

The Qur'an and Hadith as Source and Inspiration of Islamic Philosophy

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Viewed from the point of view of the Western intellectual tradition, Islamic philosophy appears as simply Graeco-Alexandrian philosophy in Arabic dress, a philosophy whose sole role was to transmit certain important elements of the heritage of antiquity to the medieval West. If seen, however, from its own perspective and in the light of the whole of the Islamic philosophical tradition which has had a twelve-century-long continuous history and is still alive today, it becomes abundantly clear that Islamic philosophy, like everything else Islamic, is deeply rooted in the Qur'an and Hadith. Islamic philosophy is Islamic not only by virtue of the fact that it was cultivated in the Islamic world and by Muslims but because it derives its principles, inspiration and many of the questions with which it has been concerned from the sources of Islamic revelation despite the claims of its opponents to the contrary.'

All Islamic philosophers from al-Kindi to those of our own day such as 'Allamah Tabatabai have lived and breathed in a universe dominated by the reality of the Qur'an and the Sunnah of the Prophet of Islam. Nearly all of them have lived according to Islamic Law or the Shari'ah and have prayed in the direction of Makkah every day of their adult life. The most famous among them, such as Ibn Sina (Avicenna) and Ibn Rushd (Averroes), were conscious in asserting their active attachment to Islam and reacted strongly to any attacks against their faith without their being simply fideists. Ibn Sina would go to a mosque and pray when confronted with a difficult Problem,' and Ibn Rushd was the chief qadi or judge of Cordova (Spanish Cordoba) which means that he was himself the embodiment of the authority of Islamic Law even if he were to be seen later by many in Europe as the arch-rationalist and the very symbol of the rebellion of reason against faith. The very presence of the Qur'an and the advent of its revelation was to transform radically the universe in which and about which Islamic philosophers were to philosophize, leading to a specific kind of philosophy which can be justly called "prophetic philosophy".³

The very reality of the Qur'an, and the revelation which made it accessible to a human community, had to be central to the concerns of anyone who sought to philosophize in the Islamic world and led to a type of philosophy in which a revealed book is accepted as the supreme source of knowledge not only of religious law but of the very nature of existence and beyond existence of the very source of existence. The prophetic consciousness which is the

recipient of revelation (al-wahy) had to remain of the utmost significance for those who sought to know the nature of things. How were the ordinary human means of knowing related to such an extraordinary manner of knowing? How was human reason related to that intellect which is illuminated by the light of revelation? To understand the pertinence of such issues, it is enough to cast even a cursory glance at the works of the Islamic philosophers who almost unanimously accepted revelation as a source of ultimate knowledge.' Such questions as the hermeneutics of the Sacred Text and theories of the intellect which usually include the reality of prophetic consciousness remain, therefore, central to over a millennium of Islamic philosophical thought.

One might say that the reality of the Islamic revelation and participation in this reality transformed the very instrument of philosophizing in the Islamic world. The theoretical intellect (al-aql al-no'ari) of the Islamic philosophers is no longer that of Aristotle although his very terminology is translated into Arabic. The theoretical intellect, which is the epistemological instrument of all philosophical activity, is Islamicized in a subtle way that is not always detectable through only the analysis of the technical vocabulary involved. The Islamicized understanding of the intellect, however, becomes evident when one reads the discussion of the meaning of aql or intellect in a major philosopher such as Mulla Sadra when he is commenting upon certain verses of the Qur'an containing this term or upon the section on aql from the collection of Shiite Hadith of al-Kulayni entitled Usul al-kafi. The subtle change that took place from the Greek idea of the "intellect" (noun) to the Islamic view of the intellect (al-aql) can also be seen much earlier in the works of even the Islamic Peripatetics such as Ibn Sina where the

Active Intellect (al-aql al-fa'ali) is equated with the Holy Spirit (al-ruh al-qudus).

As is well known to students of the Islamic tradition, according to certain hadith and also the oral tradition which has been transmitted over the centuries, the Qur'an and all aspects of the Islamic tradition which are 'rooted in it have both an outward (*dhir) and an inward (batin) dimension. Moreover, certain verses of the Qur'an themselves allude to the inner and symbolic significance of the revealed Book and its message. As for the Hadith, a body of this collection relates directly to the inner or esoteric dimension of the Islamic revelation and certain sayings of the Prophet refer directly to the esoteric levels of meaning of the Qur'an.

Islamic philosophy is related to both the external dimension of the Qur'anic revelation or the Shari'ah and the inner truth or Vagigah which is the heart of all that is Islamic. Many of the doctors of the Divine Law or Shariah have stood opposed to Islamic philosophy while others have accepted it. In fact some of the outstanding Islamic philosophers such as Ibn Rushd, Mir Damad and Shah Waliullah of Delhi have also been authorities in the domain of the Sacred

Law. The Shari'ah has, however, provided mostly the social and human conditions for the philosophical activity of the Islamic philosophers. It is to the Haqiqah that one has to turn for the inspiration and source of knowledge for Islamic philosophy.

The very term al-haqiqah is of the greatest significance for the understanding of the relation between Islamic philosophy and the sources of the Islamic revelation.⁵ Al-baqiqah means both truth and reality. It is related to God Himself, one of whose names is al-Haq or the Truth, and is that whose discovery is the goal of all Islamic philosophy. At the same time al-baqiqah constitutes the inner reality of the Qur'an and can be reached through a hermeneutic penetration of the meaning of the Sacred Text. Throughout history, many an Islamic philosopher has identified *faisafah* or *hikmah*, the two main terms used with somewhat different meaning for Islamic philosophy, with the Haqiqah lying at the heart of the Qur'an. Much of Islamic philosophy is in fact a hermeneutic unveiling of the two grand books of revelation, the Qur'an and the cosmos, and in the Islamic intellectual universe Islamic philosophy belongs, despite some differences, to the same family as that of *ma'rifah* or *gnosis* which issues directly from the inner teachings of Islam and which became crystallized in both Sufism and certain dimensions of Shi'ism. Without this affinity there would not have been a Suhrawardi or Mulla Sadra in Persia or an Ibn Sab'in in Andalusia.

Philosophers living as far apart as Nasir-i Khusraw (fifth/eleventh century) and Mulla Sadra (tenth/sixteenth century) have identified *falsafah* or *hikmah* explicitly with the Haqiqah lying at the heart of the Qur'an whose comprehension implies the spiritual hermeneutics (*ta'wil*) of the Sacred Text. The thirteenth/nineteenth-century Persian philosopher Jafar Kashifi goes even further and identifies the various methods for the interpretation of the Qur'an with the different schools of philosophy, correlating *tafsir* (the literal interpretation of the Qur'an) with the Peripatetic (*mashshd'*) school, *ta'wil* (its symbolic interpretation) with the stoic (*riwagi*),⁶ and *tajhim* (in-depth comprehension of the Sacred Text) with the Illuminationist (*ishraqs*). For the main tradition of Islamic philosophy, especially as it developed in later centuries, philosophical activity was inseparable from interiorization of oneself and penetration into the inner meaning of the Qur'an and Hadith which those philosophers who were of a Shiite bent considered to be made possible through the power issuing from the cycle of initiation (*dairat al-walayah*) that follows the closing of the cycle of prophecy (*da'irat al-nubuwwah*) with the death of the Prophet of Islam.

The close nexus between the Qur'an and Hadith, on the one hand, and Islamic philosophy, on the other, is to be seen in the understanding of the history of philosophy. The Muslims identified Hermes, whose personality they elaborated into the "three Hermes", also well known

to the West from Islamic sources, with Idris or Enoch, the ancient prophet who belongs to the chain of prophecy confirmed by the Qur'an and Hadith.' And they considered Idris as the origin of philosophy, bestowing upon him the title of Abu'l-I;lukama' (the father of philosophers). Like. Philo and certain later Greek philosophers before them and also many Renaissance philosophers in Europe, Muslims considered prophecy to be the origin of philosophy, confirming in an Islamic form the dictum of Oriental Neoplatonism that "Plato was Moses in Attic Greek". The famous Arabic saying "philosophy issues from the niche of prophecy" (yanba`u'l-hikmah min mishkdt al-nubuwwah) has echoed through the annals of Islamic history and indicates clearly how Islamic philosophers themselves envisaged the relation between philosophy and revelation.

It must be remembered that al-Hakim (the Wise, from the same root as hikmah) is a Name of God and also one of the names of the Qur'an. More specifically many Islamic philosophers consider Chapter 31 of the Qur'an, entitled Lugman, after the Prophet known proverbially as a hakim, to have been revealed to exalt the value of hikmah, which Islamic philosophers identify with true philosophy.

This chapter begins with the symbolic letters alif, lam, mim followed immediately by the verse, "These are revelations of the wise scripture [al-kitab al-hakim]" (Pickthall translation), mentioning directly the term hakim. Then in verse 12 of the same chapter it is revealed, "And verily We gave Lugman wisdom [al-hikmah], saying: Give thanks unto Allah; and whosoever giveth thanks, he giveth thanks for [the good of] his soul. And whosoever refuseth --Lo! Allah is Absolute, Owner of Praise." Clearly in this verse the gift of hikmah is considered a blessing for which one should be grateful, and this truth is further confirmed by the famous verse, "He giveth wisdom [hikmah] unto whom He will, and he unto whom wisdom is given, he truly hath received abundant good" (2: 269).

There are certain Hadith which point to God having offered prophecy and philosophy or hikmah, and Luqman chose hikmah which must not be confused simply with medicine or other branches of traditional hikmah but refers to pure philosophy itself dealing with God and the ultimate causes of things. These traditional authorities also point to such Qur'anic verses as "And He will teach him the Book [al-kitab] and Wisdom [al-hikmah]" (3: 48) and "Behold that which I have given you of the Book and Wisdom" (3: 81): there are several where kitab and hikmah are mentioned together. They believe that this conjunction confirms the fact that what God has revealed through revelation He had also made available through hikmah, which is reached through aql, itself a microcosmic reflection of the macrocosmic reality which is the instrument of revelation.⁹ On the basis of this doctrine later Islamic philosophers such as

Mulla Sadra developed an elaborate doctrine of the intellect in its relation to the prophetic intellect and the descent of the Divine Word, or the Qur'an, basing themselves to some extent on earlier theories going back to Ibn Sina and other Muslim Peripatetics. All of this indicates how closely traditional Islamic philosophy identified itself with revelation in general and the Qur'an in particular.

Islamic philosophers meditated upon the content of the Qur'an as a whole as well as on particular verses. It was the verses of a polysemic nature or those with "unclear outward meaning" (mutashabihdt) to which they paid special attention. Also certain well-known verses were cited or commented upon more often than others, such as the "Light Verse" (ayat al-nur) (24: 35) commented upon already by Ibn Sina in his Ishardt and also by many later figures. Mulla Sadra was in fact to devote one of the most important philosophical commentaries ever written upon the Qur'an, entitled

Tafir ayat al-nur, to this verse.¹⁰

Western studies of Islamic philosophy, which have usually regarded it as simply an extension of Greek philosophy," have for this very reason neglected for the most part the commentaries cc Islamic philosophers upon the Quran, whereas philosophical commentaries occupy an important category along with the juridical, philological, theological (kalam) and Sufi commentaries. The first major Islamic philosopher to have written Qur'anic commentaries is Ibn S-ma, many of whose commentaries have survived." Later Suhrawardi was to comment upon diverse passages of the Sacred Text, as were a number of later philosophers such as Ibn Turkah al-Isfahani.

The most important philosophical commentaries upon the Qur'an were, however, written by Mulla Sadra, whose Asrdr al-ayat and Mafatib alghayb¹³ are among the most imposing edifices of the Islamic intellectual tradition, although hardly studied in the West until now. Mulla Sadra also devoted one of his major works to commenting upon the Usul al-kafi of Kulayni, one of the major Shiite texts of Hadith containing the sayings of the Prophet as well as the Imams. These works taken together constitute the most imposing philosophical commentaries upon the Qur'an and Hadith in Islamic history, but such works are far from having terminated with him. The most extensive Qur'anic commentary written during the past decades, al Mizdn, was from the pen of Allamah Tabatabai, who was the reviver of the teaching of Islamic philosophy in Qom in Persia after the Second World War and a leading Islamic philosopher of this century whose philosophical works are now gradually becoming known to the outside world.

Certain Qur'anic themes have dominated Islamic philosophy throughout its long history and

especially during the later period when this philosophy becomes a veritable theosophy in the original and not deviant meaning of the term, theosophia corresponding exactly to the Arabic term al-hikmat al-ildhiyyah (or hikmat-i ilahi in Persian). The first and foremost is of course the unity of the Divine Principle and ultimately Reality as such or al-tawhid which lies at the heart of the Islamic message. The Islamic philosophers were all muwahhid or followers of tawhid and saw authentic philosophy in this light. They called Pythagoras and Plato, who had confirmed the unity of the Ultimate Principle, muwahhid while showing singular lack of interest

in later forms of Greek and Roman philosophy which were sceptical or agnostic.

How Islamic philosophers interpreted the doctrine of Unity lies at the heart of Islamic philosophy. There continued to exist a tension between the Qur'anic description of Unity and what the Muslims had learned from Greek sources, a tension which was turned into a synthesis of the highest intellectual order by such later philosophers as Suhrawardi and Mulla Sadra.⁴ But in all treatments of this subject from al-Kindi to Mulla Ali Zunuzi and Haul Mulla Had! Sabziwari during the thirteenth/nineteenth century and even later, the Qur'anic doctrine of Unity, so central to Islam, has remained dominant and in a sense has determined the agenda of the Islamic philosophers.

Complementing the Qur'anic doctrine of Unity is the explicit assertion in the Qur'an that Allah bestows being and it is this act which instantiates all that exists, as one finds for example in the verse, "But His command, when He intendeth a thing, is only that he saith unto it: Be! and it is [kun fa-yakun! " (36:81). The concern of Islamic philosophers with ontology is directly related to the Qur'anic doctrine, as is the very terminology of Islamic philosophy in this domain where it understands by wujud more the verb or act of existence (esto) than the noun or state of existence (esse). If Ibn Sina has been called first and foremost a "philosopher of being ",¹⁵ and he developed the ontology which came to dominate much of medieval philosophy, this is not because he was simply thinking of Aristotelian theses in Arabic and Persian, but because of the Qur'anic doctrine of the One in relation to the act of existence. It was as a result of

meditation upon the Qur'an in conjunction with Greek thought that

Islamic philosophers developed the doctrine of Pure Being which stands above the chain of being and is discontinuous with it, while certain other philosophers such as a number of Isma'ilis considered God to be beyond Being and identified His act or the Qur'anic kun with Being, which is then considered as the principle of the universe.

It is also the Qur'anic doctrine of the creating God and creatio ex nihilo, with all the different levels of meaning which nihilo possesses," that led Islamic philosophers to distinguish sharply between God as Pure Being

and the existence of the universe, destroying that "block without fissure" which constituted Aristotelian ontology. In Islam the universe is always contingent (*mumkin al-wujud*) while God is necessary (*wajib al-wujud*), to use the well-known distinction of Ibn Sina.¹ No Islamic philosopher has ever posited an existential continuity between the existence of creatures and the Being of God, and this radical revolution in the understanding of Aristotelian ontology has its source in the Islamic doctrine of God and creation as asserted in the Qur'an and Hadith.² Moreover, this influence is paramount not only in the case of those who asserted the doctrine of *creatio ex nihilo* in its ordinary theological sense, but also for those such as al-Farabi and Ibn Sina who were in favour of the theory of emanation but who none the less never negated the

fundamental distinction between the *wujud* (existence) of the world and that of God.

As for the whole question of "newness" or "eternity" of the world, or *huduth* and *qidam*, which has occupied Islamic thinkers for the past twelve centuries and which is related to the question of the contingency of the world vis-à-vis the Divine Principle, it is inconceivable without the teachings of the Qur'an and Hadith. It is of course a fact that before the rise of Islam Christian theologians and philosophers such as John Philoponus had written on this issue and that Muslims had known some of these writings, especially the treatise of Philoponus against the thesis of the eternity of the world. But had it not been for the Qur'anic teachings concerning creation, such Christian writings would have played an altogether different role in Islamic thought. Muslims were interested in the arguments of a Philoponus precisely because of their own concern with the question of *huduth* and *qidam*, created by the tension between the teachings of the Qur'an and the Hadith, on the one hand, and the Greek notion of the non-

temporal relation between the world and its Divine Origin, on the other.

Another issue of great concern to Islamic philosophers from al-Kindi to Mulla Sadra, and those who followed him, is God's knowledge of the world. The major Islamic philosophers, such as al-Farabi, Ibn Sina, Suhrawardi, Ibn Rushd and Mulla Sadra, have presented different views on the subject while, as with the question of *huduth* and *qidam*, they have been constantly criticized and attacked by the *mutakallimun*, especially over the question of God's knowledge of particulars.³ Now, such an issue entered Islamic philosophy directly from the Qur'anic emphasis upon God's knowledge of all things as asserted in numerous verses such as, "And not an atom's weight in the earth or the sky escapeth your Lord, nor what is less than that or greater than that, but it is written in a clear Book" (10: 62). It was precisely this Islamic insistence upon Divine Omniscience that placed the issue of God's knowledge of the world at the centre of the concern of Islamic philosophers and caused Islamic philosophy, like its Jewish and Christian counterparts, to develop extensive philosophical theories totally absent

from the philosophical perspective of Graeco-Alexandrian antiquity. In this context the Islamic doctrine of "divine science" (al-ilm al-laduni) is of central significance for both falsafah and theoretical Sufism or alma`rfzah.

This issue is also closely allied to the philosophical significance of revelation (al-wahy) itself. Earlier Islamic philosophers such as Ibn Sina sought to develop a theory by drawing to some extent, but not exclusively, on Greek theories of the intellect and the faculties of the soul.²⁰ Later Islamic philosophers continued their concern for this issue and sought to explain in a philosophical manner the possibility of the descent of the truth and access to the truth by knowledge based on certitude but derived from sources other than the senses, reason and even the inner intellect. They, however, pointed to the correspondence between the inner intellect and that objective manifestation of the Universal Intellect or Logos which is revelation. While still using certain concepts of Greek origin, the later Islamic philosophers such as Mulla Sadra drew heavily from the Qur'an and Hadith on this issue.

Turning to the field of cosmology, again one can detect the constant presence of Qur'anic themes and certain Hadith. It is enough to meditate upon the commentaries made upon the "Light Verse" and "Throne Verse" and the use of such explicitly Qur'anic symbols and images as the Throne (al arch), the Pedestal (al-kursi-), the light of the heavens and earth (nur al-samdwat wa'l-ard), the niche (mishkat) and so many other Qur'anic terms to realize the significance of the Qur'an and Hadith in the formulation of cosmology as dealt with in the Islamic philosophical tradition.²¹ Nor must one forget the cosmological significance of the nocturnal ascent of the Prophet (al-mi raj) which so many Islamic philosophers have treated directly, starting with Ibn Sm!. This central episode in the life of the Prophet, with its numerous levels of meaning, was not only of great interest to the Sufis but also drew the attention of numerous philosophers to its description as contained in certain verses of the Qur'an and Hadith. Some philosophers also turned their attention to other episodes with a cosmological significance in the life of the Prophet such as the "cleaving of the moon" (shagq al-qamar) about which the ninth/fifteenth-century Persian philosopher Ibn Turkah Isfahani wrote a separate treatise.²²

In no branch of Islamic philosophy, however, is the influence of the Qur'an and Hadith more evident than in eschatology, the very understanding of which in the Abrahamic universe was alien to the philosophical world of antiquity. Such concepts as divine intervention to mark the end of history, bodily resurrection, the various eschatological events, the Final Judgment, and the posthumous states as understood by Islam or for that matter Christianity were alien to ancient philosophy whereas they are described explicitly in the Qur'an and Hadith as well as of

course in the Bible and other Jewish and Christian religious sources.

The Islamic philosophers were fully aware of these crucial ideas in their philosophizing, but the earlier ones were unable to provide philosophical proofs for Islamic doctrines which many confessed to accept on the basis of faith but could not demonstrate within the context of Peripatetic philosophy. We see such a situation in the case of Ibn Sina who in several works, including the *Shifa*, confesses that he cannot prove bodily resurrection but accepts it on faith. This question was in fact one of the three main points, along with the acceptance of *qidam* and the inability of the philosophers to demonstrate God's knowledge of particulars, for which al-Ghazzali took Ibn Sina to task and accused him of *kuft* or infidelity. It remained for Mulla Sadra several centuries later to demonstrate the reality of bodily resurrection through the principles of the "transcendent theosophy" (*al-hikmat al-muta'aliyah*) and to take both Ibn Sina and al-Ghazzali to task for the inadequacy of their treatment of the subject.²³ The most extensive philosophical treatment of eschatology (*al-ma'ad*) in all its dimensions is in fact to be found in the *Asfār* of Mulla Sadra.

It is sufficient to examine this work or his other treatises on the subject such as his *al-Mabda' wa'l-ma'ad* or *al-Hikmat al-arshiyyah* to realize the complete reliance of the author upon the Qur'an and Hadith. His development of the philosophical meaning of *ma'ad* is in reality basically a hermeneutics of Islamic religious sources, primary among them the Qur'an and Hadith. Nor is this fact true only of Mulla Sadra. One can see the same relation between philosophy and the Islamic revelation in the writings of Mulla Muhsin Fayd Kashani, Shah Waliullah of Delhi, Mulla Abd Allah Zunuzi, Hajji Mulla Hath Sabziwari and many later Islamic philosophers writing on various aspects of *al-ma'ad*. Again, although as far as the question of eschatology is concerned, the reliance on the Qur'an and Hadith is greater during the later period, as is to be seen already in Ibn Sina who dealt with it in both his encyclopedic works and in individual treatises dealing directly with the subject, such as his own *al-Mabda' wa'l-ma'ad*. It is noteworthy in this context that he entitled one of his most famous treatises on eschatology

al-Risalat al-adhawiyyah, drawing from the Islamic religious term for the Day of Judgment. In meditating upon the history of Islamic philosophy in its relation to the Islamic revelation, one detects a movement toward ever closer association of philosophy with the Qur'an and Hadith as *falsafah* became transformed into *al-hikmat al-ilahiyyah*. Al-Farabi and Ibn Sina, although drawing so many themes from Qur'anic sources, hardly ever quoted the Qur'an directly in their philosophical works. By the time we come to Suhrawardi in the sixth/twelfth century, there are present within his purely philosophical works citations of the Qur'an and Hadith. Four centuries later the Safavid philosophers wrote philosophical works in the form of commentaries on the

text of the Qur'an or on certain of the Hadith. This trend continued in later centuries not only in Persia but also in India and the Ottoman world including Iraq.

As far as Persia is concerned, as philosophy became integrated into the Shiite intellectual world from the seventh/thirteenth century onwards, the sayings of the Shiite Imams began to play an ever greater role, complementing the Prophetic Hadith. This is especially true of the sayings of Imams Muhammad al-Bagir, Jafar al-Sadiq and Musa al-Kazim, the fifth, sixth and seventh Imams of Twelve-Imam Shi'ism, whose sayings are at the origin of many of the issues discussed by later Islamic philosophers.²⁴ It is sufficient to study the monumental but uncompleted *Sharh Usfd alkafi* of Mulla Sadra to realize the philosophical fecundity of many of the sayings of the Imams and their role in later philosophical meditation and deliberation.

The Qur'an and Hadith, along with the sayings of the Imams, which are in a sense the extension of Hadith in the Shiite world, have provided over the centuries the framework and matrix for Islamic philosophy and created the intellectual and social climate within which Islamic philosophers have philosophized. Moreover, they have presented a knowledge of the origin, the nature of things, humanity and its final ends and history upon which the Islamic philosophers have meditated and from which they have drawn over the ages. They have also provided a language of discourse which Islamic philosophers have shared with the rest of the Islamic community.²⁵ Without the Qur'anic revelation, there would of course have been no Islamic civilization, but it is important to realize that there would also have been no Islamic philosophy. Philosophical activity in the Islamic world is not simply a regurgitation of GraecoAlexandrian philosophy in Arabic, as claimed by many Western scholars along with some of their Islamic followers, a philosophy which grew despite the presence of the Qur'an and Hadith. On the contrary, Islamic philosophy is what it is precisely because it flowered in a universe whose contours are determined by the Qur'anic revelation.

As asserted at the beginning of this chapter, Islamic philosophy is essentially "prophetic philosophy" based on the hermeneutics of a Sacred Text which is the result of a revelation that is inalienably linked to the microcosmic intellect and which alone is able to actualize the dormant possibilities of the intellect within us. Islamic philosophy, as understood from within that tradition, is also an unveiling of the inner meaning of the Sacred Text, a means of access to that Hagigah which lies hidden within the inner dimension of the Qur'an. Islamic philosophy deals with the One or Pure Being, and universal existence and all the grades of the universal hierarchy. It deals with man and his entelechy, with the cosmos and the final return of all things to God. This interpretation of existence is none other than penetration into the inner meaning of the Qur'an

which "is" existence itself, the Book whose meditation provides the key for the understanding of those objective and subjective orders of existence with which the Islamic philosopher has been concerned over the ages.

A deeper study of Islamic philosophy over its twelve-hundred-year history will reveal the role of the Qur'an and Hadith in the formulation, exposition and problematics of this major philosophical tradition. In the same way that all of the Islamic philosophers from al-Kindi onwards knew the Qur'an and Hadith and lived with them, Islamic philosophy has manifested over the centuries its inner link with the revealed sources of Islam, a link which has become even more manifest as the centuries have unfolded, for Islamic philosophy is essentially a philosophical hermeneutics of the Sacred Text while making use of the rich philosophical heritage of antiquity. That is why, far from being a transitory and foreign phase in the history of Islamic thought, Islamic philosophy has remained over the centuries and to this day one of the major intellectual perspectives in Islamic civilization with its roots sunk deeply, like everything else Islamic, in the Qur'an and Hadith.

NOTES

1- Within the Islamic world itself scholars of kalam and certain others who have opposed Islamic philosophy over the ages have claimed that it was merely Greek philosophy to which they opposed philosophy or wisdom derived from faith (al-bikmat alyunaniyyah versus al-hikmat al-imdniyyah). Some contemporary Muslim scholars, writing in English, oppose Muslim to Islamic, considering Muslim to mean whatever is practised or created by Muslims and Islamic that which is derived directly from the Islamic revelation. Many such scholars, who hail mostly from Pakistan and India, insist on calling Islamic philosophy Muslim philosophy, as can be seen in the title of the well-known work edited by M. M. Sharif, A History of Muslim Philosophy. If one looks more deeply into the nature of Islamic philosophy from the traditional Islamic point of view and takes into consideration its whole history, however, one will see that this philosophy is at once Muslim and Islamic according to the above-given definitions of these terms.

2- When accused on a certain occasion of infidelity, Ibn Sina responded in a famous Persian quatrain: "It is not so easy and trifling to call me a heretic; 1 No faith in religion is firmer than mine. / I am a unique person in the whole world and if I am a heretic; I Then there is not a single Muslim anywhere in the world." Trans. by S. H. Barani in his "Ibn Sina and Alberuni", in Avicenna Commemoration Volume (Calcutta, 1956): 8 (with certain modifications by S. H. Nasr).

- 3- This term was first used by H. Corbin and myself and appears in Corbin, with the collaboration of S- H. Nasr and O. Yahya, *Histoire de la philosophie islamique* (Paris, 1964).
- 4- We say "almost" because there are one or two figures such as Muhammad ibn Zakariyya' al-Razi who rejected the necessity of prophecy. Even in his case, however, there is a rejection of the necessity of revelation in order to gain ultimate knowledge and not the negation of the existence of revelation. See Corbin, op. cit.: 26ff.
- 5- The term *riwagi* used by later Islamic philosophers must not, however, be confused with the Roman Stoics, although it means literally stoic (*riwaq* in Arabic coming from Pahlavi and meaning *stoa*). Corbin, op. cit.: 24.
- 6- On the Islamic figure of Hermes and Hermetic writings in the Islamic world see L. Massignon, "Inventaire de la litterature hermetique arabe", appendix 3 in A. J. Festugiere and A. D. Nock, *La Revelation d'Herm2s Trismegiste*, 4 vols (Paris, 1954-60); S. H. Nasr, *Islamic Life and Thought* (Albany, 1981): 102-19; F. Sezgin, *Geschichte der arabischen Schrifftums*, 4 (Leiden, 1971).
- 9- See for example the introduction by one of the leading contemporary traditional philosophers of Persia, Abul-Hasan Sha'rani, to *Sabziwari, Asrdr al-hikam* (Tehran, 1960): 3.
- 10- Edited with introduction and Persian translation by M. Khwajawi (Tehran, 1983).
- 11- The writings of H. Corbin are a notable exception.
- 12- See M. Abdul Haq, "Ibn Sima's Interpretation of the Qur'an", *The Islamic Quarterly*, 32(1) (1988): 46-56.
- 13- This monumental work has been edited in Arabic and also translated into Persian by M. Khwajawi who has printed all of Mulla Sadra's Qur'anic commentaries in recent years. It is interesting to note that the Persian translation entitled *Tarjuma yi mafanh al-ghayb* (Tehran, 1979) includes a long study on the rise of philosophy and its various schools by Ayatullah Abidi Shahrirdi, who discusses the rapport between Islamic philosophy and the Qur'an in the context of traditional Islamic thought.
- 14- See I. Netton, *Allah Transcendent* (London, 1989), which deals with this tension but mixes his account with certain categories of modern European philosophy not suitable for the subject.
- 15- See E. Gilson, *Avicenne et le point de depart de Duns Scot*, *Extrait des archives d'histoire doctrinale et litteraire du Moyen Age* (Paris, 1927); and A. M. Goichon, "L'Unite de la pensEe avicennienne", *Archives Internationale dHsstoire des Sciences*, 20-1 (1952): 290ff.
- 16- See D. Burrell and B. McGinn (eds), *God and Creation* (Notre Dame, 1990): 246ff. For the more esoteric meaning of *ex nihilo* in Islam see L. Schaya, *La Creation en Dieu* (Paris, 1983),

especially chapter 6: 90ff.

17- This has been treated more amply in Chapter 16 below on Ibn Sina See also Nasr, *An Introduction to Islamic Cosmological Doctrines* (Albany, 1993), chapter 12.

18- See T. Izutsu, *The Concept and Reality of Existence* (Tokyo, 1971).

19- The criticisms by al-Ghazzali and Imam Fakhr al-Din al-Razi of this issue, as that of *huduth* and *qidam*, are well known and are treated below. Less is known, however, of the criticism of other theologians who kept criticizing the philosophers for their denial of the possibility of God knowing particulars rather than just universals.

20- See F. Rahman, *Prophecy in Islam, Philosophy and Orthodoxy* (London, 1958), where some of these theories are described and analysed clearly, but with an over-emphasis on the Greek factor and downplaying of the role of the Islamic view of revelation itself.

21- On this issue see Nasr, *An Introduction to Islamic Cosmological Doctrines*, and Nasr, "Islamic Cosmology", in *Islamic Civilization*, 4, ed. A. Y al-Hassan et al (Paris, forthcoming).

22- See H. Corbin, *En Islam iranien*, 3 (Paris, 1971): 233ff.

23- Mulla Sadra dealt with this debate in several of his works especially in his *Glosses upon the Theosophy of the Orient of Light* (of Suhrawardi) (*Hashiyah 'ala hikmat al-ishrdq*). See H. Corbin, "Le theme de la resurrection chez Mulla Sadra Shirazi (1050/1640) commentateur de Sohrawardi (587/1191)", in *Studies in Mysticism and Religion - Presented to Gershom G. Scholem* (Jerusalem, 1967): 71-118.

24- The late Allamah Tabataba'i, one of the leading traditional philosophers of contemporary Persia, once made a study of the number of philosophical problems dealt with by early and later Islamic philosophers. He once told us that, according to his study, there were over two hundred philosophical issues treated by the early Islamic philosophers and over six hundred by Mulla Sadra and his followers. Although he admitted that this approach was somewhat excessively quantitative, it was an indication of the extent of expansion of the fields of interest of Islamic philosophy, an expansion which he attributed almost completely to the influence of the metaphysical and philosophical utterances of the Shi'ite Imams which became of ever greater concern to many Islamic philosophers, both Shi'ite and Sunni, from the time of Nasir al-Din al-Tusi onwards.

25- The Qur'an and Hadith have also influenced directly and deeply the formation of the Islamic philosophical vocabulary in Arabic, an issue with which we have not been able to deal .in this chapter