DIALOGUE WITH THE MASTER: EARLY SHĪ‘A ENCOUNTERS WITH AKBARĪAN MYSTICISM

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Abstract: Muḥy al-Dīn Ibn ‘Arabī’s theoretical mysticism has been the subject of lively discussion among Iranian Sufis since they first encountered it in the seventh century. ‘Abdul Razzāq Kāshānī was the pioneer and forerunner of the debate, followed by reading and interpreting al-Shaykh al-Akbar’s key texts, particularly Fūṣūs al-Ḥikam (Bezels of Wisdom) by future generations of Shī‘ī scholars. Along with commentaries and glosses on his works, every element of Ibn ‘Arabī’s mysticism, from his theory of the oneness of existence (waḥdat al-wujūd) to his doctrines of nubūn, wilāya, and kbatm al-wilāya, was accepted by his Shī‘ī peers, incorporated into their context and adjusted to Shī‘a doctrinal platform. This process of internalization and amalgamation was so complete that after seven centuries, it is difficult, if not impossible, to distinguish between Ibn ‘Arabī’s theory of waḥdat al-wujūd, or his doctrines of wilāya and kbatm al-wilāya and those of his Shī‘ī readers. To have a clearer picture of the philosophical and mystical activities and interests of Shī‘ī scholars in Iran under Ilkhanids (1256-1353), I examined the intellectual and historical contexts of seventh century Iran. The findings of my research are indicative of the contribution of mystics such as ‘Abdul Razzāq Kāshānī to both the school of Ibn ‘Arabī in general and of Ṣādr al-Dīn al-Qūnawī in particular on the one hand, and to the correlation between Sufism and Shi‘ism on the other. What I call the ‘Shī‘ītization of Akbarīan Mysticism’ started with Kāshānī and can be regarded as a new chapter in the history of Iranian Sufism.

Keywords: Theoretical mysticism, Ibn ‘Arabī, ‘Abdul Razzāq Kāshānī, Wilāya, Kbatm al-Wilāya, Sufism, Shi‘ism.

1 The author is grateful to Professor Liyakat Takim of McMaster University in Hamilton, Canada, for reading and commenting on the article before publication.
Introduction

I will provide a general picture or idea of intellectual activities in Iran prior to the first encounter of Sufis with the ‘iḥfān of Ibn ‘Arabī in the second half of the seventh century. Ibn ‘Arabī had a profound impact on a number of Sufis with Shi‘a inclination, although the reason(s) why it was important for them to analyze him from a Shi‘a perspective has yet to be studied. It is interesting to note that Ibn ‘Arabī’s relationship with his Shi‘ī exponents was deeper and more sophisticated than mere interpretation, and in fact, contains ‘adjustment’ and ‘dissemination’. Akbarīan mysticism in these figures’ hands, whom I prefer to call Shi‘a-minded Sufis, surpassed its original construct and transformed into a new configuration that, while maintaining similarities with and being influenced by it, should be treated as an independent philosophical system. ‘Abd al-Razzāq Kāshānī, ‘Alā’ u-Dawlah Simnānī (d. 736 H/1336), Sayyid Ḥaydar Āmulī (d. 787 H/1385), and the Azerbāijānī Sufi and poet, Shaykh Maḥmūd Shabistarī² (d. 740 H/1340) of the seventh and eighth centuries, to mention a few, are notable exponents in this regard.

It is possible to identify two reasons for Iranian Sufis’s interest in reading and interpreting Ibn ‘Arabī’s mysticism in a Shi‘a style. First, Twelver Shi‘ism contains the same elements as Akbarīan mysticism, albeit existing in a more primitive mode of a “raw mysticity”, which needs to be fertilized and inseminated when the necessary catalyst is available.

Several resources such as the office of the imamate as the cornerstone of Shi‘ism with the personality of the imām as the living exemplar at its heart, the doctrine of mabhāwīyya, the concept of divine knowledge and the allegorical interpretation of religious duties and of

² Shabistarī’s brightness of mind is revealed by his comprehension of the complexities of ṭawḥdat al-wujūd and his skills in adding to Ibn ‘Arabī’s intellectual system. He could be regarded as the representative of a brand of mysticism whose main characteristic was pouring ‘iḥfān into Persian literature as a means of expounding and illuminating it. For Shabistarī, the rich tradition of Persian literature was a framework through which the Akbarīan mysticism’s intricacies were expressed more fully. In his magnum opus Gulshan-i Rāz (the Rose Garden of Mystery), which is written in the form of an ode (matnawī), Shabistarī discusses the main ‘iḥfānī/kalāmi ideas of the First Emanated, the state of completeness or totality (maqām-i jāmī’), as well as the theory of the Perfect Man, of niyāya and mabnawīya. See Maḥmūd b. ‘Abd al-Karīm Shabistarī, Gulshan-i Rāz (the Rose Garden of Mystery), Muḥammad Ḥimāsīyān (ed), (Kerman: Khadamāt-i Farhangī-ya Kerman, 2003), 16.
the Book, nourished this mysticity. All of them had the potential for mystical interpretations, thanks to the scholarly works of Mohammad Ali Amir-Moezzi, who provides us with abundant information about classical Shi‘ism, as well as the role of these elements in creating a Shi‘a identity in its formative period. One can add to these sources supplications, salutations, and psalms, which always occupied a central place in Twelver culture. Kāmil Muṣṭafā al-Shaybī, Seyyed Hossein Nasr, and Shahrām Pāzūḵī, who considerably contributed to the existing scholarship on the correlation between Shi‘ism and Sufism in general, and the reception of Akharīan mysticism among Shi‘a scholars in particular, studied the role of the abovementioned factors in this union but neglected to discuss the potential of supplications in preparing the background for such a relationship.

Examination of the content of these prayers, which were gathered over centuries, as well as their veracity, is beyond the scope of this research. Therefore, I only briefly indicate the two main themes of this trio (supplications, salutations, and psalms); i.e., tawḥīd

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4 The main two messages of this trio (supplications, salutations, and psalms), are tawḥīd and servitude (lit. ‘abīnḏīyā), with a special emphasis on safeguarding believers from the hardships of life and death. The allegory of hīrīn (lit. castle) and/or silāh (lit. weapon), which shelter believers or arm them to overcome difficulties is a recurring theme in the Twelvers’ prayer culture. The most prominent example is the well-known Jawshan al-Kabīr and Jawshan al-Saḡīr (Major and Minor Armor, respectively), which has taken its name from it.


and servitude (lit. ‘ubūdīyya), which indirectly impacted the correlation between Shi‘ism and Sufism. On the other hand, since these supplications had the imprint of the imāms—as both narrator and teacher—as well as their teachings, the narrator/imām is the living exemplar and the ideal type of ‘ubūdīyya and zuhd, which are also the two main motifs of Sufism in its formative period.7 These common elements in both Sufism and the supplication tradition pursue one aim: they concern themselves with the activation and cultivation of the soul and of the Self (nafs) that seem to be neglected outside the realm of Sufi and Shi‘a spirituality.8

Our analysis is confirmed via Michael Ebstein’s discussion of the Shi‘i group of ghulāt’s impact on several Akbarīan themes such as incarnation (ḥulūl) and imām as a divine manifestation. These ideas, which originally emerged in the ghulāt group of Kufa around the mid-second/eight century, resurfaced later in Ismā‘īli circles and finally were endorsed and crystalized by Ibn ‘Arabī as ḥubūr and tajallī. Pertinent to this is the binary of divine organs of man and human organs of God (wali/good servant is the organ of God and vice versa), as well as the doctrine of the Perfect Man, both with their bold Shi‘a coloring. Ebstein points to the wilāyat al-takwīnīya of the office of khilāfa of the Perfect Man, which unlike the elitist Shi‘a worldview that limits this right only and exclusively to the imāms, embraces humanity and even the whole creation too.9 With regard to Ebstein’s analysis, there was a unique exchange of ideas between the Shi‘a extremists of the mid-second century on the one hand and Ibn ‘Arabī’s mysticism (via the intermediary role of the Ismā‘īli circles such as Ikhwān al-Safā) on the other. These exchanges started with the infiltration of a few ghulāt ideas to the ‘irfān of Ibn ‘Arabī, which were later refined and developed by him and finally returned to its Shi‘a milieu in the seventh century.

8 Bernd Radtke has discussed the importance of this goal in Sufism in light of “the impress of enlightenment and science”. See Bernd Radtke, “Between Projection and Suppression: Some Considerations Concerning the Study of Sufism”, in Frederick De Jong (ed.), Shi‘a Islam, Sects and Sufism, Historical Dimensions, Religious Practice, and Methodological Considerations (Utrecht: Publications of the M. Th. Houtsma Stichting, 1992), 70-82.
Second, and from a theological perspective, the Akbarīan theories of wilāya and khatm al-wilāya, as well as that of the Perfect Man and waḥdat al-wujūd, seemed revolutionary and sometimes even alien to the Shi‘a ethos, but accommodating jarring sets of ideas within the moderate framework of Twelver Shi‘ism was not unprecedented among Shi‘ī scholars. Al-Shaybī shows how the extremist beliefs in the Abbasid era—and particularly those of Hīshām b. Ḥakam (d. 199 Hegira/815-816)—were refined from their unconventional redundancy and became incorporated into the mainstream Shi‘ism of the second century. Furthermore, as Amir-Moezzi discusses, after the fourth century (tenth century CE) and as a result of the establishment of the Buwaihids (also Buyids, 320 H/932 – 447 H/1055) and due to some political considerations, Twelvers tended to highlight the more “rational” (i.e., juridical and kalāmi) dimensions of their creed at the expense of its esoteric aspect. History repeated itself when in the mid-seventh/thirteenth century, Ibn ‘Arabī’s mysticism underwent the same experience and its different doctrines, including that of wilāya, the Perfect Man and waḥdat al-wujūd, were customized according to the Shi‘a creed. Therefore, and from this perspective, it is no exaggeration to say that the seventh century should also be called ‘the Shi‘a century’.

Contextualizing Iranian Sufism: A Case Study of ‘Abdul Razzāq Kāshānī

‘Abdul Razzāq Kāshānī11 in his Majmū‘ah Rasā‘il wa Muṣannafāt (Collected Treatises and Writings), recounts that the first time scholarly circles in Shiraz became familiar with Fussūs dates back to 655 H/1257,12 when two of his masters in Sufism,13 Shaykh Ǧiyā al-

11 For Kāshānī’s position in the line of immediate followers and disseminators of Ibn ‘Arabī, staring from Ǧār Dīn Qūnawī (d. 673 H/1274) and ending in Dāwūd Qayṣārī (d. 751 H/1350), See William Chittick, “The Five Divine Presences: From al-Qūnawī to al-Qayṣārī”, The Muslim World, Vol 72, Issue 2 (April 1982), 107-108.
12 Ibn ‘Arabī had died seventeen years earlier in 638.
13 As Ǧāh al-Ḥussein Zarrīnkūb ascertains, Kāshānī’s masters were all Suhrwardī Sufis, and he had Suhrwardī training in Sufism, and that is why he cannot be regarded as a simple follower and commentator of Ibn ‘Arabī. He in fact merged Akbarīan mysticism with the Suhrwardī teachings. See Ǧāhul Ǧāh al-Ḥussein Zarrīnkūb, Dunbāla-yi Īstān‘ū dar Tašawwuf-i Iran (Sequel to Inquiries into Persian Sufism), 5th edition (Tehran: Amīr Kabīr Publication, 2001), 130-131.
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Dīn Abū al-Ḥasan al-Shirāzī (d. 70 /1306)14 and Shaykh Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad b. Aḥmad al-Ḥakīm Kīshī (d. 694 H/1295), had difficulty finding an expert in Shiraz with whom they could discuss tawḥīd, or who could answer their questions regarding the subject. Quoting Kīshī, Kāshānī writes:

“… and at that time, there was no one in Shiraz with whom I could discuss tawḥīd, and Shaykh Dīyā al-Dīn Abū Ḥasan did not have enough knowledge about it, and I [myself] was also perplexed, until Fusūṣ reached here.”15

In consideration of the above-mentioned quotation as well as the time of the completion of the Fusūṣ in 627 H/1229,16 it seems that it only took twenty-eight years for the Fusūṣ to reach Shiraz and become accessible to Kāshānī’s masters who lived during the Ilkhanid dynasty. We know much about the intellectual life of the seventh century Iran under the Mongol rule. As Lambton, Pfeiffer, Amitai-Preiss, and al-Shaybī,17 among others have discussed, while Shi ’ism was an exception, Sunnism was the rule, and Sunni Sufism was particularly popular and vibrant. Ostensibly, the decline of the Abbasid caliphate, the impartiality of the Mongols in religious affairs, and the release of Sufism from Sunnism contributed to a rise in the status of Sufism. The two main Sufī silsilas of Subhawardīya (to which Kāshānī was affiliated) and Kubrawīya, as well as lesser tariqah, such as Kāzirūnīya (also Ishāqīya)18 and Rushdīya, were active and prevalent at that time.19

14 With the full name of Naṣīr al-Dīn Abū Ḥāmid Maḥmūd b. al-Imām Dīyā al-Dīn Abū al-Ḥasan Mas‘ūd b. Maḥmūd al-Shirāzī. For the complete list of the names of Kāshānī’s masters, I consulted with Fatemeh Tayefeh’s doctoral thesis entitled “Concept of Chivalry (Futuwwah) According to ‘Abdul Razzāq Kāshānī: Analysis on His Tuhfat al-Ikhwan fi Ḵaṣa’iṣ al-Fityān (Brethren Trove in Chivalry)” (Academy of Islamic Studies--University of Malaya, 2015).

15 Unfortunately, I did not have direct access to Majmū’a Rasā’il wa Muṣannafāt and my correspondence with the publisher was inconclusive.


17 al-Shaybī, Sufism and Shi ’ism.


19 ‘Abdul Hussein Zarrinkūb in Dunbala-yi Jastujū dar Taṣawwuf Iran (in his discussion of Iranian Sufism indirectly indicates the popularity of “Sunni mysticism”, though he never mentions the term and only refer to it as “Ṣūfīya-yi Iran” (lit. Iranian
Not only were they popular, but they were also attached to the court. It seems that the Ilkhanid policy was to invest in moderate and established mystics; figures such as Şâfi‘ al-Dîn Ardibîli (735 H/1334), the disciple of Shaykh Zâhid Gîlânî, or the Kubrawî Shaykh, ‘Alâ’ u-Dawlah Simnânî (d. 736 H/1336), rather than radical and ghâlî Sufis who seemed to be troublesome for the political stability of their territory. It is beyond the objectives of this paper to investigate the reasons for this policy. I can briefly say that by attaching themselves to moderate Sufis and recruiting them into their system, Mongols wanted to use their capabilities, including their knowledge and popularity, as valuable sources of legitimacy.

The Mongols’ attachment to moderate mystics was a policy that had been started by Abû Sa‘îd’s ancestors, Arghûn (d. 695 H/1316) and his son Uljeitû (d. 690 H/1291). The abovementioned ‘Alâ’ u-Dawlah Simnânî, who was in the official service of Arghûn as well as Şâfi‘ al-Dîn, could successfully restrain many of the Mongols “from molesting the people”. As Al-Shaybî ascertains, this policy was based on the mutual need of the Mongols and the Sufis. The Mongols “needed a group of people who would calm the people and react towards the Mongol invasion in accordance with the Sufi doctrine of satisfaction and resignation”. Non-moderate Sufism, such as Nûrbakhshîyya, ʻHurûfîyya, Musba’iyya, and Sarbidâr, with chiliastic orientation and ghâlî colorations, were active and operating, and like the Abbasid era, had characteristics which resembled the Shî‘a extremist movements. The collapse of the Abbasids was beneficial for moderate Shi‘ism as well, which was slowly but gradually rising to


20 Amitai-Preiss, Sufis and Shamans, 35.
21 Abû Sa‘îd Bahâdur Khân (d. 736 H/1335).
22 Mustawfî in Amitai-Preiss, Sufis and Shamans, 32, 35-36.
23 al-Shaybî, Sufism and Shi‘ism, 112.
25 al-Shaybî, Sufism and Shi‘ism, 56.
prominence and recognition, due both to the conversion of a number of Ilkhanid Khāns, such as Ghāzān, to Shi‘ism, and the adoption of a moderate attitude by Twelvers.\(^\text{26}\)

Tucker emphasizes that Twelvers, compared with extremist Shi‘as who represented millenarian fervor, showed a “relatively moderate and frequently quiescent” attitude\(^\text{27}\) because of their sociopolitical weaknesses.\(^\text{28}\) Nevertheless, despite this passivity in politics, Twelver (or moderate) Shi‘ism was not only gradually receiving social popularity and acceptance, but also Shi‘a elements were infiltrating the Sufi system, and sometimes became a replacement for it. Maḥmūd Taqī Ẓādīh Dāwarī observes how the Sufi \textit{dībīr} recitation sessions became replaced by \textit{Ashūrā} and lamentation for \textit{imām} Ḥussayn.\(^\text{29}\) Developments such as this prepared groundwork for the emergence of the Safawids, whose era was a landmark of the free reign of popular Shi‘ism to a variety of expressions.\(^\text{30}\)

Earlier, I mentioned Kāshānī’s quote about his masters’ difficulty in finding an expert in Shiraz with whom to discuss \textit{tawāhid} until the \textit{Fusūs} reached the city and became accessible to them. Ostensibly, the \textit{Fusūs} had gained popularity in Shiraz’s Sufi circles almost immediately after its composition.\(^\text{31}\) So, too, did the theory of

\(^{26}\) Ibid., 110-112, 139.
\(^{27}\) Tucker, \textit{the Kufan Ghulat}, 182.
\(^{28}\) Amir-Moezzi believes that prior to the establishment of the Buyid dynasty, Shi‘ism was esoteric and it was only after the Buyids that this differentiation between esoteric and moderate Shi‘ism (here \textit{kalāmi}/juridical) started. He also is reluctant to use the term “extremist” because what looked to be “extremism” in the post-Buyid era was not only the esoteric narrative of Shi‘ism in pre-Buyid era, but also the sole tendency among Twelvers. In other words, Shi‘ism was esotericism and vice versa. Therefore, the term “extremist”, according to Amir-Moezzi, is insufficient and does not reflect the reality of historical developments.
\(^{29}\) Maḥmūd Taqī Ẓādīh Dāwarī, \textit{Sunat-i ‘Azādārī wa Manqibat Khānī dar Tārīkh-i Shi‘a-yi Emāmīya (The Lamentation Tradition and Mourning in the History of the Imam Shi‘ism)} (Qum: Shi‘a Shināsī, 1386 Shamsī).
\(^{30}\) Momen’s assessment of the “free reign” of Shi‘ism not only explains the socio-religious developments of the Safavid era, but also sheds light on the pre-Safavid developments as well. He observes how “the devotion of ordinary people towards the Sufi saints, which had been a major factor in popular religiosity in previous centuries, was gradually transferred to the Shi‘ Imams, who now became the spiritual intermediaries and intercessors of the masses”. See Moojan Momen, \textit{Shi‘i Islam: A Beginner’s Guide} (London: Oneworld, 2016), 147.
\(^{31}\) As Caner Dagli explains, \textit{Fusūs} “was an important starting point for the centuries of philosophical elaboration” which had begun by Qūnarwī and reached its
wahdat al-wujūd, which “was in ultimate widespread” by Ibn ‘Arabi’s disciples.32 Tayefeh’s analysis is similar to that of Dagli who ascertains that by the time of Kāshānī, Ibn ‘Arabi’s mysticism had “already started to become a kind of meta-order, not itself providing spiritual initiation, but existing as a special dimension within existing orders”.33

The teachings of Ibn ‘Arabi facilitated the shaping of the three intellectual tendencies in Muslim societies, including the philosophical school of Ṣadr al-Dīn al-Qūnawī (with figures such as Kāshānī, the aforementioned Ḥaydar Āmulī and ‘Abd al-Karīm al-Jīlī (d. 826/1424 ?) as its members), the mystical poetry of Nūr al-Dīn ‘Abd al-Raḥmān Jāmī (d. 871/1492), and Fakhr al-Dīn ʻĪrāqī (d. 1045/1635-36?) and his successors (known as ḥikma/ḥikmat discourse).34 At the beginning of its development, the first school had “extremely close interaction”35 with “the separate intellectual traditions of Avicennan falsafa”36 and later kalām,37 and it is due to this close contact that Morris rightly believes that Ta’wilat Qur’ān-i Ḥakim of Kāshānī, to which I will return shortly, is not so much a ta’wil in its Sufi meaning and usage, but is rather “based on elements from both Ibn ‘Arabi’s writings and the prevalent Avicennan school of philosophy in which Kāshānī himself was originally trained”38.


32 Tayefeh, “Concept of Chivalry (Futuwwah) According to ‘Abdul Razzaq Kāshānī”, 30.
33 Zarrīnkūb indicates that the encounter of Iranian Sufis with Akbarīan mysticism could not have been easy and comfortable. See Zarrīnkūb, Dunhīla-yī Justujū, 127. Though he does not bring any evidence to prove it. Dagli, Ibn ‘Arabī and Islamic Intellectual Culture, 105.
36 Ibid., 33.
37 Ibid.
Regarding Kāshānī’s contribution to the first school, I should mention “his eminence in the field” as well as his significant role in publicizing Akbarīan mysticism in the Ilkhanid court. Through the lens of his commentary on the Fuṣūṣ, the later generations of Sufis familiarized themselves with the highly sophisticated and erudite metaphysics of Ibn ‘Arabī. So, his role was that of “formalization” of the language and the technical terms and concepts of the Fuṣūṣ by putting together three lexicons (among many other writings), which eventually helped novices to navigate their way around the often-bumpy terrain of the intricacies of Ibn ‘Arabī’s terminology. On the other hand, Kāshānī’s “guidebook style approach for autodidacts”, for those who were excluded from law colleges and madrasas, was useful for “public debates that were enduringly popular at the riyal Mongol court”.

Pertinent to Kāshānī’s intellectual genealogy as well as his contribution to the legacy he inherited from the past, is his “legal and theological affiliation”, which, according to Lala, “seems premature, as it is not even known whether he was Sunni or Shi‘ī”. Several scholars have shed light on it and considered him a Shi‘ī Sufi. Others simply call him an Iranian Sufī, and Zarrīnkūb and Dagli believe that because of his Suhrawardī masters and training, he cannot be Shi‘ī. Lala also believes that Kāshānī’s respect for the ahl al-bayt and his visits to Najaf and Karbala should not make us conclude that he was a Shi‘a, because pilgrimage to the tombs of Ali and his sons is “

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40 Lala, Knowing God, 28-31.
41 Ibid., 31.
42 Ibid.
43 Ibid., 22.
44 Ibid.
46 Tayefeh, “Concept of Chivalry (Futuwwah)”, 36.
47 Zarrīnkūb, Dunbālā-yi Justgū, 127-133; Dagli, Ibn ‘Arabī and Islamic Intellectual Culture, 105.
rieger for Sunnis also.”48 Al-Shaybānī surprisingly skips him and mentions him only once when discussing Kāshīf Wa‘īzī’s (910 H/1504)49 work Rawḍat al-Shuhbādā (the Rose Garden of Martyrs).50 With regard to the minor status of Shī‘īsm in the Ilkhanid era as well as Kāshānī’s training in Suhrawardī Sufism, it is obvious that his Shī‘īsm, as al-Shaybānī puts it well, was a Shāmī one; i.e., he shows love and respect to the household of the Prophet without necessarily being a Shī‘ī Sufi or cursing the first three caliphs and/or companions of the Prophet.51 Kāshānī not only benefited from the wide variety of Sufi authorities such as Ḥasan al-Baṣrī, Junayd, Bistāmī, Fuḍayl b. ‘Īyād (d. 187/803) and al-Hallāj (d. 309/922),52 but also, as we will observe in the following, utilized the treasury of Shī‘a ḥadīth to read and interpret Ibn ‘Arabi’s teachings.

Shī‘ītization of Akbarīan Mysticism: The Beginning of an Era

Kāshānī’s books53 have been discussed in a number of sources.54 For our purpose here, I briefly read and analyze his three

48 Lala, Knowing God.
49 Kamāl al-Dīn Ḥusseyn ibn ‘Alī Sabizwārī, known as Mawlānā Kāshīf Wa‘īzī, Iranian polymath of the Timūrid era. He was a Sunni Ḥanafī ‘ālim and preacher, whose book Rawḍat al-Shuhbādā eventually became one of the most important compilations on Karbala tragedy.
50 al-Shaybānī, Sufism and Shī‘ism, 275.
51 Al-Shaybānī categorizes many Sunni Sufīs and philosophers of the medieval period as such. Another prominent example is Shāh Nīmatullāh Wali (d. 834 H/1430), who clearly stated he was not a Rāfidī (the enemy of Abū Bakr and other companions), and in fact he was the lover of them and a “comrade of Sunnis” (Shāh Nīmatullāh Wali, Diwān, Vol. 2, 484 in al-Shaybānī, Sufism and Shī‘ism, 217-218.
52 Lala, Knowing God, 24.
key texts including *Ta’wilāt al-Qur’ān al-Ḥakīm* (The Interpretation of the Qur’ān),\(^{55}\) *Tuhfat al-Ikhwān fi Khaṣaṣṣ al-Fityān* (Brethren Trove in Chivalry) and *Sharḥ Ḥadīth al-Ḥaqīqat* (Commentary on the Ḥadīth of Truth).

*Ta’wilāt*, as scholars such as Lory and Morris have discussed, cannot be regarded a mystical interpretation, because Kāshānī was a shift from Ibn ‘Arabī’s attitude in the sense that “while the Shaykh al-Akbar bases his commentaries on the Qur’ān on a spiritual perception of its metaphysical senses (*ḥaqāiq*), Kāshānī tries to introduce the verses in a rather simple, pedagogical frame of (philosophical) interpretations”\(^{56}\). Furthermore, I will argue in the following that Kāshānī’s reading of sainthood, not only in *Ta’wilāt*, but also in the two other texts, is very close to the Shi‘a understanding of the office of *wilāya*, which is endorsed by Lory’s investigation of the two possible models of sainthood in *Ta’wilāt* as well.

Lory argues that Kāshānī comes up with two types of sainthood: the first type of saint/ *walī* is the one who “tries to attain the truth (*ḥaqīqa*) by imitating the Prophet. This imitation does not mean simply following the *shari‘a* of Muhammad’s deeds and conduct, as often occurs in Sunni Islam. It implies that the Prophet’s holiness, the prophetic light, is the source and root of all human sainthood and that the Sufi should try to join this source. The second type of saint refers to direct divine inspiration by a journey to God solely by means of divine grace and love”\(^{57}\). As we will observe in the following, Kāshānī’s conception of *wilāya* is similar to its Shi‘ī reading.

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Pertinent to this is his extensive utilization of the Shi‘i hadiths, particularly from the first imām, to show how in these initial steps, Akbarian mysticism came to be read and scrutinized from a Shi‘a perspective. Furthermore, Ali’s presence is bold and outstanding throughout the text and is saluted in the Shi‘a style of “peace be upon them” (‘alayha al-salām), rather than the Sunni phrase of “God be pleased with him” (raḍīya Allāh ‘anhu). Interpreting the verse twenty-nine of the sūrah al-Baqarah (the Cow), “He it is Who created for you all that is on the earth. Then He turned to Heaven and fashioned it into seven heavens, and He is Knower of all things” (58), Kāshānī maintains that the “sab‘a samāwāt” indicates the seven levels of the spiritual world (marātib ‘ālam-i rawḥāniyāt), starting from ‘ālam al-malakūt al-ardiyya wa al-qunwa al-nafsāniyya wa al-jinn down to ‘ālam al-nafs to ‘ālam al-qalb to ‘ālam al-sirr to ‘ālam al-qalb to ‘ālam al-rawḥ to ‘ālam al-khafā’. (59)

Obviously, Kāshānī here refers to microcosm, insān, and his description of the journey “means taking the outward expression back to the inner world of the microcosm, and “seven” is a favorite number for enumeration of the latā‘if (lit. intricacies), for example. After all, the mi‘rāj went through the “seven heavens” in the outside world, so the internal mi‘rāj of the adepts must also go through “seven heavens” on the inside, not outside”. (60) Following his esoteric reading of this verse, Kāshānī brings a hadīth from imām Ali saying that “salūnī ‘an ṭurq al-sama‘; fa innī a’lam bihā min ṭurq al-‘arq” (ask me from the paths of the Heaven because I am more learned about it than the paths of the earth), and maintains that the paths of the Heaven, whose knowledge is in Ali’s possession are but [mystical] states and stations (al-‘ahwāl wa al-maqāmāt), such as ḥabd, tawakkal, riḍā, and alike. (61)

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60 For this part, I am very grateful to Professor William Chittick, who clarified on the issue in my email correspondence with him (dated 10/03/2020), and explained that Kāshānī here points to microcosm and seven heavens (or the allegory of seven stations of spiritual journey), must be understood in light of mi‘rāj.
61 Ibid.
Interpreting verse one-hundred and sixty-eight of the same surah “O mankind! Eat of what is lawful and good on the earth and follow not the footsteps of Satan. Truly he is a manifest enemy unto you”, 62 Kāshānī emphasizes the importance of moderation (i’tidāl) in the body and the soul of the Sufi. Moderation, Kāshānī ascertains, is the fourth shadow, which alongside the shadow of enmity (‘adāwat belongs to the world of nafī), of friendship (ulfat belongs to the world of qalbi), and of affection (muḥabat belongs to the world of rūḥ), reflects unity (wahdah). 63 Kāshānī brings another hadīth from the same imām stating that “you do not see an ignorant (jāhil), unless he goes to two extremes; either exaggeration or understatement (lā tara al-jāhil illā muʃraṭan aw muʃarriṭan) to support his all-mystical reading of the above-mentioned verse. 64

But probably the most outstanding section of Taʾwilāt, which goes beyond narrating hadīth and eventually serves to prove the right of the wilāya of Ali and his progenies against the right of the khilāfa of their adversaries, is Kāshānī’s interpretation of the verses seventy-two and seventy-three of the Sūrah al-Anbīyā (the Prophets): “And We bestowed upon him Isaac and Jacob as an added gift. And each of them We made righteous. And We made them imāms, guiding according to Our Command. And We revealed unto them the doing of good deeds, the performance of prayer, and the giving of alms. And they were worshippers of Us”. 65 He narrates a hadīth from the Prophet saying that “Ali and I were two lights (nūrayn), which are praised and glorified by God and His angels. And when He created Adam, we were transmitted to his forehead (jibha) and from his forehead to his loins (sulb) until we were transmitted to Seth”. 66 Although the hadīth, known as hadīth nūrayn (lit. of two lights), is narrated in different ways by the Shiʿī sources, Kāshānī’s key point in this text is to prove the right of the khilāfa/wilāya of Ali and his sons as a divine one and their office as divinely assigned.

Clarifying the term sadaqa (almsgiving/charity) and the philosophy behind it in verses twelve and thirteen of the Sūrah al-Mujādilah (She Who Disputes): “O you who believe! When you

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62 Nasr and Others (eds.), the Study Quran, 80.
63 Kāshānī, Taʾwilāt al-Qurʾān, Vol. 1, 64.
64 Ibid., Vol. 1, 65.
65 Nasr and Others (eds.), the Study Quran, 1471.
converse in secret with the Messenger, offer charity before your secret converse. That is better for you and purer. But if you do not find [the means], truly God is Forgiving, Merciful. Are you apprehensive about offering charity before your secret converse? If you do not do so and God relents unto you, then perform the prayer, give the alms, and obey God and His Messenger. God is Aware of whatsoever you do’, in which believers are recommended to give charity before they want to converse with the Prophet, Kāshānī explains that the first and foremost to do to approach the Prophet and eventually reach spiritual attachment to him is to alienate (insilākh) self from any worldly connection.

For Kāshānī, obviously, this is the real meaning of ṣadaqa. When the station (maqām) of tajrīd is achieved, the believer will share the Prophet’s divine secrets. In the following, Kāshānī mentions a statement from the second caliph, ‘Umar b. Khattāb (d. 23 H/644), where Ali is praised for his sole and unique status due to giving charity before conversing with the Prophet and instead of benefitting from three things that ‘Umar (and obviously no one else) never had: marriage with Fatemeh, the endowment of the flag of Khaybar and Ayat al-Najwā (al-Najwā or al-Munajāt verse). In all probability, Ta’wilāt is the first text among similar works wherein Shi‘a hadiths are frequently mentioned and imāms are introduced as role models, ideal exemplars, of a mystical lifestyle. Kāshānī’s initiative in reading the teachings of Ibn ‘Arabī, of which he was a full defender and disseminator, in the shadow of the Shi‘a hadiths, paved the way for figures such as the aforementioned Sayyid Ḥaydar Āmulī to claim that Sufism is Shi‘īsm and vice versa. Furthermore, Āmulī’s inspiration from Kāshānī is well-documented.

Tuḥfat al-Ikhwān fi Ḥaṣā‘is al-Fityān is written on the request (order?) of his shaykh, al-Shaykh al-Kabīr, Abū Ḥafs ‘Umar b. ‘Abd Allāh Shahāb al-Dīn Suhrawardī (d. 620-632? H/1234), the

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67 Nasr and Others (eds.), the Study Quran, 2463.
70 This inspiration was so great that it encouraged Āmulī to write “a fervent panegyric”. See Lala, Knowing God, 23, footnote 120, on Kāshānī.
Suhrawardī’s Suḥb of the time.⁷¹ At the beginning of the text, Ali is praised as the “generous chivalrous of the Arab” and “the ever-conqueror Lion of God”.⁷² Defining chivalry as the appearance of the natural disposition (faṭrah) via its attributes and faculties … in order to actualize the potentials of the natural disposition and prepare it for perfection (kamāl),⁷³ because perfection is a requirement for the sincere and truthful Abrahamic faṭrah, Kāshānī argues that chivalry and achieving perfection are a foundation for wilāya, which only belongs to Ali.⁷⁴ It belongs to him because his natural disposition is at its paramount of perfection because the appearance of wilāya in a servant causes the perfection of chivalry in him.⁷⁵ Therefore, he is called fatā (chivalrous), because he has used his isti’dād (preparedness) to actualize his potentials.⁷⁶

Abraham is the primal point of wilāya (awwal nuqṭa), it’s beginning (mufattih) and the first banīf (monotheist), though the culmination, the Suḥb (pillar) of wilāya is Ali, because he rectifies every

⁷¹ Kāshānī, Sharḥ-i Fusūṣ al-Ḥikam, 11.
⁷² Ibid.
⁷³ For a long time, and until Ibn ‘Arabī, the popular belief among the mystics was that God is manifested in conformity with the preparedness (isti’dād) of the servant, but according to Ibn ‘Arabī and his students including Kāshānī, this preparedness of the servant, isti’dād, “is rather the servant’s preparedness to conform to a particular form of God’s phenomenal appearance. Indeed, this isti’dād is given by God to His servant [italic is in the text] (Ronald L. Nettler, Sufi Metaphysics and Qur’anic Prophets: Ibn Arabi’s Thought and Method in the Fusus al-Hikam (Cambridge: the Islamic Texts Society, 2003), 124-125. Thus, when this preparedness comes to the heart, the heart sees Him in the form in which He is revealed to it. Therefore, the heart of the ‘ārif is the only thing that sees God in everything and worships him in the infinite shapes of His manifestations (Masataka Takeshita, “Ibn Arabi’s Theory of the Perfect Man and Its Place in the History of Islamic Thought” (Ph.D. Thesis--University of Chicago, 1986), 117-118. Furthermore, according to Ibn ‘Arabī. A mystic should use her/his isti’dād to actualize things in the external world. Kāshānī, as the true student of this school and its defender, uses this new conception of isti’dād and ties it to faṭrah and to futuwwa, as the actualization of the hidden attributes and faculties integral of faṭrah. Fatā is the one who has been successful is nurturing, or rather, actualizing these intact faculties. In this worldview, servant is not passive in receiving emanation (fayḍ) in his quest for perfection. She/he has agency and subjectivity.
⁷⁴ Ibid., 13-14.
⁷⁵ Ibid., 15.
⁷⁶ Ibid., 17.
distortion or imperfection (i‘wajāj).\textsuperscript{77} Ali occupies a far higher position than Abraham, because Ali’s futuwwa is about renouncing Self, and not just a son, to deity and has been inherited by his progenies until his wilāya finally rests in his son al-Mahdi, who is the seal of wilāya (khātam) and his status being equal to the status of the scaling of the nubuwwa of the Prophet.\textsuperscript{78} To conclude, Ali’s wilāya is equal to the Prophet’s nubuwwa, while Abraham’s wilāya is equivalent to Adam’s nubuwwa.\textsuperscript{79} In the following, Kāshānī lists the virtues of chivalry as well as its four pillars, including chastity (‘iffat), courage (shujā‘at), wisdom (hikmat), and justice (‘idālat), which are all put together in the personality of Ali.\textsuperscript{80}

Dagli is right when maintains that the Book of Chivalry is written “in keeping with his background in the Suhrawardiyyah order and its emphasis on futuwwah”,\textsuperscript{81} though it is not contradictory to assume that for Kāshānī, the imāms ought to be modeled as the prototype of chivalry, fraternity, and sincere servitude. Narrating a ḥadīth from imām Ali,\textsuperscript{82} Kāshānī maintains that fraternity (lit. ikhwāniyya) is one of the most significant dimensions of futuwwa and “its foundation and fundamental principle”,\textsuperscript{83} because the love between people is dependent on fraternity. Since chivalry is the best and most beautiful lifestyle (lit. aḥsan tarā‘īq al-nās wa ajmalāhā) man

\textsuperscript{77} Ibid., 16.
\textsuperscript{78} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{79} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{80} Kāshānī’s discussion of the four pillars of futuwwa is in fact a Platonic subject, which has been an inseparable part of Islamic philosophy and ethics since the beginning. We know that the main concern of Plato in the book Republic was justice in the soul and in the city, the polis, and it will be actualized when balance or harmony between the three miniature personalities (i.e., three parts of the soul including courage, wisdom and moderation) is realized. When this task is done, justice will be achieved (A. C. Grayling, (ed.), Philosophy 1: A Guide through the Subject (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 370-371). The only difference is that for Kāshānī, justice is not singled out as the main virtue, or the climax of the three miniature virtues, it is just one of them. Ibid., 18-51.
\textsuperscript{81} Dagli, Ibn ‘Arabī and Islamic Intellectual Culture, 105.
\textsuperscript{82} ‘A‘jaza al-nās man ‘ajaza an iktisāb al-ikhwān, wa ‘a‘jaza min-bu man ḏuwiyya min zafar-ī bib-i minhum. [The most incapable of Man is the one who is disabled to earn friendship and even more incapable of him is the one who spoils the assistance of his brothers]. See ‘Abdul Razzāq Kāshānī, Rasā‘i-l-i Falsafī wa ‘Irfānī (Philosophical and Mystical Treatises) (n.d, n.p.), 548, Tayefeh, “Concept of Chivalry (Futuwwah)”, 288.
\textsuperscript{83} Kāshānī, Sharḥ-i Fuisīs al-Ḥikam, 36.
can adopt, Ali is the *qutb* and *imām* of all chivalrous.\(^{84}\) Kāshānī’s innovation is not just his abundant use of narrations from the first and the fourth *imāms*,\(^ {85}\) which is most probably the first of its kind among Iranian Sufis, but also his contrast to Ibn ʿArabi’s reading of the virtue of chivalry, which is more egalitarian and gender-neutral. Sa’diyya Shaikh shows how some Sufis, including Ibn ʿArabi, used *futūwa* and/or *fitnān* “to describe a number of exemplary female Sufi practitioners,”\(^ {86}\) but Kāshānī’s description, on the other hand, is all-masculine and patrimonialistic.

The last text which is our concern here is *Sharḥ Ḥadīth al-Haqiqat*, which along with *Tuhfat* is published in a collection entitled *Ādāb ul-Tariqah wa Asrār ul-Haqiqah fī Rasā’il al-Shaykh ‘Abdul Razzaq al-Qāmishānī* (the Ethics of the Path and the Secrets of the Truth in the Treatises of Shaykh ‘Abd al-Razzāq al-Qāmishānī). The text revolves around Kāshānī’s reading of the famous ḥadīth of *imām* Ali, when his loyal friend and disciple, Kumayl b. Ziyād an-Nakha’ī (d. 82-83 H/702) asks him about the meaning of the Truth. The ḥadīth is not documented in any ḥadīth compilation, but its mystical connotations have been narrated by several Sufi authorities and is commented upon by many ‘ārifīs. Interestingly, as much as the clarification of the meaning of *wilāya* is important for Kāshānī, the meaning of the main problem of this ḥadīth, i.e., ḥaqiqah, is not. Ali is the holder of the station (maqām) of completion (lit. *takmīl*), endurance (lit. *istiqāmat*, i.e., or the backbone of strength and power) and obedience (*tamkīn*), while Kumayl’s status is that of the heart (lit. *maqām-i qalb*) and quest (lit. *ṭalab*).

But why is Ali’s status that of completion? Because it contains *sīr* (secret) and Ali is its cognizant (‘ārif), and therefore *maqām al-sīr* is the same as *maqām al-wilāya*. Defining *wilāya* as the status of self-annihilation (*fanā*), Kāshānī argues that Kumayl was only at the beginning of a path which eventually ends in Ali, who has stood at the peak of it. However, like any other beginner, Kumayl must use his *isti’dād* should he want to actualize his potentials and realize his ideal,

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\(^{84}\) Ibid.

\(^{85}\) Was Kāshānī familiar with *Nabī ul-Balâghah* and *Ṣahīfat al-Sajjādyya* of the fourth *imām*? In all probability yes, because the ethics of both treasuries is the spirit of *Tuhfat*.

i.e., the status of wilāya, in the real world.\textsuperscript{87} Kāshānī’s choice of this Shi‘a hadith itself indicates his devotion to the first imām and his teachings, because maqām al-sīr, according to another famous hadith, is but Imāmī Shi‘ism.\textsuperscript{88}

### Concluding Remarks

Kāshānī’s role in disseminating, formalizing, and systematizing the teachings of Ibn ‘Arabī, and particularly the challenging terrain of his technical terms, is undeniable.\textsuperscript{89} Based on a master-disciple relationship, he obtained his education from Mu‘ayyid al-Dīn Jandī, who, along with Sa‘īd al-Dīn Faraghānī (both d. 700/1300), was an important student of Ṣadr al-Dīn al-Qūnawī. Qūnawī’s place as the first expositor and spokesman of Ibn ‘Arabī is well-attested. Furthermore, he had a profound impact on his famous student, Sharaf al-Dīn Dāwūd Qayṣārī (d. 751 H/1350), another influential commentator of the Fuṣūṣ, entitled Sharḥ-i Fuṣūṣ al-Ḥikam (the Commentary on Fuṣūṣ al-Ḥikam). These last two figures’ commentaries on the Fuṣūṣ “have been studied perhaps more than any others by serious seekers of knowledge up to modern times”.\textsuperscript{90}

So, we have a one-hundred-year direct and uninterrupted line of teaching and training, which contributed to the robust tree of the theoretical mysticism of Ibn ‘Arabī in the eastern part of the Muslim world. This specific line, revolving around Kāshānī and his student, has continued to exist up to the present time, when we see how they

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\textsuperscript{87} Kāshānī, Sharḥ-i Fuṣūṣ al-Ḥikam, 119-123.

\textsuperscript{88} Kāshānī, as I mentioned earlier in this paper, was well-aware of the Shi‘a hadith sources, and his analysis of the status of wilāya and its nexus to sīr, is based on a famous hadith by the sixth imām, Ja‘far al-Ṣādiq which is related by Abū Ja‘far Moḥammad b. al-Ḥasan b. Farrukh al-Ṣaffār al-Qumī in Basā‘ir al-Darajāt fī Faqā‘īl Āl-i Muḥammad (Clear Proofs in the Sciences of the Household of the Prophet and on Whatever is Designated to Them by God), in which the imām says “innā amrinā sīr r fī sīr, wa sīr r o mūsātār, wa sīr r ʿlā yaṣīdū illā sīr r, wa sīr r ‘dā sīr r wā sīr r o muqānā bīl sīr r”. Abū Ja‘far Muḥammad b. al-Ḥasan b. Farrukh al-Ṣaffār al-Qumī, Baṣā‘ir al-Darajāt fī ‘Ulīm-i Āl-i Muḥammad wa Mā Khāṣabām ul-lāb Bihī (Insights into the Degrees, on the Knowledge of the Family of Muḥammad and That with which Allah Endowed Them), Mīrzā Muḥṣin Kūchī Bāghī Ṭabarīzī (ed.) (Qum: Manshūrāt-i Maktabat Ayatollah al-ʿUzma Maʿashi Najafī, 1404 H), 28. According to this reading, wali is a treasurer (khāzin) of whatever God has created in the cosmos, but specifically a treasurer of His sīr. Ibid.

\textsuperscript{89} Lala, Knowing God, 31.

\textsuperscript{90} Chittick, “The Five Divine Presences”, 107.
considerably shape the metaphysical outlook of contemporary individuals such as Rūḥullāh Khomeini (d. 1368 H/1989). 91

Kāshānī also extensively wrote about all the elements of Akbarīan mysticism, from wahdat al-wujūd to the Perfect Man (when he discusses chivalry), and to the Five Divine Presences (al-ḥaḍarāt al-ilāhīyyat al-khamṣ). However, as far as we are concerned, his innovation rests in benefiting from the Shī‘a authorities to both elucidate the key terms of Ibn ‘Arabi’s mysticism, such as tajallī92 (lit. theophany), wilāya and khatm al-wilāya, and to shed light on the intricacies of his teachings; because for him there was no contrast between these two and the former fully supported the latter. Even when he is not discussing the central Akbarīan terms, he still refers to the Shī‘a authorities and cites the imāms as the role models, the ideal exemplar, the wali, and the only owner of the true knowledge (ma‘rifā). For him, the seals of the prophets and of the awlīyā are the rightful owners of ‘ilm, and other prophets and walis gain light from their mishkāt (lamp), and the seal of the Mohammedan wilāya is but al-Mahdi from the household of the Prophet,93 who is the “mine of the divine knowledge” and shares the name, title and characteristics of the Prophet. 94

In the case of wilāya and khatm al-wilāya, as well as that of futuwwa, he had a divergent outlook from Ibn ‘Arabi, which eventually came to be regarded as the predominant reading among Shī‘a commentators in subsequent generations. Thanks to Ḥaydar Āmulī and his Jāmi‘ al-Asrār wa Manba‘ al-Anwār (the Comprehensive of Mysteries and the Source of Lights), which indeed is the culmination

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92 The ḥadith of imām Ali stating that “Baṣīrum ‘idb lā manẓūra ilayh-i min al-khalqīl” (lit. He does not need any manifestation to reflect Himself in) is used to both explain the meaning of this term and why Deity does not need to see Himself and His face in anything because He is Baṣīr (lit. Insightful) and therefore self-explanatory without need for a mirror to reflect Himself. See Kāshānī, Sharḥ-i Fuṣūṣ al-Ḥikam. Kāshānī, in this text, uses Shi‘a ḥadīth in this text pervasively and when brings a ḥadīth from Imām Ali praises him as “Karram Allāh wajbah” (lit. may God bless his face), which leaves no doubt that Kāshānī, as mentioned above, is a Sunni scholar in the Syrian definition.

93 Kāshānī, Sharḥ-i Fuṣūṣ al-Ḥikam, 126-127.

94 Ibid., 127.
of such a union between Sufism and Shi‘ism. Pertinent to this, is Kāshānī’s conception of huwīyya, which as Ismail Lala discusses, contradicts that of his master too. Given this, Kāshānī was definitely more than a commentator and student of the school of Ibn ‘Arabī and should be treated as an independent and innovative mystic who, by offering different readings of the main teachings of his master, left his imprint on Akbarīan mysticism indefinitely.

References


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95 As Lala ascertains, huwīyya plays a central role in the “Sufis’ semantic Weltanschauung and often incorporates other terms within it (such as anāniyya whose existence in implied by huwīyya ...”). Lala, Knowing God, 29. It also plays an important role in the mystics’ account of God, though it is defined differently by Ibn ‘Arabī and Kāshānī. For Ibn ‘Arabī, huwīyya denotes God’s absolute unknowability, “a state in which He is truly non-manifest”, but Kāshānī “depleys it principally to connote the second emanatory stage in which there is a prefiguring of creation within the divine consciousness”. Lala, Knowing God, 64-179.


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