

General Introduction

This fourth volume of *An Anthology of Philosophy in Persia* deals with one of the richest, most complex and yet least-known periods of philosophical life in Persia. It encompasses the period between the seventh/thirteenth century which saw the eclipse of the School of Khurāsān, and the tenth/sixteenth century coinciding with the rise of the Safavids. It is a period whose extensive philosophical activity proves false the still widely-held view that Islamic philosophy came to an end with Ibn Rushd. Since our treatment of the subject of philosophy in all the volumes of this *Anthology* has been according to schools as well as chronological periods, in the present volume we have sought to keep to this method, but with two major exceptions in our dealing with philosophy in Persia from the seventh/thirteenth to the tenth/sixteenth century. The first is that the *ishrāqī* tradition in this volume is treated in its wholeness as a continuous one stretching into the Qājār period. The second is that because of the already extensive nature of this volume, the School of Shiraz, which flowered during the period treated in this work, will be included in volume five rather than here, except for those of its figures who are central to the history of the School of Illumination or *ishrāq*, namely, Quṭb al-Dīn Shīrāzī and Jalāl al-Dīn Dawānī.

Unfortunately, even this compromise is not perfect because there are other members of the School of Shiraz such as Ghiyāth al-Dīn Maṣṣūr Dashtakī, who also wrote important *ishrāqī* works but who are treated not here but in volume five because we feel that they were central figures of the School of Shiraz and should be dealt with there rather than as part of the School of *ishrāq* where they also belong. Also, the coming together of various schools of thought in the period treated in this volume has made such omissions and/or overlaps unavoidable since a thinker often belongs to more than one school.

In any case with the coming of the Mongol invasion the history of Islamic philosophy in Persia enters a new chapter. With the great seats of learning in Khurāsān destroyed to a large extent as a result of the Invasion, the centre of philosophical

activity shifts for several decades from the middle to the end of the seventh/thirteenth century to western Persia to the extent that one can speak of the School of Azarbaijan including the circle of Marāghah succeeding the School of Khurāsān as the centre of philosophical activity in Persia. It is here that such figures as Naṣīr al-Dīn Ṭūsī, Quṭb al-Dīn Shīrāzī, Dabīrān-i Kātībī, Athīr al-Dīn Abharī and many others taught or studied.

The origin of the School of Azarbaijan can in fact be traced to a century earlier and the appearance of Suhrawardī who was born and studied in the province of Azarbaijan before coming to Isfahan. Also the recent discovery of two major collections of philosophical treatises, the *Majmū'a-yi falsafī-yi Marāghah* (The Philosophical Collection of Marāghah) and *Safīna-yi Tabrīz* (The Ship of Tabriz) which were probably used as texts in the schools of Azarbaijan wherever philosophy was taught, attest to the continued interest in Suhrawardī in that region and also to a very active philosophical life during the seventh/thirteenth century. Furthermore, philosophical treatises appear in these collections by philosophers hitherto unknown. In any case the presence of Naṣīr al-Dīn Ṭūsī in Marāghah and the establishment of a major intellectual circle in which philosophy was also taught mark a major revival of Islamic philosophy centred in Azarbaijan. Of course that does not mean that there was no philosophical activity elsewhere in Persia at that time as we see in the notable figures of Afḍal al-Dīn Kāshānī and Quṭb al-Dīn Rāzī. But the primary centre in the seventh/thirteenth century remained Azarbaijan.

It was at the end of this period that the main locus of philosophical activity shifted to Shiraz and its environs and the School of Shiraz became established. The main link between these two schools may be said to be Quṭb al-Dīn Shīrāzī who hailed from Shiraz but who was active in Marāghah. And the School of Shiraz itself was the major source and primary background for the School of Isfahan and the revival of Islamic philosophy in the hands of Mīr Dāmād and Mullā Ṣadrā.

One of the essential characteristics of philosophical activity in Persia from the later part of the seventh/thirteenth onward is the coming together and synthesis of various schools of thought that had remained completely distinct and separate in earlier Islamic history. It is true that Fārābī and Ibn Sīnā were interested in Sufism but they did not combine *mashshā'ī* philosophy and Sufism in a synthesis and a single vision of the nature of things. The fact that *mashshā'ī* philosophy itself is a synthesis of Neoplatonism, Aristotelianism and Islamic teachings is another matter and does not change the gist of our argument here. The *Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikmah* (Bezels of Wisdom) attributed to Fārābī is a gnostic work but it does not combine Peripatetic philosophy and gnosis in a new synthesis. As for Ibn Sīnā's *Kitāb al-Ishārāt wa'l-tanbīhāt* (The Book of Directives and Remarks), the last chapters deal openly with 'irfān, but they are not integrated with the *mashshā'ī* teachings of the earlier chapters. If anything, Ibn Sīnā considered his 'Oriental philosophy' (*al-ḥikmah al-mashriqiyyah*), which we dealt with in the first volume of this *Anthology*, as being

the philosophy for the 'elite' (*khawāṣṣ*), but he did not try to synthesize it with his Peripatetic teachings in a single work. Rather, he kept fully faithful to the general principle of the Islamic intellectual sciences of earlier Islamic history that one should respect the integrity of each science and school of philosophy, its methodology and rules and should avoid the 'sin' of 'mixing methods of discussion' (*khalt al-mabḥath*). One sees outstanding examples of this approach in such figures as Fārābī and Naṣīr al-Dīn Ṭūsī who were masters of several sciences and intellectual perspectives and wrote major works from the point of view of each science and perspective without seeking to combine them into a single vision. For example, Ṭūsī wrote the major work on Twelve-Imam Shi'i *kalām*, the *Kitāb al-Tajrid* (The Book of Catharsis), revived Peripatetic philosophy in his *Sharḥ al-ishārāt* (of Ibn Sīnā), composed major works on Ismaili philosophy discussed in the second volume of this *Anthology* as well as a beautiful treatise on Sufi ethics called *Awṣāf al-ashrāf* (Characteristics of the Noble) without mixing these various schools together. His work on Sufism does not discuss Peripatetic philosophy; nor do his works on Ismailism deal with Twelve-Imam Shi'i *kalām*, or Ibn Sīnā.

Ṭūsī was, however, at the cusp in the arc of Islamic philosophy as far as this issue is concerned. Although he knew *ishrāqī* teachings well, and according to some scholars even taught the *Ḥikmat al-ishrāq* (The Theosophy of the Orient of Light) in Marāghah, he remained completely within the matrix of Ibn Sīnā's thought while commenting upon his *Ishārāt*. Of course Ṭūsī also commented on the last part of the *Ishārāt* dealing with 'irfān as we shall see in this *Anthology*, but he did so to remain faithful to Ibn Sīnā's text. He did not seek to create a new synthesis as we see in the writings of Quṭb al-Dīn Shīrāzī, Ṣā'in al-Dīn ibn Turkah Iṣfahānī or of course Mullā Ṣadrā. But there is an exception when, in his commentary in writing of God's knowledge of His creation, Ṭūsī accepts Suhrawardī's rather than Ibn Sīnā's view and places this *ishrāqī* view in the context of his understanding of Avicennan philosophy. This exception gives an inkling of what was soon to become characteristic of the philosophical scene in Persia and through the influence of Persian philosophers in Ottoman Turkey and India, namely, an attempt to synthesize various intellectual perspectives. Already Ṭūsī's colleague and friend in Marāghah, Quṭb al-Dīn Shīrāzī, who like Ṭūsī was an important scientist, had written the philosophical encyclopedia *Durrat al-tāj* (Pearl of the Crown) selections of which appear below, as a work which can be called an *ishrāqī* interpretation of Avicennan philosophy. Afḍal al-Dīn Kāshānī combined Peripatetic philosophy and Sufism; Dawānī, Peripatetic philosophy, the doctrine of *ishrāq* and *kalām*; and one could go on with many other examples. In fact as we shall see in volume five of the *Anthology*, the major figures of the School of Shiraz, such as Ṣadr al-Dīn Dashtakī, his son Ghiyāth al-Dīn Maṣṣūr Dashtakī and Shams al-Dīn Khafrī were all synthesizers of various philosophical, gnostic and theological schools and perspectives who prepared the ground for the grand

synthesis of the School of Isfahan, especially in the ‘transcendent theosophy’ (*al-ḥikmah al-muta‘āliyah*) of Ṣadr al-Dīn Shīrāzī.

The schools of thought which were very active and which are of particular importance during the period from the seventh/thirteenth to tenth/sixteenth century are, the Peripatetic (*mashshā’ī*) School, the School of *ishrāq*, the various forms of philosophical and doctrinal Sufism especially the School of Ibn ‘Arabī, and *kalām* in both its Sunni and Shi‘i forms that we dealt with in volume three of this *Anthology*.

Let us consider briefly the state of each of these schools in or after the seventh/thirteenth century. By the seventh/thirteenth century, the *mashshā’ī* School in Spain had already become more or less defunct and that in the East was eclipsed as the result of attacks made against it by scholars of *kalām* with whom we have already dealt. But the school had not died out completely in Khurāsān and was revived in a remarkable fashion by Naṣīr al-Dīn Ṭūsī. Henceforth it continued as a living and powerful philosophical tradition over the centuries that followed although often interpreted in an *ishrāqī* manner.

The School of Illumination or *ishrāq* had been founded a century earlier by Suhrawardī who hailed from the western region of Persia although he died in Aleppo. Because of his violent death, his followers went underground for a few decades but his teachings came out fully in the open in the seventh/thirteenth century when Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad Shahrazūrī and Quṭb al-Dīn Shīrāzī wrote very influential commentaries upon the masterpiece of Shaykh al-Ishrāq, the *Ḥikmat al-ishrāq*. Henceforth the School of *ishrāq* became a powerful and widely popular philosophical perspective that attracted many major thinkers not only in Persia, but also in India and the Ottoman world. The period of the flowering of the School of *ishrāq*, is, therefore, the seventh/thirteenth century.

Doctrinal and philosophical Sufism also flowered fully in the seventh/thirteenth century with Ibn ‘Arabī and the dissemination of his teachings in the East especially by his student Ṣadr al-Dīn Qūnawī. There is little doubt, however, that the beginning of philosophical and doctrinal Sufism goes back a century earlier to Abū Ḥāmid Muḥammad Ghazzālī, his brother Aḥmad and ‘Ayn al-Quḍāt Hamadānī. And yet it was in the seventh/thirteenth century that the appearance of the works of Ibn ‘Arabī and his school began to provide a vast and diversified source for philosophical thought. From this period onward, on the one hand many gnostics (*‘urafā’*) wrote works that possessed a philosophical dimension—although *falsafah* and *‘irfān* have always remained distinct disciplines—and on the other, many philosophers turned to the study of *‘irfānī* or gnostic texts. In this domain the presence of the School of *ishrāq* also played a very important role. In any case this period is among the richest in the development of what one can call philosophical Sufism as well as mystical philosophy throughout many parts of the Islamic world and especially in Persia.

As for *kalām*, it is necessary to repeat briefly what was discussed more fully in volume three of our *Anthology*. In the seventh/thirteenth century there appears the seminal work of Ṭūsī on Shi'i *kalām*, the *Kitāb al-Tajrīd*, which is itself quite philosophical and becomes later the subject of numerous philosophical commentaries. Also it is in the eighth/fourteenth and ninth/fifteenth centuries that the earlier Sunni philosophical *kalām* of men such as Ghazzālī reaches its peak with such figures as Jurjānī, Ījī, Dawānī and Taftāzānī. Although a number of these figures were against *falsafah*, some of their views nevertheless became the subject of philosophical discussion as we see in many of the philosophical texts of later schools of philosophy in Persia.

In any case to understand the philosophical life of the period treated in this volume, one must keep in mind that all these schools were very much alive at that time. Moreover, various thinkers sought to combine them to create different types of synthesis of their teachings. Some like Dawānī sought to combine Peripatetic philosophy and *kalām* while being also an *ishrāqī*; some like Āmulī sought to combine Shi'i *kalām* with gnosis and Ibn 'Arabian doctrines in particular; and some like Ibn Turkah sought to combine *mashshā'i*, *ishrāqī* and 'irfānī teachings, preparing the ground, as did some of the figures of the School of Shiraz, for Mullā Ṣadrā.

A point of great interest, as far as the subject of this volume and also part of volume five dealing with the School of Shiraz is concerned, is that during the period between the seventh/thirteenth century and the tenth/sixteenth century, many of the greatest Persian philosophers, even those interested in Sufi or Illuminative doctrines or *kalām*, were also notable scientists. One need only recall the names of Naṣīr al-Dīn Ṭūsī and Quṭb al-Dīn Shīrāzī, known as two of the greatest scientists of Islamic history, but one must also remember in this context the names of Ṣadr al-Dīn and Ghiyāth al-Dīn Maṣṣūr Dashtakī and Shams al-Dīn Khafrī, whose scientific works have not been fully studied until now, but who were nevertheless outstanding scientists. In Persia today Khafrī is known primarily as an acute commentator upon the *Tajrīd* of Ṭūsī, but his commentary upon Ṭūsī's astronomical work the *Tadhkirah* (Treasury of Astronomy) is perhaps even more remarkable, revealing him to be a major astronomer. In fact the recent discovery of him as an outstanding astronomer by Professor George Saliba completely changes the prevailing view of the history of Islamic science during later centuries.

One needs therefore to mention that the period under consideration here is also of great importance for the history of Islamic science and the interaction between theology, metaphysics, philosophy and science in later Islamic civilization. Unfortunately this period is also one in which the least amount of scholarly work in both philosophy and science has been carried out. Many major works remain in manuscript form and need to be critically edited and published. Many others have appeared in printed form but have never been seriously analysed and studied. For this very reason the present volume cannot be any more than a depiction of

the general contour of the peaks of the philosophical landscape of this period. The more detailed picture of this landscape has to await further monographic study. But even this tour of the general characteristics of the philosophical landscape reveals remarkable richness and diversity in the least-known period of the intellectual history of Persia during the Islamic era.

In this volume, three major philosophical schools, each of which we shall deal with more specifically later, are discussed in the following order: the school of *ishrāq*, the revived school of *mashshāʿī* philosophy and philosophical Sufism, as well as of necessity some of their interactions. These schools are the most important of this period in the tradition of philosophy in Persia. Furthermore, the only major arena of philosophical activity, which was deeply influenced by all three schools, is the School of Shiraz, which, as mentioned already, will be treated in the fifth volume of this *Anthology* only for practical considerations, seeing how extensive the present volume has become. Otherwise, that School could have been included here where it really belongs.

The school of *ishrāq* began in the sixth/twelfth century with Suhrawardī, but as already mentioned, because of the tragic events surrounding his death, it flowered exactly at the time when the other two schools included in this volume began to flourish. The school of *ishrāq* transformed the philosophical landscape in all of the eastern lands of the Islamic world including not only Persia, but also Muslim India and Ottoman Turkey. It found numerous followers from Ankara and Kaysari to Lucknow but the centre of its flowering and later development remained in Persia, although Suhrawardī spent the last part of his life in Syria. Although in many ways related to Sufism, Suhrawardī himself having been initiated into Sufism as a young man, the school of *ishrāq* is not simply a form of philosophical Sufism but a distinct school of philosophy which is also a 'theosophy' in the original sense of this term. As shall be seen later, it has its own distinct philosophical features and technical vocabulary and this philosophy was both a challenge to *mashshāʿī* philosophy and in certain ways its complement. In any case the School of *ishrāq* is definitely a new and distinct Islamic philosophical school that has preserved its life in Persia up to the contemporary period. It must not be confused with the School of *irfān* or what is often called philosophical Sufism.

The flowering of *ishrāq*, as mentioned already, coincided almost exactly with the revival of Islamic *mashshāʿī* philosophy and more particularly its Avicennan interpretation at the hand of Naṣīr al-Dīn Ṭūsī. As demonstrated fully in volume three of this *Anthology*, the Ash'arite School of *kalām* set out to criticize the *mashshāʿī* School and such major figures as Ghazzālī, Fakhr al-Dīn Rāzī and Shahrastānī (who was also inspired by Ismaili philosophy) caused the eclipse of Avicennan teachings in Persia in the sixth/twelfth and early seventh/thirteenth centuries. During this period *mashshāʿī* philosophy thrived in Andalusia and one of the foremost philosophers

of that land, Ibn Rushd or Averroes, set out to respond to Ghazzālī's attack upon the philosophers, especially in the latter's *Tahāfut al-falāsifah* (Incoherence of the Philosophers) by writing a rebuttal to this work entitled *Tahāfut al-tahāfut* (Incoherence of the Incoherence). In this work the specific theses of Ghazzālī were criticized point by point but strangely this work did not exercise any notable influence in Persia where Naṣīr al-Dīn Ṭūsī was to succeed in the task of responding to the attacks of the *mutakallimūn* in a different manner.

Ṭūsī achieved his goal of reviving Ibn Sīnā in several works of which the most significant and most influential is his commentary on *al-Ishārāt wa'l-tanbīhāt* of the latter. Here Ṭūsī followed a method very distinct from that of Averroes. Rather than answering the attacks of the opponents of *mashshā'ī* philosophy point by point, as Averroes had done, Ṭūsī chose the most learned commentary by any figure among the earlier *mutakallimūn* upon a *mashshā'ī* text and then set out to comment in turn upon that commentary. Among the *mutakallimūn* of the earlier centuries preceding Ṭūsī perhaps none had been as familiar with the works of Ibn Sīnā, the master of the eastern *mashshā'ī* School, as Fakhr al-Dīn Rāzī. In order to criticize Ibn Sīnā, Rāzī chose Shaykh al-Ra'īs's philosophical masterpiece written late in his life, the *Kitāb al-Ishārāt wa'l-tanbīhāt*. This work is very synthetic in nature and not easy to understand fully by beginners. Rāzī commented in detail upon the whole text line by line, clarifying the meaning of many difficult passages and then set out to refute what Ibn Sīnā had said. His work therefore contained the key for the understanding of the meaning of this seminal text as well as its refutation. In a decision that must be considered 'a stroke of genius', Ṭūsī chose this commentary, making use of Rāzī's clarifications and elucidations but then responding to Rāzī's criticisms. The result is one of the great masterpieces of Islamic philosophy, a text full of remarkable intellectual rigour and a clear structure, characteristics which reflect the fact that it was written by one of the greatest mathematicians who ever lived.

The writing of this text along with several other important treatises on *mashshā'ī* philosophy in both Arabic and Persian by Ṭūsī and also his teaching of Avicennan philosophy in Marāghah caused a major revival of this school in Persia. From the seventh/thirteenth century onward, the teaching of this philosophy became widespread, at least in centres in Persia where Islamic philosophy was taught from Marāghah, Zanjān and Tabriz to Isfahan and Shiraz. Also numerous independent *mashshā'ī* works began to appear in both Arabic and Persian, some like the *Kitāb Hidāyat al-ḥikmah* (The Book of Guidance to Philosophy) by Athīr al-Dīn Abharī and the *Ḥikmat al-'ayn* (Wisdom from the Source) by Dabīrān-i Kātībī-yi Qazwīnī becoming very popular texts for the teaching of this philosophy. Other works that are also of great value such as those of Afḍal al-Kāshānī, which mark a peak from the literary point of view as far as philosophical Persian is concerned, did not gain as much popularity but remain nevertheless very significant. In any case following Ṭūsī we see a rich development of the *mashshā'ī* School which in some cases

became combined with other philosophical perspectives but which continued its own distinct life into the Safavid and Qājār periods.

Finally in this volume, a major section is devoted to philosophical or doctrinal Sufism which is associated mostly with the name of the seventh/thirteenth-century Andalusian master Muḥyi al-Dīn ibn ‘Arabī but which, as already mentioned, has its origin in a certain sense somewhat earlier in the fifth/eleventh and sixth/twelfth centuries in the writings of the two Ghazzālīs and also of ‘Ayn al-Quḍāt Hamadānī. Earlier Sufism did of course deal with salvific and unitary knowledge or gnosis (*ma’rifah* or *irfān*) which lies at the heart of Sufism as such. But the early masters spoke of this reality mostly through allusions and rarely in a systematic manner even in such cases as Junayd, Dhu’l-Nūn al-Miṣrī and Ḥakīm Tirmidhī who were openly devoted to gnosis. Gradually with the two Ghazzālīs and ‘Ayn al-Quḍāt the expression of Sufi teachings gained greater philosophical import and this quality becomes much more accentuated through the School of Ibn ‘Arabī which reached Persia mostly through Ṣadr al-Dīn Qūnawī and also a number of major poets such as Fakhr al-Dīn ‘Irāqī and Awḥad al-Dīn Kirmānī. Although one of the titles of Ibn ‘Arabī was ‘the Plato of his day’, his doctored expression of gnosis in a more explicit and synthetic form, which we have called philosophical Sufism here, must not be confused with *falsafah* as this term is understood in traditional Islamic thought and Ibn ‘Arabī himself was careful to point out this distinction. However, this School does have much philosophical significance. Not only did it produce major literary works of gnostic and mystical significance, some of which like the *Gulshan-i rāz* (Secret Garden of Divine Mysteries) of Shaykh Maḥmūd Shabistārī and the *Lawā’ih* (Gleams) of Jāmī, are masterpieces of Persian literature, but it also provided a rich source for philosophical speculation on the part of many masters of other schools during later centuries. We cannot understand the philosophy of such major later figures as Mullā Ṣadrā and Sabziwārī without knowledge of what we have called philosophical Sufism in this volume. Moreover, this School is of great innate significance philosophically even today, dealing as it does with crucial metaphysical and cosmological questions that remain as pertinent today as in days of old.

Because so much of the thought of the philosophical currents and schools under consideration here is unknown to the general public, including most Persians themselves, and because of the richness of choice from which selections could be made, it has been difficult to prepare this volume in such a way that it would be completely representative of all the different currents of thought and at the same time reveal, for the first time, the most salient features of a generally unknown philosophical landscape. We have, therefore, sought to select works that were later influential within intellectual circles in Persia while at the same time presenting, as much as possible, writings of innate philosophical and literary value. Nor has

our task been made any easier by the fact that many of the major works of the period do not possess a critical edition and some have not been printed even in lithograph form.

In any case this volume is the first in English to present, in the form of an anthology, several centuries of philosophical thought in Persia stretching from the seventh/thirteenth to the tenth/sixteenth centuries, a period which has remained the least known and studied of all eras in the history of Islamic philosophy. We hope that despite its shortcomings the volume will shed light on some of the riches of this period of philosophical activity in the Islamic world, which influenced nearly all later philosophical activity in Muslim India, Ottoman Turkey as well as Arab lands such as Syria and Iraq and in Persia itself, and also create greater interest in a period which produced many works of metaphysical and philosophical significance for all those concerned today with what the ancient sages, including Pythagoras, Parmenides and Plato, considered to be real philosophy.

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