

AMERICAN UNIVERSITY OF BEIRUT

ORIGIN, EMANATION AND RETURN
IN AL-FAYḌ AL-KĀSHĀNĪ'S 'AYN AL-YAQĪN

by

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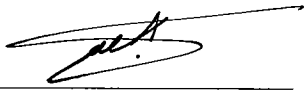
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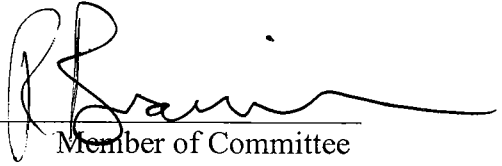
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I thank my parents, family, friends, advisors and teachers for always being so patient with me even when I don't deserve it.

The Divine Name 'The Patient' has become manifest through you...

AN ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS OF

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Title: Origin, Emanation and Return in al-Fayḍ al-Kāshānī's 'Ayn al-Yaqīn

In this thesis I will explore al-Fayḍ al-Kāshānī's unique attempt at harmonizing demonstrative proof, mystical unveiling and divine revelation (*Burhan*, *ʿIrfan* and *Qurʿan*) by analyzing the themes of origin, emanation and return in his work *ʿAyn al-Yaqīn*. Al-Kāshānī is one of the few Twelver Shiʿite scholars who can simultaneously be categorized in two historically opposing scholarly circles; the revelatory camp and reasonable camp. This is evident in his intellectual genealogy for his teachers and his students range from extreme promulgators of the pure revelatory method to the most philosophically inclined. I will argue, through *ʿAyn al-Yaqīn*, that al-Kāshānī attempts to attain concordance between the revelatory and the reasonable in a distinct fashion. While many of his predecessors and successors would inadvertently lean to either the side of revelation or that of reason al-Kāshānī wants both at once. His scheme of coordination between revelation and reason is one which can be described as being 'hypostatic' in nature. The reason the concept of 'hypostases' is employed here is to steer clear from reducing al-Kāshānī's extremely nuanced project to a mere cutting and pasting of the revelatory and the reasonable.

By translating and analyzing al-Kāshānī's *'Ayn al-Yaqin* this thesis will attempt to show that al-Kāshānī perceives both reason and revelation to occupy mutually irreducible discursive spheres, each with its own internal dynamics, which must be respected and kept apart, even while they simultaneously participate in a deeper underlying inseparable unity. The thesis will first of all situate al-Kāshānī within his historical context and then explore how al-Kāshānī takes up a Neo-Platonic philosophical mode of reasoning and a Twelver Shi'ite cast of the Islamic revelation to carry out this delicate project. I have chosen the core themes of origin, emanation and return because they run through both Neo-Platonism and Twelver Shi'ism such that they can act as a fertile space within which al-Kāshānī's 'hypostatic' project unfolds.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Intellectual traditions are not monolithic; rather, they are profoundly vibrant, consisting of innumerable perspectives and diverse views on a shared core of questions. An attentive reading of a particular thinker, in any intellectual tradition, can give the reader a clear sense of the noetic horizons, which dominate that tradition as a whole. The series of intellectual stances a thinker makes with respect to the central problematics of his predecessors within the tradition acts as a map, which can guide us to feel the pulse, so to speak, of the whole tradition through its part. Few indeed are intellectual figures, which can simultaneously incarnate several seemingly contradictory perspectives into a single intellectual tradition, such that the whole is fully contained in the part rather than merely being an influence in the part.¹ Known as an exegete, a narrator of hadith, a philosopher and a mystic; Mulla Muḥsin-Muḥammad (b.1007/1599-d.1090/1679), renowned as al-Fayḍ al-Kāshānī, is one of the figures, in Islamic intellectual history, who could, potentially, act as a mirror of the whole Islamic intellectual enterprise in all its richness.

Islamic thought, like much of religious thought, was characterized by a vast cleft between the philosophers and the religionists, on one hand, and amongst the religionists themselves, with regard to the role of reason as an instrument for deepening understanding of religion, on the other. This intellectual circumstance marked the aura of Islamic thought, such that many Islamic

¹ See Bellah, R., *Religion in Human Evolution: From the Paleolithic to the Axial Age*, p 248, 275, 441, 443, 600.

thinkers began to see methodologies and epistemologies, which were alternate to their own, in an inimical light. So it came to pass that diverse schools of thought began to develop incommensurable conceptual frameworks by which they accessed truth. Rare, indeed are the scholars who were able to see through these seemingly incompatible conceptual frameworks and draw on all of them simultaneously. One such scholar is the polymath al-Fayḍ al-Kāshānī through whom the whole intellectual heritage of Islam, in its contradictions and harmonies, can be teased out. There also seems to be a deep connection between al-Fayḍ al-Kāshānī's epistemology and the epistemic methods applied by Twelver Shi'ite polymaths of the 20th century, such as Muḥammad-Husayn al-Tabṭabāī (1903-1981) and Ruḥallah al-Khomeinī (1901-1989). Both al-Tabṭabāī and al-Khomeinī have had and still have an immense influence on the socio-political and intellectual life in the Shi'ite centers of learning in the Near East.² Hence, studying al-Fayḍ al-Kāshānī's work can act as a bridge that connects the intellectual discussion of the past to those of the present. To fully fathom an intellectual, as multifaceted as al-Fayḍ al-Kāshānī, we must, firstly, attempt to create a bases for a common language between al-Kāshānī and western philosophy, and secondly, gather and collect as many threads, which act as influences upon his thought from his own context, to be able to paint a wealthy image of the man.

The semantic field and conceptual architecture used by al-Kāshānī must be distinguished from lexicon and concepts which are used in modern western philosophical discussions. The main theme which acts as the lynchpin of al-Kāshānī's philosophical edifice is his distinction between essence and existence, or *whatness* and *thatness*. In modern Western philosophy, which has most of its roots in the writings of Immanuel Kant, *what* we can know is phenomena; things-

² See Rizvi, S., "Only the Imam Knows Best" *The Maktabe Tafkīk's Attack on the Legitimacy of Philosophy in Iran*, p 487-503.

as-they-appear-to-us. The only thing we can know about noumena; things-in-themselves, is *that* they are (*thatness*) but we do not know *what* noumena is (*whatness*). This is so, because, according to Kant, the natural world stimulates our senses and those stimulated sensual intuitions, which are conditioned, a priori, by space and time, act as representations, within human experience, of their stimulators in the natural world. Now those spacio-temporal representations, in experience, are then categorized by a priori concepts in the faculty of the understanding and then judged by the faculty of reason. Hence, by applying a priori concepts to sensual intuitions, the spacio-temporal manifold, things as they appear to us, can be discerned and their *whatness* can be known.³

Since this thesis is written within the context of the academy in the English language it is important to attempt to build bridges between the philosophical concerns indigenous to the academy and those of Islamic thought. To map al-Kāshānī's project into Kant's semantic and conceptual framework, we would have to say that *whatness* ultimately exists, or else it would be absurd to speak about it, hence *whatness* for al-Kāshānī ultimately participates in *thatness*. It can then be argued, from al-Kāshānī's angle, that there are two perspectives with regard to noumena; one which is opposite to phenomena, i.e. *thatness* which opposes *whatness*, which seems to be the fulcrum of Kant's philosophical project and another, which existentially grounds phenomena, i.e. *thatness* which grounds *whatness*, which is the pivot of al-Kāshānī's philosophy. Al-Kāshānī bases his philosophical argument on the second definition of noumena, which makes all phenomena (*whatness*), ultimately, an inflection of noumena (*thatness*).

It is interesting to note that the trajectory Western philosophy has followed went the completely opposite direction to where al-Kāshānī is heading. In modern western philosophy, for

³ See Kant, I., *The Critique of Pure Reason*, trans. Paul Guyer and Allen Wood, p 155-156.

the most part, noumena or *thatness*, has been done away with all together. This has led to the denial of numinous knowledge, which is unmediated by concepts, leaving phenomenal knowledge, a synthesis between sensual perception and cognitive conception, as the only option. However, there might be some bridge, between the two philosophical worlds. This link might be found in German Idealism, in general, and more specifically in Fredrich Schelling's distinction between the positive philosophy, the study of *thatness*, and the negative philosophy, the study of *whatness*.⁴

A. The Historical Background

In 750, black flags were raised in defiance of imperial rule, allegiance to the family of the prophet was invoked, and the Umayyads were crushed by an army led by the sword of Abū Muslim al-Khurāsānī.⁵ The Abbasids legitimated their right to rule through al-ʿAbbas, the paternal uncle of the Prophet. ʿAbbasid rule was another mode of familial and tribal resurgence, preceded by Umayyad rule, which was remnant of the birth pangs of Islam, in the Arabian peninsula. The ʿAbassid line, within the larger Meccan tribe of Quraysh, had asserted itself into the Islamic socio-political matrix, opposing both the Umayyads and the Hashemites. Hence, the ʿAbbasids inherited all the institutions, which had been fine-tuned under the Umayyads, and Islamic civilization continued to flourish in all directions. In the wake of their power the ʿAbbasids were able to conquer parts of eastern China, which had developed an efficient technology of the paper production from cotton. This useful technology, adopted by the Islamic

⁴ See Schelling, F., *The Grounding of Positive Philosophy: The Berlin Lectures*, trans. Bruce Matthews, section entitled "The Difference between Negative and Positive Philosophy".

⁵ See Arjomand, S., *The Shadow of God and the Hidden Imam: Religion, Political Order, and Societal Change in Shi'ite Iran from the Beginning to 1890*, 1984, p 57.
See Hourani, A., *A History of the Arab Peoples*, p 25-32.

world, under 'Abbasid rule, spawned the explosion of the translation movement. The 'Abbasid translation movement left us enormous amounts of texts, which can be investigated closely. Analysis of the processes of translation, can teach us how Hellenic intellectual accomplishments, in addition to others, were incorporated into Arab civilization and Islamic religiosity.⁶

The 'Abbasid translation movement was not driven by mere human curiosity, rather, it had very pertinent social and political roots. From a social viewpoint, the translation of texts on mathematics and medicine would offer needed tools for the inhabitants of the empire, to calculate their complex inheritance algorithms, incumbent upon them in Islamic law, and medicate themselves. Politically, the 'Abbasids, after they had defeated the Umayyads in 750, moved the capital of the Islamic empire eastwards, from Damascus, establishing a new imperial capital at Baghdad. This put the 'Abbasids in the midst of the ancient land of Persia where much of the Sassanain aristocracy and governmental bureaucracies, prior to the Arab conquests, retained themselves. As a political act of defiance, against the Persian officials and aristocrats, the 'Abbasids drew on Hellenic sciences and philosophy, to divert the concentration of power from Persian centers of learning and cement their unique imperial identity. By engaging in a vast project of translation, which lasted for two to three centuries, the 'Abbasids hoped to sever the possible dangers of their empire falling back into the hands of the Persian officials.⁷

The 'Abbasid authorities delegated the procedures of translation to several circles of experts, which were handsomely paid for their work. An important translator of philosophy who was hired by the 'Abassid court is Ya'qub b. Ishaq al-Kindi (d. 276/870). Al-Kindi gathered around him a circle of competent translators, which began to systematically convert Greek

⁶ See El-Hibri, T., *The Empire in Iraq*, p 269-304.

⁷ See Gutas, D., *Greek Thought, Arabic Culture: The Graeco-Arabic Translation Movement in Baghdad and Early 'Abbasid Society*, p 34-45.

See Adamson, P., *The Arabic Plotinus: a Philosophical Study of the "Theology of Aristotle"*, p 3.

philosophy into Arabic. However, being so close to the government does not leave one unscathed. For it is highly possible that the 'Abbasid political milieu, within which al-Kindī functioned, influenced his notion that Greek philosophy was one holistic system worthy of challenging that of ancient Zoroastrianism. Hence, the translations were not totally innocent, rather, they were also interpretations, which aimed at solving tensions internal to the Greek philosophical tradition, in addition to making it more relevant to contemporary circumstances of the Islamic culture and religiosity. And so it came to pass, that the confluence of the political, social, intellectual and religious tendencies, at the first glimmering of the dawn of 'Abbasid rule, aligned and gave rise to one of the greatest intellectual movements in history.⁸

Most of the denizens of Syria, and many of the inhabitants in the Near East, were Syriac Christians, who were bilingual, being proficient in both Greek and Syriac. The Hellenic philosophical tradition was written in Greek and some texts had been translated into Syriac, prior to the advent of Islam. This made Syriac Christian centers of learning, such as monasteries, important chains in the translation procedure of Greek philosophy into Arabic. There was many internal currents, in the Greek philosophical tradition, and since Syriac was a liturgical language, with a highly religious function, it is understandable why some Greek philosophical schools would be more useful for Syriac Christians, rather than others. Since the translators, many of which would have been faithful Syriac Christians, were not neutral individuals but were rather inheritors of a Syriac recast of the Greek philosophical tradition they would naturally be biased toward certain philosophical schools. This might explicate why, under the 'Abbasids', translations of Plato, which in its original form was rendered almost obsolete by Aristotelian philosophy, were extremely dearth, while Stoic and Epicurean philosophies, which would have been largely useless in a religious context, were left completely un-translated. Since the Islamic

⁸ See *ibid.*, p 3-13.

tradition was similar to Christianity in many of its discursive motifs it is not surprising to observe the translation of similar types of texts. Hence, we find a clear focus in al-Kindī's circle on Aristotle who's entire retrievable corpus was translated. There is also evidence which suggests that al-Kindī's circle was also involved in a translation of the Neo-Platonic corpus, which also has its Syriac precedence.⁹

The Islamic philosophers found the completion of their world-scheme, mostly drawn from Aristotle, in Neo-Platonism which they paraphrased and recast making it more digestible for an Islamic context.¹⁰ Neo-Platonic philosophy could offer a philosophically robust pathway into the mystical modes of knowledge, typical of religious traditions, which Aristotelian discursivity could not. Platonic thought, in its Greco-Roman context, was not static for it continually developed in interaction with other philosophical schools, in the Hellenic tradition, many of which were extremely critical of it. This incessant process of reassembling and embellishing Platonic arguments peaked, under the aegis of Plotinus, in the middle third century. Neo-Platonists, the followers of Plotinus' school, exploited all the methods developed in Sophistry, Stoicism, Materialism and most importantly Aristotelianism, within their Greco-Roman context, to revive Plato's tiered cosmos. This meant that both the meticulous discursive exactness, characteristic of Aristotle and other schools, was harmonized with the non-discursive mystical seeing of the supreme Good emblematic of Plato. This formula was obviously greatly appealing to high cultured religious theologians, coming out of both Syriac or Islamic contexts. The conclusions of Neo-Platonism could easily be connected to those of revelation, which would bridge a seemingly unbridgeable cleavage between reason and revelation. Surely enough this is

⁹ See Takahashi, H., "Syriac as the Intermediary in Scientific Graeco-Arabica: Some Historical and Philological Observations" in *Intellectual History of the Islamicate World* 3, p 66-97.

See Brock, S., *Two Letters of the Patriarch Timothy from the Late Eighth Century on Translations from Greek in Arabic Sciences and Philosophy*, vol. 9, p 233-246.

¹⁰ See Adamson, P., *The Arabic Plotinus: a Philosophical Study of the "Theology of Aristotle"*, p 1.

exactly what we see crystallize as an Arabic Neo-Platonic corpus. Although most of what survives in Arabic are the paraphrases of Plotinus' enneads, some academics assert that much of the topics raised in what survives resonates with the larger Neo-Platonic tradition, raising notions which are not mentioned in the Enneads. This proposes that al-Kindī's circle was involved in a translation of Neo-Platonic texts at large, not only Plotinus. The Arabic Plotinus was, in fact, part of a larger corpus of Neo-platonic translations made by al-Kindī's circle in the ninth century which contained Proclus' Elements of Theology and Book on the Pure Good. There has also been mention of Alexander the Aphrodesises who was translated alongside the other Neo-Platonists. This surge of Greek rationalism and Hellenic philosophy, into the intellectual milieu of the Islamic empire, brought about a multitude of positions regarding the validity of the rationalistic methodology and the nature of its relationship to the Islamic revelation.¹¹

Now the sources which survive from the Ummayyad dynasty are scant, paper being unavailable at the time. The availability of paper and the openness of the Abbasid caliphs towards extra-Islamic knowledge pried a niche for all the diverse intra-Islamic schools to begin to crystallize, in text, slightly prior to the translation of Aristotle, Plotinus and others from the Hellenic corpus. We also see the emergence of juristic literature, relayed through narrations, which are traced back in time, through chains of transmission, to the prophet himself. Possibly the first text in this genre is Malik b. Anas' (b. 93/711-d.179/795) Muwatta, sponsored by Abū Jaafar al-Manşūr (b.95/714-d.158/775), the second Abbasid caliph, whose reign lasted for 22 years, starting in 136/754. Al-Manşūr also commissioned Muḥammad b. Işḥaq to write the first biography of the prophet. Flanking Malik's Muwatta and b. Işḥaq's biography, in the 2nd/8th century exegete, Muqatil b. Sulayman al-Balkhī (d.150/767), wrote what is arguably the earliest exegesis of the Qur'an. Alongside this budding corpus a thriving tradition of speculative

¹¹ See *ibid.*, p 5, 13.

theology, polemics and apologetics, of intra-Abrahamic and intra-Islamic tensions began to take a novel shape. The translated texts of the Greek philosophers added to this vortex, multiplying both the depth of thought and its conflict. Many Muslim scholars adopted Hellenic philosophy and science, implanting it into their discursive patterns, while other scholars were taken aback and expressed suspicion toward these alien ‘pagan’ sciences. So the olden disputes over the relationship between reason and revelation, which had both plagued and enriched Judaeo-Christian intellectual motifs, surfaced anew in Islamic thought.¹²

In this intellectual milieu, the heralds of revelation, which were the exegetes, traditionalists and jurists, were pulled into the whirlpool of reason by the intellectual force of their adversaries. This forced exegetes, traditionalists and jurists to ask philosophical questions, provide prophetic-revelatory answers and vice-versa. The philosophers were also subsumed into the power of religious questions, which became deeply entrenched in their modes of reason. Hence, within the respective resistance of both sides, to one another, both were forced to explain themselves in the discursive modalities of their antagonists. The protagonists of the revelatory camp began to use reason as an instrument by which knowledge could be excavated from the prophetic sources. In a mirror reflection, the promoters of reason also began to use sources, deemed prophetic by the Islamic community, as instruments to plough information from the rational resources within man. The question around whether reason and revelation are sources of knowledge, in their own right, and the extent to which each source could be used, as an instrument, in relation to the other, opened a vast spectrum of positions.¹³

¹² See Donner, F., *Narratives of Islamic Origins: The Beginnings of Islamic Historical Writing*, p 148, 154.

¹³ See Zabeeh, F., *Avicenna’s Treatise on Logic*, p 1-4.
See Van Ess, J., *The Flowering of Muslim Theology*, p 153-190.

These schisms, in the epistemic framework, which were orally present in the Umayyad age, began to refract in texts, which dealt with both tiers of religious belief and practice, their philosophical equivalent being pure and practical reason, in the early 'Abbasid era. The Mu'tazilites argued that reason is the bedrock according to which religious beliefs are to be understood. Hence, if the revelatory sources contradict what is known, through reason, to be true about God, revelation must be allegorized in accordance to the laws of reason. In opposition to them, the Ash'arites stressed that reason cannot attain to the truth of revelation, which meant that the revealed scriptures dominate over reason.¹⁴ A similar rift also emerged in the sphere of religious practice, such that a tendency toward incorporating rational principles in the process of jurisprudence (*usul al-fiqh*) contested with traditionalist tendencies (*ahl al-hadith*), which bracketed the role of reason in its methods of mining the practical duties of the Islamic faith from its sources. These same schisms, regarding belief and practice, affected all sub-Islamic communities, however, the manifestation of those motifs, in text, would come about much later in the Shi'ite community, taking a life of its own in their midst.¹⁵

The vast geography, under 'Abbasid control, stretched the empire too thin. Due to the throttled communication between imperial institutions, over vast spaces, the empire began to administratively fracture into its constituent provinces, during the last quarter of the 2nd/8th century. This decentralized rule of the 'Abbasids came to an end, in 334/945, when the Shi'ite Dalamite Buwayhids captured Baghdad. The end of the 'Abbasid empire ushered in an epoch, dominated by the rule of non-Arabian Muslim empires. Pockets of Shi'ite communities lived in Mesopotamia and parts of Persia, many of whom had originally disseminated from the garrison city of Kufa, which was brought to proto-Shi'ism by 'Alī himself. With the rise of the

¹⁴ See El-Bizri, N., "God: Essence and Attributes" in *Classical Islamic Theology*, p 121-137.

¹⁵ See Nasr, H., *Islamic Philosophy from its Origin to the Present*, p 49-63.

Buwayhids, which was also accompanied with the major occultation of the twelfth Imam of the ‘Alid line, two Shi‘ite schools in the centers of Baghdad and Qum begin to take textual form.¹⁶ Baghdad was a cosmopolitan city which was inhabited by a vast spectrum of Islamic sects. Qum, on the other hand, was inhabited almost solely by Ash‘ari Arabs, Imamī immigrants from Kufa. Those two divergent demographics of Qum and Baghdad echoed in their dissimilar epistemic views, which were voiced by the respective Shi‘ite communities in both cities.¹⁷

The Baghdad school, spear-headed by Abu ‘abd Allah Muhammad b. Muhammad b. al-Nu‘man (b.948-d.1022), known as al-Shaykh al-Mufīd, echoed the Mu‘tazilite epistemic methods, such that revelation, a Shi‘ite cast of it in this case, was deemed to be accessible by reason alone. Hence, the corpus which the Baghdad school produced largely pertained to the category of speculative theology (*kalam*).¹⁸ Under al-Mufīd, his student al-Sharīf al-Murtaḍa (b.965/355-d.1044/436) and al-Murtaḍa’s student, Abū Ja‘far Muḥammad al-Tusī (b.385/996-d.460/1067), we see the consolidation between Shi‘ite belief and Mu‘tazilite rational theology, accompanied by the harmonization of Shi‘ite law, passed down orally and recently encoded in text, to Sunni rationalist legal theory (*usul al-fiqh*).¹⁹ In contradistinction, the Qum school stressed the primacy of revelation, focusing on compiling prophetic narrations which, unlike Sunni narrations, were transmitted via the twelve ‘Alid imams.²⁰ Although the crevice between these two schools would continue to exercise its divisive powers one important traditionalist by the name of Ya‘qub b. Ishāq al-Kulaynī al-Rāzī (b.255/869-d.329/941) attempted to forge a bridge between the two schools. Al-Kulaynī was born and trained in Qum after which he traveled to Baghdad where he compiled a text, named al-Kafī (The Ample) which attempted to answer the

¹⁶ See Moomen, M., *An Introduction to Shi‘i Islam: The History and Doctrines of Twelver Shi‘ism*, p 75.

¹⁷ See Haider, N., *Shi‘i Islam: An Introduction*, p 147.

¹⁸ See McDermott, M., *The Theology of al-Shaikh al-Mufid*.

¹⁹ See Stewart, Devin., *Islamic Legal Orthodoxy: Twelver Shi‘ite Response to the Sunni Legal System*, p 145.

²⁰ See Bar-Asher, M., *Scripture and Exegesis in Early Imami Shi‘ism: An Archeology of Human Sciences*, p 314.

rationalist concerns of the Baghdad school through the epistemic prisms of the Qummīs. But ultimately even attempts like this were bound to be pigeon-holed into one of the incommensurable sides, in this case the Qummī side. Hence, the epistemic schisms regarding the relationship between reason and revelation, which was embodied in the Sunni background, took a novel form in the Shi'ite sub-milieu. In 447/1055, Buwayhid Baghdad fell to the Seljuq Turks, which had burst out of Central Asia and adopted a staunch form of Sunni Islam. Yet, even during the zenith of Seljuq rule a dynasty of Shi'ite amirs, named the Mazayadids, originally recognized as vassals by the Buwayhids in 403/1012, ruled. Sayfu'd-Dawla Sadaqa (r. 479/1086-501/1108), the most influential Mazayadid ruler, built his capital between Najaf and Karbala' on the banks of the Euphrates at Hilla in 495/1101.²¹ The movement of the scholarly institution to Hilla gave way to a break with the calcified tradition that stressed the synthesis of reason and revelation executed by al-Tusī.²²

In 1258, a confederation of Mongolian tribes, under the direction of Gengis Khan (b.1162/d.1227), swarmed into the Islamic world and replaced the present power-structures. Hilla, as one of the few exceptions, was spared because it submitted to Mongol rule, the Ilkhanid. Also to the advantage of the Twelver Shi'ites was the presence of Nasīr al-Din al-Tusī (b.1201/d.1274), a Shi'ite philosopher, amongst the chief advisors of Hulagu Khan (b.1218/d.1265), the Mongol Khan. Due to this political situation, the centers of Shi'ite knowledge production shifted to Hilla, whose most celebrated scholar is al-'Allamah al-Hillī (d.726/1326).²³ Al-Hillī's son, Fakhr al-Muhaqqiqīn (d.771/1370), taught Muḥammad b. Makkī (d.786/1384), which would in turn succeed in establishing Jabal 'Amil (modern day south

²¹ See Stewart, D., *Islamic Legal Orthodoxy: Twelver Shi'ite Response to the Sunni Legal System*, p 87.

²² See Haider, N., *Shi'i Islam: An Introduction*, p 111-125.

See Stewart, D., *Islamic Legal Orthodoxy: Twelver Shi'ite Response to the Sunni Legal System*, p 111-173.

²³ See Moomen, M., *An Introduction to Shi'i Islam: The History and Doctrines of Twelver Shi'ism*, p 89-92.

Lebanon) as an important center for Shi'ite studies. However, Jabal 'Amil did not reach the level of importance of Hilla at the time. There is also an interesting connection between Fakhr al-Muhaqqiqīn and another one of his students, Sayyed Haydar al-Amoli (b.720/1320), an early Shi'ite theosopher. Amoli is deemed to be the first Shi'ite to incorporate the high-mysticism of Ibn al-'Arabi and his lineage into the Shi'ite tradition. This momentous action would have immense reverberations within Shi'ite thought, which will be felt most lucidly in the school of Isfahan under Saffavid rule three centuries later.²⁴ In 1335, the Ilkhanid state splintered amongst a multitude of feeble aspirants, which allowed a number of Shi'ite states to be established. In 782/1380, Timurlanq led the second devastating wave of the Mongolian invasion into Iran and, approximately twenty years after that, he had advanced into Syria and Turkey. Hilla remained the most important Shi'ite center for learning until 857/1453 when it was taken by 'Alī b. Muḥammad b. Falaḥ and subsequently controlled by the Mush'sha' state, which was very harsh against the Shi'ites. The rise of the Musha'sha' state forced the Shi'ite scholarly hierarchy to reassemble in Jabal 'Amil. This social circumstance explains why the Safavid state called upon scholars from Jabal 'Amil, not Hilla, as it began to consolidate power in 1501.²⁵

The Safavid dynasty has its origin, during the 1300's, in a mystical Sufi order named al-Safawiyya. The founder of the order was shaykh Ṣafi-al-Din (1252-1334), who hailed from northwest Persia. The leadership of the order persisted under Ṣafi-al-Din's son, Ṣadr al-Din (d. 1391-92), Khaja 'Alī (d. 1427), Jonayd (d. 1460) and Haydar (1460-88). The Safawiyya order underwent two main changes over the years. Firstly, the order gradually adopted Twelver Shi'ite doctrines and secondly the order became militant under Jonayd and Haydar. Persia has large dry

²⁴ See Kohlberg, E., "Amoli, Sayyed Baha'-al-Din" *Encyclopedia Iranica*, 2016.

²⁵ See Arjomand, S., *The Shadow of God and the Hidden Imam: Religion, Political Order, and Societal Change in Shi'ite Iran from the Beginning to 1890*, p 70.

plains, receiving minimal rainfall, which stifles the possibilities of agrarian life and encourages a pastoral nomadic lifestyle. Nomadic Turkic tribes of the central Asian steppes, which had trickled into Persia over the ages, inhabited those vast arid spaces. In the 1500's and the 1600's the nomadic tribes, who consisted of one-third of the Persian population, began to assemble themselves into tribal confederations. The urban centers of Persia, on the other hand, were mostly inhabited by ethnic Persians, called Tajiks. Most of the supporters of the Safawiyya order were Turkic in origin such that tight tribal connections and nomadic lifestyle patterns had sustained their warrior spirit. The militarization of the order, under Jonayd and Haydar, was only possible due to this situation.²⁶

In 1501, under shaykh Haydar's son, Shah Isma'īl I (b.1487/d.1524), the militant Safawiyya order became a full-fledged dynasty. Under Saffavid rule the Turks were, for the most part, employed in the military while the Tajiks were placed in the administrative institutions of the state. Shah Ism'ail I was succeeded by Shah Tahmasp (b.1514-d.1576), in 1524, who attempted to clear the residues of folk Twelver Shi'ism, manifest in the Turkic tribes, and unify Persia under orthodox 'urban' Twelver Shi'ism. Tahmasp brought scholars from Lebanon, most prominently Shaykh 'Alī Karakī 'Amelī (b.865/1461-d.940/1534), who were entrusted with converting Persia, a long, often violent, process which eventually succeeded. Shah Tahmasp's reign, which ended in 1576, was succeeded by Shah Isma'īl II (b.1537-d.1577), for two years, and Shah Moḥammad Khoda-banda, who ruled from 1578-87. Under these two Shahs, the Safavid empire continued to be preserved from Ottoman and Uzbek military onslaught. Shah 'Abbās I (b.1571-d.1629), who's reign lasted from 1587 to 1629, followed Khoda-banda. 'Abbās

²⁶ See Haider, N., *Shi'i Islam: An Introduction*, p 155-166.

I was renowned for his ability to consolidate the state, centralize power, conquer lost territories and invigorate the intellectual culture of the empire.²⁷

Not only was Shah ‘Abbās I a brilliant politician who succeeded in stabilizing the empire, he was also interested in the pursuit of knowledge, which manifested as his unconditioned endorsement of the religious institution, allowing it to flourish without constraint. The appointment of shaykh al-Baha‘ī al-‘Amelī (b.1547-d.1621), a Shi‘ite religious scholar with Sufi leanings, as the ‘Shaykh al-Islam’ of the empire portrays Shah ‘Abbās I’s open religiosity. During this Saffavid ‘golden age’, heterodox mysticism, within which the pre-dynastic Safavids thrived, Twelver Shi‘ite orthodox religiosity, embodied in the scholarly genealogies of the Lebanese scholars who had immigrated to Iran, and Hellenic philosophy, which had become part and parcel of the Islamic educational system, all interwove. Under the aegis of a series of prolific scholars such as Mīr Dāmād (b.1561-d.1631), Mīr Findrinskī, Mulla Sadra (b.1572-d.1640) and al-Fayḍ al-Kāshānī, a unique school, named and reified as the School of Isfahan by Henry Corbin and Hossein Nasr, emerged. The School of Isfahan considered demonstrative proof, mystical intuition and divine revelation (*Burhan, ‘Irfan and Quran*) to be indispensable pathways in the attainment of true knowledge.²⁸ This trinity of true knowledge became the mantra of the scholars associated with the school.²⁹

It is arguable that the epistemic formula which synthesized demonstrative proof, mystical intuition and divine revelation into a singularity was realized in al-Fayḍ al-Kāshānī’s works. While Mīr Dāmād, Mīr Findrinskī and Mulla Sadra are renowned as philosophers and mystics al-Kāshānī, on the other hand, can simultaneously be categorized in the revelatory camp, Sufi camp

²⁷ See Algar, H., “Fayz-e Kāshānī, Molla Mohsen-Mohammad.” *Encyclopedia Iranica*.

²⁸ See Bidarfar, M., introduction to *‘Ilm al-Yaqīn* by al-Fayḍ al-Kāshānī, p 6.

²⁹ See Kamal, M., *Mulla Sadra’s Transcendent Philosophy*, p 24-41.

See Bidarfar, M., introduction to *‘Ilm al-Yaqīn* by al-Fayḍ al-Kāshānī, p 50-56.

and rationalist camp, hence, being renowned, as a traditionalist, exegete, mystic and philosopher at once. It seems that al-Kāshānī was an example of a scholar out of the Isfahan School who was able to actualize its epistemic mantra. This is evident in his intellectual genealogy for both his teachers and his students range from extreme promulgators of the pure revelatory method, such as his teacher, Majid al-Bahrānī, and his student, Muḥammad Baqir al-Majlisī (b.1616-d.1698), to the most philosophically inclined, such as his teacher Mulla Sadra and his student Qadī Sa‘id al-Qummī (b.1639-d.1691).³⁰

B. Al-Kāshānī’s Biography³¹

Al-Fayḍ al-Kāshānī, lived under the rule of several Safavid Shahs, during the empire’s zenith; Shah ‘Abbās I (b.1571-d.1629), Shah Safī I (b.1611-d.1642), Shah ‘Abbās II (b.1632-1666), Shah Suleiman (b.1648-d.1694) and Sultan Hosayn (b.1668-d.1726). Al-Fayḍ al-Kāshānī was born to a family of religious scholars, in Kāshān. His father taught him the exoteric sciences, such as jurisprudence, exegesis, hadith and logic, during his youth. In 1618/9, at age twenty, he traveled to Isfahan to pursue his learning, however, after one year in Isfahan he moved to Shiraz to deepen his knowledge of jurisprudence and hadith with a leading Akhbarī scholar of the time, named Majed al-Bahrānī. Al-Bahrānī passed away, a few months after, which pushed al-Kāshānī back to Isfahan where he encountered Baha’ al-dīn al-‘Amilī and Mīr Dāmād, both of whom were erudite scholars in the intellectual sciences. Al-Kāshānī’s second stay in Isfahan did not last long either and, in 1029/1620, he went on the pilgrimage to Mecca, after which, he continued his

³⁰ See Jambet, C., *The Act of Being: The Philosophy of Revelation in Mulla Sadra*, p 19-41.

³¹ See Saghage-Biria, M., *Al-Fayḍ al-Kāshānī (1589-1680) on Self-supervision and Self-accounting*, p 7-34. See Algar, H., “Fayz-e Kāshānī, Molla Mohsen-Mohammad.” *Encyclopedia Iranica*, 2016. See al-Kāshānī, M., *‘Ilm al-Yaqīn* commented upon by Muḥsin Bidarfar.

study of Hadith under Muḥammad b. Hasan b. Zayn-al-Dīn ‘Amelī (d.1011/1602). Eventually, al-Kāshānī was drawn back to Persia due to his thirst for the esoteric sciences. This quest eventually led him to Qum, where he was initiated into mysticism and illuminist philosophy, for eight years, under Mulla Sadra. He states that being engaged in spiritual exercises and divine contemplations for so long opened his heart to inward realities.³²

Eventually al-Kāshānī married Mulla Sadra’s daughter and, in 1042/1632-33, accompanied him back to his native city, Shiraz. After three years in Shīrāz, al-Kāshānī returned to his birthplace, in Kāshān. Whilst he was in Kāshān, Shah Safī (r.1038-52/1629-42) invited him to settle in Isfahan, which he refused to do; however, al-Kāshānī responded affirmatively to Shah Safī’s successor, Shah ‘Abbas II (r.1052-77/1642-66), who offered him the same invitation. ‘Abbas II made al-Kāshānī the leader of the Friday prayer, at Isfahan, and worked with him in order to tighten the implementation of shari‘ah law in the empire. As a crystallization of this process, al-Kāshānī wrote a text, named ‘The Kingly Mirror’ (*Aīna-yī shahī*), which was dedicated to the Shah.³³ Despite his proximity to the Shah, al-Kāshānī was severely attacked by exoteric religious scholars, who accused him of being affiliated with Sufism. Three tracts were written by Muḥammad Sharīf Qumī, ‘Alī b. Muḥammad Shahidī and Muḥammad Taher Qumī, respectively, against al-Kāshānī, denouncing him as a heretic. This ordeal suggests that his more esoteric and philosophical texts were accessible at the time, such that they were written before, and/or during, his affiliation with the government.³⁴

This context is likely to have had an influence upon al-Kāshānī, which is reflected in his attempts to reformulate his mystical and philosophical conclusions in a way that would bypass

³² See Bidarfar, M., introduction to *‘Ilm al-Yaqīn* by al-Fayḍ al-Kāshānī.

³³ See Arjomand, S., *Authority and Political Culture in Shi‘ism*, p 267-270.

³⁴ See Bidarfar, M., introduction to *‘Ilm al-Yaqīn* by al-Fayḍ al-Kāshānī, p 5-17.

friction with exoteric religiosity. One of his texts, named ‘The Hidden Words’ (*al-Kalimat al-Maknuna*), which used the lexicon of the school of Ibn al-‘Arabī, was rewritten, as ‘The Eye’s Pleasure’ (*Qurat al-‘Ayn*), using the semantics of the Qur’an and the Hadith, instead of the words of Ibn al-‘Arabī’s school. It is possible that al-Kāshānī was driven to reformulate al-Ghazālī’s ‘Revival of the Religious Sciences’ (*Ihya’ ‘Ulum al-Dīn*), under a similar pre-text, mostly by exchanging Sunni hadith with Shi’ite hadith of similar meaning.³⁵ Towards the end of his life, al-Kāshānī moved towards hadith, rather than mysticism and philosophy, which gave fruit to one of the three grand compendiums of Shi’ite hadith, in the Safavid era, named *al-Wafī*. However, despite this shift, towards the end of his life, al-Kāshānī’s comments on the narrations he provided, as explanations of the hadiths, were deeply neo-platonic and mystical in nature. This dynamic symbiosis between reason and revelation, such that each is a distinct source of knowledge, which is also inseparable from the other, is the core basis upon which al-Kāshānī is greatly contested.³⁶ To further complicate the situation, this symbiotic methodology, in the sphere of belief, is not extended, by al-Fayḍ, into that of practice, such as worship, transactions and personal affairs. Rather, in his early career, al-Kāshānī wrote a tract about the rational principles of jurisprudence (*uṣūl al-fiqh*) but, later in his life, he receded from this position and became a staunch traditionalist, writing a tract, named ‘The Ship of Salvation’ (*Safinat-u-Najat*), wherein he denounces the principalists (*uṣūlīs*), those who use reason to derive practical religious rulings, as heretics.³⁷

³⁵ See *ibid.*, p. 28-35.

³⁶ See *ibid.*, p 37-42.

³⁷ See Algar, H., " Fayz-e Kāshānī, Molla Mohsen-Mohammad." *Encyclopedia Iranica*, 2016.

C. Al-Kāshānī's Works

Al-Kāshānī's texts can be divided into several categories. The first category pertains to his exegetical and hadith works, which employ the literature of the revelation, as the methodological spine of text and flesh out the revelatory conclusions by using reason and mysticism. The main texts in this category are 'The Pristine Exegesis' (*Tafsīr al-Sāfī*), its summary being 'The Most-Pristine Exegesis' (*Tafsīr al-Aṣfā*)³⁸, and the grand hadith compendium 'The Sufficient' (*al-Wāfī*), which is summarized in 'The Healing' (*al-Shāfī*). The 'Pristine Exegesis' (*Tafsīr al-Sāfī*) is structured like a typical exegetical text, which comments on each of the Qur'anic verses in sequential order. Al-Kāshānī's commentary on the Qur'anic verses consists of heavy recourse to Shi'ite narrations accompanied by scant references to philosophical and mystical literary motifs. *Al-Wāfī* and *al-Shāfī* are also typical hadith texts, which are split into roots (*uṣūl*) and branches (*furū*), strongly echoing the structure of al-Kulaynī's aforementioned seminal hadith text 'The Ample' (*al-Kāfī*). In *al-Shāfī*, for example, the roots are divided into the books of intellect and ignorance, knowledge and fathoming, divine unity and glory, God's making and creation, prophecy and imamate, test and trial, faith and its opposite, virtues and vices, social intercourse and rights, dress and beauty, sermons and messages and, lastly, death and resurrection. While the branches are divided into the books of prayer, almsgiving, fasting, pilgrimage, holy war (*jihad*) and politics, court and witnesses, livelihood and gains, transactions and usury, eating and drinking, marriage and children, divorce and waiting

³⁸ Al-Kāshānī, M., *Tafsīr al-Sāfī*.

periods (*mudad*), preparation of the dead and inheritance. Each of the aforementioned books are further divided into sections (*abwab*).³⁹

The second category consists of theological texts, which are methodologically made up of a combination of both reason and revelation. ‘Knowledge of Certitude’ (*‘Ilm al-Yaqīn*), which is summarized in ‘The Sciences’ (*al-Ma‘arif*), are both complete theological texts that deal with all the major themes of Imamī theological discourse. ‘Knowledge of Certitude’ and ‘The Sciences’ are structured according to the following Qur’anic verse: {The messenger believes in that which hath been revealed unto him from his Lord and (so do) believers. Each one believes in Allah, His angels, His scriptures and His messengers.}⁴⁰ ‘Knowledge of Certainty’ is roughly divided into four sections, which discuss Allah, the angels, the scriptures, the messengers, within which he includes a discussion on the imamate, and the last day, the importance of which is clearly discernible, not from this verse, but from other verses in the Qur’an.⁴¹

The third category consists of his mystical literature, wherein he depended upon the immediate disclosure of the divine as the foundation, employing reason and revelation only as affirmations of the truths of mystical unveiling. Al-Kāshānī’s mystical corpus consists of Sufi divans and, the aforementioned, ‘Hidden Words’ (*al-Kalimat al-Maknūna*), which he also summarized as a text he named ‘The Treasured Words’ (*al-Kalimat al-Makhzūna*). An interesting interplay between raw Islamic mysticism, often relayed in ecstatic poetry, Shi‘ite extremism (*ghulw*), communicated through rapturous sermons attributed to Imam ‘Alī and the

³⁹ See al-Kāshānī, M., *al-Shāfi*.

⁴⁰ Khalidi, Tarif., 2009, *The Qur’an: A New Translation*. Qur’an, 2:285.

⁴¹ Qur’an, 2:177. {Virtue rather is: He who believes in God, the Last Day, the angels, the Book and the prophets }

See al-Kāshānī, M., *‘Ilm al-Yaqīn*.

theoretical high-Sufism of Ibn al-‘Arabī, written in a complex mystico-philosophical style, is clearly visible in al-Kāshānī’s mystical literature.⁴²

The fourth category consists of philosophical texts, which use reason as the methodological backbone and build upon it with revelatory and mystical resources. These texts, such as ‘Certitude Itself’ (*‘Ayn al-Yaqīn*) and its summary ‘The Roots of the Sciences’ (*Uṣūl al-Ma‘aref*), are structured according to topics which belong to the genre of Islamic philosophy. ‘Certitude Itself’ (*‘Ayn al-Yaqīn*) is divided into an introduction and two general themes (*maqasid*), which are further divided into root (*aṣl*), connector (*waṣl*) and section (*faṣl*). The introduction is divided into five sections: on the virtue of the science of divine unity, the nobility of its people and the path of its attainment, on the scarcity of the people of God, the difficulty of this reality and its obscurity, on the encouragement of concealing the secrets, on a portrayal of the types of people and, finally, the concordance of reason and divine law. The first theme is named ‘on the principles of the sciences’ and is further divided into twenty-four sections. The names of the sections in the first theme are as follows: on the analogies between the book and the sunna, on important conditions, on existence and non-existence, on knowledge and ignorance, on light and darkness, on life and death, on faith and infidelity, on goodness and evil, on pleasure and pain, on wealth and poverty⁴³, on quiddity and its distinctions, on the one and the many, on the prior and the posterior, on the ancient and the transient, on potentiality and its opposite [i.e. actuality], on cause and effect, on substance and accident, on dimensions, sides and borders, on motion and stillness, on time and now, on space and place, on the roots of states and the fashion by which the otherworld is generated from the first world and the difference between them, on

⁴² See Lawson, T., *The Hidden Words of Fayd Kāshānī*.

⁴³ What is being referred to here is ontological, not economic, wealth and poverty. This particular philosophical lexicon is distinct to the Islamic milieu having clear resonances with the following verse: {God is wealthy, and it is you who are poor} (Qur’an, 47:38.)

the principles of existence and His unity exalted and, finally, the modality of His emanation of existence.

The second theme in ‘Certitude Itself’ (*‘Ayn al-Yaqin*) is named, ‘on the science of the heavens and the earth and what is between them’, which consists of twenty-two sections. The names of the sections in the second theme are as follows: on the structure of the world and the simplicity its corpus, on the nature of the motions of the celestials and what follows that, on the size of the corpuses and the dimensions, on the telos of celestial motions, on the creation of compounds, on the beings of the air, on the mountains and the mineral rocks, on the plants, on the animals, on the dissection of the bodies of the perfect animal (i.e. human) and its benefits, on the angels which are assigned to the perfect animal, on the transcendence of the soul of the perfect animal, on the human as such, on the obedience of the universes to the human due to his godly vicegerency and the clarification of the vicegerency, on the priority of the creation of spirits over bodies, which are posterior in creation, and the decent of Adam from the paradise, on the narrative of Adam and the tree, on the marvels and wonders of human signs, on the jinn and the demons, on the incipience of the cosmos, that the world is created in the best possible orders, on the coursing love, desire, worship and remembrance in all existents and, finally, on that the voyage of all things is to God-exhaled.⁴⁴

The summary of ‘Certitude Itself’ (*‘Ayn al-Yaqin*), ‘The Roots of the Sciences’ (*Uşul al-Ma‘arif*) is divided into an introduction, which is followed by ten chapters (*bab*), each of which is also further divided into ‘root’, ‘connector’ and ‘section’. These chapters successively discuss: existence and non-existence, knowledge and ignorance, quiddities and their determinations,

⁴⁴ See al-Kāshānī, M., *‘Ayn al-Yaqīn*.

cause and effect, renewed natures and spirits, motion and space-time, heavens and the earth, good-evil and pleasure-pain and, finally, the principles of various states of being and the realities of beings. The introduction, which in ‘Certitude Itself’ heavily quoted hadith and Qur’anic verses is sizably smaller in ‘The Roots of the Sciences’ in contrast to the original. Also chapters such as those on faith and infidelity and on the narrative of Adam and the tree, amongst other, are excluded. This peeling away of chapters with blatant religious lexicon, affirms that al-Kāshānī’s methodological foundation of ‘Certitude Itself’ was demonstrative proof and portrays his employment of the sources of revelation as an aid to strengthen his rational arguments.⁴⁵

This rich heritage, left by al-Fayḍ al-Kāshānī, in several disciplines which were engaged in the Islamic world, during his day and age, has made him an emblem of the well-rounded religious scholar. The *al-Fayziyya* seminary in Qum, where important 20th century scholars, such as Ruḥallah al-Khomeinī and Muḥammad-Husayn Tabatabaeī, would later study and/or teach, is named after al-Fayḍ al-Kāshānī. Al-Fayḍ’s affiliation with the state, through Shah ‘Abbas II, obviously had an influence on his writing style since he was exposed to exoteric jurists, which felt uneasy with his strong mystical and philosophical tendencies, as was mentioned above. However, the extent to which this is so can only be disclosed when al-Kāshānī’s manuscripts are ordered chronologically. Whether or not there is a methodological shift in al-Kāshānī’s writings, due to his affiliation with the Saffavid court, is yet to be discovered. Nonetheless, his legacy which lived on through his incommensurable students, which ranged from mystics, such as ‘Abd al-Razzaq al-Lahījī, to philosophers, such as Qadī Sa‘id al-Qummi, to narrators of prophetic hadith, such as Muḥammad Baqir al-Majlisi, seem to suggest that he considered each demonstrative proof, mystical intuition and revelatory faith (*Burhan*, *‘Irfan and Qur’an*) to be

⁴⁵ See Al-Kāshānī, M., *Uṣūl al-Ma‘aref*.

simultaneous paths to knowledge till the very end of his life. This is suggestive of what might have been al-Kāshānī's view such that he would have considered these three niches of knowledge to have unique inherent dynamics, each mutually irreducible to the other, while still being, at their deepest core, one. This synthesis of philosophical, mystical and religious resources, that does not reduce any of them to the others, relays al-Kāshānī's interaction with diverse teachers and students, which belong to a vast spectrum of methodologies. This thesis will focus on the philosophical themes of: 1-origin, 2-emanation and 3-return in al-Kāshānī's 'Certitude Itself' to analyze the way in which reason, revelation and mysticism are interrelated by al-Kāshānī in the text.

D. The Division of Knowledge into Theoretical and Practical

One particularly pivotal equation al-Kāshānī executes is the one between pure and practical reason, on one hand, and the roots (*uṣūl al-dīn*) and branches of religion (*furū' al-dīn*), on the other. The distinction between pure and practical reason comes from the Aristotelian tradition and al-Kāshānī attempts to incorporate it into his scheme. However, he is keen to show that this same division is present in the revelatory sources. He writes:

“Wisdom is constituted of knowledge, of the truths of existents in-themselves, in proportion to the ability of mankind, and action, which is how man ought to act, to better all his states. Both of which were pointed to by our prophet -peace be upon him and his progeny- to the first in his saying: “Show us things as they are” and to the second: “Act [righteously] as God acts [righteously].” The friend (*al-Khalil* i.e. prophet Abraham), upon our prophet and him be peace, has also pointed to the first, in his saying: {Lord

grant me wisdom}⁴⁶ and to the second, in his saying: {and join me to the righteous}⁴⁷

There is no doubt that what is meant here is the two disciplines: the pure and the practical.

The benefit of pure [reason] is the carving of the form of the whole of existence -as it is in its organization and completion- in the human soul so that it [the human soul] may become an intelligible world, which corresponds to the existent world. All that is mentioned in [the theoretical sphere] resonates with the science of Divine Unity and its branches. The benefit of the practical, [on the other hand,] is the emptying of the human soul of vices and sweetening it with virtues such that it becomes a clear mirror within which the signs of Truth -majestic and high- are witnessed...All that is mentioned in [the practical sphere] resonates with the science of servant hood and its branches.

Then each of the two sections is divided into: What is the independently the sphere of the reason and what requires aid from [divine] law. Such that it is four sections.”⁴⁸

In this passage al-Kāshānī firstly distinguishes between belief and practice, in a religious sense, by quoting Qur’an and hadith. Next, he identifies this distinction, found in the revelatory sources, with the distinction between pure and practical reason, which is found in the Aristotelian corpus directly available to him through translations or indirectly through the writings of Ibn Sina. Finally, he discriminates between using revelation and reason in both pure and practical spheres. The final result is a quaternary division; 1-the use of revelation to understand belief and pure reason, 2-the use of reason to understand belief and pure reason, 3-the use of revelation to inform religious/rational practice and 4-the use of reason to inform religious/rational practice. Condensed into a passage like this one, the process of interweaving reason and revelation, which

⁴⁶ Qur’an, 26:83.

⁴⁷ Qur’an, 12:101.

⁴⁸ Al-Kāshānī, M., *‘Ayn al-Yaqīn*, p 16.

ground al-Kāshānī's whole project, assure his insistence on the preservation of a delicate harmony between the reasonable and revelatory from the very start.

E. Al-Kāshānī's Epistemic Methodology

“What encouraged me to write and gather this [text] are several matters:

One of them is: the breadth of my love for true sciences -demonstrative knowledge- and the intensity of my desire for knowledge of religious secrets, and the differentiating of its symbols...

Another one of them is: My will to synthesize the path of the first philosophers in their sciences and mysteries to what is present in the luminous disciplines of divine law showing that they are all in agreement. [I desire this] so that it may become manifest to the seeker of truth that there is no exclusivity between what [1-] the *intellects* of the wise sages, [2-] the people of struggles and seclusions, who are receptive to the presences, which come into their *hearts*, from the higher world, during its purity, and [3-] what has been spoken, of the roots of the sciences, by the *tongues* of the messengers and the prophets-God's blessings be upon them- in the revealed law.”⁴⁹

‘*Ayn al-Yaqīn* consists of chapters which deal with typical issues pertinent in Islamic metaphysics and ontology. However, al-Kāshānī does not limit himself to a purely philosophical methodology, rather, he integrates demonstrative proof, mystical intuition and the Islamic revelation throughout it. In the quote above al-Kāshānī mentions three groups of people: the wise sages, the people of struggles and the messengers-prophets. The wise sages are associated with

⁴⁹ Al-Kāshānī, M., ‘*Ayn al-Yaqīn*, p 16.

the intellect, the people of struggle with the heart and the messengers & prophets with divinely inspired speech. Thus, the trinity of demonstrative proof, mystical intuition and divine revelation (*Burhan, 'Irfan and Qur'an.*) gazes at us once again.

Al-Kāshānī's whole project can be understood as a deep integration of the available branches of knowledge, which were at his disposal in Saffavid Iran. Obviously this attests to the fact that al-Kāshānī was resting on a mount of historical debris within his socio-political context. However, from another perspective, this trinity of disciplines: reason, mysticism and revelation, seems to have a perennial reality, transcending the conditions of space and time. For even the most primitive hunter-gather societies participate in reason, mysticism and religion such that their communal fabric is constituted of 1- tool-makers, who build homes and create hunting instruments 2-shamans, who hold the keys to ecstatic rapture and 3- priests, who preserve the mythic and ritual horizons of a community. We have similar patterns in Vedic India between the Brahmin priests, the yogis and the philosophers-scientists or in Christendom with the ecclesiastic priests, the monks and the philosophers-scientists.⁵⁰ An inability to see a universality which cuts across these diverse societies is problematic and so is the inability to see the originality, inequality and incommensurability of each. In his attempt to harmonize the universal niches of knowledge; reason, mysticism and religion, which were found in a particular formation in his spacio-temporal context, al-Kāshānī can be seen as an incommensurable doorway, that can teach us about all human communities.

Throughout his writing al-Kāshānī recurrently stresses that all three sources of knowledge are in ultimate agreement. However, when studied closely his methodology turns out to be one which simultaneously respects the distinct borders of each of the disciplines as it

⁵⁰ See: Eliade, M., *Shamanism: Archaic Techniques of Ecstasy* trans. Willard R. Trask, p 4, 88, 186, 189.

affirms their ultimate union. Al-Kāshānī writes: “The intellect is akin to eyesight while [heavenly] law is analogous to [solar] radiance. For eyesight yields no benefit if the radiance outside it exists not and radiance is not perceivable if there is no eyesight.”⁵¹ This parable elucidates the fact that for al-Kāshānī reason and revelation have a symbiotic relationship. The full truth can only be reached when reason and revelation work together for any other path is impotent. However, in other passages al-Kāshānī seems to want to make the argument that even when one of the sources of knowledge is united to the other it could be simultaneously superior to it. He writes: “Revealed law is an intellect outside man and the intellect is a revealed law within man. They are not opposites, rather, they are united. Yet, know that the intellect in-itself is of minimal wealth since it barely attains to knowledge of universals and cannot access particulars. The [divine] law, [on the other hand], knows things in their universality and particularity, making manifest the particularities of belief.”⁵² In this particular passage it is clear that al-Kāshānī affirms the ultimate superiority of revelation over reason, however, to further complicate the situation al-Kāshānī affirms the exact opposite conclusion, reason’s superiority over revelation, in another aforementioned text, named ‘*aīna-yi shāhī*. He writes: “there is no doubt that intellect and divine law are nobler and more excellent than the other commanders (nature, habit, common law). Of these two, intellect is more excellent, more knowledgeable, and nobler, if it has reached perfection, since through intellect one can know the reality of each of the commanders and discern them from one another. In reality intellect is a revealed law within man, just as the revealed law is an intellect outside of man.”⁵³ The last sentence is identical to what he mentioned in ‘*Ayn al-Yaqīn* which suggests that al-Kāshānī is expounding the same

⁵¹ Al-Kāshānī, M., ‘*Ayn al-Yaqīn*, p 25.

⁵² *Ibid.*, p 26.

⁵³ Chittick, W., “Two Seventeenth-Century Persian Tracts on Kingship and Rulers” in *Authority and Political Culture in Shi’ism* edited by Said Arjomand, p 277.

epistemology in the two texts rather than having changed his mind. This lends itself to the fact that not only does al-Kāshānī see reason and revelation as symbiotic but he also seems to attest to a mutual superiority of each over the other. The way this potentially perplexing stance unfolds in al-Kāshānī's corpus is by virtue of his writing of several texts in different epistemic registers. In texts where he deems revelation as the reference point reason becomes inferior, whereas, in other texts, where he recognizes reason as the reference point revelation becomes subservient. Al-Kāshānī wants to argue that, from one aspect, revelation is superior to reason just as reason is superior to revelation, from another respect. By asserting the superiority of both sides he will be able to fully engage with each of the two sources of knowledge without undermining the inherent dynamic of each or oversimplifying it by subsuming one source of knowledge under the other source.

CHAPTER II

THE ORIGIN

“All attributes are lost within Him and all descriptions, other than His, break down. He signified Himself through Himself and He is elevated beyond the similitude of his creation. That is Allah your lord there is no God save Him.”⁵⁴

As a faithful pupil to his teacher (Mulla Şadra) al-Fayḍ al-Kāshānī asserted the truth of the singularity of existence (*waḥdat al-wujūd*). Under the influence of the theoretical mysticism of Muḥyī al-Dīn b. al-‘Arabī, Mulla Şadra philosophically argued for the singularity of existence (*waḥdat al-wujud*), bringing ibn al-‘Arabī’s project, which consisted of theorizing mysticism, to its logical conclusion. By philosophically proving the sayings attributed to the mystics, Şadra believed that he would have brought together both demonstrative proof and mystical unveiling, showing that both teach a singular truth in original ways. Şadra also used verses from the Qur’an and portions of the hadith to hammer the concordance of all three epistemic resources into the minds of his readers (or listeners). In the larger socio-political context, Ibn al-‘Arabī’s lofty mystical discourse, adopted by Mulla Şadra and al-Kāshānī, might have acted as a bridge, which connected the tribal rural mysticism, characteristic of the Turks, to the urbanized institutional bureaucracies, distinctive amongst the Tajiks. It is plausible to extrapolate that the absorption of the tribal mysticism, rampant amongst the pastoralist Turks, into the higher scholarly culture of the religious institution, via theoretical mysticism, might have acted as a conscious or unconscious attempt to fashion a medial discourse between that of urbanization and that of the

⁵⁴ Al-Kāshānī, M., *Ayn al-Yaqīn*, p 13.

rural confederations. It even suggestible that what was going on was a sort of urban colonization of the rural which is accented in Ṣadra's criticism of unsophisticated Sufism, in texts like 'Destroying the Idols of the Age of Ignorance' (*kasr asnam al-jahiliyya*) a path which was followed by al-Kāshānī. Hence, in this respect, it is plausible to view the socio-political situation and the epistemic discourses promulgated by the school of Isfahan as two mirrors, which mutually reflect one another.

Mulla Ṣadra argued that essences do not actually exist, rather, he asserted that they are produced by the imposition of conceptual limitations onto the unlimited reality of existence.⁵⁵ Ṣadra's very own teacher, Mīr Dāmād, had argued that essences are not illusions which derive from the imposition of conceptual limits upon unlimited reality, rather, he argued that essences are real limited existents, which ontologically derive their being from the unlimited reality of existence. The point of contestation was not whether existence was the primal reality over essence, for both asserted the ontological primacy of existence, rather, the tension arose as to whether essences were real or not.⁵⁶ By arguing for the unreality of essences, Ṣadra opened a philosophical doorway into the singularity of existence (*waḥdat al-wujud*), characteristic of mysticism, and by arguing for the reality of essences, Mīr Dāmād, in turn, preserved the necessary-contingent distinction, barring mystical non-duality, and hence, conserving traditional metaphysical philosophical discourse.⁵⁷

Following in his teacher's footsteps, al-Kāshānī, also, voiced a philosophical rendition of the singularity of existence. To fathom the significance of what al-Kāshānī is going after we

⁵⁵ See Al-Shirazi, S., *The Wisdom of the Throne*, trans. James Winston Morris, p 98-99.

⁵⁶ See Kamal, M., *Mulla Sadra's Transcendent Philosophy*, p 1-11.

⁵⁷ See Al-Shirazi, S., *The Wisdom of the Throne*, trans. James Winston Morris, p 95-96.

must be distinguish between the word, concept and reality of existence.⁵⁸ He writes: “the word to signify pen was put for an instrument which carves forms into a tablet, regardless of whether [the instrument] is made of bamboo, steel, otherwise. [It also does not matter if the instrument] is bodily or if the carving is sensible or intelligible.”⁵⁹ In this quotation al-Kāshānī seems to suggest that the signification of a word is not limited to either the sensible or the intelligible. By opening capacity within language, such that it can refer to sensible, intelligible and other referents, al-Kāshānī is able to utilize language in the vastest ways imaginable. The sensible word ‘existence’ is a visual or aural pattern, which has been designated by an individual or a group, as a sensual sign, which signifies the reality or concept of existence. The intelligible ‘concept of existence’, on the other hand, is what makes thought possible, for a sensual perception or a cognitive conception cannot ‘exist’ and not-‘exist’ from the same respect. This reality manifests, in thought, as the law of identity ($x \text{ is } x$) and the law non-contradiction ($x \text{ is not } -x$), and it is this that makes all thinking possible. Due to his commitment to the singularity of existence, al-Kāshānī considers sensual words and cognitive concepts to be modalities (*shu’un*) of the reality of existence, for if existence was not then nothing could be, neither words nor concept.⁶⁰ Al-Kāshānī writes: “nothing exists in itself save existence, for if anything, other-than-it, existed in itself then existence would be external to that thing, such that its existence would be prior to existence...which is impossible.” Hence, in al-Kāshānī’s scheme, all sensible and intelligible reality, of which words and concepts are sub-realities, act as illusionary finite existents, which manifest the reality of existence’s infinity. This rational exposition has clear roots in both mysticism and revelation. Mysticisms of diverse cultures seem to agree on the non-

⁵⁸ See *ibid.*, p 122.

⁵⁹ Al-Kāshānī, M., *Ayn al-Yaqīn*, p 29.

⁶⁰ See Izutsu, T., “The Basic Structure of Metaphysical Thinking in Islam” from ‘The concept and reality of existence’.

dual nature of reality, such that appearances, in the appearance-reality distinction, become illusions to be transcended rather than realities to be dealt with.⁶¹ From a revelatory perspective, on the other hand, it is most likely rooted in the Qur'anic assertion that all things are signs of God and that the sole purpose of creatures is to trace all signs, themselves included, back to their source with God. {We shall show them our signs on the horizons and in their own souls}.⁶² {Verily the signs are with God}.⁶³ {What is with you comes to an end and what is with God remains for ever}.⁶⁴ Or more blatantly in the following verse: {He is the First and the Last, the Manifest and the Unmanifest}.⁶⁵

For al-Kāshānī, the reality of existence is the expulsion of non-existence, and non-existence is nothing, such that there is nothing outside the reality of existence, to which it relates. This entails that the reality of existence is *non-relational* meaning it is absolute (*sirf*). Since nothing is outside the reality of existence it is unlimited, unbounded, infinite and one. Al-Kāshānī writes:

God -exalted- is true uncontaminated absolute existence while pure non-existence has no essence, no effect and no differentiation, since it is pure nothingness. All existents that are other than God are pure non-existence, however, the creation of God is an intermingling of existence with non-existence. [Creatures] are compound beings composed of existence from God, which is its form, and non-existence from itself, which differentiates its existence [from others] and particularizes it in accordance with its essential potency and receptivity in God's foreknowledge. [It is by virtue of this pre-

⁶¹ The distinction between maya and samadhi in Advaita Vedanta, samsara and nirvana in Buddhism, mortality and immortality in Daoism, the uncreated and the created in Hesychasm, the one and the many in Platonic and Neo-Platonic thought and so forth.

⁶² Qur'an 41:53.

⁶³ Qur'an 29:50.

⁶⁴ Qur'an 16:97.

⁶⁵ Qur'an 57:3.

eternal receptivity] that it was able to respond to the divine command “be” which is its matter, referred to as ‘water’ in the tongue of revelation {and His throne was upon the water}⁶⁶. Matter signifies effortless receptivity in response to the [divine] command, just like water easily accepts formation, however, [despite the fact that all water is supple] some parts of the water are pure and fresh while others are salty and brackish.⁶⁷

In this condensed passage al-Kāshānī uses both religious and philosophical lexicon to get his idea across. Also the non-dual singularity, characteristic of mysticism, at work in this passage, is all too clear. According to al-Kāshānī, God, pure existence, is non-relational because non-existence, which is nothing, is outside Him, while all of creation is relational comprised of a comingling of existence and non-existence. Hence, all creatures are privative existents, which have been contracted to a differentiated mode of existence according to their pre-eternal essence, known within God. This pre-eternal potentiality out of which all privative existents emerge is equated to the notion of water as it is mentioned in the revelation. Al-Kāshānī also uses the opportunity to include a hadith from the fifth Shi‘ite imam to perfect his synthesis further: “Our master al-Baqir has said: “If people knew how creation was initiated no one would disagree. For, before creation, God most-high spoke to the waters saying: ‘Be fresh water! For I will create my paradise from thee and the people who obey me. Then He spoke again saying: ‘Be brackish and salty! For I will create my fire from thee and those who disobey me.’ Then he commanded both of them to mix and it is for this reason that the believer is begotten from an unbeliever and an unbeliever is begotten from a believer.”⁶⁸ Here al-Kāshānī wants to portray that although the

⁶⁶ Qur’an, 11:7.

⁶⁷ Al-Kāshānī, M., *‘Ayn al-Yaqīn*, p 37.

⁶⁸ Ibid., p 37.

There is an interesting correlation in this hadith with the Babylonian epic of creation, the *Enuma Elish*, which describes the intermingling of Apsu, the primordial fresh water, with Tiamut, the primeval salty water.

demonstrative language of philosophy and the mythical language of revelation are vastly different, in the end, they both point towards the same kernel of truth.

Ultimately, al-Fayḍ is pointing towards the absurdity of beginning at any other place than the reality of existence. For before mapping the dynamics between the sensible and the intelligible; both must have real existence. So whatever we do we always originate in and return to the reality of existence. To strike an analogy of this argument, we would assert that, in order to be able to make a square-shaped-paper, paper is required. For if one does not have paper then one cannot make a paper square. Similarly, if existence is *not* then there would be pure non-existence, which is not the case, so existence is. Obviously the huge elephant in the room pertains to why finite sensations, cognitions and their complex interactions seem to exist. In other words, al-Kāshānī's argument, about the singularity of existence (*waḥdat al-wujūd*), is faced with a torrent of questions, regarding the multiplicity of essences or quiddities (*māhiyat*).⁶⁹

Al-Kāshānī responds in his characteristic succinct style, and makes important distinctions, which put him on the way to solve the problem. He writes:

“There are two perspectives (*i'tibārān*) in existence. The first is existence's being in itself, which is the truth. From this aspect there is no multiplicity, no composition, no attribute, no adjective, no name, no definition, no relation, no judgment but rather pure goodness. The other perspective pertains to his [Existence's] relation to contingents and the dawning of His light upon the essences of existents. For He -exalted- constrains Himself in His existence such that His contraction offers the suitable attributes for each of the contingent essences. This constraining is named 'creation' and 'other'; [in this perspective] the Exalted one is attributed with every attribute, named by every name,

⁶⁹ See Nasr, H., *Islamic Philosophy from its Origin to the Present*, p 63-85.

accepting all judgments, contracted to every definition, perceived by every faculty, of sight, hearing, reason and understanding. This is due to the permeation of His essential light in all things, [a light], which is sanctified above parting and division or incarnation in spirits and bodies...[Finally,] His manifestation in [creation] and His constraining of Himself in it and its conditions do not negate his existential wealth, which is above all...and His unconditionedness that is beyond all conditions.”⁷⁰

In this passage, al-Kāshānī wants to parse between two levels of his analysis, each with its unique perspective on the relationship between the reality of existence and the essences. The first view focuses on the singularity of the reality of existence, which considers essences to be mere illusions, imposed on the unencumbered reality of existence. From this perspective al-Fayḍ sees nothing but the reality of existence, he even wants to argue that conditioned essences are completely subsumed in the singularity of the reality of existence. This outlook possibly has its roots in the Akbarian tradition’s notion of the most-holy effusion (*al-fayḍ al-aqdas*) and/or in the Shi‘ite extremist notion of the roll (*al-kawr*). The absolute singularity of existence is accented here, to such an extent, that nothing at all escapes its oneness. The second view focuses on the relationship between unbounded existence and bounded essences, with each of the two preserving a peculiar ontological originality. The way this bifurcation between existence and essence occurs is via contraction, such that God’s unconditionedness inflects upon itself into conditioned existent. This ‘dualism’ is also a philosophical reformulation of the Akbarian tradition’s notion of the holy effusion (*al-fayḍ al-muqaddas*) and/or the Shi‘ite extremist notion

⁷⁰ Al-Kāshānī, M., *‘Ayn al-Yaqīn*, p 41.

of the cycle (*al-dawr*). Hence, once again we see that al-Kāshānī's commitment to the singularity of existence acts as the fulcrum of his whole philosophical edifice.⁷¹

The first philosophical chapter of *'Ayn al-Yaqīn* is on existence and non-existence, which affirms the singularity of existence. This first chapter subsumes the following seven chapters, which discuss knowledge and ignorance, light and darkness, life and death, faith and infidelity, goodness and evil, pleasure and pain and [ontological] wealth and poverty, into its hermeneutical circle. Knowledge, light, life, faith, goodness, pleasure and ontological wealth are said to be rooted in existence, whereas, ignorance, darkness, death, infidelity, evil, pain and ontological poverty are, according to al-Kāshānī, sourced in non-existence. He writes: "Knowledge... and ignorance return to existence and non-existence."⁷² "Both the light...and the darkness also return to existence and non-existence...for existence and light are one reality...and were it not for light neither intelligible nor sensible nor imaginable would be perceived."⁷³ "Life, like knowledge and light, is rooted in existence just as its opposite is sourced in non-existence."⁷⁴ "Faith is rooted in knowledge, which is in turn rooted in an aspect of existence...while unbelief, which means concealment and covering, is sourced in ignorance, which is rooted in an aspect of non-existence."⁷⁵ "Just like existence is leveled into intelligible planes stacked one above the other in an ontic gradation, similarly faith has degrees, which are leveled in intensity and weakness."⁷⁶ "Good and evil also go back to existence and non-existence, because existence is pure goodness

⁷¹ See Al-Qaysari, D., *Sharh Fuṣuṣ al-Hikam*, ed. Hasan Hasan Zada al-Amuli.

"In general, in Isma'ili and Twelver Shi'ism, time is divided into two major periods one "before the day of Alast and one "after". Thus, *kawr* might be taken to refer to the 'time' of the pristine, unmanifested godhead the period prior to the movement indicated in the famous hadith qudsi "I was a hidden treasure", while *dawr* might be taken to refer to the period after this movement." (See Lawson, T., *The Hidden Words of Fayd Kāshānī*, p 439.)

⁷² Al-Kāshānī, M., *'Ayn al-Yaqīn*, p 50.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, p 54-55.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, p 56.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, p 57.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, p 58.

and evil has no reality...Existence, as such, is pure goodness and non-existence, as such, is pure evil. This entails that the more intense the existence of an entity the more complete and abundant Goodness it is.”⁷⁷ “Pleasure...and pain when analyzed also return to existence and non-existence.”⁷⁸ The passages quoted above depict how dependent al-Kāshānī’s philosophical scheme is truly based upon the initial cognitive separation between existence and non-existence. There is also a lucid resonance here with a narration entitled: ‘the armies of intellect and ignorance’ in the seminal abovementioned Shi‘ite hadith text: *al-Kaḥfī*.⁷⁹

Al-Kāshānī’s philosophical cosmogony, which is committed to preserving the dualistic conflict between intellect and ignorance envisioned within Shi‘ite hadith, makes use of the non-existence/existence split. This creates a new space where the mythical language of the religious sources can interweave with philosophical proof. The ultimate image that emerges is one in which evil is non-existent and goodness is existent. Hence, the good-evil duality, distinctive of Qur‘anic verses and the Shi‘ite hadith, is transmuted, such that the cosmic combat between benevolence and malevolence is not between two existent entities but rather between the reality of existence and the unreality of non-existence. This train of thought leads al-Kāshānī to the two ideas he was most criticized for: 1- The singularity of existence (*waḥdat al-wujūd*) and 2- the transience and rapture of infernal torment (*al-‘aḏab al-musta‘ḏab*). For if non-existence is unreal, as al-Kāshānī asserts, then existence is the only reality, which inevitably leads al-Fayḍ to philosophically argue for the singularity of existence (*waḥdat al-wujūd*). Also if nothing is outside of existence then hell is a manifestation of the reality of existence. This leads al-Kāshānī to argue that torment in the inferno cannot be eternal because those who end up in hell had to be

⁷⁷ Ibid., p 61.

⁷⁸ Ibid., p 64.

⁷⁹ Al-Kulayni, M., *Usul al-Kaḥfī*, p 11-20.

there. Al-Kāshānī does not want to assert that unbelievers and sinners were coerced into evil but rather he wants to maintain that Divine Majesty manifests itself in hell, making it ecstatic from that perspective. Throughout *'ayn al-yaqīn*, the singularity of existence acts as the foundation of his whole philosophical edifice. However, if we are to truly understand how al-Kāshānī roots his philosophical project in the singularity of existence we must observe how he deals with limited existence, i.e. essences.

Al-Kāshānī's discussion about essence or whatness (*māhiya*) is contained in his analysis of the limiting nature of mental categories on the limitless reality of existence or thatness (*wujud*). Like Sadra, Al-Kāshānī will argue that it is meaningless to ask *what* existence is because all we can know is *that* existence is and *that* non-existence is not. When we ask about something's essence, on the other hand, we want to know *what* it is, its delimitations. "Nothing exists in itself save existence, for if anything, other-than-it, existed in itself then existence would be external to that thing, such that the existence of essences would be prior to existence...which is impossible. Yes the intellect can abstract meanings other than existence from contingent existents...But I say that it is of its stature to notice those meanings alone without noticing existence, and not noticing something does not mean it is non-existent. Those meanings are named quiddities or the immutable essences and they do not exist in themselves...for [they i.e. the essences are] posterior to existence, not like one existent follows another existent, but rather, how a shadow follows a person...It is due to this that it is said that: the immutable essences never smelled the scent of existence {Verily they are names which you and your forefathers have named God did not grant them suzerainty.}^{80,81} To further elaborate on this

⁸⁰ Qur'an, 7:71.

⁸¹ Al-Kāshānī, M., *'Ayn al-Yaqīn*, p 38.

issue, al-Kāshānī distinguishes between essential attributes and accidental attributes, in line with the Aristotelian tradition.⁸²

Essential attributes are identified by genus (*jins*) and differentia (*fasl*). The genus refers to the attributes which a universal essence has in common with other universal essences, such as being organic, which is common to both plants and animals. The differentia, on the other hand, refers to the attributes, which are unique to an original universal essence, such as rationality to humans. Essential attributes cannot be peeled away from a universal essence, they are constant. However, essences are never encountered immediately because they are always contacted through accidents. Accidental attributes (quantity, quality, relation, action, reaction, time, place, disposition, and raiment), unlike essential ones, are the sensual properties which particularize a universal essence, by which it is embodied. Senses cannot access the intelligible world of universals, the realm of the essences, it is forever trapped in a world of particulars. It is by the exercise of the self-evident principles of identity and non-contradiction, also Aristotelian in origin, which are inherently present in man's intellect, that particular sensual accidents are cognitively peeled away revealing the universal essence concealed within them. In this bipolar synthesis, between intelligible conception and sensual perception, essential attributes emerge on the intelligible-side while accidental attributes appear on the sensible-side. Al-Kāshānī writes: "Existence in everything is singular, but the intellect abstracts the universal and the particular from itself and its concomitants so that it judges via intrinsic concepts, genera, differentia and accidental or universal and particular. So what happens in the intellect in itself is named essential while what happens from the other aspect [the sensual] is named accidental."⁸³ For al-Kāshānī

⁸² See Patterson, R., *Aristotle's Modal Logic Essence and Entailment in the Organon*.

⁸³ Muḥsin al-Kāshānī, *Ayn al-Yaqīn*, p 78.

the intellect's interaction with sensibles allows an essential-accidental/universal-particular duality to crystallize.

This duality poses a serious philosophical problem, which al-Kāshānī attempts to solve with his insistence on the singularity of existence. He seems to want to assert that accidental and essential properties only emerge when the intellect is trying to impose a limit on the reality of existence, which is unlimited. So perceived sensible accidents and essential attributes, which are conceived intelligibly, are not real, rather they are illusionary bounds that we force onto reality. He writes: “He is not conceptual nor is He universal or particular...nor is He unconditioned or conditioned, however, He is inseparable from these things, with regards to his existence in essences and accidents. He is united with essences and accidents without this [unification] changing His essence and intrinsic truth...hence, it is not correct to judge or define or relate him to unity or necessity or existentiating origination or emanative effect or self-knowledge or knowledge-of-others because all those attributes are a result of [the intellects] essentializing and conditioning, meaning He is, ultimately, unknowable from this aspect.”⁸⁴ This would ultimately mean that although we might be able to know *what* something is, by discerning what its particular sensible accidents and universal intelligible essentials are, we remain in total darkness with regard to its *thatness*. He writes: “Verily, essence does not exist until it is paired to existence, is considered with existence or has come into existence...For if essences are taken into consideration in themselves without taking existence into account...they are neither non-existent nor not non-existent either...”⁸⁵ The movement towards the light of existence, according to al-Kāshānī, begins when we move from *whatness* to *thatness*, from essence to existence, from phenomena to noumena. Hence, *whatness* does not tell us anything about the reality of existence,

⁸⁴ Ibid., p 43.

⁸⁵ Ibid., p 38.

about *thatness*, it only tells us about the conditions we are deciding to inflict upon unconditioned existence. After establishing the singularity of the reality of existence and the illusionary duality of the essences-accidents al-Kāshānī reformulates a notion of multiplicity, which is concordant with his allegiance to the singularity of existence (*waḥdat al-wujūd*).

CHAPTER III

THE EMANATION (OR INMANATION⁸⁶)

“Existence descends from the unconstrained heaven (*sama’ al-itlaq*) to the constrained earth (*ard al-taqyīd*) in layers. It originates in the most noble [of the planes of existence] and proceeds to the less noble [levels] until it ends with what is unsurpassed in ontic ignobility and weakness [i.e. pure potentiality], with which the descending chain ends and begins to reascend. [As it voyages back] it is ceaselessly elevated from vicious [states] to virtuous ones until it reaches that which is unsurpassed in [ontic] virtue [i.e. pure actuality] in the ascending chain [of existence] such that it returns to the identical state it initially descended from, as was pointed to in His exalted speech: {He drives the command from the heaven to the earth then it ascends back to Him}⁸⁷. Whatever is closer to His exalted source is nearer to simplicity, unity and ontic wealth, while, all that is distant from Him suffers from differentiation, composition and poverty. The first [and most-proximate] level [of existence] needs nothing other than the First Principle - majestic is His name- for the sustenance of itself, its attributes and its actions. The denizens of this station in all their different planes- are named intelligences, spirits and archangels (*al-mala’ika al-muqaraba*). The second level derives its sustenance from what is above it but it is dependent upon the levels below it to manifest actions and attributes, its denizens are named -in their variant portions- souls and ordering angels (*al-mala’ika*

⁸⁶ Since, for al-Kāshānī, nothing exists outside the singularity of existence the whole hierarchy of being occurs within existence not outside it. This is why the word inmanation seems to suit al-Fayd’s project better. The latin root of the word emanation is *emanare* meaning “to flow out or spring out of” the image of out flowing is rooted in the prefix ‘em’ which means ‘to bring into a certain state’ while a more accurate prefix would be ‘en’ or ‘in’ which would stress that creation takes place within the Creator not outside of Him.

⁸⁷ Qur’an, 32:4.

al-mudabira). The third level is also dependent in its sustenance upon that which is below it, this station is named forms and natures. The fourth level has no reality other than that of potentiality and receptivity, such that, nothing is actualized in it except for its receptivity to things. It is named matter, water, dust, first hyle and it is the end of the divine command. Then the descent takes upon itself in its return: the first emergence [in the return-voyage] is a combination of matter and form, which is named the body. Then the body is particularized into a higher and more noble form, such that it begins to nourish itself and grow which is named the plant. Then particularization increases into another form, which is higher than what preceded it, emerging with sensation and motion, named the animal. Then particularization increases into an even higher and more-excellent state by which it becomes a reasonable being named the human. There are multiple levels for the human before he becomes an attained intelligence (*'aql mustafad*), at that point, [with the attained intellect,] the circle of existence is completed and the end of the chain of goodness and benevolence [is reached]. So existence was intelligible became a soul, then a form, then matter then it returned in retrograde, as if it turned upon itself, becoming a formal body then a plant then an animal then a human with intelligence, such that it began with intellect and it ended in it {as He initiated you, you shall return}⁸⁸ {as we initiated the first creation we return it}⁸⁹...[the plunge from] the origin is referred to as the night of portioning (*laylat al-qadr*), the descending books and sending of the spiritual messengers {we cause the angels and the spirit to descend in it by the permission of their Lord within every command}⁹⁰. The return [to the origin] is referred to as the day of rising and spiritual ascension {the angels and the spirit ascend to Him in a day whose length is fifty thousand years}⁹¹. Those two [realities] are referred to

⁸⁸ Qur'an, 7:29.

⁸⁹ Qur'an, 21:104.

⁹⁰ Qur'an 98:4.

⁹¹ Qur'an 70:4.

in the narrations as moving towards (*iqbal*) and moving away from (*idbar*). Our master al-Sadiq -may peace be upon him- has said: “Verily, God created the intellect out of His light, which is the first spiritual creation on the right side of the throne. He spoke to it saying: move away so it moved away, then, He spoke [again] saying: come to me so it came. Then God -most high- said: I have fashioned you as a great creature and I have treated you generously above all my creation.” Then he [the imam] said: “Then He created ignorance from a dark brackish ocean and He spoke to it saying: move away and so it moved away then He said: come to me but it did not come. So He said to it: you have been arrogant so He cursed Him.” Then he -peace be upon him- mentioned the benevolent armies of the intellect and the malevolent armies of ignorance.”⁹²

The lexical tapestry of the passage relays a typical neo-platonic emanative scheme punctuated by Qur’anic verses or words after which he narrates a whole hadith. The insinuation that al-Kāshānī wants the reader to have is that even if the sources of human knowledge, be they reason or revelation, are different they both point to the same truth. After rooting his philosophical project in the singularity of existence (*wahdat al-wujud*) he goes on to explicate the existence of multiple levels and planes of reality.

The foundation of al-Kāshānī’s argument for multiplicity lies in his differentiation between categorical conditions, that the mind illusionary imposes on unlimited existence, and conditions, which are a fulfillment of the unconditionedness (*itlaq*) of the reality of existence. To harmonize between the singularity of existence and the ‘seeming’ multiplicity of existents al-Kāshānī asserts that the reality of existence is unconditioned, such that it is not conditioned by its unconditionedness. Ultimately, al-Fayḍ wants to argue that if the reality of existence could not manifest as conditioned entities then its unconditionedness would be compromised. He writes:

⁹² Al-Kāshānī, M., *Ayn al-Yaqīn*, p 45-46.

“Existence in itself is comprised of different planes, each of which is attached to different meanings, such that there is no difference between essentials and accidents in their receptivity to gradation....For that which is truly receptive to gradation is nothing save existence. He in Himself precedes and is precedence, antecedes and is antecedence, [He] is [ontically] wealthy and [ontic] wealth, [He] is [ontically] poor and [ontic] poverty, [He] is perfect and perfection, [He] is incomplete and incompleteness, [He] is strong and strength, [He] is weak and weakness and so on.”⁹³ To assert that God’s ontological poverty, incompleteness and weakness are fulfillments of His ontic wealth, completeness and strength affirms that there is a singular reality, which permeates all. “He is exalted and One above every aspect in His affirmation since there is nothing with Him save Him and this explains the saying: He is He in me, you and he. He is He, alone, there is no god but He. Also amongst his exalted names are: ‘O He. O He who is He. O He who there is no he but He.’”⁹⁴ These sorts of passages call for a recognition of al-Kāshānī’s extreme bravery within his social context, especially when his reputation as an exoteric scholar is taken into account. This ‘unknowable’⁹⁵ omnipresence of God in all things, which is described in the passage, makes al-Kāshānī’s severe commitment to the singularity of existence crystal clear. Unlike other scholars which leaned towards revelatory or rational or mystical sciences al-Kāshānī embraced all forcing the scholars on all sides of the divide to deal with what they despised with the other camps within his single person.

Al-Kāshānī extends the philosophical conclusions he derives from the singularity of existence to important religious matters. For his singularity of existence holds that the conceptual imposition of limits on the reality of existence, which gives rise to essences-accidents, is in itself

⁹³ Ibid., p 44.

⁹⁴ Ibid, p 204.

⁹⁵ Ibid, p 43.

a self-disclosure of the reality of existence. This means that all epistemology is consumed in ontology such that all realities are inflections of the one and only reality, living at the complete mercy of His power. This conclusion is in diametrical opposition to Kant's philosophy which asserts that existence, and hence ontology, is nothing more than a conceptual category, making ontology subservient to epistemology. We can postulate that al-Fayḍ would point out to Kant that there is a difference between the concept of existence and the reality of existence, for if the reality of existence was *not* the concept of existence would *not be*. In vein with this line of thought al-Kāshānī quotes al-Ghazali (d.505/1111): "there is no existence with Him other than Him for all which is other than Him is an effect of the effects of his Omnipotence."⁹⁶ It is from this stance that al-Kāshānī will open a door towards the absolute suzerainty of God as he affirms the utter and complete servitude of all else. Next, al-Kāshānī will embark on a process wherein he extracts the levels of existence, which pertain to the divine immanation or the inner-life of God, from the reality of existence. In harmony with the neo-platonic corpus, translated into Arabic, in the middle eighth century, he assigns the reality of existence, God or the One, the highest status in the great chain of being. The obvious eschatological horizons embedded within this image of a tiered cosmos, ever-present in *ʿAyn al-Yaqīn*, explains why al-Kāshānī goes at great length to explain it.

After al-Kāshānī affirms and reaffirms the singularity of existence he begins to argue for the layers of being. He writes:

"The most-noble, the most-confident, the fastest and the loftiest of proofs...is the way of the Truthful [*Siddiqin*] which witnesses all things within Truth not within another, such that all existents are seen in the divine presence and are known through His names and

⁹⁶ Ibid., p 204.

His attributes. There is nothing which does not have a root in the world of Divine names, [meaning] it has a face towards Truth-exalted. For you have perceived that every contingent [being] is a compounded pair [comprised of existence and its essential-accidental limitation] and it is in this regard that when our prophet-peace be upon him and his progeny- was asked: ‘By what means did you know God?’ He replied: ‘I knew God through things’ while the commander of the faithful–peace be upon him said: ‘Know God through God.’”⁹⁷

In this passage, which interweaves religious and philosophical motifs, al-Kāshānī makes an important distinction. Al-Fayḍ distinguishes between the two faces of every contingent being; the first face is its existence, which is ontically grounded in God while the second face pertains to its essence, which is oriented to other essences or accidents. This can be likened to a circle, which is constituted of a circumference and a center. One point on the circumference can connect to an indefinite number of other points on the circumference, which are at variant distances from one another, however, all points on the circumference are equidistant to the same central point of the circle. Similarly, all essences on the circumference of the circle of existence inter-relate to one another in manifold patterns, however, all essences are equidistant from the center of existence. The relationship between essences is one of varying relativities while the relationship between essence and existence is always one of absolute dependence. The existence aspect of contingent beings is the divine presence which dwells within it. Al-Kāshānī identifies these indwelling divine presences, within all realities, with the divine names. This connection in all likelihood has its roots in the mystical legacy left by Ibn al-‘Arabi and the Akbarian school. In its distinctive rendition of the chain of being the Akbarian school speaks of five divine presences, 1- the world of divine names 2- the world of spirits 3- the imaginal world 4- the world of bodies 5-

⁹⁷ Ibid., p 197.

the all-comprehensive world. Under the influence of his teacher, who was largely indebted to Ibn ‘Arabi’s metaphysics, al-Kāshānī extracts his metaphysical schema in this same hierarchical order.⁹⁸

In line with the singularity of existence, al-Kāshānī argues that nothing outside existence can be, meaning the reality of existence is Omnipresence. The reality of existence is also omnipotence since nothing can overpower the reality of existence, because nothing is outside it. Al-Fayḍ writes: “He -exalted- is pure existence; self-sufficient lacking any trace of multiplicity, such that nothing is negated from Him since He is the completion of everything and its perfection. Nothing is negated from Him save the limits of existents for there is no atom of the atoms of the world which He does not encompass and overpower such that He is closer to it than it is to itself. This is so because He is its completion... {and We are closer to him than the jugular vein} ⁹⁹.”¹⁰⁰ Further still, the reality of existence is omniscient, since immediate knowledge is the presence of the known to the knower and nothing is outside the reality of existence’s presence. He writes: “You have perceived that His exalted essence (*dhat*) is simple and one in all things such that His knowledge of Himself is identical to His knowledge of all things... His knowledge of the innumerable essences, which are present in all the worlds from pre-eternity till eternity, is identical to His simple knowledge of Himself because His exalted essence grounds all that exists... and just like His exalted knowledge of His own essence consists of a unity of Knowledge-Knower-Known similarly his knowledge of things must also be His essence since all is grounded [within Him].”¹⁰¹ Both omniscience and omnipotence are truths of life meaning the reality of existence is alive, a conclusion which is exceedingly important from a religious

⁹⁸ Chittick, W., “The Five Divine Presences from Qunawi to Qaysari”, p 107-128.

⁹⁹ Qur’an, 50:16.

¹⁰⁰ Al-Kāshānī, M., *‘Ayn al-Yaqīn*, p 206.

¹⁰¹ Ibid., p 213-214.

perspective. This is so because the God al-Kāshānī is committed to proving is a deity of religious discourse not a mere philosophical prime mover or a mystical unfathomable source of being. With this backdrop he is propelled to harness the energies within philosophical and mystical motifs for religious ends. Hence, he argues that divine attributes and names, hidden in the unmanifest inner-life of God, manifest in the worlds through emanation or rather ‘inmanation’, since there is nothing outside of the reality of existence. This distinction between the unmanifest and the manifest invokes the difference between the most-holy effusion (*al-fayḍ al-aqdass*) and the holy effusion (*al-fayḍ al-muqaddass*). For God’s unmanifest effusion pertains to His attributes and His names whereas His manifest effusion relates to His creation of the spiritual, the imaginal and the corporeal worlds. All existents in all planes and levels on the great chain of being are, therefore, inflections of divine omniscience and omnipotence. Al-Kāshānī writes: “He is the Absolute Light {God is the light of the heaven and the earth}¹⁰². When you have perceived that light, which is manifest in itself and brings others to manifestation, then [you can understand] how absolute luminosity and suzerainty is His.”¹⁰³ By starting with this unmanifest ‘multiplicity’ of divine names and attributes, which precedes manifestation, al-Kāshānī can begin to paint an image of a manifold cosmos. His discourse on the world of the divine names acts as the foundation-stone in the bridge he will build between the absolute and the relative, the unconditioned and the conditioned. He writes:

“God casts existence upon the temples of existents by the mediation of His most beneficent names. He -mighty and majestic- has said: {God’s names are the most-beneficial so call upon Him through them}¹⁰⁴. A name is the [divine] essence which has been limited to a particular meaning i.e. the essence which is attributed with a particular

¹⁰² Qur’an, 24:35.

¹⁰³ Al-Kāshānī, M., *‘Ayn al-Yaqīn*, p 213.

¹⁰⁴ Qur’an, 7:180.

attribute, such that the All-Merciful, is the merciful essence, and the Almighty, is the essence attributed with might...So the names are identical to the named [i.e. the essence] in identity and existence even if they are different in meaning and concept. The spoken words are the names of the names...[narration:] ‘He who worships the name without the meaning [i.e. the essence] has concealed truth (*kafar*), he who worships the name and the meaning has associated (*ashrak*) while those who worship the meaning through the names...are the true believers.’ ”¹⁰⁵

Again al-Kāshānī attempts to forge a delicate balance between reason and revelation and within each, as is evident in the passage’s invocation of both revelatory and rational lexicon. He is grappling with ancient questions of the relationship between unity and multiplicity as he etches out a subtle argument which can maintain the many without compromising the one. He argues that when the essence is turned to itself it is absolutely one, whereas, when it is turned to the creation it is multiple. This multiplicity is not manifold in any sense that undermines the absolute singularity of the divine essence rather it is multiple in conceptual consideration. For the divine essence can be considered in several ways, it can be considered in its mercy or in its wrath, however, this dual consideration does not compromise its essential unity.

The unmanifest divine names and attributes (*al-kalimat al-maknuna*) manifest in the layered cosmos and refract accordingly to the structures of each of the worlds. For example, a divine name, such as the Sustainer (*al-Razzaq*), takes the form of an incorporeal angel of mercy, which lies behind the physical phenomena of rain. Another divine name, the Vengeful (*al-Muntaqim*), manifests as an angel of wrath, which tugs at the roots of the earth causing it to quake.¹⁰⁶ “Every creature...has a portion of some of the [divine] names- the angels take their

¹⁰⁵ Al-Kāshānī, M., *Ayn al-Yaqīn*, p 222-223.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., p 321.

portion from the Exalted and the Blest; this is why they said {we exalt in thy praise and bless You}¹⁰⁷. The devil takes his portion from the Almighty the Proud, which is why he disobeyed and was proud. The animals takes their portion from the All-hearing, the All-Seeing, the Alive and the Omnipotent and their likeness. Fire's portion is from the Overpowerer, air's is from the Subtle, water's is from the Beneficent, earth's is from the Patient, poison's is from the Harmful, the world's is from the First and the otherworld's is from the Last."¹⁰⁸ This conjures up a reformulated Islamicised version of the Platonic doctrine of the archetypes.

Within his revised neo-platonic emanationist scheme al-Kāshānī identifies the unmanifest names as divine archetypes or immutable essences (*a'yan thabita*), which cast their shadows in the manifest world. All manifest realities are, hence, the moving image of the eternal unmanifest divine names, in a typical Platonic sense. "For every natural reality has a noetic (*'aqli*) reality with God -most High- existing in His exalted knowledge by which it is persistent, immutable and self-sufficient."¹⁰⁹ There is a resonance in all worlds such that what is above is reflected in what is below and what is below has a reality in the place above. "[Quoting Ibn al-'Arabi:] 'Abd Allah ibn 'Abbass has narrated in a hadith that: 'This [earthly] ka'ba is only one of fourteen houses, for in each of the seven earths [and seven heavens] there are creatures like us such that amongst them is an Ibn Abbass like me.' This narration has been affirmed by the people of unveiling'."¹¹⁰ The participation of all things in the reality of existence means that all sensual phenomena, which is categorized via concepts, are shadows of higher super-sensible realities. "You have fathomed that every natural and sensual reality -be it celestial or elemental- has a higher noetic nature in the divine world, which acts as the root of its [natural] generated renewed shadow

¹⁰⁷ Qur'an, 2:30.

¹⁰⁸ Al-Kāshānī, M., *'Ayn al-Yaqīn*, p 225.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., p 122.

¹¹⁰ Ibid., p 165.

[reality]...The roots are noetic in actuality while the [natural reality] is potential and contingent. Its generative and renewed existence is in a state of constant desire for [its noetic reality]. It's temporal particularity and personality is attained gradually in stages...for every noetic form has modes, aspects, faces and respects [that unfold over time], which are encompassed [at once] by no one save God -Majestic."¹¹¹ This mediation between the Divine essence and the rest of creation, through the names, initiates existence's downward pilgrimage towards multiplicity, which is further elaborated in an image of a creation, consisting of grades and planes.

The first conditioned existent that emerges within the inmanation of the reality of existence is the universal intellect. The universal intellect exists in the reality of existence and yet it is not unconditioned. All the divine attributes, such as omniscience, omnipotence and omnipresence, are reflected anew in the universal intellect. The proliferation continues with a secondary intellect which looms forth out of the primal intellect. Since its connection to the reality of existence is mediated by the first intelligence the second intelligence is more conditioned than the first. This process continues, increasing the conditions, until prime matter is reached. Al-Kāshānī writes: "All these stations -in their variant degrees- are connected in origination and return, such that, there is no vacuum in existence...the lesser [existent] is always sustained by the higher...This is how God's law flows. He has spoke: {We do not cause the angels to descend save in truth}¹¹². The end of each level is connected to the beginning of the one which is lower than it or above it [depending on the perspective]. So the last levels of divinity are connected to the beginning degree of the first intellect and the last degrees of the first intellect are connected to the [beginning of the] second intellect and so on."¹¹³ This gradational

¹¹¹ Ibid., p 524.

¹¹² Qur'an, 15:8.

¹¹³ Al-Kāshānī, M., *Ayn al-Yaqīn*, p 46.

continuum captures the dynamism between the unconditioned and the conditioned poles of reality. It is in the interface between the unconditioned and the conditioned which acts as a wellspring for all multiplicity in al-Kāshānī's scheme. The divine inflection descends through ever tighter conditions to the horizon of non-existence and then re-ascends back to the unconditioned pole. The zenith of this circle of existence is pure actuality while its nadir is pure potentiality. Each level, in this existential hierarchy, is ever more spiritual, as we ascent towards the pole of pure actuality, and ever more corporeal, in the descent towards the pole of pure potentiality.¹¹⁴

Al-Kāshānī taps into the notions of potentially and actuality to further explain how multiplicity is generated. The way he does this is by employing the Aristotelian notion of the four causes: material, formal, efficient and final. He writes: "Efficient and final causes are existential causes while material and formal causes are essential causes."¹¹⁵ The material cause refers to a potential range of existence, such that it can take more than one form. The formal cause refers to the process by which a differentiated pattern is actualized from the undifferentiated potencies latent in the material cause, to the exclusion of other patterns. The efficient cause is the agent which carries out the actualization of potencies, latent in the material cause, which brings about the formal cause. Whereas the final cause is the end or telos, which drives the agent to actualize all possible forms dormant in the material cause's matrices of potentiality.

The whole of existence is, therefore, suspended between receptivity and activity: matter is the receptive pole, while the efficient cause, driven by the telos, is the active pole and the

¹¹⁴ Al-Qaysari, D., *Sharh Fusus al-Hikam*, ed. Hasan Hasan Zada al-Amuli, p 159-164.

¹¹⁵ Al-Kāshānī, M., *Ayn al-Yaqīn*, p 93.

formal cause is suspended between the two. Al-Kāshānī writes: “Matter, the potency of all contingent beings, is of limitless potentiality, reactivity and affect as the absolute receiver...while the absolute actor, which is God exalted, is of limitless actuality and effect since His ability is boundless. So the blessings will persist in their descent opening the doors of goodness and effusion.”¹¹⁶ By drawing this model al-Kāshānī is able to explain the way within which levels on the hierarchy of being inter-relate. For al-Kāshānī every higher level in the gradation of existence is, simultaneously, the efficient and final cause in relation to a lower plane it is causally interacting with. The lower plane itself becomes the material cause in relation to the higher and the interface between the material and the efficient causes yields the formal cause, which has an actual aspect, from its efficient cause and a potential side, from its material cause.

Each rung on the ladder of existence is an efficient cause in relation to lower planes and a material cause in relation to higher planes. “The subsumption of the lesser to the higher is intrinsic...Don’t you see how prime matter is under the suzerainty of form which changes it as it wills.”¹¹⁷ Ultimately, all the actualities of all the levels of existence are concentrated into pure actuality, whereas all the potentialities of all of the levels of existence are integrated into pure potentiality. “All existents, which have two aspects: [one] of potentiality and [another] of actuality, migrate from potentiality to actuality...such that the receptivity to motion is due to potentiality and its actor is an actual reality...so all aspects of actuality end in what is absolute in every respect...just like all aspects of potentiality return to a reality which is potential from every respect save [the actuality of it] being potential.”¹¹⁸ The whole chain of being is suspended from these two poles, the first active and the second passive. Divine activity flows in two arcs; the first

¹¹⁶ Ibid., p 308.

¹¹⁷ Ibid., p 509.

¹¹⁸ Ibid., p 141.

arc, descends from the pole of actuality to that of potentiality, through the intelligible, imaginable and sensible worlds (*qaws al-nuzul*) while the second arc, ascends back from the pole of potentiality to the pole of actuality (*qaws al-ṣu‘ud*). In reference to the descending arc he writes: “The secret is that actuality ontologically precedes what is potential as has been exposed.”¹¹⁹ With regards the ascending arc he writes: “The human identity is overturned in several levels of existence because its existence is primarily potential then it is in the station of nature then in that of sensation then in that of soul, with all its layers, then in the noetic station with all its levels.”¹²⁰ These indefinite layers of being, ranging from pure actuality to pure potentiality, are further grouped into three main tiers.

Al-Kāshānī divides his cosmos into three main levels; the intellective (*‘aqli*), the imaginative (*khayali*) and the sensitive (*hissi*). These three tiers of the cosmos are suspended between the pole of pure actuality, from above, and the pole of pure potentiality, from below. He writes: “The worlds are innumerable [such that] their number is unknown save to the Lord of the worlds and the roots [of all worlds] return to three states: a noetic spiritual [level], named the unseen world and divine power (*jabarut*); its denizens are the surpassing {these shall be the nearest in gardens of bliss}¹²¹, an imaginal formal [level] named the world of the isthmus and divine dominion (*malakut*); its denizens are the people of the right {they are among lote-trees without thorns, and acacia in clusters and shade outspreading}¹²² and a sensual corporeal [level] named the seen world and the divine kingdom (*mulk*); its denizens are the people of the left {They are amidst scorching wind and boiling water, and a shade of black smoke}¹²³.”¹²⁴ In this

¹¹⁹ Ibid., p 115.

¹²⁰ Ibid., p 512.

¹²¹ Qur’an, 56:11-12.

¹²² Qur’an, 56:28-29.

¹²³ Qur’an, 56:42-43.

¹²⁴ Ibid., p 161.

passage al-Kāshānī brings together both the view that the worlds are indefinite while preserving that they are three.

The division of the worlds into three is distinctive to Islamic philosophy and ultimately has its source in the writings of Shabidīn al-Suḥrāwardī. The triune division of the levels of reality into the world (*dunya*), the isthmus (*barzakh*) and the otherworld (*akhira*), characteristic of Islamic religious sources, would have likely influenced al-Suḥrāwardī and those who followed him like al-Kāshānī.¹²⁵ The sources of the Islamic tradition speak of a world which is between earthly existence and that of the resurrection, which is called the world of the graves. “These three realms are layered in emanation meaning that every existent in this worldly realm...has a form in the medial realm and a truth in the higher realm, which precedes both of them...so the noetic man -for example- emanates its light upon this lower man by intermediaries layered in the noetic and imaginal worlds...A similarity also exists between the noetic fire and the lower fires which is corroborated by a narration: ‘This [earthly] fire was cleansed by seventy waters before it descended’ which signifies its descent through the layers [of existence].”¹²⁶ Since the noetic realm is more proximate to God it is less conditioned, meaning that its existence is more powerful than its essence, such that its essential multiplicity dissolves into its existential unity. The imaginal world is one where both essential multiplicity and existential unity are of equal strength, which is why al-Kāshānī defines this world as one where ‘spirits are corporealized and bodies are spiritualized.’¹²⁷ Lastly, the corporeal realm is the most distant from God and hence the most conditioned, such that its essential multiplicity constrains its existential unity. Describing the three worlds in more detail al-Kāshānī writes:

¹²⁵ See Henry Corbin, *Spiritual Body and Celestial Earth* trans. Nancy Pearson, p 109-118. See Todd Lawson, Shaykh Aḥmad al-Aḥsa’ī and the World of the Images, p 22.

¹²⁶ Al-Kāshānī, M., *‘Ayn al-Yaqīn*, p 160.

¹²⁷ See Henry Corbin, *Spiritual Body and Celestial Earth* trans. Nancy Pearson, p 171-176.

“The noetic level is the state of true life, eternal persistence, pure goodness, unadulterated light, full manifestation, pristine perception. All its denizens have immediate knowledge as they rest {in an assembly of virtue with a mighty King}¹²⁸ who looks at them as they look at Him, through the eyes of their heart. Verily they are the proximate angels and the people of true and complete joy...It is in reference to this noetic realm [of existence] that the master of prostraters (the fourth imam) – peace be upon him- said: “Verily all of God’s creatures on land and in sea are in the throne and this is the esoteric [dimension] of His speech most-high: {There is nothing that we do not have the treasures of}¹²⁹.”¹³⁰

“Whereas the imaginal realm [of existence] is also essential life, persistence, luminosity and perception except that it is less [ontically intense] than the first [noetic realm] in these conditions. It is separate [from physicality] and transcendent beyond the materiality of the body...however it participates in bodies because it has essences with extensions and many portions.”¹³¹ “What has been transmitted from the ancients has pointed to the presence of a non-sensual, yet portioned, world of endless wonders and innumerable cities some of which are Jabalqa and Jabarsa. These two great cities have a thousand doors each and are inhabited by uncountable creatures.”¹³²

“Abū Ja‘afar- peace be upon him- said: ‘verily God has created a mountain out of a green jewel which surrounds the world’... he described the mountain as green because green is an isthmus between white and black just like it [the mountain] is an isthmus between the luminous spirits and the dark bodies.” “Whereas the sensual realm is one of death, impermanence, absence, darkness and ignorance being constituted of matter and form

¹²⁸ Qur’an, 54:55.

¹²⁹ Qur’an, 15:21.

¹³⁰ Al-Kāshānī, M., *‘Ayn al-Yaqīn*, p 162.

¹³¹ Ibid., p 162.

¹³² Ibid., p 164.

which are forever salient, changing, dispersed and divided. This realm has no intrinsic feeling save by virtue of the other two realms...In this world all is veiled from all.”¹³³

It is through these triune tiers: the intelligible, imaginative and sensitive realms, that existence descends and reascends. According to al-Kāshānī this circle of existence is perpetually cycled, an ontological pattern, which discloses itself within the literary structure of *‘Ayn al-Yaqin*. The text as a whole depicts the cycle of existence in its descending and ascending arcs as it stresses descent and ascent in each of the chapters and several of the sections in different ways. The reader is thrown into a labyrinthine image of divine cycles disclosed within divine cycles. This literary design makes the text a linguistic concentration of the whole existential circle in its perennial descending-ascending cycles. This ‘divine station’ of *‘Ayn al-Yaqin* is hinted at by al-Kāshānī himself in his introduction. Al-Kāshānī even describes his text using lexical patterns which takes off in a fashion similar to the Qur’an’s description of itself. He writes: “[There] has come [to you] a book in praise of God in the most manifest word, the firmest meaning and [the deepest] intimacy¹³⁴ ...There is no matter in the true sciences which does not have its root and kernel within it, bereft of peels and concealing clothes. For every mystic truth is present, herein, purified of rhetoric, while all intellectual knowledge is present in full lucidity and all its expositions are in [complete] accordance with the mighty book and the pure sunna...blest is a person who analyses it’s sciences and delves into its depths.”¹³⁵ Throughout *‘Ayn al-Yaqin* al-Kāshānī unfolds his emanative scheme, the holy-effusion (*al-fayḍ al-muqaddas*), wherein he maintains a distinction between Creator and creature. However, he simultaneously subsumes the holy-effusion within the most-holy-effusion (*al-fayḍ al-aqdass*) due to his commitment to the

¹³³ Ibid., p 167.

¹³⁴ {There has come to you from God a Light and a Book made manifest} (Qur’an, 5:15.)

¹³⁵ Al-Kāshānī, M., *‘Ayn al-Yaqīn*, p 17.

singularity of existence, wherein Creator and creature become active and passive poles of a singular reality.

For al-Kāshānī, the reality of existence in its very nature emanates into the great chain of being. The levels of existence are at their core non-existent being wholly sustained by the reality of existence. It is for this reason that in al-Kāshānī's scheme, ultimately, even the graded cosmos does not actually exist. For conditioned existents are a manifestation of the unconditioned reality of existence, which, as was stated above, is not conditioned by its unconditionedness. So conditioned existences are unreal in themselves, rather, they are only real in as much as they are the inflection of the singular reality of existence. Al-Kāshānī writes: "True existence discloses Himself in Himself, which is named the mystery of mysteries (*ghayb al-ghuyub*). He also discloses Himself in His action...He is a single light within which all quiddities manifest without action or affect...Don't you see how the sunlight becomes manifold due to windows even if it is one in itself with no multiplicity in it...It is due to this that when the narration: 'God was and there was nothing with Him' was heard [an immediate reply came]: 'He is now as He was'."¹³⁶ The distinction between existence's disclosure to itself and its disclosure in its action is a novel way of expressing the difference between the most-holy-effusion and the holy-effusion or the roll (*kawr*) and the cycle (*dawr*).

According to al-Kāshānī's emanative scheme, the conditioned existences effuse within their source, the reality of existence, in ontological hierarchies. The emanations do not unfold outside existence, rather they occur within it thus maintaining the singularity of existence (*waḥdat al-wujud*). The less conditioned an existent is the higher up the ladder it is, whereas, the more conditioned it is the lower in the hierarchy. The whole of the causal chain is existentially

¹³⁶ Al-Kāshānī, M., *ʿAyn al-Yaqīn*, p 233.

grounded and consumed by the reality of existence such that the ontological relations between the various planes are sustained in God. The entire great chain of existence is itself a sign of the inner-life of God and since God is one the whole of the hierarchy is also one. Al-Kāshānī writes: “Each one of the three realms is a single organism, in its own right, which has a unified and completed reality. God exalted has spoke: {Our command is only one}¹³⁷ and He spoke: {the otherworldly abode is of true life}¹³⁸. Similarly all three realms combined are as a single organism, having one soul, which is the noetic realm, a heart which is the imaginal realm and a body which is the bodily realm. {Your creation and your resurrection is nothing but a single soul}¹³⁹. The master of the openings [ibn al-‘Arabi] has said: the world is the image of Truth, He is the spirit of the world which organizes it, such that He is the macro-human.”¹⁴⁰ A constant theme throughout *‘Ayn al-Yaqīn* is the swing between the most-holy-effusion and the holy-effusion. For while al-Kāshānī avidly asserts the finality of the singularity of existence such that all layers of reality are within God, he also wants to maintain the distinct causal interaction within each of the layers and also between the layers. This distinction is necessary for al-Kāshānī’s eschatological canvas to come to full life.

He writes:

“Still the flames of your imagination O determinist (*jabri*) for actions are yours since you yourself did them and sustained them then calm your folly O proponent of free-will (*mufawid*) for action is negated from you...because your existence is void if it is severed from the existence of Truth...So find peace in the speech of the Imam in truth: ‘Neither determinism nor free-will (*tafwid*) [is true] rather [the truth] is a matter between the

¹³⁷ Qur’an, 54:50.

¹³⁸ Qur’an, 29:64.

¹³⁹ Qur’an 31:28.

¹⁴⁰ Al-Kāshānī, M., *‘Ayn al-Yaqīn*, p 173.

two.’... It is due to this concordance between determinism and free-will and the agreement between necessity and contingency that God related action in the Qur’an once to Himself, another to the angels and finally to his servants. He spoke- most high: {God causes souls to pass at its death}¹⁴¹ and he said: {Say: the angel of death, which has been designated to watch over you, will cause you to pass}¹⁴².”¹⁴³

“Drinking poison is a cause of death by His lofty will, just like drinking medicine is a cause of cure by His will.”¹⁴⁴

This discourse on free-will and determinism is also grounded in al-Kāshānī’s ontology. For the reality of existence is unlimited such that nothing exists outside it, meaning nothing is outside it to limit it, hence, it is absolutely free. All creatures, on the other hand, are a limitation of the reality of existence, being comprised of two qualities. The first quality is that of existence, which aligns it with the absolute freedom of God, while the second quality is that of its essence, which limits that divine freedom and conditions it. All conditioned beings have free-will, on one hand, since they exist, and participate in determinism, on the other, since they have limited essences. In this philosophical discourse, ultimately grounded in the singularity of existence, al-Kāshānī can assent both to God’s absolute freedom and the relative freedom of all creatures. By maintaining both determinism and free-will positions, at once, al-Kāshānī can hold creatures accountable for their own actions without severing action from the Creator. In this fashion al-Kāshānī will have hit two birds with one stone, maintaining God’s absolute power without dismissing the duty and responsibility of the contingent actor. This strategy has an obvious

¹⁴¹ Qur’an, 37:42.

¹⁴² Qur’an, 32:11.

¹⁴³ Al-Kāshānī, M., *‘Ayn al-Yaqīn*, p 250.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid., p 304.

eschatological utility in the imagery of the final judgment that al-Kāshānī is deeply committed to.

CHAPTER VI

THE RETURN

“Elements become minerals, minerals become plants, plants develop into animals, animals turn into humans and the human turns into an angel {overturned to his people in bliss}¹⁴⁵”¹⁴⁶

“Man’s identity is transfigured in the levels of existence because his existence in the beginning is potential then natural then sensual then psychic, passing through its [various] levels, then intellective, in its [multifarious] levels.”¹⁴⁷

“For every natural form in the sensible world there is a psychic form in the supersensible world, [which is the site of] its resurrection and its refuge, [where it travels] after its transience (*duthur*) and the passing (*zawal*) of its materiality. It is now connected to it [the supersensible reality]...however, since it is immersed in the depths of darkneses and non-being, drowned in a hylic and corporeal ocean its constant resurrection to the noetic form, by which it is sustained, is not apparent, save to the people of knowledge and witnessing. If the [material] form is torn away, due to its transience, and the veils of its material bodily...are transcended then its [supersensible] form looms forth out of the concealing places and the graves to the world of knowledge, unveiling and certainty...All things shall return to their original abode after their exodus out of the world of motion, change, evil and pains through the death and corruption of the bodies and the terrible blazing forth of souls as He -most high- has said: {The trumpet shall be sounded, and

¹⁴⁵ Qur’an, 84:9.

¹⁴⁶ Al-Kāshānī, M. *‘Ayn al-Yaqīn*, p 524.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid., p 512.

everyone in the heavens and earth shall fall down dead, except for whomever God wills.} ¹⁴⁸ Then the divine mercy and compassion shall subsume all things once again [taking them] to a life wherein there is no death and an endless persistence as He said: {It shall be sounded again and, behold, they shall rise up and see.} ¹⁴⁹ He [also] said: {And the earth shall shine with the light of its Lord} ¹⁵⁰. That otherworldly earth is a psychic form that is receptive to the illuminations of the noetic emanations from Him -most high. This [worldly] earth...is subsumed by the angels [which are busy] transfiguring it to a psychic form that is receptive to the capture of the hands of the All-Merciful {the whole earth is within his grasp on the Day of rising and the heavens are folded in His right [hand]}. ¹⁵¹ The difference between capturing and folding is that capturing means that the captured existence has a more noble [existence] when it is captured than its previous existence... Folding, on the other hand, suggests that the existence and ego of the folded [entity] is eradicated. So the grasping of the earth points to the changing of its natural form to a psychic otherworldly one as He said: {On a day where the earth shall become a new earth}. ¹⁵² Whereas the folding of the sky refers to its extinction and its unity to the intellectual reality, which is His right [hand]-most high. The intellectual reality within which it is extinct is effaced in itself and persistence in the Truth -mighty and majestic. ¹⁵³

Following the footsteps of his teacher Mulla Şadra, al-Kāshānī makes the argument for the return of all things back to God on the basis of essential motion. With Şadra's teacher Mīr Dāmād, known as the third teacher, the first being Aristotle and the second al-Fārābī, essences were deemed to be eternal, while accidents were considered to be transient. The accidental

¹⁴⁸ Qur'an, 37:68.

¹⁴⁹ Qur'an, 37:68.

¹⁵⁰ Qur'an, 37:69.

¹⁵¹ Qur'an, 37:69.

¹⁵² Qur'an, 14:48.

¹⁵³ Al-Kāshānī, M., *ʿAyn al-Yaqīn*, p 527-528.

attributes: quantity, quality, relation, action, reaction, time, place, disposition, and raiment, were considered to be in constant flux, whereas the essential attributes; genus and differentia, were believed to be unchanging. By cognitively peeling away the transient accidents we could noetically reach the eternal essence. Reason is, in this scheme, an instrument which bridges the gap between the particulars and the universals. For Şadra, this Aristotelian understanding of the relation between the particular and the universal, which was reformulated in the works of Ibn Sina, was problematic. Şadra claimed that no accidental quality exists on its own, such that we always witness accidental attributes correlated to an essence and never on their own. For example, we see a large (accident) mountain or a white (accident) horse but never find largeness or whiteness on their own. This deep connection between accidents and essences led Şadra to claim that the change we see in accidents must have its utmost source in the essence.

In line with his teacher al-Kāshānī writes: “Quantity...time...position...are in motion and so is essence as our teacher, may his shadow persist, has singularly analyzed...What points to it - also- is the [emergent] perfections of the human soul from when it is a fetus or a sperm until it becomes an active intellect and what is above that. The pristine intellect and the pure heart [both] judge that the difference between the fetus or the incomplete ignorant child and the wise sagacious elder are not accidental attributes, which are added to its essence.”¹⁵⁴ Since accidents are fully dependent upon their essence to exist, Şadra was driven to conclude that the connection between essential and accidental attributes is much deeper. This leads Şadra, and al-Kāshānī, to the conclusion that accidents are in motion because essences are in motion. Accidents are in flux because the essence which holds them is in flux.¹⁵⁵ This motion is the exodus out of the potentialities of the material cause into the actualities of the efficient and final causes through the

¹⁵⁴ Ibid., p 146.

¹⁵⁵ See: Kamal, M., *Mulla Sadra's Transcendent Philosophy*, p 64-87.

chariot of the formal cause. This gives al-Kāshānī the opportunity to retrace the descending arc of emanation (inmanation), aforementioned in the previous section, in retrograde back to its source out of which it effused. This movement out of potentiality towards actuality unfolds endlessly from the nadir of pure potency to the zenith of pure actuality. The whole of conditioned existence unfolds cyclically in a descending arc, which gravitates towards pure potentiality to manifest the unconditionedness of the reality of existence and in an ascending arc, which levitates towards pure actuality to voyage back to its unmanifest source.

As we have discussed, for al-Kāshānī, contingent existence descends from pure actuality in a tiered continuum, which consists of three main levels: the intellectual, the imaginative and the sensitive. “These three layered realms emanate in degrees, meaning that every existent in the worldly realm of essences and accidents, even motion, stillness, tastes and smells have a form in the medial realm [imaginal world], which precedes it in existence, and has truth in the highest realm, which precedes them both. All that is in this lower world of persons, forms, proportions, shapes and bodily-psycho structures are shadows, images and exemplars of what is in the higher world of spiritual realities, noetic forms and non-material proportions, which descended, darkened and were trialed after they were pure, pristine and holy; beyond imperfection-vice, lofty beyond filth-rust, transcendent to flaw-imperfection and [completely] purified of destruction and transience.”¹⁵⁶ Here, al-Kāshānī speaks of the contingent world as one which contains levels, which relate to one another as octaves, such that the realities of each level of being are present more intensely in higher planes and less intensely in lower planes. The descending arc resonates down the existential scale, reaching pure potentiality, and then begins to move in retrograde back upwards. Hence, motion is not limited to the sensitive tier but rather

¹⁵⁶ Al-Kāshānī, M., *ʿAyn al-Yaqīn*, p 169.

it is extended to the whole chain of being, with each level, within each tier, thirsting for the perfections for the levels above it. In al-Kāshānī's words: "All the universes...move from pure potentiality to absolute actuality."¹⁵⁷ "You have understood that minerals and elements have souls in the world of imagination and intellects, which act as the lords of the species, in the higher world. They [mineral and elements] are sustained by those souls [in the imaginal world] just like those souls are sustained by the intellects. Hence the resurrection is firstly to those psychic forms [i.e. the souls] then to what is above them."¹⁵⁸ This ontological momentum out of imperfection towards perfection or from potentiality to actuality or from essence to existence pertains to al-Kāshānī's whole discourse on the return of all existents to God.

Potentiality and actuality are gradated such that every entity, in every level of being, has a potential aspect, oriented away from God, and an actual aspect, oriented towards God. The potential aspects, of each level of existence, derive from its contingency and conditionedness, while, its actuality derives from its existence which is, ultimately, none other than the reality of existence. Pure potentiality is the sum total of all conditions, whereas, pure actuality is that which is unconditioned, the divine spark within the creature, so to speak. This ontological dialectic, between the conditioned and the unconditioned, is the inner-life of God and the divine inflection, as we have argued. In line with Mīr Dāmād, the founder of the school of Isfahan, al-Kāshānī distinguishes between three types of ontological relations, the temporal (*zaman*), the perpetual (*dahr*) and the infinite (*sarmad*). Al-Kāshānī writes: "The relation between two transient beings is temporal, the relation between a transient being and an eternal being is perpetual and the relation between eternal being to eternal being is infinite."¹⁵⁹ Interestingly

¹⁵⁷ Ibid., p 142.

¹⁵⁸ Ibid., p 526.

¹⁵⁹ Ibid., p 493.

enough al-Kāshānī does not mention Mīr Dāmād when he refers to this triune distinction which is associated with him. Whether this is an act of intellectual allegiance to Mulla Ṣadra, his teacher, which greatly differed with Mīr Dāmād is not clear. Yet, the utility of this distinction between the three relations: temporal, eternal and infinite is understandable within the scheme al-Kāshānī is offering.

The temporal relation is the lowest of the three because it looks at the relationship between conditioned existents, beings which have both a potential aspect and an actual aspect or an aspect of *whatness* and an aspect of *thatness*. The perpetual relationship looks at the existential relationship between the unconditioned and the conditioned. This relationship is between pure unconditioned existence, pure actuality, on one hand, and conditioned existents, which have both a potential and actual aspect, on the other. Lastly, the infinite relation is, ontologically speaking, the highest of the three relations because it pertains to the ‘relation’ of unconditioned existence to itself. It is in *infinity* that unconditioned existence, not conditioned by its unconditionedness, fulfills its reality in self-knowledge as it inmanates into the *perpetual* circle of existence, which further inflects into the *temporal* rhythms. The *infinite* looks at the unconditioned non-relationally or absolutely, the *perpetual* gazes upon the unconditioned in relation to the conditioned and the *temporal* studies conditioned existents in relation to one another.

This philosophical position has obvious parallels with Akbarian theoretical mysticism, which distinguishes between the most-holy effusion (*al-fayḍ al-aqdas*) and the holy effusion (*al-fayḍ al-muqadas*).¹⁶⁰ We have also mentioned the notions of the roll (*al-kawr*) and the cycle (*al-dawr*), in Shi‘ite extremism and esotericism, which also resonate with these two realities of

¹⁶⁰ See Al-Qaysari, D., *Sharh Fusus al-Hikam*, ed. Hasan Hasan Zada al-Amuli, p 159-164.

emanation; the most-holy infinite roll and the holy perpetual cycle. For al-Kāshānī, all these convergences would affirm the central tenet of his larger project, which is to show that even when demonstrative reason, mystical intuition and divine revelation are strictly obeyed, each within its own internal dynamics, a singular result is attained albeit in an original form in each one. The perpetual cycle of the holy-effusion, within which the conditioned is forever in motion towards the unconditioned, is forever realizing its effacement in the infinite roll of the most-holy-effusion. For al-Kāshānī, all these processes of return are carried out through the perfect man (*al-insan al-kamil*), which acts as the link between the created and the Creator.

In al-Kāshānī's scheme the whole of the material world gravitates towards man, which acts as its doorway to the immaterial angelic worlds. The whole sequence of emergence from elemental to vegetative and, finally, to animal paves the way for the appearance of mankind. "It has become clear -from what has passed- that the ultimate end in founding the generative world and its sensual constituents is the creation of man, while the end of the creation of man is the receptive intellect i.e. the witnessing of intelligible reality and the connection to the higher sphere. Both [witnessing and connection] lead to essential servant-hood that is the total extinction in the First Truth and hence the [attainment of] divine vicegerency, as He said-exalted: {We did not create the jinn or mankind save for worship}¹⁶¹...[In line with this] the prophet-peace be upon Him and his family- has said: 'O 'Ali were it not for us God would not have created Adam nor Eve nor heaven nor hell nor sky nor earth.' For were it not for the vicegerent creation would not exist, which is why his existence must persist in all ages and epochs...[Also in this context] Al-Sadiq -peace be upon him- said: 'If the earth remained without an Imam it

¹⁶¹ Qur'an, 51:56.

would melt.”¹⁶² Out of the material world mankind arises and out of mankind the perfect human wells forth, who actualizes the connection between the world of light and that of darkness.

The perfect man (*al-insan al-kamil*) becomes the bridge between the unconditioned and the conditioned, between Creator and created, connecting the lower and higher worlds. The way al-Kāshānī interweaves notions of the perfect man, from the Akbarian tradition, with concepts of the generative and intelligible worlds, characteristic of neo-platonic paradigms and references to vicegerency and imamate in the Qur’an/Shi’ite hadith suggest that he wants the reader to come to the conclusion that all those disparate roads lead to Rome (or in this case Najaf). He writes: “Know that all entities are in service of humanity and are solely transmuted to it [mankind] and to no other [species for] {there is no change in the words of God}¹⁶³ ...So the world’s return [to God] is [concentrated in] the essence of the human being who, in turn, returns to the Divine essence, opening by virtue of the keys of his knowledge and the chains of his kingdom the doors of heaven and earth in mercy, compassion, wisdom and knowledge.”¹⁶⁴ Since, according to al-Kāshānī, the telos behind the whole creation, which originated in God, is to return to its beginning, the centrality of the perfect man becomes obvious. Here again the perfect man, a term coined in Akbarian metaphysics, is utilized by al-Kāshānī with regard to the central figures of Twelver Shi’ism, namely the prophets/messengers mentioned in the Qur’an and the Twelve Imams, which are referred to in the hadith literature. However, by appealing to resources from mysticism, philosophy and revelation al-Kāshānī’s seems to be keen on proving that each of the resources is irreducible to the others even whilst they are all integrated into a singularity. To fully explain the pivotal role of the perfect man as an axis between divinity and humanity al-

¹⁶² Al-Kāshānī, M., *‘Ayn al-Yaqīn*, p 433.

¹⁶³ Qur’an, 10:64.

¹⁶⁴ Al-Kāshānī, M., *‘Ayn al-Yaqīn*, p 437.

Kāshānī plunges into a rigorous philosophical analysis of perception within which he will project his discourse.¹⁶⁵

The fashion by which al-Kāshānī confers this medial status, upon the perfect man, as a bridge between the lower and higher worlds is through his discussion of the variant human faculties. He writes:

“The [only] senses and sensibles... that perceive quiddities are the five [external ones]...However, [these faculties of perception are gradational such that] if they are [ontologically] strengthened and heightened they converge unto singularity and disembodiment, whereas, when they are [ontologically] weakened and descended they congregate upon multiplicity and embodiment. The preserver of [sensual] form is imagination (*khayal*)...which is a faculty that is connected to the end of the first crevice of the brain. [Within the imagination] the forms of sensibles remain after the material [stimulus] is absent from the field of sensual [perception], hence, the imagination can be seen as the treasury of the sensorium...The perceiver of meaning, [on the other hand,] is estimation (*wahm*)...which perceives non-sensual meaning within sensibles and makes particular judgments, such that the bird’s perception of the mouse drives the bird [to plunge] towards it and the mouse’s perception of the bird necessitates [the mouse’s] fleeing...[Another faculty is] that of noetic perception, which apprehends universal realities [in themselves], such as [a universal noetic] Lord over [a whole] animal species...The faculty of estimation, [on the other hand,] has no relation to the noetic reality [in itself], rather, it connects to it through a particular body. The faculty that preserves meaning is named memory (*hafiza*)...holding what is perceived by the faculty of estimation... such that it’s (memory’s) relation to estimation is akin to that of the

¹⁶⁵ See Kamal, M., *Mulla Sadra’s Transcendent Philosophy*, p 88-105.

[faculty of] imagination to the sensorium. The actor (*mutasarif*) [faculty], on the other hand, associates some of what is [in the faculties of] imagination and memory of the [sense] forms or meanings with other [sense forms and meanings] while it differentiates some of them from the others. Therefore [the actor faculty] associates [disparate parts of different] animals, such as the head of a human, the neck of a camel and the back of a tiger as it also separates several parts of a single species, like [dissociating] the head from a human. [This faculty] is never quite, neither in sleep nor in waking, and it stitches perceptions and structures...such that it moves from a thing to its opposite in a chaotic and disorganized fashion making it the most demonic of the internal faculties...When the soul uses [the actor faculty to associate estimative perceptions] it is named the imaginal faculty (*mutakhayila*) and when [the soul gives way for] the noetic faculty to use it [the actor faculty] it's activity is contemplative, which yields sciences and disciplines...and it [the actor faculty also] draws on memory...By virtue of its use [of the actor faculty] the soul acts through the [physical] hand in [material] realities just like it uses imagination...as a spiritual hand...and estimation as the spiritual eye. Truly exalted is the Creator of mankind and praise is due to the Granter of power and portion.”¹⁶⁶

The faculties mentioned by al-Kāshānī are five: the sensation, imagination, estimation (or emotion), memory and nous (or reason). Sensation encompasses touch, taste, smell, hearing and sight each of which interact in themselves, with their environment and with one another. This rich sensual matrix can be named the sensorium or the sum total of all sensual stimuli at a given place and time. The next faculty is the imagination which preserves all the sensual stimuli such that past sense experiences can be retrieved in the present. The third faculty is estimation, which perceives non-sensual realities through there sensual experiences, like hate for a person or love for one's parents. When sensation could only feel pain or pleasure estimation can experience

¹⁶⁶ Al-Kāshānī, M., *ʿAyn al-Yaqīn*, p 394-395.

more abstract realities through the sensorium. The memory is the faculty which preserves the estimative experiences, such that past estimations can be retrieved in the present long after they have passed. Finally, the highest faculty is that of the intellect or the noetic faculty, harboring self-evident first principles within itself, such as the law of identity and the law of non-contradiction, which it can apply to sensation, imagination, estimation and memory or even to itself. The noetic faculty uses self evident axioms to achieve a theoretical scheme about external reality and cognitively maps the world in the process such that it becomes a conceptual mirror of the external world. It is through the saturation of the noetic faculty that perception overflows into the spiritual world as the intellect becomes a receiver of divine lights and Godly emanations, beyond the sensation, imagination, estimation, memory and noetic, through contact with the active intellect. The reality which participates in all these faculties, at once, is the soul (*nafs*), a discussion of which will prove central for al-Kāshānī in order for him to be able to map out how the perfect human can bridge the lower and higher worlds. Regarding the soul al-Kāshānī writes:

“The [physical] atmosphere and others are mediums, instruments and supplementary [causes]...such that the material cause prepares the soul making it receptive to the presence of the archetypes through the material mediums...[and] acts as a preparation for the emanation of the form upon the soul...The soul perceives the audible by mediation of air which has reacted, taken structure and a particular position proportionate to a specific sense...but it is not [reducible] to matter for even if the formation of air into particular sounds of letters is necessary [perception] it is still occurring in a subjective world of its own. Also the soul does not perceive the seen form by mediation of the moist skin [on the

eye]...rather the only reason that form takes shape in a perceptual witnessing is through a
hylic faculty...which is attached to the soul acting as a mirror of its perception.”¹⁶⁷

The soul, hence, partakes in both the sensible and the super-sensible, choosing to orient its attention towards either of the two. By peeling away the accidental-sensible attributes and identifying the essential-conceptual ones, a doorway is opened into the non-corporeal/non-abstract reality which is being channeled by an entity. “There is no relation between the pure immutable [sphere] and the pure ephemeral [sphere] except through a [third reality] which participates in both aspects. [This third reality] is the soul which is immaterial in itself and material in its actions. So the soul falls between the [immaterial] intellect and [material] nature since its essence is noetic while its action is natural.”¹⁶⁸ Some souls are fully absorbed in the super-sensible while others are fully soaked up in the sensible. The most perfect soul, according to al-Kāshānī, is one whose absorption in the super-sensible does not veil it from the sensible and whose attention to the sensible does not conceal it from the super-sensible, such that he can both see the transient lower world and the eternal higher world. It is this awareness of both worlds that gives the perfect human the ability to mediate the interactions between both of them, making him the literal representative of God on earth. Al-Kāshānī quotes “The Master of Illumination Suhrāwardī [who] has said: ‘You have seen how a heated iron attains similar qualities to the fire, which is proximate to it, such that it acts like it, so do not be dazzled by a soul which was illuminated, enflamed and enlightened with the light of God such that the universes came under its [the soul’s] obedience.’”¹⁶⁹ The eschatological utility of this philosophical conclusion is all too obvious. The perfect man can witness the eternal through the transient, the infinite through the finite and the unconditioned through the conditioned. Hence, the perfect man becomes the

¹⁶⁷ Ibid., p 390.

¹⁶⁸ Ibid., p 124.

¹⁶⁹ Ibid., p 444.

channel which connects all realities in the lower worlds to the higher world. In the final horizon the perfect man ultimately grounds all realities in both the lower and higher world to their corresponding divine attributes. In the following two passages al-Kāshānī maps out the trajectory of ascending arc utilizing philosophical concepts, in the first passage, for the most part and mostly using religious imagery, in the second passage. He writes:

“{And to God is the return}¹⁷⁰ {We are God’s and We return to Him}¹⁷¹ ...Every existent save God has an end above it that calls upon it...[such that its ascent] ends in the primal telos above which there is no end, which is the Creator-ex-nihilo...You have fathomed that every natural sensual reality -be it celestial or elemental- has a [corresponding] noetic reality in the Divine world, which acts as the root of the generated and renewed shadows [in the lower world] acting as its efficient, final and formal [cause]. For those [divine] roots are [immaterial and] noetic in actuality, whereas, the [sensibles] suffer from potentiality and contingency, which pertains to its generative path of constant renewal, [characteristic of materiality], such that its temporality, particularity and personality attain something of [the immaterial noetic reality] gradually and reaches it by stages...for each noetic form has modes, aspects, faces and respects that cannot be encompassed save by God.”¹⁷²

“Our teacher -may God extend his shadow- said: ‘If plants are dried or cut from their root they traverse to the portioned formal world [of imagination] which is without hyle until they reach the intellective world as the first teacher [i.e. Aristotle] has mentioned. When the plant ends in that formal world it either becomes one of the trees of paradise, if it was of sweet taste and smell or one of the trees of the inferno if it had a bad taste, a bitter

¹⁷⁰ Qur’an, 42:53.

¹⁷¹ Qur’an, 82:6.

¹⁷² Al-Kāshānī, M., *‘Ayn al-Yaqīn*, p 522-524.

flavor and a horrid stench, like the tree of zaqum which is the food of the sinful. The roots of all these trees end in the final lote-tree {near which is the garden of refuge when there covered the lote-tree that which covered it}¹⁷³ similar to how all the souls end firstly in the universal soul, which then finds refuge in the universal intellect.”¹⁷⁴

Al-Kāshānī’s commitment to the singularity of existence within which his philosophy of origin and emanation is mapped also has its influence on the return. As we have discussed above the reality of existence is the primal reality, which grounds all realities for al-Kāshānī. Since nothing exists outside Existence the whole emanation in its hierarchies unfolds within the reality of existence. The return pertains to the re-absorption of the emanated realities back into their primordial ground of being, completely evaporating back into the reality of existence. “When the grand rising is ushered and the great calamity is brought about then all particular existents will shed their relation to their quiddities, such that true existence is witnessed in its absolute singularity.{When they shall all rise from the dead before God, the One, the Victorious.}¹⁷⁵...For the Victorious is He who overpowers all existents, other than Him, persisting alone for there is no doubt that if He -most high- manifested in Himself no trace of another existent would remain...The commander of the faithful -peace be upon him- said: ‘He -exalted- returns after the extinction of the world to His aloneness as He was before its origination. Thus He will be after its extinction without epoch or place or location or time. With that all generations, epochs, years and hours perish, such that there is nothing save the One the Omnipotent to whom is the end of all realities.’”¹⁷⁶ Since all realities are inflections, which occur within the singular reality of existence, then every reality, whatever it may be, has its utmost

¹⁷³ Qur’an, 53:15-16.

¹⁷⁴ Al-Kāshānī, M., *‘Ayn al-Yaqīn*, p 526.

¹⁷⁵ Qur’an, 14:48.

¹⁷⁶ Al-Kāshānī, M., *‘Ayn al-Yaqīn*, p 529.

source in God where it returns to dissolve thence according its portioned reality. By stressing both dissolution and portioned reality al-Kāshānī can preserve the majestic encounter with God in hell and the beatific encounter in paradise.

One of al-Kāshānī's students, al-Lāhījī, likened God to a 'Black Light', which is the very reality that sustains all perceptual faculties, such that they are unable to perceive it because they are grounded by it. We can think of the blackness of the light as a symbol of divine transcendence while its luminosity as a icon of its immanence. Out of divine transcendence wells forth the majestic names and attributes of God, such as the Overpowering and the Wrathful, which echo in the inferno. On the other hand, divine names and attributes such as the Compassionate and the Merciful spring out of the divine immanence and resonate in paradise. It is in this context that al-Kāshānī develops a rich understanding of the afterlife, an understanding which he got severely criticized for. An obvious problem for a religionist who attests to the singularity of existence, like al-Kāshānī, is the problem of evil which culminates and crystallizes in the doctrine of hell. In an attempt at giving a reasonable framework within which al-Kāshānī can map the religious doctrine of hell he writes: "May it be known that painful suffering will overtake those who negated the Truth, rejected the [true] sciences and desired noetic perfection in the world but abandoned the pursuit of its attainment such that they lost their [noetic] hylic potentiality and attained satanic actuality as false doctrines entrenched themselves in their estimation (*awhamahum*). [This aforementioned group is] distinct from those who are unable to perceive lofty levels of understanding. The misery of this [second group] is not painful due to their ignorance of perfection and their lack of desire towards it...for stupidity is closer to

salvation than cleverness.”¹⁷⁷ As a first move al-Kāshānī divides the torment of the inferno into two categories: painful torment and non-painful torment.

This division, however, does not seem enough for al-Kāshānī for he still has to deal with painful torment. So he writes: “May it be known that pain, be it noetic (*‘aqli*) or sensual, must end one day and return to bliss even if it is after eons because coercion does not persist and structures which are opposed to Truth are alien to the essence of the soul...He [Ibn al-‘Arabi] said in another section: ‘Divine presence demands eulogy so that it may be...praised in His true promise [of paradise] not in His true threat [of hell]...He said: {do not consider that God will disobey His promise to his messengers}¹⁷⁸ and He did not say His threat, rather, He said {We shall overlook their faults}¹⁷⁹ even if He did threaten.’”¹⁸⁰ Since all realities are ultimately the emanation of the singular reality of existence al-Kāshānī is led to find a place for sin and unbelief within the divine scheme of things. While unbelief and sin, in the otherworld, have an infernal reality belief and surrender have a paradisaal reality in the world beyond. However, al-Kāshānī wants to explain why God creates creatures He knows will choose unbelief over belief and sin over obedience. Ultimately, al-Kāshānī’s approach to the issue will fall into his commitment to the dyadic ecology between the majestic and beatific divine names -attributes of God. From this perspective belief and unbelief or obedience and sin are manifestations of the symbiotic unity between God’s Beauty and His Majesty. Hence, unbelief and sin fulfill the majestic qualities of the divine providence making particular divine attributes manifest that have no other way to appear.

¹⁷⁷ Ibid., p 530.

¹⁷⁸ Qur’an, 14:47.

¹⁷⁹ Qur’an, 46:16.

¹⁸⁰ Al-Kāshānī, M., *‘Ayn al-Yaqīn*, p 531.

Al-Kāshānī incorporates the problem of evil into his system on two levels: firstly on the level of this world and secondly on the level of otherworld. He writes: “Our principles (*‘ndana usul*) signify that the inferno, its pains and evils are persistent for its people like paradise, its bliss and its goodness is persistent for its people, however, the persistence of each carries a different meaning...He (Şadra) -may his shadow persist- pointed out that there is no contradiction between the torment upon the people of the fire being endless and it coming to an end to each and every one of its people at some time, so do understand. For he said: ‘you know that the worldly order is not set a right save by harsh souls and hard hearts such that if all people had felicitous souls, which were afraid of God’s chastisement, the order of this world would be disrupted because of the absence of the uncompassionate souls who build this abode [through their sins] like the pharaohs, the anti-christs and the mischievous souls...In the lordly hadith: ‘I have made the sins of the sons of Adam a cause for the building of the world.’”¹⁸¹ In another quintessential passage he draws on the Akbarian commentary tradition, as he transcribes:

“Kamal al-din ‘abd al-Razzaq al-Kashi in his exposition on the ring-stones [of wisdom] (*fuşuş al-ḥikam*) said: ‘When the people of the fire enter hell its suffering dominates them exteriorly and interiorly such that they are possessed by despondency and anxiety so they accuse one another of infidelity and curse one another in inimical sayings as has come in the speech of God in several situations. They are encompassed by its (hellfire’s) pavilions, such that they demand an easing of their suffering or their elimination, as God spoke on their tongues: {O Malik (the angelic guardian of hell) may your Lord eradicate us}¹⁸², or their demand to return to the world both of which are not answered such that they are told: {their torment shall not be lessened, nor shall any defense be accepted from

¹⁸¹ Ibid., p 533.

¹⁸² Qur’an, 43:77.

them}¹⁸³ nor will they return to the world so there demands will not be responded to rather they will be told : {you shall remain within it}¹⁸⁴ {He said: cower in it and speak not to Me.}¹⁸⁵ So when they have lost hope and fixed their souls upon the torment remaining therein during the passage of years and eons after having exhausted all excuses they begin to swerve towards patience and they say: {It is all the same to us whether we mourn or bear with patience; for us there is no escape}¹⁸⁶. With that...God's fire, which arises upon the hearts, is extinguished, such that if they get accustomed to the torment after the passage of the eons they began to enjoy it and not be tortured by its intensity such that when a breeze from heaven blew their way they would hate it and experience pain from it just like a sick person is harmed by the scent of a rose due to his accustomedness to the stench of dung and impurities."¹⁸⁷

Once again al-Kāshānī invokes a vast array of literary traditions, which range from religious, mystical and philosophical sources in his elucidation of the doctrine of hell above. Al-Kāshānī is hinting at an integral Shi'ite worldview which does not limit its epistemic resources into a single school to the exclusion of the others. By running a single idea through several epistemic systems al-Kāshānī is able to delve into all its depth since he can evoke endless literary patterns at once instead of stifling himself with the fatigued energies of a single method.

¹⁸³ Qur'an, 2:162.

¹⁸⁴ Qur'an, 43:77.

¹⁸⁵ Qur'an, 23:108.

¹⁸⁶ Qur'an, 14:21.

¹⁸⁷ Al-Kāshānī, M., *'Ayn al-Yaqīn*, p 532-533.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

After our abstract engagement with al-Kāshānī's philosophical thought, which has been tackled throughout the chapters of this thesis it would be useful to embed him within a lineage of scholars to see exactly the ways in which his thought has actually influenced embodied life. Within this study I firstly contextualized al-Kāshānī within his geographical, economic, socio-political and intellectual milieu and secondly analyzed *'Ayn al-Yaqīn* through the prism of the three Neo-Platonic themes of origin, emanation and return. From this study we can conclude that in this work al-Kāshānī Neo-Platonized Shi'ism and Shi'itized Neo-Platonism. *'Ayn al-Yaqīn* can be identified as an Islamic philosophical text in the tradition of al-Kindī, al-Fārābī (b.872-d.950), Ibn Sinna (b.980-d.1037), Suhrawardī (b.1154-d.1191) and, of course, Mulla Ṣadra because it deals with the same topics and uses identical lexicon. However, al-Kāshānī's use of mystical and religious sources to supplement his philosophical arguments portray to us that he is not simply engaging in philosophy. Rather, he seems to be constantly concerned with reminding his reader that the available modes of knowing, namely demonstrative reason, mystical unveiling and divine revelation (*Burhan, 'Irfan and Qur'an*), lead to the same source. Our close analysis of *'Ayn al-Yaqīn's* stylistic motifs in his literature has made it clear that al-Kāshānī participates in several scholarly lineages, simultaneously, the first being that of the Hellenic philosophy, mediated through Muslim philosophers, and the second being that of traditional Islamic intellectual thought.

Al-Kāshānī is an important link in the chain of Shi‘ite scholars. A quick glance at his teachers and students can show us how he literally bridges the past to the future. His teachers range from al-Shaykh al-Bāhā’ī, Mīr Dāmād, Mīr Findrinskī (b.1562-d.1640) and Mulla Ṣadra, on the philosophical/mystical side and Majīd al-Bahranī, Muḥammad Taqī al-Majlisī, his father and his uncle in hadith/exegesis. His students include also philosophers and mystics like Qadī Sa‘id al-Qummī and ‘Abd al-Razzaq al-Lāhījī, who had great influence on Hadī al-Sabzawārī (b.1797-d.1873), who, in turn, influenced Muhammad-Husayn al-Tābātābāī. Two of the philosophical texts written by al-Tābātābāī are taught at the major Shi‘ite seminaries today. On the other side, his students also include muhadiths the most prominent one being Muhammad-Baqir al-Majlisī. Al-Majlisī’s student Mulla Muhammad al-Akmal, taught Muhammad-Baqir al-Bihbahani (b.1706-d.1791), who taught Mahdi b. Murtada al-Tabtabai al-Brujardi (b.1797-d.1741), who taught Ahmed b. Muhammad al-Naraqī (d.1828), who taught Murtaḍā b. Muḥammad al-Anṣārī (b.1799-d.1864), who taught Mirza Husayn al-Nurī (b.1838-d.1902) who taught Shaykh ‘Abbass al-Qummī (1877-1940) who, in turn, taught Ruhullah al-Khomeinī. Al-Qummī also taught Shahab al-Dīn Mar‘ashī al-Najafī who was Murtada Mutahari’s teacher.¹⁸⁸ Al-Najafī was an active supporter of the Iranian revolution of 1979 while Mutahari was one of its major ideologues and theoreticians. The presence of al-Kāshānī in this important scholarly lineage would make Shi‘ite scholars receptive to exploring his works. Khomeinī is reported to have become interested in mysticism due to his reading of al-Kāshānī’s Tafsīr, which had Sufi tendencies.¹⁸⁹ Al-Kāshānī’s engagement with such a vast spectrum of seemingly contradictory topics displeased several of his distant students, such as Yusuf al-Bahranī, who openly criticized him for it. However, al-Kāshānī’s ability to engage with all the diverse disciplines eruditely

¹⁸⁸ Khomeini, R., *Arba‘un Hadithan*, p 23-30.

¹⁸⁹ Hamid, A., et al. *Imam Khomeini: Life, Thought and Legacy*, p 24-25.

forced several of his successors who held a vast array of orientations to encounter disciplines they thought they would never have engaged with through al-Kāshānī's works, simply because they respected him as a great scholar.

Through his legacy al-Kāshānī contributed to the development of Shi'ite thought during the centuries that followed his death. This becomes obvious when one reads the works of twentieth century scholars, four centuries after al-Kāshānī, who still mention him. This attests that several scholars were part of al-Kāshānī's school, which combined between sources internal to the Islamic tradition with sources external to it. One contemporary Shi'ite scholar, Muḥammad-Husayn al-Tihranī, an active theoretician of the Iranian revolution of 1979, narrates the views of his teacher Muḥammad-Husayn al-Tābātābāī regarding al-Kāshānī he writes:

“The ‘Allamah [Tābātābāī] use to glorify the remembrance of Mulla Muhsin al-Fayd al-Kāshānī -who has been embraced by mercy- saying: He was a man well-versed in all sciences or that it is rare to find anyone like him within the Islamic world, for he would engage with each science distinctly without mixing between any of them. Such that in his exegetical works ‘al-Sāfi’, ‘al-Asfa’ and ‘al-Musafa’, which tended towards an exegesis [of the Qur’an] through narrations, he does not address any philosophical, mystical and witnessing questions. While he who reads his text of narrations named ‘al-Wafi’ will perceive him to be as one of the Akhbarīs, who have never studied philosophy. Similarly this was also [the method] he carried out in his works on mystical tasting within which he sticks to the methodology [of the discipline] never exiting the [parameters] of the subject. This [is the case] despite [the fact] that he was a master in philosophy and one of the most prominent students of Sadr al-Muta’alihīn [Mulla Ṣadra].”¹⁹⁰

¹⁹⁰ Al-Tihranī, M., *Al-Shams al-Sati’a*, p 40-41.

Our study has shown that al-Kāshānī's epistemology is more intricate than al-Tihranī depicts, because al-Kāshānī draw on demonstrative reason, mystical unveiling and divine revelation at once, as it has been expanded through this study, yet, nonetheless, this quote portrays the importance of al-Kāshānī in the modern Shi'ite world.

Since the late 18th century, alien technologies and novel ideas poured into the Muslim world yielding a vast spectrum of reactions, as the encounter with the world of antiquity had done during the 8th century. However, one major difference between the early 'Abbasid era and the 18th-19th century was that this time around the Islamic world was in a weaker position. The main positions that emerged in the Islamic world in this context can be loosely grouped into two major camps: the first are the fundamentalists who became introverted, refusing to interact with the outsiders save in violent, while the second camp became extroverted and dissolved into the accomplishments of Europe and the west. Could someone like al-Kāshānī possibly offer a third option? I will argue that al-Kāshānī's integral framework, if understood dynamically, not rigidly, remains largely unaffected by the ruptures of modernity because it can reassemble the relational modalities of how reason, mysticism and revelation are to be interpreted in relation to one another. This epistemic stance could facilitate thinking of seemingly old and rusted topics in fresh and new ways.

The three relations which concern al-Kāshānī are 1) the relation of the creature to the creature 2) the relation of the creature to the Creator and 3) the relation of the Creator to Himself. In philosophical language, creatures are existents which are grounded in the Reality of Existence. The grounding relation of existents to Existence pertains to the holy-effusion, which is the space that conventional monotheistic discourse inhabits. In the holy-effusion a lucid duality between Creator and creature sustains itself. Existence-as-such, on the other hand, is ungrounded, for

there is nothing outside it that can relate to it, this confers upon it the title of the most-holy effusion, which is the space of absolute monism. In the most-holy-effusion Creator and creature dissolve into an uncompromising singularity, which they are active and passive dyadic poles of. Schelling's distinction between the negative and positive philosophies could be of aid here. The negative philosophy, studying what something is, is active between creatures, however, the moment the focus shifts to the existential grounding of existents in Existence we enter into the domain of the positive philosophy, the study of thatness. By consulting Schelling's post-Kantian restructuring of metaphysics we could possibly reframe al-Kāshānī's project in a language which acknowledges the strides in knowledge which have opened up today since the 1600's.

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