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FROM THE EDITORS

Ilahiyat Studies is a new multidisciplinary academic journal dedicated to publishing original articles, essays, reports, and book reviews primarily within the fields of Islamic and Religious Studies. In our context, the term *Ilahiyat* is not confined within the boundaries of its classical usage as one branch of Islamic philosophy, which refers to a variety of issues on first philosophy, metaphysics, and the notion of God. Rather, we intend to widen its scope and use it in a broader sense to include any topic related to what is considered to be "divine," as studied under three general categories of Classical Islamic Sciences, History of Islam and Islamic Arts, and Philosophy and the Study of Religion(s). In so doing we hope to bring out a truly interdisciplinary journal whose focus is upon the intersection of more than one discipline, perspective, and religious tradition.

We initiated this project with a view to providing a forum for the scholars of Islamic Studies and of Study of Religion(s) from all over the world through which they can share, test, and disseminate their research results and findings, making them available to a wider international audience in English. This is especially important within the context of Turkish society where the great accumulation of knowledge not only in every branch of Islamic sciences, but also in social sciences, and humanities remains largely unknown to the wider academic world. Except for a couple of universities and academic departments, Turkish has been almost the only scientific language in the Turkish university system for various reasons not to be discussed here. As a result, the body of knowledge accumulated over the centuries has not been able to find a viable channel through which it can sufficiently reach the international academic stage thus far. With the *IS* initiative we hope to "raise a voice" by taking the lead in developing similar and better projects that would address to the needs and problems of our time. Although *IS* is the first in its kind in Turkey to provide scholars with an effective channel of communication in English, we are not in the position to imply that our attempt is sufficient to fill the gap. As stated above: it is just that, a "voice!"

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We hope *IS* will provide an effective forum for constructive critique and for creative thinking on all aspects of Islamic and Religious Studies/Study of Religion(s).

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ARTICLES

POSTMODERNIZATION OF RELIGION
–A Brief Remark–

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Abstract

In this article, the postmodernization of religion is analyzed as part of the individualization and alienation of the "cultural reification" process. In attempting to define the "postmodernization of religion" within a general philosophical framework, two specific social phenomena are considered. First, the article takes up the "crisis" of modernity, with special reference to the secularization and subjectivation that has undermined the universality of modernity and legitimized the individualization of social life. Second, a philosophical deliberation about Christianity between two preeminent philosophers (Rorty and Vattimo) is examined to shed light upon the debate about Islam in Turkey. This deliberation between Rorty and Vattimo is indirectly reminiscent of disputes about the role of Islam in Turkish society and politics.

Key Words: Postmodernization of religion, the "crisis" of modernity, secularization, subjectivation, Rorty, Vattimo, civic responsibility, spiritual responsibility.

I.

The first thought that the concept of postmodernity brings to mind is the crisis involved in the process of modernization. This crisis is, in essence, the expression of an irrational emergence caused by rationalization, which lies at the core of modernization. Modernization is a process that has progressed along the dual axes of the differentiation

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and secularization of social life spaces. However, the dissemination and acceptance of this process was made possible by the mythos that the process itself has created. Therefore, to talk about the phenomenon of postmodernization within this conceptual framework only refers to the crises that were forced upon society by the acceptance of the mythos that modernization created. To be more accurate, it refers to social pathologies.

We can expand upon the above framework and claim that modernity was presented as a "project" based on two fundamental assumptions. The first assumption was the intelligibility of the social world, and the second was that this social world could be shaped (manipulated) and managed. The sociologist Alain Touraine labels these assumptions *rationalization* and *subjectivation*, respectively (Touraine, 1995: 9-10, 204-205). According to Touraine, modernity primarily depends on complementary and antagonistic relations between rationalization and subjectivation, which have replaced a centralized view of social life. This, in turn, is the replacement of a world divided between the human and the divine by rationality and subject; that is, a world governable by laws that are the product of human thought. Touraine labels modernity a "counter-tradition" in this sense and emphasizes that this tradition symbolizes the transition to the age of rationality. The postmodern view, by de-centering the subject of modernity, adopts a philosophy that points to the possibilities of plural rationalization. Thus, it has undermined the universality of modernity and legitimized the individualization of the social life.

In this context, the hierarchy created by modernity began to be challenged by instrumental rationalization, holistic social arrangements, and the equality, value rationalization and individualistic arrangements of postmodernity. This is what is called "the crisis of modernity": the erosion of *singular*, *universal*, and *absolute* values and their replacement by values that are *plural*, *particular*, and *relative*.

What I refer to as the "postmodernization of religion" emerges as an important discussion issue precisely at this point. An important question awaits a detailed answer: especially in holy scriptures, how can divine unity be situated within the postmodern condition, which consists of elements such as "plural", "singular", and "relative", as mentioned above? This essay attempts to provide clues to such an answer through a contemporary philosophical discussion. For this

purpose, it is necessary to further detail the philosophical background of the issue.

II.

About 150 years ago, the Danish philosopher Søren Kierkegaard described his times as "essentially *a sensible, reflecting age, devoid of passion, flaring up in superficial, short-lived enthusiasm and prudentially relaxing in indolence*". He adds:

> As an age without passion it has no assets of feeling erotic, no assets of enthusiasm an inwardness in politics and religion, no assets of domesticity, piety, and appreciation in daily life and social life… everything becomes, as it were, transactions in *paper Money*. Certain phrases and observations circulate among the people, partly true and sensible, yet devoid of vitality, but there is no hero, no lower, no thinker, no knight of faith, no great humanitarian, no person in despair to vouch for their validity by having primitively experienced them… *It lets everything remain but subtly drains the meaning out of it; rather than culminating in an uprising, it exhausts the inner actuality of relations in a tension of reflection that lets everything remain and yet has transformed the whole of existence into an equivocation that its facticity is –while entirely privately… a dialectical fraud interpolates a secret way of reading– that is not* (Kierkegaard, 2000: 252, 254-255; italics in original).

The real issue about which our philosopher complained was that a passionless age had no value judgments and turned everything into symbolic ideas. In our age, too, we live trapped in a web of "realities" in which false value judgments, created by things turned into symbolic ideas, shape the individual, the society, and the culture. In general, Islam, Christianity, and Judaism are perceived as tools of personal legitimization rather than as the holistic sources of reality. Along these lines, religion(s) functions almost as a personalized code of conduct rather than a shared life-style or a culture.

Such a condition exists at the postmodern societal turning point (which will be defined shortly) because global capitalism, of which this turning point is an integral part, has maximized the reification process noted by Georg Lukacs. Reification, as Lukacs defined it (cited in Honneth, 2008: 21-28), is a process whereby an element that essentially relates to human existence and society becomes symbolic,

departs from its ontological foundations and turns into an object-like entity. That is, an element that defines us materializes out of us. An element that we understand as having definition and meaning moves out of us and acquires the possibility of defining us. In essence, this is "alienation" through "individualization".

Regarding religious phenomena, the general effect of reification through individualization is a tendency for feelings of obligation toward the other and of belonging to the whole to disappear, as Marcel Gauchet (1999) pointed out. In Gauchet's terms, we are now at a turning point where we are faced with "the historical figure of holy being replaced by a worldly absolute whose features and form have not yet been defined". By implication, this situation, which some view as the beginning of a "post-secular" age, is in reality not a rejection of religion but is religion acquiring a *new public image* and thereby becoming politicized. The most obvious feature of this image corresponds to the phenomenon of "the postmodernization of religion", referred to in the title of this essay.

The emerging possibility of a personal "interpretation" that deconstructs supernatural mysteries may pave the way for the reconstruction of microcosms.

This sort of interpretation can paradoxically contribute to the reconstruction of supernatural-like mysteries at the personal level. This is done through symbolic representations and the possibility of a political platform. Following Luc Ferry, the core of the realization of individual interpretation consists of the inseparability of "the question of meaning and the question of sacred" interconnected with "a twofold process". On the one hand, there is the "disenchantment of the world" or, to put it a better way, the broad movement of the *humanization of the divine* that since the eighteenth century has characterized the rise of secularism in Europe. "… But in parallel to all this, there has also been a slow and inexorable *divinization of the human*…" (Ferry, 2002: 31-32).

The postmodern world represents a condition whereby the real and the simulated merge into each other. More often, however, simulation makes us forget the real, and consequentially establishes itself as more real than the real. This condition leads to the propagation of representational (symbolic) ideas, and even phenomena, that are made possible by signs, symbols, technological speed, consumerism, media-based information, and orientation.

III.

The structuring of postmodernity in this way is also valid for religion, which it views as the old face of the truth, and for faith, which is the heart of religion. In today's world, do we experience "real" religion and/or faith, or do we re-experience what is old in a "simulational" way? This question is the intellectual agenda of two contemporary philosophers, Richard Rorty and Gianni Vattimo (Rorty and Vattimo, 2005).

The main issue that Rorty and Vattimo have focused on within this framework is that our obligations and duties, which before the Enlightenment were only toward God, have been replaced with obligations toward Reason. This has only changed the nature of the errors that humanity has committed. Given this, the issue is toward whom we have obligations and responsibilities today. Rorty's idea is that "our responsibility is only toward our citizens", which he calls "civic responsibility".

Vattimo thinks differently. What can we do when this civic responsibility is not shared inside and outside of our community? Based on this, Vattimo claims that we live in an "age of interpretation", and he affirms that the personal "interpretation", which we touched upon above, has been made possible. He thus legitimizes the foundation of the postmodernization of religion.

As he has stated in his earlier works, Vattimo consistently views religion as a feeling of loyalty to God. He emphasizes that this God is not the God that the Church officially introduced; it is an entity that is defined in the Bible. According to Vattimo, secularization, which he views as the "foundational element of genuine religious experience", makes this possibility available to the believing (faithful) person.

In Christianity, there have been two important consequences of secularization, or the placement of religion on a secular foundation. The first is what Vattimo calls "kenosis" ("purification", in Greek), the phenomenon of Jesus' incarnation as a human being by purifying himself of his divine side. The second is the dissolution of the bond between violence and the holy and the emergence of worldliness on the axis of charity (Vattimo, 2002: 67).

Vattimo views both consequences as Christianity's return in the form of weak thought as it liberates itself from the strict organization and dominant mentality of the Church. This makes it possible for the

believing (faithful) Christian to reconstruct everything from scratch. Thus, to depart from the official doctrine of the Church and move closer to the original discourse of Jesus becomes both liberating and obligatory for individuals.

This is actually the correspondence of Rorty's perception of *civic responsibility* to Vattimo's *spiritual responsibility*. Moreover, Vattimo claims that in a world where we should consider charity as the norm of secularization, extra-metaphysical thought and arrangements determined by the conquering character of reason in modernity cannot be comprehended outside of the Judeo-Christian tradition. This is precisely the image of "the post-secular age". On the one hand, it reflects a renewed interest in the spiritual life and thus the loosening of the skeptical secular view. On the other hand, in Luc Ferry's terms, true religion marches ahead of us and becomes pure, rather than being left behind.

Vattimo states that Nietzsche's "God is dead" motto in fact provides us the opportunity to hear God without a go-between, and that this is true secularization (Vattimo, 2002: 3). In stating this, Vattimo appears to be following Kierkegaard, who puts the understanding of abstract religion above all. However, Kierkegaard, by constructing an individual metaphysics, took the individual out of her historical context, externalized the individual to herself, and viewed this individual as the guarantor of "true" religion.

It is unnecessary to say how imaginary this is for the present age. For this reason, it is appropriate to view today's *postmodernized religion* not as a religion intended to resurrect Nietzsche's dead God but as a new, magic device responsible for sacralizing the birth of objectified individual entities.

IV.

Even though Vattimo and Rorty agree that the future of religion depends on a position beyond the theism-atheism distinction, Vattimo still takes a different approach than Rorty. He emphasizes that hermeneutics will continue to be the most important guide in understanding religion and overcoming the limits of the Catholic Church.

This leads us to a Latin concept that has central importance in the postmodernization of religion in Vattimo's thought: *pietas*. For Vattimo, *pietas* (faith) expresses a respectful loyalty to the past and eve-

rything that we inherit from it. However, this loyalty enables us always to re-interpret the past and thus prevents us from viewing the past as only consisting of a "history of mistakes" (Vattimo, 1988: li – Translator's Introduction). The meaning of this, in Vattimo's thought, is that within the postmodern condition, it is more appropriate to treat religion as a hermeneutic issue rather than an ontological issue.

Viewed from this perspective, the postmodernization of religion points to a past that is a message inherited from tradition via Being, which needs to be constantly re-interpreted. Therefore, postmodernization is the experience of receiving things filtered from history and responding to them.

Religion, in this context, is a hermeneutical possibility that is both a *Verwindung* (transcending) and an *Andenken* (recollection), to borrow Vattimo's German terms in *The End of Modernity*. Consequently, the joining of religion to the postmodernization process is, in fact, modernity remembering religion by self-transcending.

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THE RECEPTION OF IBN SĪNĀ'S *PHYSICS* IN LATER ISLAMIC THOUGHT*

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Abstract

In the *Physics* of his major encyclopedia *al-Shifāʾ*, Ibn Sīnā does not limit himself to paraphrase Aristotle's *Physics*, but also adds important innovative ideas. However, one may wonder whether they did really influence the later Islamic tradition? Based on the treatise on change, present in Ibn Sīnā's *Physics*, II, 1-4, it is shown that major later thinkers as Bahmanyār b. Marzubān, Abū l-ʿAbbās al-Lawkarī, Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī and Mullā Ṣadrā al-Shīrāzī were using his exposé in a significant way. Certainly, they did it in very different ways, but they clearly expressed their own views with an eye on Ibn Sīnā's doctrine. The present paper details the elements and scope of this influence.

Key Words: Ibn Sīnā, Bahmanyār b. Marzubān, Abū l-ʿAbbās al-Lawkarī, Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī, Mullā Ṣadrā al-Shīrāzī, *Physics*.

In Ibn Sīnā's major encyclopedia, *Kitāb al-Shifāʾ*, the book *al-Samāʿ al-ṭabīʿī* constitutes the first volume of the collection of the natural books. In this book, Ibn Sīnā paraphrases Aristotle's *Physics*. However, he does not limit himself to reproducing the Stagirite's ideas. On the contrary, in several respects he sensibly modifies the

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latter's ideas. This immediately manifests itself in his fundamental restructuring of Aristotle's text.[1] Moreover, Ibn Sīnā presents doctrines derived from the "Commentators", especially Alexander of Aphrodisias, Themistius and John Philoponus.[2] The first four chapters of the second *maqāla* (section) offer a good illustration of this particular way of paraphrasing and reworking. Indeed, in these chapters Ibn Sīnā develops what Hasnawi has qualified as a "petit traité", a small treatise on change.[3] It is essentially and largely based on Aristotle's *Physics*, III, 1-3, but it also uses elements derived from the latter's V, 1-2; VII, 1 and VIII, 4.[4] Furthermore, change is defined as the "*first* entelechy of that which potentially is as such [my emphasis]". The qualification of "first" is absent in Aristotle, but it is in full agreement with Themistius' wording. The innovative character of that addition by Themistius is particularly stressed by Philoponus, although it seems to have its ultimate source, at least in inspiration, in Alexander.[5] However, Ibn Sīnā details –much more than his Greek predecessors had done– this double conception of change in direct relation

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1 See Ahmed Hasnawi, "La *Physique* du *Šifāʾ*: aperçus sur sa structure et son contenu", in J. Janssens and D. De Smet (eds.), *Avicenna and His Heritage*, (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2002), 67.

2 See Jules Janssens, "L'Avicenne Latin: un témoin (indirect) des commentateurs (Alexandre d'Aphrodise-Thémistius-Jean Philopon)", in R. Beyers, J. Brams, D. Sacré and K. Verrycken (eds.), *Tradition et traduction: Les textes philosophiques et scientifiques au moyen âge latin*, (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1999), 89-105 (now reprinted in Janssens, *Ibn Sīnā and His Influence on the Arabic and Latin World*, Aldershot, Hampshire: Ashgate, 2006).

3 This kind of small treatise is somewhat reminiscent of the late Hellenistic "corollaries", e.g., those of Philoponus and Simplicius, in spite of significant differences in the basic approach. It may be worthwhile to note that Ibn Sīnā offers, after the "treatise" on change, one on place (chapters 5-9) and another on time (chapters 10-13) in the second section of the book *al-Samāʿ al-ṭabīʿī*.

4 See Hasnawi, "La *Physique* du *Šifāʾ*", 67-68; see also the references in the notes of the critical edition of the *Physics* 2 of the *Avicenna Latinus* in S. Van Riet, J. Janssens and A. Allard (eds.), *Avicenna Latinus: Liber primus naturalium, Tractatus secundus, De motu et de consimilibus*, (Brussels: Académie Royale de Belgique, 2006), 147-213.

5 For Ibn Sīnā's dependence on Themistius and Philoponus, see Janssens, "L'Avicenne Latin: un témoin (indirect) des commentateurs", 97-99; regarding Alexander as the ultimate source of inspiration, see Hasnawi, "Alexandre d'Aphrodise vs. Jean Philopon: Notes sur quelques traités d'Alexandre 'perdus' en grec, conservés en arabe", *Arabic Sciences and Philosophy*, 4 (1994), 63-66.

to a double notion of perfection.[6] Finally, one finds ideas that in all likelihood are proper to him, such as the distinction between time and the element "in which" of change, or the acceptance of change not only in the three categories of quantity, quality and *ubi* but also in that of *situs* (*waḍ*ʿ).[7]

Were these chapters of Ibn Sīnā's *Samā*ʿ read by later thinkers in the Islamic world? Did the newly expressed ideas receive attention or even approval? When looking at the so-called world of the "Islamic East", the answer is definitely positive, as I will try to show in what follows. In this respect, I will consider four important thinkers: Bahmanyār b. Marzubān, a direct disciple of Ibn Sīnā; Abū l-ʿAbbās al-Lawkarī, possibly a disciple of Bahmanyār, but at least a second or third generation disciple of Ibn Sīnā; Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī (twelfth century), a great "theologian and exegete" and a "commentator" of Ibn Sīnā[8]; and Mullā Ṣadrā al-Shīrāzī (sixteenth-seventeenth century), a major representative of the Ishrāqī school of Iṣfahān. For each of them, I have limited myself to one of their major writings: respectively, *Kitāb al-taḥṣīl*, *Bayān al-ḥaqq bi-ḍamān al-ṣidq*, *al-Mabāḥith al-mashriqiyya* and *al-Asfār al-arbaʿa*, specifically the seventh *Marḥala* of the first *Safar*.[9] I will discuss them each in chronological order.

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6 See the seminal study by Hasnawi, "La définition du mouvement dans la *Physique* du *Šifāʾ* d'Avicenne", *Arabic Sciences and Philosophy*, 11 (2001), 219-255.

7 For the first idea, see Abū ʿAlī Ḥusayn b. ʿAbd Allāh b. ʿAlī Ibn Sīnā, *al-Shifāʾ*, *al-Samāʿ al-ṭabīʿī*, (ed. S. Zayed; Cairo: al-Hayʾa al-Miṣriyya al-ʿĀmma li l-Kitāb, 1983), 87, 5; for the second, *ibid*., 103, 8-106, 3. In what follows, all references are to this edition. According to Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī, al-Fārābī was the very first thinker to include change in the category of *situs*, but his opinion is based on a work the ascription of which to the latter is not certain: see infra, pp. 28-29.

8 This qualification of al-Rāzī was inspired by the title of the work of Roger Arnaldez, *Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī: Commentateur du Coran et philosophe*, (Paris: Vrin, 2002).

9 The following editions were used: for Bahmanyār's *Kitāb al-taḥṣīl*, the edition by M. Muṭahharī; edited Tehran: Tehran University Press, 1970, reprinted Tehran: Intishārāt Dānishgāh-i Tehrān, 1375 H.S.; for al-Rāzī's *al-Mabāḥith al-mashriqiyya*, the anonymous edition of Qom: M. Amīr, 1411 H. (perhaps a reprint of the Hayderabad, 1924-1925 edition); for Mullā Ṣadrā's *al-Asfār al-arbaʿa*, the edition in nine volumes by R. Luṭfī; Qom: Manshūrāt al-Muṣṭafāwī, 1958-1969. As for the *Physics* of al-Lawkarī's *Bayān al-ḥaqq bi-ḍamān al-ṣidq*, it is still wait-

Bahmanyār b. Marzubān had an important number of epistolary exchanges with Ibn Sīnā; he appears to be one of the latter's favorite disciples, if not the most loved one, in spite of his having been severely reproved on occasion by his master.[10] The composition of his *Kitāb al-taḥṣīl*, in all likelihood, has to be dated after Ibn Sīnā's death. In this work, it is obvious that he draws heavily upon Avicennian texts, especially in using quotations and/or paraphrases of different parts of *Kitāb al-shifāʾ*. However, an in-depth analysis of the structure of the work shows a profound rupture from the major ideas and/or structural démarches of his master. He clearly rejects some of the latter's most important innovations, and he thereby at least gives the impression that he wants to restore a more genuinely Aristotelian thought.[11]

Let us now examine whether this rather general characterization applies as well to the exposé on change. The latter is presented in the twelfth chapter of the second part (*maqāla*) of book (*kitāb*) two, which is entitled *mā baʿd al-ṭabīʿa*, meta-physics. The second section is devoted to the discussion of the nine categories of accidents. The twelfth chapter opens with a brief discussion of the categories of action and passion.[12] After this short introductory section, motion becomes the central issue until the end of the chapter. Attention is paid

ing to be edited, hence, I have consulted the manuscript; Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, 5900.

[10] See David C. Reisman, *The Making of the Avicennan Tradition: The Transmission, Contents, and Structure of Ibn Sīnā's* al-Mubāḥathāt *(The Discussions)*, (Leiden: Brill, 2002), 185-195 (epistolary exchange) and Yahya M. Michot, "La réponse d'Avicenne à Bahmanyār et al-Kirmānī: Présentation, traduction critique et lexique arabe-français de la *Mubāḥatha* III", *Le Muséon* 110 (1997), 146 and 162 (beloved disciple) and 189-191 (reprove); see also id., *Ibn Sīnā: Lettre au Vizir Abū Saʿd*, (Beirut: al-Burāq, 2000), *Introduction*, *passim*.

[11] For a more detailed justification of the preceding affirmations, see Janssens, "Bahmanyār b. Marzubān: A Faithful Disciple of Ibn Sīnā?", in David C. Reisman, with the assistance of Ahmed H. al-Rahim (eds.), *Before and After Avicenna: Proceedings of the First Conference of the Avicenna Study Group*, (Leiden: Brill, 2003), 177-197, and Janssens, "Bahmanyār, and His Revision of Ibn Sīnā's Metaphysical Project", *Medioevo*, 32 (2007), 99-117. For a different appreciation (although certainly not a rejection) of Bahmanyār's reworking, see Heidrun Eichner, "Dissolving the Unity of Metaphysics: From Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī to Mullā Ṣadrā al-Shīrāzī", *Medioevo*, 32 (2007), 155-156, esp. note 20.

[12] Bahmanyār, *Kitāb al-taḥṣīl*, 417-418, 10.

to its definition, its relationship to the different categories, and its opposition to rest. It is evident that for Bahmanyār, change belongs in an essential way to the category of passion. He may have been inspired in this case by Ibn Sīnā's affirmation in his *Samāʿ* that change has to be placed in the category of passion, at least if one wants to limit the number of categories, as Aristotle had done, to ten. However, it is clear that in al-Shaykh al-raʾīs' eyes, this is not the only (and likely not the best) solution. In fact, he clearly suggests that it is better to conceive of change as a separate category in itself.[13] A general outline regarding the derivations from Ibn Sīnā's *Samāʿ*, II, 1-4, either by way of quotation or paraphrase (a question mark indicating a rather casual correspondence), is presented in the following list:

Kitāb al-taḥṣīl	*al-Shifāʾ*, *al-Samāʿ al-ṭabīʿī*
418, 14-16	81, 10; 81, 15-82, 7 (change and gradual passage from potency into act)
418, 17-419, 1	82, 3-7 (to define change by time is impossible, because circular)
419, 2-420, 4	84, 10, 13-19 (change and the "middle")
420, 5-10	86, 7 (?) (a moment in change only exists in potency)
420, 11-14	84, 1-4 (in its quality of completed process, i.e., in its second perfection, change has no real existence)
420, 15-421, 8	85, 8-87, 4 (?) (change as having parts in potency)
422, 1-2	84, 1-2 (change is intelligible)
422, 3-7	85, 1-6 (change in time: a double interpretation)
422, 8-423, 13	86, 15 (?) (a body as something stable to which change happens)
423, 14-15	87, 5 (enumeration of six elements that characterize change)

[13] See Ibn Sīnā, *al-Shifāʾ*, *al-Samāʿ al-ṭabīʿī*, II, 2, 97.

424, 1-12 90, 15-92, 1 (the link between change and its *termini a quo* and *ad quem*)

424, 13-425, 1 92, 7-10, 5 (the distinction between change, being in change and the action of changing is purely conceptual)

425, 3-12 94, 17-95, 6 (against the opinion that change is a homonym[14])

425, 13-426, 7 95, 8 (?) (change necessarily requires the existence of an external cause)

426, 8-427, 6 98, 10-17 (no change in the category of substance)

429, 11-430, 3 108, 14-109, 6 (how are rest and change related to each other?)

430, 4-7 110, 16-17 and 108, 10 (definition of rest as privation of change)

In addition, one finds a few passages that ultimately have been inspired by the *Najāt*:[15]

Kitāb al-taḥṣīl	*al-Najāt*
421, 9-19	204, 7-205, 2 (100) (definition of change)
427, 7-429, 10	205, 8-208, 8 (105-107) (change and categories other than substance)
430, 8-431, 10	208, 13-210, 3 (107-108) (something in rest is in potency a change)

Even this rather rough survey makes it clear that Bahmanyār covers almost all the essential elements of Ibn Sīnā's small treatise on change in the *Samāʿ*. However, he systematically omits all historical

[14] Yaḥyá (Philopon) ascribes this opinion to Alexander of Aphrodisias; see Yaḥyá (Philoponus), *Sharḥ al-Ṭabīʿa*, in ʿA. Badawī (ed.), *Arisṭūṭālīs, al-Ṭabīʿa: Tarjama Isḥāq b. Ḥunayn*, (Cairo: al-Hayʾa al-Miṣriyya al-ʿĀmma li l-Kitāb, 1984), I, 176, 5.

[15] All references here, and later as well, are to the edition by Dānish-Pazhūh, Tehran: Intishārāt Dānishgāh-i Tehrān, 1364 H.S. (between the brackets the corresponding pagination of the Cairo, 1938 edition has been added bacause this latter edition is easier to find).

or doxographical references, although they occupy a not negligible part of his master's work.[16] However, it has to be noted that this attitude might have been inspired by Ibn Sīnā's so-called "Oriental" project, which mainly consisted of a systematic presentation of his philosophy that explicitly avoids historical considerations.[17] Less understandable, however, is the extremely slight attention that is paid to the distinction between two conceptions of change that were amply elaborated in the first chapter of the *Samāʿ*: change as a finished process and change as an ongoing process.[18] Certainly, Bahmanyār does not reject that distinction, but he mentions it so briefly that it can easily escape the reader's attention. In a similar vein, he mentions only in passing his acceptance of change in the category of *situs*, as if it were a long-standing, classical idea. Of course, in these cases, one has to admit that he remains faithful to Ibn Sīnā's basic ideas and gives them less attention than they had received in the latter's work. However, regarding Bahmanyār's analysis, much more is involved than just a difference in emphasis. Indeed, to discuss the issue of change in the context of metaphysics, not of physics, is not only surprising, from an Avicennian point of view, but also totally unacceptable. It blurs the distinctive domains of the two philosophical sciences, a distinction that was very clear to Ibn Sīnā.[19] Moreover, it provides, at least in principle, a way to include in a metaphysical context the argument of the Unmoved Mover as a valid proof for the existence of God, whereas Ibn Sīnā had vehemently rejected the validity of this démarche.[20] If the differences with Ibn Sīnā were rather limited

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16 For the place of doxographies in Ibn Sīnā's scientific works, see Janssens, "Ibn Sīnā: An Extraordinary Historian of the Sciences", in M. Mazak and N. Özkaya (eds.), *Uluslararası İbn Sînâ Sempozyumu –Bildiriler– 22-24 Mayıs 2008, İstanbul [International Ibn Sīnā Symposium –Papers– May, 22-24, 2008, Istanbul]*, (Istanbul: İstanbul Büyükşehir Belediyesi Kültür A. Ş. Yayınları, 2009), II, 83-93; Turkish translation by O. Baş, *ibid.*, II, 94-103.

17 See Dimitri Gutas, "Avicenna's Eastern ("Oriental") Philosophy, Nature, Contents, Transmission", *Arabic Sciences and Philosophy*, 10 (2000), 159.

18 Hasnawi, "La définition du mouvement dans la *Physique* du *Šifāʾ* d'Avicenne", highlights this distinction very well, which he articulates in French by using the (innovative) terms "mouvement-parcours" and "mouvement-intermédiaire".

19 See Janssens, "Bahmanyār b. Marzubān: A Faithful Disciple of Ibn Sīnā?", 181-183.

20 Ibn Sīnā, *Kitāb al-inṣāf: Sharḥ Kitāb ḥarf al-lām*, in ʿA. Badawī (ed.), *Arisṭū ʿinda l-ʿArab*, (Kuwait: Wakālat al-Maṭbūʿāt, first edition 1947, second edition 1978), 23-24. It has to be noted that it is not certain that Ibn Sīnā considered Aris-

on the level of the contents proper (i.e., mainly restricted to a difference in accentuation), this is no longer the case with respect to the place of motion within the broader system. Here, an important rupture shows itself, insofar as change is dislocated from physics to metaphysics.

As for al-Lawkarī, he not only respects the letter of Ibn Sīnā's exposé (even more than Bahmanyār had ever done, as he quotes verbatim, or almost verbatim, entire pages of the *Samāʿ*) but he also maintains the treatment of change within the framework of physics proper. Although there are a few very minor omissions, there is also a major one: that of the entire second chapter of the *Samāʿ* in which Ibn Sīnā explains the presence or absence of change in the different categories. The details of the latter are offered in the third chapter. Hence, al-Lawkarī may have judged the second chapter somewhat superfluous. Thus, after all, he offers a shortened version of Ibn Sīnā's treatise on change, which largely respects the latter's spirit.

The correspondences between al-Lawkarī's and Ibn Sīnā's discussions are as follows:

Bayān al-ḥaqq	*al-Shifāʾ*, *al-Samāʿ al-ṭabīʿī*
20v, l. 10-21r, l. 5	81, 7-82, 4 (change and the gradual passage from potency to act)
21r, l. 5-19	82, 9-83, 4 (the true definition of change)
21r, l. 19-22r, l. 12	83, 17-85, 6 (the double notion of change; discussion of a problem linked with the notion of change as a completed process)
22r, l. 12-25v, l. 7	98, 9-99, 16; 100, 16-102, 8; 102, 16-103, 8; 104, 2-17; 103, 14-104, 1; 104, 18-105, 8; 106, 7-107, 14 (change and the diverse categories)

totle himself "guilty" of such a mistaken view. It looks as if he reproaches him for a lack of precision in his *Metaphysics*. However, one has the impression that he thought that the Stagirite correctly pronounced himself in the (pseudo-)*Theology*. If this is correct, then he never seriously doubted the attribution of this work to Aristotle.

25v, l. 8-26v, l. 6 87, 5-88, 11 (enumeration of the six elements that characterize change; significance of the mover; impossibility of the existence of a self-moving being)

26v, l. 6-27r, l. 11 90, 15-91, 5; 91, 10-92, 3 (change and its *termini a quo* and *ad quem*)

27r, l. 11-15 92, 13-16 (change and that in which it is)

27r, l. 18-28v, l. 21 108-111, 1 (relation between change and rest)

On the one hand, some omissions can easily be detected. The major one (i.e., that of the entirety of Chapter Two) has already been noted. The other ones are rather limited in scope and never concern crucial issues. Illustrative in this sense is the omission of *Samāʿ*, 88, 15-90, 15. This passage deals with a purely hypothetical objection regarding rest and what is self-moving (but, in fact, nothing is self-moving). At first sight, more significant is al-Lawkarī's silence concerning the fact that the category of *state* (*jidda*) does not allow for change, but it seems probable that this results from an involuntary oversight.

On the other hand, two major relocations show up:

1. The passage covering p. 104, 2-17 of the *Samāʿ* precedes the fragment given there (p. 103, 14-104, 1). This clearly constitutes a minor change of order because it concerns two passages that are part of the discussion of the existence of change in the category of *situs* (*waḍʿ*).

2. Pages 87-92 of the *Samāʿ* are reproduced only after the almost complete reproduction of Chapter Three. In doing this, al-Lawkarī completely separates the discussion of the constitutive elements of change from the elaboration of its definition. Hence, a more important modification is involved here. Nevertheless, because he maintains the same wording, it is of little or no relevance, doctrinally speaking.[21]

[21] It is worthwhile to note that Hasnawi, "La définition du mouvement dans la *Physique* du *Šifāʾ* d'Avicenne", does not include the discussion or the translation of this part of the first chapter and thus suggests that it does not have an intimate link with the former discussion of change.

Finally, a small addition (f. 27r, 15-17) has to be mentioned. It deals with the notion of time, but in a very superficial way. Moreover, its presence here is fitting because time is explicitly mentioned by Ibn Sīnā as one of the six elements that characterize change. It is rather surprising that Ibn Sīnā no longer makes any mention of it in his discussion of change (of course, he deals extensively with time in chapters 10-13).

In sum, al-Lawkarī does not modify Ibn Sīnā's basic options or ideas in any way. He shows a great respect for the spirit of the latter's thought and even remains largely faithful to the letter of his exposé. One could easily have believed that one was dealing with a copyist of *Samāʿ*, II, 1, 3 and 4, if it had not been for the few omissions and rearrangements in the textual order.

As for Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī's *al-Mabāḥith al-mashriqiyya*, it is a vast encyclopedic work that shows many traces of Avicennian influence, even if it is undeniable that it also entails criticisms against Ibn Sīnā.[22] It is divided into three books. The "treatise" on motion of *Samāʿ*, II, 1-4, has been integrated (with rewordings and criticisms) in the fifth section (*fann*), entitled "On motion and time", of the first major part (*jumla*) of the second book. This means that it is included in the wider context of the discussion of the "*principles*" (*aḥkām*) of substances and accidents (the subject of the second book), and more particularly of accidents (the proper object of the first major part). In other words, the overall context (i.e., the discussion of the ten categories) is logical. In spite of this, al-Rāzī does not hesitate to include issues that Ibn Sīnā had designated as belonging to the domain of physics. Hence, just as Bahmanyār had done before him, he weakens the demarcation lines between the domains of logic and physics. In spite of this (and like Bahmanyār), he is not reluctant to draw upon the exposé of the al-Shaykh al-raʾīs, as is shown by the following table of comparison (a question mark again indicates a casual correspondence):

[22] Regarding a critical evaluation in this respect, see Janssens, "Ibn Sīnā's Impact on Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī's *al-Mabāḥith al-Mashriqiyya*, with Particular Regard to the Section entitled *al-Ilāhiyyāt al-maḥḍa*: An Essay of Critical Evaluation", *Documenti e Studi sulla Tradizione Filosofica Medievale*, 20 (2010; in press).

al-Mabāḥith al-mashriqiyya	*al-Shifāʾ, al-Samāʿ al-ṭabīʿī*
547, 10-15 potency to act)	81, 7-10 (gradual passage from
547, 17-548, 6 nition of change)	82, 3-7 (mistaken circular defi-
548, 7-19 change)	82, 9-17 (proper perfection of
548, 20-549, 7 potencies –definition of change[23])	82, 19-83, 6 (evocation of two
549, 7-10	83, 7 and 11 (improper definitions of change, i.e., as inequality and alteration[24])
550, 13-551, 8 of change)	83, 18-84, 16 (a double concept
551, 9-15	85, 5-7 (change in time)
551, 9-554, 14	84, 18-85, 14 and 86, 7-20 (?) (change as both imaginary and real, universal and particular: an interrogation)
554, 14-16	87, 5 (six elements of change)
554, 18-555, 19 moving being)	88, 5-11 (impossibility of a self-

[23] Although the definition as given by al-Rāzī (549, 7) includes the qualification of the perfection of what is in potency as "primary", he attributes it to Aristotle. However, that qualification is a later addition: see supra, p. 16, especially note 5. It has to be noted that al-Rāzī entirely partakes of Ibn Sīnā's double notion of change, even if he never explicitly mentions that of "second perfection" (at least if I have not overlooked it).

[24] al-Rāzī assigns these definitions to Plato and Pythagoras, respectively. This specification is lacking in the corresponding passage of *Samāʿ*. Regarding the Pythagoreans as adepts of a conception of change in terms of alteration, see Yaḥyá, *Sharḥ al-Ṭabīʿa*, I, 184, 16. As for Plato, he is mentioned (together with the Pythagoreans) in *Aetius Arabus* as belonging to the thinkers who have defined change in terms of inequality (but expressed by the notion of *ikhtilāf wa taghayyur*, not *khurūj ʿan al-musāwāt*): see Hans Daiber, *Aetius Arabus: Die Vorsokratiker in arabischer Überlieferung*, (Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner, 1980), 132-133 (I, 23, 1).

555, 20-561, 5 87, 6-88, 11 (?) (impossibility of a self-moving being –remarks and objections)

561, 6-562, 3 90, 15-91, 5 (*termini a quo* and *ad quem* in change)

562, 4-16 91, 16-18 (*termini a quo* and *ad quem* in circular change)

562, 17-563, 18 90, 17-91, 2 (?) (opposition between *termini a quo* and *ad quem* in change)

563, 19-564, 4 93, 4-94, 15 (?) (link between change and the categories)

564, 5-18 94, 17-95, 8 (proof that no category is subject to change)

566, 4-15 93, 8-94, 5 (proof that no category is a genus of change)

567, 4-20 96, 1-10 (change: equivocal or univocal?)

568, 1-569, 7 93, 5-6; 95, 10-96, 1; 96, 11-17 et 96, 11 (change and the category of passion)

569, 9-10 107, 16-17 (change is present in four categories)

575, 12-17 102, 12-16 (kind of opposition suffices to qualify growth and diminution as change in the category of quantity)

581, 22-582, 19 103, 4-5; 103, 11-104, 10 (change in the categories of *ubi* and *situs*)

588, 18-591, 9 98, 9-101, 7 (no change in category of substance[25])

593, 2-594, 12 102, 11-12; 103, 5-8; 106, 4-5 and 106, 17-107, 5 (categories besides that of substance having no change[26])

[25] al-Rāzī divides Ibn Sīnā's text in a way that is not present in the original, but nevertheless is doctrinally tenable.

594, 13-595, 21	108, 10-11 and 109, 7-110, 19 (rest)

Generally speaking, al-Rāzī paraphrases rather than reproduces Ibn Sīnā's text. One rarely finds literal quotations, as was the case with al-Lawkarī. Like Bahmanyār, al-Rāzī does not hesitate to reformulate Ibn Sīnā's thought. However, contrary to the latter, he explicitly indicates those cases where he expresses fundamental additions, investigations and/or criticisms. Certainly, a good number of them are limited in scope, and therefore most of the time they do not exceed a few lines. Nevertheless, they sometimes reveal themselves to be substantial, as the following three cases may illustrate:

1. While discussing the problem of the origination of a thing in terms of gradual change on pages 549, 1-550, 12, al-Rāzī inclines toward an eleatic conception of change –a conception that is substantially different from that of Ibn Sīnā's.[27]

2. On pp. 564, 19-566, 3, al-Rāzī emphasizes that qualitative change implies a quantitative aspect. I looked in vain for this kind of affirmation in Ibn Sīnā. Hence, in all likelihood this has to do with an innovative development of al-Rāzī, although this in no way contradict Ibn Sīnā's basic conception of the general link between the categories and change.

3. On pp. 591, 10-593, 2, the presence of a succession of moments in a qualitative change is defended in a way that seems to be absent in Ibn Sīnā. In this respect, al-Rāzī does not hesitate to put into service a passage derived from *al-Shifāʾ*, *Kitāb al-nafs*, III, 5.[28]

Moreover, on three occasions (pp. 569, 11-575, 19, change in the category of quantity; pp. 575, 20-581, 18, change in the category of

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[26] For four of these categories, al-Rāzī also utilizes passages taken from *al-Najāt*, 205, 13-15 (106) (relation); 206, 3-5 (106) ("quando") and 207, 12-208, 5 (107) (action and passion).

[27] Regarding al-Rāzī's inclination toward a non-dynamic, eleatic conception of change, see Arnaldez, *Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī*, 181.

[28] See Ibn Sīnā, *al-Shifāʾ*, *Kitāb al-nafs*, (ed. F. Rahman; London: Oxford University Press, 1959), III, 5, 117, 9-118, 4. In this passage, Ibn Sīnā insists that, due to their extreme shortness, the difference between the time of perceiving a nearby object and the time of perceiving a distant one cannot be perceived by the senses, although the latter can be divided into infinite parts, one of which corresponds to the time to perceive the nearby object.

quality; and pp. 582, 20-588, 17, absence of change in the category of substance), al-Rāzī's exposé is substantially different from that in *Samāʿ*. However, another book from *Kitāb al-shifāʾ* treating issues in natural philosophy (*al-Kawn wa l-fasād*) has clearly functioned as a major source.[29]

Generally speaking, al-Rāzī offers a valuable idea of what is said in *Samāʿ*, II, 1-4. He presents a genuine survey of Ibn Sīnā's major ideas, making them his own most of the time, although not always. Two of the most significant among the latter, the double notion of change and the presence of change in the category of *situs*, are not only accepted, but also well developed. In this respect, he remains even closer to Ibn Sīnā's thought than Bahmanyār had done. Certainly, he also opposes Ibn Sīnā on some issues. Like Bahmanyār (though in a different way), he does not respect the basic division of the sciences as elaborated by Ibn Sīnā. Furthermore, even when he agrees with Ibn Sīnā, he does not always explicitly say so. On the contrary, although it happens now and then, it does so only rarely. At any rate, he gives proof of being a careful reader of the latter's work(s). His critical sense also shows itself in his remark that al-Fārābī (hence, not Ibn Sīnā) was the first thinker who accepted change in the category

[29] A quick survey revealed the presence of a direct influence of this work on the chapter on growth (pp. 573, 4 sqq. –inspired by Chapter 8 of *Kawn*), on the entire exposé of change in the category of quality (with special attention to *kalām* doctrines, especially the notion of *kumūn* –inspired by *Kawn*, Chapter 4) and on that of the absence of change in substance (intellectual and observational proofs –inspired by *Kawn*, Chapter 6). A more systematic investigation is needed to fix the precise details of this influence, but it exceeds the limits of the present paper. The passage on p. 588, 11-17, however, deserves special attention, because al-Rāzī explicitly qualifies it as a saying of *al-Shaykh al-raʾīs*. It presents the example of the "bottle with the long neck", called in Arabic *qumquna*, in the context of the discussion of the transformation of water into air. This passage might have been inspired by Ibn Sīnā, *Dānish-nāmeh, Ṭabīʿiyyāt*, (ed. M. Meshkāt; Tehran: Intishārāt Anjuman-i Āthār-i Millī, 1953; repr. Hamadān: Dānishgāh-i Bū ʿAlī Sīnā, 2004), 55, 6-56, 8, although the wording is far from identical. A more correct rendering of the latter is offered by Abū Ḥāmid Muḥammad b. Muḥammad al-Ghazālī, *Maqāṣid al-falāsifa*, (ed. S. Dunyā; Cairo: Dār al-Maʿārif, 1960), 327-328, to which one may compare Abū l-Fatḥ Tāj al-Dīn Muḥammad b. ʿAbd al-Karīm al-Shahrastānī, *Kitāb al-Milal wa l-niḥal*, (ed. W. Cureton; London: n.p., 1842-1846), 409 [reference borrowed from Jolivet, in al-Shahrastānī, *Livre des religions et des sectes*, (traduction avec introduction et notes par J. Jolivet et G. Monnot; Paris: UNESCO, 1993), II, 458, note 84].

of *situs*.[30] He bases this, however, on a small passage in the work *ʿUyūn al-masāʾil*, where it is said: "The motions of the Heavens are according to *situs* (and) circular".[31] The work was undoubtedly attributed to al-Fārābī in the manuscript that he had at his disposal. Although the authenticity of this attribution can be questioned, it is not totally implausible, and so al-Rāzī's remark is not necessarily devoid of sense, even if its historical accuracy is not evident.[32] Whatever the case, al-Rāzī exclusively bases the further development of this idea on Ibn Sīnā's exposé. It is therefore beyond question that al-Rāzī, at least in his *Mabāḥith*, found in Ibn Sīnā a major source of inspiration.

Separated by almost four centuries from al-Rāzī, Mullā Ṣadrā al-Shīrāzī, the great master thinker in the Illuminationist (*Ishrāqī*) tradition in Īrān, discussed in his monumental work *al-Asfār al-arbaʿa* (more precisely, in the seventh stage (*marḥala*) of the first "journey" (*safar*) a theory of change more or less corresponding with *Samāʿ*, II, 1-4.[33] This first "journey" deals with the nature of being and its major accidents, which is a quite natural (and hence adequate) context for the discussion of change, at least when one takes into account the specific framework of Illuminationist philosophy. Certainly, this deviates in many important respects from the "classical" Aristotelico-Avicennian system. However, this does not mean that Mullā Ṣadrā completely ignores Ibn Sīnā. Even if he does not often quote him directly, he nevertheless was influenced by the latter's thought, showing a great familiarity with its major aspects. Mullā Ṣadrā's under-

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30 al-Rāzī, *Mabāḥith*, 582, 17-19.

31 Abū Naṣr Muḥammad b. Muḥammad b. Ṭarkhān al-Fārābī, *ʿUyūn al-masāʾil*, (ed. F. Dieterici, in id., *Alfārābī's philosophische Abhandlungen*, Leiden: Brill, 1890), 60, 16.

32 See Fazlur Rahman, *Prophecy in Islam: Philosophy and Orthodoxy*, (London: Allen & Unwin, 1958; reprint, Chicago & London: The University of Chicago Press, 1979), 21-22, n. 2; see also Janssens, "The Notions *of Wāhib al-ṣuwar* (Giver of Forms) *and Wāhib al-ʿaql* (Bestower of Intelligence) in Ibn Sīnā", in M. C. Pacheco and J. F. Meirinhos (eds.), *Intellect et Imagination dans la Philosophie Médiévale* (Actes du XI[e] Congrès International de Philosophie Médiévale de la SIEPM. Porto, du 26 au 31 août 2002), (Turnhout: Brepols, 2006), 559. However, Joep Lameer, *Al-Fārābī and Aristotelian Syllogistics: Greek Theory and Islamic Practice*, (Leiden: Brill, 1994), 24-25, accepts its ascription to al-Fārābī and offers two arguments in this sense (but he ignores Rahman's objections).

33 See Mullā Ṣadrā al-Shīrāzī, *al-Asfār al-arbaʿa*, III, 20-115.

standing of Ibn Sīnā's doctrine owes a considerable debt to his careful reading of the *Mabāḥith* of al-Rāzī. Therefore, among the sources of his exposé on change, mention has to be made of both Ibn Sīnā's *al-Samāʿ al-ṭabīʿī* and al-Rāzī's *al-Mabāḥith al-mashriqiyya.*

al-Asfār al-arbaʿa	*al-Shifāʾ*, *al-Samāʿ al-ṭabīʿī* or *al-Mabāḥith al-mashriqiyya*
21, 1-23, 4	*Mabāḥith* 547, 10-548, 6 (potency/act)
23, 5-6 change)	*Samāʿ* 82, 7-8 (circular definition of
23, 6-25, 8 definitions of change[34])	*Mabāḥith* 548, 7-549, 10 (mistaken
25, 9-26, 9 change by the ancients[35])	*Samāʿ* 83, 5-14 (three definitions of
26, 17-27, 18 tion expressed by al-Rāzī regarding gradual change)	*Mabāḥith* 549, 11-550, 12 (interroga-
30, 14-18 as "passage" is an erroneous opinion)	*Samāʿ* 83, 14-17 (to conceive change
31, 6-32, 8 of change)	*Samāʿ* 83, 18-84, 19 (?) (double notion
32, 9-15	*Mabāḥith* 551, 9-15 (change in time)
36, 5-37, 1 taining divisible parts)	*Mabāḥith* 552, 3-11 (change as con-
41, 1-46, 16	*Mabāḥith* 554, 18-555, 16; 555, 20-557, 11 and 557, 21; 558, 1-18; 559, 14-21 (every mobile has a motor)

[34] With al-Rāzī, Mullā Ṣadrā presents Plato and the Pythagoreans as the authors of two mistaken definitions of change, i.e., those of inequality or alteration (compare supra, note 24).

[35] Mullā Ṣadrā, who quotes here literally from Ibn Sīnā, mentions the three opinions on change that Aristotle, *Physics*, III, 2, 201 b 20-21, had qualified as utterly mistaken: change as alterity, as inequality or as non-being. This fragment partly overlaps the previous one (largely corresponding with al-Rāzī's *Mabāḥith* 548, 7-549, 10), because the former two of these three doctrines were already dealt with there. The only reason that I can see for the direct use of Ibn Sīnā's text is the presence in it of a third view, although that is also a mistaken one.

69, 5-72, 5	*Mabāḥith* 563, 19-564, 26 and 565, 14-566, 1 (nature of link between change and categories)
74, 6-75, 9	*Samāʿ* 93, 8-9, 13-14 and 5 (change: a homonymous notion?)
75, 13-14	*Samāʿ* 87, 5 (six elements of change)
75, 16-76, 5	*Samāʿ* 90, 15-91, 5 (*termini a quo* and *ad quem* of change)
105, 9-106, 4; 107, 1-2, 11-12	*Samāʿ* 98, 11-18 (against accepting change in the category of substance)

To this, it has to be added that Mullā Ṣadrā, *Asfār*, III, p. 29, 6-8, offers an explicit quotation from *Najāt* (p. 203, 10-12 [105]). It consists of a definition of change that omits the qualification of "first perfection": "(Change) is the gradual transformation of a state established in a body, in such a way that it tends towards something; and it reaches this (latter) in potency or in act". Afterwards (*ibid.*, pp. 29, 9-30, 13), Mullā Ṣadrā analyzes in detail the different elements of restriction involved in this definition.

Three passages show an evident link with the *Samāʿ*, but closer inspection reveals that their direct source is Bahmanyār's *Kitāb al-taḥṣīl*:

al-Asfār al-arbaʿa	*Kitāb al-taḥṣīl*
27, 19-22	420, 14-16 (non-real existence of change as a process of becoming)
59, 15-16	422, 8-9 (necessity of the existence of a stable thing in view of the possibility of change)
80, 12-18[36]	428, 1 and 5-14 (existence of change in the categories of *ubi* and of *situs*)

Mullā Ṣadrā mentions many elements of Ibn Sīnā's doctrine of change, and agrees with the most typical of them, i.e., the acceptance of a double notion of change and the presence of change in the cate-

[36] I lack certainty about the exact end of the fragment involved, due to the fact that in the edition at my disposal pages 81-97 are missing. It is obvious that in these pages still more derivations from Ibn Sīnā (or Bahmanyār or al-Rāzī) may be present.

gory of *situs*. However, on other issues he strongly questions, not to say completely rejects, the view of the al-Shaykh al-raʾīs. In this respect, he goes much further than Bahmanyār or al-Rāzī had done before him. He sometimes makes fundamental innovations –for example, when he seriously puts into question the non-real character of change as process. However, his most radical departure from Ibn Sīnā consists in the acceptance of change in a fifth category, i.e., that of substance. He thereby lays the foundations for his famous theory of substantial change. This has been the object of a wide range of interpretations and has given rise to many controversies. However, for our present investigation they are not relevant. The only significant fact is that even if Mullā Ṣadrā develops an entirely new view, he still presents elements of Ibn Sīnā's exposé –of course, without agreeing with them.

In the preceding sections, we focused on the reception of Ibn Sīnā's *Physics* in the Eastern part of the Islamic world, or, to be more precise, on a significant part of it: its "small treatise" on change. The results of our survey make it clear that this text has played more than a secondary role in the physical exposés included in the encyclopedic writings of some of the greatest representatives of the Oriental posterity of Ibn Sīnā. One detects not only a respect for the spirit of the original text but also for the letter of the text as well. Such an important and innovative idea as the acceptance of the existence of change in the category of *situs* is never put into question, in sharp contrast with the Latin reception.[37] In spite of deviations or even fundamental rejections of its elements by some of our authors, Ibn Sīnā's theory evidently remained a most significant source of inspiration.

[37] Albert the Great, in his *Physica*, V, 1, 7 (ed. P. Hossfeld; Aschendorf: Monasterium Westfalorum, 1988), and Thomas Aquinas, in his *Commentarium in VIII Libros Physicorum*, IV, 7, § 475 (ed. Maggiolo; Taurini: Marietti, 1954) explicitly reject the existence of change in the category of *situs*. However, Robert Grosseteste seems to have accepted it: see his *Commentarius in VIII Libros Physicorum Aristotelis*, (ed. R. C. Dales; Boulder: Colorado, 1963), 83. For further details on the reception of Ibn Sīnā's *Physics* in the Latin tradition, see Janssens, "The Reception of Avicenna's *Physics* in the Latin Middle Ages" in I. Vrolijk and J. P. Hogendijk (eds.), *O ye Gentlemen: Arabic Studies on Science and Literary Culture in honour of Remke Kruk*, (Leiden & Boston: Brill, 2007), 55-64. For the historical background of Ibn Sīnā's acceptance of change in the category of *situs* and its particular significance, see Jon McGinnis, "Positioning Heaven: The Infidelity of a Faithful Aristotelian", *Phronesis*, 51 (2006), 140-161.

Even five centuries after it was written, the *Samāʿ* still constitutes a basic work of reference. However, it must be emphasized that this does not mean that our authors blindly relied on it. On the contrary, they did not hesitate to introduce innovations on the level of structure as well as content.

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AN ASSESSMENT OF DISCURSIVE CHANGES IN ISLAMIC METAPHYSICS
–*Thubūt* as an Interpretation of the Concept of Possibility or Nonexistence and the Nonexistence of Nonexistence–

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Abstract

In its beginnings, Sufism was a moral movement concerned with asceticism *(zuhd)* and poverty *(faqr)*. Later, Sufism's second period, which was called "Sunnī Sufism" with problems arising from a spiritual life of which the theoretical basis is unknown, was again within the limits of a moral content. Finally came an era of maturity with the advent of Ibn al-ʿArabī and his followers, who revealed a set of metaphysical principles for moral life. In this last period, the Sufis, who have always been loyal to their own methods, instruments and (especially) to the objectives that have always aimed at the progress of morals, dealt largely with theoretical problems, interpreted the relations among God, man and the universe, expressed at times the already-discussed traditional problems in a new style, and extended the field of metaphysical thought in Islam by adding and considering new problems. In extending the domain of metaphysics, concentrating on the problem of the relations between God and man, Sufism has represented an attempt to express the intellectual heritage put forth by Islam for a period of four centuries through various philosophical-religious traditions and dialectical relations; consequently, a Sufi language or discourse has arisen that describes traditional problems by means of a renovation of terms and styles. One of the main obstacles facing the academic study of Sufism is determining the relation between this language and the theoretical discourse that has arisen

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within Islamic philosophy and within *kalām* (Islamic theology). If this obstacle can be overcome, the origins of Sufism and the degree of its contribution to the heritage of Islamic reflection as a whole will be revealed.

Key Words: Nonexistence, the concept of possibility, Ibn al-ʿArabī, Islamic metaphysics, Sufism.

Introduction

One of the main difficulties in the perusal of Sufi texts developed under the guidance of Ibn al-ʿArabī was the language problems created by the complex style of the text. This style adorned with long phrases that bear the direct and indirect effects of different scientific/intellectual traditions and with terms that are partially old and partially new, but mostly reinterpreted due to addition of adjectives.[1] The problems of the comprehension of metaphysical thought because of language and expression have received considerable focus since the beginnings of Sufism, which is and has been characterized as "knowledge of the state" (*ʿilm al-ḥāl*). Despite the possibilities of language and expression that enable it to overcome certain problems, Sufism has always included a mysticism (as well as the subjective expression that accompanies it) that is opposed to objectivity.[2] In this

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1 Throughout this article, I will use the expression "metaphysics" sometimes in the Avicennian sense and sometimes in the sense offered by theology (including *kalām* and Sufism) concerning our knowledge of God. In fact, from the Avicennian perspective, it is hard to accept this second part as metaphysics. However, we will make use of the commonly accepted concepts of modern research; we will especially consider the nomenclature of Ṣadr al-Dīn al-Qūnawī and accept that it is possible to use the terminology he offers. There are still no extensive studies on this matter. Nonetheless, for an assessment, see Ekrem Demirli, *İslâm Metafiziğinde Tanrı ve İnsan* [*God and Man in Islamic Metaphysics*], (Istanbul: Kabalcı Yayınları, 2008), 91 ff.

2 This research is most readily available in works by Abū Naṣr al-Sarrāj, and, after Ibn al-ʿArabī, in studies by Ṣadr al-Dīn al-Qūnawī and Dāwūd al-Qayṣarī. See Abū Naṣr al-Sarrāj ʿAbd Allāh b. ʿAlī b. Muḥammad, *İslâm Tasavvufu: Lüma* [*Islamic Mysticism: al-Lumaʿ*], trans. H. Kamil Yılmaz, (Istanbul: Altınoluk, 1997), 21; Ṣadr al-Dīn Muḥammad b. Isḥāq b. Muḥammad al-Qūnawī, *Tasavvuf Metafiziği* [*Metaphysics of Islamic Mysticism: Miftāḥ ghayb al-jamʿ wa l-wujūd*], trans. Ekrem Demirli, (Istanbul: İz Yayıncılık, 2002), 11 ff.; Sharaf al-Dīn Dāwūd b. Maḥmūd b. Muḥammad al-Qayṣarī, *Risāla fī ʿilm al-taṣawwuf*, in his *al-Rasāʾil*,

regard, the mystical aspects of Sufism have never been ruled out by Sufi movements, including the new Sufi approach represented by Ibn al-ʿArabī and his disciples. Complaining that their knowledge cannot be comprehended or that it will at least be misunderstood and suffer the reaction of incompetent persons, Sufis have pointed out this mystical facet of Sufism.[3] The most common criticisms have concerned the attempt by those persons called "people of the outward knowledge" (*ahl al-ẓāhir*) to comprehend a domain about which they had no experience. Such criticisms have become widespread through the famous expression that had been made an idiom by Sufis: "one who does not taste does not know". These criticisms have been fed by the notion that Sufism is an *ʿilm al-ḥāl* (knowledge of the state) and an *ʿilm al-asrār* (knowledge of the mysteries) and that its followers are *khawāṣṣ* (elites) or *khāṣṣ al-khawāṣṣ* (elites of elites), and they reached a point at which they are appreciated by even non-Sufi writers.[4] What is more, certain terms used by Sufis to describe knowledge and wisdom have validated this mysticism.[5] In this context, the term *maʿrifa*[6] has sometimes been used synonymously with (and sometimes as merely similar to) knowledge, and Sufism also makes wide use of expressions such as *dhawq* (to taste), *shurb* (to drink), *riyy* (to be satisfied) and others that refer to individual experience. All of

(ed. with an introduction by Mehmet Bayraktar; Kayseri: Kayseri Büyükşehir Belediyesi Yayınları, 1997), 110.

3 The views in the early works on the matter are clear. Ibn al-ʿArabī has always had similar concerns. See Abū ʿAbd Allāh Ibn al-ʿArabī Muḥyī al-Dīn Muḥammad b. ʿAlī, *Fütûhât-ı Mekkiyye* [*al-Futūḥāt al-Makkiyya*], trans. Ekrem Demirli, (Istanbul: Litera Yayıncılık, 2006), I, 83; al-Qūnawī draws attention to the same issue. See al-Qūnawī, *Tasavvuf Metafiziği*, 12; for an evaluation, see Ekrem Demirli, *Sadreddin Konevî'de Bilgi ve Varlık* [*Knowledge and Being in Ṣadr al-Dīn al-Qūnawī*], (Istanbul: İz Yayıncılık, 2005), 45 ff.

4 For an example, we can mention the evaluation by Kātib Chalabī. See Ḥājī Khalīfa Kātib Chalabī Muṣṭafá b. ʿAbd Allāh, *Kashf al-ẓunūn ʿan asāmī l-kutub wa l-funūn*, (ed. M. Şerefeddin Yaltkaya and Kilisli Rifat Bilge; Istanbul: Maarif Matbaası, 1941-1943), I, 159 ff. He has repeated his opinions in his discussion of the subject of "ʿilm al-ḥikma". See *ibid.*, I, 676.

5 Concerning this aspect of Sufism, see Ibn al-ʿArabī, *Fütûhât-ı Mekkiyye*, I, 79 ff.; also see his *Rasāʾil Ibn al-ʿArabī*, *Kitāb al-fanāʾ*, (ed. Muḥammad Shihāb al-Dīn; Beirut: Dār Ṣādir, 1997), 16 ff.

6 For the distinction between knowledge and gnosis *(maʿrifa)*, see Abū l-Ḥasan ʿAlī b. ʿUthmān b. ʿAlī al-Hujwīrī, *Hakikat Bilgisi* [*Kashf al-maḥjūb*], trans. Süleyman Uludağ, (Istanbul: Dergâh Yayınları, 1982), 533.

these terms draw attention to the subjectivity of Sufism. As a matter of fact, throughout his struggle to place Sufism among the Islamic sciences, al-Qushayrī has worked to take this subjectivity into account. On one hand, al-Qushayrī talks about Sufi nomenclature and tries to place Sufism among the sciences; on the other hand, indicating that he will draw attention to the fact that Sufi nomenclature also includes mysticism, he has abstained from scientifically limiting his interpretations of Sufism.[7] Regardless of its relation to the Islamic sciences, mysticism is one of the characteristics that Sufism always conserves.

With mysticism in mind, we must comprehend two interconnected subjects. The first is that Sufism possesses its own method of reaching knowledge and truth. However, if we are to consider the *ṭarīqa* (order) structure that enables Sufism to attain a large body of followers that are deprived of intellectual interest, it is not always possible to accept its method as one seeking to enable knowledge. In this sense, in order to explain Sufism's method, other concepts than knowledge may spring to mind. For example, using more general expressions such as "making man mature", "purification of self", and "maturation of morality", it may become possible to explain the Sufi method more successfully. From the beginning, Sufis were aware of the fact that they had a genuine method among those other methods offered by the religious sciences. In this regard, the diffusion of Sufism itself (and here, to prefer the word "diffusion" instead of "rising" reminds us of the approach of earliest Sufi writers that was later replaced by the terms "rising" and "birth" preferred by modern researchers[8]) was a kind of reaction with respect to *tafsīr* (Islamic exegesis) that can be deemed an intervention in the method of reaching at knowledge or, in other words, the interpretation of *naṣṣ* (Qurʾān and Sunna) by the theologians who were the first to consider these matters. Later, this method would be called *istinbāṭ* (to reveal the hidden meaning of a word or deed)[9] or *istidlāl* (reasoning), two terms which both refer to

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[7] See Abū l-Qāsim Zayn al-Islām ʿAbd al-Karīm b. Hawāzin al-Qushayrī, *al-Risālā al-Qushayriyya*, (ed. ʿAbd al-Ḥalīm Maḥmūd and Maḥmūd b. Sharīf; Cairo: Dār al-Kutub al-Ḥadītha, 1966), 188.

[8] On this point, authors such as al-Sarrāj, al-Qushayrī and al-Kalābādhī agree that one can talk about the diffusion or attention-grabbing of Sufism. For example, see al-Sarrāj, *İslâm Tasavvufu: Lüma*, 22 ff.

[9] On al-Sarrāj's use of the term *istinbāṭ*, see *İslâm Tasavvufu*, 109 ff.; for an assessment of the relation between Sufism and the conventions of the *fiqh-kalām* tradition, see Muḥammad ʿĀbid al-Jābirī, *Arap-İslâm Kültürünün Akıl Yapısı*

objectivity. In the matter of these concepts of method, the Sufis were conscious of the fact that by elaborating a specific method, they gave expression to an intention distinct from objective methods. Sufi mysticism has arisen because of the development of a method that promotes subjectivity against objectivity.

The second subject is the existence of a group of people who actually use this method. These adherents to Sufi's methodology have been called elites and elites of elites, and after the advent of Ibn al-ʿArabī and his followers, have become named by such related expressions as *muḥaqqiq* (researcher of truth), *kāmil* (sage, spiritually wise) or other terms that indicate an elite relationship to knowledge and truth. Nevertheless, as al-Qūnawī insists, there are also those who attain the truth without following a particular method. This fact may not enable us to deduce the presence of mysticism within Sufism if we consider only the question of method.

Such a question may be significant. Although Sufis have the right to dissociate their own methods from the methods of other sciences (because every science possesses its own method), doesn't every science bear the right to deem itself mystical? For Sufis, the answer to this question is "no" because all sciences, despite their differences, share a common role as the "knowledge of the apparent". In this sense, Sufis have qualified these sciences with concepts concerning observable domains and objectivity, giving them names such as *ʿilm al-ẓāhir* (the outward knowledge), *ʿilm al-rusūm* (knowledge of images), *ʿilm al-qishr* (knowledge of shell) and *ʿilm al-ṣūra* (knowledge of forms). This approach can be observed during every period of Sufism. In dissociating their method from the method of the "people of the outward knowledge", Sufis have thus deemed all other sciences common in the way in which they remain within boundaries of form and have affirmed that, on the other hand, one can attain the truth only by methods such as asceticism and efforts in the way of Allah that support the essence and secret of man. Thus, mysticism remains peculiar to Sufism, by transforming into a necessity of being the knowledge of inward *(ʿilm al-bāṭin)*.

In addition to this clear distinction between the "knowledge of outward" *(ʿilm al-ẓāhir)* and the "knowledge of inward" *(ʿilm al-*

[*Binyat al-ʿaql al-ʿArabī*], trans. Burhan Köroğlu et al., (Istanbul: Kitabevi Yayınları, 1999), 380 ff.

bāṭın) that appeared with the origin of Sufism, the comparison between the methods of knowledge in Sufism and other method(s) was originally carried out by Ibn al-ʿArabī, al-Qūnawī and their disciples. In this context, al-Qūnawī made the Sufi method as explicit as it had ever been in the hands of the early Sufi writers; indeed, he put it forth as a complete method.[10] Thanks to his studies, the epistemological approach that grounds the method that enables Sufis to call themselves a genuine group has appeared, and the principles of this method have become clear. This method is principally practical. In other words, the Sufis have determined *ʿamal* (practice, deed, act) as the method to make man reach at the terminus; and from this point of view, they have deemed Sufism to be a morality. On the other hand, the comparison method proposed by al-Qūnawī has necessitated a shift towards practices of dispute and of proofs from which Sufis usually try to remain distant. Thus, the first noticeable matter in this method of comparison is the way in which, in considering the epistemological possibilities of man, it can be assumed that all researchers of the truth have a single objective, thus elaborating the grounds for a realistic comparison. The objective of each person is to attain maturity or truth, or, in short, felicity. The methods for this pursuit are deduction *(istidlāl)*, which uses the power of speculation *(naẓar)* and observation *(mushāhada)* that use the power of *ʿamal*. It is no doubt impossible to talk about an exact opposition here. The theoretical method that Sufis attribute to philosophers and, partially, to *kalām* scholars is also used by themselves; in the same way, the methods of asceticism *(riyāḍa)* and striving *(mujāhada)* in the way of Allah that constitute their own method are followed by speculative theologians *(ahl al-naẓar)*. Consequently, as Ibn al-ʿArabī notes, both are well-known methods throughout the history of philosophy. Nevertheless, there is a question of priority; the users of the theoretical approach have neglected the practical or have been deprived of the means to carry it out appropriately. Regarding the latter, the most suitable expression for this approach is a "lack of means", which we can find in the writings of Ibn al-ʿArabī. As for the followers of the

[10] On this matter, *Tasavvuf Metafiziği* and *Fatiha Tefsiri* include significant information. See al-Qūnawī, *Tasavvuf Metafiziği*, 11; Ibid., *Fatiha Tefsiri* [*Exegesis of Sūrat al-Fātiḥa: Iʿjāz al-bayān fī tafsīr Umm al-Qurʾān*], trans. Ekrem Demirli, (Istanbul: İz Yayıncılık, 2002), 55 ff.; for a similar evaluation see Dāwūd al-Qayṣarī, *Risāla fī ʿilm al-taṣawwuf*, 110; Demirli, *Sadreddin Konevî'de Bilgi ve Varlık*, 45 ff.

practical method (and in this matter, Ibn al-ʿArabī and his disciples constitute a party on behalf of Sufism), these put the theoretical method and the speculative (*naẓarī*) competence of man into the background. Interestingly, however, both methods have arrived at the same problems. This becomes particularly obvious in texts by Ibn al-ʿArabī and al-Qūnawī. These works apply the terms used beforehand by Islamic philosophers and *kalām* scholars in order to explain their own views. Ibn al-ʿArabī and al-Qūnawī deal with the problems discussed by those in the past and, moreover, do so by remaining Sufi, which is to say, special persons having a special method. This fact demonstrates that Sufism has come upon the same problems as have the speculative theologians even though the methods they follow are different. By establishing a connection between this language/discourse and that used by Sufis in the past, which was limited to accurately express the details of the spiritual life of Sufis, Sufis have followed the traces of metaphysical terms in moral life. If we are to approach the matter via a discussion of historical changes, we can say that Sufis have found the metaphysical grounds and interpretations of terms that had been traditionally restricted merely to moral content. The new situation has led to an extension of the meaning or even to a re-expression of the familiar terms of philosophy and *kalām*. For example, the term "relativity" is one of the main concepts of the writings of Avicenna. Avicenna talks about the relativity of everything within being,[11] but he does not give adequate information about the matters that can be included within this term, and, likewise, the other terms that can be derived from it. Departing from this concept, Ibn al-ʿArabī and al-Qūnawī treat at first the relation of relativity between God and man and then derive concepts such as *ilāh*ness-*maʾlūh*ness (God-divine thrall, or the Lord-the vassal), *rāziq*ness-*marzūq*ness (being provider-being provided) and others that had not previously been in common use. They use, with regard to the relation between active and passive or with regard to the concept of causality, terms such as father-son, maternity, divine causes, inferior causes and others. A more common nomenclature is the word *nikāḥ* (literally, "spousal") that has been used in order to explain causal connections. In explaining that the whole universe is connected within itself by means of a relation of causality, Ibn al-ʿArabī often resorts to the term *nikāḥ* and

[11] See Abū ʿAlī Ḥusayn b. ʿAbd Allāh b. ʿAlī Ibn Sīnā, *Metafizik* [*al-Shifāʾ: al-Ilāhiyyāt*], trans. Ekrem Demirli and Ömer Türker, (Istanbul: Litera Yayıncılık, 2004), I, 137.

talks about the *nikāḥ* between divine and inferior universes or in the natural universe. An interpretation of this term that we find in the works of al-Qūnawī in particular centers on concepts such as *ithmār* (to prove fruitful), *intāj* (finalization), and *baraka* (benediction) that are used with respect to *ṣudūr* (emanation).[12] Or, accepting the idea that the universe is the most perfect of all possible universes, this concept can be associated with fundamental Sufi concepts such as *tawakkul* (trust), *riḍā'* (consent), and submission and interpreted as their principle. A significant portion of the contradictions observed between the texts of philosophers who prefer objective expression and the Sufi texts that arose with Ibn al-ʿArabī and al-Qūnawī originates from these differences in language/discourse preference. In other words, even though Sufis have examined similar problems and made use of similar terms, they have made use of these words and concepts by adding Sufi interpretations and by extending their philosophical meanings.

We can estimate various reasons for this Sufi extensions and interpretations. Sufism was under the influence not only of philosophy and *kalām*, but of multiple resources. Given its influences, Sufis have paid attention to the use of revelation- (*waḥy*-)based words while at the same time working to add a new and broader dimension to philosophical expressions by applying them to particular and partial problems. In addition, Sufis have almost accepted those whom they call *ahl al-ẓāhir* as members of the same science, even though they have acknowledged certain differences. It is not always clear whether Sufis mean philosophers or *kalām* scholars when their texts read *ahl al-naẓar*. Such an indistinction of perception has enabled Sufis to benefit equally from both groups. As it is, while studying the God-universe relation, they can easily benefit from different schools of exegetes, *ḥadīth* scholars or the terms of pre-Islamic philosophies as well as from Islamic philosophers. In metaphysical subjects in particular, it is possible for Sufis to overcome the language and style problems between Sufi texts and texts by philosophers and *kalām* scholars only by taking these practical/pragmatist approaches of Sufism into account. This strategy can be observed in the case of the concept of *imkān* (possibility) and its interpretations by Ibn al-ʿArabī and his followers. Departing from the concept of possibility in the sense used by philosophers, these Sufi scholars have interpreted it in

[12] See al-Qūnawī, *Tasavvuf Metafiziği*, 23.

a more extensive way in an attempt to explore the richness of the concept with respect to meaning.[13] As a result, for them it bears many meanings such as possibility, image, shadow, mirage, poverty, white pearl *(al-durra al-bayḍā')*, light, darkness and others. With this in mind, we should turn to an examination of the way in which Sufis have claimed to discover the richness of the concept of possibility with regard to meaning.

Possibility: Nonexistence and the Nonexistence of Nonexistence

Ibn al-ʿArabī begins his magnum opus *al-Futūḥāt al-Makkiyya* (*The Meccan Revelations*) with the following expression: "I absolve the one who discloses/creates things from nonexistence and nonexistence of nonexistence".[14] What meaning can be attributed to the opening phrase of a book? Likewise, in the Islamic tradition, what rich meaning can we expect from the first phrase of a book? This sentence would seem to be expected to resonate with the concepts of praise (*ḥamd*) and blessings *(ṣalawāt)*. It cannot be deemed as a prejudice to think that Ibn al-ʿArabī might have overlooked the habits of some of his readers by neglecting to approach the phrase with the necessary meticulousness. In this regard, can the difference between "I absolve Allah who creates things" and "… who creates things from nonexistence" or "… who creates from nonexistence and the nonexistence of nonexistence" be immediately detected? Or, even if it is detected, how can it be explained? When we follow closely the metaphysical thought of Ibn al-ʿArabī, we comprehend an explicit difference between each expression. We see that the last expression is competently constituted in order to signify the competence of an

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[13] One of the terms used frequently by Ibn al-ʿArabī is *miʿrāj al-ʿibāra*. See Mustafa Çakmaklıoğlu, *İbnü'l-Arabî'de Marifetin İfadesi* [*The Expression of Knowledge in Ibn al-ʿArabī*], (Istanbul: İnsan Yayınları, 2007), 405. Also for the reasons of this attitude and the problem of understanding Ibn al-ʿArabī, see *ibid*., 391.

[14] See Ibn al-ʿArabī, *Fütûhât-ı Mekkiyye,* I, 15. After this expression, Ibn al-ʿArabī mentions the objective of creation as the disclosure of the perfection of divine names; this view is often emphasized by Sufis. See Ibn al-ʿArabī, *ibid*., 16; also see his *Fusûsu'l-hikem* [*Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam*], trans. with a commentary by Ekrem Demirli, (Istanbul: Kabalcı Yayınevi, 2006), 23; For the acceptance of divine names as a principle for metaphysical knowledge, see al-Qūnawī, *Tasavvuf Metafiziği*, 11; for an evaluation, see Demirli, *Sadreddin Konevî'de Bilgi ve Varlık*, 45.

author. In addition, this is a key phrase that guides the reader to the main issues of Ibn al-ʿArabī's thoughts, and above all, to the concept of the "unity of being" (*waḥdat al-wujūd*).[15] Therefore, it is extremely significant and fitting to ask why Ibn al-ʿArabī does not merely say "from nonexistence" and instead begins his book by saying "who discloses from nonexistence and nonexistence of nonexistence".

First of all, we have to lay stress on the expression: there are two terms of equal importance in the sentence, and they are connected with the conjunction "and". The first one is "nonexistence" (*ʿadam*), whereas the second one is the "nonexistence of nonexistence" (*ʿadam al-ʿadam*). Ibn al-ʿArabī expresses them as *ʿan ʿadam* and *ʿadamihī*. In daily language, we have no difficulty in using expressions such as nonexistent, nothing or nothingness. When it comes to metaphysics, however, this usage becomes a serious problem with regard to the proper sense and context for the use of the word nonexistence (*ʿadam*). What do we mean exactly by "nonexistence" and "nonexistent"? On the other hand, if we consider other words that might describe nonexistence, the obstacles preventing comprehension are multiplied. This results from the fact that it is not known what nonexistence actually signifies because, as Avicenna indicates, man comprehends being explicitly, and it is not the counterpart of the nonexistent.[16] In the case of nonexistence, we do not possess anything according to which we can define the concept. Nonetheless, our mind perceives nonexistence as a continuous thing and envisions it according to and with regard to being. In the end, as Ibn al-ʿArabī indicates, the human mind defines it as the "nonexistence of being" (*ʿadam al-wujūd*). The thought of Ibn al-ʿArabī is thus based on the acceptance of the impossibility of nonexistence as a consequence of the priority of being and of the fact that being is comprehended explicitly.

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[15] For exhaustive information about the term *waḥdat al-wujūd*, see Demirli, "Varlık Olmak Bakımından Varlık İfadesinin Sufiler Tarafından Yeniden Yorumlanması [A New Interpretation of the Sufi Phrase 'Being qua Being' and the Metaphysical Results of This Interpretation]", *İslâm Araştırmaları Dergisi* [*Turkish Journal of Islamic Studies*], 18 (2007), 43. See Ibn Sīnā, *Metafizik*, I, 63.

[16] See Ibn Sīnā, *Metafizik,* I, 27.

We should recall some of the contexts in which Ibn al-ʿArabī talks about nonexistence (*ʿadam*).[17] His first significant point is the classification of nonexistence. Nonexistence is divided into three classes. The first one is called "necessary nonexistence". This concept can be explained by the example of the impossibility of the existence of a partner of God. The lack of a partner of God is a necessary principle that the mind accepts absolutely. The second class is called "possible nonexistence". We can estimate existence or nonexistence; thus, it can be called relative nonexistence. As with the nonexistence of possible things, nonexistence in daily language generally refers to this category. Considering the universe as an imagination/phantasm and mirage, Ibn al-ʿArabī takes this type into account and extends it to apply to the universe. The third class is the "impossible" or "absolute nonexistence" (*al-ʿadam al-muṭlaq*). "Absolute nonexistence is impossible" constitutes one of the fundamental principles of Ibn al-ʿArabī's ontological thought. "The absolute nonexistence is impossible"; this is to say, there is no such thing as a fact and it is impossible to reason for man. We can therefore summarize Ibn al-ʿArabī's views as follows: absolute existence does not exist and the only nonexistence that we can talk about is relative nonexistence.

The second point to which Ibn al-ʿArabī draws attention concerning nonexistence is its obligatory connection with evil, or rather, the sameness of the two categories. Nonexistence (*ʿadam*) means evil, and disclosing a thing from nonexistence means bringing it forth from evil to good. The expression "nonexistence is evil" is a consequence of the verdict "*wujūd* (being) is good", and it recalls the metaphysical views of Avicenna. This conviction finally reaches at accepting God as pure, absolute being and pure good.[18] Likewise, there is an absolute evil in the form of God's counterpart, but under the connection

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[17] See Kamāl al-Dīn ʿAbd al-Razzāq b. Aḥmad al-Kāshānī, *Tasavvuf Sözlüğü* [*A Dictionary of Islamic Mysticism: Laṭāʾif al-aʿlām fī ishārāt ahl al-ilhām*], trans. Ekrem Demirli, (Istanbul: İz Yayıncılık, 2005), 577; Rusūkh al-Dīn Rusūkhī Ismāʿīl b. Aḥmad al-Ānqarāwī, *Minhāj al-fuqarāʾ*, (ed. Safi Arpaguş; Istanbul: Vefa Yayınları, 2008), 484 ff.; M. Erol Kılıç, *İbn Arabî Düşüncesine Giriş* [*Introduction to the Philosophy of Ibn al-ʿArabī*], (Istanbul: Sufi Kitap, 2009), 88; William C. Chittick, *The Self-disclosure of God: Principles of Ibn al-ʿArabī's Cosmology*, (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1998), xx; Demirli, *İslâm Metafiziğinde Tanrı ve İnsan,* 175; Ibid., "Varlık Olmak Bakımından Varlık İfadesinin Sufiler Tarafından Yeniden Yorumlanması", 41.

[18] See Ibn Sīnā, *ibid*., II, 108 ff.; Ibn al-ʿArabī, *Fütûhât-ı Mekkiyye*, I, 129.

of nonexistence and evil, no such evil actually exists. Regardless, the necessary relation or equivalence between nonexistence and evil leads to the consequences that we have observed with regard to nonexistence: there is no absolute evil, and we can talk about evil only relatively. The two phrases, one proceeding from the other, are logical consequences of Ibn al-ʿArabī's ontology; moreover, interpreting the above phrase, we can establish both these expressions as a framework for a further consideration of nonexistence.

Based on this framework, we can draw attention to several issues regarding the term "nonexistence" (*ʿadam*) in the aforementioned sentence by Ibn al-ʿArabī. Above all, the nonexistence in his phrase should not be considered to be "absolute nonexistence" because the latter is, as he indicates, impossible. In other words, absolute nonexistence can neither be comprehended by the mind nor realized. The nonexistence from which things are derived can only be relative nonexistence. Later, we will treat the problems of this expression in this sense in addition to Ibn al-ʿArabī's efforts to overcome them. For the moment, the issue we shall consider is that nonexistence, which we identify here as "relative", is also equivalent to relative evil. According to this interpretation, in disclosing things from nonexistence, Allah has also saved them from evil because of the intimate relation between evil and nonexistence. In other words, to be and to remain nonexistent are the biggest evils, whereas creation is the greatest good. This is why creation is a consequence of divine blessing and generosity. The *optimistic* ontological views of Sufis are based on this conviction. Ibn al-ʿArabī expresses this view metaphysically by the expression "the best and the most perfect of all possible universes"[19], used by Sufis to indicate this world in order to reveal their consent and submission. Explaining the sublimity of mercy and goodness in the act of creating, Ibn al-ʿArabī also draws attention to the relation between creation and *mashīʾa*[20] and says that no greater goodness can exist than the creation and being-giving of God.

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[19] For more about Sufi interpretation of the expression, see Demirli, *İslâm Metafiziğinde Tanrı ve İnsan*, 229; about Ibn al-ʿArabī's citation from al-Ghazālī, see *Fütûhât-ı Mekkiyye*, I, 23.

[20] *Mashīʾa* is the general will (*irāda*) of God, and this will means to give existence to something without any value judgment. The word thing (*shayʾ*) is also connected with this word. In this sense, a thing means the one that is willed. Nevertheless, the will is a disposition about the good or bad condition of a thing given

After interpreting the first part of the phrase, we can now deal with the second part in which Ibn al-ʿArabī mentions the "nonexistence of nonexistence" (*ʿadam al-ʿadam*). The nonexistence of nonexistence is most certainly equivalent to being. Here, there can be no reason for us to hesitate. As a matter of fact, Ibn al-ʿArabī has personally expressed this view. After this explanation, assuming that we have arrived at a more explicit interpretation of Ibn al-ʿArabī's expression, we can rewrite it as follows: "Allah, who evinces things from nonexistence and existence, is *munazzah* (far from any deficit and lacking)". In this sentence, Ibn al-ʿArabī connects the two major terms with the conjunction "and", thus forming a new term. We can express this term as "nonexistence and nonexistence of nonexistence", or, following the meaning we have given to the second part of the phrase individually, "nonexistence and being".

At this stage, we have a more complex problem when compared with the first one: how can something be conceived to be "existent and nonexistent" (or existence and nonexistence) at the same time? It seems that here we have arrived at one of the paradoxical concepts that occupy a central place in Ibn al-ʿArabī's thought. Paradoxical expressions frequently occur in Ibn al-ʿArabī's texts, and as a whole, Ibn al-ʿArabī explains everything in the universe through paradoxes.[21] One of the most important manifestations of paradox is that man himself is a paradoxical being. Ibn al-ʿArabī's view on man can be followed via the concept of *al-kawn al-jāmiʿ*[22], which is to say, the being who harbors and accumulates oppositions in himself. Man is *al-kawn al-jāmiʿ* because Allah is the being who accumulates all oppositions within Himself. Man and the universe benefit from this paradox to the extent that they are created according to divine form (*ṣūra*). The source for these paradoxes of Ibn al-ʿArabī is the paradox

existence. This relation of generality and particularity between *mashīʾa* and *irāda* can be equally observed within the relation between *al-Raḥmān* and *al-Raḥīm*. Creation comes from the breath of *al-Raḥmān*, and this is determined by the fact that nonexistence is evil. See Dāwūd al-Qayṣarī, *Maṭlaʿ khuṣūṣ al-kilam fī maʿānī Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam*, (ed. Muḥammad b. Ḥasan Saʿīdī; Cairo: Dār al-Iʿtiṣām, 1416), I, 157.

21 Concerning these paradoxes, see Çakmaklıoğlu, *İbnü'l-Arabî'de Marifetin İfadesi*, 380 ff.

22 The term is most comprehensively used in *Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam*. See Ibn al-ʿArabī, *Fusûsu'l-hikem*, 23; for the term, see Dāwūd al-Qayṣarī, *Maṭlaʿ khuṣūṣ al-kilam fī maʿānī Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam*, I, 158.

and antilogy that arose with the creation of the universe. The universe came into existence from a paradox, and we can define its origin as follows: *nonexistence and existence* or *nonexistent-existent*. The universe came into existence from the "nonexistent-existent". We witness here another of the paradoxical expressions frequently used by Ibn al-ʿArabī.

We can analyze this paradox by returning to the Islamic tradition of metaphysics. In other words, this expression by Ibn al-ʿArabī bears the problems of Islamic theoretical schools of thought in their diverse traditions; however, the solution of this paradox is possible only through a return to that heritage. "Nonexistence and existence", as the origin of things, requires that we interpret in a new context the ontological views of the *kalām* schools (such as the Ashʿariyya and the Muʿtazila) and the metaphysical theories of Islamic philosophers. In essence, *The Meccan Revelations* (*al-Futūḥāt al-Makkiyya*), *The Bezels of the Wisdom* (*Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam*) and above all the heritage of Ibn al-ʿArabī are deeply concerned with interrogating (sometimes for critical purposes and sometimes for purposes of consummation) the heritage of these three (or two, *kalām* and philosophy, excluding any denominational seperations) theoretical schools. Revising the heritage he inherited with a new language, Ibn al-ʿArabī *consummates* that heritage by means of the epistemological possibilities of the Sufi method. We can interpret the opening phrase of *The Meccan Revelations* from just such a background and just such a profound point of view. Here, Ibn al-ʿArabī removes the veils of habits and their effects on comprehension, and explores the depth of meaning of a term. From this aspect, a term incites us to eternal discussions, as if it were a mirror to reflect many discussions. Ibn al-ʿArabī insistently emphasizes that nomenclature is only a gloss and an interpretation and that, if the terms are taken away from their objective of disposition, they can detract us from the truth. The disclosure of the content of terms, and the exploration of what they actually imply, are among the characteristics of the interpretative method of Ibn al-ʿArabī. We can see an explorer attitude in many of the concepts offered by Ibn al-ʿArabī in his interpretations of tradition. Because of its relation with our subject, we can take the term "creation" as an example.

The *kalām* scholars have desired to explain the relation God-universe by the idea of "create from nothing" and by an accompanying faith in an Omnipotent (*al-Qādir al-muṭlaq*) God. However, the ontology of Ibn al-ʿArabī indicates that "creation from nonexistence"

does not provide us with any knowledge. It is not clear what we are to understand from the expression "to create", and thus the phrase "God created the universe from nothing" is an expression without content. If we ask a *kalām* scholar what God's creation of the universe means, and what the meaning of the verb "to create" is in this context, he shall not be able to give a clear response. However, Ibn al-ʿArabī thinks that to discover the meaning of the term "creation", to provide an understanding of the relation God-universe (or at least to recall the nature of this relation) is the duty of the *muḥaqqiq* (verifier), which means metaphysician. We can take the same approach for terms such as *kufr*, *īmān* that occupy a fundamental place in Ibn al-ʿArabī's thought. Thus, in saying "nonexistence and nonexistence of nonexistence", Ibn al-ʿArabī tries to restore the meaning of a term that was developed by Islamic metaphysicians, but that, in time, has lost its depth of meaning. The term in question is "possibility".

The term "possibility" (*imkān*), which is used synonymously with the word "faculty" (*quwwa*), can be defined as "one, the existence and nonexistence of which is equal".[23] What does this mean? We can interpret the phrase in two ways. The first aspect of this definition of possibility is that it serves as a proof used by Islamic philosophers for the deduction of necessary being, since, if everything in being were necessary, everything would come into existence at the same moment, and no distinction (between the categories of being) would have taken place. When we propose the nonexistence of certain things as if they existed, our mind thus does not fall into a dilemma. Therefore, possibility in itself is a proof that ensures a distinction of "possible" and "necessary" regarding existence. But the problem does not end here. The second aspect of possibility, which is to say, the question of its nonexistence, constitutes the essence of the distinction between the possibility argument of Islamic philosophers and the notion of *ḥuduth* (to be created in time) produced by *kalām* scholars. According to Islamic philosophers, possibility means one, the existence and the nonexistence of which are equal; and possibility can never exist by means of itself. What is possible can come into existence because of a preferring one. From this point of view, possibility

[23] For possibility, see Abū Naṣr Muḥammad b. Muḥammad b. Ṭarkhān al-Fārābī, *Felsefenin Temel Meseleleri: Uyûnü'l-mesâil* [*Major Themes in Philosophy: ʿUyūn al-masā'il*], in Mahmut Kaya (ed. with translation), *İslâm Filozoflarından Felsefe Metinleri* [*Selected Texts from Islamic Philosophers*], 2nd ed., (Istanbul: Klasik Yayınları, 2003), 118; Ibn Sīnā, *Metafizik*, I, 36.

can be defined as follows: possibility is the one that is existent in one aspect or condition and nonexistent in another aspect. Therefore, we can express the term possibility as "both existent and nonexistent" or "existent in one aspect, nonexistent in another". In considering nonexistence, Ibn al-ʿArabī draws attention to the first point we stated about possibility, whereas, in his second expression, the nonexistence of nonexistence, he attracts attention to the second aspect of possibility and indicates that "Allah has disclosed things from nonexistence and from nonexistence of nonexistence, namely, from existence", since the nonexistence of nonexistence means existence/being.

Can we split this statement of Ibn al-ʿArabī? For example, if we say that "Allah has created things from nonexistence", will we find ourselves contradicting Ibn al-ʿArabī's thoughts? In my opinion, such an approach will lead to comprehending Ibn al-ʿArabī through the creation theory offered by *kalām* scholars, and prevents us from seeing his genuine thought. Nevertheless, we have to remember that Ibn al-ʿArabī himself offers several sentences that might be seen as giving way to this fault. Ibn al-ʿArabī does something different here, however, and as we already stated, this is a new composition and gloss. Recalling the Ashʿarī approach, Ibn al-ʿArabī points out nonexistence as the origin of things, at first. Because Ashʿarīs ground their thoughts on the omnipotence of God, they do not accept the thingness or content that might constitute an origin for the universe and limit God's puissance. Instead, they assert that Allah may have created things from nonexistence. In Ibn al-ʿArabī's thought, however, nonexistence "is not an aforementioned thing" in terms of both existence and value.[24] The nonexistence he mentions thus bears no value other than an expression of the way in which things do not come into existence by themselves but by means of one who continuously prefers (to bring into existence or not). This situation of things, which is to say, their nonexistence with regard to themselves, takes us to another term within the scope of the relation between God and things: poverty. Things have not left nonexistence on their own; they were disclosed by someone, and they are dependent on the one who brings them into existence. In addition, this neediness is a necessary attrib-

[24] For an interpretation of this expression, see al-Qūnawī, *İlâhî Nefhalar: en-Nefehâtü'l-ilâhiyye* [*al-Nafaḥāt al-ilāhiyya*], trans. Ekrem Demirli, (Istanbul: İz Yayıncılık, 2002), 24 ff.

ute that accompanies things, and it maintains its existence after its original expression. In this sense, according to Ibn al-ʿArabī, the most important equivalent of the word "possibility" is "dependent", whereas the equivalent of necessary being is "Rich" (*al-Ghaniyy*). In other words, necessity is identified with completeness and perfection, whereas neediness is identical with insufficiency and requirement. Thus, the first "nonexistence" in the expression points out this sense and bears the traces of *kalām* scholars' conception of an omnipotent God. For now, however, we are merely at the first stage of the problem.

Is it possible that things are created only from nonexistence, in its Ashʿarī sense? According to Ibn al-ʿArabī, this is impossible. Moreover, before Ibn al-ʿArabī, Muʿtazila and Islamic philosophers had also not accepted the idea of creation from nothing in the Ashʿarī manner. The Muʿtazilī school tried to escape from the idea of absolute nonexistence by an intermediary situation it called "the thingness of nonexistent"[25], the meaning of which it could not, however, explain; thus, in an uncertain way, it moved closer to the Islamic philosophers' idea of content. Nevertheless, it is evident that Ibn al-ʿArabī took into account the arguments of the Muʿtazilī school regarding this term in his analysis discussed above. No matter which aspect of the problem we treat, it is necessary a condition that prioritizes createdness of things. This can be assessed from two perspectives. First, in the Qurʾān, in a verse that explains the problem of creation, a being that has not yet been created is called a "thing". Other verses repeat this conceptualization. If we are to adopt al-Qūnawī's approach, we cannot explain the relation between the eternal and the existent in time (*ḥādith*) unless we accept an intermediary situation or stage between the two.[26] On the other hand, if we consider the eternality *(qidam)* of God's attributes, there has to be a situation that we may describe as the truth of things prior to creation.

With regard to the problem of attributes, Ibn al-ʿArabī tries to attain a solution by considering Avicenna's theory of possibility and

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[25] See Abū l-ʿAlā al-ʿAfîfî, "İbnü'l-Arabî'nin Ayân-ı Sâbitesi ve Madûmât [*al-Aʿyān al-thābita* and *al-maʿdūmāt* in Ibn al-ʿArabī]", *İslâm Düşüncesi Üzerine Makaleler* [*Articles on Islamic Thought*], ed. with trans. Ekrem Demirli, (Istanbul: İz Yayıncılık, 2000), 232; Demirli, *İslâm Metafiziğinde Tanrı ve İnsan*, 250.

[26] See al-Qūnawī, *Tasavvuf Metafiziği*, 14; for its interpretation, see Demirli, *Sadreddin Konevî'de Bilgi ve Varlık*, 282 ff.

eternal contents (*māhiyya*), the Muʿtazilī theory of thingness of non-existence, and the Ashʿarī theory of attributes. According to Ibn al-ʿArabī, in the first place, we have to establish the existence of attributes; because he states the God is the only Absolute and Necessary Being, if we do not accept God's attributes, we cannot escape from deism. Deism is the most important problem for Ibn al-ʿArabī, a problem that he attributes to philosophers and deems to be a failure of mind regarding metaphysics.[27] Thus, the most important concern of Ibn al-ʿArabī's philosophy is to pick apart deism. In this sense, whereas Avicenna deemed the objective of metaphysics to be the verification of God's existence[28], according to Ibn al-ʿArabī, the main problem is deism. We cannot pick holes in deism by making use of any source of knowledge, but only through revelation (*waḥy*). Here, one of the distinctive characteristics of the epistemological method of Sufism appears: even though Sufis defend their method of purification of the heart against deduction and reasonable demonstration, they do not denote a "mystical experience" based on purification of the heart. According to Sufis, the Sufi method is above all nothing but obedience *(ittibāʿ)*, which is to say, obeisance to revelation and to the Prophet. We can overcome the problem of deism only by the help or guidance of revelation. From this perspective come Ibn al-ʿArabī's criticisms of the Muʿtazilī school. Ibn al-ʿArabī clearly conceives the Muʿtazila to be among the speculative theologians (*aṣḥāb al-naẓar)*. Nonetheless, it is difficult to detect whether he deems the Muʿtazila to be deist or not. However, the criticisms of the Muʿtazilī school defending the difference between the acceptance of the attributes of God and the acceptance of only His Essence (Self) are correct, even though this is a distinction that exceeds its purpose. As a matter of fact, Ibn al-ʿArabī considered this Muʿtazilī assessment and, through it, developed a new approach to the problem of essence and attributes. According to Ibn al-ʿArabī, the Ashʿarīs are inconsistent, and they can be criticized in two ways in their defense of their opinions concerning attributes against the Muʿtazila. First, the acceptance of attributes gives way to a kind of multiplication, as if it justifies the Muʿtazilī idea of *taʿaddud al-qudamāʾ* (multiple eternal beings). However, for Ibn al-ʿArabī, the mistake of the Muʿtazila in this regard is to extend this multitude to a real one, beyond relativity. Even though we do not deem this relative multitude identical with the

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[27] See Demirli, *İslâm Metafiziğinde Tanrı ve İnsan*, 170 ff.

[28] See Ibn Sīnā, *Metafizik*, I, 4.

oneness that is identified with the meaning of absolute simplicity, we can overcome the problem of plurality by virtue of a new concept. As a matter of fact, the types of oneness that Ibn al-ʿArabī explains in a gradation as *waḥda* (unity, oneness), *aḥadiyya* (absolute unity), *wāḥidiyya* (inclusive oneness, the station of awareness of unity) and *fardiyya* (uniqueness) point out this difference that appears alongside the concept of attributes.

The Ashʿarīs have rightly determined that the Muʿtazilī conception of God will lead us to deism; however, the Ashʿarī school has been ineffective when it comes to understanding oneness and has not been able to correctly explain the connection between attributes and essence. Concentrating on the relation between essence and attributes, they disregarded the relation between attributes and universe.[29] The second point at which to criticize the Ashʿarīs is thus their failure to explain the relation between divine attributes and the universe that is the consequence of these attributes. If God has created the universe through His attributes, and if His relations with the universe were realized via His attributes, the universe, like the attributes, has to be qualified as *qadīm* (eternal) in a determined sense. In this sense, if we accept that God is omniscient and that knowledge is God's attribute, this knowledge should have a subject. What does God know? Islamic philosophers respond to this question with the assertion that God knows Himself and thus that God is intelligent *(ʿāqil)* and intelligible *(maʿqūl)*.[30] The Sufis also accept this view. Accordingly, God has to know everything He knows (i.e., the universe and each particular in it) in an eternal way.

What does it mean to know something in eternity? Can an idea of eternity *(qidam)* arise from this point? This is the most principal problem of Ibn al-ʿArabī's metaphysical conception. In order to exceed it, Ibn al-ʿArabī has developed an extensive theory about the truths of things that he calls "immutable essences" (*aʿyān thābita**). Ibn al-ʿArabī applies this term in order to explain the relationship between divine attributes and the universe, and, in fact, his expression of the disclosure of "things from nonexistence and existence" refers to this term. According to Ibn al-ʿArabī, things should be eternally "immuta-

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29 For this question, see Demirli, *Fusûsu'l-Hikem Şerhi*, 505 ff.

30 See Ibn Sīnā, *Metafizik*, I, 41.

* The archetypes of all that exists.

ble" in divine knowing[31] because if we assume that things are not eternally known by God, we will be accepting that there is a renewal or increase/decrease in God's knowledge in the wake of creation. However, like any other attribute of God, His knowledge is also eternal and no increase/decrease can be in question with respect to the eternality of this knowledge. Because we are talking about an attribute of God, Ibn al-ʿArabī's interlocutors should be the Ashʿarīs because the Muʿtazila rejects eternal attributes and because no problem of attributes exists for the Islamic philosophers. Divine attributes, in the way Ibn al-ʿArabī deals with them, are accepted by only Ashʿarī *kalām* scholars; thus, we can compare his thoughts only with theirs.[32]

According to the Ashʿarīs too, there can be no renewal or *ḥudūth* (to exist afterwards) when it comes to God's knowledge. It seems that the difference between Ibn al-ʿArabī and Ashʿarī *kalām* scholars emerges from the more systematical approach of Ibn al-ʿArabī. Ibn al-ʿArabī follows the traces of the metaphysical tradition and asserts that the usage of an attribute or an act about God will consequently reveal a ruling and a situation, whereas the Ashʿarīs do not deem this necessary, or, more precisely, have overlooked the problems of this concern via their "omnipotence" approach. This is to say that, according to the Ashʿarīs, God's knowledge of things in eternity is merely a knowing, whereas Ibn al-ʿArabī deduces a situation and determination from the state of "being known".[33] If God has known things, their name should consequently be "the known" (similar to the Muʿtazilī term, *maʿdūm maʿlūm* [the known nonexistent]). To be known is a situation different from not being known. Knowing means distinction and designation. al-Qūnawī interprets this approach as the distinctive characteristic of "actual knowledge" in opposition to passivity, which consequently gives way to the judgment that "God's knowing means His creation". If God has known something, a known thing is created from this knowledge.

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[31] Ṣadr al-Dīn al-Qūnawī draws attention to the same thought while explaining the truth of something as "its immutable thingness in divine knowing". See al-Qūnawī, *Tasavvuf Metafiziği*, 23.

[32] For criticism by Ibn al-ʿArabī regarding the Ashʿarī view on attributes, see Demirli, *İslâm Metafiziğinde Tanrı ve İnsan*, 220.

[33] For comparison by al-Qūnawī between immutable essences and the known nonexistent (content), see *Tasavvuf Metafiziği*, 23.

This approach enables the possibility of deeming the universe eternal as a whole, a larger problem that the Ashʿarīs seem to have tried to keep away from. If we consider the gradation of God's attributes, it is an obligation to accept that being exists externally to composition. At this point, Ibn al-ʿArabī interprets the "*ḥudūth* argument"* of the *kalām* scholars and the possibility argument of Islamic philosophers in the same context in order to determine this gradation. The existence of an order in the universe must correspond to divine attributes. More precisely, this gradation in the universe is the consequence and outcome of the gradation in divine attributes. In his gradation of attributes, Ibn al-ʿArabī deems the attribute of knowledge to be the first and most extensive attribute. After knowledge comes the will (*irāda*) and then puissance. This classification has a determining role in Ibn al-ʿArabī's metaphysics. Although by accepting that every act or attribute has a judgment, an intermediary situation that we call "to be known" appears, there is no other way of accepting that a situation of "*ḥādith*" (existing in being, not eternal, but dependent on time). In this case, while things had taken place as "known" in God's eternal knowing, they had not appeared yet externally. The attribute of puissance shall disclose them in a time that will be determined by the attribute of will, and the so-called disclosure shall be synonymous with creation (*iḥdāth*). The relative difference between being eternally known and being disclosed within time can be explained through the relation between decree (*qaḍāʾ*) and destiny (*qadar*). Decree is a general state of being known and determined, whereas destiny consists of the planning of this knowing in time and space (*taqdīr*).

But how will things be expressed in divine knowing between the conditions of being distinguished and not existing externally? Here, the meaning of the sentence in the beginning of Ibn al-ʿArabī's work appears: things obtain a situation of being by being known in divine knowing. However, this is not a complete being because we can only attribute to things here the situation of being known by God, and what makes them a "thing" consists of this state of being known. Things do not exist in respect to themselves. Therefore, as God knows them, things have gained a state of being and determination,

* The *ḥudūth* argument can be summarized in the following way: 1) everything that has a beginning requires a cause; 2) the universe has a beginning; 3) consequently, the universe has a cause other than itself.

but they continue to remain in nonexistence with regard to themselves. The genius of Ibn al-ʿArabī shows itself as he proposes an intermediary concept in order to express this paradoxical situation; he calls this state between nonexistence and existence (*thubūt*). For Ibn al-ʿArabī, *thubūt* means the distinction and emergence of things in divine knowing as a truth and an eternal content. Ibn al-ʿArabī refers to this with the phrase the "nonexistence of nonexistence", which is to say, existence. Thus, "nonexistence and existence" signify *thubūt*; things have been disclosed from being immutable in divine knowing towards the external universe, which is another way of saying, towards the situation of existing for themselves.

The style of reflection by Ibn al-ʿArabī does not allow us to produce firm decisions at any stage of our metaphysical inquiry. Each solution carries us to a new unsolvable situation and to further research, and we find ourselves engaged in trying to comprehend within a continuous renewal of the situation because there is no "golden mean" (*iʿtidāl*) in being that would connote death, namely, inertness. Ibn al-ʿArabī's dynamic approach can be seen in the expression "the immutable essences have not smelled the external being", a saying of the Sufis who adopt *waḥdat al-wujūd* (unity of being). In other words, the truths of things in divine knowing never become externally visible. What then does "external being" mean? External being, namely, the universe of the created, is the shadow of the immutable truths within eternal knowing. Disclosure, appearance or creation (and it is not at all important which of these terms we utilize) is nothing but the appearance of the shadow. This time, Ibn al-ʿArabī applies the expression "nonexistent-existent" for the universe and interprets the universe as "shadow being". Shadow is something that exists in one side and does not exist in another. The universe exists in eternal knowing with respect to its immutable truth but not regarding itself. Other words that, in this context, are synonymous with shadow are imagination (*al-khayāl*) and mirage; both exist in one sense and do not exist in another. Imagination is synonymous in this context with guessing. The universe is an imagination. Man-in-the-universe is an imagination within an imagination. According to Ibn al-ʿArabī, who is a moralist and humanist thinker, "to be human" means to be able to interpret an imagination or dream when one is already in it. The ones who can interpret a dream without waking up are actually dead, which is to say, the ones who have reached at the truth.

Conclusion

In a historical analysis that included an account of the ages of the Islamic community, Ibn al-ʿArabī estimated his day to be an era in which all sciences had reached maturity. This means that, in a sense, Sufism was to constitute the objective of all the sciences. In this context, speaking of the maturity of his time, Ibn al-ʿArabī does not merely mention a maturity or perfection of Sufism. He talks about the maturity obtained by each science (by virtue of reinterpretation of these sciences with respect to an objective) and of the establishment of their connections. According to Ibn al-ʿArabī, during this period, the task for Sufis (who quest for truth) is to realize a kind of finalization process in all the Islamic sciences and in metaphysics above all. Thus, by virtue of this approach, Ibn al-ʿArabī considers his period to be capable of interpreting all ages and making judgments about them. Today, even though research on Ibn al-ʿArabī and his followers has seen a relative increase, little attention has been paid to determining the origins of varying schools of thought. In my personal view, the conception of Sufism that appeared in those days (especially the approaches of Ibn al-ʿArabī and al-Qūnawī) holds significant possibilities for allowing us to comprehend the theoretical traditions of Islamic world. In other words, Ibn al-ʿArabī and al-Qūnawī can be seen as the explicators of the theoretical traditions that preceded them. These acts of explanation are also acts of interpretation that inherit thought, reinterpret it and add new aspects to important points. This explication discloses thought and follows its traces, especially in particular fields. In this respect, this act of explication should be evaluated separately from any interpretive act that emerges from a scientific tradition that tries to overcome the obscurities and the contradictions of a system of thought. Ibn al-ʿArabī and al-Qūnawī have tried to reveal (first) the objective and methodical unity and (second) the deficiencies of all theoretical sciences, and they have aimed to interpret both purposefully. Thanks to this approach, they are distinguished from explicators in the sciences. For instance, when we consider Avicenna, it is clearly evident that Ibn al-ʿArabī and his followers are deeply influenced by Avicennian metaphysics. However, almost as important as this influence for these explicators is the production of new interpretations and the disclosure of the richness of concepts in this Avicennian thought. Ibn al-ʿArabī has applied the abstract/universal language of Avicennian metaphysics to particular issues and has unfolded in detail the dimensions of this thought (es-

pecially the particular-universal relations). What is more, Ibn al-ʿArabī has given metaphysical thought a broader foundation by dealing with some of the relations between God-man and universe that had not been handled by that thought. In this respect, research about Ibn al-ʿArabī, al-Qūnawī and their disciples will result in useful consequences not only for Islamic philosophy, but also for *kalām* and for theoretical thought in a more general sense. Nonetheless, the appearance of such a contribution depends on attending to several important points. One of these is that Sufis, even when dealing with a theoretical concept or thought, aim at deducing practical consequences. In other words, it is necessary to consider practical intentions of Sufis in every interpretation. Dāwūd al-Qayṣarī draws attention to this problem and has responded by considering the question of what place Sufism occupies among the theoretical sciences given its concern with practice. This practical approach, which in a certain sense is necessary to call Sufi pragmatism, has to be considered among the motives that result in the emergence of an (at least formally) eclectic structure within Sufi texts. This can be deemed as an indicator that Sufism has maintained its main features throughout all its periods of development. In this sense, for Sufis, the primary aspect of a question is that of the moral consequences to be deduced from it by man. This Sufi approach towards theoretical matters has enabled them to see and interpret abstract issues in more particular conditions. As a result, Sufis have made contributions to philosophical texts, and they have been able to extend the domain of philosophical thought. By these means, the concepts and thoughts of metaphysics have been able to reach the masses. A further interesting point that requires attention is the extensity of the target group of Sufism. Addressing the masses, Sufism has benefited from the possibilities of imagination as well as those of theoretical language. However, as we understand from the assessment by Ibn al-ʿArabī of the relations between theoretical power and imagination, the latter does not only bring with it a possibility of expression. Imagination is also, like the abstracting power of thought, one of the powers by which man can comprehend the truth. That is why the necessity of understanding imagination to be a means of comprehension and of using all powers of man for the comprehension of the thing-in-itself occupies a central place in Sufi epistemology. With regard to the question of the possibilities generated by the Sufi conceptions of imagination, Sufis have produced the possibility of explaining an abstract concept by way of more than one word; they have tried to rule out the limitedness of conceptualization by

considering the secondary and tertiary meanings of a word, and thus, more terms and words have appeared regarding each given conceptual subject. This is the situation with respect to the concept of possibility. In this sense, possibility, which consists of faculty and act, also corresponds to words such as imagination, mirage, illusion, or even man, dream and, as Ibn al-ʿArabī indicates in some of his works, white pearl and egg, because all of these acknowledge possibility or space.

A third interesting issue is in fact very closely related to the first. In the first problem, we drew attention to the relation between practical and theoretical thought. We should now shift our attention to the increase of knowledge as a result of practice that emerges from this relationship. Sufis have drawn an analogy between moral maturity and the level of human comprehension. The comprehension of man increases as he matures; finally, he reaches perfection. This question is expressed by the terms *ʿilm al-yaqīn* (the knowledge of certainty), *ʿayn al-yaqīn* (the essence of certainty) and *ḥaqq al-yaqīn* (the truth of certainty), each of which concerns the gradation of knowledge. At this stage, the important issue is the level of our comprehension with respect to *yaqīn*, or precision or certainty. In these formulations of the relation between maturity and knowledge, the term *yaqīn* is common. As a result, Sufis have found it possible to deal with diverse sciences and to see and criticize their deficiencies. There are continuous references to this matter, especially with regard to metaphysical matters. For example, Ibn al-ʿArabī indicates that with respect to many issues, speculative theologians assert views in which the respective expression is right but the content is not entirely known. Hence, to obtain certain and ultimate knowledge about the truth of affairs can be possible only by reaching perfection. Otherwise, any comprehension is only apparent and superficial. This gradation of exactitude emphasizes that the Sufi method for attaining knowledge/truth is complementary and that, in this sense, it should be considered a kind of "verification" (*taḥqīq*)[34] or, in other words, a method that aims at reaching exact and immutable knowledge about things.

Taking these issues into account, one may better comprehend both how Sufism utilizes and interprets the terms of diverse theoretical traditions and what it has contributed to them.

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[34] For the term, see Ismāʿīl al-Ānqarāwī, *ibid*., 480.

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Qūnawī, Ṣadr al-Dīn Muḥammad b. Isḥāq b. Muḥammad, *Fatiha Tefsiri* [*Exegesis of Sūrat al-Fātiḥa: Iʿjāz al-bayān fī tafsīr Umm al-Qurʾān*], trans. Ekrem Demirli, (Istanbul: İz Yayıncılık, 2002).

_____ *İlâhî Nefhalar: en-Nefehâtü'l-ilâhiyye* [*al-Nafaḥāt al-ilāhiyya*], trans. Ekrem Demirli, (Istanbul: İz Yayıncılık, 2002).

_____ *Tasavvuf Metafiziği* [*Metaphysics of Islamic Mysticism: Miftāḥ ghayb al-jamʿ wa l-wujūd*], trans. Ekrem Demirli, (Istanbul: İz Yayıncılık, 2002).

Qushayrī, Abū l-Qāsim Zayn al-Islām ʿAbd al-Karīm b. Hawāzin, *al-Risālā al-Qushayriyya*, (ed. ʿAbd al-Ḥalīm Maḥmūd and Maḥmūd b. Sharīf; Cairo: Dār al-Kutub al-Ḥadītha, 1966).

Sarrāj, Abū Naṣr ʿAbd Allāh b. ʿAlī b. Muḥammad, *İslâm Tasavvufu: Lüma* [*Islamic Mysticism: al-Lumaʿ*], trans. H. Kamil Yılmaz, (Istanbul: Altınoluk, 1997).

ṢĀBĪ MATTER
–The Issue of Whether the Concept Ṣābī in the Qurʾān Signifies Ṣābiʾī/Ṣābiʾa–

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Abstract

In this article, we examine whether there is a contextual similarity between the expression "ṣābī", a concept in the Qurʾān, and "Ṣābiʾī", which is used as the name for a member of a particular religious group. Even though "ṣābī", which we find three times in the Qurʾān, is used as an adjective concerning religious conversion, it has been alleged that the word "ṣābiʾa" is the name of a religious group used first for the Mandaeans and later for a Ḥarrānian pagan society and that the word in the Qurʾān refers to this religion. Our study finds that there is neither a similarity nor an association between the "ṣābī" in the Qurʾān and the religious group "Ṣābiʾa (Sabians)" and that an artificial naming has emerged within history. Because the concept "ṣābī" was Arabic, and it was originally used for people who left the prevalent belief. Nonetheless, the expression "Ṣābiʾī" was used after the arrival of Islam on the assumption that it was the name given to the religion of the Mandaeans and the Ḥarrānians.

Key Words: Qurʾān, ṣābī, convert, Ṣābiʾī, Mandaeans, Ḥarrānians, polytheists, Magians, Jews, Christians.

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Introduction

The word *ṣābī*[1] in the Qurʾān is based on the root *ṣ-b-ʾ* (simple present tense: *yaṣ-ba-ʾu*, infinitive: *ṣubûʾ*), whose verb form means "the rising of the sun" or "the baby's cutting teeth" but is more commonly used to mean "leaving the religion to convert to another religion". Accordingly, because the Prophet had left their religion, the polytheists (*mushrik*s) called him *ṣābī* and called the other people who converted to Islam *maṣbuww*. It is noted that Arabs expressed their acceptance of Islam as "*ṣabaʾnā*". In fact, the famous linguist al-Zajjāj (d. 311/923) argued that the word "ṣābiʾīn/ṣābiʾūn" in the Qurʾān means *the ones who have left a religion to convert to another*, whereas al-Farrāʾ (d. 207/822) interpreted the same expression as *the ones who form a new religion*.[2]

There are many reports of ḥadīth that show that the word "ṣābī" was commonly used by Arabs in this way. Such narrations show that the Prophet was called *ṣābī* both inside and outside Mecca, and this expression became a kind of fame for him. Abū Dharr al-Ghifārī (d. 32/653), who heard about the Prophet and came to Mecca to study him, asked the Meccans "to show him the person they called *ṣābī*".[3] When ʿUmar b. al-Khaṭṭāb, the second caliph of Islam (d. 23/644), converted to Islam, the Meccans said, "ʿUmar has also become a

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1 The expression *ṣābī* is the adjective derived from the Arabic verb *ṣa-ba-ʾa*. It has a *hamza* at the end. In order to translate this *hamza* in the Latin alphabet, there is a need to add an apostrophe to the end, to make it *ṣābiʾ*. However, in Arabic, the *hamza* can be occasionally transformed into *y* or *ī*; thus, it is possible to read and to write it as *ṣābī*. Accordingly, the word *qārī*, which is the adjective derived from the verb *qa-ra-ʾa*, is read and written in the same way. Throughout this text, we will follow this method and use *ṣābī*. However, we will preserve the word *Ṣābiʾī* that is used with an *ī* (possessive suffix) for the name of the tribe or religion.

2 Abū Isḥāq Aḥmad b. Muḥammad al-Nīsābūrī al-Thaʿlabī, *al-Kashf wa l-bayān fī tafsīr al-Qurʾān*, (ed. Sayyid Kasrawī Ḥasan; Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyya, 2004), I, 128; Abū l-Qāsim al-Rāghib Ḥusayn b. Muḥammad b. Mufaḍḍal al-Iṣbahānī, *al-Mufradāt fī gharīb al-Qurʾān*, (Istanbul: Kahraman Yayınları, 1986), 405; Abū l-Faḍl Ibn Manẓūr b. Mukarram Jamāl al-Dīn Muḥammad al-Anṣārī al-Miṣrī, *Lisān al-ʿArab*, (Beirut: Dār Ṣādir, 1990), I, 108; Mutarjim Aḥmad ʿĀṣim Efendī, *al-Uqyānūs al-basīṭ fī tarjamat al-Qāmūs al-muḥīṭ*, (Istanbul: n.p., 1268), I, 35; Ayyūb b. Mūsā al-Ḥusaynī Abū l-Baqāʾ al-Kafawī, *al-Kulliyyāt*, (ed. ʿA. Darwīsh and M. al-Miṣrī; Beirut: Muʾassasat al-Risāla, 1992), 432.

3 Muslim, "Faḍāʾil al-ṣaḥāba", 132.

ṣābī".[4] ʿUqba b. Abī Rabīʿa, who had converted to Islam upon the call from Muḥammad, was pressured by Ubayy b. Khalaf by the phrase, "Did you too become a *ṣābī*?", and ʿUqba had to give up Islam.[5] During a campaign, a country woman who was asked for water to give to the Prophet asked, "Is the person you call the Prophet he whom they call *ṣābī*?". The *ṣaḥāba* affirmed this, saying, "Yes, he is the one you mean".[6] On the other hand, Khālid b. al-Walīd (d. 21/642) was sent by the Prophet to invite the Banū Jazīma tribe to Islam. Because the tribe could not appropriately pronounce the word *aslamnā* (We have become Muslims), they twice said *ṣabaʾnā* (We became ṣābī), whereupon Khālid killed some of the tribe, captured some others, and ordered the *ṣaḥāba* near him to kill the captives, but the companions did not obey this command. When this event was told to the Prophet, he raised his hands and prayed twice, saying, "O Allah, I seek refuge in you for what Khālid has done".[7] The meaning of *ṣābī* probably seemed strange to al-Imām al-Bukhārī as well; so when he first encountered the word, he felt the need for an explanation, and he revealed that *ṣābī* means, "One who has left a religion and converted to another".[8]

According to al-Ṭabarī (d. 310/922), one of the early exegetes of the Qurʾān, the expression "ṣābiʾīn" in the Qurʾān is the plural form of "*ṣābī*", which is "ism al-fāʿil" (in Arabic grammar, a name derived from a verb) of the verb *ṣa-ba-ʾa*. Like the concept *murtadd* (apostate), it means *the conversion of a person to a religion after leaving his own*. As proof, al-Ṭabarī points out that the Arabians call a person who has left a religion and converted to another "*ṣābī*". Then he

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4 al-Bukhārī, "Manāqib al-anṣār", 35.

5 Abū Jaʿfar Muḥammad b. Jarīr al-Ṭabarī, *Jāmiʿ al-bayān ʿan taʾwīl āy al-Qurʾān*, (ed. ʿAbd Allāh b. ʿAbd al-Muḥsin al-Turkī; Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyya, 2003), XVII, 441; Abū Manṣūr Muḥammad b. Muḥammad b. Maḥmūd al-Māturīdī, *Taʾwīlāt Ahl al-sunna*, (ed. Fāṭima Yūsuf al-Khaymī; Beirut: Muʾassasat al-Risāla, 2004), III, 501; Abū l-Ḥasan ʿAlī b. Aḥmad b. Muḥammad al-Nīsābūrī al-Wāḥidī, *al-Wasīṭ fī tafsīr al-Qurʾān al-majīd*, (ed. ʿĀdil Aḥmad ʿAbd al-Mawjūd; Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyya, 1994), III, 339; Abū l-Qāsim Jār Allāh Maḥmūd b. ʿUmar al-Zamakhsharī, *al-Kashshāf ʿan ḥaqāʾiq ghawāmiḍ al-tanzīl wa ʿuyūn al-aqāwīl fī wujūh al-taʾwīl*, (ed. Muḥammad al-Saʿīd Muḥammad; Cairo: al-Maktaba al-Tawfīqiyya, n.d.), III, 312.

6 al-Bukhārī, "Tayammum", 6.

7 al-Bukhārī, "Maghāzī", 58; "Aḥkām", 35.

8 al-Bukhārī, "Tayammum", 6.

states that people discuss whether this concept is an adjective or a name.[9] Its meaning as an adjective signifies leaving a religion and converting to another, while it as a noun is the name of a community or religion. We understand that during those days, its meaning as an adjective signifying the converted was still used. In fact, the comparison by al-Ṭabarī between *ṣābī* and *murtadd* is an important indicator: *murtadd* is an adjective meaning "apostate", for a person who converted from his religion. This sense of the concept is accepted by most exegetes. Nevertheless, as the Mandaeans in the Wāsiṭ region gradually became known as Ṣābiʾīs (Sabians), the meaning of the adjective has evolved to be used as the name of a tribe. Thus, there has been a difference in the level of expression. While the expression in the Qurʾān was *ṣābī*, the version attributed to the Mandaeans has become *Ṣābiʾī*, with the addition of an *ī* to form an adjective.

Contact between the Community Called Ṣābiʾīs and Muslims

It can be said that during the reign of the Prophet, there was no contact between the Muslims and a community called "Ṣābiʾīs (Sabians)". For example, the Prophet ordered some of his companions, particularly Zayd b. Thābit, to learn the languages of many nations, including the languages of the Jews, Greeks, Persians, Abyssinians, Copts and Syrians of the surrounding region. However, the language of a community called Ṣābiʾī was not among them. As for the *jizya*, the tax gathered from non-Muslims, it was collected from Jews, Christians and fire-worshippers (Magians), as far as is known. During the era of the Prophet, no community called Ṣābiʾī is mentioned as a taxpayer.[10] On the other hand, Abū Bakr al-Wāsiṭī (d. 331/942) asserts that words from fifty different languages appear in the Qurʾān, and he lists them. Many of them are Arabic dialects such as Quraysh, Hudhayl and Kināna, while the foreign languages include Persian, Greek, Coptic, Abyssinian, Berber, Syrian and Hebrew. The language of the so-called Ṣābiʾī community is not among these.[11] This fact supports the idea that the word *ṣābī* in the Qurʾān is a noun derived from a verb, and it is used as a general adjective for the convert rather than as the name of a certain tribe or religion. If the expression *ṣābī* were

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9 al-Ṭabarī, *Jāmiʿ al-bayān*, II, 34-35.

10 Muḥammad ʿAbd al-Ḥayy b. ʿAbd al-Kabīr b. Muḥammad al-Kattānī, *al-Tarātīb al-idāriyya*, (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-ʿArabī, n.d.), I, 202-203, 392.

11 *Ibid.*, I, 208.

the name of a tribe, it would have belonged to that tribe's language, and been accepted among the foreign words in the Qurʾān. Moreover, from the time of the companions, people would have known that this noun was the name of a certain tribe.

According to the narration by al-Ṭabarī from Ḥasan al-Baṣrī, it was told to Ziyād b. Abīh (Ziyād b. Abī Sufyān) (d. 53/693) that the Ṣābiʾīs turned towards the *qibla* to pray five times a day; thus, he concluded to collect *jizya* from this community. Later, he learned that these people worshipped the angels.[12] According to al-Qurṭubī, Ziyād b. Abī Sufyān (Abīh) saw this community called Ṣābiʾīs, and realized that they worshipped the angels, so he decided that they should pay *jizya*.[13] So, the first person to have a judgment on the Ṣābiʾīs, in al-Ṭabarī's narration, and the first statesman to meet the Sabians, in al-Qurṭubī's account, was Ziyād b. Abīh. Considering Ziyād's date of death, this event must have taken place before 53/693. On the other hand, if we take into account that Ziyād was among the administrators during ʿUmar's reign, the story could have occurred at an earlier date, because the territory where the community called Sabians lived was between Baṣra and Wāsiṭ, and these lands were conquered during the reign of ʿUmar. Ziyād might have come upon these people during ʿUmar's reign; however, it should be kept in mind that his name is not among the commanders who conquered the region.[14] Furthermore, ʿUmar remarked about this community, "These are among *Ahl al-Kitāb* (the People of the Book)",[15] so the possibility of such an event during his reign grows even stronger. But it is more probable that the abovementioned encounter or the judgment by Ziyād on the Sabians happened during Ziyād's governorship in ʿIrāq under Muʿāwiya's reign.

On this issue, there are some narrations from Ibn ʿAbbās who was one of the younger companions of the Prophet Muḥammad, because he stayed in the Baṣra region for a long time. Thus, we see that the

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12 al-Ṭabarī, *Jāmiʿ al-bayān*, II, 36.

13 Abū ʿAbd Allāh Muḥammad b. Aḥmad b. Abī Bakr al-Qurṭubī, *al-Jāmiʿ li-aḥkām al-Qurʾān*, (ed. Muḥammad Ibrāhīm al-Ḥifnāwī; Cairo: Dār al-Ḥadīth, 2005), I, 393.

14 See Abū Muḥammad Ibn Ḥazm ʿAlī b. Aḥmad al-Ẓāhirī al-Andalusī, *Jumal fuṭūḥ al-Islām* in *Rasāʾil Ibn Ḥazm al-Andalusī*, (ed. Iḥsān ʿAbbās; Beirut: al-Muʾassasa al-ʿArabiyya li l-Dirāsāt wa l-Nashr, 1981), II, 128.

15 al-Thaʿlabī, *al-Kashf wa l-bayān*, I, 128.

convictions about the expression "ṣābī" in the Qurʾān emerged only after this community was met in the Baṣra region, and they were called Ṣābiʾīs (Sabians). However, Muslims hesitated on the issue for a long time and could not reach an exact decision. One of the most striking indicators of this situation is that in the fourth century AH (tenth century CE), the ʿAbbāsid Caliph al-Qāhir Bi'llāh (r. 320-322/932-934) asked al-Iṣṭakhrī (d. 328/940) about the religious situation of the Sabians. According to al-Qurṭubī, al-Iṣṭakhrī issued a *fatwá* that they were unbelievers. al-Nawawī relates that al-Iṣṭakhrī concluded, "These are idolaters, and they should be killed". However, at the end of an agreement, the Caliph gave up the sentence of death.[16] Even though al-Qāhir Bi'llāh's question was intended to determine in which legal category the Sabians should have been placed, it is meaningful to show that it was still a dubious question, even at that period. From a different point of view, despite more than three centuries since the first contact with Sabians, neither their beliefs nor their practices are clear in the minds of Muslims. This must be because of the artificiality of their naming as *Ṣābiʾīs*.

Ṣābī/Ṣābiʾī in Tafsīr (Exegesis of the Qurʾān) Literature

Muqātil b. Sulaymān (d. 150/767), an exegete of the early period, defines the ṣābiʾīs in verse 62 of *Sūrat al-Baqara* as a community that reads the Psalms (*Zabūr*) and worships the angels, whereas in verse 69 of *Sūrat al-Māʾida*, he describes them as a Christian community who converted to Noah's religion. He adds that, in fact, Sabians do not belong to Noah's religion, despite their assertion.[17] According to Hūd b. Muḥakkam al-Khuwwārī, a Khārijī exegete in the third/ninth century, Sabians were a community that read the Psalms and worshipped the angels. al-Khuwwārī also relates that according to Mujāhid (d. 104/722), one of the *tābiʿī*s, this was a community between the Jews and the Magians, before concluding, "In fact, they did not

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[16] al-Qurṭubī, *al-Jāmiʿ li-aḥkām al-Qurʾān,* I, 393; Abū Zakariyyā Muḥyī al-Dīn Yaḥyá b. Sharaf al-Mūrī al-Nawawī, *Kitāb al-majmūʿ*, (ed. Muḥammad Najīb al-Mutīʿī; Beirut: Dār Iḥyāʾ al-Turāth al-ʿArabī, n.d.), XVII, 231. According to Abū l-Faraj Jamāl al-Dīn Ibn al-ʿIbrī, the person on whom al-Qāhir Bi'llāh applied oppression and ordered his execution is a Ḥarrānian Sabian of Baghdād, and his name is Sinān b. Thābit b. Qurra. See *Tārīkh mukhtaṣar al-duwal*, (Beirut: Dār al-Mashriq, 1992), 162; F. C. de Blois, "Ṣābiʾ", *EI²*, VIII, 673.

[17] Muqātil b. Sulaymān, *Tafsīr Muqātil b. Sulaymān*, (ed. Aḥmad Farīd; Beirut: n.p., 2003), I, 53, 313.

have a religion". Ibn Qudāma (d. 620/1223), a Ḥanbalī scholar, also narrates the first conviction of Mujāhid.[18]

As the person who has most extensively discussed the issue, al-Ṭabarī thinks that this word should be an adjective, such as *murtadd*. Nevertheless, according to his exegesis style, he evaluates the information he gathered in three sections. In the first part, there is information on the Ṣābiʾīs' religious situation. The second part is on their worship practices, and the third part addresses their judicial status.

i. Religious situation: There are two views from Mujāhid on their religious situation. According to the first view, they are related neither to Judaism nor to Christianity; in fact, they do not even have a religion. According to the second view, they are a community between fire-worshippers (Magians) and Jews, but one cannot eat the animals they slaughter and cannot marry their women. Ḥasan al-Baṣrī (d. 110/728) adopts this second view. According to Abū Najīḥ, they are between Jews and Magians, but they do not have a religion. Ibn Jurayj (d. 150/767) asked Ibn ʿAṭāʾ (d. 114/732), "It is asserted that the Ṣābiʾīs are a tribe around Sawād; they are neither Magians, nor Christians, nor even Jews". Ibn ʿAṭāʾ responds, "I heard that. The polytheists said of the Prophet that he "he became ṣābiʾī; left the religion (*qad ṣabaʾa*)". Ibn Zayd says "Ṣābiʾūn is one of the religions. It is in Jazīra (between Euphrates and Tigris), near Mosul. They assert Allah is the One; but they have neither prayers, nor holy scriptures, nor even prophet. The polytheists thought the Prophet resembled them, so they said he was a ṣābiʾī".

ii. Worship: According to information given to Ziyād b. Abī Sufyān, Sabians turned towards the *qibla* and performed their prayers *(ṣalāt)* five times a day. Qatāda (d. 118/736) affirms that they worshipped the angels, turned towards the *qibla* for their prayers, and read the Psalms. Abū ʿĀliya said they were People of the Book and read the Psalms. According to Abū Jaʿfar al-Rāzī, they worshipped angels, read the Psalms, and perform their prayers towards the *qibla*.

iii. Judicial status: Sufyān says he asked Suddī about the Ṣābiʾīs and he answered "they were among the People of the Book".[19]

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[18] Hūd b. Muḥakkam al-Khuwwārī, *Tafsīr Kitāb Allāh al-ʿAzīz*, (ed. Balḥājj b. Saʿīd al-Sharīfī; Beirut: Dār al-Gharb al-Islāmī, 1990), I, 112; Abū Muḥammad Muwaffaq al-Dīn ʿAbd Allāh b. Aḥmad Ibn Qudāma, *al-Mughnī*, (Cairo: Maktabat al-Jumhūriyya al-ʿArabiyya, n.d.), XIII, 503.

Abū Manṣūr al-Māturīdī (d. 333/944), a contemporary of al-Ṭabarī, says of the Sabians, "They worship the angels, they believe in Psalms, they pray for stars, they take their place between Magians and Christians, and believe in two gods", but he goes on to confess, "in fact, we do not possess clear and exact knowledge about them".[20] The prominent Muʿtazilī exegete al-Zamakhsharī emphasizes the meaning "One who has left the common religion" and asserts that they are a community that left the Jews and Christians, and then worships angels.[21]

Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī (d. 606/1210) gives the Arabic meaning of the word before repeating the existing information about the Ṣābiʾī community. However, he differs from the others on one point. According to al-Rāzī, the Ṣābiʾī community is the Chaldeans to whom Ibrāhīm (Abraham) was sent as a prophet.[22] al-Qurṭubī (d. 671/1272) informs us about their judicial status. According to him, Suddī (d. 128/745), Khalīl (d. 175/791) and Isḥāq b. Rāhawayh (d. 238/853) considered the Ṣābiʾīs among the People of the Book, while Abū Ḥanīfa thought that it was *ḥalāl* (lawful) to marry their women and to eat the meat of animals they slaughtered. Mujāhid and Ḥasan al-Baṣrī asserted that their religion was a mixture of Judaism and Magianism (*Majūs*) and decreed that one cannot eat the animals they slaughter. Ibn ʿAbbās (d. 68/687) did not find it legal to marry their women. As for al-Qurṭubī's own idea, he thinks that they believed in the unity of God but also in the influence of stars.[23]

It is possible to summarize the information in some other exegeses as follows: according to ʿUmar b. al-Khaṭṭāb, Abū Ḥanīfa (d. 250/767) and Suddī, the Ṣābiʾīs are among the People of the Book; according to Saʿīd b. Jubayr (d. 95/714) and al-Kalbī (d. 146/763), they are a community between Jews and Christians; Ḥasan al-Baṣrī, Ibn Nujaym and Mujāhid assert that their place is between Jews and Magians; according to Ibn ʿAbbās and Khalīl, they are a group among Christians, which claim that they belong to Noah's religion, and their *qibla* is from where the south wind blows; Qatāda (d. 118/736) believes

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19 al-Ṭabarī, *Jāmiʿ al-bayān*, II, 35-37. al-Bukhārī also relates the view that is said to belong to Abū ʿĀliya. See al-Bukhārī, "Tayammum", 6.

20 al-Māturīdī, *Taʾwīlāt Ahl al-sunna*, I, 59.

21 al-Zamakhsharī, *al-Kashshāf*, I, 178.

22 Abū ʿAbd Allāh Fakhr al-Dīn Muḥammad b. ʿUmar al-Rāzī, *al-Tafsīr al-kabīr*, (Beirut: Dār Iḥyāʾ al-Turāth al-ʿArabī, 1934), III, 105.

23 al-Qurṭubī, *al-Jāmiʿ li-aḥkām al-Qurʾān*, I, 393.

that they worship angels, perform prayers and read Psalms; Ibn Zayd says they are followers of the unity of Allah, but they have neither an *ʿamal* (religious deed) nor a scripture, nor even a prophet; according to al-Wāḥidī (d. 468/1076), the Sabians worship and respect the stars; and for al-Samʿānī (d. 489/1096), they are Salmān al-Fārisī (d. 36/656) and his followers.[24] However, there is no clarity about the position of Salmān al-Fārisī and his relation to the Ṣābiʾīs.

Ṣābiʾīs in *Fiqh* (Islamic Jurisprudence) Literature

Ḥasan al-Baṣrī thinks that one cannot marry the Sabian girls or women and that one cannot eat the meat of animal slaughtered by them.[25] This suggests that he does not consider them among *Ahl al-Kitāb* (the People of the Book). In his *Kitāb al-kharāj*, the first ʿAbbāsid *qāḍī* (*qāḍī al-quḍāt*) Abū Yūsuf (d. 182/798) includes the Sabians among the communities who should pay *jizya*, just like Jews, Christians and Magians, but he does not relate whether there was any contact with them or whether this tax was actually collected from them. On the contrary, he mentions the practices toward Jews, Christians and Magians several times due to various reasons.[26] On the other hand, while introducing the judicial status for a non-Muslim who claims to have become Muslim, Muḥammad al-Shaybānī (d. 189/805) mentions Jews and Christians, as well as Manichaeans, but not the Ṣābiʾīs, to represent the believers in two gods.[27] al-Shāfiʿī (d. 204/820), another *faqīh* of the early period, classifies Christians, Jews and Magians among the non-Muslims (*dhimmī*s) and discusses the

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[24] al-Wāḥidī, *al-Wasīṭ*, I, 149; al-Thaʿlabī, *al-Kashf wa l-bayān*, I, 128; Abū l-Muẓaffar Manṣūr b. Muḥammad b. ʿAbd al-Jabbār al-Samʿānī, *Tafsīr al-Qurʾān (Kitāb al-tafsīr)*, (ed. Abū Tamīm Yāsir b. Ibrāhīm and Abū Bilāl Ghānim b. ʿAbbās; Riyāḍ: Dār al-Waṭan, 1997), I, 88; Abū l-Ḥasan ʿAlī b. Muḥammad b. Ḥabīb al-Māwardī, *al-Nukat wa l-ʿuyūn*, (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyya, 1992), I, 132-133; Abū l-Faraj Jamāl al-Dīn ʿAbd al-Raḥmān b. ʿAlī Ibn al-Jawzī, *Zād al-masīr fī ʿilm al-tafsīr*, (Beirut: al-Maktaba al-Islāmiyya, 1987), I, 92.

[25] Abū Bakr Ibn Abī Shayba ʿAbd Allāh Muḥammad b. Ibrāhīm al-ʿAbsī, *al-Muṣannaf*, (ed. Kamāl Yūsuf al-Ḥūt; Riyāḍ: Maktabat al-Rushd, 1409), IV, 23.

[26] See Abū Yūsuf Yaʿqūb b. Ibrāhīm b. Ḥabīb al-Anṣārī, *Kitāb al-kharāj*, (Cairo: al-Maṭbaʿa al-Salafiyya, 1396), 131, 133, 134, 139.

[27] Abū Bakr Shams al-Aʾimma Muḥammad b. Aḥmad b. Sahl al-Sarakhsī, *Sharḥ Kitāb al-Siyar al-kabīr*, (ed. Abū ʿAbd Allāh Muḥammad al-Shāfiʿī; Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyya, 1997), I, 106-110.

treatment of Nabataeans during ʿUmar's reign.[28] However, according to another source, al-Shāfiʿī refrains from making a judgment about them because of insufficient information on the subject. In response to questions, he says that they should be treated in a similar way as the People of the Book.[29] Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal (d. 241/855) of the next generation considers the Sabians among the Christians, but because their holy day is Saturday (Shabbat), he adds that they may also be considered among the Jews.[30] According to the Ḥanbalī jurist Ibn Qudāma (d. 620/1223), Ṣābiʾīs believe that the sky is living and sentient, they accept the seven stars as gods, and they possess the pages of Ibrāhīm, Seth, Zubayr and David. But Ibn Qudāma asserts that these holy texts in the hands of the Ṣābiʾīs did not contain *sharīʿa* and that they were only the texts of sermons. Thus, according to him, the Ṣābiʾīs cannot be considered among the People of the Book.[31]

The Ṣābiʾīs in the Islamic Literatures of History, Heresiography, and Geography

ʿAlī b. Sahl Rabban al-Ṭabarī (d. 247/861) introduces the Ṣābiʾīs as a community who believes in the existence of human ancestors even before Adam and Eve, as the Indians do.[32] Nāshiʾ al-Akbar (d. 293/906) mentions the Ṣābiʾīs along with the philosophers and relates that they reject the afterlife and claim the stars that fall down from the sky torment the evil souls.[33] al-Masʿūdī (d. 346/957) claims that the Ṣābiʾī belief was formed by a person called Būdāsaf/Būdāsif.[34] According to al-Masʿūdī, the Ṣābiʾī belief is based on the conviction that the sky has influence over the earth and governs it. In particular, the stars in the sky are the source of every occurrence and creation and

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28 Abū Ibrāhīm Ismāʿīl b. Yaḥyá b. Ismāʿīl al-Shāfiʿī al-Muzanī, *Mukhtaṣar Kitāb al-Umm*, (Beirut: Dār al-Maʿrifa, n.d.), 411-412, 460.

29 al-Nawawī, *Kitāb al-majmūʿ*, XVII, 231.

30 Ibn Qudāma, *al-Mughnī*, XIII, 503; XXI, 202.

31 *Ibid.*, XIII, 503.

32 ʿAlī b. Sahl Rabban al-Ṭabarī, *al-Dīn wa l-dawla fī ithbāt nubuwwat al-Nabī Muḥammad*, 4th ed., (ed. ʿĀdil Nuwayhiḍ; Beirut: Dār al-Āfāq al-Jadīda, 1982), 38.

33 Abū l-ʿAbbās ʿAbd Allāh b. Muḥammad Nāshiʾ al-Akbar, *Masāʾil al-imāma*, (ed. Josef van Ess; Beirut: Franz Steiner Verlag, 1971), 114.

34 Ibn al-Nadīm uses the name Būdāsaf/Būdāsif as the equivalent of Buddha and considers him the leader of Buddhism. Abū l-Faraj Muḥammad b. Isḥāq Ibn al-Nadīm, *al-Fihrist*, (ed. Ibrāhīm Ramaḍān; Beirut: Dār al-Maʿrifa, 1994), 419.

they conduct the order in the universe. Their movements, the distances between them, and their positions cause certain occurrences on earth, and the emerging events can only be explained by their positions and movements. al-Masʿūdī feels the need for a footnote and asserts that there is no relationship between this Sabianism and the Ḥarrānian Sabianism; for him, the real homeland of the Ṣābiʾī belief is somewhere between Wāsiṭ and Baṣra.[35] His contemporary, al-Maqdisī, gives extensive information about the Ḥarrānians, but he does not mention that they are Sabians. At the beginning, he prefers the expression "*sharāʾiʿ al-Ḥarrāniyyīn*" (*sharīʿa*s of Ḥarrānians). He includes Sabians within the worshippers of two gods (*adyān al-tathniya*).[36] Therefore, it seems that al-Maqdisī shares the same opinion as his contemporary al-Masʿūdī. al-Khwārizmī (d. 387/997) discusses similar information, despite some minor differences. According to him, who were called Ṣābiʾīs are the Chaldeans, and during the reign of al-Maʾmūn, the Ḥarrānians were called Ṣābiʾīs. In fact, the Sabians are a sect of Christianity.[37] The Ashʿarī theologian ʿAbd al-Qāhir al-Baghdādī (d. 429/1037) has a similar view. According to him, there is no relationship between the Ḥarrānians and the true Sabians, who lived around Wāsiṭ. As indicated in *al-Fihrist*, Ḥarrānians are a community that worships the human head scalped after several operations.[38]

al-Bīrūnī (d. 440/1048) also states that the Ṣābiʾī belief was established by Būdāsaf (Būdhāsaf) and that the Sabians of Ḥarrān, the "Ḥarrānians", are their remaining descendants. He adds that (as indicated in several sources) this name originates with Hārān b. Taraḥ, brother of Ibrāhīm. al-Bīrūnī goes on to explain that the Ḥarrānians had a ritual of sacrificing men and worshipped several sculptures

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35 Abū l-Ḥasan ʿAlī b. Ḥusayn b. ʿAlī al-Masʿūdī, *Murūj al-dhahab wa maʿādin al-jawhar*, 4th ed., (ed. Muḥammad Muhyī al-Dīn ʿAbd al-Ḥamīd; Cairo: al-Maktaba al-Tijāriyya al-Kubrā, 1964), I, 222-223.

36 Abū Naṣr al-Muṭahhar b. Ṭāhir al-Maqdisī, *Kitāb al-badʾ wa l-tārīkh*, (ed. Clement Huart; Paris: Erneste Laroux, 1903), IV, 22-24.

37 Abū ʿAbd Allāh al-Kātib Muḥammad b. Aḥmad b. Yūsuf al-Khwārizmī, *Mafātīḥ al-ʿulūm*, (Cairo: Maṭbaʿat al-Sharq, 1342), 25.

38 Ibn al-Nadīm, *al-Fihrist*, 390-391; Abū Manṣūr ʿAbd al-Qāhir b. Ṭāhir b. Muḥammad al-Baghdādī, *Uṣūl al-dīn*, (Istanbul: Maṭbaʿat al-Dawla, 1928), 321, 325.

(idols) that bore the names of stars.[39] Moreover, he notes that a Manichaean group in Samarqand named themselves Ṣābiʾīs.[40] Sāʿid al-Andalusī (d. 462/1070) states that the peoples of Egypt and Andalusia were idolatrous Sabians before Christianity.[41] All of this information suggests that Islamic authors used the term "Ṣābiʾī" as a common name for the worshippers of idols or stars. Accordingly, Sāʿid al-Andalusī's explanation "All idolatrous Arabs accept the unity of Allah. Their prayers are a kind of Ṣābiʾī pietism that respects and praises the stars and the idols" supports this suggestion.[42]

al-Shahrastānī (d. 548/1153) analyzes the Ṣābiʾīs in different groups. The first Ṣābiʾī group believed in the prophets they called *ʿĀdhīmūn* and *Hermes*, who were actually *Seth* and *Enoch*, respectively. They were Chaldeans to whom Ibrāhīm was assigned as a prophet. Nonetheless, they did not possess or follow any *sharīʿa*. They developed certain beliefs in contrast with the *Ḥanīf* religion of Ibrāhīm and deviated from the right way. In this sense, al-Shahrastānī considers the Ṣābiʾī belief as the opposite of the *Ḥanīf* religion.[43] The Ṣābiʾīs were divided into *aṣḥāb al-hayākīl* and *aṣḥāb al-ashkhāṣ*. While the first group worshipped the stars through certain symbols, the second group worshipped the statues of certain persons they sculpted. In short, the first group worshipped the stars, while the second idolized the statues.[44] Analyzing the Ḥarrānians as a distinct Sabian group, al-Shahrastānī refers to actual facts and contents himself with describing the beliefs and ideas of the idolatrous tribe in the Ḥarrān region. First, he narrates their conception of God and the universe, which is mostly similar to the convictions of the first Sabians. Then he treats their beliefs about incarnation and infiltration (*ḥulūl*). Finally, he explains their practices in accordance with their faith.[45] In

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39 Abū l-Rayḥān Muḥammad b. Aḥmad al-Bīrūnī, *al-Āthār al-bāqiya ʿan al-qurūn al-khāliya*, (ed. Parwīz Adhkāʾī; Tehran: Mīrāth-i Maktūb, 1380 H. S.), 243-245.

40 *Ibid.*, 254.

41 Abū l-Qāsim Sāʿid b. Aḥmad b. ʿAbd al-Raḥmān al-Andalusī, *Ṭabaqāt al-umam*, (ed. Ḥayāt Bū ʿAlwān; Beirut: Dār al-Ṭalīʿa, 1985), 106, 156.

42 *Ibid.*, 116.

43 Abū l-Fatḥ Tāj al-Dīn Muḥammad b. ʿAbd al-Karīm al-Shahrastānī, *al-Milal wa l-niḥal*, (ed. ʿAbd al-Amīr ʿAlī Mahnā and ʿAlī Ḥasan Fāʿūr; Beirut: Dār al-Maʿrifa, 1990), II, 306-308.

44 *Ibid.*, II, 358-361.

45 *Ibid.*, II, 365-368.

his work on sects and religions, Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī prefers a slightly different usage than in his exegesis and uses the expression "Ṣābiʾa" rather than "Ṣābiʾī". Furthermore, he asserts that the people he calls *al-Ṣābiʾa al-khāliṣa* (the True Sabians) were an ancient tribe who worshipped stars and celestial bodies, and he explains that they worshipped stars because they believed that Allah placed all the deeds of the universe under the responsibility and control of these stars.[46]

The Ḥarrānīs, who were called Sabians after the era of al-Maʾmūn, used philosophical concepts such as *jawhar* (substance), *khalāʾ* (space) and *hayūlá* (hyle, prime matter). These people believed in the existence of five *eternals* (*qadīm*): two were active, one was passive and the remaining two were neither active nor passive. The God and the soul were active, the hyle was passive, and *dahr* (time) and *khalāʾ* (space) were neither active nor passive.[47] According to Ibn al-Nadīm, the Ḥarrānīs used "the concepts of hyle, element, form, non-existence, time and space" in the Aristotelian sense. Ibn al-Nadīm classifies them as members of the eternal Nabataean order.[48] Accordingly, ʿAbd al-Qāhir al-Baghdādī (d. 429/1037) notes that the "hyle" conception of the Sabians was similar to that of its philosophical counterpart, called "*aṣḥāb al-hayūlā*".[49] In consideration of such information, it is possible to speak of a structure of the belief of the Ḥarrānians in which a philosophical culture was blended with idolatry.

The Malatya-born Assyrian historian Abū l-Faraj Ibn al-ʿIbrī (d. 685/1286) indicates that in the past, seven races (Persians, Chaldeans, Greeks, Copts, Turks, Indians and Chinese) lived in the world, and they were all Sabians because they worshipped idols they created as symbols of the stars and celestial bodies. In accordance with this opinion, he states that the Roman Emperor Constantine rejected the Ṣābiʾī religion and adopted Christianity.[50] Abū l-Faraj also mentions

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[46] Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī, *al-Riyāḍ al-mūnaqa fī ārāʾ ahl al-ʿilm*, (ed. Asʿad Jumʿa; Kairouan: Markaz al-Nashr al-Jāmiʿī, 2004), 86, 160.

[47] Ibn al-Nadīm, *al-Fihrist*, 389-389; Shlomo Pines, *Madhhab al-dharra ʿinda l-muslimīn (Beiträge zur Islamischen Atomenlehre)*, trans. into Arabic Muḥammad ʿAbd al-Hādī Abū Rīda, (Cairo: Maktabat al-Nahḍa al-Miṣriyya, 1946), 60-66.

[48] Ibn al-Nadīm, *al-Fihrist*, 414.

[49] ʿAbd al-Qāhir al-Baghdādī, *al-Farq bayna l-firaq* (ed. Muḥammad Muhyī al-Dīn ʿAbd al-Ḥamīd; Beirut: al-Maktaba al-ʿAṣriyya, 1990), 355.

[50] Ibn al-ʿIbrī, *Tārīkh mukhtaṣar al-duwal*, 3, 64.

the Ḥarrānians as Sabians and says that before the reign of al-Maʾmūn, they lived in religious liberty during the caliphate of his uncle Ibrāhīm. According to Abū l-Faraj, the same environment of freedom continued during the period of Muʿtaḍid (r. 279-289/892-902), and there were some scholars who wrote about their beliefs in Syriac, Arabic and Greek.[51]

Muḥammad b. ʿAbd al-Munʿim al-Ḥimyarī, the ninth/fourteenth century Andalusian geographer, says that Ḥarrānian Sabians paid homage and respect to an oracle called Ṣāb b. Ṭāṭ b. Khanūkh, who was a person knowledgeable about wisdom, philosophy and stars. This oracle was the first person to settle in Babylon and sculpted the first statue there. According to this information, this figure most extensively influenced and formed the Sabian belief and thought. Consequently, it is debatable whether the assertions about the beliefs of the Ḥarrānians reflect the truth or whether they are the consequences of endeavors to find an origin for their faith. Because the Ḥarrānians claim that Mānī, the founder of Manichaeism, and Bar Dīṣān, the leader of the Dayṣāniyya sect, were Ḥarrānians,[52] such suspicions are foremost about this community.

Abū l-Ḥasan al-Ashʿarī talks about a different Ṣābiʾī community. In his account, "according to Yazīdism, an Ibāḍī sect, that is attributed to Yazīd b. Unaysa, in the future, Allah will send a prophet from among the ʿAjams (Persians) with a book brought down in one time from heaven. This so-called prophet will leave the way *(sharīʿa)* of Muḥammad to establish another way. They claimed that the religion of this person was Ṣābiʾa". Here, al-Ashʿarī adds a note that they are neither the Sabians of his days nor the ones in the Qurʾān.[53]

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[51] Ibn al-ʿIbrī, *Tārīkh al-zamān*, trans. into Arabic by Ishāq Armala, (Beirut: Dār al-Mashriq, 1986), 23, 48; the Turkish translation: *Ebu'l-Ferec Tarihi* (by Ömer Rıza Doğrul; Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu, 1945), I, 216, 244-245.

[52] Muḥammad b. ʿAbd al-Munʿim al-Ḥimyarī, *al-Rawḍ al-miʿṭār fī khabar al-aqṭār*, 2nd ed., (ed. Iḥsān ʿAbbās; Beirut: Maktabat Lubnān, 1984), 191-192.

[53] Abū l-Ḥasan Ibn Abī Bishr ʿAlī b. Ismāʿīl b. Isḥāq al-Ashʿarī, *Maqālāt al-Islāmiyyīn wa ikhtilāf al-muṣallīn*, 3rd ed., (ed. Hellmut Ritter; Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner Verlag, 1980), 103-104.

Assessment and Conclusion

At the end of our research, we conclude that the expression *ṣābiʾūn/ṣābiʾīn* in the Qurʾān is the plural form of *ṣābī*, the noun derived from the verb "*ṣa-ba-ʾa → yaṣ-ba-ʾu → ṣubûʾ*". This concept, as al-Ṭabarī affirms, is an adjective, such as *murtadd*, that is used in the Arabian Peninsula for persons who have left their religion and converted to another, rather than signifying a certain community or a religion. In other words, while in Islam people who left the religion were called *murtadd*, during the pre-Islamic period people who left the prevalent and common belief were defined with the adjective *ṣābī*. This situation can be understood from the usage of the expression for the Prophet Muḥammad, ʿUmar and others. In particular, its usage in the sayings of Prophet Muḥammad shows that this expression was not applied as a noun but as a descriptive adjective. Moreover, because no companion except Ibn ʿAbbās gives information about a community called *Ṣābiʾī*, it is likely that no such community was known then.

In the tafsīr literature, the expression is consistently treated as an Arabic word and is analyzed primarily through its linguistic aspect. Thus, the idea of the above judgment grows even stronger. al-Ṭabarī, a reliable exegete in terms of both narration (*riwāya*) and sound opinions (*dirāya*), declares that during his time there was a dispute about whether this concept was an adjective or the name of a community. Therefore, it is clear that during the fourth/tenth century, the adjective version was still fresh and strong in people's minds. According to the information above, Ziyād b. Abīh must have been the first statesman to have a relationship with the so-called *Ṣābiʾī* community, although it is unclear when he had this contact. It may have happened during his office as the clerk of Abū Mūsā al-Ashʿarī under ʿUmar's reign or even when he was in charge of the Dīwān and Treasury Affairs of the Baṣra governor ʿAbd Allāh b. ʿĀmir al-Kurayz during ʿUthmān's caliphate. However, it may have taken place much later, when Ziyād was ʿIrāq's governor during the reign of Muʿāwiya.[54] The judgment of Ziyād on the Ṣābiʾīs merely consists of

[54] Abū l-ʿAbbās Aḥmad b. Yaḥyá b. Jābir al-Balādhurī, *Futūḥ al-buldān (Ülkelerin Fetihleri)*, 2nd ed., trans. into Turkish by Mustafa Fayda, (Ankara: Kültür ve Turizm Bakanlığı, 2002), 499, 514; Abū ʿUmar Aḥmad b. Muḥammad Ibn ʿAbd Rabbih, *Kitāb ʿiqd al-farīd*, (ed. Aḥmad Amīn et al.; Cairo: Maktabat al-Nahḍa al-Miṣriyya, 1962), IV, 167, 169; Melek Yılmaz, *Mugîre b. Şu'be, Hayatı, Kişiliği ve Devlet*

determining their political and judicial position within the state. In any case, the early Muslims did not intend to analyze the religious, cultural and social aspects of this community. Their only aim was to define the position (that is, the political and judicial status) of this community within Islamic territory in the eyes of the government. In fact, the *fiqh* works and the early exegeses comprise information that is devoted to such an objective. Nevertheless, the gathered information is not clear or extensive enough to determine their position and location or to establish a judicial opinion about them, which is why they have become a matter of serious dispute among early Muslim jurists. This controversy is based on the fact that no exact similarity or identification could be established between the *ṣābī* in the Qurʾān and this community. If such an identification could have been established, the jurists of the day would not have had such deep controversies. The jurists, who took the expression in the Qurʾān into account and so considered them among the People of the Book, remained in the minority, while the majority stressed their similarity to the Magians. For example, al-Imām al-Shāfiʿī was impartial on the so-called Ṣābiʾī tribe because he could not clearly determine their resemblance to the *ṣābī* in the Qurʾān. Accordingly, the later Shāfiʿī scholars thought that Sabians did not resemble either the Jews or the Christians and classified them among the Magians. However, if they were to take into account the verse 62 of *Sūrat al-Baqara*: "… whoever believes in Allah and the Last Day and does good, they shall be rewarded ..." and the classification in verse 69 of *Sūrat al-Māʾida*, "Jews and the Christians and the Sabians", the Sabians should have been considered People of the Book because they are mentioned together with Jews and Christians, who are accepted as People of the Book. In verse 17 of *Sūrat al-Ḥajj*, Magians (fire-worshippers) and *mushriks* (polytheists) are also added to these. The added communities in this *sūra* are not considered among the People of the Book. Considering these facts, some early Muslim jurists have included the Sabians among the People of the Book, suggesting that they read the Psalms and were followers of the prophet Yaḥyá (John). On the other hand, the jurists who reached clearer information on the Sabians adopted exactly the opposite attitude. This dispute between Muslim jurists demonstrates that no similarity was in question between the *ṣābī*s in the Qurʾān and the community later called *Ṣābiʾī*s. If there

Adamlığı [*Mughīra b. Shuʿba, His Life, Personality and Statesmanship*], (MA thesis; Bursa: Uludağ University, 2005), 98.

had been any identification between the two, there would have been an accord on them as there was on Jews and Christians, and they would have been included among the People of the Book. In many Qurʾanic exegeses, only Jews and Christians are included in the concept of "The People of the Book".[55] Accordingly, Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī indicates that the content of the People of the Book in *Sūrat al-Bayyina* is restricted to Christians and Jews. al-Rāzī relates the controversy about the inclusion of the Magians among the People of the Book and states that some accepted this argument while others did not. However, he does not even mention the name of the *Ṣābiʾīs*.[56] This is mostly because in his time, the meaning and the content of the concept "the People of the Book" was clarified, and that people commonly thought the *Ṣābiʾīs* out of the People of the Book. That *The Encyclopedia of Islam* defines the People of the Book as "an expression used generally for Jews and Christians in Qurʾān", shows that this conviction remains the same today.[57]

We have a fundamental and crucial question at this point: if the expression *ṣābī* is an Arabic word, an adjective meaning *to leave the religion*, why were certain communities such as Mandaeans and Ḥarrānians, who were not Arabs by language and nationality, called by this name? Did these communities bear the same name before Islam, or was the name attributed to them afterwards? The research so far has not found convincing proof that they bore the same name before Islam. *The Encyclopedia Britannica*'s suggestion that the Ṣābiʾī belief was often taken for the religions of Mandaeans and pagan Ḥarrānians[58] weakens the possibility that the expression originated from *ṣ-b-ʾ*, which meant "to be baptized" in the Mandaic language.[59] The Roman Pliny (the first century CE), the first person to

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55 See al-Ṭabarī, *Jāmiʿ al-bayān*, V, 480; al-Māturīdī, *Taʾwīlāt Ahl al-sunna*, I, 78; al-Wāḥidī, *al-Wasīṭ*, I, 446; Abū Muḥammad Muḥyī al-Sunna al-Ḥusayn b. al-Masʿūd al-Baghawī, *Tafsīr al-Baghawī (Maʿālim al-tanzīl)*, (ed. Khālid ʿAbd al-Raḥmān al-ʿAkk and Marwān Suwār; Beirut: Dār al-Maʿrifa, 1992), IV, 513.

56 Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī, *al-Tafsīr al-kabīr*, XXXII, 39-40.

57 See Remzi Kaya, "Ehl-i Kitap" [Ahl al-Kitāb], *Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı İslâm Ansiklopedisi (DİA) [Turkish Religious Foundation Encyclopaedia of Islam]*, X, 516-519.

58 "Sabians", *Encyclopedia Britannica*, XIX, 855.

59 Şinasi Gündüz, *Son Gnostikler: Sâbiîler, İnanç Esasları ve İbadetleri [The Sabians: The Last Gnostics, Their Beliefs and Prayers]*, 2nd ed., (Ankara: Vadi Yayınları, 1999), 28.

mention the Mandaeans, talks about them using expressions such as *Mandani/Mardani*.[60] Moreover, the community calls themselves *Mandāyi* (*Mandaeans*)[61] or *Naṣuraiyi* (*Naṣoraeans*)[62], suggesting that they must have obtained the name "Ṣābiʾī" only after Islam. According to *The Encyclopedia Britannica*, because Muslims behaved tolerantly towards Sabians (as they did with Jews and Christians), some communities may have adopted the *Ṣābiʾī* name to benefit from this tolerance.[63] Thus, we can say that the Mandaeans may have followed this approach. In any case, as mentioned above, there is information in Islamic sources that the Ḥarrānians took the *Ṣābiʾī* name after the reign of ʿAbbāsid Caliph al-Maʾmūn.

Nonetheless, an analysis of the Islamic sources reveals that some of these references talk about Mandaeans, whereas some others mention Ḥarrānians. In particular, because the Mandaeans bear some Judaic and Christian elements simultaneously, even contemporary researchers have to apply different approaches and opinions to determine their origin and location.[64] The views on Mandaeans, such as, "They are a branch of Jews; a Christian sect; between Judaism and Christianity; between Jews and Magians" in traditional Islamic sources are still shared by today's researchers. This historical confusion and obscurity brings about the problem of placing the mentioned community. After the Ḥarrānians called themselves Ṣābiʾīs, the later sources had to take their beliefs into account too; thus, the problem grew even more enigmatic.

al-Khwārizmī, al-Shahrastānī, Fakhr al-Dīn ar-Rāzī and the Assyrian historian Abū l-Faraj have classified the Ṣābiʾīs among the Chaldeans, possibly because the community attached importance to stars within their faith. On the other hand, while some scholars identify the Ṣābiʾīs with the *Ḥanīf*s, interestingly, al-Shahrastānī describes them as

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60 Pliny the Elder (Gaius Plinius Secundus), *The Natural History of Pliny*, trans. with notes by John Bostock and H. T. Riley, (London: Henry G. Bohn, 1855), II, 71.

61 Edmondo F. Lupieri, "Mandaeans: i. History", *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, Online Edition, 20 January 2010, available at http://www.iranica.com/articles/mandaeans-1.

62 Kurt Rudolph, "Mandaeans: ii. The Mandaean Religion", *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, Online Edition, 20 January 2010, available at http://www.iranica.com/articles/mandaeans-2-religion.

63 "Sabians", *Encyclopedia Britannica*, XIX, p. 855.

64 "Mandaeans", *Encyclopedia Britannica*, XIV, 766-767.

Chaldeans (Babylonians) who, in contrast with *Ḥanīf* religion of Ibrāhīm, worship stars and believe in numerous gods. An even more amazing point is that Salmān al-Fārisī is asserted to have been a Ṣābiʾī before converting to Islam. All of these statements are in need of proof, and it seems very difficult to prove them. For example, according to the latest assertion, the priests whom Salmān al-Fārisī met after leaving Īrān may not have been Christians but (though very unlikely) Mandaeans.

We can raise several possibilities for the reason why these communities were called Ṣābiʾīs. However, it should be noted that these are merely assessments based on the acquired findings. It is very hard to talk about a certainty. Thus, modern researchers have opposing views on the issue. There is not even a common view on the Mandaeans, not to mention the Sabians. Nonetheless, we will now present three reflections on how the name Ṣābiʾī was given to these communities, which called themselves by different names, and how they came to accept this name.

The *first possibility* is that the name was given by the Muslims. This is probably the strongest one. As the Muslim conquerors proceeded into ʿIrāq, they came upon a community who did not deserve interest due to their political and military existence and importance, who believed in stars, had a ritual like ablution, prayed at certain hours of the day, read a Psalms-like book and worshipped turning toward the south (*qibla*). As al-Ṭabarī points out, the Muslim soldiers thought that the expression *ṣābī* in the Qurʾān could have been the name of a community. They predicted that this community, which did not resemble Jews, Christians or Magians, could be the *ṣābī*, and they gave them the name. However, there is no clarity about when this contact happened. Because historians generally note situations of war and major political events, and because the Mandaeans have no importance in these matters, the date of the contact remained obscure. We only know that the first contact at the governmental level was by Ziyād b. Abīh. However, there is no proof whether the name was a product of this encounter or dated back to an earlier era. Probably, the first commanders to meet the Mandaeans took into account the similarity of their beliefs and prayers with Jewish and Christian rites, included them in the *jizya* group, and used the term *ṣābī*, for which the corresponding term in the Qurʾān was relatively unclear. The situation is similar to the fact that Columbus, who discovered the American continents, believed these lands to be India and the locals

to be Indians. Hence, this is why the indigenous people of America are called Indians today. In the history of Islam, there have been similar developments. For example, the group founded under the guidance of Wāṣil b. ʿAṭāʾ, which called themselves *Ahl al-ʿadl wa l-tawḥīd*, were named *Muʿtazila* by their enemies. In time, this name grew familiar, and they began to use it themselves. Şinasi Gündüz, who is known for his studies on the issue, indicates that the so-called Ṣābiʾī community called themselves Mandaeans or Naṣoraeans, and the Ṣābiʾī name was given to them by their Arab neighbors.[65] On the other hand, in the course of time, this name has been understood by some Muslim scholars as a general name for the followers of the religions without a sacred book. Accordingly, Sāʿid al-Andalusī said that Egyptians and Andalusians were idolatrous Sabians before Christianity, and the Assyrian historian Abū l-Faraj states, "Constantine accepted Christianity, thus he rejected the Ṣābiʾī religion".

The *second possibility* reveals that the communities of the region (except the Jews, Christians and Magians) assumed the name on their own. The greatest motive for such an action is no doubt the privilege for the members of this religion in Islamic law. Considered the People of the Book, Christians and Jews had a privileged position within Islamic law. This fact may have motivated certain communities, Mandaeans above all, to adopt the name Ṣābiʾī. Because the Ḥarrānians adopted the name in a later period, and because al-Bīrūnī relates that a Manichaean group in Samarqand called themselves Ṣābiʾīs, this possibility looks stronger. Accordingly, as for the interpretations of some Western researchers, when the Mandaeans first met Muslims they introduced their religious book *Ginza Rba* as a holy text and John the Baptist as their prophet. Thus, they were included in Islam's category of the People of the Book and lived in peace without having to change their religion.[66] Muslims saw the adoption of this name by the Mandaeans as a judicial solution. The comments by the first Muslim jurists considering the Mandaeans among the People of the Book seem to support this interpretation. In the exegeses of the Qurʾān, their holy book is said to be the Psalms/*Zabūr* because people tried to see them as a community that believed in a divine text. In the

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65 T. Fahd, "Ṣābiʾa", *EI*², VIII, 675.

66 J. Jacobsen Buckley and Ezio Albrile, "Mandaean Religion", trans. from Italian by Paul Ellis, *Encyclopedia of Religion Second Edition*, (editor in chief: Lindsay Jones; USA: Thomson Gale, 2005), VIII, 5635.

Qurʾān, in addition to the Torah and the Bible, the *Zabūr* is mentioned as holy scripture. The first two are the sacred books of Jews and Christians, but the *Zabūr* remains in a sense ownerless; thus, the problem is solved by deeming Mandaeans the followers of the *Zabūr*. Such behavior has brought many advantages for Muslims, too, in judicial terms. However, upon an analysis of the information by al-Nawawī, it was understood over time that their book was not the *Zabūr* and that they worshipped not Allah but angels. Consequently, the community was excluded from the frame of the People of the Book.[67]

The *third* and probably the weakest possibility asserts that it was the name of a community with little population in the ʿIrāqī region and that the Mandaeans and Ḥarrānians adopted the name to gain advantages within Islamic law. İsmail Cerrahoğlu, one of the first Turkish researchers on the Ṣābiʾīs, seems to support this assertion. According to Cerrahoğlu, this community has its own religion, and in the course of time, they have gone out of existence.[68] However, Cerrahoğlu does not introduce any information or opinion about this date.

Consequently, we have to state that no identification exists between the expression *ṣābiʾūn/ṣābiʾīn*, which we find three times in the Qurʾān,[69] and the community called Ṣābiʾīs. The main proof of this fact is that the communities that are called "Ṣābiʾīs" with an adjec-

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67 al-Nawawī, *Kitāb al-majmūʿ*, XVII, 231.

68 İsmail Cerrahoğlu, "Kur'ân-ı Kerîm ve Sâbiîler [The Qurʾān and the Ṣābiʾīs]", *Ankara Üniversitesi İlâhiyat Fakültesi Dergisi* [*Review of the Faculty of Divinity of Ankara University*], X (1962), 116.

69 "Surely those who believe, and those who are Jews, and the Christians, and the Sabians (the Arabians who have left their previous belief), whoever believes in Allāh and the Last Day and does good, they shall have their reward from their Lord, and there is no fear for them, nor shall they grieve" (al-Baqara 2/62).

"Surely those who believe and those who are Jews and the Sabians (the Arabians who have left their previous belief) and the Christians whoever believes in Allāh and the last day and does good, they shall have no fear nor shall they grieve" (al-Māʾida 5/69).

"Surely those who believe and those who are Jews and the Sabians (the Arabians who have left their previous belief) and the Christians and the Magians and those who associate (others with Allāh), surely Allāh will decide between them on the day of resurrection; surely Allāh is a witness over all things" (al-Hajj 22/17).

tive deriving *ī* suffix have had different names for themselves and their tribes. In any case, the early sources and recent researches show the Mandaeans and Ḥarrānians as the Ṣābiʾīs. There is consensus on the point that the Ḥarrānians adopted this name later. From this point of view, it is possible to say that this name was attributed to the Mandaeans later, by themselves or by others, because the content of the concept is not clear in the Qurʾān. The information in the sayings of Prophet Muḥammad shows that the expression is limited by the converted –in other words, by the persons who have left the prevalent religion in the Arabian region. Because the whole Arabian Peninsula opted for Islam in time, the concept was irrelevant; thus, an opportunity was born for new, equivalent meanings and usages. It seems that the Mandaeans and Ḥarrānians have taken advantage of this opportunity to increase their comfort and ameliorate their judicial position.

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THE AUTHOR OF THE PALIMPSEST TEXTS OR "SCRAPING AGAIN" THE TEXTS OF BORGES (1899-1986) TODAY
–Through the Case of Averroes–

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Abstract

In this paper, we try to understand Jorge Luis Borges' references to the East, especially Islamic thought, by analyzing his short stories, including *Averroes' Search* and *The Enigma of Edward FitzGerald*. This paper also attempts to conceptualize Borges' philosophical gesture. It seems that we could reconstruct his deep epistemological insights through the metaphor of *palimpsest writing*. In this way, it is supposed to answer the question of orientalism in Borges' work and clarify the difference between to be an orientalist and re-appropriating the orient. Finally, this paper critiques the "native orientalism" of Muslim thinkers in the Islamic philosophical context through the case of Borges.

Key Words: Borges, orientalism, *palimpsest writing*, the bricoleur, *Averroes' Search*, deconstruction, Derrida.

> Imagine, in an Oriental library, a panel painted many centuries ago. It may be Arabic, and we are told that all the legends of *The Thousand and One Nights* are represented on its surface; it may be Chinese, and we learn that it illustrates a novel that has hundreds or thousands of characters. In the tumult of its forms, one shape –a tree like an inverted cone; a group of mosques, vermilion in color, against an iron wall– catches our attention, and from there we move on to others. The day declines, the light is wearing thin, and as we go

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> deeper into the carved surface we understand that there is nothing on earth that is not there.
>
> Jorge Luis Borges (1999d: 267)

> Gone too from the world, Averroes and Moses Maimonides, dark men in mien and movement, flashing in their mocking mirrors the obscure soul of the world, a darkness shining in brightness which brightness could not comprehend.
>
> James Joyce (1960: 34)

Jorge Luis Borges is generally acknowledged as one of the greatest Spanish writers in this century. On the wider literary scene, particularly in France and the United States, he is recognized as both a modern and postmodern master. However, one thing sets Borges apart from most of his contemporaries: his fascination with philosophy, especially metaphysics. Borges displays a genuine philosophical turn of mind; that is, he can appreciate and formulate rigorous philosophical arguments. He also exhibits a profound interest in metaphysical games, hoping all the while that one of these games may turn out to be a relatively accurate description of reality. In this, he is much like his favorite philosophers, Heraclitus, Parmenides, Zeno, Leibniz, Spinoza, Berkeley, Hume, Kant, and Schopenhauer. However, this does not mean that he is a philosopher. So how should we classify Borges' legacy? This question seems to help us to answer another question. Looking at his writings, we see other names, such as al-Fārābī, Avicenna, Averroes, Ḥasan b. Ṣabbāḥ, Niẓām al-Mulk, Brethren of Purity, Ẓāhir, and Ibn Ḥakam al-Bukhārī, and so on. –Only in the beginning of "The Enigma of Edward FitzGerald", Borges manages to fit over twenty names of Islamic or Arabic origin into the opening paragraph (Borges, 1999b). Does this mean he is an orientalist? Or, is there a special designation just for him? The quick and simple answer is this: when Borges refers to the philosophers, this does not mean he is a philosopher; when he refers to the East, this does not mean he is an orientalist! The main point is to understand the *deep grammar* of his writings.

There have been many books and articles written in the last several years attempting to understand Borges' corpus. Many new concepts have been introduced to capture his style: cosmopolite, postmodern, syncretic, and poststructuralist. Firstly, I will analyze some of

these concepts and then propose that the quasi-concept *palimpsest* seems most appropriate to understand the language games Borges played throughout his life. Secondly, this paper is not restricted to literary space; it is also about the philosophical space between Muslims in the "Orient". It will be emphasized that Borges' citation of Islamic philosophy is one means of its introduction into contemporary philosophy.

A. A Man Who Has Many Names

Today, there are many names given to Borges. Actually, as a mystical gesture, everyone sees themselves in the mirror of Borges. Borges has not had a name such as BORGES (with capital letters). There are a lot of Borgeses in this one man, or *There Is No Borges* (Köpf, 1993). It is no longer a proper noun; hence, it is a metaphor for a genre(s).

He was always interested in the relationship between the *one* and the *many*, and for him, these words were interchangeable, substitutional concepts. He set up a dynamic between the One and the Many through references to one plot with many permutations. A single, definitive plot has implications for a singular, determined world with little opportunity for choice. The multiple permutations offer a world of unlimited possibilities. The fact that all philosophies must give expression to opposing points of view also emphasizes that this world allows for multiple, competing perspectives, rather than exclusive, monistic visions. It has implications for a discourse on ideas and freedom of expression as well (Frisch, 2004). He takes his power from being nothing and everything together.

He never restricted himself to only one context, and thus, he was always interested in all context/s. Some think that this man is *out of context* and separated from the world. Here the *language of Tlön* in "Tlön, Uqbar, Orbis Tertius", a famous story by Borges, could be useful for understanding this strange man's unusual style. In Tlön, Borges write that,

> Philosophies are much like the nouns of the northern hemisphere; the fact that every philosophy is by definition a dialectical game, … has allowed them to proliferate. There are systems upon systems that are incredible but possessed of a pleasing architecture or a certain agreeable sensationalism. The metaphysicians of Tlön seek not truth, or even plausibility –they seek to amaze, astound. In their view, meta-

> physics is a branch of the literature of fantasy. They know that a system is naught but the subordination of all the aspects of the universe to one of those aspects– anyone of them" (Borges, 1964c: 10).

It seems that Borges gives some clues about his writing style, such as a dialectical game, a proliferation, and systems upon systems. In this regard, to understand Borges, we need different concepts, may be quasi-concepts. It is possible to conceptualize Borges' gestures some postmodern idioms.

i. The Syncretic

The Borgesian notion of syncretism is closely associated with the concept of the world as a mental universe. Borges forms his philosophical edifice by drawing on several trends of idealism as envisioned by Plato, Berkeley, Hume and (mainly) Schopenhauer, as well as on Eastern philosophy. He is fundamentally skeptical regarding the existence of a supernatural, metaphysical power. In other words, the Borgesian syncretist machine can be irreverent toward traditions, ideologies and all sorts of narratives for the simple reason that, in essence, they are all fictional (Kefala, 2007: 69). However, this is a different kind of idealism, which Borges' narrative challenges to a singular, encompassing vision of the world. His idealism subverts the sense of a fixed reality and the ultimate, objective authority of sensory data in defining objective truth. Once one acknowledges the aesthetic futility of capturing "truth" through objectivity and mimesis, the options for literature open up.

Borges' syncretist aesthetics contaminate the objective language of truth with the subjective language of deceit, and vice versa. Essay and fiction plunge into each other, blurring the limits between objectivity and subjectivity, between the real and the imaginary. In short, the very structures that irony and fantasy serve, by definition, as they both confront the latter with a declared *this* and an alluded *more than this* –they suspend a solidified reality. With his syncretist aesthetics, Borges challenges and enriches (Kefala, 2007: 85). "I've spent many years of my life studying Chinese philosophy", says Borges,

> for instance, especially Taoism, which interests me very much, but I've also studied Buddhism and am interested in Sufism. Therefore, all this has influenced me, but I don't know to what extent. I'm not sure whether I've studied these religions and Oriental philosophies because of their effect on my thoughts and actions, or from an imagina-

> tive point of view, for literary reasons. But I think this may happen with every philosophy. Except for Schopenhauer or Berkeley, no philosopher has ever given me the sensation that I was reading a true or even probable description of the world. I've looked at metaphysics rather more as a branch of fantastic literature. For instance, I'm not sure whether I'm a Christian, but I've read a great many books on theology for the sake of their theological problems –free will, punishment, and eternal happiness. All these problems have interested me as food for my imagination (Borges, 1998: 57).

This quote provides some aspects of the syncretic character of his legacy. For Borges, in the end, the human mind itself, the archetypal craftsman (Daedalus) creates the world interminably by constructing and deconstructing –or, better yet, by translating narratives through the syncretist processes of thinking. Eventually, Borges confirms a simple and basic truth: human civilization has never emerged (and never will emerge) from parthenogenesis. Instead, it results from the syncretist processes of literary, ideological and cultural machines whose mechanisms of hybridization and translation become explicit in peripheral countries like Argentina and Turkey –countries that are by definition situated on the delta of diverse times and heterogeneous traditions (Kefala, 2007: 112).

ii. The Bricoleur

The *bricoleur*, building his interpretation on uncertain grounds, should nevertheless recognize the political significance of his work. The bricoleur's reading, which assumes no monolithic truth as its center, should contest the very notion of such truth. Building multiple interpretations on unstable grounds while alternately using and resisting the codes of Western logic (codes such as order, cause and effect, and closure) requires an energetic engagement with the text, a keen sense of its complex and contradictory possibilities. The assumption that the text is a space where author and reader interact serves as the bricoleur's useful, if uncertain, foundation (Carter, 2000).

It could be said that Borges made a bricolage without knowing it. It appears that his mind always works as a bricoleur. "Bricolage" in the Borges' dictionary means *Infinity Plus One*. In this regard, *The Thousand and One Nights* is just another name for bricolage. *The Passion of an Endless Quotation* is a form of bricolage that acknowledges that the possibilities of multiple narrative progressions could

be found in Borges (or vice versa) (Balderston, 1993; Block de Behar, 2003).

It is possible to Borges, but that is not the main goal of this paper. In particular, I am interested in the name "Orientalist". In other words, is there any name an orientalist" be added to the names of Borges? Certainly there are some oriental elements in Borges; however, it is uncertain whether Borges is an "Orientalist". Some scholars see Borges as an Orientalist (Kushigian, 1991). According to Ian Almond,

> What we do find in the stories Borges has set in an Islamic context is that each text displays a different attitude toward Islam itself. Borges' tales actually form a collection of multiple genres, where the narrator of each story confronts and relates his Islamic content in a different voice: patronizing, incomprehending, sympathetic, informative, and cynical. This means that in any of Borges' several stories concerning Islam –"The Mirror of Ink", "A Double For Mohammed", "The Enigma", "The Masked Dyer", "The Zahir", and "Averroes' Search"– a very specific set of Western metaphors for Islam is being used, one that connects the tale concerned to an equally specific genre of Oriental studies/literature (Almond, 2004: 438; Almond, 2007).

Nonetheless, in this context, it seems that calling Borges as an "Orientalist" is an inappropriate way to read and understand him; at least, this is not fair to his legacy. Hence, it is necessary to find a new concept to understand his perspective toward the Orient. The next section will offer some reasons for this and will propose an Oriental concept, the palimpsest.

iii. A Name for the Names: Palimpsest

It seems that the concept of palimpsest encapsulates the exact connection of Borges with the East. It is well known that the palimpsest is related to old texts. A palimpsest is a manuscript page from a scroll or book that can be scraped off and used again. That is, one could read other texts in the surface of the same papyrus; however, the others are no longer clear. This reading, if there is a reading, is transformed into another. It seems that Borges' texts, in this regard, have a palimpsest character, and the experience of reading his palimpsest texts is unique. When we are reading him, we recognize that there is always another level or levels behind the visible text. If we go further, again, we see one more level, and so on. Borges himself re-

fers also to this concept of the palimpsest in his texts. In "Pierre Menard, Author of the Quixote", we read, "I have reflected that it is permissible to see in this 'final' Quixote a kind of palimpsest, through which the traces –tenuous but not indecipherable…" (Borges, 1964b: 44).[1]

Gérard Genette, in his book, *Palimpsests: Literature in the Second Degree*, conceptualizes Borges' point like this:

> That duplicity of the object, in the sphere of textual relations, can be represented by the old analogy of the palimpsest: on the same parchment, one text can become superimposed upon another, which it does not quite conceal but allows to show through. It has been aptly said that pastiche and parody "designate literature as a palimpsest". This must be understood to apply more generally to every hypertext, as Borges made clear concerning the relation between the text and its foretexts. The hypertext invites us to engage in a relational reading, the flavor of which, however perverse, may well be condensed in an adjective recently coined by Philippe Lejeune: a palimpsestuous reading. To put it differently, just for the fun of switching perversities, one who really loves texts must wish from time to time to love (at least) two together (Genette, 1997: 398-399).

The notion of the palimpsest seems a key concept for understanding Borges, if there is any key concept. Thus, we should respond to his palimpsest texts with palimpsest readings.

In this context, we return to our main question: whether he could be called an Orientalist. It seems that the accusation that Borges is an Orientalist results from overlooking the palimpsest aspect of his writings. If the reader reduces Borges to only one dimension, the real significance of his texts disappears, and this would be an incorrect reading of Borges. I will detail this point through Borges' famous story, *Averroes' Search*.

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[1] In "Shakespeare's Memory", on the other hand, De Quincey says, "Man's brain is a palimpsest. Every new text covers the previous one, and is in turn covered by the text that follows –but all-powerful Memory is able to exhume any impression, no matter how momentary it might have been, if given sufficient stimulus" (Borges, 1964b: 248).

B. Averroes' Search: Destruction of the Destruction

In the well-known story *Averroes' Search* (*La Busca de Averroes*), Borges cites Averroes, a Muslim philosopher from Spain, as a Greek sage.

> This Greek, fountainhead of all philosophy, had been bestowed upon men to teach them all that could be known; to interpret his works as the ulema interpret the Koran was Averroes' arduous purpose. Few things more beautiful and more pathetic are recorded in history than this Arab physician's dedication to the thoughts of a man separated from him by fourteen centuries (Borges, 1964a: 149).

The story imagines the difficulty of Averroes, the famed Arabic commentator on Aristotle, in explaining the concepts of tragedy and comedy. Averroes' difficulty was that these concepts could not be expressed in Arabic; hence, no appropriate word existed in Averroes' culture:

> The night before, two doubtful words had halted him at the beginning of the *Poetics*. These words were *tragedy* and *comedy*. He had encountered them years before in the third book of the *Rhetoric*; no one in the whole world of Islam could conjecture what they meant. In vain he had exhausted the pages of Alexander of Aphrodisia, in vain he had compared the versions of the Nestorian Hunain ibn-Ishaq and of Abu-Bashar Mata. These two arcane words pullulated throughout the text of the *Poetics*; it was impossible to elude them (Borges, 1964a: 149).

Our main aim is not to summarize the story or to analyze it but to understand Borges' essential gesture in this story through the story itself. At the end of *Averroes' Search*, Borges seems to give to us a clue: "I felt, on the last page, that my narration was a symbol of the man I was as I wrote it and that, to compose that narration, I had to be that man and, to be that man, I had to compose that narration, and so on to infinity. (The moment I cease to believe in him, 'Averroes' disappears)" (Borges, 1964a: 155). According to Almond, "Borges seems to have stumbled upon Edward Said's main point: that whenever Westerners write about the 'Orient', they invariably end up writing about themselves –their fantasies, their longings, and their failures. It is a realization that triggers the interruption of the tale– as soon as Borges understands the Orient he is trying to describe is nothing but his own, he stops writing about it" (Almond, 2004: 451-

452). In this regard, he always wrote about himself through the other. Is this enough reason to call Borges an Orientalist? For Almond, yes:

> The Oriental teller of tales, the moral admonisher, the detached, Western chronicler and historical "expert", the anti-Mohammedan satirist, the eccentric dabbler, the student of the esoteric, and finally, the Orientalist biographer who suddenly realizes the biography he is writing is nothing other than his own. Nevertheless, a certain number of recurring characteristics seem to manifest themselves throughout Borges' Islamic stories (Almond, 2004: 452).

This criticism may be true in a certain sense. This critical approach to Borges, if we do not forget the remarks about the palimpsest character of Borges' writing, is more serious. However, Borges is always a comic and tragic writer. Borgesian irony incessantly decontextualizes and recontextualizes narratives of all sorts. The process of writing as endless irreverent readings and re-readings of multiple texts is set in the realm of irony where the writer meditates on, attacks or satirizes texts, including his own. In this regard, to call Borges an orientalist is entirely alien to his genre. In this regard, Almond is entirely missing the point.

In this context, the right question should be this: why does translation ultimately emerge as the *modus operandi* of Borges' syncretist aesthetics? Borges seems to have dedicated his whole life to translating, transferring and dislocating the most heterogeneous and heteroclite narratives to relocate them within his syncretic textual edifice. According to Kefala, the infinite possibilities of translation as falsification and the invention of what is essentially untranslatable are also what make Borges stop writing about (translating) Averroes. Borges cannot literally translate Averroes because he knows as little about him as Averroes knew about the Aristotelian terms; he therefore translates ("imagines") his Averroes in the same way Averroes translated ("imagined") the terms "tragedy" and "comedy". The act of cultural translation equates Borges with his Averroes inasmuch as Borges principally invents him through his own cultural experience. Hence, "The terms 'tragedy' and 'comedy' are exactly what is untranslatable in Averroes' translation of Aristotle but also *what is a fertile ground for Borges as an irreverent translator of the interstitial space of the orillas*. In one word, translations, cultural difference opens up the possibility for infinite reworkings, distortions, falsifications" (Kefala, 2007: 109). In this regard, Borges sees his own tragedy and com-

edy in Averroes. The tragedy is this: there is no exact and correct translation. The comedy is that there is no end to translation. From this perspective, neither Borges nor Borges' Averroes will ever finish the translation of Achilles.

There are more sophisticated readings of the same story by Floyd Merrell, who proposes some connections between Borges' story and Kuhn's and the other radical philosophers' version of incommensurability (Merrell, 1991: 74-76). The primary message of *Averroes' Search* is that there is no context-neutral standpoint from which one can consider the translation "objectively". Rather, all translations take place within a particular context or from a particular point of view. This echoes Nietzsche's observation that every great philosophy is, in effect, autobiography and that there is no knowing which is not perspectival. This theme is reinforced throughout much of Borges' work by the narrator's assertion that he will do his best to refrain from interpretation and by his subsequent failure to carry out his promise (Bossart, 2003: 13). This does not mean "he is a relativist" or another name like that; on the contrary, this is the way to create new concepts and philosophies that are not Eurocentric.

C. The Question of "Native Orientalism" in Islamic Thought and Not Able to Make Philosophy Today: The Case of Precursors and Successors

Ironically, Almond is missing his own orientalism when he accuses Borges of being an orientalist. Being an orientalist is different from being a Westerner! It is a way of seeing, thinking, creating, and so forth. There is an ongoing, extensive discussion between Muslim thinkers and academic orientalists: is there any philosopher after Averroes in the Islamic world? This is a tragic and comic question in the Borgesian sense. I believe that to ask this question is itself a kind of orientalism. Here it is very important to mention a passage from *Averroes' Search*, which differentiates Borges' position from orientalism. He writes:

> Averroes, prefiguring the remote arguments of an as yet problematical Hume ... (Borges, 1964a: 150).

The question here is this: how many scholars manage to mention the name of Hume when they refer to Averroes from the East? Borges is always trying to translate one context into another and to quote the Orient in a non-orientalist context, assuming there is a suitable con-

text in the palimpsest text (Kristal, 2002; Waisman, 2005). Sometimes, he is anachronistic; but to avoid being orientalist, what we need is exactly this anachronism, translation and quotation. Making philosophy is synonymous with translation, or philosophy is itself infinite translation. The main question of *Averroes' Search* is translation, whereas today, Muslim thinkers forget the main gesture of their precursors: translation. Instead of blaming Borges for orientalism, we should consider his translation process. For example, in the same story, Borges refers to Averroes' *Tahāfut al-tahāfut* as *Destruction of the Destruction* (Averroes, 1960). This translation is more accurate as *The Incoherence of the Incoherence* (Averroes, 1954). If orientalist Muslim thinkers had not forgotten the processors' philosophical gesture, philosophy as a translation, philosophy in today's world would be different. For example, some papers suggest that Borges is a precursor of deconstruction or that Derrida is a successor to Borges. On the other hand, Derrida also refers to Averroes, in addition to Borges. So if the main issue is translation, is there any "beside"/translation of Averroes today in Islamic world? Yes, we have a right to criticize oriental figures in Borges, but we have no right to reduce Borges only to the orb of the Orient.[2]

There are many examples of this situation in the corpus of Borges. This is the most challenging one: in the "The Enigma of Edward FitzGerald", Borges writes:

> The case invites speculations of a metaphysical nature. Umar professed (we know) the Platonic and Pythagorean doctrine of the soul's passage through many bodies; centuries later, his own soul perhaps

[2] In this context, his connection with Schopenhauer, which is very different from the others, should be mentioned. In the history of philosophy, Schopenhauer seems unique among the Western philosophers when he refers to the East. His impact on Borges is very important. "There is one German writer that I would like to speak about", says Borges, "And I think I spent most of my life reading and rereading him –at first in English and now in German. And that writer is, as you may have guessed, Arthur Schopenhauer. I think that if I had to choose one philosopher, one metaphysician, I would choose Schopenhauer. Or if not, I suppose I would fall back –and be very happy about it– on Berkeley or on Hume. So you see that I'm quite old-fashioned. But I think of Schopenhauer as belonging to the 18th century. I think his irony and his pleasant style –and the word 'pleasant' means much to me– belong rather to the 18th than to the 19th century" (Borges, 1998: 80). If Borges' relationship with Schopenhauer is more fundamental, Schopenhauer's gesture toward the orient was the same.

> was reincarnated in England to fulfill, in a remote Germanic language streaked with Latin, the literary destiny that had been suppressed by mathematics in Nishapur. Isaac Luria the Lion taught that the soul of a dead man can enter an unfortunate soul to nourish or instruct it; perhaps, around 1857, Umar's soul took up residence in FitzGerald's. In the *Rubáiyát* we read that the history of the universe is a spectacle that God conceives, stages, and watches; that notion (whose technical name is pantheism) would allow us to believe that the Englishman could have recreated the Persian because both were, in essence, God or the momentary faces of God (Borges, 1999b: 368).

If we forget the palimpsest dimension of this text, maybe, it could be very hard to understand this quote. However, if we consider *his translation style*, we should ask, through this passage: today, whose soul was reincarnated in Borges to fulfill the literary destiny of the orient? As is well known, Borges' concept of history is cyclical, and according to this insight, there is no privileged time or thinking. Cyclical events reach back toward a mythical conception of time, a sense that certain rhythms and patterns reappear regularly. Thus, they challenge the concept of a definable universal history, the notion that all history is moving in a predictable and undeniable direction. East and West belong to the same universe; all writings belong to the same palimpsest, parchment, or God.[3] It seems that Borges' insight deconstructs the Eurocentric view of philosophy. It does not belong to the Greek or the Muslim or to Babylon or Europe. It is always born and born again. This is the question of precursors and successors, which are very important concepts for Borges and are related to the concept of the palimpsest. A palimpsest text is a text that has a precursor.

Today, we can learn many lessons from Borges' gestures toward his precursors. In the age of oblivion, we need to remember Borges' remembrance of his precursors. In *Kafka and His Precursors*, Borges writes:

> The word "precursor" is indispensable to the vocabulary of criticism, but one must try to purify it from any connotation of polemic or ri-

[3] Again, he refers to the al-Aṭṭār, a Persian of the Sufi sect, when he criticizes Stevenson's movie. He says, "Beyond Stevenson's dualist parable and closer to the Conference of the Birds, which Farīd al-Dīn al-Aṭṭār composed in the twelfth century (of the Christian era), we may imagine a pantheist film, whose numerous characters finally become One, who is everlasting" (Borges, 1999c: 261).

> valry. The fact is that each writer creates his precursors. His work modifies our conception of the past, as it will modify the future. In this correlation, the identity or plurality of men doesn't matter. The first Kafka of "Betrachtung" is less a precursor of the Kafka of the gloomy myths and terrifying institutions than is Browning or Lord Dunsany (Borges, 1999a: 395).

If we ignore his *precursors*, there is no Borges or Kafka: "Kafka's idiosyncrasy is present in each of these writings, to a greater or lesser degree, but if Kafka had not written, we would not perceive it; that is to say, it would not exist" (Borges, 1999a: 395).

The term *precursor* is more meaningful with the term *successor*. Borges is constituted by his precursors; today, his legacy is carried on by his successors. Jacques Derrida, as a good successor to Borges (González-Echevarría, 1986; Rodriguez, 1990),[4] refers to this point: "– And on the subject of the *et cetera* in the Chinese encyclopedia, let us remind ourselves that Borges entitled *'Et cetera'* a set of short texts he added to a second edition of *A Universal History of Infamy*: "In the 'Et cetera' section, I have added three new texts…" (Derrida, 2000: 284). In the language of Borges and Derrida, "Etcetera" means "dissemination" by way of the infinite "and … and …" or by way of infinite successors. From this point of view, there was a "before"/previous to him, and there will be an "after" him. He was between these two orbs; hence, today, the task entirely belongs to us. If you wish, you could cut the "to say AND", and call him an orientalist. Or you could go on this manner of translation and try to find new successors to him. It seems that the last one is more appropriate for his legacy. Today, we are face to face with a reality like that of *becoming Borges* or *Averroes*. In this becoming, there is no repetition or imitation, but there are always new moments. In this regard, *becoming Borges* or *Averroes* means reproducing them in every context from the new, by scraping again/translating the texts of *Borges* or *Averroes* today.

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[4] It should be remembered that Umberto Eco's *The Name of the Rose*, a novel on the tragic/comic, has some cabbalistic affinity between Jorge and Borges (de Lailhacar, 1990). Also, it seems to me that Orhan Pamuk is one of the successors of Borges.

Toward a Conclusion

Why Averroes? Why has history produced many different Averroeses? It is possible to see Averroes as a heretic or as a firm believer in the East and the West. It could not be an accidental event to see Averroes in Raphael's *The School of Athens*, *Divine Comedy, Ulysses* or in some texts of Derrida today. The power of philosophy of Averroes lies in its infinite translatability and infinite contexts, including palimpsest. The main question of *Averroes' Search* was the question of translation; Borges was a translator, not in a pejorative sense, but in a philosophical sense –a very old job of Hermes. In conclusion, Borges, as a palimpsest writer and translator, never lived *The Anxiety of Influence*. In his palimpsest literature, there are lessons for the East and the West, sometimes tragic, sometimes ironic. Certainly, it goes beyond being an Orientalist.[5]

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REFLECTIONS

Concept and Consensus
–Alevi Initiative and Workshops–
Necdet Subaşı

CONCEPT AND CONSENSUS
–Alevi Initiative and Workshops–

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The Turkish government initiated a series of attempts to be directly informed about the main problems of Alevis and to take a step towards the solution of these problems from February, 2009 on. The most important one of those attempts was undoubtedly the workshops that were held under the title of "Initiative". In the workshops, 400 people in total gathered in seven sessions giving more attention to the discoursal representation of the participants.

In these events known as the Alevi workshops, the participants' approaches from a diversity of sources were focused on, and also carried out remarkable discussions on the reality of the well-known problems. In this context, how to overcome the ambiguity of the borderlines of the problem was negotiated, and what the present condition holds as the obstacles and opportunities to overcome the problems in question was also discussed.

In this essay the Alevi initiation and workshops were intended to be analyzed at the concept level. Thus the first stage results, which were completed after the seventh workshop and will be shared with the public in a final report that will be prepared, will in a way present data that can be regarded as crucial in terms of reflecting the aspects of the preparation phase of the problem. The planning to access these data with which concept is the basic subject matter of this essay.

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For the very first time in Turkish history, the sociopolitical problems of the Alevi community are being treated at the governmental level. The Alevi Initiative, the name given to the various attempts and a series of workshops to reconcile the fundamental social issues of the Alevi community in Turkey, demonstrates progress in the government's position toward this religious community.

The Alevis are a group of people whose beliefs and traditions are generally regarded as part of the larger Islamic tradition. However, Alevi customs and beliefs are notably different from other Imām ʿAlī-based traditions. Hence, although ʿAlī is a central figure in their belief system, this commonality does not necessarily align them with other similar groups like Shīʿīs, Ismāʿīlīs, or Nuṣayrīs. On the contrary, despite many similarities with the above-mentioned sects, the traditions of Anatolian Alevis are distinct enough to warrant a separate evaluation of the belief structure of this community.

Historically, Alevis have been associated with deprivation and exclusion because their religious views, customs and traditions are not well-known not only to the Turkish public but to the larger world community at large. Therefore, Alevis have often been the recipients of undeserved cultural stereotypes and negative public sentiments. At times, non-Alevis have accused Alevis, for instance, of heresy, heterodoxy, rebellion, betrayal, and immorality –all intangible charges that seems to have no valid ground.

The very issue of the origin of the Anatolian Alevi community is a subject-matter in itself to be discussed. What is significant at this point, however, is that because the early encounter of Turks with Islam was mostly through the so-called ʿAlī-influenced groups, Alevi communities have become synonymous with public piousness, reflected in the figures of Aḥmad Yasawī and Ḥājī Baktāsh-i Walī. Despite this historical fact, the Alevi community has been trying to carve a secure place for themselves within the Sunnī world with little success.

Let us not forget that, evaluations upon the Alevi history and culture are not independent from the age-old and already established values and criteria, which have certain strong religious and political connotations. In other words, contemporary views of the Alevi community are based upon dated, incomplete, and probably confusing perceptions of their religio-political history within the Saljūq and the Ottoman societies. The fact that Alevis had an active role in many

revolts during the Saljūq and Ottoman eras has also overshadowed the socio-political background of these conflicts. Because of these historical misunderstandings, the contemporary Turkish view of Alevism is that of an ethno-political group, bent on opposition and the search for libertarian discourse, rather than a religious community.

As many researchers admit today, Alevi efforts to survive as both a religious and cultural and, maybe even a political community in Turkey have often been characterized by a policy of disdain and exclusion. Consequently, it was not until the mid-Republican era that it became possible to discuss how Alevis could become more visible in contemporary urban life. Historically Alevis have often settled in rural areas and in small urban areas; even when and if they settled in big cities they had to live in what may be called "peripheral urban centers". Deprived of any religious, cultural, and intellectual connection with Īrān today, the sophisticated historic beliefs and rituals of Alevis have been brought up for discussion, once again, under the pressure of problems that appear in the course of modernization.

It is so striking that Alevis' current appearance in society enables them to be considered as an order, a sect, or even a religion. Therefore, analyzing their religious, political, and cultural demands is problematical because it is difficult to estimate and to determine which Alevi position is *the* Alevi position and which source is *the* source of such demands. Their general approach is to demand that the *Cemevi* be accepted as a house of worship, which shows that their demands are intentionally or unintentionally inclined toward a religious status.

However, because of the eclectic and syncretic nature of Alevi beliefs, academics argue that such a religious designation will be difficult to formulate. The beliefs inherited from both Shīʿī-Ismāʿīlī theology and non-Islamic traditions in Alevism which developed from a surprising integration of local and regional beliefs have now taken shape of a genuine, though complex and indistinct entity. As a result, it is difficult to describe or define what Alevism really is. It is even more difficult today to decide whether Alevism is a religion, a sect, or a culture. This indefinable nature of Alevism leads to endless discussions. Until recently, Alevism was primarily described through negative relationships and political showdowns brought about by modern urbanization and life. However, there arose a need in public at large and among the Alevi community itself to define themselves as either

a social movement, religious sect, or even as a separate religion different from Islam.

Alevis contend that Sunnīs not only exclude them but also mislead the public regarding Alevi beliefs and practices. It can be argued, on the other hand, that Alevis are not consistent in their efforts to dispel these ideas and explain their community's beliefs. The uncertainty with respect to the description of Alevism continues, frustrating both Alevi and Sunnī researchers alike.

After the foundation of the Turkish Republic, the Alevi community found easy channels through which to express their growing complaints and religio-political demands. Nevertheless, it is not quite possible that this catalogue of complaints whose historical roots could never be ignored was extensively expressed by the Alevis during the early Republican era. In the New Republic, which espouses an increasingly radical conception of secularism, no organization was allowed to conduct a religious activity except the Directorate of Religious Affairs. Furthermore, the Republic rejected the legality of mystical, heretical, and ṣūfī organizations of all sorts. The Republic did not welcome any oral or legendary traditions, which, according to the founding fathers, were nothing but superstition, Alevism included. Accordingly, with the Code of Tekkes and Zāwiyas banning all such institutions, the channels of access to public daily life for Alevism were destroyed and consequently they have been subject to significant problems of legality. Despite all impediments, Alevis built strong relationships with the leading figures of the new regime, most notably Mustafa Kemal Atatürk. Through these relationships, the Alevis hoped to change the negative sentiments about them still lingering from the Ottoman period.

In the 1950s, the Alevi sought official state recognition but had to wait until the 1990s to achieve it. According to the Kemalist curriculum, the Alevi had to live within the stated confines of the secular nation state, just as the Sunnīs were required to do –something that the Sunnīs and Alevis were equally unhappy about. Although there is no evidence that either group received special consideration, the common Alevi opinion was that the government favored the Sunnīs when it came to integration; and the Sunnīs believed that the Alevis had a confidential, supportive partner in the government. This mutual distrust has created many complex problems.

Although Alevis continue to live in rural Anatolia, segregated and disconnected from city centers under the pressure of social isolation, they have a clearly-defined strategy setting its hopes on the secularist agenda of the new regime. For example, the Alevis believe that state restriction of the activities of Sunnī organizations has crucial importance for their security. In this context, it has become impossible for Alevis, who maintain themselves in traditional rural regions and modern urban areas by a typical ghettoizing approach, to sustain this process of disintegration during modernization period.

Encounters between the Alevis and other religio-political groups within this context created areas of tension and stress that contributed to the already existing mistrust on both sides. Moreover, Alevi-involved criminal cases and riots during the late 1970s likely prevented Alevis from establishing social, religious, and political relations with other religious communities. As a result, social apathy in the cities with large Alevi populations, such as Çorum, Maraş, and Sivas, has only intensified. As the polarization became acute, the Alevi community has been inclined to establish their identity on this segregation. The much-discussed Gazi events of the 1990s, and more recently the Madımak Events (Sivas Massacre) in 1993, during which 37 people, most of whom were Alevi, (including 17 Sunnī) were burned or smothered to death, have made the current environment even more volatile.

Modern Alevis are experiencing an identity crisis, seeking to answer the basic questions about their ethno-religious identity. However, differences within the community in nearly every area –from theology to rituals, from political organization to the design of their catalogues of demands– cause significant problems in forming a unified group identity. The problem is exacerbated by a mutual misunderstanding with the state. Whereas the state sees the Alevi community as a security symptom or threat, the Alevis regard the state as a hegemonic Sunnī structure that is not upholding its secular policies. Alevi suspicion of the state and the growing tension that this causes have long been in the agenda of the government. How could be produced a permanent discourse which will hereafter be effective for a reliable and trusted negotiation environment? Until now, the only engagement between the Alevis and the state has been in the form of economic support of community-based organizations. However, it has been realized that the facilities provided to some organizations

and foundations or the relations which do not go beyond the political engagements have not contributed to the solution of problem.

Beginning in 2009, the Turkish government renewed its effort to bring together underrepresented and mistreated communities, including the Alevis, with the aim of developing a discourse in the area of religious rights and freedom, as it is included in its political program. For the first time, meetings with the Alevis did not focus on any fear for the community's security. The desire to extend the scope of human rights, and state protection of the freedom of belief and thought has required to deal with the Alevi community and their severe problems. This effort was not based on the past, ineffective interactions between the Alevi and the government. Any approach couched in these terms would be pointless and even harmful for the Alevi community. Instead, Alevi organizations, representing all sides of the political spectrum, struggled to understand the current government's new position and publicly expressed their suspicions.

In this effort, the Turkish government felt a need to take a step to understand the Alevis leaving aside the historical perception toward them, and immediately shared this with the public at large. The government had a great deal of work to do, including agreeing upon a definition of Alevism and what the government should do for the community.

With this in mind, the Alevi Initiative was launched in 2009. Numerous workshops were scheduled by Ministry of State in order to determine the steps to be taken. The main objective of the workshops was to bring the Alevis and the government together and to provide a forum in which positive, deliberate steps could be taken to address the problems of Alevis in Turkish society. The need for negotiation and empathy required extraordinary attention. What is expected from all sides was to communicate with, listen to and understand each other.

The workshops, the preliminary step of the Alevi Initiative, attracted a great deal of public interest and were followed by interested people with great curiosity and attention due to their unprecedented and unusual nature. As designed prerequisite for the Initiative, they were intended to clarify the present problems of the Alevi community. Accordingly, appropriate representatives of the community were sought in order to accurately reflect public opinion, and, above all, the true needs and sentiments of Alevi society. It was imperative that

all parties be heard, and steps were taken to provide an arena for all Alevis and others, in general, to participate in these conversations. In order to invite not only Alevis but also all the society to an equitable negotiation, it was a need, first of all, to share mutual responsibility and develop a practical discourse against exclusion and discrimination. The aim of the official and non-official meetings was to ensure the whole society to comprehend, and even to feel deeply the problems of the Alevis, and consequently to contribute to the solution. Members of the Alevi community, academics, and representatives from both non-governmental organizations and political institutions, and the media were all invited to participate in the workshops, based on their different discourses.

Alevi public opinion contributed greatly to the peaceful functioning of these workshops. Throughout this meticulous process, Alevis contributed to the Initiative not only within the workshops, but also in their daily lives, whenever the occasion arose. The Initiative workshops revealed that Turkish society, despite years of effort to social unity, knows very little about Alevi beliefs and lifestyle. Alevis continue to repeat their demands for democracy and human rights because they argue that these are designed for "the highest good", even though there is no consensus within the Alevi community as to how and to what extent these demands could be met. Today everyone admits that the Alevis, as a community, have suffered great adversity in the past but have survived, despite near-constant pressures against their beliefs and lifestyle. Such historically complex relationships must be treated with the utmost sensitivity.

At this point, the most important effort was to determine the actual parameters of the problems and to set clear procedures in order to address the question in the first place and eventually to get the process moving. Both of these topics were undertaken by workshop participants. The stated objective of the Initiative workshops was to change public perception of the Alevi community by replacing outdated prejudices and segregation strategies with a new functional concept compatible with their perception of self. Because Alevis have long believed that they were not regarded as part of the Turkish society, seeing themselves, rather, as tertiary, this effort must not ignore their own benefits. Accordingly, the workshops were intended to remove the sanctions that impair the equality in an irreversible way. Such an intention and determination eventually will bring forward the usual nature of government-citizen relationship, forcing the elites of

the state to be ready to discuss the type of institutionalized secularism that has proven to be oppressive.

The disorganization of the Alevi leadership structure, and their seemingly endless number of demands, were not taken as an obstacle to the realization of the Initiative. Such a variety of opinions and ideas is natural in a group of their size and only reflects the dynamism of the group. Moreover, this diversity is expected to pave the way for the new actors who dare to deal with thorny modern issues, notably theological ones.

Tackling the problem resolutely will disprove the validity of negligences and ignorances in the eyes of the society, as well as will prevent abuse of the issue. The fact that efforts of some exceptional rogue actors, bent on disrupting this process, has not gone unnoticed. However, the government is confident that such manipulative and provocative attempts can be derailed by including the variety of voices within the society in its governance. In this process, goodwill, patience, and determination are the main virtues that should not be sacrificed. The main issue here is how the Alevis are seen in the eyes of other social and religious groups, and what awaits them considered their image that has long been identified with depressed feelings, hostility and exclusion, even though they created a notable interest in the public with their demands.

Today, despite many studies on Alevi demands of all sorts, there has been no notable interest in how these demands resonate with the Turkish public. Alevis' efforts to transform their presence to an identity are quite new and these efforts have mostly been formed by internal disputes and conflicts. The reaction to this situation by the state, the Sunnī community, the media, and nongovernmental organizations has been both an important source and part of the problem.

The identity problem of the Alevi community is a multifaceted and complex one. As an oral cultural code, they have been passionately involved in the modernization process, and, as a result, have lost or damaged most of their traditional beliefs and rituals. Alevism has long been defined as a syncretic and eclectic belief system; their being in touch with new forms and ideas should not be a surprise. The structure of Alevism is highly adaptable and can continuously adapt to cultural needs of the time. However, the disputes arisen from new quests and tendencies have damaged the historical symbols, images and principles of Alevism.

Currently, neither Alevi perceptions of the Sunnīs nor Sunnī opinions of the Alevis are acceptable by either party –opinions and perceptions that are still deeply rooted in old prejudices and misconceptions. Sunnī belief that Alevism is not only an ʿAlī-centric form of belief system, despite evidence otherwise, has been thoroughly internalized. On the other hand, Alevis see the Sunnīs as descendants of Yazīd, who massacred Ḥusayn b. ʿAlī in Karbalāʾ. Even though these opinions are not supported with historical data, current sentiments between these two groups are undeniably affected by them. The relationship between Alevi and Sunnī communities remains at a critical threshold, stuck in the political and theological disputes that defined their relationship a few centuries ago.

Alevis levy claims of usurpation, cruelty, and discrimination, while Sunnīs blame Alevis of betrayal, deviance, and ignorance. Although such abstractly-held ideas are expected to be not as strong as they were in the past, neglecting them has been a significant impediment to progress.

The national Turkish policy of secularism has recognized Sunnī Islam as main reference frame for the primary, acceptable religious tradition, though it has not refrained from presenting the Alevis as the unique guarantee of Turkish secularism. Nevertheless, the state has never been inclined to see Alevism as a separate religious community that is different from Sunnī Islam. The usual attitude was to make Alevism subject to hegemonic network and influence of Sunnī Islam, and to put down comments that deem Alevism as a heterodox element within the governmental expression.

Today, the academic world is deeply interested in the nature of Alevism. Although the many opinions of researchers regarding Alevi origins, beliefs, and ritual practices create different images of Alevism, all of them contribute greatly in the effort to establish a consolidated Alevi identity. Alevis themselves discuss the maintenance of their beliefs, principles, and practices in two basic ways: in terms of conservative and radical Alevism. Conservative Alevism emphasizes the necessity of the loyal and faithful preservation of traditional heritage, whereas radical Alevism seeks to form a new and characteristic identity. Nevertheless, many Alevis emphasize loyalty, as well as enthusiasm to national unity, like the Sunnī public, despite their troubled relationship with the state. Many Alevis, who consider the government as a source of trouble, want the current situation to be rear-

ranged, rather than transforming this conviction into a radical opposition. Even though the opposing rhetoric seems to have blended surprisingly with both forms of Alevism, it can be argued that it was introduced into daily life by leftist Alevis.

The unequal treatment of the Alevi has resulted in feelings of anxiety about cultural exclusion and contempt. Indeed, it is clear that annoyances, deprivations, and unjust treatment have, for centuries, created a unique Alevi culture that can take easily any shape and form in a given context. Today, Alevis estimate that they can get through the present blockade as long as they stake a claim on their current demands. Many suggestions such as seeking legal status for *Cemevi*s, calling for a review of the status of Directorate of Religious Affairs in accordance with sound norms of secularism, and the consolidation of the lost or rejected status of their spiritual leaders, *Dede*s, are intended to reinforce their security areas.

Whenever Alevism is treated as a problem, it is necessary to treat it by considering the state (Directorate of Religious Affairs), Sunnī public, and popular media. In this sense, the position of Alevis in the eyes of governmental mechanism has scarcely been treated and analyzed. The government, the Directorate of Religious Affairs, the Sunnī public, and the Turkish media create a great variety of opinions and approaches that never coincide with one another. Omitting the variety of opinions and approaches to the problem will only blind our perspective of the real problems. Hence, it is necessary to see what the Alevi perception is and what it corresponds to within Turkish society.

The government workshops held as part of the Alevi Initiative, revealed that a combination of public ignorance and a lack of governmental attention has nourished distrust and misunderstanding by both the state and the Alevi community. The results of seven workshops have been compiled, and the government has shared the resulting report. Now, related discussions continue among the Turkish public. It is hoped that the final report will provide a roadmap for the development of a political good will and possible solutions to Alevi problem that incorporate opinions and information gleaned from the workshops as well as other public opinions and suggestions emerged from these useful conversations.

BOOK REVIEWS

Fī Uṣūl al-Ḥiwār wa Tajdīd ʿIlm al-Kalām
by Ṭāhā ʿAbd al-Raḥmān

Veysel Kaya

Metinlerle Günümüz Tasavvuf Hareketleri
[*Contemporary Sufi Movements Through Texts*]
by Mustafa Kara

Abdurrezzak Tek

Zeyd bin Ali: Hayatı, Eserleri ve İslâm Hukuk Düşüncesindeki Yeri
[*Zayd b. ʿAlī: His Life, Works, and Place in Islamic Legal Thought*],
by Eren Gündüz

Saffet Köse

Memories of Muhammad: Why the Prophet Matters
by Omid Safi

Nagihan Haliloğlu

Fī Uṣūl al-Ḥiwār wa Tajdīd ʿIlm al-Kalām, by Ṭāhā ʿAbd al-Raḥmān, (Beirut: Markaz al-Thaqāfī al-ʿArabī, 2007), 3rd ed., 75 pp., ISBN: 9953-68-156-2

The turn of the 20th century witnessed several attempts by Muslim scholars to renew Islamic theology in the face of ideological challenges posed by the West. Contributing to a new *kalām*, prominent scholars like Shiblī Nuʿmānī (d. 1914) in the Indian Subcontinent, Muḥammad ʿAbduh (d. 1905) in Egypt and İzmirli İsmail Hakkı (d. 1946) in Ottoman Turkey believed that the theological heritage of Islam would no longer suffice for demands of a Muslim mind living in the modern world. Bearing such a significant title, contemporary Moroccan scholar Ṭāhā ʿAbd al-Raḥmān's important book offers remarkable observations on the meaning of Islamic theology today. Moreover, he questions the misinterpretations of Islamic philosophy by several modern writers whose works remain quite popular in the field.

Early in the book, the author offers a general idea about his stand on the critical view of Islamic heritage. He is strongly against those who reduce Islamic thought to Greek philosophy. For ʿAbd al-Raḥmān, the discipline of logic that Muslims have constructed is in essence "a Qurʾanic disputation theory", even if it drew substantially from Greek thought. Therefore, the main source of Islamic disputation theory is the Qurʾān itself (p. 21).

Another introductory point of the book, which I think has the crucial importance in the area of the Islamic studies is his appropriate emphasis when he says that a topic must be dealt with in its own context without striving to view it in terms of its "foreign" roots. At first glance, it is quite predictable who the author has in mind when he offers this judgment, and a quick overview of recent Islamic studies can prove it right. Such studies deal with any topic (in this case, Islamic thought) through a historical or political lens. ʿAbd al-Raḥmān would uncover the names of such authors in the last chapter of his book.

The book consists of four main chapters. In the first chapter, the author divides the concept of conversation (*ḥiwār*) into three parts. As for the conversation in general, one can talk about three levels,

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each of which represents a step in a gradual process toward the best form of conversation: *ḥiwār*, *muḥāwara* and *taḥāwur*. Among these, simple conversation (*ḥiwār*) has the lowest degree since it only presents the ideas of two sides. However, in *muḥāwara*, objections arise in the conversation. Both sides try to establish a theory together, and thus the simple conversation acquires a state of debate (*munāẓara*) in its classical sense. Therefore debate differs from *ḥiwār* because of its scientific and philosophical nature.

For ʿAbd al-Raḥmān, it is the term *munāẓara* that accords precisely with the theological (*kalāmī*) method in Islamic thought. Thus, the second chapter of the book focuses on defining the nature of the theological method and its prominence among Islamic disciplines. According to ʿAbd al-Raḥmān, Muslim philosophers from Kindī (d. 866) to Ibn Rushd (d. 1198) tended to see their own philosophical method as the only way of certainty for demonstration. Nevertheless, the main characteristic of demonstration is its potential to be formed in accordance with pure mathematical functions. Meanwhile, philosophical demonstration does not share this calculability (*ḥisābiyya*) (p. 63). As a direct consequence of the lack of this characteristic in the classical philosophical method of demonstration, philosophical discourse does not have the sufficient condition for gaining practical conviction. This is because the demonstration of an argument may be obtained without convincing the addressee (p. 65). There occurs the distinctive attribute of the kalāmic discourse: the pragmatic aspect and the author's Arabic equivalent choice for this word is *tadāwulī*. In fact, in terms of their reasoning and inference, kalāmic and philosophical discourse are not different from each other. Nonetheless, *kalām* has pragmatic aspects that "*burhānī*" philosophy does not share. In summary, pragmatic argumentation is the unique form of achieving the desired results from a conversation, and we can find this form in *munāẓara*, a method used effectively by Muslim theologians.

It seems that Ṭāhā ʿAbd al-Raḥmān wants *kalām* to take the role of defending Islamic doctrine in the contemporary world, and he is arguably right in his position. Because *kalām* is based on debate, it can defend Islamic principles against the challenges of the opposite (currently, the dominant Western) side. The author calls readers' attention to the fact that *kalām*'s dialectical method does not make itself weak in its demonstrative aspect, as claimed. In this regard, we can talk about the renewal (*tajdīd*) of respect for *kalām*, rather than the re-

newal of *kalām* itself. *Kalām* surely has had the adequate dynamics for maintaining its prominent role in the Islamic sciences because the theological heritage of Islam represents the true nature of debate. The methods of dialectical debate (*munāẓara jadalī*) cover all areas of Islamic thought (p. 69). Moreover, the fact that Muslim theologians used Aristotelian logic does not change this situation because Muslims did not import it blindly. They adjusted it according to their principles (p. 69). Muslims' way of acceptance of Aristotelian logic is also distinctive in that it views logic as a branch of the discipline of debate. Therefore, ʿAbd al-Raḥmān's main purpose is to reaffirm *kalām*'s location among the Islamic sciences against those who criticize its method. Afterward, he gives a brief outline of the structure of debate in Islamic writings, including the duties of both sides.

Entitled "Theological Inference: *Qiyās* and *Mumāthala*", the third chapter aims to prove *kalām*'s ability to accommodate modern logical developments. For example, ʿAbd al-Raḥmān discusses the nature of God's attributes in length and comes to the conclusion that although the Ashʿarī *kalām*'s position on the attributes of God seems at first to conflict with logic (they are neither identical with God nor distinct from His essence), it actually employs multi-valued logic (p. 133, 140).

In the fourth and final chapter entitled "The Theological Rationalism: *Muʿāqala*", the author responds to those who defend anthropological approaches to Arabic thought. Scholars like Muḥammad ʿĀbid al-Jābirī and Muḥammad Arkoun, who only address the philosophical aspects of Islamic civilization on the grounds that these are the only aspects suitable for modernity, in fact remove the Arabic component (in the text: *multaqá* = a meeting platform) from the community of Islam (*umma*) and attach it to the West. Those scholars are not aware that what makes theologians' hands strong is the fact that they relied on Arabic texts while Muslim philosophers adopted a logic constructed under the rules of Greek language. Therefore, kalāmic argumentation is not only more likely to achieve logical success (p. 148) but it also has the ability to defend Islamic principles against modern ideologies as did in the past (p. 158).

Because the modest-sized work deals with an enormous topic, it has some weaknesses. Its bibliography, which includes most of the classical Islamic texts in theology and philosophy, gives the impression that the author intended to use only primary sources. Nonethe-

less, while it develops key concepts gradually, the book fails to base the ideas on the theological sources. An exception is the last chapter, which considers *kalām*'s position on the attributes of God. Thus, Jābirī's *The Structure of the Arabic Mind* (*Binyat al-ʿaql al-ʿArabī*; 1986), for instance, whose outlook is severely criticized by our author, can be viewed as much more sufficient in terms of using the classical sources properly in this regard. Moreover, ʿAbd al-Raḥmān makes several general and stereotypical judgments, including that "the metaphysics of Aristotle is based on paganism (*shirk*) while the Islamic doctrine on monotheism (*tawḥīd*)" (p. 62), that may detract from the academic character of the work.

In conclusion, after all, this book can be considered as a good read for anyone interested in the logical value of the classical Islamic theology.

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***Metinlerle Günümüz Tasavvuf Hareketleri* [*Contemporary Sufi Movements Through Texts*]**, by Mustafa Kara, (Istanbul: Dergâh Yayıncılık, 2002), 613 pp., ISBN: 9756611251.

Despite its general title, Mustafa Kara's book offers the story of Sufism and Sufi orders (*tarīqa*s/*turuq*) during the nearly 150 years from *Tanẓīmāt* (1839, Ottoman Reform Movement, literally re-organization) to the last decade of the 20th century. The First and Second Constitutional Periods as well as the Republican Period, though the year 1925 (and the ban on Sufi orders) are of central importance. Although the book focuses mostly on Istanbul and its surroundings it occasionally sheds light on Sufi movements in Sofia, Crete, Cairo, Baghdad, Baku and Crimea.

In Turkish Islamic history, Sufism and Sufi orders have always been an integral part of life. Nevertheless, they were banned in 1925 by article 677 of the Turkish Constitution on the grounds that they had degenerated. Thus, Kara seeks to answer the crucial question of how Sufi life has continued its presence and increasingly widened its area of influence despite the closing down of the *tekke*s, the ban on the *turuq* and dervish clothes and the locked shrines, the Sufi life. Why? According to the author, the answer is difficult and requires serious contemplation. Sufi life in Turkey is "blurry", and it remains difficult to obtain a close and clear picture of contemporary Sufi movements in Turkey.

In pointing out the difficulty of studying contemporary Sufi movements, the author emphasizes two main problems. First, experts in the history of Sufism do not want to enter this so-called "mine field". Events in Turkey are not yet "history". On the other hand, an objective study necessitates "disclosing" some dervishes and "making them public". While some are pleased to be exposed, others get into hot water. Rather than be perceived as "informers", historians of Sufism avoid studying these subjects. The second problem centers on recent interest in the Sufi environment and *turuq*. Many social scientists are interested in this field and seek to acquire "sensational" knowledge. However, because they are not sufficiently qualified, their research does not go beyond "groping". They sometimes consider well-known facts in this field as new discoveries (p. 18). While the author touches on some scholarly works that pose obstacles to

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understanding Sufism and Sufi orders correctly, he also provides examples from administrators, politicians, researchers, writers, journalists and government officials whose understanding might be derived from false information.

The author deals particularly with the silenced *turuq*, especially the *Baktāshiyya*, which was abolished along with the Janissary corps in 1826; the ban on all orders 100 years later; the events of the Sheikh Saʿīd rebellion (1925) and Menemen incident (1930); and the ideas, ways of life, and survival of sheikhs and dervishes in the period leading up to the National Security Council meeting on February 28, 1997.

The book consists of an introduction, thirteen chapters and a conclusion. Its main subjects include: the legislation of Sufi life following the Tanẓīmāt administrative reforms (pp. 28-47), the First and Second Constitutional Monarchies and their effects on dervishes, mystical communities and periodicals of the time (pp. 51-78), the sheikhs elected to the first Turkish Grand National Assembly and their efforts to revive Sufi life (pp. 81-99), the Menemen incident and the banning of orders in its aftermath (pp. 185-207), an easing up due to democracy (1950) (pp. 209-239), the effects of military coups, the debate on whether *tekke*s should be re-opened (pp. 311-353), *turuq* in the Islamic world and the West (pp. 455-488), Muslim orientalists, criticisms of Sufi life and thought (pp. 543-551), and potential solutions to the problems of Sufism and Sufi orders (pp. 601-607).

The informative work depicts the *tekke*s, *turuq* and adventures of Sufi life in the last century. With its rich bibliography, the book is a significant source for academics, journalists and historians. The quoted texts –presented in double columns– not only prove the scholarly quality of the work but also serve as a valuable archive. It would not be an overstatement to say that the book is the first of its kind in the field. Chronologically covering Sufi movements up to 1990 in a quite objective manner, this volume may be regarded as the harbinger of the highly anticipated second volume, which will address the 21st century.

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***Zeyd bin Ali: Hayatı, Eserleri ve İslâm Hukuk Düşüncesindeki Yeri* [*Zayd b. ʿAlī: His Life, Works, and Place in Islamic Legal Thought*]**, by Eren Gündüz, (Istanbul: Düşünce Kitabevi Yayınları, 2008), XVI+374 pp., ISBN 978-975-6434-24-6

The current work is a PhD thesis on Zayd b. ʿAlī (d. 122/740), leader of the Zaydiyya sect and the attributed author of *al-Majmūʿ al-fiqhī*. It is composed of an introduction, three chapters, a conclusion, and a rich bibliography.

Zayd b. ʿAlī is a prominent scholar of the political history of Islam and an authority on the sciences of Islamic law/*fiqh*, Qur'anic exegesis/*tafsīr* and Prophetic Tradition/*ḥadīth*. He is not only the leader of a sect but also at the center of discussions on the author of the first *fiqh* book and his political activities. Eren Gündüz selected the issue of the place of Zayd b. ʿAlī in Islamic legal thought as the main concern of his PhD thesis by focusing on the scientific value of *al-Majmūʿ al-fiqhī*, the attribution of which has been disputed.

In the first chapter, the author successfully examines the life of Zayd b. ʿAlī, the political and scientific conditions of the era in which he lived, his political and academic personality, and his sect (pp. 29-165).

The whole second chapter is dedicated to *al-Majmūʿ al-fiqhī*. In this chapter, the work's matter, process of narration, titles, content, printed and manuscript copies, commentaries and glossaries, methodology and the main features of its period are studied (pp. 167-263). Of course, the main question is whether or not *al-Majmūʿ* was written by Zayd b. ʿAlī. Its authorship has been a subject of debate in academic circles; criticisms have been expressed particularly in reference to its narrative technique and systematic structure. Some scholars doubt that such a systematic piece of work could be written during so early a period, and they find its attribution to Zayd b. ʿAlī unlikely. Moreover, the fact that the only narrator of the work is Abū Khālid has been strongly debated. Gündüz addresses these and other similar assertions. He concludes that some of these criticisms have a coherent basis, and although the attribution of the complete work to Zayd b. ʿAlī can barely be claimed when the ḥadīths mentioned in it

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are checked with the Qurʾān, the book continues to have value in the eyes of Zaydīs (pp. 243, 335).

The third chapter considers the place of *al-Majmūʿ* in Islamic legal thought. It discusses it in terms of the science of narration, Zaydī and Sunnī sources of *fiqh*, branches of Islamic law (*furūʿ al-fiqh*) with some individual legal issues, and comparative law.

In the study, Gündüz set out to provide a unity of sources between Sunnī and Shīʿī *fiqh* through the legal thought of Zayd b. ʿAlī and his *al-Majmūʿ* (p. XIII). He points out that although Zayd b. ʿAlī was regarded as a respected scholar in both Sunnī and Shīʿī circles, his thought could not attract jurists of both sects, and offers possible reasons of this situation (p. XIII). Apart from all these, in our opinion, one of the major reasons could be the fact that Zayd b. ʿAlī, when considered in the classical classification, was seen by Sunnī scholars as a member of Shīʿa while Shīʿīte scholars thought otherwise. While Imām Zayd shared the central Shīʿī idea that ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib was the most appropriate person to become caliph after the Prophet, some of his other thoughts differentiated him from Shīʿa. For example, he believed that the caliphate of the former three caliphs was legitimate and accepted the imamate of the inferior/*mafḍūl* in spite of the presence of the superior/*afḍal*. He also believed that the *imām* was not appointed by naming but by just describing his qualities; there is no hidden *imām*; belonging to the *Ahl al-bayt* was not a prerequisite for narrating ḥadīth; *mutʿa* (fixed-term marriage) is not allowed despite Jaʿfarī law; and washing feet during ablution is obligatory. By Shīʿa, we and the author mean Ithnā ʿAshariyya/Imāmiyya, which is the largest group in Shīʿa. Political-theological differences prevent one from grouping sects within each other. In fact, there is no need. As the author points out (p. 79), the main distinctive differences between Zaydiyya and Shīʿa are theological-political issues, especially over the imamate. There are not many important controversies between the Jaʿfarī, Zaydī and other Sunnī schools of law. Therefore, it does not seem coherent to claim that the legal thought of Zayd b. ʿAlī offers a new contribution to the Shīʿīte perspective (p. 8). The conviction of the author that Zayd b. ʿAlī was seen as a Shīʿī by Shīʿīs and as a Sunnī by Sunnīs (p. XIV) remains questionable and should be treated cautiously. The fact that biographical works of both sects mention him does not necessarily mean that they saw him as a member of their sects. Furthermore, the author clearly states that he is undoubtedly Shīʿī even if he can be considered Sunnī (pp. 7, 342). While the

author demonstrates the value of Zayd b. ʿAlī's ideas for both sects' legal thought (p. XIII), this claim needs to be reconsidered. In fact, the writer admits that the academic personality and thought of Zayd was not treated adequately in the Jaʿfarī sources (pp. 9, 14, 26). Moreover, the reaction of Jaʿfarīs against the legal thought of Zayd and its narrators can be clearly seen in their respected sources.

By considering the fact that Zayd b. ʿAlī gained the confidence of both the Sunnī and Shīʿī communities, Gündüz offers that finding a middle way based on the legal thought of Zayd between Sunnī and Shīʿī camps could provide a closer relationship between them and thus mitigate the controversies set off by other external factors (pp. 2, 8). This middle way could also lead to interaction between the sects (p. 8) and eliminate differences that shake trust in Islamic legal sources (p. 341). Furthermore, Gündüz argues that the legal thought of Zayd is the basis of both Sunnī and Shīʿī law (p. 7). This conclusion places a heavy burden on Zayd. With the exception of some local issues, it is difficult to discuss serious problems among sects, given the long-standing attitudes of sect leaders and scholars toward each other. Secondly, the author seems to claim that Zayd b. ʿAlī was embraced by Imāmī Shīʿa. The institutional separations between sects, however, are so deep and numerous that they make it difficult to view Zayd as a member of this sect. In fact, Shīʿī books regard Zayd as part of the *al-ʿāmma*. Meaning "ordinary people", this word is the opposite of the word of *khawāṣṣ* (the elite people) and is used for the followers of Ahl al-sunna by Shīʿa.

Both the idea that a common point between Ahl al-sunna and Shīʿa can be found in the legal thought of Zayd b. ʿAlī and the notion that a unity of sources might be enabled with *al-Majmūʿ* (p. 346) seem questionable. Because Imām Zayd shares many ideas with Ahl al-sunna and Shīʿa explicitly asserts the opposite, Shīʿīs regard him as a Sunnī. Moreover, while there is in our opinion no doubt that *al-Majmūʿ* was written by Zayd, its attribution is still controversial in academic circles. In fact, the writer could not reach a definite conclusion about it. Thus it seems difficult to build a relationship between both sects by placing *al-Majmūʿ* in the center.

In the social sciences, there is no one right answer. Statements may be right or wrong in terms of their basis or point of view. The value of one should not be evaluated with another. The remarks above are those of the writer and should not be regarded as a defi-

ciency for the study. Gündüz's study is one of the most comprehensive and significant works on Zayd b. ʿAlī in recent times. It is also a valuable contribution to research on Islamic law in Turkey with its skill in introducing Zayd b. ʿAlī, one of the most prominent figures in the history of Islamic law, to the academic world, in addition to its rich bibliography, plain and fluent style, and success upon the use of research techniques.

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Memories of Muhammad: Why the Prophet Matters, by Omid Safi, (New York: HarperOne, 2009), 352 pp., ISBN: 978-0061231346, $24,99 (Hardcover)

Omid Safi's book *Memories of Muhammad* is not a biography of the Prophet Muḥammad in the conventional sense. This point is suggested by the subtitle: *Why the Prophet Matters*, which reveals the central theme of the book. This question is currently being asked by many Muslim and non-Muslim columnists and intellectuals. An American Muslim of Iranian origin, Safi starts the book by introducing the "Muḥammad Problem", in which he locates Islam and the Qurʾān in the American tradition. The introduction functions like a manifesto of the American Muslim in particular and of Muslims living in non-Muslim lands in general. It examines the way that different faiths have been received in the Christian West and how the Founding Fathers of the USA viewed Islam, revealing little-known facts such as Thomas Jefferson's interest in the Qurʾān and the Arabic language and that the Muslim American Congressman Keith Ellison swore on Jefferson's copy of the Qurʾān when he took office.

Safi's book then takes on the task of reviewing the methodologies of remembering the Prophet in the *umma*, or the followers of the Muḥammadī tradition. As a chronicler of the ways of the Prophet who is interested in demystifying both the connections of the Islamic faith to the Judaic one and the access that people of different Judaic faiths (used to) have to each other's worldviews, Safi begins by explaining the kind of environment that Muḥammad was born into. He paints a picture of the Arabian Peninsula, situated as it was on trade routes, as a crossroads of different cultures and faiths. He describes an Arabia in which one's honor is inextricably linked with one's clan, to set the ground for the impact of the transformation of "the Muḥammadī revolution". It was, as Safi argues, Muḥammad's mission to change the understanding of honor from bravery on the battlefield to being an honorable human being through being mindful of God in one's actions, through that touchstone of Muslim faith, *taqwá*. Safi explains that Muḥammad became the person to initiate this "heart-transformation" through his own connection to God, which started with the revelation and culminated in the "*Miʿrāj*" (heavenly ascension). Safi guides the reader gently to this most pivotal of events in the development of Islam, drawing parallels to Jesus' crucifixion and

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Buddha's enlightenment to carry the non-Muslim reader along on the journey. The *Miʿrāj* not only becomes a pivotal event in that it consolidates the importance of the personal connection to Allah in the Islamic faith but also becomes the event around which the "literal" and "metaphorical" readings of the Qurʾān and the *ḥadīth* (the Prophet's sayings) try to claim legitimacy. Safi addresses both of these readings and provides quotations from the literature that has been generated about the "nightly journey" during which Muḥammad is believed to have travelled from Mecca to Jerusalem and then from there to the Heavens to come face to face with God. The passages that Safi quotes from classical works that embellish upon this journey are read with a view of finding the pathos of these (re)tellings of the story, especially in placing Muḥammad's message within the Judaic tradition (he meets several Prophets of the Old Testament in his journey in the Heavens). However, most important aspect of this ascension is the verification of Man's place in the constellation of beings that God has created and Man's inherent ability to connect to the Creator like no other creature can.

Safi's account of the events of the life of Muḥammad are drawn mostly from classical histories such as Ibn Isḥāq's; however, in each episode that Safi recounts, he points to the "cosmic" character of the Prophet's personality, which enabled him to experience the closeness to Allah. In *Miʿrāj*, the Prophet was close to Allah like no other being had been, realizing the full potential of Man. His ability to commune with Allah at such close quarters makes him the ultimate example to follow for Muslims, and his companionship with Allah manifests itself in his wisdom and social abilities: he is invited to Madīna because of his trustworthy character to establish peace between the warring tribes. It is this conciliatory note that resonates throughout Safi's take on the Prophet's life, rather than the catalogue of wars that take center-stage in some other accounts. When the wars are mentioned, aspects of how Muḥammad changed conventions of warfare –not killing civilians and by respecting the bodies of the fallen– are highlighted.

Attention is given to the Prophet's family life to emphasize how he enabled members of his family to fulfill their own potential as human beings. His guidance and how his example is to be perpetuated in the Islamic world become the point around which Safi discusses the Sunnī and Shīʿa split that ensued after the Prophet's death. The chapter on this debate will be an interesting read, especially for Sunnī

readers or people who have been exposed to Sunnī accounts of events that aim to suppress the memory of this split. Safi identifies the blurriness of the accounts of what "really" happened after the Prophet died in Sunnī texts and explains that what happened afterward is very important for the Shīʿa tradition. It is this approach to Muḥammad's memory, according to Safi, that differentiates the Sunnī and Shīʿa paths. He starts with the commonplace understanding that the Sunnī way of connecting to the Prophet as a model is through his sayings, "sayings-legacy", whereas the Shīʿa see models of the Prophet in members of his family in what he calls the "family-legacy". Safi provides a history of the struggles and conflicts that occurred during the time of the four caliphs, a period, he reminds the reader, that is portrayed as the best of possible worlds, only second to the time of the life of Muḥammad himself in Sunnī accounts. Safi's American sensibility can be seen in the way he lays importance on the preservation of the different histories, especially the Shīʿa history. Having delineated the differences between the two approaches, Safi also draws attention to the fact that the borders between Sunnī and Shīʿa schools of thought are more porous than one imagines, with the Shīʿa's dedication to emulating the habits of the Prophet as a tradition passed down in his family, and the Sunnī's love for the family of the Prophet.

This porousness is nowhere more evident, as Safi suggests, than in the practices of the Sufi orders and the poems of Sufi masters, which he quotes at length. In Sufi understanding, he explains, the cosmic personality of Muḥammad is much more prominent than the historical one. However, rather than presenting the devotional texts of Sufi orders as esoteric narratives, he explains that these narratives give just as much weight to the Qurʾān and the ḥadīth and in fact act as commentary on them. The importance of the Sufi orders, and their appeal, Safi argues, is again, their emphasis on "conditions" of the heart, and in the Sufi approach, Muḥammad comes across not so much as someone who has brought divine Law (for social relations) but as a figure of affection and mercy, an image that goes some way to explain the attraction of the Islamic faith and the Muḥammadī tradition for billions around the world –especially those incredulous Westerners who only see a body of arcane social laws when they look at Islam.

Safi maintains that it is the "cosmic" character of Muḥammad, the culmination of all human faculties that enable Man to know God personally, that "Islamist" movements overlook in their understanding of

Islam, as they try to implement the principles of just government that the Prophet implemented in his lifetime.

Leaving the discussions of historicism aside (Safi maintains that if a historicist reading of Islamic practice is to be done, it is to be carried out not piecemeal but wholesale), he focuses on something more fundamental, the love of the Prophet, and through that, the love of the divine. In fact, Safi argues that the mutual love between the Creator and His beloved servant Muḥammad, the love between Muḥammad and his *umma*, which led his coming back to humanity after his encounter with God, is the only prism through which Islam and Muslims can be, and should be, understood. It is a Sufi writer that he turns to make his point clear. He tells the story of the love-stricken Majnūn who describes his beloved Leila as the most beautiful woman, a description that falls short when the Sultan comes face to face with her. In response to the Sultan's dissatisfaction, Majnūn explains: You have to see her through my eyes. And as such, Safi equates faith with love and says that to understand the love that Muslims have for Muḥammad, one has to look through a Muslim's eyes, and so the Muḥammadī community becomes Majnūn, who is consumed with that love. This love, Safi makes clear, despite differences, is the enduring legacy and memory of Muḥammad.

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CONFERENCE REPORTS

The Qurʾān: Text, History and Culture, 6th Biennial Conference on the Qurʾān, 12-14 November 2009, organized by Centre of Islamic Studies, SOAS, University of London, London-UK

Salih Kesgin & Kadir Gömbeyaz

International Symposium on Molla Fanārī, 4-6 December 2009, organized by Faculty of Theology, Uludağ University & Bursa Metropolitan Municipality, Bursa-Turkey

Jules Louis Janssens

The Qurʾān: Text, History and Culture, 6th Biennial Conference on the Qurʾān, 12-14 November 2009, organized by the Centre of Islamic Studies, SOAS, University of London, London-UK

On 12-14 November 2009, the Centre of Islamic Studies at the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS), University of London, hosted a conference entitled "*The Qurʾān: Text, Interpretation and Translation*", during which a total of 35 papers were presented in English over eleven sessions. This series, which has been running biennially since 1999, aims to bring together academics from a number of Qurʾān-related disciplines and provide an ongoing forum to investigate the ways in which we read, understand, interpret, debate and represent Qurʾanic discourse.

Following an opening address by Professor Muhammad Abdel Haleem (*Director of the Centre of Islamic Studies at SOAS*), who welcomed the speakers and audience, the first panel of the conference, "Structure & Composition", opened, chaired by Mustansir Mir (*Youngstown State University, Ohio-USA*). Papers presented in this panel included Michel Cuypers's (*Institut Dominicain d'Etudes Orientales, Egypt*) "Semitic Rhetoric as a Key to the Question of Naẓm of the Qurʾanic Text", which examined the composition of the Qurʾanic text and discussed the rules of semitic rhetoric, which has been rediscovered in the field of biblical studies, and applied these rules to the Qurʾanic text. The paper was followed by Ayman al-Desouky's (*SOAS, University of London, UK*) "Naẓm, Iʿjāz, Discontinuous Kerygma: Approaching Qurʾanic Voice on the Other Side of the Poetic", in which he proposes a new approach to the discussion of *naẓm* and *iʿjāz* that emphasizes the force of sacred language at the levels of syntax and metaphoric operations. The panel concluded with Thomas Hoffmann's (*Aarhus University, Denmark*) "From the Chaotic to the Chaordic: Rethinking Chaos and Qurʾān", in which Hoffman discussed the crucial relevance of chaos in the Qurʾān. At the end of his presentation, he devised the portmanteau word "chaordic" (chaos+order) to call attention to this issue. After a short break, a lunchtime presentation, "Documenting the Textual History of the Qurʾān: The Approach of the Corpus Coranicum Project", was given by Michael Marx, Hadiya Gurtmann and Jens Sauer (*Brandenburg Academy of Sciences, Germany*). It discussed the approach of the 'Corpus Coranicum' Project, which follows the German scholar

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Gotthelf Bergstäßer's (1886-1933) methodology in describing the Qurʾanic text in history.

In the second session, chaired by Ayman Shihadeh (*SOAS, University of London, UK*), presentations on the theme of "The Qurʾān and Medieval Philosophy" were given by Peter Adamson (*King's College, London-UK*), Daniel De Smet and Meryem Sebti (*Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique, France*), and Heidrun Eichner (*Freie Universität, Berlin-Germany*). In "Abū Bakr al-Rāzī on Prophecy", Peter Adamson focused on Abū Bakr al-Rāzī's views on prophecy. He mentioned that al-Rāzī's position is in fact much more nuanced than it seems. Rather than attacking prophecy as a whole, he attacked schismatic groups within Islam, especially those who endorsed *taqlīd* and denied the efficacy of individual rational reflection. In "Avicenna's Philosophical Approach to the Qurʾān in the Light of His *Tafsīr Sūrat al-Ikhlāṣ*", Daniel De Smet and Meryem Sebti examined Avicenna's *Tafsīr Sūrat al-Ikhlāṣ*, comparing the basic principles of his metaphysics (*wājib al-wujūd, ṣudūr*, etc.) to the words of the Qurʾān (*huwa*, *Allah*, and *aḥad*), and emphasized the importance of Avicenna's philosophical approach to the Qurʾān. In final presentation, "The Hermeneutics of Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī's Qurʾān Commentary: A Link between Philosophy and Sufism", Heidrun Eichner surveyed the Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī's Qurʾanic commentary based on the notion of *ishāra* and argued that this Qurʾanic commentary does not only attest to a shared methodological background, which is used in analyzing textual units of the various works comments on, but also establishes an immediate connection on the level of content.

The final session of the day, chaired by Elsaid Badawi (*SOAS, University of London, UK*), was devoted to papers related to "Theological Approaches to the Qurʾān". The panel began with Anthony H. Johns's (*Australian National University, Australia*) "The Transfiguration of the Spoken Word: A Humanistic Approach to *Iʿjāz*", in which he sought to explore the *iʿjāz* of the Qurʾān from a different perspective on modes of direct speech occurring in a number of Qurʾanic locutions, including the words of God addressed directly to Muḥammad (pbuh) and those spoken by the varied assembly of actors. Afterward, Abdessamad Belhaj (*Pázmány Péter Catholic University, Hungary*) presented a paper on "Argumentation of the Qurʾān through al-Muẓaffar al-Rāzī's *Ḥujaj al-Qurʾān* and al-Ṭūfī's *ʿAlam al-jadhal*. Ahmad Achtar (*Heythrop College, University of London, UK*) delivered "al-Zamakhsharī's Unique Hermeneutics of Anthropomorphic Verses

in the Qurʾān: *Majāz* Based on *Kināya* and *Takhyīl*". He addressed al-Jurjānī's theory of *majāz* and its relation to the hermeneutical tools used by al-Zamakhsharī, which can be called *majāz* based on *kināya* and *takhyīl*. The first day of panels culminated with Christopher Melchert's (*University of Oxford, UK*) "God Created Adam in His Image", which focused on the historical interpretations of the ḥadīth that "God created Adam in his image".

The second day of the conference started with a session entitled "*Tafsīr*" and chaired by Toby Mayer (*Institute of Ismaili Studies, London-UK*). In "Astrology and *Tafsīr*", Robert Morrison (*Bowdoin College, Brunswick-Australia*) discussed the topic of judicial astrology, predicting future events on the basis of celestial positions, and used the *tafsīr* literature to support this practice. Jamal J. Elias (*University of Pennsylvania, USA*) followed with a paper on "Sufi *Tafsīr* Reconsidered: Exploring the Development of a Genre", in which he explored and challenged the Sufi *tafsīr* on the Qurʾān as a scholarly or literary genre through a direct examination of Sufi *tafsīr* literature from the formative, medieval and early modern periods. The panel closed with Mustansir Mir's (*Youngstown State University, USA*) discussion of "Reading the Qurʾān with the Bible in Mind", which offered an analytical study of Qurʾanic interaction with the Bible and examined historical Muslim scholarly attitudes toward the Bible. The paper also raised and discussed the larger issue of using of the Bible as an aid in Qurʾanic exegesis. The second panel of the morning, chaired by Muhammed Abdel Haleem (*SOAS, University of London, UK*) and again devoted to "*Tafsīr*", included papers from Badri N. Zubir (*International Islamic University, Malaysia*) and Husain Qutbuddin (*Academy of Advanced Studies in South Asian Islam and Arabic, India*). In "al-Sharīf al-Raḍī's Contribution to Qurʾanic Exegesis: An Analysis of *Talkhīs al-bayān fī majāz al-Qurʾān*", Zubir examined the contribution of al-Sharīf al-Raḍī (d. 1015) to the field of *tafsīr* through his work *Talkhīs al-bayān fī majāz al-Qurʾān*. In "Fatimid Legal Hermeneutics: The *Daʿāʾim al-Islām* of al-Qāḍī al-Nuʿmān (d. 363/974)", Qutbuddin outlined the essential hermeneutical techniques used in the interpretation of the Qurʾān by the eminent Fāṭimī dāʿī and qāḍī al-Nuʿmān b. Muḥammad in his foundational fiqh text, *Daʿāʾim al-Islām*.

The first afternoon session, chaired by Anthony Johns (*Australian National University, Australia*), offered presentations on "Ethics in the Qurʾān". In "Defining Good in the Qurʾān: A Semantic Inquiry in

Qurʾanic Ethics", Ahmad Z. Obeidat (*McGill University, Canada*), argued for the existence of three value-types in the Qurʾān: authoritarian, utilitarian, and naturalist; he proposed a reconciliatory synthesis way between them, namely, the ethical maxim "act by what gives you life". In "Islamic Morality in the Making: The Sexual Ethics of the Qurʾān and its Late Antique Context", Patrick Franke (*Universität Bamberg, Germany*) claimed that a parallel reading of late antique texts (Jewish, Christian, Zoroastrian, Manichaean, Pagan etc.) pertaining to sexuality might contribute to a better understanding of Qurʾān verses related to sex, sexuality, and sexual ethics. In "Conceptions of Trust in the Qurʾān: The Case of *Amāna*", Nora S. Eggen (*Universiy of Oslo, Norway*) focused on *amāna* and the other various notions expressed in the Qurʾān for the concept of trust and pointed out that the concept of *amāna* is a central and intersecting point on trust. The second afternoon session, entitled "The Qurʾān in the Contemporary World", was chaired by Sebastian Guenther (*University of Göttingen, Germany*). In "Whither Averroism: Does Ibn Rushd's Interpretation of the Qurʾān Provide the Basis for a Modernist Rereading of Islamic Law?", A. David K. Owen (*Harvard University, USA*), investigated the claim mentioned in his title and concluded by pointing out Ibn Rushd's legal writings' complementary use of philosophical ethics derived from Aristotle and legal norms derived from the Qurʾān. In "A Typology of Contemporary Sunnī Tafsīr: Sources, Methods and Aims of Qurʾanic Commentaries from the Arabic World, Indonesia and Turkey since 1967", Johanna Pink (*Freie Universität, Berlin-Germany*), developed a typology of contemporary *tafsīr* in different regions and languages of the Islamic world since 1967, exploring similarities and differences between them as well as their political, religious, social and cultural motives. Finally, in "Ḥarakat al-taʾwīl al-niswī li l-Qurʾān wa l-dīn", Hassan al-Shafei (*University of Cairo, Egypt*) discussed the significance of congruities between lexical elements in the Qurʾanic text on the basis that, in any given utterance, it is expected by the reader or listener that words be interconnected to allow us to arrive at the intended sense.

"Early Manuscripts", chaired by Abdul-Hakim al-Matroudi, (*SOAS, University of London, UK*), was the main topic of the opening session of the conference's third and final day. Alain George's (*University of Edinburgh, UK*) "On Chronology and Provenance in Early Qurʾāns" examined artistic and calligraphic elements as well as regional variations in the early Qurʾān manuscripts. Anne Regourd's (*The Louvre,*

France) "One More ʿAbbāsid Qurʾān: IFAO, Edfou 73" focused on a single folio of parchment found in Egypt in the 1920s bearing several Qurʾanic verses, which were identified as belonging to the beginning of the 3rd/9th century. Shannon Wearing's (*New York University, USA*) "Precious Blood, Sacred Text: The Legacy of the ʿUthmānic Qurʾān" emphasized the role of the ʿUthmānic Qurʾān as an emotional and political object and discussed how its codices has been utilized in the practice of Islam.

The session on "Early Qurʾanic Text" was chaired by Mustafa Shah (*SOAS, University of London, UK*). In "The Sanaa Palimpsest: Introductory Remarks to Philological and Literary Aspects", Asma Helali (*Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique, France*) discussed on a project on some of the oldest Qurʾān manuscripts found in Sanaa and underlined its importance for Qurʾanic studies in providing new materials. The presentation included photos of the palimpsest. Afterward, in "The Qurʾān According to Agfa: The Gotthelf-Bergsträßer-Photoarchive of Qurʾanic Manuscripts and the Question of Material Evidence for the Study of the Textual History of the Qurʾān", Michael Marx (*Brandenburh Academy of Sciences, Germany*) discussed the Gotthelf-Bergsträßer photoarchive of Qurʾanic manuscripts, Gotthelf's approach to the Qurʾān, and the importance of material evidence in the study of the textual history of the Qurʾān. Finally, in "A Neglected Aspect of the History of the Qurʾān: The *Waqf* Rules and the Redaction of the Qurʾanic Text", Amr Osman (*Princeton University, USA*) delivered a study demonstrating the significance of *waqf* (pausing or resuming while reciting the Qurʾān) as a form of *tafsīr* and discussed how it could change the meaning.

The afternoon of the third day was devoted to the two panels: "Cultural Expressions", chaired by Sebastian Guenther (*University of Göttingen, Germany*), and "Literary Perspectives", chaired by Stefan Sperl (*SOAS, University of London, UK*). In the former, Natalia Viola (*The Islamic Manuscript Association, Cambridge-UK*) opened with "West African Qurʾāns: Codicological Features of the Sūdānī Style", a paper on the codicological features of the Sūdānī calligraphic style in a selection of images of Qurʾāns dating from the 18th-20th centuries from different countries in West Africa. This was followed by Elsaid Badawi's (*The American University in Cairo, Egypt*) "Qurʾanic Recitation and Audience Rhythm: The Case of the Egyptian Reciter, Muṣṭafá Ismāʿīl (1905-1978)", which demonstrated the relation of interdependency between the Qurʾān reciter and audience through the example

of Mustafa Ismāʿīl, one of the greatest Qurʾān reciters of our time, and also included an auditory part. In "The Early American Qurʾān: Islamic Scripture and U.S. Canon", Jeffrey Einboden, (*Northern Illinois University, USA*) examined the initial receptions, adaptations and translations of the Qurʾān during the American renaissance (1830-1860) and outlined its influence on the US canon as well as American cultural and religious foundations.

In the latter session, Todd Lawson (*University of Toronto, Canada*) gave a paper entitled "The Qurʾān as Epic: A Consideration of Formal and Thematic Elements", which presented the formal and thematic elements of the Qurʾān as epic. Shawkat Toorawa's (*Cornell University, USA*) "(Absent) Fathers in the Qurʾān" focused on absence of the fathers of main characters in the Qurʾān, including Noah, Moses, Jesus, Muḥammad and others, and explored what it means in the larger Qurʾanic and Islamic narrative. In "The Fantastic in the Qurʾān: A Structural Approach to Study the Story of Moses and al-Khiḍr (18:60-82)", Hanadi M. Behairi (*Umm al-Qurá University, Saudi Arabia*) brought the conference to an end with a structural, literary analysis of the fantastic in the story of Moses and al-Khiḍr in the Qurʾān using Tzvetan Todorov's theory of the fantastic.

Throughout the discussions, participants offered thought-provoking questions and recommendations. There was abundant opportunity for participants to make each other's acquaintance and share information about their specializations. After the final presentation, Professor Muhammed Abdel Haleem gave the closing speech, in which he thanked the chairs and speakers for their contributions and looked ahead to the next meeting in fall 2011.

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International Symposium on Molla Fanārī, 4-6 December 2009, organized by the Faculty of Theology, Uludağ University & Bursa Metropolitan Municipality, Bursa-Turkey.

An "International Symposium on Molla Fanārī" was held in Bursa, Turkey on 4-6 December 2009. While Mullā Fanārī (d. 834/1431) was one of the leading thinkers of the early Ottoman period, he has up till now received little attention. Although this may give the impression that he was not so influential a thinker, this is clearly not the case as shown by the various contributions of the present symposium. S. Ḥusayn Naṣr, an important contemporary scholar of Islamic thought, was impressed by his thought, as M. Kara indicated, while A. Godlas made clear how even today Mullā Fanārī might remain a vivid source of spiritual inspiration.

To understand a thinker, it is important to grasp the historical circumstances in which he lived. Mullā Fanārī lived during the rise of the Ottoman Empire, the only great Islamic state of the period, as M. el-Geadi stressed. Although the Ottoman rulers generally held scholars in high esteem, tensions occasionally arose, as can be seen in the controversy between ʿIwaḍ Pasha and Mullā Fanārī, a fact highlighted by S. Pay and İ. Oruçoğlu. As H. Gülgen explained, the actual existence of the Mullā Fanārī Mosque, founded by the scholar himself, and the inscriptions on the many gravestones permit a more precise and detailed understanding of what was going on in his day. Also noteworthy is the fact that Mullā Fanārī was the founder of an important family, which played an important role for centuries in the area of Bursa. This was dealt with in two contributions by Saraçoğlu and S. Maydaer.

In classical times, there was no sharp division between "philosophical" and "scientific" thought. Hence, one may wonder whether Mullā Fanārī has contributed to both fields? T. Görgün insisted that he may perhaps be considered the founder of the "second classical period" of thought in the Islamic world while O. Benaissa qualified his work as the result of the epistemic (in Foucault's sense) event of the mystical fever of his days.

Hence, the importance of the mystical dimension is no surprise. As T. Yücedoğru emphasized, this is already true in the very concept of the universe, which is a sign of Allah while being absolutely separate from Him. As M. Aşkar argued, Mullā Fanārī's explicit dealing with

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and particular understanding of Ibn ʿArabī's conception of the "unity of being" and his enduring influence on later Ottoman thought remains of indubitable significance. Despite his pivotal role, however, Mullā Fanārī's Sufi-identity is far from obvious, a fact rightly noted by A. Tek. S. Çift pointed out that in late Ottoman Sufi-compilations, Mullā Fanārī's name is sometimes not included, most likely because his mysticism includes a philosophical dimension. Indeed, J. Janssens noted the presence of elements inspired by Avicenna in his theory of emanation but at the same time stressed a major difference between Mullā Fanārī and Ibn Sīnā in its basic understanding.

Nevertheless, Mullā Fanārī was not only a mystic. He was also a great jurist and "theologian" (*mutakallim*). R. Cici offered an encompassing picture of his role as jurist, and O. Ş. Koloğlu discussed his contributions as a theologian. In particular, A. Kozalı showed how Mullā Fanārī, as a member of the Ḥanafī/Māturīdī school, dealt in a balanced way with the problem of divine power (i.e., omnipotence) while U. M. Kılavuz focused on his dealing with the issue of the divine names.

Mullā Fanārī also paid great attention to the study of the Qurʾān. M. Öztürk emphasized the syncretistic character of his Qurʾān exegesis and its combination of philology, law (*fiqh*) and mysticism. M. Çiçek concentrated on the issue of the specific language, structure and revelatory mode of the holy text.

Mullā Fanārī's interests were not limited to the religious sciences alone. A. Kayacık mentioned his important contributions to logic, and İ. Fazlıoğlu and J. Ragep discussed his influence in mathematics and astronomy, respectively. In all three cases, the contributions of Mullā Fanārī were presented in a broader historical context.

Generally speaking, Mullā Fanārī appears largely as a "commentator". H. Eichner explored the strategies he uses within this literary genre.

A final question remains: are all works attributed to Mullā Fanārī indeed his? K. Gömbeyaz tried to distinguish between authentic, spurious and wrongly attributed works based largely, although not exclusively, on manuscript evidence.

From this brief survey, the historical importance of Mullā Fanārī as a great thinker –in the broad sense of the term– is obvious. We hope

that the various contributions will give rise to a wide variety of further studies evaluating in a much more precise way his real significance in each of the domains mentioned above. Overall, the Bursa symposium delivered a major contribution to the study of Mullā Fanārī's multifaceted thought.

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A reference list must be included at the end of the manuscript in the following style:

Journal Article & Entry

Eichner, Heidrun, "Dissolving the Unity of Metaphysics: From Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī to Mullā Ṣadrā al-Shīrāzī", *Medioevo*, 32 (2007), 139-197.

Buckley, J. Jacobsen and Albrile, Ezio, "Mandaean Religion", trans. from Italian by Paul Ellis, *Encyclopedia of Religion: Second Edition*, (editor in chief: Lindsay Jones; USA: Thomson Gale, 2005), VIII, 5634-5640.

Book

Kātib Chalabī, Ḥājī Khalīfa Muṣṭafá b. ʿAbd Allāh, *Kashf al-ẓunūn ʿan asāmī l-kutub wa l-funūn*, 2 vols., (ed. M. Şerefeddin Yaltkaya and Kilisli Rifat Bilge; Istanbul: Maarif Matbaası, 1941-1943).

Michot, Yahya M., *Ibn Sīnā: Lettre au Vizir Abū Saʿd: Editio princeps d'après le manuscrit de Bursa, traduction de l'arabe, introduction, notes et lexique* (Sagesses Musulmanes, 4), (Beirut: al-Burāq, 2000).

Book Chapter

Janssens, Jules, "The Reception of Avicenna's *Physics* in the Latin Middle Ages" in I. Vrolijk and J. P. Hogendijk (eds.), *O ye Gentlemen*: *Arabic Studies on Science and Literary Culture in honour of Remke Kruk* (Islamic Philosophy, Theology, and Science, 74), (Leiden & Boston: Brill, 2007), 55-64.

Online Citation

Rudolph, Kurt, "Mandaeans: ii. The Mandaean Religion", *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, Online Edition, 20 January 2010, available at www.iranica.com/articles/mandaeans-2-religion

Page references to works referred to in the text should take the following form: (Touraine, 1995: 9-10). The verses of the Qurʾān (also Old and New Testament) should carry chapter name and number, and verse number (al-Baqara 2:23).

Text and references must follow the format outlined in The Chicago Manual of Style, 15th edition.

Arabic words should be transliterated according the the style used by the Library of Congress.

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