become clear to them, they called the human being on that account a microcosm.[19]

And the same doctrine is echoed in the writings of Shihāb al-Dīn ʿUmar al-Suhrawardī (d. 632/1234),[20] a Sufi master who loomed large in the Seljuq Anatolia of Qūnawī's childhood and early youth.[21]

Qūnawī, then, was not the first medieval Muslim thinker to lay emphasis on the study of human nature, nor does his metaphysical doctrine of man constitute a break from the spirit of the tradition in which he wrote; but it remains significant nonetheless by dint of its breadth, complexity and lasting legacy.

In order to set the scene for our analysis of his anthropology, we have endeavoured to provide at least some historical and intellectual background to our author and his thought. In the first part of this book we therefore give a brief account of Qūnawī's life and works and attempt to situate his writings in relation to the intellectual currents of his day, including the Sufi metaphysics of his master, as well as the Hellenistic theories adopted by the Islamic philosophers.

As for the anthropological section proper, it has been founded upon an examination of all of Qūnawī's major works, and has been structured

19 *Rasā'il Ikhwān al-Ṣafā'*, vol. II, p. 456–457.

20 On ʿUmar al-Suhrawardī's doctrine of man, see M. Hodgson, *The Venture of Islam: Conscience and history in a world civilization*, Chicago 1974, vol. 2, p. 225; and A. Knysh, *Islamic mysticism: a short history*, Leiden 2000, p. 201.

21 On ʿUmar al-Suhrawardī, see Knysh, *Islamic mysticism*, p. 195–204.

according to the overarching scheme of man's *exitus* and *reditus*, or existential journey. Here, however, it should be said that although on occasions we refer to other relevant sources, our prevailing concern at this stage has not been to undertake a systematic comparison between Qūnawī's anthropology and that of his master, or indeed to provide an exhaustive account of the texts that may have informed his work, but simply to allow his treatment of this topic to emerge as clearly as possible.

3 The Political Setting

The political backdrop throughout the greater part of Qūnawī's career is that of the Seljuq Sultanate of Rūm.[22] Born into the privileged class of Persian courtiers on whom the Turkic Seljuq rulers traditionally relied, Ṣadr al-Dīn's fortunes seem to have remained tied, throughout his life, to those of the Seljuq state. Although Qūnawī's writings contain virtually no mention of political figures or events, it seems clear from the timing of his sojourns in Syria and Egypt that the periods he spent away from Rūm were prompted in some measure at least by changes of ruler or political turmoil in his Anatolian homeland.

A rump state of the Great Seljuq Empire, the Sultanate of Rūm experienced a heyday of prosperity and influence during the first half of the thirteenth century under a succession of capable leaders. Having captured vital outlets to the Mediterranean and the Black Sea, the ensuing revenue from transit trade helped fund the cultural and architectural efflorescence of the Seljuq capital, Konya.[23] Noticeable, too, in this period is the generally favourable attitude of the Seljuq sultans towards Sufism, with Kaykā'ūs famously providing a haven for Ibn ʿArabī[24] while his successor, Kaykūbād, offered protection to the family of Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī.[25]

From the 1240's onwards the political landscape of Seljuq Anatolia would be dominated by one feature above all others: the encroaching Mongol threat from the East. In fact, since the Mongols had first started their campaigns, some twenty years earlier, against the Iranian dominions of the Khwarazmian shah, Konya and Rūm in general had been absorbing waves of refugees from

22 Present-day Eastern Anatolia.

23 See See T. Rice, *The Seljuks in Asia Minor*, London 1966, p. 67–72.

24 See C. Addas, *Quest for the Red Sulphur: the Life of Ibn ʿArabī*, Cambridge 1993, pp. 225–227, 233–235.

25 See A. Bausani, "Djalāl al-Dīn Rūmī" in *EI²*.

Persia and Transoxania. But when, in 1242, the Mongols took Erzurum on the eastern fringe of the Seljuq lands, the Seljuq sultan, Kaykhusraw II (d. 644/1246), mustered an army and engaged the enemy at Köse Dagh on the road between Sivas and Erzincan. The ensuing battle ended in a crushing defeat for the Seljuq forces. The sultan himself fled unscathed and found refuge in Antalya. In his absence, however, and without his knowledge, his vizier, Muhadhdhab al-Dīn (d. 644/1246), negotiated a treaty of protection with the Mongols, thus sparing the rest of the Sultanate from attack.[26]

For Eastern Anatolia the years that followed were a period of general instability marked by famine and infighting between rival scions of the Seljuq clan.[27] Relative stability, however, was restored under the stewardship of the "Parvāna"[28] or chief vizier, Muʿīn al-Dīn Sulaymān (d. 676/1277), a figure who dominated Rūm during the final years of the Mongol protectorate.[29] Both a patron of mystics and a ruthless politician, the Parvāna was the *de facto* ruler of the protectorate for more than two decades. Finally, it seems likely that in the hope of ridding himself of his Mongol overlords he had a hand along with other Anatolian *amīrs* in enlisting the support of the Mamlūk sultan of Egypt, Baybars (d. 676/1277), who responded to their call and defeated the Mongol forces at the battle of Albistān in 1277. Suspecting treachery, the Mongol Ilkhān, Abaqā (d. 681/1282), had the Parvāna put to death, and shortly afterwards, despite Baybars' victory, Eastern Anatolia was placed directly under Mongol rule.[30]

4 The Cultural and Intellectual Climate

Like the political world of the time, the cultural and intellectual environment into which Qūnawī was born was undergoing significant changes too. This is especially true of Sufism in the late twelfth and early thirteenth centuries, a period that witnessed the emergence of the *ṭarīqa*s or Sufi orders[31] as well as important developments in doctrinal expression. Of the orders that emerged

26 See Cl. Cahen "Köse Dagh" in *EI²*.

27 See T. Rice, *The Seljuks in Asia Minor*, p. 75. This period, as we shall see, largely coincides with Qūnawī's second stay in Egypt, where, accompanied by a circle of students from Rūm, he taught at a Sufi lodge in Cairo.

28 Literally "butterfly" – a traditional Persian title given by the Seljuqs to their chief vizier.

29 See C. Hillenbrand, "Muʿīn al-Dīn Sulaymān Parwāna" in *EI²*.

30 See C. Hillenbrand, "Muʿīn al-Dīn Sulaymān Parwāna" in *EI²*.

31 For an account of their rise, see Knysh, *Islamic mysticism*, p. 172–218.

in the decades prior to Qūnawī's birth, the Suhrawardīya in particular seems to have had a special bearing on Ṣadr al-Dīn's first contacts with the initiatic path, as Awḥad al-Dīn al-Kirmānī (d. 636/1238),[32] the master who initiated him into Sufism, was affiliated to the founder of that order, Abū-l-Najīb ʿAbd al-Qādir al-Suhrawardī (d. 563/1168).[33]

On the doctrinal level the Sufi metaphysics of Ibn ʿArabī – unprecedented in its breadth and sophistication – marks a key watershed in the development of Sufi thought.[34] This is also a period in which mystical poetry – both in Arabic and Persian – comes to the fore as a major genre of Sufi literature:[35] from the spiritual allegories of Farīd al-Dīn ʿAṭṭār (d. 586/1190)[36] to the finely constructed odes of Ibn al-Fāriḍ, in which the stock themes and imagery of profane wine songs and love poetry are invested, often audaciously, with spiritual symbolism.[37]

Finally, we should note that the early years of Mongol rule in Iran provided the setting for a minor renaissance of Avicennian philosophy at the hands of Naṣīr al-Dīn al-Ṭūsī (d. 672/1274) and his students.[38] Free from the dogmatic pressures that had hindered philosophical inquiry since Ghazālī's (d. 505/1111) famous critique of *falsafa*, or Arabic Aristotelianism, towards the end of the eleventh century,[39] Ṭūsī penned an influential commentary on Ibn Sīnā's (d. 428/1037) *Kitāb al-ishārāt wa al-tanbīhāt*, which was essentially a defence of the Avicennian tradition.[40] Ṭūsī's commentary, and indeed the ripples of this

32 See *infra,* p. 16, note 13.

33 The Suhrawardīya is also noteworthy for its links with *futuwwa* or Islamic chivalry, and in particular the brand of *futuwwa* championed by the resurgent ʿAbbasid caliph, al-Nāṣir (d. 622/1225), who sought to use the chivalric orders and trade guilds as a means of securing allegiance among the urban classes of Seljuq Rūm. The caliph was a patron of Abū-l-Najīb's nephew, ʿUmar al-Suhrawardī, and encharged him with a mission to Seljuq Anatolia in 618/1221, where he invested the new Seljuq sultan, Kaykūbād (d. 634/1237), with the robe of *futuwwa*. On the political dimensions of ʿUmar al-Suhrawardī's relationship with al-Nāṣir, see Knysh, *Islamic mysticism*, p. 195–204.

34 For a brief account of Ibn ʿArabī's life and thought, see Knysh, *Islamic mysticism*, p. 163–168.

35 See Knysh, *Islamic mysticism*, p. 150–161.

36 See Knysh, *Islamic mysticism*, p. 152–156.

37 See *infra,* p. 17, note 19.

38 On Ṭūsī see *infra,* p. 35.

39 On Ghazālī and his *Tahāfut al-Falāsifa*, or *Incoherence of the Philosophers*, see W. Montgomery Watt, *Muslim Intellectual: a study of al-Ghazālī*, Edinburgh 1963.

40 See H. Dabashi, 'Khwājah Naṣīr al-Dīn al-Ṭūsī: the philosopher/vizier and the intellectual climate of his times' in S.H. Nasr and O. Leaman, eds., *History of Islamic Philosophy; Part I*, p. 544–551.

movement in general, reached Qūnawī in Seljuq Anatolia, prompting his emblematic correspondence with Naṣīr al-Dīn – an exchange to which we will refer throughout the present study.

5 Qūnawī's Biography in Medieval Sources

When setting about the task of constructing as accurate a picture as possible of Qūnawī's life, a variety of primary sources present themselves, with differing degrees of reliability. Naturally, priority has been given to Ṣadr al-Dīn's own testimonies. However, though his works cannot exactly be regarded as lacking in this respect, as his precise chronicle of epiphanies and intuitions would appear to be unique in the annals of Sufi literature, their rather impersonal nature means that they do not contain the kind of straightforward biographical account – ostensibly at any rate – that one finds, for instance, in the writings of Ghazālī or Ibn Sīnā. Nor, for that matter, do they contain an abundance of anecdotal material of the kind found in Ibn ʿArabī's works.

It is, however, possible to find a certain amount of biographical data in the writings of Qūnawī's disciples. The principal sources in this connection are two works by Muʾayyid al-Dīn al-Jandī (d. 700/1300), the biographical value of which has long been recognised by students of Ibn ʿArabī, namely his commentary on the *Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam* and a Persian work entitled *Nafthat al-rūḥ wa tuḥfat al-futūḥ*. Also worthy of mention is Saʿīd al-Dīn al-Farghānī's (d. 699/1299) *Mashāriq al-darārī*, a work which, though lacking in the kind of anecdotal material found in Jandī's writings, is nonetheless of particular interest in that it includes a preface, written by Qūnawī, in which he provides details of his youthful travels and early teaching career.

Of similar importance in terms of usefulness and reliability is the data contained in the colophons of the authorised manuscripts of works by both Qūnawī and Ibn ʿArabī. This source has the additional advantage of providing a welcome measure of chronological precision. Hence, while some periods of Qūnawī's life remain hazy or completely obscure, these records serve to bring some events, at least, sharply into focus.

Another reasonably reliable store of information is to be found in the two chief chronicles of the Seljuq Sultanate of Rūm, namely Ibn Bībī's (fl. 684/1285) *al-Awāmir al-ʿalāʾīya*, and Karīm al-Dīn al – Aqsarāʾī's (fl. ca. 700/1300) *Musāmarat al-akhbār wa musāyarat al-akhyār*. Although the former contains little mention of Qūnawī, it is important nonetheless in that it represents the chief source of information about his father's career at the court of the Seljuq sultan. Aqsarāʾī's work, by contrast, provides clear confirmation of the elevated

position that Qūnawī himself eventually came to occupy within the Seljuq state.

While these four categories take precedence in terms of their historical value, it is still possible to glean a significant amount of information from a number of other, less reliable types of sources. On this score, mention should be made first of all of traditional biographical dictionaries, or *Ṭabaqāt*, which, it has to be said, vary in terms of their usefulness depending on their author and their purview. Nevertheless, out of the many *Ṭabaqāt* containing notices on Qūnawī, two classic reference works in particular deserve mention here. The first is Khalīl ibn Aybak al-Ṣafadī's (d. 764/1363) *al-Wāfī bi-l-wafayāt*, which has the advantage of being the earliest such source to include Qūnawī in its listings. The other is ʿAbd al-Raḥmān al-Jāmī's (d. 898/1492) *Nafaḥāt al-uns*, which, in keeping with its author's reverence for Ibn ʿArabī's school, contains by far the most comprehensive mention both of Qūnawī and his disciples.[41]

Finally, there are traditional hagiographies, or *manāqib*. As a rule, the closer they were written to the time in which their respective saints lived, the greater their historical value, which is why we have chosen not to make use of the only work devoted to Qūnawī that properly falls into this genre: Muḥammad Amīn Dede's *Raghāʾib al-manāqib*,[42] which was composed several centuries after Qūnawī's death, and has a typically legendary feel to it. Of considerable value, by contrast, is Shams al-Dīn Aḥmad Aflākī's (d. 761/1360) well-known hagiography of Jalāl al-Dīn al-Rūmī (d. 672/1273), entitled *Manāqib al-ʿārifīn*, since despite displaying the characteristic bias of the genre, it provides, nonetheless, a vivid portrayal of the personalities and daily life of Konya during the time of the Mongol protectorate.

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41 Other well-known *ṭabaqāt* with entries on Qūnawī are Tāj al-Dīn al-Subkī's (d. 771/1370) *Ṭabaqāt al-Shāfiʿīya al-kubrā*; ʿAbd al-Wahhāb al-Shaʿrānī's (d. 973/1565) *al-Ṭabaqāt al-kubrā*; Aḥmad Taşköprüzade's (d. 968/1561) *Miftāḥ al-saʿāda*; and ʿAbd al-Raʾūf al-Munāwī's (d. 1031/1621) *al-Kawākib al-durrīya fī tarājim al-sādāt al-ṣūfīya*.

42 For a short description of this work, see H. Ritter, 'Autographs in Turkish Libraries' in *Oriens*, 6.1 (1953), p. 70–71.

PART 1

Qūnawī's Life and Work

∵

CHAPTER 1

Life and Times

1 Early Life and Education

Ṣadr al-Dīn Muḥammad ibn Isḥāq ibn Yūsuf al-Qūnawī was born in the Seljuq Sultanate of Rūm[1] in or around 605/1208–9,[2] the son of a prominent religious scholar.[3] His father, Majd al-Dīn Isḥāq, was the *Shaykh al-Islām*, or head of the Seljuq religious establishment,[4] under Sultan Ghiyāth al-Dīn Kaykhusraw (d. 608/1211) and his successor ʿIzz al-Dīn Kaykāʾūs (d. 618/1221). Majd al-Dīn was a friend too of Ibn ʿArabī, whom he had met on the pilgrimage to Mecca,[5] and who stayed with him in Rūm for several years under Kaykāʾūs's protection and patronage.[6] A number of sources suggest that following Majd al-Dīn's

1 On his exact place of birth there is no firm consensus – some sources claiming Konya (the Seljuq capital), others Malatya. It seems likely, though, that he spent much of his childhood in the latter. Konya, however, was to be his home in later life and his final resting place, hence the sobriquet al-Qūnawī, or "the Konyan".

2 See Elmore, 'Sadr al-Dīn al-Qūnawī's personal study-list', p. 161, note 1.

3 On Qūnawī's early life in particular see Claude Addas, *Quest for the Red Sulphur* (p. 227–233), an account of the *Shaykh al-Akbar*'s spiritual career, which, along the way, sheds a certain amount of light on Qūnawī's discipleship and also on Ibn ʿArabī's friendship with Qūnawī's father. See also Gerald Elmore's 1997 article, 'Sadr al-Din al-Qunawi's personal study-list of books by Ibn al-'Arabi' (*Journal of Near Eastern Studies*. 56: 3, 161–181), which documents in considerable detail the course of reading that Qūnawī followed under the guidance of his master. For a brief account of Qūnawī's life in general see Chittick's chapter on 'The School of Ibn 'Arabī' in S.H. Nasr and O. Leaman, eds., *History of Islamic Philosophy; Part I*, p. 510–526. Of interest too is Chittick's 1978 article 'The Last Will and Testament of Ibn 'Arabi's Foremost Disciple and Some Notes on Its Author' (*Sophia Perennis*, vol. 4, no. 1.), which contains a very brief description of Qūnawī's major works and an annotated translation of his will. In addition, there are short biographical sections in the two main Turkish works on Qūnawī, namely Nihat Keklik's, *Sadreddin Konevi'nin felsefesinde Allah-Kâinât ve Insan* (Istanbul 1967) and Ahmet Ceran's, *Şeyh Sadruddin Konevi* (Konya 1995); and Osman Yahia's *Histoire et classification de l'œuvre d'Ibn 'Arabī* (Damascus 1964), contains an exhaustive record of Qūnawī's role in the transcription of authorised manuscripts of Ibn ʿArabī's works.

4 For a brief history of the title *Shaykh al-Islām* see *EI*[2], s.v.

5 On Majd al-Dīn and his relationship with Ibn ʿArabī see Addas, *Quest for the Red Sulphur*, p. 225–226. See also S. Yıldız and H. Şahin, 'In the Proximity of Sultans: Majd al-Dīn Isḥāq, Ibn ʿArabī and the Seljuk Court' in A. Peacock and S. Yıldız, eds., *The Seljuks of Anatolia: Court and Society in the Medieval Middle East*, London 2013, p. 206–227.

6 After two relatively brief sojourns – the first in 602/1205 and the second around 608/1211 – Ibn ʿArabī's lengthiest stay in Anatolia began in 612/1215 and lasted, in all likelihood, until the death of Kaykāʾūs in 618/1220. See Addas, *Quest for the Red Sulphur*, p. 227.

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death[7] Ibn ʿArabī married Ṣadr al-Dīn's widowed mother and the family settled in Damascus,[8] where the Ayyubid ruler was more favourably disposed towards him than was the new Seljuq sultan, Kaykūbād (d. 634/1237). Although we cannot know for certain whether such a marriage took place, it does seem clear from the colophons of autograph manuscripts that Qūnawī spent at least some of his youth as part of Ibn ʿArabī's household in Damascus. Such too is the impression conveyed by the following curious anecdote recounted by one of Qūnawī's disciples:

> One day, the master of the perfect and seal of the saints [Ibn ʿArabī] – may God be pleased with him – was outside the gates of Damascus when it occurred to him that he should like to perform the circumambulations (*ṭawāf*) around the Kaʿba, whereupon he immediately found himself at the gates of Mecca and set forth at once to perform the *ṭawāf*.
>
> When it was time for the midday rest he went to the house of a friend of his in Mecca and slept there awhile. Then he renewed his ablutions and went out barefoot to continue his *ṭawāf*. After performing the circumambulations and praying in the Sacred Mosque it occurred to him that he ought to return to his companions and disciples in Damascus, and attend to the needs of his family, whereupon he found himself outside the gates of Damascus once again. Arriving home, he was met by our Shaykh, the teacher of truth and the proof of the way, Ṣadr al-Dīn Muḥammad ibn Isḥāq ibn Yūsuf – may God be pleased with him – who asked him: 'Master, where are your shoes?'
>
> 'I left them at a friend's house in Mecca.' replied the Shaykh – may God be pleased with him.
>
> 'In the less than three hours that you've been gone, you've been to Mecca and back?' asked our master.

7 So far no record of the date of Majd al-Dīn's death has come to light. However, it seems likey to have occurred some time between 611/1214 and 618/1220. See Addas, *Quest for the Red Sulphur*, p. 228.

8 For example, ʿAlī b. Ibrahīm b. ʿAbd Allāh al-Qārī al-Baghdādī (fl. 784/1382) – the author of the earliest hagiography, or *manāqib*, of Ibn ʿArabī, entitled *al-Durr al-thamīn fī manāqib al-shaykh Muḥyī-l-Dīn* – writes: "He [the *Shaykh al-Akbar*] entered the lands of Rūm, and there he married the mother of the Pole of the times, Shaykh Ṣadr al-Dīn Muḥammad ibn Isḥāq al-Qūnawī – may God be pleased with him – who thus graduated under his guidance". (*Manāqib Ibn ʿArabī*, p. 23). Moreover, in the colophon of a transcript of Ibn ʿArabī's *ʿAnqā' Mughrib*, recited before the author in Rabīʿ I 629 (January 1232), Qūnawī describes himself as the Shaykh's servant (*khādim*) and stepson (*rabīb*). (See Elmore, 'Sadr al-Din al-Qunawi's personal study-list', p. 178, note 125).

> 'Yes' replied the Shaykh, who then told him what had happened, explaining how it is possible to gather one's corporeality back into its spiritual principle and then cast it forth at will somewhere else. Shaykh Ṣadr al-Dīn kept a note of the day, time and hour [that this had happened]. After a long period had elapsed, they came from Mecca and brought the *Shaykh al-Akbar*'s shoes with them – may God be pleased with him. They too had made a note of the day and hour in which the Shaykh had appeared in Mecca, explaining that 'after a midday nap at our house the Shaykh went out barefoot to perform the *ṭawāf*, as is his wont – may God be pleased with him. When the people of the Sacred Precinct and its environs heard [that the Shaykh was there] they all thronged to see him. Suddenly the Shaykh disappeared from their very midst, leaving his shoes at our house. Wherefore, we were sent forth [to deliver them] and to learn how all this had come to pass.'[9]

But whether Ṣadr al-Dīn moved to Damascus at the same time as his master – in 620/1223, when he would have been around fifteen – or joined him there at some later date cannot be established with any certainty.[10]

Of Qūnawī's education we know that he specialised in the science of hadith[11] and was granted an *ijāza*, or license, authorising him to transmit Majd al-Dīn ibn al-Athīr's (d. 606/1210) famous compendium, the *Jāmiʿ al-uṣūl*.[12] And it seems likely

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9 Jandī, *Nafḥat al-rūḥ wa tuḥfat al-futūḥ*, p. 124–125.

10 Indeed, of his childhood in general little is known besides brief mentions in hagiographies and Seljuq chronicles.

11 It would appear that Qūnawī was recognised in later life as an authority in this discipline. According, for instance, to the contemporary chronicler, Karīm al-Dīn al-Aqsarā'ī (fl. 700/1300), "Shaykh Ṣadr al-Dīn Muḥammad … was a thoroughly learned man and a perfect teacher, versed in all manner of disciplines, especially the science of hadith, for which he was renowned in both East and West, and also for the fact that his father, Majd al-Dīn Isḥāq, was one of the companions of the divinely inspired master, Muḥyī-l-Dīn Muḥammad al-'Arabī". (Aqsarā'ī, *Musāmarat al-akhbār* in M. Mashkūr, ed., *Akhbār-i-Salājiqah-i-Rūm*, Tehran 1971, p. 419).

12 See Ṣafadī, *al-Wāfī*, vol. II, p. 200. A compilation of the hadiths contained in the six canonical collections, the *Jāmiʿ al-uṣūl fī aḥādīth al-rasūl* became a standard reference work. Its compiler, Majd al-Din Ibn al-Athīr (the eldest of three famous Ibn al-Athīr brothers), is also known for his hadith dictionary, *al-Nihāya fī gharīb al-ḥadīth*. On Ibn al-Athīr, see F. Rosenthal, "Ibn al-Athīr" in *EI*[2]. On the *Jāmiʿ al-uṣūl*, see H. Ritter, 'Autographs in Turkish Libraries' in *Oriens*, 6.1 (1953), p. 71–72.
Qūnawī's personal copy of the *Jāmiʿ al-uṣūl* contains a list of the many students who read this work under him, including the celebrated polymath Quṭb al-Dīn Shīrāzī (d. 710/1310).

that he was initiated into Sufism at an early age by the well-known Iranian mystic, Awḥad al-Dīn al-Kirmānī (d. 636/1238),[13] whom he would refer to throughout his career as his "other master".[14] We know too that in Damascus he studied Ibn ʿArabī's works under the *Shaykh al-Akbar*'s close guidance – a course of reading that has been carefully documented elsewhere.[15] Notably, this included all twenty volumes of the first redaction of *al-Futūḥāt al-makkīya* – Ibn ʿArabī's monumental summa of esoteric knowledge, consisting of 560 chapters – "recited to me", as his master confirms, "from beginning to end".[16]

(See A. Ateş, 'Konya Kütüphanelerinde Bulunan Bazı Mühim Yazmalar' in *Belleten* 16, 1952, p. 71–72).

13 A mystical poet of some note, Kirmānī was affiliated to the Suhrawardī order of Sufis and – like ʿUmar al-Suhrawardī – was also linked to the tradition of *futuwwa* or Islamic chivalry. His name is associated, too, with *shāhid-bāzī* or the mystical contemplation of supernatural beauty in the earthly form of handsome youths. For a brief account of Kirmānī and his thought, see B.M. Weischer, "Kirmānī" in *EI*[2]. On the controversy surrounding *shāhid-bāzī*, see L. Ridgeon, 'The controversy of Shaykh Awḥad al-Dīn Kirmānī and handsome, moon-faced youths: a case study of *Shāhid-Bāzī* in medieval Sufism' in *Journal of Sufi Studies* 1.1 (2012), p. 3–30. For examples of Kirmānī's poetry, see B.M. Weischer, 'Some mystical quatrains of Awhaddudin Kirmani' in *Journal of Turkish Studies*, 18 (1994), p. 323–328. On Kirmānī's tutelage of the young Ṣadr al-Dīn, as reported in hagiographic sources, see Addas, *Quest for the Red Sulphur,* p. 228–230.

14 According to a communication from William Chittick, published in Addas' biography of Ibn ʿArabī, "Qunawi states, in a manuscript letter addressed to a disciple, that Awḥad al-Dīn had been his master 'in certain respects, and for two years at Shiraz I was his companion and in his service". (See Addas, *Quest for the Red Sulphur*, p. 230). Some details of Qūnawī's time with Kirmānī are given in the *manāqib* of this shaykh, but, given the nature of this genre, these can hardly be counted as reliable. According to this source, Qūnawī "served him for 17 years" until the shaykh's death in 636/1238, which would mean that he became Kirmānī's disciple at around the age of thirteen. This same source likewise asserts that Kirmānī was instrumental in reconciling Qūnawī and Ibn ʿArabī after discord had arisen between them. The idea that such disharmony ever arose, however, is generally treated with scepticism. (See, for example, Elmore, 'Sadr al-Din al-Qunawi's personal study-list'). Nevertheless, the fact that Qūnawī held a special reverence for Kirmānī cannot be doubted, as he affirms as much in the text of his last will and testament.

15 See Elmore, 'Sadr al-Din al-Qunawi's personal study-list of books by Ibn al-'Arabi' in *Journal of Near Eastern Studies*. 56: 3, 1997, 161–181. Among the last works to be covered was the *Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam*; the copy that Qūnawī transcribed at the time (630/1232) now being its oldest extant manuscript. (MS Istanbul Evkāf Müzesi 1933). In addition, he would regularly assume the roles of reader, auditor and scribe in the *samāʿāt*, or official readings and transcriptions, of the shaykh's treatises. (See Yahia, *Histoire*, 'Répertoire Général', #2, 30, 70, 142, 150, 313, 414, 484, 639).

16 Not surprisingly, this alone took one whole year to complete (628/1230–629/1231). (See *Ijāza li-l-Qūnawī*, MS Konya Yusuf Ağa 5624, fol. 678; and Elmore, 'Sadr al-Din al-Qunawi's personal study-list', p. 174–175).

2 Travels and Teaching in the Near East

Around the year 630/1232–3, while still in his mid-twenties, Ṣadr al-Dīn was granted an *ijāza* to transmit Ibn ʿArabī's writings in their entirety. He then embarked upon a period of "asceticism and spiritual wandering"[17] (*tajrīd wa siyāḥa*), which included a stay in Egypt and, in all probability, the performance of the *ḥajj*. It seems likely that these travels began with a brief return to his homeland, since in one of his works he mentions a "general intuition I received in the year 630 or 631 at the court of the Turkmens".[18] From there he accompanied Awḥad al-Dīn al-Kirmānī to Egypt. Recalling his first stay in that country, Qūnawī would later describe how he had hoped to meet the famous Sufi poet, Ibn al-Fāriḍ (d. 632/1234),[19] and "indeed had once prayed in the same mosque as he; however, though he too had expressed a desire to meet, it was not destined to be, for, not long after, he fell ill and passed into God's mercy".[20] It was during this stay too that he befriended ʿAfīf al-Dīn al-Tilimsānī (d. 690/1291),[21] who was living at the time in the Saʿīd al-Suʿadāʾ *khānqāh* in Cairo,[22] and who later returned with him to Damascus where they spent the year 634/1236–7 participating in the *samāʿ* sessions, or official readings, of Ibn ʿArabī's *Futūḥāt*.[23]

It is not known whether Qūnawī was present in Damascus at the time of his master's death in 638/1240, but before the year is over he is seen assuming

17 See Qūnawī's preface to Farghānī's *Mashāriq al-darārī*, p. 5.

18 *Miftāḥ*, p. 102.

19 Generally regarded as the greatest of all Arab Sufi poets, Ibn al-Fāriḍ is famed chiefly for his 760 verse *tāʾīya*, also known as the *Naẓm al-sulūk* (*Poem of the Mystical Path*), a mystical ode that spawned a long series of commentaries by Akbarian authors. On Ibn al-Fāriḍ and his poetry, see T.E. Homerin, *Passion before me, my fate behind: Ibn al-Fāriḍ and the poetry of recollection*, Albany 2011.

20 Qūnawī's preface to Farghānī's *Mashāriq al-darārī*, p. 5–6.

21 By all accounts Qūnawī's closest friend, ʿAfīf al-Dīn al-Tilimsānī was famed in his own right as a mystical poet. Favoured by the Mamlūk authorities, he settled in Damascus towards the end of his life, where he was appointed treasurer of Shām. The quarter where he lived is still popularly known as "al-ʿAfīf". See P. Nwyia, 'Une cible d'Ibn Taimîya: le moniste al-Tilimsânî (m. 690/1291) in *Bulletin d'Études Orientales*, 30 1978, p. 127–145.

22 Munāwī, *al-Kawākib al-durrīya fī tarājim al-sāda al-ṣūfīya*, ed. M.A. al-Jādir, Beirut 1999, p. 420–427. The Saʿīd al-Suʿadāʾ *khānqāh*, founded by Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn Ayyūbī (d. 589/1193), was the chief Sufi lodge in Egypt at the time. See L. Fernandes, *The Evolution of a Sufi Institution in Mamluk Egypt: the Khanqah*, Berlin 1988, p. 21–25.

23 Yahia, *Histoire*, vol. I, p. 209. The second redaction of the *Futūḥāt* was completed two years later and dedicated to Qūnawī. (MS Istanbul Evkāf Müzesi 1845–1881) (See Yahia, *Histoire*, vol. I, p. 202). The following year, Ṣadr al-Dīn, for his part, accomplished the daunting task of transcribing all thirty-seven volumes of that work. (See Yahia, *Histoire*, vol. I, p. 204).

the role of successor in one capacity at least – both he and Ibn Sawdakīn (d. 646/1248)[24] finishing the official readings of the *Futūḥāt*.[25] Moreover, he would later record that while continuing these sessions in Aleppo in Ramaḍān 640 (March 1243) he saw Ibn ʿArabī in a vision (*wāqiʿa*) in which he was advised to set his intuitions down in writing.[26] His own brief mention of that period suggests that, from Aleppo, he then moved back to Rūm, where he continued teaching.[27] However, it would appear likely that any plans he may have had of remaining in his homeland were forestalled by the Mongols' crushing victory over the Seljuqs at the battle of Köse Dāgh in Muḥarram 641 (June 1243).[28]

As for his withdrawal to Egypt at the time these events were unfolding, it may well have been for reasons other than simply those of seeking a more peaceful environment; Ibn ʿAṭāʾ Allāh's (d. 709/1309) account of Qūnawī's meeting with Abū-l-Ḥasan al-Shādhilī (d. 656/1258)[29] states that he "came to Egypt as an envoy" (*rasūl*)[30] albeit without specifying on whose behalf or to what end.[31] Be that as it may, there is no mention of any diplomatic mission in his own remarks concerning his second stay in Egypt, nor in those of his immediate circle of students. What does emerge from such accounts, however, is a picture of the following he had already attracted as Ibn ʿArabī's chief disciple. The testimony of one of these students, Shams al-Dīn Īkī, provides a rare glimpse into the character of his lectures:

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24 Another of Ibn ʿArabī's prominent disciples.

25 Yahia, *Histoire*, vol. I, p. 229–231.

26 *Tarjumah*, p. 133.

27 See. *infra*, p. 20.

28 As already noted, the Seljuq sultan, Kaykhusraw II, (635/1237–644/1246) fled with his family to seek refuge in Antalya. At the same, and without his knowledge, his vizier, Muhadhdhab al-Dīn (d. 644/1246), managed to negotiate a treaty of protection with the Mongols which thus spared Konya.

29 Moroccan Sufi shaykh and founder of the *ṭarīqa* bearing his name.

30 "When Shaykh Ṣadr al-Dīn al-Qūnawī came to Egypt as an envoy, he met with Shaykh Abū-l-Ḥasan [al-Shādhilī] and spoke by virtue of his manifold sciences. The Shaykh listened with his head bowed until Shaykh Ṣadr al-Dīn finished talking and then raised his head and said: 'Tell me, where is the pole of the times (*quṭb al-zamān*) today, and who is his friend and what are his sciences?' Whereupon, Shaykh Ṣadr al-Dīn was silent and gave no reply". (*Laṭāʾif al-minan*, p. 63).

31 If the purpose was that of rallying support for Kaykhusraw II, then such a mission would presumably have been cut short by the latter's death in 644/1246. Moreover, the Ayyubid sultan of Egypt would soon have enough problems of his own to contend with in resisting the Seventh Crusade, a campaign that would eventually see him overthrown by the Mamlūks.

> According to Shaykh Shams al-Dīn Īkī – God's mercy be upon him – who was one of the companions of Shaykh Ṣadr al-Dīn al-Qūnawī – may God sanctify his secret – and the *Shaykh al-Shuyūkh*[32] of his day: 'Both students and *'ulamā'* would attend the *majlis* of our master [Shaykh Ṣadr al-Dīn], and the talk therein would range across various sciences, but such sessions would always come to a close with a line from [Ibn al-Fāriḍ's] ode, the *Naẓm al-sulūk*, about which the Shaykh would then speak in Persian, expounding such mysteries and esoteric meanings as may be grasped by the initiated alone. Sometimes it would happen that, at the following session, he would tell us that another of the verse's meanings had become apparent to him, and then he would reveal to us an even more wondrous and profound meaning than the previous one. Indeed he often used to say that the Sufi should memorise this ode and seek to elucidate its meanings with the help of someone who understands it.'
>
> In this respect, Shaykh Shams al-Dīn tells us that 'Shaykh Saʿīd al-Farghānī used to bring all his concentration to bear on understanding what the Shaykh was expounding [regarding this poem], while at the same time making notes. Whereafter, he produced a commentary [on the *Naẓm al-sulūk*], first in Persian[33] and then in Arabic;[34] all of which derived from the blessing contained in every breath of our venerable master, Shaykh Ṣadr al-Dīn.'[35]

Among Qūnawī's circle of students in Egypt, then, was the important figure of Saʿīd al-Dīn Saʿd al-Farghānī (d.ca. 699/1299), who would go on to become one of Ṣadr al-Dīn's foremost disciples. His seminal commentary (*sharḥ*)[36] on Ibn al-Fāriḍ's *Naẓm al-sulūk* – the first in a long line of such works – is typical of its genre, with the classic text providing the occasion not only for the commentator to clarify its obscure or ambiguous passages, but also to engage in a doctrinal exposition of a more general nature. In Farghāni's work, as was often the case, the commentary proper is preceded by a substantial

32 In Ayyubid Cairo and Damascus the *Shaykh al-Shuyūkh*, or "Master of Masters" was officially responsible for overseeing the practice of Sufism. However, as Geoffroy observes, their role was often "more political and diplomatic than spiritual". See É. Geoffroy, "Shaykh" in *EI*[2].

33 Entitled *Mashāriq al-darārī*.

34 Entitled *Muntahā al-madārik*.

35 Jāmī, *Nafaḥāt*, p. 541–542.

36 Here it is worth noting that the appellation "commentary" does not, perhaps, fully do justice to the term *sharḥ*, which essentially conveys the sense of an "expansion".

muqaddima or introduction,[37] famously described by the Persian poet, ʿAbd al-Raḥmān al-Jāmī (d. 898/1492),[38] as the clearest treatise on esoteric science ever written.[39]

Significant, too, in the passage above is the statement that Qūnawī's teaching in Cairo was conducted partly in Persian. This is probably due – in part at least – to the fact that a number of his Eastern students had accompanied him to Syria and Egypt from Anatolia in the wake of the Seljuq defeat at Köse Dāgh, as his own comments testify:

> In 643 I returned to Egypt from Shām, and there, even as they had done so in Shām and Rūm, a group of outstanding initiates and eminent men read [with me] this *qaṣīda* [*Naẓm al-sulūk*] – listening to the elucidation of its more difficult aspects, and making marginal notes, with a view to composing an orderly exposition of the doctrinal treasures and nuances contained therein. However, it was not given to anyone to succeed in this endeavour, save the author of this commentary, our brother, Shaykh Saʿīd al-Dīn Saʿd Farghānī.[40]

But it is also, perhaps, testament to the enduring Persian character of the *khānqāh* in general, an institution rooted in the culture of the Great Seljuqs, and one that continued, even in Egypt and Syria, to be frequented by mystics from the East.[41]

Neither the testimonies of Qūnawī himself, nor those of his students, give any indication as to how long he stayed in Egypt. Indeed, apart from his mention of his arrival in that country in 643/1245, there is no firm documentary evidence linking him to a specific place until Jumādā I 652 (7th July 1254), when, we are told, he saw his master in a vision he had in Konya.[42]

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37 This type of introduction might easily stand alone as a work in its own right and in practice was often treated as such by manuscript copiers.

38 Jāmī's Akbarian sympathies are well known. It is worth noting too, moreover, that his metaphysical treatises – such as the *Lawāʾiḥ* and *al-Durra al-fākhira* – display a special debt to Qūnawī in particular. On this question, see *infra* p. 174–175.

39 Jāmī, *Nafaḥāt*, p. 588.

40 Qūnawī's preface to Farghānī's *Mashāriq al-darārī*, p. 5–6.

41 Éric Geoffroy, for example, notes that in the thirteenth century the Sufis of the Egyptian and Syrian *khānqāh*s were often of Persian origin. See *Le Soufisme en Égypte et en Syrie sous les derniers Mamelouks et les premiers Ottomans: orientations spirituelles et enjeux culturels*, Damascus 1995, p. 168.

42 *Tarjumah*, p. 133.

3 Konya

Although we cannot be sure of when he actually returned to the Seljuq capital, we do know that it would be his home for at least the last two decades of his life.[43] Moreover, the fragments of biographical detail pertaining to this time paint the image of a man closely involved in Konya's spiritual and intellectual life. His study-circles were attended by Sufis, scholars and courtiers alike; he was a friend to the great Persian mystic, Jalāl al-Dīn al-Rūmī (d. 672/1273) and led the prayer at his funeral;[44] he engaged in a polemical correspondence with the pre-eminent Avicennian philosopher of the time, Naṣīr al-Dīn al-Ṭūsī; and

43 Throughout this time he kept a record of his visions, epiphanies and intuitions, which, when finally assembled in a single volume, would constitute the work known as *al-Nafaḥāt al-ilāhīya* (*The Divine Breaths*). Chronologically, the first three visions recorded in this work consist of dialogues with his master. The last of these is significant in that it concerns, so we are told, Qūnawī's attaining the "theophany of the Essence" (*al-tajallī al-dhātī*), which constitutes the "end of the initiate's journey to God". He writes: "On the night of the 17th Shawwāl, in the year six hundred and fifty-three (20th November 1255), I saw the Shaykh – may God be pleased with him – in a long vision (*wāqi'a*). There was much talk between us, in the course of which I said to him: 'the effects of the names derive from the conditions and modalities, the conditions and modalities derive from the states [of being], the states [of being] are determined by the essence in accordance with the predisposition, and the predisposition is something not caused by anything other than itself.' The Shaykh was so pleased with this that his face shone with joy, and, nodding his head, he repeated some of the things I had said, and added: 'Splendid! Splendid!'

'The splendour is all yours, master!' I responded, 'for being able to nurture someone and raise them to the point where they grasp such things. By my life, if you are just a man then the rest of us are nothing!' Then, approaching him, I kissed his hand and said: 'I still have one further thing to ask of you.'

'Ask!' he said.

'I wish to realise the way in which you perpetually and eternally behold the self-disclosure of the [divine] Essence,' by which I meant the attainment of all that he attained by beholding the essential theophany, whereafter there can be no veiling, and before which there can be no settled abode for the perfect (*al-kummal*).

'So be it.' said [the Shaykh], and he accorded me what I had asked for. Then he said: 'This is granted to you, although you yourself know that I had progeny and companions, and yet to none of them, not even to my own son Sa'd al-Dīn, was it given to realise that which you have requested.'

After this, other things were said that cannot be revealed. Then I awoke". (*Nafaḥāt*, fols. 61a and 78b) (*Tarjumah*, p. 131).

44 See Aflākī, *Manāqib al-'Ārifīn*, Ankara 1959, p. 593; and Aqsarā'ī, *Musāmarat al-akhbār*, in M. Jawād, ed., *Akhbār-i-Salājiqah-i-Rūm*, Tehran 1971, p. 432.

his lectures on Ibn ʿArabī's *Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam* inspired, as we shall see, seminal works of both prose and verse.

Under the astute governance of the Parvāna Muʿīn al-Dīn Sulaymān, Konya re-emerged, so it would appear, as one of the cultural hubs of its day.[45] Its Sufi masters in particular were shown special reverence. Aflākī,[46] for instance, relates that the Parvāna was especially close to Rūmī and would visit him every day.[47] For his part, Qūnawī was appointed to the office of *Shaykh al-Islām* like his father before him, and was granted a large *zāwiya* or Sufi lodge to which students and men of state alike would retire after Friday prayers to attend his hadith lessons.[48] It is to be noted, however, that despite his official role in the Seljuq state, Ṣadr al-Dīn refrains from any mention of temporal affairs or political events in his writings until the final pages of his last (unfinished) work, where he refers to the sacking of Baghdad more than a decade earlier in 656/1258. The sense of horror provoked by this event, which brought about the end of the ʿAbbasid Caliphate, is evident in his description – recounted towards the very end of his life – of a premonition he had on the night before Baghdad fell:

> It was not the Prophet himself – may God's grace and peace be upon him – that you saw [in your dream] but his Law (*sharʿ*) [personified in his form].[49] Likewise, on the night before Baghdad was taken, I, for my own part, saw the Prophet – may God's grace and peace be upon him – wrapped in a shroud and lying on a funeral bier, to which people were securing him with rope. His head was uncovered and his hair was almost touching the ground. I asked them 'what are you doing?' They replied: 'He is dead. We are going to bear him forth and bury him.' However, something in my heart told me that he was not dead, so I said to them: 'His face does not look to me like the face of someone

45 The presence alone of Rūmī, Qūnawī and their respective circles of students is significant enough. Moreover, the decade from 648/1250 to 658/1260 saw the founding of both the Karatay and Ince Minare *madrasas*, two of Konya's most prominent historical edifices.

46 Shams al-Dīn Aḥmad Aflākī (d. 761/1360): author of the well-known hagiography of Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī, entitled *Manāqib al-ʿārifīn*.

47 As far as relations between Qūnawī and Rūmī are concerned, Aflākī's *Manāqib al-ʿĀrifīn* contains several anecdotes intended to illustrate their mutual respect. (See *Manāqib al-ʿārifīn*, pp. 392, 548, 593).

48 *Manāqib al-ʿārifīn*, pp. 278, 318. The Parvāna also built a lodge for the Sufi poet Fakhr al-Dīn ʿIrāqī near Tokat. See C. Hillenbrand, "Muʿīn al-Dīn Sulaymān Parwāna" in *EI*[2].

49 Here, as elsewhere, when a quoted passage alludes to information that has appeared earlier in the text in question, I have added the appropriate information in square brackets.

> who is dead. Wait awhile, whilst I see', and, thus saying, I leant close to his mouth and nose, and found that he was still breathing, albeit very weakly; whereupon I shouted at them and stopped them from doing that which they had been so intent upon. Then I awoke, distressed and downcast, knowing all too well from my insight into such matters, and from repeated experience, that this signified some terrible event that had befallen the domain of Islam. Now, since news had already reached us that the Mongols were marching on Baghdad, it struck me that it had just been taken; wherefore I made a careful note of the date. Later, there arrived several of those who had been present when it fell, and they confirmed that this was indeed the day on which Baghdad had been taken. Hence the vision was as I had feared.[50]

4 Students and Disciples

Troubled though the times may have been, the last decade of Qūnawī's life seems to have been a period of considerable activity in terms of teaching, providing guidance for his students, and composing his own works.[51] Indeed, it is quite probable that most of the latter – or the major ones at least – were written during this time.[52] It was in this period too that he was joined by Muʾayyid al-Dīn al-Jandī (d. 700/1300), who was to become one of his foremost disciples, and whose commentary on the *Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam* is generally considered the formative work in that genre. Jandī's account of the path that led him to Konya is testament to the sacrifices that discipleship entailed. He writes:

> With manifold arguments and no shortage of nagging, my teachers, father, family, friends and loved-ones, sought to hold me back from cutting my worldly ties and setting off alone in search of God and a true master; and in their efforts to do so they would attempt to clinch the matter with various rational and religious objections. Then there was the sway exerted by my individual self, my passions, natural disposition, the comfort and security gained from that which is familiar and homely, and my habits and routine, all of which was more than sufficient in itself to cause me to hesitate … As I could see no way of resolving this perplexity

50 *Sharḥ al-aḥādīth*, fols. 60–61.

51 The majority of the epiphanies, visions and intuitions recorded in the *Nafaḥāt* belong to this latter period.

52 At any rate, none of the extant autograph manuscripts of his works are dated earlier than 669/1271.

> by myself, I determined to commit the matter into God's hands. Thus, with this end in view, I betook myself to the *majlis* of the Qur'ān reciters, watchful as to which sign God would give me, for I had resolved to take the first verse that I heard them read in that gathering as a divine augury. Whereupon, the reciter began reciting the verse:
>
> {Say: If your fathers, your sons, your brothers, your wives, your clan, your possessions that you have gained, commerce you fear may slacken, dwellings with which you are contented, if these are dearer to you than God and His Messenger, and to strive on his Way, then wait warily and watchfully until God brings His command; God guides not the disobedient and profane.}[53]
>
> This poor, watchful wretch was at once overcome by an overpowering spiritual state and ecstasy, and, no longer able to ignore the voice of my inner calling, I resolved to renounce all that is other than Allah … Wherefore, having relinquished all my worldly ties, I crossed the sea with the intention of performing the pilgrimage, until finally God provided me with the companionship of Shaykh Ṣadr al-Dīn Muḥammad ibn Isḥāq ibn Yūsuf, who was the perfect man of his age, the pole of poles of the time, and the *khalīfa* of the seal of Muḥammadan sainthood. For ten years in his service I spent most of my time in spiritual retreats, forty-day vigils and disciplines, until finally the true spiritual opening and the unequivocal good tidings were achieved through the blessed influence of the Shaykh – may God be pleased with him.[54]

From the progression of his works, and the testimonies of his students, it would seem that a prominent facet of Qūnawī's doctrinal activity during this period was his elucidation of the *Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam*. Given the daunting magnitude of the *Futūḥāt*, the *Fuṣūṣ* became a natural vehicle for the study of Ibn ʿArabī's doctrines, with its numerous enigmatic passages inevitably inviting commentary – the first being that of the author himself (entitled *Naqsh al-Fuṣūṣ*). Describing the circumstances in which he came to compose his own commentary, Jandī writes:

> Shaykh Ṣadr al-Dīn – may God sanctify his secret – elucidated for me the *khuṭba*[55] of the *Fuṣūṣ*, and while he was doing so the signs of an arrival from the Non-Manifest appeared upon him, the effect of which then

53 Qur'ān, IX, 24.

54 Jandī, *Nafḥa*, p. 142–144.

55 Most medieval Arabic works begin with a *khuṭba* or brief doxological preamble in which the author praises God and invokes blessings on the Prophet.

> pervaded me both inwardly and outwardly … At that moment he exercised a mysterious influence within me, by virtue of his theurgy (*taṣarruf*), such that God thereby granted me an immediate understanding of all that is contained within the entire book, simply through this elucidation of the *khuṭba*. Realising that this was the case, the Shaykh told me that he too had asked his master – the author of the *Fuṣūṣ*, may God be pleased with him – to expound to him its secrets, and that while he was explaining to him the *khuṭba* he exerted a wondrous influence within him, by virtue of his theurgy, such that he thereby grasped all that the book contained. Wherefore, hearing this, I rejoiced at this subtle indication, realising as I did the extent of my own participation in this blessing. Then he indicated that I should write an exposition of these secrets, and commanded me to assist and give counsel to all who would understand them.[56] Hence, in obedience to his command, I immediately wrote, in his presence, an elucidation of the *khuṭba*, even as he had expounded it to me.[57]

Another important figure inspired by Qūnawī's lectures on the *Fuṣūṣ* was the celebrated Persian Sufi poet Fakhr al-Dīn ʿIrāqī (d. 688/1289).[58] Of the circumstances in which he came to compose his most famous work, the *Lamaʿāt*, or *Flashes of Intuition*, we are told:

> After visiting the two holy sanctuaries, [Shaykh ʿIrāqī] went to Rūm to join the circle of Shaykh Ṣadr al-Dīn Qūnawī – may God sanctify his secret – who thus took his spiritual development in hand. Now, it happened that a group [from within this circle] were reading the *Fuṣūṣ* [under the direction of the Shaykh]. [ʿIrāqī] would listen to them, and, while listening, would set his 'Flashes of Intuition' (*Lamaʿāt*) down in writing. When he had completed this poem he showed it to his master, who was greatly pleased by it, considering it to be a work of great beauty.[59]

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56 Chief among those who studied the *Fuṣūṣ* under Jandī's tutelage is ʿAbd al-Razzāq al-Qāshānī (d. 730/1330), who would, in turn, become famed for his own commentary on that work, as well as for his esoteric commentary on the Qur'ān.

57 Jandī, *Sharḥ Fuṣūṣ al-Ḥikam*, p. 9–10.

58 For a brief study of ʿIrāqī and his poetry, see Chittick's introduction to his translation of the *Lamaʿāt*. (*Divine Flashes*, translation and introduction by William C. Chittick and Peter Lamborn Wilson, New York 1982).

59 Jāmī, *Nafaḥāt al-uns*, p. 600.

5 Final Years

The manuscripts bequeathed by Qūnawī to his charitable endowment, or *waqf*, indicate that in the last few years of his life he oversaw the transcription and collection of his own works as well as several works by Ibn ʿArabī.[60] It also seems likely that in the two years prior to his death he not only finished the *Nafaḥāt* and composed his hadith commentary and the *Kitāb al-Fukūk* – an elucidation of some of the enigmas in Ibn ʿArabī's *Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam* – but also undertook his lengthy epistolary exchange with the philosopher Naṣīr al-Dīn al-Ṭūsī.[61]

The last epiphany recorded in the *Nafaḥāt* occurred on Friday 19th Jumādā I 672 (1st December 1273). It was around this time that Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī fell gravely ill, and, apparently at the latter's request,[62] Qūnawī was chosen to lead the prayer at his funeral. The sense in which this event marked the end of an era is evident in the following account from the annals of the contemporary chronicler, al-Aqsarā'ī:[63]

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60 This period begins in 667/1269 with Qūnawī supervising and authenticating the transcription of works by Ibn ʿArabī (see MS Istanbul Veliyeddin 1686). This is followed by the production of definitive copies of his own major writings: the *Iʿjāz al-bayān fī tafsīr umm al-Qurʾān*, transcribed by Farghānī in 669/1271 (MS Istanbul Köprülü 41); the *Miftāḥ ghayb al-jamʿ wa tafṣīli-hi*, copied in Shaʿbān 672 (February 1274) (MS Konya Yusuf Ağa 4864); and *al-Nafaḥāt al-ilāhīya*, copied around the same time, with extensive marginal notes in his own hand (MS Konya Yusuf Ağa 5468). In Ramaḍān 670 (April 1272) and Rabī' II 671 (November 1272) he issued *ijāzas* to Jandī and Farghānī, authorising them to transmit the *Nafthat al-maṣdūr* and *Iʿjāz al-bayān* respectively. (MSS Leiden. Or. 544, fol. 1a and Istanbul Köprülü 41) (See Appendix 2).

61 For a general account of this exchange, and a discussion of its emblematic nature see Chittick's article 'Mysticism versus Philosophy in Earlier Islamic History: the al-Tūsī, al-Qūnawī Correspondence' in *Religious Studies*, 17 (March 1981), p. 87–104. See also G. Schubert, 'The textual history of the correspondence between al-Qunawi and al-Tusi' in *Manuscripts of the Middle East*, vol 3, Leiden 1988, p. 73–78, and the introduction to her critical edition, *al-Murāsalāt bayna Ṣadr al-Dīn al-Qūnawī wa Naṣīr al-Dīn al-Ṭūsī / Annäherungen. Der mystisch-philosophische Briefwechsel zwischen Ṣadr ud-Dīn-i Qōnawī und Naṣīr ud-Dīn-i Ṭūsī*, ed. G. Schubert, Wiesbaden 1995.

62 "All of the *ʿulamāʾ* and *qāḍīs* had been hoping to lead this prayer, but it was not given to them to do so; for this was a privilege reserved for this unique figure". (Aflākī, *Manāqib al-ʿārifīn*, p. 593).

63 Maḥmūd b. Muḥammad Karīm al-Dīn al-Aqsarā'ī (fl. ca. 700/1300): Seljuq courtier and author of the *Musāmarat al-akhbār wa musāyarat al-akhyār*, a history of the Seljuqs of Rūm which covers the period from the reign of Ghiyāth al-Dīn Kaykhusraw I to the year 734/1333.

> Immediately after finishing the funeral prayer, the *Shaykh al-Islām* [Ṣadr al-Dīn] fell ill and had to be carried back to his *zāwiya* … Eight months later he too passed into God's mercy. When the sun of his assistance was eclipsed in the sphere of spiritual guidance … the group of scholars, masters, learned men, and eminent personalities, who had gathered around him, split up and went their separate ways.[64]

In his last will and testament,[65] Qūnawī requested that his personal library be preserved for the public good, except for the works of philosophy,[66] which should be sold and the money gained from them distributed as alms. As for his own works, they should be sent on to his life-long friend Tilimsānī, who was requested to give them to those in whom he discerned the requisite qualifications. His tomb should be a modest affair, open to the sky and the elements, and he should be laid to rest "in the clothing of the Shaykh [al-Akbar]" and upon the "prayer-mat of Shaykh Awḥad al-Dīn [Kirmānī]". On the day he is buried alms of a thousand dirhams should be distributed to "the weak, the poor, and beggars, both men and women, especially those who are lame or blind".[67] Finally, those of his family and disciples who were free to do so should move to Damascus[68] – where his friend ʿAfīf al-Dīn Tilimsānī enjoyed the protection of the Mamlūk ruler – for great turmoil would soon arise in Konya.[69] The details of his *waqf* give the date of his death as Sunday 16th Muḥarram 673 (22nd July 1274).[70]

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64 Aqsarāʾī, *Musāmarat al-akhbār*, in *Akhbār-i Salājiqah-i Rūm*, p. 432.

65 *Waṣīyat al-Shaykh Ṣadr al-Dīn ʿinda-l-wafāt.* MS Istanbul Şehid Ali Paşa 2810. For an analysis and translation of this document see Chittick's article 'The Last Will and Testament of Ibn 'Arabi's Foremost Disciple and Some Notes on Its Author' in *Sophia Perennis*, vol. 4, no. 1.

66 From references in his own writings as well as manuscripts preserved in the Yusuf Ağa Library in Konya, we know that Qūnawī was familiar with Ibn Sīnā's *Taʿlīqāt* and *Kitāb al-ishārāt wa-al-tanbīhāt* along with commentaries on the latter by Ṭūsī and Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī. (See Chittick, 'The Last Will', p. 51; and 'The School of Ibn 'Arabī', p. 514).

67 Chittick's translation ('The Last Will', p. 53).

68 In fact, all evidence suggests that the initial phase in the diffusion of the Akbarian current was chiefly that of a movement eastwards into the Persian heartland. This movement seems to have been given natural impetus by the eventual decline of Rūm as a centre of Persian culture, and by the return of the predominantly Persian members of Qūnawī's circle to the Iranian dominions of the newly Islamicised Il-Khanids. On the development of the Akbarian school following Qūnawī's death, see *infra*, Chapter 8.

69 Whether it did or not is a matter of opinion. At any rate, two years after his death Konya was temporarily occupied by the Karamānids following Baybars' victory over the Mongols at the battle of Albistān in 675/1277 and the Parvāna's subsequent execution.

70 See Ceran, *Şeyh*, p. 42.

CHAPTER 2

Qūnawī's Works

1 Qūnawī's Corpus

The pages that follow are intended to provide a brief description of Qūnawī's major works, as well as the odd lesser-known treatise to which he himself attached a certain importance. The works thus selected – numbering some twelve titles in all – form the doctrinal and quantitative core of his corpus; and it is on these writings primarily that our analysis of his thought has been based. In fact, a critical examination of the many titles ascribed to Qūnawī suggests that he authored probably no more than twenty works in total.[1] Like his master, then, Ṣadr al-Dīn has often been credited by default, as it were, with authorship of treatises composed by lesser-known (or unknown) members of the Akbarian school. Fortunately, through scrutiny of the relevant manuscripts – or as many as possible at any rate – we have been able to identify a number of mistaken attributions.[2]

While we have endeavoured to list the titles below in the order in which they were written, it should be stressed that, for all but the final three, this chronology can be no more than an approximation, since, in view of the absence of any manuscripts dating earlier than three years before his death, it has been arrived at chiefly on the basis of Ṣadr al-Dīn's own incidental references. At the same time, it should be said that this question of chronology is perhaps not quite as relevant in the case of our author's works as it can be for others; for even if they are read in the order in which they appear below, one gains no real sense of any evolution either of doctrine or style. Rather, the overall impression is one of a fully mature and homogeneous body of teachings.[3] It would seem, therefore, that the most instructive conclusion to be drawn from such efforts at determining the order of his works is that, as already suggested, they were probably all composed within a relatively short space of time, namely the last ten years or so of his life.

1 See Appendix 1.

2 These include, most notably, *al-Lumʿāt al-nūrānīya fī ḥall mushkilāt al-Shajarat al-nuʿmānīya*, the *Kitāb marātib al-taqwā*, the *Mirāt al-ʿārifīn fī multamas Zayn al-ʿĀbidīn*, the *Kitāb shuʿab al-īmān*, and the *Tabṣīrat al-mubtadī wa tadhkīrat al-muntahī*. See Appendix 1.

3 When reconstructing Qūnawī's thought we have therefore, on occasions, deemed it appropriate to illustrate a line of argument with passages from different works or with non-consecutive passages from the same text.

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This, however, is not to say that Qūnawī's teachings had not been formulated prior to that, since we know from his own testimony that he had been expounding the esoteric meaning of the *Naẓm al-sulūk* to "a group of outstanding initiates and eminent men" as early as 643/1245, when he would have been in his late thirties.[4] Moreover, judging by Farghānī's commentary on this *qaṣīda* – which, as we have seen, may be deemed a record of Qūnawī's lectures – it would seem that the doctrines expressed in his oral teachings were essentially the same as those he would eventually set down in his written works. One may conclude, therefore, that for the greater part of his career his influence was imparted to his contemporaries through his study-circles, initially in Egypt and then in Anatolia, and that his written works were undertaken towards the end of his life, often at the request of his disciples, in order to preserve his teachings for posterity.

2 Qūnawī's Methodology

From Ṣadr al-Dīn's comments regarding his approach to writing, two affirmations emerge with more or less equal prominence: first, in contrast to the works of rationalist thinkers, his expositions, so he tells us, are the product, not of thought and deliberation, but of inspiration;[5] and second, he is not in the habit of quoting or referring to the works of others, "not even those of the Shaykh".[6] The first claim, of course, eludes verification. The second would appear to be generally accurate. Although he occasionally mentions Plato, Ibn Sīnā and the Ikhwān al-Ṣafāʾ in his correspondence with Naṣīr al-Dīn al-Ṭūsī, his works are, on the whole, noticeably free of references to earlier Sufi masters, including Ibn ʿArabī. In Qūnawī's eyes, moreover, this feature of his writings is, to an extent, an expression of his own spiritual distinction (*ikhtiṣāṣ*) and the unique intuitions that derive from the latter. Hence, in the *Risālat al-nuṣūṣ*, a treatise consisting of a series of metaphysical texts, we are told that the doctrines expounded therein "derive from the spiritual tastes imbued with the particularity (*khuṣūṣ*) of the station of perfection itself".[7] And in order

4 See *supra*, p. 20.

5 Nevertheless, although he saw himself as no more than the vessel of this inspiration (see *Iʿjāz*, p. 359), Qūnawī did not claim that the latter flowed without hindrance into the very letter of the text itself. Any deficiencies that the reader might find in his expositions should thus be attributed, not to the inspiration itself, but to the "smudge of contingency" that must inevitably remain on the "mortal vessel" into which it flows. (See *Iʿjāz*, p. 10).

6 *Iʿjāz*, p. 139.

7 *Nuṣūṣ*, p. 13.

further to underline this point he declares that some of the teachings included in the *Nuṣūṣ* have likewise been set forth in his *Miftāḥ ghayb al-jamʿ* "and the other works I composed without including the words of anybody else".[8]

To see this claim as serving to underline his originality would no doubt be a somewhat anachronistic way of looking at things. Nevertheless, by asserting that his works are not simply the product of reading his master's oeuvre, or anyone else's, it would seem that our author is at least seeking to provide an assurance as to their freshness of insight, something he regards as one of the hallmarks of genuine inspiration as it bears witness to the inexhaustible nature of the source whence it stems.

As for the famously demanding nature of his expositions, Qūnawī himself is acutely aware of how difficult many of them must seem. But this, we are told, must inevitably be so, as they are concerned with expressing the loftiest of all perspectives, that of the "verifiers" (*al-muḥaqqiqūn*).[9] Indeed, of the *Miftāḥ ghayb al-jamʿ* he says: "to grasp the meaning of this discourse through one or two readings alone is virtually impossible, unless one is accompanied by the rule of unveiling (*kashf*) and an elevated spiritual opening (*fatḥ*)".[10] The loftiness of the concepts involved likewise poses problems for the author, who must endeavour to convey them through the all too restricted means of formal expression. Considered narrow even in relation to the domain of individual thought,[11] the "belt of expression"(*niṭāq al-ʿibārāt*)[12] serves to constrict the meanings intuited through "unveiling"[13] to such an extent that the most the verifier can hope for, we are told, in setting out to communicate the fruits of his intuition, is to provide approximations (*taqrīb*) and pointers (*tanbīh*).[14] As

8 *Nuṣūṣ*, p. 22.

9 For Qūnawī, the term *muḥaqqiqūn*, or "verifiers", generally appears to denote the pre-eminent Sufis who have "verified" the truth of their doctrines. Quite often, however, it seems to refer specifically to Ibn ʿArabī and his followers. Ibn Sabʿīn, too, makes frequent use of this term, which Spallino defines as "colui che riesce a realizzare il *Ḥaqq* (il Vero), cioè colui che guinge al Massimo grado della conoscenza divina". (*Le questioni siciliane: Federico II e l'universo filosofico. Introduzione, traduzione e note a cura di Patrizia Spallino,* Palermo 2002, p. 44).

10 *Miftāḥ*, p. 67. Lest the reader be too discouraged, however, he reassures them that so long as the text is approached in the right spirit their persistence will be rewarded: "Through humility and poverty towards God, and with a heart stripped of blemish, the veils over that which is contained in the principles expounded in this work will be lifted, little by little".

11 See *Hādiya*, p. 141.

12 *Miftāḥ*, p. 56.

13 For Qūnawī's theories on the *supra*-formal nature of noumenal essences, see Appendix 3, Text E.

14 *Miftāḥ*, p. 39.

for the profoundest mysteries, they remain properly inexpressible such that "trying to express them merely renders them more obscure".[15]

Nevertheless, if Qūnawī is intent on expounding the most sublime of all perspectives, however difficult it may be, it is because his works are addressed above all to the rare few who possess the requisite aptitudes. While this refers primarily to his "divine brethren" (*ikhwān ilāhīyūn*), that is, those of his fellow *mutaṣawwifūn* who are qualified to understand these doctrines, it also includes those who have not yet entered upon the spiritual path but who nonetheless have implicit faith in it, as this is a sure sign of a favourable disposition (*istiʿdād*) and an untainted inner nature (*fiṭra salīma*).[16] That they are intended for such a readership is further testament to the fact that he saw the prime purpose of his expositions as that of providing his readers with the necessary doctrinal basis for progress on the spiritual way.[17] Hence, in the first work on our list, the *Miftāḥ ghayb al-jamʿ*, he makes it known that the doctrine of the perfect man expounded therein was written "not for the generality"[18] but precisely for "those who would realise the degree of human perfection".[19]

3 Miftāḥ ghayb al-jamʿ wa tafṣīli-hi (The Key to the Non-Manifest Side of Synthesis and its Manifest Detail)

Arguably Qūnawī's most influential work; it became one of the most widely read texts of Sufi metaphysics in both the Ottoman and Persian domains.[20]

15 *Miftāḥ*, p. 27.

16 See *Iʿjāz*, p. 12–13.

17 An attitude shared, notably, by the head of the first Ottoman *madrasa*, Dāwūd al-Qayṣarī (d. 751/1350), as evidenced by the following passage from Qayṣarī's introduction to his commentary on the *Naẓm al-sulūk*: "You should know that the way of arriving at God comprises two chief aspects, the theoretical and the practical, and that the practical is conditional upon the theoretical, so that the agent may be fully aware of the nature and purpose of his work … This science, then, is the most noble and lofty of all, owing to the nobility of its object and the loftiness of its concerns. And though it is true that the sciences of philosophy and *kalām* likewise have the same object, they are nevertheless not concerned with how the servant arrives at his Lord and draws nigh to him, which is the highest goal in the attainment of knowledge and in the performance of acts of obedience and worship". (*Sharḥ al-Tāʾīyat al-kubrā*. MS Bodleian Pococke 244, fol. 3). For Qūnawī's influence on Qayṣarī see *infra*, p. 173.

18 *Miftāḥ*, p. 34.

19 *Miftāḥ*, p. 99.

20 Like Ibn ʿArabī's *Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam*, the *Miftāḥ* is remarkable in that it has had an impact on the study of Sufi metaphysics in Sunni and Shiʾi Islam alike. Indeed, as both Khvājavī and

Its impact no doubt owes a great deal to its being a summary, or *mukhtaṣar*, of his quintessential doctrines. This likewise explains why it has elicited more commentaries[21] – of the kind outlined in the previous chapter – than any of the other works.

The *Miftāḥ* is divided into three broad sections. The first is a general introduction (*tamhīd jumalī*) which begins in a surprisingly conventional, Peripatetic vein, with a brief outline of the basic methodology of science, the aim of which is to affirm the nobility of metaphysics, or "divine science" (*al-ʿilm al-ilāhī*.).[22]

The middle section, which is by far the longest, is devoted to an ontological and cosmological account of the hierarchal degrees of existence (*al-tartīb al-wujūdī*). This account becomes increasingly esoteric as it moves beyond the relativity inherent in the theological perspective in order to consider this hierarchy from the transcendent standpoint of the "rank of synthesis and existence" (*martabat al-jamʿ wa-l-wujūd*).[23]

The work ends with an exposition of the ontological rank and defining characteristics of the perfect human being (*al-insān al-kāmil*). Stressing this doctrine's importance, Qūnawī states that all he has said so far has, in a sense, merely been leading up to this, the ultimate purpose of the *Miftāḥ*.[24] Hence, according to its author's conception, the architecture of this work is intended to mirror the scheme of existence itself, in relation to which the perfect man is both the final cause (*al-ʿilla al-ghāʾīya*)[25] and the key to unravelling its mysteries.

4 Iʿjāz al-bayān fī taʾwīl umm al-Qurʾān (The Inimitability of the Divine Exposition in the Interpretation of the Mother of the Qurʾān)

Qūnawī's longest work: the fruit, so he explains, both of earlier intuitions and of a new doctrinal "opening" (*fatḥ*) which "included such knowledge of

Chittick have pointed out, some Shi'i masters in the *madrasa*s of Iran held the *Miftāḥ* in such high esteem that it was taught after the *Fuṣūṣ* in the traditional curriculum. (See Chittick, 'The Last Will', p. 48).

21 For a brief account of some of the best-known examples see *infra*, p. 173–174.

22 The *Metaphysics* of the Stagirite himself, of course, begins in this way. For a summary of Qūnawī's treatment of this topic, see *infra* p. 55–56.

23 *Miftāḥ*, p. 35.

24 *Miftāḥ*, p. 102. At the end of a passage of the *Iʿjāz al-bayān*, which briefly documents the hierarchical degrees of human perfection, Qūnawī refers the reader to the *Miftāḥ*, saying that "anyone who would understand something of the states, journey and signs of the perfect man, should consult the *Kitāb miftāḥ ghayb al-jamʿ wa tafṣīli-hi* in which I have treated of these and other things". (*Iʿjāz*, p. 298).

25 *Miftāḥ*, p. 102.

the secrets of His Book as served to unlock many of its doors".[26] Having decided that the time was right to convey such intuitions to others, he outlines his purpose as that of expounding, primarily for the benefit of his "divine brethren", some of the mysteries contained in the *Fātiḥa* or opening *sūra* of the Qur'ān.[27]

The overarching perspective within which such mysteries are expounded is that of the "book of the world". According to the latter's symbolism, the cosmos has been made "in the form of a book bearing the forms of God's Names and the forms of the relations of His omniscience which are stored in the Sublime Pen".[28] Within this great book of existence, moreover, God has placed successive synopses, each of which is a perfect distillation of the one preceding it. The first of these "synoptic copies" (*nusakh mukhtaṣira*) is the perfect man, who synthesises within himself all the realities of the world, and is thus described as the microcosm. Then the all-embracing nature of the perfect man is, in turn, encapsulated within the Qur'ān, which has been made "according to

26 *Iʿjāz*, p. 5.

27 In the case of this doctrine at least, Qūnawī had decided to wait for some time before sharing his insight with his contemporaries, as he reveals in the following testimony from the opening passages of the *Iʿjāz*: "Know, O band of divine brethren and those who believe in them and their ways and who love them, for you are the object of this lofty address and the recipients of this splendid gift, that from the same pre-eternal munificence whence flows all of His favours and watchful care, God – Transcendent is He! – granted his servant, after he had attained to gnosis and contemplation of Him, such bountiful knowledge of the divine Names, the inner essences, and the mysteries of existence and created beings as only He may wish and desire … And part of this bounty was that He acquainted him with some of the secrets of His noble book … Nevertheless, although the servant was thus acquainted with the treasure-troves of these secrets and was able to uncover from them whatever God willed when the curtains [surrounding them] were lifted, he did not, at first, feel any prompting from the side of the True requiring him to manifest, by way of communication or exposition, that which He had bestowed upon him, nor, by God's grace, any desire for the attention that would come through revealing [these secrets]. Wherefore, he chose to keep quiet and guard them, such that, with God's accord, the rule of occultation held sway over that of divulgation. And thus did he continue in that state until the True awoke within him once again the summons to turn towards Him – albeit from the perspective, this time, of the journey within Him – that he should breathe in the fragrant breezes of His munificence and draw nigh to Him with the face of his heart. Wherefore, even as he turned to face Him [the True] granted him a new spiritual opening and made his spiritual vision piercing [an allusion to Qur'ān, L, 20]. And He included in this opening such knowledge of the mysteries of His book as served to open many of the locks to its doors. Whereafter, [the servant] was stirred to display a portion of such secrets to his divine brethren". (*Iʿjāz*, p. 5).

28 *Iʿjāz*, p. 3. On the doctrine of the Sublime Pen, see *infra*, p. 65–68.

the nature of him who was created in His form".[29] Finally, insofar as it is a perfect encapsulation of the Qur'ān,[30] the *Fātiḥa*, for its part, is "the last of these sublime copies" and hence contains all that is comprised in those preceding it. Thus, in the light of this perspective, Qūnawī sees in each word of this *sūra* a reflection of the great book of existence.

In order to prepare the reader for his existential commentary on the *Fātiḥa*, the *I'jāz* starts with a lengthy introductory section (*tamhīd*) intended, as the term *tamhīd* conveys, to prepare the ground by laying the doctrinal foundations upon which the commentary will be built. This preliminary groundwork, which takes up a third of the book, comprises two chief sections. In the first of these Qūnawī sets out to establish the nature of "true knowledge" (*al-'ilm al-ḥaqīqī*) and how best to acquire it. In so doing he takes the opportunity to justify the intellectual standpoint on which his commentary is based, by contrasting the certain and immediate character of *supra*-rational unveiling (*kashf*) with the limited and mutually conflicting results of rational inquiry.[31] He then moves on to a broader exposition of his key metaphysical theories, but one that nonetheless gives a certain emphasis to the doctrine of the book of the world. An analogy is established, for example, between the articulation of human speech and the creation of the world through the divine word, a perspective that leads him to introduce teachings pertaining to the "science of letters" (*'ilm al-ḥurūf*). Likewise, the doctrine of the perfect man is presented insofar as he is envisaged as being, like the *Fātiḥa*, or "Mother of the Qur'ān" (*Umm al-Qur'ān*), an all-inclusive copy of the book of existence.

Having laid these foundations, he proceeds to expound the metaphysical meaning of the *Fātiḥa*, verse by verse, and in many cases, word by word; and

29 *I'jāz*, p. 3. Here the perfect human being is envisaged insofar as he is identical with the "Muḥammadan reality" (*al-ḥaqīqa al-muḥammadīya*), that is, the metaphysical archetype of man created in the divine form. The correspondence between the nature of the Prophet and that of the Qur'ān has its basis in the words of the Prophet's wife, 'Aisha, who used to say that "his character is the character of the Qur'ān". For Ibn 'Arabī's conception of the *ḥaqīqa muḥammadīya* see *Futūḥāt* vol. I, p. 167–171.

30 Invoking traditional sources in support of this view, Qūnawī cites, among others, the words of 'Alī: "Were it permitted for me to interpret the *Fātiḥa* I would [write] enough to fill seventy saddle-bags"; and the words of 'Alī's son, al-Ḥasan: "God has revealed one hundred and four books. And He has stored the hundred in the four, namely the Torah, the Gospel, the Psalms and the Furqān; and all of these He has stored in the Qur'ān; and all that is in the Qur'ān He has stored in its last quarter; and all that is in its last quarter He has stored in the *Fātiḥa*". (*I'jāz*, p. 138).

31 See Appendix 3, Texts D and G.

in order to emphasise the inspired nature of his exposition he stresses that his commentary will neither be based on the methods of "dialecticians and thinkers" (*ahl al-jadal wa-l-fikr*),[32] nor make constant references to the opinions of the exegetes (*al-mufassirūn*).[33]

5 The Correspondence with Ṭūsī: including al-Risāla al-Mufṣiḥa ʿan muntahā al-afkār wa sabab ikhtilāf al-umam (The Treatise that Makes Plain the Utmost End of Thoughts and the Reason for the Divergence between Religious Communities); and al-Risāla al-hādiya (The Treatise that Guides Aright)

Included along with the works that Qūnawī donated to his *waqf* are copies of some thirty or so of his letters.[34] Among these the polemical correspondence with one of the most prominent intellectual figures of his day, Naṣīr al-Dīn al-Ṭūsī (d. 672/1274), stands out by virtue of its historical significance. Renowned in his time as a scientist, astronomer and reviver of Avicennian philosophy, Ṭūsī was also a controversial figure, who, during the course of his career, had allied himself first to the "Assassins", or Isma'ilis of Alamūt, before betraying them, and then to the Mongol Il-Khan, Hülegü, prior to the sacking of Baghdad. Evidently much valued both by Hülegü and his successor, Abaqā, he was granted a large observatory at Marāgha, where, in addition to pursuing his astrological studies, he instructed students in philosophy and theology.[35] Indeed, it may well have been the testimony provided by one of these students,

32 *Iʿjāz*, p. 12.

33 *Iʿjāz*, p. 6.

34 The majority are addressed to his friends and fellow initiates and are typically concerned with conveying some fresh intuition or with responding to a point raised by the correspondent in question. A selection of such letters – the number varies from one manuscript to another – has been appended to the *Nafaḥāt*, presumably at Qūnawī's behest, and has therefore circulated along with this work. Perhaps of most interest in this anthology – by virtue of the anecdotal material they contain – are those addressed to the Damascene Qāḍī, Muḥyī-l-Dīn Ibn Zakī (d. 668/1270), whose family had provided patronage for Ibn ʿArabī during his years in Damascus. On Ibn ʿArabī's relationship with the Banū Zakī family see Addas, *Quest for the Red Sulphur*, p. 255–256.

35 For a survey of Ṭūsī's life and work, see H. Dabashi, 'Khwājah Naṣīr al-Dīn al-Ṭūsī: the philosopher/vizier and the intellectual climate of his times' in S.H. Nasr and O. Leaman, eds., *History of Islamic Philosophy; Part I*, p. 527–584.

Quṭb al-Dīn al-Shīrāzī (d. 710/1310), that prompted Qūnawī to start the correspondence in the first place.[36]

Whatever the case, in his opening letter Qūnawī simply says that he had heard a lot about Ṭūsī and would have liked to have met him in person, but as that was not possible, he had decided to make do with the next best thing instead, namely starting a written correspondence, which, "as they say, is one of the two ways of meeting".[37] However, he goes on to say that, in addition to the general aim of forging an acquaintanceship, he had been hoping that Ṭūsī would honour him with his privileged insight into some of the most problematic elements of *falsafa* – problems he had contemplated in his youth to little avail, and which he had eventually resolved, not through what had been said about them by the "folk of studying and formal education" (*ahl al-baḥth wa-l-taḥṣīl*), but through the "taste" (*dhawq*) he had attained after leaving behind the "stage of studies and erudition" in order to pursue the methods of the initiatic path or *ṭarīq*. Nevertheless, he adds that if Ṭūsī were able to complement the fruits of intuition with sound rational demonstrations they would thereby achieve the ideal outcome of "combining the two reassurances: the demonstrative and the contemplative".[38]

Along with this covering letter, he entrusted to his courier, Tāj al-Dīn Kāshī,[39] a further two treatises. The first is a philosophical questionnaire – to which Qūnawī adds some thoughts of his own – calculated, on the whole, to challenge Avicennian philosophy's most controversial theories. As for the other, entitled *al-Risāla al-mufṣiḥa*,[40] it is largely taken from the critique of

36 Shīrāzī, as already noted, received an *ijāza* from Qūnawī, authorising him to transmit the *Jāmiʿ al-uṣūl*. Prior to coming to Rūm, however, he had been in Marāgha studying under Ṭūsī. An anecdote from Muḥammad al-Shawkānī's (d. 1250/1834) biographical dictionary, describes Shīrāzī's reasons for leaving Ṭūsī as follows: "Sultan Abaqā ibn Hulāgū once said to [Quṭb al-Dīn] 'You are the best of al-Naṣīr's students, and he is now very old, so try and make the most of his knowledge.' 'I have already done so', he replied, 'and now have no further need of him'. Thereafter he entered Rūm, where he was nobly received by its sovereign who made him Qāḍī of Sivas and Malatya … while there he read the hadiths of the *Jāmiʿ al-uṣūl* under the auspices of al-Ṣadr al-Qūnawī". (*al-Badr al-ṭāliʿ bi-maḥāsin man baʿda al-qarn al-sābiʿ*, ed. H. ʿAmrī, Damascus 1998, p. 817).

37 *Murāsalāt*, p. 13–14.

38 *As'ila*, p. 47.

39 This is presumably the wealthy Konyan merchant mentioned throughout Aflākī's *Manāqib al-ʿārifīn*.

40 The full title by which this work is generally known is *al-Risālat al-mufṣiḥa ʿan muntahā al-afkār wa sabab ikhtilāf al-umam* (*The Treatise that Elucidates the Utmost End of Thoughts and the Reason for the Divergence between Religious Communities*), but this may well be a later variation, since on the one hand Ṭūsī refers to it simply as *Ḥāṣil natāʾij al-afkār*

rational inquiry that features in the introductory section of the *Iʿjāz al-bayān*, and hence, as he says,[41] had been written some time before. It does, however, contain enough original material to be deemed a significant work in its own right.[42] The *Risālat al-hādiya*, which is the other major treatise to figure in the correspondence, was, by contrast, composed specifically for that purpose since it consists of his response to Ṭūsī's answers. In it he highlights the contrast between, on the one hand, the powerlessness of reason to attain anything other than a limited intellection (*taʿaqqul*) within the individual's mind and, on the other, the direct intuition afforded by the path of realisation.[43] Along with Ṭūsī's answers the *Mufṣiḥa* and the *Hādiya* make up the bulk of the exchange, and would later circulate quite widely, both within the record of the correspondence as a whole and as independent works.[44]

It is somewhat curious, then, given the weight of evidence in favour of the authenticity of this exchange,[45] that two senior Turkish scholars should have sought to argue the contrary.[46] While the manner in which they do so differs, the basic tendency remains the same: to dismiss the idea that Qūnawī wrote to Naṣīr al-Dīn al-Ṭūsī. Thus, whereas Nihat Keklik[47] effectively discounts

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(*The Net Results of Thoughts*) and on the other it does not actually mention the question of the differences between religious communities. Nevertheless, in his other writings, most notably the *Iʿjāz al-bayān*, Qūnawī does indeed link these two questions on the grounds that both the scope of reason and the character of sacred law are conditioned by the limited and differentiated nature of the human individual state. (See Appendix 3, Text G).

41 *Murāsalāt*, p. 14.

42 See Appendix 3, Text B.

43 See Appendix 3, Texts C, K, and L.

44 Fanārī, for example, clearly regarded them as integral parts of Qūnawi's corpus, since he makes several references to them in the *Miṣbāḥ al-uns*. Gudrun Schubert, in the introduction to her edition of the correspondence, gives a reasonably detailed summary of its constituent texts. (See Schubert, *al-Murāsalāt bayna Ṣadr al-Dīn al-Qūnawī wa Naṣīr al-Dīn al-Ṭūsī*).

45 For a detailed account of this evidence see G. Schubert, 'The textual history of the correspondence between al-Qunawi and al-Tusi' in *Manuscripts of the Middle East*, vol 3, Leiden 1988, p. 73–78.

46 It should, however, be noted that both Ülken (*Islam düşüncesi*, p. 168–170) and Ergin ('Ṣadraddīn al-Qunawi ve eserleri', p. 79) regard the correspondence as genuine and, moreover, of prime importance in terms of the insight that it provides into Qūnawī's treatment of *falsafa*.

47 See *Sadreddin*, p. XXIII.

Qūnawī's authorship,[48] Mikâil Bayram[49] (followed in this regard by his student, Ahmet Ceran),[50] accepts it while nevertheless maintaining that Qūnawī's fellow correspondent was not Ṭūsī but Ahi Evren, the semi-legendary patron saint of the Anatolian tanners' guilds.[51]

For the Iranian scholar, Muhammad Khvājavī, by contrast, the correspondence is not only genuine but bears testimony to Ṭūsī's admiration for Ṣadr al-Dīn.[52] Although Khvājavī is undoubtedly right to regard the correspondence as genuine, the relationship between Qūnawī and Ṭūsī is perhaps not quite as he seeks to present it, for once the conventional pleasantries have been dispensed with the tone of the correspondence reverts to an essentially polemical one. Indeed, scarcely veiled beneath the etiquette of the day, a number of stinging comments come to light; as, for instance, when Qūnawī takes Ṭūsī to task over his excessively narrow interpretation[53] of Ibn Sīnā's assertion that man can never truly fathom the underlying realities of things (*ḥaqā'iq al-ashyā'*),[54] saying "I can only imagine that the scribe who copied the relevant

48 Although Keklik includes the "*Nasireddin Tusî ile Mektuplaşmalar*" in his brief (and somewhat arbitrary) list of Qūnawī's works, the paragraph he devotes to it consists solely of reasons why it should be "treated with suspicion". Nevertheless, he stops short of dismissing its authenticity outright, suggesting instead that the various manuscripts of the *Mükâtabât* "require careful examination". It has to be said, however, that even the most perfunctory examination is enough to dispel one of his two chief grounds for suspicion, namely his assertion that "whereas Qūnawī repeats certain ideas in many of his works, we do not come across a single bit of what is said in this work in any of his other books" (*Sadreddin*, p. XXIII). Suffice to say that more than half of the *Mufṣiḥa* is taken *verbatim* from the *I'jāz al-bayān*.

49 'SadrüdDin Konevi ile Ahi Evren, Şeyh NasırüdDin'in Mektuplaşması' in *Selçuk Üniversitesi Fen-Edebiyat Fakültesi'nin Dergisi*, 1983, no. 2, p. 57–59.

50 *Şeyh*, p. 70–72.

51 Bayram bases this claim on the questionable assertion that Qūnawī's letters are in fact addressed, not to Naṣīr al-Dīn Muḥammad al-Ṭūsī, but to a certain Naṣr al-Dīn Maḥmūd al-Hoyī, whom he regards as the historical Ahi Evren. The grounds, however, on which he attempts to establish a connection between these two figures, about whose historical personalities very little is known, are doubtful to say the least, as is his assertion that Qūnawī would have regarded Ahi Evren as a renowned exponent of the rational sciences because he had been taught by Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī.

52 Khvājavī, however, refrains from describing the actual content of the correspondence. All he says, in fact, is that "Qūnawī once sent one of his treatises to the sultan of philosophers, Khwājah Naṣīr al-Milla wa-l-Dīn Muḥammad Ṭūsī, and he in his reply began by saying" … after which he cites Ṭūsī's eulogies. (See Khvājavī's introduction to his translation of Fanārī's *Miṣbāḥ al-uns*, p. 25).

53 See *Murāsalāt*, p. 101–102.

54 See Ibn Sīnā, *Ta'līqāt*, p. 34. (See Appendix 3, Text L).

passages from the *Taʿlīqāt* must have omitted to transcribe that part in full otherwise the sense of the *Shaykh*'s words could not possibly have been lost on your august understanding".[55]

It would therefore seem that in initiating this correspondence and then "publishing" it, our author was primarily motivated, not by the desire to preserve a record of his and Ṭūsī's admiration for one another, but by the lesson his critique would set for posterity.[56]

6 Nafthat al-maṣdūr wa tuḥfat al-shakūr (The Sigh of Relief of the Tight-Chested and the Gift of the Grateful)

A work that stands apart, stylistically, from the rest of Qūnawī's writings; altogether more personal in tone, it consists of what he calls an "intimate discourse" (*munājā*) between the two poles of his being – necessity and contingency – corresponding to the ranks of lordship and servanthood respectively.[57] Although only partly composed in *sajʿ*, or rhymed prose, it retains nonetheless a rhythmic quality throughout, and the language used is more ornate than is usually the case in his works. As for the curious title, it refers, so we are told, to his writing this work in gratitude to the providence (*ʿināya*)[58] that saw him through the trials and hardships he had to endure before reaching the end of the spiritual path.

This is also one of the rarer works in his corpus.[59] Indeed, copies of the *Naftha* occur so infrequently in the manuscript collections of the Muslim world that the Turkish and Iranian scholars who have studied Qūnawī's bibliography have, on the whole, tended to regard it as merely ascribable to him.[60] Nevertheless, though

55 *Hādiya*, p. 150.

56 The Ottoman scholar, Taşköprüzade (d. 968/1561), seems to have taken a similar view of the correspondence, saying "he undertook a written debate with al-Ṭūsī regarding obscure metaphysical questions until al-Ṭūsī was forced to admit to the weakness and shortcomings of his standpoint". (*Miftāḥ al-saʿāda*, vol. II, p. 124).

57 See *Murāsalāt*, pp. 135, 137.

58 Although the term *ʿināya* is conventionally rendered in theological contexts as "providence", its root meaning is more clearly conveyed by "concern" or "watchful care".

59 Only one copy is listed in the catalogue of the Süleymaniye Library in Istanbul (MS Amcazade Hüseyin Paşa 447/1m, fols. 1–17). Fortunately, though, any doubts about the authorship of this work are dispelled by the copy housed in the University of Leiden (MS Or. 544), which contains a reproduction of Qūnawī's *ijāza* to Jandī. (See Appendix 2).

60 This is notably the case with Ergin and Khvājavī. For his part, Ergin refers to Ḥājjī Khalīfa's (d. 894/1489) mention of this work in his *Kashf al-ẓunūn*. The latter, however, is not the only classic reference to contain a mention of the *Naftha*, for an earlier source, Ṣafadī's

it does not seem to have been widely read, it still has a special importance of its own, which justifies its being counted among his essential writings: first, his *ijāza* to Jandī was included in the latter's copy of this work, which he read before his master towards the very end of Ṣadr al-Dīn's life;[61] and second, and more importantly, the *Naftha* figures in Qūnawī's letters to Ṭūsī, albeit by chance as it only came to Ṭūsī's attention because Qūnawī's messenger, Tāj al-Dīn Kāshī, decided of his own accord to include it along with the other *rasā'il*.[62]

In the letter that accompanies his answers to Qūnawī's questions, Ṭūsī refers to this work, expressing surprise that someone of so elevated a spiritual degree should have need to engage in "supplications" of this sort.[63] In response, Qūnawī begins by explaining that the *Naftha* takes the form of a long supplication as it was only proper, from the point of view traditional etiquette or *adab*, that the author should adopt the "tongue of slavehood and contingency".[64] He then adds that its true purpose is to shed light upon man's "intelligible journey" (*riḥla ma'qūla*) in order that it should serve as a guide to others.[65]

As for Ṭūsī's conjectures regarding his spiritual rank, Qūnawī suggests that there are three passages towards the end of the *Naftha* that should provide sufficient indication on that score.[66]

7 Risālat al-nuṣūṣ fī taḥqīq al-ṭawr al-makhṣūṣ (The Treatise of Texts in the Verification of the Distinguished Degree)

A concise treatise consisting of twenty "texts" (*nuṣūṣ*), of varying lengths, some no more than a few lines. The author's comments suggest that it was composed in response to the need for a short summary of the metaphysical theories elaborated in his longer works. The importance of these texts, so he explains,

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(d. 764/1363) *al-Wāfī bi-l-wafayāt*, likewise lists the "*Tuḥfat al-shakūr*" among Qūnawī's "writings about the spiritual path" (*al-Wāfī*, vol. II, p. 200).

61 See *supra*, p. 26, note 60.

62 *Murāsalāt*, p. 134.

63 *Murāsalāt*, p. 90.

64 *Murāsalāt*, p. 135.

65 *Murāsalāt*, p. 135–136.

66 *Murāsalāt*, p. 139. One passage in particular stands out. Qūnawī declares that at a relatively early stage in his career he had been raised to the "utmost gnosis of the True" through the power of the "divine attraction" (*ijtidhāb*), a force described as such since it "pulls" the wayfarer to a higher spiritual station without any effort on his part. Nevertheless, he goes on to say how, in that lofty state, it was revealed to him that he would still have to pass through all the stations (*maqāmāt*) on the spiritual path after returning to the world. (*Naftha*, fol. 16a).

resides in their representing the specific hallmarks of his works, deriving as they do from his unique spiritual distinction (*ikhtiṣāṣ*).[67]

Helped, no doubt, in large measure by the fact that it would have been considerably easier to copy than the longer studies, the *Risālat al-nuṣūṣ* has proven to be the work that has circulated more widely than any other in Qūnawi's corpus.[68] Like the *Miftāḥ* – with which it shares the characteristic of being a *mukhtaṣar*, or summary of his quintessential teachings – it has, over the centuries, given rise to a number of commentaries and glosses.[69]

8 Al-risāla al-murshidīya (The Epistle of Spiritual Guidance)

Addressed specifically to the initiated, this "brief sketch" (*'ujāla*), as Qūnawī styles it, differs from his other works in that it deals directly with a technical, or methodological, aspect of the spiritual journey. The technique in question is one that he calls "spiritual orientation" (*tawajjuh*), which consists in total and unbroken concentration upon God. This state is achieved through complete detachment from all contingent things such that the locus of consciousness (*al-maḥall*) is emptied of all that appears as "other than God". When the last of these "veils of contingency" has been cast aside what remains, we are told, is the "secret of the True" (*sirr al-ḥaqq*), shining in the mirror of the heart.

As its objective is the supreme theophany itself, Qūnawī declares this method of orientation to be "useful not only for beginners but also for those who are already firmly grounded in gnosis".[70] Moreover, despite its brevity this was a work to which he attached special importance. We know this to be the case because it is singled out in the section of his will in which he advises his disciples on how best to proceed after his death: they should, he says, avoid occupying their minds with vexed philosophical questions,[71] but devote themselves instead to the methods of the way – especially the practice of orientation as depicted in the *Murshidīya*.[72]

67 *Nuṣūṣ*, p. 13.

68 For example, twenty-nine copies are listed in the catalogue of the Süleymaniye Library alone. There even exists an 18th-century Javanese translation (MS Leiden, Or. 1521/2).

69 For a list of some of the commentaries undertaken by Ottoman scholars, see Ergin, 'Ṣadraddīn al-Qunawi ve eserleri', p. 73–74.

70 *Murshidīya*, fol. 4a.

71 See *Waṣīyat al-Shaykh Ṣadr al-Dīn 'inda-l-wafāt.* (MS Istanbul Şehid Ali Paşa 2810), and Chittick, 'The Last Will', p. 54.

72 See Chittick, 'The Last Will', p. 53.

9 Al-nafaḥāt al-ilāhīya (The Divine Breaths)

A certain amount has already been said about this, Qūnawī's second longest work, and the manner in which it came to be compiled. One will recall that it consists of a chronicle of epiphanies, visions and intuitions experienced over a period of thirty years. Typically, a description of these events is given, along with a precise note of the time at which they occurred. Such descriptions then form the point of departure for a series of complex metaphysical discussions.

By dint of this personal dimension, the *Nafaḥāt* would come to be seen as testament to his spiritual rank. Jāmī, for example, in his brief list of Qūnawī's major works, singles out the *Nafaḥāt* for special attention, saying "anyone who would know something of Qūnawī's perfection in this way [of ours] need do no more than consult this [work]".[73]

10 Al-fukūk fī asrār mustanadāt ḥikam al-Fuṣūṣ (The Unravelling of the Mysteries behind the Wisdoms of the Fuṣūṣ)

Qūnawī's last completed work, it was written at the request of his disciples[74] who had suggested that he clarify some of the enigmas they had encountered in Ibn ʿArabī's *Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam*.[75] Chief among these had been the connection

73 Jāmī, *Nafaḥāt*, p. 555.

74 "When the divine communication came to this humble [servant] informing him of his special connection with the secret of being last (*sirr al-ākhirīya*), and of the fact that no-one from among his companions would inherit the fullness of his universality (*kamāl jamʿīyati-hi*) save his Lord, he was pained by the folding-up of this noble carpet and the pulling-down of this lofty pavilion; wherefore, he was told that there would remain followers who would continue to bear some of what this universality contains, even as he has said – God's grace be upon him and his family: *in every generation this knowledge will be borne by the justly balanced who will spare it from the distortion of the over-zealous and the twisting of the cynic*. Thus, gladdened by this news he gave praise to Allāh and waited in a state of hope and anticipation. Then the True raised up, during that time, a group of sincere brethren, true companions and beloved friends from among the folk of noble souls … and because they desired to solve the enigmas of this book and to uncover its mysteries and lofty sciences … they suggested that I unravel its seals, clarify the mystery of its origin, unveil its hidden secrets, and open its locks … So I agreed, knowing how much they deserved it. And although I had never gone through an explanation of any part of this book with the author – God be pleased with him – except for the *khuṭba*, and that alone, I was blessed nonetheless with being allowed to share in that which [the Shaykh] had come to know … and in taking from God without any causal intermediary". (*Fukūk*, p. 181–182).

75 The *Fukūk* contains an interesting preface in which Qūnawī stresses the special importance of the *Fuṣūṣ*: "The *Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam* is one of the most precious distillations

between the "Prophetic Words" and the kinds of wisdom specific to them. Although this connection is implied in the title of each chapter, or "ring-stone" (*faṣṣ*), – for example, "The Ring-Stone of Divine Wisdom in the Adamic Word", and "The Ring-Stone of Singular Wisdom in the Muḥammadan Word"[76] – the grounds on which such a link is established are often difficult to glean. Hence, Qūnawī identifies his purpose as that of "bringing to light the reasons why the wisdom of each chapter is ascribed the way it is … without actually undertaking a commentary of the entire text".[77] As for the notion of "unravelling" expressed in the title, he explains that since these "wisdoms" form the intricate seal engraved on each ring-stone[78] – or in other words the spirit of the doctrine expressed therein – the process of shedding light on it, according to the symbolism of the signet-ring employed in the *Fuṣūṣ*, is one of unravelling or deciphering such seals in order to determine the specific rank and nature of the Prophetic Word in question.[79]

11 Sharḥ al-aḥādīth al-arbaʿīnīya (Commentary on Forty Hadiths)

Qūnawī's last work, it was left unfinished at the time of his death. Hence, though commonly known under the generic title of "Commentary on Forty Hadiths", it actually contains only twenty-nine. It was composed at the request of a group of friends and acquaintances, who, in the light of his renown as a teacher of hadith, had asked him to preserve something of his expertise for posterity. But as the following passage reveals, he was not especially enthused by their suggestion that he compose his commentary in the manner of earlier, exoteric authors:

(*mukhtaṣarāt*) of our master's works … and forms one of the final seals of his writings and one of the last intuitions (*tanazzulāt*) to descend upon him. It flows from the very well-spring of the Muḥammadan station … and thus comes comprising the quintessence of the spiritual taste of our Prophet – God's grace be upon him – with regard to knowledge of God, while at the same time pointing to the origin of the tastes specific to the great friends (*awliyāʾ*) and prophets mentioned therein … It is, then, like a stamp betokening that which is contained in the spiritual perfection of each of them … This being the case, there can be no doubt that a full acquaintance with the mysteries contained in a book of this stature … is dependent upon realising the spiritual inheritance of him [i.e. the Prophet] who has tasted all of that". (*Fukūk*, p. 180).

76 The titles of the opening and closing chapters respectively.

77 *Fukūk*, p. 316.

78 *Fukūk*, p. 182.

79 *Fukūk*, p. 316.

> It so happened that when they saw for themselves that my share in the science of hadith was an abundant one and my deal of its secrets a profitable one, a number of my acquaintances and companions urged me to excerpt a collection of prophetic hadiths and to say something about them in the manner of some of the earlier authors (*iswata baʿḍi-l-mutaqaddimīn*). For my own part, though, I was reluctant to do so, as I was not interested in emulating those whose excerptions [usually] amount to no more than a list of hadiths, or the odd few who, if they do happen to say something about them, speak solely about their grammatical inflection or that which is understood from their outer form, all of which is obvious to anyone with a basic grasp of Arabic and sound common sense. In all of that there is neither much merit nor a great deal of benefit. What *is* important, by contrast, is knowing what he means thereby – peace be upon him – and elucidating the wisdom and mysteries that his words contain, in a manner that is supported by the principles of the revealed law (*sharīʿa*), as expressed in the Book and the *sunna*, and whose soundness is attested to by enlightened intellects and natural intuition alike. Then it happened that the True (*al-ḥaqq*) opened my heart to the idea of excerpting a number of the prophetic sayings that emanate from the station of 'comprehensiveness of word' (*jawāmiʿ al-kalim*), and of unveiling their doctrinal treasures, which comprise the most precious mines of wisdom. As for their chains of transmission, they are universally regarded as sound, and are taken from the authorised transcriptions which I made under the auspices of the most proficient masters.[80]

The abundance of extant manuscripts would suggest that, though unfinished, the *Sharḥ al-aḥādīth* became one of his most widely read works.[81]

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80 *Sharḥ al-aḥādīth*, fol. 2b-3a.

81 Twenty-two copies are listed in the catalogue of the Süleymaniye Library alone.

CHAPTER 3

Intellectual Currents and Debates

1 Qūnawī's Work in Relation to Ibn ʿArabī's

The previous chapters should already have provided an idea of the extent to which the figure of the *Shaykh al-Akbar* looms large over Qūnawī's life and work. Indeed, however important Qūnawī may have been as a spiritual master in his own right, one cannot ignore the fact that he is – and always has been – known primarily as Ibn ʿArabī's stepson and foremost disciple.[1] At least some attention, then, should be given to the issue of how his writings stand in relation to those of his master[2] – especially as this question has, over the years, given rise to a number of contentious interpretations and clichés. The pages that follow are intended to give an overview of where their writings coincide or differ, taking as terms of comparison the three broad areas of doctrines, structure and style.

Starting with their doctrinal content, we should recall that Qūnawī himself is keen to stress that his works are not simply the product of a bookish study of his master's teachings. Rather they are the fruits of inspiration and, as such, are imbued with the specific "taste" (*dhawq*) that derives from his "spiritual distinction" (*ikhtiṣāṣ*). But this does not mean that he seeks to assert his originality by contradicting Ibn ʿArabī. From Qūnawī's point of view, to do so would only serve to undermine the value of his writings: just as the divine revelations reflect the unity of their source, so, as he explains in the *Iʿjāz al-bayān*, is it

1 That this was true even during Qūnawī's lifetime would seem to be confirmed by Jandī's describing him as the "*khalīfa* of the seal of Muḥammadan sainthood" (cf. *supra*, p. 24), and also by the comments - cited earlier - of the contemporary chronicler, Karīm al-Dīn al-Aqsarāʾī: "In those days the *Shaykh al-Islām* was Shaykh Ṣadr al-Dīn Muḥammad, who was a thoroughly learned man and a perfect teacher, versed in all manner of disciplines, particularly the science of hadith, for which he was renowned in both East and West, and also for the fact that his father, Majd al-Dīn Isḥāq, was one of the companions of the divinely inspired master, Muḥyī-l-Dīn Muhammad al-ʿArabī". (*Musāmarat al-akhbār*, in *Akhbār-i-Salājiqah-i-Rūm*, p. 419).

2 ʿAbd al-Raḥmān al-Jāmī famously described him as the "chief interpreter of the Shaykh's words," adding that "one cannot grasp the essence of the Shaykh's discourse regarding the question of the oneness of Being (*waḥdat al-wujūd*), in a manner compatible with both reason and sacred law, save by following and understanding [Qūnawī's] verifications". (*Nafaḥāt*, p. 555).

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"inconceivable that any divergence should arise between the great Friends [of God] regarding fundamental divine principles".[3]

Accordingly, Qūnawī's oeuvre, while retaining its specific taste, contains, nonetheless, the key elements of Ibn ʿArabī's teachings. The most important of these will be considered in detail as occasion demands. For the moment one may briefly cite the doctrines of existence envisaged as continual theophany; the all-embracing nature of the perfect man; the world envisaged as the articulation of the breath of the All-Merciful; the *barzakh* as an intelligible common boundary; the metaphysical symbolism of the mirror; the immutable essences; the relative nature of the concept of divinity; the superiority of *supra*-rational "unveiling" (*kashf*) over reason; and the existence of a "specific face" (*wajh khāṣṣ*) through which all beings remain directly connected to their divine principle: all of which feature prominently in Ibn ʿArabī's *Futūḥāt* and *Fuṣūṣ*, not to mention the many shorter treatises, and all of which play a key part in Qūnawī's synthesis.[4]

At the same time, it is important to observe that the roots of other crucial elements of this synthesis appear as no more than brief allusions in the works of the *Shaykh al-Akbar*. This is notably the case, for example, with the doctrines of the "divine secret" (*al-sirr al-ilāhī*), the "ascension of dissolution" (*miʿrāj al-taḥlīl*), and the "self-disclosure of the Essence" (*al-tajallī al-dhātī*), each of which will be examined in due course. Nor, by the same token, should it be forgotten that some of the most influential elements of Qūnawī's oeuvre are – so it would seem – absent from the works of his master, or far less noticeable at any rate; the most prominent examples in this respect being the metaphysical theory of "determination" (*taʿayyun*) and "non-determination" (*al-lā taʿayyun*), the doctrine of the "divine affairs" (*shuʾūn*), and the idea of intra-substantial causality.

Nevertheless, because of its special relevance to the present chapter, there is one question that deserves particular attention here: we are referring, of course, to the theory of the "oneness of Being", or "*waḥdat al-wujūd*", which, over the centuries, has become both the best-known and most controversial doctrine associated with the Akbarian school. As for this doctrine's roots, they are to be found in Ibn ʿArabī's assertion that true Being (*wujūd*) belongs to God (*al-ḥaqq*) alone, such that the sole measure of existence that things possess is

3 *Iʿjāz*, p. 44. (See Appendix 3, Text G).

4 For detailed studies of Ibn ʿArabī's metaphysics see W. Chittick, *The Sufi Path of Knowledge: Ibn al-ʿArabī's Metaphysics of Imagination*, Albany 1989; and R. Nettler, *Sufi metaphysics and Qurʾānic prophets: Ibn ʿArabī's thought and method in the Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam*, Cambridge 2003.

by dint of their participation in God's unique *wujūd*.[5] It is, however, by now generally agreed that Ibn ʿArabī himself makes no mention of the term "*waḥdat al-wujūd*" by which this doctrine would later be denoted.[6] This being the case, some scholars have sought to identify Qūnawī as the figure who gave a label to his master's ontology, working chiefly on the basis that he was, at least, the first author in the Akbarian school to use this term. Hence, Claude Addas, for instance, argues that "not only did Ṣadr al-Dīn give Ibn ʿArabī's doctrine a precise form and outline but he also gave it a name: *waḥdat al-wujūd*".[7] The problem, however, with such assertions is that the actual phrase itself occurs only once in Qūnawī's works,[8] and that, far from being introduced as a "name for Ibn ʿArabī's doctrine", it appears quite innocuously in passing.[9] This remark

5 He writes: "Being is His and non-existence is yours. Wherefore He does not cease to be and you do not cease to be not … (*Futūḥāt*, vol. II, p. 55). Through the power of the One, the manifold beings are made manifest. Indeed they could not possibly become so were they not fundamentally identical with It. The existence attributed to each and every creature is therefore God's Being (*wujūd al-ḥaqq*), for the contingent has no being of its own. At the same time, the essences of the contingents are receptacles for the manifestation of this Being … (*Futūḥāt*, vol. II, p. 69). In their divine manifestation (*ẓuhūru-hā al-ilāhī*), then, things are really nothing. Hence, being is His Being, and the slaves are his slaves. Yet although they are slaves in respect of their own essences, they are the True (*al-ḥaqq*) in respect of their existence". (*Futūḥāt*, vol. II, p. 70). It ought to be said, moreover, that the gist of this theory is not exclusive to the writings of Ibn ʿArabī and his followers. Indeed, the conception of *al-wujūd al-ḥaqq*, would appear, all told, to be in harmony with the Avicennian notions of necessary and contingent being as well as with the Sufi concepts of the perpetual annihilation (*fanāʾ*) of the servant and permanence (*baqāʾ*) of God. This same basic perspective is evident too in the following passage from the *Mishkāt al-Anwār*, a treatise traditionally (though probably incorrectly) ascribed to Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī (d. 505/1111): "Existence (*wujūd*) is divided into that which exists through itself and that which exists through another. As far as the latter is concerned, therefore, its existence is merely borrowed, such that it cannot subsist by itself. Indeed, considered as it is in itself, it is pure nothingness (*ʿadam maḥḍ*), and the only measure of existence that it has is through its relation to another. This, however, is not true being, but is instead … like borrowing a garment or riches. Thus, the [only] True Being (*al-wujūd al-ḥaqq*) is God Most High". (*Mishkāt al-anwār*, p. 121–122).

6 According to Bakri Aladdin, for example, "ce terme de *waḥdat al-wuǧūd* n'a aucune occurrence dans l'œuvre d'Ibn ʿArabī, mais d'autres termes qui expriment un sens similaire y sont facilement repérables". (See the introduction to his edition of al-Nābulusī's *Kitāb al-wujūd al-ḥaqq*, p. 70.)

7 Addas, *Quest for the Red Sulphur*, p. 232.

8 To be strictly accurate, it should be said that the relevant passage from the *Miftāḥ ghayb al-jamʿ* is duplicated in the *Risālat al-nuṣūṣ*.

9 Specifically, at the end of an explanation as to why, on the basis that "like is apprehended by like", the contingent being cannot apprehend Being itself, as its own oneness is not a true

alone, then, should suffice to call into question Addas' claim that by coming up with a "simple and handy designation" Qūnawī had inadvertently "provided Ibn ʿArabī's critics with a dangerous weapon" and made his thought "more vulnerable to the attacks of the exotericists".[10]

That said it would appear that one key passage in his writings provided, admittedly, at least some of the inspiration for the eventual coining of this label by later Akbarians. The passage in question – which became something of a *locus classicus* in later times[11] – focuses specifically on the idea of the "true unity" (*waḥda ḥaqīqīya*) that pertains to Being, without actually mentioning the phrase "*waḥdat al-wujūd*" itself. It is to be noted, moreover, that like much of his ontology, Qūnawī's conception of this "true unity" readily concurs in many respects with the prevailing theories of his day. Hence, in agreement with the Muslim Peripatetics, or *falāsifa*, he regards Being as the most universal of things;[12] and like his Christian contemporary, Thomas Aquinas,[13] he holds it to be the most adequate attribute of God by virtue of its indeterminacy.[14] As the least differentiated of things, Being is thus the most unified; indeed it is the transcendent archetype of unity itself:

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unity "like the unity of Being" (*ka-waḥdati-l-wujūd*). (*Miftāḥ*, p. 20; *Nuṣūṣ*, p. 72–73). (See Appendix 3, Text F).

10 Addas, *Quest for the Red Sulphur*, p. 232.

11 See, for instance, al-Nābulusī, *Kitāb al-wujūd al-ḥaqq*, p. 141; and ʿAbd al-Qādir al-Jazā'irī, *Kitāb al-Mawāqif*, vol. 1, p. 153.

12 For the philosophers' view of the universality of Being, see, for example, Fārābī, *Bayān gharaḍ Arisṭūṭālīs*: "The universal science looks at that which is common to all beings, namely Being and Oneness … Hence, the primary object of this science is Being without qualification (*al-wujūd al-muṭlaq*) and that which is the same as it in terms of universality, namely unity". (*Kitāb al-majmūʿ min muʾallafāt Abū Naṣr al-Fārābī*, p. 41–42). Commenting upon the verse, {Our Lord encompasses all things in mercy and knowledge}, Qūnawī writes: "What is meant here by His mercy is His Being, for there is naught that is common to [absolutely] all things, in all of their variation and difference, save Being". (*Iʿjāz*, p. 276).

13 See *Summa Theologiae*, Ia. 13, 11: "Et ideo quanto aliqua nomina sunt minus determinata, et magis communia et absoluta, tanto magis proprie dicuntur de Deo a nobis. Unde et Damascenus dicit quod *principalius omnibus, quae de Deo dicintur nominibus, est,* QUI EST; *totum enim in se ipso comprehendens habet ipsum esse velut quoddam pelagus substantiae infinitum et indeterminatum*".

14 "One will have understood, therefore, that '*wujūd*' may be considered in two respects, the first of which is that of Being *qua* Being, which is God, and that in this sense it has no multiplicity in it, nor composition, nor attributes, qualities, names, forms, relations and conditions: just pure Being. However, even our referring to it as 'Being' is, all told, analogical, since this Name cannot be wholly adequate to His Essence. On the contrary, His Name

> Know that God (*al-ḥaqq*) is pure Being[15] (*al-wujūd al-maḥḍ*), wherein there is no difference, and that He is One according to a true unity (*waḥda ḥaqīqīya*) which is not to be conceived of in relation to the many; for neither the reality of this unity as it is in itself, nor the conception thereof [on the part of created beings] imply any opposite (or correlative).[16]

Having considered, albeit briefly, the extent to which Qūnawī builds upon his master's teachings, attention will now turn to what are probably the most readily apparent differences between their respective writings: those of structure and style.

In this connection it has often been said that Qūnawī's works are more "systematic" or "logically structured" than those of his master;[17] and though one should be wary, perhaps, of overstating this feature – as it is sometimes emphasised to the point of distortion – it remains true that his writings generally appear more focused, lacking as they do Ibn ʿArabī's typically parenthetical mode of expression whereby a chain of ideas is interspersed with digressions forming so many tangents to the main line of argument. This systematic quality also derives from the fact that our author's writings are comparable in scope at least, if not in general style, to the metaphysical and cosmological sections of a philosophical summa. Hence, his most important works – by which we mean chiefly the *Miftāḥ* and the *Iʿjāz al-bayān* – are comprehensive enough to deal with the nature of the world and man's place therein, while being much more manageable, for both reader and scribe, than the dauntingly voluminous *Futūḥāt*, the work that contains Ibn ʿArabī's essential writings on metaphysics and cosmology.[18]

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is identical with His Attribute, and His Attribute is identical with His Essence". (*Miftāḥ*, p. 22; *Nuṣūṣ*, p. 78–79).

15 In the same decade that Qūnawī wrote these words, Aquinas, likewise, would assert that "Deus est ipsum esse". (*Summa Theologiae*, Ia. 4, 2).

16 *Miftāḥ*, p. 19; *Nuṣūṣ*, p. 69–70. Unlike the *falāsifa*, however, he sees the conception of Being's true oneness as having a fundamental bearing on the possibility of spiritual realisation. In this respect he focuses on the idea of Being as the "common measure" (*al-qadr al-mushtarak*), which – like numerical unity in relation to the series of numbers – is found in all existents yet at the same time comprises them all within itself.

17 See, for example, Chittick, *The Last Will*, p. 44.

18 Focusing primarily on these aspects of his master's oeuvre, Qūnawī makes relatively little mention, for example, of the different degrees of the esoteric hierarchy, nor of the numerous stations on the spiritual path - topics which, by contrast, take up a significant portion of Ibn ʿArabī's works, and of the *Futūḥāt* in particular.

But is it accurate to describe – as some have[19] – Qūnawī's works as more "philosophical" or "rationalistic" than those of his master? Here a good degree of caution is advisable; for while it is true that Ṣadr al-Dīn appears better acquainted with the Avicennian tradition and incorporates a number of its terms and concepts into his doctrine,[20] he is also, like his master, at pains to point out the limitations of syllogistic reasoning, and challenges in particular those philosophical theories that are at odds with revelation.

As for general style, Ṣadr al-Dīn's works are altogether more neutral in tone – cooler if one will – than those of his master, and are noticeably devoid of poetic verses,[21] which, by contrast, form an integral element of Ibn ʿArabī's oeuvre.[22] Noticeable too, as already mentioned, is the fact that apart from the occasional mention of "the Shaykh"[23] Qūnawī almost never refers to other Sufi masters.[24] This differs markedly from Ibn ʿArabī, whose writings – though representing a new departure in the development of Sufi metaphysics – retain much of the flavour of earlier Sufi literature, characterised as they are by a familiar, anecdotal style along with numerous references to the

19 See, for instance, H. Ülken, *Islam düşüncesi*, Istanbul 1946, p. 170.

20 For example, see *infra*, p. 77–78. On the Avicennian dimension of Qūnawī's works and its role in shaping the perception of "philosophical Sufism" in the anti-Akbarian polemical tradition, see A. Akasoy, 'What is Philosophical Sufism?' in Peter Adamson, ed., *In the Age of Averroes: Arabic philosophy in the sixth/twelfth century*. London 2011, p. 242–249.

21 This, however, is not to say that Qūnawī's teachings were never expressed in verse, for his closest friend, the North-African ʿAfīf al-Dīn al-Tilimsānī (d. 690/1291), was a talented poet, and many of his verses were clearly inspired by Ṣadr al-Dīn's doctrines. Indeed, even Tilimsānī's arch-critic, Ibn Taymīya, appreciated the formal beauty, at least, of his poetry.

22 Notable in this respect are the *Kitāb al-isrā' ilā al-maqām al-asrā* (*The Book of the Night Journey to the Most Noble Station*), a poetic account of the spiritual ascent through the seven heavens, and the *Tarjumān al-ashwāq* (*The Interpreter of Ardent Desires*), an esoteric love poem inspired by his meeting with the saintly Niẓām ʿAyn al-Shams. Poetry plays an integral part in the *Futūḥāt* too, all 560 chapters being preceded by introductory poems, the doctrinal importance of which has been expressly highlighted by the author himself.

23 Meaning Ibn ʿArabī. Qūnawī also makes a brief reference to his friend, Saʿd al-Dīn Ḥammūya (d. 652/1254), in which he recounts how the latter was able to contemplate the reflection of the immutable essences in the world of archetypes. (See *Fukūk*, p. 234). On Saʿd al-Dīn Ḥammūya see Chittick, 'The School of Ibn 'Arabī' in S.H. Nasr and O. Leaman, eds., *History of Islamic Philosophy; Part I*, p. 519.

24 It is undoubtedly this feature of his work which leads Ibn Taymīya to conclude that Qūnawī was not well-versed in the sayings of the Sufis. See *infra*, p. 172.

outstanding representatives of the *qawm*, or "folk", with whom the author has kept company.[25]

Finally, Qūnawī's works contain far fewer Qur'ānic quotations. That said it still seems something of an exaggeration to suggest, as Chittick does, that Ṣadr al-Dīn's writings "focus on philosophical issues rather than on Qur'ān and hadith".[26] His longest work, after all, is his commentary on the *Fātiḥa*; and, as will be seen, much of his metaphysical language – like that of his master – is derived from scriptural concepts and terms.

2 The Critique of Rational Inquiry

As indicated in the previous chapter, Qūnawī's critique of rational inquiry is an integral part of his teachings,[27] and one, as we shall see, that would seem to have exerted an influence on the intellectual orientation of later generations in both the Ottoman and Persian lands.[28] It is important to bear in mind, however, that in undertaking this critique, he is seeking, not to dismiss the validity of rational inquiry outright, but rather to highlight its inevitable limitations when applied to metaphysics.

Although he generally treats of this subject from a purely theoretical point of view – that of establishing the most adequate means of attaining "sound knowledge" (*al-ʿilm al-ṣaḥīḥ*), or "knowledge of things as they really are in

25 References to the sayings and deeds of earlier masters feature abundantly in much of the classic literature of *Taṣawwuf*. Notable examples are Qushayrī's *Risāla*, Hujwīrī's *Kashf al-maḥjūb*, and Kalābādhī's *al-Taʿarruf li-madhhab ahl al-taṣawwuf*. This remains true of Ibn ʿArabī's writings too. Indeed, one of the works most frequently read during his lifetime, the *Rūḥ al-quds*, is an account of the many luminaries of the Way whom he had met on his travels.

26 'The School of Ibn 'Arabī', p. 517. Having cited this feature of his writings as an example of Qūnawī's intellectual independence, Chittick then seeks to strengthen this assertion by concluding that, in this respect, Qūnawī had "presumably" gone against the "oral instructions that he received from his master".

27 Here too he would appear to be following in the footsteps of Ibn ʿArabī who famously wrote to the pre-eminent speculative theologian of the time, Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī (d. 606/1209), advising him that certitude (*yaqīn*) in matters of divine science may be gained through *supra*-rational unveiling (*kashf*) alone. (See *Risāla ilā al-imām al-Rāzī* in *Rasā'il Ibn ʿArabī*). For a detailed discussion of Ibn ʿArabī's attitude toward *falsafa* see F. Rosenthal, 'Ibn ʿArabī between Philosophy and Mysticism: Ṣūfism and Philosophy are neighbours and visit each other' in *Oriens*, Vol. 31 1988, p. 1–35.

28 See *infra*, p. 173–174.

themselves"[29] – it is clear nonetheless that for him, as for others before him, an important impetus behind his critique of reason is the desire to restore harmony to Muslim intellectual life. In his view, the solution to both these problems resides in rising above the constraints of the rational faculty; a liberation, so he asserts, which is achieved by pursuing the methods of the initiatic path. Thus, he holds that, in contrast to the reflective character of cogitative thought, it is precisely the immediate, intuitional nature of *supra*-rational unveiling, or *kashf*, which makes it both the best means of attaining knowledge, and the key to transcending the conflicts and disputes that characterise the relationships between the religious and philosophical schools (*niḥal*), "each of whom regard only themselves, and those who agree with them, as being in the right, whereas everyone else is in error".[30] By virtue of having freed themselves from the bounds of the "shackled intellect" (*al-ʿaql al-muqayyad*), the "folk of unveiling" are able to look down on this domain and "know the limits of what each thinker (*mufakkir*) is capable of grasping through his own reflective thought, and of discovering through his senses and his speculative faculty, even as he will know the reason why the partisans of rational inquiry inevitably refute one another".[31]

For Qūnawī, then, the inevitable "clash of opinions"[32] between the followers of such schools is an expression both of the rational faculty's limitations and of the fact that its use is not, in reality, the wholly objective affair one might suppose it to be, influenced as it is by the nature and propensities of the individual.[33] Hence, the measure of truth that the exponents of rational inquiry (*ahl al-naẓar*) are capable of attaining will depend, to a large degree, upon the extent to which they recognise its inevitable limitations. "The deficiencies inherent within this mode of cognition", Qūnawī says, "are many indeed, but all of them stem from its being an apprehension pertaining to the individual domain, achieved by means of an individual faculty".[34] It thus follows that the individual, *qua* individual, is incapable of immediately and intuitively grasping the nature of *supra*-individual realities.[35] This is not to say that one is thereby justified in simply denying the existence of anything beyond the domain of the senses.[36] On the contrary, sound reasoning is perfectly capable of deducing the existence of such *supra*-sensible realities as the human soul,

29 *Muṣṣiḥa*, p. 16.
30 *Iʿjāz*, p. 345. (See Appendix 3, Text A).
31 *Iʿjāz*, p. 43.
32 *Muṣṣiḥa*, p. 27. (See Appendix 3, Text D).
33 *Muṣṣiḥa*, p. 26. (See Appendix 3, Text D).
34 *Hādiya*, p. 148. (See Appendix 3, Text C).
35 *Hādiya*, p. 148.
36 *Muṣṣiḥa*, p. 27. (See Appendix 3, Text D).

the immaterial spirits, and the First Cause.[37] But what it cannot do is lead to any positive knowledge of the nature of these things as they really are in themselves.[38]

It is essentially on the basis of such criteria, therefore, that both Qūnawī and Ibn ʿArabī tend, on the whole, to regard the philosophers in a more favourable light than the *mutakallimūn*, or rationalist theologians;[39] for, regardless of their religious orientation, the Peripatetic and – above all – Neoplatonic philosophers are still in possession of certain fundamental premises which elude the exponents of *kalām*: most notably the Neoplatonic insistence on the utterly transcendent – and therefore unknowable – nature of the One, and on the incommensurability between God and creation; which stands in clear contrast with the Ash'arite assertion that God's Essence is knowable, and with their theory of induction (*istiqrāʾ*) "from the attributes of the creatures to those of God" (*shāhidan wa ghāʾiban*).[40] Qūnawī writes:

> When [the verifiers] talk about being in accord (*ittifāq*) [with the exponents of rational inquiry] it should be implicitly understood that what they mean thereby is their concordance with the philosophers (*ḥukamāʾ*); for they are in agreement with the philosophers regarding that which speculative reasoning is capable of grasping independently within its own domain (*fī ṭawri-hi*), while nonetheless differing from them by virtue of their command of other cognitive faculties and insights which transcend the domain of reason (*ṭawr al-fikr*) and its limiting conditions. As for the *mutakallimūn*, in all their manifold guises, the verifiers hardly ever agree with them, except on the most straightforward of questions.[41]

Regarding the religious adherence of the philosophers, or rather their perceived lack thereof, Ibn ʿArabī dismisses the attitude of those who object to the adoption of philosophical language solely on the grounds that it was elaborated by those who "have no religion" (*lā dīna la-hu*): a true proposition, he contends, remains true regardless of the religious belief of those who enunciate it.[42] For his own part, Qūnawī adds a further dimension to this question by observing that, far from being "irreligious", the ancient philosophers

37 *Mufṣiḥa*, p. 17. (See Appendix 3, Text B).

38 *Hādiya*, p. 167. (See Appendix 3, Texts B and L).

39 See *Futūḥāt*, vol. I, p. 73 and *Mufṣiḥa*, p. 24–25. See also, Rosenthal, 'Ibn ʿArabī between Philosophy and Mysticism', p. 1–35.

40 See *Futūḥāt*, vol. I, p. 357.

41 *Hādiya*, p. 165–166.

42 *Futūḥāt*, vol. I, p. 70–71.

(*al-ḥukamāʾ al-awāʾil*) were, in fact, "much given to spiritual retreat, spiritual exercises, and generally observing the precepts of the revealed law (*sharīʿa*) to which they adhered".[43] Indeed, the most sublime elements of their philosophy arose precisely out of the intuitions they received as a result of their "spiritual labours" and their adherence to their *sharīʿa*.[44] For him, therefore, there is nothing contradictory *per se* about assimilating these elements within an Islamic perspective, since, by virtue of the "perfection of the last", this perspective comprises the doctrinal "heritages" (*mawārīth*)[45] of all previous revealed laws (*sharāʾiʿ*) within itself.[46]

In order to stress the inspired nature of his writings, our author, as already noted, makes it clear that he is not in the habit of quoting or referring to the works of others.[47] However, in his correspondence with Ṭūsī, he does confirm his acquaintance with some of the most widely read philosophical writings of his day. These include two works influenced by the Hermetic and Pythagorean currents historically associated with the ancient city of Ḥarrān:[48] the *Sirr al-khalīqa* and the *Rasāʾil Ikhwān al-Ṣafāʾ*.[49] He also refers to the "divine Plato", and his followers, whom he reveres above all other sages (*ḥukamāʾ*),[50] and while it is true that he adopts a significant number of Aristotelian themes, he is, at the same time, critical of the tendency, displayed by the Peripatetics, of indulging in disputation for its own sake.[51]

As for his familiarity with the Islamic philosophers, he appears to be well versed in the works of Ibn Sīnā, whom he holds in evident regard, referring to him by his honorific title of *al-Shaykh al-Raʾīs*,[52] and even describing him as the "final seal of the philosophers" (*khātim al-ḥukamāʾ*).[53] Moreover, he makes

43 *Iʿjāz*, p. 13.

44 *Iʿjāz*, p. 13.

45 *Iʿjāz*, p. 376.

46 *Iʿjāz*, p. 383. (See Appendix 3, Text D).

47 *Nuṣūṣ*, p. 22; *Iʿjāz*, p. 139.

48 Located in South Eastern Anatolia, Ḥarrān flourished as a cosmopolitan centre of learning in the early Islamic period. Ṣābi'ans associated with Ḥarrān played a key role in the transmission of Hellenistic thought into Arabic in ninth and tenth-century Baghdad. For a thorough investigation of the extent of the Ḥarrānian influence on early Arabic Hermetica see Van Bladel, *The Arabic Hermes*, p. 79–104.

49 *Asʾila*, p. 81–82. Although clearly influenced by these currents, the *Rasāʾil Ikhwān al-Ṣafāʾ* were composed chiefly in Basra in the tenth century C.E.

50 *Fukūk*, p. 189; *Hādiya*, p. 169.

51 *Iʿjāz*, p. 14.

52 *Hādiya*, pp. 142, 149.

53 *Asʾila*, p. 51.

a distinction between the latter's earlier, more controversial works, such as the *Shifāʾ,* and those written in his maturity, such as the *Tanbīhāt*, which include elements of *ʿirfān* or gnosis.[54] He also pays special attention to the *Taʿlīqāt*, a *reportatio* of Ibn Sīnā's comments and clarifications, in which the philosopher admits to some of the limitations of rational inquiry.[55]

3 Qūnawī's Doctrinal Synthesis

That Qūnawī was by no means averse to the theories of the philosophers *per se* is clear from his account of the factors that determine the nobility of a given science, much of which is a reiteration of the standard Peripatetic thesis in this regard. Accordingly, in seeking to establish the highest science of all, he starts out from an Aristotelian premise[56] which had become something of a general tenet of medieval thought:[57] "the nobility of a science is determined by the nobility of its object".[58] As for the criteria by which this nobility is judged, he again echoes the stock Aristotelian view in holding that general sciences are superior to specific ones, such that the more universal a science the more noble it is;[59] likewise, speculative sciences are superior to practical ones, as they are sought for their own sake rather than the sake of something else;[60] and those concerned with the abstract and everlasting principles of things are more worthy than those concerned with the fleeting phenomena of the physical world.[61] All of which leads to the inevitable conclusion that metaphysics, or "divine science",[62] is the

54 *Mufṣiḥa*, p. 37.

55 See *Mufṣiḥa*, p. 36; *Asʾila*, p. 51–53 (see Appendix 3, Text L), and *Hādiya*, p. 149–151. For a study of parallel attitudes in Andalusī Sufism see A. Akasoy, 'Ibn Sīnā in the Arab West: The Testimony of an Andalusian Sufi' in *Documenti e studi sulla tradizione filosofica medieval*, 21, 2010, p. 287–312.

56 Cf. Aristotle *Metaphysics* Books I and VI, and *De Animalibus* Book XI.

57 See, for example, Fārābī, *Risāla fī faḍīlat al-ʿulūm wa al-ṣanaʿāt*, p. 1, and Ghazālī, *al-Risāla al-ladunīya*, p. 21. On the classification of the sciences and definitions of metaphysics in medieval Arabic philosophy see P. Adamson, 'The Kindian Tradition: the structure of philosophy in Arabic Neoplatonism' in C. D'Ancona, ed., *The Libraries of the Neoplatonists*, Leiden 2007, p. 355–357.

58 *Miftāḥ*, p. 7; *Mufṣiḥa*, p. 16.

59 *Miftāḥ*, p. 5.

60 *Miftāḥ*, p. 91.

61 *Miftāḥ*, p. 91–92; *Mufṣiḥa*, p. 19–21.

62 Ibn Sabʿīn devotes a fairly lengthy passage of his *Sicilian Questions* to discussing the meaning and goal of "divine science" (*Le questioni siciliane: Federico II e l'universo filosof*

most noble science of all[63] and hence "the one that it best behoves man to acquire".[64]

As for the general questions (*masā'il*) that this science poses, these, for all their abundance, may be reduced to two chief concerns: knowing how the world is connected to the cause of its existence, and how the latter is connected to the world.[65] Here, however, Qūnawī's view departs significantly from that of the Islamic philosophers, or *falāsifa*; for like Ghazālī before him[66] he rejects the theory of emanation which Ibn Sīnā adopts in the *Shifā'*.[67] As is well known, Avicenna's theory seeks to explicate the problem of how the many emerge from the One by ascribing the origin of existential multiplicity to a hierarchy of causal intermediaries consisting of the ten heavenly intellects, whose contemplation of themselves and of the degrees above them thus engenders the plurality of things by producing not only their own respective souls and spheres but also the celestial intellect of the degree below them.[68] Instead, in his correspondence with Ṭūsī, Ṣadr al-Dīn suggests an alternative response to the premise that "from the one there can emerge only one":

> You [the *falāsifa*] have accepted that [in themselves] quiddities are uncreated and therefore not existential, and that the existence in which all quiddities then participate is one, such that what is referred to as the world is really nothing more than quiddities characterised by one common existence shared by the [First] Intellect and all other [contingent beings] alike. So why can it not be that the one reality issuing (*ṣādir*) from

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ico. Introduzione, traduzione e note a cura di Patrizia Spallino, p. 96–101). He defines divine science as the name "the ancients gave to the study of the incorporeal and the ultimate causes".

63 *Miftāḥ*, p. 7.

64 *Muṣṣiḥa*, p. 19.

65 *Miftāḥ*, p. 6.

66 See *Tahāfut al-falāsifa*, ed. M. Bouyges, Beirut 1962, p. 125.

67 For an analysis of this theory, see H. Davidson, *Alfarabi, Avicenna and Averroes on intellect: their cosmologies, theories of the active intellect and theories of human intellect*, Oxford 1992, p. 74–76.

68 Qūnawī describes this theory, in characteristic fashion, as "not having a leg to stand on". (*As'ila*, p. 66). It is worth noting that Aquinas rejects both the Avicennian theory of emanation and the premise of *ex uno non fit nisi unum* upon which it is based. (See *Summa Contra Gentiles*, 42, 8–11). Moreover, one of the ways in which Aquinas seeks to illustrate the falsity of this premise is by using the example of the indefinite multitude of radii that emerge from the single point at the centre of a circle: an example Ibn 'Arabī uses for the same purpose in the *Futūḥāt*.

> the one God (*al-ḥaqq al-wāḥid*) is this self-same common, universal existence into which the First Intellect and all other [beings] fall?[69]

As well as regarding the Avicennian theory of emanation as one of *falsafa*'s weakest doctrines, Qūnawī also holds it to be one of the most insidious. As it implies that God's sustaining influence (*madad*) cannot be transmitted to created beings other than through a succession of intermediaries, it thereby serves to diminish one's notion of divine omnipotence. Against this view our author argues that such so-called causal intermediaries are really nothing more than conditions (*shurūṭ*) which allow for the manifestation of the existential states comprised within the "uncreated predisposition" (*al-istiʿdād ghayr al-majʿūl*) of a given being, and that, fundamentally, all beings remain directly connected to God, envisaged as the cause (*mūjid*) of their existence.[70]

What this means, then, is that unlike the radical occasionalism espoused by the Ashʿarites,[71] Qūnawī's view of the connection between God and the world does not seek to deny the reality of the chain of existential causes altogether, but instead holds that all things may be regarded as connected to the cause of their existence in two ways, depending on whether they are considered in respect of their contingent manifestations or their underlying reality as permanent and necessary possibilities. "There is not a single being", he says, "that is not connected to the True through two facets (*wajhayn*): one from the side of the chain of succession and intermediaries (*silsilat al-tartīb wa-l-wasā'iṭ*), the first of which is the First Intellect; and the other from the side of its necessity (*wujūb*), which adjoins the True, and in which respect it may truly be said of every being that it is necessary, even though its necessity is through another".[72]

The idea of a twofold connection with the cause of existence is one on which Ṣadr al-Dīn lays considerable emphasis. Indeed, his numerous discussions of this point suggest that he sees it as one of the doctrines that define the approach of the "verifiers" as such. The reasons why this should be the case are not hard to discern, for this doctrine clearly has crucial implications with regard to the possibilities both of intellectual intuition (*kashf*) and of spiritual realisation (*taḥqīq*). If, in other words, all beings possess this "face of necessity", by which they participate directly in the nature of their divine

69 *As'ila*, p. 66–67.

70 *As'ila*, p. 66–69.

71 For a study of Ashʿarite occasionalism and Averroës' critique of it see M. Fakhry, *Islamic Occasionalism and its Critique by Averroës and Aquinas*, London 1958, p. 22–138.

72 *Hādiya*, p. 156.

principle, it follows that, were they to become conscious of this face, they would thereby not only be able to "take [knowledge] straight from the True" but would also be liberated from the "sway of contingency" (*ḥukm al-imkān*) pertaining to the chain of existential causes and effects. This, according to Qūnawī, is precisely what the verifiers have done, which is why they are certain of the reality of this "specific face" (*wajh khāṣṣ*), as they have termed it, however sceptical others may be. Having stressed this point throughout his career, he comes back to it again in the final pages of his last, unfinished work, when he writes:

> Know that the facet whereby things are directly connected to the True is indeed present in all beings, but that most people are unaware of it, such that there never opens for them that door through which one takes from God without any intermediary. Rather, this is something that happens to the rare few from among the prophets and the saints alone. The great verifiers call this facet the 'specific face'. The *falāsifa*, however, reject this, asserting instead that there can be no link between the True and the existents save through the occasions (*asbāb*) and causal intermediaries. But they are wrong to judge so, for their failure to perceive this face does not mean that it has no reality. After all, absence of consciousness (*wijdān*) does not equate to absence of existence. So even if they, for their part, know nothing of it, others have not only known it but witnessed it and made it part of their consciousness.[73]

For Qūnawī, as for his master before him,[74] the world is God's self-disclosure (*tajallī*).[75] According to this theory, all that is generally thought of as "creation" (*khalq*) is, in reality, the manifestation of a portion – albeit an infinitesimally

73 *Sharḥ al-aḥādīth*, fol. 77.

74 See *Fuṣūṣ*, Ch. 5 (p. 81): "The world is naught but His revealing Himself (*tajallī-hi*) within the forms of their immutable essences, for the latter are devoid of reality without Him. Wherefore, He appears to assume various forms in accordance with the natures of these essences and their manifest states".

75 As has been explained elsewhere, the use of the verb *tajallā* to refer to God's revealing himself to His creation is one that is rooted in the Qur'ān, VII, 143: {And when his Lord revealed Himself (*tajallā*) to the mountain He made it crumble to dust; and Moses fell down swooning.} Depending on the context I have translated the verbal noun *tajallī* as "theophany", "epiphany" and – following William Chittick – "self-disclosure".

small one[76] – of the "treasures" (*kunūz*) hidden in the Divine Essence.[77] Such treasures are its inexhaustible "specificities" (*khuṣūṣīyāt*), or "affairs" (*shu'ūn*), a Qur'ānic term of key importance in his metaphysics, and one which will be discussed in detail later on. For the time being it will suffice to say that, in accordance with this notion of self-disclosure, the divine affairs are seen as forming the underlying reality of contingent beings (*ḥaqā'iq al-mumkināt*).[78] Moreover, even in respect of their outward manifestations, contingent beings are not thought of as having *emerged* from God, since what their concrete existence really amounts to is the "clothing" of God's non-manifest specificities in the light of His Being.[79] Qūnawī writes:

> The world, with all its sensorial forms and underlying intelligible realities, is the rays of God's light, or you could also say the relations of His knowledge ... or the determinations (*ta'ayyunāt*) of His theophanies (*tajallīyāt*) within those of His states that are referred to from one point of view as 'concrete essences' (*a'yān*). Hence, the exterior of the world is the outward form of light and its interior the inner meaning of light.[80]

According to this conception, the creation of the world may be thought of as the "displaying" (*istijlā'*) of God's treasures, in order, as Qūnawī puts it, "that He may behold His specificities in each of His affairs".[81] As a way of conveying the sense in which the latter are related to God, he uses the analogy of the relationship between arithmetical unity and number: far from standing outside their principle, the manifold existents are simply the determinations,

76 "That of Him which transcends determination is even greater and more magnificent than that which has assumed a determinable identity; for the relationship of the absolute to the conditioned is that of the infinite to the finite. In fact, there is no commensurability between that of Him which is determined by our cognitive faculties and Him as He is in Himself". (*I'jāz*, p. 350).

77 The symbol of the divine treasures has its basis in the well-known *ḥadīth qudsī* in which God says *I was a hidden treasure and I loved to be known so I created the world*. For a study of mystical interpretations of this hadith and an account of the debate surrounding its authenticity, see Eschraghi, Armin, "'I was a hidden treasure'. Some notes on a commentary ascribed to Mullā Sadrā Shirāzī' in A. Akasoy and W. Raven, eds., *Islamic thought in the Middle Ages: studies in text, transmission and translation in honour of Hans Daiber*, Leiden 2008.

78 *Fukūk*, p. 253.

79 *I'jāz*, p. 364.

80 *I'jāz*, p. 50.

81 *I'jāz*, p. 364.

or self-disclosures, of the possibilities concealed (*mustajinn*) in metaphysical unity, in the same way that numbers are simply the self-disclosures of the possibilities comprised in arithmetical unity.[82]

From this analogy, moreover, it follows that – however multitudinous its determinations – it is still essentially the intrinsic possibilities of unity that are made manifest, such that, in a sense, there is really only a single, unique *tajallī*, which is that of metaphysical unity or Being itself:

> Know that God's sustaining influence (*imdād*) and self-disclosures come to the world with every breath. Indeed, to be strictly accurate, there is really only one self-disclosure (*tajallī wāḥid*), which, in accordance with the varying ranks and dispositions of its manifold receptacles (*qawābil*), assumes various determinations. For this reason, it takes on the guise of plurality and appears to have different qualities, names and attributes, yet without this meaning that it really is many in itself or that its flow is broken or renewed, for the same considerations apply to the question of its apparent succession as applied to its apparent plurality … Now, this unique self-disclosure is none other than the Light of Being, and nothing arrives from the True to the contingents other than that, either after they are attributed with existence or before … Given, then, that Being is not intrinsic to anything other than the True, but is instead merely acquired from His self-disclosure, it follows that, in order to persist, the world is utterly dependent upon this unique existential succour at every instant without break or interruption. Indeed, were this succour (*imdād*) to be interrupted for the merest blinking of an eye the world would vanish at once, for the sway of non-existence forever accompanies the contingent, whereas existence is imparted to it (*ʿāriḍ la-hu*) from its principle.[83]

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82 *Nuṣūṣ*, p. 45–46; *Iʿjāz*, p. 364. This analogy, minor differences of terminology notwithstanding, is central to the Neopythagorean doctrine of numbers expounded by the *Ikhwān al-Ṣafāʾ*. See *Rasāʾil*, vol. 3, p. 181.

83 *Iʿjāz*, p. 34–35. Without wishing to anticipate too much – as this question will be dealt with later on – it is worth mentioning here that, as with the conception of the "specific face", Qūnawī's conception of the world as a unique theophany, has important implications with regard to the possibility of spiritual realisation. Indeed, he considers these conceptions to be closely linked, since, in his view, every being has a vision of this unique *tajallī* when it first receives its existence (see *Iʿjāz*, p. 36; *Naftha*, fol. 12b; *Sharḥ al-aḥādīth*, fol. 10a) and it is towards this "primordial theophany" that the "specific face" remains perpetually turned (see *Iʿjāz*, p. 48).

In contrast, then, to those who object on principle to anything connected with the *falāsifa*, Qūnawī does indeed incorporate into his expositions elements of the terminology and theories espoused by the Islamic philosophers. But while it is significant that he should speak of establishing an accord between the fruits of intuition and reason,[84] the extent to which his synthesis draws on elements of *falsafa* hardly serves to place it outside the mainstream of Muslim thought, as most of these elements had simply become part of the common currency of Islamic intellectual life.[85] The mere fact of taking, as Qūnawī does, a Peripatetic view of the hierarchy of sciences, or of expressing things in the Avicennian language of necessary and contingent being, does not automatically mark an author out as someone who is especially inclined towards *falsafa*. Like Ghazālī before him[86] – and indeed those who saw themselves as defenders of orthodoxy in general – he firmly rejects those elements of philosophy that are at odds with the tenets of faith; chief among them being the above-mentioned scheme of emanation, the denial of bodily resurrection, the insistence on the eternity of the world,[87] God's inability to know singulars *qua* singulars,[88] and the non-sensorial nature of man's posthumous states.[89]

Reserved though our author may have been towards the *falāsifa*, it should also be remembered that theirs are not the only philosophical elements discernible in his work, for in addition to the Islamic philosophers' elaborations upon Hellenistic doctrines, his synthesis also contains ideas associated more directly with the "ancient sages" (*al-ḥukamā' al-awā'il*) themselves.[90] Indeed, as already noted, he saw the wisdom of the ancient sages as having its basis in the sacred law specific to their people and epoch;[91] hence, so we are told,

84 *As'ila*, p. 47.

85 See Rosenthal, 'Ibn 'Arabī between Philosophy and Mysticism', p. 33.

86 See *Tahāfut al-falāsifa*, p. 293–294.

87 *As'ila*, p. 80; *Hādiya*, p. 169.

88 *As'ila*, pp. 66, 68.

89 *I'jāz*, p. 298.

90 His remarks regarding their adherence to the sacred law of their time suggest that it is this distinction, above all, which earns a philosopher the title of *ḥakīm*, or "sage", an epithet whose intimations of traditional orthodoxy are reinforced by its being one of the Divine Names mentioned in the Qur'ān. It is the philosopher's stance towards the sacred law, in other words, that serves to distinguish a mere *faylasūf* from a true *ḥakīm*, whether Muslim or ancient Greek. Hence, for example, this particular terminological nuance would seem to be evident in his asserting that the verifiers disagree with the "*falāsifa*" regarding the question of the 'specific face', but agree with the "*ḥukamā'*" regarding "that which reason is capable of attaining within its own domain".

91 *I'jāz*, p. 13–14.

unlike many of those who would later claim to be following their example, they did not consider the power of reason to be the ultimate arbiter in intellectual matters – irrespective of whether its conclusions coincide with the tenets of revelation – but devoted themselves instead to periods of retreat and spiritual disciplines, preferring to reveal the intuitions they received in this way, not through rational demonstrations, but through expository sermons.[92]

As for the question of how he came to assimilate their doctrines, it should, like that of his assimilation of *falsafa*, be treated with a certain amount of caution. Although he alludes, in his correspondence with Ṭūsī, to an acquaintance with the writings of the ancient philosophers,[93] this does not necessarily mean that the Neoplatonic elements in his work derive directly from his readings; for, as was the case with *falsafa*, many of these concepts had simply merged into the general framework of medieval Islamic thought; a process helped in large measure by their having been Islamised through their incorporation within philosophical and scientific compendia such as the *Rasā'il Ikhwān al-Ṣafā'*.

Nevertheless, alongside such traditional notions – associated with both Neoplatonism and Hermetism – as the conception of the physical world as a mere image of its intelligible archetype, Qūnawī's expositions would seem to display, in certain key respects, a special affinity with the writings of the later Neoplatonist philosopher, Proclus (d. 485) in particular,[94] without necessarily suggesting the specific influence of the *Kalām fī maḥḍ al-khayr*, a partial translation of Proclus' *Elements of Theology*, and the work through which his

92 *I'jāz*, p. 14. For Qūnawī, as for other Muslim authors of his day, the ancient philosophers who fit this description are *muta'allihūn*, or "pursuers of divinisation", for, unlike the Aristotelians, they held the true goal of philosophy to be *theosis* (or *ta'alluh*, as it is expressed in Arabic), that is, the process of gradually assimilating the divine characteristics; and it is into this category that he places the Platonists, for, in a marginal note to a passage on the doctrine of divine ideas espoused by the *muta'allihūn*, he cites, by way of example, "the divine Plato and those who agree with him on the subject of the archetypes". (*Fukūk*, p. 189). A similar view of the Platonists and their understanding of divine science is expressed by the Andalusī mystical philosopher, Ibn Sab'īn, in his response to philosophical questions posed by the Holy Roman Emperor, Frederick II of Hohenstaufen (d. 1250). See *Le questioni siciliane: Federico II e l'universo filosofico. Introduzione, traduzione e note a cura di Patrizia Spallino*, p. 293. For a comprehensive study of Ibn Sab'īn's thought see A. Akasoy, *Philosophie und Mystik in der späten Almohadenzeit: die Sizilianischen Fragen des Ibn Sab'īn*, Leiden 2006.

93 *As'ila*, p. 82.

94 For an in-depth study of his doctrines, see Siorvanes, *Proclus: Neo-Platonic Philosophy and Science*, Edinburgh 1996.

thought was disseminated in both the Muslim[95] and Christian worlds.[96] The most significant of these concordances will be highlighted as occasion demands, but for the time being mention may be made of the agreement between, for instance, the Proclean notion of "all in all"[97] and Qūnawī's affirmation that "everything has everything in it", as well as the concordance between Proclus' theory of spiritual ascent through a process of dissolution, or *anagoge*,[98] and Qūnawī's conception of the "ascension of dissolution" (*miʿrāj al-taḥlīl*).[99]

In addition to Neoplatonism, Ṣadr al-Dīn – like many Muslim authors of his day – draws on another important "inheritance" from the ancient world: Hermetism.[100] Hermetic themes and symbols occur throughout his writings, and like his master before him[101] he sees the human being's journey

95 For an account of Proclus' influence in the Islamic tradition, see Endress, *Proclus Arabus*, Beirut 1973. See also E. Wakelnig, 'Al-ʿĀmirī's Paraphrase of the Proclean *Elements of Theology*. A Search for Possible Sources and Parallel Texts' in C. D'Ancona, ed., *The Libraries of the Neoplatonists*, Leiden 2007.

96 Known as both the *Liber Bonitatis Purae* and, more commonly, the *Liber de Causis*, Gerard de Cremona's (d. 1187) Latin translation of the *Kalām fī maḥḍ al-khayr* exerted, as Gilson points out, a "profound influence upon the [Christian] philosophers and theologians of the 13th century"; an influence made all the stronger by the fact that it was, until Aquinas' time at least, widely held to be a work by Aristotle. See E. Gilson, *La philosophie au moyen age*: *des origines patristiques a la fin du XIV siecle*, Paris 1947, p. 377–379.

97 See Siorvanes, *Proclus*, p. 156.

98 See Siorvanes, *Proclus*, p. 191.

99 As far as the question of possible textual influence is concerned, it should be noted that neither of these Proclean concepts appear in the medieval Arabic translations of Proclus included in Endress's study.

100 Within their Islamic setting, the Hermetic sciences are traditionally deemed to fall under the aegis of the prophet Idrīs. See, for example, *Rasāʾil Ikhwān al-Ṣafāʾ*, vol. I, p. 228, and Muḥammad ibn ʿAbd al-Karīm al-Shahrastānī (d. 558/1163), *Kitāb al-milal wa al-niḥal*. See also Van Bladel, *The Arabic Hermes*, p. 164–168.

101 See *Futūḥāt*, vol. II, p. 269: "Know that the desired perfection for which the human being was created is that of the vicegerency … Now just as the bodies of metals fall into different ranks due to defects that arise in them when they are being formed … so is the human being, who has been created for perfection, diverted from that perfection solely through defects and maladies that arise in their intrinsic natures or accidentally". It is worth noting too that Qārī, in his *Manāqib Ibn ʿArabī*, describes the Shaykh as "the very personification of alchemy; for the heart of alchemy, according to the masters of the craft, resides in transmuting essences, such that, through the action of the elixir, lead turns into silver and copper into gold; thus, he – may God be pleased with him – was the elixir of his time and the alchemy of his age, for through his guidance how many of the essences [of his disciples] were turned from the common baseness of the animal soul into the preciousness of the true human being". (*Manāqib*, p. 41).

to perfection as analogous to the stages of the alchemical work. Hence, in the same way that different metals are thought to be formed through their departing from the perfect equilibrium of their source (*maʿdin*),[102] so is the individual's ontogenesis[103] deemed the result of their "divine secret" (*al-sirr al-ilāhī*) or existential ground – which in itself is "as non-differentiated as prime matter" (*hayūlānī al-waṣf*) – being "dyed" (*inṣabagha*) by the conditions of different cosmological degrees.[104] Moreover, as the final stage of man's journey consists in his returning to the indeterminacy of his metaphysical origin, it is seen as corresponding to the alchemical process of returning the matter of the stone to the equilibrium of its source, the return beginning in both cases with the phase of "dissolution", or *taḥlīl*.[105] Having reached the state of perfection (*kamāl*), the perfect human being is deemed analogous to the elixir (*al-iksīr*), able as such to perfect others, just as the elixir transmutes all that it touches.[106]

Here, once again, it is to be noted that for Qūnawī there is nothing contradictory *per se* about integrating these currents within an Islamic perspective. Indeed, his comments on this score suggest that, if anything, he saw the reclaiming of such doctrinal "heritages" as the prerogative of those who adhere to the revealed law of Islam, which "guards over all revealed laws and over the taste specific to each prophet".[107] But one should still not lose sight of the fact that his synthesis remains specifically Islamic at heart. Like Ibn ʿArabī, his metaphysical language – while influenced by the intellectual currents mentioned above – stays rooted in the Qurʾān and prophetic traditions. As for the verses and hadiths that play so fundamental a part in his writings, they and their bearing on his doctrine of man will be highlighted in the anthropological section proper.

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102 See *Sirr al-khalīqa*, p. 248.

103 Qūnawī calls man's ontogenetic descent the "first composition" (*al-tarkīb al-awwal*), a term used to denote the first stage of the alchemical work. (See for example, Jābir ibn Ḥayyān, *Kitāb al-īḍāḥ*, in *The Arabic Works of Jābir*, p. 55–56).

104 *Miftāḥ*, p. 111.

105 *Miftāḥ*, p. 105–106.

106 *Miftāḥ*, p. 106.

107 *Iʿjāz*, p. 383. In connection with this theme, he writes: "Those who fulfil perfectly the duties of the Muḥammadan *sharīʿa*, and whom God uses to preserve its traditional norms (*ādābu-hā*) and to see that it is applied in the best of ways, God reveals to them the secrets He has included in all previous revealed laws. Indeed, they actually verify the latter and the secret of God's command within them. Wherefore, they are able to exercise their authority through them and appear in whichever of their states or guises they wish, without at any time departing from the dominion of the Muḥammadan *sharīʿa*, universal and all-encompassing as it is".

CHAPTER 4

Cosmology

1 Qūnawī's Cosmology in Context

In Ṣadr al-Dīn's anthropology a key part is played, as we shall see, by the doctrine of human ontogenesis, conceived of as man's formative descent through a hierarchy of cosmological grades and principles. In order to establish the conceptual framework surrounding our author's treatment of this topic, it seems appropriate at this juncture to give an overview of his cosmology, noting both where it agrees with and departs from the standard theories of his day. Starting, therefore, at the top rung of the cosmological ladder with the "first created being", or First Intellect, the model to which he subscribes is as follows:

1. The First Intellect = the Sublime Pen = the Universal (or Muḥammadan) Spirit
2. The Universal Soul = the Guarded Tablet
3. Nature
4. Prime Matter = Universal Hylé
5. Universal (or Absolute) Body
6. The Outermost Sphere = the Throne
7. The Sphere of the Fixed Stars = the Pedestal
8. The Form of the Elements = the Supreme Element
9. The Seven Planetary Heavens (Saturn, Jupiter, Mars, the Sun, Venus, Mercury, the Moon)
10. The Kingdoms of Nature (Mineral, Plant, Animal)
11. The Human Being

In its basic structure – viewed this time from the geocentric point of view – the familiar architecture of medieval cosmology is immediately recognisable: the earth, at the centre of the cosmos, is the world of generation and corruption; above it rotate the concentric spheres of Aristotelian and Ptolemaic astronomy; finally, transcending the physical realm of change is the hierarchy of universal principles – body, matter, nature, soul and intellect – elaborated by the Neoplatonists. Evident too, moreover, in the list above is the extent to which this largely Hellenistic model had, by Qūnawī's time, been Islamised through the incorporation of terms and concepts grounded in the Qur'ān and hadith,

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with the Ikhwān al-Ṣafā' once again playing an influential role in setting Greek thought within a Muslim framework. This is particularly apparent in the case of the first two grades of the hierarchy: the Neoplatonic concepts of First Intellect (*al-ʿaql al-awwal*) and Universal Soul (*al-nafs al-kullīya*). For Plotinus and his successors, as is well known, Intellect is the first hypostasis, or emanation, of the transcendent One and contains the intelligible forms of all things within itself. By knowing itself and its source, Intellect produces a second emanation, Soul, which animates the world in its entirety. In the eyes of Muslim Neoplatonists such as the Ikhwān this creative duality seemed readily reconcilable with the Islamic doctrine of the Sublime Pen (*al-qalam al-aʿlā*) and Guarded Tablet (*al-lawḥ al-maḥfūẓ*)[1] – God's first and second creations respectively – whose function, according to a well-known hadith,[2] is to record God's knowledge of His creation until the Day of Resurrection.

Written some two hundred and fifty years after the Ikhwān, the following passage from Ibn ʿArabī's *Futūḥāt* is both typical of his school in general and indicative of the extent to which the terminological equivalence in question had, by his time, become commonplace:

> The first entity to be created was the First Intellect or Sublime Pen, [which existed] with no other originated being (*muḥdath*) beside it. Then passively it underwent the effect of God's causing the Guarded Tablet to proceed from it – even as Eve would proceed from Adam in the world of bodies – so that the Tablet be the locus and receptacle for what the Divine Sublime Pen would inscribe within it [...] Wherefore, between Pen and Tablet there occurred an intelligible, spiritual congress (*nikāḥ*), giving rise to a perceptible, sensorial effect [...] The traces deposited in the Tablet are therefore akin to the sperm that flows into the female's womb.[3]

Also noteworthy in this text, and typically Akbarian, is the idea that the relationship between Pen and Tablet, or Intellect and Soul, is that of a marriage or

1 Although the cosmological doctrine of Pen and Tablet derives chiefly from a hadith, it should be noted that the terms "Pen" (though not "Sublime Pen") and "Guarded Tablet" do appear in the Qur'ān, albeit enigmatically. See Qur'ān, LXXXV, 21–22: {Nay, but it is a glorious Qur'ān, in a guarded tablet}; and LXVIII, 1–2: {Nūn. By the Pen and what they inscribe, thou art not, by the blessing of thy Lord, a man possessed}.

2 *The first thing God created was the Pen. Then He created the Tablet and said to the Pen: 'write!' The Pen said 'what should I write?' God said to it 'write My knowledge of My creation until the Day of Resurrection.' Then the Pen traced what had been ordained.*

3 *Futūḥāt*, vol. I, p. 191.

conjugal union between a masculine and feminine principle respectively. Indeed, for both Qūnawī and his master, cosmogenesis in general largely consists of a succession of productive unions between complementary principles, each marriage reflecting after its own fashion the archetypal relationship between ontological necessity (*wujūb*) and contingency (*imkān*), envisaged as the twin poles of existence. As is well known, Ibn ʿArabī memorably described such principles as "the fathers above and the mothers below",[4] adding that in the cosmological hierarchy "every active principle is a father and every passive principle a mother".[5] It is to Qūnawī, however, as we shall see in due course, that later Akbarians owe the specific notion of there being five basic levels of such unions (*al-nikāḥāt al-khams*), corresponding to the five fundamental categories of existence.[6]

Further examples of terminological assimilation can be found in the following passage from Saʿīd al-Dīn al-Farghānī's *Mashāriq al-darārī*, a work – as already observed – born out of Qūnawī's oral teachings.[7] Especially notable here, moreover, is the fact that the Sublime Pen is equated not only with the First Intellect but also the esoteric concept of the "Muḥammadan Spirit", a notion that features prominently in later medieval Sufism, and in the doctrines of the Akbarian school in particular.[8] Farghānī writes:

> This Sublime Pen has a name corresponding to each of its facets. Hence, from the standpoint of its taking its existence wholly and directly from the non-manifest, and its comprehending this within both the non-manifest and itself, it is known as First Intellect. Insofar as the existence comprised in its essence is then detailed in another through the divine command to *write my knowledge of my creation* its name is Sublime Pen. As the immediate locus of the primordial self-disclosure of Being it is the Muḥammadan Spirit (*rūh-i muḥammadī*). And by appearing in all degrees of existence in the capacity of governance it is the Muḥammadan Rational Soul.[9]

4 *Futūḥāt*, vol. I, p. 191.

5 *Futūḥāt*, vol. I, p. 191.

6 See *infra*, p. 121–122.

7 In fact, the introduction to Farghānī's work contains a particularly detailed exposition of cosmological theory, and will therefore be referred to throughout this chapter.

8 On this topic, see Annemarie Schimmel, *Mystical dimensions of Islam*, Chapel Hill 1975, p. 223–224. Summarising the Akbarian conception of the Muḥammadan Spirit, Schimmel writes : "The Perfect Man is the spirit in which all things have their origin ; the created spirit of Muhammad is, thus, a mode of the uncreated divine spirit." See also R.A. Nicholson, *The Idea of Personality in Sufism*, Cambridge 1923, p. 44.

9 Farghānī, *Mashāriq al-darārī*, p. 37–38.

Nor does the equivalence end there. In both the *Nafaḥāt* and the *Nuṣūṣ* Qūnawī expressly equates the concept of First Intellect, or Sublime Pen, with Spirit in a *universal* sense: "this Universal Spirit (*al-rūḥ al-kullī*)", he writes, "which is the Pen, is the noblest of all contingent beings and the closest to God; wherefore it bears the attributes of lordship and makes them manifest through its knowledge, actions and state".[10] In the writings, then, of Qūnawī and his disciples God's first creation admits of a surprisingly varied array of names and guises, depending on whether it is being envisaged from the perspective of the macrocosm, i.e. as the intellect and spirit of the world, or that of the microcosm, as the intellect and spirit of the Prophet.

As for the First Intellect's relationship with Universal Soul, it has already been observed that for Qūnawī their interaction is fundamentally a reflection on the cosmological level of the archetypal relationship between ontological necessity (*wujūb*) and contingency (*imkān*). This being the case, their attributes and functions, too, are depicted in terms that echo after their own fashion the respective chief concomitants of *wujūb* and *imkān*, namely metaphysical unity and existential multiplicity. Hence Intellect – the active partner in its marriage with Soul – is "simple", "non-differentiated", and contains within itself the inchoate possibilities of existence in a "summative" (*mujmal*), "non-distinct" manner; whereas Soul, the passive recipient, refracts or "differentiates" (*yufaṣṣil*) such possibilities into the myriad of spiritual essences. Summarising his master's doctrine, Farghānī writes:

> Manifest existence (*wujūd-i ẓāhir*) – whose hidden inward aspect was summatively comprised in its entirety in the Sublime Pen – became outwardly detailed in the Guarded Tablet in accordance with [the latter's] ontological level (*martaba*). Wherefore, each of the world's underlying essences acquired therein a non-composite (*mujarrad āz tarkīb*) spiritual archetype, like the spirits of individual letters; and this detailing of existence's outward aspect is what the language of the revealed law refers to as 'writing', even as He has said *write my knowledge of my creation until the Day of Resurrection*.[11]

The symbolic language employed in this passage naturally evokes the doctrine of the book of the world, outlined previously, and in particular the idea that the intelligible essences in the First Intellect are made manifest first as spiritual prototypes, and then as subtle forms before finally taking shape in the

10 *Nafaḥāt*, fol. 39b. See also *Nuṣūṣ*, p. 63.

11 Farghānī, *Mashāriq al-darārī*, p. 37.

bodily domain as "written words", i.e. corporeal beings. For Ṣadr al-Dīn, then, this process of manifestation comprises three key stages consisting in the three fundamental levels of conditioned existence, namely the worlds of spirits, formal exemplars and bodies. According to this perspective, the fruits of the union between Pen and Tablet belong to the world of spirits, an essentially formless domain. If they are to be reflected in the formal realm of bodies, they must first be clothed in the phantasma or subtle semblances pertaining to the *ālam al-mithāl* or world of formal exemplars.[12] The function assigned to the latter is therefore that of a bridge between two very different domains; and in this capacity Qūnawī likens its role on the macrocosmic level to the part the human mind (*dhihn*) plays in giving formal expression to abstract ideas.[13] Elaborating upon this doctrine, Farghānī writes:

> Found in this reality that is the world of formal exemplars are the semblances and shadows of all the spiritual essences that had been fixed in the Guarded Tablet … and every being, whatever it be, has a form in this world consistent with it.[14]

Although endowed with form, the *ʿālam al-mithāl* is conceived of as incorporeal and non-spatial while still falling under the dominion of Nature.[15] As for Nature (*al-ṭabīʿa*), it is an "instrument" (*āla*) of Universal Soul, through which Soul acts upon the degrees below it.[16] Comprising in essence four fundamental qualities,[17] Nature – so Qūnawī asserts – is known to us through its effects but has no manifest form of its own:

> When speaking of Nature, Matter, and Universal Body, I merely say that the intelligibility (*maʿqūlīya*) of their metaphysical ranks (*marātib*) became determinable (*taʿayyanat*) [at a specific level]: I do not say that Nature itself became manifest (*ẓaharat*) and then Matter and Universal

12 For a brief study of Ibn ʿArabī's conception of the *ʿālam al-mithāl*, see Fazlur Rahman, 'Dream, Imagination, and ʿālam al-mithāl' in *Islamic Studies* 3.2 (1964–65).

13 *Fukūk*, p. 206.

14 Farghānī, *Mashāriq al-darārī*, p. 39–40.

15 According to Farghānī, the world of formal exemplars is made manifest through an "unfolding (*inbisāṭ*) in Nature's essence" (*dar ḥaqīqat-i ṭabīʿa*). (*Mashāriq al-darārī*, p. 39).

16 Farghānī, *Mashāriq al-darārī*, p. 40.

17 The four qualities of Nature are seen as reflections of the four Divine Names that preside over the act of creation, viz. the Living, the Knowing, the Willing and the Able. (See Farghānī, *Mashāriq al-darārī*, p. 39).

> Body likewise. For each of these three is a non-manifest universal which admits of no manifestable form *in concreto*.[18]

Accordingly, when identifying Nature's rank as being below that of the Guarded Tablet and above that of Prime Matter, our author is quick to add the proviso that this, at least, is Nature's rank "insofar as its sway (*ḥukm*) is made manifest within and by means of bodies".[19] In the corporeal domain, then, Nature's effect upon bodies is perceivable in the four basic qualities of heat, cold, dryness and wetness, as well as the elements of which bodies are composed. But how exactly do Ṣadr al-Dīn and his disciples conceive of bodily existence? In broad agreement with the standard theories of their day, they – like the Ikhwān al-Ṣafā' before them[20] – see corporeal space as being produced by the "measuring" of Prime Matter (*al-habā' al-awwal*), or Universal Hylé (*al-hayūlā al-kullī*), along the three dimensions, viz. height, breadth and depth.[21] Matter, thus characterised by the three dimensions and subject to the four qualities of nature, is deemed the basic principle of corporeality, a principle referred to – following the terminology of the Muslim Neoplatonists[22] – as Universal or Absolute Body (*jism al-kull* or *al-jism al-muṭlaq*).

Qūnawī, however, as we have just seen, takes pains to point out that although its intelligible rank is known to us through its manifest effects, Universal Body – like Nature and Prime Matter – remains non-manifest in itself and hence has no actual existence *in concreto*. Rather, the first corporeal form actually to be made manifest is that of *al-ʿarsh al-muḥīṭ* or God's All-Encompassing Throne, a concept rooted in Qur'ānic accounts of the creation of the world,[23] and one that generally plays a key part in Islamic

18 *Miftāḥ*, p. 51.

19 *Miftāḥ*, p. 51.

20 See *Rasā'il Ikhwān al-Ṣafā'*, vol. III, p. 187: "From the [Universal] Soul there flowed another substance (*jawhar*) called prime matter (*al-hayūlā al-ūlā*); and prime matter was measurable by length, breadth and depth, whereby it became an absolute body (*jism muṭlaq*) or secondary matter". On this topic see S.H. Nasr, *An introduction to Islamic cosmological doctrines*, p. 58–59.

21 See Farghānī, *Mashāriq al-darārī*, p. 41.

22 See *Rasā'il Ikhwān al-Ṣafā'*, vol. III, pp. 184, 187.

23 See Qur'ān, VII, 54: {Surely your Lord is God, who created the heavens and the earth in six days – then settled upon the Throne}; XI, 7: {And it is He who created the heavens and the earth in six days, and His Throne was upon the water – that He might try you, which one of you is fairer in works}; and XX, 4–6: {A revelation from Him who created the earth and the high heavens; the Most Merciful settled upon the Throne; to Him belongs all that is in the heavens and the earth and all that is between them, and all that is underneath the soil}.

cosmology.[24] Moreover, by dint of being the first body, the Throne, we are told, is also the "first sensorial form",[25] a notion endowed with special significance in the writings of Qūnawī and later Akbarians, for it is seen as representing the complete manifestation of existence in all of its fundamental degrees: spiritual, subtle and corporeal. Qūnawī writes:

> The Throne – which is the first sensorial form, encompassing all others – is the station where the Most Merciful (*al-raḥmān*) settled (*istawā*), for it marks the point at which the self-disclosure of Being is made firmly and fully manifest. 'Mercy', then, is existence itself; and the 'Most Merciful' is God (*al-ḥaqq*) inasmuch as He is Being. Hence, wherever it appears [in the Qur'ān], 'settling' (*istiwā'*) is never predicated of any other Name.[26]

As the first and simplest of bodies, the Throne embraces, in principle, all bodily forms. However, as was the case at the archetypal level with the creative pairing of First Intellect and Universal Soul, the Throne – in keeping with its simple nature – contains such forms in a unified, summative manner. They are distinguished and differentiated at the level of its passive, complementary aspect, the *kursī* or Pedestal – a term likewise grounded in Qur'ānic cosmology.[27] Farghānī writes:

> The Pedestal is a locus of manifestation (*maẓhar*) for the Guarded Tablet and falls under the sway of the Name 'the Compassionate' (*al-raḥīm*) even as the Throne falls under the sway of the Name 'the Most Merciful'. And just as the relative existential multiplicity hidden and solely conceptualised in the Sublime Pen becomes, through the divine [act of] writing, spiritually differentiated in the Guarded Tablet in conformity with the world of spirits, so does every statute (*ḥukm*) comprised summatively in the Throne become detailed in the Pedestal.[28]

Conceived of as the principle which "defines the directions of space",[29] the Throne is seen as comprising all space within itself. Accordingly, like the

24 See, for example, *Futūḥāt*, vol. I, p. 201. See also S.H. Nasr, *An introduction to Islamic cosmological doctrines*, pp. 39, 76.

25 *Fukūk*, p. 205.

26 *Fukūk*, p. 205.

27 See Qur'ān, II, 255: {His Pedestal comprises the heavens and the earth; the preserving of them oppresses Him not; He is the Most High, the Mighty}.

28 Farghānī, *Mashāriq al-darārī*, p. 42.

29 *I'jāz*, p. 320.

Ikhwān before them,[30] Qūnawī and his disciples identify the Throne with the ninth or outermost sphere (*al-muḥīṭ*) in the Ptolemaic system of concentric celestial orbs. As for the Pedestal – depicted in the scriptures as encompassing the heavens and the earth – it is naturally equated with the eighth sphere, or heaven of the fixed stars. Although identified as corporeal and falling under the aegis of Nature, both Throne and Pedestal are nonetheless deemed to transcend change and corruption, and hence to abide in perpetuity – a doctrine, as we shall see, which coincides with that of the *falāsifa*, but which also, more pertinently perhaps, accords with the Islamic scriptural view of the Throne and Pedestal as the ceiling and ground respectively of Paradise and as therefore everlasting like the latter. Hence, Farghānī writes:

> The folk of unveiling are unanimous in deeming the Throne and Pedestal physical but not elemental, and in no way susceptible to generation and corruption, nor perishing or ceasing to be, for the Pedestal's roof is the ground of Paradise (*zamīn-i behesht*) and the Throne is Paradise's ceiling as articulated explicitly in the sound prophetic traditions and by allusion in the text of the Qur'ān.[31]

For Qūnawī and his students, the Throne or "supreme sphere" (*al-falak al-aʿẓam*) is the mover that turns the wheel of the heavens.[32] Spurred by the divine love that initiated the act of creation,[33] the Throne's movement sets the Pedestal and lesser spheres turning, and their combined motion, interaction and "manifold configurations" produce the "principles of the generic, specific and individual corporeal forms" that make up the world of bodies.[34]

At this point, however, Ṣadr al-Dīn's conception of the celestial spheres departs appreciably from that of the Avicennian philosophers – who hold that all nine spheres are everlasting – in that it deems the *planetary* spheres to be composed of the four natural elements, such that they are "part of this world

30 See *Rasā'il Ikhwān al-Ṣafā'*, vol. II, p. 26: "As for the eighth sphere, the great sphere of the fixed stars which encompasses these seven spheres, it is the Pedestal which {comprises the heavens and the earth} (Qur'ān, II, 255). As for the ninth sphere, which encompasses the other eight, it is the Mighty Throne, which {on that day eight shall carry above them} (Qur'ān, LXIX, 17) as the Glorious and Exalted has said". See also S.H. Nasr, *An introduction to Islamic cosmological doctrines*, p. 76.

31 Farghānī, *Mashāriq al-darārī*, p. 43.

32 See *Hādiya*, p. 169; and Farghānī, *Mashāriq al-darārī*, p. 43.

33 See Fargānī, *Mashāriq al-darārī*, p. 43.

34 Farghānī, *Mashāriq al-darārī*, p. 42–43.

and hence are destroyed along with it".[35] For Qūnawī, as we shall see, the doctrine that the bodies of the planetary spheres are perishable is one that has been espoused by the ancient sages and, more crucially, has been affirmed by the revealed scriptures; and it would appear to be this latter point in particular that leads him to devote considerable attention to the nature of the planetary spheres in his correspondence with Naṣīr al-Dīn al-Ṭūsī.

2 Cosmological Questions in Qūnawī's Letters to Ṭūsī

Specific differences notwithstanding, Qūnawī's critique of Ṭūsī's essentially Avicennian cosmology would appear to be driven by the same fundamental concerns – especially regarding reason's subordination to *kashf* and revelation – that characterise his approach throughout much of the correspondence. When challenging Ṭūsī's conception of the planetary spheres, our author starts, therefore, once again by highlighting the inevitable fallibility of syllogistic reasoning:

> What proof is there that the powers of the heavenly orbs are endless and that they are not susceptible to change, corruption or substitution? For in all that [the *falāsifa*] have said when setting out to prove that the heavenly spheres are permanent, that their effects are perpetual, that they are free of the properties of nature, and that the [sublunary] world of generation and corruption forever receives such influences … we have never encountered a complete demonstration apt to set at rest the mind of the unprejudiced seeker (*mustabṣir*) who cannot be appeased with tendentious arguments or second-hand corroborations … Rather, we have found nothing but discretionary preferences and objections that sit comfortably with their [the philosophers'] own ideas and the underlying purpose of which is simply to emphasize the greatness of the celestial realm as they see it.[36]

Since human reasoning, Qūnawī continues, is not the impersonal arbiter of truth that the *falāsifa* suppose it to be, they should be wary of allowing it to take precedence over revealed scripture wherever reason and revelation appear at odds; all the more so given that "the divine revelations transmitted by the envoys and the perfect have clearly stated that *all* such bodies are

35 *Tarjumah*, p. 190.

36 *As'ila*, p. 80–81.

physical, and in agreement with them on this score are a number of the great ancient philosophers (*ḥukamāʾ*) as we know from their writings".[37] Responding to Qūnawī's remarks, Ṭūsī – making no mention of the scriptures – simply observes that the pronouncements of the ancient philosophers on this topic are many and varied: the theories cited by him in answer to Ṣadr al-Dīn's question are merely those he found to be based on rational demonstration.[38] As for the details of Ṭūsī's answer and Qūnawī's subsequent riposte, they largely revolve around the question of whether celestial motion is forced (*qasrī*) or natural (*bi-l-ṭabʿ*) – one of the vexed issues of medieval physics[39] – for it is on their conception of celestial motion that the *falāsifa* predicate their theory of the non-elemental character of the planetary spheres.

For Ṭūsī, then, the outermost sphere is the "defining principle" (*muḥaddid*)[40] of both space and time; and, as such, must necessarily endure and turn in perpetuity. He writes:

> [The philosophers] realised that if the all-encompassing sphere were to perish or stop turning there would remain neither direction nor time in which bodies could exist, which is absurd as all bodies are necessarily characterised by position and direction; and if time came to a standstill and was interrupted then the period of interruption after it stopped could not occur other than in time. To avoid such absurdities they therefore ruled in favour of the permanence of the celestial spheres and their motion.[41]

Having taken this view – so Ṭūsī proceeds – the philosophers were obliged to conclude that celestial motion is not forced – i.e. due to the impetus of an external agent – since forced or violent motion can never be more than temporary; rather it must be natural, that is, intrinsic to the moving body itself, and specifically in this instance the effect of each sphere's having "a soul endowed with endless power and an intellect out of desire for which the soul will move [the body] of the sphere in order to achieve an entelechy which perpetually exists in it in potential".[42] Moreover, given that the motion of bodies composed

37 *As'ila*, p. 81.

38 Ṭūsī, *Ajwiba*, p. 124.

39 For a discussion of Avicenna's treatment of this topic see S.H. Nasr, *An introduction to Islamic cosmological doctrines*, p. 226–229.

40 Ṭūsī, *Ajwiba*, p. 122.

41 Ṭūsī, *Ajwiba*, p. 122–123.

42 Ṭūsī, *Ajwiba*, p. 123.

of the elements cannot be other than forced – since the elements naturally tend towards their own resting-place (air and fire upwards, water and earth downwards) – they therefore concluded in turn that "the bodies of celestial spheres are free of the natural qualities (*ṭabāʾiʿ*) of the elements".[43]

For Qūnawī, however, the basic flaw in this argument is the assumption that *all* celestial spheres are bound to abide perpetually lest space and time cease to exist. Responding to Ṭūsī he writes:

> What you have stated – may God grant us the benefit of your knowledge – about the permanence of the heavenly sphere, and about the defining sphere through which time is determined, is correct but only in the case of the *supreme* sphere (*al-falak al-aʿẓam*) ... Open to question, though, are your remarks concerning the rest of the spheres and their being free of the qualities of the elements (on the grounds that if they possessed such qualities their positions and motion would be forced and hence impermanent, leading to the absurdity entailed by their cessation) for the absurdity mentioned in this regard would apply in the case of the first [i.e. supreme] sphere alone. Now the verifiers from among the folk of initiatic taste and jurists alike are united in the view that it abides in perpetuity, as does the heaven of the fixed stars, for in their eyes [the first two spheres] have no part in elemental nature, unlike the seven planetary spheres whose motion they therefore hold to be impermanent. So the burden falls on those who would refute this to construct an apodeictic proof to that effect.[44]

But that is not all. Turning his focus to one of the key premises of Ṭūsī's argument – namely that violent motion is impermanent – Qūnawī goes on to question why, logically speaking, that should necessarily be the case:

> By the same token one might equally ask why it would still be impossible for violent motion (*al-ḥaraka al-qasrīya*) to last perpetually if, say, the mover existed in perpetuity and the object moved was perpetually capable of undergoing its effect. For in such a hypothesis there would no longer be any reason for the motion to be finite, given that the reason for the finitude of violent motion – as observed in the world around us – is simply the finitude of the mover's force. When, therefore, one supposes its force to be endless, and the moved object's aptitude to receive it likewise,

43 Ṭūsī, *Ajwiba*, p. 123.

44 *Hādiya*, p. 168–169.

> perpetual motion is no longer a problem. Why then should this not be the case with the planetary spheres? After all, it is known that the supreme sphere exerts a violent force – albeit one that is natural to itself – whose effect pervades the remaining spheres, which, according to [the *falāsifa*], are everlasting. Hence both the effect of the mover's force and the moved object's capacity to receive it would be everlasting too – the problem of perpetual violent motion thereby being resolved.[45]

The problem of celestial motion brings into play too the related topic of time and its origin, with our author once again invoking the authority of the pre-Aristotelian philosophers in support of his view. Commenting on Ṭūsī's assertion that "time encompasses only that which is encompassed by the moving celestial spheres",[46] Qūnawī writes:

> That depends on whether you think of time as actually consisting in the motion of the spheres or as simply being determined (*taʿayyana*) by it. You will, of course, be well aware of the different theories that have been put forward on that score, [and know] that a group of those steeped in philosophical science, including Plato, took the view that time is an intelligible essence whose rank is prior to the heavenly spheres. A syllogistic demonstration is therefore required if one is to prove that time's existence is dependent on the motion of the spheres alone.[47]

Although on this occasion Ṣadr al-Dīn refrains from explicitly identifying the idealist position as his own – even if the rhetorical inference is clear enough – we know that this was in fact his view from his other works, notably the following passage from the *Iʿjāz*:

> The origin of time (*aṣl al-zamān*) is the [Divine] Name 'the Eternity' (*al-dahr*), which is an intelligible relationship like all the other Names and universals. It is, indeed, one of the chief Names and its effects are seen in every world in accordance with the measure implied and determined by the specific conditions of the contingent beings therein.[48]

For Qūnawī, then, time – like all other physical conditions – is inevitably the modified expression of a universal principle. This principle, the Divine Name

45 *Hādiya*, p. 169.
46 Ṭūsī, *Ajwiba*, p. 116–117.
47 *Hādiya*, p. 169–170.
48 *Iʿjāz*, p. 203.

al-dahr, makes its influence felt, so we are told, in all degrees of existence and all phases of human ontogenesis; and though those degrees beyond the realm of corporeal motion are still conceived of as transcending time, they are deemed nonetheless to possess their own specific mode of duration.

Despite their respective differences over the bodies and movements of the heavenly spheres, Qūnawī generally concurs with the *falāsifa* in holding that each *falak* has an intellect and soul, while nonetheless rejecting – as previously noted – the Avicennian idea that an emanationist scheme of intellects is necessary in order to explicate the problem of how the many emerge from the One. Again, as was the case with the First Intellect and Universal Soul, the Hellenistic hierarchy of celestial intelligences is given an Islamic hue through assimilation of concepts drawn from the Qurʾān and hadith; specifically, in this instance, the doctrine (albeit broadly Abrahamic in essence) of the heavenly hierarchy of archangels. Though he refrains from listing this hierarchy in full, our author does identify some of its chief grades: the Throne, we are told, is the station (*maqām*) of the archangel Isrāfīl, the Pedestal is that of Mīkāʾīl, while the Lote Tree (*al-sidra*) – mentioned in the Qurʾān[49] and deemed to mark the boundary between the Pedestal and the world of elemental nature[50] – is the station of Jibrāʾīl, "and thus", says Qūnawī "does it continue until one arrives at the lowest heaven (*al-samāʾ al-dunyā*) specific to Asmāʾīl, the chief of its angels".[51]

It is with the angel Asmāʾīl, moreover, that the connection with the theory of celestial intelligences is made explicit, for Qūnawī describes him as the lunar sphere's master and treasurer "referred to by the Peripatetic philosophers as the active intellect (*al-ʿaql al-faʿʿāl*)".[52] As is well known, the active intellect has an important role in Ibn Sīnā's cosmology and theories of cognition alike.[53] Although rooted in Aristotle's *De Anima*,[54] it is primarily al-Fārābī's elaborations[55] that underpin Ibn Sīnā's conception of the active intellect as the *wāhib al-ṣuwar* or

49 Qurʾān, LIII, 14–16: {Indeed, he saw him another time by the Lote Tree of the Boundary, near which is the Garden of the Refuge, when there covered the Lote Tree that which covered; his eye swerved not, nor swept astray. Indeed, he saw one of the greatest signs of his Lord}.

50 *Sharḥ al-aḥādīth*, fol. 48.

51 *Nuṣūṣ*, p. 64.

52 *Nuṣūṣ*, p. 64.

53 See, for example, L. Goodman, *Avicenna*, London 1992, p. 144.

54 See Aristotle, *De Anima*, III.5. For a survey of the textual history of this concept in Greek and Arabic – and in particular the key role played by the *De anima* of Alexander of Aphrodisias – see H. Davidson, *Alfarabi, Avicenna and Averroes on intellect*, p. 7–43.

55 See Fārābī, *Risāla fī maʿānī al-ʿaql* in *Al-Fārābī's Philosophische Abhandlungen*, ed. F. Dieterici, Leiden 1890, p. 42–48. On Fārābī's conception of the active intellect, see H. Davidson, *Alfarabi, Avicenna and Averroes on intellect*, p. 65–70.

"bestower of forms". Following Fārābī, then, Avicenna conceives of the active intellect as the perpetually immaterial (*mujarrad*) and fully actualised principle of cognition, which contains, in a non-individuated manner, the abstract forms of material beings, and whose function is not only to actualise man's potential intellect by illuminating it with these forms but also, from a cosmological point of view, to impart form to matter – the principle of individuation – thus producing the individual beings that populate the world of generation and corruption.[56]

For his part, Qūnawī's treatment of this topic, though somewhat incidental, suggests nonetheless that he generally subscribes to this theory. Hence, despite being abstract and immaterial, the active intellect, we are told, "manages (*yudabbir*) the world of generation and corruption along with all its forms".[57] It is universal (*kullī*), like a genus, in relation to the individual souls and physical forms below it, while being itself akin to no more than a sub-species or individual in relation to those intellects above it.[58] Echoing, moreover, the Fārābian notion of conjunction (*ittiṣāl*) with the active intellect – a fairly familiar topos in medieval philosophy[59] – Qūnawī asserts that "the primary perfection of the individual rational soul resides in its realising the nature of the treasurer (*khāzin*) of the first celestial sphere".[60] The precise sense, however, in which he conceives of such a conjunction clearly differs in core respects from the standard philosophical conception, since in his correspondence with Ṭūsī he argues that it allows the soul in question to govern multiple bodies (*hayākil*) at one and the same time – a possibility that Ṭūsī rejects.

3 The Sublunary World

Apart from the occasional reference to the "world of generation and corruption" and the "kingdoms of nature" (*al-muwalladāt*), Qūnawī – in his written works at any rate – generally says little about the physical make-up of the world beneath the lowest heaven, appearing instead to accept without comment the standard theories of his day. Nevertheless, a more detailed treatment of this

56 See H. Davidson, *Alfarabi, Avicenna and Averroes on intellect*, p. 76–94.

57 *As'ila*, p. 72.

58 *As'ila*, p. 72.

59 For a detailed study of this topic, see S. Feldman, 'Gersonides on the Possibility of Conjunction with the Agent Intellect' in *Association for Jewish Studies Review*, vol. 3 (1978), p. 99–120. See also, H. Davidson, *Alfarabi, Avicenna and Averroes on intellect*, p. 53–58.

60 *Nafaḥāt*, fol. 40a.

topic can in fact be found in Farghānī's record of Ṣadr al-Dīn's oral teachings, viz. the *Mashāriq al-darārī*; and though the doctrines formulated therein would appear to be largely similar to those expressed in this regard by the Ikhwān al-Ṣafāʾ,[61] they display some typically Akbarian features too.

How, then, does Farghānī's *reportatio* portray the elemental world, and how does it depict the human being's place therein? The elements (*ʿanāṣir*) themselves, we are told, originate in the "element of elements" (*ʿunṣur al-ʿanāṣir*) or "supreme element" (*ʿunṣur-i aʿẓam*) in which they are synthetically and indistinguishably comprised.[62] Described as the "first effect" to derive from the combined motion of Throne and Pedestal, the supreme element is a "material substance" (*jawhar-i habāʾī*) comprising the four fundamental qualities of nature – heat, cold, dryness, and wetness – in perfect balance.[63] Applying this theory to Qurʾānic cosmology, Farghānī equates the supreme element with the term *ratq* or "stitched mass" which features in the following verse connected with the creation of the heavens and earth: {have not the unbelievers beheld that the heavens and the earth were a stitched mass, and then We rent them asunder and of water made every living thing?}[64] The correlative verbal root, *fatq* or "tearing apart", which appears in the same verse, thus refers, so we are told, to the production of the individual elements – earth, water, fire and air – through a disturbance in the balance of natural qualities in the supreme element such that in each element two natural qualities in particular are predominant: hence, in general conformity with the stock theories of the day, earth is deemed to be produced by the predominance of cold and dryness, water by that of cold and wetness, fire by that of dryness and heat, and air by the preponderance of wetness and heat.[65]

All bodies in the world of generation and corruption are seen as consisting, therefore, in an amalgamation of the elements. And though such amalgamations admit of indefinite variety – an effect, we are told, of the varied influence of the celestial powers – they are deemed to fall into four basic categories of equilibrium (*iʿtidāl*), constituting the kingdoms of nature or "beings born of [the elements]" (*al-muwalladāt*).[66] The first three kingdoms, naturally enough, are those of minerals, plants and animals – each gradation thereof being

61 On the Ikhwān's conception of the elements and the kingdoms of nature, see S.H. Nasr, *An introduction to Islamic cosmological doctrines*, pp. 52, 62, 89–95.

62 Farghānī, *Mashāriq al-darārī*, p. 43.

63 Farghānī, *Mashāriq al-darārī*, p. 43. In the *Miftāḥ ghayb al-jamʿ* Qūnawī refers to this effect as the " form (*ṣūra*) of the four elements ". (*Miftāḥ*, p. 56).

64 Qurʾān, XXI, 31. For Ibn ʿArabī's interpretation of this verse, see *Futūḥāt*, vol. I, p. 368.

65 Farghānī, *Mashāriq al-darārī*, p. 43–44.

66 Farghānī, *Mashāriq al-darārī*, p. 45.

characterised by a successively greater capacity for movement and the pursuit of specific perfections,[67] in broad agreement with the Aristotelian conception of the vegetal and animal souls and their respective faculties and entelechies.[68] Situated above these – while nonetheless encompassing their properties – the fourth and highest kingdom is that of the human being, "created in God's image";[69] and it is with the appearance of man that the cosmogonic process reaches its end.[70]

Conceived of as the seal and sum of God's creation, the human being is accordingly deemed, by Qūnawī and his disciples, to mark the end-point in the descent of God's *amr* or creative command.[71] Tracing the command's descent through the ontological and cosmological hierarchy, Qūnawī writes:

> The command descends unseen from the reality of realities (*ḥaqīqat al-ḥaqā'iq*) … along a central, axial degree, with a non-manifest, intelligible motion, to the breath of the Most Merciful (*al-nafas al-raḥmānī*) – described as the 'Primordial Mist' (*al-'amā'*) – thence to the rank of the Pen or First Intellect, then to the Tablet or Soul, then to the Throne, then the Pedestal, then the heavens,[72] then the elements, then the engendered kingdoms of nature, until it arrives at the human being … Then, having reached the end of its descent in man's manifest form it returns to the perfect, universal reality that is specific to the human being, namely the reality of realities, and thus does it complete a full circle whose rule abides until the Pen finishes writing God's knowledge of His creation.[73]

As for the questions that inevitably arise from this passage – concerning the precise nature of man's metaphysical rank, the stages of anthropogenesis, and the relationship between the human being's metaphysical origin and earthly state – they will be addressed at length in the chapters that follow.

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67 Farghānī, *Mashāriq al-darārī*, p. 46.

68 See, for example, *De Anima*, II.2 and III.9.

69 The idea that man was created in God's image is grounded in a hadith.

70 Farghānī, *Mashāriq al-darārī*, p. 47.

71 For the Qur'ānic use of this term, see XXXVI, 82: {His command, when He wants a thing, is to say to it 'Be', and it is}.

72 For Ibn 'Arabī and his school the doctrine of the command's descent through the celestial spheres is seen as having a scriptural basis in the verse {So He determined them as seven heavens in two days, and revealed in every heaven its command}. (Qur'ān, XLI, 12). (See, for example, Farghānī, Mashāriq al-*darārī*, p. 43).

73 *Miftāḥ*, p. 56.

PART 2

Qūnawī's Anthropology

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CHAPTER 5

Man's Metaphysical Origins

Our author, reflecting the spirit of his times,[1] holds the Aristotelian view that "divine science", or metaphysics, is the most noble of all sciences and hence the most worthy of study.[2] At the same time, he also takes pains to impress upon his readers the importance of understanding the *human* predicament in all its facets – from its ontological causes to its earthly nature.[3] With this in mind – and following broadly the traditional *mabdaʾ wa maʿād* scheme – our analysis of his anthropology will start by surveying his key metaphysical doctrines, noting as we do so the way in which his metaphysics is repeatedly brought to bear on the study of the human being.[4]

1 Indeterminacy and Determination

Because God's Essence is beyond intellection,[5] Qūnawī holds that divine science is concerned, not with describing God's intrinsic nature, but with understanding the nature of the world's dependence upon Him.[6] Although he refers to God as the "existenciator" (*mūjid*) of the world, he is nonetheless reluctant – unlike the *falāsifa*, who frequently describe God as the "First Cause" (*al-ʿilla al-ūlā*) – to apply to Him the notion of causality (*ʿillīya*), as a cause necessarily shares some common measure with its effect. Indeed, he dismisses as specious one of the ways commonly cited among Muslim (and for that matter Jewish and Christian) philosophers of "proving the reality of the Necessary Being" (*ithbāt al-wājib*), namely the supposed impossibility of an infinite regress (*tasalsul*) of existential

1 See P. Adamson, 'The Kindian Tradition: the structure of philosophy in Arabic Neoplatonism' in C. D'Ancona, ed., *The Libraries of the Neoplatonists*, p. 355–357.

2 See *supra*, p. 55–56.

3 Hence, for example, knowledge of man's "origin" (*mabdaʾ*) and "end" (*ghāya*), and of his "journey" (*riḥla*) between the two, is lauded as "one of the most noble ornaments adorning the souls of the intelligent". (*Murāsalāt*, p. 135).

4 Especially the study of man's "existential journey", metaphysics being concerned with the eternal causes and underlying reality of things, and the science of man's *exitus* and *reditus* (*mabdaʾ wa maʿād*) with establishing where the human being stands in relation to such principles and with illuminating the path leading back to God.

5 *Miftāḥ*, p. 33.

6 *Miftāḥ*, p. 33.

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causes.[7] While one is entitled to conjecture that there must be a First Cause, or Necessary Being, on the grounds that the chain of causality cannot regress indefinitely, this argument, he observes, does not actually represent a *burhān* or self-evident demonstration, and nor, by the same token, does it say anything about the real nature of ontological necessity and contingency.[8]

When setting out to establish the ground on which reality is based, Qūnawī, by contrast, focuses specifically on the reasons why the existence of the world and everything in it is *intrinsically* dependent upon something else, arguing that what the metaphysical notions of contingency and necessity really imply is the relationship of the limited and "constrained" (*al-muqayyad*) towards the limitless and "absolute" (*al-muṭlaq*).[9] Central to his treatment of this topic is a conceptual perspective which, as already indicated, represents one of his most important contributions to the development of Akbarian metaphysics, namely the ontological significance of "determination" (*taʿayyun*) and "non-determination" (*lā taʿayyun*).

According to this doctrine, the conditioned being's dependence upon an "unconstrained" principle is simply an expression of the "rationally sound" premise whereby "every determination is preceded by non-determination".[10] In other words, the particular is comprised within the possibilities of the universal and is therefore both logically and ontologically consecutive to it, a relationship seen as an expression of the fact that the universal has the breadth to encompass individual determinations within itself precisely by virtue of its own relative indeterminacy.[11]

In keeping with this view, the concept of determination is seen as closely linked to that of constraint (*taqyīd*), since the more determinate and specific a thing is, the more constrained it is in relation to everything else, and by the same token the more dependent it is upon the principles of its specific modes of determination. Hence our author asserts that "every determination is a limitation",[12] and likewise that "every determination is a restriction with regard to the unconstrained principles (*muṭlaqāt*) underlying it".[13] For Qūnawī, then, the

7 For an overview of this topic see H. Davidson, *Proofs for eternity, creation and the existence of God in medieval Islamic and Jewish philosophy*, Oxford 1987, p. 336–345.

8 *As'ila*, p. 84.

9 *Miftāḥ*, p. 83. For *muṭlaq* and *muqayyad* as legal terms and theological parallels see the chapter on Ibn Tūmart in T. Nagel, *Im Offenkundigen das Verborgene: die Heilszusage des sunnitischen Islams*, Göttingen 2002, p. 33–175.

10 *Hādiya*, p. 143.

11 Hence, numbers are "determinations of unity" (*Nuṣūṣ*, p. 30) and individual existents are "determinations of the one Being" (*Iʿjāz*, p. 50).

12 *Mufṣiḥa*, p. 41.

13 *Hādiya*, p. 143.

key to understanding contingent existence is to realise that it is synonymous with determination;[14] and this is why he equates Being – envisaged as the immediate principle of existence – with "determination itself" (*nafs al-taʿayyun*), a principle which – unconstrained as it is by any particular mode of determination – comprises all possible determinations within itself.[15]

Nevertheless, although he considers all existents to be dependent upon this "first determination" (*al-taʿayyun al-awwal*),[16] the latter is still not seen as the ground on which their reality is ultimately founded. The first *taʿayyun*, he explains, inevitably retains a "single bond of dependency", that of its own determinate nature.[17] Inasmuch as it excludes the "indeterminate" or "non-manifest", it cannot be the principle of all reality, since it does not contain all reality within itself.

He therefore argues that reality's underlying principle is to be found solely in that which is without limits of any kind, even those of its own nature, such that there can be nothing outside it, and nor, by the same token, can it be dependent upon anything else. This absolute freedom belongs to the state of utter non-determination alone.[18] It is this state that is deemed to constitute the true nature of the Divine Essence, a state definable solely as "that indeterminate reality lying behind all determinate things".[19] When contingency and necessity are understood in this way, one comes to see that all determinate realities are necessarily grounded in non-determination: "by considering things", says Qūnawī, "in their aspect of constraint one comes to see how they are eventually joined to the absoluteness of the True (*iṭlāq al-ḥaqq*)".[20]

According to Ṣadr al-Dīn, then, the reality of all things is founded upon this "essential absoluteness" (*al-iṭlāq al-dhātī*), and this applies to man as much as any other existent. Nevertheless, this fundamental state of boundless indeterminacy is not seen as corresponding to man's "origin", in the strict sense of the word, that is, as a "starting-point": indeed he states categorically that "considered solely from the point of view of His essential absoluteness, God cannot be

14 A natural link between the concepts of *taʿayyun* and *ẓuhūr* or manifestation, is, in a sense, implicit in the root meaning of the former term, connected as it is with the idea of "that which can be seen with the eye" (*ʿayn*); and, in effect, Qūnawī would seem to conceive of the *mutaʿayyin* as an aspect of the non-manifest which, like a figure emerging from the mist, assumes a determinate intelligible form through which it can be known and 'seen'.

15 *Iʿjāz*, pp. 110, 237; *Hādiya*, p. 152–153.

16 *Nuṣūṣ*, p. 30.

17 *Iʿjāz*, pp. 110, 237.

18 *Iʿjāz*, p. 237.

19 *Miftāḥ*, p. 27.

20 *Nuṣūṣ*, p. 48–49.

thought of as the origin (*mabdaʾ*) or source (*maṣdar*) of anything".[21] Continuing in this vein, he writes:

> It is not in respect of the non-duality of His Essence (*aḥadīyat dhāti-hi*) that God should be conceived of as bringing about the existence of contingent beings. On the contrary, in this regard it is really all the same whether one seeks to ascribe the necessity of existenciation (*al-iqtiḍāʾ al-ījādī*) to [the Essence] or to deny such a relation; for nothing can have any connection (*irtibāṭ*) with the Essence, in respect of [its absoluteness], nor any compatibility (*munāsaba*) such that it could act upon them and they could receive its action – all reciprocity and relativity being effaced within this non-duality.[22]

The starting-point of man's existential journey is therefore seen as being meaningful solely from the relative point of view whereby God is indeed thought of as the cause of existence. The nature of this relative standpoint will be considered in the next section, which thus marks the point at which we begin to examine Qūnawī's treatment of man's ontogenesis proper.

2 The Cognitive Relationship

At the start of the final section of the *Miftāḥ ghayb al-jamʿ*, concerned with expounding the "states, journey and signs of the perfect man",[23] Qūnawī lists a series of questions intended to guide the reader to the "knowledge that must be acquired by the sincere seeker of human perfection".[24] The first of these questions, which deal with the stages and overall purpose of the human being's existential journey, is simply: "what is [man's] essence (*ḥaqīqatu-hu*)?"[25] For Qūnawī the answer is that the human being's *ḥaqīqa* – like that of all existents – is "the expression of a distinct relationship (*nisba mutamayyiza*) in God's knowledge (*ʿilm al-ḥaqq*)",[26] meaning that while it is still God that is

21 *Fukūk*, p. 192.

22 *Sharḥ al-aḥādīth*, fol. 62b.

23 *Iʿjāz*, p. 298.

24 *Miftāḥ*, p. 99.

25 *Miftāḥ*, p. 99.

26 *Miftāḥ*, p. 102. The ontological status of the essences in the *nisba ʿilmīya* is seen as one of *thubūt* or "fixity", a term denoting their changeless reality in God's knowledge. For Qūnawī this is essentially the same as the Avicennian concept of *irtisām* or "inscription" (See Ibn Sīnā, *Taʿlīqāt*, p. 82) according to which the essences of things are pre-eternally "inscribed"

identified as the ground on which man's reality rests, that ground is no longer conceived of as the absolute Essence itself.

Clearly, the key to this change of perspective lies in the idea of "distinctiveness" associated with the term *ḥaqīqa*, denoting as the latter does the underlying essence, or nature, of a distinct being. In other words, to envisage God as the ground of all specific essences or *ḥaqā'iq*, is, by that token, to envisage Him as bearing some relation to determinate existence. According to Qūnawī, what these "distinct relationships in God's knowledge" represent is the indefinite multitude of determinations comprised in metaphysical Oneness. Nevertheless, just as he holds that all numbers are merely determinate aspects of arithmetical unity, so does he stress, lest this theory be taken as implying an irreducible plurality in God's Essence, that while in one respect such relationships give rise to the manifold appearances in the domain of existence, in another more profound respect they remain effaced in the oneness of God. He writes:

> The underlying essences of beings, that is to say, the relationships in [God's] knowledge [which then give rise to] the manifestations of multiplicity ... lie concealed in God's non-manifestation ... moreover, in respect of their fixity, things never leave the state of non-manifestation, nor are they distinct from [God's] knowledge in its immutable oneness.[27]

Adding further weight to the idea that – while constituting the underlying reality of existents – such relationships in God's knowledge are essentially determinate aspects of His self, Qūnawī identifies them with the Qur'ānic notion[28] of God's "affairs":

> His eternal knowledge of things is identical with His knowledge of Himself in the sense that He knows Himself by Himself and thus knows everything through His knowledge of Himself; for everything comes from the affairs of His Essence (*shu'ūn dhāti-hi*). Wherefore, given that He

(*murtasim*) in the divine mind. (See *Hādiya*, p. 151). In similar vein, our author speaks of the essences as being like "non-manifest letters" in the mind of God, waiting to be written in the book of the world. (See *Tarjumah*, p. 17). On the well-known Avicennian distinction between essence (or quiddity) and existence, see A.M. Goichon, *La Distinction de l'essence et de l'existence d'après Ibn Sina*, Paris 1937.

27 *I'jāz*, p. 122.

28 Qur'ān, LV, 29: {Whatsoever is in the heavens and the earth ask of Him, every day He is upon some affair}.

> knows all the affairs of His self, He thus knows everything by knowing Himself.[29]

It is from the standpoint, therefore, of its knowing itself and all its affairs that the Divine Essence may be thought of as having at least some link with contingent being. Accordingly, Qūnawī calls this hypostasis the *nisba ʿilmīya* or "cognitive relationship", a term which thus expresses its character as the intermediary between the absolute and the conditioned, and therefore as "that which opens the doorway to all relative perspectives (*iʿtibārāt*)".[30] Hence, "to the cognitive relationship", we are told, "belongs the determination that comprises all determinations, and it is in *this* respect that God is to be conceived of as the principle, the Necessary Being and bestower of existence".[31]

3 The Divine Affairs

We have seen that our author considers the essences of contingent beings to be "identical with God's own affairs"[32] (*ʿaynu shuʾūni-l-ḥaqq*).[33] Expanding upon this, he writes:

> 'All but God is false,'[34] for {All things pass, save His face};[35] wherefore we assert that what people refer to as 'existents' (*mawjūdāt*) are really only the determinations (*taʿayyunāt*) of His own affairs – Sublime is He ... Hence, the underlying natures of the Names and the essences are

29 *Nuṣūṣ*, p. 79.

30 *Hādiya*, p. 153.

31 *Hādiya*, p. 153.

32 As the following passage affirms, Qūnawī bases his use of the term *shaʾn* on the context in which it appears in the Qurʾān: "The development of His [inexhaustible] possibilities within His affairs is symbolised ... by the development of the possibilities of the one within the indefinite series of numbers such that it manifests their essences and manifests its own essence through them; for the one unifies the series of numbers and the series of numbers differentiates (*faṣṣala*) the one in the sense that its appearance in each degree of this series, *which we would call an 'affair' in respect of God, in accordance with that which He has related about Himself* – Sublime is He – differs from its appearance in any other degree". (*Iʿjāz*, p. 364).

33 *Nuṣūṣ*, p. 20–21.

34 A well-known verse by the poet Labīd (d. 40/660); it is said that the Prophet called it the "truest verse spoken by the Arabs".

35 Qurʾān, XXVIII, 88.

> identical with His affairs. Now [these affairs] are not distinct from Him in any way other than their being determined by Him who is utterly indeterminate. The existence that is attributed to them is thus nothing other than the clothing (*talabbus*) of His affairs in His Being. Their plurality and differentiation are expressions of His specificities, which are hidden in the non-manifest depths of His Ipseity … You could therefore say that [these affairs were determined] in order for Him to behold the specificities of His Essence in each of His affairs.[36]

The doctrine of the *shu'ūn* likewise underpins Qūnawī's conception of the unique nature of existence. Each affair represents one of the inexhaustible "specificities" (*khuṣūṣīyāt*) of God's Essence. Hence, as each existent is merely the manifest determination of a particular "affair" it follows that it too reflects a divine specificity after its own fashion. "All", he says, "that makes the child uniquely distinct from its parents, the result from its premises, and the fruit from its roots, derives from the secret of the divine specific face (*al-wajh al-khāṣṣ al-ilāhī*) which the contingent being receives through its specificity (*khuṣūṣīyatu-hu*) by dint of which it is distinguished from all other possibilities".[37] It therefore follows that no two beings, or events, can be alike in every way, as this would mean that one and the same possibility of existence had occurred twice:

> Nothing ever produces that which is identical to it (*lā yuthmir shay'un ʿayna-hu*) nor that which resembles it completely, for this would mean that a possibility of existence had occurred twice in a single essence and a single ontological degree, and in a single manner and respect. Such redundancy (*taḥṣīl li-l-ḥāṣil*), however, is impossible … for the possibilities of being are endless, and the effusion of existence (*al-fayḍ*) from the True, who is the supreme principle (*aṣl al-uṣūl*), is unique. Wherefore, those who have grasped this truth know that there can be no repetition of existence (*lā takrāra fī-l-wujūd*). Hence the verifiers have said[38] that 'God never reveals Himself in the same form to the same person twice.'[39]

In Qūnawī's view, then, there can be no repetition of, or end to contingent beings for the simple reason that their metaphysical ground is limitless – the

36 *Iʿjāz*, p. 364.

37 *Miftāḥ*, p. 50.

38 See, for example, Abū Ṭālib al-Makkī's (d. 386/996) *Qūt al-qulūb*.

39 *Nuṣūṣ*, p. 28–29.

boundlessness of non-determination ensuring the endless multitude of possible determinations:

> That of the True which is grasped through knowledge or contemplation is simply that which is determined through Him and conditioned according to the essences, or, if one prefers, according to His mutually determining possibilities of manifestation … Now all of this simply amounts to the determinable aspect of the non-manifest (*al-mutaʿayyin min al-ghayb*) which, in itself, is utterly indeterminate, and in which there can be no determinate thing. Moreover, this determination forever arises from the indeterminate state of non-manifestation, for there is no end to the contingent realities capable of receiving its self-disclosure and thereby determining it, or you could equally say, there is no end to its affairs (*shuʾūn*) in which its manifestation is determined and variegated.[40]

4 The Immutable Essences

As with other fundamental elements of Akbarian terminology, our author takes the term *ʿayn thābita*, or "immutable essence", to be peculiar to the "verifiers", meaning in practice his master and those who follow him.[41] But in contrast to the doctrine of the *wajh khāṣṣ*, or specific face, it is, in this instance, the mode of expression alone that is seen as specific to Ibn ʿArabī's school, as the basic concept denoted thereby is one, we are told, that is also accepted by philosophers and rationalist theologians alike. "The essence (*ḥaqīqa*)", Qunawī says, "of every being is an expression of the relationship of its eternal archetypal reality within its Lord's knowledge; it is, then, what is called, in the terminology used by the verifiers among God's folk, an 'immutable essence' (*ʿayn thābita*), and in the terminology of others[42] a 'quiddity' (*māhīya*)", a 'non-existential object of knowledge' (*maʿlūm maʿdūm*), a 'fixed thing' (*shayʾ thābit*), and so forth".[43]

40 *Iʿjāz*, p. 384–385.

41 For Ibn Taymīya's condemnation of the concept of immutable essence, see A. Knysh, *Ibn ʿArabī in the Later Islamic Tradition: the making of a polemical image in medieval Islam*, Albany 1999, p. 100–105.

42 The first term, "quiddity", is favoured by the *falāsifa*, whereas "non-existential object of knowledge" and "fixed thing" belong to the terminology of the Muʾtazilite theologians.

43 *Nuṣūṣ*, p. 74.

What is in question, therefore, once again is the concept of pre-eternal "fixity" in the *nisba ʿilmīya*. Elaborating upon the immutable essence's status in God's knowledge, Qūnawī writes:

> Because the essences are known [to God] and their intelligible forms are determined in God's essential and eternal knowledge, it follows that they cannot possibly be created (*majʿūla*) owing to the impossibility of anything new arising in God's Essence, and the impossibility of His containing anything other than Himself, or of His being contained, not to mention other absurdities which are only too clear to those who consider the matter attentively. Accordingly, neither the verifiers from among the folk of intuition, nor those from among the partisans of rational inquiry, regard [these essences] as having been created, for the created is synonymous with the existent. Hence whatever [like the essences] has no existence is not created. Indeed, if they *were* existent then the determination of the objects of God's immutable knowledge would inevitably affect Him in some way, despite the fact that they are in no way external to Him that knows them (*al-ʿālim bi-hā*). The truth of the matter, therefore, is that they in themselves are non-existent (*maʿdūm fī anfusi-hā*), their sole reality (*thubūt*) being in the self of the knower.[44]

It is in the light of this perspective, then, that the correspondence is drawn between the verifiers' conception of the immutable essence and the philosophical notion of quiddity (*māhīya*). Just as the immutable essence is deemed the contingent being's mode of reality prior to its becoming manifest, so do the *falāsifa* consider the quiddity or "whatness" of a thing to be ontologically prior to its existence. Furthermore, like the *falāsifa*, Qūnawī holds the view that even when the essences are "clothed in existence" this in no way alters God's knowledge of them, since His knowledge cannot possibly change.[45]

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44 *Nuṣūṣ*, p. 75.

45 As for the reasons why God's knowledge is necessarily immutable, Qūnawī – as is clear from the above-quoted passage from the *Nuṣūṣ* – would seem to regard them as so well documented (presumably in the works of the *falāsifa*) as to spare him the task of recounting them in detail. Later on, however, in the same work, he does outline one of the basic proofs, which is as follows: because God's knowledge is identical with His Essence – since God is One in every respect – any change in His knowledge would imply a change in His Essence, but there can be no change in the latter, so we are told, as this would mean that before that His Essence had not been wholly actualised, which is impossible since it is repugnant to the very concept of God. As there can be no potentiality in God it follows that He knows all things eternally and immutably, and all in the same way

Having noted the accord, on this score, established between the "verifiers" and the "exponents of rational inquiry" it is to be observed that Ṣadr al-Dīn departs from the rationalist treatment of this topic by dint of certain implications arising from the basic concept of the immutable essence. As this essence, he argues, is a relationship in God's knowledge, and since nothing new arises in the latter, it follows that all the future states of things are likewise comprised in their immutable essence, in the same principial and simultaneous manner.[46] Hence "all the forms, geneses and developments that a man goes through … are simply the manifest states (*aḥwāl*) of this essence".[47]

Of particular note here, moreover, is the conceptual interconnection between this idea and a doctrine that constitutes one of the characteristic hallmarks of his teachings: the theory of intra-substantial influence according to which "things only ever act upon themselves". The latter, then, is seen as having its basis in one of the key principles of divine science, namely that "nothing can act upon anything else in respect of that whereby they differ from or are opposed to one another".[48] From this premise, we are told, it follows that interaction – or what appears as such – between two things can take place solely in respect of that through which they are united, such that in reality it is still only an aspect of themselves that they are acting upon.[49] An elaboration upon both the grounds of this theory and its link with the immutable essence is provided in a key passage from the *Risālat al-nuṣūṣ*, where Qūnawī considers what it really means to say that something "acts upon" something else. To this end he begins by posing the question of whether a mirror, for example, may be said to act upon the object it reflects.[50] Clearly not, he concludes, since it is only the object's image – its reflected light – that is affected whereas its underlying essence is in no way modified. But the same principle also applies to modifications affecting the object's other *aḥwāl*, or manifested states, since these too are simply reflections of its underlying essence, rather than the essence itself. This being the case, something might truly be said to act upon something else only if its *ḥaqīqa* "acted upon" or in other words caused some

(*ʿalā watīra wāḥida*), irrespective of the changes their outward manifestations undergo in the realm of temporal becoming. (*Nuṣūṣ*, p. 81).

46 *Iʿjāz*, p. 154.

47 *Iʿjāz*, p. 154.

48 *Miftāḥ*, p. 15.

49 Just as he considers this to be the case with all other kinds of outward or inward influence, so does he hold it to be true of cognition; in other words, since knowledge is the expression of that "whereby the knower and known are united" it follows that things only ever know themselves. (See Appendix 3, Text K).

50 *Nuṣūṣ*, p. 19.

modification in the *ḥaqīqa* of the other.[51] But even this he deems impossible since a thing's *ḥaqīqa* is a fixed relation in God's knowledge and may therefore suffer no modification, whether by means of another real essence or any manifested state or condition. Hence:

> Whoever has tasted this contemplative station and knows that the immutable essences (*al-aʿyān al-thābita*) are the real essences of beings (*ḥaqāʾiq al-mawjūdāt*), that they are uncreated, that God's reality is above being acted upon in any way, and that there is no third thing beside God and the essences, such a one will therefore necessarily know that nothing really acts upon anything else (*lā athara li-shayʾin fī shayʾin*). [On the contrary] things act upon themselves (*al-ashyāʾ hiya al-muʾaththira fī anfusi-hā*); what are thought of as causes and influences being really no more than intrinsic conditions (*shurūṭ*) for the manifestation of certain aspects of the thing in itself, as opposed to implying that some real essence truly acts upon another.[52]

51 *Nuṣūṣ*, p. 19.

52 *Nuṣūṣ*, p. 21–22. Accordingly, while the idea that every being carries its future states within itself might be seen as expressing a rigorously predestinarian view of the world, it might also be said that by affirming that "things only ever act upon themselves" Qūnawī is ultimately attributing the things themselves with the responsibility of determining their fate. In Islam, as is well known, the "secret of destiny" (*sirr al-qadar*) is traditionally seen as one of the most inscrutable of mysteries. Nevertheless, our author hints that he has been "acquainted with it" (*Fukūk*, p. 234) and, in a related vein, affirms the possibility of "reading" one's destiny within one's immutable essence. Those, we are told, who succeed in opening that door by which they are connected to their principle become conscious thereby of their underlying essence "which has never left the presence of knowledge". (See *Iʿjāz*, p. 122). They are then able to read therein all of the states through which they are destined to travel; and on this score he cites the example of his master, who, so we are told, was able to contemplate not only all of his own future states but also those of anyone else at a single glance. (*Fukūk*, p. 234). Jandī, in similar vein, relates the following anecdote transmitted to him, we are told, by Qūnawī: "When I [Muḥyī-l-Dīn] reached the Sea of Rūm, I resolved that I would not set forth upon the sea until I had beheld, in detail, all of the states of my being – both inward and outward – which God had decreed for me, or through me, until the end of my days. So I betook myself to God – Sublime is He – with perfect presence, profound contemplation, and complete watchfulness. Wherefore, God revealed to me all that would happen to me, or through me, both inwardly and outwardly, until the end of my life (Jandī, *Sharḥ Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam*, p. 219–220) … I witnessed all of that, and even my companionship with your [Ṣadr al-Dīn's] father, [Majd al-Dīn Isḥāq] … and I witnessed your birth during the time of that companionship, your rank in the sight of God, all of your intuitions and spiritual tastes, and even those of your spiritual sons

5 The Common Measure

Given that a certain amount has already been said about the principles of Qūnawī's ontology, it will suffice here to recall that for him, as for Ibn ʿArabī, all things exist through their participation in God's *wujūd*. Moreover, we have seen that he elaborates upon the nature of this participation by speaking of the manifold existents as so many "determinations" of the unique "self-disclosure of Being".

As already mentioned, Qūnawī's conception of both the unity and universality of Being concurs in many respects with the prevailing philosophical theories of his day, both in the Muslim world and the Latin West. But it should not be forgotten that he, for his part, sees this conception as having important implications with regard to the possibility of spiritual realisation, which may be summarised as follows: all things are simply the determinate appearances, or self-disclosures, of the unity of Being; thus, however much they differ in terms of their own determinate natures, Being remains the "common measure" (*al-qadr al-mushtarak*) uniting them all;[53] moreover, in the same way that arithmetical unity is contained in all numbers while at the same time containing them all in principle, so is this common measure found in all existents while comprising them all within itself.

For Qūnawī the consequences arising from this premise are profound indeed, for not only do they mean that all things are contained in the unity of Being, consisting as they do of so many self-disclosures of this unity, but also, and by the same token, that every single existent effectively contains the common measure of all existents within itself – a perspective expressed in his dictum to the effect that "everything has everything in it".[54] Accordingly, he sometimes speaks of the goal of the spiritual path as that of discovering this common measure within oneself. This is achieved, so we are told, through a process of *jamʿ*, or "integration", whereby the contingent being's multiple determinations are resolved within the unity of its principle.[55] Hence, as he explains in the following passage from the *Nafaḥāt*, the being that has realised this goal sees that it too "has everything in it" and that all things are simply the *tafṣīl*, or "manifest detail" of its nature:

(*awlādu-ka-l-ilāhīyūn*) … and all that will happen to you and to them, until the end of your lives, and – following the separation [of body and soul] – in the posthumous states of limbo (*barāzikh*), and in that which follows". (Jandī, *Sharḥ*, p. 263).

53 *Nafaḥāt*, fol. 56.

54 *Tarjumah*, p. 133.

55 *Nafaḥāt*, fol. 56.

> None reaches the point where they [consciously] undertake the journey [of Being itself] save those who break absolutely free from the bonds of conditions, attributes and actions such that they flow in essence through all things, even as Being flows eternally and timelessly through the [divine] affairs, commonly referred to as 'contingent beings' … When you witness this state you will see how you grasp everything through everything by being the essence of all things, for you are the attribute of every subject and the quality of every substance. Wherefore everything is the differentiated detail of your essence and you are the common measure between them, unifying their multiplicity and multiplying their unity through the manifold guises in which you appear.[56]

6 The *Barzakh*

Having established the importance attached to the notions of determination and common measure, it should now be borne in mind that Ṣadr al-Dīn considers both these concepts to be closely connected with man's *martaba* or "metaphysical rank". Like his master before him, he identifies this degree with the supreme *barzakh* or "common boundary"[57] between God and creation. But by explaining the nature of the *barzakh* in terms of the fundamental notions of determination and non-determination, Qūnawī brings to this doctrine his own characteristic perspective. Hence, in his view, the perfect human being's rank is that of the *barzakh al-barāzikh*, or "boundary of boundaries" because it is identical with the "broadest of determinations" forming the common border between the indeterminacy of the absolute and the manifold determinations that make up the domain of conditioned existence. Qūnawī writes:

> Considered solely in respect of the purity of His Essence and His absoluteness, the True cannot be described as the origin or source of anything. Now, the very first metaphysical degree susceptible to intellection (*awwal al-marātibi-l-mutaʿaqqala*) is the determination that comprises all determinations within itself. To it belongs the non-duality of synthesis

56 *Nafaḥāt*, fol. 56.

57 The symbolism of the *barzakh* has its basis in the following Qur'ānic verse: {He let forth the two seas that meet together, between them a boundary (*barzakh*) they do not overpass}. (LV, 19).

> (*aḥadīyat al-jamʿ*) and it is specific to the true human being (*al-insān al-ḥaqīqī*) whose form is Adam.[58]

Here, moreover, it is important to note that the works of later Akbarians[59] typically identify a second hypostatic determination or *taʿayyun thānī* below that of the first; and though Qūnawī's written corpus seems to contain no mention of this term, its origins appear to be traceable to Farghānī's record of Ṣadr al-Dīn's oral teachings. Farghānī writes:

> As for that boundary (*barzakh*) and dividing line (*fāṣil*), they deem it the essence of humanity (*ḥaqīqat-i insānīyah*). It comprises the first and second determinations. In the first determination (*dar taʿayyun-i awwal*) it is a common boundary between non-duality and oneness – and in this respect it is the essence of Muḥammad (*ḥaqīqat-i Muḥammadī*), upon him be peace and salutations. In the second (*dar taʿayyun-i thānī*) it is a common boundary between manifest existence – whose specific attribute is necessity (*wujūb*) – and manifest knowledge, one of whose concomitants is contingency (*imkān*); and under this aspect fall the essences of all other perfect human beings.[60]

Qūnawī, again like Ibn ʿArabī before him, conceives of the *barzakh* as sharing in the respective natures of both the domains that it serves to demarcate.[61] Accordingly, because he is the "common boundary between the seas of necessity and contingency" the "true human being" – that is, the human being who has actualised all that his metaphysical rank implies – is seen as comprising the respective characteristics of both these domains within himself. This facet of the perfect man's nature is one that is clearly expressed in the different epithets that Qūnawī gives him. He is both the "mediator" (*al-wāsiṭa*)[62] and "interpreter" (*al-tarjumān*) between the realms of the unseen and the visible;[63] and like the Roman deity Janus he has "two faces", one of which is turned towards the "absolutely non-manifest" and in keeping with the nature of the common

58 *Fukūk*, p. 192.

59 Such as Faḍl Allāh al-Burhānpūrī (d. 1028/1619); see *infra*, p. 176.

60 Farghānī, *Mashāriq al-darārī*, p. 22.

61 For Ibn ʿArabī's conception of the *barzakh*, see *Futūḥāt*, vol. I, p. 380. See also Chittick, *The Sufi Path of Knowledge* p. 117–118.

62 *Fukūk*, p. 268.

63 *Fukūk*, p. 183.

boundary "does not differ from it", while the other is turned towards and shares in the character of manifest existence.[64]

Because the perfect human being's rank is identified as the "starting-point of all determinations" Qūnawī sometimes speaks of it as the "gateway" through which determinate things come into existence or as the "source of all that is called a particular thing".[65] But at the same time he also envisages a correlative function corresponding more closely to the context in which the term *barzakh* appears in the Qur'ān, i.e. that of a barrier between two seas. Thus he asserts that just as the true human being, in his role as mediator, opens the door through which all things enter the world of manifestation, so conversely does he bar them from returning to the non-manifest before their allotted time. It is specifically in respect, therefore, of the *barzakh*'s role as "dividing line" (*ḥadd fāṣil*) that the perfect man is attributed with the function of the "guardian" (*al-ḥāfiẓ*) who preserves the order (*niẓām*) of the world by stopping manifestation from returning immediately to its non-manifest principle, a tendency seen as intrinsic to all manifest realities, since "all things yearn to return to their roots".[66]

The function of preserving the order of the world is naturally connected with the concept of God's sustaining influence or "succour" (*madad*); and the perfect human being, in his capacity as the common boundary, is portrayed as the conduit through whom this succour is transmitted:

> He is the intermediary between God and the creatures, and it is through him and by virtue of his function that the outpouring of God's grace and succour – which is the cause of the continued existence of all that is other than God – extends to the whole world, both higher and lower. Indeed, were it not for his being the intelligible boundary (*barzakh*) which is essentially no different from either of the sides [of necessity and contingency], nothing in the world would receive this unique divine succour, as there would no longer be any link or analogy between the two. He is thus the pillar[67] of the heavens.[68]

As further indication of the significance attached to the concept of the *barzakh*, it is worth remarking that the perfect human being is deemed to

64 *Iʿjāz*, pp. 120, 268.

65 *Iʿjāz*, p. 267.

66 *Iʿjāz*, p. 119–120.

67 An allusion to Qur'ān, XIII, 2: {God is He who hath raised up the heavens without a pillar you can see}.

68 *Fukūk*, p. 247–248.

exercise the *barzakh*'s mediatory role not only in this world but indeed in all the worlds and states through which he travels: "God's influence (*athar al-ḥaqq*)", says Qūnawī, "and His life-giving succour flow through the perfect man and, by virtue of his manifestation therein, into all stations, presences, worlds and spiritual states".[69] In addition, then, to identifying the perfect man's rank with the supreme *barzakh* forming the boundary between the non-manifest and the realm of manifestation, he conceives of the true human being as exercising the role of *barzakh* throughout all the hierarchical degrees of existence, like a supporting pillar running through the centre of each degree or world. It seems appropriate, therefore, at this juncture, to consider in more detail Qūnawī's theory of the multiple states and categories of existence and of where man stands in relation to them, especially as his treatment of this question constitutes one of the most influential elements of his work.

7 The Five Presences

Qūnawī applies the term *ʿālam*, or "world", to specific degrees of existence as well as to the cosmos in general. As for the question of how many individual worlds make up the cosmos as a whole, he merely notes, enigmatically, that they are "very many indeed" (*kathīra jiddan*). Nevertheless, all such worlds are comprised within five[70] fundamental categories of existence which he calls the "five universal divine presences" (*al-ḥaḍarāt al-kullīya al-ilāhīya al-khams*)[71] and which are enumerated as follows:

1. The Divine Non-manifest, or World of Divine Names and Abstract Essences.
2. The World of Spirits.
3. The World of Subtle Archetypes.
4. The Visible, or World of Natural Forms.
5. The Middle Presence which embraces them all.

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69 *Miftāḥ*, p. 126–127.

70 Although Ibn ʿArabī speaks of "divine presences" he does not, as Chittick has remarked, specify their number ('The Five Divine Presences', p. 101). Here again, therefore, it is in the writings of his chief disciple that one finds the seminal elaboration of a doctrine that would come to characterize Akbarian metaphysics.

71 The term *ḥaḍra* in this context thus conveys the idea that all states may be thought of as a specific mode of God's presence, existence consisting solely of His self-disclosures.

As for the actual identity of the fifth and all-embracing presence, it is, we are told, the presence of the perfect man himself, an assertion that chimes with Qūnawī's conception of man's ontological function as that of the supreme *barzakh*, or "principle of determinations". However, when describing these degrees schematically he situates the fifth presence, not at the end as one might expect, but in the very middle of the schema, such that it marks the common boundary between the essential and spiritual domains above it and the imaginary and sensorial domains below:

> The universal divine books are five in number,[72] in accordance with the number of principal presences. The first of these is the non-manifest presence of knowledge and light, which encompasses within itself all that becomes manifest. To this presence belong the abstract meanings and the relationships implicit within the [Divine] Names and knowledge. Standing opposite is the presence of manifestation and the visible to which belongs the outwardly manifest aspect of universal existence, or the 'great book', and which includes all formal, individual beings. Directly between them is the presence of synthesis and being (*al-jamʿ wa-l-wujūd*), and of occultation and revelation (*al-ikhfāʾ wa-l-iʿlān*). [This presence] thus occupies the middle and its companion is man. On the right of this middle presence is a presence located between it and the non-manifest, such that its relationship to the latter is stronger and more complete. Its book is the world of spirits and the Guarded Tablet. On the left [of the middle presence] is another which, for its part, is more closely related to the [Divine] Name the 'Outwardly Manifest' (*al-ẓāhir*) and the realm of the visible (*al-shahāda*). [This presence] is the level from which the sacred scriptures are made to descend to the prophets. These four books are tributaries of the sea of possibilities comprised in man's hidden metaphysical rank.[73]

At the same time, each of the five degrees is deemed to have a "lordly perfection (*kamāl rabbānī*) whose authority appears and abides through a human locus of manifestation",[74] which is why the teachings of some prophets are apt to be characterised by one such presence in particular:

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72 This is a reference to the Islamic notion of the five holy books revealed by God, viz. the Torah, the Psalms, the Gospel, the Discrimination (*al-furqān*, i.e. the Qurʾān envisaged in its legislative aspect), and the Qurʾān.

73 *Iʿjāz*, p. 4.

74 *Iʿjāz*, p. 4.

> Individual beings are merely manifestations of the ramifications of the Names and Attributes. Thus, whoever is the locus of manifestation of one of these five degrees … the influence of that degree within him will be particularly evident. Accordingly, his words and the inspiration underlying what he says about God, will be coloured by the perspective of the degree in question.[75]

Hence for Qūnawī the unique universality of Islam is an expression of the Prophet Muḥammad's inherent link with the middle presence, which comprises the characteristics of all other presences within itself:

> The one whose station is the point in the middle of the circle, such that he remains unaffected by the pull (*jadhabāt*) of the surrounding extremes, like our Prophet Muḥammad – may God's peace and grace be upon him – his words will be the most universal in scope and authority, and the revelations that descend upon him will be the most comprehensive, and comprise the greatest store of knowledge, owing to his embracing all the characteristics of these degrees, such that absolutely nothing is outside the dominion of his metaphysical station, and nothing is beyond his grasp.[76]

Finally, a noteworthy consequence arising from the doctrine of the five presences is the view that *all* sensorial things are animate, whatever their nature. Underlying this view is the idea that there necessarily exists an essential continuity extending from the highest degrees of existence to the lowest; hence any reality belonging to a specific degree will contain within itself states pertaining to the presences both above and below it in the hierarchical scheme:

> I have contemplated the five fundamental degrees that *all beings have* by conforming to the conditions of the five universal degrees that encompass all specific degrees [of existence], and, indeed, all things. Accordingly, the being's first degree is the one whereby it is envisaged in respect of its immutable essence, i.e. the form of its intelligibility within God's essential and immutable knowledge … The second is the degree whereby it is envisaged in respect of its spirit (*rūḥānīyatu-hu*). Moreover, *there is no being which does not possess this spiritual degree*, be it clearly manifest in terms of its authority and effect (*sulṭa wa ḥukm*) – as is the case with the

75 *Iʿjāz*, p. 4.

76 *Iʿjāz*, p. 3–5.

angels, the jinn, men and animals – or hidden, as is the case with plants, minerals[77] and other elemental and non-elemental forms.[78]

8 The Divine Secret

With Qūnawī's theory of the multiple states comprised within the human being we are brought to another of the characteristic motifs of his writings: the doctrine of the "divine secret" (*al-sirr al-ilāhī*),[79] which, though rooted in the teachings of his master, is given considerably more prominence in his own work. However, as it is Ibn ʿArabī who first establishes the sense in which the

77 The Ikhwān al-Ṣafāʾ likewise held the view that minerals have a hidden life of their own. See Nasr, *An introduction to Islamic cosmological doctrines*, p. 91.

78 *Nafaḥāt*, fol. 8 (*Tarjumah*, p. 22). In harmony with this view, Qūnawī speaks of man's heart as having "five faces" turned towards the five presences within him: "Know that the heart has five ontological degrees, namely, principial and purely intelligible, spiritual, imaginary, sensorial, and a final degree encompassing all of the previous four. Moreover, each of these five degrees has a corresponding locus of manifestation representing the source whence stem the conditions and modalities of the degree in question and the life-giving root of its indefinite ramifications. Every heart likewise has five faces: the first is turned towards the presence of God, with no intermediary between itself and the latter; the second pertains to the world of pure spirits and thus takes from its Lord that which its predisposition demands, through the intermediary of the spirits; the third concerns the world of formal exemplars (*ʿālam al-mithāl*) and enjoys its share thereof in proportion to its proximity to the station of synthesis, the relative equilibrium of its temperament (*mizāj*) and character, and the regularity of its states in its modes of behaviour, mental conceptions, aspirations and knowledge; the fourth is turned towards the world of the visible and pertains to the Names 'the Outwardly Manifest' and 'the Last'; and, finally, the fifth is all-encompassing and concerns the unity of synthesis, or in other words, the degree of the Divine Ipseity which is attributed with being the First and the Last, the Inwardly Hidden and the Outwardly Manifest, and in which all four of these attributes are essentially united". (*Fukūk*, p. 250). Moreover, by dint of the universality implicit in his role as the middle presence, the perfect man is deemed capable of becoming conscious of all degrees of existence and of commanding all their possibilities: "He who is the manifest form of the heart of synthesis and Being (*qalb al-jamʿi wa-l-wujūd*), even as our Prophet is – peace be upon him – his station is the central point of the circle of existence. With the five faces of his heart he is turned towards every world, Presence and degree, and with his all-encompassing face he commands the conditions and modalities of all these worlds and appears with all their qualities". (*Fukūk*, p. 250–251).

79 On the notion of the soul's innermost secret (*sirr al-nafs*) in earlier Sufism, see G. Böwering, *The Mystical Vision of Existence in Classical Islam: the Qurʾānic Hermeneutics of the Ṣūfī Sahl At-Tustarī (d. 283/896)*, New York 1980, p. 185–186.

Akbarian school understands this term, it seems only appropriate to begin by outlining his treatment of this question before going on to consider Qūnawī's elaborations.

According to the *Shaykh al-Akbar*, the "secret" is the Divine Spirit that is breathed into all human beings when they are created,[80] a doctrine seen as having its basis in the words {when I have made[81] him and breathed of My Spirit into him} which feature in two separate Qur'ānic accounts of the creation of man; first in *Sūrat al-Ḥijr*[82] and then again in *Sūrat Ṣād*,[83] which, significantly, he calls the "*Sūra* containing the secret of [man's] vicegerency". Moreover, it is to be noted that he considers man alone to be capable of receiving the divine secret, and that this privilege is seen as inherently linked to man's role as God's vicegerent (*khalīfa*) on Earth. "When the human constitution is completed", he says, "and properly harmonised and God turns towards [man] through the sublime inbreathing in the movement of the fourth of the seven celestial spheres, then does this harmonised being that is man receive, by very dint of his harmony, the divine secret which none may receive but he; and it is through this [inbreathing] that, of all stations, he is able to occupy the stations of the Divine Form and the vicegerency".[84]

For Ibn ʿArabī, then, this secret is the spark of divinity in man, which is why he sees it as that through which man is able to contemplate God.[85] Qūnawī,

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80 *Futūḥāt*, Ch. 20 (vol. I, p. 224).

81 Literally "arranged" or "harmonised". See *infra*, p. 117.

82 Qur'ān, XV, 29.

83 Qur'ān, XXXVIII, 71–72: {When thy Lord said to the angels, 'See, I am creating a mortal of clay. So when I have made him and breathed of My Spirit into him, fall in prostration before him.'}

84 *Kitāb al-isfār ʿan natāʾij al-asfār*, in *Rasāʾil Ibn ʿArabī*, p. 13.

85 *Futūḥāt*, Ch. 20 (vol. I, p. 224). Moreover, his comments suggest that the term *sirr* used to denote it can be understood not only in its usual sense, that of "secret" or "mystery", but also in the specific etymological sense of "that which is not spoken", for he identifies it with the "breath of the All-Merciful" (*nafas al-raḥmān*), a term, as Chittick has shown, (see Chittick, *The Self-Disclosure of God*, p. 42) of fundamental importance in Ibn ʿArabī's cosmology, especially with regard to the doctrine of manifestation envisaged as God's Speech (*al-kalām al-ilāhī*), where it sustains the endless words that make up the book of existence. (The term *nafas al-raḥmān* itself is derived from a hadith in which the Prophet states that *the breath of the All-Merciful comes to me from the direction of Yemen*.) As for Qūnawī's treatment of this question, it should be noted that in the same way that he regards the Name the "All-Merciful" as denoting God insofar as He is pure Being (*al-wujūd al-maḥḍ*), so does he identify the "breath of the All-Merciful" with *al-wujūd al-ʿāmm* or universal existence. Hence, in accordance with this symbolism, he portrays the eternal "effusion" (*fayḍ*) of existence as the "exhaling" and "spreading forth" of this single

as one would expect, shares this view, calling the secret "man's portion of lordship".[86] But at the same time he lays special emphasis on the idea of its being the one fixed principle present throughout all of man's geneses (*nasha'āt*)[87] as he progresses from one world to the next – making it one of the defining doctrines in his treatment of man's *exitus* and *reditus*. Accordingly, though he affirms a certain causal continuity between all such geneses[88] – asserting, for example, in keeping with tradition, that the specific form and characteristics of man's posthumous *nasha'āt* have their root in the "elemental genesis" in

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breath, within which the "relationships of the speaker's knowledge" are made manifest in the form of "existential words"; and, in keeping with his view of existence as the unique self-disclosure of Being, he holds that the breath of the All-Merciful "flows throughout all existents", as the latter are simply determinations of this *tajallī nafasī* or "epiphany of the breath". (See *Fukūk*, p. 265).

86 "Man's secret is an expression of his share of the self-disclosure of synthesis (*al-tajallī al-jam'ī*), through which he is tied to the True, and is hence his portion of lordship". (*Sharḥ al-aḥādīth*, fol. 10a-b). A similar view is expressed in the following *munājā* from the *Nafthat al-maṣdūr*: "When you perfected my harmony and equilibrium, you made for the point of junction within me a share of the interior of your self-disclosure, within which you stored a portion of the light of your Essence; and you made that share holy and free from the taint of all intermediaries and conditions, and all accidental bonds and ties … Then to that hallowed, essential theophany, which was reflected in me and distinguished from you by dint of your turning towards me to bring me into determinate existence, you gave the name of 'Spirit' (*rūḥ*). The latter, then, is nothing other than a parcel of the light of your mercifulness, and a portion of the most holy self-disclosure of your Essence; and you expressed this 'distinguishing' and 'turning towards' as a noble 'inbreathing' (*nafkh sharīf*), which is a subtle sign from you; for those who have witnessed your breath know that it is the latter that is 'breathed in', and that the breath is the form of the inner depths of the breather Himself". (*Naftha*, fol. 12b-13a).

87 Although the term *nash'a* (pl. *nasha'āt*), in keeping with its root meaning, has for the most part been translated as "genesis" or "regeneration", the alternative renderings "modality" or "regenerated modality" have been used on occasions because the context there has been deemed to emphasise the sense not just of birth into and development within a specific state of being, but also of the actual modality in which man's spirit resides in the state in question; a nuance evident, for example, when Qūnawī asserts that "within this [elemental] *nash'a* is that which endures and remains [forever] … and that which perishes with death, and that which accompanies the spirit as far as the posthumous states of limbo". (*Nafaḥāt*, fol. 42a).

88 Qūnawī identifies four successive *nasha'āt* belonging to the bodily and posthumous degrees of the human state proper, namely the *nash'a 'unṣurīya*, *nash'a barzakhīya*, *nash'a ḥashrīya*, and *nash'a istiqrārīya*, i.e. the geneses of the elemental world, the posthumous states of limbo, the eschatological Assembly or Resurrection, and the "settled" genesis in Heaven or Hell. See *infra*, pp. 129, 130–131, 134.

which man resided in this world – he identifies the divine secret nonetheless as that part of man which transcends causality and change:

> Each regeneration (*nash'a*) is, *in a certain respect*, the consequence of the one preceding it – as indicated when the Most High says {you shall ride stage upon stage},[89] i.e. one state born of another. Nevertheless, the reason why I say 'each regeneration … *in a certain respect*' is that in all of these geneses there is something permanent and unchanging which is the source of such modifications.[90] This is the underlying reality of the human being and the substance of his manifold regenerations. It is the locus of manifestation of the immutable True Being (*al-wujūd al-ḥaqq*) and the divine secret.[91]

In keeping with this view, Qūnawī sometimes appears to ascribe to the secret the role of an inner guide, leading man back to his origin. "Of the secret", he says, "of that by which we are united, You have preserved a delicate thread (*raqīqa*),[92] which is the path to my destination and the passageway that leads from the abode of my separation and multiplicity … to my unity, and from my exile to my homeland".[93] However, as will be seen in more detail later on, he holds that the qualities man acquires on his journey are liable to obscure this providential influence:

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89 Qur'ān, LXXXIV, 19.

90 Again, focusing on the secret's permanent and immutable presence, he divides man's being, during his existential journey, into "that of him which is susceptible to variation and change when he develops and progresses through the manifold worlds, states and regenerations, and that of him which admits of no variation, change or limitation". (*Miftāḥ*, p. 116).

91 *Miftāḥ*, p. 113. The connection between the divine secret and *al-wujūd al-ḥaqq* would seem to be based in the secret's being defined as man's share of the *nafas raḥmānī*. Hence, just as Being is considered the unchanging principle within which all existential determinations become manifest, so is the secret thought of as the permanent mirror in which all of man's changing states are reflected.

92 To be strictly accurate it should be said that the term *raqīqa* conveys the rather general notion of "something very thin and delicate", and hence can be used in the concrete sense of "foil" or "flake" and in the figurative sense of "subtlety" or "nicety". In the writings of both Qūnawī and his master, however, it is used almost exclusively in the sense of a "subtle connection" between two things. It is in order, therefore, to convey both its basic sense and the latter nuance that I have chosen to render it, with a certain amount of licence, as "delicate thread" or "connecting-thread".

93 *Naftha*, fol. 12a–b.

> The fewer the contrary qualities, and the more direct his passage through such states, the quicker reminiscence (*tadhakkur*) comes to him, and the easier the spiritual opening (*fatḥ*) and the way (*ṭarīq*) become. Now the root in all of that is the divine secret, which is also called the 'sure footing' (*qadam al-ṣidq*),[94] 'pre-eternal providence' (*ʿināya azalīya*), the 'seed of the [supreme] theophany' and so forth. Thus, whenever it is not so coloured by the characteristics of the existential degrees as to obscure the secret of Unity and the power of this seed, prevalence belongs to the latter; and to this there is a subtle pointer in His words {Allah prevails in His Command}.[95] But when the characteristics of the degrees and presences serve to dye and veil the divine secret and its effect, the overall influence then belongs to whichever of these characteristics exerts the greatest sway. The human being, as you know, is composed of manifold parts and different essences and faculties, but that which is best in man is the divine secret, the self-disclosure of the specific face (*tajallī al-wajh al-khāṣṣ*).[96]

For Qūnawī, then, as we shall in due course, the key to making progress on the road to human perfection lies in freeing oneself from the effect of those contingent characteristics that serve to hinder the secret's influence. As the secret is held to be indivisibly present throughout all man's *nashaʾāt* or geneses, it is deemed possible through such liberation for him to reach the point where, rather than the conditions of one world veiling him from those of another, he becomes simultaneously conscious of *all* the worlds on his existential journey:

> When he is granted complete 'presence' (*ḥuḍūr*), the knower, verifier and contemplative will know all the homelands (*mawāṭin*) into which he passes, and in which he develops, and will be cognisant of their conditions and of the regenerations that God establishes for him, and through him, in the manifold worlds.[97]

Those distracted by this world, however, remain passively tied to the series of geneses, oblivious of their past states and unaware of those to come:

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94 The notion of having a "sure footing" in God's providence is rooted in the following Qur'ānic verse: {And give good tidings to the believers that they have a sure footing with their Lord.} (Qur'ān, X, 2)

95 Qur'ān, XII, 21.

96 *Miftāḥ*, p. 108–109.

97 *Miftāḥ*, p. 113.

> As for one whose soul is so tied to the body as to hinder him from arriving at the perfection to which man is predisposed by very dint of being human … he will remain in the state of the {lowest of the low}.[98] Wherefore, his migration to the homelands through which he is destined to pass, and his donning of their attributes and states, will be dictated by the specific properties God has lodged in such homelands and worlds, and by those of the respective geneses [he has therein] and by their influence upon him; while he, throughout all of this, never knows what he will be changed into next nor where he will end up.[99]

Having considered Qūnawī's theories regarding the spiritual principles underlying man's existence, we now intend to focus on his handling of human ontogenesis and of the fundamental conditions defining man's earthly life, before ending with an analysis of his eschatology.

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98 Qur'ān, XCV, 5.

99 *Miftāḥ*, p. 113–114.

CHAPTER 6

The Human State

We have seen that, for Qūnawī, human beings occupy a uniquely privileged place in the universal scheme of things and have considered some of the metaphysical grounds on which this view is based. Now that our attention has been turned to the human state proper, we will begin by examining his theories concerning the seemingly paradoxical relationship between mankind's elevated metaphysical stature and its lowly, earthbound nature.

1 The Perfection of the Last

On the subject of the human being's descent into the corporeal state, our author reminds us that while being "first in terms of his metaphysical degree" man is nonetheless "last in terms of his manifest form".[1] "With the human state", we are told, "the circle of existence is sealed and the last is united with the first".[2] In his earthly state, therefore, man is "the utmost end of creation and the divine command's descent".[3] As such, his "elemental genesis" (*nash'a 'unṣurīya*) represents the aggregate of all causal relations in all states of existence,[4] such that, considered in terms of his manifest form, no being has more intermediaries between itself and its principle than he.[5] But while this makes him outwardly the {lowest of the low}[6] and the poorest and most dependent of creatures,[7] it is also deemed, paradoxically, to be the guarantor of his inner excellence.

Like his master before him,[8] Qūnawī calls this paradox the "perfection of the last"[9] (*kamāl al-ākhirīya*) or the "perfection of comprehensiveness" – an

1 *Fukūk*, p. 248.
2 *Fukūk*, p. 193.
3 *Sharḥ al-aḥādīth*, fol. 76b.
4 *Miftāḥ*, p. 28.
5 *I'jāz*, p. 240.
6 Qur'ān, XCV, 4–5: {We created man in the best of statures, then made him the lowest of the low.}
7 *Tarjumah*, p. 145; *I'jāz*, p. 343.
8 See *Futūḥāt*, Ch. 198.
9 *I'jaz*, p. 376.

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expression, so we are told, of the fact that the last term of a causal series is the only term apart from the origin that comprises the entire series within itself, albeit as its final product rather than its first cause. "To those degrees that are lattermost", he says, "belongs the perfection of comprehensiveness (*kamāl al-ḥīṭati wa-l-istīʿāb*) as the closing term [of a series] is necessarily the most comprehensive with regard to meaning, form, attributes and overall scope".[10] He writes:

> From the point of view of his manifest form, and as far as the chain of succession is concerned, the human being is the existent that has most intermediary causes [between itself and its principle], and is hence the last of them to become manifest. This, however, is so that he embraces the secret of every intermediary and so that he encompasses and seals all that the circle comprises; for he is the last existent to be sustained by the divine succour, even though it is from his metaphysical rank that this succour (*madad*) arrives at the Sublime Pen, which is the first conveyer of this succour after the True.[11]

This, then, according to Qūnawī, is why man is last in order of manifestation yet first in terms of his metaphysical rank. By spanning all degrees and intermediaries, from the highest to the lowest, he manifests the all-embracing character (*jamʿīya*) inherent in his rank,[12] which is the "beginning of all existential determinations". "Whoever", he says, "is the last point of the circle such that he is connected with the first … his rank is the first of all firsts, his manifest form is the last of all manifest forms, and his being extends between his form and his rank, without being constrained within first or last, outward or inward".[13]

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10 *Fukūk*, p. 193. For Qūnawī, as for his master before him, the excellence of Islam is inherently connected with the perfection of the last, the Prophet being the last of the divine messengers in order of manifestation precisely because his metaphysical essence, or "Muḥammadan reality" (*ḥaqīqa muḥammadīya*), is identical with the *barzakh al-barāzikh* itself. Hence, the Prophet's spiritual "taste" (*dhawq*) comprises the taste of all previous prophets just as his sacred law "encompasses and guards over all previous sacred laws". Moreover, an important scriptural base for this doctrine was found in the well-known hadith in which the seal of prophecy is likened to placing the final brick that completes the overall unity of a wall.

11 *Iʿjāz*, p. 240.

12 *Miftāḥ*, p. 92.

13 *Tarjumah*, p. 146.

This perspective too, we are told, explains why, of all existential degrees, man was destined to be God's vicegerent (*khalīfa*) *on Earth* (*fī-l-arḍ*),[14] for the latter is seen as a corporeal reflection of the Primordial Mist (*al-ʿamāʾ*),[15] or breath of the All-Merciful (*nafas al-raḥmān*), in which the true human being resides prior to the creation of the cosmos:[16]

> This is why the Earth is the seat of his vicegerency, for she is the centre of the circle of existence. Her intelligible station, which is presently veiled by her outward form, is the degree of the origin (*aṣl*) from which the breath of the All-Merciful pours forth in order to bring about the genesis (*takwīn*) of universal existence (*al-nashʾa al-kullīya al-wujūdīya*). Hence she is entirely in conformity with the true human being who dwells within her in order to fulfil his vicegerency, for he too is first in rank and degree, though last in terms of his manifest form.[17]

2 The Stages of Lodging and Settling

Because he considers the human being's underlying essence to be a "distinct relationship in God's knowledge", Qūnawī, like many of his contemporaries, speaks of the process whereby the individual becomes manifest in the corporeal world as a passage "from knowledge to concrete essence" (*min al-ʿilm ilā-l-ʿayn*),[18] adding for his part that this journey constitutes an "ascent in the

14 See Qur'ān, II, 30–32: {And when thy Lord said to the angels, 'I am making a vicegerent in the Earth'. They said 'Wilt Thou set therein one who will do corruption there, and shed blood, while we proclaim Thy praise and call Thee Holy?' He said, 'I know that which ye know not'. And He taught Adam all of the names, then He presented them to the angels and said, 'Tell Me the names of these, if you speak truly.' They said, 'Glory to Thy Transcendence! We know not save what Thou hast taught us. Thou art the All-Knowing, the All-Wise.'} In this connection it is to be noted that, for Qūnawī, the perfect human being's ability to know all the Divine Names is a concomitant of his metaphysical rank. Indeed, "it is through his knowledge", he asserts, "that the human being merits the vicegerency" (*Fukūk*, p. 279).

15 The concept of the "Primordial Mist" has its basis in a hadith. It is related that having been asked where God was before he created the world, the Prophet replied, "in a mist with no air above or below it".

16 *Miftāḥ*, p. 122.

17 *Fukūk*, p. 247–248.

18 *Miftāḥ*, p. 52.

guise of a descent", as it consists in man's gradually actualising his determinate nature by acquiring a succession of qualities or "garments" from the hierarchy of worlds and presences situated between the "homeland" of God's knowledge and the human state. Hence, briefly outlining this theory, he writes:

> The [human being] whose existence has been decreed becomes manifest first in the metaphysical degree of the Sublime Pen and then within that of the Guarded Tablet; and thus does he continue to descend, passing through each presence, acquiring its characteristics and becoming imbued with its influences – while nevertheless retaining those non-manifest, essential attributes which he acquired through the initial act of existenciation – wherefore, even in the act of descending he ascends (*hākadhā munḥadiran yartaqī*) until the moment when the form of his matter is determined in the womb.[19]

As well as incorporating, in its basic elements at least, the widely-adopted Neoplatonic scheme of universal intellects and souls, Qūnawī's treatment of man's formative descent[20] draws considerably, in respect of both its conception and terminology, on the numerous Qur'ānic passages concerned with man's genesis. This scriptural influence is reflected, most notably, in his referring to the process and end of man's descent as the stages of "lodging" (*istīdāʿ*) and "settling" (*istiqrār*) respectively; notions seen as enshrined in the verses {it is He who produced you from a single living soul: so a settled abode (*mustaqarr*) and a lodging-place (*mustawdaʿ*)},[21] and {We fix (*nuqirru*) in the wombs what We will}.[22]

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19 *Miftāḥ*, p. 105.

20 Although, in one respect, man's journey "from [God's] Knowledge to concrete essence" is seen as marking an *ascent* from potency to act, Qūnawī naturally speaks of it as a descent too through the cosmological hierarchy of presences and worlds, and hence as an "exile" or movement away from man's "homeland" *in divinis*.

21 Qur'ān, VI, 98.

22 Qur'ān, XXII, 5. Regarding Qūnawī's use of these terms, it would seem that although in the first verse the {settled abode} is mentioned before the {lodging-place}, he identifies it with conception nonetheless on the basis that, in the second verse, the same basic verbal root is used to denote the human being's initial "settling" in the womb. Hence, he asserts that "the starting point of the phase of settling and fixity is the womb, whereas everything before that concerns the stages of lodging". (*Miftāḥ*, p. 107).

As for the different degrees in which man "lodges" prior to his entry into the human state, Qūnawī, as seen in the passage quoted above, portrays this progression as a journey through the cosmological hierarchy. Here, however, it should be observed that, even without taking into account the sense in which this journey is thought of as "an ascent in the guise of a descent", the itinerary described does not follow a solely downward course from the First Intellect to the point of conception, as it ends with an ascent through the three kingdoms of nature. Moreover, as will become clearer in the pages that follow, it transpires from Qūnawī's treatment of this topic that he regards these final degrees of lodging as pertaining to the development of the material substance from which the individual is formed. Given, therefore, that he deems the descent through the "higher worlds" to be concerned, for its part, with the acquisition of the spiritual and intelligible characteristics which define the individual's nature, it would appear that he sees these two distinct phases of lodging as pertaining to the development of man's formal and material sides respectively. He writes:

> Man does not cease passing through all of the stages of lodging (*marātib al-istīdā'*), from the moment the [divine] will singles him out from the domain of knowledge – relatively speaking at least, since this really only applies to his manifestations, and not to his immutable reality [in God's knowledge] – and commits him to the divine power. Thence follows his determination within the ontological degree of the Sublime Pen, or First Intellect; then within that of the Guarded Tablet, or [Universal] Soul, then within the degree of Nature envisaged insofar as her authority is manifested within the corporeal world; then within the Throne (*al-'arsh*), by whose virtue the directions of space are defined; then within the Pedestal (*al-kursī*), which is the seat of the Name 'the Merciful' (*al-raḥīm*); then the seven heavens, the elements and the three kingdoms of nature, until the moment when he is finally settled (*ilā ḥīn istiqrāri-hi*).[23]

Although, on the whole, he says relatively little about how long these formative stages take, or what modalities man, or at least his underlying essence, assumes in his descent through these degrees, he does state that this journey falls under the aegis of the Divine Name "the Eternity" (*al-dahr*),[24] and that "man sojourns in each of the worlds and presences through which he

23 *I'jāz*, p. 320.

24 He also refers to a hadith which states that "God created spirits two thousand years before bodies". (*I'jāz*, p. 323).

passes".[25] Moreover, regarding the nature of the human being's stay in such lodgings, he adds: "the extent to which the inhabitants of such worlds concern themselves with serving and assisting him – indeed, the warmth, or otherwise, of their initial reception and subsequent leaning towards him – will be determined by the extent to which they perceive in him the marks of providence and divine favour (*ikhtiṣāṣ*)".[26] The idea of man's being helped or hindered by the "inhabitants of the higher worlds" thus concurs with Ṣadr al-Dīn's remarks in another passage, in which, treating of the "garments" and qualities that human beings acquire in their descent, he says that those who are favoured by providence benefit from the auspicious attention of the "spirits and celestial powers".[27]

At the same time, even the favour shown by such powers can ultimately have a hindering effect if expressed in the guise of a particular quality outweighing all others, as it is liable to pull the individual in question away from the ideal state of equilibrium. "There is not one", he says, "of the higher worlds through which man passes which is not capable of serving as a spiritual hindrance to him or a cause of deviation, owing to the predominance of the attributes of some of the spirits connected with that world".[28] Hence, the most beneficial contribution that the spirits and higher powers can make will be one that is "free from all trace of excess and bias",[29] such that he passes through the "very centre"[30] of each of these higher stages of lodging.

For Qūnawī, this unswerving path through the middle of the *marātib al-istīdāʿ*, and indeed through the stages of man's journey as a whole, is the path followed by the *kummal* or perfect human beings, whom providence favours above all others. Moreover, just as this is deemed to be the case with the qualitative or essential side of their nature in its formative descent through the higher worlds, so, as the following passage illustrates, is it held to be true of their material substance as it rises through the three kingdoms of nature:

> When he joins the world of the three kingdoms of nature, [the individual] will – if he is from among the perfect – pass through them in the most direct and unified manner. What this means is that the very first

25 *Iʿjāz*, p. 320.
26 *Iʿjāz*, p. 320.
27 *Miftāḥ*, p. 112.
28 *Iʿjāz*, p. 320–321.
29 *Miftāḥ*, p. 112.
30 *Iʿjāz*, p. 284.

> plant, for example, in which he is made manifest[31] will be safe from anything that might harm it, and will thus sprout and flourish exactly as intended. Indeed, he will usually appear in the most perfect of all the plants found in the place which best befits his spiritual essence and station, or in the place where his parents dwell. Then God sends forth to it whomsoever He wills, be it someone who harvests the plant, for example, and then conveys it to the parents – or one of them at least – or the parents themselves who both harvest it and then consume the form of the plant at the time which best corresponds to his degree and that of the divine command in which he is synthetically included, as the part is included in the whole, in accordance with the authority exercised by the Name 'the Eternity' in all of the worlds through which he has passed. The plant is then changed into digested food, then into blood, and then into sperm, such that it becomes assimilated by the body of the parents, a fact which thus constitutes an elevation from the rank of plants and [before that] minerals to that of animals. The matter [which is the necessary complement] to his form is thereby finally determined, and is thence transferred from the loins to the womb.[32]

While the stages of lodging are concerned with the separate development of the individual's formal and material sides, the moment of conception (*istiqrār*),[33] marks the point at which the individual first appears as an integral whole:

> This, then, is the first integral determination of him to become manifest, just as it constitutes the first manifestation of the predominance of the all-embracing Name (*al-ism al-jāmiʿ*) within him. Moreover, through the

31 The following verses may well have been seen as a scriptural basis for the doctrine of the human being's ascent through the kingdoms of nature: {He created you by stages. Have you not regarded how God created seven heavens one upon the other, and set the moon therein for a light and the sun for a lamp? And God caused you to sprout from the earth like plants. Then He shall return you into it, and bring you forth again.} (Qur'ān, LXXI, 14–18).

32 *Miftāḥ*, p. 107.

33 Also of note, as far as Qūnawī's notion of *istiqrār* is concerned, is the fact that he regards the conditions of the environment at the moment of conception as indicating something of the individual's nature. Thus, he holds that the "time and place of conception bear witness to many of the human being's inner states" (*Iʿjāz*, p. 323); and, similarly, he sees the configuration of the heavens, and of the ascendant in particular, as indicating the balance of qualities that the human being receives while descending through the higher worlds. (See *Hādiya*, p. 158–159; *Iʿjāz*, p. 204).

> secret underlying the speed of his passage from the rank of plants to that of animals, one discerns the speed of his passage from the rank of minerals to that of plants. Indeed, these degrees are all connected to one another, with no barriers between them save common boundaries of a purely conceptual nature. This is alluded to in the Incomparable Book when the Most High says: {a settled abode and a lodging-place}.[34] Thus, the starting point of the phase of settling and fixity is the womb, whereas everything before that concerns the stages of lodging; and in this respect He has said {We fix in the wombs what We will until a stated term}. [The individual] then grows and develops in the womb, according to the well-known phases,[35] until he comes forth into the visible world, thence to ascend until he reaches the degree of perfection.[36]

Unlike the *kummal*, who take an unswerving path through the middle of the stages of lodging – and who are hence *aḥadī al-sayr* or "unified in their progress" through the kingdoms of nature too – those who are less favoured by providence encounter obstacles in their ascent from the rank of minerals to that of animals, just as they had encountered "spiritual hindrances" in their descent through the higher states; a view which again chimes with the idea that the "lower world is a mirror to the higher one":

> If he is of those who are hindered by the decrees of fate, [the individual] will be subject to certain misfortunes when he enters the vegetable kingdom such that [the plant in which he is manifested] perishes before it is fully grown, or before it is consumed. This being the case, he will become separated from the vegetable kingdom, returning to it at some later time, be it near or distant. Moreover, the misfortune may also reside in his being assimilated to a wretched plant far removed from the state of perfect equilibrium, and of a kind that no animal would ever venture to consume, or which would cause the animal to perish if it did consume it. Similarly, harm of this sort may befall him by [the plant's] being consumed by an animal that perishes before any human has the chance to consume it, or he may be prevented from passing from the animal in question to the human state by some other hindrance. Likewise, it may

34 Qur'ān, VI, 98.

35 See Qur'ān, XXII, 5: {Surely We created you of dust, then of a sperm-drop, then of a blood clot, then of a lump of flesh, formed and unformed that We may make clear to you. And We fix in the wombs what We will, till a stated term, then We deliver you as infants, then that you may come of age}.

36 *Miftāḥ*, p. 107.

> also happen that a human being consumes the animal but dies before [the individual's] substance can be determined within him, such that he becomes separated from [the human being in question] and returns to the degree of animals, and so is it apt to continue, time and again.[37]

Nevertheless, though such obstacles serve to place the individual outside the category of those who are *aḥadī al-sayr*, this is not to say that they are considered solely detrimental. Whether the individual benefits or suffers from them will depend on the nature of the characteristics acquired thereby:

> Now, the more he successively enters and leaves these kingdoms, and comes up against the powers and properties lodged within the degrees through which he passes, the more [the individual] acquires in the way of the intelligible qualities pertaining to all of the former. Hence, if these qualities are predominantly praiseworthy and harmonious, he will benefit from them, albeit after a great deal of effort and hardship; but if the predominant influence is that of the inferior and the unsuitable, his knowledge and reminiscence of his degrees of existence, and of his passage [from one to another], will be lessened accordingly; indeed, it may even be hidden from him completely. Conversely, the fewer the contrary qualities, and the more direct his passage through these states, the quicker reminiscence comes to him, and the easier the spiritual opening (*fatḥ*) and the way (*ṭarīq*) become.[38]

Significant, then, in Qūnawī's treatment of human ontogenesis is the fact that he sees a predetermined connection between the individual's intrinsic nature and the diverse elements of the cosmological hierarchy which contribute towards his manifestation in this world, including not only the influence of the heavens but even the material substance from which the individual is made.

3 The Soul

As well as being the moment at which the human individual's formal and material aspects first appear as an integral whole, the point of *istiqrār* or conception is seen as marking the determination of the bodily *mizāj* or "mixture". In step with the prevailing view of the times, the latter is conceived of as denoting the specific balance of the four elements and four fundamental qualities of

37 *Miftāḥ*, p. 107–108.

38 *Miftāḥ*, p. 108.

nature – namely heat, cold, dryness and wetness – which goes to make up the individual's body.[39] However, in his treatment of the factors that determine this mixture Qūnawī does introduce some of his own characteristic perspectives. Thus, while it is true that he attributes the influences of the celestial powers and the configurations of the planets with an effective role in fashioning the *mizāj* – to such an extent, in fact, as to call them the "impetus for the union of its parts"[40] – he also puts forward the idea that the peculiar balance of these influences, and hence of the *mizāj* that reflects them, is itself an expression of the individual's uncreated predisposition. He then links this to the doctrine of intra-substantial influence by asserting that those whom the celestial powers act upon, have, in reality, acted upon the celestial powers first,[41] such that, ultimately, the individual's *mizāj* can never be regarded as anything other than an expression of his immutable essence.

As for his theories regarding the genesis of the human soul, he states quite categorically that the individual soul comes into existence only "*after* the determination of the bodily *mizāj* and in accordance with it", a point, he remarks, on which the "verifiers from among the folk of tasting (*ahl al-dhawq*) and philosophical wisdom alike" are agreed.[42] At first sight, then, it may seem somewhat surprising, given both his theory of man's descent through the stages of lodging and his avowed preference for the Neoplatonists, that he should side with the Peripatetic *falāsifa* in rejecting the view that the soul pre-exists the body.[43] The key, however, to his approach to this question would seem to lie in the emphasis placed on the notion of the *individual* human soul. Although he stresses that the human soul, *qua* individual, can have no determinate existence prior to the formation of the corporeal *mizāj*, he speaks of this soul, nevertheless, as being "rooted in the sublime universal spirits that the philosophers refer to as

39 It should be observed that besides the context in which it is usually applied, namely that of the bodily constitution, Qūnawī also applies the notion of a specific mixture to the *supra*-corporeal dimensions of man's being. Nevertheless, whether he is treating of the body, soul or spirit, his view of what constitutes a harmful or beneficial *mizāj* remains in general accord with the dominant theories of his times in that it is rooted in the fundamental concept of equilibrium (*iʿtidāl*) whereby the relative soundness of a given individual's *mizāj* – be it elemental (*ʿunṣurī*), psychological (*nafsānī*), or spiritual (*rūḥānī*) – is determined by its proximity or otherwise to the mixture that forms the ideal balance for the species in question. (See *Miftāḥ*, p. 44; *Iʿjāz*, p. 285).

40 *Hādiya*, p. 158.

41 *Miftāḥ*, p. 55.

42 *Hādiya*, p. 158.

43 See, for example, Ṭūsī, *Murāsalāt*, p. 119.

intellects";[44] and, as will be seen when we come to his treatment of spiritual realisation, he elaborates upon this point by arguing that it is possible for the individual soul to "ascend until it becomes universal",[45] and that it does so, not by changing into something else, but simply by "casting off the accidental constraints on account of which it had been referred to as 'individual', such that it returns to its original universality".[46]

In effect, therefore, he appears to conceive of the "determination of the individual soul" as denoting, not the creation of something *ex nihilo*, but rather the mode in which the *supra*-individual spirit is present according to the conditions of the human individual state, a view which would concur with his assertion that the appearance of the divine epiphanies is always determined by their locus of manifestation.[47] In keeping with this perspective, Qūnawī likens the bodily *mizāj* to a mirror in which the soul is neither located nor incarnated but simply "reflected", such that its appearance is conditioned by the mirror's characteristics.[48] Here, moreover, it is important to note that the development of the *mizāj* is seen as a gradual process, which, in line with the Qur'ānic accounts of man's genesis,[49] is referred to as one of *taswiya* or "harmonising".[50] Thus, after the initial determination of the "elemental mixture" or *mizāj ʿunṣurī*, which coincides with the moment of conception, the next crucial stage in the formation of body and soul is identified as occurring 120 days later, when, according to a hadith, an angel breathes the spirit (*al-rūḥ*) into the foetus,[51] indicating that the process of harmonising the body has reached the point where the *mizāj* is capable of reflecting a properly human soul.[52]

As for the nature of this angelic inbreathing, it is considered to be a reflection within its own lesser degree of the inspiration of the divine secret.[53] In the same way that the divine secret is deemed the specific privilege of man, so does Qūnawī, as already indicated, regard the spirit that the angel breathes

44 *Fukūk*, p. 285.

45 See *infra*, p. 162–163.

46 *Hādiya*, p. 171.

47 *Iʿjāz*, p. 36.

48 *Hādiya*, p. 158.

49 See Qur'ān, XXXVIII, 71: {When thy Lord said to the angels, 'See, I am creating a mortal of clay. So when I have harmonised him and breathed of My Spirit into him, fall in prostration before him.'} See *supra*, p. 102.

50 *Iʿjāz*, pp. 76, 319; *Murshidīya*, fol. 7b.

51 *Iʿjāz*, p. 319.

52 *Iʿjāz*, p. 319.

53 *Naftha*, fol. 13a-b.

into the foetus as the summit and seal of the individual's specifically human faculties and as therefore intrinsically connected with the specific *differentia* that sets man apart from the other creatures in his world; hence his tendency to equate this spirit with the "kernel of humanity" (*laṭīfa insānīya*)[54] or "speaking soul"[55] (*al-nafs al-nāṭiqa*).[56]

As far as his conception of the *nafs nāṭiqa* is concerned, it should be observed that, in conformity with his regarding it as a specific determination or "reflection" of the Divine Spirit itself, our author qualifies the speaking soul as "*qudsīya*",[57] a term which, though usually rendered simply as "holy", has the connotation of "unaffected by the characteristics of the physical world". Hence, whatever the nature of the individual in which it resides, the "holy speaking soul" itself remains untouched and unsullied.[58] This, however, is not to say that he considers its influence to be exerted without change or alteration in all individuals alike; for just as he asserts that the "influences of the higher powers and the angelic orientations come to [human beings] in the utmost sanctity and purity, and quite distinct from one another, yet become, at the point of juncture with them, coloured by their characteristics",[59] so does he hold that the sway of the spirit is coloured by the characteristics of the individual. Thus, he remarks that "although human mixtures of temperament (*al-amzija al-insānīya*) all fall into the same general category, there can be no doubt that they still vary enormously in terms of their proximity to or distance from the degrees of equilibrium, and this is why souls vary in respect of their luminosity, purity, nobility and other such attributes of perfection".[60]

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54 *Nafaḥāt*, fol. 90b.

55 Although, like the Greek *logikê psychê* on which it is based, the Arabic term *nafs nāṭiqa* is usually translated as "rational soul", I have chosen, in the context of Qūnawī's works, to render it in its primary and literal sense of "speaking soul" or "soul endowed with the faculty of speech". The reasons for this choice are twofold: first, the notion of "speech" is especially relevant in the case of Qūnawī's conception of the *nafs nāṭiqa*, since, in accordance with his doctrine of divine speech, he sees it as a specification of the divine breath or Spirit that is breathed into man; and second, he qualifies the *nafs nāṭiqa* as "holy" (*qudsīya*) and hence as transcending the imperfections of *fikr*, or reflective thought, which, in his view, serve to restrict both the bounds and reliability of rational inquiry.

56 *Nafaḥāt*, fol. 66a.

57 *Nafaḥāt*, fol. 66a.

58 In similar vein, Ibn ʿArabī, for his part, asserts that the *nafs nāṭiqa* is incapable of disobeying God.

59 *Iʿjāz*, p. 181.

60 *Hādiya*, p. 158–159.

Although the spirit, or "holy soul", is identified as the faculty which ultimately both governs and animates the individual, this nonetheless raises the problem of how the spirit, simple and abstract as it is, is able to act upon the complex material body. In agreement with the prevailing theories of medieval physiology,[61] Qūnawī resolves this difficulty by identifying the "vital spirit" (*al-rūḥ al-ḥayawānī*) as the intermediary between the two, allowing the spirit to vivify and govern the body. Once again, therefore, what is in question is the notion of a *barzakh* or common boundary serving to unite two radically different sides by participating in the nature of both:

> The vital spirit (*al-rūḥ al-ḥayawānī*) that dwells hidden in the left ventricle of the [physiological] cone-shaped heart … is the common boundary (*barzakh*) between the human spirit and the *mizāj*. Accordingly, insofar as it is a simple intelligible power (*quwwa basīṭa maʿqūla*) it is consistent with the spirit and connected to it, while insofar as it comprises, in essence, the manifold faculties which are spread throughout the body and govern it in various ways, it is consistent with the *mizāj*, composed as it is of parts and different natural qualities. It is in this way, therefore, that the connection between the simple spirit and the composite *mizāj* is achieved, such that the former is able to sustain and govern the latter.[62]

As for the means by which the vital spirit's animating influence is transmitted to the body, he sees it as occurring through the intermediary of the "most subtle part of the human organism" depicted as a "vapour" (*bukhār*) or "mist" (*ḍabāb*) filling the ventricles of both heart and brain. This vapour is the bodily support, or locus of manifestation, of the vital spirit, and so long as life inheres in the body the vital spirit continues to be reflected in it:[63]

> Even though the vapour in the ventricle of the heart is corporeal in nature it is nonetheless the most subtle (*alṭaf*) part of the human organism and the most closely related to simple bodies. Hence it is like the mirror of the vital spirit: for, on the one hand, the vital spirit comprises the manifold faculties that extend throughout the body – producing diverse actions and effects – and so matches the bodily *mizāj*, which is made up of the

61 See, for example, Ghazālī, *al-Risāla al-ladunīya*, p. 23. See also J. Livingston, 'Qusṭā ibn Lūqā's psycho-physiological treatise: On the difference between the soul and the spirit (*fī l-farq bayn al-nafs wa l-rūḥ*)' in *Scripta Mediterranea* 2 1981, p. 53–77.

62 *Fukūk*, p. 250–251.

63 *Miftāḥ*, p. 41–42.

> elements and the many properties of the mineral, vegetable, and animal kingdoms arising from them; and, on the other, inasmuch as it is a simple, intelligible, *supra*-sensorial power, carried in the vapour in the heart, it matches the speaking soul (*al-nafs al-nāṭiqa*) in relation to which it too is like a mirror.[64]

According to this perspective, each of the intermediary principles through which the governing spirit exerts its influence is a direct manifestation of the one above it. Hence, tracing this hierarchy to its summit, Qūnawī seems to suggest that they are all, in essence, so many reflections of the Universal Spirit itself:

> In the same way that the vital spirit is related to the individual human soul, so is the latter related to the Universal Soul … and in the same way that the individual soul is related to the Universal Soul, so is the latter related to the Sublime Pen, which is also called the First Intellect and the Universal Spirit.[65]

Finally, it should be observed that, for Qūnawī, it is this idea of a hierarchy of reflections of one and the same principle that underscores the spiritual significance of the physiological heart, since, considered from the individual's point of view, it forms the hierarchy's outer guard:

> The physiological heart is at once a throne to the vapour in its cavity, a guard for it and a veil over it. Similarly, this vapour is a throne to the vital spirit, a guardian over it and an instrument upon which its activity is dependent. For its part, the vital spirit, in its ethereal locus of manifestation, is a throne and mirror to the Divine Spirit, or holy speaking soul (*al-nafs al-nāṭiqa al-qudsīya*), and an intermediary through which the effect of the soul's governance reaches the body. As for the holy soul, considered in respect of all of its aforementioned manifestations … it is a throne to the Name of Allah.[66]

4 Sustenance

We have already seen that in our author's view there exists a necessary continuity between all degrees of existence, as realities pertaining to a given degree,

64 *Nafaḥāt*, fol. 39 (*Tarjumah*, p. 91).
65 *Nafaḥāt*, fol. 39 (*Tarjumah*, p. 91).
66 *Nafaḥāt*, fol. 66a.

or presence, are merely determinations or manifestations of those pertaining to the degrees above them. Hence for him, as for the "ancient sages", the lower world is but a reflection of the higher one.[67] Given, therefore, that all physical realities are deemed to stem from metaphysical ones, the key to fathoming the nature of the former resides in "looking to their archetypes in the spiritual degrees",[68] a perspective, one will note, which tallies with the belief that divine science necessarily underpins all natural sciences.[69] It is essentially this perspective, then, that pervades Qūnawī's account of the fundamental conditions that define the human individual state. Just as it is evident in his treatment of the spiritual and psychological faculties of the human being, so, as we shall now see, does it play a crucial part in his theories concerning the natural conditions upon which man's genesis and continued existence depend, namely sexual union (*nikāḥ*) and physical sustenance. He writes:

> The essential point to glean from all of this, is that whenever anything of this sort becomes manifest to you in the realm of nature you should look to its archetype in the spiritual degrees and in the intelligible attributes of the soul; and you should recall what was said earlier with regard to the mystery of the five conjugal unions (*al-nikāḥāt al-khams*), namely that the conditions, laws and realities of the natural domain stem from, and are produced by, those of the spiritual domain, which, for their part, stem from the domain of non-manifest essences (*al-ḥaqā'iq al-ghaybīya*). Wherefore, if you are from among the folk of unveiling and witnessing, take these words to heart and proceed to their essence; if not, accept them in good faith and ask to be granted understanding.[70]

As far as sexual union is concerned, Qūnawī, applying the law of correspondence between different degrees of existence, sees it as mirroring, within the corporeal domain, the productive union (*ijtimā'*) that occurs between the active, "masculine" principles and receptive "feminine" ones present in all degrees of the cosmological hierarchy.[71] The archetype of this polarity is that of ontological necessity and contingency, a relationship also expressed as that of divine omnipotence (*iqtidār*) towards the receptivity (*qubūl*) of the world.[72]

67 *I'jāz*, p. 209; *Mufṣiḥa*, p. 42.
68 *I'jāz*, p. 181.
69 *Miftāḥ*, p. 6.
70 *I'jāz*, p. 181.
71 *Miftāḥ*, p. 52.
72 *Fukūk*, p. 210.

Hence, the former's creative influence upon the latter in the Primordial Mist is identified as the "first wedding" (*al-nikāḥ al-awwal*).[73] In addition to this first *nikāḥ*, he identifies a further three fundamental degrees of conjugal union which represent the marriage of those complementary principles – reflections themselves of this first polarity – that engender the realities pertaining to the spiritual, imaginary, and sensorial domains respectively.[74] There is, therefore, a correspondence between these four fundamental degrees of *nikāḥ* and the first four divine presences, and the link between these perspectives is further strengthened by the fact that he regards the fifth and final degree of conjugal union as that of man and woman.[75] In the same way that the perfect human being is conceived of as the quintessential presence that synthesises the other four within itself so is the ideal union of a "balanced man and woman" deemed the synthesis of all degrees of *nikāḥ*.[76]

As for the physical sustenance (*ghidhā'*) required to keep man's body and soul together, this likewise, according to Qūnawī, is simply a natural expression of a principle "present throughout all degrees",[77] namely the divine *imdād*, or life-giving succour which sustains the existence of all things and which, as previously noted, is deemed a function of the self-disclosure of Being (*al-tajallī al-wujūdī*). Sustenance in general, then, he defines as "that through which an existential form is sustained and through which life continues to inhere in it".[78] Such considerations also explain why his lengthiest discussion of the underlying nature of sustenance includes an excursus on the concept of the perfect man envisaged as the "guardian" who prevents manifest realities from returning immediately to their non-manifest ground;[79] for, like the guardian, the reality of sustenance in all its degrees is seen as concerned with upholding the authority of the Divine Name "the Outwardly Manifest" (*al-ẓāhir*) under whose aegis the hidden treasures of God's Essence are revealed.

Furthermore, just as there can be no Outwardly Manifest without its correlative, the Inwardly Hidden (*al-bāṭin*), so is the universal principle of sustenance deemed to be connected with the interdependence of the polarities that characterise contingent existence:

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73 *Nuṣūṣ*, p. 77–78.

74 *Miftāḥ*, p. 43.

75 *Miftāḥ*, p. 43.

76 On one occasion he alludes to its being a symbol of "the appearance of the form of the perfect human being". (*Miftāḥ*, p. 44.)

77 *I'jāz*, p. 182.

78 *I'jāz*, p. 173.

79 *I'jāz*, p. 174–175.

> You should consider how the principle of sustenance is present throughout all degrees [of existence]: thus, the food of the Names is their attendant conditions and possibilities; the food of the concrete essences, existence; the food of existence, the possibilities inherent in the concrete essences; the food of substances (*jawāhir*), accidents (*aʿrāḍ*); the food of spirits, their knowledge and attributes; the food of the sublime forms (*al-ṣuwar al-ʿalawīya*), their movements and that by virtue of which their movement lasts … the food of the elements is that by virtue of which their forms persist, and which thus prevents them from turning into their counterparts or contraries (*al-mukhālif wa-l-muḍādd*), and finally the sustenance of natural forms is provided by the fundamental natural qualities of which these forms and mixtures (*amzija*) are composed. In other words, heat endures solely through heat, and the same applies to cold and the other natural qualities, which are nonetheless of a spiritual nature in essence.[80]

As far, then, as man in his bodily state is concerned, his sustenance consists of that which keeps his body and soul together until his "allotted time", that is, for as long as the authority (*ḥukm*) of the Name "the Outwardly Apparent" (*al-ẓāhir*) is destined to remain manifest in him. To a certain extent this role belongs to the immaterial spirit as its presence prevents the body's dissolution.[81] However, the actual conjunction of body and spirit is dependent first of all upon the body's obtaining and preserving the requisite *mizāj*, or physical balance. If the body is to maintain its link with the spirit and continue "serving as a support for life" it must therefore keep its *mizāj* intact; and since the *mizāj* is formed from a specific balance of the elements and four fundamental qualities of nature, it is sustained, according to the passage quoted above, by whatever is of like nature, namely anything from the mineral, vegetal and animal kingdoms which will not upset its balance.

At the same time, it should be borne in mind that Qūnawī sees these substances too, like all other physical phenomena, as manifestations of intelligible realities (*maʿānī*); and it is the latter, so he asserts, that constitute sustenance in its purest and most essential form – physical nutriments being, all told, no more than vehicles allowing corporeal beings to assimilate the intelligible sustenance they all require:

> The principial moisture (*al-ruṭūba al-aṣlīya*), which is the locus of manifestation of life (*maẓhar al-ḥayāh*),[82] abides solely by virtue of that

80 *Iʿjāz*, p. 182.

81 *Fukūk*, p. 260.

82 See Qurʾān, XXI, 30: {We made from water every living thing}.

> moisture which is derived from physical sustenance; for one intelligible reality (*maʿnan*) cannot be transmitted to another and thence assimilated by the latter, in terms of both its essence and activity, save through the intermediary of material supports (*mawādd*) and the accidental attributes that go with them. The latter, then, are merely conditions upon which this assimilation depends and hence are not sought for their own sake as ends in themselves. Rather, their function is simply one of communicating that which is really aimed at (*al-maqṣūd*), whereupon they disaggregate themselves, to be followed by their like. And this is the case with every nutriment (*ghidhāʾ*) and every being that derives sustenance therefrom (*mughtadhin*) in all their manifold degrees.[83]

In step with this conception of physical nutriments as manifestations, or vehicles, of *supra*-sensorial realities, Qūnawī holds that, besides their elemental properties, they must also possess qualities belonging to the spiritual and psychological order. Thus "all three kingdoms of nature possess specific properties capable of having an effect not only on man's body but on his soul as well".[84] Elaborating upon this theme, he writes:

> Everything from which sustenance is derived, in the various physical forms of alimentation, possesses spiritual properties and faculties distinct from those outward qualities and particularities which are observable in respect of the [nutriment's] form and its effect upon the body. These [spiritual] properties are capable of exerting different influences (*aḥkām mukhtalifa*) over men and other beings. Moreover, between the different nutriments and the formal, spiritual and intelligible temperaments (*amzija*) of the being that derives sustenance from them, there will inevitably be compatibilities in some respects and incompatibilities in others … Thus, proclivity or aversion towards a particular food is determined by the predominance of either the former or latter respectively. However, the natures of most of these [compatibilities and incompatibilities] remain hidden, such that it is extremely difficult to be aware of them without the intervention of divine revelation (*taʿrīf ilāhī*).[85]

Accordingly, in many cases it is not the intrinsic nature of the food itself but its relationship to the balance of the individual's *mizāj* that classifies it as harmful

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83 *Iʿjāz*, p. 182.

84 *Miftāḥ*, p. 111. A similar view is expressed by the *Ikhwān al-Ṣafāʾ*. See Nasr, *An Introduction to Islamic cosmological doctrines*, p. 70.

85 *Iʿjāz*, p. 178–179.

or beneficial, and in this connection he cites the example of the contrasting effects that honey will have on the "hot-tempered", on the one hand, and the "phlegmatic" or "cool and wet-tempered" on the other.[86] Not surprisingly, this perspective, above all, is seen as the key to the question of why sacred law permits some foods and forbids others. Although a certain food may well be compatible with the physical *mizāj* it may nonetheless have subtle properties harmful to the spiritual *mizāj*, or at least to a specific balance thereof:[87] hence some foods are forbidden to certain communities and in certain epochs but permitted to others, in accordance with the different physical, psychological and spiritual temperaments of the peoples in question.[88]

5 The Separation of Body and Soul

For Qūnawī, then, man's life is sustained both by elements assimilated from his environment,[89] and by principles within himself. The former – consisting of the four natural elements (earth, water, fire and air) required to maintain the balance of man's physical *mizāj* – are assimilated through the processes of respiration (*tanaffus*) in the case of air, and, as we have seen, alimentation (*tawzīʿ al-aghdhiyāʾ*) in the case of the other three.[90] Important as they are, however, it is the inner principle of vitality which is seen as the decisive condition for the continuation of life.

This principle, as already noted, is the vital spirit, which, according to the dominant physiological theories of the day, resides in the left ventricle of the heart where it acts as the link between man's simple, non-corporeal faculties and his complex, material body, allowing the former to control the latter. Moreover, since the vital spirit's continued presence there is identified as the *sine qua non* of bodily life, the instant of its departure from the heart is seen as synonymous with the moment of death, which Qūnawī, along with most of his contemporaries, therefore conceives of as the "separation (*firāq*) of body and soul", echoing the well-known Socratic definition.[91]

86 *Iʿjāz*, p. 181.

87 *Iʿjāz*, p. 181; *Miftāḥ*, p. 111.

88 *Iʿjāz*, p. 181.

89 Albeit that, in keeping with his theory of intra-substantial causality, he considers these external elements to be separate from the individual in a relative sense alone. (See *Miftāḥ*, p. 134).

90 Both respiration and alimentation are deemed to reflect, within their own degree, the sustaining power of the divine succour, or *madad*. Hence breathing is sometimes referred to as "respiratory succour" (*madad nafsānī*). (See *Fukūk*, p. 252).

91 See Plato, *Phaedo*, 60C.

As one might expect, there was considerably less agreement concerning the question of what happens to the soul following its separation from the body, with the nature of man's eschatological states famously constituting one of the most serious areas of contention between mainstream Muslim opinion[92] and those, such as the *falāsifa*, who tended to interpret the scriptural accounts of man's posthumous rewards and torments in a purely allegorical light.[93] Where Ṣadr al-Dīn concurs with the Avicennian philosophers is in holding that even though the individual soul comes into being with the body it nonetheless survives the latter's dissolution, the body merely serving as a vehicle which the soul inhabits until it realises its own specific perfection; and it is in harmony with this view that he – again like many of his contemporaries – speaks of death as a "casting-off" or "shedding" (*insilākh*)[94] of the body. This, however, is as far as his accord with the *falāsifa* goes; for, as his correspondence with Ṭūsī clearly illustrates, he departs from their theories regarding not only the exact nature of this *insilākh*, but also, more seriously, man's posthumous states in general.

As far, then, as the question of *insilākh* is concerned, it should be noted that, unlike Naṣīr al-Dīn, our author identifies *two* distinct sets of circumstances in which the soul "casts off" the body; for, besides the commonly accepted *insilākh* that is synonymous with bodily death, he also envisages the relative divesting of the body that takes place at the beginning of the "spiritual ascents" undertaken by the wayfarers on the *ṭarīq*, or initiatic path. Employing the spatial symbolism expounded by the "great verifiers", namely that "the world has both breadth and height, its breadth being the corporeal domain and its height the world of spirits",[95] Qūnawī conceives of the spiritual ascent (*miʿrāj*) as a journey through the vertical dimension of the initiate's being. The initiate, he explains, ascends to his higher states by casting off the constraints that define the states below them, starting with those of the bodily domain.[96] Such a conception is thus closely analogous to that of bodily death itself; to such an extent, in fact, that the highest form of *miʿrāj*, the "ascent of unbinding" (*miʿrāj al-taḥlīl*), is seen as consisting

92 See, for example, Ghazālī, *Tahāfut al-falāsifa*, p. 268.

93 See Ibn Sīnā, *Najāt*, p. 477–483. For an analysis of Ibn Sīnā's treatment of the soul's fate after death see H. Davidson, *Alfarabi, Avicenna and Averroes on intellect*, p. 109–116. For Fārābī's approach to the soul's afterlife see, M. Fakhry, *Al-Fārābī: founder of Islamic Neoplatonism; his life, works and influence*, Oxford 2002, p. 117–119.

94 The symbolic connotations of this term naturally evoke the ancient doctrine associated, among others, with the Alexandrine Gnostics, according to which the soul's transmigration is likened to a snake shedding its skin.

95 *Sharḥ al-aḥādīth*, fol. 13a.

96 *Hādiya*, p. 146.

of the journey, in this life, that the soul would otherwise make after death.[97] Nevertheless, he does specify a crucial difference between this *insilākh* and the one that occurs at the time of death proper, namely that in the former there still remains a slender bond between body and soul, allowing the initiate to continue to govern his body, whereas actual death naturally implies that this link is severed.[98] Moreover, as the following passage from his correspondence demonstrates, his view on this score differs from Ṭūsī's not only in that he affirms the possibility of this voluntary, relative kind of *insilākh* but also in his assertion that in certain exceptional cases even the final divesting of the body can be achieved at will, without any change in the physical *mizāj*:

> You assert – may God keep and preserve you – that the casting off [of the body] is indeed necessary, but that the soul can have no say therein, even as it had no say in its joining [the body] in the first place; on the contrary – so you maintain – it is simply a question of the soul's having to shed the body when the latter perishes, and on that occasion alone. Such an assertion, however, calls for certain observations: first, it does not necessarily follow that every casting-off must likewise be irrespective of the soul's will just because the initial conjunction [with the body] came about without its having any say therein; for we ourselves have seen more than one of God's folk who was capable of casting off this modality whenever he so wished; and, for that matter, we have even seen those who, intent upon dying, declare the fact that they have freely chosen it and die there and then, without being in any way afflicted by illness or corruption of their physical complexion (*mizāj*).[99]

While dealing with this topic, Qūnawī also takes the opportunity to point out that although it is true that *individual* souls are not determined until after the requisite disposition of the body, such that they can have no influence over the form or time of their conjunction with the latter, this is not the case for "those who possess *universal* souls" which are determined along with the Universal Spirit itself.[100] He writes:

> In a direct allusion to his own case, I have been told by my Shaykh, the most perfect Imam – may God be pleased with him – that there are those

97 *Miftāḥ*, p. 113.
98 *Iʿjāz*, p. 212.
99 *Hādiya*, p. 171–172.
100 *Miftāḥ*, p. 110.

> who are capable of knowingly governing the constituent parts of their body before these parts have come together, and that they do this by virtue of the universality of their soul, whereas such a thing is impossible for one whose soul belongs exclusively to the individual order (*man takūn nafsu-hu juzʾīyatan*); for individual souls are determined only after the *mizāj* and in accordance therewith, such that prior to that, they are not even endowed with any existence whereby they could consciously govern the constituent matter of their future body. Wherefore, the fact that such things have happened means that whenever people dismiss them as impossible it cannot be on the basis of sound logical demonstration that they do so, since if such demonstration was truly sound these things would not have come into being. Hence it becomes clear that the real reason for such pronouncements is nothing more than common scepticism and the like.[101]

Given, however, the exceptional nature of such cases this particular disagreement appears more as a matter of principle than anything else, with Qūnawī again highlighting what he sees as the tendency on the part of the *falāsifa* to dismiss even the theoretical possibility of anything that happens to lie outside the usual scope of human experience.

Of a more fundamental nature is the disagreement regarding what actually happens to the soul after death, as it revolves around the controversial issue of man's eschatological fate in general. Here, once again, the divergence between Qūnawī's theories and those of the *falāsifa* is evident in his emblematic encounter with Naṣīr al-Dīn Ṭūsī, who, on the subject of the soul's state after its separation from the body, echoes the stock eschatological views of the Avicennian philosophers: the human soul is imperishable as it is a simple intellectual substance (*jawhar*) and therefore, unlike the natural composites of the sublunary world, is not subject to corruption and dissolution.[102] Since it has no further need of any outward vehicle – corporeal or otherwise – following its separation from the body, it remains in perpetuity in this abstract state;[103] and, this being the case, the posthumous torments and delights described in the scriptures should simply be regarded as easily accessible metaphors for the divergent states of these abstract souls. For Ṭūsī, then, as for Ibn Sīnā before him, the blessed (*al-suʿadāʾ*)[104] are those who have perfected their intellectual

101 *Hādiya*, p. 172.

102 *Murāsalāt*, p. 116.

103 *Murāsalāt*, p. 116.

104 Literally, the "happy", the "contented".

natures such that their departure from the body comes as a welcome release from the weariness and hardships of physical existence, whereas the damned (*al-ashqiyā'*)[105] are those whose souls had been tied to the body and its sensual pleasures to such an extent that, following its dissolution, they remain perpetually tormented by their desire for something they no longer possess.[106]

Against this view, Qūnawī argues that rather than entailing the immediate release of the immortal substance of man's being, the shedding of the bodily garment merely brings about a passage into another "locus of manifestation" (*maẓhar*), or "regeneration" (*nash'a*),[107] and if the *falāsifa* reject this it is because they fail to grasp what really constitutes man's immortal essence.[108] For Qūnawī, this essence is not simply the individual soul in the sense of the *nash'a nafsānīya*, that is, the assemblage of psychological, rational and intellectual faculties that departs from the body at the time of death. Rather it is the "divine secret", or "parcel of divine light" which forms the permanent heart of man in all of his multiple states and which is likened, as we have seen, to a "connecting-thread" (*raqīqa*) running through the centre of all of them.[109] The specific modalities that man possesses in each of the five presences – and, moreover, in each of the manifold worlds within them – are, as already indicated, thus described as so many "garments" (*malābis*) beneath which the "governing spirit" (*al-rūḥ al-mudabbir*) is concealed.[110]

It is in this sense, therefore, that Ṣadr al-Dīn interprets the traditional doctrine of the soul's passage into the "intermediary realms", or *barāzikh*, i.e. the different states of limbo[111] in which the departed soul remains "imprisoned" until the Resurrection. In these states, he contends, the governing spirit appears not as it is in itself but through the guise of a specific locus of manifestation determined by their conditions. Qūnawī calls this modality the *nash'a barzakhīya*, and – in keeping with tradition – conceives of it as formed by the thoughts and beliefs that characterised the individual's soul during its sojourn in the body, especially at the instant of its final breath.[112] When expounding this theory, however, he is careful to point out that, contrary to the opinion of

105 Literally, the "miserable", the "wretched".

106 *Murāsalāt*, p. 120.

107 *I'jāz*, pp. 153, 319.

108 *Miftāḥ*, pp. 111, 113.

109 *Naftha*, fol. 12a.

110 *Miftāḥ*, p. 112.

111 The *barāzikh* are thought of as corresponding to the "souls" or "imaginary dimensions" of the celestial spheres that extend – according to the Ptolemaic system – from the earth to the seventh and highest of the planetary orbits. (See *Nuṣūṣ*, p. 67–68; *Hādiya*, p. 160).

112 *Nafaḥāt*, fol. 43a.

the *falāsifa*, there is nothing inherently unorthodox about the idea of the soul's passage into other *nasha'āt*.[113] Replying to Naṣīr al-Dīn Ṭūsī, who, in common with the *falāsifa* in general,[114] equates this theory with the "condemned doctrine of *tanāsukh*", he argues that the sense in which this doctrine has been condemned, and which he likewise rejects, is essentially that of *reincarnation*,[115] not of the soul's *transmigration* into other worlds:

> Elaborating on the main point under discussion, you assert – long may God grant you life! – that if the soul did in fact have other regenerations (*nasha'āt*) among the celestial spheres (*aflāk*) then that would amount to *tanāsukh*. However, the matter is not quite as simple as that; for the notion of *tanāsukh* which has been condemned is that which envisages the soul's passing into another form *in this world*, and then only on the condition that this is envisaged as acquiring another elemental modality (*bi-sharṭi ḥuṣūli mithli hādhihi-l-nash'ati-l-ʿunṣurīya*). As for the soul's passing into another form, or forms, in another world, it is not something that can be proved, or disproved, syllogistically (*fa-lā burhāna ʿalay-hi*). So let anyone who automatically dismisses this as impossible come up with a demonstration to that effect.[116]

As for the duration of the *nash'a barzakhīya*, Qūnawī, in line with the scriptures, sees it as tied to that of earthly humanity, such that it too comes to an end with the dawning of the Hour of Judgement, when the sun – to which he attributes the same function in relation to the elemental world as the vital spirit in relation to the body[117] – finally sets on this lower domain (*al-dunyā*) in order to rise in the hereafter (*al-ākhira*).[118] At the point of transition, then, between this world and the next, the souls of those who are trapped in the *barāzikh* are freed from their state of limbo and summoned to the Assembly (*al-ḥashr*)[119] where, according to tradition, all mankind from the beginning of the cycle to its end

113 *Nafaḥāt*, fol. 43a.

114 See, for example, Fārābī, *ʿUyūn al-masā'il*, p. 75 (in *Kitāb al-majmūʿ*), and Ibn Sīnā, *Najāt*, p. 309.

115 Fārābī, for instance, defines the proponents of *tanāsukh* as those who "hold that the soul passes from one body (*jasad*) to another". (*ʿUyūn al-masā'il*, p. 75).

116 *Hādiya*, p. 170.

117 *Sharḥ al-aḥādīth*, fol. 13a.

118 *Iʿjāz*, p. 375.

119 The soul's passage from the *barāzikh* to the "land of the Assembly" (as it is termed in the hadith) is regarded as entailing the restoration of the human individuality as a whole, body and all – the Day of Judgement being likewise the Day of Resurrection (*yawm*

stand resurrected behind their respective prophets in order to hear the judgement of the King of the Day of Justice determining their future states.

The question of bodily resurrection too is another key point on which Qūnawī's view, and indeed that of mainstream Muslim opinion in general,[120] differs from that of the *falāsifa*, who for their part reject this notion.[121] In his summary of Ibn ʿArabī's *Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam*, Qūnawī not only affirms the possibility of resurrection, but also envisages a number of ways in which it can take place. These are divided into two principal types. The first consists in reassembling the scattered elements of the body, following its disintegration, which should, after all, be considered even "easier" (*ahwan*) for God than their creation in the first place.[122] As for the second, it resides in the preservation (*ḥifẓ*) of either the form or essence of the body. According to Qūnawī, the three modes in which this can occur are illustrated in the Qurʾānic story of the prophet ʿUzayr (the Biblical Ezra), who, after wondering how God brings the dead back to life, is made to die and is then resurrected.[123] Hence, the first mode of preservation, exemplified by ʿUzayr's food, consists in "slowing down" to an absolute minimum the changes that continually occur in corporeal forms, whereby the body maintains its original form.[124] The second, typified by the way in which the bones of ʿUzayr's donkey are clothed once again in flesh, revolves around the concept of the enduring essence of the body, that is, the minute corporeal element located at the base of the spinal column which contains the germ of the entire body within itself, and from which the body can be reproduced in its original appearance, albeit from different material parts.[125]

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al-qiyāma). Nevertheless, the spirit's outer vehicle during the Assembly is deemed to be of not entirely the same nature as the elemental genesis or *nashʾa ʿunṣurīya* which it governed during the individual's earthly life, as a distinction is made between the latter and the *nashʾa ḥashrīya* or "genesis of the Assembly". (See *Miftāḥ*, p. 113; *Nafaḥāt*, fol. 43b).

120 See, for example, Ghazālī, *Tahāfut al-falāsifa*, p. 268.

121 Hence, in the *Taʿlīqāt*, Ibn Sīnā asserts that "in the same way that it is impossible for bodies to exist permanently *or to be brought back again*, so is it impossible for the soul not to exist, even though it came into existence [at a certain time], rather than being pre-eternal". (*Taʿlīqāt*, p. 114).

122 See Qurʾān, XXX, 27: {It is He who originates creation and then brings it back again, and that is easier for Him}.

123 See Qurʾān, II, 259: {So God made him die a hundred years, then He raised him up, saying 'How long hast thou tarried?' He said 'I have tarried a day or part of a day.' Said He, 'Nay, thou hast tarried a hundred years. Yet look at thy food and drink, it has not spoiled; and look at thy donkey. So We would make thee a sign for the people. And look at the bones, how We shall raise them up and clothe them in flesh}.

124 *Fukūk*, p. 261.

125 *Fukūk*, p. 261.

Finally, the resurrection of ʿUzayr's uncorrupted body exemplifies the exceptional character of the posthumous relationship between the body and spirit of those – such as the prophets – who have realised human perfection. He writes:

> The other type of bodily resurrection is that in which the parts of the composite form [of the body] are preserved from disintegration even though the spirit has departed from this form owing to the latter's no longer being capable of supporting life … Now the spirit's tendency towards perfection serves to endow the form that it animates with a certain measure of the permanence it has *per se*, since permanence is an essential attribute of spirits. But when the spirit turns away from governing the form it has left and turns instead to the governance of another of its manifestations it is liable to become so engaged therein as to cause the disintegration of the parts of the initial form. When this happens it is simply due to a particular spirit's weakness and inability to combine both sides at once, by which I mean its inability to look towards both this world and the world into which it has passed. This, however, is not the case with such beings as possess universal, sanctified and perfect spirits, for the concern of such spirits with one thing does not make them heedless of another, nor does one world veil them from another.[126]

126 *Fukūk*, p. 260. In Qūnawī's view, the perfect or true human being is capable not only of looking to the state he has left, following bodily death, and the one immediately adjoining it, but also of being conscious of all of his forms and *nashaʾāt* in all states of existence, and hence of acting in whichever of them he chooses or of communicating with the beings situated within these states. He writes: "Another of the characteristics of the [true human being] is his ability to meet with whichever created beings he wishes, irrespective of whether they are still living [in this world] or have passed on. There are two ways in which this can take place: according to the first he beholds the world wherein resides the being with whom he wishes to meet, and then dons the form which he himself possesses within that spiritual station or world (*fa-yatalabbas bi-l-ṣūrati-latī la-hu fī dhālik al-maqām wa-l-ʿālam*) – for, in truth, he possesses, within every state of existence and spiritual station, a form consistent with their conditions – and thus does he meet with them. Then, once the purpose of the meeting has been achieved, he descends along the delicate thread (*raqīqa*) that links the form in question to his synthetic, all-embracing form, and thence to his form [in this world]. According to the second way, whenever he wishes to meet with someone who has passed on, he looks to the spiritual station in which their soul was finally seized, and thence to their abode in the posthumous states of limbo (*barāzikh*). Then, from within himself, he produces a spiritual image (*ṣūra rūḥānīya mithālīya*) which he sends to the *raqīqa* through which he is connected to that spiritual state and abode. He then calls forth the one whose presence is sought; whereupon, if the latter is aware of the perfection [of the one who is summoning him] and is at liberty to leave the prisons of

6 Man's Posthumous States

In accordance with tradition, Qūnawī holds that, following their separation from the body, the souls of both damned and blessed alike pass into the *barāzikh* where they remain until the Resurrection. As we have seen, these states of limbo are conceived of as the subtle or psychological dimensions of the elemental world extending from the interior of the earth to the highest of the seven planetary heavens, with the damned occupying the *barāzikh* below the lowest heaven (*al-samāʿ al-dunyā*)[127] and the blessed those above it.[128] The boundary between the two is therefore formed by the *barzakh* of the moon, which is the lowest planetary sphere, and in this connection he cites the hadith which depicts the prophet presiding over this *barzakh*, namely Adam, as having "the blessed from among his descendants on his right and the damned on his left, such that when he looks to his right he laughs and when he looks to his left he weeps".[129] Unlike the "majority of the blessed" (*ʿumūm al-suʿadāʾ*), who all share the same basic rank (*martaba*) within this limbo, the damned fall into different ranks[130] the highest of which is identified as the "base of the *samāʿ al-dunyā*" and the lowest as the "three wells" mentioned in a hadith[131] concerning man's posthumous states.[132] As for those blessed souls who in their earthly life attained a certain spiritual distinction (*khuṣūṣ*), they dwell in the *barāzikh* of the other planetary spheres.[133]

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the *barāzikh*, he descends to him willingly and comes to him in whichever subtle semblance his state demands. If, however, he is of those who are imprisoned within the *barāzikh*, he will descend under duress, solely by reason of his summoner's power and rank". (*Miftāḥ*, p. 140–141). Indeed, this is something he claims to have witnessed at first hand: "Now this is something that we ourselves have both realised and witnessed, and we have seen others who have, for their part, witnessed the same. Indeed, our Shaykh – may God be pleased with him – was able to meet with the Prophet – peace be upon him – and whomsoever he wished from those among the departed who likewise possess this attribute, whenever he wished, whether by night or by day. Moreover, I have experienced this myself on more than one occasion". (*Fukūk*, p. 260).

127 As none pass beyond the "base" of the lowest heaven, the damned are therefore "those for whom the gates of heaven (*abwāb al-samāʿ*) do not open when they die". (*Nuṣūṣ*, p. 67).

128 *Nuṣūṣ*, p. 67.

129 *Nuṣūṣ*, p. 67.

130 A view that reflects, perhaps, the traditional doctrine according to which some will eventually be freed from their torment to join the company of the blessed.

131 In the hadith in question these wells are named as *Barhūt* and *al-Ḥallatayn*. According to tradition, the former is situated in Babylon and the latter pair in *Shām*.

132 *Nuṣūṣ*, p. 67.

133 Regarding these higher *barāzikh*, Qūnawī argues that since "souls are not located spatially" (*al-nufūs ghayr mutaḥayyiza*) the traditional accounts – both in the prophetic hadiths

Following the Resurrection, blessed and damned alike are assigned their "settled geneses" (*nasha'āt istiqrārīya*) in Heaven or Hell. For Qūnawī, moreover, it is at this pivotal point in their eschatological evolution – as they cross the Bridge (*ṣirāṭ*) leading to their final abode – that the distinction between the blessed and the damned shifts from being one of varying degrees of felicity or wretchedness within the same overall state to the difference between those who lose the spiritual and intellectual essence of their humanity and those who preserve it. While crossing this Bridge, he says, the damned "lose all their remaining human faculties".[134] No longer intermediaries between the "authority of the spirit (*sulṭat al-rūḥ*) and that of nature", as they had been in the human state,[135] they are thenceforth characterised exclusively by the dark forces of the physical world in which the light of the spirit is obscured. Their "transmutation" (*istiḥāla*) is thus likened to that of "freezing" or "solidification", and in keeping with this perspective, he speaks of the "infernal genesis" as being marked by extreme density, opaqueness, and materiality.[136]

As for the blessed, their own transformation is the polar opposite as "their natural and elemental powers withdraw into their subtle essences".[137] Having crossed the Bridge into Paradise, the blessed are thenceforth "like angels". No longer bound to a particular shape or form, they are able to "appear in

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and on the part of the saints – of the prophets presiding over these heavens should not be construed as implying spatial location in the corporeal spheres themselves, but rather as denoting a spiritual affinity between the celestial poles or prophets in question and the spirit and soul of their respective heavens. (See *Fukūk*, p. 284; *Hādiya*, p. 161) For him the seven planetary *barāzikh* are expressions of the seven fundamental categories to which belong the souls not only of the prophets mentioned in the hadiths regarding the Prophet's *mi'rāj* or ascension through the heavens, but indeed of all prophets and those who "inherit" their spiritual type. (*Nuṣūṣ*, p. 67–68). He also speaks of the planetary *barāzikh* as being the "shadows" of the gardens of Paradise, and, in similar vein, conceives of the summit of the seventh celestial *barzakh* as touching the first of these gardens, the Garden of Eden. As for the actual bodies of the planetary spheres, he differs – as we have seen – from the *falāsifa* in deeming them composed of the four natural elements (*'anāṣir*) such that they too are "part of this world and hence are destroyed along with it" (*Tarjumah*, p. 190).

134 *Nafaḥāt*, fol. 42b. Indeed, besides his remarks regarding the loss of such faculties, he says very little else about the posthumous states of the damned, thus displaying a reticence which may be explained by the fact that the different categories of the "people of the Fire" have been amply discussed by his master in the *Futūḥāt*. (See *Futūḥāt*, chapters 20, 61 and 62).

135 *Sharḥ al-aḥādīth*, fol. 26a.

136 *Sharḥ al-aḥādīth*, fol. 43b. In support of this he cites the hadith according to which the skins of the wretched are "three days' journey in thickness".

137 *Sharḥ al-aḥādīth*, fol. 44b.

whichever form they wish".[138] Hence, whereas the *nash'a barzakhīya* had been portrayed as retaining much in common with man's mode of existence in this world, the passage into Paradise is seen as marking a profound reversal of perspective:

> In the case of the people of Paradise most of their physical faculties and attributes are transformed – in a remarkable manner resembling the sudden transmutations that occur in nature – into spiritual forms, with the essence of corporeality (*ḥaqīqat al-jism*) remaining in the interior of the [spiritual] form of the blessed. So whereas here [in this world] the inner aspect [of man] is free and the outer one restricted, there the case is quite the opposite in that the rule of freedom pertains to the outward aspect of the *nash'a jinānīya*, and the rule of restriction to its interior.[139]

At the same time, our author makes a specific point of reminding his intended readership – his "divine brethren" – that no conditioned state, however sublime, could ever be regarded as the end of the spiritual path. So long as they have not yet reached the supreme goal beyond all determinate states "there can be no settled abode" (*lā mustaqarr*) for those qualified to achieve perfection.[140] Once having reached it, however, they are then necessarily present in all worlds without being wholly contained by any:

> There is a subtle point concerning perfect human beings (*al-kummal*), which is as follows: only those aspects of them which pertain to Paradise may be said to reside therein; for Paradise cannot contain a perfect

138 *Sharḥ al-aḥādīth*, fol. 44b.

139 *Nafaḥāt*, fol. 42b–43a. While conceiving of the paradisiacal states as being situated above the human individual one, he does not take this to mean that they have no contact with the latter or that they are above the human state in its entirety. Rather, as is evident in the passage quoted above, he thinks of them as implicitly comprising all the possibilities of man's corporeal state, such that the inhabitants of Paradise are able to exercise their mastery of these possibilities at will. For him, therefore, it is the idea that the spirit encompasses the formal possibilities of the bodily domain that provides the key to the hadith concerning the "market of Paradise" (*sūq al-janna*) in which the people of Paradise are able to assume "whichever beautiful human form they wish". (See *Sharḥ al-aḥādīth*, fol. 44b; *Nuṣūṣ*, p. 64–65). Also of significance in this connection is the fact that, unlike the *falāsifa*, Qūnawī upholds the mainstream view whereby the pleasures enjoyed in Paradise are not solely abstract but sensorial too, as the spirit contains the body within itself. (See *I'jāz*, p. 298).

140 *Nafaḥāt*, fols. 61a, 78b, *Ummahāt al-mawāṭin*, fol. 51b–52a.

> human being, and nor, for that matter, can any other world. On the contrary, the aspect of the perfect man that dwells in Paradise is merely that which corresponds to the degrees [of existence] that Paradise represents … Indeed, just as there are aspects of the perfect man's being which do not pertain to Paradise, so are there those which do not pertain to Hell, nor any other particular state of existence; and this in spite of his being essentially connected to and in conformity with all things by very dint of his transcending all forms, regenerations, states of existence, spiritual states and presences.[141]

Indeed, because the perfect human being has realised his identity with the "common measure" of existence, he "flows through all things"[142] and sustains all worlds from the highest to the lowest of the low:

> At the same time, it follows that no world, presence, or state of existence can be devoid of a manifestation of the perfect human being. Indeed, it is precisely by virtue of this manifestation that the [divine] governance (*taṣarruf*) – which he exercises by reason of his all-encompassing rank – continues to exert its influence within the world in question. Hence, God's influence (*athar al-ḥaqq*) and its life-giving succour (*madad*) flow through the perfect man into all stations, presences, worlds and spiritual states by dint of his manifestation therein.[143]

Having considered Ṣadr al-Dīn's treatment of the fundamental conditions and stages governing the lives of *all* human beings – from the formative degrees of lodging to their eschatological ends – we will now turn our attention to his conception of the path leading beyond these relative limits to the degree of human perfection.

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141 *Miftāḥ*, p. 126.

142 *Nafaḥāt*, fol. 56a.

143 *Miftāḥ*, p. 126–127.

CHAPTER 7

Liberation

Incorporated into Qūnawī's treatment of man's existential journey are many of the terms and premises associated with a philosophical perspective which – like the belief in the pre-eminence of divine science – had become part of the common currency of medieval thought in both the Muslim world and the Latin West. The perspective in question is that of Aristotelian teleology according to which all things tend towards a particular end (Gr. *telos*, Ar. *ghāya*) wherein resides the fulfilment, or perfection, of their specific nature.[1] However, while concurring with the basic principles of this theory – insofar as the purpose of man's existence is seen as that of actualising all that is contained in his specific nature – Ṣadr al-Dīn's own view of the latter leads him to a different idea of human perfection than the one generally espoused by the Peripatetic philosophers: as man's metaphysical rank is the principle of all existential determinations (*mabdaʾ al-taʿayyunāt*) his perfection must reside, not solely in perfecting his rational and speculative faculties, as the *falāsifa* envisage it,[2] but in consciously actualising all degrees of existence within himself.

When he speaks of the *complete* journey of man *qua* man, from its origin to its final end, what he has in mind, therefore, is not the relative evolution achieved by the vast majority of mankind, ending in Heaven or Hell, but rather the voyage of the rare few who progress beyond the highest degrees of Paradise, and the constraints of all determinate worlds, in order to realise the "theophany of the Essence" (*al-tajallī al-dhātī*).[3] While only the few achieve it, such perfection is deemed nonetheless to exist in potential in all human beings.[4] Indeed, as all the lesser perfections of human existence are subordinate to that "perfection pertaining to man *qua* man", it must follow that all human endeavour expresses, to an extent, the tendency towards this goal, whether intentionally (*bi-l-qaṣdi-l-awwal*), or unintentionally (*bi-l-qaṣdi-l-thānī*).[5]

1 See Aristotle, *Physics*, VII.3 (246a); *Metaphysics*, V.16 (1021b).

2 See, for example, Ibn Sīnā, *Risāla fī al-nafs* in *Risâleleri*, ed. H. Ülken, Ankara 1953, p. 147; and Ṭūsī, *Murāsalāt*, p. 121.

3 It is to the *kummal* or perfect alone, therefore, that Qūnawī reserves the title of "true human beings", whereas all others merely possess the "outward form of humanity" (See *Nafaḥāt*, fol. 48).

4 *Ummahāt al-mawāṭin*, fol. 51a.

5 *Iʿjāz*, pp. 182, 343.

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What we propose to consider, then, in this chapter, are Qūnawī's numerous reflections on both the quest for, and realisation of, human perfection – starting with his treatment of the factors that predispose the individual to pursue this end.

1 Providence

That our author views the tendency towards perfection as inherent in all human beings is evident from his describing the obstacles that impede the individual's progress towards it as accidental in nature. As the following passage shows, such impediments, and their effects, are divided into three broad categories, each of which is defined in terms of its relationship towards the "divine secret":

> The divine secret may be said to be dyed (*yanṣabigh*) by the conditions of the degrees of existence through which it passes. Now, the manner in which this occurs may, from a certain point of view, be envisaged as falling into three categories: in the first, the relationship of such qualities (*kayfiyāt*) and garments (*malābis*) towards it is like that of accidental attributes towards their subject. This is on account of the nobility and power of the being's primordial rank within God's presence; this being, in essence, what is expressed by such terms as 'having a sure footing' (*qadam al-ṣidq*), providence (*ʿināya*) and the like. If it should thus happen, by reason of providence, that the [human being] enjoys harmonious states in all the degrees through which it passes, and likewise benefits from the favourable disposition of the spiritual presences and celestial stations – whereby the orientation of the spirits and celestial powers towards the [divine] secret is perfectly balanced, harmonious and free from all trace of excess and bias – then the individual who is the outward form and manifestation of this secret will be of those who are pulled [along the spiritual path] (*yakūn min al-majdhūbīn*) and so do not need to betake themselves to many arduous acts of worship and spiritual exercises.
>
> In the second category, the above-mentioned qualities are related to their owner in the manner of fixed accidents (*aʿrāḍ thābita*), owing to the predominance that the Name 'the Lord' had over him when he was brought into existence, which is not the case in the first category. Accordingly, his principial rank within God's presence possesses considerable nobility and power, and hence he will enjoy a measure of harmony with the existential states and geneses [through which he passes]. Thus,

> if time and the decree of destiny are favourable towards those belonging to this group they may still attain to perfection, or at least to some medium rank, but only after a great deal of striving and arduous spiritual exercises, if God so wills.
>
> In the case, however, of someone who belongs to the third category the effects of the garments and qualities become thoroughly ingrained, for the beginning of the determination of his rank within God's presence is not permeated by the rule of providence according to the sense outlined above. Thus, his receptivity towards the influences of the presences through which he passes is not complete, and nor do the spirits and celestial spheres have a harmonious effect upon him. Wherefore, time does not help him along the spiritual path (*al-sulūk*), and he weakens in his efforts at purifying himself from such attributes, which form so many veils and obstacles. Hence, the individual in this case becomes one of the unenlightened and the damned, who are outside the circle of the folk of providence.[6]

This passage serves to underline, once again, the key role assigned to the divine secret in Qūnawī's conception of man's *exitus* and *reditus*; every human being's progress towards perfection being shaped by the extent to which the secret's influence remains unaffected by the conditions not only of the human state proper but indeed of all the worlds and presences through which he passes. Not surprisingly, this influence is seen as ineluctably linked to the concept of *ʿināya* or "providence". How, then, does our author conceive of the latter?

For Ṣadr al-Dīn – as seen in the passage above – providence, or God's watchful care, is an expression of the immutable essence's "primordial rank" in the divine mind. This rank would appear to be understood as denoting the immutable essence's intrinsic possibilities, an idea closely linked to that of "uncreated predisposition" (*al-istiʿdād ghayr al-majʿūl*).[7] Indeed, it seems that, all told, providence and predisposition are thought of as two different facets – divine and human respectively – of one and the same reality. But at the same time it should be borne in mind that while all of man's existential states are seen as manifestations of possibilities comprised in his immutable essence, or uncreated predisposition, their actual coming into being is nonetheless deemed dependent on obtaining the requisite existential conditions (*shurūṭ*). Whether or not this will happen is determined, in turn, by man's "individual

6 *Miftāḥ*, p. 111–113.

7 *Miftāḥ*, p. 130–131.

existential dispositions" (*istiʿdādāt juzʾīya wujūdīya*). On the distinction between the two types of *istiʿdād*, Qūnawī writes:

> As for the difference between the being's universal predisposition and its individual dispositions, it is as follows: the universal is that by virtue of which you actually received your existence from God, when the divine will determined you among the possibilities of manifestation and God turned towards you to bring you into existence; whereas the existential states that you assume thereafter are by virtue of the individual [dispositions]. Thus all of them prepare you for your subsequent state, even as God Most-High has said {you shall ride stage upon stage},[8] that is, one state born of another. However, the universal predisposition, through which you first received your existence, is not existential. Rather it is a non-manifest aspect of your immutable essence, whereas the individual dispositions are, as you know, all existential. In order to make this clearer to you I will explain it in another way. Consider, therefore, all that your being possesses or has acquired: if it pertains to you in such a way that it is possible to envisage its separation from you or the ceasing of its effect upon you at a particular time or in a particular state, or if it is something that pertains to you only in a certain state or modality of existence, and subject to certain conditions, then it is connected with the individual disposition and is therefore a created reality (*min maqāmi-l-jaʿl*); if this is not the case then it is connected with the non-manifest, universal predisposition. Created realities likewise, and hence received through the individual disposition, are all those things the attainment of which depends upon an existential reality other than pure Being itself, whereas if something that you are capable of receiving is not like this then creation can have no part in it and neither can the individual disposition.[9]

Providence is also, so we are told elsewhere, God's "specific mercy" (*raḥma khāṣṣa*) which is peculiar to the individual[10] and contrasted as such with the "all-inclusive mercy" (*raḥma shāmila*) deemed identical with existence itself.[11] Hence, unlike the latter – which encompasses all human beings whether blessed or damned – the specific mercy of providence is one that may be granted or withheld.

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8 Qurʾān, LXXXIV, 19.

9 *Miftāḥ*, p. 130–131.

10 See *Fukūk*, p. 271.

11 See *Iʿjāz*, p. 51.

Here, therefore, it is to be noted that Qūnawī's definitions of the first and third categories enumerated earlier would seem to imply that some human beings are in effect predestined either to beatitude or damnation – all that happens to them being a virtually inevitable consequence of their primordial rank in the divine mind. Nevertheless, the route assigned to the middle category – to which the majority of men are presumably deemed to belong – would appear to be less rigorously predetermined; one on which their fate remains open and to a large extent dependent on their own efforts.[12] For this group in particular, then, as we shall see, the pastoral functions of religion and holy law are held to play a decisive role in shaping their destiny.

2 The Law and the Way

Central to Qūnawī's view of the purpose of religion and revealed law is the idea of preserving a just balance in all things. As the following passage illustrates, he identifies one of their chief *raisons d'être* as being that of preserving order and equilibrium in the world in general as well as in the individual lives of humankind:

> The outward form of prophethood [i.e. the sacred law,] is concerned with maintaining order (*niẓām*) in the world[13] and with providing the beings therein (*al-kawn*) with the most favourable circumstances for undertaking the upward spiritual journey (*sulūk*), at least as far as the stage that marks the wayfarer's salvation (*saʿāda*). With this end in view, it is likewise concerned with establishing a just balance (*ʿadl*) between the sway of nature and the use of the bodily faculties in all those things in which such use is necessary and, indeed, desirable, such that rather than giving way to extremes – either of excess or negligence – the divine equilibrium (*al-mīzān al-ilāhī al-iʿtidālī*) is observed and applied in all such activities. Similarly, it is concerned with the attainment of the natural, sensorial bliss which is to be enjoyed in perpetuity in the hereafter, and also with

12 Although the question of free will versus predestination had been, as is well known, one of the key debates serving to define the positions of the early schools of Islamic theology, Qūnawī is clearly not disposed to invoke their views, preferring instead merely to expound his doctrine of providence without context or commentary.

13 One will recall that the function of "upholding the order of the world" is deemed intrinsic to the perfect man's ontological role as the "guardian" who prevents manifestation from returning at once to its non-manifest source.

> acquiring the appropriate individual existential disposition for bringing about the conformity of the body, and all its faculties, with the Divine Holy Spirit (*al-rūḥ al-qudsī al-ilāhī*) such that it becomes imbued with [the Spirit's] attributes and influence and all that these entail in terms of divine realities and spiritual benefits.[14]

Also of note on this score is the idea that an inherent bond exists between the characteristics of the different sacred laws, the natures of the divine envoys (*rusul*) sent to establish them, and the people for whom they are intended – whether a specific community, as in the case of all previous laws, or mankind as a whole in the case of Islam. "In every age", says Qūnawī, "the divine decrees [of the sacred law] are determined through the intermediary of the envoy (*rasūl*) of that epoch, and through that which is most beneficial for his people, according to the demands of their predisposition, states, spiritual qualifications, and characteristics".[15] Indeed, so close is this bond that, to a large extent, the function of prophethood merges with that of sacred law itself:

> Know that prophethood (*nubuwwa*) has both an outer form and an inner spirit, each of which has its own field of authority (*ḥukm*) and bears its own fruit. Now, the outer form of prophethood consists in founding a sacred law and traditional path (*tashrīʿ*), of which there are three categories: the first is concomitant [with prophethood itself] and concerns anyone who has worshipped God within himself, by means of a *sharīʿa* that God has determined for him such that he takes it as his path and worships his Lord through it. Thus, in this case, the *sharīʿa* is identical with the initiatic path (*ṭarīqa*); so be heedful of this! The second category concerns anyone who has been sent to guide a specific community (*ṭāʾifa khāṣṣa*). The authority of their prophethood thus extends [beyond themselves] since both they and the people to whom they were sent participate in that which was determined for them. Nevertheless, the scope of their *sharīʿa* is not universal. The third and final category is none other than the apostleship (*risāla*) of our Prophet – may God's grace and peace be upon him – for his is an apostleship that embraces all the various modes of revelation (*jamīʿ ḍurūbi-l-waḥy*) and all forms of sacred law (*jamīʿ ṣuwari-l-sharāʾiʿ*). Thus, its scope and authority is all-encompassing, universal and continuous, such that it has no appointed

14 *Iʿjāz*, p. 298.

15 *Iʿjāz*, p. 44.

> end. Rather, its rule simply comes to a close with the dissolution of time and becoming when the sun rises in the place where it set.[16]

For Qūnawī the pastoral functions of prophethood and sacred law are likewise connected with the human being's journey to perfection. Since the prophets have followed man's spiritual *reditus* to its very end and have therefore realised "that perfection which pertains to the human being", a fundamental aspect of their mission (*baʿtha*), following their return to the world, is the guidance they are able to provide by dint of their acquaintance with all of the journey's stations and pitfalls.[17] Their status in this respect is thus described as that of *al-wāṣil al-ḥākī*, or "the one who has actually been there" and who, by reason of his own experience, is able to "recount" to his fellow human beings the most direct and most suitable path to God.[18] Tied in with this role is the idea that the envoys, prophets and saints have been sent for the benefit of *all* human beings with all their varying predispositions and levels of understanding.[19] Indeed, as already indicated, the dictates of the sacred laws are deemed to have been determined in accordance with the nature of the "great majority" (*jumhūr*) of the people for whom they are intended, and this consideration goes so far as to take into account "the nature of the times they live in and the things on which they generally agree (*mā tawāṭaʾū ʿalay-hi*)".[20] Hence, a fundamental characteristic of the divine revelations, and the teachings of the prophets, is the fact that they are expressed in symbolic language containing different levels of meaning yet whose "outward sense" (*ẓāhir al-mafhūm*) is always suited to the understanding of the majority.[21] Though the latter are not "qualified" to achieve perfection in this life, the role of the sacred law with regard to them is nonetheless that of a safeguard preventing the influence of the divine secret from being obscured altogether by the conditions of this lower world and

16 *Iʿjāz*, p. 297–298.

17 *Mufṣiḥa*, pp. 22, 32.

18 *Murāsalāt*, p. 136. Following the departure of the Prophet of Islam or "Seal of the Envoys and Prophets", this role is carried out by the "inheritors of the prophets", i.e. the saints or the "perfect from among the Friends of God" (*al-kummal min al-awliyāʾ*) (*Mufṣiḥa*, p. 23). Indeed, Qūnawī asserts that God raises someone "in every generation" to fulfil the role of guide to salvation and perfection (*Mufṣiḥa*, p. 22). For the treatment of this topic in Ibn ʿArabī's works see M. Chodkiewicz, *Seal of the Saints: prophethood and sainthood in the doctrine of Ibn ʿArabī*, Cambridge 1993. See also G. Elmore, *Islamic sainthood in the fullness of time: Ibn al-ʿArabī's book of the fabulous gryphon*, Leiden 1999.

19 *Mufṣiḥa*, p. 22–24.

20 *Iʿjāz*, p. 44.

21 *Murāsalāt*, p. 136.

providing them with the most propitious circumstances for achieving salvation (*salāma*).[22]

The salvation of the majority (*al-saʿāda al-ʿāmma*), then, is something that is seen as pertaining, above all, to the "outer form" of prophethood.[23] Its "inner spirit", by contrast, is concerned, first and foremost, with those whose intrinsic nature qualifies them to rise above the level of the *jumhūr*. When dealing with this facet, Qūnawī turns again to the idea that the prophets have followed man's journey to its end and are therefore able to guide others along the same path. In this instance, however, he focuses specifically on the idea that the divine envoys are entrusted with the task not only of instituting an exoteric law applicable to *all* of their community but also with establishing an esoteric "way" or *ṭarīq*[24] whose function is to permit the few who possess the appropriate spiritual predisposition to travel as far and as quickly as possible[25] along the road to perfection.[26] However, while speaking of this journey as a cycle, he identifies its goal, not with the last point of the circumference but with the centre itself, since the *nuqṭa markazīya*, or central point, is the principle of the circle as a whole. It is in accordance with this perspective, then, that he highlights the exceptional nature of the *ṭarīq*. As its *raison d'être* is to provide the quickest and most direct way to the final goal, it necessarily differs from the usual course in that, rather than following a cyclic progression, it follows a linear one, that of the radius leading from the circumference to the centre.[27]

According to Qūnawī, a favourable predisposition will inevitably manifest itself in certain key respects, thus regarded as the unmistakable signs (*ʿalāmāt*)

22 *Murāsalāt*, p. 136.

23 *Iʿjāz*, p. 298.

24 He relates these complementary facets to those mentioned in the Qur'ānic verse {For every one of you We have made a law and a way} (Qur'ān, V, 48).

25 He adds, for example, that the inner spirit is concerned with "acquainting souls with the most direct path to perfection" (*Iʿjāz*, p. 300) and with "vivifying the link between the spirit of those who follow this way and the spirit of the prophet [who founded it]" (*Iʿjāz*, p. 298).

26 It should be borne in mind that for Qūnawī the *ṭarīq* is essentially identical with man's spiritual *reditus* from the individual state to that of the perfect human being. Thus, in his view, whether done by degrees or all at once, to follow this path to its end is to complete the passage from potency to act that is specific to man. This identity is further reinforced, moreover, by the fact that both the journey along the *ṭarīq* and man's existential journey in general are referred to by the term *sulūk*, which, by dint of its root meaning, conveys the sense of "threading one's way along a path". Hence, those initiated into the *ṭarīq* are called *sālikūn* or "wayfarers" (See *Iʿjāz*, p. 300; *Murāsalāt*, p. 135–136).

27 *Iʿjāz*, p. 292.

of the spiritual elite (*al-khāṣṣa*),[28] that is, those properly qualified (*muʾahhal*) to follow the *ṭarīq*.[29] The elite, he says, possess noble souls[30] and "elevated concerns that lead them to aspire to all that is loftiest"[31] – a soul's nobility being seen as a measure of its aloofness from the body and the pursuit of worldly goals.[32] A noble soul is therefore one that still remains conscious, albeit perhaps only partially, of its spiritual origin and is disinclined to immerse itself in the concerns of the inferior domain to which the individuality belongs.[33] Moreover, the idea of the soul's being aware of its origins is one that naturally has strong Platonic associations,[34] and these parallels are further reinforced by Qūnawī's describing the soul's intimations of its sublime roots as a type of recollection (*tadhakkur*).[35] Prompted, he says, by this vague reminiscence, and unconcerned with the fleeting phenomena of the lower world, the noble soul turns instead to acquiring the lasting virtues and perfections that befit its nature,[36] chief among which being knowledge in general but especially "knowledge of things as they really are in themselves",[37] as the elite could never be satisfied solely with those sciences concerned with the physical world alone.[38]

Alongside the desire for knowledge there is another crucial qualification: innate faith in God and His messengers.[39] Since – in keeping with the hadiths regarding *al-fiṭra* or pristine nature – the faith of Islam is seen as part of the pure state into which all humans are born, Qūnawī considers the elite's faith an indication of their having kept this nature relatively intact.[40]

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28 A term conventionally contrasted with that of "the common folk" or the "generality" (*al-ʿawāmm* or *al-ʿāmma*). Qūnawī's use of this term would appear to be based, not on any considerations of culture, education or social standing, but on the sole criterion of whether or not someone possesses the spiritual qualifications indicated above.

29 *Iʿjāz*, p. 13; *Mufṣiḥa*, p. 20.

30 *Mufṣiḥa*, p. 25.

31 *Mufṣiḥa*, p. 16.

32 *Fukūk*, pp. 181, 285; *Mufṣiḥa*, p. 20–21.

33 Naturally, this brings to mind Qūnawī's remarks – cited earlier – about the providential role of man's divine secret.

34 See Plato, *Phaedrus*, 249–250.

35 *Miftāḥ*, pp. 34, 108; *Iʿjāz*, p. 323.

36 *Mufṣiḥa*, p. 16.

37 *Mufṣiḥa*, p. 16.

38 *Mufṣiḥa*, pp. 19, 21.

39 *Mufṣiḥa*, p. 25.

40 *Iʿjāz*, p. 13.

But unlike the common people, who are also characterised by faith, yet whose predispositions dictate that they go no further than the sphere of belief,[41] the elite are compelled by their search for certitude (*yaqīn*) to look beyond the outer form and exoteric sense of the divine revelations and the teachings of the prophets.[42] Indeed, fundamental to their quest is the idea that they could never be content with mere "conformism", or *taqlīd*,[43] and it is with regard to this trait in particular that he calls them "sincere seekers", or *mustabṣirūn*,[44] a term conventionally contrasted with that of *muqallid*, or "imitator",[45] and which conveys the idea of someone who, rather than accept something without striving to understand why, is intent on seeing the truth of things for themselves. Furthermore, though compelled to look beyond the belief and conformism that characterise the generality, the *mustabṣirūn* are also distinguished by the fact that, unlike the *falāsifa* and *mutakallimūn*, they realise that the certitude they seek cannot be acquired through reason alone.[46]

Because their need to find the truth is so compelling, Qūnawī speaks of the elite's search for the path that will lead them to it as, by extension, a quest for peace of mind. Their state during their progression towards this path is therefore one of "perplexity and confusion" (*ḥayra*), a predicament seen as an inevitable part of the human condition, at least until man finds something to rely on, both materially with regard to his profession and spiritually with regard to his faith.[47] But whereas the generality of believers find the cure to perplexity in the exoteric understanding of their faith, the elite remain in this state until they finally enter the *ṭarīq*. In their case, however, the intensity of this initial stage of perplexity, or "angst" (*qalaq*),[48] is itself a mark of the desired predisposition; for it is the "sincerity of their quest, the earnestness of their determination, and the great efforts they expend in seeking to lift the veil" that evoke a providential reaction whereby "the seeker is overcome by one of the stations

41 *Mufṣiḥa*, p. 23.

42 *Mufṣiḥa*, p. 25; *Murāsalāt*, p. 136.

43 *Mufṣiḥa*, p. 25; *Hādiya*, p. 161.

44 *Mufṣiḥa*, p. 16–20.

45 See, for example, *Rasā'il Ikhwān al-Ṣafā'*, 9th *Risāla*, (vol. I, p. 264) and Ghazālī, *Mishkāt al-anwār*, p. 131. See also F. Griffel, '*Taqlīd* of the Philosophers: Al-Ghazālī's initial accusation in the *Tahāfut*' in S. Günther, ed., *Ideas, images and methods of portrayal: insights into Arabic literature and Islam*, Leiden 2005.

46 *Mufṣiḥa*, p. 25; *Fukūk*, p. 181; *I'jāz*, p. 345; *As'ila*, p. 71.

47 *I'jāz*, p. 344.

48 *Mufṣiḥa*, p. 17.

(*maqāmāt*) [of the way]" and enters upon the path, where, at last, "he finds peace and reassurance".[49]

For Qūnawī, then, the role of the *ṭarīq* is to provide the most favourable conditions for pursuing the highest of all goals: that of actualising the perfection and universality implicit in the human being's metaphysical rank. If the initiate is to achieve this goal he must become conscious of his presence not just in the corporeal world but in all of his multiple states. Thus, setting out from the {lowest of the low} – the human corporeal state, which is the "sum of all causes and intermediaries"[50] – the *ṭarīq* retraces in reverse order his spiritual progression through the worlds in which he sojourned during the formative stages of lodging (*istīdāʿ*). However, whereas his passage into this world had been achieved by acquiring an ever-increasing number of determinations and conditions in each of the *marātib al-istīdāʿ*, ascent from it is brought about by "untying" or "dissolving" (*taḥlīl*) each of these determinations in turn.[51]

Here Qūnawī stresses that for most human beings what stops them from undertaking this ascent is the fact that their "vessel of consciousness" or *maḥall* is restricted by the bounds of their individual faculties.[52] Accordingly, in his treatment of the *ṭarīq* and its role, he lays special emphasis on the concept of "liberation" (*khulūṣ* or *taḥarrur*). The factors that prompt the elite to follow the way – their search for certitude and their desire to fathom those truths that lie beyond the grasp of reason – these, he says, are all essentially expressions of the quest for liberation from the constraints of the individuality and its limited faculties.

In line with his assertion that "every determination is a limitation", Qūnawī – who defines freedom simply as the absence of constraint – holds that total freedom belongs to God's Essence alone. As it is "utterly indeterminate and contains no determinate thing" it cannot possibly be constrained.[53] Below this absolute freedom, however, at the boundary between the non-determination of the Divine Essence and the indefinite multitude of determinations that make up universal existence, is a freedom that admits of a single constraint (*qayd*) alone, that of determination itself (*nafs al-taʿayyun*).[54] This, he affirms,

49 Here again, Qūnawī seems to take the view that things merely act upon themselves, attributing the peace the seeker finds on entering the *ṭarīq* to his recognising "that part of his own secret comprised therein" (*li-mā fi-hi min sirri-hi*) (*Iʿjāz*, p. 345).

50 *Iʿjāz*, p. 240.

51 *Miftāḥ*, p. 105–106; *Hādiya*, p. 171; *Iʿjāz*, p. 257.

52 *Hādiya*, pp. 148, 157, 171.

53 *Iʿjāz*, p. 237.

54 *Iʿjāz*, pp. 110, 237.

is the freedom that belongs to the perfect man, and though not absolute like that of the Essence, it is nonetheless complete with regard to the realm of manifest existence. To realise human perfection is therefore to attain this freedom, which is likewise that of the common measure or unity of Being. Residing as it does in the first determination, it is realised by resolving all existential determinations within their principle. Hence our author speaks time and again of "freeing oneself from the constraints of the individuality"[55] – particularly those faculties that serve to restrict one's consciousness, such as the "prisons of cogitative thought"[56] – and of liberation from the "noose of conformism"[57] and ultimately from the "bonds" of the spiritual stations themselves.[58]

3 Reorientation

As established at the beginning of this chapter, Ṣadr al-Dīn sees the extent to which a person leans towards and subsequently progresses on the *ṭarīq* as a measure of the providential influence of their divine secret. Moreover, one will recall that in certain cases this influence is linked to the notion of *jadhb*, or attraction,[59] envisaged as the force that pulls the individual towards the end of the path and hence spares them from having to "betake themselves to many arduous acts of worship and spiritual exercises". In order to gain a clearer picture of the sense in which Qūnawī conceives of this attractive force one should bear in mind that he specifically ties the concept of *jadhb* to the symbolism of the circle in its dynamic aspect. Drawing on this symbolism, he speaks not just of one kind of *jadhb* but of two opposing attractions, corresponding to the two basic forces of circular motion: as well as a divine attraction, or centripetal force, pulling the initiate towards the centre of his being, there are also those attractions, or *jadhabāt*, which, at each point of the circumference, pull in the opposite direction, and which therefore correspond to the action of a centrifugal force. Not surprisingly, when treating of the initiate's journey along the *ṭarīq*, he assimilates these "peripheral individual attractions" (*mujādhabāt aṭrāfīya juzʾīya*) to the different obstacles and distractions liable to slow their progress on the road to perfection,[60] warning that, if allowed to prevail

55 *Hādiya*, p. 157.
56 *Fukūk*, p. 182.
57 *Hādiya*, p. 161.
58 *Iʿjāz*, p. 257.
59 See *supra*, p. 138.
60 *Iʿjāz*, pp. 42, 257.

unchecked, they are capable of dragging the individual to the very limit of "deviation" or "disequilibrium" (*inḥirāf*). This, however, is not to say that such forces are considered wholly negative *per se* in all circumstances. Indeed, when dealing with man's formative descent from the metaphysical degree of the {best of statures} (*aḥsan taqwīm*) to the human corporeal state or {lowest of the low} they are attributed with a necessary role in his ontogenesis. Accordingly, the attitude that one should adopt towards such peripheral attractions is not to refuse them outright, but rather to give each of them their due measure and no more, while inwardly remaining fixed and impassive in the immutable middle:

> For the one who regards with equanimity the peripheries of the circle of every station through which he passes, and remains in its centre unaffected by their qualities, free from the shackles of their influences and traces, *while giving everything within him that attracts and summons him its due share of him and nothing more*, such that he in himself, apart from that which assumes a determinate appearance through these shares, remains in his original state of freedom and simplicity, without any particular attribute, state, characteristic, or name: such a one, we say, is a true man (*rajul*), who follows the affairs of his Lord inasmuch as he {gives everything its creation}.[61,62]

It is, then, solely with regard to those who exceed the golden mean, allowing themselves to swerve from the central point of equilibrium, that such forces are thought of as negative, and as obstacles on the journey to perfection:

> Because man is a copy of the entire cosmos he has a constant connection with every world, degree, reality and state: indeed, with every single thing; and in this link is that which inevitably demands that he be pulled from his centre, which is {the best of statures}, to every side and that he respond to every summoner …[63] Such attractions, my brother, pull from every side and all directions, and they call with the voice of love, since man is beloved of all things (*maʿshūq al-kull*) … and you are the servant of those to which you respond and to which you are attracted. Nevertheless,

61 Qur'ān, XX, 50. By invoking this verse, Qūnawī appears to be alluding to the cosmogonic aspect of man's descent i.e. the idea that it is through the prism of man's existence that the cosmos is made manifest.

62 *Iʿjāz*, p. 284.

63 *Iʿjāz*, p. 281.

> the just balance in all stations and states resides in the middle, such that it is only those who depart from it that swerve from the true path. Thus nobody deviates save those who are pulled from that which is superior within them to that which is inferior.[64]

Of significance too, in this regard, is the direct correlation established between the concept of man's distraction by such forces and that of the "accidental bonds" that keep him "imprisoned" within the confines of the individual state,[65] as it underscores the idea that this imprisonment is seen not as a definitive and unalterable state but as something that man himself contributes towards and which can thus be undone by his turning away from the *jadhabāt* and following instead the path leading to the centre. That our author sees human beings as the victims of their own illusions is evident in the following passage:

> You already possess it, yet it is as though you still needed to acquire it. You have it firmly in the grasp of your power, yet it is as though you were still seeking it in a state of poverty towards it. In truth, one of the things causing this to be so is the mystery of your all-embracing nature (*sirr jamʿīyati-ka*), of its unity and of the lack of permanence of whatever is reflected in your mirror, insofar as all things revolve around your essence (*ḥaqīqatu-ka*), which is the very centre of their circle. Your essential reality, then, is like a spherical mirror on an {unfurled parchment}[66] (*raqq manshūr*) which surrounds it and revolves around it, and which contains all inscriptions, such that the relationship of all things towards [your essence] is that of the points of the circumference towards the central point from which they originate.[67]

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64 *Iʿjāz*, p. 284.

65 *Iʿjāz*, p. 42; *Hādiya*, pp. 157, 171.

66 The term "unfurled parchment" is taken from the opening verses of *Sūrat al-Ṭūr*: {By the Mount and a Book Inscribed in an Unfurled Parchment, and by the Inhabited House} (Qurʾān, LII, 1–4). Commenting upon these verses, Qūnawī writes: "The {Mount} is the intelligible degree of the world envisaged in respect of its unchanging essence and contingent nature (*imkān*); and the {Book Inscribed} (*al-kitāb al-masṭūr*) represents the contingent beings (*mumkināt*) made manifest upon the page of existence, which is symbolised, for its part, by the {Unfurled Parchment} (*al-raqq al-manshūr*)". (*Fukūk*, p. 211). Hence, what is reflected – or "imprinted" (*munṭabiʿ*), as he puts it – in the "spherical mirror of the heart" is the "great book of existence" itself.

67 *Miftāḥ*, p. 139.

Applying these considerations to his theory of *sulūk*, Ṣadr al-Dīn sees progress along the spiritual path as occurring when the central *jadhb* outweighs the peripheral *jadhabāt*.[68] It would seem, however, that he holds this to be achieved, not through an actual increase in this force itself, but simply through the changes the wayfarer brings about in his own "vessel of consciousness", which thus render it more susceptible to the influence of the divine secret. This process is described as one of "emptying the vessel" (*tafrīgh al-maḥall*) of the multiple determinations – such as the manifold thoughts, beliefs and affections – which characterise the contingent state.[69] Although he mentions numerous factors that assist in this endeavour he nonetheless singles out two in particular which he considers to be of fundamental importance.

The first, which is clearly deemed the *sine qua non* of all spiritual development, is a favourable predisposition, since without this "all effort is in vain".[70] As for the second, it is the "method of orientation", or *tawajjuh*, which consists, as its name suggests, in the initiate's striving to keep the "face of the heart" constantly turned towards the final goal, such that it remains oblivious to the distractions along the wayside.[71] In its ideal form this state of concentration reaches the point of "fixing one's mind entirely upon the True, in so total a manner as to be analogous to the way in which He knows Himself".[72] That he considers the ability to achieve this state as extremely rare is clear from his identifying it as "one of the defining characteristics of the cream of the elite".[73] It should be noted, moreover, that included too within the overarching concept of orientation are the familiar methods of the way – namely the exercises (*riyāḍāt*) and disciplines (*mujāhadāt*) prescribed by one's shaykh, or spiritual master – since all of these contribute towards the desired state of concentration.[74]

On this score, as one might expect, special emphasis is placed on the practice of *dhikr* or invocation,[75] considered one of the most effective means of clearing the mind of the constant procession of fleeting thoughts which form "so many obstacles on the path". The initiate achieves this by devoting himself

68 *Mufṣiḥa*, p. 42.

69 *Miftāḥ*, p. 86; *I'jāz*, p. 33.

70 *Murshidīya*, fol. 5b.

71 *Murshidīya*, fol. 3b.

72 *Mufṣiḥa*, p. 20.

73 *Mufṣiḥa*, p. 20.

74 *Nafaḥāt*, fol. 39b (*Tarjumah*, p. 91).

75 For a description and analysis of this practice see M. Gilsenen, 'Ritual : the *dhikr*' in L. Ridgeon, ed., *Sufism : critical concepts in Islamic studies*, Vol. III, London 2008.

to the "outward invocation" (*al-dhikr al-ẓāhir*), that is, the pronunciation of a specific sacred formula, until he reaches the stage where he is able to quell all extraneous thoughts. When this happens, he proceeds to the next degree of invocation, whereby his heart pronounces the *dhikr* of its own accord. This, however, is not the final stage in the process, since, having reached this point, the *sālik* or initiate must then strive not only to keep his mind free of all thoughts but to "empty his heart of this inward *dhikr* as well", a state so difficult to maintain that, to begin with, he will be capable of preserving it for no more than a moment or two, at best, before he is "assailed by thoughts".[76] Nevertheless, it is by continuing in this vein, or, if necessary, by combining both the inward and outward invocations at once, that the *sālik* realises "the void (*farāgh*) [in the heart], and hence, ultimately, the elucidation of the True (*istijlāʾ al-ḥaqq*), whose secret has been hidden from the world of creation, since this can come about solely in the heart which has been emptied of all that is other than the True, and which therefore looks to Him alone".[77] Elaborating upon the symbolic nature of the *dhikr*, Qūnawī writes:

> The *dhikr* is in one respect a creatural thing (*kawnī*) and in another it is a lordly thing (*rabbānī*): regarding its verbal formulation and its pronunciation it is a created thing, and regarding what it denotes it is God (*ḥaqq*). The *dhikr* is thus the *barzakh* between the True and the creature … At a later stage, when a man passes from the outward to the inward *dhikr*, and the heart pronounces it without effort – as happens above all in the case where the heart pronounces of its own accord a *dhikr* other than the one to which it has usually been applied – he becomes further removed from the forms of the world and its manifold modalities, even as both his proximity to the True and his analogical relationship towards Him becomes more complete.[78]

Like his master,[79] Qūnawī makes a point of stressing how difficult the *ṭarīq* will be for all but the rarest few. To follow the way, he says, is to commit oneself to enduring hardships and trials in which progress, in most cases, will be made only with the utmost effort.[80] That this should be the case is hardly surprising given that the state of *jamʿ*, or "integral concentration", which the initiate

76 *Murshidīya*, fol. 6a.

77 *Murshidīya*, fol. 4a.

78 *Murshidīya*, fol. 8a-b. Michel Vâlsan's translation in part (*Épître*).

79 See *Risālat al-anwār* in *Rasāʾil Ibn ʿArabī*.

80 *Miftāḥ*, p. 112; *Hādiya*, p. 161; *Fukūk*, p. 290.

should constantly strive to achieve is the antithesis of all that usually characterises man's state of mind, in which the vessel of consciousness typically finds itself in a state of *tafriqa*, that is, of "dispersion" among the manifold objects and distractions of the lower world.[81]

It is in keeping with this latter perspective, then, that entering the *ṭarīq* is seen as implying a fundamental shift in the individual's orientation. Having been turned towards the multiple *jadhabāt* of the lower world, the soul must thenceforth turn aside from all that might distract it from achieving its aim of rediscovering its essential conformity with the non-differentiated spirit.[82] Here Qūnawī's readers are reminded of the fact that, traditionally, the first station (*maqām*) of the initiatic journey is deemed that of *tawba* or repentance in the etymological sense of turning again towards God.[83] The initiate's reorientation, or *tawajjuh*, towards the centre of his being therefore implies his detachment from all worldly concerns:

> Know that the source of man's individual and temperamental faculties, and hence the root of all of his qualities, characteristics, and activities, is his heart.[84] Now, [the heart] is the mirror of the Divine Spirit (*al-rūḥ al-ilāhī*), which, although separate (*mufāriq*) and immaterial in itself, governs the body nonetheless through the intermediary of the vital spirit (*al-rūḥ al-ḥayawānī*) which is supported by the ethereal form (*al-ṣūrat al-ḍabābīya*) present in the left ventricle of the corporeal heart. Moreover, the Divine Spirit mentioned above is the mirror of the divine secret to which allusion is made in the hadith: *The heart of my believing servant contains Me*. Whoever divides and scatters his heart in the pursuit of worldly goals, thereby rendering it prone to following each and every desire, the heart of such a one will be undermined on the intellectual level, like a body which, excessively weakened, is no longer capable of recovering, or like the water of a great river when the latter splits into so many tributaries. Such a man will thus be led to seek strength and

81 *Iʿjāz*, p. 35.

82 *Fukūk*, p. 285–286.

83 *Iʿjāz*, p. 293.

84 For the classical Sufi conceptions of the heart as the receptacle of intuition and seat of contemplation see, for example, Abū Ṭālib al-Makkī, (d. 386/996), *Qūt al-qulūb; fī muʿāmalat al-maḥbūb wa-waṣf ṭarīq al-murīd ilā maqām al-tawḥīd*, ed. B. ʿUyūn al-Sūd, Beirut 1997, vol. 1, p. 221. See also G.Böwering, *The Mystical Vision of Existence in Classical Islam : the Qurʾānic Hermeneutics of the Ṣūfī Sahl At-Tustarī* (*d. 283/896*), New York 1980, pp. 163, 250–252.

> comfort in outward things, which he would presume to take in and make part of himself, as one would do with the nutriments in food. This effort, however, cannot but be in vain, for such a case is, in reality, comparable to that of a man who has a weak stomach and severely diminished strength, yet who attempts, nonetheless, to make himself well again by consuming plentiful quantities of food, although this, of course, can do him no good at all, since his bodily condition will not allow it.[85]

And likewise:

> Know that the reason for the gradual procession in the practice of invocation, orientation and ascension (*taraqqī*) is the quickening of the reality of the primordial analogy (*munāsaba*) between the True and His servant. At present, this reality is lost [from view], being veiled by the conditions of the created being's state and by the different characteristics and attributes of the contingent state. Hence, it may be rediscovered, reformed and released solely through the breaking of all outward and inward ties, thereby emptying the heart of all the affections engendered by man's attachment to all things, wittingly or unwittingly.[86]

Naturally, relinquishing worldly affections is by no means an easy prospect – all the more so given that the soul inevitably becomes "enamoured" of its governance (*tadbīr*) of the body and is pained by the thought of turning away from it.[87] But just as the soul must turn away from the body when the latter dies, so must the initiate's soul at the start of its journey. "When the servant", says Qūnawī, "becomes an intimate of the *dhikr*, it is as if he has departed from this world in most respects, yet at the same time, by virtue of the dominance which the authority of divine unity then exerts over existential multiplicity, he enlivens the thread of the analogy that links him to the True".[88]

It is, therefore, by turning away from the attractions that bind his consciousness to a specific state that the *sālik* follows the thread leading to the divine centre of his being:

> When the initiate transcends the sway of the manifold bonds, particular leanings, and the unbalancing effect of the individual peripheral

85 *Murshidīya*, fol. 5b. Michel Vâlsan's translation in part (*Épître*).

86 *Murshidīya*, fol. 7a. Michel Vâlsan's translation in part (*Épître*).

87 *Fukūk*, p. 285.

88 *Murshidīya*, fol. 8a.

attractions, such that he finally reaches the central station of synthesis (*al-maqām al-jamʿī al-wasaṭī*), which is the fixed point of the universal sphere (*nuqṭat al-musāmatati-l-kullīya*) and the centre of the circle that embraces all the degrees of equilibrium – the intelligible, the spiritual, the imaginary, and the sensorial – he thereby comprises everything within the two dignities [the divine and the contingent], by dint of being the intelligible common boundary between them, facing both of them at once, like the central point in relation to each part of the circumference.[89]

4 Love

In line with tradition, Qūnawī identifies God's love as the "motive" (*bāʿith*) of creation.[90] This doctrine, however, is not without its paradoxes. Hence the reader is reminded that creation, though caused by love, entails man's descent from God's knowledge to manifest existence, and therefore brings about his separation (*faṣl*) – albeit in appearance alone – from the "homeland of the non-manifest".[91] How, then, can it be that love itself is the cause of separation from the beloved? The answer, we are told, is that such estrangement is necessary as love always presupposes a certain degree of separation in order that its

89 *Iʿjāz*, p. 42.

90 *Miftāḥ*, p. 40. Qūnawī sees this doctrine as enshrined in both the Qur'ān and the hadiths, referring primarily to the well-known *ḥadīth qudsī 'I was a hidden treasure and I loved to be known so I created the world'*. In his interpretation, just as it identifies the bringing to light (*istijlā'*) of God's treasure as the *final* cause of creation, so does it identify God's love (*maḥabba*) – expressed by the past tense *aḥbabtu*, "I loved" – as the motive or impetus for this manifestation. Besides the hadith of the hidden treasure, Qūnawī considers the doctrine of love as the motor of existence to be expressed in the following verses from *Sūrat al-Burūj*, in which the Divine Name "the Loving" (*al-wadūd*) is mentioned in direct conjunction with the notion of God as the Originator and Returner of creation: {Verily, thy Lord's power is overwhelming. It is He who originates and brings back again. And He is the Forgiving, the Loving, Lord of the Throne, the Glorious, Doer of what He wills}. (Qur'ān, LXXXV, 12–16). Hence, insofar as God is the Lover (*al-muḥibb*) of His creation, He originates the journey of existence, yet insofar as He is, at the same time, their Beloved (*al-maḥbūb*) He brings all things back to Himself (*Nuṣūṣ*, p. 86–88), a return, says Qūnawī, which is an expression of the necessary resolution of all multiplicity within its principle (*Fukūk*, p. 187). Moreover, so intense does he consider the power of God's love to be, that he relates it specifically to the Name "the Overwhelming in Power" (*shadīd al-baṭsh*) expressed at the beginning of the Qur'ānic passage cited above (*Nuṣūṣ*, p. 86).

91 *Naftha*, fol. 12a.

power (*sulṭān*) be made manifest.[92] But that is not all, for insofar as "nothing can act upon anything else in respect of that by which they are different or opposed" it follows that "nothing can *love* anything else in respect of that by which they differ", such that, in reality, "the lover only ever loves himself",[93] a principle deemed to hold true of love both human and divine. Hence, contrary to what is generally assumed, God does not love creatures in respect of their being other than Him, but in respect of their participation in His Attributes.[94] The beloved, then, is like a mirror in which the lover's hidden beauty is made manifest;[95] and in keeping with this view Qūnawī speaks of the perfect man – who is the final cause of existence – as being a "perfect mirror of the True" (*majlan tāmm li-l-ḥaqq*)[96] in which God beholds the multiplicity hidden in His absolute oneness.[97]

Love plays an important part too in Ṣadr al-Dīn's conception of the spiritual path,[98] both as the force carrying the initiate forward and as the principle presiding over the chief stages of his progress.[99] Judging by the *Mashāriq al-darārī*, Farghānī's *reportatio* of his master's oral commentary on the *Naẓm al-sulūk*, Qūnawī would seem to have reserved his most elaborate treatment of this topic for his lectures. In any case, expounded in the long introduction to this work is an esoteric doctrine of love, which may thus be considered a relevant and indeed important source in any assessment of this facet of his teachings.

Again, as one might expect given the subject-matter, the doctrine in question displays a strong Platonic influence, albeit couched within the specific

92 *Nafaḥāt*, fol. 27.

93 *Iʿjāz*, p. 198.

94 *Nafaḥāt*, fol. 28.

95 *Nafaḥāt*, fols. 26–27; *Iʿjāz*, p. 198.

96 *Nuṣūṣ*, p. 42.

97 Again, such multiplicity, we are told, cannot be made manifest other than by means of this relative separation, as otherwise it would stay hidden by the "veil of proximity" (*ḥijābīyat al-qurb*). (*Nafaḥāt*, fol. 27; *Iʿjāz*, p. 198–199).

98 Given the equivalence established between the initiate's path and man's existential journey, it is not surprising that he should attribute love with a crucial role in this process.

99 Indeed, it could be said that he considers all the *jadhabāt* or attractive forces to which the initiate is subject to be expressions of the motive force of love, and this applies not only to the attraction that pulls him towards the centre of his being but to the manifold *jadhabāt* that pull in the opposite direction as well; for just as the centripetal attraction is the expression of the love, or common measure, between the human being and its divine principle, so are the peripheral attractions expressions of the love between man and all that is comprised in his nature and metaphysical rank, a perspective that Qūnawī reinforces by asserting that such *jadhabāt* call to man "with the voice of love", precisely because he is "beloved of all things" (*maʿshūq al-kull*).

framework of Islamic mysticism. In agreement, therefore, with the spirit of Plato's teachings regarding the nature of beauty and the role that love plays in initiation into the mysteries,[100] we are told that the love engendered by a vision of physical beauty is capable firstly of turning the initiate's attention to beauty's metaphysical source and secondly, through his yearning for the latter, of assisting him in his progress towards perfection. Indeed, it may sometimes happen that either at the time of his entering the *ṭarīq* or at some later stage in his journey, he encounters a "human locus of manifestation" (*maẓhar insānī*) whose beauty, whether aesthetic, spiritual or both at once, awakens within him a "burning love" of such intensity as to be a source of anguish.[101] In such cases, we are told, there exists a profound kinship between the lover and his beloved. Appearing at a stage where the initiate has not yet become conscious of his higher faculties, the beloved is so closely wedded to his own spirit that its traces are discernible in their manifest form.[102] Here, however, a specific danger lurks: since such love is intended to make him conscious of his spirit, to stop at the level of physical beauty would halt any further progress on the path. Those who benefit from it, by contrast, look beyond the outer form and see the spirit within.[103]

Where this doctrine takes on a more distinctly Islamic hue is in the idea that the esoteric function of love merges with that of the shaykh or spiritual master, both being instrumental in purifying the heart and hence in aiding the intiate along the path:

> A perfectly balanced spiritual *mizāj* is the outward sign of the authority of the heart. Now, until the initiate becomes a 'companion of the heart' (*ṣāḥib-i dil*) he should not cease striving to attain this degree, by practising the spiritual exercises and means of countering the desires of the soul which his shaykh has prescribed,[104] as distinct from those of his own

100 See Plato, *Phaedrus*, 249–250. For an in-depth study of the Sufi doctrine of divine love and its Platonic antecedents see B. Abrahamov, *Divine love in Islamic mysticism: the teachings of al-Ghazâlî and al-Dabbâgh*, London 2003.

101 Farghānī, *Mashāriq al-darārī*, p. 72.

102 Farghānī, *Mashāriq al-darārī*, pp. 72, 75. This would appear to tally with the view expressed in the *Iʿjāz* whereby the beloved – like any other outward manifestation – is simply a condition (*sharṭ*) on which hinges the lover's own influence upon himself. (See *Iʿjāz* p. 198).

103 Farghānī, *Mashāriq al-darārī*, p. 74.

104 The shaykh's role in relation to the soul of the *murīd* or disciple is likened to that of the physician in relation to the body: in both cases their aim is to recognise and treat the

> choice. However, once he has become a companion of the heart, Love (*ʿishq*) is his master (*ustādh*) from that moment on. Having reached that point, it is he himself who determines his actions.[105]

Attaining the degree of "companion of the heart", we are told, is synonymous with the "spiritual opening" (*fatḥ*),[106] a concept that features prominently in Islamic mysticism,[107] and which is conceived of here – in one of its three principal modes at least – [108] as having a special bearing on the intitiatic doctrine of love. This time, moreover, it is specifically the idea of love's irrationality – or rather its transcending the bounds of reason (*ʿaql*) – that is invested with an esoteric significance:

> In [this] category, what is manifested with the opening (*fatḥ*) is the existential secret (*sirr-i wujūdī*) that the initiate's spirit and speaking soul (*nafs-i nāṭiqah*) possess in the world of spirits … And whether this manifestation comes about through providence alone – that is, without having had to devote oneself to a great deal of striving and spiritual exercises – or by means of the proximity gained by carrying out the obligatory rites (*bi-wāsiṭah-i qurb-i farāʾiḍ*), its spiritual influence and powers come to dominate the physical faculties, such that the latter fall wholly under its sway. Indeed, through its unity and freedom, the existential secret, which is the interior of the spirit, causes the rational faculty (*ʿaql*) to withdraw from its work – the very faculty, that is to say, which upholds and enforces the observance of the religious duties and the bounds set by the sacred law within the province and kingdom of the body, and

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disequilibria (*ʿilal*) upsetting the desired balance of the respective *mizāj*. (Farghānī, *Mashāriq al-darārī*, p. 68–69).

105 Farghānī, *Mashāriq al-darārī*, p. 69.

106 A term rooted in the Qurʾānic verses: {Surely We have given thee a manifest victory} (*fatḥan mubīnan*) (XLVIII, 1); and {When comes the help of God, and victory} (CX, 1).

107 See Chittick, *The Sufi Path of Knowledge*, p. 394: "'Opening' (*fatḥ* or *futūḥ*) is more or less synonymous with 'unveiling' (*kashf*) and 'tasting' (*dhawq*). Hence it signifies direct, experiential knowledge of the realities of things, a knowledge that God gives to the servant through 'self-disclosure' (*tajallī*).

108 The opening, we are told, consists in the initiate's "existential secret" (*sirr-i wujūdī*) becoming manifest. This can occur in one of three guises, depending on the individual's disposition. Hence, in the highest and rarest category of *fatḥ* the secret appears in the *wajh khāṣṣ*; in the middle category it appears in the "world of spirits"; and in the third it is made manifest "in the outward aspect of existence" (*dar ẓāhir-i wujūd*). (Farghānī, *Mashāriq al-darārī*, p. 70–71).

> which distinguishes between fair and foul, good and bad, beneficial and harmful, yet which, at the same time, by dint of its cogitative power, is the leaven from which arise the manifold thoughts and illusions that form so many obstacles [on the spiritual path]. Hence those who receive this manifestation are called 'fools' (*majdhūb*) and 'madly in love' (*muwallah*).[109]

5 The Spiritual Ascent

According to Qūnawī, "every wayfarer who is following a path to God, whichever path it be, is thereby undertaking a *miʿrāj*"[110] – a term traditionally associated almost exclusively with the Prophet's ascension through the seven heavens, though here it is applied generically to all spiritual ascensions. This, however, is not to say that every ascent leads to the same summit, since the limit of each wayfarer's ascension will inevitably be determined by the dictates of their predisposition. Whereas some will fail to break the bonds of the individual state, others may yet ascend to "some medium rank in the spiritual hierarchy",[111] and in this latter respect our author mentions the case of those who ascend at least as far as the "world of pure spirits", without necessarily going beyond it:

> Among those human beings who strive to attain spiritual realisation, there are some who, by virtue of this labour, end up at the rank of angels. When this happens, their natural, complexional faculties are re-absorbed into spiritual faculties which thenceforth hold permanent sway over the natural faculties; a process which is analogous to the natural transmutations [such as water into air, or air into fire] that occur in our world.[112]

As for the specifically prophetic type of *miʿrāj*, we are told that those initiates who are capable of casting off the limitations of the body have themselves undertaken such a journey and have therefore verified the hierarchy of assemblies and "spiritual poles" described in the prophetic traditions concerning

109 Farghānī, *Mashāriq al-darārī*, p. 70–71.

110 *Nuṣūṣ*, p. 18.

111 *Miftāḥ*, p. 112.

112 *Fukūk*, p. 296–297.

the *miʿrāj*,[113] and that they, like the Prophet,[114] are able to undertake this ascension more than once.[115]

At the same time, as we saw earlier, attention is drawn to another kind of spiritual ascent, which is undertaken once only. Like his master before him,[116] Qūnawī calls it the *miʿrāj al-taḥlīl*, or "ascension of unbinding" because it is by means of it that the initiate successively "dissolves" each of the manifold determinations acquired during his descent through the stages of lodging. This *miʿrāj*, then, is the second half of the full cycle of human existence, or "circle of completion" (*dā'irat al-tamāmīya*) ending in perfection,[117] which is why it is conceived of as starting at the very mid-point of man's existential journey, that is, the stage at which the individual reaches full maturity:[118]

> The [perfect human being] whose existence has been decreed becomes manifest first in the metaphysical degree of the Sublime Pen and then within that of the Guarded Tablet; and thus does he continue to descend, passing through every presence, acquiring their characteristics and becoming imbued with their influences – while nevertheless retaining those non-manifest, essential attributes which he acquired through the initial act of existenciation – wherefore, even in the act of descending he ascends (*hākadhā munḥadiran yartaqī*) until the moment when the form of his matter is determined in the womb, in the manner which has already been expounded. Once he has reached the stage of integral individuality, he then grows and develops, passing from one phase to another until the perfection of his genesis is achieved when he reaches maturity in mid-life, whereupon he starts ascending again by casting

113 *Hādiya*, p. 160–161. According to these traditions the "Poles" (*aqṭāb*) presiding over the celestial spheres are as follows: Adam (the Moon), Jesus (Mercury), Joseph (Venus), Enoch (the Sun), Aaron (Mars), Moses (Jupiter), and Abraham (Saturn).

114 Who, Qūnawī says, performed this ascent on no less than thirty-four separate occasions. (*Nuṣūṣ*, p. 68).

115 *Hādiya*, p. 161.

116 See *Futūḥāt*, Ch. 20. The doctrine of the *miʿrāj al-taḥlīl*, like that of the divine secret with which it is closely connected, is another of those theories which, though present in the works of Ibn ʿArabī, are nonetheless given greater prominence in the writings of his chief disciple.

117 *Miftāḥ*, p. 115.

118 In keeping with tradition, Qūnawī identifies this point as "the first day, or indeed the first hour of his 40th or 41st year". (*Miftāḥ*, p. 106). Moreover, because it ends with the realisation of human perfection, those who undertake it are considered "inheritors" of the "Muḥammadan station" proper.

off [the determinations he acquired during his descent] in order to bring about the second intelligible composition (*al-tarkīb al-maʿnawī al-thānī*) which the gnostics (*ʿārifūn*) realise after the [spiritual] opening (*fatḥ*).

Now, this ascension is that of the foremost from among God's folk – as distinct from simply all those who achieve the opening – and is called the 'ascension of unbinding'[119] because from the very moment he leaves the Earth there is nought through which the wayfarer passes on his journey to the Higher World, – be it an element, presence or celestial sphere – save he leaves the appropriate part with it[120] – namely that which he took from it when he first passed through it.[121] This, then, he does in accordance with the divine command: {Verily, God commands you to return that which He has placed in your trust to its owners.}[122] Such relinquishment (*tark*) consists in the spirit's turning away from the part in question and from the desire to control it, and likewise in the weakening of the correspondence between the two owing to the increased dominance of the essential bond between the spirit [of the wayfarer] and the True, by dint of which he ascends towards Him and devotes himself to Him with all his heart. Hence, when he arrives at the divine dignity of the Essence – albeit without having traversed any distance – according to the manner and the path expounded earlier on, naught remains with him save the divine secret,[123] which he received when God first turned towards him [to bring him into existence].[124]

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119 As indicated earlier, the theory of the *miʿrāj al-taḥlīl* naturally invites comparison with the Proclean concept of *anagoge*, envisaged as an "elevation through the return to simplicity". (See Siorvanes, *Proclus*, p. 191).

120 Although he speaks here simply of "leaving" these acquired qualities in their respective spheres, he observes elsewhere that this process of unbinding does not imply the irrevocable loss of the initiate's multiplicity, but rather its resolution within his unity. (See *Murshidīya*, fol. 9a).

121 Similarly, according to Proclus' theory of *anagoge*, "during the [pure soul's] ascent to her origins, the mortal soul and the associated pneumatic body are purged away and perish while the elemental envelopes are discarded in their respective spheres". (Siorvanes, *Proclus*, p. 132).

122 Qurʾān, IV, 58.

123 The summit to which, according to Qūnawī, this *miʿrāj* leads thus corresponds to what is identified in the *Mashāriq al-darārī* as the highest category of spiritual opening whereby the initiate's divine secret appears, not in the guise of a specific degree of existence, but in its true light. Again it is to be noted that he calls this ascent a "liberation".

124 *Miftāḥ*, p. 105–106.

It is worth observing too that Qūnawī's conception of the soul's ascent forms a significant point of contention in his debate with Ṭūsī, for the latter roundly rejects the possibility of the individual soul's ascending until it becomes universal.[125] In response, Qūnawī argues that this ascent should be conceived of, not in the sense of an individual essence's (*dhāt*) becoming something else, but simply as a rediscovery of what it had always been in reality:

> Your assertion – may God keep and preserve you – in objection to our saying that 'the soul may ascend until it becomes universal', namely that this is impossible, would seem to suggest that you construe this in the sense of a *fusion* in which two radically distinct essences (*dhātayn*) become a single essence. That, however, is not at all what we meant thereby, nor did we mean that the soul, *qua* individual, unites with the Universal Soul … Rather, what is intended is simply that the soul transcends its individual state (*juzʾīyatu-hā*) by casting off the accidental restrictive attributes (*tansalikh min awṣāfi-hā al-taqyīdīyati-l-ʿāriḍa*) on account of which it had been called 'individual', such that it returns to its original universality; whereupon, the attributes that could be predicated of it in its primordial state can be so again, simply by virtue of the [soul's] realisation of this identity and the removal of the accidental obstacles [impeding this realisation].[126]

One of the most telling comments made by Ṭūsī on this score is his statement that, as far as the soul's contemplation of the First Principle is concerned, there is no need for it to undertake any such ascent, as this contemplation is something that *individual* souls can enjoy anyway;[127] a remark which both affirms his faith in reason and effectively dismisses Qūnawī's conception of the purpose of the *ṭarīq*. In response, Qūnawī writes:

> Concerning the ascension of perfect souls and their contemplation of the First Principle, you say this is something they can acquire anyway as individuals (*fī dhawāti-hā al-juzʾīya*). But that cannot be so, as it is impossible for their individual essences, *qua* individuals, to have such a vision. Indeed, it is a unanimously verified fact among the contemplatives (*ahl al-shuhūd*), that they do not witness a universal until they have become universal themselves. Then they continue ascending by virtue of their

125 *Murāsalāt*, p. 118.

126 *Hādiya*, p. 171.

127 *Murāsalāt*, p. 118–119.

> conjunction (*ittiṣāl*) with the universals – in the manner already mentioned in connection with the spiritual ascension (*miʿrāj*) – degree after degree, deriving from each successive conjunction some new existential disposition, illumination and inner vision (*baṣīra*), until they reach the First Intellect, whereupon they derive, through their conjunction with it, that which renders them apt to witness the First Principle, even as the First Intellect does.[128]

Regarding this process of successive union, one should recall that for Qūnawī there exists in man a hierarchy not so much of distinct governing or animating principles as of different manifestations of one and the same: the Divine Spirit.[129] In harmony with this view, the initiate's ascent through the higher souls and intellects is specifically portrayed as being achieved through realising the essential continuity between all the higher states of his being, ending with his effacement (*fanāʾ*) in God's presence:

> Travelling on the spiritual path and orientating oneself [towards the final goal] by means of exercises, disciplines and the knowledge and acts of worship rooted in the principles of the *sharīʿa* and the divine revelations – all of this, through the grace of God's will and providence, causes the bodily faculties to acquire the character of the vital spirit insofar as it forms the junction between, on the one hand, the simple and abstract, and on the other, the ability to act upon bodies through different faculties and in diverse modes. Now, the primary perfection of the vital spirit resides in its acquiring the characteristics of the speaking soul (*al-nafs al-nāṭiqa*), and the primary perfection of the individual speaking soul resides in its realising the nature of the treasurer (*khāzin*) of the first heavenly sphere – known in the sacred laws as [the angel] Asmāʾīl and called by the exponents of rational inquiry the 'active [intellect]' – while its middle perfection consists in its realising the character and possibilities of the Universal Soul. Whereafter it ascends to the rank of the Universal Intellect and Spirit, until it finally arrives at God's presence (*ḥaḍrat al-ḥaqq*) and is effaced within it.[130]

128 *Hādiya*, p. 171.

129 *Nafaḥāt*, fol. 66. See *supra*, pp. 120, 153.

130 *Nafaḥāt*, fol. 39b-40a (*Tarjumah*, p. 91–92). Such is the context in which Qūnawī affirms the possibility of the soul's ascending to the point where it is capable of governing "numerous bodies and forms (*hayākil wa ṣuwar*) at one and the same time" (*Asʾila*, p. 72), a possibility that Ṭūsī, not surprisingly, rejects. (*Murāsalāt*, p. 117–118). For Ṣadr al-Dīn,

For our author, then, this marks the end of the initiate's spiritual *reditus*. Having cast off the determinations and restrictive attributes that bound him to a specific state – and kept him tied to the chain of causality – he has returned to the "necessary freedom" of his metaphysical ground. But how exactly does Qūnawī conceive of "effacement (*fanā'*)[131] in the divine", and what if anything remains of man in its wake? These are questions we propose to consider in the next, and final, section of this chapter.

6 Theophany

For Ṣadr al-Dīn effacement in God's presence is synonymous with the realisation of the essential theophany (*al-tajallī al-dhātī*),[132] which marks the end of the traveller's journey to God and "seals the epiphanies realised by the initiates".[133] As such "there can be no settled abode for the perfect" before this theophany and after it "there can be no veil".[134] But in what does it actually consist? Contrary to what the term might suggest, what is revealed through the *tajallī dhātī* is not, so we are told, the unfathomable depths of the Divine Essence (*dhāt*) itself but rather the "broadest of all determinations": God's knowledge of Himself and His Names, Attributes and their relationships. This, Qūnawī says, "is what is contemplated by the perfect, and this is the essential theophany".[135]

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however, this ability is coextensive with attaining the degree of the active intellect, as the latter governs all the forms in the world of generation and corruption, or in other words, all that lies below the first heaven, to which this intellect belongs; and in support of this he says this is something that has been realised by some of the great luminaries of the Way he has known.

131 A key concept in Islamic mysticism, the *fanā'* or "evanescence" of the servant (along with its correlative, the *baqā'* or "permanence" of the Lord) is traditionally seen as rooted in the following verse from *Sūrat al-Raḥmān*: {All that dwells on it is evanescent, and still abides the face of thy Lord, majestic, splendid}. (Qur'ān, LV, 26). For an account of different interpretations of this doctrine in classical Sufism see Qushayrī's *Risāla*, p. 67–69.

132 On the notion of theophany (*tajallī*) in earlier Sufism, see G. Böwering, *The Mystical Vision of Existence in Classical Islam: the Qur'ānic Hermeneutics of the Ṣūfī Sahl At-Tustarī (d. 283/896)*, pp. 172–175, 214.

133 *I'jāz*, p. 376.

134 *Nafaḥāt*, fol. 61a; (*Tarjumah*, p. 131).

135 *Nuṣūṣ*, p. 18. As we have seen, this hypostasis is identified elsewhere as the "Cognitive Relationship".

It is to be noted, moreover, that the locus of this revelation is identified as the actual being of the perfect man conceived of, in symbolic terms, as the mirror of his heart in which God's Attributes are made manifest. Indeed, it is through this reflection that the teleological ends of human existence and creation as a whole are deemed to merge – the attainment of human perfection coinciding with the purpose for which the cosmos itself was created, namely the "perfection of elucidation and bringing to light" (*kamāl al-jalā' wa-l-istijlā'*)[136] whereby the existential multiplicity hidden in God's oneness is made manifest in the "mirror" of the perfect man. Man alone, then, is capable of this, as his heart or vessel of consciousness alone, so we are told, comprises a void or emptiness (*farāgh*) absolute enough to encompass all determinations. Qūnawī describes it as a "total void (*farāgh tāmm*), which, as such, is free of all qualities, states and conditions, both necessary and contingent". For him, then, such a void is "absolute"; indeed, it is essentially "no different from the absoluteness of the True". It is also considered – as indicated above – to be intrinsically connected with the unique universality (*jam'iyya*) of man's nature: "If it did not comprise the kind of void and absoluteness required to bring about such theophanies, then man's nature would not be so all-encompassing as to embrace *all* qualities, states and conditions".[137]

As with so many of his key doctrines this is seen as enshrined, or at least indicated, in a number of hadiths and Qur'ānic verses. The scriptural source to which he turns most frequently in this connection is the well-known *ḥadīth qudsī* expressing the all-encompassing nature of the faithful servant's heart: *My heaven and My earth cannot contain Me but the heart of my pious, pure, faithful servant contains Me*. This, we are told, is a divine allusion (*ishāra*) to the essential theophany realised in the heart that has been emptied of all that is other than God – the piety and purity mentioned in this hadith being interpreted as denoting a state of total detachment from conditioned being.[138] At the same time we are told that what is meant by the heart in this context is

136 From the same root as the word *tajallī*, the terms *jalā'* and *istijlā'* refer here to the idea of making manifest the hidden treasures of God's Essence mentioned in the *hadith qudsī* cited earlier. Man's role in bringing about the "perfection of bringing to light" is illustrated too through the "metaphor of rose-water". Having started out, like water, in a completely non-differentiated state – or *hayūlānī al-waṣf* – the perfect human being returns, at the end of the *mi'rāj al-taḥlīl*, to an analogous state of non-differentiation but with the crucial difference of having been imbued with the "fragrance" of all the degrees of existence through which he has travelled. (*I'jāz*, p. 373).

137 *Nuṣūṣ*, p. 20–21.

138 *Nafaḥāt*, fol. 58b.

clearly not the "cone-shaped piece of flesh", but rather the core of the servant's being, identified as the heart's "underlying reality" (*ḥaqīqat al-qalb*)[139] or "polished spherical mirror".[140]

As he nears the summit of the *miʿrāj al-taḥlīl*, the initiate's heart thus tends ever closer to a state "as non-differentiated as prime matter" (*hayūlānī al-waṣf*), capable as such of reflecting all forms through its own indeterminacy. The actual moment of arrival, however, is portrayed as marking a profound break with all that has gone before. It is an epiphany in the fullest sense – a timeless flash of realisation likened to a thunderbolt,[141] or a resurrection (*qiyāma*)[142] to a new life:

> At that instant the rays of the Sun of the Essence (*shams al-dhāt*), known as the 'splendours' [of His Face],[143] incinerate the objects of vision, and [the servant's] resurrection takes place. Then, the tongue of the Name 'the True' (*al-ḥaqq*) says to him {'To whom is the Kingdom today?'}[144] Wherefore, if there remains no creatural relation through which there could appear any [contingent] characteristic, trace, or pretension, the True answers Himself through Himself, saying {'To Allah, the One, the Vanquisher'}.[145]

As such it brings about a sudden reversal of perspective in which the contingent attributes of the servant are replaced by the necessary attributes of the

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139 *Murshidīya*, fol. 4b.

140 *Nafaḥāt*, fol. 58b. Just as the physiological heart is deemed the "throne" of the vital spirit, so is the heart's polished spherical mirror the "throne of the essential theophany ". For Ibn ʿArabī's conception of the polished mirror of the heart, see M. Sells, 'Ibn ʿArabī's Polished Mirror: Perspective Shift and Meaning Event' in *Studia Islamica*. 67 1988, p. 121–149.

141 *Nuṣūṣ*, p. 20–21.

142 For Ṣadr al-Dīn, *qiyāma* or resurrection essentially consists in the "manifestation of unity's dominance over multiplicity" and this applies not only to the end of the world, or "Greater Resurrection", but also to the "lesser resurrections" (*al-qiyāmāt al-ṣughrā*) which the initiates undergo when they reach the end of the path.

143 A reference to another hadith much-quoted in the literature of Islamic mysticism (see, for example, Ghazālī, *Mishkāt al-Anwār*, pp. 140–141, 146): *God has seventy thousand veils of light and darkness. Were He to lift them the splendours of His Face would burn everything in His sight*. For Qūnawī, such veils are the images of the existential forms imprinted in man's heart by dint of his attachment to the world. (*Miftāḥ*, p. 87).

144 Qur'ān, XL, 16.

145 *Iʿjāz*, p. 38.

Lord. In the treatise on the nature of the perfect human being, which forms the concluding section of the *Miftāḥ ghayb al-jamʿ*, this reversal of perspective is called the "second way of knowing the correspondence between the two copies" (*al-maʿrifat al-thāniya bi-taqābul al-nuskhatayn*), i.e. the book of the world and its archetype in God's knowledge. Following the resolution of his contingency within the necessity of the one Being (*al-wujūd al-wāḥid*), the perfect man, we are told, sees himself and all the realities of the world as expressions of their necessary principle.[146] Indeed, in the final pages of the *Miftāḥ* particular emphasis is placed on the paradoxical conjunction of servanthood and lordship in the person of the perfect man with Qūnawī calling him "the hidden and apparent, the lowly and sublime, the eternal and transient, the barefooted beggar and the wealthy overlord".[147] Moreover, like his master before him, he sees in the Qurʾān itself a number of *ishārāt*, or pointers, to this aspect of the perfect man's nature, drawing attention to two verses in particular[148] which, we are told, point to the very highest degree of human perfection: {Those who swear allegiance to thee swear allegiance to God: the hand of God is over their hands};[149] and {Thou threwest not when thou threwest, but God threw}.[150]

In Qūnawī's view, therefore, the concept of *fanā*ʾ denotes, not the total annihilation of the servant (*ʿabd*), but rather the return of his contingency and multiplicity to the necessity and unity of their principle. Accordingly he speaks of the servant's being "invested" (*talabbasa*) with, or "transformed" by the necessary attributes of the Lord, invoking by way of scriptural support the well-known *ḥadīth qudsī* according to which *My servant does not cease drawing nigh to Me through supererogatory acts of worship* (*nawāfil*) *until I love him; and when I love him I am his hearing by which he hears and his sight by which he sees, his hand by which he grasps, and his foot by which he walks.*[151] Established at the boundary between the conditioned and the absolute, the servant has reached the state of liberation that belongs to the perfect human being. Free of all restrictive attributes, he is a featureless mirror with "two faces", reflecting all existential determinations through one while remaining merged in the absolute through the other:

146 *Miftāḥ*, p. 128.
147 *Miftāḥ*, p. 135.
148 *Miftāḥ*, p. 114–115.
149 Qurʾān, XLVIII, 10.
150 Qurʾān, VIII, 17.
151 See *Iʿjāz*, pp. 39–40, 209.

> After he has known God and beheld Him, and transcended all spiritual stations (*maqāmāt*) and the bounds and restrictions of the Names and Attributes, such that he arrives in the world of necessary freedom in which all intermediary causes and contingencies are effaced, how can any attribute restrict him or any noun, verb, meaning or letter contain the one who interprets all stations through their languages and through those of their masters? For he has encompassed all of that, realised it and risen above it, not in potential but in act, not through contingency but through the all-encompassing sway of necessity. Seen from this face, then, he has no language and no station.[152] Indeed, he is entirely without distinguishing traits, like a polished spherical mirror in an intelligible central point that forms the common boundary between the domains of necessity and contingency, and around which all things describe an intelligible cycle. Although always full in respect of their reflection (*inṭibāʿ*) and always expressing, through his reality, the meanings, spirits, forms, attributes and states reflected and determined within him … he is nonetheless in reality always empty of all things, neither containing nor contained. Veiled from all things precisely through their reflection in him, and by the fact that they themselves cannot see beyond this, he in himself remains unseen, unknown, ineffable and indescribable … For this is the case with all mirrors in relation to the reflected image: it is not they themselves that are seen when they are filled with the image, but only the latter, whatever it be. Such, then, is the status of the true human being when his contingent characteristics have been resolved within the necessary Being and unity of his Lord.[153]

The symbolic perspective expressed above thus serves to reinforce the idea of there being a necessary correlation between the state of absolute emptiness (*farāgh*) that man alone is capable of achieving and the comprehensiveness

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152 Like Ibn ʿArabī, Qūnawī considers the transcending of all spiritual stations or *maqāmāt*, to be a characteristic of those who "inherit" the type of spirituality specific to the Prophet of Islam and who are therefore known as "Muḥammadans". Although not necessarily apparent at the start of their spiritual path, such inheritance becomes fully manifest when they finally reach the state of "no [spiritual] station" (*lā maqām*), a term rooted in the Qurʾānic verse {O people of Yathrib (Medina), you have no station} (Qurʾān, XXXIII, 13) and seen as conveying the idea that the Muḥammadan transcends all determinate stations, however sublime.

153 *Murāsalāt*, p. 138–139.

(*jamʿīya*) inherent in his nature. Hence, just as our study of Qūnawī's anthropology began with the key metaphysical concepts of determination and non-determination so does it end with them: the perfect man reflecting all determinate things through his own indeterminacy, like a mirror which is completely empty and completely full at one and the same time.

CHAPTER 8

The Reception of Qūnawī's Thought

Throughout the preceding chapters mention has been made of the importance of Qūnawī's own contribution to Ibn ʿArabī's school. Having identified those elements of his thought that were destined to exert a lasting influence on later generations of Akbarians, it seems fitting to bring to a close our study of Ṣadr al-Dīn's life and work with a brief review of his historical legacy. In doing so, however, it is not our intention to provide a general overview of the Akbarian school's development as several such studies already exist:[1] these have highlighted, with varying degrees of detail, such noteworthy features as the preponderance of Persian and Ottoman figures among the school's leading thinkers, and have focused too on its attendant controversies, including the debate surrounding the doctrine of *waḥdat al-wujūd*.[2] Instead, we will restrict our attention to the impact made by Qūnawī in particular; first with a reminder of the part played by him in disseminating Ibn ʿArabī's doctrines in the Persian world, and then with a short survey of his influence on later generations.

Starting with Ṣadr al-Dīn's connection with the Persian East, it should be borne in mind that the court culture of Seljuq Anatolia was largely Persian[3] – a legacy of the Great Seljuqs' heyday in eleventh-century Iran[4] – and that Qūnawī, like his father before him, belonged to a long-standing class of Seljuq *ʿulamāʾ* who were Persian by ethnicity and culture. We know, too, that most of his students were Persians, and that he routinely delivered lectures in his mother-tongue.[5] If we also take into account the presence in Konya of emigrants from the East – such as Rūmī – as well as the role played by the Mongol protectorate

1 See, for example, W. Chittick, 'The School of Ibn 'Arabī' in S.H. Nasr and O. Leaman, eds., *History of Islamic Philosophy; Part I*, p. 510–526, and J.W. Morris, 'Ibn 'Arabi and his Interpreters. Part II: Influences and Interpretations' in *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 106.4 1986, p. 733–756.

2 See A.D. Knysh, *Ibn ʿArabī in the Later Islamic Tradition*; and É. Geoffroy, *Le Soufisme en Égypte et en Syrie*, p. 452–472.

3 See T. Rice, *The Seljuks in Asia Minor*, p. 85–86.

4 See K.A. Luther, *The history of the Seljuq Turks : from the Jāmʿ al-Tawārīkh : an Ilkhanid adaptation of the Saljūq-nāma of Ẓahīr al-Dīn Nīshāpūrī. Translated and annotated by Kenneth Allin Luther ; edited by C. Edmund Bosworth*, Richmond, Surrey 2001, p. 5.

5 See *supra*, p. 19.

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in enabling communication and trade with Il-Khanid Iran, it becomes easier to see why Qūnawī might have loomed larger in the eyes of Persian contemporaries than Arabs.

In terms of intellectual environment, it is possible too that the dissemination of Akbarian thought in Anatolia and Iran may have been facilitated to a degree by the enduring legacy of the Great Seljuqs' generally favourable attitude towards mystical Islam, an attitude embodied – as is well known – in the institution of the *khānqāh*,[6] and still evident in later times – so it would seem – in Kaykā'ūs's protection of Ibn ʿArabī and the Parvāna's patronage of Rūmī,[7] Qūnawī and Farghānī. And there is cause to conjecture, likewise, that the revival of Avicennian thought at the hands of Ṭūsī and his school may have served to render the Persian East generally more receptive to the Akbarian fusion of philosophy and mysticism than would appear to have been the case elsewhere.

This fusion stands in sharp contrast, at any rate, with the anti-Avicennian and anti-Akbarian views espoused by the Hanbalite *ʿulamā'* of Damascus, and by their most influential representative, Ibn Taymīya (d. 728/1328), in particular. Although not opposed to Sufism *per se*,[8] Ibn Taymīya saw the doctrines formulated by Ibn ʿArabī, Qūnawī, Tilimsānī, Ibn Sabʿīn and the other "professors of Absolute Oneness" (*ahl al-waḥdati-l-muṭlaqa*) as a heresy which, along with others, had invoked the Mongol campaigns in Syria by way of divine retribution.[9] His condemnation of Ibn ʿArabī and his followers – whom he describes as "worse infidels than the Christians"[10] – has been dealt with elsewhere[11] and its impact on later generations, especially the Wahhābīya reformist movement

6 See, for example, M. Malamud, 'Sufi Organisations and Structures of Authority in Medieval Nishapur' in *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, vol. 26, no. 3, Aug., 1994, p. 427–442. See also J. Chabbi, "Khānḳāh" in *EI*[2].

7 For a discussion of this topic see A. Peacock, 'Sufis and the Seljuk Court in Mongol Anatolia: Politics and Patronage in the Works of Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī and Sulṭān Walad' in A. Peacock and S. Yıldız, eds., *The Seljuks of Anatolia: Court and Society in the Medieval Middle East*, London 2013, p. 206–227.

8 Historically, the perspectives of Sufism and Hanbalism have often been closely linked: the cases of ʿAbd Allāh al-Anṣārī (d. 482/1089) and ʿAbd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī (d. 582/1186) being two well-known examples. On al-Anṣārī see R. Farhâdi, *ʿAbdullāh Anṣārī of Herāt (1006–1089 C.E.): an early Sufi master*, Richmond (Surrey) 1996.

9 Ibn Taymīya, *Majmūʿat al-rasā'il*, vol. II, p. 133–139.

10 Ibn Taymīya, *Majmūʿat al-rasā'il*, vol. II, p. 29.

11 See A.D. Knysh, *Ibn ʿArabī in the Later Islamic Tradition*, p. 87–111. See also M. Chodkiewicz, 'Le process posthume d'Ibn 'Arabī' in F. de Jong and B. Radtke, eds., *Islamic Mysticism Contested: thirteen centuries of controversies and polemics*, Leiden 1999, p. 98–105.

in modern times, has been well documented.[12] From the point of view of the present study, however, it is important to note the attention that Ibn Taymīya gives to Qūnawī,[13] not only because he sees Ṣadr al-Dīn's thought as more nefarious than Ibn ʿArabī's, but also because his critique constitutes a recognition – albeit a backhanded one – of the extent to which Qūnawī in particular has shaped Akbarian ontology.

For Ibn Taymīya, then, Qūnawī is "more versed in rational speculation (*naẓar*) and scholastic theology (*kalām*) than his master"[14] and hence has a more subtle understanding of ontology; yet at the same time he is "more heretical (*akfar*), has less knowledge and faith, and knows less of Islam and the utterances of the Sufi masters".[15] Significantly, Ibn Taymīya focuses specifically on Qūnawī's distinction between the determinate (*al-mutaʿayyin*) and the absolute (*al-muṭlaq*), thus clearly identifying Ṣadr al-Dīn as the author of concepts that would remain central to Akbarian metaphysics thereafter:

> He [Qūnawī] distinguished between the absolute and the determinate; wherefore, in his view, God is absolute being, indeterminate and non-distinct. But when He takes a determinate and distinct form He is still God, regardless of whether He is determined at the rank of divinity or anything else. Such a doctrine, then, is more overtly heretical than [Ibn ʿArabī's] and is that of Pharaoh and the Carmathians.[16]

As for the actual substance of Ibn Taymīya's critique, its inaccuracies and somewhat simplistic nature have been highlighted elsewhere.[17] Here, though, one may briefly note that, contrary to Ibn Taymīya's assertion, Qūnawī, as we have seen,[18] does not dispense with Ibn ʿArabī's distinction between *wujūd* and *thubūt*, the former pertaining to existents and the latter to the immutable essences. Moreover, the nominalist sense (according to which the absolute and the universal have no existence outside the mind) in which Ibn Taymīya

12 See, for example, E. Peskes, 'The Wahhābiyya and Sufism in the Eighteenth Century' in F. de Jong and B. Radtke, eds., *Islamic Mysticism Contested*, p. 145–161. See also M. Safiullah, 'Wahhābism: a conceptual relationship between Muḥammad Ibn ʿAbd al-Wahhāb and Taqiyy al-Dīn Aḥmad Ibn Taymiyya' in *Hamdard Islamicus* 10.1 (1987), p. 67–83.

13 For a brief discussion of this topic see Knysh, *Ibn ʿArabī in the Later Islamic Tradition*, p. 94–95.

14 Ibn Taymīya, *Majmūʿat al-rasāʾil*, vol. II, p. 22.

15 Ibn Taymīya, *Majmūʿat al-rasāʾil*, vol. II, p. 22.

16 Ibn Taymīya, *Majmūʿat al-rasāʾil*, vol. II, p. 22.

17 See, for example, Knysh, *Ibn ʿArabī in the Later Islamic Tradition*, p. 108–109.

18 See *supra*, p. 91.

interprets Qūnawī's conception of *iṭlāq*[19] appears curiously dissociated from Ṣadr al-Dīn's actual use of this term.

In his landmark study of Mamlūk and early Ottoman Sufism, Éric Geoffroy has argued that a generally anti-Akbarian attitude prevailed in Damascus – if not among the Mamlūk authorities themselves, whose patronage of Tilimsānī is well known, then certainly among the *'ulamā'* – until it was forcibly overturned by the arrival of the Ottomans in the sixteenth century;[20] a change exemplified by Sultan Selim's ordering the restoration of Ibn 'Arabī's tomb after the latter had fallen into disrepair.[21] The Ottomans' favourable attitude towards the Akbarian school in general has been broadly charted by Geoffroy and others.[22] Less well known, however, is the influence of Qūnawī in particular on Ottoman Islam.

In fact, Qūnawī's influence is discernible in some of the earliest manifestations of Ottoman intellectual life, with the head of the first Ottoman *madrasa*, Dāwūd al-Qayṣarī (d. 751/1350), furnishing a pertinent example. A prominent Akbarian, and a student of 'Abd al-Razzāq al-Qāshānī (d. 730/1330),[23] Qayṣarī is best known for his commentary on the *Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam*.[24] His indebtedness to Qūnawī, however, is clear, with the doctrine of the five presences playing a key part in his writings, as Chittick has shown.[25] Following in Ṣadr al-Dīn's footsteps, likewise, are his lengthy commentaries on Ibn al-Fāriḍ's poetry.[26]

More obvious still is Qūnawī's influence on the first Ottoman *Shaykh al-Islām*, Shams al-Dīn ibn Hamza Fanārī (d. 833/1429), whose commentary on the *Miftāḥ ghayb al-jamʿ*, entitled *Miṣbāḥ al-uns bayn al-maʿqūl wa-l-mashhūd* (*The Lantern of Harmony between the Reasoned and the Contemplated*), is easily the best known of its kind. Like the *Miftāḥ* itself, its impact has proved remarkably far-reaching, extending beyond the bounds of Ottoman dominion

19 Ibn Taymīya, *Majmūʿat al-rasā'il*, vol. II, p. 22–27.

20 See Geoffroy, *Le Soufisme en Égypte et en Syrie*, pp. 80, 459–460.

21 Geoffroy, *Le Soufisme en Égypte et en Syrie*, p. 80.

22 Geoffroy, *Le Soufisme en Égypte et en Syrie*, p. 133–135.

23 On Qāshānī see Chittick, 'The School of Ibn 'Arabī' in S.H. Nasr and O. Leaman, eds., *History of Islamic Philosophy; Part I*, p. 517–518.

24 For a brief account of Qayṣarī's life and thought, see M. Bayrakdar, *La philosophie mystique chez Dawud de Kayseri*, Ankara 1990.

25 Chittick, 'The Five Divine Presences: From al-Qunawi to al-Qayseri' in *Moslem World* 72, 1982, p. 107–128.

26 See Qayṣarī, *Sharḥ al-Tā'īyat al-kubrā*, MS Bodleian Pococke 244; and *Sharḥ al-Mīmīya*, MS Bodleian Pococke 81.

into Shīʿī Iran, where it came to be regarded as a core metaphysical text in the traditional curriculum.[27] Displaying the characteristic fluidity of the *sharḥ* genre, the *Miṣbāḥ al-uns* is essentially a synthesis of Qūnawī's thought, arranged according to the structure of the *Miftāḥ*. In the introduction to his work, moreover, Fanārī credits Qūnawī, and his critique of rational inquiry, with having delivered him from the endless conflicts and controversies that characterise relations between different religious and philosophical schools.[28]

Following Fanārī's lead, a succession of Ottoman *ʿulamāʾ* produced commentaries on the *Miftāḥ*,[29] including – most notably – Quṭb al-Dīn al-Iznīqī (d. 885/1480), whose *Fatḥ Miftāḥ al-ghayb* seems to have circulated quite widely, and ʿAbd Allāh Mullā Ilāhī (d. 896/1491), whose Persian commentary was written at the behest of Mehmet the Conqueror (1451–1481).[30] In this regard it is worth recalling too that the idea of a mysterious intertwining between the fortune of the Ottomans and the spiritual legacy of the *Shaykh al-Akbar* was given currency on a popular level by the widespread circulation of a work of divination, spuriously ascribed to Ibn ʿArabī, entitled *al-Shajarat al-nuʿmānīya fī al-dawlat al-ʿuthmānīya*, which purports to predict the dynasty's future glory through the science of letters.[31] Spurious likewise, let us add, is the commentary on the latter, ascribed to Qūnawī.[32]

In later times it is noticeable that some of the Akbarian school's most celebrated thinkers share the common trait of affiliation to the Naqshbandī order of Sufis.[33] Closer inspection of their writings, moreover, reveals reliance upon the works of Qūnawī in particular. This is certainly true of the renowned

27 See Chittick, 'The Last Will', p. 48.

28 Fanārī, *Miṣbāḥ al-uns*, ed. M. Khvājavī, Tehran 1995, p. 3.

29 For a list of such commentaries see Osman Ergin's article 'Sadraddin al-Qunawi ve eserleri' in *Şarkiyat Mecmuası* II, Istanbul 1958, p. 63–90.

30 See MS Istanbul Üniversite Rıza Paşa 304.

31 For a discussion of this treatise, see T. Fahd, *La divination arabe: études religieuses, sociologiques et folkloriques sur le milieu natif de l'Islam*, Leiden 1966, p. 226–228. Fahd, however, is mistaken in ascribing its authorship to Qūnawī. Michel Chodkiewicz, by contrast, rightly regards both the *Shajara* and its commentary, *al-Lumʿāt al-nūrānīya*, as having been composed well after Qūnawī's time. (See Chodkiewicz, *An Ocean without Shore: Ibn ʿArabī, the Book, and the Law*, Albany 1993, p. 17.)

32 See Appendix 1, no. 20, *al-Lumʿāt al-nūrānīya fī ḥall mushkilāt al-Shajarat al-nuʿmānīya*.

33 For a brief history of the Naqshbandī *ṭarīqa*, see J.S. Trimingham, *The Sufi orders in Islam*, Oxford 1971, pp. 62–65, 92–96. It is worth noting, too, that the above-mentioned ʿAbd Allāh Mullā Ilāhī played a key role in introducing the Naqshbandī order into the Ottoman Empire. (See Geoffroy, *Le Soufisme en Égypte et en Syrie*, p. 130). See also Knysh, *Islamic mysticism* p. 225.

Persian poet, ʿAbd al-Raḥmān al-Jāmī,[34] whose metaphysical work, *al-Durra al-fākhira*, cites Qūnawī more than any other source.[35] And it is the case, likewise, with the celebrated Naqshbandī master, ʿAbd al-Ghanī al-Nābulusī (d. 1143/1731),[36] whose defence of Akbarian ontology, the *Kitāb al-wujūd al-ḥaqq*, relies heavily on Qūnawī's *Miftāḥ ghayb al-jamʿ*.[37]

Finally, in order to give an idea of both the breadth and longevity of Qūnawī's doctrinal legacy we will conclude with an example of the impact that his theories had on the development of Indonesian Sufism in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The primary vehicle for this influence was, initially at any rate, not his actual works themselves,[38] but an Akbarian treatise from later times, entitled *al-Tuḥfa al-mursala ilā rūḥ al-nabī* (*The Gift addressed to the Spirit of the Prophet*). Composed in the late sixteenth century by the Indian Sufi master, Faḍl Allāh al-Burhānpūrī (d. 1619/1028),[39] the *Tuḥfa* is a succinct summary of the doctrines of the oneness of Being, the degrees of existence, and the all-embracing nature of the perfect man. Having been transmitted, through Burhānpūrī's circle of students, first to Malaysia and then to Indonesia,[40] it is generally reckoned to have played a key role in shaping the character of Javanese Sufism.[41] However, while its Akbarian character has

34 On Jāmī's connection with the Naqshbandīya, see C. Lingwood, '"The qebla of Jāmi is none other than Tabriz": ʿAbd al-Raḥmān Jāmi and Naqshbandi Sufism at the Aq Qoyunlu royal court' in *Journal of Persianate Studies* 4.2 (2011), p. 233–245. See also J. Haar, '"Wondrous caravan leaders who take the caravan to the sanctuary through a hidden path". The Naqshbandi order according to 'Abd al-Raḥmān Jāmi' in *Journal of Turkish Studies* 26.1 (2002), p. 311–322.

35 See Jāmī, *al-Durra al-fākhira fī taḥqīq madhhab al-ṣūfīya wa-al-mutakallimīn wa-al-ḥukamā'* eds. N. Heer and A. Mūsavī Bīhbahānī, Tehran 1980.

36 For a comprehensive study of al-Nābulusī's life and doctrines, see E. Sirriyeh, *Sufi visionary of Ottoman Damascus: ʿAbd al-Ghanī al-Nābulusī, 1641–1731*, London 2005.

37 See al-Nābulusī, *Kitāb al-wujūd al-ḥaqq wa-al-khiṭāb al-ṣidq*, ed. B. 'Alā' al-Dīn, Damascus 1995, p. 141–146.

38 Qūnawī's writings were certainly being studied in Indonesia at a later stage, as we know from the existence of an eighteenth-century Javanese translation of his *Risālat al-nuṣūṣ*. See *supra*, p.

39 On Burhānpūrī and the *Ṭuḥfa*, see A.H. Johns, "Faḍlallāh al-Burhānpūrī" in *EI*[3].

40 See P. Voorhoeve, 'Preface to the Arabic text of the *Ṭuḥfa*' in A.H. Johns, *The Gift addressed to the Spirit of the Prophet*, Canberra 1965, p. 126.

41 See A.H. Johns, *The Gift addressed to the Spirit of the Prophet*, Canberra 1965, p. 8–12; and P. Riddell, *Islam and the Malay-Indonesian world: transmission and responses*, London 2001, p. 133–135. See also A. Azyumardi, 'Opposition to Sufism in the East Indies in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries' in F. de Jong and B. Radtke, eds., *Islamic Mysticism*

been recognised,[42] little has been said about the extent of its indebtedness to Qūnawī. This debt is clear nonetheless from the briefest of perusals and is especially evident in the core section dealing with the fundamental degrees (*marātib*) of existence,[43] which Burhānpūrī enumerates as follows:

1. The non-determination (*al-lā taʿayyun*) and absoluteness (*iṭlāq*) pertaining to the Divine Essence (*al-dhāt*).
2. The first determination (*al-taʿayyun al-awwal*), which is God's summative knowledge of His Essence, Attributes, and all beings.
3. The second determination (*al-taʿayyun al-thānī*), which is God's detailed knowledge of His Essence, Attributes, and all beings.
4. The world of spirits (*ʿālam al-arwāḥ*).
5. The world of subtle archetypes (*ʿālam al-mithāl*).
6. The world of bodies (*ʿālam al-ajsām*).
7. The degree that encompasses all of the above, namely that of the human being.

Although Burhānpūrī speaks of "seven degrees" rather than "five presences" the basic provenance of this hierarchy is clear. From the signature notions of *lā taʿayyun* and *taʿayyun* to the familiar gradations of existence, the concepts and terminology employed are recognisably those of Ibn ʿArabī's chief disciple.

Contested, Leiden 1999, p. 667–668; and M. Van Bruinessen, 'Studies of Sufism and the Sufi Orders in Indonesia' in *Die Welt des Islams*, New Series, Vol. 38, Issue 2 1998, p. 201–202.

42 See A.H. Johns, "Faḍlallāh al-Burhānpūrī" in *EI*[3]. See also Riddell, *Islam and the Malay-Indonesian world*, p. 134.

43 See the Arabic text of the *Ṭuḥfa* in A.H. Johns, *The gift addressed to the spirit of the prophet*, p. 130–131.

Conclusion

Although inevitably overshadowed by his master, a close study of Qūnawī's life and work reveals him to have been among the most influential Muslim intellectual figures of his day. Born into a family of some standing at the Seljuq court, it would appear that this background was instrumental in steering him away from what might otherwise have been the withdrawn existence of the mystic. Instead, history presents us with the picture of a Sufi master, religious scholar and lucid thinker who was actively involved in the intellectual and spiritual life of the Islamic Near East. The role he played, then, in disseminating Ibn ʿArabī's doctrines doubtless owed something to his position as the Seljuq *Shaykh al-Islām*, in which capacity he was able to expound and interpret his master's thought to a wide circle of students and peers.

But there is clearly more to him than that alone, as our study of his thought has demonstrated. Besides interpreting and, in terms of structure and scope at least, systematising his master's teachings, he was obviously a talented metaphysician in his own right, who had a hand in formulating some of the doctrines and terminology characteristically associated with the Akbarian school.

As for the image of Qūnawī as a "Sufi philosopher", it would appear to be the result of a number of factors. The focused nature of his expositions, his acquaintance with the works of Ibn Sīnā and the Ikhwān al-Ṣafāʾ, his use of Avicennian terminology, and not least his readiness to engage the pre-eminent philosopher of his day in reasoned debate, some or all of these combined could have led to the conclusion that Qūnawī was at once philosopher and mystic. But at the same time we should recall that, like his master before him, Qūnawī is frequently at pains to highlight the limitations of philosophical methodology, especially where the fruits of syllogistic reasoning clash with revelation. This concern is very much to the fore in his correspondence with Naṣīr al-Dīn al-Ṭūsī, an exchange that would seem to have had at least some effect on subsequent attitudes towards rationalist metaphysics and theology in the Ottoman and Persian domains.[1] Important likewise in this connection is the stress placed on spiritual realisation and on the idea that the study of metaphysics is primarily intended to help the initiate along the spiritual path – a view which,

1 That said we should still keep in mind that he does not seek to deny the validity of rational inquiry outright, but simply to determine its legitimate bounds, deeming it possible (so long as the philosophers do not overstep the latter) to envisage a natural "harmony between the fruits of unveiling and demonstration".

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again, would be echoed in later times by Ottoman thinkers, notably Dāwūd al-Qayṣarī, head of the first Ottoman *madrasa*, and Shams al-Dīn ibn Hamza Fanārī, the first Ottoman *Shaykh al-Islām*.

What, then, of Qūnawī's doctrine of man? As noted from the outset, his conception of man's intrinsic excellence owes much to the long-standing cultural and traditional context that molded his views. This, as we have seen, includes not only the Qur'ānic portrayal of man as the summit of creation and God's vicegerent on Earth, but also the many echoes of the mystical and philosophical traditions of the Hellenistic world.[2] The resultant doctrine is a characteristically medieval blend of Abrahamic tradition and Greek thought, one that subscribes to the idea of an ordered cosmos in which all things pursue their teleological ends in accordance with the Creator's design, and in which sense is made of physical phenomena by interpreting them as so many signs or reflections of metaphysical causes.

But we should not let this detract from the scale and significance of Qūnawī's achievement. On its own terms – as an esoteric doctrine of man imbued with the spirit of the ancient and medieval world – his anthropology sets forth an integral vision of the underlying nature and purpose of human existence rarely matched by his contemporaries in breadth and sophistication.

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2 Indeed, in this pre-modern context, the study of man would likely have been seen as a concomitant of the Platonic emphasis on self-knowledge encapsulated in the Delphic maxim *gnōthi seauton*, or "know thyself", and expressed in its Islamic guise as *man ʿarafa nafsa-hu ʿarafa rabba-hu*, or "whoso knows himself knows his Lord".

APPENDIX 1

Critical List of Qūnawī's Works

Including his various "hurried sketches" and brief epistles, Qūnawī's authentic works, as previously mentioned, probably still number no more than twenty titles in all. In order to arrive at this conclusion with sufficient certitude, however, it was necessary to undertake a survey of as many as possible of the numerous works that have been ascribed to him, a task made all the more necessary by the fact that the lists compiled by Ruspoli[1] and Khvājavī,[2] which feature thirty-nine and forty titles respectively, give no serious consideration to this question of attribution.

As well as highlighting the most commonly mistaken attributions, the list that follows also includes a substantial miscellany of titles ascribed to Qūnawī in the catalogue of the Sülemaniye Library in Istanbul, whose importance as a scholarly resource hardly needs stressing. Due to inevitable constraints on time, however, it was not possible to examine all of these works. Those that I have not consulted are indicated by an asterisk.

1 *Risālat al-aghrab** (cf. Brockelmann *GAL*, Suppl. I, 807)

MSS: Berlin Oct. 2460(3).

There are two copies of a work bearing the same title listed in the catalogue of the Sülemaniye Library (Istanbul Hacı Mahmud Ef. 2347(1), Şehid Ali Paşa 2730(2)) both of which are attributed to ʿAbd al-Karīm al-Jīlī (d. ca. 831/1428).

2 *Kitāb ʿalam al-ʿilm**

Qūnawī mentions a "*Kitāb ʿalam al-ʿilm*" on several occasions in the *Nafaḥāt*.

To date, however, no separate work bearing this title has come to light.

3 *Risālah dar bāb-i ʿarsh**

MSS: Konya Mevlânâ Müzesi 1633(2) (fols. 114b–115b) and 5020.

1 'La clef du monde *supra*-sensible' (Ph.D. diss. Université de la Sorbonne 1978).

2 See Khvājavī's introduction to his edition and translation of the *Fukūk*, p. 32–39.

 | DOI 10.1163/9789004271265_012

Short treatise on the nature of the Divine Throne. Written in Persian, at the request of a disciple.

Genuine.

4 *Risālah dar bayān-i mabdaʾ wa maʿād**

MSS: Konya Mevlânâ Müzesi 1637.

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5 *Ḍābiṭa ḥikmīya*

MSS: Istanbul Hüdaî 1848.

Brief outline of the basic terminology of *falsafa*.

Doubtful.

6 *Al-dawāʾir al-thalātha fī al-ḥaqīqat al-insānīya*

MSS: Istanbul Veliyeddin Cârullah. 2061(13) (fol. 47b).

Schematic representation of the spheres of *al-ḥaqīqat al-insānīya*, *al-raḥmat al-imkānīya,* and *al-raḥmat al-wujūbīya.*

7 *Duʿā al-tawḥīd.* (cf. Brockelmann *GAL*, Suppl. I, 807)

MSS: Berlin Spr.299 fol. 11b.

Short supplication, invoking the supreme theophany. Identical, in parts, to the well-known supplication of the thirteenth-century Moroccan Sufi, ʿAbd al-Salām ibn Mashīsh (d. 625/1228).

8 *Al-fukūk fī asrār mustanadāt ḥikam al-Fuṣūṣ:* Variations*: Fakk al-Fuṣūṣ; al-Fukūk; Risāla fī bayān asrār mustanadāt ḥikam al-Fuṣūṣ wa fakk khutūmi-hā*

MSS: Konya, Yusuf Ağa 5886; Istanbul Aya Sofya 1818, 4856; Düğümlü Baba 382; Hacı Mahmud Ef. 2075; Halet Ef. 259; Hüdaî 425; Lâleli 172, 1512; Şehid Ali Paşa 438,1278, 1351(11) (fols.167–213; Shiraz 690/1291), 1352, 1366, 1371; Vehbi Ef. 730; Veliyeddin Ef. 1817,

1818; Veliyeddin Cârullah 2297; Umumî 3416; Ankara Üniv. 4164; Ismail Saeb 1134; Ulu Câmi 1671; Hüseyin Celebi 59,60; Muradiye 1104; Bursa Umumî Kütüphanesi 55.

Genuine.

Published: Tehran 1897 [in a lithographed edition on the margin of ʿAbd al-Razzāq Qāshānī's commentary on Anṣārī's *Manāzil al-Sāʾirīn*.]; Tehran 1992, edited and translated into Persian by Muhammad Khvājavī.

9 *Al-risāla al-hādiya*

MSS: Istanbul Üniv. A. 4122; Esad Ef. 1143; Veliyeddin 3191; Veliyeddin Cârullah 2054, 2097; Kutahya Vahid Paşa 622; Vatican V. 1453.

Genuine.

Published: in *al-Murāsalāt bayna Ṣadr al-Dīn al-Qūnawī wa Naṣīr al-Dīn al-Ṭūsī,* ed. G. Schubert, Wiesbaden 1995.

10 *Ḥaqāʾiq al-asmāʾ fī sharḥ asmāʾ Allāh al-ḥusnā*

MSS: Berlin Spr.863; Istanbul Köprülü 1594; Lâleli 172; Nâfiz Paşa 745; Şehid Ali Paşa 1366; Veliyeddin Ef. 1818.

The same text has also been attributed to ʿAfīf al-Dīn al-Tilimsānī (d. 690/1290).

Spurious.

11 *al-Risāla fī amr al-Mahdī:* **Variations***: al-Risāla fī ḥaqq al-Mahdī; Risālat al-Mahdī*

MSS: Istanbul Aya Sofya 4849(38) (fols. 168–180); Hacı Mahmud Ef. 2415(45) (fols. 161–164); Osman Ergin 1883.

Treatise about the Mahdi and his rule. The author declares his intention to treat of this subject by drawing on the relevant hadiths and "that which I have gained from the great Masters and chief Imams…and especially from our Shaykh, the most perfect Imam, Seal of the Saints and the Bearers of the Standard of Divine Trust…"[3] Although I have not seen Qūnawī refer to the "chief Imams" (*ruʾasāʾ al-aʾimma*) or "Bearers of the Standard of Divine Trust" elsewhere, it is not inconceivable that he might use such expressions. Moreover, as Chittick points out,[4] the brief passage dealing with the

3 MS Istanbul Hacı Mahmud Ef. 2415 fol. 161a.

4 'The Last Will', p. 57, note 38.

manner in which the Mahdi's spirit (*rūḥānīya*) enters into communication with certain individuals is indeed reminiscent of Qūnawī's style. However, a possible argument against Qūnawī's authorship is to be found in the author's assertion[5] that all but one of the Mahdi's Viziers are Arabs, since this contradicts Ibn ʿArabī, who, in chapter 366 of the *Futūḥāt*, states that they are all non-Arabs, though they converse solely in Arabic.[6]

Of those scholars who have compiled provisional lists of Qūnawī's works, neither Keklik[7] nor Ergin[8] express any doubts about the authenticity of the *Risāla fī amr al-Mahdī*, whereas Chittick[9] reserves judgement. Muhammad Khvājavī, by contrast, is at pains to dismiss the possibility of Qūnawī's having anything to do with what he calls "the delusions of Moroccan pseudo-Mahdists".[10] His attitude towards this treatise is perhaps not wholly unconnected with the author's assertion that "what the generality of Shi'is say about the Mahdi's being the son of the Eleventh Imam is incorrect"[11]...

12 *Hatk al-astār*

MSS: Istanbul Esad Ef. 3565(13) (fols. 25–26).

Treatise on the underlying identity between the individual self and the supreme Ipseity (*al-huwiya*).

The author states (fol. 25a) that he "composed it from the writings of *al-Shaykh al-Muḥaqqiq*, Muḥyī-l-Dīn al-ʿArabī – may his secret be sanctified – and other [writings] from the books of the *muḥaqqiqīn*..." However, from the point of view of both the formulae used and the sentiment expressed, such a statement is distinctly at odds with what we know of Qūnawī from his authentic corpus. First, I am not aware of Qūnawī's having ever used the honorific formula, "may his secret be sanctified". When mentioning Ibn ʿArabī, whom he characteristically refers to as simply "the Shaykh" or "our Shaykh and Imam", he invariably uses the formula "may God be pleased with him". Secondly, in order to emphasise the inspired nature of his works, he is careful to point out that the latter are composed "without including the words of anybody else". (See *Nuṣūṣ*, p. 22).

Spurious.

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5 MS Istanbul Hacı Mahmud Ef. fol. 162.

6 See *Futūḥāt*, vol. III, p. 320.

7 See *Sadreddin Konevi'nin felsefesinde Allah-Kâinât ve Insan*, p. xix–xxiii.

8 See 'Sadraddin al-Qunawi ve eserleri', p. 84.

9 See 'The Last Will', pp. 47–50, 54–56.

10 See the introduction to his edition and translation of the *Fukūk*, p. 35–36.

11 MS Istanbul Hacı Mahmud Ef. fol.161.

13 *I'jāz al-bayān fī ta'wīl umm al-Qur'ān:* Variations*: Tafsīr al-Fātiḥa*

MSS: Istanbul Köprülü 41 (copied in 669/1271 by Farghānī; includes Qūnawī's *ijāza* to latter, dated 671/1273); Aya Sofya 402 (795/1393); Asir Ef. 16, 55, 464; Atif Ef. 192; Damad Ibrahim Paşa 126 (880/1475.); Düğümlü Baba 18, Fâtih 293 (copied in Tabriz in 677/1278 by Muḥammad b. Maḥmūd b. Muḥammad al-Jandī), 294 (829/1426), 295; Feyzullah 72; Halet Ef. 38, 43, 46; Hüdaî 103; Lâleli 172; Nâfiz Paşa 67; Nurbanu 105; Rağıp Paşa 79; Şehid Ali Paşa 135 (811/1408), 136, 137, 138; Umumî 319; Üniv. A. 153, 842; Veliyeddin Ef. 180; Veliyeddin Cârullah 275, 2058; Yeni Câmi 62 (Herat 860/1456).

Genuine.

Published: Hyderabad-Deccan 1949 and 1988; Cairo 1969, under the title *al-Tafsīr al-ṣūfī li-l-Qur'ān*, ed. ʿAbd al-Qādir Aḥmad ʿAṭā'.

14 *Al-ilmāʿ bi baʿḍ kullīyāt asrār al-samāʿ. = Kitāb ilā Abī-l-Qāsim al-Tilimsānī*

MSS: Konya Mevlânâ Müzesi 1633(3) (fols. 115b–118a) and 5020.

Copy of a letter that Qūnawī sent from Mecca, in which he explains how the metaphysical meaning of certain verses of poetry became apparent to him while he was performing the *ṭawāf* around the Kaʿba.

Genuine.

15 *Kashf nafā'is mustakhraja min jawāmiʿ al-kalim.** (cf. Brockelmann *GAL*, Suppl. I, 807)

MSS: Asaf. I 386/57.

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16 *Kashf sitr al-ghayra ʿan sirr al-ḥayra**

MSS: (Istanbul Üniv.A.3239); Veliyeddin Ef.1658.

Mentioned by Qūnawī in his *Miftāḥ Ghayb al-Jamʿ*.

17 *Khirqat al-taṣawwuf*

MSS: Istanbul Belediye, Osman Ergin 1441.

Genuine.

18 ***Kitāb ilā Abī-l-Qāsim al-Tilimsānī. = al-Ilmāʿ bi-baʿḍ kullīyāt asrār al-samāʿ***

MSS: Istanbul Şehid Ali Paşa 1344(4) (fols. 46–50); Kara Celebi Zade 345(15) (fols. 174–183).

Genuine. (cf. *supra*. no. 14)

19 ***Lawāmiʿ al-ghayb.** (cf. Brockelmann *GAL*, Suppl. I, 807)**

MSS: Istanbul Asaf. I, 384/174

-.

20 ***Al-lumʿāt al-nūrānīya fī ḥall mushkilāt al-Shajarat al-nuʿmānīya:* Variations*: Sharḥ al-Shajarat al-nuʿmānīya fī al-dawlat al-ʿuthmānīya***

MSS: Bodleian Arab.e.96; Istanbul Ahmed III 98, 116, 221, 242; Düğümlü Baba 697; Esad Ef. 3738; Hamidiye 657; Köprülü 132, 176; Lâleli 3663; Nuruosmaniye 2286; Veliyeddin Ef. 2294; Veliyeddin Cârullah 1020, 2057; Üniv. 2337, 2513, 4093, 6250; Konya Dergâh 2949.

Spurious.

21 **30 *Maktūbāt***

MSS: Konya Mevlânâ Müzesi 1637.

-Genuine.

22 ***Manāzil al-abdāl fī bayān al-manāzil wa-l-aḥwāl.** (cf. Brockelmann*. GAL,* Suppl. I*, 807*)**

MSS: Vatican V. 1463(14).

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23 *Risālah dar marātib-i kashf**

MSS: Konya Mevlânâ Müzesi 1637.

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24 *Kitāb marātib al-taqwā*. (cf. Brockelmann *GAL*, Suppl. I, 807)

MSS: Berlin Pm.185(7); Glasgow Hunt. 499(9).

The author states (cf. MS Berlin Pm. 185(7), fol. 48) that he has already dealt with the subject of faith in "our work entitled *Taḥdīd al-bayān fī taqrīr shuʿab al-īmān wa rutab al-iḥsān*". According to MS Berl. Mq. 123, which was copied from the original in 800/1398, the author of the latter is Qūnawī's prominent disciple "*al-Imām al-ʿĀrif al-Awḥad*, Saʿīd al-Din Saʿd ibn Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad al-Farghānī".

25 *Maṭāliʿ al-īmān*

MSS: Istanbul Halet Ef. 92 (660/1262); Reşid Ef. 333 (906/1501); Konya, Yusuf Ağa 4866 (663/1265); Tehran Kitābkhāneh-i Majlis 3456.

Doubtful.

Published: [ed. W. Chittick] in *Javidan-e-Khirad* vol. 4 no. 1.

Translated by Chittick in *Faith and Practice of Islam: three thirteenth century Sufi texts*. Albany 1992.

26 *Mawārid dhī-l-ikhtiṣāṣ ilā maqāṣid sūrat al-ikhlāṣ**

MSS: Istanbul Aya Sofya 0.79(2) (fols. 79–121; 859/1455).

(See Keklik, *Sadreddin Konevi'nin Felsefesinde Allah-Kâinât ve Insan*, Introduction p. XXIII).

27 *Miftāḥ ghayb al-jamʿ wa tafṣīli-hi:* Variations*: Miftāḥ al-ghayb; Miftāḥ al-ghayb wa-l-wujūd; Miftāḥ al-jamʿ wa-l-wujūd*

MSS: Istanbul Köprülü 783; Aya Sofya 1785, 1786, 1817, 2088, 2090, 2135, 2136; Düğümlü Baba 382; Hacı Mahmud Ef. 2939; Hüdaî 1854; Köprülü 783; Lâleli 1498,1499; Rağıp Paşa 716; Reşid Ef. 1125; Şehid Ali Paşa 1412; Umumî 3774, 1930, 1817; Veliyeddin 1785, 1786,

1817; Veliyeddin Cârullah 275, 1026(2) (980/1572); Üniv. A.6471, 7133; Bursa Genel 54; Konya Yusuf Ağa 4864 (autograph: copied in Shaʿbān 672/1274 by Yūsuf b. Aḥmad b. Abū Bakr al-Lādhiqī).

Genuine.

Published: Tehran 1905, on the margin of a lithographed edition of Fanārī's commentary: *Miṣbāḥ al-uns bayn al-maʿqūl wa-l-mashhūd fī sharḥ Miftāḥ al-jamʿ wa-l-wujūd* ; Tehran 1991 (along with Fanārī's *Miṣbāḥ al-uns*) ed. M. Khvājavī.

28 *Mirāt al-ʿārifīn fī multamas Zayn al-ʿĀbidīn*

MSS: Istanbul Aya Sofya 4248; Esad Ef. 1427, 1693, 3767; Rağıp Paşa 1453; Fâtih 5307; Reşid Ef. 439; Veliyeddin Cârullah 2061(14) (fols. 48–50), 2079, 2097; Vehbi Ef. 737; Üniv. A.3370; Ulu Câmi 167/1.

The style, which is distinctly unpolished, does not resemble Qūnawī's. Moreover, in MSS Istanbul Aya Sofya 4248 fol. 155 and Rağıp Paşa 1453 the author is named as Muḥammad Shirīn.

Spurious.

English translation (with Arabic text) by Seyed Hassan Askari, entitled *Reflection of the Awakened*. London 1983.

29 *Mubāyaʿat al-mashāyikh ahl al-ḥaqāʾiq.** **(cf. Brock. *GAL,* Suppl. I, 807)**

MSS: Vatican V. 1428(4).

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30 *Al-mufāwaḍāt*

MSS: Istanbul Beşir Ağa 355.

Genuine.

Published: in *al-Murāsalāt bayna Ṣadr al-Dīn al-Qūnawī wa Naṣīr al-Dīn al-Ṭūsī*, ed. G. Schubert, Wiesbaden 1995.

31 *Al-risāla al-mufṣiḥa ʿan muntahā-l-afkār wa sabab ikhtilāf al-umam*

MSS: Istanbul Üniv. A.1458; Berlin We.1806(2) (817/1414); Leiden 1523; Vatican V. 1453; Istanbul Esad Ef. 1143, 3717; Şehid Ali Paşa 1415; Veliyeddin Ef. 3181; Vahid Paşa 622.

Genuine.

Published: in *al-Murāsalāt bayna Ṣadr al-Dīn al-Qūnawī wa Naṣīr al-Dīn al-Ṭūsī*, ed. G. Schubert, Wiesbaden 1995.

32 *Ṣūrat mukātabāt al-Shaykh Ṣadr al-Dīn al-Qūnawī al-Shaykh Naṣīr al-Dīn al-Ṭūsī*

MSS: Istanbul, Aya Sofya 1818, 2349; Beşir Ağa 355; Esad Ef. 1143, 3592; Halis Ef.1458; Pertev Paşa 1366; Rağıp Paşa 1366, 1461, 1482; Veliyeddin Ef. 1818; Veliyeddin Cârullah 2097; Üniv. A. 1458, 3133, 4122.

Genuine.

Published: in *al-Murāsalāt bayna Ṣadr al-Dīn al-Qūnawī wa Naṣīr al-Dīn al-Ṭūsī,* ed. G. Schubert, Wiesbaden 1995.

33 *Al-risāla al-murshidīya:* Variations; *al-Tawajjuh al-atamm al-a'lā naḥwa-l-ḥaqq jalla wa ʿalā; Risāla fī taʿrīf kayfīyat al-tawajjuh*

MSS: Berlin We. 1806(1) (817/1414); Glasgow Hunt. 499(10); India Office 1329; Istanbul Aya Sofya1817, 1631; Esad Ef. 1534, 1695, 1699; Hacı Mahmud Ef. 2485; Şehid Ali Paşa 1362,1369(2) (fols. 92–104) (903/1498); Veliyeddin Ef. 1817; Veliyeddin Cârullah 2054; Üniv. A.3158, 3315, 3318, 3629; Konya, Yusuf Ağa 4866(2) (fols. 33b–52b) (a Persian translation of *al-Risāla al-Murshidīya*, written in Dhū-l-Qaʿda 673/1275).

Genuine.

French translation by Michel Vâlsan, entitled 'Épitre sur l'Orientation Parfaite', published in *Études Traditionnelles*. Paris. Nov–Dec 1966.

34 *Al-nafaḥāt al-ilāhīya al-qudsīya*

MSS: Berlin We.1662 (1150/1737); Vatican V. 295 (689/1290); Istanbul Aya Sofya 4806; Düğümlü Baba 382; Esad Ef. 1783; Fâtih 2881; Hacı Mahmud Ef. 2409, 2610; Halet Ef. 40; Halis Ef.7286; Hamidiye (Lala) 709; Hasan Paşa 667; Köprülü 789; Murad Molla 709; Rağıp Paşa 1137, 1440, 1441, 1442; Veliyeddin Ef. 1849; Veliyeddin Cârullah 275, 1112 (768/1367); Üniv. A. 3436; Yeni Câmi 1196; Zühdü Bey 19; Ankara Üniversite Kütüp. Ismail Saib 2458; Konya, Yusuf Ağa 5468 (autograph, with corrections and additions in Qūnawī's own hand.); Konya, Mevlânâ Müzesi 1633(1) (includes the largest collection of Qūnawī's letters).

Genuine.

Published: Tehran 1898 [lithograph]; Persian translation by Muhammad Khvājavī, entitled *Tarjumah-i Nafaḥāt-i ilāhīyah*, Tehran 1996.

35 *Nafthat al-maṣdūr wa tuḥfat al-shakūr*

MSS: Leiden. Or.544 (1067/1657 after original with *ijāza* to Mu'ayyid al-Dīn al-Jandī, dated 670/1272); Vatican V. 1397(2); Istanbul Amcazade Hüseyin Pasha 447(1m) (fols. 1–17).

Genuine.

36 *Nāmah-i Ṣadr al-Dīn**

MSS: Istanbul Reşid Ef. 344(4) (fols. 43–47).

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37 *Al-nuṣūṣ fī taḥqīq al-ṭawr al-makhṣūṣ:* Variations: *Nuṣūṣ miftāḥ al-Fuṣūṣ; Risālat al-nuṣūṣ*

MSS: Berlin Mq.123 (800/1398); Vatican V. 297(6); India Office 1032(2); Manchester 784 A(813/1411); Leiden 1521/2; Konya, Yusuf Ağa 5886; Istanbul Aya Sofya 1917, 1818, 2088, 2135 (778/1376), 2136; Esad Ef. 132, 1761, 1782; Düğümlü Baba 382; Feyzullah Ef. 210; Hacı Mahmud Ef. 2603, 2844; Halet Ef. 259; Hamidiye 761, 764; Hüdaî 51; Köprülü 746; Lâleli 1366, 1420, 1512, 1514; Rağıp Paşa 1469; Reşid Ef. 490; Şehid Ali Paşa 1351(12) (Shiraz 690/1291), 1352, 1366, 1371, 1394; Veliyeddin Ef. 1737, 1817, 1818, 1849, 3181; Veliyeddin Cârullah 2085, 2097; Üniv. A. 6918; Haraççı 790.

Genuine.

Published: in lithographed form along with *al-Fukūk* (cf. no.8), and also with Ibn Turkah's *Tamhīd al-qawā'id* [Tehran 1898]; Tehran 1983, ed. J. Ashtiyānī, with glosses by Ağa Mirza Hashim Ashkuri.

38 *Risālat al-sayr wa-l-sulūk*

MSS: Istanbul Şehid Ali Paşa 1389(1) (fols. 1–13).

Extracts from *I'jāz al-bayān*.

-.

39 ***Risāla fī sha'n al-murīd****

MSS: Istanbul Veliyeddin Cârullah 2080(11) (fol. 48).

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40 ***Sharḥ adhkār al-Shaykh al-Akbar****

MSS: Istanbul Şehid Ali Paşa 1371(1) (fols. 1–22 ; 852/1448)

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41 ***Sharḥ al-aḥādīth al-arbaʿīnīya:*** **Variations:** ***Sharḥ ḥadīth al-arbaʿīn; Sharḥ al-arbaʿīn ḥadīthan; Sharḥ ḥadīth al-tāsiʿ wa-l-ʿashrīn***

MSS: Berlin Pet.583 (1114/1702); Leiden Or.920 (after original); Istanbul Atif Ef. 452; Aya Sofya 437,1817, 1818; Esad Ef. 342; Fâtih 788, 791; Feyzullah 2163, 2174; Düğümlü Baba 60; Halet Ef. 38; Hüdaî 198; Köprülü 41, 594; Lâleli 172; Nurubanu 105; Veliyeddin Ef. 81, 589, 1817, 1818; Veliyeddin Cârullah 275, 2054, 2057, 2079, 2085, 2097; Pertev Paşa 91, 616/5, 2749; Şehid Ali Paşa 138, 1369, 1371, 1394; Üniv. A. 300, 2140, 2687, 1360, 3238.

Genuine.

42 ***Sharḥ al-hidāya fī al-ḥikma****

MSS: Istanbul Hafid Ef. 159.

-.

43 ***Sharḥ maʿānī mushkilāt al-Qurʾān****

MSS: Istanbul Pertev Paşa 617 (fols. 79b–131).

-.

44 ***Sharḥ naqsh al-Fuṣūṣ****

MSS:

It is doubtful that such a work exists, despite Chittick's speculations to the contrary (see his provisional list of Qūnawī's works in 'The Last Will and Testament of Ibn 'Arabi's Foremost Disciple and Some Notes on Its Author' in *Sophia Perennis* 4/1 (1978) p. 47, notes 14 and 15.)

45 *Sharḥ-i Qaṣīdah-i sirr-i waḥdat**

MSS: Istanbul Üniv. A. 3524.

-.

46 *Sharḥ Risālat al-wujūd**

MSS: Istanbul Üniv. 1419.

-.

47 *Sharḥ al-Tajallīyāt**

MSS: Istanbul Veliyeddin Cârullah 1092(7) (fols. 161–205).

-.

48 *Sharḥ Tajallī al-anwār**

MSS: Istanbul Murad Bukhari 205(2).

-.

49 *Sharḥ Waṣīyatnāmah-i Birgivī**

MSS: Istanbul Hacı Mahmud Ef. 1297(1) (fols.1–29).

Spurious.

50 *Tabṣīrat al-mubtadī wa tadhkīrat al-muntahī*

MSS: Istanbul Aya Sofya 1691, 1692, 1693, 1711, 2349; Belediye Osman Ergin 88, 327; Lâlâ Ismail 117, 118; Esad Ef. 3781; Nuruosmaniye 2286; Şehid Ali Paşa 1324, 1373,

1394, 2271; Umumî Mehmed Arif 289; Veliyeddin Ef. 1795; Veliyeddin Cârullah 2055.

Doubtful.

Published: [ed. W. Chittick] in *Javidan-e-Khirad* vol. 4 no. 2.

Translated by Chittick in *Faith and Practice of Islam: three thirteenth century Sufi texts.* Albany 1992.

51 *Risāla fī tabyīn al-ḥadīth alladhī huwa "inna-l-zamān qad istadāra"**

MSS: Istanbul Reşid Ef. 440(19) (fols. 158–159).

-.

52 *Risāla fī tafsīr al-ḥadīth "man raanī fī-l-manāmi faqad raanī"**

MSS: Istanbul Esad Ef. 1480(20) (fols. 202–205).

-.

53 *Kitāb al-taqrīr wa-l-bayān fī taḥrīr shuʿab al-īmān wa rutab al-iḥsān*
Variations : Risāla taḥrīr al-bayān fī taqrīr shuʿab al-īmān.
(cf. Brockelmann *GAL,* Suppl. I, 807)

MSS: Berlin Mq.123 (800/1398 after original); Glasgow Hunt. 499(8); Feyzullah 2163; Veliyeddin Cârullah 2054.

According to MS Berlin Mq. 123 the author of this work is Qūnawī's disciple, Saʿīd al-Dīn Farghānī (cf. *supra* no.24).

54 *Risāla fī al-taṣawwuf**

MSS: Istanbul Yazma Bağışlar 198(2) (fols. 13–15).

-.

55 *Risāla fī uṣūl al-fiqh**

MSS: Istanbul Yazma Bağışlar 607(11) (fols.120–121).

-.

56 *Risāla al-tawajjuh al-atamm.* = *al-Risāla al-murshidīya*

57 *Ummahāt al-mawāṭin*

MSS: Istanbul Kara Celebi 345 (980/1572); Şehid Ali Paşa 1344(5) (fols. 50–51).

Concise exposition of the ontological degrees underpinning man's existence. Written in response to a question posed by Shaykh Yā Sīn al-Tilimsānī.

Genuine.

58 *Waṣāyā al-Shaykh Ṣadr al-Dīn*

MSS: Istanbul Aya Sofya 2910; Şehid Ali Paşa 2810.

Two collections of spiritual directives and recommendations. Written in Persian.

59 *Waṣīyat al-Shaykh Ṣadr al-Dīn ʿinda-l-wafāt*

MSS: Istanbul Esad Ef. 3314; Şehid Ali Paşa 2810; Osman Ergin 1940.

Genuine.

Published and translated into Persian in Khvājavī's introduction to *al-Fukūk* (Tehran 1992). A facsimile of MS Istanbul Şehid Ali Paşa 2810 is included in Osman Ergin's list of Qunawi's works, 'Sadraddin al-Qunawi ve Eserleri' in *Şarkiyat Mecmuası* 11, 1958 vol. 2, p. 63–90.

English translation by Chittick, entitled 'The Last Will and Testament of Ibn 'Arabi's Foremost Disciple and Some Notes on Its Author' in *Sophia Perennis*, vol. 4, no. 1.

60 **Anonymous commentary on Ibn 'Arabi's verse '*We were sublime Letters*'**

MSS: Istanbul Veliyeddin Cârullah 2054; Şehid Ali Paşa 1389(2).

APPENDIX 2

Qūnawī's *Ijāza*s to Farghānī and Jandī

FIGURE 1 *Qūnawī's* ijāza *to Saʿīd al-Dīn Saʿd al-Farghānī, in his own hand; dated Rabīʿ II 671/ November 1272.*
MS ISTANBUL KÖPRÜLÜ 41

 | DOI 10.1163/9789004271265_013

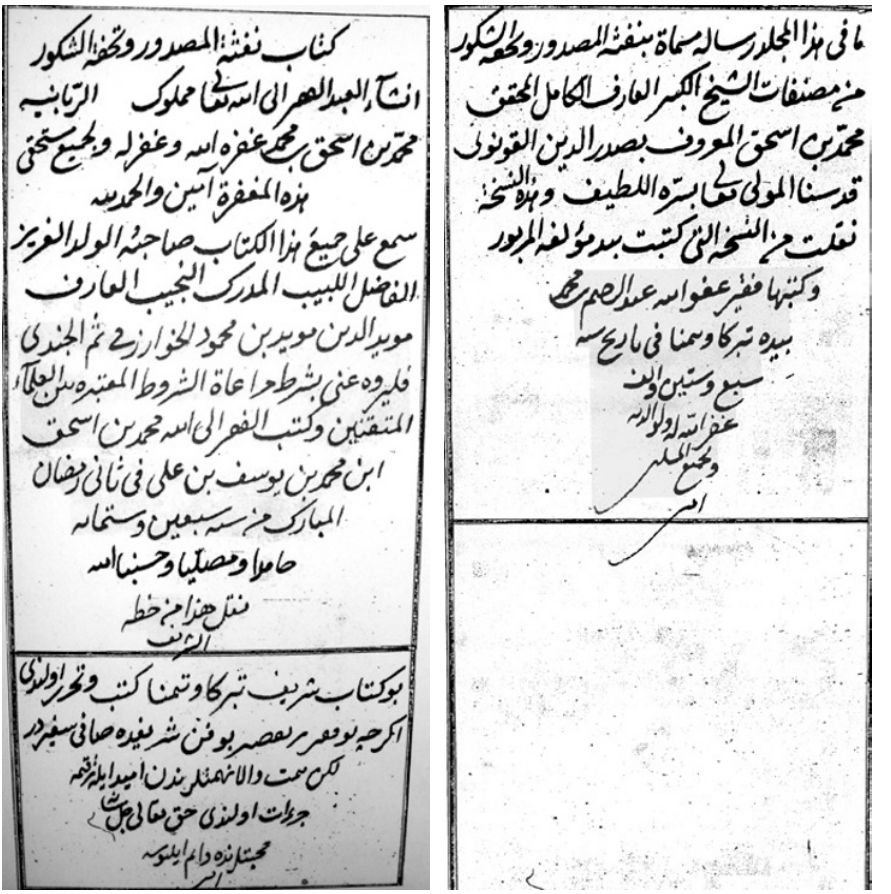

FIGURE 2 *Copy of the* ijāza *that Qūnawī issued to Mu'ayyid al-Dīn al-Jandī in Ramaḍān 670/ April 1272; transcribed from the original in 1067/1656.*
MS LEIDEN OR. 544, FOLS. 1A AND 2A

APPENDIX 3

Translated Excerpts from Qūnawī's Epistemological Texts

As already indicated, the topic of knowledge is one to which Qūnawī returns time and again, with much of the *Iʿjāz* in particular – as well as the treatises addressed to the Avicennian philosopher, Naṣīr al-Dīn al-Ṭūsī – being taken up with questions concerning its nature and branches, the characteristics and limitations of the rational faculty, and the possibility of knowing things as they truly are beneath outward appearances or mental constructs. In several instances, moreover, such questions are expressly linked to the theme of man's *exitus* and *reditus*. As demonstrated by the excerpts below, Qūnawī identifies the desire to know things in their transcendent essences as one of the defining traits of those human beings whose inner disposition qualifies them to achieve the perfection specific to man.

In our first passage (taken from the *Iʿjāz al-bayān*) Ṣadr al-Dīn observes that the perplexity and anxiety born out of the quest for certitude is intrinsic to the human condition. Such intellectual angst, however, can be resolved, not by adherening to rationalist schools of thought, but only at a stage beyond reason:

A

"Know that wandering in error (*ḍalāl*) is essentially identical with perplexity (*ḥayra*), of which there are three degrees: the first concerns the perplexity of the novices (*ahl al-bidāyāt*) from among the generality of men (*min jumhūri-l-nās*); the influence of the second is evident in those who occupy the middle rank from among the folk of insight and veiling (*al-mutawassiṭūn min ahli-l-kashfi wa-l-ḥijāb*); while the authority of the third concerns the great verifiers. Now, the first and most general perplexity is due to the fact that man is intrinsically poor and needy (*faqīr ṭālib bi-l-dhāt*), such that not a single breath passes without his seeking to meet some need or another, owing, as we have said, to his inherent indigence. At the same time, one should realise that the ultimate object of this constant seeking is none other than that perfection which is the goal of the seeker. This same fundamental quest [for perfection] has manifold branches connected with the attainment of lesser goals which are not actually ends in themselves, as for instance is the case with the quest for

 | DOI 10.1163/9789004271265_014

food and drink and other such contingencies as are sought in order to derive some individual benefit or to avoid some harm of an equally individual nature. Which of these [lesser] goals the individual strives towards will be determined by his prevailing concerns (*himam*), his propensities, the pull of his various natural affinities and other factors, all of which have been comprehensively dealt with earlier on.

However, so long as man fails to determine one direction to pursue [above all others] or one chief goal to strive towards, or a doctrine or belief to adhere to, he will remain in a state of perplexity and anxiety. This is because he is conditioned and bound by his very nature; i.e. by his individual modality, his state and most of the circumstances that he finds himself in, such that he has no intrinsic independence from something to lean on, to bind himself to, and to put his trust in … Thus, the first step towards dispelling this first kind of perplexity is that of actually determining the preferred goal. The next step is that of knowing the path that leads to this goal, followed by entry upon this path. Then comes knowledge of all that may be of help in attaining the goal, and, finally, knowledge of any likely obstacles and of how best to overcome them. Wherefore, if all of these conditions are fulfilled, this perplexity vanishes.

After experiencing this perplexity and endeavouring to discover what it is that he requires [in order to feel at peace], and after finally settling upon that which he regards as his rightful goal and true path, man's state will fall into one of two kinds: either he will be sufficiently satisfied with that which [he has chosen to adhere to] such that there remains no desire within him to seek any further – as is, more often than not, the case with the generality of believers and the members of the different religious communities (*ahl al-i'tiqādāti wa-l-niḥal*) – or there will still remain a certain restlessness within him, in which case – although still putting his trust in a certain state and a particular direction – you will nonetheless see him scrutinising [the basis of that trust] from time to time, and even glancing elsewhere, with a view to the possibility of finding something more complete than that which he has already grasped, and more rewarding than that which he is presently pursuing, or has already achieved. Thus, if he finds anything that troubles him [within his present refuge], and if he subsequently has his eyes opened to something else, he passes into the circle of the second degree.

Here too, however, his state will be the same as in the first, inasmuch as it must fall into one of two categories: either he will be perfectly at ease with the new state of affairs in which he has anchored his trust, such that he feels no desire to seek beyond that, or there will still remain within him a certain restlessness which stops him from feeling entirely settled [with his new-found refuge], especially when he sees that the people of middling capacities, who

generally make up this sphere, have split up into various parties and factions, each of which regard only themselves, and those who agree with them, as being in the right, whereas everyone else is in error. Yet he himself sees the source which each group draws upon, and the tenets which they cling to, and finds that they do not have a leg to stand on, for they are not wholly grounded in certitudes and are prone to inconsistencies and contradictions. Moreover, he sees all too well that the basis for their judgement with regard to wrong and right, truth and falsehood, error and guidance, good and bad, harmfulness and usefulness, is, all told, a wholly relative affair. Whereupon, realising all of this, he falls into perplexity once more, not knowing which of these beliefs is closest to the truth on any given matter, nor which of the various religious and philosophical schools (*niḥal*) and their accompanying states and acts is the most [divinely] favoured and beneficial.

And thus does he remain in this state of confusion, until he is finally overcome by the sway of one of the initiatic stations upon which some of the folk of beliefs and doctrines ultimately depend; whereupon he inclines towards it by reason of that part of his [divine] secret which is comprised therein, thus becoming contented and at peace. Indeed, he may even attain to the spiritual 'opening', be it solely through God's Providence, or through both the latter and his own sincerity and truthfulness in his quest, the earnestness of his determination, and the great efforts which he expended in seeking to lift the veil; wherefore, he becomes one of the folk of unveiling (*ahl al-kashf*)".[1]

A similar view is set forth in the following extract from the *Mufṣiḥa*, a treatise intended to affirm the ascendency of *kashf* over *fikr*. The spiritual elite, we are told, are characterised by their proclivity for metaphysics, the noblest science. But they also recognise the inevitable limitations of ratiocination when applied to metaphysical questions. Indeed, of the conventional philosophical curriculum only mathematics and geometry are grounded in certitudes, while the rest is marked by hypotheses and delusions:

B

It is well known that according to the dictates both of reason and the divine revelations (*al-ikhbārāt al-ilāhīya*) people inevitably fall into three main echelons, namely higher, middle and lower, and that one of the defining characteristics of the higher echelon – possessing, as they do, elevated aspirations which spur them to strive for all that is loftiest (*al-maʿālī*) and for the eternal

1 *Iʿjāz*, p. 343–345.

perfections and lasting virtues – is their quest to know the essences of things as they really are in themselves, and above all, to attain to knowledge of God – glory to His transcendence! – of Him, that is to say, who is the most noble object of the most noble of all sciences; for they know that the nobility of a science varies according to the nobility of its object, and that knowledge of God – Sublime is He! – is the root of knowledge of all things, be they composite or simple, encompassed – intelligibly or materially – or encompassing, existent or inexistent.

Wherefore, looking to the manifold existents – be they those that are grasped by the intellect or those that are grasped by the senses – in all their multifarious categories, and considering them in terms of how man's knowledge relates to them, they found that they can be divided into two groups. The first comprises all those things that man is capable of grasping independently through the use of some or all of the complexional faculties (*al-quwā wa-l-ālāt al-mizājīya*) that God has given him. This, at any rate, is the case if the object of cognition is something that may be grasped by physical faculties. Otherwise, if it is something that man can apprehend solely through the use of his mind (*bi-ʿaqli-hi*) considered in terms of its rational speculation and reflective thought (*min ḥaythu naẓari-hi wa fikri-hi*), then that is the way in which it is grasped, as is the case, for example, with knowledge of the existence of God, or of the immaterial spirits, and simple intelligible realities (*al-maʿānī al-basīṭa*). As for the second group, it consists of all that cannot be grasped independently by the reflective and rational powers of the intellect, nor by the senses or physical powers, used individually or in unison, as is the case, for example, with regard to God's Essence (*dhāt*), and the true nature of the Names and Attributes related to Him, both by the sacred laws and man's intellect (*al-ʿuqūl*), and particularly with regard to how any of them – or indeed anything about them – may be properly related to His Essence – Sublime is He! – for the rank of the knowledge of how the Attributes and Names are correctly related to God's Essence is a redoubtable one indeed, owing to the fact that one must uphold the necessity of God's existence, and that He is One in every respect, and utterly distinct *per se* (*mumtāz bi-ḥaqīqati-hi*) from everything else, such that He is not similar to anything, nor is anything similar to Him: all of which has to be affirmed, owing to the inconsistencies and absurdities which would inevitably follow if these fundamental premises were neglected. The same applies to knowledge of the true nature of His Act, considered from the point of view of the relationship between His omnipotence and the objects of [His] knowledge, as well as to knowledge of how the latter have existence imparted to them, and of how they proceed from Him.

Thus, if the sincere seeker (*mustabṣir*) gives careful and unprejudiced consideration to how much he can really know of such things, relying solely upon

his capacity for rational speculation (*bi-naẓarihi-l-ʿaqlīyi-l-fikrī*), he will inevitably find it to be insufficient to put his mind at rest and to quell the very unease (*qalaq*) which had prompted him to seek knowledge of the true nature of things in the first place.

As far as knowledge of God's Essence is concerned, this is clear to the sincere seekers at first sight. As for what I mentioned regarding the [Divine] Attributes and Act, and the emergence of the manifold existents, and other such mazes in which the mind is apt to wander in vain, this likewise becomes apparent upon the slightest reflection and meditation; as, for instance, is the case with the specific properties and effects produced by the mixing of physical, complexional faculties, and those which arise from the conjunctions (*mumāzajāt*) occurring between the celestial powers and angelic influences and between human souls and inferior natural powers; for every enlightened seeker of truth knows that the individual's rational faculty is incapable of arriving at knowledge of the true nature of these and other such things …

Wherefore, we assert that when the enlightened seekers from among God's folk realised all of this and subsequently scrutinised all that people claim to possess by way of sciences, they found them to be no more than so many hypotheses and delusions, although some of them are undoubtedly more plausible than others. Indeed, they found nothing therein capable of standing on its own two feet. [As for the exponents of these sciences,] they cannot even settle upon scientific criteria which they can all agree upon, with the exception of those that apply to the majority of mathematical and geometrical questions, for the simple reason that the bases of their demonstrations are evident to the senses. However, given that the scope and final end of this latter science does not extend beyond knowledge of quantities and surfaces it is incapable of satisfying the souls [of the enlightened seekers] such that they stop there and devote all their attention to acquiring it in full. On the contrary, they are intent on nothing less than knowledge of the most noble of all objects of knowledge, and the one which it best behoves man to acquire, owing to its supreme worth and to the fact that its imperishable fruits endure beyond [the soul's] separation from material supports and bodies.

[In seeking this knowledge, therefore, they are] seeking perfect realisation (*kamāl al-taḥaqquq*) and identity with the supreme knower (*wa-l-ittiṣāl bi-janābi-l-ʿalīyi-l-ʿallām*), while at the same time fulfilling their analogous correspondence to the Most-High's knowledge, in terms of knowing the essences of things as they really are in themselves. Indeed, as we have verified from our repeated observation thereof, and our own knowledge of [the initiatic path] and its folk, the very hallmark of the cream of the elite (*khulāṣat al-khāṣṣa*) – of those, that is to say, who are qualified to achieve true, divine perfection, and

who thus seek to realise the latter in their state, knowledge and metaphysical degree – is the fact that they fix their minds entirely upon the True, in a manner which is thus analogous to the way in which He knows Himself; thereby emptying the receptacle [of their consciousness of all that is other than the True] (*tafrīgh al-maḥall*) and abstaining from seeking knowledge of other than Him, even though such knowledge may indeed be noble in relation to what is beneath it, and even though it may result in a certain measure of felicity (*saʿāda*) or lead its companion to a relative perfection.

Thus, whenever knowledge of something other than the True is allotted to them, whatever it be, and even if they acquired it simply through the outpouring of His Grace – Sublime is He – without any initiative on their part, the ultimate reason for their receiving it is the comprehensiveness of the circle of their knowledge, and the perfection of their uncreated predisposition; for, in reality, it is the latter which demands the pouring forth upon them of the principial light, and hence their being pervaded by the sway of God's knowledge in all of its manifold aspects and fullness. In other words, knowledge of lesser things is not expressly sought out by them, nor does it figure in their concerns – unlike the majority of people, busying themselves, as they do, with the various arts and disciplines which they imagine to be genuine sciences, and each of whom spends his life, time and energies (*himmatu-hu*) in mastering one of these disciplines concerned solely with the world [of generation and corruption], on account of his preferring it above all others, due to its nobility in his eyes, and his belief that it will bring him great benefits, either in this life or the next, or simply because of some spontaneous love for it, whose cause is unknown".[2]

In the next extract, from the *Hādiya*, Qūnawī touches briefly on one of the key debates in medieval philosophy, concerning the ontological status of universals. In essence, this debate revolves around the question of whether universals are merely mental constructs, as the nominalists contend, or whether they are in fact endowed with real existence outside the individual's mind, as argued by the realists. The passage itself certainly suggests that our author takes a realist view on this score, adducing his own intuition of universal realities in support. Nominalism, by contrast, is dismissed as another example of the individual mind's failure to grasp realities pertaining to the *supra*-individual realm:

C

"The true man (*al-insān al-ḥaqīqī*) has intellection of quiddities in the same way that God does; in virtue, that is, of their pre-existent determinations

2 *Mufṣiḥa*, p. 16–21.

(*taʿayyunātu-hā-l-azalīya*), as opposed to their mode of determination within the minds of those whose intellectual vision is veiled by natural reason. For, in truth, the deficiencies inherent within this latter mode of cognition are many indeed, but all of them stem from the fact that it is an apprehension pertaining to the individual domain, achieved by means of an individual faculty, namely that of rational reflection (*al-quwwat al-mufakkira*) and the passive, restricted kind of knowledge to which it leads. Thus, only that which is of the same order as this faculty can actually be comprehended. This is why the intellect which is fettered by reflective reasoning – and hence tied to the laws of multiplicity and contingency – is incapable of grasping universals in their principial degree (*fī marātibi-hā-l-aṣlīya*). On the contrary, the only grasp it can have of them is that which is acquired by first observing particulars and then deriving from them some notion (*maʿnan*) which is common to them all. This, then, is their idea of a universal; nothing more, in other words, than a purely mental construct, and devoid, as such, of any extra-mental reality. Such a view, however, is seriously open to question. In fact, what is intrinsic to the direct intuition acquired during the wayfarer's spiritual ascent (entailing as it does the casting off of the conditions of multiplicity and contingency, as well as the soul's liberation from the faculties of perception specific to the individual state) is that, precisely by virtue of this ascent, the self's grasp of universal realities (*al-ḥaqāʾiq al-kullīya*) comes to precede its perception of particulars. Accordingly, first it comprehends universal realities, such as Being, and so forth, and then it grasps the particulars and concomitants entailed by those universals".[3]

The following text is a key passage in Qūnawī's critique of rational inquiry. It occurs in the *Iʿjāz* and is reproduced verbatim in the *Mufṣiḥa*, one of the treatises sent to Ṭūsī. Here Qūnawī is at pains to point out that his dispensing with syllogistic reasoning – the methodological bedrock of the philosophical curriculum – is not due to ignorance but to a carefully considered rejection of the syllogism as a means of arriving at scientific certainty:

D

"I shall now embark upon the section of this introduction which aims to clarify the status of rational reflection (*fikr*) and syllogistic demonstration (*al-barāhīn al-naẓarīya*) and to examine to what ends they are actually capable of leading, and what serves to characterise their proponents, while at the same time expounding the [relevant] underlying metaphysical secrets and nuances … I shall then set forth the nature of that which the verifiers from among God's

3 *Hādiya*, p. 148.

folk regard as true knowledge (*al-ʿilm al-ṣaḥīḥ*) – the rational sciences (*al-ʿulūm al-naẓarīya*) being merely some of its applications and attributes – and I shall explain how this knowledge is acquired and what are its influence and effect … And yet it must be said that were it not for the fact that the treatment of this initial subject forms one of the cornerstones of this general introduction, seeking, as it does, to clarify the true nature of knowledge (*sirr al-ʿilm*), and its various degrees, I would not have included it in the present work, nor would I have adopted the manner of exposition [which such a task entails]. Its inclusion, however, is necessary in order to point out to the unenlightened (*al-maḥjūbūn*) that our dispensing with the system which they imagine to be the supreme arbiter (*ḥujja*), an attribute of perfection, a precondition for attaining sure and certain knowledge (*al-ʿilm al-yaqīnī*), and the most excellent of the paths leading to it, is due, not to any ignorance thereof, but, on the contrary, to awareness of its ultimate futility and the manifold forms of strife and controversy to which it inevitably gives rise, and also to our preferring to stay in conformity with that which God has chosen for the perfect from among His servants and those who are protected under the watchful guard of His providence.

You should know, dear brethren – may God grant you that which He grants His closest servants – that it is virtually impossible to furnish logical proofs for disputed questions so thoroughly, by purely rational means alone, as to preclude all possible doubts and dialectical objections; for speculative criteria (*al-aḥkām al-naẓarīya*) differ according to the variation in the cognitive faculties (*madārik*) of those who apply them. Now, for their part, these cognitive faculties are consecutive to the [intellectual] orientation (*tawajjuhāt*) of the cognizant (*mudrikūn*), and these orientations are attendant upon their propensities (*maqāṣid*) which, for their part, follow on from their doctrinal affiliations, mental habits, balances of temperament, and natural affinities … Wherefore, we assert that, owing to the factors listed above, the exponents of rational speculation differ considerably with respect to the workings of their mind, the dictates of their thought, and their subsequent results. Hence the inevitable clash of opinions, such that what one holds to be correct another declares to be mistaken, and what some regard as indisputable proof others dismiss as specious. Indeed, there is nothing upon which they can all agree.

In effect, therefore, the truth in relation to each speculative thinker (*nāẓir*) is really that which he wishes to be right, by virtue of his own preference, and with which he thus feels most at ease. At the same time, one should not forget that the mere fact of a particular proof's being open to question does not mean that it should be rejected outright, nor, more importantly, should it entail the rejection of the thing whose reality it was intended to affirm; for there are, as we know, many things which elude logical demonstration yet about whose

reality there can be no doubt, either on our part, or on that of the proponents of rational proofs. Conversely, we have seen many things that were supposed to have been established once and for all through rational demonstrations the soundness of which was considered indisputable by certain individuals, owing to their inability, and that of their contemporaries, to discover the weaknesses and inconsistencies inherent in the premises of those demonstrations; wherefore, finding no room for doubt therein, they imagined them to be clear demonstrations and hence [productive of] sure and certain scientific knowledge (*barāhīn jalīya wa ʿulūm yaqīnīya*). After a period of time, however, they, or those who came after them, became alert to the presence of weaknesses in some, or all, of the premises. Thus, having identified the weaknesses they contain, their confidence in these demonstrations was thoroughly undermined, such that they dismissed them as false. However, the debate concerning these objections, and whether they are valid or groundless, then takes the place of the initial debate concerning the demonstrations, such that the situation of the doubters is like that of the affirmers".[4]

Another objection to the basic methodology of *falsafa* is expressed in the passage below, taken from the *Iʿjāz*. This time the focus is on the conceptual building-blocks of propositional logic and syllogistic reasoning, namely formal concepts (*taṣawwurāt*) and definitions (*ḥudūd*). Although the latter purport to define the *essential* features of things, they are based, so Qūnawī argues, solely on attributes, accidents and outward phenomena. For him, underlying essences (*ḥaqāʾiq*) are formless, non-manifest and rooted in the divine mind. Since the individual's mind belongs to the formal, manifest domain it cannot know or presume to define the *ḥaqāʾiq* as they really are:

E

"The [manifold] changes which occur in existence – by means of conjunction and separation, dissolution and composition, and the outward determinations and multifarious types of formal configurations (*anwāʿ al-tashakkulāt*) – are, in fact, concerned solely with individual forms and shapes which, for their part, are nothing more than [individual] modalities (*aḥkām*) of the universal, abstract essences and archetypes which are purely intelligible in nature. In other words, the outward forms pertaining to the individual domain, and the individualities (*tashakhkhuṣāt*) determined within the visible world are merely manifestations of modalities implicitly comprised within the universal

4 *Iʿjāz*, p. 15–17 and *Mufṣiḥa*, p. 26–27.

archetypes (*al-ashkāl al-kullīya*) and simple essences (*al-ḥaqā'iq al-basīṭa*), such that the qualities of these [individual] forms perceived [by the senses], are ultimately so many modalities of the [*supra*-formal] reality which has thus become endowed with form (*al-amr al-mutashakkil*) in a given degree and concrete essence.

Now, the real essences (*ḥaqā'iq*) all share in the fact of being abstract and indivisible substances (*al-jawharīya*), even as they are united both in respect of the existence common to them all, and the non-manifest, divine secret which admits of no multiplicity. The differences [between them], therefore, appear solely through their [conceptual] and outwardly manifest forms. It thus follows that what are known as 'formal definitions' (*ḥudūd dhātīya*) are, in fact, proper to these conceptual and outward forms alone, and not to the [*supra*-formal] reality which has been clothed in form. Nevertheless, the fact remains that it is solely through its outward form (*shakl*) that this reality may be perceived, which is why those who do not know otherwise assume that the object defined (*maḥdūd*) is the 'formalised' reality itself (i.e. envisaged in respect of its essence), whereas it is really only its outward form. But this is hardly to be wondered at, given that the form cannot be seen independently of the essential reality which is clothed therein, even as the latter cannot be perceived other than by means of the outward form.

A similar mistake is made by those who, of the real essences of things know only their accidents and attributes, yet who assume nonetheless that they have grasped the essential nature of these attributes, whereas, in reality, they know them only insofar as they are attributes of a certain subject which is described in terms of them (*ṣifa li-mawṣūfin mā*), and this is akin to what was said earlier on about the qualities (*kayfīyāt*) perceived [by the senses and the mind] being modalities of the 'formalised' reality – not from an absolute point of view, that is, but solely insofar as it is clothed in form [within a particular degree of existence]. In reality, then, such knowledge [i.e. knowledge of real essences acquired through their accidental qualities and attributes] pertains, not to the real essences themselves, but merely to the relations implicit therein, such that the possessor of this knowledge knows the relations of the real essences – at least inasmuch as they are determined through applying the criteria of negation or attribution – but does not know these essences as they really are; for knowledge of the true nature of real essences (*kunh al-ḥaqā'iq*) cannot be acquired by any way other than the one mentioned earlier on, namely that which pertains specifically to the 'taste' realised by the great initiates – may God be pleased with them!

Wherefore, we assert that the constituent parts in the formal definition (*ḥadd*) of every simple thing are not elements of the [thing's] essential reality,

but only of its formal definition – of something, that is to say, which has been imposed by the faculty of reason (i.e. at the cognitive level of the individual's mind). As for the thing as it really is in itself (*fī dhāti-hi min ḥaythu huwa huwa*) it remains unknown, such that no constituent parts [of its definition] may be properly negated with regard to it, or affirmed. It is on account of this secret, and of what was explained at the outset of this work, that it is impossible to know the true nature of things considered in respect of their absoluteness and simplicity within the dignity of the divine non-manifest – which is their very ground and well-spring (*maʿdan*) – save in the manner expounded earlier on when we were treating of the true nature of knowledge. Thus, the formalised reality, for example, considered in abstraction of its form (*shakl*), resides within the dignity of the non-manifest divine knowledge (*ḥaḍrat al-ʿilmi-l-ilāhīyi-l-ghaybī*) such that we can have no determinate knowledge of it (*fa-lā yataʿayyan la-nā*), for the reasons already expounded; and nor, by the same token, is it distinguishable [from anything else] (*wa lā yamtāz*). Hence, it cannot be contained within a determinate concept (*fa-lā yanḍabiṭ fī taṣawwurin*), which, in turn, means that it cannot be defined, named, or expressed, except in the most general way possible; namely, that there is something behind this outward form (*shakl*) which, when considered independently of the intelligible forms, attributes and aspects which serve to determine it as far as our own point of view is concerned, cannot be contained in a formal concept, nor is it susceptible to determinate intellection, nor can it be beheld. In other words, there cannot but be a certain reality (*amr*) by virtue of which the outward form is manifested; the latter thus serving to condition the reality attributed with being clothed in form (*al-amr al-mawṣūf bi-l-tashakkul*), such that it is thereby possible to perceive them both; by which I mean both the form and the formalised reality insofar as they are conjoined. However, when envisaged in abstraction both of the outward form and the dictates of the formal condition (*ḥukm al-tashakkul*) it is, as we have already stressed, extremely difficult to grasp the thing's true nature".[5]

The following extract from the *Nuṣūṣ* is noteworthy for containing the only instance of the phrase *waḥdat al-wujūd* in Qūnawī's entire corpus. The context in which it appears, though, is as much epistemological as ontological. As with all phenomena, so our author contends, the most that human beings can grasp of Being itself is its manifest effects. Since "like is apprehended by like", the transcendent Unity of Being cannot be comprehended by the individual as his own unity is defined in relation to the many, unlike that of the One:

5 *Iʿjāz*, p. 79–81.

F

"All that is perceived in the realm of concrete essences (*fī-l-aʿyān*) and beheld in the world of generation [and corruption], whatever be the mode by which man perceives it, and irrespective of the presence in which it is beheld, (with the exception of that mode of perception connected with immaterial essences and achieved by way of *supra*-rational unveiling [*bi-ṭarīqi-l-kashf*] – which is why we said 'in the realm of concrete essences', i.e. that which is perceived in a manifest object of whatever kind) amounts to no more than colours, lights and *superficia* of various qualities and quantities, or rather their likenesses manifested in the imaginal world (*ʿālam al-amthāl*) (the latter being bound up with man's nature in one respect and separate from it in another) in accordance with the object of perception as it exists externally (*fī-l-khārij*), or to be more precise, as its various elements exist externally. Thus, the multiplicity of this ensemble is the proper object of the senses, whereas its overall unity is arrived at through the operation of the intellect. Yet all of this [i.e. everything perceived through the natural faculties of the individual *qua* individual] amounts to no more than the conditions and modalities of Being (*aḥkām al-wujūd*) … in other words, it is not Being itself, for Being is One and so cannot be grasped by anything other than Itself, for the reasons already set forth, namely the fact that the Unity of the [transcendent] One cannot be grasped by considering it in relation to multiplicity as such, and vice versa. Now, for his part, man's perception is due, not to his being One according to a true oneness like the unity of Being (*ka-waḥdati-l-wujūd*), but rather to his being a particular essence (*ḥaqīqa*) attributed with existence, life, knowledge, and some commensurability between itself and the desired object of perception, not to mention the absence of the various obstacles capable of impeding perception. Accordingly, whatever he perceives, he perceives by virtue of its plurality, rather than in respect of its unity, whence it follows that he is incapable of perceiving [Pure Being] inasmuch as it is utterly free of multiplicity, as explained earlier on".[6]

For Qūnawī, as we have seen, the lack of consensus between theological and philosophical schools is an inevitable consequence of the shortcomings inherent in rational reflection. In the following passage from the *Iʿjāz* this tendency towards mutual contradiction and endless debate is contrasted with the harmony underlying the doctrines expounded by the verifiers, saints and prophets. Since they derive, so we are told, from the same transcendent source, such doctrines display a fundamental unity at heart, differing solely in terms of

6 *Nuṣūṣ*, p. 70–74.

secondary applications or modifications necessitated by the nature and circumstances of the specific people to whom they are addressed:

G

"One of the things resulting from this comprehensive spiritual taste and perfect unveiling (*al-kashf al-kāmil*) is a clear overview of the actual ends to which the reflective faculties (*al-madārik al-fikrīya*) and rational inquiry are capable of leading, and which, as we have already pointed out, do not extend beyond [the wholly relative knowledge of] accidents, attributes, specific properties and concomitants. In this way, then, the possessor [of such taste and intuition] will know the limits of what each thinker (*mufakkir*) is ultimately capable of grasping through his own reflective thought, and discovering through his senses and his rational faculty, even as he will know the reason why the partisans of rational inquiry inevitably refute one another. [Similarly, he will know] what they have succeeded in grasping, what they have missed, and in which respect they are right, and in which respect they are wrong.

Moreover, the same is true of his situation with regard to those possessors of tastes (*ahl al-adhwāq*) who have not realised the universal taste (*al-dhawq al-jāmiʿ*), and likewise with regard to those who adhere to profane beliefs, or to religious ones merely as a result of conformism. Thus, he knows the various ranks both of the [lesser] tasters (*dhāʾiqūn*) and the conformists (*muqallida*); he knows which of the Names, spiritual states and stations, rule over them, and thus cause them to be enamoured of, and be bound to the particular state which serves to define them; and he knows who is qualified to rise above that, and who is not. Wherefore, [knowing this], he excuses all created beings, whereas they, for their part, deny him, ignorant as they are of his standing.

This, then, dear brethren, is the state of the masterly from among God's folk with regard to the knowledge that has been granted to them, and the perfect intuition which they had been seeking. Yet do not imagine this to be the ultimate end [in view]; for beyond every peak lies a higher one. Moreover, it is because of this spiritual realisation (*taḥaqquq*) and profound insight that there has never arisen any divergence (*khilāf*) between either the envoys and the prophets, or the perfect from among the saints, concerning the principles of their doctrine (*uṣūl maʾkhadhi-him*), that which results from the application thereof, or that which they have expounded regarding the nature of the principal divine presences – although some have a greater insight and are more capable of expressing [this doctrine] than others.

In truth, therefore, any contradiction or divergence as would seem to emerge from what has been related about them, really only concerns the individual [applications of this doctrine] (*juz'īyat al-umūr*) and the divine decrees of the sacred law (*al-aḥkām al-ilāhīya al-mashrūʿa*), since these are bound up with the circumstances and characteristics of the peoples entrusted with observing their precepts, the nature of the times they live in, their general outlook (*mā tawāṭa'ū ʿalayhi*), and that which they require for their well-being. Indeed, in every age the divine decrees are determined through the intermediary of the envoy of that epoch, and through that which is most beneficial for his people, according to the demands of their predisposition, states, spiritual qualifications, and characteristics.

In themselves, however – and with the exception of the particular applications mentioned previously – there is perfect accord between all [of these envoys] – peace be upon them – in all that they relate regarding the True. Thus, each successive [prophet] affirms and validates what was said by his predecessors, since the source of their doctrine is one and the same (*li-ittiḥādi aṣli ma'khadhi-him*), and the receptacle [of their consciousness] (*maḥallu-hum*) is wholly free from the influence of acquired sciences (*aḥkām al-ʿulūmi-l-muktasaba*), dogmas, attachments, and other such things as were dealt with earlier on.

By the same token, it is inconceivable that any discord should arise among the great friends [of God] (*akābir al-awliyā'*), concerning fundamental divine principles. On the contrary, any divergence that arises is either merely concerned with secondary applications, or it is that which arises among those middle-ranking initiates and neophytes (*al-mutawassiṭūn wa ahl al-bidāya*) who are subject to transient spiritual states (*ahl al-aḥwāl*), or who receive manifest unveilings (*aṣḥāb al-mukāshafāti-l-ẓāhira*) whereby real essences, [spiritual] presences, and other such realities as may be grasped solely through intellectual intuition, appear to them clothed in subtle semblances (*fī malābis mathalīya*); for the true signification of this kind of intuition – and what the True intends thereby – cannot be known other than through that knowledge which comes with the non-manifest, purely intellectual kind of unveiling (*al-kashf al-maʿnawī al-ghaybī*) which transcends all subtle archetypes and material supports of whatever degree, or through that mode of divine communication (*ikhbār ilāhī*) which occurs through the suppression of all intermediaries, and hence transcends all conditioned states and the dictates of contingent being".[7]

Moving now from knowledge human to knowledge divine, the following is a passage from the *Nuṣūṣ* concerning God's knowledge and its necessary

7 *Iʿjāz*, p. 43–45.

perfection. The mention of *dhawq* and *kashf* notwithstanding, the argument has a distinctly philosophical flavour, evoking both Aristotle's concept of knowledge as the "common act of knower and known" and Avicenna's notion of God's self-knowledge:

H

"Know that the highest degree in which one may be said to know something – whatever the thing and whoever the knower, and irrespective of whether the object of knowledge be a single thing or many – is that which is achieved through union with the object of knowledge (*bi-l-ittiḥād bi-l-maʿlūm*) such that the knower does not differ from it; for the cause of [a being's] ignorance of something – which is to say the cause of that which prevents [its having] a full and perfect grasp (*kamāl al-idrāk*) [of the thing in question] – is none other than the predominance of the influence exerted by that through which they are distinct from one another. What is in question, therefore, is an intelligible distance (*buʿd maʿnawī*), so to speak; for distance, of whatever kind, prevents the full perception of the distant object. By the same token, the extent to which something is known varies in accordance with the extent to which there holds sway the influence of that through which the knower and the known are united. This, then, is the essential proximity which negates the separation represented by the intelligible distance …

Wherefore, if you see the truth of this principle, and taste it through direct intuition (*bi-kashfin muḥaqqaqin*), you will realise that the reason for the perfection of God's knowledge of all things is His elucidation of them within Himself (*min ajli istijlā'i-hi iyā-hā fī nafsi-hi*), and the effacement of their multiplicity and otherness within His Unity … Hence, we assert that God knows Himself through Himself, and thus knows all things within Himself precisely through His knowledge of Himself. Indeed, the divine revelation itself (*al-ikhbār al-ilāhī*) informs us that '*God Most High was and nothing was with Him*'; thus affirming that the otherness of all things is effaced in relation to the Unity which is their essential, non-manifest abode".[8]

For Qūnawī, human beings too are capable of grasping the essential reality of things in a transcendent and universal manner akin to God's knowledge. This, we are told, is the highest degree of human knowledge and is achieved through the essential theophany that marks the end of the spiritual path:

8 *Nuṣūṣ*, p. 43–45.

I

"When the initiate finally reaches this hidden station, and realises the things we have been expounding, and when he sees his Lord through the eye of his Lord (and vice versa), science and knowledge will then be attributed to him, not from his own standpoint [*qua* contingent being] and in accordance therewith, but from that of his Lord; and this, moreover, will be the case with all other attributes. Indeed, in this way he will also know his own soul, which, of all existential things (*al-ashyā' al-kawnīya*) is the closest to him. He will do so, however, having already realised knowledge of his Lord, in the manner to which we have alluded. Then, he will know whichever Names and universal, abstract essences God wishes him to know through Him, [and, this being the case, he will know them] in a non-dualistic, synthetic, universal and utterly transcendent manner. Thus, his knowledge of the real essences of things and his grasp of the latter in their universal degree, will be in conformity with the non-dualistic, all-embracing, divine quality acquired through the essential theophany (*al-tajallī al-dhātī*) which imbues him [with the transcendent attributes] and which effaces, through its Unity, the sway of the multiplicity inherent in contingent being, as well as that of the [relative] unities [pertaining to each of the total being's degrees and modalities] which were mentioned when we were discussing the true nature of influences and affinities. Then, he will seize the conditions and modalities of these essences, and of their characteristics, accidents and concomitants, through the conditions and modalities of this unified, all-embracing self-disclosure (*hādha-l-tajallī al-aḥadī al-jamʿī*) and the above-mentioned transcendent quality by virtue of which [the being] is made ready to be invested with the authority of this essential theophany and of the non-manifest light of knowledge (*al-nūr al-ghaybī al-ʿilmī*) alluded to above.

Now, the secret underlying all of this is that man is at once an isthmus (*barzakh*) between the dignity of the divine and that of contingent being, and an all-inclusive copy (*nuskha jāmiʿa*) of both of the latter and all that they contain, such that there is nothing that is not inscribed within his metaphysical rank (*murtasam fī martabati-hi*), all-embracing as it is".[9]

In the following passage from the *Iʿjāz* Qūnawī contrasts what he sees as the Aristotelian trait (shared by the *falāsifa*) of disputation for its own sake with the practices of the Platonists and Pre-Socratic sages. It is noticeable that the latter are depicted as being closer in spirit and method to the Sufis than the Avicennian philosophers:

9 *Iʿjāz*, p. 41–42.

J

"It is related that, while still numbering among the exponents of rational inquiry, the ancient philosophers were much given to spiritual retreat (*khalwa*), spiritual exercises, and generally observing the demands of the sacred law to which they adhered. Thus, whenever a certain reality was opened up to them, they would convey to their disciples and students as much thereof as they saw fit to mention, and this they would do by way of straightforward exposition, rather than syllogistic demonstration. Occasionally, however, they might perceive a particular usefulness in establishing a demonstration of the truth that they were expounding, in which case they would do so; but these occasions notwithstanding, they would simply relate to their disciples the particular truth which they sought to render manifest. Those who accepted this exposition unreservedly benefited therefrom, whereas those who showed reluctance or voiced objections were not answered immediately but simply urged to increase their efforts in the inner work of realisation, and to turn towards God, asking Him that they be granted perfect knowledge of that which they had been hesitant about … and thus did they continue in this practice until the time of Aristotle, wherein the art of logical disputation took hold and spread far and wide, propagated by his followers – by those, that is to say, who are known as the Peripatetics – and thus has it continued down to the present day".[10]

In the following extract from the *As'ila* our author sets out to remind Naṣīr al-Dīn al-Ṭūsī that the rational faculty is incapable of fathoming the true nature of God's Essence due to the utter incommensurability between God and His creation. In many respects this is a familiar expression of apophatic theology, albeit couched in the characteristic language of determination and non-determination:

K

"The truth is that regardless of whatever determinations of God the intellect, mind or senses may arrive at, He remains essentially indeterminate (*ghayr muta'ayyin*). He is therefore neither bound up with anything, nor similar to anything; nor yet can He even be regarded as distant from anything except insofar as His true Essence is distinct from all things …

Given, then, that there can be no real conformity between man's [discursive] intellection [of God] and the latter's true nature, it follows that all the judgements derived through man's reasoning and which consist in attributing

10 *I'jāz*, p. 13–14.

things to God by way of negation or affirmation, ultimately pertain to nothing more than this intellection itself, i.e. the determinate concept arrived at through the operation of the intellect (*al-taʿayyun al-mutashakhkhiṣ fī taṣawwuri-l-ʿaql*) …

Seen in this light, it hardly matters whether one holds that God's existence is identical with His Essence, or simply a concomitant thereof; in either case the premises are incapable of being verified since their elements elude definition".[11]

Finally, in another passage from the *Asʾila*, Qūnawī invokes in support of his critique of reason the views of Avicenna himself as set forth in the *Taʿlīqāt*, a *reportatio* of Ibn Sīnā's comments and clarifications compiled by his pupil Bahmanyār ibn al-Marzubān (d. 1066/458). Even the *Shaykh al-Raʾīs*, Qūnawī asserts, ultimately recognised the powerlessness of formal definitions in fathoming the true nature of things. For Qūnawī, as we have seen, such knowledge is possible, but may be achieved through *supra*-rational gnosis alone:

L

"Our remarks [regarding the limitations of the rational faculty] are supported by the admission on the part of the *Shaykh al-Raʾīs* [Ibn Sīnā], who is the final seal of the philosophers and the foremost exponent of reason … namely that 'it is not in the power of mortals to fathom the underlying natures of things. Thus, all we know of things is their specific properties, concomitants and accidents. But we do not know the *differentiae* that go to make up each of them and which therefore provide the key to its essence. On the contrary, all we know is that they are things that possess certain properties, accidents and concomitants. Hence we do not know the underlying reality of the First, nor of the intellect, nor the soul, nor the celestial spheres, nor fire, air, water and earth. Indeed, we do not even know the true nature of their accidents'[12]…

Similarly, regarding the very question that we have taken as underlying all subsequent areas of dispute, and which is namely that of the true nature of God (*ḥaqīqat al-ḥaqq*) he says: 'We do not know the true nature of the First. All we know of Him is that He must either be necessarily existent or not. This, however, is not His true essence but simply one of His concomitants, and by means of it we come to know some of His other concomitants, such as Unity and the other Attributes.

11 *Asʾila*, p. 54.

12 Ibn Sīnā, *Taʿlīqāt*, p. 34.

In fact, the closest we can come to grasping His true nature is by thinking of Him as the Existent *per se*; or in other words, that which exists solely by virtue of itself. By describing Him thus, however, we are, all told, merely referring to something the true nature of which eludes us. The fact is that His true essence cannot be the same as existence (*nafs al-wujūd*), nor can it be a quiddity properly so-called, since existence is extrinsic to quiddities as such, whereas He is intrinsically the very cause of existence. Accordingly, two alternatives present themselves: in the first of them existence should be regarded as His definition (*taḥdīdu-hu*) in the same way that our intellect regards genus and *differentia* as entering into the definition of simple substances. In this case existence will be a part, not of His essence, but of the manner in which He is formally defined (*ḥaddu-hu*), just as genus and *differentia* are parts of the formal definitions of simple substances, rather than parts of their respective essences (*dhawāti-hā*). In the second, however, His essence should be regarded as above existence (*fawq al-wujūd*), such that the latter would be merely one of its concomitants'[13]…

Wherefore, we, for our part, declare that one of the certitudes obtained through the true taste enjoyed by God's folk is that the starting point of their gnosis is their knowledge of the True, and that [this knowledge] is attained through God Himself, rather than through their own faculties and intellect. Thus, when they know the True through the True they can then know themselves through this same knowledge, and indeed know whatever God wishes to acquaint them with, whether all at once or gradually. This is why we hold that nobody can possibly know the underlying nature of anything so long as he does not know the True; for God is the indeterminable (*ghayr mutaʿayyin*) that underlies all that is determined by the intellect, mind, or senses, without intermingling with it, resembling it, or even being distant from it except inasmuch as it is intrinsically distinct from all things".[14]

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13 Ibn Sīnā, *Taʿlīqāt*, p. 35.

14 *Asʾila*, p. 51–53.

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