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Contents

Articles

Mīr Dāmād's Life and Works: A Brief Survey

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Abstract

The article represents a brief survey of the life and works of Mīr Dāmād, summarizing the scanty available biographical facts and providing an annotated catalogue of his works, as well as a list of the editions of his works and studies about him. This is the most recent overview of the life and works of the great Iranian philosopher of the Ṣafavid era in English.

Keywords: Mīr Dāmād, biography, bibliography, school of Iṣfahān, Ṣafavid studies

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1. Life

Sayyid Burhān al-Dīn Muḥammad Bāqir al-Astarābādī, nicknamed Mīr Dāmād (969–1040/1561–1631) was, along with his student and younger contemporary Mullā Ṣadrā, one of the two most important philosophers of the Ṣafavid Iran. He was born in 969/1561[1] in the family of Persian sayyids of Astarābād (Gurgān since 1937), which had produced several Shīʿī scholars before

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1. Sayyid ʿAlī Mūsawī Bihbahānī, *Ḥakīm-i Astarābād Mīr-i Dāmād*, Tehran, 1370 Sh./1991, p. 45. Some sources quote different dates, from 958/1551 to 963/1556 (see: Saʿīd Naẓarī Tawakkulī, *Naẓariyya-yi paydāish-i jahān dar ḥikmat-i yamānī wa ḥikmat-i mutaʿāliya*, Mashhad, 1389 Sh./2010, p. 48; Sajjad H. Rizvi, 'Mīr Dāmād's (d. 1631) *al-Qabasāt*: The Problem of the Eternity of the Cosmos', in Khaled El-Rouayheb and Sabina Schmidtke, eds., *The Oxford Handbook of Islamic Philosophy*, Oxford-New York, 2016, p. 461, n. 1).

him. His father Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad, who played an important role at the Ṣafawid court, married the daughter of the powerful jurist Muḥaqqiq 'Alī al-Karakī (d. 940/1533–1534), and, for this reason, was nicknamed *Dāmād* ('the son-in-law').[1]

Apparently, Mīr Dāmād did his early studies in Mashhad,[2] then moving to Qazwīn (the Ṣafawid capital in 955–1007/1548–1598[3]), where he is said to have begun his teacher's career,[4] subsequently to Kāshān (in 988/1580[5]) and finally to Iṣfahān. Having lost his father before he was fourteen, Mīr Dāmād studied *fiqh* and *ḥadīth* with his maternal uncle 'Abd al-'Ālī b. 'Alī al-Karakī (d. 993/1585) and Ḥusayn b. 'Abd al-Ṣamad al-'Āmilī (d. 984/1576, the student of al-Shahīd al-Thānī (executed 965/1558) and father of Bahā' al-'Āmilī).[6]

Mīr Dāmād's principal (and probably only) teacher in philosophy was Sayyid Fakhr al-Dīn Muḥammad Ḥusaynī Sammākī Astarābādī (nicknamed Muḥaqqiq-i Fakhrī, d. 984/1576[7]), a student of Ghiyāth al-Dīn Manṣūr Dashtakī (866–948/1462–1541), the son of Ṣadr al-Dīn Dashtakī (d. 903/1498).[8]

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1. Mudarris Tabrīzī Khiyābānī, 'Rayḥānat al-adab', quoted from Mīr Dāmād, *al-Qabasāt*, ed. M. Mohaghegh, 2nd ed., Tehran, 1374 Sh./1995, p. LVII; Rizvi, 'Mīr Dāmād's (d. 1631) *al-Qabasāt*', p. 440.

2. Bihbahānī, p. 48.

3. Roger Savory, 'Ṣafawids', *EI2* (online edition: http://referenceworks.brillonline.com/entries/encyclopaedia-of-islam-2/safawids-COM_0964?s.num=0&s.f.s2_parent=s.f.cluster.Encyclopaedia+of+Islam&s.q=safaw%C4%ABds consulted on 13 December 2016).

4. Bihbahānī, p. 48.

5. Bihbahānī, p. 48 (where he quotes from (the lithographic edition or manuscript of) Mīr Taqī al-Dīn Kāshānī's *Khulāṣat al-ash'ār wa zubdat al-afkār*).

6. Rizvi, 'Mīr Dāmād's (d. 1631) *al-Qabasāt*', p. 441.

7. Bihbahānī, p. 49; 'Alī Riḍā Bahār Dūst, '*Tafsīr-i Āyat al-Kursī*. Mu'allif Mīr Fakhr al-Dīn Ḥusayn Ḥusaynī Astarābādī', *Āfāq-i nūr*, 9 (Spring and Summer 1388 Sh./2009), p. 397. Some chroniclers give 918/1512 as the year of his birth. However, according to a remark he makes in his gloss on Kamāl al-Dīn Mīr Ḥusayn Maybudī's (ca. 853–909/ca. 1449–1504) commentary on Athīr al-Dīn Abharī's *Hidāyat al-ḥikma*, that gloss was completed in 928/1521 (Bahār Dūst, p. 403). Sammākī could not have written it at the age of ten – hence, he could not have been born before 910/1504 (for the detailed discussion, see: Bahār Dūst, pp. 395–448).

8. It is likely that Sammākī studied with Ghiyāth al-Dīn Dashtakī in Tabrīz during the period when Dashtakī, jointly with 'Alī Karakī, held the office of *ṣadr-i shar'ī*, i.e., in 936–938/1529–1531 (see: 'Alī Awjabī, 'Muqaddima-yi muṣaḥḥiḥ', in Ghiyāth al-Dīn al-Dashtakī, *Ishrāq hayākil al-nūr li kashf-i ẓulamāt-i shawākil al-ghurūr*, ed. 'Alī Awjabī, Tehran, 1382 Sh./2003, p. LIV). Perhaps after Dashakī's resignation and return to his na-

Sammākī served as the minister during the rule of Ṭahmasp I (1524–1576). He established a *madrasa* in Qazwīn, where he, inter alia, taught Qāḍī Kamāl al-Dīn Mīr Ḥusayn Maybudī's (ca. 853–909/ca. 1449–1504) commentary on Athīr al-Dīn Abharī's *Hidāyat al-ḥikma*, ʿAlī Qūschchī's commentary on Ṭūsī's *Tajrīd al-ʿaqāʾid*,[1] and Dawānī's commentary on Taftāzānī's *Tahdhīb al-manṭiq*. In 952/1545, Sammākī wrote a (theological and philosophical) commentary in Persian on the Throne Verse (Q. 2: 255), which he dedicated to Shāh Ṭahmasp I.[2] In 958/1551, he authored a short treatise in verse, entitled *Ādāb wa rusūm al-baḥth wa al-munāẓara*.[3]

According to some sources, when Mīr Dāmād was about fifteen years old, he and Sammākī had a public dispute (*munāẓara*) in the presence of Shāh Ṭahmasp I.[4] The works taught and/or composed by Sammākī dealt mostly with logic and *kalām* – and, in any case, belonged to the beginner's (rather than intermediate or advanced) curriculum. How/ with whom did Mīr Dāmād study the works that form the advanced curriculum of the student of Islamic philosophy – such as Ibn Sīnā's *al-Shifāʾ*?[5] We do not know. In all likelihood, either Sammākī held separate classes for a narrow circle of advanced students, or Mīr Dāmād studied these works on his own. Since Mīr Dāmād never mentions Sammākī by name, it is possible that he viewed him as a teacher of introductory level (as was the case with Ibn Sīnā and Abū-ʿAbdallāh Nātilī).[6]

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tive city Sammākī went to Shīrāz to continue his studies with him. In any case, Bahār Dūst's claim that Sammākī studied with Ghiyāth al-Dīn al-Dashtakī during the latter's stay in Qazwīn (Bahār Dūst, p. 398) appears to be ill-founded (the capital was moved to Qazwīn in 955/1548, seven years after Dashtakī's death).

1. Apparently, Sammākī wrote a separate gloss to each chapter of Qūshchī's commentary. Only three of these glosses appear to have survived: 1) the gloss on the quiddity and the cause and the effect; 2) the gloss on the substances and accidents; 3) the gloss on the chapter that establishes God's existence (Bahār Dūst, pp. 402–403).

2. Bahār Dūst, pp. 404; 408–409.

3. Muḥammad Barakat, *Kitābshināsī-yi maktab-i falsafī-yi Shīrāz* (Shiraz, 1383 Sh./ 2004), p. 209; Bahār Dūst, p. 401.

4. Bahār Dūst, p. 400.

5. Sajjad Rizvi (Rizvi, 'Mīr Dāmād's *al-Qabasāt*', p. 441) claims that Mīr Dāmād studied this text with Sammākī, but gives no proof of his claim. I fear such cannot be provided.

6. Abū ʿAbdallāh al-Ḥusayn ibn Ibrāhīm ibn al-Ḥusayn ibn Ḥuršīd Ṭabarī Nātilī was a logic and physician, the editor of the Arabic translation of Dioscurides' *Materia medica*. On him, see: Dimitri Gutas, *Avicenna and the Aristotelian Tradition Introduction to Reading Avicenna's Philosophical Works*, 2nd edition, Leiden, 2014, pp. 13–16.

Hence, it is rather likely that he studied the advanced philosophical texts independently.

It is not known when exactly Mīr Dāmād became a part of the royal court and what was his initial status there. Gradually, he became a close companion of Shāh ʿAbbās,[1] who, upon the death of Bahāʾ al-ʿĀmilī in 1030/1621, appointed him the *shaykh al-islām* of Iṣfahān.[2]

We know more or less precisely which texts Mīr Dāmād taught (in both transmitted and rational sciences) and who belonged to the inner circle of his students, but we don't know were exactly the instruction took place (in the course of time, as the status of Mīr Dāmād rose, the venue may have changed more than once).[3] The core philosophical texts he taught, apparently, were those of Ibn Sīnā and himself. The tentative list of the key taught texts, which can be partially reproduced on the basis of the surviving commentaries and glosses to them, and the permissions to teach these texts, issued to the students, would include:

- Kulaynī's (Kulīnī's[4]) *al-Kāfī*;

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1. Rizvi, 'Mīr Dāmād's *al-Qabasāt*', p. 442.

2. Ibid.

3. Kalbʿalī Tabrīzī (Muḥammad Zamān Kalbʿalī Tabrīzī, *Farāʾid al-fawāʾid fī aḥwāl madāris wa masājid*, ed. Rasūl Jaʿfariyān, Tehran, 1374 Sh./2005, p. 295; cf. ʿAlī Awjabī, 'Shamsā Ghilānī wa maktab-i falsafī-yi Iṣfahān', *Āyina-yi mīrāth*, 3/3-4 (Autumn and Winter 1384 Sh./2005), p. 102; Rizvi, 'Mīr Dāmād's *al-Qabasāt*', p. 442) claims that Mīr Dāmād taught at Shaykh Luṭf Allāh *madrasa*. However, there is no conclusive evidence in favour of this claim. The *madrasa* of Shaykh Luṭf Allāh, built for the famous jurist Luṭf Allāh al-Maysī al-ʿĀmilī (d. 1032/1622–1623), as far as we know, was not completed before 1028/1618. Having become the *shaykh al-islām*, Mīr Dāmād apparently led the prayers in the royal or main congregational mosque (*Masjīd-i Shāh*), which was completed in 1630, and probably for a short period before his death taught at the adjacent *madrasa*. It is, however, unclear where he taught before the completion of these two mosques and/or adjacent *madrasas*. Henry Corbin's belief that Mīr Dāmād taught at *Madrasa-yi Ṣadr-i bāzār* (Corbin, *En Islam iranien*, vol. 4, p. 10), unfortunately, is wrong, since the aforementioned *madrasa* was built in the early Qājār period by the then governor Ḥājj Muḥammad Ḥusayn Khān, known as Ṣadr-i Iṣfahānī (d. 1239/1823).

4. There is no univocity as to how his name should be transcribed in Roman letters – see: e.g. Wilferd Madelung's article 'al-Kulaynī (or al-Kulīnī), Abū Djaʿfar Muḥammad', *EI2* https://referenceworks.brillonline.com/entries/encyclopaedia-of-islam-2/al-kulayni-or-al-kulini-abu-djafar-muhammad-SIM_4495?s.num=1&s.f.s2_parent=s.f.cluster.Encyclopaedia+of+Islam&s.q=kulayni (accessed on 17 December 2018).

- Fārābī's *Kitāb al-jamʿ bayna raʾyay al-ḥakīmayn*;
- Ibn Sīnā's *al-Shifāʾ, al-Ishārāt wa al-tanbīhāt, al-Najāt* and *al-Taʿlīqāt*;
- Suhrawardī's *Ḥikmat al-ishrāq*;
- Naṣīr al-Dīn Ṭūsī's *Tajrīd al-ʿaqāʾid, Tahdhīb al-aḥkām* and *Sharḥ al-Ishārāt wa al-tanbīhāt*;
- Alī Qūshchī's commentary on al-Ṭūsī's *Tajrīd al-ʿaqāʾid*;
- Jalāl al-Dīn Davānī's *Unmūzadj al-ʿulūm*;
- Mīr Dāmād's *al-Ufuq al-mubīn, Taqwīm al-īmān, Ḥudūth al-ʿalam, al-Rawā-shikh al-samāwiyya, al-Ṣirāt al-mustaqīm* and *al-Qabasāt*.[1]

The list of Mīr Dāmād's principal students, in turn, can be drawn on the basis of the extant *ijāzāt* and, more importantly, by examining the commentaries and glosses on his works. His most famous student, definitely, was Mullā Ṣadrā. However, it is difficult to establish the exact character of their relationship (it is not known how long Ṣadrā studied with Mīr Dāmād, and no *ijāzā* in the latter's hand given to the former has survived) – in fact, circumstantial evidence shows that Ṣadrā never belonged to Mīr Dāmād's inner circle.

Mīr Dāmād's two closest disciples, who transmitted his philosophical teachings and elaborated on them were:

1) Sayyid Niẓām al-Dīn Aḥmad ʿAlawī ʿĀmilī (Mīr Dāmād's cousin and son-in-law, whom he describes as his spiritual son,[2] d. between 1054/1644 and 1060/1651).[3] He wrote commentaries on Mīr Dāmād's *al-Īmāḍāt, Taqwīm al-īmān* and *al-Qabasāt*.[4]

2) Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad Gīlānī, known as Mullā Shamsā (d. before 1064/1654), who wrote a commentary on the *al-Qabasāt* and a gloss on *al-Īmāḍāt*,[5] as well as an original treatise *Ḥudūth al-ʿālam*, in which he elu-

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1. See the lists of commentaries and glosses in: Bihbahānī, pp. 109–111; ʿAlī Awjabī, *Mīr Dāmād – bunyādguzār-i ḥikmat-i yamānī* (Tehran, 1382 Sh./2003), pp. 196–200.

2. See: the 1st *ijāza*, published in Ḥāmid Nājī, 'Muqaddima-yi muṣaḥḥiḥ', in Sayyid Aḥmad al-ʿAlawī, *Sharḥ kitāb al-Qabasāt*, ed. Ḥāmid Nājī, Tehran, 1376 Sh./1997, p. 62.

3. ʿAlī Awjabī, 'Muqaddima-yi muṣaḥḥiḥ', in Mīr Dāmād, *Taqwīm al-īmān wa sharḥihi Kashf al-ḥaqāʾiq li al-ḥakīm al-ilahī al-ʿallāma Sayyid Aḥmad al-ʿAlawī al-ʿĀmilī*, ed. ʿAlī Awjabī, 2nd ed., Tehran, 1385 Sh./2006, p. 135; cf. Rizvi, 'Mīr Dāmād's *al-Qabasāt*', p. 443.

4. Nājī, 'Muqaddima-yi muṣaḥḥiḥ', in Sayyid Aḥmad al-ʿAlawī, *Sharḥ kitāb al-Qabasāt*, pp. 70–71.

5. Sajjad H. Rizvi, 'Mullā Shamsā al-Gīlānī and His Treatise on the Incipience of the Cosmos', in Mullā Shamsā al-Gīlānī, *Ḥudūth al-ʿalam*, ed. ʿA. Aṣgharī and Gh. Dādkhāh, Costa Mesa, CA, 2015, p. 7 (of the English introduction).

cidated on Mīr Dāmād's theory of perpetual creation (*al-ḥudūth al-dahrī*) and defended it.

Among other students who played an important role in the dissemination of Mīr Dāmād's teachings, Niẓām al-Dīn Aḥmad Gīlānī (993/1585 – after 1071/1660), who is believed to have been the key figure in the transmission of Mīr Dāmād's ideas to the subcontinent[1] and who himself wrote a treatise on creation (*Ḥudūth al-ʿālam*), in which he defended his teacher's theory on the perpetual creation,[2] and Quṭb al-Dīn Muḥammad Ashkiwarī, the author of the famous history of philosophy *Maḥbūb al-qulūb* (d. 1090/1679), should be mentioned (Ashkiwarī's account includes passages from some of Mīr Dāmād's legal and mystical works which appear to be lost).

Other Mīr Dāmād's students in rational sciences include Sayyid ʿAlāʾ al-Dīn Ḥusayn Ḥusaynī, known as Khalīfa Sulṭān or Sulṭān al-ʿulamāʾ (d. 1064/1654), the son-in-law of Shāh ʿAbbās I and the vizier in 1624–1632 and 1645–1654, Muḥammad Taqī Astarābādī (d. 1058/1648), commentator of the Pseudo-Fārābī's *Fuṣūṣ fī al-ḥikma*, ʿAbd al-Razzāq Lāhijī (d. 1072/1662), who was Mullā Ṣadrā's son-in-law, but followed Ibn Sīnā in philosophy, ʿAbd al-Ghaffār Gīlānī, the author of the commentary on Mīr Dāmād's *Īqāḍāt*, and Rajab ʿAlī Tabrīzī (a proponent of apophatic theology and a rather harsh opponent of Mullā Ṣadrā, he died in 1080/1670).[3]

Among the students of second generation (with one intermediary), one must highlight the name of ʿAlī Qulī bin Qarachaghāy Khān (between 1020 and 1025/1611 and 1616 – 1097/1685), who, in his *Iḥyāʾ-i ḥikmat*, elaborated the theory of the *ḥudūth dahrī*, distinguishing between the absolute/unconditioned (*muṭlaq*) and pure (*ṣirf*) perpetual creation.[4]

Mīr Dāmād's students in *ḥadīth* included Sayyid Ḥusayn b. Ḥaydar Karakī

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1. He moved to India in 1040/1631 or 1632, settling in Hyderabad, where he enjoyed the patronage of Shāh Maḥabat Khān (d. 1044/1634), the influential Mughal general, and the ruler of the Quṭb Shāhī dynasty, ʿAbd Allāh Quṭb Shāh (r. 1034/1625–1082/1672). He was the representative of ʿAbd Allāh Quṭb Shāh in Iran in 1050/1640–1 and in Delhi in 1066/1655–6 (Asad Q. Ahmed, and Reza Pourjavady, 'Theology in the Indian Subcontinent', in Sabine Schmidtke, ed., *The Oxford Handbook of Islamic Theology*, Oxford, 2014, p. 612).

2. Rizvi, 'Mīr Dāmād's *al-Qabasāt*', p. 443.

3. Bihbahānī, pp. 53–56; Rizvi, 'Mīr Dāmād's *al-Qabasāt*', pp. 442–443.

4. ʿAlī Qulī bin Qarachaghāy Khān, *Iḥyāʾ-i ḥikmat*, ed. Fāṭima Fanā (2 vols., Tehran, 1377 Sh./1998), vol. 2, p. 530.

ʿĀmilī (fl. 1029/1620), Mullā Khalīl Qazwīnī (commentator of the *al-Kāfī*, d. 1089/1678), and Mīr Lawḥī Sabzawārī (later became famous for his opposition to Ṣūfism, d. 1087/1676).[1]

2. Works

Bihbahānī[2] lists 134 works of Mīr Dāmād. In terms of form and size, these can be grouped into:

- independent books and treatises (83 items);
- commentaries, glosses and addenda (29 items);
- letters (17 items);
- permissions to teach and endorsements (13 items).

In terms of the content, the works can approximately be divided into legal, philosophical, theological and exegetical. Many of them, however, fall within two or three of these categories, the border between the philosophical and theological works being particularly subtle (on the basis of the prevailing topics, one can establish, however, that the *al-Ufuq al-mubīn* is predominantly a philosophical opus, while the *Taqwīm al-īmān* is mainly a theological text). Here I give a brief account on the main works, grouped according their prevailing topics.

A. Philosophy and theology

- In all likelihood, Mīr Dāmād's *magnum opus **al-Ufuq al-mubīn*** ('The Clear Horizon', the title borrowed from Q. 81: 23 'He truly saw him on the clear horizon' Arberry[3]) was never completed (the extant part, apparently, was written before 1025/1616) – in any case, all known extant manuscripts contain only chapters (*musāqāt*) 1, 4 and 6 of the first part (*ṣarḥa*), which deals with general metaphysics. The second part (dealing with the special metaphysics (*rubūbiyāt*)) and chapters 2, 3 and 4 of the first part were either

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1. Rizvi, 'Mīr Dāmād's *al-Qabasāt*', p. 442.

2. Bihbahānī, pp. 107–113.

3. According to Qāḍī Saʿīd Qummī, the expression 'clear horizon' refers to 'what precedes the perpetuity' (*mā qabla al-dahr*), namely to 'the highest receptacle which is the receptacle of divine realities, holy intellects and luminous substances, situated above the [realm of] perpetuity' (Muḥammad Qāḍī Saʿīd Qummī, *Sharḥ* Tawḥīd al-Ṣadūq, ed. Najafqulī Ḥabībī, 3 vols., Tehran, 1415–1416/1994–1995, vol. 2, p. 11), i.e. the receptacle of eternity (*sarmad*).

never written, or lost, or (my personal opinion) probably existed only as sketchy outlines. The importance of the work lies in the fact that, in spite of its incomplete state, it still provides a relatively comprehensive picture of Mīr Dāmād's philosophical doctrine (which his other works, including *al-Qabasāt*, fail to do).

The first chapter of the first part contains discussions on such subjects of general metaphysics as making/ creation (*jaʿl*) in general sense (which, for Mīr Dāmād, coincides with the Real's predication of existence to the hypothetical quiddities present in His knowledge), and the properties of existence and the states of non-existence. The fifth chapter deals with the types, modes and properties of logical propositions, and elaborates on the difference between the necessary, the impossible and the contingent. The sixth chapter discusses the three kinds of receptacles of existence (eternity, perpetuity and time) and the types of the priority and posteriority, as well as the relationship of time and motion (and, thus becomes an indispensable introduction to the discussion on the perpetual creation), while also elucidating on the substance and meaning of the Yemenī wisdom.

Mīr Dāmād himself wrote numerous glosses on the work, to which his students Aḥmad ʿAlawī, Aḥmad Gīlānī and ʿAbd al-Ghaffār Gīlānī added a good number of theirs. Later glossators include Sharīf Kashmirī and Āqā ʿAlī Mudarris Zunūzī Ṭihrānī (1234–1307/1819–1888).[1]

- Mīr Dāmād's second major work is *Qabasāt ḥaqq al-yaqīn fī ḥudūth al-ʿālam* ('Burning Embers of True Certitude Concerning the Creation of the World') composed at a late stage of his academic career (completed in 1034/1625). The book consists of ten chapters (*qabasāt*, literally 'burning embers'), which, in turn, are divided into larger and smaller sections (*wamḍāt* ('flashes') and *wamīḍāt* ('blazes'), respectively). The key term *qabas* alludes to Q. 27: 7 'Behold when Moses said to his people: I perceive a light; soon I shall bring you some news from there or bring a burning brand (*shihābin qabasin*) so that you can warm yourselves'. As Mīr Dāmād mentions in the preface, the book was written in response to the request of some of his friends (and/or students?) to further elucidate on the issue

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1. His gloss (on the predication of relative mentally conceived predicates) was published as section 9 of the *Risāla fī al-wujūd al-rābiṭ* in Āqā ʿAlī Mudarris Ṭihrānī, *Majmūʿa-yi muṣannafāt*, ed. Muḥsin Kadīwar (3 vols., Tehran, 1378 Sh./1999), vol. 2, pp. 157–159.

of the creation – in particular, on the perpetual one.[1]

The first chapter discusses the kinds of creation and the related types of existence; the second deals with the three types of essential priority; the third is devoted to the two kinds of discrete posteriority. The fourth chapter represents a collection of the Qur'ānic verses, and prophetic traditions, which, in the author's opinion, support his teaching on creation. The fifth discusses the manner in which the natural universals exist. The sixth deals with the continuity of time and motion. The seventh chapter examines and refutes the arguments for the eternity of the world (i.e., the claims (of the Peripatetic philosophers) that the world is only essentially (but not perpetually) created). Chapter 8 is devoted to the discussion on God's will and power. Chapter 9 examines the order of priority and posteriority between different parts of the world (i.e., their hierarchy). The tenth chapter deals with God's decree and its gradual realization ('measuring out') and the problem of evil.

To date, there is only one modern edition of the work,[2] edited by Mahdi Mohaghegh, with the assistance of Toshihiko Izutsu and several Iranian scholars. Ḥāmid Nājī and Ḥussayn Najafī are currently preparing a new edition of Mīr Dāmād's *Qabasāt*, which will include detailed author's glosses and the commentaries and glosses of several Mīr Dāmād's disciples.[3]

On Mīr Dāmād's request, Aḥmad 'Alawī composed a detailed commentary on the *al-Qabasāt*,[4] which, in all likelihood, was completed after the author's death.[5] Two other commentaries were produced by Muḥammad b. 'Alī Riḍā Āqājānī (d. 1071/1660, student of Mullā Ṣadrā)[6] and Mīr Muḥammad Ashraf 'Āmilī (the latter's commentary was entitled *Miqbās al-Qabasāt*).[7] Mīr Dāmād and Mullā Ṣadrā wrote glosses on the work.

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1. Mīr Dāmād, *al-Qabasāt*, p. 1; cf. Rizvi, 'Mīr Dāmād's *al-Qabasāt*', p. 449.

2. Mīr Dāmād, *al-Qabasāt*, ed. M. Mohaghegh, 2nd ed. (Tehran, 1374 Sh./1995).

3. Personal conversations with Ḥussayn Najafī (in Tehran on 23 December 2019) and Ḥāmid Nājī (in Iṣfahān on 25 December 2019).

4. Published by Ḥāmid Nājī in 1376 Sh./1997 (see: footnote 43).

5. Nājī, 'Muqaddima-yi muṣaḥḥiḥ', in Sayyid Aḥmad al-'Alawī, *Sharḥ kitāb al-Qabasāt*, p. 73.

6. On him, see: Ghulām Ḥusayn Khadrī, *Ḥukamā' wa ḥikmat-i muta'āliya (1050–1231 h.q.)*, Tehran, 1391 Sh./2012, pp. 115–122.

7. Awjabī, *Mīr Dāmād*, p. 194.

- Another important, but unfinished, work on philosophical theology, the *Taqwīm al-īmān* ('Correcting/ Establishing Faith', the alternative title – *Al-Taṣḥīḥāt wa al-taqwīmāt*[1]), was written in or around 1026/1617.[2] It consists of a short introduction and one *raṣad* (literally 'observation') (and, hence, presumably, remains incomplete[3]), dealing with 'the Sustainer and the Essentially Necessary, the Maker of the possible worlds and the Establisher of the hierarchy of determination'[4] – in other words, with metaphysics in the more specific sense. The *raṣad* consists of five chapters (*fuṣūl*). The first chapter, named 'in place of the introduction' (*ka al-madkhal*), briefly addresses some issues of general metaphysics (the kinds of the existents, categories (substance and accidents), and two types of philosophical demonstration (from effect to cause and from cause to effect)). The second chapter deals with different kinds of the proofs of the Necessary-by-essence. The third chapter establishes the identity of essence and existence in the Necessary-by-essence and the otherness of these in all other existents (which, therefore, can only be the effects of something else) and discusses the types of unity/ oneness. The fourth chapter discusses some negative (the absence of opposites, manyness and likenesses) and positive (eternal priority to the world, including the intellects) attributes of the Necessary, and establishes the identity of the latter attributes with His essence. It also provides a proof of the perpetual creation. The fifth chapter deals with the different types of knowledge (formal and presential, active and passive, summary and detailed). It establishes the presential and active character of the Necessary's knowledge, and the identity of that knowledge with His essence.

  Four commentaries on the book are known to exist: 1) Mīr Dāmād himself wrote a detailed commentary on the opening statement (*taqdima*) of the

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1. Bihbahānī, p. 126. Cf. also slightly different versions of the title in Awjabī, 'Muqaddima-yi muṣaḥḥiḥ', in Mīr Dāmād, *Taqwīm al-īmān*, pp. 116–118; idem, *Mīr Dāmād*, p. 175.

2. See: Rizvi, 'Mīr Dāmād's *al-Qabasāt*', p. 448. Published twice: 1) Mīr Dāmād, *Taqwīm al-īmān wa sharḥihi* Kashf al-ḥaqā'iq *li al-ḥakīm al-ilahī al-'allāma Sayyid Aḥmad al-'Alawī al-'Āmilī*, ed. 'Alī Awjabī, 2nd ed. (Tehran, 1385 Sh./2006), pp. 1–380; 2) Mīr 'Abd al-Ḥasīb b. Aḥmad al-'Alawī, *'Arsh al-īqān fī sharḥ taqwīm al-īmān*, eds. 'Alī Awjabī and Akbar Thaqafiyān (Tehran, 1390 Sh./2011), pp. 1–139.

3. Contrary to what Rizvi ('Mīr Dāmād's *al-Qabasāt*', p. 448) believes.

4. Mīr Dāmād, *Taqwīm al-īmān*, p. 199.

book, entitled *Sharḥ taqdima Taqwīm al-īmān fī faḍāʾil amīr al-muʾminīn*;[1] 2) Aḥmad ʿAlawī composed a commentary, entitled *Kashf al-ḥaqāʾiq*;[2] 3) Mīr Dāmād's grandson Mīr ʿAbd al-Ḥasīb b. Aḥmad ʿAlawī (d. 1121/1709) wrote a commentary, entitled *ʿArsh al-īqān*;[3] 4) Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad Gīlānī (Mullā Shamsā) wrote another (as yet unpublished) commentary.[4] The author himself and several of his students wrote some glosses on the work. However, the most important glosses on the *Taqwīm al-īmān* were compiled about two hundred years later by Mullā ʿAlī Nūrī (d. 1246/1830).[5]

- (The unfinished) ***al-Ṣirāt al-mustaqīm fī rabṭ al-ḥādith wa al-qadīm*** ('The Straight Path Concerning the Relationship between the Created and Eternal'),[6] apparently, was also written before 1025/1616.[7] It consists of an introduction and one *masāq* ('route'), which is further divided into two *nuzʿa* ('gardens'). The first *nuzʿa* discusses the receptacles of existence and the states of the existent related to these receptacles. It is divided into five sections, dealing with temporal continuity and related issues, the flowing instant, the meaning of the concepts of eternity (*sarmad*) and perpetuity (*dahr*), and eternity *a parte ante* (*azal*) and eternity *a parte post* (*abad*). The second (incomplete) *nuzʿa* consists of one section, which deals with the three kinds of temporal creation (instantaneous, gradual and temporal proper) and examines the difference between them and the perpetual creation.[8] Mīr Dāmād himself compiled some glosses and addenda to the work.

- ***Jadhawāt wa mawāqīt*** ('Flaming Embers and Appointed Meeting Times'),[9]

1. Mīr Dāmād, *Sharḥ taqdima Taqwīm al-īmān fī faḍāʾil amīr al-muʾminīn*, ed. Ḥāmid Nājī and Ghulām ʿAlī Najafī, with an introduction by Maḥmūd Mīrdāmādī, Isfahan, 1412/1991.

2. Published in Mīr Dāmād, *Taqwīm al-īmān wa sharḥihi* Kashf al-ḥaqāʾiq, pp. 381–771.

3. Mīr ʿAbd al-Ḥasīb al-ʿAlawī, *ʿArsh al-īqān*, pp. 141–371.

4. Awjabī, 'Muqaddima-yi muṣaḥḥiḥ', in Mīr Dāmād, *Taqwīm al-īmān*, p. 120.

5. Published in Mīr Dāmād, *Taqwīm al-īmān wa sharḥihi* Kashf al-ḥaqāʾiq *li al-ḥakīm al-ilāhī al-ʿallāma Sayyid Aḥmad al-ʿAlawī al-ʿĀmilī*.

6. Mīr Dāmād, *al-Ṣirāt al-mustaqīm*, ed. ʿAlī Awjabī, 2nd ed. (Tehran, 1381 Sh./2002 – a critical edition based on 5 MSS); Mīr Dāmād, *Muṣannafāt*, vol. 1, pp. 329–496 (based on a single MS).

7. Bihbahānī, p. 157.

8. Only the title of the second section of the second *nuzʿa* is given ('On the manner in which the thing which moves in time is related to the category in which the motion occurs'). No text follows – the work ends with this title of the second section.

9. Mīr Dāmād, *Jadhawāt wa mawāqīt*, with the glosses of Mullā ʿAlī Nūrī, ed. ʿAlī Awjabī,

Mīr Dāmād's only major work in Persian, formally represents a detailed philosophical exegesis (*tàwīl*) of the Qurāʾnic verse 7: 143 'And when Moses came to Our appointed time and his Lord spoke with him, he said, 'Oh my Lord, show me, that I may behold Thee!' Said He, 'Thou shalt not see Me; but behold the mountain -- if it stays fast in its place, then thou shalt see Me.' And when his Lord revealed Him to the mountain He made it crumble to dust; and Moses fell down swooning'.[1] According to the explanation provided by Mīr Dāmād in the introduction, the book was composed in order to dissolve the doubts of certain sages of the Mughal India, who were unable to understand how Moses body could remain intact during God's manifestation, while the mountain which saw Him crumbled to dust. Allegedly, they turned to Shāh ʿAbbās for help, and the latter ordered Mīr Dāmād to write a detailed explanation of the verse[2] (the veracity of this account is, at least partially, confirmed by the choice of the language: Persian was the main language of the court and the literati of Mughal India). In addition to being an allegorical interpretation of the aforementioned Qurāʾnic verse, the work (in particular, *mawāqīt* 5–35) can also be read as a treatise on the science of letters and numbers. The work consists of an introduction and forty-seven chapters, the first twelve of which are called *jadhawāt*, and the remaining thirty-five –*mawāqīt*. The *jadhawāt* part represents a series of general metaphysical discussions on the hierarchy of existence, prophecy and eschatology, while each of the *mīqāt* discusses a certain specific paradigmatic aspect, in which God reveals Himself to us.[3]

- **al-Īmāḍāt wa al-tashrīfāt** ('Flashes and Exaltations', also known as *al-Ṣaḥīfa al-malakūtiyya, al-Ḥikma al-nabawiyya*[4] and *Tashrīq al-ḥaqq*[5])[6] is another incomplete work on creation and eternity. Probably completed before 1025/1616, but its second part may be composed after the *al-Ufuq al-mubīn* and the *al-Ṣirāt al-mustaqīm*.[7] It was intended to consist of five chapters

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Tehran, 1380 Sh./2001.

1. Arthur John Arberry (trans.), *The Koran Interpreted*, Oxford, 1998, p. 159.

2. Mīr Dāmād, *Jadhawāt wa mawāqīt*, pp. 5–6.

3. See: the author's explanation in Mīr Dāmād, *Jadhawāt wa mawāqīt*, pp. 153–154.

4. Awjabī, *Mīr Dāmād*, p. 170.

5. Awjabī, *Mīr Dāmād*, p. 172.

6. Mīr Dāmād, *Muṣannafāt*, vol. 1, pp. 1–112.

7. Bihbahānī, p. 123.

(*suqāya*, 'drinking places'), however the fourth one, apparently, was never written and the fifth one consists of two brief sections and ends abruptly. Each completed *suqāya* consists of a number of short (typically, ten to thirty lines) sections (*īmāḍāt*). The first *suqāya* deals with the characteristics of the existent in accordance with the types of the receptacles of existence. The second one discusses the characteristics of the created things in accordance with the type of their creation (temporal or perpetual). The third chapter establishes the existence of the prime matter and discusses its role in the substantiation of bodies. The supplement (*takmila*) to the third chapter examines the implications of the affirmation of the existence of the prime matter. The addendum (*talḥiqa*) to the supplement discusses certain relevant points (the true meaning of action and passion, the transition from potency to act etc.). The fifth chapter was intended to deal with the transition from the realm of becoming to the realm of the divine, but stops at the discussion on the relation of the categories to the essence.

- *al-Taqdīsāt* ('Sanctifications', not identical with the *ʿArsh al-taqdīs*![1])[2] postulates a number of common principles which 'make complete the proofs of God's transcendence and oneness[3] (such as 'the Existence-by-essence is necessary', 'a single effect cannot be dependent on two causes', 'the source of abstraction is the shared nature', 'essential necessity is true activity, whereas contingency is the annihilation of the essence', etc.). It consists of 89 short chapters (*taqdīsāt*).

- *al-Īqāẓāt* ('Awakenings')[4] discusses the issues of compulsion and free choice, and God's decree and its gradual realisation ('measuring out'), and, concomitantly, the issue of good and evil in the hierarchy of being. Probably composed before 1025/1616, the book consists of an introduction (on the creation of the actions) and six chapters ('awakenings'). ʿAbd al-Ghaffār Gīlānī wrote glosses on it.

- *al-Īḍālāt al-ʿawīṣa fī funūn al-ʿulūm wa al-ṣināʿāt* ('Embarassing Difficult Questions, Pertaining to Various Sciences and Arts')[5] offers the solutions of twenty difficulties pertaining to various arts and sciences (mathemat-

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1. Bihbahānī, p. 126.

2. Mīr Dāmād, *Muṣannafāt*, vol. 1, pp. 113–206.

3. Mīr Dāmād, *Muṣannafāt*, vol. 1, p. 115.

4. Mīr Dāmād, *Muṣannafāt*, vol. 1, pp. 207–266.

5. Mīr Dāmād, *Muṣannafāt*, vol. 1, pp. 267–280.

ics, astronomy, logic, philosophy, theology and jurisprudence), written in 1022/1613.[1]

- *Khulsat al-malakūt* ('The Angelic Ecstasy'), a philosophical treatise, was completed in 1020/1611. It consists of two parts (*rashḥ*, 'transpirations'), each of which then divides into more than a dozen short sections. The first part establishes the unicity of the Maker as the sole possessor of eternity, concomitantly discussing the types of creation and the related aporia. The second deals with certain issues related to creation, time and motion.

- *Nibrās al-ḍiyāʾ wa taswāʾ al-sawāʾ fī sharḥ bāb al-badāʾ wa ithbāt jadwa al-duʿāʾ* ('The Cresset of Light and the Equal Share in the Commentary on the Chapter on the Change and the Establishment of the Usefulness of the Supplication'),[2] written upon the request of Mīr Dāmād's student Muḥammad Ḥusayn Chalapī Istanbulī Sipāhānī,[3] deals with the issue of (the possibility of) the change in God's decision.

B. Ḥadīth

- *Al-Rawāshiḥ al-samāwiyya fī sharḥ al-aḥādīth al-imāmiyya* ('The Celestial Drops in the Commentary on the Sayings of the Imams'),[4] a (philosophically inclined) commentary on (the introduction (*khuṭba*) 'The Book of the Intellect and the Ignorance' and some *ḥadīth*s from 'The Book of the Oneness' of) Kulīnī's *al-Kāfī*, consists of an introduction and 39 sections (*rāshiḥa*). Mīr Dāmād himself and his students Mullā Ṣadrā and Fayḍ Kāshānī wrote glosses on it.[5]

C. Jurisprudence (*fiqh*) and the Principles of Jurisprudence (*uṣūl al-fiqh*)[6]

- *Al-Sabʿ al-shidād* ('The Seven Strong Ones', an allusion to Q. 78: 12), com-

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1. Awjabī, *Mīr Dāmād*, p. 169.

2. Mīr Dāmād, *Nibrās al-ḍiyāʾ wa taswāʾ al-sawāʾ fī sharḥ bāb al-badāʾ wa ithbāt jadwa al-duʿāʾ*, with the addenda by Mullā ʿAlī Nūrī, ed. Ḥāmid Nājī, Tehran, 1374 Sh./1995.

3. Bihbahānī, p. 171.

4. Mīr Dāmād, *Al-Rawāshiḥ al-samāwiyya fī sharḥ al-aḥādīth al-imāmiyya*, Qum, 1405/1984.

5. Bihbahānī, p. 149.

6. For a more detailed overview of Mīr Dāmād's works on *fiqh* (including his *fatwā*s), see: Mathieu Terrier, 'Mīr Dāmād (m. 1041/1631), philosophe et *mujtahid: Autorité spirituelle et autorité juridique en Iran safavide shīʿite*', *Studia Islamica* 113 (2018), pp. 133–148.

posed in 1023/1614,[1] consists of seven chapters (*maqāla*), each of which is divided into several sections. Mīr Dāmād himself wrote a gloss on it.[2]

- [*al-Risāla*] **al-Khalʿiyya** ('The Solving [Treatise]') (also known as *Uʿyūn al-masāʾil* and [*al-Risāla*] *al-ithna ʿashariyya*), a treatise on twelve issues of religious law (such as ablution, prayer, ritual purity etc.); the discussion is built in the *uṣūlī* manner (i.e., rests on logical reasoning). Apparently written after the *al-Ufuq al-mubīn* and *al-Ṣirāt al-mustaqīm*, but before 1025/1616. Probably unfinished (the known MSS include only five chapters).[3]

- *Shāriʿ al-najāt fī abwāb al-muʿāmalāt* ('The Path of Salvation through the Gates of Transactions', the initial title given by the author – *al-Risāla al-fārsiyya fī uṣūl al-dīn wa furūʿihi*), a treatise on the transactions (*muʿāmalāt*), consists of an introduction, three principles (rational theology, intellectual appreciation (=the principles of *ḥadīth*) and the principles of jurisprudence), and ten chapters (on the acts of worship, such as prayer, fast, religious taxes etc.) and a conclusion. Like the *Nibrās al-ḍiyāʾ*, it was written upon the request of Muḥammad Ḥusayn Chalapī.[4] Apparently, Mīr Dāmād himself wrote some glosses on it.[5]

- *Shirʿat al-tasmiyya fī nahy ʿan tasmiyya ṣāḥib al-zamān* ('The Law of Naming Concerning the Prohibition of Naming the Lord of the Time')[6] discusses the lawfulness of explicitly naming the absent Imam of the Time and and/or naming other people after him. Referring to certain Shīʿī traditions, Mīr Dāmād concludes that both actions are unlawful. The book was written in 1020/1611, apparently, as part of the ongoing discussion on the issue between Shaykh Bahāʾī and Mīr Dāmād, probably in response to an explicit request of some of his students.[7]

- *Ḍhawābiṭ al-riḍāʿ* ('The Rules of Breastfeeding', also known as *al-Risāla*

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1. Bihbahānī, p. 150; Awjabī, *Mīr Dāmād*, p. 189. Published twice: 1) Mīr Dāmād, *Al-Sabʿ al-shidād,* Qum, 1317/1899, lithographical edition; 2) Mīr Dāmād, *Al-Sabʿ al-shidād*, Tehran, 1397/1976.
2. Bihbahānī, p. 150; Awjabī, *Mīr Dāmād*, p. 189.
3. Awjabī, *Mīr Dāmād*, p. 167.
4. Awjabī, *Mīr Dāmād*, p. 190.
5. Ibid.
6. Mīr Dāmād, *Shirʿat al-tasmiyya*, ed. Riḍā Ustādī, Isfahan, 1409/1988.
7. Bihbahānī, pp. 155–156; Awjabī, *Mīr Dāmād*, p. 190.

al-riḍāʿiyya), a lengthy comprehensive treatise in verse (approximately 4850 verses) on the rules of breastfeeding, written in 1028/1619. Consists of an introduction, three expositions (istibāna) (which, in turn, divide into smaller sections) and a conclusion. Mīr Dāmād's opinion on the issue in some points differs from the view of the earlier Shīʿī jurists, including those of his grandfather Muḥaqqiq ʿAlī Karakī. In particular, he argues for the permissibility of the wider application (i.e., the applicability of the rule relevant to a case explicitly referred at in the Scripture or in the tradition to a similar case to which they do not explicitly refer (the rule of ʿumūm-i manzilat).)[1]

D. Gnosis (ʿirfān)

- [al-Risāla] **al-Khalʿiyya** ('The [Treatise of] Undressing', a reference to the soul's exit from the material body during an ecstatic experience), an account of Mīr Dāmād's two ecstatic experiences (khulsa), one of which occurred in Qum in Ramaḍān 1011/ February or March 1603 and the other – in Iṣfahān on 14 Shaʿbān 1023/ 19 September 1614, and during which he allegedly left the limits of time and space, finding himself in the realm of perpetuity. The Arabic text and an annotated French translation by Henry Corbin was published in the *Festschrift* of Louis Massignon.[2]

- *Dīwān-i Ishrāq* (collection of poems, typically signed with the pen name *Ishrāq* ('Illumination')),[3] consists of two parts, Persian and Arabic. The Persian part includes 2 *mathnawī*s (*Mashriq al-anwār* (a response to Niẓāmī Ganjawī's *Maḥzan al-asrār*) and [*Dar radd-i ān ki*] *pā-yi istdidlāliyān chūbīn buwad*, a refutation of the famous verse of Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī), 2 *qaṣīda*s, 37 *ghazal*s, 318 *rubāʿī*s and 5 *qiṭʿa*s. The (much smaller) Arabic part consists of 2 incomplete *qaṣīda*s, 3 *qiṭʿa*s and 7 *rubāʿī*s.

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1. Bihbahānī, p. 159. Recently published in two separate editions: 1) Mīr Dāmād, *Ḍhawābiṭ al-riḍāʿ*, ed. Ḥujjat Manganachi (Qum, 1392 Sh./2013); 2) Mīr Dāmād, *Ḍhawābiṭ al-riḍāʿ*, ed. Sayyid Mujtabā Mīrdāmādī (2 vols., Qum, 1392 Sh./2013).

2. Corbin, 'Confessions extatiques de Mîr Dâmâd', vol. 1, pp. 278–331.

3. Published twice: 1) Mīr Dāmād, *Dīwān-i Ishrāq*, ed. Ḥājj Mīrzā Maḥmūd Shafīʿī, with an introduction by Abarqūhī (Isfahan, 1349 Sh. /1970); 2) Mīr Dāmād, *Dīwān-i Ishrāq*, ed. Samīra Pūstīndūz, with an introduction by Jūyā Jahānbakhsh, Tehran, 1385 Sh. /2006.

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- _____. 'Muqaddima-yi muṣaḥḥiḥ', in Mīr Dāmād, *Taqwīm al-īmān wa sharḥihi Kashf al-ḥaqāʾiq li al-ḥakīm al-ilahī al-ʿallāma Sayyid Aḥmad al-ʿAlawī al-ʿĀmilī*, ed. ʿAlī Awjabī, 2nd ed., Tehran: Mīrāth-i maktūb, 1385 Sh./2006, pp. 19–156.

- _____. 'Muqaddima-yi muṣaḥḥiḥ', in Qawām al-Dīn Muḥammad Rāzī Tihrānī, *Majmūʿa-yi muṣannafāt: ʿAyn al-ḥikma wa Taʿlīqāt*, ed. ʿAlī Awjabī, Tehran: Ḥikmat, 1389 Sh./2010, pp. XIII–XLIII.

- _____. 'Shamsā Ghilānī wa maktab-i falsafī-yi Iṣfahān', *Āyina-yi mīrāth*, 3/3-4 (Autumn and Winter 1384 Sh./2005), pp. 101–129.

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- _____. [*al-Risāla*] *al-Khalʿiyya*, in Henry Corbin, "Confessions extatiques de Mîr Dâmâd" pp. 367–368.

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- _____. *al-Ṣirāt al-mustaqīm*, ed. ʿAlī Awjabī, 2nd ed., Tehran: Mīrāth-i maktūb, 1381 Sh./2002.

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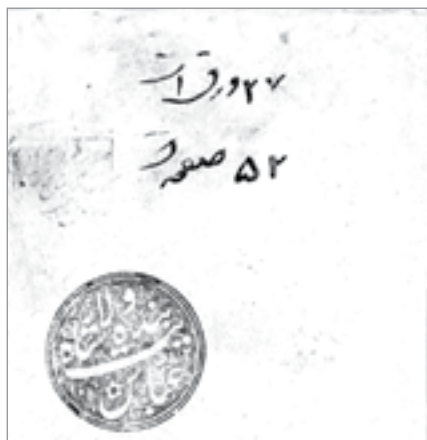
A Seal Impression of Shah Abbas I of Persia (Contemporary with Mīr Dāmād)

Collection No. 2493 (Arabic), Berlin State Library

The Beginning of an Exquisite Manuscript of Mīr Dāmād's *Al-Qabasāt*

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Articles

Mīr Dāmād by his Student Quṭb al-Dīn Ashkiwarī:

A Spiritual and Political Portrayal*

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Abstract

In Western Studies, Mīr Dāmād is depicted sometimes as a Gnostic philosopher subject to ecstatic experiences, and sometimes as an ambitious lawyer, essentially concerned with empowering the *mujtahid*s class over society. Quite surprisingly, these two portraits are based on the same text, a doxographic notice on Mīr Dāmād composed by his former student Quṭb al-Dīn Ashkiwarī (d. between 1088 and 1095 /1677 and 1684) as part of a monumental history of sages. This article proposes to study this text in its entirety and its intentionality, in order to draw a more united and coherent portrayal of the philosopher-*mujtahid*. Indeed, in the anthology of legal, philosophical and mystical texts of Mīr Dāmād selected by Ashkiwarī, it appears that both the exoteric and esoteric dimensions of truth and authority were inseparable in the works and life of the "third master", as they are in the Imāmi religion itself.

Keywords: Mīr Dāmād, Quṭb al-Dīn Ashkiwarī, Gnosis, Friday prayer, *ijtihād*, theodicy, Imamology

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Introduction

In 1956 was published Henry Corbin's "Confessions extatiques de Mīr Dāmād, maître de théologie à Ispahan (ob. 1041/1631-1632)", the first study on "the third master" (*al-muʾallim al-thālith*) in the Western academic world. The French philosopher and orientalist also invented here the famous expression of "the philosophical School of Isfahan", meaning a synthesis of four currents of thought: the Peripatetic philosophy, Suhrawardī's (d. 597/1191) "wisdom of illumination" (*ḥikmat al-ishrāq*), Ibn al-ʿArabī's (d. 638/1240) intellectual mysticism, and the teachings of the impeccable Imāms as conserved in their *ḥadīth*s.[1] It is worth noticing that Corbin's primary source, in this pioneering work, was a notice composed on Mīr Dāmād by one of his ancient students, Quṭb al-Dīn Ashkiwarī (d. between 1088 and 1095/1677 and 1684), inserted at the end of an encyclopedia of sages entitled *Maḥbūb al-qulūb*. Although this notice has been reproduced in extenso in the introduction of the first critical edition of Mīr Dāmād's *Kitāb al-Qabasāt* in 1977,[2] and became therefore an authoritative source on this philosopher, the *Maḥbūb al-qulūb* waited twenty more years to be edited only incompletely.[3]

From Ashkiwarī's notice, Corbin relied mainly on a few pages allowing him to present Mīr Dāmād as a philosopher both Peripatetic (*mashshāʾī*) and Gnostic (*ʿārif*), combining rational speculation and visionary experience. Thirty years after him, and a few years after the Islamic revolution in Iran, Said Amir Arjomand, in *The Shadow of God and the Hidden Imam*, pointed out that Mīr Dāmād had held, as a *mujtahid*, a high position at the court of Shāh Abbās I (r. 996-1038/1588-1629) and Shāh Ṣafī (r. 1038-1052/1629-1642) ; and relying on

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1. Henry Corbin, "Confessions extatiques de Mīr Dāmād, maître de théologie à Ispahan (ob. 1041/1631-1632)", in H. Massé (ed.), *Mélanges offerts à Louis Massignon*, 3 vol., Damas, 1956, I, pp. 331-378; resumed in Idem, *En Islam iranien. Aspects spirituels et philosophiques. IV. L'école d'Ispahan, l'école shaykhie, le douzième imâm*, Paris, Gallimard, 1972, pp. 9-53. See also: Seyyed Hossein Nasr, "The school of Isfahan", in M. M. Sharif (ed.), *A history of Muslim Philosophy*, 2 vols., Wiesbaden, 1963-66, Vol. II, pp. 904-992.

2. Mīr Dāmād, *Kitāb al-Qabasāt*, ed. M. Muḥaqqiq, Tehran, Muʾassasa-yi intishārāt wa chāp-i dānashgāh-i Tihrān, 1977-2016, introduction, p. 31-53.

3. Quṭb al-Dīn Ashkiwarī, *Maḥbūb al-qulūb, al-maqālat al-ʿulā*, ed. I. al-Dībājī and H. Ṣidqī, Tehran, Mīrāth-i maktūb, 1378 Sh./1999; French transl. with commentary in Mathieu Terrier, *Histoire de la sagesse et philosophie shiʿite. L'Aimé des cœurs de Quṭb al-Dîn Ashkiwarî*, Paris, Le Cerf, 2016; Quṭb al-Dīn Ashkiwarī, *Maḥbūb al-qulūb, al-maqālat al-thāniya*, ed. I. al-Dībājī and H. Ṣidqī, Tehran, Mīrāth-i maktūb, 1382 Sh./2003.

other extracts from Ashkiwarī's notice, Arjomand presented Mīr Dāmād as a defender of the political sovereignty of the lawyer (*faqīh*), namely a precursor of Ayatullāh Khomeini.[1] Thus two historians, based on the same source with different agendas, have formed two portrayals, seemingly contradictory, of the same scholar, one as a representative of genuine Shī'i esotericism, the other as an architect of the politicization of Shī'ism in modern time. However, in Ashkiwarī's notice, these two dimensions, esoteric and exoteric, prove to be much more in solidarity than opposed. In the following pages, we propose a comprehensive study of this source, allowing us to sketch a more coherent portrayal of Mīr Dāmād's spiritual and political personality.

1. Mīr Dāmād in Ashkiwarī's History of Wisdom

Quṭb al-Dīn Ashkiwarī remains a poorly known actor of the "Renaissance of philosophy" in Safavid Iran. After having been a pupil, in his early youth, of Shaykh Bahā'ī (d. 1031/1621) and Mīr Dāmād in Isfahan, he returned to his homeland of Lāhījān, Gilan, in order to endorse the function of *shaykh al-is-lām*.[2] The *Maḥbūb al-qulūb*, which occupied at least the last ten years of his life, is the last great "history of wisdom" or "encyclopedia of the sages" in the history of Islamic literature, and the first one to be composed from an open Shī'i point of view.[3] Its core purpose is to establish the agreement or *symphonia* between philosophy, Imāmi Shī'ism and a certain Sufism. It is divided into three volumes: the first one on the sages before Islam, mainly the Greek philosophers; the second one on the scholars of Islam, translators, astrologers, doctors, philosophers, as well as Sufis; the third one on the twelve Imāms and as many Shī'i scholars – theologians, traditionists, lawyers and *mujtahid*s – after the Occultation of the twelfth Imām. The chapter on Mīr Dāmād takes place at the end of this third volume, after Shaykh Bahā'ī and before the conclusion formed by Ashkiwarī's own autobiography. In this history of wisdom, Mīr Dāmād therefore does not make part of the Muslim philosopher – as Ibn Sīnā or Suhrawardī in the second volume –, but appears namely as "the seal of the *mujtahids*" (*khātam al-mujtahidīn*), i.e. the supreme religious authority

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1. Said Amir Arjomand, *The Shadow of God and the Hidden Imam*, Chicago/ London, The University of Chicago Press, 1984, p. 305, n. 101.

2. On the life and works of Ashkiwarī, see: Terrier, *Histoire de la sagesse*, p. 25-105.

3. On the histories of the sages, see: Terrier, *Histoire de la sagesse*, p. 124-137.

during the Imām's absence. Even more, by bringing together the three main knowledge successively presented in the book, that are philosophical wisdom (*ḥikma*), mystical knowledge (*'irfān*) and religious science (*sharī'a*), Mīr Dāmād appears as the one who leads wisdom to its achievement.

At the outset, Mīr Dāmād is designated as "the one who verified the rational and traditional [religious] sciences" (*al-muḥaqqiq fī l-ma'qūl wa l-muḥiqq fī l-manqūl*), i.e. philosophy on the one hand, *ḥadīth* and *fiqh* on the other hand.[1] Ashkiwarī also reminds us that the name of the philosopher is due to his forebear, the fifth Imām Muḥammad al-Bāqir (d. ca 114/732); and that his nickname al-Dāmād, "the son-in-law," was inherited from his father, son-in-law of the famous shaykh 'Alī al-Karakī (d. 940/1533), the artisan of the institutionalization of Imāmi Shī'ism under the first Safavid Shāhs Ismā'īl (r. 907-930/1501-1524) and Tahmāsp (r. 930-984/1524-1576). Then he gives a list of some of the master's works: apart four major philosophical treatises, that are *Taqwīm al-īmān*, *al-Ṣirāṭ al-mustaqīm*, *al-Ufuq al-mubīn*, *al-Qabasāt*, he mentions *al-Rawāshiḥ al-samāwiyya*, an introduction to al-Kulaynī's (d. 329/941) *Kitāb al-Kāfī*), and *al-Jadhawāt wa-l-mawāqīt*, an occultist-philosophical work in Persian.[2] The following pages – twenty-one in the published edition – give an anthology of texts of a legal, mystical and/or philosophical nature, mostly borrowed from various other works.

2. From Law to Gnosis

The first extract is the conclusion of a treaty of Law (*fiqh*) entitled *Ḍawābiṭ al-riḍā'*, dealing with the kinship caused by the breastfeeding of the same nursemaid, an issue that seems to have raised fierce debates among the lawyers of the time.[3] Following his grandfather al-Karakī, Mīr Dāmād supported the validity of a prophetic *ḥadīth* stating that ten feedings were necessary and sufficient to create a kinship link. However, in an unusual way for a work of *fiqh*, the conclusion offers an esoteric interpretation which is precisely Ashkiwarī's point of interest:

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1. *Qabasāt*, introduction, p. 31.

2. Ibid., p. 32.

3. See: Andrew Newman, "The Myth of the Clerical Migration to Safawid Iran: Arab Shi'ite Opposition to Ali al-Karaki and Safawid Shi'ism", *Die Welt des Islams*, 33 (1993), pp. 66-112, esp. pp. 83-89. On this epistle, voir Āqā Buzurg al-Ṭihrānī, *al-Dharī'a ilā taṣānīf al-shī'a*, 26 vols., Tehran-Najaf, 1353-1398/1934-1978, vol. 15, p. 120, § 805.

*Man, being the copy of the system of the universe and the sum of the hierarchies of the worlds (*fadhlaka ṭabaqāt al-'awālim*), has two roots corresponding to both worlds, one corresponding to the world of Nature, which is his corporeal temple, i.e. his material body, and the other corresponding to the world of Holiness, which is his intellective substance, i.e. his rational and immaterial soul (*nafsuhu l-nāṭiqa al-mujarrada*). By virtue of the two copies, man has a birth in each of the two worlds and, by virtue of his two births, he receives two breastfeeds in two different ways, one sensitive and the other intellectual. The two breasts of his intellectual breastfeeding, according to his true birth, are the theoretical and practical faculties, the first one facing the true Reality which is the remaining and everlasting Origin, the second one acting towards the perishing corporeal temple. The milk of these two faculties is the light of science and the brightness of wisdom. Just as the physical breastfeeding produces a kinship similar to that of physical offspring (...), the spiritual breastfeeding produces a kinship similar to the intellectual kinship with the substances of the worlds of Praise and Glorification, and a direct conjunction with the intellectual and holy Lights, I mean the most beautiful angels close to God (*malā'ikat allāh al-muqarrabīn*), and especially the Holy Spirit, the giver of the forms with the permission of his Prodigal Lord [...]. And just as the minimum measure of the bodily breastfeeding [legally] taken into account is ten complete feeds, the minimum intellective breastfeeding taken into account is (...) the knowledge of the ten degrees of the two hierarchies of Origin and Return (*al-badw wa l-'awd*), which are the two hemispheres of the system of existence. The encompassing circle (*al-muḥīṭ*) is the Almighty, "God who encompasses all things" (Qur'an 4:126, 41:54). The path leading to Him, the extinction in Him, the subsistence by Him (...) are in the places of Origin and Return (*al-mabdā' wa l-ma'ād*). A man is not counted among the sages until he has acquired the ability to undress from his tenebrous body and rise to the luminous world, until his body has become for him like a tunic which he sometimes puts on and other times casts off.*[1]

Drawn from a legal treatise on an apparently minor issue, this text summarizes Mīr Dāmād's entire philosophical system and conception of the spiritual

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1. *Qabasāt*, introduction, pp. 32-33; *Ḍawābiṭ al-riḍā'*, in *Kalimāt al-muḥaqqiqīn*, Iran, 1898, pp. 145-146.

life, inherited from Neoplatonism and concluded in Suhrawardī's words.[1] This is followed by a quote of *al-Jadhawāt wa l-mawāqīt* recalling the analogy, shared by all the philosophers of Islam, according to which the Lights of the active Intellects (*anwār al-ʿuqūl al-faʿʿāla*) are similar to the angels close to God, and the active Intellect governing the sublunar world is similar to the angel Gabriel or the Holy Spirit.[2]

Ashkiwarī obviously intends to show that Mīr Dāmād was one of those sages able to strip themselves of their bodies like a tunic. He reports two accounts of the master's spiritual experiences, the first dated 1023/1614 and known as *Risālat al-khalʿiyya* ("Epistle of the stripping"), the second dated 1011/1601 and conserved as a talisman formula (*ḥarz*). These are the two "ecstatic confessions" on which Corbin based himself to depict Mīr Dāmād as a Gnostic philosopher. Both texts are also reported by Muḥammad Bāqir al-Majlisī (d. 1111/1699) in the *Biḥar al-anwār*.[3]

The first vision of ecstasy occurred to Mīr Dāmād a Friday of Shaʿbān, during a seclusion, while he was repeatedly invoking God (*dhikr*) by His name: "O He who is self-sufficient (*al-ghanī*)! O He who makes self-sufficient (*yā mughnī*)!", and meditating on the Secret and the Light of God. Then:

> *Suddenly, it was as if an abductor of the world of holiness* (*khāṭifa qudsiyya*) *had come upon me and ripped me from my physical nest. I pierced the chain of the lattice of the senses, untied the bindings of nature and began to fly with the wings of my heart into the space of the kingdom of True Reality* (*malakūt al-ḥaqīqa*). *It was as if I had stripped myself of my body* (…), *as if I had folded up the land of time* (*iqlīm al-zamān*) *and burst into the world of Meta-time* (*ʿālam al-dahr*).

Mīr Dāmād refers here to the distinction, central in its metaphysical system, between the time (*zamān*) of the physical world, that of generation and corruption, the Meta-time (*dahr*) of the intelligible world, and the No-time

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1. Shihāb al-Dīn Suhrawardī, *Kitāb al-Mashāriʿ*, in *Œuvres philosophiques et mystiques*, tome I, ed. H. Corbin, Tehran / Paris, Institut d'Études et de Recherches culturelles – A. Maisonneuve, new ed. 2001, pp. 193-506, see: p. 503.

2. *Qabasāt*, introduction, pp. 33-34; Mīr Dāmād, *al-Jadhawāt wa l-mawāqīt*, ed. ʿA. Awjabī, Tehran, Mīrāth-i maktūb, 1380 Sh./2001, p. 33.

3. Muḥammad Bāqir al-Majlisī, *Biḥār al-anwār*, 111 vol., Beirut, Muʾassasat al-wafāʾ, 1403/1983, vol. 106, pp. 125-126 and vol. 91, pp. 370-371. Corbin, *En Islam iranien,* IV, p. 36, only mentions Majlisī's quotation from the *R. al-Khalʿiyya*.

(*sarmad*) of the divine Essence.[1] After this opening scene, he relates how he simultaneously contemplated both worlds of established (*ibdāʿiyyāt*), meta-physical (*ilāhiyyāt*), immaterial (*qudsiyyāt*) and meta-temporal beings (*dahri-yyāt*), and of generated (*takwīniyyāt*), natural (*ṭabīʿiyyāt*), material (*hayūlāni-yyāt*) and temporal existents (*zamāniyyāt*). At the end, his soul saw and heard all the atoms of the worlds turning their faces towards God and invoking Him by His names: "O He who is self-sufficient! O He who makes self-sufficient!". Then he lapsed and returned unwillingly to his body and what he calls "the land of perdition, vanity and illusion".[2]

This text bears a clear resemblance with an account of ecstasy of Plotinus, attributed to Aristotle in the famous *Uthūlūjiyya Arisṭāṭālīs*, which was well known by Mīr Dāmād.[3] However, the latter's report shows a specific religious dimension and a typical conceptual apparatus. It is obvious that the "third teacher" intended here to echo the experience of the "first master" Aristotle and to establish himself as his spiritual successor. At least, this is what Ashki-warī understands and approves:

> *I say that what the trustworthy Sayyid, the servant* [*of God*]*, the wise man versed in religious science (...), the true knower* (*ʿārif*) *of Origin and Return (...), has attributed to himself and to his sanctified soul, by virtue of his formal and spiritual link with the interpreters of inspiration and the treasurers of revelation* [*the Imāms*]*, is even more appropriate, ad-missible, credible and worthy of assent than what the prince of the phi-losophers Aristotle has attributed to himself and to his rightful soul (...). To deny, in either case, that this really took place, comes from the lack of experience that men of all periods have of the degrees reached by people of spiritual deprivation* (*ahl al-tajrīd*)*. This is not the prerogative of one*

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1. On this, Toshihiko Izutsu, "Mîr Dâmâd and His Metaphysics", in *Qabasāt*, introduction, pp. 1-15; Fazlur Raḥman, "Mīr Dāmād's Concept of Ḥudūth dahrī: A Contribution of the Study of God-World Relationship Theories in Safavid Iran", *Journal of Near-Eastern Studies* 39.2 (1980): 139-151; Sajjad Rizvi, "Between Time and Eternity: Mīr Dāmād on God's Creative Agency", *Journal of Islamic Studies* 17.2 (2006): 158-176; Mathieu Terrier, «De l'éternité ou de la nouveauté du monde : parcours d'un problème philosophique d'Athènes à Ispaha», *Journal Asiatique*, 299.1 (2011) : 369-421, see: p. 395-411 .

2. *Qabasāt*, introduction, pp. 34-35; Corbin, *En islam iranien*, IV, pp. 43-53.

3. *Aflūṭīn ʿinda l-ʿArab – Plotinus apud Arabes*, ed. ʿA. Badawī, Kuwayt, Wikālat al-maṭbūʿāt, 1977, see: p. 22; corresponding to Plotin, *Enneads* IV, 8, 1.

people to the exclusion of others and, certainly, the Giver of the Bestowal (*wāhib al-fayḍ*) *is not stingy. If the bestowal of the Holy Spirit provides its help again, other people can do what Christ did.*[1]

For Ashkiwarī, the spiritual veracity of the two accounts is undeniable, and their similarity is nothing but the proof of the universal prodigality of the Divine Principle. For a modern historian, both this account and its commentary testify above all to the value of spiritual experience, in an intellectualized form, in the Shī'i philosophy of 11th /17th century Iran, and show how the language of mysticism could be there authoritative alongside those of *fiqh*, *ḥadīth* and philosophical demonstration. Ashkiwarī suggests that this account played a role in the building of Mīr Dāmād's authority. This is confirmed by al-Majlisī who, despite his general opposition to mysticism and philosophy, stated that this epistle testified to Mīr Dāmād's "deification of conscience and holiness of life" (*ta'alluh sarīratihi wa taqaddus sīratihi*).[2]

The second account reports a vision that occurred to Mīr Dāmād in Qum, near the mausoleum of Ḥaḍrat-i Ma'ṣūma. The philosopher relates that after the prayer, when he was crouched down facing the qibla, he was taken to a sleep similar to a rapture (*khulsa*). Then he saw two luminous forms similar to human bodies, one lying on his right side, the other sitting behind him. He immediately realized that the first was Imām 'Alī and the second, Prophet Muḥammad. 'Alī called him to himself, caressed his face while smiling and gave him to recite a formula describing a lavish testimonial vision (*mushāhada*):

> *Muḥammad, the Messenger of God, before me; Fāṭima, his daughter, above me; the Prince of Believers, 'Alī b. Abī Ṭalib, on my right; al-Ḥasan, al-Ḥusayn, 'Alī, Muḥammad, Ja'far, Mūsā, 'Alī, Muḥammad, 'Alī, al-Ḥasan and the Awaited Proof* (*al-ḥujja al-muntaẓar*)*, my Imāms, on my left; 'Ammār, Abū Dharr, Salmān, al-Miqdād, Ḥudhayfa, and the companions of the Messenger of God, behind me; the angels around me; my Lord God, may His names be sanctified, enveloping, encompassing, and keeping me; God, beyond them all, encompassing all things* (*muḥīṭ*) *in the form of a noble Qur'an in a well-guarded Table. For God is the best of the guardians*

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1. *Qabasāt*, introduction, p. 35; Corbin, *En Islam iranien*, IV, pp. 46-47. The last line is a verse of Ḥāfiẓ al-Shīrāzī.

2. *Biḥār al-anwār*, vol. 106, p. 125.

and the most merciful of the merciful!

After repeating this formula until he knew it by heart, the philosopher woke up by keeping forever the nostalgia of this vision.[1] This account, without including any proper philosophical element, thus aims to translate the direct visionary experience of the Shīʿi creed. It must have contributed, as the previous one, to build Mīr Dāmād's spiritual authority. So did an elegiac poem in Arabic composed by Mīr Dāmād during a visit to the sanctuary of the eighth Imām in Mashhad, and two Persian quatrains of mystical flagrance, successively quoted by Ashkiwarī. Here ends the passage on which Corbin based his portrayal of Mīr Dāmād in Gnostic, and begins the one used by Arjomand to depict him an ambitious lawyer.

3. Back to the Law : the Building of the Mujtahid's Authority

Thus, Ashkiwarī does not make any transition between these "mystical confessions" and a group of texts of legal concern, beginning with a *fatwā* pronounced by Mīr Dāmād about the Friday prayer, which is undoubtedly his most important contribution to the social and political history of Shīʿism. It worth recalling that the Friday collective prayer, whose direction originally belonged to the exclusive prerogatives of the Imām, was long abandoned by the Shīʿa after the Occultation. It was only reestablished in Safavid Iran in the 10th/16th century by the rationalist *uṣūlī* scholars, despite the opposition of the traditionalist *akhbārī*s, by arguing that the collective prayer behind a "representative of the imam" (*nāʾib al-imām*) was not only legal but obligatory.[2] Mīr Dāmād, as a *uṣūlī* and like al-Karakī, held that the ability of *ijtihād*, i.e. interpretation and reasoning based on the sacred texts, bestowed on the *mujtahid*s the "general deputation" (*al-niyāba al-ʿāmma*) of the hidden Imām, and that the Friday collective prayer is optional (*ikhtiyārī*), i.e. mandatory on condition of a lawyer possessing all the necessary qualifications (*al-faqīh al-jāmiʿ li-l-sharāʾiṭ*) being present.[3] He refers to the Friday prayer as "the best mother of acts of obedience (*afḍal ummahāt al-ṭāʿāt*), (...) after the knowledge of God (*al-maʿrifa bi-llāh*)" and states:

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1. *Qabasāt*, introduction, pp. 35-37; Majlisī, *Biḥār al-anwār*, vol. 91, pp. 370-371.

2. Rasūl Jaʿfariyān, *Siyāsat va farhang-e rūzegār-e ṣafavī*, 2 vol., Tehran, ʿIlm, 1388 Sh./2009-2010, vol. 1, pp. 592-610.

3. Ibid., pp. 626-627; A. Newman, "The Myth", pp. 100-103.

> *The divine institution of Friday prayer, in our time, which is the absence of our master the Imām, the one who will rise with the Order and judge by Justice, is the best of the optional obligations* (ʿalā l-takhyīr)*, in presence of the holder of the general deputation* [*of the Imām*] (al-niyāba al-ʿāmma)*, I mean the* mujtahid *or the reliable lawyer* (faqīh) *gathering the disciplines of legal interpretation and reasoning* (ijtihād) *and the conditions for the issuance of fatwas. The righteous ruler* (al-sulṭān al-ʿādil) *who is the impeccable Imām, or the one especially established by him, or the one who deserves to represent him generally, is part of the conditions for the conclusion of the pact* (inʿiqād) *of Friday or festivals'* (aʿyād) *prayers. In their absence, no Friday or festival prayers are possible.*[1]

Mīr Dāmād maintains here clearly that in the legal order, in order to conduct the main collective rite of the religious community, the *mujtahid* can substitute himself to the Imām. It seems, however, that for Mīr Dāmād, the depute of the Imām designated as "the righteous ruler", is not only a *mujtahid* skilled in legal matters, but also a holder of the true knowledge of God, that is, a wise man or a Gnostic (*ʿārif*), possessing both esoteric and exoteric knowledges, like the Imām himself. Ashkiwarī acknowledges to its former master the possession of this science and the dignity of this "general representation" of the Imām. The sequence of this fatwa with the ecstasy accounts indicates that both spiritual and temporal authorities, in the mind of the student as well as in that of the master, were indeed inseparable.

Numerous pages are then dealing with the issue of the Imām's deputation. Ashkiwarī first reports an opinion from Shaykh al-Karakī refuting the limitation of *ijtihād* to a particular domain.[2] The introduction of a "practical treatise" (*risāla ʿamaliyya*) of Mīr Dāmād, the *Shāriʿ al-najāt*, composed in Persian, confirms this position:

> *During the period of occultation of the impeccable Imām designated by God, the accountable subject of the precepts of the revealed Law is either a* mujtahid*, or the imitator* (muqallid) *of a* mujtahid*. The obligation of the* mujtahid *is to act by his own thought in all matters relating to the reasoning and interpreting* (ijtihād)*. Thus, the claim of the specialization of the* ijtihād *does not have any aspect of truth. The* mujtahid *having learned*

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1. *Qabasāt*, introduction, pp. 38-39.

2. Ibid., pp. 40-41.

the sciences composing the total ijtihād (ijtihād-e kullī) has actually ac-
quired the ability of reasoning and interpreting on all the questions and to
deduce a solution in all the branches of Law. The obligation of the imitator
is to learn, in all branches of religion and about all different questions,
from a total mujtahid (mujtahid-e kullī) gathering all the qualifications of
ijtihād and able to pronounce fatwas (...). [The imitator] has to act accord-
ing to the thought and the word of the mujtahid.

Mīr Dāmād adds an important legal condition, for which he gives a philo-
sophical justification:

The condition is that the mujtahid is alive, being not allowed to act ac-
cording to the words of a deceased mujtahid. It is ensured that when the
mujtahid dies, his words also die. This issue does not give rise to any dis-
pute among Imāmi scholars and mujtahids. Here is the secret of this sta-
tion. Error is allowed to the mujtahid in his opinions; and whenever he is
wrong, he is also rewarded and compensated. His personal opinion, as the
prevailing belief in the soul of the mujtahid, is mandatory to be followed
in practice. However, the bodily death is in reality the breaking of the link
between the immaterial soul and the world of the body and the return of
the former to the intelligible world (ʿālam-i malakūt), where the truth of
the true and the falseness of the false are manifested to it. Therefore, it
may happen that the personal thought of the mujtahid, which occurred
in his soul during this life, does not agree with the right reason and that
its falseness appears to him only after his death. So, the prevailing belief
(...) which was followed [by imitators] ceases to exist, and it is no longer
reasonable to take it as viaticum in this life. [...] In this respect, the death
of the mujtahid is the death of the obligation to follow his belief as well.[1]

We can see, as Arjomand did, in this provision a measure aimed at requir-
ing the perpetuation of the clerical authority. However, the justification given
by the philosopher is even more of interest: because of his fallibility and his
deserving effort during his earthly life, that is, as long as his soul remains at-
tached to his body, the *mujtahid* experiences spiritual progress after his death,
seeing the truth revealed to him about the questions he has dealt with during

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1. Ibid., pp. 41-42; see also: *Moqaddama-yi Shāriʿ al-najāt*, in *Muṣannafāt Mīr Dāmād*, vol.
1, ed. ʿA. Nūrānī, Tehran, Anjuman-i āthār-i wa mafākhir-i farhangī, 1381 Sh. /2003, pp.
573-574.

his lifetime. Here again, the *mujtahid* is the representative of the Imām on the exoteric level only because he has approached his rank, without reaching it entirely, on the esoteric level, before and after his natural death.

4. Back to Metaphysics and Theology

Numerous pages, mostly borrowed from the *K. al-Qabasāt*, are now dealing with metaphysical and religious issues. The first issue is about the proof of divine justice despite the obvious existence of evil, i.e. the philosophical problem of theodicy.[1] Mīr Dāmād first undertakes to defend the meaning of a *ḥadīth qudsī*: "Whoever is not satisfied with My Decree (*qaḍā'*), does not endure My trial and does not thank My grace, may it come out of My earth and My heaven to send a Lord equal to Me !", against the following objection: if satisfaction (*riḍā*) with infidelity is itself infidelity, and if infidelity is decreed (*maqḍī*) by God, then satisfaction with God's Decree would be a mandatory infidelity. He mentions Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī's (d. 606/1210) defense of this *ḥadīth* by stating that infidelity was not the Decree, but the decreed, and that mandatory satisfaction was aimed at the Decree and not at the decreed. Mīr Dāmād considers this argument worthless, preferring to reply to the objection that the obligation concerns satisfaction with the Decree in essence and the decreed in essence, and that the evil of infidelity is not decreed in essence but only by accident, as concomitant with the goods of the order of existence. Generally, good is always what is decreed in essence, and evil is only decreed by accident. In the view of God's Science encompassing all things, including infidelity and disobedience, the intelligible form of infidelity and disobedience is not itself infidelity and disobedience.

This conception is illustrated by the commentary of another *ḥadīth qudsī*: "In none of my actions do I hesitate as I do in regaining the spirit of my faithful believer who hates death and whose suffering I hate". After having recalled that the hesitation of God, the absolute Agent and Knower, cannot be compared with man's hesitation about his actions, Mīr Dāmād explains that the death of the believer is a good thing in relation to the order of existence and an evil in relation to the suffering of the believer; however, of all the relative

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1. *Qabasāt*, introduction, p. 43-47; text, pp. 479-472. This issue remains famous in Europe due the work of a philosopher posterior to Mīr Dāmād, Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz' (d. 1716) *Essais de théodicée*.

and accidental evils, necessary for the greatest good, it is the most severe according to God's Science.[1]

This raises the problem of the conciliation between God's Science and Decree on the one hand, and man's free will on the other. Here again, Mīr Dāmād recalls al-Rāzī's position and criticizes it before formulating its own, which is: "If God's Science is the cause that decrees the necessity of the act, what it decrees is only the necessity of man's act as preceded by his capacity and choice, for both are part of the set of the causes and reasons of the act." God's Science of all things, identical to His power over them, does not contradict but includes the sequence of causes and effects of which man's free will is part.[2] Mīr Dāmād has developed this position at length in his *Risālat al-īqāẓāt*[3]. It is understandable that the philosopher-*mujtahid* was particularly concerned to reconcile the theological and metaphysical realm of necessity with man's moral and legal accountability.

Ashkiwarī continues to give voice to Mīr Dāmād as a true theologian, a "knower of God", for a full quotation from his short epistle on the Science of the Necessary Being.[4] He argues that God's Science of realities is a presential knowledge (*'ilm ḥuḍūrī*), either synthetic (*ijmālī*) or analytical (*tafṣīlī*), of their very essence derived from His Essence, analogous to man's knowledge of himself and of his psychic attributes.[5] In the middle of this epistle is inserted a short extract from *Jadhawāt wa mawāqīt*, referring to the role of letters and numbers in the original creation (*ibdā'*) and the order of existence (*niẓām al-wujūd*)[6]. This important dimension of Mīr Dāmād's thought, which appears only briefly here in this notice, is however widely echoed, if anonymously, in the first volume of the *Maḥbūb al-qulūb*. It is certainly the most esoteric and secret product of the "third master's" teaching as collected by his disciple.

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1. *Qabasāt*, introduction, pp. 45-46; text pp. 469-470. For the *ḥadīth*, see: Abū Yaʻqūb al-Kulaynī, *Uṣūl al-Kāfī*, Beirut, Muʼassasat al-Aʻlamī li-l-maṭbūʻāt, 1426/2005, p. 513.

2. *Qabasāt*, introduction, pp. 46-47; text pp. 471-472.

3. Mīr Dāmād, *Risālat al-Īqāẓāt fī khalq al-aʻmāl*, ed. Ḥ. N. Iṣfahānī, Tehran, Muʼassasa-yi pajūhashi-yi ḥikmat wa falsafa-yi Īrān, 1391 Sh./2012-2013.

4. *Risāla fī ʻilm al-wājib*, in *Muṣannafāt Mīr Dāmād*, vol. 1, pp. 509-510.

5. *Qabasāt*, introduction, pp. 47-50.

6. *Jadhawāt wa mawāqīt*, pp. 155-156.

6. Imamology, Popular Practices and the Seeds of Ambiguity

Ashkiwarī then quotes a key passage from *K. al-Qabasāt*, tying the threads of both Mīr Dāmād's metaphysics and political theory with the genuine Shī'i imamology:

> *On the divisions of the rulers* (ruʾasāʾ) *of the material world. Every genus has species that are subordinate to it, and among all these species, one is the most perfect. The same applies to species in relation to members. The noblest of the members, their ruler, is the heart, and his caliph is the brain; from him* [*the heart*] *derive all the faculties of the body. Likewise, man necessarily needs a ruler. The ruler has authority either on the exoteric level only, and he is the Sultan; or on the esoteric level only, and he is the Doctor* (ʿālim)*; or on both* [*exoteric and esoteric*] *levels together, and he is the Prophet or the one who occupies his place, the Caliph* [*i.e. the Imām*]. *Thus, the Prophet is like the heart of the world and the Caliph like his brain and marrow* (nukhāʾ). *Just as the perceptive and motor faculties proceed in the members of the body only from the brain and the marrow, so the faculty of clear distinction, science, religion and guidance, proceed in all the inhabitants of the world only through the mediation of the Caliph* [*the Imām*].[1]

This text reminds us that according to ancient Shī'ism, temporal, political and legal power is only the exoteric aspect of an esoteric, metaphysical authority, both spiritual and cosmic, belonging to the Prophet himself as well as to the Imām. This Imāmi traditional tenet is reinforced and rationalized by the Farabian analogy between man and the city, the heart and the ruler (raʾīs).[2] Mīr Dāmād then recalls another ancient Imāmi conception of which he gives a conceptual and philosophical interpretation. This conception, typically, brings the Imām very close to the Prophet and at the same time maintains a difference between them:

> *Among the special attributes of the Caliph and Legatee* (al-khalīfa al-waṣī) [*i.e. the Imām*] *is the fact of being "someone to whom an angel speaks"* (muḥaddath). *He is the one who hears the voice and the ordered word* [*of the angel*] *in a state of wakefulness and in perfect health, not by*

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1. *Qabasāt*, introduction, p. 50; text p. 398.
2. See: al-Fārābī, *Ārāʾ ahl al-madīna al-fāḍila*, ed. ʿA. Bū Mulḥam, Beirut, Maktabat al-hilāl, 1995, pp. 87-88.

the way of the eardrum and the auditory nerve, but by the way of conjunction with the angels and attachment to the world of Holiness; however, he sees no individual in any form of appearance and sees no image representing anything whatsoever. He therefore follows the same path as the Prophet in the exercise of his holy faculty and the strength (…) of his bond with the heavenly world (malakūt). However, he is not at such a rank that the angels would appear to him, that the Holy Spirit would present himself to him in a form that he could see and contemplate directly, so that he would hear from him the word of God through revelation and would himself be the subject of revelation without the intermediary of a Prophet. […] The Shaykh al-Kulaynī reported in al-Kāfī that [the sixth Imām] was asked about "the one to whom an angel speaks" and replied: "He hears the voice and does not see the speaker". We asked him: "How does he know that this is [really] the angel's speech?" He replied: "He is given Serenity (al-sakīna) and Dignity (al-waqār),[1] *so that he knows that this is an angel's speech".*[2]

Since the caliphate and the legacy are a representation (niyāba) of the Seal of the Prophets, the rank of the Legatee and Caliph, in the hierarchies of Return (marātib al-ʿawd), is equivalent to that of the Second Intelligence in the hierarchies of Origin (marātib al-badw). The Prophet certified (yanuṣṣu) that [the Imām] was his equal in the tree of nobility and his fellow man in luminescence (nūriyya) by saying: "Alī and I come from the same light, and Alī and I come from the same tree".[3]

Does this reminder of the supreme rank of the Imām reinforce or jeopardize the position of his self-proclaimed "deputy", the lawyer? Ashkiwarī's notice ends with a final excerpt from *K. al-Qabasāt* which adds to the ambiguity. It deals with the effectiveness of supplication (*duʿā*), a theme also addressed in the *Risālat al-Īqāẓāt*,[4] as well as in the last part, lost, of Mīr Dāmād's *Nibrās al-ḍiyāʾ* devoted to the Shīʿi notion of *badāʾ*.[5]

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1. On these two terms, see respectively: Qurʾan 2: 248; 9: 26, 40; 48: 4, 18, 26; and 71: 13.

2. *Uṣūl al-Kāfī*, pp. 99-100; Ṣaffār al-Qummī, *Baṣāʾir al-darajāt*, ed. ʿA. Zakīzāde Ranānī, 2 vols., Qum, Vuthūq, 1390 Sh. /2011, vol. 2, p. 207, § 1155; see also: *Biḥār al-anwār*, vol. 26, p. 68.

3. *Qabasāt*, introduction, pp. 50-51; text pp. 398-399; the *ḥadīth* is Ashkiwarī's interpolation.

4. *Īqāẓāt*, pp. 6-7.

5. Mīr Dāmād, *Nibrās al-ḍiyāʾ wa-taswāʾ al-sawāʾ fī sharḥ bāb al-badāʾ wa-ithbāt jadwā al-*

For the "third master", supplication is one of the second and partial causes established by the Divine Decree (*al-qaḍā'*) in the production of events. It is therefore wrong to say that with or without supplication, its object will or will not be realized according to God's Will. Supplication is useful and even necessary in the succession of intermediate causes, even if God's absolute freedom remains the first principle, the causer of all causes.[1] This development reminds us that the meaning and value of any devotional practice depends on the question of free will or determinism. On this issue, Mīr Dāmād claims to be in line with the view of the Shī'ī Imāms: "Neither determinism nor delegation of power, but something in between" (*lā jabr wa lā tafwīḍ wa-lākin al-amr bayna l-amrayn*).[2] It results from this that supplication is both the free initiative of the believer and the determination of the divine Bestowal (*al-fayḍ al-ilāhī*) that inscribes him in the chain of causes and effects. The same applies to the pious visit to a saint's tomb, to which Mīr Dāmād devotes a philosophical explanation taken up by Ashkiwarī in its notice on Aristotle.[3] However, this interest for popular practices may seem paradoxical in view of the previous positions of the philosopher-*mujtahid*. Indeed, by relying on metaphysics to make these practices effective, Mīr Dāmād suggests the essential agency of every believer behind his status of *muqallid*, as if the spiritual concern of the Gnostic philosopher had set limits to the ambition of the *uṣūlī* lawyer.

Conclusion

Ashkiwarī's notice on Mīr Dāmād, concluding his history of wisdom, is a spiritual and political portrayal of the ideal sage. Opening with the spiritual interpretation of a legal opinion, ending with the philosophical justification of a popular practice; basing the temporal authority of the *mujtahid* on gnosis or mystical knowledge; defending the idea of a "general deputation" of the Imām and reminding the latter's exclusive metaphysical attributes: its center of gravity is the essential link between the exoteric (*ẓāhir*) and the esoteric (*bāṭin*). The different aspects of Mīr Dāmād's life and work, often presented as contradictory in Western studies, appear here, if not without tensions and

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du'ā', ed. Ḥ. N. Iṣfahānī, Tehran, Mīrāth-i maktūb, 1374 Sh. /1995.

1. *Qabasāt*, introduction, pp. 51-53; text pp. 449-450.

2. *Īqāẓāt*, pp. 37-41.

3. *Qabasāt*, pp. 455-458; *Maḥbūb al-qulūb*, vol. 1, pp. 276-277; Terrier, *Histoire de la sagesse et philosophie shi'ite*, p. 489-490.

ambiguities, as coherent as faithful to the religion of the Imāms. No doubt a student like Ashkiwarī, who himself brought together the traditional science of ḥadīth, the practice of jurisprudence, and the taste for philosophy and mysticism, was required to reveal the "inner secret" (sirr) of the "third master" in all its unity and complexity.

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A Seal Impression of Shah Safī I of Persia (Contemporary with Mīr Dāmād) Manuscript No. Or. 4935, the British Library (London)

Articles

Spiritual Dimensions in the Life of Mīr Dāmād*

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Abstract

Sayyad Muḥammad Bāqir Mīr Dāmād is a well-known name to historians of Shi‘i Islam generally and Safavidists specifically; and yet this great figure has been little studied. Mīr Dāmād was a polymath, a master of the rational and traditional sciences; his acclaim as the "Third Master" refers to his founding of the philosophical system he called the "Yemenite Wisdom" (*al-ḥikmah al-yamāniyyah*). As such, he was honoured by the Safavid shah as the highest religious authority of Iran, and seen by his students and those around him as a saintly figure. This paper focuses on the latter aspect of his personality, dwelling on the mystical, devotional and spiritual life of Mīr Dāmād.

Keywords: Mīr Dāmād, *al-Ḥikmah al-Yamāniyyah*, mysticism, litany, invocation

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When early modern Shi‘i philosophy is now discussed, in most cases the first notable figure that comes to mind is Mullā Ṣadrā, whose system of Transcendental Theosophy[1] (*al-ḥikmah al-mutaʿāliyah*) overshadows most other Mus-

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1. This is the chosen English equivalent for *Ḥikmah*, as used by Nasr and Aminrazavi, who

lim and Shiʿi philosophers. This has meant that even Mullā Ṣadrā's famous teacher, Mīr Dāmād, has became less known, and gradually neglected. Even so, the name Sayyid Muḥammad Bāqir Mīr Dāmād has continued to be familiar—but there the familarity ends. The surprising thing here is that Mīr Dāmād's scientific and authoritative status should have meant that he be far more celebrated than any of his contemporaries, or anyone after him for that matter.

Due to his contemporary fame, Mīr Dāmād was dubbed the Third Master (*al-Muʿallim al-Thālith*), after Aristotle and Farabi. He was the last of Peripatetic (*mashshāʾī*) philosophers, seeing himself to be the equal of Avicenna.[1] He introduced the first comprehensive philosophical system completely synchronised with Shīʿah doctrine, calling it *al-ḥikmah al-yamāniyyah*. He was a polymath, mastering all rational sciences and traditional sciences, including the occult. Mīr Dāmād was a prolific jurist, reaching the highest level of religious authority in the Safavid court as *shaykh al-islām* of the Safavid Empire. From his grandfather al-Karakī he inherited the Uṣūlī jurisprudential legacy of Jabal ʿĀmil.

But if he was such a great figure, why are there so few studies on his theories? Was it his complex and abstruse writing style and idiosyncratic terminology?[2] Or were there political motives behind this?[3] These and many other important questions come to mind when looking into the life and works of Mīr Dāmād. Of course, it must be said that this lack of interest in Mīr Dāmād largely relates to writings, and not to him as an important personality in the

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have written extensively on Suhrawardi. In *The Essential Seyyed Hossein Nasr*, by Seyyed Hossein Nasr and William C. Chittick, the word 'theosophy' is preferred, as understood in its original sense and as used by Jakob Boehme, as a combination of the training of theoretical intellect and purification of the heart. Seyyed Hossein Nasr, *The Essential Seyyed Hossein Nasr*, ed. William C. Chittick, Bloomington: World Wisdom, 2007, p. 111.

1. He referred to Avicenna as our equal in leadership.

2. Some researchers think that Mīr Dāmād has his own unique style of writing, a view not completely accepted, but it is certainly the case that there are elements that distinguish his writing style from that of others. (ʿAlī Awjabī, *Mīr Dāmād Bunyanguzār Ḥikmat Yamānī*, Tehran: Intishārāt Sāhat, 2003, p. 139.).

3. See: Seyyed Hossein Nasr, *Ṣadr al-Dīn Shīrāzī and his Transcendent Theosophy, Background, Life and Works*, second edition, Tehran: Institute for Humanities and Cultural Studies, 1997, p. 33.

history and heritage of Islamic society and thought.[1]

Given his equal mastery of the rational and the traditional sciences, Mīr Dāmād was highly devotional, living a very ascetic and spiritual life. This aspect of Mīr Dāmād is not as apparent as is in the life and works of his student Mullā Ṣadrā, mainly due to the fact that not only does Mīr Dāmād not have an existing book exclusively in the field of *ʿirfān*, but also that each scholar adheres to a different methodology. Mīr Dāmād's does not accord as easily with modern sensibilities.

To further clarify, it is not that Mīr Dāmād does not have any *ʿirfānī* works; rather, his approach was systematically different to that of Mullā Ṣadrā. In the mystical writings of Mīr Dāmād, we do not see the *ʿirfānī* style of writing that was then in vogue, being strongly influenced by the mystical school of Ibn ʿArabī. Mīr Dāmād had his own unique style, based more on the peripatetic and Illuminationist rational approach and moulded within the Twelver Shīʿah tradition. The very titles of his books and their chapters demonstrate Mīr Dāmād's mystical leanings.[2] At first glance one would say that Mīr Dāmād was influenced by Suhrawardī's (549/1155–587/1191) illuminationist school of *ḥikmat al-ishrāq*,[3] and even choosing the pen-name *Ishrāq* when writing poetry. However, this does not go beyond usage of similar terms which were also common in the

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1. I have discussed these points in detail in my (unpublished) PhD thesis, presented to Australian National University, pp. 69-72.

2. We can see in the titles Mīr Dāmād selected for his books, in addition to *al-Qabasāt* (*Blazing Brands*), there are *al-Ufuq al-Mubīn* (*The Clear Horizon*) *al-Jadhawāt* (*Particles of Fire*) *al-Īmāḍāt* (*Flickerings*) *Taqwīm al-Īmān* (*The Strengthening of Faith*) *Mashriq al-Anwār* (*Lights of the East*) and more. Henry Corbin notes something important about the titles, in that as lofty as they sound, they are serious philosophical text books (Henry Corbin, *History of Islamic Philosophy*, Trans. Liadain Sherrard, (London: Kegan Paul International, 1993), p. 339.

3. The founder of this school is Shihāb al-Dīn Suhrawardī (1155–1191). He was strongly influenced by Neoplatonism and other ancient traditions and added a mystical and spiritual dimension to Peripatetic philosophy. He became known as Sheikh al-Ishrāq, or the Master of Illumination, and his innovative philosophical school was named Ḥikmah al-Ishrāq, after the title of his most outstanding work. He was also given the title of Sheikh al-Shahīd (the Martyr) because he was killed and seen as a martyr. See: Shihab al-Din Suhrawardi, *The Philosophy of Illumination*, trans. John Walbridge and Hossein Ziayi (Provo: Brigham Young University Press, 2000) and Mehdi Amin Razavi, *Suhrawardi and the School of Illumination,* Surrey: Curzon Press, 1997.

works of many Sufi writers whose ideas were popular at that time.[1]

One of Mīr Dāmād's works now considered as mystical is *Jadhawāt wa mawāqīt* (*Firebrands and Epiphanies*),[2] on the topic of God's self-manifestation or theophany (*tajallī*).[3] In this book he discusses the variable levels of ontological existence, the microcosm and macrocosm, and other philosophical and theological issues. He also deals with numerology/lettrism (*ʿilm al-ḥurūf*) in this book, on the secrets of letters and numbers.[4]

In the *Jadhawāt wa Mawāqīt*, Mīr Dāmād relates lettrism in particular to cosmologically contextualizing religious duties (*takālīf sharʿīyyah*); so performed, these duties bear you away from the material world and into the metaphysical world—hence his focus on spiritual exercises, based on *dhikr*, a discipline presented in lettrist, which is to say occult-scientific, terms.

As a lived example, one of Mīr Dāmād's students and biographers, Quṭb al-Dīn al-Ishkawarī,[5] reports on one of Mīr Dāmād's secluded *dhikr* sessions,

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1. An interesting point is that in numerous places Mīr Dāmād was critical of Suhrawardī and refuted him in his book *al-Ufuq al-Mubīn* by showing how weak his arguments were, leading to fallacies. See: Mīr Dāmād, *al-Ufuq al-Mubīn*, ed. Ḥāmid Nājī Esfahānī, Tehran: Mīrāth Maktūb, 2013, p. 139, under the title of '*Ḥikmah Ishrāqiyah Mīzāniyah*'.

2. The complete title for this book is *Jadhawāt wa Mawāqīt* (*Particles of Fire and Stations*), and it was written in Persian. As Mīr Dāmād makes references to most of his other main works, it seems that this book was written in a later stage in his life, and maybe among his last. See: Mīr Dāmād, *Jadhawāt wa Mawāqīt*, glosses by Mullā *ʿAlī* ibn Jamshīd Nūrī, ed. ʿAlī Awjabi, Tehran: Markaz Pejūhesh Mīrāth Maktūb, 2002.

3. It is said that scholars of India travelled to Esfahan, which was the cradle of knowledge at that time, seeking the answer to a question troubling them. The question was "When Almighty God manifested to the mountain of Ṭūr, trembled, but when He manifested to Prophet Moses (a.s.), nothing happened to him?" This was in reference to the Quranic verse: "*And when his Lord revealed (His) glory to the mountain He sent it crashing down. And Moses fell down senseless.* [Quran, 7:143] Shah Abbas delegated Mīr Dāmād to write a book in answer to this misconception to, and Mīr Dāmād wrote the book in Persian, giving it the title *Jadhawāt wa Mawāqīt*.

4. See: Matthew Melvin-Koushki, "World as (Arabic) Text: Mīr Dāmād and the Neopythagoreanization of Philosophy in Safavid Iran," *Studia Islamica* 115, no. 1 (2020), forthcoming.

5. Muḥammad ibn ʿAlī ibn ʿAbd al-Wahhāb Ishkuwarī, known as Qutb al-Dīn, about whom we have no information regarding his date of birth or death, other than that he lived in the eleventh century AH. He is the author of the famous book *Maḥbūb al-Qulūb* (*The Beloved by the Hearts*) which can be considered a book on the history of philosophy. (The first parts of it have been published by Mīrāth Maktūb, ed. Ḥāmid Ṣidqī and Ibrāhīm Daibājī. Tehran, 1378–1382 [SY].) The portion Qutb al-Dīn wrote about Mīr Dāmād has

where he recited the invocations *yā ghanī* (O All-sufficient) and *yā mughnī* (O Enricher), and he then experienced a spiritual unveiling (*kashf*).[1]

Another of Mīr Dāmād's philosophical-mystical works is *Khulsat al-malakūt* (*The Trance of the Sovereign Realm*),[2] and he uses the mystical word "seizing" (*khulsah*)[3] to refer to a state of mystical trance in-between sleeping and being awake, where the physical body enters in deep inner calmness and spiritually ascends to connect to higher realms.

In the beginning of *Khulsat al-malakūt*, Mīr Dāmād mentions a dream he had, and explains that in this dream he was blessed with receiving arguments in support of his famous theory on meta-temporal creation (*al-ḥudūth al-dahrī*). He then begins to explain these arguments.[4] In *ʿirfānī* terms, such cases would fall under the category of "unveiling and witnessing" (*kashf wa shuhūd*).[5]

In addition to this book, there is a short treatise Mīr Dāmād also named *al-Khulsah*, where he describes a unique spiritual experience he had in the holy city of Qom. He says that in the year 1011 AH, he entered into a spiritual trance, while facing the *qiblah*, after his afternoon prayers, and he saw a powerfully illuminating light. He then says that he saw a person, and something told him that it was Imām ʿAlī, and behind him was the Prophet Muḥammad. With them were the rest of the Imāms.[6] Mīr Dāmād then gives details of how they wiped their hands on his head, and then taught him a protective amulet (*ḥirz*) to recite.[7]

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been published in the introduction of Mehdi Mohaghegh's edition of *Kitāb al-Qabasāt*. In it, Quṭb al-Dīn quotes Mīr Dāmād's name as 'Amīr Muḥammad Bāqir al-Dāmād' (Introduction, 31).

1. Mīr Dāmād, *Kitāb al-Qabasāt*, introduction, pp. 35-36.

2. Mīr Dāmād, Muḥammad Bāqir. Khalsat al-Malakūt, in *Muṣannafāt Mīr Dāmād*. ed. ʿAbdullah Nūrānī, Tehran: University of Tehran, 2003.

3. From what I have seen, it can also be read as *khalsah*.

4. Mīr Dāmād, *Khalsat al-Malakūt*, p. 283.

5. The whole story has been mentioned in ʿAlī Khān al-Madanī's *Sulāfah al-ʿAṣr fī Maḥāsin al-Shuʿarāʾ bi kullī Maṣr*, Tehran: Murtaḍawī, 1383 SY. Al-Madanī (1052-1119 AH) who wrote this biography dictionary was also close to the era of Mīr Dāmād.

6. ʿAbbās al-Qommī, *al-Fawāʾid al-Raḍawiyah fī Aḥwāl ʿUlamā al-Madhhab al-Jaʿfariyah,* ed. Nāṣer Bāqerī Bīdhindī, Qom: Bustān Kitāb, 1385 SY), vol. 2, p5. 684-685.

7. Muḥammad Bāqir Mīr Dāmād, *al-Īmāḍāt*, in *Muṣannafāt Mīr Dāmād,* ed. ʿAbdullah Nūrānī, Tehran: University of Tehran, 2003, pp. 632-633.

This and other similar cases experienced by Mīr Dāmād leave no doubt as to his mystical pursuits, to say nothing of his interest in talismans and amulets, another area Mīr Dāmād was well versed in.[1]

A standard topic in *ʿirfān* is the arc of ascent and descent (*qaws ṣuʿūd/nuzūl*), with the microcosm (*al-ʿālam al-ṣaghīr*) existing within the macrocosm (*al-ʿālam al-kabīr*). In the works of Mīr Dāmād, he describes this mystical concept, using symbolism, with the intellect (*al-ʿaql*) being the sun, the self (*al-nafs*) being the moon, and the body being earth. The essence of the human *nafs* is able to benefit from both the microcosm and the macrocosm, and the same way as planets have eclipses, a human can also have an intellectual eclipse. This means that the material body can obstruct the radiance of the sun (the intellect) radiating onto the moon (the *nafs*).[2]

There are many examples of such lofty spiritual messages throughout Mīr Dāmād's writings, even in the most philosophical of them, like his book *al-Ṣirāṭ al-mustaqīm*.[3] When discussing how the self (*al-nafs*) is perceived, he quotes a *ḥadīth qudsī* in which God told the Prophet Muḥammad (s.a.w.): "Your most hostile enemy is your very self that is within you." Mīr Dāmād then comments on this tradition.[4]

There are other cases in this book where Mīr Dāmād makes reference to a Quranic verse, a tradition from the Prophet, or one of the Shiʿi Imāms, and then elaborates on it, relating it to the philosophical or theological topic at hand. This is the unique approach of Mīr Dāmād's Yemeni Wisdom school, integrating deep philosophical concepts with Shiʿi religious doctrine and

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1. The book *Mīr Dāmād Kabīr*, which is on occult sciences and magic is attributed to Mīr Dāmād, but there is no evidence to this. For information related to this book, see: Alireza Doostdar, *Impossible Occultists: Practice and participation in an Islamic tradition*, in American Ethnologist, vol. 46, no. 2, pp. 176-189.

2. See: *Jadhawāt wa Mawāqīt*, p. 19.

3. This book, *al-Ṣirāṭ al-Mustaqīm fī Rabṭ al-Ḥādith bi al-Qadīm* (*The Straight Path on Connecting the Created to the Eternal*) is one of the three major books of Mīr Dāmād. The other two are *Kitāb al-Qabasāt* and *al-Ufuq al-Mubīn*. This book deals not only with the topic of meta-temporal creation, where Mīr Dāmād presents arguments he had not mentioned in *Kitāb al-Qabasāt*, but he also discusses complex matters about the essence, the quality and divisions of time. See: Muḥammad Bāqir Mīr Dāmād, *al-Ṣirāṭ al-Mustaqīm fī Rabṭ al-Ḥādith bi al-Qadīm,* ed. ʿAlī Awjabī, Tehran: Mīrāth Maktūb, 2002.

4. Mīr Dāmād, *al-Ṣirāṭ al-Mustaqīm*, p. 337.

spiritual discipline.[1]

As previously mentioned, Mīr Dāmād was also well versed in the occult sciences (ʿulūm gharībah). A number of later popular works on the magical arts are attributed to him, under the title *Mīr Dāmād-i kabīr*, though these are almost certainly pseudepigraphal. And yet this attribution testifies to Mīr Dāmād's known investment in these sciences: both the *Jadhawāt* and his *Nibrās al-ḍiyāʾ* have special sections on lettrism, and at least one other collection of invocations and supplications was authored by Mīr Dāmād.[2]

Although more can be said about the *ʿirfānī* aspect of the writings of Mīr Dāmād, as well as the occult-scientific, the remainder of this article will focus more on the moral,[3] devotional and spiritual aspects of his life as mentioned

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1. Major Shīʿah philosophers, from the commencement of the School of Esfahan onwards, believed that philosophy and divine religion (or revelation) were aligned, which is why philosophers in this era were also mujtahids. They regarded the accurate formulation of sharʿīah and philosophy as both dependent on divine wisdom, or theosophy. [Muḥammad Riḍā Zādhūsh, Dīdār bā Faylasūfān Sepāhān, Tehran: Muʾassaseh Pejūheshi Ḥikmat va Falsafe Iran, 2013, 93.] An individual endowed with Ḥikmah had a divine and Prophetic attribute, which meant he could know the secrets of existence and creation. Another important issue that Mīr Dāmād focused on is to design philosophical issues according to the Quran and Ḥadith. He would use a specific topic from a verse or a tradition, seeing it as a source of pure knowledge, and then imports it as a philosophical problem and then discusses it. He was the first to use such a methodology and place it within the formula of a philosophical issue. [Examples for this can be seen in: *al-Qabasāt*, pp. 469-470, pp. 476-477.] This is where for Mīr Dāmād being a Mujtahid and having acquaintance with the Quran and Ḥadith carries more importance, which is why him and his students in the School of Esfahan emphasised on transmitted sciences.

2. See: Ḥusain Najafī, *Awrāq Parākande az Muṣannifāt Mīr Dāmād*, Tehran: Muʾassase Pejūheshī Ḥekmat va Falsafe, 2017, pp. 339-383.

3. To describe how gallant and humble Mīr Dāmād was, the following famous anecdote is mentioned, showing his relationship with Sheikh al-Bahāʾī, being part of the entourage of Shah Abbas I:

In order to test them, the Shah points out to each the clumsy riding of the other, caused by the tremendous weight of Mīr Dāmād on the one hand and the slight frame of Sheikh al-Bahāʾī on the other. Rather than chiming in with the mean-spirited criticisms, each scholar defends his peer to the Shah, Sheikh al-Bahāʾī claiming that the plodding of Mīr Dāmād's horse was due to his tremendous learning, and Mīr Dāmād suggesting that the flightiness of Sheikh al-Bahāʾī's mount was due to its joy at carrying such a distinguished rider. The reaction of the two is surprising, and Shah Abbas was particularly pleased, taking time to thank the Lord for blessing his realm with such unusually wise and pleas-

above. These aspects stand out in the personality of Mīr Dāmād, and are even more apparent in the life and works of his students, like Mullā Ṣadrā, Mullā Muḥsin Fayḍ Kāshānī, Mullā Shamsā Gīlānī and Seyid Aḥmad al-'Alawī.[1] The relationship they had with Mīr Dāmād was not only that of student and teacher, but more of disciple and shaykh.[2] This can be seen in their expressed admiration for Mīr Dāmād: they lauded him not only as authority on matters philosophical, but also on matters spiritual.[3] It should also be noted that Mīr Dāmād was very selective when choosing students, making sure they met his high standards of strong intellectual comprehension, but also possessed of exceptional moral, religious and spiritual dedication. Mīr Dāmād put effort in his students not only in his philosophical gatherings, but also outside of class.

In a letter written by Mullā Ṣadrā in reference to Mīr Dāmād, for example, among the many praiseworthy qualities he attributes to his teacher Mīr Dāmād, he refers to him as the 'teacher of mankind' (*ustādh al-bashar*), and sees himself as his teacher's servant and slave (*'abduhū wa mamlūkuhū*).[4] This again displays how those around Mīr Dāmād saw him to be not only a teacher, but something greater than that. In numerous biographical dictionaries,

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ant learned men. [Devin J. Stewart, 'Polemics and patronage in Safavid Iran: The debate on Friday prayer during the reign of Shah Tahmasb', *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 72:3 (October 2009) 425. Also mentioned in Browne, Edward G. *A Literary History of Persia,* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1959, 3: 426–27; Rula J Abisaab, *Converting Persia: Religion and Power in the Safavid Empire,* London: I.B. Taurus, 2004, p. 70]

1. 'Abdullah Ni'mah, *Falāsifah al-Shī'ah: Ḥayātahum wa Ārā'ahum*, forwarded by Muḥammad Jawād Mughniyah, Qom: Dār al-Kitāb al-Islāmī, 1987, p. 443.

2. On this topic of the student – teacher spiritual relationship, it is clearly not that of a Sufi characteristic, and this was a point Henry Corbin had also expanded on, distinguishing between the characteristic type of spiritual Shī'ite mysticism and Sufi *ṭarīqahs*. See: Henry Corbin, *History of Islamic Philosophy*, p. 90.

3. On the note of Mīr Dāmād's scientific superiority, one of his students by the name of 'Ādil Ardestānī, saw him not as the Third Master, but rather the First Master. Ardestānī copied some of Mīr Dāmād's books, and he wrote this testimony in the beginning of Mīr Dāmād's jurisprudence book called *'Uyūn al-Masā'il*. See: Mehdī Imāmī Jum'eh, *Sayr Taḥawwulī Maktab Eṣfahān az Ibn Sīnā tā Mullā Ṣadrā*, 3rd edition, Tehran: Mu'assaseh Pejūheshī Ḥikmat va Falsafeh Irān, 1397/2018 SY/CE, pp. 181-182.

4. See: Seyid Jalāl al-Dīn Āshtiyānī, *Sharḥ Ḥāl va Ārā' FalsafīMullā Ṣadrā*, Qom: Daftar Tablīghghāt, reprint, 1378 SY, p. 270.

moreover, Mīr Dāmād is referred to as a 'holy man' (*muqaddas*),[1] as he surpassed the rational and traditional sciences to live a holy and spiritual life.[2]

The devotional life of Mīr Dāmād

Mīr Dāmād was an exceptional religious scholar (*ʿālim*) in the purest sense, combining the rank of the highest scholarly position and publicly demonstrated righteousness, extreme piety and asceticism. He believed that the theory of *ḥikmah* must be interwoven with moral discipline, and that the former without the latter would be morally dangerous. Mīr Dāmād insisted on strict adherence to religious obligations and rituals, and argued for them as the true method of spiritual wayfaring (*sayr wa sulūk*).[3]

In one of Mīr Dāmād's jurisprudential works, on the topic of the rulings of wet nursing, he clearly states that one cannot be counted among the philosophers if they have not gone through spiritual purification:

One is not considered among the *ḥukamāʾ* as long as they have not acquired the skill of detaching from their dark body (*al-badan al-ẓulmānī*) and ascended to the realm of Divine Light (*al-nūr al-ilāhī*), so that his body to him is like a shirt, where he is able at times to wear it, and at other times to take it off.[4]

There are other places where Mīr Dāmād also speaks about detachment from the body (*khalʿ al-badan*), signifying that this is not merely theoretic, but rather something he himself had achieved, through self-purification and spiritual wayfaring. Mīr Dāmād uses every opportunity to make reference to this in many of his philosophical and legal works alike. Towards the end of his *magnum opus*, *Kitāb al-Qabasāt*, Mīr Dāmād discusses death, referring to it in what he calls the 'second birth' (*al-wilādah al-thāniyah*). He then describes the delight of 'leaving the body', and says that those with a penetrating percep-

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1. See: Jūyā Jahānbaksh, *Muʿallim Thālith* (*The Third Master*), Tehran: Intishārāt Asāṭīr, 2010, pp. 121-129.

2. Mīr Taqī al-Dīn Ḥusainī Kāshānī, *Khulāṣat al-Ashʿār wa Zubdah al-Afkār* (*A Summary of Poems and the Best of Thoughts*)*, Esfahan Section*, ed. ʿAbd al-ʿAlī Adīb Barūmand and Muḥammad Ḥusain Naṣīrī Kahnamūʾī, Tehran: Mīrāth Maktūb, 2007, p. 247.

3. Seyid Ḥamīd Mīr Khandān, *Zendegināneh Marḥūm Mīr Dāmād*, in Mishkāt, Summer 1373 SY, no. 43, p. 112.

4. Mīr Dāmād, *Ḍawābiṭ al-Riḍāʿ*, ed. Seyid Mujtabā Mīr Dāmādī, Qom: Markaz Bayn al-Milalī Tarjume va Nashr al-Muṣṭafā, 2014, vol. 2, p. 215.

tion and encompassing vision who relinquish the material world will achieve spiritual states:

> *Indeed, they disdain the world of sensation and pay no heed to the perceptions of the senses. They regard as unclean the pleasures of the in-ane and brutish and consider base the delights of the animal senses. They bathe at the shore of the clear intellect and immerse themselves in the Euphrates of pure knowledge, whereupon they scoop up with their clean and sanctified hands handfuls from the bubbling spring of intelligible life and quaff its water. They will subsist through the subsistence of God within the treasure-house of glory, and they will endure through His permanence in the realm of mercy.*[1]

Mīr Dāmād continues to delve into the topic of voluntary death (*al-mawt al-irādī*), and preparing oneself for a greater world above this material realm. This is where one fully appreciates the *ʿirfānī* side of Mīr Dāmād, as these discussions are all purely mystical in tenor. In his commentary on *al-Ṣaḥīfah al-Sajjādiyah*, also on the topic of achieving familiarity with death, he says:

> *So, O you who have been preoccupied with this false bodily life from the real intellectual life, do not fear death, because the only bitterness of death is in fearing it.*[2]

As noted, there are numerous historians and Islamic hagiographers contemporary or close to the era of Mīr Dāmād who wrote various testimonies about him, giving us an indication to how spiritual and religiously devoted he was. Some of these testimonies were orally transmitted, and therefore it is difficult to verify their origin or authenticity, and some might even seem too hard to believe. For example, when Shaykh ʿAbbās al-Qommī (1294/1877–1359/1940) in his book *al-Fawāʾid al-Raḍawiyah* describes the exceptionally spiritual qualities of Mīr Dāmād, he mentions that it has been said that throughout the span of forty years Mīr Dāmād would rarely sleep, and if he did, he would only raise his knees to rest his head on them, and throughout this period he never slept with his legs stretched out.[3] A footnote is added

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1. Mīr Dāmād, *The Book of Blazing Brands*, trans. Keven Brown, New York: Global Scholarly Publications, 2009, p. 491.

2. Muḥammad Bāqir Mīr Dāmād, *Sharḥ al-Ṣaḥīfah al-Sajjādiyah*, ed. Seyyid Mehdī Rajāʾī, Esfahan: Maktabat Wali al-ʿAṣr, 1985, p. 323.

3. This was mentioned in Tankabūnī's (d. 1302/1885 AH/CE) *Tadhkirah al-ʿUlamā*. See: Muḥammad ibn Sulaymān Tankabūnī, *Tadhkirah al-ʿUlamā*, ed. Muḥammad Riḍā

here by Sayyid Mahdī Lājavardī (1305/1887–1392/1972), an editor of one of the editions of this book, and he says that some have commented on this, saying that such a thing is a lie and certainly baseless, but also naturally impossible.[1] This same book also quotes that Mīr Dāmād had never committed a *mubāḥ* act, let alone a *makrūh* or *ḥarām* act.[2]

Another biographer contemporary to Mīr Dāmād was Malik Shāh Ḥusain Sīstānī (fl. 1036/1626) who, a prince himself, wrote a still-unpublished biographical dictionary called *Tadhkirat khayr al-bayān*. Sīstānī begins his account of Mīr Dāmād, he says:

> *Although he* [*Mīr Dāmād*] *was very much occupied with reading philosophical books, his worship and his spiritual exercises* (*riyāḍah*) *were of such a level as to exceed the capability of a human being. His feeble body and his strong spirit both reached the level of perfection.*[3]

The fact that Sīstānī was not only contemporary to Mīr Dāmād, but also enjoyed social nobility as a prince, give valuable credit to his portrayals of the exceptional spiritual status of Mīr Dāmād. In tandem with the evidence of Mīr Dāmād's own oeuvre, such testimonies also suggest it to have a basis in historical reality.

Among his other spiritual pursuits, it is reported that Mīr Dāmād was very fond of reciting the Quran, to the point that he would sometimes recite up to half the Quran each night.[4] It is also reported that Mīr Dāmād strictly prayed all the daily supererogatory prayers (*nawāfil*) from the age of religious matu-

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Aẓharī and Ghulāmriḍā Parandeh, Mashhad: Bunyad Pejuheshhāye Islāmī, Second Edition, 1393 SY, p. 179.

1. ʿAbbās al-Qommī, *al-Fawāʾid al-Raḍawiyah*, vol. 2, p. 682, footnote 270.

2. Ibid., p. 682. Also see: Jūyā Jahānbaksh, *Muʿallim Thālith,* p. 126.

3. It is fortunate that this part of *Tadhkirah Khayr al-Bayān* on Mīr Dāmād has been edited and published in a journal. See: Malik Shāh Ḥusain Sistānī, *Tadhkirah Khayr al-Bayān dar Sharḥ Aḥwāl wa Āthār ʿUlamāʾ wa Shuʿarāʿ ʿAṣr Ṣafavī*, ed. ʿĀrif Nūshāhī, (in Maʿārif, vol. XIV, no. 2, November 1977, pp. 32-69), p. 42.

4. This testimony was written by Mīr Muḥammad Ṣāleḥ Khātūnābādī (1058 – 1126 AH), who lived close to the era of Mīr Dāmād, and he mentions that he heard this from a reliable trustworthy person. See: Mīr Muḥammad Ṣāleḥ ibn ʿAbd al-Wāsiʿ Ḥusainī Khātūnābādī, *Ḥadāʾiq al-Muqarrabīn* (*ḥadīqeh panjum va bāb shishom va haftom az ḥadīqeh chahārom*), ed. Mīr Hāshim Muḥaddith, Tehran, Sherkat Chāp va Nashr Bayn al-Milal, 1389 SY, p. 245.

rity (*taklīf*) until his death.[1]

One of Mīr Dāmād's earlier students who had accompanied him in the city of Mashhad was Mullā 'Abdullāh ibn Ḥusain Bābā Simnānī (fl. 11th /17thc.), the author of the devotional manual *Tuḥfah al-'Ābidīn* (*The Gift of Worshippers*),[2] who likewise wrote various accounts of Mīr Dāmād's exceptional spirituality. Here Simnānī, while describing how to pray the prayer of Ja'far al-Ṭayyār, says:

> *This mentioned prayer is the most practiced prayer by my most holy teacher, the master of scholars and the seal of jurists – may his lofty life be prolonged. He would also recite the supplication narrated from Imām 'Alī, the Du'ā' Kumayl, while in prostration after the prayer.*[3]

It is because of his reputation for holiness that Mīr Dāmād enjoyed a close relationship with Safavid rulers, who came to depend on him in affairs of religion. As such, he would be a member of the shah's entourage when travelling to Iraq to visit the shrines of the Imams, where Mīr Dāmād would lead the pilgrimage rituals (*ziyārāt*).[4] In one written account, when Shah Ṣafī was visiting the Shrine of Imam Ḥusain, in Karbala, Mīr Dāmād recited a visitation supplication, and also instructed Shah Ṣafī and the others present as to the rituals and etiquette of the pilgrimage.[5] Indeed, Mīr Dāmād even passed away in one of these trips.

Numerous accounts suggest, in short, that Safavid rulers not only depended on him in affairs of religion, but also had complete confidence in his high spiritual status. Rulers themselves would attend him at his place of residence.[6] Most notably, just one year before Mīr Dāmād died, Shah Ṣafī visited him, desperately imploring him for a special invocation to win a war; the invocation Mīr Dāmād supplied reportedly led to victory.[7]

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1. Mirzā Muḥammad Bāqir al-Mūsawī al-Khwānsārī, *Rawḍāt al-Jannāt,* Qom: Intishārāt Ismā'īliyān, 1970, vol. 2, p. 66. Also see: 'Abdullah Ni'mah, *Falāsifah al-Shī'ah: Ḥayātahum wa Ārā'ahum*, p. 442.

2. Also unpublished. A copy of this book is in Majlis Shura Islami Library, MS 15908.

3. Ibid., folio 38. Also see: Ḥusain Najafī. *Awrāq Parākande az Muṣannifāt Mīr Dāmād*, p. 345.

4. Abū al-Mafākhar Faḍlullah Ḥusainī Sawāneḥnegār Tafreshī, *Tārīkh Shāh Ṣafī* (*Tārīkh Taḥawwulāt Īrān dar Sālhāye 1038 -`052 AH*), ed. Muḥsin Bahrāmnejād, Tehran: Markaz Pejūhesh Mīrāth Maktūb, 1388 SY, p. 49.

5. *Tārīkh Shāh Ṣafī*, pp. 52-53.

6. Ḥusain Najafī. *Awrāq Parākande az Muṣannifāt Mīr Dāmād*, p. 347, footnote 1.

7. Ibid., p. 347.

In conclusion, what Mīr Dāmād tried to achieve with his school of Yemeni philosophy was to initiate a broader, practical outlook on the relationship between the Creator and creation, not limiting it to conceptual articulation, but insisting on the role of spiritual exercise and enlightenment of the heart. The goal of the philosophy is to achieve a correct worldview; the goal of the practical and moral sciences is to achieve bring that worldview alive.

As such, his goal must been seen in relation to both levels of theoretical and practical perfection. As Mīr Dāmād states:

> *Rather, its goal (i.e. the human self) is the perfection that is settled in it as long as it resides in the land of exile, which is to say the realm of the body, and attached to the horizon of being and renewal, in that it acquires a complete disposition in connecting to the true intellects. Here it will take from the intellect that is simple and from it the forms that are elaborate in itself by way of thought will spring and emanate from it.*[1]

According to Mīr Dāmād (and many of his contemporaries and heirs), philosophical perfection of the self can only be achieved, on the one hand, through thought and contemplation, which connects to the active intellect; on the other it must manifest in moral behavior, which must include the purification of the self from sensual and imaginal concerns. In tandem, such an operation allows one to attain epistemic and scientific perfection and to achieve truth and validity by acquiring solid arguments and sound proofs.

Reasoning and spirituality worked hand in hand in Mīr Dāmād's Yemeni wisdom, whereby he asserted the cohesion between reason, religion and spirituality. Mīr Dāmād's approach to mysticism and spirituality was not in the common *'irfānī* kind of framework modern scholars are accustomed to, like that of Ibn 'Arabī. Rather, it was more a synchronised effort between philosophy, the occult sciences and the devotional religious teachings of the Shi'i tradition.[2]

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1. Mīr Dāmād, *Taqwīm al-Īmān*, ed. 'Alī Awjabī, Tehran: Muṭāle'āt Islāmī, Tehran University, 1997, p. 377.

2. See: Ata Anzali, *"Mysticism" in Iran: The Safavid Roots of a Modern Concept*, Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2017.

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Shah Safī I of Persia on Horseback Carrying a Mace

Bonhams International Auction House (London)

Articles

Mīr Dāmād's concept of *metaphysica generalis* (*umūr ʿāmma*): A preliminary sketch

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Abstract

While studies on both the conception of the scope of metaphysics – at least the *metaphysica generalis* – and on the thought of the Safavid thinker Mīr Dāmād (d. 1631) are rather limited in Europhone scholarship, this article attempts a preliminary sketch that brings the two together. Starting with a quick survey of those who have written about Mīr Dāmād's metaphysics and on his inheritance of the notion of metaphysics, I examine his own texts, not least the recently edited *al-Ufuq al-mubīn*, which may turn out to be his most influential work, and consider how his work represents the culmination of a Avicennian metaphysics and the ultimate foil for the revisions and critiques of Mullā Ṣadrā (d. 1636), his student, straight after him.

Keywords: Mīr Dāmād, *umūr ʿāmma*, existential quantifier, essentialism

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Introduction

The Safavid jurist and sage Sayyid Burhān al-Dīn Muḥammad Bāqir Astarābādī (d. 1040/1631), better known as Mīr Dāmād, is a case of a thinker whose œuvre has focused on one particular problem, namely, the creation and incipience of the cosmos: how did the cosmos come about? He proceeded to provide a

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novel interpretation of the Avicennian tradition: contrary to both the classical theologians' doctrine of *creatio ex nihilo* in time (*ḥudūth zamānī*) and also to the basic postulation of the cosmos being only logically posterior to God by virtue of its contingency (*ḥudūth dhātī*), he came up with the notion that there was a median solution that the cosmos was instaured at the level of the celestial perpetuity of the intelligible firmament (*ḥudūth dahrī*), where the immutable intelligibles interacted with the mutable. This solution seems to be consistent with Neoplatonic notions of time and cosmogony.[1] Most works in the history of Islamic philosophy or attempts to produce readers in the field represent Mīr Dāmād wholly through his doctrine of *ḥudūth dahrī* and there is very little consideration of how that theory fits within a conception of metaphysics and *umūr ʿāmma*.[2]

His theory clearly has certain metaphysical foundations relating to the nature of existence and essence, intelligibles and sensibles, time and motion. It is to these that I wish to turn in this study, and in particular to interrogate the commonly articulated notion that Mīr Dāmād, contrary to his student Mullā Ṣadrā Shīrāzī (d. 1045/1636), was an essentialist who held that within the conceptual dyad of contingents constituted by existence and essence, it was the latter that was ontologically prior since existence was merely a secondary intelligible (*maʿqūl thānī*) and 'being of reason' applied to contingent entities – a theory known as *aṣālat al-māhīya*. For example, it is commonly held that Suhrawardī (d. 587/1191) considered existence to be a 'being of reason' or an accidental quality that pertained to essences that alone possess reality in the extra-mental realm and that this was later known as *aṣālat al-māhīya*, and as

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1. See, for example: Samuel Sambursky and Shlomo Pines, *The Concept of Time in Late Neoplatonism*, Jerusalem: Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities, 1971; Michael Chase, "Discussions of the eternity of the world in antiquity and contemporary cosmology", *Scholē* 7.1 (2013), pp. 20–68.

2. For example, the section on Mīr Dāmād in the *Anthology of Philosophy in Persia* is taken from the introduction to this problem in *al-Qabasāt*: 'Sparks of Fire: *al-Qabasāt*', tr. Keven Brown, in Seyyed Hossein Nasr and Mehdi Amin Razavi (eds), *An Anthology of Philosophy in Persia Vol. 5: From the School of Shiraz to the Twentieth Century*, London: Tauris in association with the Institute of Ismaili Studies, 2015, pp. 129–145; Henry Corbin and Sayyid Jalāl al-Dīn Āshtiyānī (eds), *Muntakhabātī az āsār-i ḥukamāʾ-yi ilāhī-yi Īrān*, rpt., Qum: Markaz-i intishārāt-i daftar-i tablīghāt-i islāmī-yi ḥawza-yi ʿilmiyya, 1378 Sh/1999, vol. 1, pp. 27–61.

an *ishrāqī* thinker, Mīr Dāmād followed Suhrawardī on this point.[1]

Of course, there are two problems with such a statement. The first relates to the nature of Suhrawardī's position which clearly relates light with reality and not essence, and second, it is debatable whether Mīr Dāmād was more of a *ishrāqī* than an Avicennian (the evidence on the latter is much clearer and the later tradition often read Mīr Dāmād and his position on creation to be doctrinaire Avicennism). However, the scope of what is meant by *umūr ʿāmma* is also relevant here: Mīr Dāmād's positions on the eternity or the incipience of the cosmos fits within his ontology and not his theology or cosmology as such.

Before beginning my analysis of his work and sketching his conception of 'common notions' and general ontology, it is useful to rehearse quickly what previous studies have said about the nature of Mīr Dāmād's ontology, and also say something about the very notion of *metaphysica generalis* (*umūr ʿāmma*) inherited by Safavid thinkers.

1. Previous Studies

Henry Corbin and Sayyid Jalāl al-Dīn Āshtiyānī in their selection of the works of philosophers from the Safavid period onwards and in their discussion of their work were the first ones to present within the context of Mīr Dāmād's thought his ontology, or rather specifically his solution to the relationship of existence and essence (*ittiṣāf al-māhīya biʾl-wujūd*).[2] They present two passages from *al-Qabasāt*. The first deals with the so-called rule of subordination (*qāʿida farʿīya*): 'the subsistence of a quality of a thing is subordinate to the subsistence of the thing that bears it',[3] and the question of whether existence

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1. Mehdi Amin Razavi, 'The School of Illumination', in Seyyed Hossein Nasr and Mehdi Amin Razavi (eds), *An Anthology of Philosophy in Persia Vol. 4: From the School of Illumination to Philosophical Mysticism*, London: Tauris in association with the Institute of Ismaili Studies, 2012, p. 19.

2. For the summary, see: Henry Corbin, *La philosophie iranienne islamique aux VXII et XVIII siècles*, Paris: Buchet/Chastel, 1981, pp. 30–31.

3. On this point, see: Ghulām-Riżā Fayyāżī, *Hasti u chīstī dar maktab-i Ṣadrāʾī*, Qum: Pazhūhishgāh-i ḥawza u dānishgāh, 1388 Sh/2009, pp. 290–294, and Sayyid Muḥammad Ḥusayn Ṭabāṭabāʾī, *Bidāyat al-ḥikma*, Qum: al-Nashr al-islāmī, 1981, 3–7, tr. Sayyid ʿAlī Qulī Qarāʾī as *The Elements of Islamic Metaphysics*, 2nd edition, London: ICAS Press, 2018, pp. 9–14.

is something accidentally or rather super-added to essence in extra-mental reality. Mīr Dāmād seems to take two positions: the first is that existence and essence are identical in real things whether in mental or extra-mental reality, and secondly, that existence has no extra-mental manifestation and no reality beyond the conceptual 'being of reason' that is existence as a quality posited in the mind. In *al-Qabasāt*, he says:

> *Are you not of them that clearly perceive, by reason of what we have related to you in our other works, that the existence of something, in whatever vessel or container it may be, is the occurrence of that very thing in that vessel, not the attachment or addition of another thing to it? Otherwise, the simple interrogative (hal basīṭ) would be turned into the compound interrogative (hal murakkab) and the affirmation (thubūt) of the thing with respect to itself would be the affirmation of something belonging to another thing. Thus whoever considers the "existence" of the essence (māhīya) to be a particular property (waṣf) among concrete properties, or a particular thing among mental things, apart from the concept of predicated being-an-existent (mawjūdīya maṣdarīya), he is not among those worth talking to, and he is not one of the companions of the truth, as our foregone companions in this profession have said. If the thing were as he imagines it to be, existence itself would be a particular essence among other essences, and its existence, without a doubt, would be superadded to its own essence, as with the other possible essences, and its existence also would be its predicated affirmation, as with the existence of other things.*

> *Therefore, existence in the real world is the very becoming (ṣayrūra) of something in the real world, not that which by its qualification the thing becomes in the real world. In like manner, existence in the mind is the same as its very occurrence in the mind. The existence of every accident is its existence in its subject, and the existence of existence is the existence of its subject. The caused thing is its very reality and its essence as made by the Maker's simple act of making (ja'l basīṭ), and existence is the account (ḥikāya) of the substance of its actually created reality.*

> *The stage of the actually created reality itself is called "the stage of determination (taqarrur) and actualization (fi'līya)," and the question that corresponds to it is called "the real simple interrogative," that is to say, the interrogative of (what) the thing (is) (al-shay'). The stage of predicated being-an-existent abstracted from it is called "the stage of existence," and the*

question that corresponds to it is called "the general simple interrogative," that is to say, the interrogative of the thing existent without qualification. The end result of these two questions is ultimately the same with respect to the object signified. As for the meaning of the negative in simple interrogatives: in the case of the real simple interrogative, it is the negation of the essence in itself, and in the case of the general simple interrogative, it is the negation of existence as unqualified. The end result of these two questions is also ultimately the same with respect to the object signified. As for the affirmation of a particular concept to the essence, whatever the concept may be, whether belonging to the essential constituents (jawharīyāt) of the essence or to its accidental attributes (ʿaraḍīyāt), it pertains to the sphere of the compound interrogative, that is to say, the interrogative of the thing as something. The object signified, [in this case], is the affirmation of something belonging to another thing, and in the negative, it is the negation of something from another thing.

Existence, therefore, is the appearance of the determined essence itself, while nonexistence, which is the negation of existence, is the nullification (buṭlān) of the postulated essence and its non-being. Its concept does not correspond to anything; it is not that there is something whose primary attribute is nonexistence.[1]

The second passage from *al-Qabasāt* is an affirmation that in contingent entities, it is essence that is ontologically prior and real and not existence:

Just as it has become clear to you by these two ways, it is clear also that the intelligible stage belonging to the concrete essence is only possible if the real existence of the concrete essence in the real world is not the same as the substance as itself and the stage of its essence as such. For were the stage of the essence itself as such the same as existence in the real world, the intelligible stage, which corresponds to the essence of the real thing itself with respect to its unqualified self, would itself be existence in the external world and a determination in concrete reality. The intelligible stage and the concrete entity would then be the same, but this is contrary

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1. Corbin and Āshtiyānī (eds), *Muntakhabātī az āsār-i ḥukamā'-yi ilāhī-yi Īrān*, vol. 1, pp. 63–65; Mīr Dāmād, *al-Qabasāt*, ed. Mehdi Mohaghegh et al, Tehran: Tehran University Press, 1977, pp. 37–38. I am drawing on Dr Keven Brown's excellent revised translation of *al-Qabasāt* with some modifications (I use essence instead of quiddity for *māhīya*). His translation is forthcoming with Brill.

to their nature, since existence is superadded to the essence. These are two principles are among the fundamental principles that are the pillars of the science of metaphysics.[1]

This latter passage is also cited by Mūsavī-Bihbahānī in his study of Mīr Dāmād's position on the unreality of existence.[2] Ibrāhīmī-yi Dīnānī, in an article first published in 1992, rehearses the same passages from the second *qabas* of *al-Qabasāt* to demonstrate that Mīr Dāmād held the ontological primary of essence both with respect to what is realised in actuality and what is made in the process of creation (*ja'l*).[3] The existence of a thing is identical to the essence in extra-mental reality and nothing apart from it and similarly the existence of something in the mind is identical to its realisation in the mind. With respect to the latter form of ontological priority, it means that what God makes or produces in the process of creation are essences of things and not their existence. Existence is a concept that we ascribe to those entities.

Nasr similarly repeats the notion that Mīr Dāmād was the first to raise the question that Mullā Ṣadrā and those who came after grappled, namely, within the conceptual dyad of existence and essence that constitutes the contingent entity, which of the two is ontological prior (possessing *aṣāla*)?[4] He does not unfortunately cite any text in support. Toshihiko Izutsu's contribution to Mīr Dāmād's ontology is similarly to express some surprise that he held the notion of the ontological priority of essence and considered existence to be a mere 'being of reason' posited in the mind.[5] In his introduction to the edition of *al-Qabasāt*, he points out that Mīr Dāmād's position is basically a Platonic continuation of Suhrawardī and he draws attention to the propositional analysis of the first passage cited above and the distinction between saying, 'X exists' and 'X is a flower' if existence added anything to a proposition; how-

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1. Corbin and Āshtiyānī (eds), *Muntakhabātī az āsār-i ḥukamā'-yi ilāhī-yi Īrān*, vol. 1, p. 67; Mīr Dāmād, *al-Qabasāt*, p. 51.

2. Sayyid ʿAlī Mūsavī-Bihbahānī, *Ḥakīm-i Astarābād Mīr Dāmād*, Tehran: Tehran University Press, 1377 Sh/1998, pp. 214–215.

3. Ghulām-Ḥusayn Ibrāhīmī-yi Dīnānī, *Niyāyish-i fīlsūf*, Tehran: Intishārāt-i Hirmis, 1396 Sh/2017, pp. 246–251.

4. Seyyed Hossein Nasr, *Islamic Philosophy from its Origins to the Present: Philosophy in the Land of Prophecy*, Albany: State University of New York Press, 2006, pp. 214–215.

5. Toshihiko Izutsu, *The Concept and Reality of Existence*, Tokyo: Keio Institute of Cultural and Linguistic Studies, 1971, p. 155.

ever, the two propositions are the same for Mīr Dāmād – they are both simple propositions whereas for adherents of the ontological priority of existence the former is simple proposition and the latter a compound one (due to the fact that in the first there is a single predicate and in the latter two predicates).[1] Later, Dabashi also repeats the same material on the ontological priority of essence from Āshtiyānī, Corbin and Izutsu and even attempts – rather poorly – to render the first paragraph of the first passage cited in Āshtiyānī and Corbin into English.[2]

ʿAbd al-Rasūl ʿUbūdīyat's study of the philosophy of Mullā Ṣadrā similarly considers this question by locating Mīr Dāmād in the school of Suhrawardī as a denier of the actuality of existence and insisting upon the ontological reality of essences.[3] He points to a very short treatise that Mīr Dāmād penned on the concept of existence and essence (*mafhūm al-wujūd wāl-māhīya*) in which it is made clear that not only is the effect of the making of the Maker (*jāʿil*) essences that occur in extra-mental reality, but also that the dyad of existence and essences that constitute the contingent is purely conceptual and in the mind as a mental distinction since existence is a pure consideration (*amr iʿtibārī*) that is merely posited in the mind.[4] Thus, with respect to the two questions of *aṣāla*, Mīr Dāmād's answer to both is in favour of essence, and he further points to his own gloss on his *al-Ufuq al-mubīn*.[5]

He further says that if existence is a shared concept that acts like a universal it cannot be individuated in extra-mental reality; rather it is the natural universal – or the essence – that must be individuated in order to give individ-

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1. Toshihiko Izutsu, "Mīr Dāmād and his Philosophy", in Mīr Dāmād, *al-Qabasāt*, pp. 10–13.

2. Hamid Dabashi, "Mīr Dāmād and the founding of the school of Isfahan", in Seyyed Hossein Nasr and Oliver Leaman (eds), *History of Islamic Philosophy*, London: Routledge, 1996, II, pp. 610, 615.

3. ʿAbd al-Rasūl ʿUbūdīyat, *Dar āmadī bih niẓām-i ḥikmat-i Ṣadrāʾī*, Qum: Muʾassasa-yi āmūzishī va pazhūhishī-yi Imām Khumaynī, 1385 Sh/2006, vol. 1, pp. 77–82.

4. Mīr Dāmād, *Muṣannafāt*, ed. ʿAbd Allāh Nūrānī, Tehran: Anjuman-i āsār va mafākhir-i farhangī, 1381–1384 Sh/2002–2005, vol. 1, pp. 504–505. It might be worth pointing out that in a recent work, Dāwūd Ḥusaynī has questioned the attribution of this short text to Mīr Dāmād and discussed this question extensively – see: *Vujūd u dhāt: tafsīrī az Ṣadrā dar siyāq-i tārīkhī*, Qum: Intishārāt-i ḥikmat-i islāmī, 1398 Sh/2019, pp. 68–143.

5. I have not managed to trace this reference and it is entirely possible that it further supports Ḥusaynī's contention that this passage is not by Mīr Dāmād but maybe by a student who wrote such a gloss.

uality to things that occur in extra-mental reality.[1] In the text, he also makes it clear that *umūr ʿāmma* is the study of common notions – secondary intelligibles (*maʿqūlāt thānīya*) – that have no actuality such as oneness, existence, thingness and the like.[2]

ʿUbūdīyat also notes that Mīr Dāmād's position follows that of Suhrawardī and he cites the passage on mental considerations from his *Ḥikmat al-ishrāq*.[3] Suhrawardī makes three points: first, the univocity of existence means that it cannot obtain in extra-mental reality. Second, existence is not a real predicate, argued by infinite regress. Third, existence like other secondary intelligibles does not obtain in extra-mental reality. He summaries the point that distinguishing between two types of property: the first is one which obtains in extra-mental reality such as blackness and whiteness, and the second is one that is purely mental such as existence, contingency, being a substance and so forth. If we say that something exists, we are not positing existence as a concrete reality that occurs, but we ascribe an intellectual notion of 'existence' to that thing in extra-mental reality; existence as a being of reason is merely a mental predicate.[4] ʿUbūdīyat's presentation also shows us how the issue has been subordinated to a teleology in which the 'correct' position emerges with Mullā ṣadrā.

The most comprehensive – and because it is the best discussion of Mīr Dāmād's positions on *ḥudūth* – is Keven Brown's doctoral dissertation which demonstrates the metaphysical foundation of the theory of perpetual crea-

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1. Mīr Dāmād, *Muṣannafāt*, vol. 1, pp. 506–507.

2. Mullā Ṣadrā recognises this genealogy and associates Suhrawardī with the particular position that existence is only posited in the mind (*amr ʿāmm ʿaqlī intizāʿī*) – Mullā Ṣadrā Shīrāzī, *al-Ḥikma al-mutaʿāliya fīʾl-asfār al-ʿaqlīya al-arbaʿa*, gen. ed. Sayyid Muḥammad Khāminihī, Tehran: Bunyād-i ḥikmat-i islāmī-yi Ṣadrā, 1380 Sh/2001–, vol. 1, p. 298. He cites – without mentioning but it is clear it is Mīr Dāmād (and Suhrawardī) who is concerned – the notion that existence is not a true property (*waṣf*) – see: *Asfār*, vol. 1, p. 48. Elsewhere he cites Suhrawardī's denial that existence is a real predicate – see: *Asfār*, vol. 1, pp. 71, 155. He associates both Suhrawardī and Mīr Dāmād with the position that the simple effect of the Maker (*majʿūl basīṭ*) is essence and not existence – see: *Asfār*, vol. 1, p. 481.

3. Shihāb al-Dīn Suhrawardī, *Ḥikmat al-ishrāq* [*The Philosophy of Illumination*], eds./trs. Hossein Ziai and John Walbridge, Provo, UH: Brigham Young University Press, 1999, pp. 45–51.

4. Suhrawardī, *Ḥikmat al-ishrāq* [*The Philosophy of Illumination*], pp. 50–51.

tion (*ḥudūth dahrī*). These relate to what Brown describes as the first and second proofs, the former based on the notion of three receptacles of time and existence and the second based on the analysis of the relationship of essence and existence. In the first, Mīr Dāmād distinguishes between two notions of non-existence of an essence with respect to its actualisation that suggests that essences are prior.[1] Essences are real and the true constituents of the mind of God that are emanated.[2] The second *qabas* presents the distinction between God and contingents: in the former essence and existence – following Avicenna's notion of divine simplicity – are identical while in the latter they are conceptually distinct.[3]

God actualises essences by giving them existence that shows that essences are ontologically prior.[4] He goes on to compare it with the priority of substance to accidents in Aristotelian metaphysics.[5] He also comes back to what Mīr Dāmād describes as the two fundamental pillars of metaphysics: that existence and essence are distinct in all except God, and that essences are ontologically prior and existence is conceptually accidental in relation to contingent entities.[6] What God makes are essences – Mīr Dāmād points to his discussion in *al-Ufuq al-mubīn* (to which we will return later).[7]

Finally, ʿAlī Awjabī in his excellent introduction to Mīr Dāmād provides the most extensive discussion of the question of *aṣāla* but points out an important qualification: there is no doubt that for Mīr Dāmād, God is the only entity for whom the application of existence is a real predicate and for all contingents, existence that is ascribed to them are merely mental considerations while it is essence that obtains in extra-mental reality.[8] To this end, he cites the same passages from *al-Qabasāt* as previous studies.

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1. Keven Brown, *Time, Perpetuity, Eternity. Mir Damad's Theory of Perpetual Creation and the Trifold Division of Existence. An Analysis of Kitab al-Qabasat: The Book of Blazing Brands*, unpublished PhD Dissertation, University of California Los Angeles, 2006, pp. 95–97, citing Mīr Dāmād, *al-Qabasāt*, pp. 14–16.
2. Brown, *Time, Perpetuity, Eternity*, pp. 107–120.
3. Ibid., pp. 156–161.
4. Ibid., pp. 161–163, citing Mīr Dāmād, *al-Qabasāt*, pp. 38–39, 78.
5. Ibid., pp. 164–168, citing Mīr Dāmād, *al-Qabasāt*, pp. 42–45.
6. Ibid., pp. 172–174, citing Mīr Dāmād, *al-Qabasāt*, p. 51.
7. Ibid., p. 187, citing Mīr Dāmād, *al-Qabasāt*, p. 56.
8. ʿAlī Awjabī, *Mīr Dāmād bunyāngudhār-i ḥikmat-i yamānī*, Tehran: Intishārāt-i Sāḥat, 1382 Sh/2003, pp. 124–125.

However, he suggests that in terms of how he describes existence as the very realisation and actuality of essences, he opens the way for Mullā Ṣadrā's understanding. In that sense, Awjabī is the only one who questions the straightforward application of the ontological reality of essence above existence for Mīr Dāmād.[1]

2. Constructing *umūr ʿāmma*

The scope of the *umūr ʿāmma* and whether it is an independent section of metaphysics and/or equivalent to first philosophy or universal science is presented in a number of *kalām* and *ḥikma* texts in the middle period.[2] The foundation of the notion lies with Avicenna's conception of 'common things' in book I, chapter 5 of the *Metaphysics* of *al-Shifāʾ*: 'the things that have the highest claim to be conceived in themselves are those common to all matters – as, for example, 'the existent', 'the one thing', and others".[3] Avicenna seems to this that such primacy notions that are imprinted in the rational soul are known innately by sound minds. From this we get the development of such a consideration of ontology as part of metaphysics.

Let us consider the *kalām* ones first and take two examples which spawned a major commentary tradition not least in North India: *Tajrīd al-iʿtiqād* of Naṣīr al-Dīn al-Ṭūsī (d. 672/1274) and *Kitāb al-mawāqif* of ʿAḍud al-Dīn al-Ījī (d. 756/1356). The *Tajrīd* is divided into sections the first two of which overlap with metaphysics and the remaining four are theology proper (proof for the existence of God and her attributes, prophecy, the imamate, and the afterlife). The first two are *umūr ʿāmma* and substance and accident. This first section was extensively glossed in the later period especially by al-Sharīf ʿAlī al-Jurjānī (d. 816/1413) and we will return to his comments. The structure of the *umūr ʿāmma* is the following chapters (*fuṣūl*):[4]

1. Common properties of existence and non-existence (*aḥkām al-wujūd*

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1. Ibid., pp. 126–127.

2. For a useful discussion of this, see: Heidrun Eichner, "Dissolving the unity of metaphysics: from Faḫr al-Dīn al-Rāzī to Mullā Ṣadrā Šīrāzī", *Medioevo* 32 (2007), pp. 139–197.

3. Ibn Sīnā, *The Metaphysics of the Healing*, ed./tr. Michael Marmura, Provo, UH: Brigham Young University Press, 2005, p. 23.

4. Naṣīr al-Dīn al-Ṭūsī, *Tajrīd al-ʿaqāʾid*, ed. ʿAbbās Muḥammad Ḥasan Sulaymān, Alexandria: Dār al-maʿrifa, 1996, pp. 63–84.

wàl-ʿadam)

2. Essence (*al-māhīya*) and its properties

3. Cause and effect (*al-ʿilla wàl-maʿlūl*)

The clear function of these is to establish the principles needed for the theological discussions that will follow. The *Mawāqif* has a similar but far more detailed structure: preliminaries in epistemology, *umūr ʿāmma*, accidents (*aʿrāḍ*), substances (*jawāhir*), theology proper, and matters relating to revelation (*samʿīyāt*) such as prophecy and the afterlife.[1] The *umūr ʿāmma* is then divided into the following sections (*marṣad*):

A. **Common properties of existence and non-existence comprising the following chapters (*maqṣid*):**

- Definition (*taʿrīf*) of existence (*al-wujūd*)
- Commonality (*ishtirāk*) of existence
- Relationship of existence and essence – this is an extensive discussion in the commentaries which clearly sets up the question of *aṣāla*
- On mental existence (*al-wujūd al-dhihnī*)
- On whether one can distinguish between privations (*al-aʿdām*)
- Whether the non-existent is a thing (*hal al-maʿdūm shayʾ*)
- On the ontological mode (*ḥāl*)

B. **On essences comprising the following chapters:**

- Distinguishing essences from other common matters
- On the considerations (*iʿtibārāt*) of essence
- On essence considered in itself
- On simple and compound essences
- On the constituents of compound essences
- Are contingent essences made (*majʿūla*) by the Maker
- On composition of essences
- On composition of essencesOn composition of essences
- On composition of essences
- On essences as universals
- Entification and the coming into being of essences

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1. For a discussion of this text, see: Eichner, "Dissolving the unity of metaphysics", pp. 188–190.

C. On the modalities, on eternity and incipience comprising these chapters:

- On the conception of these notions
- On whether these notions have reference in extra-mental reality
- On the necessary in itself (*al-wājib bi'l-dhāt*)
- On the eternal (*qadīm*)
- On the incipient (*ḥādith*)

D. On oneness and multiplicity (*al-waḥda wàl-kathra*) comprising the following chapters:

- On the equivalence of oneness and existence
- On whether they are distinct
- On the opposition of oneness and multiplicity
- On number and mathematical essences
- On types of oneness
- On their species
- On two
- On the lack of coincidence of two
- On three types of two
- On the law of Non-Contradiction
- On the non-coincidence of two contraries in one instant

E. On cause and effect (*al-ʿilla wàl-maʿlūl*) comprising the following chapters:

- Whether causes are necessary
- On the impossibility of an individual being an effect of two independent causes
- On the Ashʿarī denial of the *ex uno non fit nisi unum* rule
- On the pure simple thing which is identical to God
- On the effectiveness of human power
- On impossibility of infinite regress in causes
- On the premises for the scientific proof of the impossibility of an actual infinite
- On the scientific proof of the impossibility of an actual infinite
- On the difference between a condition or a part of a cause
- On causes and ontological modes

For *ḥikma* texts, let us consider three in order that show us the Rāzīan re-

ception of Avicenna: *al-Mabāḥith al-mashriqīya* of Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī (d. 606/1210), *Hidāyat al-ḥikma* of Athīr al-Dīn al-Abharī (d. 663/1265) and *Ḥikmat al-ʿayn* of Dabīrān Kātibī Qazwīnī (d. 675/1276). Since Rāzī clearly influenced the others, it is best to start with his text. He divided metaphysics and theology into three sections: *umūr ʿāmma*, substance and accident, and theology proper. The *umūr ʿamma* is further divided into five chapters (*bāb*) with sub-chapters (*faṣl*):[1]

A. On existence

- Existence cannot be defined
- On the commonality of existence
- On existence as an accident of essence in contingents
- On an explanation of existence as extrinsic to essence
- Whether existence is additional to essence in the Necessary
- On mental existence
- Essence cannot be devoid of one of two modes of existence
- Existence is not that by which a thing becomes a thing
- The non-existent is not a thing
- The non-existent cannot revert to existence (*al-maʿdūm lā yuʿādd*)

B. On essence comprises twenty chapters on composition and on 'making'

C. On the one and the many also has twenty chapters on the equivalence of oneness and existence, numbers and so forth

D. On contingency, impossibility and necessity comprises twelve chapters:

- On definitions
- On necessity and contingency
- Necessity is an existential thing
- Is contingency as such existential? [Is contingency merely a being of reason?]
- Is specific contingency an existential thing?
- On divisions of the necessary
- On contingent essences
- On types of contingents
- On the causal necessity of contingents

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1. Again, for a discussion, see: Eichner, "Dissolving the unity of metaphysics", pp. 154–159.

- A thing cannot exist and not exist simultaneously
- If a contingent does not become necessary it cannot exist
- Contingency is an essential property of contingents

E. On eternity and incipience comprises five chapters:

- On their being real
- On essential incipience (that the cosmos is eternal)
- Is incipience the reason for dependence on a cause?
- Is incipience a quality additional to the incipient thing?
- Temporal incipience depends on the priority of matter and time to the thing

Abharī's work follows a similar structure and was famously commented upon by Mullā Ṣadrā. He equates *umūr ʿāmma* with universal science and divisions of existence (*taqsīm al-wujūd*) as a preliminary to theology proper (on God and his attributes, on angels and immaterial intellects, and on the afterlife).[1] He has the following divisions:[2]

1. The universal and the particular
2. The one and the many
3. The prior and the posterior
4. The eternal and the incipient
5. The actual and the potential
6. The cause and the effect
7. Substance and accident

The first six of these constitute the core elements common to others.

The metaphysics of Qazwīnī is divided into five sections: *umūr ʿāmma*, cause and effect, substance and accident, God and his attributes, and properties of the rational soul.[3] The *umūr ʿāmma* is then divided into the following discussions (*buḥūth*):[4]

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1. Eichner, "Dissolving the unity of metaphysics", pp. 168–176.
2. Mullā Ṣadrā Shīrāzī, *Sharḥ al-hidāya*, ed. Maqṣūd Muḥammadī, Tehran: Bunyād-i ḥikmat-i islāmī-yi Ṣadrā, 1393 Sh/2014, vol. 2, pp. 5–124.
3. Eichner, "Dissolving the unity of metaphysics", pp. 176–179.
4. Najm al-Dīn Kātibī Qazwīnī, *Ḥikmat al-ʿayn*, ed. ʿAbbās Ṣadrī, Tehran: Anjuman-i mafākhir va āsār-i farhangī, 1384 Sh/2005, pp. 9–36.

A. On existence and non-existence comprising the following issues (*masāʾil*):

- On the self-evident nature of existence and non-existence
- On the commonality of existence
- On existence being additional to essence in contingents
- Existence is identical to essence in the necessary
- On mental existence
- On existence as pure good and privation as pure evil
- The non-existent is not a thing
- The non-existent does not revert to existence
- Whether one can distinguish non-existents
- Denial of any mediation between existence and non-existence

B. On essence including its composition and the predicables

C. On oneness and multiplicity including issues of the equivalence of oneness, individuality and existence, on number and other issues

D. On the modalities comprising the following issues:

- Modalities of essence with respect to existence
- Necessity is an existential matter
- Is contingency an existential matter?
- On the relationship of contingency and essence
- On the emanation of essences
- On eternity and incipience comprising the following issues:
- On the nature of the two
- On the cause of dependence upon an effect
- On whether incipience is a property additional to existence
- On the priority of matter and duration to the incipient thing

Returning to *al-Mawāqif*, and in particular the commentary of al-Sharīf al-Jurjānī, the first three sections relating to *umūr ʿāmma*, essence, as well as the modalities and eternity and incipience are critical for the reception of Mīr Dāmād. Jurjānī mentions three types of constituents of *umūr ʿāmma*: three divisions of existence and oneness that includes essence, individuation and necessity and contingency; the two divisions of contingency and necessity including substances; or the modalities.[1] But especially, the notion of *umūr*

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1. Al-Sharīf ʿAlī al-Jurjānī, *Sharḥ al-mawāqif*, ed. Omer Turker, Istanbul: Türkiye Yazma Eserler Kurumu Başkanliği, 2015, vol. 1, p. 449.

ʿāmma refers to common notions that are undetermined and comprises the properties of existence, non-existence and essence especially and the determinations of eternity and incipience by implication.

Three main points are drawn by Mullā Ṣadrā on the work of his Shirazi forebear. First, divine simplicity – the identity of existence and essence – constitutes the basis for the distinction between Necessary and contingent. Second, necessity and – as another concomitant notion – and existence can only be predicated of entities because of the necessary existence of God.[1] Third, existence is merely a concomitant feature posited in the mind that pertains to realised essences and the truth validity of propositions depends on the correspondence between the notion in mental existence and that realised entity in extra-mental reality.[2]

The final stage before one gets to the time of Mīr Dāmād is the Shirazi philosopher Jalāl al-Dīn Dawānī (d. 908/1502). His glosses on the commentary on the *Tajrīd* were of critical importance and cited extensively by Mullā Ṣadrā.[3] His idea of *umūr ʿāmma* is based on the notion of mentally posited general (or common) notions that apply across entities described as existent, one and so forth – in that sense *umūr ʿāmma* depends on the postulation of *umūr iʿtibārīya*.[4] The main notions that went forward from his work relate to the ideas of existence and essence. Existence is only true of God insofar as he is the only referent for the term; this is a clear entailment of the notion of divine simplicity.[5] The first being – apart from the One – is defined by its essence and from it emanate a chain of being characterised by their essences.[6]

1. Mullā Ṣadrā Shīrāzī, *al-Ḥikma al-mutaʿāliya fīʾl-asfār al-ʿaqlīya al-arbaʿa*, gen. ed. Sayyid Muḥammad Khāminihī, Tehran: Bunyād-i ḥikmat-i islāmī-yi Ṣadrā, 1380 Sh/2001–, vol. 1, p. 147.
2. Ibid., p. 167.
3. There are two forthcoming editions of these glosses: one in the group under the supervision of Eṣref Altaṣ in Istanbul and the other in Tehran by Ḥūrīya Shujāʿī.
4. Jalāl al-Dīn Dawānī, *Sharḥ Risālat al-Zawrāʾ*, in *Sabʿ Rasāʾil*, ed. Sayyid Aḥmad Tūysirkānī, Tehran: Mīrās-i maktūb, 1381 Sh/2002, p. 108.
5. Jalāl al-Dīn Dawānī, *Risālat Ithbāt al-wājib al-jadīda*, in *Sabʿ Rasāʾil*, pp. 125–127, 140; Mullā Ṣadrā, *al-Asfār*, vol. 1, pp. 483–484; Ghulām-Ḥusayn Ibrāhīmī-yi Dīnānī, *Jalāl al-Dīn Davānī: fīlsūf-i dhawq-i taʾalluh*, Tehran: Intishārāt-i Hirmis, 1395 Sh/2016, pp. 19, 52, 83.
6. Jalāl al-Dīn Dawānī, *Sharḥ Hayākil al-nūr*, *Commentary on Suhrawardī's Temples of Light*, in Nasr and Amin Razavi (eds), *An Anthology of Philosophy in Persia*, Vol. 4, p. 116.

Therefore, what emanates from God, and what are made simply by God, are essences since existence has no reference in extra-mental reality for contingent entities.[1] The mind distinguishes between the realisation (existence) of a thing and its essence, but the former is not something concrete or real.[2] The fact that one can conceive of an essence devoid of existence in any mode or its non-existence suggests that essence are ontologically prior to existence.[3] It is precisely because existence is an abstracted notion, a relational 'thing' that it canot be the simple and direct effect of the Maker.[4]

The two senses of existence ascribed to contingent entities do not have reference: the first sense is the abstracted notion of existence, a mental consideration (*amr i'tibārī*) or 'being of reason' that is the mere fact of the actuality and realisation of the essence (akin to the notion of a quantifier), and the second sense is just the copula (the Persian verb '*hast*' is invoked).[5] Neither existence nor essence undergo modulation (*bi'l-tashkīk*) in their predication; rather, existence is predicated univocally of its essential instances.[6]

Only God constitutes extra-mental existence, whereas existence that is ascribed to contingents has no reality.[7] This is the position – based on a reading of Avicennian essentialism and the monism of the school of Ibn ʿArabī – that in the case of Dawānī is known as the 'taste of theosis'.

One contemporary witness of the scope of the *umūr ʿāmma* for Mīr Dāmād might be the work of his student Mullā Ṣadrā. His magnum opus, *al-Ḥikma al-mutaʿāliya fī'l-asfār al-ʿaqlīya al-arbaʿa*, begins with the first journey on metaphysics which is primarily concerned with foundational knowledge that a person needs in order to understand all the sciences (*al-maʿārif allatī yaḥtāju ilayhā al-insān fī jamīʿ al-ʿulūm*), that is, the notion of first philosophy.[8]

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1. Jalāl al-Dīn Dawānī, *Sharḥ Risālat al-Zawrāʾ*, in *Sabʿ Rasāʾil*, pp. 206–207; Mullā Ṣadrā, *al-Asfār*, vol. 1, p. 472.
2. Ibrāhīmī-yi Dīnānī, *Jalāl al-Dīn Davānī*, p. 67.
3. Jalāl al-Dīn Dawānī, *Risālat Ithbāt al-wājib al-jadīda*, in *Sabʿ Rasāʾil*, p. 132; Ibrāhīmī-yi Dīnānī, *Jalāl al-Dīn Davānī*, p. 77.
4. Jalāl al-Dīn Dawānī, *Risālat Ithbāt al-wājib al-jadīda*, in *Sabʿ Rasāʾil*, p. 133.
5. Ibid., p. 129; Mullā Ṣadrā, *al-Asfār*, vol. 1, pp. 71, 484.
6. Jalāl al-Dīn Dawānī, *Risālat Ithbāt al-wājib al-jadīda*, in *Sabʿ Rasāʾil*, p. 127; Mullā Ṣadrā, *al-Asfār*, vol. 1, p. 505.
7. Jalāl al-Dīn Dawānī, *Sharḥ Risālat al-Zawrāʾ*, in *Sabʿ Rasāʾil*, p. 221.
8. On this point, see: Rüdiger Arnzen, "The structure of Mullā Ṣadrā's *al-Ḥikma al-mutaʿāliya fī l-asfār al-ʿaqliyya al-arbaʿa* and his concepts of first philosophy and divine science.

The core ontological aspect – or the *umūr ʿāmma* – constitutes six sections (*marāḥil*): on the properties of existence (*al-wujūd*) including the semantics of existence, the modalities and the notion of mental existence, on the properties of privation (*al-ʿadam*), on the modes of making (*al-jaʿl*) or producing entities through combining existence and essence within the order of causality, on the properties of essence, on the one and the many, and on causality.[1] The remaining four sections of the first journey as well as the first part of the second journey seem to deal with metaphysical foundations of physics: on potentiality and actuality, on properties and the nature of motion, on eternity and incipience, on the intellect and intellection,[2] on the properties of substances and accidents and category theory.[3]

What is clear is that Mullā Ṣadra the notion of first philosophy or a universal (divine) science is identical with the notion of *umūr ʿāmma* and he criticises notions that either fail to distinguish between existence in one of the three modalities, or conceptions of existence that take in mathematical and physical instances specifically; universal science considers the properties of existence whether material or immaterial, whether mental or extra-mental.[4]

From this preceding presentation, we see that the notion of *umūr ʿāmma* inherited by Mīr Dāmād primarily concerned properties of existence and essence – and their relationship – and properties of certain modalities of things such as eternity and incipience. In that sense it is clear that the scope of general ontology takes in the arguments on perpetual creation and incipience articulated in *al-Qabasāt* and other texts. However, his positions on the nature of existence and essence are most salient for drawing a sketch of his *umūr ʿāmma*, independently as well as a basis for his arguments on the incipience of the cosmos.

An essay", *Medioevo* 37 (2007), pp. 211–212.

1. Mullā Ṣadrā Shīrāzī, *al-Asfār*, vol. 1, pp. 29–528, vol. 2, pp. 1–529. For a defence of such a reading see: Arnzen, "The structure of Mullā Ṣadrā", pp. 217–225.

2. As Arnzen says, this is one of the innovative elements of Mullā Ṣadrā's metaphysics to include intellection: "The structure of Mullā Ṣadrā", p. 225. However, it is also clear that this stems from the discussion of the divine intellect in Aristotle's *Metaphysics lambda* and the commentary tradition thereof.

3. Mullā Ṣadrā, *al-Asfār*, vol. 3, pp. 1–561, vol. 4, pp. 5–473.

4. Ibid., vol. 1, pp. 35–36.

3. Mīr Dāmād's metaphysical foundations for *ḥudūth dahrī*

Before we move onto the scope of ontology in his other works, the best place to start with Mīr Dāmād is his argument for *ḥudūth* in *al-Qabasāt* and its metaphysical foundations. What is clear from *Sharḥ al-mawāqif* and Mīr Dāmād's own witness, the very question of God's creation, what constitutes eternity and incipience, are all well within the remit of *umūr ʿāmma*. A proper analysis of how the cosmos comes about – and the constituents of contingent entities and how they differ from the Necessary – is based on a number of metaphysical postulations that can be derived primarily from the first two *qabas* of the text (and we have already mentioned some of these in terms of the texts cited above):

1. *Umūr ʿāmma* concerns existence, non-existence and essence since they are not quantified or specified (*al-Qabasāt*, p. 6)

2. Existence and essence are identical in God and what differentiates God from contingents is that (*al-Qabasāt*, pp. 17, 24)

3. Existence and essence are conceptually distinct in contingents (*al-Qabasāt*, pp. 49–50)

4. Existence is an accident of essence (*al-Qabasāt*, pp. 39, 42–43)

5. Existence is merely what we call actualisation or the individuation of a thing and nothing else (*al-Qabasāt*, pp. 38, 49)

6. Essences are the constituents of divine knowledge and hence (*al-Qabasāt*, pp. 52, 64)

7. Essences are made by God who gives them existence, that is, essences are *majʿūla* (*al-Qabasāt*, pp. 22–23, 52, 53–54, 56)

8. Since essences in their non-actualised sense have a reality in the mind of God – and also in the ontological sphere known as *nafs al-amr* – they are ontologically prior to existence (*al-Qabasāt*, pp. 4, 16, 39)

9. Therefore, essences are ontologically more fundamental and prior and can be found in any mode of existence (*al-Qabasāt*, pp. 47–48, 49–50)

10. However, essence does not undergo modulation (*tashkīk*) *contra* Suhrawardī (*al-Qabasāt*, pp. 67–68)

11. Existence is not a real predicate or a real property of anything – it is the mere fact of the individuation and entification of an essence as a thing (*al-Qabasāt*, pp. 37–38)

12. The two primary pillars of metaphysics are: existence and essence 13. are

distinct in contingent entities, and essences are ontologically prior as existence is merely accidental (*al-Qabasāt*, p. 51).

In these postulations, we can see how the distinction and the rupture (*infikāk*) between the Necessary and the contingent and between the eternal and the incipient is analysed by Mīr Dāmād through recourse to the metaphysical analyses of existence and essence. In the range of issues broached, one can see the basis of how Mullā Ṣadrā responds in the first journey of *al-Asfār*.

4. A sketch of Mīr Dāmād's ontology

What does a reading of Mīr Dāmād's other works contribute to an understanding of his ontology? In this section, I will consider his three most important works aside from *al-Qabasāt*, namely *al-Ṣirāṭ al-mustaqīm*, *Taqwīm al-īmān*, and *al-Ufuq al-mubīn*. Taken together they propose a consistent metaphysics and one that is entirely compatible with the abbreviated form that one finds in the foundations of his theory of perpetual incipience of the cosmos.

Taqwīm al-īmān is primarily concerned with theology in the sense of giving proofs for the existence of God, explaining the nature of God and discussing her attributes (especially divine power and knowledge – the debt to the Avicennian tradition is clear). However, even in those discussions one finds elements of ontology relating primarily to four issues. The first relates to the very notion of *umūr ʿāmma* and first philosophy as the basic common, theoretical analysis that is of benefit to all inquiries and central to that is the conception of secondary intellgibles such as existence and especially the subject matter of 'being *qua* being'.[1] The second is that God as the necessary existent is absolutely simple – his existence is his essence – and he is the most simple reality.[2] From this stems the basic distinction between the Necessary and the contingent since in the latter their existence is distinct from their essence conceptually.[3] The third point relates to the nature of essence: they are what emanate from God and are given existence to come into realisation.[4] Essences are substances realised in actuality stemming from their non-existent (or

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1. Mīr Dāmād, *Taqwīm al-īmān*, ed. ʿAlī Awjabī, Tehran: Mīrās-i maktūb, 1376 Sh/1997, pp. 200, 275–276, 304.

2. Ibid., pp. 202–203, 249–251, 251–256, 266–267.

3. Ibid., pp. 206, 234.

4. This is argued on the basis of the Neoplatonic rule of *ex uno non fit nisi unum* in *al-Taqdīsāt*, in *Muṣannafāt*, vol. 1, pp. 116–117.

rather non-realised) status in the mind of God before.[1]

This is the notion that essences are *maj'ūla* and it plays part of a role in critiquing Avicenna's theory of divine knowledge. Finally, existence is the very fact of being individuated and realised; it is nothing more than that.[2] It is not a real predicate but merely an intellectual consideration that we ascribe to realised contingent essences.[3]

Al-Ṣirāṭ al-mustaqīm is a text concerned with the relationship between the eternal and the incipient, between the Necessary and the contingent and discusses the nature of motion and time extensively. Even within these discussions one finds elements of Mīr Dāmād's general ontology. He is critical of the notion that either existence or essence undergo modulation – there can be no more or less in either.[4] Divine simplicity – that God's existence is identical to his essence – is one way of distinguishing from contingent entities.[5] Fundamentally, existence is purely in the mind and not a property (*waṣf*) of anything – and on this point he is critical of the Shirazi philosopher Sayyid Ṣadr al-Dīn Dashtakī.[6] The position on essence and existence in summarised on a short section called a foundation (*asās*) that draws upon the Avicennian tradition:

> *Existence* (*al-wujūd*) *is merely the fact of being existent* (*al-mawjūdīya*) *that the mind abstracts from essences* (*al-māhīyāt*) *and is identical to their realisation by way of an abstracted notion. It does not establish an individual that subsists through essence apart from determined portions by annexation* (*iḍāfa*) *or as a property* (*waṣf*) *such as existence that has no cause. Absolute existence has no particularity except by annexation to what is abstracted from it nor is not specified except by that* [*annexation*] *and not before it. This is repeatedly stated by the great master Abū 'Alī and his group and his students and those in their line. In al-Ta'līqāt, he said: 'Existence that pertains to a body is just the fact of being existent for the body and is not like the state of whiteness and the body in its being white'.*[7]

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1. Mīr Dāmād, *Taqwīm al-īmān*, pp. 213, 353–354, 368–369.

2. Ibid., pp. 214, 215, 256, and *al-Taqdīsāt*, in *Muṣannafāt*, vol. 1, pp. 118–119.

3. Mīr Dāmād, *Taqwīm al-īmān*, p. 235.

4. Mīr Dāmād, *al-Ṣirāṭ al-mustaqīm fī rabṭ al-ḥādith wàl-qadīm*, ed. 'Alī Awjabī, Tehran: Mīrās-i maktūb, 1381 Sh/2002, pp. 17–18, 32–33.

5. Ibid., pp. 146–147.

6. Ibid., pp. 33–34, 38, 93, 290, 310.

7. I have not managed to trace the exact wording, but passages of the same import are:

> *In al-Taḥṣīl, [Bahmanyār says]: 'Existence is not that by which a thing is in concrete reality (fī'l-a'yān); rather, it is the thing in concrete reality and its becoming in concrete reality', and 'the individuation of everything is in annexation to its substrate and to the cause not in the sense that it is an addition that is realised in extra-mental reality; so the existence of the human for example is constituted by its annexation to "human" and the existence of Zayd is annexed to Zayd', and 'if we claim, so-and-so exists, we do not mean by that that existence is a notional thing that exists in extra-mental reality, but rather we mean that it is so in concrete reality and so in the mind'.*[1]

Existence is therefore a secondary intelligible, a notion abstracted from realised essences or things and is not something actually existing in itself. It is a univocal concept that is predicated of different essences in different modes of realisation.[2] Essence is prior to existence in contingents and is what is realised in concrete reality.[3] The fundamental nature of essence is the basis of Mīr Dāmād's embrace of Aristotelian substance metaphysics and hylemorphism: substances and accidents are the ways in which realised essences are manifest.[4]

The most systematic study of ontology is *al-Ufuq al-mubīn* which is many ways prefigures Mullā Ṣadrā's conceptualisation of *umūr 'āmma*. We cannot definitively date it but it comes after *al-Ṣirāṭ al-mustaqīm* which is mentioned in it and probably *al-Taqdīsāt*, and because a number of issues relating to time and motion later in the text prefigure a more detailed exposition in *al-Qabasāt*, it probably predates that text.[5] The editor reasonably suggests that the evidence of the licenses (*ijāzāt*) to transmit the text points to this being the main text that Mīr Dāmād uses to text ontology to his students.[6] It seems that

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Ibn Sīnā, *al-Ta'līqāt*, ed. Sayyid Ḥusayn Mūsawīyān, Tehran: Mu'assasa-yi pazhūhishī-yi ḥikmat u falsafa-yi Īrān, 1391 Sh/2012, §76, 571, 934, 996.

1. Mīr Dāmād, *al-Ṣirāṭ al-mustaqīm*, p. 46. The passages from Bahmanyār are*: Kitāb al-taḥṣīl*, ed. Murtaḍā Muṭahharī, Tehran: Tehran University Press, 1375 Sh/1996, pp. 281, 282, 284.

2. Mīr Dāmād, *al-Taqdīsāt*, in *Muṣannafāt*, vol. 1, p. 131.

3. Mīr Dāmād, *al-Īmāḍāt*, and *al-Taqdīsāt*, in *Muṣannafāt*, vol. 1, pp. 21–22, 129.

4. Mīr Dāmād, *al-Īmāḍāt*, in *Muṣannafāt*, vol. 1, p. 111.

5. Mīr Dāmād, *al-Ufuq al-mubīn*, ed. Ḥāmid Nājī Iṣfahānī, Tehran: Mīrās-i maktūb, 1391 Sh/2012, pp. 29, 120, 451, 470, 630.

6. Iṣfahānī, "Muqaddima", in Mīr Dāmād, *al-Ufuq al-mubīn*, p. xliii.

the text originally had two sections: *metaphysica generalis* (*umūr ʿāmma*) and *metaphysica specialis* (theology proper) but the extant codices only testify to the first part. This unfinished text comprises three sections (named one, five and six in the text):

1. The semantics of existence with three chapters:

- Defining philosophy and whether existence is a predicate
- On the nature of predication and how God makes the cosmos
- Remaining properties of existence and non-existence

2. The semantics of modalities comprising the following chapters:

- Semantics of the modalities
- On modalities and *umūr ʿāmma*
- On the properties of the Necessary Existent
- On properties of the contingent

3. On the God-world relationship comprising the following chapters:

- On the nature of modes of existence and temporality: time (zamān)
- On perpetuity and eternity
- On types of eternality and persistence and permanence and on tenses
- On types of priority and posteriority
- A critique of *kalām* conceptions of the God-world relationship

The third section in particular overlaps extensively with the arguments about the nature of the incipience of the cosmos in *al-Qabasāt*. The text also seems to predict some objections and counterpoints that one finds in Mullā Ṣadrā: for example, there are arguments against modulation of existence (*tashkīk al-wujūd*) by virtue of intensity (*al-shidda*) and weakness such as one cannot extend the notion of modulation of essences to modulation in the reality of existence, since the latter is nothing something real but merely the very fact of being realised (*taḥaqquq*).[1] Modulation cannot similarly occur in the Necessary existent for the obvious reason of divine simplicity (and of course, monotheism).[2]

Two foundational positions are important: the very notion of *umūr ʿāmma* and the idea of a mental consideration (*iʿtibār*). The former is defined by Mīr

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1. Mīr Dāmād, *al-Ufuq al-mubīn*, pp. 114, 116–118, 428.

2. Ibid., pp. 244.

Dāmād in terms of two types of commonality: the first is generic and universalising in the way that 'animal' picks out a wider range of senses and referents than 'human', and the second is the property that is more common than a specific essence, such as 'animality' with respect to 'animal' (that is, a unconditioned conception as opposed to conditioned).[1] The latter is secondary intelligibles that *umūr 'āmma* discusses (as does the semantics part of later logic as well). An *i'tibār* is also central to this discussion since it relates to beings of reason that are purely considered in the mind – from pure conceiveables to things that potentially could be actualised.[2] The most important types of these mental considerations for Mīr Dāmād are existence, the modalities and non-existence since these are pure concepts that have sense and meaning but have no referents in extra-mental reality. The truth validity of propositions that include such secondary intelligibles is predicated on their status in the objective reality, the very truth of the matter (*nafs al-amr*).[3]

As in his other works, Mīr Dāmād declares that existence is the mere fact of something, an essence being actualised and individuated in extra-mental reality:

> *The reality of existence is the same as its very being-existent (al-mawjūdīya) in an abstracted sense, or its becoming the same as an essence in a particular receptable, not a meaning that is included within that of essence nor abstracted from it [essence]. It is the basis of the validity of the abstraction from 'being-existent' and of the predication of the concept of being an existent so that one may realise that there is nothing in the receptable of existent except for the essence itself. Then the mind analyses and abstracts from it a meaning of being-an-existent and its becoming the basis of an analysis and ascribes a property to it and predicates it as the referent for a predication of a logical judgement that is identical to essence with respect to the receptacle, not something additional to it (essence), such that the predication is valid...*

> *It is similar to the predication of other accidents... As for the accident that is existence, its reality is that same as what it is in extra-mental reality and in mental reality, that is, neither a thing in concrete reality nor a men-*

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1. Ibid., pp. 67–68.

2. Ibid., pp. 9, 218, 225, 257.

3. Ibid., pp. 97–98.

> *tal entity. Its existence is identical to the existence of its subject [to which it is analytically related].*[1]

From this it is clear that existence has no reality. However, it is analytically useful and necessary for the successful predication of propositions to consider existence to be the basis for meaning bearing. Discussion of existence for Mīr Dāmād is about predication – existence in itself is neither a real predicate nor a property.[2] He explains further:

> *If we say, 'X exists' we do not mean that existence is something extra-mental, that its being is extrinsic to essence so that we have existence and essence such as 'the existing human', but rather we merely mean that X is in things or in the mind.*[3]

Nevertheless, the actuality and persistence of essences requires the notion of being-existent, and in that sense, existence is identical to the existing essence.[4] That is one of the effects of the existence of the Maker when he makes essences.

This raises the question of how Mīr Dāmād understands the nature of essence and its relationship to the act of creation known as 'making' (*ja'l*). He asserts that the simple act of making (*ja'l basīṭ*) – the object of what is made – of God is essence (*māhīya*). The compound act of making (*ja'l mu'allaf*) – and this is related back to the truth validity of propositions – is the dyad of essence and being-existent.[5] Existence insofar as it is identical to being-existent is thus a concomitant and accidental result of that making.[6] The foundation of these contingent essences that constitute the cosmos is the pure existence of God.[7] If a thing is devoid of itself and not realised, it requires a cause to become an essence that persists and exists and has actuality. God's agency then actualises that essence so that it may persist and come into existence as an individuated, realised and actualised essence.[8] The effect of the cause is upon 'that by which

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1. Ibid., pp. 9–11.
2. Ibid., pp. 42–44.
3. Ibid., p. 12.
4. Ibid., pp. 14–15.
5. Ibid., pp. 22–23.
6. Ibid., p. 32.
7. Ibid., pp. 54, 281.
8. Ibid., pp. 362–363, 602.

a thing is what it is' which is a way of saying its 'essence'.[1]

Does it follow that essences must then be ontological prior to existence since they are the simple and direct result of God's creative agency? In one sense, yes and Mīr Dāmād says so when he argues that essences are prior (*masbūq*) to existence in terms of God's creation but also in terms of the analysis of propositions because before we can quantify and ascertain the truth validity of something we need to understand that concept of the essence of that thing.[2] It is still the case that existence is the first of the analytical considerations associated with essence.[3]

The ontological priority of essence is the foundational issue of ontology for Mīr Dāmād and he criticises the notion that the simple effect of the Maker could be existence in a sense that it greater than the simple fact that essence exists. But if one postulates a conceptual dyad in contingent entities, he also argues that existence is a mere being of reason and hence since existence is not a real part or even property of a contingent, in one sense there is no posteriority or accidentally of existence in concrete reality. There is no real distinction between existence and essence because existence is not a thing.[4] This is precisely the position that is reversed by Mullā Ṣadrā.

Perhaps the most interesting contribution in this text is Mīr Dāmād's notion of the existential 'portion' (*ḥiṣṣa*) that he uses to describe the individual realised essence and its share in 'being-existent' or share of the conceptual notion of existence. When one moves from the general to the specific one moves from the notion to the 'portion' and when actualised it is the individual. The portion is a conceptual individual (*al-fard al-iʿtibārī*) in the mind – a portion of being-existent – that corresponds to the individual entity in extra-mental reality.[5] Thus our quantification of an actualised essence means that we ascribe a 'portion' of the concept of existence to it. The very use of the term is somewhat striking because it suggests something as a 'real part'. Mullā Ṣadrā criticises the theory of portions of existence in the mind by suggesting that their postulation should commit the thinker to an ontological correspondence such that the individuals in extra-mental reality corresponding to the

1. Ibid., p. 367.

2. Ibid., pp. 44–45, 48.

3. Ibid., p. 53.

4. Ibid., p. 82.

5. Ibid., pp. 75–76.

'portions' ought to be existence. For him, the language of 'portions' and being-existent are only fully meaningful if existence is the very reality of what there is external to the mind in objective fact and in things.[1] By extension, if the portions theory is true, then we would be left with God as a pure concept and essence without any reality or actuality corresponding.[2] This is Mullā Ṣadrā's critique (although he does not name Mīr Dāmād, he does identify him as an Avicennian):

> *Then we claim: if existence did not have real individuals (afrād ḥaqīqīya) apart from 'portions' (ḥiṣaṣ), then it could not be qualified by the concomitants of essences differentiated by their realities or by degrees since they would be qualified by it. Thus, the Necessary existence is free from the need for a cause for it to be and the contingent existence is reliant on it [a cause] for its essence, since there is no doubt that need and freedom from being concomitants of essence or from the concomitant of degrees of essence are differentiated by degrees of perfection and imperfection. Here it must be that there is a thing in existents beyond being a portion of the concept of existence. If it were not, then existences could not be differentiated by essence as the Peripatetics claim nor differentiated by degrees as another group [the Ishrāqīs] claims, since the universal considered in the absolute sense by analogy to its portions would be a species that is undifferentiated.*
>
> *As for the claim of someone who claims that "if existence has individuals in existence apart from portions, then the actuality of the individual of existence to essence is subordinate to its actuality. This requires the actuality of the other thing to be subordinate to the actuality of that other thing. Thus, it has an actuality before its actuality." This is not correct, due to the absence of the specification of that thing by being an existence possessing individuality. Rather its cause is the qualification of essence by existence (ittiṣāf al-māhīya bi'l-wujūd) whether it has actual individuals or does not, apart from portions.*
>
> *An investigation of this: being is the same as the actuality of essence, not the actuality of the thing which essence possesses, such that it is subordinate to the actuality of essence. The philosophers, since they are un-*

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1. Mullā Ṣadrā, *al-Asfār*, vol. 1, pp. 51, 57.
2. Ibid., p. 132.

aware of this subtlety, sometimes characterise the universal rule called rule of subordination (al-farʿīya) as exceptional, sometimes they change it to concomitance. At other times they refute the actuality of existence either in the mind or in re. Instead they claim that essence is united with the concept of existent. It [existence] is a simple affair like the rest of the derivative [concepts] expressed in Persian by 'hast' and its synonyms. It [existence] has no principle at all either in the mind or in external [reality] and other such unfortunate statements.[1]

It is clear that he is citing Mīr Dāmād as we have seen above. I want to conclude this sketch by considering a passage in *al-Taqdīsāt*, a text primarily concerned with the nature of God and her relationship to the cosmos. In this passage he seems to come close to the position associated with Jalāl al-Dīn Dawānī (d. 908/1502), namely the so-called 'taste of theosis' (*dhawq al-taʾalluh*) which postulates that only God is worthy of the name of existence and all contingents are mere essences. He makes three key points here.[2] First, essences cannot be determined or perdure by themselves but rather through the act of making (*jaʿl*) of the Maker. The effect of making is the most basic level – based partly on the old Neoplatonic maxim of *ex uno non fit nisi unum* – is essence that emanates from the One. Second, existence is merely ascribed to realised essences because those essences are made by God's existence. Third, and related, it is merely because God is existence that existence can be predicated of anything. The only true referent for existence is God; all others are ascribed the notion of existence, but it is not actualised with reference in extra-mental reality.[3] While on the face of it, this is entirely consistent with the doctrine of the ontological priority of essence (*aṣālat al-māhīya*), it is also somehow predicated on the reality of existence, even if the sole referent of that is the Necessary existent, God. In that sense, it is continuous with the priority of existence insofar as it postulates the foundational nature of existence, albeit the referent of that existence is God alone – as he later says more explicitly in *al-Ufuq al-mubīn*.[4]

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1. Mullā Ṣadrā, *al-Asfār*, vol. 1, pp. 51–52.

2. Mīr Dāmād, *al-Taqdīsāt*, in *Muṣannafāt*, vol. 1, pp. 119–120.

3. See also: Mīr Dāmād, *al-Taqdīsāt*, in *Muṣannafāt*, vol. 1, pp. 157–158.

4. See: Mīr Dāmād, *al-Ufuq al-mubīn*, p. 111.

Conclusion

Mīr Dāmād's ontology constitutes a culmination of debates about the nature of common notions, existence, essence and non-existence in the post-Avicennian period. Especially in its form in *al-Ufuq al-mubīn*, we see the seeds of some of the debates that arise in the work of Mullā Ṣadrā. By orienting *umūr ʿāmma* towards semantics and by introducing this notion of the 'portion' of the concept of existence that is identical to the individuated, particular manifestation of an essence in extra-mental reality, Mīr Dāmād opened up a series of debates about the isagogic nature of the intersection of logic and metaphysics that was carried forward both in the commentary tradition on the logic texts *Sharḥ Tahdhīb al-manṭiq* and *Sullam al-ʿulūm* in India on the truth validity of universal terms and in the commentary tradition on the *umūr ʿāmma* of *Sharḥ al-mawāqif* initiated by Mīr Zāhid Hirawī. This Indian context and reception of Mīr Dāmād still requires further investigation. A more detailed analysis of his metaphysics is thus needed for a number of reasons relating to their reception: the consequent course of the Avicennian traditions in Safavid Iran and beyond, the making and contestations of Mullā Ṣadrā immediately after, and the history of logic and metaphysics in North India.

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De' 29. di Nouembre 1622. 501

di tutti, fi era rifoluto, che le fi rifpondeffe in buona for-
ma. Chiamano i Perfiani *Muftehèd*, il lor Capo fupremo
della Setta, nelle cofe fpirituali: & al prefente ha quefto V-
ficio il Mìr Muhammèd Baqir, non sò fe Zio, ò per altra
via, parente ftretto del Rè: huomo vecchio, da me cono-
fciuto in Ifpahàn: che, affettando di moftrare, anche nel-
l'habito, vna gran purità di mente, che a quel fuo grado,
ftima egli conuenirfi; và per ciò veftito, tutto da capo a
piedi, fempre di bianco. Con l'autorità dunque, e con
l'approuatione di coftui, fu diputato a fcriuer contro l'Epi-
ftola mia vn Dottore, che hà nome, *Ahmèd Ben Zeinel abe-
dìn, el Aleuì*, cioè Ahmèd, figliuolo di Zeinelabedìn, l'Ale-
uita; fiafi quefta vltima parola, ò cognome della fua ftir-
pe, ò pur nome della fua patria, come egli vuole. Queſti,
fi fa Autor della Rifpofta; la quale, con due verfetti che
fan rima, intirola, *Elluuàmea errebhàni, Fi red feebeh el Na-
fràni*, che vuol dire, I Raggi, ò gli Splendori Dominicali,
In rendi fimilitudine, ò In rimanda fimilitudine (quafi di-
ca In riuerbero, cioè, In rifpofta, In ribattimento) del Na-
zareno; che appreffo di loro è tanto, quanto a dire del
Chriftiano, vfando bene fpeffo così di chiamarci. Fin dal-
l'anno paffato, quando io ftaua in Minà, riceuei vna lette-
ra de' Padri Agoftiniani di Sphahàn, nella quale mi auuifa-
rono, che il Mìr Muhammèd Abd'el Vehabi, a cui io quel-
la mia Epiftola haueua indirizzata, e nel lor Conuento a
punto prefentata di mia mano; poco dopo la mia parten-
za da Sphahàn, era venuto vn giorno da loro, & haueu
portato l'ifteffo libretto della Epiftola che io gli diedi, con
alcune note in margine, non sò, fe da lui medefimo, ò da
altri, fatteui in diuerfi luoghi, per rifpofta; e che doman-
daua di me, con defiderio di moftrarmele: il che non potè
fare, perche io era già partito. Io, fin d'all'hora, rifcriffi
a i Padri, che mi faceffero gratia di procurare in ogni mo-
do di hauer dal Mìr Muhammèd vna copia di quell: note
marginali, e che me la mandaffero: che era neceffario di
vederle; e che a quelle ancora fi farebbe replicato. Et ha-
uendo io più volte, in diuerfe altre mie lettere, pregato i

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Pietro Della Valle's Description of Mīr Dāmād

in his Famous Travelogue, *Viaggi*

> **Articles**

Three Kinds of Origination and Three Containers of Existence: Mīr Dāmād's argument for Perpetual Origination (*ḥudūth dahrī*)*

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Abstract

This article investigates two of Mīr Dāmād's arguments for perpetual origination (*ḥudūth dahrī*) found in the First Qabas of his major philosophical work *al-Qabasāt*, which he says demonstrate the origination of the universe in its entirety, not in time (*zamān*) and not at the level of eternity (*sarmad*), but at the intermediate level of perpetuity (*dahr*). The first argument is based on a careful analysis of three kinds of origination (essential, perpetual and temporal) and their prior nonexistences, and the second argument is based on knowledge of the three containers of existence: time, perpetuity, and eternity. Special focus is given to the writings of Ibn Sīnā and his commentator, Naṣr al-Dīn al-Ṭūsī, on these topics, as well as the commentary on *al-Qabasāt* by Sayyid Aḥmad al-ʿAlawī with the aim of understanding how Mīr Dāmād's views diverged from those of Ibn Sīnā on the subject of creation. Mīr Dāmād's argument against the theologians' claim of the temporal origination of the universe, though similar to that of Ibn Sīnā, for example, draws the opposite conclusion.

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* This article is an expanded and substantially revised version of my article "An Analytical Summary of the First Qabas of Mīr Dāmād's *Kitāb al-Qabasāt*" published in the *International Journal of Shīʿī Studies*, vol. 3, no. 1 (2005), pp. 11–52. Passages quoted from *al-Qabasāt* are from my revised translation.

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Key words: origination (*ḥudūth*), perpetual origination (*ḥudūth dahrī*), essential origination (*ḥudūth dhātī*), temporal origination (*ḥudūth zamānī*), absolute creation (or direct creation *ibdāʿ*), fashioning (*ṣunʿ*), temporal production (*iḥdāth*), material generation (*takwīn*), absolute nonexistence (*lays muṭlaq*), essential nonexistence (*ʿadam dhātī*), pure nonexistence (or pure privation *ʿadam ṣarīḥ*), temporal nonexistence (or temporal privation *ʿadam zamānī*), hypothetical nonexistence (*ʿadam wahmī*) eternity (*qidam* or *sarmad*), perpetuity (*dahr*), time (*zamān*), emanation (*ifāḍa*), essential possibility (*imkān dhātī*), dispositional possibility (*imkān istiʿdādī*), eternity of the world (*qidam al-ʿālam*)

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Introduction

Mīr Dāmād (d. 1631) has become known among students of Islamic philosophy as the proponent of the theory of *ḥudūth dahrī* (perpetual origination) with its accompanying trifold division of existence into time, perpetuity, and eternity. The theory of *ḥudūth dahrī* is the main subject of Mīr Dāmād's most celebrated philosophical work, *al-Qabasāt*, whose full title is *Qabasāt Ḥaqq al-Yaqīn fī Ḥudūth al-ʿĀlam*, which means "Blazing Brands of Objective Certainty on the Origination of the World." By his own testimony, Mīr Dāmād affirms in a poem:

> *In al-Qabasāt I became the sea of certitude.*
> *The script of doubt and uncertainty I destroyed.*[1]

As a philosopher, Mīr Dāmād was primarily a Peripatetic philosopher following in the tradition of al-Fārābī and Ibn Sīnā, whom he frequently calls his "two companions in instruction and in leadership,"[2] though he differed with them substantially on the question of the origination of the world. As a Shīʿī theologian, Mīr Dāmād saw himself as guided by the wisdom of the Prophets and the Shīʿī Imāms (referred to as *al-ḥikmat al-yamāniyya*), who taught the

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1. Qtd. in Hamid Dabashi, "Mīr Dāmād and the founding of the 'School of Iṣfahān,'" *History of Islamic Philosophy*, London: Routledge, 1996, p. 605.

2. See: *al-Qabasāt*, ed. M. Mohaghegh, et al, Tehran: Tehran University Press, 1977, pp. 72, 77, 191, 365. He also refers to Ibn Sīnā separately as "my companion in leadership" and to al-Fārābī as "my companion in instruction."

doctrine of origination, and he maintains in *al-Qabasāt* that the philosophers who advocated the eternity of the world failed to use their sound philosophical premises to draw a scripturally compatible conclusion.

In *al-Qabasāt*, which consists of ten chapters, each called a *qabas*, or blazing brand, his goal is to demonstrate by means of the rational methods of the Peripatetics and based upon principles established by the Peripatetics themselves that the universe in its entirety, in both its material and immaterial dimensions, has a beginning with God at the level of perpetuity and is preceded by its real nonexistence. He does not believe like Aristotle, Ibn Sīnā, and most of the Peripatetics that the universe, as a whole, is eternal, nor does he believe like most of the early Muʿtazilite and Ashʿarite theologians that it was created in time. Mīr Dāmād devotes the first six chapters of *al-Qabasāt* to demonstrating, through a series of demonstrations, his alternate thesis of *ḥudūth dahrī* (perpetual origination). In all, according to his own account, he presents eight different principles upon which he builds his demonstrations for the origination of world in the domain of perpetuity preceded by pure, unquantifiable nonexistence. He says:

> *By the leave of God, His grace, and His mercy, we have investigated the eight principles that are the principles for the demonstrations of the origination of the world in this book. The first is the knowledge of the containers of existence, namely, time, perpetuity, and eternity; the second is the knowledge that existence is identical to the essentially necessary Being but added to the possible quiddities; the third is the knowledge of the three kinds of essential priority and their characteristics; the fourth is the knowledge of the two kinds of separate priority, the eternal and the temporal, and their characteristics; the fifth is the knowledge of the three kinds of origination and their requirements; the sixth is the knowledge of quantitative relation and everlasting relation and the distinction between them; the seventh is the knowledge of the mode of existence of the unqualified natures and the settling of their affair; the eighth is the knowledge of the continuity of motion and time and what is associated with that.*[1]

In the Seventh Qabas, Mīr Dāmād responds directly to the arguments of the theologians for the origination of the universe in time and to those of the

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1. Qtd. in Sayyid Aḥmad al-ʿAlawī, *Sharḥ al-Qabasāt*, ed. Ḥāmid Nājī Iṣfahānī, Tehran: University of Tehran, 1997, p. 395.

philosophers for its eternity. In the last three chapters of *al-Qabasāt* he addresses subsidiary subjects, such as the power of God and His will, the chains of beginning and return, the secret of predetermination and fate, and the question of evil.

Mīr Dāmād's theory is not that the universe and time have a beginning *in time*, but that both have a beginning *with their Creator*. This view differs from that of the philosophers by the premise that the universe and time are finite in the direction of the past and do have an actual beginning; and it differs from the view of the theologians by the equally important premise that *the beginning of the universe is not temporal*. In other words, the universe was not created *in time*, but time was created simultaneously *with* the universe at the level of perpetuity (*dahr*), which is ontologically separate from the Creator. Perpetuity is the level of the *essential possibility* of things in a timeless state, just as time (*zamān*) is the level of the unfolding *dispositional possibility* of things in a temporal state. Furthermore, what Mīr Dāmād means by the universe "having a beginning" is having a cause of existence and being preceded by a pure nonexistence (*ʿadam ṣarīḥ*) that precedes its origination at the level of *dahr*.

As Ibn Sīnā perceptively observes: "It is not possible to remove time from the estimative faculty (*wahm*), for if you imagine it removed, the estimative faculty then compels the existence of another time in which time is removed."[1] The estimative faculty, therefore, compels the mind to believe that if the universe is really posterior to the Creator, it must be temporally posterior, as the Muʿtazilite and Ashʿarite theologians hold. In the same way, the proposition that the emanation of God cannot not exist compels the mind to believe that the universe must be co-eternal with God, as the philosophers hold, based on the principle of the simultaneity of cause and effect. Mīr Dāmād proposes that neither of these positions is correct due to the distortion of the estimative faculty. The correct position, as his demonstrations will prove, is that the creation is, in fact, separate from God in the stage of the cause with an unquantifiable, atemporal posteriority and simultaneous with Him in the stage of the effect with a perpetual simultaneity.

The theologians, holding that God is separate in substance from His creation and motivated by the Prophetic tradition "God was, and nothing was

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1. Qtd. in Mīr Dāmād, *al-Qabasāt*, Wamīḍ [1.7.6], p. 33.

with Him" (*kāna allāh wa lam yakun ma'a-hu shay'*), sought to place God in an extension of time in which nothing else existed prior to the creation of the world. The philosophers countered that this would be equivalent to suspending God's attributes during the time when the creation did not exist, which is impossible. Therefore, they said that His creation has always existed and is eternal. Mīr Dāmād demonstrates in *al-Qabasāt* that parts of both these positions are correct, but neither of them taken alone is correct. He agrees with the theologians that God exists with a separate priority to His creation, but not a temporal separate priority; and he agrees with the philosophers that God's attributes can never be suspended, but this fact, he argues, does not mean the universe is simultaneous with God at the level of eternity (which is the cause), but rather it is simultaneous with Him at the level of perpetuity (which is the effect), as the nature of what is possible in itself and only necessary through another makes it impossible for it to have existence at the level of eternity.

Mīr Dāmād, therefore, has modified Ibn Sīnā's interpretation of eternity (*sarmad*), which includes the Creator's directly created effects (*mubda'āt*), which are possible in themselves, and specialized eternity to what is *both timeless and has no cause for its existence*, which is more in line with Aristotle's definition of the eternal as that in which "there is no difference between what may be and what is."[1]

In the First Qabas, Mīr Dāmād establishes two of the principles that he says demonstrate the origination of the universe in its entirety in perpetuity (*dahr*), namely, (1) the three kinds of origination and their prior nonexistences, and (2) knowledge of the three containers of existence: time, perpetuity, and eternity. He also defines the area of dispute among the respected philosophers, showing that it is not essential origination or temporal origination that are disputed, but perpetual origination. Lastly, he counters the arguments of the theologians for the origination of the universe in time. This article focuses on Mīr Dāmād's arguments for perpetual origination as presented in the First Qabas.

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1. *Aristotle's Physics*, trans. Richard Hope, University of Nebraska, 1961, iii, 4, 203b30.

1. On the Three Kinds of origination

In Wamḍa [1.1], Mīr Dāmād establishes three kinds of origination and three corresponding kinds of prior nonexistence (*ʿadam*) by starting with an analysis of a passage of Ibn Sīnā in Book Six, Chapter Two of the Metaphysics of the *Shifāʾ*. The passage from Ibn Sīnā reads as follows:

> *The meaning of what is called "absolute creation" (*ibdāʿ*) by the philosophers is causing something to exist "after" an absolute nonexistence (*lays muṭlaq*), for it belongs to the effect through itself that it is non-existent, while it belongs to it through its cause that it is existent. That which belongs to something by virtue of itself is more prior for the mind, essentially, not temporally, than that which belongs to it from something else. Therefore, every effect is existent after being non-existent, where "after" means essentially [and not temporally] posterior.*

> *Therefore, if the term "origination" (*al-ḥadath*) is applied [in this manner] to everything that possesses existence after nonexistence, then every effect is originated (*muḥdath*). If, however, the term is not applied in this way, but rather the condition of an originated thing is that a time or moment precedes it that ceases with its coming into existence, since temporal posteriority cannot coexist with temporal priority, but rather is distinct from it in existence, then not every effect is originated, but only those which are preceded by time and, without doubt, movement and change. This you know, and we will not dispute the terms.*

> *Now, an originated being in the sense that does not necessitate time must be such that either its existence is after an absolute nonexistence or after a non-absolute nonexistence (*lays ghayr muṭlaq*), that is to say, after a specific opposite privation (*ʿadam*) in an existing matter, as you know. If its existence comes after an absolute nonexistence, its procession from its cause is called "absolute creation" (*ibdāʿ*). This is the most excellent form of giving existence, because privation has been entirely excluded and existence imposed on it [ex nihilo]. For if privation were enabled to precede [its] existence, its coming-into-being (*takwīn*) would only be possible through matter, and the power of giving existence would be weak and deficient from the beginning.*[1]

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1. *Shifāʾ: Ilāhiyyāt* (Cairo 1960), ed. G. C. Anawati, et al, pp. 266-267; qtd. in *al-Qabasāt*, pp. 3-4.

Ibn Sīnā is reportedly referring to three kinds of origination (*ḥudūth*) and three types of nonexistence (*ʿadam* or *lays*) in this passage. The three kinds origination are (1) temporal origination and two types of atemporal origination: (2a) not requiring matter and preceded by an absolute nonexistence, and (2b) requiring matter and preceded by a non-absolute nonexistence. The three types of nonexistence are (1) temporal nonexistence, which is not explicitly mentioned (2) absolute nonexistence, and (3) non-absolute nonexistence. In the passage quoted above, Ibn Sīnā identifies the first kind of atemporal origination, that not requiring a prior privation in matter, with *ibdāʿ*, "absolute creation".

In his subsequent commentary, Mīr Dāmād identifies these three kinds of origination and their corresponding nonexistences using their familiar technical designations. He explains them as they are understood by the philosophers in the following order:

A. Absolute or Direct Creation (*ibdāʿ*)/Essential Origination (*ḥudūth dhātī*)

Mīr Dāmād states that *ibdāʿ*, also referred to as essential origination, is "the existence of something essentially [not temporally] following its absolute nonexistence, since the stage of its actual existence "follows" [logically] the stage of its absolute nonexistence with respect to itself. This is not incompatible with the actualization of the essence by the Maker."[1]

It follows that *ibdāʿ* fulfills the need of things that are only possible in themselves (*mumkin fī dhātihi*) and essentially non-existent (*maʿdūm al-dhāt*) for a final cause that is necessary in itself (*wājib bi-dhātihi*) to become existent. Ibn Sīnā makes this connection explicitly:

> *It is evident that everything other than Him (the Necessary Being), if its essence is considered, is possible in its existence, and therefore caused; and it is apparent that in [the chain of] causality, it derives ultimately from Him. Consequently, everything other than the One who is one by virtue of himself and the Existent who is existent through itself acquires existence from another, becoming existent through it, while it is nonexistent in itself. This is the meaning of something being absolutely created (mubdaʿ), in other words, its attaining existence through another while it has an absolute nonexistence (ʿadam muṭlaq) that it merits through itself.*

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1. *Al-Qabasāt*, Wamḍa [1.1], p. 4.

It is not only that it merits nonexistence (ʿadam) by its form without its matter or by its matter without its form, but [it merits nonexistence] in its entirety... Therefore, its existentiation by the Giver of Existence applies to it in its entirety, for no part of it precedes its existence in this meaning, neither its matter nor its form, if it has both matter and form. Hence, the whole [of the effect] is absolutely created in relation to the First Cause. Its existentiation of what comes into existence through it does not entirely prevent privation (ʿadam) in the substances of things, but it excludes privation absolutely in what has the capacity for eternity (sarmad). This is absolute creation (al-ibdāʿ al-muṭlaq).[1]

Ibn Sīnā says in the passage quoted by Mīr Dāmād from the Metaphysics of the *Shifāʾ* that the nonexistence of the effect, in this sense, is "more prior for the mind, essentially, not temporally," than its existence through its cause. Therefore, this kind of effect, which is the result of absolute creation, coexists with its cause and continues to exist through it for the duration of its existence. Ibn Sīna adds in his *Ishārāt* that "*ibdāʿ* refers to existence coming to something from another, dependent on it only, and not on the intermediary of matter, instrument, or time. But that which is preceded by a temporal privation cannot dispense with an intermediary."[2]

With this understanding of *ibdāʿ*, in which absolutely created things (*mubdaʿāt*) depend directly on the First Cause for existence without being preceded by time or privation in matter, what kind of existents does Ibn Sīnā include in this category? We can include:

- *The First Effect, namely, the First Intelligence, and all nine subsequent intelligences*
- *The soul and body of the outermost sphere and the subsequent celestial bodies embedded in the spheres above the sphere of the moon*[3]
- *Absolute motion (which depends on the body of the outermost sphere)*
- *Time (which depends on absolute motion)*
- *Prime matter*
- *Form*

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1. *Shifāʾ: Ilāhiyyāt* (Cairo 1960), ed. G. C. Anawati, et al, Book 8, Chapter 3, p. 342.

2. *Al-Ishārāt wa al-Tanbīhāt* (Cairo 1960), ed. S. Dunyā, Namaṭ Five, Chapter 9, p. 524.

3. Ibn Sīnā's inclusion of the bodies of the subsequent celestial spheres under *ibdāʿ* is problematic for reasons that will be mentioned shortly.

- *The essences of all things insofar as they exist, not insofar as they change and are in motion and time*

None of these things, according to Ibn Sīnā, precedes another temporally but only essentially, according to their intelligible order, arising as they do simultaneously from the Creator's act of *ibdāʿ*, which is the same as their continuous emanation (*al-ifāḍa ʿalā al-dawm*) from Him. They have in common that they are not subject to generation and corruption but exist permanently with the permanence of their cause. Properly speaking, only the First Effect is directly created (*mubdaʿ*) without an intermediary, but Ibn Sīnā includes anything not preceded by temporal privation in matter in this category. As Mīr Dāmād notes, "the First Emanated is... the worthiest of the act of absolute creation."[1]

The beginning of motion is not preceded by time—and is therefore directly created (*mubdaʿ*)—since time is dependent on motion, which in turn is dependent on the body of the outermost sphere. As Mīr Dāmād explains: "If time itself is not existent in time at all, then this is also impossible for its substrate [motion] and the bearer of its substrate [the outermost sphere]."[2] The priority of the outermost sphere (i.e., space) to motion, and motion's priority to time, are not temporal but essential, as in actuality all three come into existence simultaneously. Ibn Sīnā states: "Motion, considered absolutely, does not have a starting point but involves atemporal creation (*ibdāʿ*), where nothing is before it save the being of the Creator (*al-mubdiʿ*), preceding essentially, not temporally."[3] (A parallel may be drawn here to the modern cosmological theory of the simultaneous creation of space-time and energy from the singularity of the Big Bang.)

Ibn Sīnā's commentator, Naṣr al-Dīn al-Ṭūsī, confirms in his *Naqd al-Muḥaṣṣal* that time, like motion, is an absolutely created entity (*mubdaʿ*), having only an essential, not a temporal, posteriority to God. He states:

> The truth is that the Creator (*exalted be He*) is not a temporal thing. Time itself is one of His absolute creations (*mubdaʿāt*). The estimative faculty compares what is not in time to what is in time, the same as with

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1. *Al-Qabasāt*, Wamīḍ [7.3.7], p. 248.

2. Ibid., Wamīḍ [3.7.1], p. 86.

3. The Physics of *The Healing*, trans. Jon McGinnis, (Provo: Utah, 2009), Book Three, Chapter Eleven, p. 364.

transit in space. Just as the intellect rejects the application of spatial priority to the Creator, in like manner it rejects the application of temporal priority to Him. Indeed, it is necessary to say that the Creator has a priority outside of the two categories [of space and time], although it is difficult for the estimative faculty to apprehend it.[1]

Ibn Sīnā states in Book One, Chapter Three of the Physics of the *Shifā'* that "bodies not susceptible to generation and corruption... exist through absolute creation (*ibdā'*),"[2] which means that the indestructible and unchanging celestial bodies are included in this category. These bodies were considered uncompounded (*basīṭ*) because their unique matter is inseparable from their form, and they were considered perpetual (*dahrī*) because they were created simultaneously *with* time but not *in* time. Ibn Sīna does not regard them as having a prior privation in matter, as their "formal principle is perpetually joined with matter."[3] He reserves privation (*'adam*) as a principle of generable bodies with the understanding that this privation is temporal. For example, he states:

Privation, in fact, is a precondition for something's being subject to change and perfection, since, were there no privation, it would be impossible for it to be perfected and changed, but rather there would always be the presently existing perfection and form... This privation, however, is not absolute privation (al-'adam al-muṭlaq), but one having a certain mode of being, since it is a privation of some thing, bringing along with itself a certain predisposition and preparedness in some determinate matter. [4]

Sayyid Aḥmad al-ʿAlawī, one of Mīr Dāmād's commentators, unlike Ibn Sīnā, regards the celestial bodies occurring below the outermost sphere to be "non-absolutely created" (*ghayr ibdāʿiyya*). Although they are indestructible, they have motion through space. He argues that while *ibdāʿ* includes the intelligences and the universal soul connected to the body of the absolutely created outermost sphere, since time is dependent on its motion, which [in turn] is existent in the sphere, it does not include the souls of the other spheres, due to their attachment to the non-absolutely created ethereal bodies. Consequent-

1. Quoted in Mīr Dāmād, *al-Qabasāt*, Wamīḍ [3.7.12], p. 106.

2. The Physics of *The Healing*, trans. Jon McGinnis, Book 1, Chapter 3, p. 27.

3. Ibid., p. 28.

4. Ibid., Book 1, Chapter 2, pp. 19, 21.

ly, they do not belong to the changeless things exalted in every respect above occurrence in the extension of the world of time.[1]

This argument is sound, because if time comes into existence simultaneously with the existence of the outermost sphere (i.e., space) and its motion, then any subsequent celestial bodies would be generated in the extension of time. Modern science, in any case, has long since disproved the immutability and perpetuity of the celestial bodies, so the inclusion of this ancient theory in a meaningful modern discussion of creation would be futile.

Ibn Sīnā also states in Book One, Chapter Three of the Physics of the *Shifāʾ* that "prime matter [as opposed to particular materials like the wood of a bed] is not subject to generation and corruption, and therefore depends only on absolute creation (*ibdāʿ*)." He states that the same applies to forms as such, insofar as they are not themselves a composite of form and matter. He also includes inseparable forms, such as the general corporeal from that gives three-dimensional extended continuity to bodies, inasmuch as they are "continuously joined with matter and are not subject to generation and corruption but are dependent on absolute creation (*ibdāʿ*)."[2] This explains why he considers "bodies not susceptible to generation and corruption" to be directly created, since the form of each celestial body was believed to be inseparable from its specific matter without any temporal priority between them.

The last thing listed as being absolutely created is the essences of all things *with respect to their existence, not with respect to their state of change and being in motion and time, if they are temporals.* This has already been mentioned above, where Ibn Sīnā says: "Its [the effect's] existentiation by the Giver of Existence applies to it in its entirety, for no part of it precedes its existence in this meaning, neither its matter nor its form, if it has both matter and form. Hence, the whole [of the effect] is absolutely created (*mubdaʿ*) in relation to

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1. *Sharh al-Qabasāt*, p. 469. "Ethereal bodies" (*al-ajrām al-athīriyya*) designates the stars and planets and the celestial spheres in which they are embedded. Aristotle in *On the Heavens* borrowed the term "ether" from his predecessors to describe an "element" transcending the terrestrial four (earth, air, fire, and water) out of which the celestial spheres and the stars and planets embedded in them are composed. He conceived of it as an indestructible, unchanging substance that is neither heavy nor light and moves by nature in a circular direction; hence, the circular movement of the heavens. (*On the Heavens*, Book 1.3 and Book 2.7).

2. The Physics of *The Healing*, trans. Jon McGinnis, Book One, Chapter Three, pp. 28, 30.

the First Cause."[1] In other words, the Creator's continuous act of *ibdāʿ* gives existence to all possible things, including their direct proximate and preparatory causes, and sustains that existence after it commences. Ibn Sīnā affirms that the First Cause's act of *ibdāʿ* "is that which gives complete existence (*al-wujūd al-tāmm*) to the thing,"[2] meaning that *ibdāʿ* gives rise directly to the secondary existential causes of things, such as universal and particular natures, form and matter, and space, time, and motion. These, in turn, are the proximate causes of composite beings existing in both time and perpetuity.

Furthermore, Ibn Sīnā gives the principle that "the cause of the existence of something coexists with it."[3] Hence, insofar as the Creator, as the First Cause of all things, exists outside of time and space (at the level of eternity, *sarmad*), His direct, or absolutely created, effects must coexist with Him in some manner outside of time and space. In his *ʿUyūn al-Ḥikmat*, Ibn Sīnā explains:

> *The beings (dhawāt) of things that are changeable in one respect and changeless in another, if considered from the point of view of their changelessness, do not exist in time (zamān), but rather with time. The relationship of what is with time but not in time [to what is in time] is called perpetuity (dahr). The relationship of what is not in time to what is not in time, by virtue of not being in time, is better called eternity (sarmad). Perpetuity in its essence belongs to eternity, but in relation to time is called "per-petuity".*[4]

Therefore, the essence of Zayd, for example, (which is a changeless effect of *ibdāʿ*) persists *with* time even while his physical form changes *in* time by generation and corruption from one state to another from infancy to maturity to old age. Ibn Sīnā holds that the relation of a changeless effect to its changeless cause is called *sarmad*, while the former's relation to changing things is called *dahr*. But Ibn Sīnā adds that "*dahr* in its essence belongs to *sarmad*," which basically voids any distinction between *sarmad* and *dahr*. Mīr Dāmād, to the contrary, draws a clear ontological distinction between eternity (*sarmad*), perpetuity (*dahr*), and time (*zamān*), and he rejects the idea that anything besides God (or an entity necessary through itself) can exist at the

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1. *Shifāʾ: Ilāhiyyāt* (Cairo 1960), ed. G. C. Anawati, et al, Book Eight, Chapter Three, p. 342.
2. Ibid., Book Six, Chapter Two, p. 266.
3. Ibid., Book Eight, Chapter One, p. 327.
4. Quoted in Mīr Dāmād, *al-Qabasāt*, Wamḍa [1.3], p. 9.

level of eternity. This topic will be examined in more detail in the section on the three containers of existence.

A few passages drawn from Ibn Sīnā's *Ta'līqāt* will help to clarify his understanding of absolute creation (*ibdā'*) and explain why Mīr Dāmād was compelled to merge *ibdā'* with perpetual origination (*ḥudūth dahrī*).

Ibn Sīnā states:

> *The existents, except for the Necessarily Existent whose existence is through himself, are possibly existent. However, among the existents is that whose possibility of existence is in another [i.e., in a temporally prior substratum], and similarly its potential existence precedes its actual existence [in time], so it is possibly existent in an absolute sense and generated. And among them is that whose possibility of existence is in itself... and whose potential existence does not precede its actual existence. These are the intelligences and the other absolutely created things (al-mubda'āt). It may only be said that they are possibly existent in the sense that their existence is not dependent on themselves but on the Giver of their existence. Therefore, they are existent in relation to Him, but with respect to themselves they are non-existent."*[1]

> *The absolutely created (al-mubda'āt) are those things whose existence is not preceded by a [temporal] privation ('adam), while the [temporally] originated (muḥdathāt) are those whose existence is preceded by a privation. It is inadmissible for anything that is independent of matter to be preceded by a privation, such as that whose possibility of existence is in itself, not in another.*[2]

The main points here are (1) that the absolutely created belongs to that category of possible things whose possibility of existence is *in itself* and its potential existence does not precede its actual existence in time. It exists simultaneously and eternally with its cause, and its relation to its cause is one of dependence only. As Ibn Sīnā states: "If it [the cause] always exists (*dā'im al-wujūd*), then its effect always exists."[3] (2) The absolutely created is not preceded by a privation (*'adam*) in a previously existing matter, which is a characteristic of that whose possibility of existence is *in another*. The es-

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1. *Al-Ta'līqāt*, ed. 'Abd al-Raḥmān al-Badawī (Beirut, n.d.), p. 28.

2. Ibid., p. 176.

3. *Shifā': Ilāhiyyāt* (Cairo 1960), ed. G. C. Anawati, et al, Book Six, Chapter 2, p. 266.

sential priority of matter in the case of the celestial bodies *does not count as a privation in relation to those bodies*, according to those who advocate their eternity, so they count them as directly created. As al-ʿAlawī relates: "Those who believe in eternity think they [the celestial bodies] are extracted from essential nonexistence [i.e., conceptual absolute nonexistence] together with the essential priority of their matter without being preceded by a pure privation/nonexistence in perpetuity."[1]

ʿAdam, in the temporal sense, means "relative nonexistence," because even though a temporal thing does not yet exist in the extension of time, its material and remote causes do exist. It only awaits the arrival of the right conditions for it to begin to exist. The coming into existence of that whose possibility of existence is in a temporally prior material substratum is called generation (*takwīn*).

Therefore, if the existence of an effect is not preceded by a privation in matter, then its existence is eternal, not through itself, but through its cause. In his commentary on Namaṭ Five of the Metaphysics of Ibn Sīnā's *Ishārāt*, Naṣīr al-Dīn al-Ṭūsī concludes that "the philosophers hold... that it is impossible for the [direct] effect of the eternal Agent (*al-fāʿil al-azalī*), who is perfect in His agency, to be other than eternal (*azalī*)," and, therefore, they assert that "the universe is an eternal effect," according to the principles of both Physics and Metaphysics.[2]

Interestingly, Ibn Sīnā's explanation of "the concomitants of the Necessary Being" (*lawāzim wājib al-wujūd li-dhātihi*) resembles his explanation of absolutely created things (*mubdāʿāt*). He states in his *Taʿlīqāt*:

> *It is necessary for the concomitants of the Necessary Being, which are objects of his knowledge, to be together with Him, not temporally posterior to Him, even though the effect is [essentially] posterior to the cause. They are not dependent in their existence from Him on another thing, so it does not follow that they were not existent and then they became existent, or that He was not willing and then He willed. It only follows that they are together with Him... The caused coincides with the cause.*[3]
>
> *The concomitants of the First proceed from Him, they do not occur in*

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1. *Sharḥ al-Qabasāt*, p. 158.

2. See: *Al-Ishārāt wa al-Tanbīhāt* (Cairo 1960), ed. S. Dunyā, Namaṭ Five, p. 499.

3. *Al-Taʿlīqāt*, p. 158.

Him; therefore, He is not multiple by them because of being their source...
The meaning of being concomitant is one thing necessarily following from
another thing without the intermediary of something else.[1]

In summary, in Ibn Sīnā's view, the unchanging entities and realities of the cosmos, whether the concomitants of the Necessary Being or His directly created effects, are eternal (*sarmadī*) through His eternity, and it cannot be said that "they were not existent and then they became existent," as Ibn Sīnā says above. The most that is demonstrated is their dependence on their cause. Mīr Dāmād differs from Ibn Sīnā by requiring a real dislocation in being between the essence of God and His creation, so that the absolutely created, not just the temporally generated, are ontologically separated from eternity (*sarmad*), and he asserts that the nonexistence preceding them must be real, or pure (*ṣarīḥ*), not merely unqualified (*muṭlaq*). To demonstrate this, he must show that every essential origination (*muḥdath dhātī*), i.e., every *mubdaʿ*, is also a perpetual origination (*muḥdath dahrī*) and fashioned (*maṣnūʿ*).

B. Fashioning (*ṣunʿ*)/Perpetual Creation (*ḥudūth dahrī*)

Mīr Dāmād finds a precedent for his theory of perpetual origination in the second kind of atemporal origination mentioned by Ibn Sīnā in Book Six, Chapter Two of the Metaphysics of the *Shifāʾ*, namely, that following "a non-absolute nonexistence (*lays ghayr muṭlaq*), that is to say, after a specific opposite privation in an existing matter."[2] Now, it is not clear from Ibn Sīnā's words whether he is referring to one kind of atemporal origination and suggesting two possibilities for its prior nonexistence, only one of which is feasible, or whether he is referring to two kinds of atemporal origination, one of which comes after absolute nonexistence while the other follows a specific opposite non-absolute nonexistence. Here is the passage from Ibn Sīnā again:

> *Now, an originated being in the sense that does not necessitate time*
> *must be such that either its existence is after an absolute nonexistence or*
> *after a non-absolute nonexistence (lays ghayr muṭlaq), that is to say, after*
> *a specific opposite privation (ʿadam) in an existing matter, as you know. If*
> *its existence comes after an absolute nonexistence, its procession from its*
> *cause is called "absolute creation" (ibdāʿ). This is the most excellent form*

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1. Ibid., p. 180.

2. *Shifāʾ: Ilāhiyyāt* (Cairo 1960), ed. G. C. Anawati, et al, p. 267; qtd. in *al-Qabasāt*, p. 3.

of giving existence, because privation has been entirely excluded and existence imposed on it [ex nihilo]. *If* (wa law) *privation were enabled to precede* [its] *existence, its coming-into-being* (takwīn) *would only be possible through matter, and the power of giving existence would be weak and deficient from the beginning.*[1]

Ibn Sīnā's use of the counterfactual conditional particle *law* in the last sentence may be taken to mean that he only considered the first option correct. Regardless of how we interpret this passage, Mīr Dāmād and his commentator Sayyid Aḥmad al-ʿAlawī took it to mean that atemporal origination is of two kinds, one of which is preceded by an unquantifiable, pure privation/nonexistence while the other is not. The difference between privation in matter with an atemporal thing, like the perpetual celestial bodies, and privation in matter involving generation is that the priority of the matter of the celestial spheres to their existence is essential and not temporal.[2]

It was presented earlier that Ibn Sīnā in his *Ishārāt* explains that "absolute creation" (ibdāʿ) refers to existence coming to something from another, dependent on it only, and not on the intermediary of matter, instrument, or time." He adds the clarification that "whatever is preceded by a *temporal privation* (ʿadam zamānī) cannot dispense with an intermediary," and therefore cannot be directly created (mubdaʿ).[3] One might think that if the celestial bodies are preceded essentially by an *atemporal, unquantifiable privation*, not a temporal, quantifiable privation, this could be accepted by Ibn Sīnā along with their absolute creation. But this is not the case.

Naṣīr al-Dīn al-Ṭūsī, in interpreting Ibn Sīnā, notes that origination requiring a previous privation in matter, in general, is called *ṣunʿ* (fashioning). He states that Ibn Sīnā "means by 'fashioning' (ṣunʿ) bringing something into existence preceded by privation... and he means by 'absolute creation' (ibdāʿ) the opposite of this, namely, bringing something into existence not preceded by privation."[4] So if the unchanging celestial bodies are preceded by any kind of privation in matter, then they cannot be regarded as absolutely or directly created, but rather as fashioned. This raises a contradiction, because Ibn Sīnā

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1. Ibid.

2. See: *al-Qabasāt*, Wamḍa [1.7], p. 23, and al-ʿAlawī's commentary on this, *Sharḥ al-Qabasāt*, p. 158.

3. *Al-Ishārāt wa al-Tanbīhāt* (Cairo 1960), ed. S. Dunyā, Namaṭ Five, Chapter 9, p. 524.

4. See: *al-Ishārāt wa al-Tanbīhāt*, Namaṭ Five, p. 485.

clearly states that "bodies not susceptible to generation and corruption... exist through absolute creation (*ibdā'*),"[1] hence, they cannot be preceded by privation, while Mīr Dāmād has Ibn Sīnā holding that the celestial bodies, which are "not susceptible to generation and corruption," are preceded by an atemporal, unquantifiable privation, and therefore are fashioned, not absolutely created.

I believe that the counterfactual conditional used by Ibn Sīnā in the above passage indicates that he does not believe that an atemporal creation, even if it has matter, can be preceded by any kind of privation. This is supported by al-'Alawī, who says: "Those who believe in eternity think that they [the celestial bodies] are extracted from essential nonexistence [i.e., absolute nonexistence] together with the essential priority of their matter *without* being preceded by pure privation [i.e., real nonexistence] in perpetuity."[2]

To the philosophers adhering to Naṣīr al-Dīn al-Ṭūsī's definition, *ṣun'* is inferior in degree to *ibdā'* because it requires the fashioned (*maṣnū'*) to be preceded by a privation in matter, which hinders the act of creation (even if this priority is not temporal), while the absolutely created is not hindered because it is not preceded by privation in matter.

Let us now examine the commentary of Mīr Dāmād and that of his student al-'Alawī on the above passage from Ibn Sīnā that commences with the words: "Now, an originated being in the sense that does not necessitate time must be such that either its existence is after an absolute nonexistence or after a non-absolute nonexistence (*lays ghayr muṭlaq*), that is to say, after a specific opposite privation (*'adam*) in an existing matter." Mīr Dāmād proposes that what Ibn Sīnā means by "a specific opposite privation (*'adam*) in an existing matter" in the case of atemporal origination is "pure privation" ('adam ṣarīḥ), which, as it is "opposite to the occurrence of actual existence in the real world," can also be translated as "pure nonexistence." He commences:

> As for origination (*ḥudūth*) *"in the sense that does not necessitate time," which is the existence of something "after" pure, unadulterated non-existence (ṣirf al-'adam al-baḥt), it is of two kinds:*
>
> (1) *It is either the existence of something essentially* [*not temporally*] *following its absolute nonexistence, since the stage of its actual existence*

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1. The Physics of *The Healing*, trans. Jon McGinnis, Book 1, Chapter 3, p. 27.
2. *Sharḥ al-Qabasāt*, p. 158.

"follows" [logically] the stage of its absolute nonexistence (laysiyyatihi al-muṭlaqa), with respect to its own essence, which is not incompatible with the actualization of the essence by the Maker, for actual existence is realized by the Agent emanating it. This kind of origination is called "essential origination" (ḥudūth dhātī) and its continuous emanation, in this manner, is called "absolute creation" (ibdāʿ) by them. There is no conflict between actualization and existence in the thing itself, with respect to depending on the emanation of the Agent, and the nullification and nonexistence commensurate with the substance of the quiddity (māhiyya) itself as such.

(2) Or it is existence preceded by unmixed, pure nonexistence (al-ʿadam al-ṣarīḥ al-maḥḍ) opposite to the occurrence of actual existence in the real world (matn al-wāqiʿ). This is what he intended by the statement: "After a non-absolute nonexistence, that is to say, after a specific opposite privation (ʿadam) in an existing matter" which has no essential priority but a separate, distinct, atemporal, non-flowing, unmeasurable, unquantifiable priority. This kind of origination is no other than perpetual origination (ḥudūth dahrī). The emanation of existence following unquantifiable, pure privation is called "production" (iḥdāth) and "fashioning" (ṣunʿ) by the philosophers, and pure privation and actual existence cannot be conjoined, with respect to the thing itself, in a matter or a place at all.[1]

The term ʿadam means both "nonexistence" and "privation," and Mīr Dāmād holds that ʿadam is of three kinds in the usage of Ibn Sīnā.[2] The first kind corresponds to absolute nonexistence, which does not have the potential to exist. The second and third kinds, namely, the atemporal (or perpetual) and the temporal, correspond to privation because of their association with matter, which has the potential to exist. ʿAdam, therefore, should be understood as "privation" when it is associated with the potentiality of matter. The second and third kinds of ʿadam, then, are really one kind with respect to matter but

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1. *Al-Qabasāt*, Wamḍa [1.1], p. 4.

2. This is Mīr Dāmād's understanding of Ibn Sīnā on the meanings of ʿadam in relation to origination. For a different view in which Ibn Sīnā proposes only two types of nonexistence, namely, absolute and relative, where the former precedes creation *ex nihilo* and the latter precedes temporal generation, see: Rahim Acar's article "Creation: Avicenna's metaphysical account" in *Creation and the God of Abraham*, ed. David Burrell et al, (Cambridge University Press, 2010), chapter 6, pp. 77–90.

two with respect to occurrence in time or perpetuity. Ibn Sīnā, for his part, states in his *Ta'līqāt* that "*'adam* may be stated in two ways: (1) A nonexistence that has a mode of existence; it is that which exists potentially, which may be made actual. (2) A nonexistence that positively has no form."[1]

Of the three kinds of *'adam* outlined by Mīr Dāmād, he recognizes only pure privation in perpetuity as the true opposite of actual existence, for reasons that will be explained below. In expounding on the passage of Ibn Sīnā reportedly presenting three kinds of nonexistence and three corresponding kinds of origination,[2] Mīr Dāmād provided the following to his student and commentator, Sayyid Aḥmad al-'Alawī:

> *The summary of the argument of our companion [*Avicenna*] is that the possible (*al-mumkin*) in the world of contingency has privation (*'adam*) in three ways: (1) That privation which is absolute nonexistence (*lays mutlaq*) in the stage of the essence (*dhāt*), in accordance with the nature of possibility; it belongs to every possible existent from the moment it exists. (2) Temporal quantifiable privation within a boundary separate from the boundary of [*the possession of*] existence; it belongs to every temporally creature, insofar as it is a temporally originating, prior to the time of its existence [*in time*]. (3) Perpetual pure privation (*al-'adam al-ṣariḥ al-dahrī*), whose precedence to existence is unquantifiable; it belongs to every existent via a receiving matter inasmuch as it is connected to fashioning (*ṣun'*).*
>
> *Privation in the first two senses is not opposed to existence. The first is united with existence in the real world and precedes it essentially with respect to the stage of the essence. The second is in a time distinct from the time of existence, and one of the conditions for mutual contradiction between temporal things is being in the same time. Therefore, the only opposite of existence is pure privation [*or pure nonexistence*] in which no succession of boundaries is conceivable and no state after state is distinguishable.*
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> *This being determined, it is apparent that origination (*ḥudūth*) also has three significations, which correspond to the three kinds of privation:*

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1. *Al-Ta'līqāt*, p. 30; quoted in *al-Qabasāt*, Wamīḍ [7.3.17], p. 266.

2. See: *Shifā': Ilāhiyyāt* (Cairo 1960), ed. G. C. Anawati, et al, pp. 266-267; qtd. in *al-Qabasāt*, pp. 3-4.

(1) Existence being preceded essentially, not separately, by absolute non-existence with respect to the stage of the essence is called essential origination. (2) Existence being separately and quantifiably after temporal privation is temporal origination. (3) Existence being separately and un-quantifiably after pure privation is best called perpetual origination, and [it is] the extraction of existence from absolute nonexistence.

If pure privation, which is opposite to existence, is not empowered at all, but existence is obtained perpetually (ʿalā al-dawām) from the Agent, this is absolute creation (ibdāʿ), the best of the kinds of causation. After opposite pure privation, if the possible is empowered [by the giving of form], this is fashioning (ṣunʿ) and production (iḥdāth) in perpetuity (dahr). It is a form of giving existence weak from the beginning, since it only pertains to what is possible to generate from matter. So temporal origination and perpetual origination, though differing conceptually in meaning, are inseparable in realization with respect to existence. The same applies to the relation between fashioning (ṣunʿ) and generation (takwīn). This is the doctrine of those who oppose the origination of the world (ḥudūth al-ʿālam) among the philosophers, as explained in the Ishārāt.[1]

In his writings, Ibn Sīnā uses the term *ḥudūth*) and its derivations *ḥādith* and *muḥdath* somewhat ambiguously, and Mīr Dāmād does the same, as illustrated in the passage above, since the philosophers clearly do not oppose the essential origination (*ḥudūth dhātī*) of the world (meaning its dependency on its Maker), although they do deny its fashioning (*ṣunʿ*) at the level of absolute creation (*ibdāʿ*). Since both Mīr Dāmād and Ibn Sīnā reject that the world was originated *in* time, and they agree on the meaning of temporal origination (*ḥuduth zamānī*), this leaves perpetual origination (*ḥudūth dahrī*)—or specifically the relation between *ibdāʿ* and *ṣunʿ*—as the area of dispute.

Therefore, understanding the context of a passage is important to determining how to interpret a term like *ḥudūth*, since the same term may refer to "essential origination" in general as "having existence after absolute nonexistence" or specifically as "having existence after a privation in matter," which is equivalent to *ṣunʿ* (fashioning), which includes both *iḥdāth* (temporal production) and *takwīn* (material generation). Naṣīr al-Dīn al-Ṭūsī explains the

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1. See: Namaṭ Five of the Metaphysics of *al-Ishārāt*. Quoted in al-ʿAlawī, *Sharḥ al-Qabasāt*, pp. 93-94.

relation of these last two terms to *ibdāʿ* as follows:

> *Takwīn pertains to something having a material existence [generated in time], and iḥdāth to something having a temporal existence [produced in time]. Each of these is contrary to ibdāʿ in a certain respect, and ibdāʿ is prior to them, as it is not possible for matter to be realized by takwīn nor for time to be realized by iḥdāth due to the impossibility of the former being preceded by another matter and the latter being preceded by another time. Consequently, both takwīn and iḥdāth depend on ibdāʿ, which is closer than them to the First Cause and higher in rank.*[1]

Al-ʿAlawī's commentary on Mīr Dāmād's interpretation of the key passage from Ibn Sīnā lends additional clarification:

> *I say: It is clear that the Master [Ibn Sīnā] did not qualify the meaning of the term "absolute nonexistence" by opposite (muqābil) as he did qualify [non-absolute nonexistence] by it in his words "namely, after a specific opposite privation in an existing matter"—since the former refers to essential privation (al-ʿadam al-dhātī), which is nonexistence (al-lays) with respect to the possibility of an essence, which has no necessity for either existence or nonexistence, so it is not opposed to existence. This contrasts with the latter, inasmuch as it is a privation belonging to the celestial beings in the stage of their matters. Clearly, what is contradictory to existence in that stage is privation (ʿadam) in it, and its removal is because of it [existence], whereas possibility is not removed by existence… .*
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> *Now this privation has been excluded [by Ibn Sīnā] from the sacred precinct of absolute creation (ibdāʿ), because if it were in effect there, the absolutely created (mubdaʿ) would be a generable existent preceded by matter, as he pointed out in his statement: 'its coming-into-being would be impossible except through matter, and the power of absolute creation (which he expressed by the term "giving existence") would be weak' due to its coming-to-be through generation (tawkīn), not absolute creation (ibdāʿ)…".*
>
> *Now the empowering of separate, atemporal privation, according to what the proponents of eternity (qidam) hold, requires matter, in accord with what he [Mīr Dāmād] mentioned in the foregoing commentary, by his words: "So temporal origination and perpetual origination, though*

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1. See: *Al-Ishārāt wa al-Tanbīhāt* (Cairo 1960), ed. S. Dunyā, Namaṭ Five, p. 525.

differing conceptually in meaning, are inseparable in realization with respect to existence." The purport is that temporally originating beings are preceded by temporal privations, but in relation to their true Creator, Who is exalted above both time and perpetuity, they are definitely preceded by an objective, separate, timeless privation, not temporal, due to His removal from the whole of time.... .

But according to the author [Mīr Dāmād], the perpetually originated is more general than the temporally originated. So if perpetual privation is empowered, its coming-into-being (takwīn) would not be through matter, as is the case with the incorporeal intelligences, for they are in fact preceded solely by their true Maker, and are posterior to Him in an unquantifiable way. Nonetheless, their [the celestial bodies] coming-into-being is through matter and the power of giving existence at the level of primary origination is not weak. [1]

This last paragraph is a little confusing, but it makes sense if one considers that Mīr Dāmād is going to make everything that is absolutely created, i.e., essentially originated, dependent on perpetual origination/fashioning, so that all things, even the intelligences, are preceded by pure nonexistence at the level of perpetuity. Therefore, even though the celestial bodies come into being through matter in an atemporal manner, their *ibdāʿī* existentiation is also not weak.

Returning to Mīr Dāmād's commentary on Ibn Sīnā, the question to consider is how does Mīr Dāmād view the sufficiency of each type of *ʿadam* (nonexistence or privation) to support a valid demonstration of the world's origination? Let us consider each of the three types in order.

(1) Absolute nonexistence: Mīr Dāmād interprets the term "absolute" (*muṭlaq*) qualifying "nonexistence" in Ibn Sīnā's writings to mean "a nonexistence that is general and unqualified, as compared to that nonexistence that is qualified by not being able to coexist with actual existence and which is opposed to it, and not conjoinable with it in reality."[2] He says that it belongs to all possible things by virtue of the nature of their possibility. In other words, all possible things are non-existent in themselves when disregarding their cause, while they are existent through their cause. As a concept derived by analyzing

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1. *Sharḥ al-Qabasāt*, pp. 95–96.

2. *Al-Qabasāt*, wamḍa [1.1], p. 4.

the concept of the possible, it can "coexist" with actual existence and is not removed by it. Mīr Dāmād states that this type of nonexistence, termed "absolute nonexistence," belongs to "the stage of the essence *in accordance with the nature of possibility* (*imkān*); it belongs to every possible existent from the moment it exists."[1] In other words, it cannot be separated from possible things after they are given existence any more than the concept of possibility can be separated from them. Therefore, it is a purely *conceptual* nonexistence, not a *real* pure nonexistence that cannot coexist with existence.[2] For the absolutely created (*al-mubda'āt*), which only have this kind of essential nonexistence, according to Mīr Dāmād, and which coexist with their Agent at the level of eternity, the most that is demonstrated is their dependence on their Cause. But the separation of their being from the unique being of God, which an act of real creation should entail, is not demonstrated. The priority of absolute nonexistence to existence, therefore, is not enough to demonstrate the world's origination.

(2) Temporal nonexistence, in other words, temporal privation, which belongs to all changeable things insofar as they are changeable and seeking perfection, via their matters, cannot be removed from changeable, generated things, because it is the very principle by which they are able to change. This is connected to the property of "dispositional possibility" (*imkān isti'dādī*), which is the potentiality of matter to become continuously actualized by taking on ever new forms. Mīr Dāmād says: "Dispositional possibility as such is a necessary accompaniment of motion and time. Its only requisite is the *actual non-occurrence* of that for which the disposition exists during the time of the occurrence of the disposition. The precedence of the potential to the actual, accordingly, is a quantifiable precedence in time."[3] Ibn Sīnā remarks

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1. Qtd. in al-'Alawī, *Sharḥ al-Qabasāt*, p. 93.

2. Ibn Sīnā does not clearly state that "absolute nonexistence" (*lays/'adam muṭlaq*) is different from pure nonexistence (*'adam ṣarīḥ*) or that it can cohabit with existence, but he does say above that this type of nonexistence "belongs to the effect through itself" prior to its existence, indicating that it is "essential" (*bi-al-dhāt*). Something that is essential cannot be separated from its subject, and so the effect could never become existent if this type of nonexistence were real. Mīr Dāmād contends that creation can take place only if the effects are preceded by a pure nonexistence that is accidental to their quiddities.

3. *Al-Qabasāt*, Wamīḍ [6.12.16], p. 226; see also: *Sharḥ al-Qabasāt*, pp. 169-172.

about temporal privation in the Physics of the *Shifā'*: "Privation is a condition for something to be changeable or seeking perfection, since if there were no privation, it would be impossible for it to be perfectible or to change, for its perfection and form would always be actual."[1]

According to Mīr Dāmād, the priority of temporally quantifiable privation, which is needed for the successive generation of things in time, is also not enough to demonstrate actual origination, which requires the removal of pure nonexistence by the Creator's bestowal of existence *outside of time*. Mīr Dāmād points out that a thing's temporal nonexistence in a prior time is not contradictory to its temporal existence in a subsequent time, since they belong to two different boundaries of the extension of time. The criterion for contradiction is two contradictory things being in the same place at the same time. Therefore, something's temporal nonexistence in a prior boundary of time is not removed by the generation of its existence in a subsequent boundary of time, since these two states coexist in separate temporal boundaries.

(3) This being the case, the only kind of *'adam* left by the removal of which an act of actual origination can be demonstrated—and which is existence's true contradictory—is perpetual pure nonexistence (*al-'adam al-ṣarīḥ al-dahrī*), i.e. atemporal, unquantifiable specific privation in perpetuity. The removal of pure privation in the domain of perpetuity, which encompasses, coincides with, and causes the world of time, is what Mīr Dāmād calls perpetual origination (*ḥudūth dahrī*) and what the philosophers have called fashioning (*ṣun'*). Pure privation/nonexistence needs to be "removed" for both something's origination in perpetuity and its generation in time; otherwise it could not exist. Consequently, temporal origination itself depends upon and is subsequent to perpetual origination.

This third type of nonexistence is the same as "qualified nonexistence" (*lays muqayyad*) in the sense of being qualified by not being able to coexist with actual existence. To Ibn Sīnā, this type of qualified nonexistence termed "privation" (*'adam*) only belongs to things having matter in contrast to absolute nonexistence, which applies generally to all created things prior to their existence.

Mīr Dāmād differs from Ibn Sīnā precisely on this point. He holds that all

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1. The Physics of *The Healing*, trans. Jon McGinnis, Book One, Chapter Two, p. 19. My translation.

things other than God, even the intelligences—on account of the difference in nature between the existence of the essentially Self-Subsisting and the existence of the essentially dependent—must be preceded by pure privation (i.e., pure nonexistence) in perpetuity, not just things requiring matter. Otherwise, they cannot be considered separate from His being and truly created. They would be mere concomitants of His essence, like our thoughts are with us, but not separate in being. He, therefore, affirms a type of *'adam not requiring matter* prior to the existence of the directly, or absolutely, created things (*mubda'āt*), which he calls "perpetual pure nonexistence" (or alternatively translated "perpetual real privation") (*al-'adam al-ṣarīḥ al-dahrī*). This kind of *'adam*, therefore, is something other than the pure potentiality of matter. As the true contradictory of existence, it must be "removed" before existence can take place. Mīr Dāmād says this pure nonexistence is associated accidentally with the essential possibility (*imkān dhātī*) of the absolutely created effect just as absolute nonexistence is associated with it essentially.[1] This must be the case; otherwise it could never become existent.

The following exposition by Mīr Dāmād illustrates his move away from "Aristotle" (via the *Theology*) and Ibn Sinā's position on *ibdā'* to one that subordinates it to *ṣun'* (fashioning), and hence permits actual origination, i.e. creation in the theological sense, since to "fashion" something implies a dislocation in being between the fashioner and the fashioned:

> *It is widely known and confirmed by unbroken traditions, both oral and written, transmitted over the course of centuries and ages, that there has been continuous and widespread disagreement between the respected philosophers regarding the origination (ḥudūth) of the world and its eternity (qidam) and the First Maker being the Fashioner (al-ṣāni') of the whole system in its entirety or its absolute Creator (al-mubdi').*
>
> *The leader of philosophy, the divine Plato, and the six philosophers preceding him... and others who followed them believed that this Great Man, which is the cosmos—with all of its parts and members, whether concrete or intelligible, material or spiritual, in other words, everything in the two realms of Command and creation—is originated (ḥādith), not eternally existent (mutasarmad al-wujūd), and that the true Maker is both its Creator and its Fashioner.*

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1. See: *Al-Qabasāt*, Wamīḍ [5.4.15], pp. 173–174.

The teacher of the Greek Peripatetics, Aristotle, and a number of his fol-lowers and supporters, like the Greek Master [*Plotinus*]*, Proclus, Themisti-us, Alexander of Aphrodisias, and Porphyry, and their followers, believed that part of the cosmos, like the individual directly created existents and the unqualified natures of the species and the genera, is eternally existent (*qadīm al-wujūd*) and eternally perpetual (*mutasarmad al-dawām*) in actuality, and that the First Maker is their Originator, while the only cre-ated part of the cosmos are the individual generated, material existents, which are subject in essence and existence to dispositional possibilities, and nothing else, and that the Agent Maker is their Fashioner... .*

*Therefore, it is understood from the followers of Aristotle that the First Maker (exalted be His praise) only essentially precedes one part of the cosmos, namely, the absolutely created existents (*mubda'āt*), with respect to the intelligible order only, but He does not precede them separately in existence with respect to the positively real world. Consequently, they are posterior to Him in the intelligible order with respect to essential origi-nation, but they are not posterior to Him in the objective world outside of mental intellection... However, He precedes the other part, namely the generated beings (*mukawwanāt*), both essentially with respect to the in-telligible order... and He also precedes it separately in the positively real world... .*

*It is clear from the path of the Platonists, however, that these two pri-orities (the essential and the separate) and these two posteriorities (the mental and the real) both encompass the two categories, such that the universe in its entirety with all of its parts, including the worlds of Com-mand (*al-amr*) and* [*the physical*] *creation (*al-khalq*), and the realms of the visible and the invisible, is in relation to the true Maker (glorified be He) in the same position as this temporal creature with respect to essential posteriority and separate posteriority... .*

This is the clear path on which the law-giving Messengers among the infallible Prophets and Chosen Ones agree... By them it is established that "God was, and nothing was with Him." Other clear verses in the Noble Book, the Sacred Law, and the traditions of the pure and holy Family sup-port this theme.

*It is therefore clear that the area of dispute concerns perpetual origi-nation (*ḥudūth dahrī*) and no other. In our view, every essentially creating*

thing is is perpetually originating also, and the two types of origination, the essential and the perpetual, though differing conceptually are inseparable in realization. As for temporal origination, it is restricted to things dependent on dispositional possibilities belonging to material existents. The emanation (fayḍ) of the Agent Maker (magnified be His sovereignty) with respect to the contents of perpetuity is termed "absolute creation" (ibdāʿ) and "fashioning" (ṣunʿ), and with respect to temporal creatures, it is termed temporal production (iḥdāth) and generation (takwīn). But they [the followers of Aristotle] say that every perpetually originating thing is temporally originating also, and that these two originations, the perpetual and the temporal, are inseparable in realization though different in concept. Essential origination is in common to both due to its complete inclusion of possible things in their entirety. [They call] the emanating action of the Maker with respect to eternal things absolute creation, and with respect to generated entities fashioning. Let it be ascertained.[1]

In this passage, Mīr Dāmād, in line with the Platonists, favors the fashioning (*ṣunʿ*) of the whole system of the cosmos in both its material and immaterial dimensions, which allows for it to be, in its entirety, both essentially and separately posterior to its Fashioner. Its atemporal parts are still absolutely created (*mubdaʿ*), but they are also fashioned (*maṣnūʿ*), according to Mīr Dāmād, which makes *ibdāʿ*, which is the same as essential origination, inseparable in realization from *ṣunʿ*, which is equivalent to perpetual origination.

The difference between these two types of priority and posteriority, the essential and the separate, is one of the main subjects of the second and third *qabasāt*. As Mīr Dāmād will prove there—based on his analysis of the distinction between the existence of the Necessary Being and the existence belonging to possible things and the kinds of priority/posteriority—the essential posteriority of created things to the Agent Maker is itself a separate posteriority (*taʾakhkhur infikākī*), which makes everything besides God, universally and without exception, like a temporal existent with respect to its essential and separate posteriority to God, and accordingly it is subject to both essential and perpetual origination.

Mīr Dāmād's unconventional removal of a separately subsisting prime matter from the act of fashioning at the timeless level of *dahr* (perpetuity), which

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1. *Al-Qabasāt*, Wamīḍ [1.7.2], pp. 24-27.

is the domain of perpetual origination, however, gives rise to a contradiction, since the act of fashioning presumes the prior presence of some matter capable of being fashioned. Mīr Dāmād's recognition of the need for a real ontological distinction and separation between the Creator and His creation to exist for "creation" to mean more than the dependency of the possible on the Necessary is justified, but he was influenced by the religious doctrine of creation *ex nihilo* to posit an untenable position, since it is inconceivable for the universe to exist separately from God unless prime matter is also independent and eternal. To require the independence of prime matter does not mean that the universe can exist independently, since the universe is composed of matter and form, and God, as the Fashioner (*al-ṣāniʿ*), is the ultimate giver of form. Matter is, in fact, *relatively speaking* nonexistent (*maʿdūm*) in the absence of form. The universe, thus, remains utterly contingent (*mumkin al-wujūd fī dhātihi*) and dependent on the Necessary Being for its existence despite the presence of an eternal prime matter. The theory of the creation of the world out of nothing (*ḥudūth al-ʿālam lā min shayʾ*), according to Harry Wolfson, "is not to be found either in the Jewish or in the Christian or in the Muslim Scripture,"[1] but it is a religious interpretation promoted by theologians. At best, it should be taken metaphorically or relatively but not literally or absolutely.

It is noteworthy that Mīr Dāmād draws upon the affirmation of the Platonists that God is the Fashioner (*ṣāniʿ*) of all things to support his theory of *ḥudūth dahrī*, but he disregards a key component of Plato's creation theory, as expounded in the *Timaeus*, which is the need for an eternal "receptacle of… all becoming and change," which by itself is "invisible and formless, all-embracing, possessed in a most puzzling way of intelligibility, yet very hard to grasp."[2]

The question of why Mīr Dāmād's dissociation of *ʿadam* from matter is problematic needs to be examined further. In Peripatetic philosophy, privations must be "removed" and replaced by possessions, and this process requires the presence of prime matter, since contradictories cannot become one another. For example, for a cold body to become warm, the state of being cold, which is the privation of heat, must be "removed" from prime matter and replaced with the possession of heat. It is not that cold has a cause and is

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1. Harry A. Wolfson, *The Philosophy of the Kalam*, Harvard University Press, 1976, p. 355. Chapter Five, section one, is devoted to the subject of creation *ex nihilo*.

2. Plato, *Timaeus*, II.49b; 51b, trans. Desmond Lee (Penguin Books, 1971), pp. 66, 69.

something; it is rather the privation of the cause of heat in that which has the capacity to be hot. In the same way, Mīr Dāmād maintains that there is a non-existence prior to the existence of things in perpetuity that must be "removed" and replaced with existence. It is not that that nonexistence has a cause and is something; it is merely the privation of the cause of existence with respect to that which has the possibility of existing. The bestowal of existence follow-ing this type of nonexistence, not in time but in perpetuity, is called by Mīr Dāmād "perpetual origination" (*ḥudūth dahrī*).

Privations and possessions are termed "contradictories" (*naqīḍān*), not "contraries" (*diḍḍān*), since the latter refer to two existent attributes that are opposed to each other, not the privation of an opposite. Each member of a pair of contraries has its own positive existence and its own cause. The con-traries of black and white, sweet and bitter, for example, each have their own cause. A privation, in contrast, needs no cause of its own, its cause being the absence of the cause of a positive state. For example, blindness is the absence of the cause of the positive attribute of sight. The contradictories of motion and rest, vision and blindness, existence and nonexistence, do not each have a cause, but only the positive member of each pair has one. Just as blindness is the privation of vision in something that has the capacity to see, the pure nonexistence (*'adam ṣarīḥ*) that Mīr Dāmād posits to precede the existence of all besides God in perpetuity should be the privation of existence in that which may exist (if we remain faithful to the Peripatetic principle), since ab-solute nothingness does not have the capacity to exist.

In this regard, Mīr Dāmād fails to draw the conclusion that an eternal prime matter is needed for perpetual origination to take place,[1] and instead he appears to follow the orthodox view of creation *ex nihilo*. This is evident when he has God create the possibility of something's existence when He bestows existence upon it,[2] and when he states that "the Creator invented

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1. This argument is given by Aristotle: "If matter came to be, there would have to be some-thing underlying out of which, as a constituent, it came to be. But to be such is the na-ture of matter itself, for by matter I mean the primary underlying thing in each case out of which... something comes to be. So if matter came to be, it would have to be before it had come to be. And if it passed away, this would be what it would ultimately arrive at, so it would have passed away before it had passed away. [Consequently, matter is eternal] (*Physics* i.9, 192a, 29-34)."

2. *Al-Qabasāt*, Wamīḍ [7.3.18], p. 267.

both matter and what possesses matter in perpetuity, not from matter and not from anything, but after pure nonexistence, not in any time or place at all."[1] Without a separate eternal matter for God to create things *from*, however, it would seem impossible for the universe to be anything other than a set of ideas in God's mind or, at best, an extension of His being. In other words, if Mīr Dāmād's non-absolute, pure nonexistence (*ʿadam ṣarīḥ*) preceding all contingent things is interpreted as the "privation of existence in that which may exist," as logically it must be, then what is "that which may exist" if not eternal prime matter? It cannot be the substance of the Creator, which contains no privation, nor can it be form, which is pure actuality. To be the substratum of absolutely created things, which Mīr Dāmād wishes to dislocate from the locus of the Necessary Being, prime matter as such would also have to be understood as the receptive complement of intelligible forms.

It can be argued that just as essential origination implies real perpetual origination, essential possibility implies real possibility in that which has the capacity to exist, in other words, prime matter. Perpetuity only needs to be distinguished from time by changelessness, not the absence of matter. The assumption that so-called "immaterial" things are free of matter needs to be reexamined. Matter in space-time is subject to change in form, but matter as the principle of receptivity in the intelligible world would only need to receive the act of creation, which is the giving of form, once.

Ibn Sīnā's commentator, Naṣīr al-Dīn al-Ṭūsī, explains that Ibn Sīnā "means by 'fashioning' (*ṣunʿ*) bringing something into existence preceded by privation [in matter]… and he means by 'absolute creation' (*ibdāʿ*) the opposite of this, namely, bringing something into existence not preceded by privation."[2] As already explained, Ibn Sīnā associates "absolute creation" with the essential origination of the secondary existential causes of things (namely, the intelligences, the universal and particular natures, form and matter, and space, time and motion) *and* with the bodies and souls of the celestial spheres, all of which are not subject to generation and corruption, and therefore supposedly have no privation preceding them. This is confirmed by al-ʿAlawī, who notes: "Those who believe in eternity think they [the celestial bodies] are extracted from essential nonexistence together with the essential priority of their mat-

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1. Ibid., Wamīḍ [4.6], p. 134.

2. See: *al-Ishārāt wa al-Tanbīhāt*, p. 485.

ter without being preceded by a pure privation in perpetuity."[1]

This view is countered by Mīr Dāmād, however, based on the statement of Ibn Sīna in the Metaphysics of the *Shifā'* that something that is not originated in time may be preceded "by a specific opposite privation in an existing matter." Since we are speaking of atemporal origination, this privation is also atemporal and unquantifiable. Mīr Dāmād then connects this type of atemporal origination to fashioning (*ṣunʿ*) because of its association with matter, and to the perpetual origination of the celestial bodies and their souls, which are preceded essentially but not temporally by a specific opposite privation in the stage of their matters. Al-ʿAlawi, commenting on Wamḍa [1.7], says:

> He only described it [*the matter of the temporally created*] as being "a bearer of the possibility of its existence," namely, dispositional possibility, because it is distinguished from the matter belonging to bodies of the celestial spheres, since it is not a bearer for the possibility of their existence.
>
> Regarding this, the Master instructed in the Ishārāt that the matter of the spheres is the cause of their subsistence, but the cause of their being is in the principles (*ʿunsuriyyāt*). For this reason the spheres cannot be qualified by temporal origination, but must be qualified by temporal eternity, except for the outermost body, due to it being a bearer of the substrate of time. They are also qualified by perpetual origination, in accord with what the author holds regarding the Maker extracting them from the domain of objective pure nonexistence (*ʿadam ṣarīḥ ʿaynī*) in perpetuity, along with the sole essential priority of their matter, without an interval of any kind preceding them whatsoever.
>
> Those who believe in eternity think they are extracted from essential nonexistence together with the essential priority of their matter without being preceded by a pure privation (*ʿadam ṣarīḥ*) in perpetuity.[2]

The matters of the celestial bodies, therefore, are not subject to dispositional possibility, since, unlike the sublunar matter of temporal things, they always retain the same form from the moment of their inception. Their matters precede them essentially but not temporally. The proponents of eternity hold that this means they are not preceded by any type of privation, whether this be a temporal privation (*ʿadam zamānī*) or a pure privation in perpetu-

1. *Sharḥ al-Qabasāt*, p. 158.
2. *Sharḥ al-Qabasāt*, p. 158. Cf. p. 113.

ity. Mīr Dāmād, although agreeing with them on the essential priority of the matters of the celestial bodies, differs with them on the subject of privation. He proposes that they are still preceded by an atemporal, unquantifiable, pure privation, which, as it is contradictory to their existence, is real nonexistence.

Both types of atemporal origination, that belonging to the celestial bodies and that belonging to the other primary originated things, therefore, belong to the category of essential priority and posteriority, not temporal, and for this reason Ibn Sīnā makes them coeternal with God. As Fazlur Rahman notes:

> *Yet the one is not preceded by any actual nonexistence while the other is. It is this second which has an existential rupture with God's being, which leads Dāmād to his postulate of dahr and which Ibn Sīnā also, to all appearances, puts at the level of dahr—since it cannot belong to the realm of time, being supra-temporal on the one hand, and yet cannot belong to the realm of simple eternity because its existence is preceded by actual nonexistence. The doctrine of dahr is thus available to Dāmād ready-made, indeed—but for one important difficulty: apparently Ibn Sīnā puts in dahr only the heavenly spheres and time itself as a whole, while he puts the transcendent Intelligences in the realm of simple or pure eternity. Dāmād must interpret and reconstruct Ibn Sīnā's doctrine in such a way that all "essential contingency" entails a real dislocation of being with God and is preceded by actual nonexistence, whether heavenly spheres or Intelligences.[1]*

In other words, for the intelligences and all contingent things to be separate in substance from God and posterior to Him in existence, Mīr Dāmād holds that they must be preceded by a non-absolute, real, contradictory nonexistence, not just an essential, or absolute, nonexistence commensurate with the nature of essential possibility. Essential origintion (ḥudūth dhātī), therefore, which only indicates dependency upon God without requiring the antecedence of actual nonexistence, does not qualify to be an act of real creation, if this is interpreted as bringing something into existence separate in substance from its Creator. For this, Mīr Dāmād asserts, the priority of unquantifiable pure nonexistence is necessary, and this is what he calls perpetual origination (ḥudūth dahrī).

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1. "Mīr Dāmād's Concept of Ḥudūth Dahrī: A Contribution to the Study of God-World Relationship Theories in Safavid Iran," *JNES* 39, no. 2, p. 147.

C. Generation (*takwīn*)/Temporal Creation (*ḥudūth zamānī*)

The third kind of creation mentioned by Ibn Sīnā in the above-quoted passage from the Metaphysics of the *Shifā'* is temporal creation (*ḥudūth zamānī*). Mīr Dāmād explains:

> *As for origination in the sense that requires time, it is of only one kind. This is the existence of something in time being preceded by its quantifiable, flowing temporal nonexistence, which occurs in the time quantifiably and temporally prior to it. Bringing something into existence in time after its quantifiable, flowing temporal nonexistence, which is included in the genus of extension and non-extension, duration and non-duration,[1] is called generation (takwīn). These are the three primary categories of origination, according to what is in the Shifā'.* [2]

As explained in the previous section, according to Mīr Dāmād, temporal origination as well, which only pertains to the successive generation of things in time preceded by a temporally quantifiable nonexistence, does not qualify to be an act of actual origination, which requires the removal of something's actual nonexistence and the bestowal of existence by the Creator *outside of time*. As Mīr Dāmād points out, a thing's temporal nonexistence in a prior time is not contradictory to its temporal existence in a subsequent time, since they belong to two different boundaries of the extension of time. The criterion for contradiction is two contradictory things being in the same place at the same time. Therefore, something's temporal nonexistence in a prior boundary of time is not removed by its generation in a subsequent boundary of time, since these two states coexist in separate boundaries. This being the case, only perpetual origination (*ḥudūth dahrī*) at the level of *dahr*, which encompasses, coincides with, and causes the world of time, is capable of giving existence to something and "removing" its real nonexistence in both time and perpetuity; otherwise it could not exist.

Mīr Dāmād summarizes the three kinds of origination: the essential, the temporal, and the perpetual, as follows:

> *It is apparent that origination (ḥudūth) has three significations which*

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1. Extension and non-extension refer to line and plane vs. point (which is non-extended), and duration and non-duration refer to time vs. the now (which is non-extended and indivisible).

2. *Al-Qabasāt*, Wamḍa [1.1], pp. 4-5.

correspond to the three kinds of nonexistence: (*1*) *Essential origination, which is existence being preceded by absolute nonexistence with respect to the stage of the essence; this is an essential priority, not a separate priority.* (*2*) *Temporal origination, which is existence following temporal nonexistence, where the posteriority is separate and quantifiable.* (*3*) *Perpetual origination, which is existence following pure nonexistence, where the posteriority is separate and unquantifiable... .*[1]

Mīr Dāmād stresses that the priority of nonexistence with respect to essential origination is an essential, or logical, priority. It is not that existence has been preceded by a real nonexistence contradictory to it, since the negation of existence in the station of the quiddity itself, insofar as it is itself, does not contradict the existence it acquires accidentally in the real world from its efficient cause, but rather it coexists with it. Real, or pure, nonexistence is associated accidentally with the quiddities of things prior to their actualization, just as actual existence is associated accidentally with them after their actualization. This is why the universe and its parts are inherently liable to destruction, despite their perpetuity with the perpetuity of the emanation. In the same way, the priority of nonexistence with respect to temporal origination is a temporal priority. It is not that a temporally originated existent is preceded by a nonexistence contradictory to it in the extension of time, because they belong to two different temporal boundaries that cannot come together in the extension of time. Consequently, for these two kinds of origination, the essential and the temporal, there is no opposition between priority and posteriority at all. But the matter differs for the third kind of creation, which is perpetual origination (*ḥudūth dahrī*), because the locus of prior pure nonexistence (*ʿadam ṣarīḥ*) in perpetuity is identical to the locus of created existence after that, since perpetuity has no quantifiable extension whatsoever; therefore, nonexistence in perpetuity must be "removed" and replaced by existence. In short, by showing that neither essential origination nor temporal origination suffice to explain the actual coming-into-existence of anything, Mīr Dāmād has demonstrated that only perpetual origination succeeds in this regard.

The following summation by Mīr Dāmād, which I have incorporated into two Venn diagrams on the next page, illustrates the difference between his position and that of the philosophers who advocate eternity:

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1. Qtd. in al-ʿAlawī, *Sharḥ al-Qabasāt*, pp. 93-94.

Haply through what we have acquainted you by the leave of God...you recognize (1) that for the absolutely created effect, insofar as it is essentially origination, absolute nonexistence (lays muṭlaq) in the stage of itself in accord with essential possibility is one of the principles of its essential origination and its absolutely originating existence; (2) that for the fashioned effect, insofar as it is perpetually originating, pure nonexistence (ʿadam ṣarīḥ) contradictory to its existence in perpetuity with respect to the real world is one of the principles of its perpetual origination and its fashioned existence, not essentially but accidentally; and similarly (3) that for the generated effect, insofar as it is temporally originating and phenomenally existent, its continuous temporal nonexistence (ʿadam zamānī) in a prior time is one of the accidental principles of its temporal origination and its generated existence occurring in a later time.

The concourse of the People of Truth (among whom are firmly grounded divines, preeminent thinkers, intuitive philosophers, and inspired mystics) are equal in legal opinion on this question. They comprehend the prophetic wisdom (al-ḥikmat al-yamāniyya) and the eight principles[1]; the exclusive ascription of eternal pre-eternity to the Maker, the Creator, the Fashioner, the One, the Real; the complete inclusion of essential origination, perpetual origination, absolute creation, and fashioning to the pillar of the world of contingency; and the association of temporal origination and generation as well with one part in its particularity from the sum of the fashioned effects, which is no other than the existents occurring in the realm of generation and corruption. But they belong to the People of Error who entertain a kind of partnership with God and who conjecture the theory and supposition that the primary originated things are describable by eternity (sarmadiyya), that fashioning (ṣunʿ) is not connected to them, that among the kinds of origination only essential origination fully encompasses the pillar of the world of contingency, and that the two originations, the perpetual and the temporal, only occur to entities in the realm of generation and corruption, albeit in two conceptually different respects, but inseparable with respect to actualization in matters and subjects, and fashioning and generation are connected to them by these two respects. Let it be understood.[2]

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1. See: the beginning of this article for the eight principles.

2. *Al-Qabasāt*, Wamīḍ [5.4.15], pp. 173–174.

Eternity (*sarmad*)

The domain of the essentially Necessary Being, who brings all possible things into existence at the level of perpetuity. This domain, as the cause of contingent existence, has a separate, not just an essential priority, to the world of creation.

Perpetuity (*dahr*)

The domain of all possible things without the extention of time. Their actual existence here preceded by real nonexistence is through fashioning (*ṣun'*), i.e., perpetual origination (*ḥudūth dahrī*), which is only conceptually different from absolute creation and essential origination, not factually different.

Time (*zamān*)

The domain of those possible things whose existence is both temporal and perpetual. Their actual existence here is through generation (*takwīn*).

The structure of existence according to Mīr Dāmād (above); according to the philosophers who advocate eternity (below).

Eternity (*sarmad*)

The domain of the essentially Necessary Being and His directly created effects (*mubda'āt*). Their actual existence here through absolute creation (*ibdā'*), i.e., essential origination, is only essentially, not separately, posterior to their Cause.

Perpetuity (*dahr*)

The domain of atemporal existents preceded by privation in matter in an unquantifiable way. Their actual existence here is through fashioning (*ṣun'*), i.e., perpetual origination.

Time (*zamān*)

The domain of those possible things whose existence is both temporal and perpetual. Their actual existence here is through generation (*takwīn*), i.e., temporal origination.

2. On the Three Containers of Existence: Time, Perpetuity, and Eternity

In *al-Qabasāt*, Wamḍa [1.2], Mīr Dāmād quotes a passage from al-Baghdādī in the *Muʿtabir* that shows that the extension of time is irrelevant to the act of origination. He has already shown in Wamḍa [1.1] that the removal of something's real nonexistence cannot be in time or in eternity but takes place at the level of perpetuity. Since the Creator is beyond time and not in it or conditioned by it in any way, His relation to His creation also cannot be in time. In like manner, no part of His creation can exist with Him at the level of eternity (*sarmad*), as Mīr Dāmād has demonstrated. Therefore, the domain of perpetuity (*dahr*), which is both originated and unchanging, is needed as an intermediary between the eternal unchanging and the temporal changing. This relationship is only possible because temporal things are themselves unchanging in one respect and changing in another.

Mīr Dāmād expresses the relationship between these three levels of existence in Wamḍa [1.3] as follows:

> *Therefore, three containers (wiʿāʾ) are required for existence with respect to the thing itself (lil-ḥuṣūl fī nafs al-amr): (1) time (zamān), which is the container of measurable, flowing existence or measurable, continuous nonexistence belonging to changeable beings insofar as they are changeable; (2) perpetuity (dahr), which is the container of pure existence preceded by real nonexistence, beyond the horizon of quantification and non-quantification, belonging to changeless things insofar as they are changeless, and it is the core of the real world; (3) eternity (sarmad), which is the container of pure, real, changeless existence utterly sanctified from the occurrence of change and exalted above any precedence of nonexistence whatsoever. It is pure, real, unqualified actuality in every respect. Just as perpetuity is more exalted and more encompassing than time, so is eternity more exalted, loftier, more sanctified, and greater than the world of perpetuity."*[1]

The three containers of existence are necessary for perpetual origination to take place and for God to be able to have one changeless relation to His creation. Were it not for the domain of perpetuity, an impossible situation would exist, which would be for the changeless First Cause, which is absolutely one in every respect, to cause the multiplicity of changing things directly, where-

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1. *Al-Qabasāt*, Wamḍa [1.3], p. 7.

as, as Mīr Dāmād and the philosophers agree, the absolutely created (*mub-dāʿāt*) are created first outside of time as the changeless principles of changing things with an essential priority not a temporal priority. The changeless causes of the things that change and the substratum for their realization (i.e., space, time and absolute motion), therefore, need to be originated first, and since this is neither possible at the level of eternity, which has no beginning, nor possible at the level of time, which itself requires these things, it remains for them to be originated at a level that is neither beginningless nor subject to time, and this is perpetuity. As explained in the previous section, Mīr Dāmād differs with the philosophers who advocate eternity over where the *mubdaʿāt* are located, with Mīr Dāmād placing them entirely in perpetuity and the philosophers placing those independent of matter in eternity.

In Wamḍa [1.3], Mīr Dāmād draws extensively from the words of several of his predecessors in philosophy to establish the characteristics of eternity, perpetuity, and time, such as from Ibn Sīnā's *Taʿlīqāt*, *Shifāʾ*, *ʿUyūn al-Ḥikmat*, and *Najāt*; from Bahmanyār's *Taḥṣīl*; and from the *Muṭāraḥāt* of al-Suhrawardī.[1] Above all, he pays attention to the words of "Aristotle" in the *Theology*, which Muslim scholars mistakenly ascribed to Aristotle but which is really a paraphrase of the *Enneads* of Plotinus.

Regarding the level of time (*zamān*), from Ibn Sīnā's *Taʿlīqāt* we learn that this is the temporal dimension of changeable things as such, which have beginnings and ends, where the end is different from the beginning, where "past" and "future," "before" and "after," apply in actuality. This is the domain of constant flux and transformation from one state to another. Time is an effect of perpetuity and is connected to it, because it is produced by the motion of the heavenly sphere, which belongs to perpetuity. The changeable aspect of things exists in time, and time itself does not exist in time. From al-Suhrawardī we are given that the body is in time only with respect to its motion, but anything changeless associated with the body is in perpetuity. Al-ʿAlawī sums up: "Generated existents, like the originating bodies, insofar as they are existent, are atemporal, but insofar as they are changeable, are temporal."[2]

Mīr Dāmād states this principle similarly in *al-Qabasāt*:

> **It is not possible for body, insofar as it is body, to occur in time, nor in-**

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1. See: *al-Qabasāt*, Wamḍa [1.3], pp. 7-11.

2. *Sharḥ al-Qabasāt*, p.101.

sofar as it is existent, since only the unfixed state occurs in time, and this is motion. Thus body, insofar as it is body, is in place; insofar as it is existent, it occurs in perpetuity; and insofar as it changes and moves, it occurs in time. Motion with respect to itself occurs in time essentially, and insofar as it is existent, it is in perpetuity, as with time itself... .[1]

Regarding the level of perpetuity (*dahr*), from Ibn Sīnā's *Ta'līqāt* we learn that this is a state of existence that surrounds and contains time, and is *with* it, not *in* it. On the one hand, it is the heavenly sphere, which does not change in itself, but is that upon which motion depends. On the other hand, it is also the relation of changeless things, like the immaterial intelligible substances, to the changeable. That which is *with* time does not change with the changes of the things *in* time. In the *Shifā'* he says that perpetuity is the effect of eternity, just as time is the effect of perpetuity. If the relationship of the causes of bodies in time to their principles at the levels of perpetuity and eternity were not perpetual, the former would cease to exist. Al-'Alawī comments on this point: "In other words, the parts of their existence which are their causes are united to the principles of their existence, which are purely incorporeal things belonging to the intelligible substances. From this it is apparent that time is like an effect of perpetuity." Eternal existence (*sarmad*), in turn, is "the efficient cause of the perpetual existences, and thus necessarily encompasses them."[2]

Furthermore, from the *'Uyūn al-Ḥikmat* we learn that the changeless aspect of changeable things, insofar as they are changeless, "does not exist in time, but rather with time" [i.e., in perpetuity]. Then in the Physics of the *Najāt* we are given that the unchanging nature of perpetuity coincides with (*muṭābiq*) the unchanging aspect of the contents of time. Fazlur Rahman feels that this statement "represents the closest determination of its [perpetuity's] nature by Ibn Sīnā." He takes it to mean that perpetuity is "a kind of fixed or 'frozen' time in which there is no temporal flow but otherwise is co-terminous or parallel with time," and "if you remove the extension of time from the world, what remains is *dahr*, where the order of events remains without past,

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1. *Al-Qabasāt*, Wamīḍ [3.7.8], p. 93. By "body" here, Mīr Dāmād means the general corporeal form, which is inseparable from its matter. Ibn Sīnā, likewise, considered this absolutely created (*mubdā'*). See: The Physics of *The Healing*, trans. Jon McGinnis, Book One, Chapter Three, p. 28.

2. *Sharḥ al-Qabasāt*, pp. 106, 111.

present, and future."[1]

This conception of perpetuity as the state of temporal things without the flow of time resembles the modern scientific view, as explained by Brian Greene, that all the slices of space-time actually exist simultaneously as one whole as seen from outside, from what encompasses time.[2] We only experience them separately and sequentially from within time. Therefore, whatever has existed or will exist in time exists in perpetuity in a timeless present. This view is confirmed by Mīr Dāmād in the First Qabas, and it is clearly stated in the *Theology* of Aristotle, as will be seen shortly. Mīr Dāmād also explains in his book *al-Ṣirāt al-Mustaqīm*, that if the future of the progressive existent, i.e., time, in post-eternity is considered with respect to its occurrence in the container of perpetuity, and with respect to its relation to God, it is an actual infinity, even though with respect to elapsing and renewal in the external world it is finite.[3]

To illustrate the extensionless, timeless quality of perpetuity, Mīr Dāmād quotes the following passage from Mīmar Eight of the *Theology*, which has "Aristotle" state:

> *The higher world is a perfect living being containing all things, because it was created perfect by the First Maker. In the higher world every soul and every intelligence exists, and there is no poverty there or need, because everything there is imbued with richness and life, a life that is abundant and overflowing. The flowing of the life of those things issues from only one spring. It is not like one brook or one breeze of wind by itself, but all things there partake of one state in which every state exists... .*
>
> *Every wayfarer there, whether an intelligence or a living being, no matter what path he travels, always travels it to its end without having left the beginning, contrary to what is experienced in the world below. Here if a traveler on a certain road comes to the end of that road, the place of the end and all the parts in between are separate from that of the beginning, so that the traveler is only at the end, that is at the place wherein he is. But the traveler in the domain of life can travel to the utmost reaches of that*

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1. "Concept of Ḥudūth Dahrī," pp. 140, 142.

2. See: *Fabric of the Cosmos,* New York: Alfred Knopf, 2004, Chapter Five, "The Frozen River."

3. Qtd. in *Sharḥ al-Qabasāt*, pp. 486-488.

realm without having left his point of departure, so that he is simultaneously at both the end and the beginning and in all the states in between... .

Furthermore, that world does not need to progress or change in any way, since it is already in the utmost state of perfection and completion. Thus all of His virtues always occur with perpetuity, not with time. The state of subsistence there is perpetual, without a past or future time. That is to say, the future there is the same as the present, and so is the past, because things there ever continue in one unchanging state.[1]

In Wamḍa [1.4], Mīr Dāmād explains that the absence of something from the domain of time does not require its absence from the domain of perpetuity. Just because something is temporally non-existent before and after the time of its existence in time does not require its nonexistence in perpetuity nor the termination of its relation with God. Mīr Dāmād elaborates upon this principle as follows:

Since you recognize that eternity (sarmad) transcends perpetuity (dahr), and perpetuity transcends time (zamān), know that if the temporal nonexistence belonging to a certain temporal thing, insofar as it is temporal, is posited to be continuous for the whole extension of time, then without a doubt its perpetual pure nonexistence is necessitated as well... But if its nonexistence is particularized to only a part of the extension of time in its particularity, its nonexistence in perpetuity is certainly not required. In this case, would not its subject (maʿrūd) be existent in what is outside of the time of its nonexistence belonging to time? Perpetuity is more encompassing and more universal than any part of time, than the extension of the whole of time, and then the domain of the real world separated from the dimensions of time and space... .

The nonexistence belonging to a temporal thing in a part of time does not require its nonexistence in perpetuity, due to the fact of its temporal existence in perpetuity not in that time. Furthermore, the nonexistence of an immaterial entity (al-shay al-mufāraq) in the whole extension of time does not require its nonexistence in perpetuity, nor does it conflict with its perpetual existence in objective reality and the actual world not in any time or place at all. Therefore, it is possible for the existence of something to be removed from a part of time, but it cannot be removed in perpetui-

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1. Qtd. in *al-Qabasāt*, p. 13.

ty from the whole extension of time; or it can be removed from the whole extension of time [in the case of separate, incorporeal things], but not removed in the domain of perpetuity from actual reality... .

Therefore, it is clear that the temporal nonexistences belonging to changeable and corruptible things, insofar as they are changeable and corruptible, only refer to the absence of a particular existent, which exists for a definite duration within the extension of time, from other than the time of its [temporal] existence, not to its absence in perpetuity from the whole of time; and they refer to the absence of a temporal from another temporal [extension], not its absence from the One who is exalted above the dimensions of time and space, and who encompasses all times and all places, and what is in them and with them, in all their details, with an everlasting, unchanging, unquantifiable relation.[1]

The intent of this passage is clear. Once a temporal thing has been created, it can never be removed from the dimension of perpetuity, which is the domain of atemporal beginning and changeless existence without end, even though its temporal existence in time ceases to exist. All of its temporal states and spatial locations exist in perpetuity in a single state. Elsewhere Mīr Dāmād confirms: "The removal of an actual thing from the domain of perpetuity is impossible; otherwise extension would be required in perpetuity."[2]

Regarding the level of eternity (*sarmad*), Ibn Sīnā holds that this state of existence encompasses perpetuity, and it is the relation of the changeless to the changeless. Al-ʿAlawī, commenting on this, states that Ibn Sīnā alludes to this relation in his *Risālat al-Ḥudūd*, where he explains that "the existence of spiritual, atemporal, and non-spatial substances emanates from Him," which are absolutely unchanging, whose relation to their Creator is eternity (*sarmad*).[3] Like perpetuity, extension and quantification in any form are inconceivable here. God's knowledge at the level of eternity consists of one timeless, immutable relation to all things, both universal and particular. "It cannot be a temporal knowledge," Ibn Sīnā continues, otherwise the past, present, and future could be added to it [as a new factor] and change could occur to an

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1. *Al-Qabasāt,* Wamḍa [1.4], pp. 15-16.

2. Ibid. Wamīḍ [6.12.2], p. 210.

3. Qtd. in *Sharḥ al-Qabasāt*, p. 117.

attribute of His essence."[1]

Mīr Dāmād differs from Ibn Sīnā on two points. First, Mīr Dāmād stresses that the domain of eternity (*sarmad*) belongs solely and exclusively to God's essence, and it does not belong to the atemporal, non-spatial substances mentioned by Ibn Sīnā above. These, insofar as they are caused and separate in substance from their Creator, belong to the domain of perpetuity. The Creator alone has no cause, no prior quiddity, and no beginning in any respect. The strict separation of eternity from perpetuity and the inadmissibility of the co-eternity of creatures in any respect is established by Mīr Dāmād in the Third Qabas, where he compares the relation between eternity and perpetuity to the relation between cause and effect. Just as causal priority can only be followed by posteriority in being-an-effect, not causal posteriority, which is nonsensical, so eternal priority can only be followed by perpetual posteriority, not eternal posteriority.[2] The relation of the changeless to the changeless, therefore, is not eternity (*sarmad*), as Ibn Sīnā proposes, but eternal priority/ perpetual posteriority.

Second, the domain of perpetuity (*dahr*) is both the container of time in its entirety without its extension and flow and the container of immaterial, changeless things which have never existed in time, such as the human rational soul. Unlike Ibn Sīnā, who holds that absolutely created things are co-eternal with God and only preceded by essential nonexistence, Mīr Dāmād emphasizes that they do have a real beginning, just not in time, inasmuch as they are preceded by actual nonexistence contradictory to existence, and that God precedes them with a separate priority, not just an essential priority. Perpetuity, therefore, is the domain of all things besides God with respect to having an atemporal beginning but no end, and with respect to being changeless in His presence, such that the relation of the entire system of creation to God, whether past or future, is the relation of a single entity to Him with one

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1. *Al-Ishārāt*, quoted in *al-Qabasāt*, p. 9.

2. In the Second and the Third Qabas of *al-Qabasāt*, Mīr Dāmād presents the next four of the eight principles upon which he builds his demonstrations for the origination of the world in perpetuity and proves the separate, not just essential, priority of eternity to perpetuity. For a detailed examination of Mīr Dāmād's arguments based on these four principles, see: Keven Brown, "An Analytical Summary of the Second and Third Qabas of Mīr Dāmād's Kitāb al-Qabasāt," *International Journal of Shīʿī Studies*, vol. 3, no. 2, pp. 11–74. This article is available online at www.academia.edu.

everlasting, unquantifiable relation. This is necessary; otherwise the unchanging First Cause could be qualified by the attribute of change. The concept of everlasting, unquantifiable relation vs. temporal, quantifiable relation is one of the topics Mīr Dāmād examines in the Third Qabas.

The everlasting, timeless state of all created things in God's presence, whether they be in the past or in the future, is beautifully expressed by Mīr Dāmād in the following passages:

> *There is nothing unchanging or changing, fixed or progressing, instantaneous or temporal but its existence is made by God and dependent on Him (glorified be He). But the progression and succession of progressing and changing things only applies to themselves and their existence in time, not their relation to God and not their existence in perpetuity, as you have been informed numerous times... .*
>
> *That which the wise Qur'ān expresses using the past tense for events expected to occur in future time—such as "We have separated them" [10:28]; "We have sent to them" [41:25]; "The companions of the garden have called out to the companions of the fire" [7:44]; "Your prayer has been granted, O Moses" [20:36]; and other numerous examples—conceal the basis of the affair and the criterion of the secret. In other words, all these events have occurred actually in perpetuity, even though they do not yet exist in time. The past, the future, and the present are all present to the real Seer, who encompasses all things in one stage and in one way... .*[1]

3. Refuting the Arguments of the Theologians for Origination in Time

Mīr Dāmād states, as quoted earlier, that the area of dispute between him and the philosophers who advocate eternity is neither essential origination nor temporal origination but perpetual origination. They agree in opposing the position of the theologians, by whom he means the Mu'tazila and the Ash'ariya, who advocate the origination of the universe in time. Mīr Damad explains that they believed that between the Creator and the beginning of the world there was a hypothetical, extended, flowing nonexistence, in other words, a temporal nonexistence, whose hypothetical continuation extended in the direction of pre-eternity (*azal*) without any end, but which ended in the direction of everlastingness (*abad*) with the creation of the beginning of the

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1. *Al-Qabasāt*, Wamīḍ [4.2], p. 122 and Wamīḍ [4.3], pp. 124–125.

world. His arguments against this conception are as follows:

First, [if]... no series of boundaries is conceivable in perpetuity, no elapsing or renewal, no falling behind or overtaking, no extension or termination, no continuation or flow, as these are among the concomitants of the existence of motion, the continuity of change, and the gradual progression of one thing after another, then how is it possible to imagine for pure, real nonexistence and sheer, absolute non-being any distinction of boundaries, succession of states, variation of moments, and difference of time spans, so that continuation and flow, finite and infinite might be conceived?

Second, if what they imagine regarding nonexistence were possible, it would be time itself or motion itself, since it is quantifiable, flowing, its whole certainly greater than a part thereof, and its parts succeeding one another, not simultaneous. Either it is essentially in this form, in which case it is time, or it is accidentally in this form, in which case it is motion. They have only applied to time or to motion the name "nonexistence."...

Third, in that case, the true Creator (glorified be He) would exist within a boundary that itself belongs to that extension of nonexistence. Exalted is He from that! And the world would exist within another boundary in its particularity, so that the interposition of that hypothetical extension between God and the world would be admissible, and the posteriority of the world and its coming after Him in existence would similarly be admissible. Therefore, if that extension is an infinite continuity, the infinite would be confined between two confines, which would be its borders and extremes, [which is absurd].

Fourth, if the boundaries of that extension are equal and alike, since there is no difference in nonexistence and no particularization of a disposition, or motion, or anything else, then for what reason did He single out the world for this boundary but not single out its origination for another boundary before it?

Fifth, since that which transcends encumbrances and conditions coexists with any extension assumed, and with all of its parts and all of its boundaries, with an unquantifiable simultaneity, encompassing all of it parts and boundaries in one relation... then the singling out of the world to one of the boundaries in that hypothetical extension will not result in its posteriority to its true Creator at all.

Sixth, time and space are twin brothers nurtured in attributes by the same milk from the same breast. Therefore, just as beyond the extension of space, in other words, beyond the outermost sphere that bounds the directions of the world, there is pure nonexistence, not void or plenum, extension or non-extension, infinitude or finitude... in like manner, beyond the extension of time, there is pure nonexistence, not extension or non-extension, duration or non-duration, infinitude or finitude, increase or decrease.[1]

Mīr Dāmād asks how it is possible to conceive of boundaries, elapsing and renewal, continuation and flow in a state of pure nonexistence? By giving the nonexistence before the world the qualities of extension and flow, the theologians have merely described time and motion. God would then be placed in the position of being in a temporal extension before the creation of the world, and time itself would be originated in time. Moreover, if the boundaries of that extension are all alike, then what would motivate the Creator to pick one boundary over another for the moment of creation? If the Creator coexists with any assumed extension, then the particularization of the creation of the world to a part of that extension would not result in its posteriority to Him. Mīr Dāmād concludes that just as there is no space beyond space, in like manner, there can be no time before time.

Ibn Sīnā presents nearly the same arguments against the theologians, but he uses them to show the theologians that their premises, instead of proving the creation of the world in time, form a dialectical proof for the world's temporal eternity (i.e., its having an infinite past and future temporal extension). He states in the *Taʿlīqāt*:

It is not possible to remove time from the estimative faculty (wahm), for if you imagine it removed, the estimative faculty then compels the existence of another time in which time is removed. For this reason the Muʿtazila asserted a fixed extension between the First (exalted be He) and the creation of the world, which they called "non-being." This is like the case of those who assert a void in which the world exists, and if the world is presumed to be removed, still require the existence of dimensions... In the impossibility of their removal from the estimative faculty is a [dialectical] proof that time is eternal and the world is eternal, and that the First only

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1. *Al-Qabasāt*, Wamīḍ [1.7.5] pp. 31-32.

precedes it essentially... .

> *If we suppose a beginning for the creation of the world in the manner the Mu'tazila hold, an impossibility necessarily follows, for they hypothesize something before this event. In that thing which they hypothesize, they assume the possibility of different motions. But the different motions can only be true with the possibility of measuring them, and the possibility of measuring them must coincide with the existence of time. Consequently, the hypothesis of the possibility of the existence of different motions [in that thing before creation] presupposes the existence of time. Hence, another time would exist before time.*[1]

Mīr Dāmād comments that Ibn Sīnā's argument here is "a dialectical proof following from their assumed postulates," but it is not "a demonstrative proof based on sound principles and rational foundations."[2] He concludes that the impossibility of removing time from the estimative faculty does not demonstrate that time is eternal. He clarifies that Ibn Sīnā's explicit aim here, which he shares with Ibn Sīnā, "is to negate a temporal beginning and to affirm that the beginning of creation is from the Creator" outside of time.[3]

Ibn Sīnā also recognized the weakness of this proof. As he explains in his *Risāla fī qidam al-'ālam* "the premises which they have used in their syllogisms are all common beliefs, which are neither primary principles nor sound." He adds that "the impossibility of infinity," by which he means the theologians' premise that the past extension of time is finite, should instead be proved by the condition of "the possession of the two attributes of succession (*tarattub*) and simultaneity (*ijtimā'*) in existence, and that a proposition true for each and every member [in a series] may be false for the whole."[4] He argues in several of his works, including in the Physics of the *Shifā'* and the *Najāt*, that the second condition does not apply to entities and events in time, since "these definitely do not exist simultaneously, even if each one exists separately in a span of time in which another does not exist."[5] He concludes from this, like Aristotle, that time and its contents, whether extending into the past or the

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1. Quoted in *al-Qabasāt*, Wamīḍ [1.7.6], p. 33.

2. Ibid., p. 34.

3. Ibid., Wamīḍ [1.7.7], p. 34.

4. Quoted in *al-Qabasāt*, Wamīḍ [7.3.20], p. 269.

5. Physics of *The Healing* (trans. Jon McGinnis), Book Three, Chapter Eleven, p. 367—my translation.

future, are a potential infinity, meaning that the generation of creatures one after another is an open-ended, ongoing process that lacks a definite beginning or end.

In the Sixth Qabas, Mīr Dāmād rejects Ibn Sīnā's argument for a temporal infinity of past events on the basis that "successive [prior] causes... are all conjoined (*mujtama'a*) in the stage of the final effect, as a result of which [the condition of] succession and simultaneity in existence is fulfilled in the direction of [past] infinity,... but none of the effects are realized in the stage of the essence of any of the causes, let alone that infinite effects should be realized in the stage of the essence of the cause." Therefore, the case is different for the potential infinity of future existents, since they do not fulfill the condition of simultaneity in existence (which would invalidate infinity), as their generation is ongoing. "Consequently," Mīr Dāmād continues, "with respect to the infinite successive effects, there is infinity in one direction [the future], which is the direction of falling and descent, while succession and simultaneity in actual existence are in the other direction [the past],... which is the direction of rising and ascent... . [An infinite temporal extension] in the series of ascent toward the causes [is therefore impossible, but] not in the series of descent toward the effects."[1]

Although the finite extension of past time is confirmed by the modern cosmological theory of the Big Bang, which puts the beginning of our universe at about 14 billion years ago, the philosophical principle that something cannot come from nothing implies that the creation itself is more encompassing than our local universe and that there may, in fact, be a multi-verse. This would make it easier to explain how God's attributes are not suspended prior to the origin of our universe.

The transcendence of the Creator's act of creation from any connection to time is further examined by Mīr Dāmād in the Third Qabas. Another proof, which is not mentioned here, but which is implied by the Peripatetic principle of the inseparability of time, motion, and spatial magnitude, is as follows. According to the Peripatetics, who follow Aristotle on this, time is the measure of motion, and motion, in turn, depends upon the presence of spatial magnitude, which is manifested by corporeal form and prime matter. Therefore, without moving physical bodies there can be no time. Time, therefore, came into existence when the physical universe did, and since it did not precede its

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1. *Al-Qabasāt*, Wamīḍ [6.12.23], pp. 234, 233.

creation, its creation did not occur *in* time.

Conclusion

Mīr Dāmād has succeeded in demonstrating in the First Qabas, based on two of his eight principles for the origination of the world, that the very nature of possible things prevents them from being eternal (*sarmadī*), although they may be everlasting and perpetual (*dahrī*). To be eternal, according to Mīr Dāmād's definition, means to be without a cause, and thus without a beginning, while all possible things have a cause, and thus a beginning (beyond time) through which their existence is actualized. As he states: "the necessity of [the effect's separate] posteriority and the impossibility of [its eternal] simultaneity is due to the essence of the effect itself on account of the nature of its essential possibility."[1]

Mīr Dāmād has also demonstrated how possible beings are preceded by pure nonexistence, or privation, in the stage of their quiddities, not essentially, but accidentally, although if "being preceded by pure nonexistence" is interpreted as "coming into existence from nothing," then his demonstration fails in this regard. Actual existence is something that is given to the possible by another from outside. Only that whose existence belongs to it essentially, through itself, can be regarded as eternal. This is why essential origination, which only requires dependency upon a cause and the priority of conceptual nonexistence, not existence after real nonexistence, is not sufficient for an act of creation. Since the celestial intelligences are possible in themselves, not necessary in themselves, they, too, according to Mīr Dāmād, must be preceded by pure nonexistence, and their origination, which can neither be at the level of eternity nor of time, must be at the level of perpetuity.

Mīr Dāmād has shown that temporal origination as well, which only describes the generation of things in time, is itself dependent upon perpetual origination preceded by pure nonexistence in perpetuity. This is because a thing's temporal nonexistence in a prior time is not contradictory to its temporal existence in a subsequent time, since they belong to two different boundaries of the extension of time. If its temporal nonexistence is not removed by its temporal existence, this means that only its contradictory, pure nonexistence in perpetuity is removed by its temporal existence, and the removal of contra-

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1. *Al-Qabasāt*, Wamīḍ [7.3.7], p. 248.

dictory nonexistence in perpetuity is the meaning of perpetual origination.

In closing, I would like to stress the limitations of this study of Mīr Dāmād's views on origination and the three containers of existence, which is mainly based on his major work *al-Qabasāt* and al-ʿAlawī's *Sharḥ al-Qabasāt* with reference also to Ibn Sīnā's writings on the subject. To gain a clearer understanding of their historical context, the philosophical positions of the prominent post-Avicennan philosophers (connecting Ibn Sīnā and Mīr Dāmād) on the types of origination (*ḥudūth*) and nonexistence (*ʿadam*) and the God-world relationship in general need to be examined in detail. To better understand their complete context, Mīr Dāmād's other works, the viewpoints of his contemporaries, and the commentaries on Mīr Dāmād made by his successors need to be studied. The position of Mīr Dāmād on many important topics, such as the principality of the essence in relation to existence, remain relatively unstudied. In short, the field of Mīr Dāmād studies is as yet in its early stages and much more needs to be accomplished.

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Articles

Mīr Dāmād on Time and Temporality*

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Abstract

In the article, "Mīr Dāmād on Time and Temporality," the three concepts of *Sarmad*, *Dahr* and *Zamān* have been discussed and then their relationship to each other as three different modalities of time have been discussed. The author, offers an ontological analysis of the relationship between immutable and mutable and change and presents how these concepts fit into Mīr Dāmād's argument, which is a refutation of what is not God. The article, undertakes a discussion of the views of T. Izutzu and S.J. Ashtiyani showing how the latter argues that Mīr Dāmād's views on time are essentially a rendition of Ibn Sīnā's.

Keywords: Mīr Dāmād, *Sarmad*, *Dahr*, *Zamān,* Ibn Sīnā, Izutzu, Ashtiyani.

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Mīr Muḥammad Bāqir Dāmād al-Ḥussaynī Isterābādī, (1491 A.H.) known also as "*Ishrāq*" (Illumination),[1] "*muʿalim al-thālith*" (Third Teacher-the first being Aristotle) and "*Sayyīd al-afāḍil*" (Master of the Learned)[2] is the founder of the

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1. Mīr Dāmād's pseudo name in his collected works of poetry is "Ishrāq". See: *Diwān-i ashʿār*, ed. Sayyid Aḥmad, MS. 347 of 4771, Mashhad, Imām Riḍā Library.

2. *Sayyid al-Afāḍil* (The Master of the Learned), is a title that Ḥājj Mullā Hādī Sabziwārī

"School of Isfahān" and one of the most celebrated philosophers of the Safavid era. Mīr Dāmād who did much of his studies in Mashhad studying the *Shifāʾ* and *Ishārāt* of Ibn Sīnā continued his studies in Qazwīn and Kashān. It was Isfahān however where he spent most of his prolific life composing numerous works and training such students as Sayyīd Aḥmad ʿAlavī and Mullā Ṣadrā.[1] Mīr Dāmād who died in Najaf, like many other Muslim philosophers of the School of Isfahān made an attempt to bring about a rapprochement between Peripatetic's (*mashshāʾis*) notion of the createdness and eternity of the world and that of the theologians (*mutikallimūn*).

Mīr Dāmād's magnum opus is a work known as *Qabasāt ḥaqq al-yaqīn fī ḥudūth al-ʿālam* (Fire of the Truth of Certainty Regarding the Createdness of the World).[2] Mīr Dāmād chooses the word *Qabasāt* based on the Quranic verses [7:27 & 9:20] to mean particles of fire. It is in this work, one of the most difficult examples of Islamic philosophical treatise that Mīr Dāmād discusses the question of time and its relationship to the eternity (*qidam*) and createdness (*ḥudūth*) of the world. *Qabasāt* is divided into ten chapters each one called *Qabas*, and each *Qabas* consists of smaller parts called *wamīḍ* (lightning). The choice of the title of this work as well as chapters and sections clearly indicate Mīr Dāmād's interest in Suhrawardī and his school of *ishrāq*. In fact, the connection between Mīr Dāmād and Suhrawardī is made even more clear not only by the title of his numerous works such as *Jazawāt* (Ecstacies), *Ufuq al-mubīn* (The Clear Horizon), and *Mashāriq al-anwār* (The Orient of Light), but also by the fact that he is one of the few philosophers who accepted Suhrawardī's principality of essence (*aṣālat al-māhiyyah*).[3]

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has bestowed upon him. See: *Ghurar al-farāʾid*, known also as *Sharḥ-i Manzumah*, Tehran: McGill Univ. Press, 1348, p. 112.

1. His title as "Dāmād" meaning in Persian "groom" is due to the fact that his father married the daughter of ʿAli ibn ʿAbd al-ʿAli also known as Muḥaqiq-i Kirkī and therefore Mīr Dāmād is the grandson of this notable figure. For more information on his life and thought see the following works: Musavi M. Behbahani, *Ḥakim-i Isterābād*, Tehran: Tehran University Press, 1377. Introduction to the *Qabasāt*, ed. M. Muḥaqiq, Tehran: Tehran Univ. Press, 1367, S.A. Mousavī Behbahanī, "Mīr Dāmād, falsafah wa sharh-i ḥāl wa naqd-i āthār-i uo", in Majillay-i maqālāt wa barrasihāy-i nashriyyah daneshkadeh ilāhiyāt wa maʿarif islami, vol. 3-4, 1349.

2. *Qabasāt*, ed. M. Muḥaqiq, Tehran: Tehran Univ. Press, 1367.

3. It is note worthy that the connection between Mīr Dāmād ends the *Qabasāt* by the prayer of light. See: *Qabasāt*, p. 483.

Before a discussion concerning the nature of time and temporality according to Mīr Dāmād, it is imperative that something about the structure of *Qabasāt* be said. In the first Qabasa, different types of createdness and division of existence is discussed. Second Qabasa deals with three types of intrinsic priority and posteriority and third Qabasa is a discussion on two types of distinctive posteriority (*taqadum al-infikākī*). Fourth and fifth chapters are less significant as far as the concept of time is concerned but in the sixth Qabasa the relationship between time and motion are discussed. This chapter which is unparalleled in depth and complexity of language, undertakes a discussion on the concept of finitude and *ad infinitum* as it relates to existent beings as opposed to integers. The following chapters treat a variety of issues which are not particularly relevant to our discussion here. Therefore, in a general sense it can be said that our discussion on the concept of time is primarily based on chapters one, two and nine even though references will be made to other chapters.

For Mīr Dāmād, time can be divided into three ontological domains or divisions, *Sarmad* (transcendental), *Dahr* (eternal) and *Zamān* (temporal). His views on eternal createdness (*ḥudūth-i al-dahrī*) according to some is a rendition of Ibn Sīnā's view on the problem of createdness and eternity of the world and according to others it is a clarification and response to the inherent problems of Ibn Sīnā's views on the subject matter. Mīr Dāmād is particularly sensitive to Ibn Sīnā where he discusses divisions of time and its relationship to eternity and createdness into three categories:

1. The relationship between immutable to immutable (*Sarmad*).
2. The relationship between immutable to changeable (*dahr*).[1]
3. The relationship between changeable to changeable (*zamān*).

Ibn Sīnā seems to have conflicting views on this since he identified *dahr* as that which is with time but is not of time, a kind of frozen time which dominates *zamān*.[2] Mīr Dāmād begins by opposing the traditional view of the philosophers in general and Ibn Sīnā in particular who has argued that the problem of eternity on both ends are insoluble and can be equally proven and refuted (*jadalat al-ṭarafayīn*).[3] Ibn Sīnā's concept of essential createdness, Mīr Dāmād argues, is eventually reduced to a mere linguistic difference between

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1. *Qabasāt*, pp. 8-9, pp. 18-19.
2. Ibid., p. 9.
3. See: Ibn Sīnā, *Shifā, al-manṭiq: al-jadal*, ed. Ahmad F. Al-Ahwani, Cairo: 1385, p. 76.

God and the incorporeal substances since the latter's existence is not created in the real sense of the word. In order to preserve the transcendental nature of God, Mīr Dāmād maintains, a real *ḥudūth* is required (he calls this *ḥudūth fī matn al-a'yān*).[1]

An accurate understanding of Mīr Dāmād's view on time and the question of *ḥudūth* and *qidam* requires a thorough understanding of such figures as Abu'l Barakāt-i Baghdādī, Ibn Sīnā and Suhrawardī, but that is a discussion which is beyond the scope of this work. What we do surmise from *Qabasāt* is that for Mīr Dāmād, time can be divided into three ontological domains or divisions, *Sarmad* (transcendental), *Dahr* (eternal) and *Zamān* (temporal). *Sarmad* can be viewed as the domain that belongs exclusively to the Necessary Existence and therefore no existent, be it corporeal or incorporeal may enter this domain. Compared to this ontological domain, all that lies below it be it corporeal or incorporeal is therefore non-existent since their existence is contingent and not necessary. That which is contingent has a shadow existence and while it has its own ontological level of reality, it nevertheless is non-existent when it is compared to *Sarmad* and therefore can be called *'adam al-sarmadī* (transcendental non-existence). This non-existence which is intertwined with the ontological fabric of all other domains makes them to be existent from one aspect, and non-existent from another one. *Sarmad* therefore is a timeless time, an entity that transcends time. As Rūmī the Persian mystical poet said:

> *In the timelessness, where there is Divine Light, Where is the past, present or the future.*

Next is the ontological domain of *Dahr* where all incorporeal beings reside. These incorporeal intelligibles which have been referred to by different names such as Plato's forms or archetypes, Ibn 'Arabī's *a'yān al-thābitah*, Suhrawardī's *Arbāb al-anwā'* or *rab al-naw'* act as an intermediary between *sarmad* and the ontological realm below it.

Dahr is not extant and is therefore indivisible, it is non-existent from the aspect of *Sarmad* but existent from the perspective of the inferior ontological domain called *zamān*. *Zamān* for Mīr Dāmād is the ontological domain where all existent beings reside and is inclusive of those corporeal entities which un-

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1. Henry Corbin suggests the term "événement eternal" which is close to the Greek term used by Proclus and conveys the real meaning of this term.

dergo change and are subject to generation and corruption. Mīr Dāmād distinguishes between *zamān* and *dahr* by telling us that existent beings are within time (*fi'l-zamān*) whereas they are concommitent with *dahr* (*ma'al-zamān*).[1]

T. Izutzu an eminent scholar of later Islamic philosophy argues that there is another interpretation of *sarmad*, *dahr* and *zamān* which Mīr Dāmād himself may have recognized and alluded to in the *Qabasāt*.[2] Contrary to the previous interpretation, this view offers a more dynamic relationship between the three ontological realities as well as in and of themselves. Accordingly, the Absolute or *sarmad*, despite its simple existence, contains certain individuations or particularities (*ta'ayyun*) which can be actualized. T. Izutzu describes this as divine essence which through its attributes is particularized and thus there is a dynamic relationship between the essence of the Absolute and its attributes which are its inherent particularization. It is precisely the mutual relationship between the essence of the Absolute and its attributes which according to Izutzu, is what Mīr Dāmād calls *sarmad*. *Sarmad* here is not an absolute ontological reality but a relationship between two unchangeable phenomena which from the aspect of *zamān*, it appears contradictory but from above remains valid. From the same perspective, *dahr* is the relation between the archetypes which are unchangeable and *zamān* which is subject to change and therefore this ontological relationship is one of relativity.

For the three categories of time, *sarmad*, *dahr* and *zamān*, it is *dahr* which for Mīr Dāmād is the philosophically significant issue and one which he thinks is the key to the understanding of the problem of creation and eternity of the world. The concept of *dahr* according to Mīr Dāmād solves the following problem: There are those philosophers who believe in the eternity of the world by arguing that even though the world may have been created, but since it has always been co-eternal with God, it is therefore eternal and its createdness has no beginning in time. To put it differently, since God is the eternal cause which has always been there, the effect must have always been there. This coeternality in time however does not mean ontological equality with God since God is ontologically prior to its effect. Many Peripatetic philosophers in particular

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1. Mīr Dāmād elaborates on this Ibn Sīnīan notion in the *Ta'liqāt*.

2. Tushiko Izutzu, Intr. to *Qabasāt*, ed. M. Muhaqiq, Tehran, Tehran Univ. Press, 1367, p. 112. For more information on Mīr Dāmād's intellectual thought see: H. Corbin, "Confessions extatiques de Mīr Dāmād" in *En islam iranien*, tome IV. Paris, 1972, pp. 9-53.

Ibn Sīnā base their argument on this basis and state that since existents came from non-existence and because their existence is contingent upon God, they should therefore be regarded as a non-existence. This concept which I have alluded to before is traditionally referred to as *ḥudūth al-dhātī* (essential createdness). It is as an alternative to this concept that Mīr Dāmād puts forward in his theory of *ḥudūth al-dahrī*.

Mīr Dāmād argues that the world of existent beings is created not because its existence is prior to this type of non-existence, namely *'adam al-dhātī* (essential non-existence) for this is a conceptual understanding of causality. The type of createdness Mīr Dāmād advocates is of a different type, namely a "real one" since it follows a real non-existence as opposed to an essential non-existent (*'adam al-dhātī*). This priority and posterity is not in the domain of time but it is in *dahr*, that is, it is a non-existence that is neither essential (*dhātī*) nor temporal (*zamānī*) but is eternal (*dahrī*).

Eternal non-existence is therefore real non-existence since dahr is not extant, linear or in a state of influx. It is not clear why Mīr Dāmād states that ontologically, *dahr* is non-existing in the sense that its existence is contradictory to an actualized existence. Therefore, he says this is different than essential non-existence (*'adam al-dhātī*) of existent beings where existence is incompatible with but is not contradictory to an actualized existence. Since *dahr* transcends time and is non-existent, Mīr Dāmād tells us that the only way to be cognizant of it is through a mystical mode of knowledge (*kashf wa shuhūd*) while a person is in a deep state of meditation.

Mīr Dāmād appears to be arguing that coming into being and perishing is not only an integral part of zaman but is somehow related to the ontological domain of *dahr*. Mīr Dāmād's perceptive observation of *zamān* sees *dahr* within it as well as by arguing that *zamān* is in a state of continuous change and influx and therefore cannot "be" (*wujūd*) in the authentic sense of the word. In a sense it is *Not*, rather than *is* and this simultaneous existence and non-existence for Mīr Dāmād is indicative of the non-existence of *zamān* and the existence of *dahr*.

Sayyid Jalāl al-Dīn Ashtiyānī, one of the most eminent contemporary Muslim philosophers criticizes Mīr Dāmād's view as being more rhetorical than substantial and argues that the concept of *ḥudūth al-dahrī* is a reformulation

of essential createdness (*ḥudūth al-dhātī*) of Ibn Sīnā.[1] He furthermore maintains that whatever Mīr Dāmād wanted to elaborate upon using the concept of *ḥudūth al-dahrī*, can also be explicated by Ibn Sīnā's *ḥudūth al-dhātī* and goes so far as to say that Mīr Dāmād's *ḥudūth al-dahrī* is really *ḥudūth al-zamānī*. As Ashtiyānī states:

> **If [*Mīr Dāmād*] wants to refute eternality of what is not God, refutation of the eternality of time is impossible. Therefore, we should abandon the effort to prove the createdness of time** (*ḥudūth al-zamān*) **and accept a type of** *ḥudūth*.... **This is precisely** *ḥudūth al-dhātī* **or something of this kind which may be called by another name.**[2]

Ashtiyānī's criticism is strictly Ibn Sīnīan in that he identifies any *ḥudūth* with the notion of time. *Ḥudūth* of any existent being, Ibn Sīnā says is posterior to its *'adam* and therefore *'adam* is an indirect cause of existent beings. Also, *ḥudūth* and *'adam* are contradictory and thus for *ḥudūth* to occur, *'adam* should vanish.

Mīr Dāmād might accept part of this argument and refute a section of it. He admits the contradictory nature of *wujūd* and *'adam* but states that it has no bearing on the question of time. *'Adam* and *wujūd* are not necessarily contradictory when it comes to existent beings since to be contradictory requires that they be at the same time. For example, A and ~A cannot be at the same time but their occurrence at two different times is possible and not contradictory. In other words, *wujūd* and *'adam* can be contradictory in time but when and where this contradiction fades away is in *dahr* where posterity and priority are ontological. It is precisely the conceptual nature of *ḥudūth* (*manṭiqī, 'aqlī, i'tibārī, dhihnī, bi'l-martibat al-'aqliyyah*) and not its reality which is troubling to Mīr Dāmād. A real *ḥudūth* must be independent of God in the real sense of independence which Mīr Dāmād identify as when a cause creates an effect and in this sense, God is the ultimate cause of creation.

There are primarily two problems with the theory of *ḥudūth al-dahrī*. First, despite the complex and sometimes verbose and repetitive nature of his argument, Mīr Dāmād does not succeed in achieving his original objective, that is to separate in a real sense the transcendental reality of *sarmad* and

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1. S.J. Ashtiyānī, *Muntakhabi az āthār-i ḥukamāy-i Iran*, Tehran: DeL'institute Franco-Iranien, 1350, pp. 8-9, pp. 40-43.

2. Ibid., p. 15.

that of *dahr*. This lack of success is not due to the weakness of his argument but is deeply rooted in the ontological structure of Mīr Dāmād's philosophy. As Mullā Ṣadrā realized, reconciling the principle that states "from One emanates only one" (*al-wāhid layusader ila 'l-wāhid*) with bestowing independence upon the reality of anything except God, ultimately fails. Mīr Dāmād has made a noble attempt to bring about a rapprochement between the notion of real *ḥudūth* which he thinks the realm of *dahr* makes possible, and Ibn Sīnā's notion of *ḥudūth al- dhātī*. This attempt despite the sophistication of the arguments involved in my opinion fails.

The second objection is one that is equally valid for Ibn Sīnā and Mīr Dāmād, both of whom in my opinion have disregarded a subtlety when they claim that *'adam* precedes *wujūd*. Let us analyze this further. If *'adam* precedes *wujūd*, then in order for *wujūd* to become *mawjūd*, *'adam* should become *ma'dūm* so *mawjūd* can come into being. In order for *'adam* to become *ma'dūm*, it must be something such that it can become *ma'dūm*, and this is contradictory to the very definition of *'adam*. So the very notion of *'adam* is as problematic as *wujūd* and one that is not entirely clear either in Ibn Sīnā or Mīr Dāmād.

The other alternative is that *'adam* does not precede *wujūd*. The first problem that arises is that if *'adam* did not precede *wujūd*, then *wujūd* must have always been there. If we identify *wujūd* with God then this problem is solved but we have also sided with the eternity of the world as stipulated by *mashshā'is*. If we don't identify *wujūd* with God, then we have the problem of co-eternality of *wujūd* with God and that is even a bigger problem. In short Mīr Dāmād's perspective of *ḥudūth* in general and *ḥudūth al-dahrī* in particular rests upon the notion of *'adam* preceding *wujūd* and if this axiom itself is problematic, so is his conclusion. The irony of it is that to the extent which *Qabasāt* is understandable, Mīr Dāmād does not address the problematic nature of the above truth claim but rather, he offers a solution to the question of eternity and createdness of the world on its basis.

To summarize the foregoing discussion, it can be said that Mīr Dāmād wants to restore the createdness of the world in the real sense of creation and not as Peripatetic philosophers have explicated. The philosophers notion of creation is based on essential creation (*ḥudūth al- dhātī*) which implies priority and posterity in the essential sense of the word such as the posterity of number three to two. This Mīr Dāmād says, is not real *ḥudūth* and he argues that real *ḥudūth* is possible and necessary only where and when the created

and creator stand in a causal relationship. This is made possible according to him, within the ontological realm of *dahr*.

Mīr Dāmād's view on time is a much neglected area of scholarship both because of the difficulty of his language and the complexity of his philosophical concepts. His contribution to Islamic philosophical tradition however is enormous since his grand synthesis of various notions of time not only provides the reader with a compendium of Islamic philosophers' view on time but offers a middle ground between the peripatetics and that of *mutikallimūn* on the problem of eternity and createdness of the world.

Mīr Dāmād's classification of time provides a rich venue for a comparative study between his notions of time and some of the Western philosophers such as Heidegger. The relation between Being and time in the *Qabasāt* which has been all but ignored remains a fascinating area of study.

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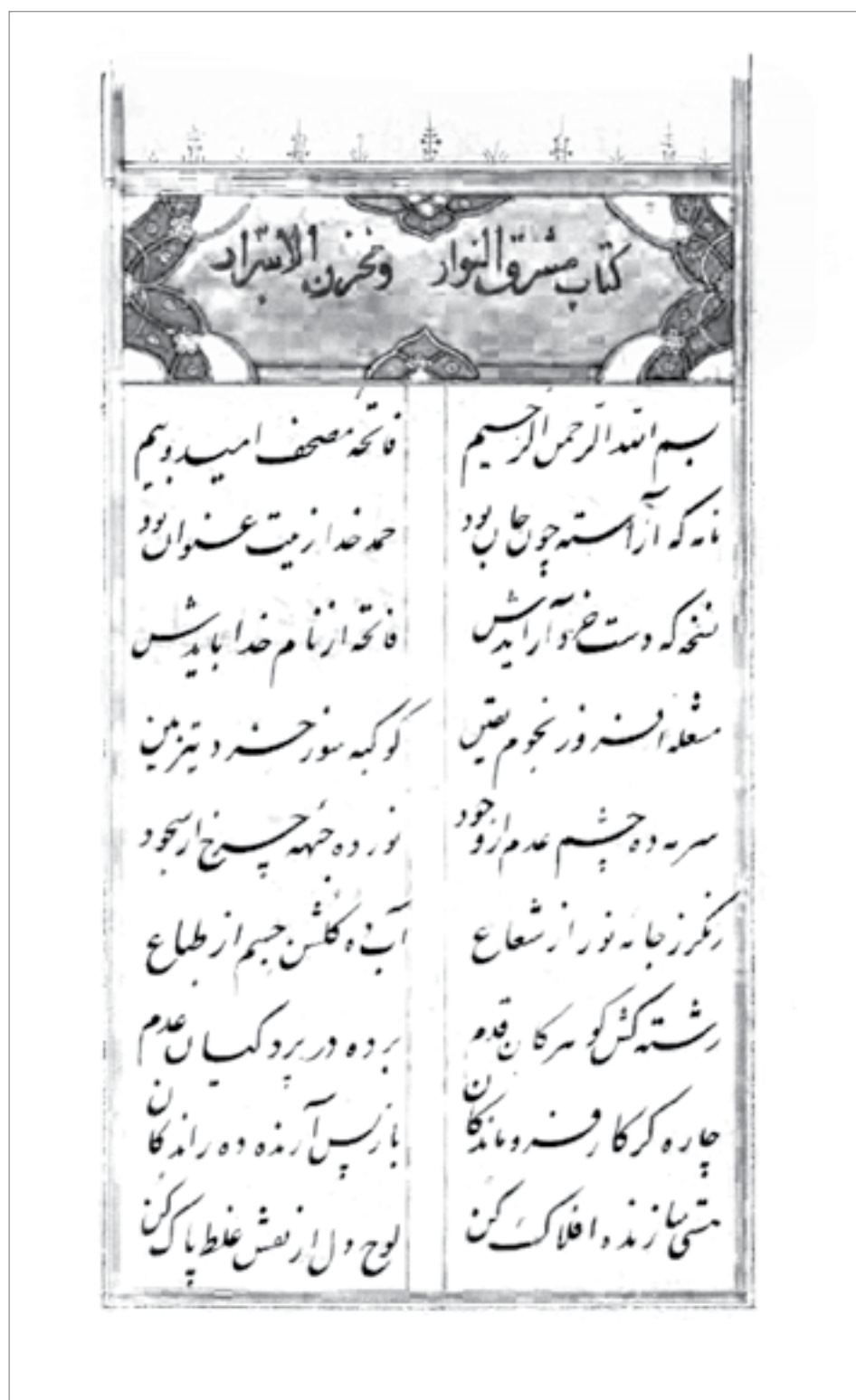
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Articles

Mīr Dāmād, Pythagorean Lettrist: Selections from the *Firebrands and Epiphanies**

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Abstract

Although he does not usually appear so in modern scholarship, Mīr Dāmād, the Safavid philosopher, was equally an occultist. This aspect of his intellectual and sociopolitical persona is a natural consequence of his specifically *Neopythagorean* and *lettrist* commitments, whereby he joined a host of early modern Muslim, Jewish and Christian thinkers in positing the cosmos as a second scripture to be decoded, and magically recoded, by the self-divinizing scientist. As such, Mīr Dāmād authored three works explicitly Neopythagorean-lettrist in tenor, chief among them *Firebrands and Epiphanies* (*Jaẓavāt u mavāqīt*), his only major work in Persian, which summarizes his philosophical system as a whole; it enjoyed mainstream status in Iran through at least the Qajar period. That here the 17th-century Twelver sage hews closely to the model established by 15th-century imamophile thinkers like Ibn Turka and Davānī likewise reveals lettrism to be a major vector for smooth Sunni-Shiʻi intellectual and cultural continuity even in an era of imperial confessionalization. The present article translates and briefly contextualizes representative excerpts from this important but now neglected work, together with its table of contents, to provide specialist and nonspecialist readers alike with a

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direct taste of what it meant to be a bleeding-edge Pythagorean-lettrist in the post-Mongol Persian cosmopolis—and Western early modernity more generally.

Keywords: Mīr Dāmād, Neopythagoreanism, lettrism, occultism, imamophilia, Western early modernity, mathematization of the cosmos

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Famously hailed the Third Teacher (*al-muʿallim al-thālith*), after Aristotle and Fārābī, Sayyid Muḥammad Bāqir Ḥusaynī Astarābādī (d. 1041/1631), aka Mīr Dāmād, was among the most intellectually and politically influential men of the Safavid realm. He was an intimate of Shah ʿAbbās I (r. 995-1038/1587-1629); sometime *shaykh al-islām* of Isfahan; and teacher to Mullā Ṣadrā (d. 1045/1635) and other leading Safavid philosophers, including Sayyid Aḥmad al-ʿAlawī al-ʿĀmilī (d. btw. 1054-60/1644-50), Quṭb al-Dīn Ishkavarī Lāhījī (d. btw. 1088-95/1677-84) and Mullā Shamsā Gīlānī (d. 1098/1687).[1] In the latter role, of course, he is often styled chief founder of the so-called school of Isfahan, which furthered his synthesis of Avicennan and Illuminationist philosophy with Ibn ʿArabian theory and Twelver theology.[2] The longstanding debate over the ontological primacy of existence (*wujūd*) versus that of essence or quiddity (*māhiyya*) was reinvigorated under his aegis; unlike his greatest student, Mullā Ṣadrā, who powerfully reasserted and refined the Avicennan existentialist position, Mīr Dāmād defended Illuminationist essentialism. His most celebrated contribution to Islamicate philosophy is the concept of perpetual creation (*ḥudūth dahrī*), whereby divine creative agency is operative on an intermediate plane of time and existence he terms perpetuity (*dahr*), that is, relative eternity or meta-time, thereby reconciling the otherwise irreconcilable Neoplatonic-Aristotelian emanationist and quranic accounts of creation.[3] Reinterpreting the doctrine of *badāʾ*, or apparent change in the divine

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1. Andrew J. Newman, "Dāmād, Mir," *EIr*.

2. See: e.g. Seyyed Hossein Nasr, *Islamic Philosophy from Its Origin to the Present: Philosophy in the Land of Prophecy*, Albany: suny Press, 2006, pp. 212-16.

3. Sajjad H. Rizvi, "Mīr Dāmād in India: Islamic Philosophical Traditions and the Problem of Creation," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 131, no. 1 (2011): 9-23, esp. 11; Mathieu Terrier, "De l'éternité ou de la nouveauté du monde: parcours d'un problème philosophique d'Athènes à Ispahan," *Journal Asiatique* 299, no. 1 (2011): 369-421.

will, he likewise propounded a new Shiʿi philosophy of history.[1]

All this is well known to modern scholarship. Less well known, however, is the fact that Mīr Dāmād was also cast by his contemporaries and later heirs in specifically *occultist* terms. He thus figures in contemporary sources as a master talismanist in service of the Safavid state, in one famous episode singlehandedly repelling the Ottoman attack on Hamadan in 1040/1630 by means of theurgic prayer;[2] even today in Iran he is known as a popular author on the occult sciences (*ʿulūm-i gharība*). As his Medinan-Shirazi biographer Sayyid ʿAlī-Khān Ibn Maʿṣūm (d. 1120/1709) emphasizes, moreover, it was our philosopher's penchant for the ritual recitation of divine names—the central focus of the letter magic of the post-Mongol era—as his primary form of spiritual practice that best proves his attainment of theosis (*taʾalluh*). As a case in point, Ibn Maʿṣūm copies in full Mīr Dāmād's brief, ornate Arabic treatise *On Doffing* (*R. al-Khalʿiyya*), written in 1023/1614, wherein the latter details a remarkable out-of-body experience in which he explored every level of physical and metaphysical being, and perceived directly the realm of perpetuity subsuming time (*ṭawaytu iqlīm al-zamān wa-ṣirtu ilā ʿālam al-dahr*)—solely by means of the divine names All-sufficient (*al-ghanī*) and Enricher (*al-mughnī*).[3] In this he was enacting the Illuminationist dictum:

A man cannot be numbered among the philosophers until he person-

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1. Mathieu Terrier, "The Wisdom of God and the Tragedy of History: The Concept of Appearance (*badāʾ*) in Mīr Dāmād's *Lantern of Brightness*," in *Philosophy and the Intellectual Life in Shīʿah Islam*, ed. Saiyad Nizamuddin Ahmad and Sajjad H. Rizvi, London: The Shiʿah Institute Press, 2017, 94-133: pp. 128-29, 132.

2. This feat is reported by his great-grandson Mīr Muḥammad Ashraf ʿAlawī (d. 1130/1718); see: e.g. Rasūl Jaʿfariyān, *Naqsh-i Khāndān-i Karakī dar taʾsīs u tadāvum-i dawlat-i Ṣafavī*, Tehran: ʿIlm, 1387 Sh./1999, 409-10. Other feats are recorded in the Safavid expansion of Ḥusayn Vāʿiẓ Kāshifī's (d. 910/1505) *Asrār-i qāsimī*, on which see: Maria Subtelny, "Kāshifī's *Asrār-i qāsimī*: A Late Timurid Manual of the Occult Sciences and Its Safavid Afterlife," in *Islamicate Occult Sciences in Theory and Practice*, ed. Liana Saif, Francesca Leoni, Matthew Melvin-Koushki and Farouk Yahya, Leiden: Brill, forthcoming 2020.

3. *Sulāfat al-ʿaṣr fī maḥāsin ahl al-ʿaṣr* [alt.: *fī maḥāsin al-shuʿarāʾ bi-kull miṣr*], ed. Maḥmūd Khalaf Bādī, 2 vols., Damascus: Dār Kinān, 1430/2009, 2:777-78. This treatise is studied and translated in Henry Corbin, "Confessions extatiques de Mîr Dâmâd (1041/1631)," in idem, *En islam iranien. Aspects spirituels et philosophiques*, 4 vols., Paris: Gallimard, 1972, 4:9-53; and see now Mathieu Terrier, "Mīr Dāmād (m. 1041/1631), philosophe et *mujtahid*: Autorité spirituelle et autorité juridique en Iran safavide shīʿite," *Studia Islamica* 113, no. 2 (2018): 121-65, esp. 152-56.

ally beholds the holy precinct, the greatest of them all, nor among the the-osized until he attains the ability to doff his body, such that it becomes to him like a shirt he wears sometimes and sometimes doffs.[1]

That the infamously strict traditionist Muḥammad Bāqir Majlisī (d. 1111/1699) saw fit to copy Ibn Maʿṣūm's account verbatim is here highly significant;[2] in sharp contrast to earlier doctrinaire scholars, indeed, this leading architect of Safavid Twelver orthodoxy is elsewhere constrained to argue for the validity of lettrist magic by *positing Islam itself as magic*.[3] More recently, ʿAllāma Ḥasan Ḥasanzāda Āmulī (b. 1307/1929)—likewise an author on lettrist magic—compared one of his visionary experiences, the product his recitation of the *tahlīl*, to that of Mīr Dāmād as recorded in this treatise.[4] To explain our philosopher's early modern status, finally, at least one modern hagiography therefore goes so far as to present his birth as being itself occult-scientifically determined: Muḥammad ʿAlī Mudarris Tabrīzī's (d. 1373/1953) *Rayḥānat al-adab* states that it was arranged by means of oneiromancy (*taʿbīr al-ruʾyā*) at the instance of ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib—this in order to produce a child who would be ʿheir to the sciences of the prophets and Imams.'[5]

Given such a reputation, it is hardly surprising that Mīr Dāmād wrote three works wholly or substantially occultist in orientation. That is to say, *Neopy-*

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1. Quṭb al-Dīn Shīrāzī, *Sharḥ Ḥikmat al-ishrāq-i Suhravardī*, ed. ʿAbd Allāh Nūrānī and Mahdī Muḥaqqiq, Tehran: Anjuman-i Asār u Mafākhir-i Farhangī, 1383 Sh./2019, 4. The 'science of divestment' (*ʿilm al-tajrīd*)—i.e., what is now termed OBE by parapsychologists and astral projection by New Agers—was likewise ranked as the chiefest of all (occult) sciences by the Brethren of Purity, those exemplary Neopythagoreans, together with alchemy, astrology, magic and medicine, the mastery of which is prerequisite for human perfection; see: *Rasāʾil*, 4 vols. (Beirut: Dār Ṣādir, n.d.), vol. 4, pp. 286-87. For a recent summary of the state of the field of parapsychology, including research on out-of-body and near-death experiences, see: Edward F. Kelly, Adam Crabtree and Paul Marshall, eds., *Beyond Physicalism: Toward Reconciliation of Science and Spirituality*, Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2015.

2. *Biḥār al-anwār*, ed. Muḥammad Bāqir Maḥmūdī et al., 110 vols., Beirut: Dār Iḥyāʾ al-Turāth al-ʿArabī, 1403/1983, vol. 106, pp. 123-26.

3. See: Matthew Melvin-Koushki, *"How to Rule the World*: Occult-Scientific Manuals of the Early Modern Persian Cosmopolis," *Journal of Persianate Studies* 11, no. 2 (2018): pp. 140-54, esp. 143 n. 8.

4. *Hizār u yak kalima*, 7 vols., Qom: Būstān-i Kitāb, 1380 Sh./2001, vol. 5, pp. 254-56.

5. *Rayḥānat al-adab*, 6 vols., Tehran: Khayyām, 1374 Sh./1995, vol. 6, pp. 56-58; see: Terrier, "Mīr Dāmād," pp. 128-29.

thagorean and *lettrist*: for the quranic-mathematical science of letters (*ʿilm al-ḥurūf*), or lettrism, coeval Arabic twin to Hebrew kabbalah, was celebrated throughout the early modern Persianate world as both the science of the Imams *par excellence* and the primary vehicle of Islamic Neopythagoreanism, whereby the cosmos was posited as a second scripture to be decoded, and magically recoded, by the self-divinizing scientist.[1] The first and most important of these is *Firebrands and Epiphanies* (*Jaẕavāt u mavāqīt*), his only major work in Persian; it offers a full, and characteristically ornate, treatment of his philosophical system within an explicitly Neopythagorean-lettrist framework.[2] It was written sometime between 1614-26 at the request of Shah ʿAbbās that he answer the problem, then exercising several scholars in India, of Moses's encounter with God as related in Q 7:143: why was the mountain destroyed by the divine self-manifestation but Moses left unscathed? The second is *The Lamp of Illumination and Keeping the Balance: An Exposition of the Concept of* Badāʾ *Furnishing Proof for the Efficacy of Prayer* (*Nibrās al-ḍiyāʾ wa-taswāʾ al-sawāʾ fī sharḥ bāb al-badāʾ wa-ithbāt jadwā l-duʿāʾ*).[3] Similarly Illuminationist in its symbolism, this curiously composite Arabic work formally treats of the topic of *badāʾ* (lit. 'appearance'), a central focus of Twelver theology-cum-historiography; at the same time, it contains occasional discussions of lettrist theory, and features an appendix cataloguing the occult properties of each letter of the Arabic alphabet. (This appendix also circulated independently

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1. See: e.g. Matthew Melvin-Koushki, "The New Brethren of Purity: Ibn Turka and the Renaissance of Neopythagoreanism in the Early Modern Persian Cosmopolis," in *Companion to the Reception of Pythagoras and Pythagoreanism*, ed. Aurélien Robert, Irene Caiazzo and Constantin Macris, 2 vols., Leiden: Brill, forthcoming 2019.

2. Ed. ʿAlī Awjabī, with glosses by Mullā ʿAlī Nūrī (Tehran: Mīrās-i Maktūb, 1380 Sh./2001). See: ʿAlī Mudarris Mūsavī Bihbahānī, *Ḥakīm-i Astarābād, Mīr Dāmād* (Tehran: Iṭṭilaʿāt, 1370 Sh./1991), pp. 128-29.

3. Ed. Ḥāmid Nājī Iṣfahānī, with glosses by Mullā ʿAlī Nūrī (Tehran: Hijrat, 1374 Sh./1995). See: Bihbahānī, *Ḥakīm-i Astarābād*, pp. 171-72. It must here be emphasized that Mīr Dāmād's theory of prayer and the means of ensuring its efficacy are thoroughly letter-magical in tenor: *prayer as mathematical science*. Similarly, his earlier contemporary Taşköprüzāde Aḥmed (d. 968/1561), the great Ottoman polymath and encyclopedist, reclassified the various branches of lettrism from the natural and mathematical sciences to the *quranic*; see: Matthew Melvin-Koushki, "Powers of One: The Mathematicalization of the Occult Sciences in the High Persianate Tradition," *Intellectual History of the Islamicate World* 5, no. 1 (2017): pp. 127-99, esp. pp. 173-76.

under the title *Letters and Numbers* (*al-Ḥurūf wa-l-aʿdād*).[1]) Mīr Dāmād refers in both this work and the later *Firebrands* to his authorship of another treatise in this vein: *Taʾwīl al-muqaṭṭaʿāt* (aka *R. dar Asrār-i muqaṭṭaʿāt*), on the mysterious separated sura-initial letters in the Quran, though the treatise appears to have been lost.[2]

I have shown elsewhere that Mīr Dāmād's primary sources in these works were Ibn Turka (d. 835/1432), foremost occult philosopher of Timurid Iran, and Jalāl al-Dīn Davānī (d. 908/1502), the Aqquyunlu Illuminationist and Ashʿari thinker whose oeuvre constituted the basis for much of early modern Islamic philosophy, whether Safavid, Ottoman or Mughal. So taken was Mīr Dāmād by the philosophical utility of lettrism, moreover, that he was singlehandedly responsible for popularizing an odd little work ascribed to Ibn Sīnā (perhaps correctly), the *New Year Treatise* (*R. al-Nayrūziyya*), which summarizes the Avicennan system in specifically Neopythagorean-lettrist terms.[3]

In view of the thoroughness with which Islamicate occultism has been suppressed in modern scholarship, it must be emphasized that Mīr Dāmād's lettrist works were not marginal or irrelevant to his larger project. To the contrary, they enjoyed mainstream status until at least the Qajar period, when Mullā ʿAlī Nūrī (d. 1246/1830), the great reviver of Sadrian philosophy, produced glosses on his *Jaẕavāt* and *Nibrās* both.[4] Significantly, Nūrī also glossed Ibn Turka's *Book of Inquiries* (*K. al-Mafāḥiṣ*), the first summa of Islamic Neopythagoreanism, which confirms that the two thinkers' intellectual connection, via lettrism, was seen by some scholars to be obvious until quite recently.[5]

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1. Bihbahānī, *Ḥakīm-i Astarābād*, p. 138.

2. The *Taʾwīl al-muqaṭṭaʿāt* would seem to have been written as a separate work sometime before the completion of the *Nibrās* and the commencement of the *Jaẕavāt*; Mīr Dāmād also refers the reader thereto at the end of the *Qabasāt* (Ibid., p. 123). No copies are known to survive, although the bias against matters lettrist in modern scholarship suggests the possibility that at least one does but has yet to be properly identified.

3. Melvin-Koushki, "World as (Arabic) Text."

4. These glosses are included in the critical editions of both works cited above.

5. Matthew Melvin-Koushki, "The Quest for a Universal Science: The Occult Philosophy of Ṣāʾin al-Dīn Turka Iṣfahānī (1369-1432) and Intellectual Millenarianism in Early Timurid Iran," Ph.D. diss. (Yale University, 2012), pp. 437, 573-74; Sajjad H. Rizvi, "Mullā ʿAlī Nūrī," in *Philosophy in Qajar Iran*, ed. Reza Pourjavady, Leiden: Brill, 2019, pp. 125-78. On the popularity of lettrism more generally during the Qajar period, see: Matthew Melvin-Koushki, "Pseudo-Shaykh Bahāʾī on the Supreme Name, a Safavid-Qajar Lettrist

Mīrzā Mahdī Āshtiyānī (d. 1372/1952), a pivotal member of the so-called school of Tehran and teacher to several of the most prominent Iranian philosophers of the 14th/20th century, likewise testified to his admiration of Mīr Dāmād's oeuvre in general and the *Jaẕavāt* in particular.[1] Nor is Mīr Dāmād's legacy restricted to the circles of the scholarly superelite: to this day, as noted, the Astarabadi sage figures in Iran as preeminent authority on the occult sciences, especially letter magic, with several popular occultist manuals of uncertain provenance circulating under his name in cheap bazaar editions and online.[2] Such texts, of course, are considered too déclassé to merit attention in the literature. Yet they both accurately reflect Mīr Dāmād's reputation in his own lifetime and represent the most immediate, *technological* application of his philosophy.[3]

As a modest contribution to Mīr Dāmād studies, then, I here translate and briefly contextualize representative excerpts from his *Firebrands and Epiphanies*, together with its table of contents, to provide specialist and nonspecialist readers alike with a direct taste of what it meant to be a bleeding-edge Pythagorean-lettrist in the post-Mongol Persian cosmopolis—and Western early

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Classic," in *Light upon Light: Essays in Islamic Thought and History in Honor of Gerhard Bowering*, ed. Jamal J. Elias and Bilal Orfali, Leiden: Brill, 2019, pp. 256-90.

1. *Jaẕavāt*, xxxviii-ix; see: Nasr, *Islamic Philosophy*, pp. 247-48.

2. These are typically titled only *Mīr Dāmād-i kabīr*, with subtitles proclaiming 'Teach yourself the occult sciences and arts (*ʿulūm u funūn-i gharība*), including the subjugation, invocation and summoning of jinn, people and angels (*taskhīrāt u khutūmāt u iḥẕārāt dar jinn u ins u muvakkal*); incantations for success and good fortune (*adʿiyāt-i* [sic] *kārgushāʾī u bakhtgushāʾī*), for seeking children, love, money, provision, the sale of goods, conquest and victory (*ṭalab-i farzand u maḥabbat u rizq u rūzī u furūsh-i matāʿ, fatḥ u pīrūzī*); and the countering of talismans and magic (*bāṭil nimūdan-i ṭilismāt u jādū*).' On this grimoire specifically see: Alireza Doostdar, "Impossible Occultists: Practice and Participation in an Islamic Tradition," *American Ethnologist* 46, no. 2 (2019): pp. 176-89, esp. 176-78; on the popular vitality of early modern occultist practices in modern Iran generally see idem, *The Iranian Metaphysicals: Explorations in Science, Islam, and the Uncanny*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2018.

3. On the specifically *imperial* applications of the same Neopythagorean-lettrist philosophy, with reference to the example of Ibn Turka, see: Melvin-Koushki, "The New Brethren"; and with reference to the examples of Davānī and Maḥmūd Dihdār Shīrāzī (fl. 984/1576), Khafrī's son and Shaykh Bahāʾī's (d. 1030/1621) teacher in the occult sciences, see: Matthew Melvin-Koushki, *The Occult Science of Empire in Aqquyunlu-Safavid Iran: Two Shirazi Lettrists and Their Manuals of Magic* (Leiden: Brill, forthcoming).

modernity more generally. For Mīr Dāmād's fellow Pythagoreans among the Muslims, Jews and Christians of the era are legion, and include the most feted names of the European Renaissance and the "Scientific Revolution," from Cusanus and Pico to Kepler and Newton. It is time we restore our Safavid worthy to this Story of the West.[1]

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In *Firebrands and Epiphanies*, as elsewhere, Mīr Dāmād compares and contrasts what he calls his Yemeni or oriental philosophy (*al-ḥikma al-yamāni-yya*) with Greek precedent (*al-ḥikma al-yūnāniyya*).[2] The former is his trademark Avicennan-Illuminationist-Ibn ʿArabian-Twelver synthesis; the latter, significantly, is here represented in the first place by Pythagoras and the (Neo)pythagoreans, called by him *fīsāghūrasiyyīn* or *āl-i Fīsāghūras*, together with Ps.-Aristotle (i.e., Plotinus) and Plato.[3] (Like Ibn Turka and other lettrists, Mīr Dāmād believes Pythagoras to be Solomon's contemporary and disciple—a common association in Arabic bio-bibliographical literature from the 3rd/9th century onward.[4]) The camp of the Greek ancients is rounded out with citations of Nicomachus, Archytas of Tarentum, Anaximenes, Ptolemy, Homer and the Stoics (*rivāqiyya*). But it is only in the Islamic or Yemeni dispensation that metaphysical perfection may be attained. Ibn Sīnā is thus by far the most referenced authority in the *Jaẕavāt*, more so than either Plato or Ps.-Aristotle; Mīr Dāmād's close identification with him is indicated by his habitual references to the Shaykh al-Raʾīs as 'my colleague' (*sharīk-i mā*) or 'my departed colleague' (*sharīk-i sālif-i mā*), even 'my fellow in the vanguard of Muslim sages' (*sharīk-i mā dar riyāsat-i ḥukamā-yi islām*).[5] He also strongly identifies with

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1. Melvin-Koushki, "Powers of One."

2. Rizvi, "Mīr Dāmād in India," p. 15: "Often he presents his argument by stating that he will first examine the 'Greek' philosophical position and then move on to the Yemeni one."

3. See: e.g. *Jaẕavāt*, pp. 46, 47, 60, 62-5, 79, 105, 110, 115, 119-20, 134, 143, 147, 177, 179, 186, etc. Pythagoras and Plato in particular are routinely identified with theosis (*ilāhī, mutàallih*). Needless to say, Mīr Dāmād's primary source for Pythagorean doctrine is Shahrastānī's description thereof in the *K. al-Milal wa-l-niḥal*; see: below.

4. *Jaẕavāt*, p. 46; cf. Melvin-Koushki, "The Quest," pp. 318, 325; Anna Izdebska, "Pythagoreanism in Arabic, Arabic Pythagoreanism: Transformations of a Philosophical Tradition," Ph.D. diss. (University of Warsaw, 2016).

5. *Jaẕavāt*, pp. 21-2, 27, 36, 65, 87, 102, 115, 122, 147, 162, 216, 221-2, 228, 247, 260, 266.

Fārābī, his 'earlier colleague in the promulgation and repair of Islamic philosophy' (*sharīk-i sābiq-i mā dar taʿlīm u taṣḥīḥ-i falsafa-yi islāmī*).[1]

A certain perennialist tension obtains in this Greek-Yemeni dichotomy, however. That is to say, Mīr Dāmād's schema, while ostensibly teleological and progressivist, remains committed to Greek precedent as model; Pythagoras and Plato in particular are *the* original theosized sages (sg. *ḥakīm-i mutȧallih*). His Yemeni philosophy is thus both inherently superior to its Greek precursor and its faithful outworking, its actualization. Indeed, Mīr Dāmād asserts in the first 'firebrand' (*jaẕva*) or section of this work that the entirety of his large oeuvre is simply an explication of the *Theology of Aristotle*.[2] That a renewed interest in the *Uthūlūjiyā* is a hallmark of Safavid philosophy and the central driver of its Neoplatonic turn is widely recognized; Mīr Dāmād's assertion here may therefore be considered programmatic.[3]

Mīr Dāmād's Yemeni philosophy, then, as presented in the *Jaẕavāt*, definitively *islamicizes* and *Twelverizes* Pythagoras (along with Plato and Plotinus) by embracing the brand of imamophilic Neopythagorean lettrism propounded by (Ps.-)Ibn Sīnā, Ibn Turka and Davānī: the *philosophia perennis*.[4] In the tenth *jaẕva* he explicitly declares it the foundation of his own philosophical system, and indeed of the philosophical quest throughout history:

> *In sum: The greatest of theosized sages and divinized scholars (aʿāẓim-i*
> *ḥukamā-yi ilāhiyyīn u afākhir-i ʿulamā-yi rabbāniyyīn) (who enjoy*
> *the victuals of truth and the flavors of precise knowledge with the sense*
> *of taste that is their holy faculty of intuition (ḥads)) all agree on the fact*
> *that the levels of the engendered realms correspond to those of the realm*
> *of number and the relations that obtain between engendered beings (nis-*
> *ab-i kawniyya) correspond to numerical relationships (munāsabāt-i*

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1. Ibid., 65, p. 86.

2. Ibid., p. 15.

3. On the Safavid revival of the *Uthūlūjiyā* see: e.g. Sajjad H. Rizvi, "(Neo)Platonism Revived in the Light of the Imams: Qāḍī Saʿīd Qummī (d. ah 1107/ad 1696) and His Reception of the *Theologia Aristotelis*," in *Classical Arabic Philosophy: Sources and Reception*, ed. Peter Adamson, London: The Warburg Institute, 2007, pp. 176-207.

4. That the same processes define Safavid perennialist philosophy more broadly is shown in Mathieu Terrier, "La figure de Pythagore comme maître d'ésotérisme et de théologie monothéiste dans la philosophie islamique du XIe/XVIIe siècle," *Revue de l'histoire des religions* (forthcoming 2019).

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'adadiyya), and that the formation of such relations and the combination of the active properties of the realm of number—the shadows of those marriages (izdivājāt) contracted by passions and impassionings (ashvāq u tashvīqāt) and the traces of those embracings of the dawning lights and luminosities of the realm of the intellect—constitute the mirror and measure of the realities of engendered ipseities (ḥaqāyiq-i huviyyāt-i kawn) and the scale and benchmark for the levels of engendered beings (marātib-i kawniyyāt-i vujūd).[1]

In the eleventh *jaẕva* he restates this summary with uncharacteristic clarity, leaving us in no doubt as to his lettrist bona fides:

In sum: The realm of the letter corresponds to that of number, and the realm of number corresponds to that of engendered existence (kawn); and the relationships (munāsabāt) that obtain in the realm of letter correspond to those that obtain in the realm of number, which in turn correspond to the commixtures (mumāzajāt, mukhālaṭāt) that constitute the realm of engendered existence.[2]

A more succinct summary of early modern Neopythagoreanism cannot be imagined. Thus Mīr Dāmād, like many Western thinkers before and after him, Muslim, Jewish and Christian, fully subscribes to the theory of correspondence between number, letter and engendered being—the mechanism that makes all occult-scientific operations possible.

Such a thoroughgoing Pythagorean does Mīr Dāmād consider himself, indeed, that he feels it his duty to defend the Greek sage against the critique of his source Shahrastānī (d. 548/1153), specifically by invoking Ibn Turka's tripartite division of the letter as cosmic category:

The leading authorities on this art and most eminent practitioners of this craft divide the letter as category into three hierarchically descending classes: mental-reflective (ẕihnī fikrī), oral-spoken (lafẕī qawlī) and written-textual (raqamī-kitābī).[3]

Penetrating the depths, the Greek Pythagoras, theosized sage, thus ordered the levels and active properties of the three types of [mathematical]

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1. *Jaẕavāt*, p. 119.

2. Ibid., pp. 133-34.

3. As Mīr Dāmād subsequently clarifies, each class corresponds to one of the three primary human senses: heart, hearing and sight (*Jaẕavāt*, p. 143); see: Melvin-Koushki, "The Quest," p. 171, 478-79.

relationships: numerical, geometrical and harmonizing. He [further] took the numerical realm to reflect the lights of the realm of the intellect, indeed a ray from the holy lights, and the alphabetical realm to be body to the spirit that is the numerical.

As the Pythagoreans say: "The state of existents is [best] known by means of number and geometrical harmonies as determined by mathematical relationships. The celestial motions, which are determined by such relationships, are therefore the noblest of all motions and the loveliest of all harmonies. As for the letters divested of matter primordially: A corresponds to 1, B to 2, and so on. Revealed scriptural laws, which specify the number of ritual prayers, alms and all other forms of worship, thus do so precisely to enact these relationships in correspondence with those spiritual harmonies."[1]

In [the same section of] his Book of Sects and Creeds, however, Shahrastānī raises an objection with respect to the letters [and their relation to number]: "I know not according which language or tongue they account them thus, for languages differ from town to town and region to region, or according to what type of compound form, for those differ too, and simple and compound forms of the letters both differ therein. But number is not so, for it does not and cannot differ."[2] But this objection is baseless. For just as number varies not between towns and regions, so too do the 28 letters in their own essence vary not; the fact that in compound form they do differ from language to language does not impair their correspondence with simple numbers. The letters are bodies, and the numbers their spirits.[3] In the realm of metaphor and allegory, the realm of number and the realm of letter correspond in macrocosmic terms to mind (ẕihn) and in microcosmic terms to the faculty of imagination (quvvat-i mutakhayyila) [respectively]; and the creation of a form in the mind is predicated on the advent of a form-bearer external to it.[4]

So far lettrist theory; but what of lettrist praxis? Does Mīr Dāmād consider

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1. These statements are pieced together from several passages in Shahrastānī; see: *al-Milal wa-l-niḥal*, ed. Amīr ʿAlī Muhannā, 2 vols., Beirut: Dār al-Maʿrifa, 1415/1995, vol. 2, pp. 393-94, 397.

2. Ibid., vol. 2, p. 394.

3. *Fa-inna l-ḥurūf ashbāḥ wa-l-aʿdād arwāḥ*. See: Āmulī, *Hizār u yak kalima*, vol. 3: p. 381.

4. *Jaẕavāt*, pp. 134-35.

the magical harnessing of this correspondence between the Book of Being and the Book of Letter-Number for practical ends to be a natural application of philosophy? Certainly—like every other committed lettrist (Ibn ʿArabī himself excepted).[1] Immediately after his overview of the three letter modalities in *jaẕva* 11, for instance, Mīr Dāmād cites both letter divination (*jafr*) and medical letter magic as logical consequences and worthy applications of this system:

> *It is continuously narrated that the eighth of the lights of knowledge and wisdom (sāmin anvār al-ʿilm va-l-ḥikma) and the infallible agents of purification (aṣḥāb al-taṭhīr va-l-ʿiṣma), our lord and master Abū l-Ḥasan al-Riżā (upon him be peace), wrote on the back of the charter of the Abbasid caliph Maʾmūn investing him as successor to the caliphate as follows: "The comprehensive prognosticon (al-jāmiʿa va-l-jafr)[2] indicates that this will not come to pass; I know not what he will do with me or with you all. The judgment is God's alone: He relates the truth, and He is the best of deciders (Q 6: 57)."[3]*
>
> *The holy revelation And We send down of the Quran that which is a healing and mercy to believers (Q 17: 82) likewise manifestly refers to the active properties (khavāṣṣ) of single letters and singular words and the effects of letter and nomial constructions. Just as every plant has a benefit and property peculiar to it, so too do the branches of the tree of speech and the tendrils of the vine of knowledge have properties and benefits—and these are beyond limit or compare. In the technical usage of the sons of*

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1. See: e.g. *al-Futūḥāt al-makkiyya*, 4 vols., Beirut: Dār Ṣādir, n.d., vol. 1, p. 190; translated in Denis Gril, "The Science of Letters," in Ibn al-ʿArabī, *The Meccan Revelations*, Vol. 2, ed. Michel Chodkiewicz, trans. Cyrille Chodkiewicz and Denis Gril, New York: Pir Press, 2004, pp. 105-219: 124: "If I had not vowed never to provoke an effect (*athar*) via a letter, what marvels they would have seen!"

2. In the earliest Shiʿi sources, the Calfskin (*al-jafr*) and the Comprehensive One (*al-jāmiʿa*) seem to have been the names of two secret books in the possession of the Imams; on these and other such books see: Mohammad Ali Amir-Moezzi, *The Divine Guide in Early Shiʿism: The Sources of Esotericism in Islam*, trans. David Streight, Albany: suny Press, 1994, pp. 73-75; Hossein Modarressi, *Tradition and Survival: A Bibliographical Survey of Early Shīʿite Literature*, Vol. 1., Oxford: Oneworld, 2003, pp. 4-12, 17-20. In later centuries, however, these were conflated to describe a letter-divinatory text invented by ʿAlī himself, the Comprehensive Prognosticon, in Persian *jafr-i jāmiʿ*.

3. Ibn Turka cites the same episode in his *R. Anjām*; see: Melvin-Koushki, "The Quest," pp. 496, 505-6.

reality (abnā-yi ḥaqīqat), the active properties of simple and compound letters and names, of verses and invocations, which correspond to medical simples and compounds, are termed spiritual medicine (ṭibb-i rūḥānī). It is said in this connection: "Lifting up one's voice with purity of intention in the hermitage of worship can undo the effects of the cycling heavens."[1]

Unlike modern researchers, in other words, "disenchanted" children of the "Enlightenment" all,[2] he does not confine his metaphysical speculations to the bounds of his own mind, but affirms the responsibility of philosophers to proactively heal the world and build their societies through letter-magical practice. The Twelve Imams are here the model, guides to humanity through their mastery of *jafr*:

> *When a person is divinely enabled to perceive all the special correspondences between and active properties of the levels of that realm [of the letter], the states of all engendered beings and the frequency and quality of past and future events will, by God's leave, be revealed to him. This was the case with the holy and ennobled soul of the Gate to the City of Knowledge (bāb madīnat al-ʿilm) and Abode of the Midian of Wisdom (dār Madyan al-ḥikma), denizen of the Ṭayba[3] of certainty and scion of the Kaʿba of infallibility, the Commander of the Faithful ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib, together with his pure sons and legatees, including Abū Jaʿfar al-Bāqir, Abū ʿAbd Allāh al-Ṣādiq, Abū l-Ḥasan al-Riżā and the rest of our infallible lords (sādātinā l-maʿṣūmīn) (God's blessings and peace be upon him and them all).*[4]

Mastery of *jafr*, of course, presupposes mastery of arithmetic; hence ʿAlī's status in particular as a mathematical genius. Mīr Dāmād thus transmits immediately after the above passage this report:

> *There was no arithmetician more dextrous than ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib (upon him be peace) (kāna... aḥsab al-nās). It is said that a Jew once came to ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib and challenged him: "ʿAlī! Tell me what number can be divided into equal halves, thirds, fourths, fifths, sixths, sevenths, eighths,*

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1. *Jaẕavāt*, pp. 135-36.

2. On the purely ideological nature of both terms see: e.g. Jason Ā. Josephson-Storm, *The Myth of Disenchantment: Magic, Modernity, and the Birth of the Human Sciences*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2017.

3. I.e., Medina.

4. *Jaẕavāt*, p. 120.

ninths and tenths, without remainder?' Said 'Alī, 'If I tell you, will you become Muslim?" "Yes," he replied. Said ['Alī], "Multiply the number of your Fridays in your month with the days of your month multiplied by [the days of] your year—this will give the desired result." [The Jew] did so and found it correct, and so converted to Islam.[1]

Imam 'Alī, in short, is the ultimate *Pythagoras redivivus* for the Islamic dispensation—hence lettrism as the ultimate Pythagorean-Imamic science.

Nor should such declarations, while obviously Twelver in tenor, be reflexively construed as evidence that the Safavid conquest of Iran marked a cultural rupture with Mamluk, Timurid, Aqquyunlu or even Ottoman precedent. To the contrary, the *Firebrands and Epiphanies*—including its insistence on Imamic infallibility (*'iṣma*)—faithfully and explicitly reiterates the consensus of the leading Sunni lettrists of the 9th/15th century. The Safavid reception of Ibn Turkian-Davānian lettrism thus represents a confessionalist *coincidentia oppositorum*: it powerfully furthered the *shi'ization* of Iran—yet guaranteed smooth intellectual continuity with Sunni precedent.[2] For Mīr Dāmād, as for Ibn Turka and Davānī, the Imams and the Pythagorean ancients stand equal as vectors of *walāya*, engine of theosis. Lettrism, core of the *philosophia perennis*, must needs therefore be an especially effective means of accessing and harnessing their sacral power for the scientific strengthening of state and society.

<p style="text-align:center">***</p>

<p style="text-align:center">*Firebrands and Epiphanies*
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1. Ibid., pp. 120-21. Cf. Quṭb al-Dīn Ishkavarī Lāhījī, *Laṭāyif al-ḥisāb*, ed. Muḥammad Bāqirī, Tehran: Mīrās-i Maktūb, 1389 Sh./2010, p. 12.

2. On this continuity more generally see: Melvin-Koushki, *The Occult Science of Empire*.

- *Firebrand 3*: The order of emanations and their names in the usage of divine write

- *A gleam from the firebrand*: The relationship of the planets and spheres to the Necessary Existent

- *Firebrand 4*: The Necessary Existent's transcendence of all manner of multiplicity

- *A blazing brand from the firebrand*: The Oneness of the Necessary Existent

- *Firebrand 5*: The modality and order of emanation of the intellects in the order of being

- *A gleaming of the firebrand*: Coupling and compounding in the levels of emanation along the causal chain

- *Firebrand 6*: The realm of similitudes according to the Stoics, the Peripatetics and the Illuminationists

- *An addendum to the firebrand*: The three dimensions in which the archetypal ipseities of external beings are actualized

- *Firebrand 7*: The Most Beautiful Names [as manifested through prophets], and the three special properties of prophethood and the manner in which they are actualized for a prophet

- *A live coal from the firebrand*: The effects of the soul's connection to the body, and the sundering thereof; the true nature of death

- *Firebrand 8*: The true nature of ascetic practice and ritual worship with respect to the rational human soul and the celestial soul

- *A gleam from the firebrand*: The Perfect Maker of the universal order and the effects for which it is the cause

- *Firebrand 9*: Absolute existence (*vujūd-i muṭlaq*), possible existents (*vujūd-i jāyizāt*), emanation (*ṣudūr*), effluxion (*ifāża*), making (*jaʿl*) and existentiating (*ījād*)

- *A piece of the firebrand*: Creation ex nihilo (*ibdāʿ*), invention (*ikhtirāʿ*), construction (*ṣunʿ*) and material creation (*takwīn*)

- *Firebrand 10*: The true nature of number, and its various levels and special properties

- *A leaving of the firebrand*: A refutation of the deluded assumption that the views of the author and Plato contradict that of Ibn Sīnā

- *Firebrand 11*: The various levels of human perception and its objects

- *A gleam from the firebrand*: The true nature of the letter, and the connection of the letters to numbers and external entities

- *Firebrand 12*: The various levels of the letters according to their *bayyināt* and *zubur*[1]

- *A supplement to the firebrand*: The various levels of correpondences of the category of letter

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- *Epiphany 1*: The fundament of effluxion and anchor of the existentiation of ipseities

- *Epiphany 2*: The numbering of the [ten] categories or highest genera

- *Epiphany 3*: The correspondence of the spoken and written letters to the various levels of existents

- *Epiphany 4*: The position of Fāżil-i Khafrī[2] on the imaginal realm

- *Epiphany 5*: The referent of the fundamental levels of the numbers and certain letters according to the Yemeni philosophy

- *Epiphany 6*: The first dependent and immediate effect of [*A*]

- *Epiphany 7*: The divisions of Oneness and the correspondence of numbers and letters according to Pythagoras

- *Epiphany 8*: The special, essential properties of the true One

- *Epiphany 9*: The names, levels and cycles of number

- *Epiphany 10*: The various levels and cycles of the letters

- *Epiphany 11*: Rarefied secrets of the letters *A*, *B*, *J* and *D*

- *Epiphany 12*: Rarefied secrets of the letters *H* and *Y*

- *Epiphany 13*: Rarefied secrets of the letters *W*, *Ḥ* and *Z*

- *Epiphany 14*: Rarefied secrets of the letters *Ṭ* and *Y*

- *Epiphany 15*: Rarefied secrets of the letters *K* and *L*

- *Epiphany 16*: The connection between *L* and *A*

- *Epiphany 17*: Rarefied secrets of the blessed Declaration of Oneness

- *Epiphany 18*: Rarefied secrets of the letter *M*

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1. The term *zubur* denotes the first letters in the full letternames (e.g., the *A* in *ALF*) and *bayyināt* the remaining letters (e.g., *LF* in *ALF*), both being derived from the prooftext Q 16: 44.

2. I.e., Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad Khafrī (d. 942/1535), the eminent Safavid philosopher, theologian and planetary theorist, who likewise authored works on both *jafr* and geomancy; see: Firouzeh Saatchian, *Gottes Wesen—Gottes Wirken: Ontologie und Kosmologie im Denken von Šams-al-Dīn Muḥammad al-Ḫafrī* (*gest. 942/1535*), Berlin: de Gruyter, 2011, pp. 53-54.

- *Epiphany 19*: To what concept *M* refers
- *Epiphany 20*: Rarefied secrets of the letter *N*
- *Epiphany 21*: Rarefied secrets of the circularity of the letters
- *Epiphany 22*: The five levels and three cycles of the realm of the letters
- *Epiphany 23*: Rarefied secrets of the letters *S* and *Sh*
- *Epiphany 24*: The correspondence of the *S* letter cycle to the true nature and substance of man
- *Epiphany 25*: Rarefied secrets of the letter ʿ
- *Epiphany 26*: Rarefied secrets of the letter *F*
- *Epiphany 27*: The connection between *F*, *A* and *L*, and to what concept *F* refers
- *Epiphany 28*: Rarefied secrets of the letter *Ṣ*
- *Epiphany 29*: Rarefied secrets of the letter *Q*
- *Epiphany 30*: Rarefied secrets of the letter *R*
- *Epiphany 31*: The correspondence of the realms and rarefied secrets of the letters *B*, *S*, *Q* and ʿ
- *Epiphany 32*: The correspondence of the realms and rarefied secrets of short vowels, vowellessness and gemination
- *Epiphany 33*: Rarefied secrets of the cycles of the *muqaṭṭaʿāt* of Light
- *Epiphany 34*: The comprehensiveness of the *muqaṭṭaʿāt* of the Holy Revelation with respect to the matrices and sources of the realm of the letters
- *Epiphany 35*: Rarefied secrets of ʾ, *W* and *N*

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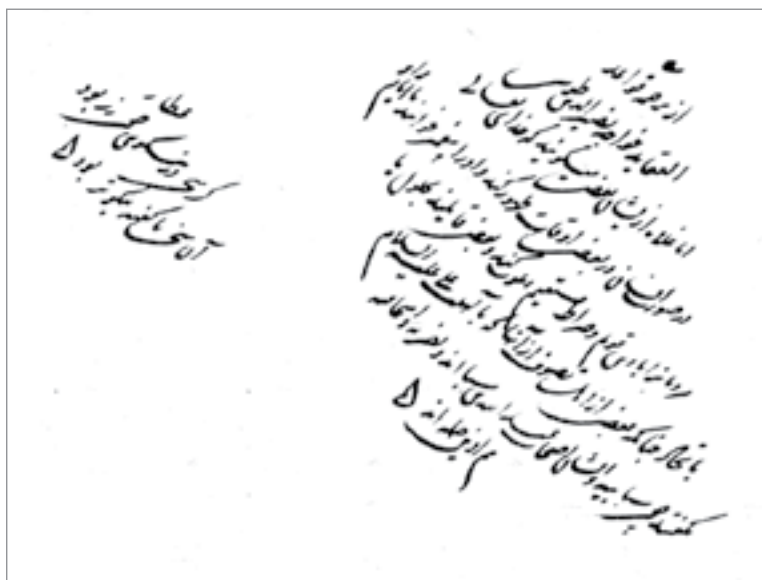
Handwriting of Mulla Sadra (Mīr Dāmād's Famous Pupil)

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