

SUFISM AND PHILOSOPHY: THE HISTORICAL INTERACTION BETWEEN TWO NEIGHBOURS

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The Islamic revelation contains a message for mankind tiered in three levels which manifest themselves as *al-islam* (submission), *al-iman* (faith) and *al-ibsan* (virtue or spiritual perfection). These levels are founded on the basis of the *Hadith* of the Prophet (peace be upon him) in which the archangel Gabriel appeared before him as a young man and questioned him on the meanings of the three aspects or dimensions of the Islamic message.¹ These three dimensions which form the inherent hierarchy of the Islamic religion is also referred to as the *Shari'ah* (the Law), *Tariqah* (the Path) and *Haqiqah* (the Truth). It is the presence of this basic hierarchy in the Islamic message which has led to the various interpretations of the meaning of the same Divine Message in Islamic history. The process of crystallization and categorization of the differences in interpretations and intellectual perspectives of the Islamic revelation eventually led to the formation of the various schools of Islamic thought.

In this paper, the relationship between two schools of thought which are considered as neighbors— Sufism and philosophy will be examined. Our examination will focus on their interactions and their consequent results in Islamic intellectual history.

Sufism or *tasawwuf* is founded upon the esoteric dimension or spiritual content of the Qur'anic Revelation and the *Sunnah* (wont) of Prophet Muhammad (May peace and blessings be upon him). Although the Sufis interpret the Islamic message spiritually or mystically, their outlook and attitudes are not always uniform and similar to each other. The differences in outlook among the Sufis have led to the establishment of different schools within Sufism and which emphasize different perspectives based on either

¹ This hadith is found in several versions in the standard sources. See A.J. Wensinck, et al. *Concordance Leiden*, 1936-1969. For a translation of the text from Bukhari and Muslim see, Tabrizi, *Mishkat al-Masabih*, 5, tr. by T. Robson. Lahore: Sh. Ashraf, 1963-1965,

fear (*makhfafah*), love (*mahabbah*) or knowledge (*ma'rifah*). Due to this, the definition of the term Sufism or *tasawwuf* involves different meanings to an uninformed outsider. However, a basic definition of what is meant specifically by Sufism may be provided as follows: "Sufism is the pursuit of the spiritual path, union with Ultimate Reality (*al-Haqq*), and gnosis according to the path and tradition of "Muhammadan poverty (*faqr*)" (spirit humility)."²

Philosophy as a form of intellectuality was not existent during the days of the Prophet (peace be upon him) and his Companions. The system of philosophy appeared and grew in importance as the Islamic community developed and encountered other religions and their intellectual and philosophical traditions, such as that of the Graeco Alexandrian tradition. Philosophy as a school of thought within the Islamic tradition includes "all intellectual schools within Islamic culture which have tried to attain knowledge of the reality of all things and ultimately the knowledge of the Origin, through the power of the intellect."³ In this definition, "philosophy includes both discursive (*bahthi*) philosophy and intuitive (*dhawqi*) philosophy and synonymous in meaning with theosophy (*hikmah*)."⁴ Thus, there is no distinction between philosophy (*falsafah*) and wisdom (*hikmah*). Since philosophy in the traditional Islamic sense includes several schools, in this article, the specific school of philosophy which Sufism is interacting with will be identified.

METHOD OF ACQUIRING KNOWLEDGE IN THE TWO PERSPECTIVES

Throughout Islamic history, Sufism and philosophy have had a number of relationships between them which ranged from that of reciprocity and assimilation to that of opposition and antagonism. However, their relationship can never be considered as one based on absolute incompatibility since their viewpoints are aspects of the Truth itself.⁵ As

² Seyyed Hossein Nasr, "The Relation between Sufism and Philosophy in Persian Culture," trans. Hamid Dabashi, *Harndard Islamicus*, Vol.6, no.4(1983), p.33

³ *Ibid.*, p.33. ⁴ *Ibid.*

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ William Chittick, "Mysticism versus Philosophy in earlier Islamic History: The Al-Tusi, Al-Qunawi Correspondence", *Religious Studies*, Vol. 17 (1981), p.87.

alluded to earlier, the variant and contrasting rapport between the two schools stemmed from the existence of various schools of Sufism and different branches of philosophy and their particular interaction with and limited view of each other.

A distinct feature which marked their interactions was the debates and discussions held between them. These debates centered around each school's methods of acquiring knowledge (*'ilm*) and discussions about the reliability of each method attaining to the truth. The interchange of ideas between Sufism and philosophy was augmented by their interplay with a third intellectual discipline, that of scholastic theology (*Kalam*). The theologians invalidated both the Sufis' and philosophers' claim to have discovered the truth of things. The divergence in perspective between the theologians and the philosophers and Sufis boils down to the same question and that is the method of acquiring knowledge and of attaining to the truth.⁶

To understand the inter-relationships between the three schools of thought it is best to examine their particular modes of acquiring the truth. However, it must be borne in mind that their respective perspectives are not always clear-cut because their differences are based on emphasis and not exclusiveness. What is meant by this is that in practice many members of each school utilize the perspective of the other schools of thought to varying degrees, and the intermingling of view points by individual figures were also common. Hence, variations occurred both at the levels of figure and intellectual perspective. As a result, the distinction between the three perspectives became increasingly clouded through the passage of time.⁷

The Islamic Peripatetic philosophers such as al-Kindi, al-Farabi and Ibn Sina held that intellect (*al-'aql*) alone without the aid of the other two modes of acquiring knowledge -- revelation (*wahy*) or "unveiling" (*kashf*) was enough for man to understand the realities of things and to attain to the ultimate truth. They believed that the very act of acquiring knowledge requires a kind of illumination by the Active Intellect (*al-'aql al alfa'*).⁸

⁶ Ibid., pp.87-88.

⁷ Ibid., p.88

⁸ Ibid., p.89

The Sufis such as Bayazid, Rumi and Ibn al-'Arabi held that man can attain to the ultimate truth only through personal and direct knowledge resulting from the removal of veils separating man from God. This second kind of knowledge called "unveiling" (*kashf*) or "direct tasting" (*dhawq*) can only come about through spiritual practice and divine self-disclosure. The locus of "unveiling" is the heart (*al-qalb*) as opposed to rational knowledge which relies on the faculty of the mind or reason. This God-given knowledge must be based on the outward support of the Qur'anic revelation.⁹

Finally, the theologians such as al-Ash'ari, maintained that truth could only be attained through the Qur'anic revelation and that both. "intellect" and "unveiling" tended to be misleading.¹⁰

In clarifying the inter-relationships among the three perspectives or schools of thought as regards to the method of acquiring knowledge, it is necessary that the meaning of the term intellect (*al-'aql*) be explained in greater detail. This will make the understanding of the views of each school pertaining to knowledge clearer.

INTELLECT IN THE SUFI AND PHILOSOPHICAL PERSPECTIVES

In the Arabic language, a single word *al-'aql* is used to denote both reason and intellect. The distinction and inter-relationships between the two meanings and the dependence of reason upon intellect is always kept in mind when the term is used. Each school of thought elaborates and uses the term *al-'aql* to denote the meaning of intellect as it pertains to the individual school's perspective and inner structure.¹¹

In the translation of the term *al-'aql* as reason, it refers to a means of acquiring knowledge which is confined to the human plane. Hence, the pertinence of the root meaning of *al-'aql* as "to bind" and "to limit", implying the limitation and construction of the human intellect (also referred to as particular intellect (*al-'aql al-juz'i*)) when using the mode of reason to know

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Seyyed Hossein Nasr, "Intellect and Intuition: Their Relationship from the Islamic Perspective", *Studies in Comparative Religion*, Winter - Spring (1979), pp.65-66

Ultimate Reality¹² The knowledge acquired through reason or discursive thought is indirect since it is based solely on mental concepts. This knowledge, obtained indirectly is also termed as “acquired knowledge” (*al-'ilm al-husuli*).¹³

The word *'aql* is also used to refer to the first creation of God it keeping with the saying of the Prophet (peace be upon him): “The first thing created by God was the Intellect.”¹⁴ In this context the Intellect is identical with the Greatest Spirit (*al-rub al-a' zam*) and the Supreme Per (*al-qalam al-a' la*). The Intellect, also referred to as Universal Intellect (*al-'aql al-kulli*) is a repository of God’s knowledge of all created being and stands beyond human comprehension. However, the prophets and the saints, to a certain extent are able to achieve union with it. This union is one of the causes of “unveiling,” and happens when the human intellect is illuminated by the Universal Intellect or the Active Intellect (the term used by Peripatetic philosophers)¹⁵ In other words, when the Universal Intellect illuminates the human intellect it enables the human intellect to possess the faculty of intuition (*bads, firasah, dhawq (ishraq, mukashafah)*).¹⁶

The knowledge obtained by using the faculty of intuition is base upon immediate experience and signifies direct vision and participation in the knowledge of the truth. This form of knowledge is referred to a “presential knowledge” (*al-'ilm al-huduri*) or “knowledge of the heart’ this type of knowledge has the directness of sensual experience but concerns the supernal realities. Intuition when wedded to faith enables man to fully understand the meaning of religion, specifically, God word as contained in the Qur’an.¹⁷

¹² William Chittick, “Mysticism versus ...”, op.cit. pp.90-91.

¹³ Seyyed Hossein Nasr, “Intellect and....”, op.cit., p.66.

¹⁴ This hadith is found in several early hadith collections of the Shi’ites. Among the sunnis it is mainly quoted by the Sufis. See Ghazali, *Mizan al-'Amal*, Cairo, 1965, p. 331; Isfahani, *Hilyat al-awliya*, 10 Vols. Cairo, 1971-79, 7:318; Ahmad Jam, *Uns al-Talihin*, Tehran, 1971, p. 330-3; Raghīb al-Isfahani, *al-Dhari'a....* Cairo, 1973, p. 73. (Editor).

¹⁵ William Chittick, “Mysticism versus....”, op.cit., p.91

¹⁶ Seyyed Hossein Nasr, “Intellect and....”, op.cit., p.66.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, pp.66-67; 73-74. Iqbal has pointed out to the same fact when he discussed the “non-rational modes of consciousness” or “other ways of invading our consciousness” etc. See M. Iqbal, *The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam*, Iqbal Academy Pakistan, Lahore,

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From the above explanation it can be discerned that both Sufis and philosophers agree that the human intellect may be the source of spun knowledge. However, the Sufis questioned the validity of knowledge obtained from the human intellect if it is not illuminated by the Divine Intellect. The philosophers can have no guarantee that they will attain such illumination if there is no spiritual practice or “purification of the heart” on their parts.¹⁸

The Sufis pointed out as proofs, the verses in the Holy Qur’an and the Hadith which allude to the heart as the seat of knowledge, for example:-

O men, now there has come to you
an admonition from your Lord, and
a healing for what is in the breasts
(namely the heart)
and a guidance, and a mercy to the believers.¹⁹

The philosophers on their part were wary of the Sufis’ claim of inspired knowledge. Although they acknowledged the possibility of the identity of the human intellect and Universal Intellect, they were of the opinion that the truth needed to be expounded in a rational way. Here it should be noted that they were not rationalists in the modern sense since they did not attempt to acquire knowledge through mental activity cut off completely from the light of the Divine Intellect. They felt that laws of logic and rational discourse must be employed to explain the operation of the Intellect at the discursive level so that others may also understand it.²⁰

CONSEQUENCE OF INTER-RELATIONSHIPS

1989, p. 13-14. Also see Rumi, Mathnawi, Pourjavady edition, Tehran, Vol. II, verses. 43-52, 65-67, 72. 3, 94-7.

¹⁸ William Chittick, “Mysticism versus....”, op.cit., p.93.

¹⁹ The Qur’an, 10:57

²⁰ William Chittick, “Mysticism versus....”, op.cit., p.94.

The resultant tension that arose from the seemingly opposite viewpoints of the Sufis and philosophers' methods of acquiring knowledge was more creative than destructive. In Islam there has existed tension and opposition between the various dimensions and components of its intellectual tradition but they have never destroyed the unity of Islam and its civilization.²¹ This may be attributed to the fact that the contending parties realized that their modes of knowing may differ but the goal of their aspiration and the source of their knowledge is one and the same: God.

A good example of this point is the famous attack of Abu Hamid al-Ghazali (d. 1111) against philosophy. In his important work entitled *Tabafatu al-Falasifah* (*The Incoherence of the Philosophers*), al-Ghazali attacked Peripatetic philosophy, especially the rationalist tendencies within it. Through his other works, for example, *al-Munqidh min al-Dalal* (*The Redeemer from Error*) and *Ihya' al-Ulum al-Din* (*The Revival of the Religious Sciences*), al-Ghazali pointed to Sufism (*tasawwuf*) as the definitive solution to philosophical doubts which stem from the excessive use of reason. He arrived at this conclusion only after having personally experienced spiritual problems. He resolved them by careful examination of the inner self and investigations of the claims of the dominant schools of thought of his time.²² The consequence of this personal crisis which he resolved and explained in his works, led to a change in the direction of the path of Islamic intellectual life. Rather than putting an end to the flow, al-Ghazali provided the background which made possible the spread of the sapiential teachings of Suhrawardi and Ibn Arabi.²³

Al-Ghazali's spiritual crisis which eventually led him to the "luminous skies of illumination and gnosis"²⁴ was not confined to him alone. It was shared by other philosophers and theologians who realized the limitations of ratiocination (*istidlal*) to obtain spiritual certitude. If philosophy was inundated by Sufi doctrines and was buried in its Aristotelian form, the Sufis on the other hand, assimilated the positive features of Greek wisdom especially in its Neoplatonic version. They kept Greek metaphysical and

²¹ Seyyed Hossein Nasr, "The Meaning and Role of Philosophy in Islam", *Studia Islamica* Vol.37, (1973), p.68.

²² Victor Danner, *op.cit.*, pp. 163-164.

²³ Seyyed Hossein Nasr, "The Meaning and Role....", *op.cit.*, p.69. 24: *Ibid.* p.71.

²⁴ *Ibid.* p.71.

epistemological notions which had relevance to gnostic speculation on the Divine Unity but put aside those aspects which were irrelevant to the spiritual life, such as logic, mathematics, the natural sciences and medicine.²⁵ In fact, Neoplatonic or Greek forms of wisdom had already, since the 3rd century/9th century permeated into the style of thinking of Muslim intellectuals affected by the translation of Greek philosophical works into Arabic.

Ibn al- Arabi (d. 1240), the *shaykh al-akbar* of the Sufi tradition, was preeminent in integrating and effectively actualizing Neoplatonic thought into Sufism. Ibn al- Arabi wrote about gnosis (*irfan*) within an elaborate theosophical or philosophical structure. His was “an eclectic system that had a spiritual unity and not at all a syncretism without interior harmony and concord.²⁶ One of the titles conferred upon Ibn al-Arabi was “The Plato of his time,” (*Aflatunu zamanibi*), However, he protested against those who construed his works as philosophy.

Philosophy benefited tremendously - from the interaction with Sufism and gradually became itself “the outer courtyard leading those qualified to the inner garden of gnosis and beatitude.”²⁷ In the course of time and process of interaction between the two schools of thought, Sufism influenced and transformed the substance of philosophy. It metamorphosed from a_ simply rational system of thought within the Islamic tradition into an ancillary of esoterism closely connected to illumination and gnosis.²⁸

After the death of the Andulasian master of Aristotelianism, Ibn Rushd (d. 1198), philosophy as an independent and rigorously applied discipline disappeared in the predominantly Sunni Western lands of Islam. It is a well accepted fact that philosophy reemerged in Persia during the Safavid period (10th century/16th century to 11th century/17th century). The philosophy that surfaced in the Shiite land wore a different dress from that which was attacked by al-Ghazali and Fakhr al-Din Razi. Actually, to be exact, there was never a discontinuity of philosophy because Nasir al-Din Tusi, who was one

²⁵ Victor Danner, op.cit., p.167.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Seyyed Hossein Nasr, “The Meaning and Role....”, op.cit., p.71.

²⁸ Ibid. p.73.

of the foremost philosophers of the 7th century /13th century, revived the Peripatetic philosophy of Ibn Sina through his work the *Sharh al Isharat*.²⁹ Philosophy was channeled into a new direction and was given a new vigour as a result of its creative interaction with Sufism earlier on. This form of philosophy or better translated as theosophy, combined philosophy and gnosis, referred to as *Hikmat* philosophy (*al-Hikmat al-Musa'aliyyah*). This particular school of philosophy emerged from a long development which dated back to the 6th century/12th century and the introduction of new intellectual perspectives by Suhrawardi and Ibn al- Arabi. *Hikmat* had drawn some of its intellectual perspectives from Ibn al- Arabi who had absorbed philosophical elements into his system of Sufism. In turn, this Sufism was absorbed into the philosophical structure of *Hikmat*.³⁰ Hence, to be exact, *Hikmat* is based upon the integration of four major schools of Islamic thought: *kalām*, Peripatetic philosophy, *ishraqi* theosophy and *'irfan*. The foremost among the group of theosophers was Sadr al-Din Shirazi known as Mulla Sadra. He achieved in his own life and in his works, a synthesis of the three means available to man to attain truth: - revelation (*wahy*), illumination and intellectual intuition (*dhawq*) and rational demonstration.³¹

IMPORTANT FIGURES AND THEIR WORKS

In this section, the important Muslim thinkers who played prominent roles in determining the type of relationship that developed between the two perspectives, and their works, will be discussed. The first three groups of figures that are mentioned share a common characteristic in the sense that they all have come out of the Sufi school and then approached philosophy. The other two groups are those thinkers who have been originally theosophers and philosophers but have had inner attachment to Sufism and tried to establish a relationship between Sufism and philosophy.³²

²⁹ Seyyed Hossein Nasr, *The Cambridge History of Iran*. Vol.6: "The Timurid and Safavid Periods", eds. Peter Jackson & Lawrence Lockhart (Cambridge: The University Press), pp. 658-659.

³⁰ Victor Danner, *op.cit.*, pp.167-168.

³¹ Seyyed Hossein Nasr, in: *The Cambridge History of Iran* Vol.6: "The Timurid and Safavid Periods", *op.cit.*, pp.680-681.

³² This categorization of thinkers into distinct groups is based on that of Seyyed Hossein Nasr in his article "The Relation between Sufism....", *op.cit.*, pp.33-47.

JALAL AL-DIN RUMI

The great Sufi poets such as Sana'i, 'Attar and Rumi were responsible for creating the impression that Sufism and philosophy were inherently opposed to each other. They disseminated their opposition to the rationalistic aspect of philosophy by their beautiful poetry. The reproach of philosophy, especially Peripatetic philosophy inherent in Rumi's *Mathnawi* addressed his concern regarding the emancipation of man from any form of spiritual and intellectual; limitations. He has never denied philosophy or logic per se. Moreover the *Mathnawi* itself is a philosophical masterpiece and its understanding is not possible without knowledge of common Peripatetic philosophy.³³

In his first book of the *Mathnawi*, Rumi considered "the leg of those who employ rational arguments is of wood: a wooden leg is very infirm."³⁴ In another passage from his third book, Rumi clarified the relationship between the unaided human intellect and the Universal Intellect from which Sufis receive their illumination: -

The philosopher is in bondage to intellectual concepts; the pure saint is mounted upon the Intellect of intellect. The Intellect of intellect is the kernel, your intellect the husk. The stomachs of animals are always seeking husks. The seeker of the kernel has a hundred loathings for the husks; in the eyes of the goodly saints, the kernel alone is truly lawful. Since the skin of the intellect gives a hundred proofs, how should the universal Intellect ever take a step without certainty?³⁵

SHAYKHAL-AKBAR MUHYIAL-DIN IBNAL-'ARABI

Ibn al-'Arabi the famous Gnostic of Andalusia was the key figure in the development of a particular form of Sufism intertwined with philosophy or specifically, theosophy in its broadest sense. He recognized as the founder of

³³ Ibid., pp.36-37.

³⁴ From Rumi's *Mathnawi* (1:2128), quoted in William Chittick, "Mysticism Versus Philosophy....", p. 93.

³⁵ From Rumi's *Mathnawi* (3: 2527-30), quoted in William Chittick, *The Sufi Path of Love*, Albany: State University of New York Press, 1983, pp.36-37.

the intellectual school of Sufism which conferred upon intellect an exalted position as a means of “attaining Absolute Reality and the Reality of the Absolute.”³⁶ In his work particularly in his *al-Futubat al-Makkiyah* (*The Meccan Revelations*) and (the *Fusus al-Hikam* (*The Bezels of Wisdom*), speculative gnosis *al-irfan*; *al-nazari* are best represented.³⁷

The connection between Sufism and gnosis was manifested ever before Ibn al Arabi in the great Persian Sufi ‘Ayn al-Qudat Hamadani, especially his books *Tambhidat* (*Spiritual Preparations*) and *Dhubdat al-Haqaiq* (*The Most Precious Realities*) and in some of the later works of Abu Hamid al-Ghazali such as *Mishkat al-Anwar* (*The Niche of Lights*). Of course, the exposition *par excellence* of this type of gnosis was best effected in the works of the Shaykh al-Akbar himself.³⁸

SHIHAB A 1.-DIN AL-SUHRA WARDI

There existed a group of Sufis, which was well represented by Suhrawardi, who were philosophers in the strict sense of the meaning of philosophy in Islamic culture since they were proponents of one of the philosophical schools, in contrast to the group of speculative gnostics who were exponents of philosophy in its broadest sense. This former group of Sufi-philosophers created a link between Sufism and philosophy.³⁹

The Master of Illumination Shihab al-Din al-Suhrawardi was initiated into Sufism before he started his studies in philosophy. He established a new School in Islamic philosophy which came to be known as the school of Illumination (*Isbraqi*) whose essence and principle was reconciliation between intuitive (*dhawqi*) theosophy and discursive (*bahthi*) philosophy. For Suhrawardi, intellect has a highly exalted position but his concept of intellect is the Glowing Red Intellect (*‘aql-i-surkeb*) which he considers as the intermediary between the realm of pure light and sheer darkness. This intellect which itself is a source of light, illuminates man’s mind and his

³⁶ Seyyed Hossein Nasr, ‘The Relation between Sufism....’, op.cit., pp.

37-38.

³⁷ Ibid., pp. 38-39.

³⁸ Ibid., p. 38.

³⁹ Ibid., p. 39.

being.⁴⁰ It is evident that Suhrawardi is greatly indebted to both the great chain of Sufi masters for his spiritual inspiration and doctrines, as well as the Muslim philosophers, especially Ibn Sina for the formulation of his philosophical ideas. Some of his famous works included the four large doctrinal treatises, the first three dealing with Aristotelian philosophy and the last with *Isbraqi* wisdom proper which is the *Hikmat al-Isbraq*. The short treatises which were written in symbolic language depicted the journey of the initiate towards gnosis and illumination, for example, the Persian '*Aql-i Surkb*'.⁴¹

AL-FARABI AND IBN SINA

This group includes those philosophers who studied and in some cases also practiced Sufism. Eminent in this group was al-Farabi. Among his works, the *Fusus al-Hikmah (The Bezels of Wisdom)* is especially significant since it deals with both philosophy and gnosis. Ibn Sina, though not a practising Sufi strongly supported Sufism. His "Fi Maqamat al-' Arifin" (On the Spiritual Stages of the Gnostics) in the book *Isyarat wa al-Tanbihat (Directives and Remarks)* is one of the most powerful defences of Sufism ever undertaken by a philosopher and his *Hikmat al-Mashriqiyah (The Oriental Philosophy)* is more inclined towards the Sufi perspective.⁴²

SADR AL-DINAL-SHIRAZI

Finally, during the intellectually outstanding Safavid period there emerged the second group of philosophers who moved towards a complete synthesis between philosophy and Sufism. This group of philosophers different from the group represented by Suhrawardi in terms of their relationship with Sufism. Although there is no doubt that they have attained

⁴⁰ Ibid., p. 41..

⁴¹ Seyyed Hossein Nasr, "Shihab Al-Din Suhrawardi Maqtul", M.M Sharif, A History of Muslim Philosophy, Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1964,

pp. 374-375.

⁴² Seyyed Hossein Nasr, "The Relation between Sufism....", op. cit., p.42.

high spiritual states, there is no solid evidence to prove of their exact attachment to Sufism.⁴³

The founder of this new school of philosophy (*al-Hikmat al-Muta'aliyyah*) is Sadr al-Din al-Shirazi, considered the greatest Muslim thinker in metaphysics. In this school, the synthesis which Suhrawardi presented between the components of rational philosophy, illumination and gnosis and the tenets of revelation was perfected. Sadr al-Din Shirazi utilized the principles of all the previous schools, especially those of Ishraqi theosophy and the gnosis of Ibn al-'Arabi's school and kept them within the matrix of shi site religious sciences.

The outstanding masterpiece of Mulla Sadra is the *al-Hikmat al-Mutia'aliyyah fi'l-asfar al-arba sat al-'aqliyya* (*The Supernal Wisdom Concerning the Four Journeys of the Intellect*) known as the *Asfar*. This most advanced text of *Hikmat* is a final summation of traditional wisdom as well as a precise exposition of Mulla Sadra's own vision and views of earlier gnostics, philosophers and theologians.⁴⁴

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The historical relationship between the two neighbors, Sufism and philosophy, upon close examination and scrutiny was one of mutual benefit and enrichment. We see the evidence of this mutual gain in the development of doctrinal Sufism (*'irfan*) and the formation of the school of *Hikmat* philosophy. *Hikmat* philosophy represents the final synthesis of the three modes of knowing the truth made available to man: revelation, intellectual intuition and reason. This culmination in Islamic intellectual tradition would not be possible without the creative tension and interchange of ideas and viewpoints between the Sufis and the philosophers. The apex would not have been reached without a long preparation of the journey: Ibn Sina anticipated it, al-Ghazali cleared the ground, Ibn al-'Arabi and Suhrawardi presented it and finally, Mulla Sadra perfected it.

⁴³ Ibid., p. 43.

⁴⁴ Seyyed Hossein Nasr, *The Cambridge History of Iran Vol. 6: "The Timurid and Safavid Periods"*, op.cit.,p. 680.