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**TECHNICAL LANGUAGE AND EXPERIENCE
IN THE MYSTICAL PHILOSOPHY OF SADR AL-DĪN QŪNAVĪ**

by
Asaad Shaker

**A thesis submitted to the
Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy**

**Institute of Islamic Studies
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TITLE: **“Technical language and experience in the mystical philosophy of Sadr al-Dîn Qûnâvî”**

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ABSTRACT

Sadr al-Dîn Qûnâvî (605/1207-673AH/1274 CE) – stepson and pupil of Ibn ‘Arabî (d. 638 AH/1240 CE) – played a pivotal role in the development of Islamic intellectual history. His contributions in the medieval period helped alter the course of mystico-philosophical tradition, which was then flourishing from Asia Minor and Persia to the major learning centers of the Arabic-speaking world. His importance was largely due to the complex mystical doctrine he expounded in the light of Ibn Sînâ’s critique of knowledge. The age-old dilemma of knowledge was encapsulated in a famous declaration by Ibn Sînâ – the *rationalist* philosopher – who asserted that man is incapable of knowing intellectually “the realities of things,” let alone the First Being. This did not imply that the realities were either unknowable in every sense, or that they did not exist. The question is in what sense and how are they knowable? It was Ibn Sînâ’s special calling, Qûnâvî argued, to show the proper role and scope of reason in this quest. Philosophical knowledge may be represented chiefly through demonstrative logic, the only paradigm available to Ibn Sînâ. Qûnâvî, on the other hand, set out to develop an exegetical grammar more suited to the movements of spiritual dialogue and paradox. For him, an intellectual knowledge of the “realities,” in essence, rested on the relation between two distinct realities (subject and object). Yet all agreed that God’s knowledge of Himself was the root of all knowledge. It had to transform utterly the distinction between the two realities. God’s self-revelation is furthermore an unfolding book divulged through the infinite possibilities of linguistic construction. Mysticism’s technical vocabulary had, therefore, to distinguish itself from, though without displacing, the bare skeleton of demonstrative logic.

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TITRE: **“Le langage technique et l’expérience dans la philosophie mystique de Ṣadr al-Dīn Qūnāvī”**

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RÉSUMÉ

Sadr al-Dīn Qūnāvī (d. 605/1207-673AH/1274 CE) – élève et fils adoptif d’Ibn ‘Arabī (d. 638 AH/1240 CE) – a joué un rôle clé dans le développement intellectuel de l’Islam. Son apport a contribué à donner une nouvelle direction à la tradition mystico-philosophique médiévale, tradition qui s’épanouissait en Anatolie et en Perse, tout comme dans les principaux centres du monde arabophone. Son importance est due largement à la doctrine mystique qu’il a élaborée à la lumière de la critique de la connaissance avancée auparavant par Ibn Sīnā. Le vieux dilemme épistémologique est résumé par la fameuse déclaration d’Ibn Sīnā, philosophe *rationaliste* par excellence, qui affirme que l’homme est incapable de connaître seul par son intellect “les réalités des choses,” sans parler de celle de l’Être Premier. Mais cela ne voulait pas dire que les réalités sont inconnaisables dans tous les sens, ou qu’elles n’existent pas. Donc la question était de savoir en quel sens au juste et comment. Qūnāvī soutenait qu’Ibn Sīnā avait comme mission de démontrer le juste rôle et l’envergure de la raison dans la recherche d’une connaissance intellectuelle. En termes philosophiques, la connaissance est représentée par la logique de la démonstration, seul paradigme accessible à Ibn Sīnā. Qūnāvī, donc, s’est donné pour tâche de développer une grammaire exégétique plus appropriée aux mouvements du dialogue et du paradoxe spirituels. Une connaissance intellectuelle des “réalités” reposait essentiellement sur la relation entre deux réalités distinctes (le sujet et l’object). Toutefois, tous étaient d’accord que la connaissance de Dieu de lui-même était la source première de toute connaissance. Et elle devait complètement transformer cette distinction entre les deux réalités. La révélation de Dieu est un livre qui s’ouvre en divulguant les infinies possibilités de la construction linguistique. Le vocabulaire technique de la mystique devait par conséquent se distinguer de la logique, mais sans la remplacer.

à *Françoise*

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* * *

Rather than write a separate preface, let me make two brief points here regarding the choices that I have had to make in this study.

My academic training has given me an understanding of historical processes and, in particular, the historical development of Islamic thought. The present study stands out for its almost exclusive focus on the thought of a single author. It is much less concerned with the historical circumstances or developments that go into the making of such a prominent figure in the high culture of Islam as  adr al-D n Q n v . Nevertheless, I am keenly aware of the importance of the broader intellectual context. There is no doubt that, in a general sense, the one approach is incomplete without the other. But this does not make their equal treatment within a single study a feasible task. I have tried to convey, in the introduction, some historical sense of the issues to be discussed. However, the opportunity for a concentrated study of Q n v 's complex system of thought appeared to me far too important to miss. The result was a conscious

the larger picture.

My second point concerns language. Many of the terms Qūnāvī employs are difficult if not impossible to translate into comfortable English. I have done my best, in a paper in the main intended for scholars, to highlight the complex semantics which almost every term usually involves. It should be noted, though, that while Qūnāvī was a master of the Arabic language, the technical nature of his writing did not allow for much grace in literary expression. Another choice has been to use “man” (in “Perfect Man”) instead of “humankind” or “human beings,” and to favor the masculine over other pronoun forms (e.g. “his or her”, “their,” etc.), which are redundant or just too cumbersome; using the feminine form is, of course, out of the question, being simply too ideologically-tainted to be of interest here. While fashionable in small intellectual circles, many current views on the English language remain unacceptable. Languages have differing capacities to convey reference without recourse to the masculine form. Though one of the richest languages in the world, English is grammatically limited in this respect – though without, I think, necessarily privileging either sex.

INTRODUCTION

Konya, the city where Sadr al-Dīn Qūnawī¹ (605/1207-16 Muharram 673AH/22 July 1274 CE) had spent the better part of his life, sits in a fertile plain that stretches all the way to the foot of the Taurus Mountains to the southeast. Despite inclement cold and tempestuous winds, the area is agriculturally productive, if almost entirely dependent on irrigation. Upon being conquered by the Saljuqs, it acquired considerable political and military importance, entering a period of unprecedented prosperity after the sultan of the western branch of the Saljuq dynasty, Maṣ'ūd (r. 512-50 AH/1118-55 CE), declared the city his capital. New mosques, *madrassas* and *khāngārs* were built, and famous personalities slowly trekked their way to this far-flung region of the Islamic world. Growing Mongol pressure around mid-century no doubt had its disruptive effects; the city reached its nadir in 1277 CE, when it was occupied for a short spell by the Qaramānids. Yet despite its initial and recurrent ferocity, Mongol rule in the Islamic world ironically tended to facilitate exchange among peoples by removing regional barriers to the movement, particularly, of commercial goods. An erstwhile factor of destabilization had been the creeping economic localization of many parts of Iran and Asia Minor (Togan EcCoAn 217). And the incessant movement of populations in this period rapidly gave our frontier capital its cosmopolitan character – which was partly a spur to, partly a result of, its political importance – making it the envy of both Muslims and local Greeks and Armenians.

This was the time when Qūnavī's father Majd al-Dīn Ishāq² began his career as a great statesman and, epitomizing mysticism's pervasiveness, became a revered spiritual figure. During his return journey from a pilgrimage to the holy city of Mecca, he was accompanied by Ibn ‘Arabī, with whom he struck a deep friendship. Upon Ishaq's death, the latter reportedly became Sadr al-Dīn's stepfather by marrying the widow.³ Through this marriage, it is said, East met West in Islamdom— and Anatolia's medley spiritual and cultural character suddenly gained shapeliness. Although Konya was unusually heterogeneous in its ethnic composition, under the Saljūqs it managed to develop a social cohesiveness that was conducive to new political and intellectual forms of expression. Its spiritual life, which began to show a remarkable vitality of its own around the middle of the thirteenth century, was nourished by two main sources.

One was an emerging native synthesis of Turkish, Iranian, Hellenic and Mongol cultural patterns. Indeed, frontier innovation in the political arena found its natural outgrowth in the novelty of expression that burgeoned among mystic-poets like Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī. Rūmī's literary achievement was in Persian, and while Persian was not quite the language with which the nomadic Turkoman roaming the countryside had expressed their popular beliefs, his linguistic depth reflected no less a kind of “practical” literary obverse to Arabo-Islamic learned culture, as it was then developing under the aegis of the eastern Saljūqs.⁴ Rūmī was in many ways a wellspring of new experiences and poetic content not easily explained by sole reference to the prim learnedness of scholars as they had been known until then. Despite this difference,

Aflākī's official biographical account portrays a close-knit community of both mystics and scholars of a curiously uninhibited spiritual mien.

As a scholar, Qūnāvī, unlike Rūmī (to whom he was close and who lived in the same city), wrote mostly in Arabic, with a particular bent for Arabic linguistics. This brings us to the second source alluded to above, the uninterrupted links with the centers of traditional science – Damascus, Aleppo, Cairo, etc. – written and taught almost exclusively in the Arabic language. By then, numerous schools and colleges had been built by the Ayyūbids in Syria and Egypt, where the Arabic language was studied assiduously by both specialists and non-specialists congregating from all over the Islamic world, among them Sadr al-Dīn Qūnāvī from Anatolia and his teacher, Ibn 'Arabī, from the Maghreb.⁵ Both spiritual and scientific themes were carefully nurtured by many circles, and tended to blend together. Indeed, in *al-Nafahāt al-īlāhiyyah*, Sadr al-Dīn relates how the matter of *al-kitābah al-ūlā al-īlāhiyyah* itself, or the “Primary Divine Writing,” an important aspect of his doctrine, was revealed to him in an early form in the City of Damascus. Of course, his *mystical* linguistics must not be confused with conventional grammar; and yet to separate the two domains completely would not bring us any nearer to grasping the intellectual climate reigning then. Its Islamic character more deeprooted and variegated than Konya's, Damascus fostered a broad intellectual fraternity that was especially felt in those traditional domains held in common by all the major schools of jurisprudence. Specialized fields like *hadīth* studies, in which Qūnāvī himself excelled to the point of being an authority and teacher, provided ample opportunity for mutual

enrichment, any doctrinal or ethnic channels of admission being far less institutionally practicable here than elsewhere. This is not to argue that intellectual influence was evenly distributed among the higher ranks of academic scholarship. Unlike Ibn 'Arabī, Qūnavī was steeped in Shāfi'i jurisprudence, and the Shāfi'ites were abundantly represented in the schools.

One of the most prestigious centers, established earlier in the century, was the Dār al-Hadīth al-Ashrafiyyah, whose first Shaykh, for instance, was the celebrated Shāfi'i *muhaddith* Ibn al-Sālih al-Shahrazūrī (d. 643/1245) (Pouzet DVS 182). But in centers like these, beyond the basic training needed to produce functional judges and lawyers, intermingling, ironically, offered a chance for some to exert an influence far disproportionate to their numbers. We know that Abū Shāma, the famous chronicler of the city, kept a close liaison with Mālikite circles and Ibn 'Arabī, in particular (Pouzet DVS 179). The Mālikīs present an interesting case where, despite its smaller number of adherents, a school was able to play an important role in the Qur'ānic sciences due to its preponderance in *iqrā'* and *nahw* (Pouzet DVS 179). Interest in these two areas was becoming increasingly focused on Arabic philology. In view of his special relation with Ibn 'Arabī, Qūnavī must have had easy access to Maghrebi-exegetical sources. But I have found little evidence of anything peculiarly Maghrebī, even in his grammatical interpretations, apart from some themes easily identifiable as belonging to Ibn 'Arabī.

Besides Damascus, Qūnavī visited Aleppo and Cairo, where he had a certain faithful following. By the mid-thirteenth century, Konya's close links with all these traditional

centers of learning had established the second most important pillar in its religio-intellectual edifice. But the intriguing question to be asked now is how his spiritual bond with Rūmī, the inveterate opponent of any bookish scholar, could have developed to the point of mutual recognition, as Aflākī indeed reported, while Qūnavī continued unabatedly to produce such unequalled scholarly accomplishments as he had to his name (Huart SDT 281-82).⁶ We shall not try to answer this in connection with Rūmī but in more general form with reference to the intellectually treacherous questions of language and experience.

Although not strictly a “literary practitioner” in the way that Rūmī was, Qūnavī was intensely interested in language, and not always in the disciplinary sense discussed by the grammarians. It was after all language that provided a vehicle of expression – more technically, the “devices of conveyance” (*adawāt al-tawṣīl*) – for conveying the most profound experiences available to a human being. And the “meanings” it purported to embody – naturally to varying degrees of success – were thought of as constants; they were intangible, immaterial and, in their insular subsistence, had no means of disclosing themselves without some device of conveyance. In his search for the proper language of concrete experience, then, he hardly differed from Rūmī. But the theoretical orientation he adopted allowed him to explore realities at a slightly different angle and distance from the core experience, which one needs to stress from the outset can only be *personal*. His own relationship to the experiential core intimated to him even by so close a spiritual master as Ibn ‘Arabī certainly conveys its own story of single-minded

devotion, fulfilment, but also of frustrated hopes; for a teacher's experience is sensibly different from that of which he, the pupil, eventually became a direct witness. Although 'Abd al-Rahmān Jāmī has remarked that Ibn 'Arabī's true intentions regarding (what later became known as) "*wahdat al-wujūd*" simply could not be discerned in any manner conforming to both reason (*aql*) and religious law (*shari'ah*) without a proper study of Sadr al-Dīn's works (JNU 556), Qūnavī's own appraisal of his relationship to Ibn 'Arabī is more nuanced. The reason was that he was careful to emphasize *personal* witness, as opposed to the interpretation of *others'* experience, no matter what their station. Al-Munāwī (1265-1350 CE), for example, quotes him as saying that his teacher had striven to lead him to ever greater heights, so as to attain in his lifetime the level at which God (*al-Haqq*) manifests Himself through flashes of manifestation (*al-tajalliyāt al-barqīyah*) to every seeker, but that he was unable to do so (NJK 222).

A manifestation of this sort is called a "flash" when a "direct witnessing of the essence" (*al-shuhūd al-dhāti*) resembles the light, speed and evanescence of a any ordinary flash or lightning (*al-barq*) (cf. Hakim *Mu'jam* 660-61). A "flash" is defined by Qāshānī as "the illumination appearing to a person which beckons and summons to the Presence of Proximity to the Lord [*hadrat al-qurb min al-rabb*] for a journey within God" (QIS 36). Ibn 'Arabī also refers to the deep tranquility (*sakīnah*) felt by the saintly "friends of God," the *awliyā'*, who take their repose in it. But this does not always occur to them, and so they can only take furtive glances at the manifestation, as if in a flash (Hakim *Mu'jam* 660-61). To return to our point about his relationship with his teacher, Qūnavī

recounts how after Ibn 'Arabī had passed away and he had already visited his grave,

I walked one summery day through an empty stretch in the Taurus. An easterly wind was stirring the blossoms. I gazed at them and reflected upon God's power, might and majesty (Exalted be He). The love of the Merciful filled me with such ardent passion that I laboured to part with created things. Then, the spirit of Shaykh Ibn 'Arabī was personified to me in the most splendid form [*fi ahsan sūrah*], as if he were a pure light. He called out [to me], "O ye who are perplexed, look at me! If God Sublime and Transcendent hath shown Himself to me in a flash of manifestation [*bil-tajallī al-barqī*] from the noble elevation of the essence, absent hast thou been therein from me by a mere glance of an eye." I agreed at once and, as if the Shaykh al-Akbar [i.e. Ibn 'Arabī] had been standing there [bodily] before my eyes, he greeted me with the salutations of reunion after a parting, and embraced me affectionately, saying: "Praise be to God who the veil hath lifted and who bringeth those dear unto each other into reunion. No goal, effort or salvation hath been disaffirmed." (NJK 222)

So central and so controversial has the relation of expression to direct experience been to Islamic tradition that it became the touchstone for Massignon's radical distinction between the *earlier* mystical figures, whom he claimed were more solidly rooted in the Qur'ān and holy scriptures than their successors; and the *later*, more intellectually-refined schools. Massignon has been dealt with by other writers. But it might be well to consider briefly some of his observations. There is no question that his writings exude a political tendentiousness that makes it quite difficult at times to separate the social militant from his thesis. Because of his stature in Islamology, this alone should not, however, automatically disqualify him from consideration in our study of technical language and experience in the writings of Qūnāvī. His real achievement, I think, is a clear-sighted grasp of "grammar" as the motor force behind the specialization of terms and concepts central to Islamic mysticism. To illustrate, he names several expressions – *haqīqah* (as opposed to *majāz*, *maqāh*), *shāhid* (opp. *mithāl*), *jam'* (opp. *fārq*), *ma'rīfah* (opp. *nakirah*), *hāl*, *'illah*, *khāfi* (opp. *jāhī*), *tajallī*, *iqti'rān*, *mulhaq*, *ishārah*. Unfortunately, aside

from intermittent remarks and two brief but important papers (Massignon ReStPr, PhOrAl), he never really probed very deeply into this phenomenon. Nor did he properly gauge, I think, the works of the later mystics, for whom Arabic philology was of undiminished, if not higher, importance. Instead, he insisted on seeing in practically every later advancement, whether in grammar or in philosophy, only the bedraggled coat of “Semitic” tradition heavily sullied by Greek pagan influences. And the culprits, he claims in the militant spirit of Ibn Taymiyyah, were clearly visible:

C'est à l'école d'Ibn 'Arabî qu'on doit le divorce entre la discipline ascétique (rituelle et morale) – et la théologie mystique, – l'élaboration d'un vocabulaire théorique subtil, visant des hiérarchies gnostiques incontrôlables, des cosmogonies et d'idéogénies invérifiables (Farghâni, Jîli, Kawrâni). (Massignon EOL 80)

Creation, he argues, is represented by this school as something emanating from God according to “une évolution cosmogonique en cinq temps [in clear reference to Qûnâvî's ‘five presences’] corrélative d'une explicitation rationnelle symétrique de la science divine; et quant à l'union mystique, c'est par un mouvement inverse d'involution idéale en cinq temps, que, totalisant la création entière dans notre pensée, nous ‘redevons’ Dieu” (Massignon EOL 79-80). He declaims against this “vocabulaire syncrétiste hellénistique” for failing to rely on “l'analyse expérimentale et l'introspection de la pratique cultuelle...” (Massignon EOL 80). For the technical terms culled by the mystics from the natural lexical variety offered by the Arabic language are not merely “des images décalqués d'objets sensibles, ou des schémas de charpente des concepts rationnels”; above all, they must *allude* to spiritual realities, to “sanctifying virtues” which persistent practice alone allows one to discover, taste and acquire gradually (Massignon EOL 117).

In the followers of Ibn 'Arabī he saw only the mentality of social passiveness, no different in his mind than turn-of-century Parisian Bohemianism, with its sorry *fumerie* collection of recumbent dreamers spinning out their theories in maudlin obliviousness of social consequences. In his opinion,

Notre seul moyen de contrôler la réalité visée par les expérimentations des mystiques musulmans, c'est d'examiner leurs conséquences sociales: la valeur, l'efficacité de leur règle de vie pour la guérison du corps social. (Massignon EOL 17)

Most of all, one need not agree with his call for social activism to see that mystical tradition did indeed place a high premium on a more fecund use of linguistic devices than our ordinary, run-of-the-mill "visionaries" were apt to do. The history of every language, he states, is dictated by the desire to express realities without becoming mired in the "unproductive commerce of formulae and instruments" (Massignon ReStPr 3). But what he means to say is *socially* unproductive commerce. And, while this may be, the problem one then has to face with this sort of issue is, without belabouring the point, how to temper our own modern concept of the "social" with what *communitarian* sense of obligation may have existed and which one understandably may have some difficulty perhaps in clearly making out in the vast corpus of medieval literature. But to deny it to a whole movement in mysticism is, I think, somewhat drastic. In response, then, I would say that Massignon's "social consciousness" normally took the form of a more concrete and pregnant sense of duty to *instruct*. This was as true of philosophy in Plato's time as it was in Fārābī's; the latter all but enshrined it as the supreme, inalienable function of the beholder of religious truth, if his knowledge be truth. One may certainly reserve the right to dispute the philosopher's ability to render this truth, one may decry

the social sterility of his choice of language, but not his intent – as far as the documentary evidence will tell.

This being the common thread linking the “religious philosophy” of *falsafah*, mystical utterances and religious law, it is more appropriate perhaps to take note of the particularities of the Islamic critique of the Hellenic way of instructing or doing philosophy – which it was the Ibn ‘Arabī school’s special calling to carry out. It is against this intellectual backdrop that Massignon’s valuation of grammar, certainly the importance assigned to *īrāb* (“inflection”), which we will analyze later in this thesis, can be fully appreciated:

Les sarfiyyūn ont établi une connexion entre les trois fonctions de la déclinaison (le cas), de la conjugaison de l’inaccompli (indicatif, subjonctif, conditionnel), et de la syntaxe des propositions (énonçant un simple récit; appréciant des états d’âme; établissant un rapport d’annexion); et ils les ont unies en trois Fonctions fondamentales d’une seule ordination de la langue arabe, l’*īrāb*, littéralement ‘la clarification (désinentielle).’ Ils les ont appelées *raf*, *nasb*, *ḡarr*, les organes phonétiques de ces trois fonctions étant les trois vocalisations désinentielles: U, A, I (en arabe: *damma*, *kasra*, *fatha*). Prononcées pour le subjonctif et l’inaccompli, sous-entendues pour la proposition. (Massignon ReStPr 11-2)

The importance of the Arabic language for the Islamic critique of philosophy cannot be overestimated, and Massignon’s is not the only study to emphasize it. More recently, Frank’s work on early *kalām* has shed some light on how language gave decisive shape to the vocabulary first used by those who discoursed systematically on problems relating to correct beliefs about God and the Divine message. Frank, however, tends to minimize the impact of scriptural exegesis on their responses to dialectical issues at this formative stage. Exegetical science had its own basin of conflict which the more specialized grammarians perhaps waded into only at the risk of appearing too dogmatic

or reductionist within their own field (Frank BTA 9-10). He, like Massignon, relies almost exclusively on the period up to the eleventh century. Once again, however, Massignon's observations on the grammar of the mystics ironically seem best borne out by those figures whom he placed beyond the pale of that genuine mystical consciousness he claimed to have found in early mysticism and only as late as Hallāj (albeit in "revivalist" form).

The aspect that Massignon had almost completely neglected had to do with the *pedagogical* aims just mentioned of later masters like Qūnāvī, for example, who makes a point of avowing these aims from the very start of his famous introduction to *Ijāz al-bayān*. Theirs was a necessary chore – irksome perhaps when the impersonal theoretical desiccation needed for the task was measured against the fullness of personal illumination that was almost their staple – but certainly religiously binding. The duty to instruct others was intensely felt; that is how they became mystical *thinkers*. Such a task, of course, may be differently construed at every age; *their* felt burden was to undertake the arduous and often tentative "theoretical" probings that they did in order to help both the novice and the practised individual merely to the appropriate spiritual expectations, with barely even a guarded assurance of success. Just the language they employed is a good index of the historical progression achieved from a point which, in Massignon's view, had marked the pristine glimmerings of spiritual life in Islam. But we shall have to await Qūnāvī's canny interjection in the debate over the place of grammatical exegesis and language before passing judgement.

This study is very much concerned with the manner in which traditional philosophical method based on demonstrative science is reaffirmed *and* then developed further in the direction of an exegetical grammar, held up as the language of experience. From this perspective, the fairer question to ask perhaps is not whether the original intent of the earliest mystics in Islam remained the same but how it had to transform itself and to deepen its roots in the face of the tumultuous intellectual upheavals that led up to the thirteenth century. The obligation to instruct, to explain the general intricacies of *another* person's spiritual peregrinations – even though there is no substitute for the direct, *personal* experience – encouraged the adoption of a disciplinary division aimed at accommodating authoritative transmission and reception at any given level of noetic realization on a model closely resembling that of philosophy, though with some significant differences. Such a division did not seek to override, in the particular case of theological science, the central fact and semantic unity of Divine Speech that Massignon so rightly emphasized; on the contrary, it reaffirmed it.

And yet, upon closer examination, one may not be saying very much here that the Greek philosophers did not themselves theoretically adhere to. It is really in its *instructiveness* or the efficacy of its teachings about Divine Speech – or lack thereof – that technical reflection, against which Ibn Taymiyyah's petulance was directed, has usually been seen to be most seriously fettered. Ibn Taymiyyah dismissed wholesale the mystics' claims to all higher modes of knowledge, in preference to an unassumingly simple, fideistic cognition which he took for what was originally intended by revealed scripture

and correctly understood only by the *salaf*. But while his views reflected a powerful personal insight into the nature and failings of human reasoning, his “empirical scepticism,” noted by Dr. al-Nashshār (Nash MMI 147), does not seem to differ in form from Qūnavī’s “spiritual empiricism” (as one might call it and which we will have occasion to examine), at least with regard to his position on man’s capacity to know the realities of things by sole recourse to intellectual reasoning. On this score, al-Nashshār distinguishes Ibn Taymiyyah’s “destructive” from his “constructive” approach; the constructive being his insistence on the need to reconcile the “plainness of what is intelligible [*al-ma’qūl*]” with the “plainness of textually-transmitted authority [*al-manqūl*]” (Nash MMI 148). Ibn Taymiyyah felt that technical meanings did not square with man’s God-given nature (*fitrat Allāh*) (TMS III 68); the technical impulse which he saw behind every *amr istilāhi*, allegedly introduced by Greek logic, had to be expunged altogether from the field of religious inquiry. It was inconsistent with the notion of *‘aql*, taken in its primitive Arabic sense rather than that of the philosophers and the mystics. Against the latter he fulminated for distorting *‘aql*’s Qur’ānic meaning in favour of the Greek (TFB 78-9). His scepticism, for this reason, appears to be much more radical than that of Qūnavī’s, for he even denies the objects of knowledge, the “*realities of things*,” which his opponents at least uniformly reaffirmed through other, more creative means. In spite of their sceptical arguments on the intellectual faculties, neither Qūnavī nor Ibn Sīnā went that far.

What we find in the mystical reflections of an Ibn ‘Arabī or a Qūnavī instead are

encoded utterances embodying an *asymmetrical* division – the one hinted at just before – between two basic components of instructive knowledge. Massignon in my opinion was completely off the mark when he referred to their rationally-contrived “symmetry.” Philosophically, these two components are known as the “subject” (*mawdū*) and the “object of inquiry” (*matlūb*); in religious dialectics and the Islamic sciences generally as “root” (*asl*) and “branch” (*far*). Therefore, the idea, in Qūnāvī’s view, is not merely to posit the “root” but to acquire knowledge of it and to establish the modalities of this knowledge. A simple, unreflective cognizance of religious fundamentals (insofar as they are given) in the manner advocated by Ibn Taymiyyah is still knowledge, and nothing in the world can extricate it from the mundane influences that normally impinge upon human comprehension.

In the “theological science” envisioned by Ibn Sīnā, the central question posed is that of “existence.” Ideally, its syllogistical division consists of the indemonstrable premises, on the one side, and the conclusion, on the other. Indemonstrables are variously given (through the senses, imagination, intellect, etc.); and “theology,” as conceived by Ibn Sīnā, collects under its own jurisdiction all the pregivens – which allows it to act as the ground of all other sciences. Now, Ibn Sīnā saw existence as something which required more than just a natural awareness of things. Qūnāvī admits in *al-Nafahāt al-itābiyyah* that in this rather banal sense it may be claimed that the awareness of existence is posited by way of intuition (*al-wādī al-badīhī*) as the “first cognizance,” for which there is no demonstrable proof (*burhān*) or true definition (*ta’rīf*) and which has merely an indistinct

unity (NI A:29a-b; B:15a). But this is not the real issue, he insists; the difficulty arises with the “second cognizance” (*al-mārifah al-thāniyah*), namely, knowledge of the “reality distinguishable in itself from other realities” (*haqīqatihī al-mutamayyizah bi-dhātihā ‘an ghayrihā*) (NI A:29b; B:15b). The goal of true knowledge is “knowledge of the realities of things,” which one may either deny for man, on the grounds that his natural faculties are imperfect, or affirm, at the risk of according him absolute knowledge. This is the classical dilemma that had preoccupied Qūnāvī. The first cognizance consists of the “awareness of existence” (*ibsās bil-wujūd*) and the perception of its “thingness” (*idrāk shay’iyyatihī*). And the demarcation between what the indistinct thingness and what singular reality tell us corresponds to the theological division of “subject” and “object of inquiry,” what is given and what is sought by way of knowledge. The realities, in the plural, are the branches (*al-musammāt furū’an*), the manifold qualities of the Essence, or *kayfiyyāt dhātiyyah mutaddidah* (NI A:33b-34a; B:17a).

But there is the more cryptic point of speculative reason that that which is sought is simply the original subject, revealed. This imposes certain limiting conditions upon knowledge of the thing which are absolutely central to Qūnāvī’s Introduction to *I’jāz al-bayān*. The Introduction, amounting almost to a separate disquisition, will be analyzed in detail in the second part of this study. The *shay’* (“thing”) having been given as the subject, just like *wujūd* (“existent”), therefore the “cause of its knowledge [*sabab al-ilm bil-shay’*] is the predominance of that precept by which there is unity with the [thing] known [*huwa ghalabat būkum mā bihi al-ittibād mā a al-mālikūn*], whatever it may be” (NI A:21a;

B:11b). This “unity” between knower and known is what any claim to a knowledge of the reality must rest upon; but it is a unity which says that we know the reality in the way that *it* reveals itself to another reality, that of the knower, and is not a simple identity of two entities. In the knower’s radical otherness this unity is utterly impossible.

So how can man, in his finitude and imperfection, come to know not only the “realities of things” but God, his Creator? There is a way in which unity may become feasible through the notion of the consonance of predominant attributes between the two realities. This is possible by virtue of “pre-existing knowledge.” In philosophy, the didactic process of discovery is tersely represented as a procession from what is known to what is unknown. Every “theological science” – from Aristotle’s to Ibn Sīnā’s to Qūnāvī’s without exception – no matter how formal, and however spiritually meager or mellifluous its utterances, accepts this rudimentary principle.⁷ Qūnāvī, however, takes pains to describe the passage, or supersession (*ta’addī*), that occurs with the knowledge of the thing as a unique reality by way of a special “unity” through consonance – that is, as we find out, knowledge of it in the form of an object of inquiry or “branch” (*far*) (NI A:22b; B:12a). But there is more to it than meets the eye. It is not the kind of passage that moves mechanically from one point to the other. The possibility of transmutation, at some given level of commonality between two distinct realities (the knower and the known), is opened up through this consonance, or *munāsabah*.

PROBLEM AND CHAPTER SUMMARY

- i. *The problem of knowledge.* From the above remarks, the task of any theory of knowledge

would appear to consist in envisioning noetic perfectibility without spoiling the authenticity of the root. These two poles of “instructive science,” as we shall henceforth call it, the root and the branch, are key to what we shall basically be seeking to understand in this thesis: namely, Qūnāvī’s passage from demonstrative science based on strictly logical principles of reasoning to “exegetical grammar,” by which alone the highest and “noblest science” can retain its rootedness in Divine Speech (as, in fact, intended by Qūnāvī and Ibn Sīnā alike). The success of such a passage toward a more identifiably mystical outlook is really contingent upon the resolution of the following dilemma found in as old a doctrine as Aristotle’s (or Plato’s, for that matter). If knowledge be more than just a fragment of information, or even a falsehood, one is tempted to apply *a fortiori*, rather unwittingly, the most stringent possible standard of knowledge, according to which it must be decided whether man is to be declared capable or utterly incapable of wisdom.

Our discussion will begin with this central problem by presenting its many facets and all the various devices and tropes which Qūnāvī employs in order to account for it. The whole matter concerning the relation between Divine and human knowledge is summed up in a passage from Ibn Sīnā’s *Kitāb al-ta’līqāt* that is not very widely known to modern students of Islamic thought, but which is faithfully quoted in Qūnāvī’s correspondence with Nasīr al-Dīn Tūsī and his other works. There, he states that man is incapable of apprehending the *realities of things* through his limited faculties alone. Put in its proper context, such putative support for the second option just mentioned – that human beings

have no access to wisdom – in the end amounted to little more than an insistence that more than just a computation of facultative perceptions is needed before the true apprehension of a thing can be grasped. Moreover, neither Qūnāvī nor anyone else in his circle claims to be substituting the technical rendition for the noetic experience by way of correspondence – again, as Massignon, inspired by Ibn Taymiyyah, has charged. What he does say is that there is no radical separation between any given root experience and the reflection upon it. Relative to the root, “reflection” is but another, albeit lower “spiritual state” with a substantive claim of its own. More than that, a number of vantage points and distances from the supreme “root” to the one “witnessing” the “realities” may be named. These realities are intertwined in such a way as to allow for a double movement – ascent and descent – of manifestation and perfection. But the source of the “movement” is always Divine hiddenness, where God alone is said to know Himself in a knowledge that lies athwart what ordinary cognition warrants through the ascription of knowledge to man. The twin noetic perfection taking place here – the “essential individualities,” or *ājān*, are perfected by being existentiated, and minds are *perfected* through their reception of Divine light – finds its true focal point in what God knows of Himself through the creature. In other words, the Essence as it is in itself lies concealed in absolute hiddenness and reveals itself only qua something that is both itself and another. Qūnāvī describes knowledge as both an “attribute” of God and *mutatis mutandis* an “attribute-for-the-other,” by which He knows Himself and we know Him by way of a consonantal transmutation of attribute. We shall try to understand the

complicated course of the one from the other.

ii. *The chapters of the thesis.* Chapter One is intended to familiarize the reader with Aristotle's inquiry into the nature of knowledge as instruction. Some of the most central problems there concern the different forms of reasoning, or different forms of representing knowledge syllogistically. This methodological aspect needs to be discussed at length in connection with both Aristotle and Ibn Sīnā, in view of Qūnāvī's theoretical interests, the prominence of logic in his thought and his general acquaintance with Aristotle.

More broadly, Part One of this thesis will elaborate the wider problems associated with Divine vs. human wisdom; the search for a measure of knowledge; fact vs. reasoned fact; knowledge of the cause; commensuration and consonance; knowledge of the particular and the universal, etc. This will spare us much effort in trying to contrast what is indigenous and properly "mystical" in those topics Qūnāvī discusses which tend to hark back to Aristotle. Although ancient *themes* (as opposed to full-fledged *doctrines*) recur continually, even under vastly different circumstances, in the thirteenth century, I do not mean to suggest that they do so as the isolated relics of a superannuated Aristotle or Plato. There is no denying that Aristotle rarely figured among the direct sources utilized in this period; the commentary tradition of late antiquity made sure of that. But this hardly proves that, at some level, a basal affinity of theme – and not just mechanical borrowings – did not also exist with the most typical medieval expressions of mysticism.

Our object in this chapter is to come to grips with the central features of Aristotle's epistemology, found especially in the *Metaphysics* and the *Posterior Analytics*, not through their lines of transmission but directly at the source. This should enable us to measure more accurately, first, the significance of Ibn Sīnā's critique of reason and its implications for the problem of knowing the "realities of things"; and, second, Qūnāvī's transformation of this critique into something more closely expressing, in the theoretical parlance of his school, the highest aspirations of mystical tradition.

Ibn Sīnā's critical distance in the *Taḥqīqāt* from Peripatetic philosophy already points to a different center of gravity for "rational" thought in Islam than the one we are perhaps conditioned to recognize as the very antithesis of religiously-sanctioned truth. It may be well to note at this stage that both Ibn Sīnā and Aristotle concur in the ultimate humility of the rational investigator before Divine wisdom. And their respective justifications are not the exiguous reasons one would normally impute to religious fideism. Upon setting out to uncover the hidden causes of things, the seeker of knowledge faces perplexing difficulties even at the level of immediate sensory perception. Demonstrative knowledge might be predicated on the data gathered through observation, or intuitively grasped; but its instructiveness depends on how well it can bridge the categorical abyss separating what is thereby "known" from "what is sought." This means any procurable knowledge is always at some remove from the root experience of which it is a rendition. It has instructive value only on account of its link with the pre-given element of knowledge, and because the object grasped through the cause has somehow

been demonstrated. There is a “fact,” pre-given in the form of premises, on the one hand, and a “reasoned fact,” which Ibn Sīnā called the object of inquiry, *matlub* (Lat. *quaesitum*), commensurate to any given discipline. The question to be asked in this and the next chapter is: If these two sides of the equation are so closely interdependent, and the pre-given “fact” is not in dispute, what then is the status of the “reasoned fact” with respect to the problem initially posed in this chapter? In other words, can one say it is in any sense identical to God’s knowledge? Or must it always be radically different – perhaps merely “rational”?

What we learn from Aristotle and Ibn Sīnā, briefly, is that any effected judgement has a *precept* which is distinctly different from that of the integral knowledge of the root subject. But for the noetic content of the root it purports instructively to present, the precept in fact would never be that of a judgement of anything. Rather, it would be a purely methodological device, which does not bring us closer to plumbing the difficult question of our relationship to God’s knowledge or wisdom. Balancing method with content seems therefore indispensable, and there are many ways of doing it. In the following chapters, we will see how Qūnāvī takes us from his usually parsimonious presentation of elementary demonstration and logic, usually given in his major writings, to the outermost goal of *theological* science. The ambiguity of the term *‘ilm itābi*, closely reflecting that of the concept of knowledge itself, allows him to envisage a science that serves as the *theoretical* point of intersection between Divine and human knowledge, the place where the knowledge attributes, as we said earlier, are “exchanged.” Interestingly,

the “ambiguity” tends to safeguard, on the one hand, the instrumental value of theology, since it has a *reflective* function it must discharge with respect to its content; and, on the other, the authenticity of the knowledge it purports to convey. This way the two aspects, method and content, remain connected. Theoretical reflection, however much diluted in content, must possess a portion of that knowledge one seeks through its instrumentality to interpret, if it is to count as a judgment of anything. Essentially, Qūnavī sees a hierarchy of levels each at some distance relative both to the next and to an original source.

As we shall not be dealing fully with Ibn Sīnā’s position on the relationship between Divine and human knowledge, our treatment of his ideas in the second part of the chapter and thereafter in this thesis, will be circumscribed by what Qūnavī himself has selected from his doctrine. Qūnavī’s most explicit reference in both his correspondence with Tūsī and in his *Ijāz al-bayān* is to Ibn Sīnā’s posthumous *Kitāb al-Ta’līqāt*. But this is not an entirely original work; it incorporates Fārābī’s treatise with the same title.⁸ Ibn Sīnā maintained there that the epistemic movement from a pre-given knowledge toward that which is unknown, one of two types of “perfection,” is granted by God as “wisdom,” which, however, human beings do not need in the same way they do their created natures, the “first perfection.” In order to attain perfect knowledge, however, human perception must be freed of all “material” – that is, facultative – attachments, thereby attaining the state of immateriality befitting the “spirit.” This provides an escape from a method-content dilemma just alluded to,⁹ allowing the instrumental aspect of

intellec¹tion to survive in translucent form as immaterial spirit. So effective is the solution that, in respect of immateriality alone, it might even be conjectured that no difference at all exists between God's and the spirit's knowledge. Ibn Sīnā, though, does not opt for simple identification, even here. Instead, analogical relationships are pressed into service. And they come into full view in Qūnāvī's Introduction. An interesting complex of noetic relations, which Qūnāvī essentially adopts and enriches in his works, will thus be considered in the last portion of this chapter. The problem of God's knowledge of particulars, too, will be taken up briefly, since if there is to be knowledge it must be resolved as something that is directly witnessed, or particularized, as well as something that is universal. This is the very nature of the process going from the known to the unknown; and the reader might want, by the end of this study, to glance back at this theme from the different angle worked out by Qūnāvī.

In the second chapter, we will investigate why man is deemed incapable of knowing by himself the "realities of things." The epistemic distinction between pre-given knowledge and the object of inquiry seems to gainsay this by presupposing that knowledge can be obtained. In fact, neither Ibn Sīnā nor Qūnāvī deny the *realities* of things, but only their knowledge through the external senses and the rest of man's limited faculties. The parallels with classical Scepticism evident in this approach – especially Qūnāvī's "sceptical" contentions in the Introduction to *Ijāz al-bayān* – will be briefly discussed. We shall then go on to see how this scepticism may still be accommodated within the scientific framework by which Ibn Sīnā purports to show that the knower, in

moving from what is known to what is unknown, does so from the subject to the object of inquiry. Qūnavī argues, however, that theological science requires a special “scale,” or method, even if knowledge of God can never really fall within the scope of any measure. And the division between subject and object of inquiry provides the key to this scale by first specifying the noetic priority that must obtain for there to be, in the second place, a synthetic knowledge of God. In this connection, Qūnavī refers to that encompassing “form” whose necessary internal order, or *tartib*, takes us from the known to what is unknown, where the subject is given as “thing” (precisely the word figuring in Ibn Sīnā’s declaration concerning the realities of things). “Thingness” (*shay’iyah*) itself is dissolvable into the basic building blocks of the language that expresses the knowledge of God, and in the face of which one says – as in the end one must – that it is God who describes Himself. Within God’s own knowledge, there is an interior and an exterior aspect of knowledge expressible as an act of writing. There, letters, words, *ayāt*, *suwar* and *kutub* exhibit various types of unity and meaning, anteriority and posteriority, in relation to one another. Qūnavī employs three nodal concepts, as “philosophical” understanding of the knowledge of God modulates into a “mystical” conception: form, perfection and existentiation.

Chapter Three examines the correspondence between Qūnavī and Nasīr al-Dīn Tūsī, where Ibn Sīnā’s statement on man’s incapacity to know the realities of things is quoted in full. We shall begin by looking more closely at the nature of philosophical knowledge of God, that is, knowledge of the Reality, in the singular. The dispute centers on three

notions – quiddity, reality and Necessary Existence – which are used in talking about God. The polarity between “reality” and “quiddity,” in particular, transpires as something more consequential than just a difference in epistemic stress with respect to the referent, although this is a point he will also make. His discussion marks a critical turning point within our knowledge of God, and an emphasis away from God’s Reality, ineffable in itself, towards a knowledge of what God’s knowledge must formally subsume with respect to *other* realities. God’s knowledge of Himself cannot be identified with His knowledge of other things; and yet the connection survives by little more than that knowledge of other things must ultimately be resolved as a knowledge of Himself, and no other. The questions raised here are preliminary, one of the aims of this chapter being to see how the instructive knowledge of God fares as something quintessentially distinguishable by its discursive distance from the contents revealed in holy scripture. Qūnāvī even proposes a classification of all the efforts at scriptural interpretation within a framework that comes closest to being an historical discussion, certainly an historically pertinent one. Within this framework, the rational method is viewed as flatly contradicting the literal side of revealed truth when the impulse to abstraction is given free rein, untrammelled by any regard for what is *concretely* and immediately given, whether sensory or intelligible. Following such a path to its logical conclusion would only lead to an impossible dilemma. The Aristotelian rule itself that some things cannot be demonstrated, but need to be posited and submitted beforehand, would be broken.

Based on this understanding, Chapter Four will examine what it truly means to know the realities of things, only this time we will focus mainly on Qūnavī's arguments as presented in *I'jāz al-bayān*. In fact, this chapter begins Part II, where the analysis of the Introduction to this important work will be carried out in earnest. The “realities” which we said cannot be known through naturally endowed faculties will be more fully analyzed. Since their ontic value is unaffected by any “sceptical” verdict, Qūnavī has to explain what it means to affirm and to know them. He does so by reference to the consonantal relationships that need from the beginning to obtain between the knower, taken in a derivative sense, and his object of knowledge. It is because of this basic “consonance” that every other analogical relation can be recapitulated in the “Five Presences,” the methodological representation which Massignon was obliquely referring to in his criticism. This being its overall orientation, the chapter will then consider two further aspects bearing on the question of knowledge: the relationality of *ulūhiyyah* (“Divinity”) and the exclusivity of *ahadiyyah* (“singular oneness”). Qūnavī's chief goal is to establish an operative framework within which to analyze something which, by his and Ibn Sīnā's admission, is refractory to the mechanical operations of the mind. The interplay between the relational poise of Divine manifestation and the singularity of its source is of decisive importance. It is only once the act of worship performed toward the Divine is confirmed in the relation of *ulūhiyyah* that God's Succour is granted and that the particular features of consonance emerge. The rest of the chapter will give a basic outline of these features with respect to manifestation and the recipient of manifestation.

For example, when the essence manifests itself it must be stipulated that it does so as a thing manifested to something else serving as its locus of manifestation, although both are joined at some *level*, without implying identity therefore in every sense. The essence can only be manifested by being coloured by the locus. And this is how they are said to be commensurate. Without commensuration, there can be no manifestation; but without a “level of similitudes” (*martabah al-mudāḥat*),¹⁰ as man is described in the Introduction in effect as being, there is no receptivity. The “station of man,” not only as a perfect recipient of Divine manifestation but as an isthmus, or *barzakh* (i.e. a state of “betweenness”), is therefore briefly discussed before proceeding to a more detailed analysis of the concept of “manifestation.” In sum, the manifold realities need to be apprehended in what philosophical tradition has been named “universality” and which Qūnāvī specifies as the comprehensive *unitary* attribute associated with the level occupied by man as the isthmus.

In the fifth chapter, we reach Qūnāvī’s consideration of the metaphor of light, popular among many of his predecessors. His aim is to clarify further the nature of “manifestation” as it relates to the problem of knowledge. Knowledge does not lend itself easily to straightforward interpretation, and even less to a single, regular definition. In fact, he begins by asking what kind of definition can possibly translate the “secret” of knowledge. The process of “instruction” itself is likened to the “illumination” of light, since light cannot be perceived in its full purity. This way of posing the issue effectively encapsulates the type of problem faced by Aristotle when comes the time to show how

demonstration differed from definition (a problem to be briefly examined in the first chapter). But the same dilemma is present in the case of singular oneness relative to its exteriorization, which indicates not unadulterated purity but what Qūnavī will call “specification” (*taṣṣayyun*). This specification occurs, however, both in the exteriorized aspect of light and its interior manifestation in God’s knowledge. The locus of manifestation or light issuing from hiddenness signals the first emergence of epistemic “forms” – philosophical for the letters, words, etc. that make for the disclosure of knowledge. From this angle, forms are the epistemic counterparts of the realities, which are hence postulated as ontic beings. All these issues stand in close relation to each other, but the central question posed here remains knowledge, since it is God’s knowledge of Himself that lies at the core of all theoretical reflection. Taken in all its dimensions, indeed, Divine manifestation exhibits complex relations which are more fully summarized by the five presences.

We will conclude by looking at Qūnavī’s characterization of the loci of manifestation as the “devices of conveyance” of intangible meanings. He devotes some space to the manner of communicating and the different senses in which the integrity of speech is either maintained or lost with the method of transmission used. The lippidity or opaqueness of the “devices” (or parts) of speech and, hence, the loci of manifestation, are factors which effectively determine the result. With knowledge (or light) and our acquaintance with it established through the intermediary of the device and locus (whether the definition or something else), Qūnavī next analyzes speech as the Willed

Act of God, which foreshadows the actual existentiation of the “essential individualities” (*āyān*) subsisting pre-eternally in His knowledge.

In the next chapter, accordingly, we discuss the *intention* of the speaker qua both *kalām* (roughly “speech” or “utterance”) and *qawl* (“word,” as in the Qur’ānic “Be!” [*kun!*]). The purposiveness of speech is expressed through the organization and arrangement of the elements of communicated speech, whether spoken or written. These, of course, are the devices of conveyance. For this, we shall examine various philological concepts that Qūnāvī employs throughout his works. Thus, in the case of the Qur’ān, insofar as it is the purposeful speech of God to man, we encounter *nazm*, or “arrangement,” which the renowned philologist ‘Abd al-Qāhir Jurjānī (d. 472 AH/1078CE) is perhaps best noted for having elucidated in terms that, by and large, remained relatively stable for many centuries thereafter. A second concept is *ijtimād*, which we translate as “integrated conjunction”¹¹ in order to emphasize the organic cohesiveness so indispensable to proper speech transmission. This should clarify some of the more abstruse aspects of Qūnāvī’s approach to the problem of knowledge. The parallel drawn between Divine and human speech is maintained with remarkable consistency, to the point that every utterances, whatever its provenance, are classifiable according to its particular combination of noun, verb and particle. It is through his extended analysis of these parts of speech, in which “noun” and “verb” in Arabic nomenclature equally indicate “name” and “act,” that the main features of his method will finally begin to emerge. In all, he identifies six types of construction, each possessing its own value as a device conveying an inner meaning,

which ultimately is nothing but the reality manifested at a given level. Other terms besides *nas̄m* and *ijtimā* may be used – e.g. *tarkīb*, *imtizāj* – which give the same or similar effect, depending on the context. The most *syntactically* significant term borrowed from Arabic philology, however, is *indimām*, whose origins we will briefly describe. It denotes the reciprocal relationship or association among the parts of a phrase, or any utterance.

In all of this, Qūnavī is anxious to show how Divine manifestation occurs through a locus, which is then cast into the somewhat ambivalent role of the “reality manifested” and the sign pointing to that reality; although it has its own precept and reality. As a sign or, grammatically, a *badal*, (“permutative”; literally, “substitute”), the latter may stand for the root without being identified with it. Since linguistic expression, “exteriorization” and “manifestation” are all interchangeable in their final consequence with “form” and “figure,” he can distinguish various senses of “figuration” – “what is figured,” the “thing qua figured,” the “figure” itself, etc. – to demonstrate his point.

In Chapter Seven, we will clarify the internal relationships of the parts of speech also in terms of subordination, or *tabdīyah*, another key concept taken from Arabic philology. Both the parts of speech and the realities in their manifold existence are said to be subordinately related to each other in a manner whereby the predominant precept of the Reality known through them (and is their source) can maintain for this Reality its status as a *known* reality, not a reality as it might be in itself. These relations, as we see at the end of the sixth chapter, may be represented through form or “figuration.” In this chapter, the forms of words exhibit certain dynamic relations which are laid bare through

īrāb, or “inflection.” Inflectional endings generally give indication of the “exteriority” and “interiority” of a manifestation, as we will see in the case of *sukīm*. As far as the *letters* of a word are concerned, on the other hand, the level of the manifestation may be indicated either by points or by the lack of points. Again, while the symbolic representation requires a minimum number of recognizable details before it can have any value, the symbol has also to maintain its unity, in the manner of the original object symbolized whose predominant “precept” imparts meaning to the whole in the first place.

Chapter Eight deals with the fundamental assumption upon which what we call here the “analogical method,” expressing the particular character of the subordinate relations internal to a noetic manifestation, must rely if it is to retain its coherence as a method; and that is the permanent distinction, as far as method is concerned, between God and “what is other than God.” These are the two main ingredients of the analogy, which is in fact sustained by a third category, that of the “comprehensive secret” where a “commonality” between these two elements is found at the “station of the Breath of the Merciful.” Being the level of the isthmus and because of its “distributive” function, this category clearly is the hub of analogy in theological science. Getting back to the light metaphor, he describes its nature as being both perceptible (unlike “pure light”) and that through which there is perception (as light). Analogy, he tries to show here, is not one of simple comparability between two equal things, correlatives or even levels – e.g. the reality of the knower and that of the known. He has in mind a relation that holds

between the root and the branch. This tends to vindicate the manner of approach widely adopted by those exponents of theological science who articulate their theories through a theoretical vocabulary often contrasted with the logically valid but factitious reasoning of the *falsifab*. The relation between root and branch is carefully analyzed in preparation for his final synthesis, to be discussed in the last chapter.

Chapter Nine collects the main threads of his arguments presented so far in order to sketch the dynamic relation obtaining between the reality qua *root* of knowledge (“subject”) and the reality qua *known* object (“the object of inquiry”). In this chapter, Qūnāvī elucidates the notion of “relative hiddenness” as the true source of multiplicity, which includes that of a root- and a branch-knowledge. Prior to the whole division into root and branch, the only intelligible factor left is something that bears no relation at all to either side of this division, even by way of negation. This he calls the “separating agent” “safeguarding the distinction” and, therefore, itself given as something that accepts no further distinction. It is the ontic source of meaning, yet without being a reality which requires a locus of manifestation to which it has to point or name by way of subordinate relations, construction, etc. Furthermore, it is because of this agent that uniqueness is imparted to things and that one is able to affirm that “He who is exteriorized beholds Himself at the level of the *other*” – which is the final act of particularization we tried to bear in mind when God’s knowledge of the particulars was first discussed in Chapter One. In any case, knowledge for us always retains its relational character, there is no identity with God, for which Massignon remonstrated the later

mystics. Apprehension signifies a transmutation of God's attribute of knowledge into an attribute attached, through the isthmian intermediary, to the "what is other than He" part of the analogy. This allows us to know "things" (*ashyā*) both through the things themselves, as unique items, and through Him, insofar as they are His knowledge of things and – in a manner belonging only to God – His knowledge of Himself.

Finally, in the last section, we shall summarize the main findings of this study and the conclusions to be drawn.

THE SOURCES

i. *Ijāz al-bayān*. The most important of Sadr al-Dīn Qūnawī's works for our study is *Ijāz al-bayān*. While this is the title we have elected to use in the citations, the book is today known by different names, for example, *Tafsīr al-Fatīhah*, which is what it basically is: an exegesis of the opening *sūrah* of the Qur'ān. This is what Qūnawī usually calls it in his other works (e.g. *Kitāb al-fukūk*). However, he refers to it on occasion as *Ijāz al-bayān* (e.g. NI A:12a; B:6b). That these two words, *ijāz* and *bayān* figure in the title is indicative of the great place accorded to the problem, taken up early in the Introduction, of knowing the "realities of things," of whose existence one may well be convinced without the apodeictic certainty of a clinching proof, or *bayān*. It might be noted nonetheless that *Tafsīr al-Fatīhah* is how generations of Islamic authors have referred to the book.¹² *Ijāz al-bayān* is how we shall refer to this work.

I have relied mainly on both the Hyderābād-Deccan, which is excellent, and the 'Atā' editions. On balance, the two are very close, save for minor differences that do not

appreciably alter the meaning of the text. The 'Āmā' edition is based on two manuscripts and would normally qualify as the more reliable one. But even for the smallest of variations, I have generally inclined toward the second Hyderābād-Deccan edition (for the reader's benefit, most of these variations have been recorded in the pagenotes). Of the books coming off the modern press, I tend almost automatically to favour older editions, when the author is not the same, unless contrary evidence proves irresistible. For one thing, the number of typographical errors seems more under control and of lesser gravity; and current notions about a subject matter of the kind under study here are more likely to find their way into the editing process itself the closer the date of publication is to our own. In my view, these fears are borne out by a cursory comparison of the two editions.

The *Ijāz* consists of a preface, a very lengthy introduction (the one we shall be concerned with in this study) to his science of exegesis, and a threepart mystical interpretation of the *Fātiḥah* according to an accepted tripartite division. It was a relatively popular work in literate circles and interest scarcely waned into this century. This is reflected in the number of extant manuscripts to be found in libraries and collections all over the world and, in particular, those of Turkey. Unfortunately, Qūnāvī's own copious marginal notes have been omitted from both published versions. W.C. Chittick has drawn up a useful list of Istanbul manuscripts which either contain or lack these notes (Chittick FDP 125, n. 6). Of those manuscripts that contain them, Aya Sofya 402 appears to have been copied from another manuscript read before Qūnāvī

himself. After having rapidly examined the notes available in the manuscripts at my disposal, I have decided that economy dictated against their consideration in a study that had already surpassed the limits initially planned for it. The more so that Qūnawī's writing is as lucid as it is astonishingly consistent in its use of technical terms and expressions; if, that is, one is willing to follow closely the warp and woof of his presentation, which must surely mark a high point in the philosophical diction of the medieval period. The other, unpublished works to which I have had no access so far, may hold some promise in helping deepen our general grasp of this man's ideas.¹³ *Ijāz al-bayān* is an exceptional work, and probably his most important, as Chittick thinks (EU² SDQ). Its difficulty is such that many a medieval novice must have stumbled over its passages. Therefore, the notes may have been a helpful aid, considering the originally pedagogical designs professed by the author himself in the preface. Apart from this, I do not discount the possibility that they may bring to light some additional biographical information not already available. Finally, Chittick's brief search of his private library, which still survives in Konya, has revealed that several personal copies of books by other authors also contain his notes and comments written along their margins; these books include a copy, written in his own hand, of Suhravardī's *Hikmat al-išrāq* and a work called *Lubāb al-Ishārāt wal-tanbīhāt* by Muhammad b. Muhammad 'Umar al-Rāzī (Chittick LWT 51).

ii. *Other works by Qūnawī.* While this study is concentrated mainly on Qūnawī's lengthiest

and most important work, *Ijāz al-bayān*, other works of his were heavily consulted. These are:

1. *Al-Muṣawadāt* – the correspondence with Nasīr al-Dīn Tūsī.
 - (a) In *Briefwechsel Zwischen Sadr ud-dīn-i Qōnawī (gest. 673/1274) und Nasīr ud-dīn Tūsī (gest. 672/1274)*. Edited and commented by Gudrun Schubert. Based on seven manuscripts.
 - (b) • *Muṣīḥah*. Süleymaniye Kütüphanesi, Istanbul. Qūnawī's first treatise sent to Tūsī. Şehit Ali Paşa #1366, fols. 92-103.
 - Tūsī's response to the *Muṣīḥah*. Süleymaniye Kütüphanesi, Istanbul. Şehit Ali Paşa #1366, fols. 103-107.
2. *Kitāb al-Nafahāt al-ilāhiyyah*. An important and mature work on mystical themes containing brief biographical references; based on a manuscript left unfinished by Qūnawī and completed by his nephew Muhammad b. Ahmad b. Muhammad al-Qūnawī on 739 AH/1338-1339 CE). My own working edition is collated from two manuscripts entitled:
 - (a) *Kitāb al-Nafahāt al-rabbāniyyah*, dated 998 AH/1589-1590 CE. Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris. Ms. 1354. Last few pages executed by Nūr al-Dīn b. Mūsā b. Sharaf al-Dīn and Muhammad b. Mahfūz al-Sanhūrī; completed 16 Dhū al-Hijjah 1072/1 August 1662 (Egypt); 138 fol.; 200 x 140 mm or 20 x 14 cm; 19 lines per page.
 - (b) *Al-Nafahāt al-qudsiyyah*. Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, Vienna. Ms. 1913. 7½ x 5 inches.
3. *Kitāb al-nusūs*. Copied by Ibrāhīm al-Lārijānī, 1315. Lithographed, Tehran: Kitābkhānah-i Hāmidī, Jamādī II, 1395 AH/1354 AHS; fol. 274-300.
4. *Kitāb Miftāh al-ghayb*.
 - (a) In *La clef du monde suprasensible (Miftah al-Ghayb) de Sadroddīn Qonyawī (Ob. 672/1274)*. Two volumes. Thèse présentée à l'Université de Paris IV, Sorbonne, par Stéphane Ruspoli, 1978. Edited text based on four manuscripts.
 - (b) *Miftāh ghayb al-jamī wal-wujūd*. On margin of *Miftāh al-uns bayna al-maqūl wal-mashhūd fī sharḥ Miftāh ghayb al-jamī wal-wujūd*, a commentary by Shams al-Dīn

Muhammad al-Fanārī al-Hanafī (or Muhammad b. al-Hamzah b. Muhammad al-‘Uthmānī al-Raqab). Lithographed. Tehran: Ahmad Shīrāzī, 1323 AH/1905.

5. *Kitāb al-fukūk*. Ed. Muhammad Khwājavī. Tehran: Intishārāt-i Mawlā, 1371 AHS/1413 AH, pp. 177-316. This is his seminal commentary on Ibn ‘Arabī’s *Fusūs al-hikam*.
6. *Sharh al-asmā’ al-husnā*. Collated from:
 - (a) Şehit Ali Paşa #425. Süleymaniye Kütüphanesi, İstanbul; fol. 37-42; 140 x 82 mm.
 - (b) Aşır Ef. #431/2, dated 865 AH. Süleymaniye Kütüphanesi, İstanbul; fol. 21-113; 105 x 55 mm.
 - (c) Şehit Ali Paşa #1366/1. Süleymaniye Kütüphanesi, İstanbul; fol. 1-26; 186 x 126 mm.
7. *Kitāb ilā Abī al-Qāsim Yā Sīn al-Tilimsānī*. Kara Çelebi #345; fol. 175-184. Letter to ‘Afīf al-Dīn al-Tilimsānī (610-690 AH)
8. *Sharh al-Abdīn hadīthan*. Edited and annotated by Dr. Hasan Kāmil Yılmaz. İstanbul: Yıldızlar Matbaası, 1990. (Published as *Tasavvufî Hadîs Şerhleri ve Konevînin Kırk Hadîs Şerhi*.)

PREVIOUS STUDIES

The most recent treatment of Qūnawī to date is Gudrun Schubert’s thesis on the correspondence, listed above, entitled *Briefwechsel Zwischen Sadr ud-dīn-i Qūnawī (gest. 673/1274) und Naṣr ud-dīn Tūsī (gest. 672/1274)*; preceded by her brief University of Basel lecture, “Die Korrespondenz zwischen Sadr ud-dīn-i Qūnawī und Nasir ud-dīn-i Tūsī,” presented at *Perspectives de la recherche en Suisse sur le Moyen-Orient et l’Afrique du Nord, Société Suisse Moyen-Orient et Culture Islamique*, 1ère Conférence, Institut universitaire d’étude du développement (Geneva, 15-16 October 1992). The first, and only, full length book on his thought is Dr. Nihat Keklik’s *Sadreddīn Konevînin felsefesinde Allah-Kâinât ve İnsan*

(Istanbul, 1967). In English, W.C. Chittick has published the following on his thought and that of his followers: "Mysticism vs. Philosophy in Early Islamic History: The al-Tūsī, Qūnawī Correspondence," *Religious Studies* 17 (1981), pp. 87-104; "The Circle of Spiritual Ascent According to al-Qūnyavī," in *Neoplatonism and Islamic Thought*, Parviz Morewedge (ed.) (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1992); "Sadr al-Dīn Qūnawī on the Oneness of Being," *International Philosophical Quarterly* 21 (1981), pp. 171-84; "The Five Divine Presences: From al-Qūnyavī to Qaysarī," *The Muslim World* 72 (1982), pp. 107-28. One of the earliest entries on Sadr al-Dīn Qūnyavī and his works is found in Hilmi Ziya Ülken's *La Pensée de l'Islam*, trans. from the Turkish by Gauthier Dubois, Max Bilen and the author (Istanbul: Fakülteler Matbaası, 1963).

The important episodes of his life, but also some anecdotes relating to his and his father's relationship with Muhy al-Dīn Ibn 'Arabī, are to be found in Claude Addas's well-documented biography of Ibn 'Arabī, *Ibn 'Arabī ou La quête du Soufre Rouge* (Paris: Editions Gallimard, 1989). "Ibn 'Arabī," *EI²* III, pp. 707-11 and Stéphane Ruspoli's introduction, *La Clef du Monde Suprasensible (Miftah al-Ghayb)*, 2 vols. may also be profitably consulted. (Thesis presented at the University of Paris IV, Sorbonne, 1978). James Winston Morris gives some hints on Qūnawī's links with other personalities in "Ibn 'Arabī and His Interpreters," *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, beginning with vol. 106:3 (July-September 1986), pp. 539-51; especially "Part II: Influences and Interpretations" 106:4 (October-December 1986), pp. 733-56 and 107:1 (January-March 1987), pp. 101-19; while Ülken provides a few glimpses into the intellectual climate of

Asia Minor in “L’Ecole wudjudite et son influence dans la pensée turque,” *Wiener Zeitschrift für die Kunde des Morgenlandes* LXII (1969), pp. 193-203.

As for his bibliography, perhaps the earliest paper on his writings is Osman Ergin, “Sadreddin al-Qunawī ve eserleri,” *Sarkiyat Mecmuası* (1958). However, Ruspoli’s thesis combined with Chittick’s recent *EI*² article and his “The Last Will and Testament of Ibn ‘Arabī’s Foremost Disciple and Some Notes on its Author,” *Sophia Perennis* 41 (1978), pp. 43-58, should provide a sufficient description and introduction to Qūnawī’s work, its nature and range. For a listing of authentic and spurious works, see Brockelmann, *GAL* I, pp. 585-86; *GAL Supplementband* I, pp. 807-08. Finally, Suraiya Faroqhi, “Vakıf Administration in Sixteenth Century Konya, the Zâviye of Sadreddin-i Konevi,” *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* XVII (1974), pp. 145-72, looks at the waqf founded in his name, still standing in the city of Konya, from an interesting historical perspective. In Turkish, there is also A. Ateş, “Konya kütüphanelerinde bulunan bazı mühim yazmalar,” *Bulleten* 16 [1952], pp. 49-130; and İbrahim Hakkı Konyalı, *Âbideleri ve Kitabları ile Konya Tarihi* [Konya, 1964], pp. 487ff).

NOTES

1. His name is spelled here with a “v” instead of a “w.” There is no strict academic reason for this choice, only that its pronunciation in Turkish and Persian seems better to reflect his origins; although it must be remembered that Sadr al-Dīn is better known for his Arabic than for his Persian works (whose authenticity has proved far more difficult to establish – cf. Chittick LWT).
2. Probably the best biographical source on Majd al-Dīn is Ibn Bībī (cf. AAU). On his career, Claude Addas is an indispensable modern source. (Cf. Addas QSR 266-69, 277; her book has now been translated into English).
3. On this marriage, see DTM 25, 35, 38. Claude Addas summarizes the information on this marriage, as well as the subsequent relationship between the Ibn ‘Arabī and his new stepson (Addas QSR 270-71).
4. I am not referring to the political bureaucracy itself, where Persian and Turkish dialects were more probably used for communication. In the educational field, which the Saljuqs were instrumental in transforming, and learned tradition, Arabic remained the predominant language, regardless of ethnic origin.
5. The most recent source to consult for the city of Damascus, is Pouzet DVS. However, there are many other studies of varied quality available. One is Sourdel PrMaAl; for a list of schools and sponsors in the Ayyūbid period, see Shalaby HME 59-64.
6. Huart’s book is a translation of Shams al-Dīn Ahmad Aflākī’s *Manāqib al-ārifīn*.
7. Few philosophical tenets are as fundamental to intellectual tradition, both Greek and Islamic, than this. Its logical casting should not cloud the didactic background against which Aristotle discussion of the knowledge is usually set. The standard source is Aristotle’s opening statement in the *Posterior Analytics*: “All instruction given or received by way of argument proceeds from pre-existent knowledge” (*PaAn* 71a, l. 1). In the *Burhān*, Ibn Sīnā reformulated this idea in connection to the finer of aspects of intellectual apprenticeship (see the whole of Ch. 3); and the whole question continued to be understood in this fashion thereafter in Islamic and Christian tradition. In fact, the main problem to which it gives rise and with which we shall be preoccupied throughout this thesis is precisely that, stated too categorically, it would not account for illumination, mystical or otherwise. Qūnāvī’s concern was, therefore, to show precisely how it was that something somehow had to be known beforehand, which Ibn Sīnā of course recognized but expressed differently.
8. Jean Michot has constructed a table of comparison between the two books; see Michot TaCoTa 231-50.
9. That is, if we assume that the strictest formal method strives for perfect transparency, which precludes all content, or “matter,” then a dilemma arises.
10. I realize that my rendering of the term *martabah al-mudābiṭ* as “level of similarities” may not be very obvious at this point, but it will become apparent after we discuss the question of the Perfect Man later on in the thesis.

11. This expression will be discussed in great detail below.
12. That has not prevented its modern publishers from giving their own titles. The first and the second modern, revised editions, both put out by the same company, go by *Ijāz al-bayān fi ta'wīl umm al-Qur'ān*. They were published in Hyderābād-Deccan in 1310 AH and 23 Jamādī I, 1369 AH, some fifty-nine years later, respectively. The third edition by 'Abd al-Qāhir Ahmad al-'Atā' is called *al-Tafsīr al-Sūfi lil-Qur'ān*, although it is important to bear in mind that the work was never intended as an interpretation of the whole of the Qur'ān, but only the *Fātiḥah*; in Qūnavī's own words, it "contains the elucidation of the universals with respect to the secrets of the Mother of the Qur'ān" (NI A:12b; B:6b).
13. In short, I doubt if anything new of thematic significance will come out of the notes.

Part I

CHAPTER ONE

Scientific Discourse and the Problem of Knowledge

§ PRELIMINARY REMARKS

The problem of knowledge has a lengthy history, which we can hardly be expected to examine in all its dimensions or, indeed, beyond the contributions of a single epoch or author. Nevertheless, Sadr al-Dîn Qûnâvî affords us a revealing glimpse into the inner workings of speculative reason pondered at this critical juncture in medieval history. In this study, we will try to preserve some of the sequence of presentation and thematic context of his writings, rather than to fasten on the bare contours of each problem. Taken to extremes, the tendency to isolate specific aspects of an author's thought for analysis often leads to glib conclusions which, in my view, sometimes fail to convey the intellectual depth and range of the thinker himself, to say nothing of the proper dimensions of the subject. Success is better assured perhaps when the investigator's fidelity to the text before him is such as to enable him to deal with what may well be "timeless questions" but as near to the original thought as his method will possibly carry him.

This is not to say that the author under discussion and his wider tradition may not coalesce in spirit and, therefore, merit comparison with a larger cultural setting. I do not claim to be singularly talented or qualified in tracing out an author's "originality" – although if anyone had originality Qûnâvî surely did. Still, it is exceedingly difficult, I

think, to fathom another person's original contribution with so inconclusive a measure as radical and fundamental dissent from "tradition," any tradition, only to have to fall back on some disembodied shape of human reason as the final arbiter. Maybe a balance needs to be struck in our construal of these internal tensions, if only to escape the quandary of deciding who that arbiter ultimately is, as opposed to who he ought to be. The circular strategies often resulting from sole reliance on the abstract criteria of reasoned argument may be avoided through a closer contact with what is actually presented to us from the past, learning therefrom, and then perhaps spinning our theories — indeed, ones that might even teach us something about ourselves. And, conceivably, the exchange may operate in reverse, beginning with our own perspectival insights and perceptions as the starting point for deciphering the past. The point is that we ought never to give ourselves over entirely either to pure speculation or to evidential facts, with respect to the creative impulses or movement of the past — whether of an isolated thinker or an entire school.

The reader may note in this observation perhaps a slight hint of the medieval approach to rational investigation about to be studied in this thesis. What a thinker, at any rate, has made of the vast resources offered him by his native culture in order to express anything from the tritest to the subtlest experience imagined, but one fully his, is surely a signal achievement in itself, to be carefully recorded and studied; the more so that anything beyond that range seems to me to require a practically superhuman effort for proper balance. Yet both aspects involved — the individual personality and his milieu

— occupy the same space within which they exhibit themselves to us. As far as originality is concerned, one can at least note that intellectual dedication and pellucid style are seldom less important than the welter of ingenious neologisms that normally lie within the capacity of any common author — although the two sides may, under exceptional circumstances, go very well together. In the end, even the most dreadfully complicated authors must still have concretely felt a meaningful portion of their thoughts — if they hope to produce anything worth imbibing — almost, one might in a mystical vein say, “as immediately as the odour of a rose.”¹¹ Serious thought and investigation today, on the other hand, are varied. Wherever his sympathies may ultimately lie, the reader will most certainly find that many aspects of Qūnāvī’s thought coming to his attention in this study belong to a larger community of ideas. But “community” is already more alive to content than any abstract reordering of the entire philosophy to suit one of many variants of modern sensibility can ever be.

The reality is that medieval tradition is already intellectually bounded by limits, which are often misconstrued. For one thing, it never consented to a particular kind of dichotomy that only later became prevalent and which, to our loss, we very frequently accept uncritically in our scholarly work: the radical separation of the *logical* integument of a problem from its *religious* content. This is the foundational truth, if ever there was one, of its particular “community of ideas.” Although widely acknowledged in other departments of medieval studies, it has either been obfuscated or distorted in Islamics by the personal idiosyncracies of the “campus radicals.” In any case, the separation in

question began to widen in Latin Europe only in the late Scholastic period (around Ockham's time), and from that period on emerged a distinctly new problematic, the intellectual consequences of which are still being played out to this day. I am certainly not suggesting that this is historically either right or wrong. I do not assume any ideological position on this matter. My argument simply is that, at the very least, one should not feel *methodologically* beholden, in a serious study of the premodern period, to a compartmentalization of thought that figured at first, somewhat dreamily, only within the covers of college manuals, an intellectual expediency that was then regarded at most with an air of uncertainty. Placidly adopting such a recent arrival to metaphysics without sufficient historical appreciation should do little more for us than help conjure up some imaginary object, fascinating to our coevals perhaps, but with little historical veracity.

If anything, Qūnāvī's work is further proof that a systematic avoidance of this conceptual divorce had been widely and judiciously kept in view by contemporaries. In particular, his single-minded interest in linguistic analysis as a model for the sought after "scale," or *mizān*, of "the Divine Science" is designed to introduce the very element of "concreteness" into methodological questions otherwise missing in the conventional logic of philosophy in his time. It is not to say that all previous philosophy, basically Hellenic in character, was foreign to the underlying problem. What it does imply mainly is that at the heart of the medieval debate over knowledge and of the proper employment of reason, as we hinted, lay a pre-eminent consciousness of the reality of Divine Speech, both as an eternal and a determinately "concrete" event – in short, the real ground of

knowledge. My hope simply is that this indubitable consciousness is faithfully translated in this study with all its nuances and complexities.² A sparing use of faddish cant in the treatment of a past thinker, far from attenuating analytical rigour, can only enhance it the less pensively methodological one tries on the whole to be. If there is one thing to be eschewed, it is not so much the *choice* of method as its sheer obtrusiveness.

The only note on “methodology” we wish to make is the following. We shall begin by identifying some of Aristotle’s central concerns, starting with the *Metaphysics* and then his *Analytics*. This will not be done for comparative purposes but in order to get to Qūnāvī himself. It will disencumber us of the need constantly to refer his thoughts back to more ancient debates on science, which are interesting in themselves but require special care. Perhaps then the reader will be in a better position both to view the historical evolution of the theme at hand and, also, to make an independent judgment about the author’s contribution beyond its structural affinities with practically every other past system of note. As far as Aristotle and the Islamic scholars we shall be discussing here are concerned, these affinities are all too obvious and too freely professed to require extensive textual corroboration in a work not entirely devoted to this task, and we should be none the worse for failing to locate the direct channels of borrowing, if any. Similarities, at any rate, are no more to be taken as evidence of intellectual debt than would an admiring portrayal of Aristotle’s views on some of the most central themes of philosophy as an argument for his exclusive importance. We shall put aside for the moment any speculation on the purely textual aspect of our problem, in anticipation that

the reader may himself recognize the real locus of intellectual transformation. For, doubtless by around Qūnāvī's time something old had come into its own and something new was being born.

§ DEMONSTRATIVE KNOWLEDGE AND DIVINE WISDOM IN ARISTOTLE

To start with, there is nothing novel, philosophically speaking, in the proposition that the highest form of cognizance has to approximate, in some respect or other, Divine Knowledge. In ancient Greek philosophy, two distinctly different but interrelated considerations arose, man's knowledge of God and that knowledge which God alone possesses. Perhaps the most notable acknowledgement of this was made by none other than Aristotle at the very beginning of the *Metaphysics* (983^a 1-11). Let us consider briefly what he says, since this will furnish just the background we need for a later, three-way philosophical debate between Qūnāvī, Nasīr al-Dīn Tūsī (his contemporary) and the Ibn Sīnā of a posthumous work, *Kitāb al-Ta'līqāt* – upon whose interpretation and even attribution to Ibn Sīnā the former two were in disagreement. In the *Ta'līqāt*, Ibn Sīnā had fixed his doctrine, according to which the most universalizing element of knowledge is “cause.” Given mortal beings’ radical difference from the First Being, the science of causes represented a theoretical “meeting point” between Divine knowledge and the highest possible attainments of human intellectual endeavour. Even Qūnāvī’s philosophical forebears in Islam held in common a concept of science based on such an idea as the key to genuine knowledge if not, as Aristotle at times seems to suggest, outright perfect knowledge.

Whatever its true character, this science by definition had the merit at least of being intelligible even to those for whom the greatest intellectual endowment before God's infinite capacity was of little avail. Now, Islamic thinkers took this also as evidence for the contextuality of science, that only that inceptive knowledge is possible as human predisposition – meaning the intellectual faculty – can sustain. But if science is a lower or derivative form of knowledge and if the “realities of things” cannot be known as they truly are through any faculty alone, how then *are* they known beyond predisposition, since it was held that they were knowable in some respect or other – extreme nominalists like Ibn Taymiyyah apart? The paramount question is, In what sense can one be said to know them and what exactly *does* one know? The emphasis on direct apprehension, circumventing endless layers of perspectival approach to the object of knowledge, was a partial answer to these perplexing questions, one that was based on an epistemic division between conception and judgment (or assent). However, matters were never so clearcut as to resolve themselves into a direct contest between Divine revelation and reason's infinitely ponderous route to illumination. In view of this, “science” will have to occupy our attention for most of the early chapters. This is hardly avoidable in view of the attitude adopted by the Ibn ‘Arabī school, inspirited as it was by its founder's sophisticated understanding of scriptures and their significance for human existence, toward the intellectual endeavour as a whole.

Aristotle begins his *Metaphysics* with an epistemological analysis based on what is implied in ordinary usage . He settles on a notion of “knowing” (*ειδέναι*³) (Met 980^a

21) which, relative to both experience (*ἐμπειρία*)⁴ and reason (*λόγος*),⁵ exhibits various degrees of perfection where experience yields the knowledge of individuals (Met 981^a 21-2; cf. Met [Ross commentary] 119). From the outset, there is thus more than just tacit recognition of the ambiguous nature of the concept. The most elevated rank is that of “wisdom” (*σοφία*), concerned with “first causes” and the principles of things (981^b 28-9). Three things follow from this. First, “the wise man” must know all things as far as possible, though not each one in detail (982^a 9). “Knowing all things” is characteristic of the one “who has in the highest degree universal knowledge,” and indicates that “in a sense he knows all the instances [*τὰ ὑποκείμενα*, Lat. *subjectum, suppositum*] that fall under universal” (982^a 21-3; cf. Met 983^a 30).⁷ The highest type of demonstration Aristotle calls, in the *Posterior Analytics*, “commensurately universal demonstration,” since it teaches both the universal and the particular; whereas “particular demonstration” teaches only the particular (PoA 86^a 10-2). Second, the wise man knows difficult matters. Thirdly, he is more exact and capable of *teaching* the causes (Met 982^a 8-15). And fourthly, wisdom is sought for its own sake.

Let us first see what this third point implies. Aristotle hoped to establish that the “theoretical science” which investigates causes is also *instructive* at a higher degree and vice versa, “for the people who instruct us are those who tell the causes of each thing” (982^a 28-30).⁸ Instruction at its best naturally entails a systematic or scientific approach that relies on some notion of “pre-existent knowledge” (PoA 71^a 1). However, a puzzling complication results when the technical terms Aristotle coined for use within this

theoretical framework are juxtaposed. In Met 982^b 1-4, he states that “first” and “cause” are pursued as knowledge “which is most truly [instances of] knowledge,” “for by reason of these, and from these, all other things come to be known, and not these by means of the things subordinate to them.” But, as one modern commentator put it, if they are to be presupposed by all knowledge, or $\dot{\epsilon}\pi\iota\sigma\tau\eta\mu\eta$, as Aristotle holds here, how can they at the same time be the objects of $\dot{\epsilon}\pi\iota\sigma\tau\eta\mu\eta$ (Met [Ross Commentary] 122)? $\dot{\epsilon}\pi\iota\sigma\tau\eta\mu\eta$ is of a demonstrative nature and, therefore, cannot prove its own premises, which together comprise the pre-given component of a syllogism (PoA 100^b 10).⁹

Aristotle chose to consider “opinion” as well as pure knowledge within this scheme of things. While Ibn Sīnā was circumspect in the way he depicted Aristotle’s view of their differences,¹⁰ opinion was said to grasp premises which are “immediate,” but not “necessary” (PoA 89^a 4); whereas necessity is a defining feature of demonstration. Technically, in trying demonstratively to determine the mode in which an accident is known to inhere in a subject (89^a 38), we are really seeking, as Aristotle often repeated, “to grasp truths that cannot be other than they are” (89^a 16-7). But what makes them so? Aristotle states that,

We suppose ourselves to possess unqualified scientific knowledge of a thing, as opposed to knowing it in the accidental way in which the sophist knows, when we think that we know the cause on which the fact depends, as the cause of that fact and of no other, and, further, *that the fact could not be other than it is...* ¹¹ (PoA [Ross commentary] 71^b 9-12).

A functional distinction between the “fact” ($\ddot{\sigma}\tau\iota\iota$)¹¹ and the “cause” of the fact ($\tau\ddot{o}$ $\alpha\ddot{\iota}\tau\iota\iota\sigma\sigma$) need not controvert the implicit recognition here that it is above all the fact ^{which leads} \wedge

⁹ My emphasis.

to necessity in the demonstration, being what is most fully pre-given. The paradoxical result is that the very same “fact,” taken in one respect, must also qualify as the *object* of demonstration, if there is to be any syllogistic demonstration at all. But while “fact” and, in this latter sense, “reasoned fact” (*διότι*) – as W.D. Ross translated it (PoA 78^b13:6-7) – do have close affinity, they are not exactly the same, at least in regard to their order of inquiry. Otherwise everything would be uniformly evident from the start or, conversely, equally hidden from view. Briefly,

Recognition of a truth may in some cases contain as factors both previous knowledge and also knowledge acquired simultaneously with that recognition -- knowledge, this latter, of the particulars actually falling under the universal and therein already virtually known. For example, the student knows beforehand that the angles of every triangle are equal to two right angles; but it was only at the actual moment at which he was being led on to recognize this as true in the instance before him that he came to know “this figure inscribed in the semicircle” to be a triangle...Before he was led on to recognition or before he actually drew a conclusion, we should perhaps say that in a manner he knew, in a manner not (PoA 71^a 16-25).

Indeed, that the same fact is *differently* known upon logical predication gives rise to an additional set of requirements absent from the “original” fact.¹² What this means is this. For demonstration to be necessary knowledge, as it is meant to be, all *attributes* must also be necessary.

Since the object of pure scientific knowledge cannot be other than it is, the truth obtained by demonstrative knowledge will be necessary. And since demonstrative knowledge is only present when we have a demonstration, it follows that demonstration is an inference from *necessary premisses*^b (PoA 73^a 4:21-4).

To Aristotle this means that it is impossible for them not to inhere in their subjects (PoA 73b 17-8). Indeed, although the multiplicity of a demonstration’s premisses effectively breaks up the unity of the object, the premisses must be *essentially* connected, as we shall

^b My own italics.

see below, on the grounds that “all attributes must inhere essentially or else be accidental...” (PoA 74^b 6-7). Therefore, once “the attributes of the thing are apprehended,” he points out, “our business will then be to exhibit readily the demonstrations” (PrA 46^a 23-4). This is the hallmark feature of demonstrative knowledge that ensures a cohesive unity of relations throughout. But in order to operate it also suffers a suitably different set of conditions than those of the singular fact.

Having distinguished between knowledge of the fact and knowledge of the cause, or the “reasoned fact,” which implies a complete causal account (PoA 78^a 13:23) has been found,¹³ Aristotle suggests a matching epistemological division between empirical and theoretical knowledge¹⁴ (78^b 13:3-4).¹⁵ Nevertheless, there must be a combinative knowledge with elements from both. In fact, this is what makes demonstration *instructive*, where “all instruction given or received by way of argument proceeds from pre-existent knowledge” (71^a 1-2).

The empirico-theoretical division is important for our purposes, and we shall have more to say on it later in this thesis. But by calling demonstration instructive, Aristotle confers upon knowledge, whether of essential nature (91^a 3:36) or of some other aspect of a thing, a pedagogical purpose expressed through an operation which can successfully display the contents of knowledge in the most orderly fashion. This is another key element we shall be investigating later in our study, one that served to introduce the method of “theological science” conceived by Qūnāfi and Ibn Sīnā. Let us, therefore, take the time to get some rudimentary idea of this logic.

Briefly, demonstration as “a syllogism productive of scientific knowledge” (71^a 17-8), he says, consists of three elements: (1) the conclusion; (2) the axioms (or premises of demonstration); (3) the subject-genus whose essential properties are revealed by demonstration (75^a 38-75^b 2-3). Within this formal structure, “pre-existent knowledge” consists in assuming an “admission of the fact,” “comprehension of the meaning of the term used” or both (71^a 12-3). The premises themselves must be “true, primary, immediate and better known than and prior to the conclusion” (71^a 20-2). For obvious reasons, experience is more readily assimilable as prior knowledge for its immediacy and at least its perceptual certainty than deliberative mode of knowing can ever be. Aristotle has exactly this in mind when he concludes that “it is the business of experience to give the principles which belong to each subject” (PrA 46^a 18-9). There must always be certain premises which, being primary truths, are themselves incapable of demonstration ¹⁶ within the same science.¹⁷ While this seems reasonable enough, it still does not explain how – given the structural cleavage, and peculiar exigencies, of demonstration – the cause or the “reasoned fact” may be known. For demonstration leads us inexorably to the odd position of having to assert that we can only seek to know what we “already” know. Can “predicative complexity” as an additional factor be so easily reconciled with knowledge of the one “essential nature” of the thing?

This is a problem whose terms Ibn Sīnā had sought to establish formally. In mysticism, it presents many more difficulties, as we will see. While it may not present any difficulty to a “superior intellect” poised to acquire the full measure of knowledge,

It is quite crucial to a didactic discipline like theology. More specifically, it reflects the inherent “ambiguity” of knowledge which for all of theology’s logical rigor, lends itself especially well to theological application. That “theology” was after all what philosophers had in mind when discussing logic is perhaps more obvious in Ibn Sīnā’s case. In view of the extensive use later made of demonstrative method in this domain and given Ibn Sīnā’s persistent quest for an adequate reformulation of the problem of God’s existence, one may go even further to insist that the *philosophical* knowledge of God expressed in terms of concomitants and constitutive attributes was, in the end, scarcely to any other end than to bolster scriptural claims, or the scriptural manner of knowing God. Demonstration became the typical method of “theological science,” and the compatibility of Ibn Sīnā’s theory with Islamic tradition, if defensible, had to stem from the narrow strictures he placed upon what *new* knowledge one might expect the illative operation of the mind to offer in relation to the immutable content of God’s own revealed Word. So true has this been that the deceptively “propaedeutical” air of the debate on the formal conditions of scientific knowledge could only take a decidedly “cosmological” turn of its own as the existential link with the Divine Word acquired such complexity that theoretical reflection itself began to look more definitely like a province of textual exegesis – and nowhere more so than in Qūnāvī’s writings. Immuring theology within a mesh of logical complexities failed to dislodge Ibn Sīnā from religious tradition. On the contrary, it earned him a surprising reputation, for Qūnāvī duly conceded his role as both critic and proponent of the rational method in theology to be his chief contribution.

The consequence was that the previous disciplinary order going from parts of speech to logical propositions – traditionally regarded as preparatory “for [Aristotle’s] doctrine of the syllogism” (KDL 67) – while not exactly reversed, gave way rather to a “philosophy of speech” *tout court*. Elaborating such a philosophy without supplanting logic as a formal tool was an adversity that not only mystics like Ibn ‘Arabī and Qūnawī but, somewhat more dimly, *fātāsifah* like al-Fārābī and Ibn Sīnā had tried to meet.

The difference between a doctrine of language or grammar and a doctrine of logical predication cannot be defined in the same stark terms one might wish to adopt for optimum clarity. Although it would be erroneous to picture a one-to-one correspondence between their respective “parts” in a reasoned or uttered statement, respectively, both purport to rely on a structural dependence of these parts. Aristotle, for instance, referred to the necessary connections of *attributes* as a feature of, in the words of Kneale and Kneale, “a piece of reasoning that relates two general terms by means of a middle term...” (KDL 44). In other words, there must be a term common to both premises (the “middle term”) “so related as subject or predicate to each of the other two terms that a conclusion may be drawn regarding the relation of these two terms to one another” (*DictP* 21). This being definitive as far as the subject-predicate relation is concerned, it is clear, as we said earlier, that the conclusion of the syllogism must show an attribute “inhering as such” (PoA 75^b 37-9)¹⁸ As Aristotle explains,

The method is the same in all cases, in philosophy, in any art or study. We must look for the attributes and the subjects of both our terms, and we must supply ourselves with as many of these as possible, and consider them by means of the three terms, refuting statements in one way, confirming them in another, in the pursuit of truth starting from

premisses in which the *arrangement* of the terms is in accordance with truth... (PrA 46^a 3.9)

Aristotle's allusion to instances (*ὑποκείμεναι*) – whether in true knowledge or in opinion (89^a 12) – where *essentially* the same thing may be adduced as both the fact and the object, almost though not quite in the manner of an identity (PoA 89^a 27, 33), shifts the emphasis *a fortiori* onto the particularities of the arrangement or “graduated” structure of predication said to culminate in a necessary causal knowledge. This way of looking at things is not foreign to what medieval tradition claimed for its scripturally-based method of doing theology. What we would like to retain at this stage is the necessary structural coherence of complex propositions as well as the logical “identity” of the reasoned fact with the given fact the intervening complexity we call logical inference. Unity and structural complexity are two contrastive aspects shared by both logical and grammatical constructions.

In logic, the most impregnably defensible unity or “identity,” however artificial, is that of the “definition” – to which we shall now turn – and its “parts” with the definiendum. So sharply has the contrast sometimes been drawn between “statements of identity” and “statements of predication” that their confusion may have led some philosophers before Aristotle even to deny that predication could be anything else but ‘identical predication’ (Kneale DOL 22). If so, the views of those who argued that “non-identical predication and negation were nonsensical would have been serious stumbling-blocks to the development of logical theory” (Kneale DOL 22). But what definitional knowledge is

^c My emphasis.

expected to respect is the unity of the definiendum itself. We shall briefly deal with the particulars of Aristotle's treatment of its relationship to other paradigms of knowledge.¹⁹ Aristotle's response to the "identity" issue was to posit two further limiting factors on inference's propensity for ramification. I shall refer to these two factors as the vertical and the horizontal. The first is that the "basic truths" be somehow "appropriate," that belonging to the same genus.²⁰

Another limit besides appropriateness is the number of postulates or hypotheses which might be assumed: the fewer the premises, all equally known, the higher the demonstration (85^a 25:34-6; 86^a 34-7).²¹ Thus not only must the "attributes" in a demonstration, which prove the inherence of *essential* attributes in things, be "commensurate with the subject and not of wider extent" (84^a 22:24-5), these attributes also have to be finite, or else – and here is the interesting point – no *definition* is possible (84a 22:26). Generally, any intermediates between two terms must be limited in number (84a 22:30-2).²² The implication, it transpires, is that definition may well serve as a model, but it is to be approximated, and never truly reached. He is driving basically in that direction.

These two limits are indispensable for the primary condition of knowledge to be fulfilled; in the language of logic: "grasp of a reasoned conclusion" (79^a 14:23). The first limit is especially important, since grasping the reasoned fact is effectively that of the *commensurate universal* ("universal" being what we know about the cause). By this is meant,

an attribute which belongs to every instance of its subject, and to every instance essentially and as such; from which it clearly follows that all commensurate universals inhere *necessarily* in their subjects.

To this he adds,

The essential attribute, and the attribute that belongs to its subject as such, are identical (PoA 73^a 4:27-9).

Therefore, demonstration being a “syllogism that proves the cause,” it has to be primarily, commensurately and universally true of the subject. Here the universal aspect alone imparts causality (85^b 24:23-4), and the value of the commensurate universal is that “it makes clear the cause” in all its dimensions (88^a 31:5). Every inquiry asks something about the “middle”; indeed, we inquire because we have not yet perceived the middle (90^a 2:25). In view of this goal, there are really two sorts of questions to be asked in the course of an inquiry: “Is there a middle” and “What is the middle”; if, that is, we are to take the “middle” as being “precisely the cause, and it is the cause that we seek in all our inquiries” (90^a 2:6). In all, there are four distinct questions:

(1) *whether* the connexion of an attribute with a thing is a fact, (2) *what* is the reason of the connexion, (3) *whether* a thing exists, (4) *what* is the nature of the thing. (PoA 89^b 1:24-5)

Now, it is clear from this, he argues, that the reason of the fact ($\deltaιότι$) is identical to “the nature of the thing” (90^a 2:15). The answer to the question, “what is something,” is the same as to the question, “what is the reason for something” (90^a 2:16-7); hence to know a thing’s nature is to know the reason why it is.²³ To summarize,

When we are aware of a fact we seek its reason, and though sometimes the fact and the reason dawn on us simultaneously, yet we cannot apprehend the reason a moment sooner than the fact; and clearly in just the same way we cannot apprehend a thing’s definable form without apprehending that it exists, since while we are ignorant whether it exists we cannot know its essential nature. Moreover we are aware whether a thing exists or not sometimes through apprehending an element in its character, and sometimes accidentally... As often as we have accidental knowledge that the thing exists, we must be in a wholly negative state as regards awareness of its essential nature; for we have not got

genuine knowledge even of its existence, and to search for a thing's essential nature when we are unaware that it exists is to search for nothing. On the other hand, whenever we apprehend an element in the thing's character there is less difficulty. Thus it follows that the degree of our knowledge of a thing's essential nature is determined by the sense in which we are aware that it exists. (PoA 93^a 8:16-29)

The peroration of this passage shows the degree to which all the key questions are intertwined. We do not know a thing without knowing at least some “element in its character” (that is, without having some prior knowledge of it, even if accidental), and the “degree of our knowledge of its essential nature” depends on “the sense in which we are aware that it exists.” The latter is the ontological postulate that allows him to escape the barren confines of definition and circular reasoning he would otherwise be saddled with in a notion of demonstration modelled on the definition. His conclusion is that essential nature is demonstrable in one sense but not in another, and of certain things to the exclusion of others (94^a 10:14-7). What is particularly noteworthy for our later discussion in this thesis is that knowledge should in essence be inseparable from existence. Stated differently, there is an epistemic link between *knowledge of the thing's existence* and *knowledge of its essential nature*.

But what of the highest knowledge or Wisdom? What gives knowledge the “nobility” that befits the “noblest object of knowledge”? Indeed, is it identifiable with Divine Wisdom?

While in the *Posterior Analytics*, Aristotle deals chiefly with demonstrative knowledge, central to which is the search for cause, in the *Metaphysics* his attention is immediately turned to the notion of cause itself. More particularly, he asks what might distinguish the First Science. Its investigation of causes alone cannot confer upon it any uniqueness,

since other sciences do it as well (Met 996^b 2:2). Its first claim to distinction, rather, is that it is the science of substance or essence, given that “he knows most fully who knows what a thing is, not he who knows its quantity or quality or what it can by nature do or have done to it” (996^b 2:14-8). Still, not all substances are the same, some being more nearly those with which the highest science is concerned than others (996^b 2:15), depending on whether they are sensible or eternal. As we saw, it is the business of each demonstrative science to investigate the essential attributes of its own subject (or genus), in this case a single class of substances (996^b 2:19-20). There is a science, he says, that deals with axioms (the most universal and the principles of all things [997^a 2:13]), which must be assumed, and another that deals with substance (997^a 2:11-2); and the hallmark of true wisdom is of course what the science of the cause elaborated in the *Posterior Analytics* claims to procure. What is less clear is whether or not this high knowledge is identifiable with Divine Wisdom itself. Aristotle remarks that possession of the highest science may be thought by some to be “beyond human power,” since in some respects human nature is “in bondage” (982^b 28-9). The frailty of human faculties would, in that case, be an insuperable obstacle to knowledge. This issue, though not Aristotle’s rendering of it, is of the greatest consequence for Qūnavī, who sought quite independently of him to delimit the nature and scope of formal reason.

More precisely, in the terms stipulated by Aristotle so far, knowledge in the superlative sense seems to demand that cause, essential nature, demonstration and definition be welded together, though in a way that seems to defy conventional reason. And yet,

human frailty here would almost certainly mean that "God alone can have this privilege," which He jealously guards; and that man then ought to seek the knowledge which is best suited to him (982^b 28-32), by which he meant a drastically lower order of cognition detached from Divinity, rather than something explicitly anchored in human predisposition or the natural faculties, as later intellectual tradition would have it. But ""divine power,"²⁴ he retorted, cannot be jealous, for there is no science more worthy of honour than this (983^a 5-7). I do not wish to be drawn into a textual discussion, but Aristotle, it seems to me, is affirming some kind of identification of science with Divine Wisdom, at least by virtue of their common object of knowledge. He sets forth nonetheless the following elements of the problem:

For the most divine science is also most honourable; and this science alone must be, in two ways, most divine. For the science which it would be most meet for God to have is a divine science, and so is any science that deals with divine objects; and this science alone has both these qualities; for (1) God is thought to be among the causes of all things and to be a first principle [$\alphaρχή$, Lat. *principium*], and (2) such a science either God alone can have, or God above all others. All the sciences, indeed, are more necessary than this, but none is better. (Met 983^a 6-11)²⁵

The two types of knowledge ($voūs$ ²⁶), Divine and human, are radically different from each other, in certain respects incommensurable; this after all is what has given rise to the difficulties enumerated in Met 1074^b 15. While Divine knowledge is described as the most divine "of all things seen," Aristotle has attempted an answer first to the question of how it must be "situated in order to have that character" (1074^b 16-7). That is a key consideration in philosophy, whose aim is not to substitute its own content for Divine Wisdom, but merely to elucidate the formal conditions of knowledge. Hence, he tries to disentangle Divine knowledge from all potency associated with the faculty of

thinking.²⁷ But he also argues that “it must be of itself that the divine thought thinks [since it is the most excellent of things], and its thinking is a thinking on thinking” (1074^b 32-4). This is how Aristotle conceived of Divine Wisdom. The kind of knowledge we have through perception, opinion and understanding, on the other hand, has always “something else” as its object and itself “only by the way” (1075b 35-6), in other words, accidentally. To be an *act* of thinking and to be an *object* of thought are not the same here at all.²⁸

Our objective so far has been to outline the general features of the Aristotle’s conception of knowledge, which might help us gain a clearer idea of the direction of the debate in the Islamic rather than the Greek tradition. What is most striking about Aristotle’s solution to the problem of Divine Wisdom is its purely formal nature. We have gone from a treatment of the necessary coordination among various ways of knowing an object (“whether,” “what,” etc.) to what the formal condition for “perfect” or “complete” knowledge, as it were, has to be: namely, it has to be a separate principle and to consist of “self-knowledge.” *Logos* understood in this sense is almost indistinguishable from the discursive importance, indeed primacy – insisted on in Judaic, Christian and Islamic tradition – of revealed Scripture. That it is God who can truly describe Himself and that it is God who knows Himself has come, in prophetic (and to some extent Hellenic) religion, to signify the *scriptural* exigencies of Divine knowledge; what is revealed unto man is both God’s knowledge of Himself and man’s knowledge of God.

§ THE PROBLEM OF KNOWLEDGE IN IBN SINĀ'S *Kitāb al-ta'liqāt*

While both the Hellenic and the prophetic traditions seem to have arrived at this remarkable recognition, the historical circumstances under which it was elaborated intellectually differed considerably. In face of human frailty, the Greek philosophers, as we saw, took it upon themselves to reconcile the notion of “theological science,” in all its internal complexity and relative priorities, with that noble and supreme Wisdom that is God’s. The way it was done in Islamic mystical tradition is perhaps rarely so clearly illustrated as in the following, almost offhand remark Qūnavī made to his correspondent, Nasīr al-Dīn Tūsī, about the precariously “narrow” relation of:

the sphere of concepts [al-tasawwurāt] and mental specifications [al-ta'ayyunāt al-dhibniyyah], [on the one hand,] to the domain of psychical attachments ['arsat al-ta'alluqāt al-nafsāniyyah] and the simple concepts [al-tasawwurāt al-basītah], on the other. The same holds true of the simple concepts of the soul relative to the universal things [lil-umūr al-kulliyah]; and of the causal realities [al-haqā'iq al-'illiyah] to the intellection of the intellects [ta'aqqul al-'uqūl]; and of the universal souls [al-nufūs al-kulliyah] to the universals [al-kulliyāt]. [However,] the intellects' and the souls' intellections are related to the specification [ta'ayyun] of the objects of knowledge in God's own knowledge in the same manner that the intellection belonging to He who has no intellects or universal souls at the level of knowledge is to them. (MQH 96-7)²⁹

The significance of this explanation will become clearer in Chapter Three. Briefly, what it shows is that theoretical reason is assigned a secondary, interpretive role with respect to the stationary sphere of the noetic object, and *ipso facto* to intellectual *experience*.

The proper function of reason has never been an easy theme to deal with, particularly in connection with Greek philosophy, which has resisted any facile interpretation in matters fundamental to religious tradition based on revelation. One seems nonetheless justified in arguing that reconciling two levels of “intellectual” knowledge – Divine and

facultative – is a more accurate way of identifying the venue of “conflict,” if any exist, between reason and faith, as it continued to develop into our era, than could any irreligion by the Greek philosophers that is thought to result from their reliance on rational methods. Perhaps ancient philosophy refused to demand that reason be taken in any but the most benign methodological sense. But the reflective faculty was still needed, if properly deployed, for its unique capacity to harmonize two modal poles; perhaps the Greeks were unwilling or were perspicacious enough not to suggest a more substantial role for it than intermediation. In its intermediary role, theoretical reason at least holds the promise of human knowledge without extenuating the Perfect Wisdom of God it needs to qualify as knowledge. This is a “reason” of synthesis and predication. But approaching the problem in this fashion also runs the risk of banalizing knowledge altogether. Prophetic religion always maintained its distance, not necessarily with logic as such, but its metaphysical applications, because all logical utterance came to be seen, as it was in the Islamic period,³⁰ as a distillation from natural discourse, no less dependent on the specific rules of communication for language. That it was dependent to this degree may appear somewhat pedantic, but it was just the spur needed for a much wider debate on the role and nature of discursive methods. All discourse in the premodern era – and disguisedly, some would also argue, into our own period – was discourse on God. The difficulty arose with respect to God’s discourse to man, which, for all believers, is enshrined in Scripture and transmitted through language rather than logic or, for that matter, the ponderous argumentation of the *mutakallimīn*. And so rather than fault logic

directly for its dependence on natural language, religious tradition tended simply to emphasize the speech factor in knowledge. Indeed, being merely “distilled” gave logic a remoteness from experience which a more plenary operation of reason (rather than mere logic) also required before it can procure any knowledge. It is hardly surprising, in the face of such a seemingly impossible dilemma that Divine Speech, championed for so long by the votaries of the revealed knowledge of the great prophets and messiahs should so easily come to fill the void. As Frank points out,

Aristotle asks what do we mean when we say of something that it is an entity [*ousia*] or when we say that something has come about “through nature” [*phūsei*]; but in the *kalām* (and the term itself is resonant in the context), the origin of the questioning which is at the root of the science itself is perforce more self-consciously and more explicitly exegetical because of its explicit relationship to a revelation whose linguistic nature is not merely a fact among facts, something given and to be taken for granted, but an overarching fact, the awareness which must influence the view and conception of all facts. (Frank BTA 11)

In view of this, it is perfectly reasonable that the science of *kalām* should be pondered, indeed questioned, in relation to Divine “Wisdom” or “Knowledge,” as van Ess has pointed out in his commentary on a later but quite representative work by İjī,

Für İjī befaßt sich Theologie, entsprechend seiner Definition, ganz allgemein mit Problemen, wie sie sich religiösem Denken beim Betrachten der Glaubenswahrheiten stellen. Mit der Klausel „unmittelbar oder mittelbar“³¹ bezieht er ausdrücklich auch propädeutische Fragen (z.B. die Atomtheorie, die Diskussion von Abū Hāsim’s Modus-Begriff usw.) mit ein. Gerade diese sekundären Fragen, die gleichwohl noch „Theologie“ sind, verbieten ihm, der Ansicht beizustimmen, daß *kalām* einfach „Wissen von Gott“ (im Ursinn des Wortes „Theologie“) sei. Jene Formulierung läßt sich nach seiner Ansicht nur halten, wenn man vieles wegschneidet – wie es etwas Gazzālī getan hatte, der in den Sekundärproblemen nur „extravagante Albernheiten“ sah und meinte, daß man durch allzu große Gründlichkeit häufig etwas nur verworrenere mache... (van Ess EAI 41)

Some, like the sceptics of all ages and stripes, simply denied that any reconciliation between theoretical reflection and religious truths, or human and Divine knowledge, was

feasible. We should like to see how Ibn Sīnā and Sadr al-Dīn Qūnawī gave meaningful retort, especially in view of the Islamic scholars' adherence as members of a prophetic religion to the scriptural sources of interpretation at practically every step of their intellectual peregrination. Qūnawī, we will see shortly, scrutinized the theoretical task of the philosopher along lines that appear to hark back to some of the most cardinal tenets of Greek Scepticism. Aristotle's rhetorical demur on man's capacity for wisdom had found a formulaic extension in Sextus Empiricus (second century AD), who deployed Scepticism's famed inquisitive doubt to pronounce all "things" as "non-apprehensible" and indeterminable.³² And the "sceptical" critique presented by Qūnawī, of course, was already familiar to Ibn Sīnā's. In fact, a major part of the debate between Tūsī and Qūnawī revolved on the latter's bold pronouncement in the *Taṣlīqāt* that man was incapable of knowing the "realities of things," quoted below. Not unlike the classical sceptics, the main justification he advances, and which Qūnawī accepts, for this ineffectualness is a principle on which the common knowledge of things is understood to rest, namely, sensory experience (*al-biss*); sensory experience is what he called "*mabda'* *mārifat al-ashyā'*" (MQA 32; Tal 82). In a passage quoted in full by Qūnawī, he openly declares that,

Man can never apprehend the reality of the thing precisely because his knowledge of things begins [*mabda'* *mārifatibī līl-ashyā'*] with sense [*al-biss*]. He then distinguishes intellectually [*bil-'aq*] between what is ambiguous [*mutashābihāt*] and what is clear [*mutabāyñāt*]. At this point, he comes to know intellectually some of its concomitants, acts, effects and properties and, from this, approaches [*fa-yandarū*] a kind of synoptic knowledge [*mārifah mujmalah*] of it that has not been verified with those of its concomitants which he does not know except the easiest ones. He may know it for the most part, except that it is not necessary that he know all of its concomitants. But if he had apprehended the reality of the thing and descended from a true knowledge [*mārifah*

haqīqiyah] down toward its concomitants and properties, he would know these concomitants and properties in their entirety. [As it is,] his way of knowing is the reverse of what it ought to be. All souls intrinsically need [*muhtājah fi dhawatihā*] to become intellectually perfected, whether they are closely or remotely predisposed to this (Tal 82).

The “sense principle” enunciated in the *Talīqāt* is important for us because Qūnavī himself draws attention to its role in Avicennan epistemology and proceeds only after taking his bearings from what Ibn Sīnā says on the matter. Since this is not a study on Ibn Sīnā, we will be more at liberty to concentrate on the evidence offered by the posthumous work known as the *Talīqāt*. Ibn Sīnā concludes that during its bodily life the human soul tends to act according to the body’s promptings, devoting itself only to what it can perceive through the senses (Tal 30-1). He believed that its intimate acquaintance with its sense organs results in a dependence so deep-rooted that whatever the soul cannot perceive it at once consigns to non-reality (Tal 31), an argument having clear affinities with classical Scepticism. Instead of verifying things for itself, the soul recedes, “moving away” from its essence (*dhātihā*).

On this ground, he proceeds to make his famous declaration about man’s incapacity to perceive the “realities of things” (*haqā’iq al-ashyā*) – especially that which is simple (Tal 34), let alone the simplest of all things: God.³³

It is not within the power of the human being [*qudrat al-bashar*] to grasp the realities of things [*haqā’iq al-ashyā*]. Of things, we only^a know their properties [*al-khawāṣṣ*], concomitants [*al-lawāzim*] and accidents [*al-ārād*.^b But we do not know the constitutive

The following abbreviations indicate the source: Q for Qūnavī’s *As’īlah*, S for Ibn Sīnā’s *Talīqāt*.

^a Q: *fa-innā lasnā nārifū* / S: *wa naḥnu tā nārifū*.

^b Q: *khawāṣṣahā* / S: *al-khawāṣṣ*; Q: *wa lawāzimahā* / S: *wa-l-lawāzim*; Q: *al-ārādahā* / S: *al-ārād*

differentiae³⁴ [al-fusūl al-muqawwimah] for each one of them, indicating [that thing's] reality [al-dāllah 'alā haqīqatihī]. We only know that they are things which have properties and accidents [annahā ashyā' labā khawāṣṣ wa ḥrād wa lawāzim].^c We do not know^d the reality of the First [Being] [haqīqat al-awwal], the Intellect ['aql], the soul [nafs], the [heavenly] spheres [falaq], fire, air, water and earth. Nor do we know [even] the reality of the accidents. (MQA 31)

The source of falsification of knowledge thus identified, what does it mean exactly to attain a true knowledge of the reality of things? Under what conditions can one properly speak of such knowledge, which neither he nor Qūnavī after all denies? These are the questions we shall be seeking to answer in this study.

In the *Taṣlīqāt*, Ibn Sīnā reduces the problem of knowledge to a relational complex composed of the knower, the act of knowing and the object known. The knower (*al-`ālim*), he says, is related to the object known through a configured *form* (*hay'ah*) that occurs in him (Tal 13). It might be pointed out that Ibn Sīnā employs the term *hay'ah* instead of *ṣirah*. Qūnavī uses both to elaborate his philosophy of language. The former has the special significance of a configuration of parts, as in the letters of a word or the words of a sentence. The “form” in general is quite fundamental to our study, but *configured* it may suggest an internal ordering of accidents, attributes and concomitants, to be examined later on, based on “subordinate-superordinate” relations and a structural behaviour normally associated with the parts of speech. Ibn Sīnā maintained that a relation (*al-idāyah*) obtained between the knower and the object known through the form, but that this form can neither be collapsed with the relation itself (e.g. with “left” and

^c Q: *khawāṣṣ wa ḥrād wa lawāzim* / S: *khawāṣṣ wa ḥrād*

^d Q: *fa-tā nārif* / S: *fa-innā tā nārif*.

“right,” where changing the relation would not normally spare the “form,” let alone change it) nor be said to be completely independent of it. Something must survive the relation, and only once the form engendering the relation between knower and known ceases does the knowledge of the knower become vacuous (*yabṭul*).

That knowledge is a form may, on the other hand, seem to assuage the desire for a close linkage between knowledge and existence, between the “what” and the “whether.” The simplest instance of this is when the form occurring in the knower coincides with the existence of the object of knowledge (*md'a wujūd al-maṭlūm*) and immediately ceases with its non-existence (*md'a 'adamīhi*) (Tal 13). What is really invalidated whenever we speak of an invalidation of knowledge (*fa-biṭṭān al-ilm*) by the absence of the known object is nothing more than an attribute “extrinsic” (*min al-khārij*) to the object known. “Being a knower” (*al-‘alimīyah*) at all is superadded to the “relatedness” that obtains between the knower and the object known (*zā'id 'alā al-tadāyuf*). The text is somewhat muddled, but what he is in essence doing is leaving open the option that something may be simultaneously absent, having no external existence whatever, and yet known. Knowledge cannot simply be a function of the actual existence of the object known, since a thing’s existence, being accidental, cannot be what causes (*sababan*) knowledge to occur. Otherwise there would be no knowledge of what is as yet absent, as is often the case. Because knowledge signifies merely the form’s presence in the knower himself, in the event that something is known and then ceases to be known, he states, it is really the state (*fal-bālah*) of the knower that has changed, not the relation as such (Tal 13).

Indeed, knowledge under conditions where the thing is absent or outrightly non-existent (*adam*) calls for a special inquiry. The controversy over the nature of *'adam* has a long history, and in order not to digress too much we ought to keep in mind the proper context. A doubt has been raised as to man's capacity to perceive the “*realities* of things” unaided. The sceptical tenor of this distinction between *shay'* and *haqīqah*,³⁵ which will be examined more closely later when we come to Qūnāvī's Introduction to *Ijāz al-bayān*, is as unmistakable as it is still perfectly consistent with the fact that, being *undenied*, the realities have to be taken as *a priori*.³⁶ The “*realities*” are known in some respect before any attempt to prove their existence even gets underway. This epistemic priority is indispensable (Frank MWM 208). However, it has given rise to disconcerting questions about the realities' “*existential*” status in the instance where their affirmed “*knowledge*” may quite reasonably preclude their actual existence in the world but not their subsistence as realities of sort – for example, in our minds or in God's knowledge. In the end, knowledge cannot be separated from a kind of “*existence*,” whether actual or potential, as Ibn Sīnā argued. According to van Ess,

Der Begriff *ma'dūm* etwa ließe sich dadurch erklären, daß man ja nicht scharf zwischen „Sein“ und „Dasein, Existenz“ in der Terminologie unterschied (vgl. S. 200), die Dinge aber erst durch die Schöpfung ihre Existenz erhalten, vorher demnach „nichtseiend“ sein müssen (vgl. auch Nyberg 82 und Anm. 2). Wieweit im einzelnen fremdes Gut assimiliert worden ist, bliebe noch zu untersuchen; nicht zu leugnen bleibt die durchaus originelle Initiative, in der man es an sich zog und den diskutierten Problemen einordnete. (van Ess EAI 197)

Nyberg in fact points out that “Die ideale, relativ nichtseiende Welt tritt als die dritte metaphysische Kategorie auf, und diese erhält Bestimmungen, die uns ermöglichen, der ganzen Konzeption ideengeschichtlich näher beizukommen” (Nyberg EKS 47). God's

knowledge is that “third thing” mentioned by Ibn ‘Arabī, the “Mittelding zwischen Gott und der Welt,” as Nyberg points out.

Although Nyberg is certainly correct as far as the conceptual similarities are concerned, I would not put the case as serenely as he perhaps for a straight line of transmission from al-Nazzām to Ibn ‘Arabī. In tracing the origins of an influential Mu‘tazilī current advocating the daring view that what is absent can still be something, he goes so far as to characterize Ibn ‘Arabī’s work *Inshā’ al-dawā’ir* as a “typical product of the Ma‘dūniyyah School.” “Die Schrift ‘Inshā’ al-dawā’ir,’ he states, “stellt sich als ein typisches Produkt der Ma‘dūniyyah-Schule heraus, erst aus dieser Schrift fällt über diesen Ideenkreis helles Licht” (Nyberg EKS 47). The Mu‘tazilī position on *ma‘dūm* qua thing or entity may have had wider currency among other schools than we are wont to suppose (cf. van Ess EAI 191). This does not lessen the usefulness of his historical treatment of ‘*adam* and *shay’*.¹⁷ The whole object, he says, is to grasp Divine knowledge’s relation to the world qua thing (“zu den Weltdingen” [Nyberg EKS 47]), and what this *Ma‘dūniyyah-Schule* managed to introduce was a “realism” that propounded “die Bewusstseinsinhalte” as *objective Realitäten*, of which Qūnavī will avail himself above all as the primary level of knowledge at which the epistemological concerns of theology can be properly met. Put in broader perspective, however, it also evinces a critical methodological shift away from the inscrutable question of the quiddity – “what-is-it” – of God, towards a more appropriate venue for knowledge, where an Divine effusion is accepted by a recipient, no longer the agent, as both knowledge of God *and* knowledge of what is “other-than-

God.”

With regard to what is customarily qualified as “non-existence,” Ibn Sīnā himself makes the following clarifications. Certain things may be non-existent by essence (*ma dūm bil-dhāt*) and, therefore, impossible of existence (*mumtani dīl-wujūd*); in other words, they are not a thing (*lā yakin shay'*) (Tal 175). While null by essence, they only *seem* to contain reference to an existent (*ishārah ilā mawjūd*). This, he says, is true merely as a manner of speaking; in reality, they have no such referent. By contrast, a *thing* that does not exist in time may be taken for something which, while *not existing* (*ghayr mawjūdah*), is nonetheless in a state of potentiality. Having a kind of existence, what is “non-existent” here may pass from potentiality to actuality (Tal 30). In the case of God’s knowledge, this would of course entail an element of change (Tal 29). Therefore, “knowledge” cannot be the same in both cases, since every “thing” is necessary and *actually* existent (*mawjūdah bil-fa*) in relation to God. The third instance, is when a thing has no form (*sūrah*) in our knowledge but is present “by nature” (*bil-tab'*) (Tal 30). The human soul, for example, is innately aware (*matbū'ah 'alā ann tash'ur*) of existents. It is in one way aware of them by nature, which awareness is ever present and actual; in another way, it has the capacity to become aware of them by “acquisition” (*bil-iqtisāb*). Hence, by nature, it has in its very constitution self-awareness (*shūrūhā bi-dhātihā*) continuously in state of actuality; whereas its awareness *that* it is aware of itself is something acquired and fundamentally different.

All this resemblance Mu'tazilī views like those of the influential follower of Abū Hāshim al-Jubbā'ī, 'Abd al-Jabbār (Frank MaWaMa 188). Although their position on

ma'dūm being a “thing” appears to have had wider currency than their immediate following, as we suggested,³⁸ *ma'dūm* seems to have acquired explicit designation as a “thing” with Abū Ya‘qūb al-Shahhām, Jubbā'i's teacher (van Ess EAI 192). But it should also be pointed out that *ma'dūm* signified “something known,” and, as van Ess remarks, Shahhām appears

mit seiner Lehre einem Kompromiß gefunden zu haben: Die Dinge existieren vor ihrer realen Existenz in Geiste Gottes; sie sind weder gänzlich nichtseiend, so daß auch Gott nicht von ihnen wissen könnte, noch aber ganz vorhanden, sondern im besitz einer gewissen, “idealen Dinglichkeit,” in der sie sich, obgleich noch nicht in der Schöpfung verwirklicht, schon, voneinander unterschieden. (Van Ess EAI 193).

Ma'dūm, in short, indicated something known as well as unqualified by any existence “perceptible” by the faculties. In contrast to this, what is *impossible* of existence signified what could *not* be known (Frank MaWaMa 189). Ibn Sīnā, on the other hand, had recognized at least the possibility of an appearance of a claim to the latter's knowledge, even if only a verbal one.

Frank argues further that the early Mu'tazilīs' strong concern with possibility when broaching the question of the “non-existent as an entity” all but determined the later schools' identification of *ma'dūm* solely with the “possible,” rather than with the possible and the impossible *tout court* (Frank MaWaMa 190), as consideration of “knowability” alone ordinarily implied. In short, this later treatment of all entities as possible disregarded the necessity of it being so to a *knower* and failed to accord with the epistemically-dependent distinction between impossible and possible. The Bāṣriyan Mu'tazilah acknowledged merely “the intrinsic possibility of the *ma'dūm* to become existent and the power of the autonomous agent to cause it to exist” (Frank MaWaMa

199, 202). To be sure, the Mu'tazili's made a logical distinction between the "prior possibility" of realization and the agent's power to effect an entity's existence (Frank MaWaMa 202), and it is this correlatedness that gives an epistemic dimension to their scheme (Frank MaWaMa 204). But this is a far cry from the sense Qūnavī intended when he took up the content of Divine knowledge. It still falls short of maintaining that the non-existent is possessed of an existence all the same which, while unlike that of any actually existing being, is "real" – that is to say, it is a thing (*shay'*), which is to affirm its reality, or *haqīqah*.

For Ibn Sīnā, if knowledge is more than just a function of the actual existence of the thing known, then there must be two fundamental poles to be counted as "pre-existing knowledge" – one for those objects that have acquired existence and an another for those that have not. At one end is what we have called the "sense principle," at the other, lies Divine knowledge and its "precepts" (*ahkām*). Knowledge takes its ideal form in the Divine knowledge of things before these are ever endowed with external existence. Going by the epistemic order of priority presupposed by all discursive learning, and as taught by Aristotle, one must nevertheless remember that the senses, too, display what is pedagogically "given" and "immediate," but only within a temporal dimension that the natural faculties need if they are to discharge their function. Though antithetical to Divine knowledge for this latter reason, their "givenness" is still comparable to what Islamic theologians generally regarded as "given" on another, higher plane: the "inspired" or "revealed" *core* of theological science or knowledge. *Falsafah* uses a

heuristic model where sensory data figure as a kind of genetic counterpart to revealed content. Lest the analogy be drawn too tightly, though, overruling indiscriminately the “sense principle” in favour of the “reality” lying beyond what the senses can procure would normally also mean having to embrace the *meaning* of scriptural language at the expense of the word-form that alone reveals it. The balance, if not the equivalence, has to be maintained. The senses by themselves may be insufficient for intelligibility on a physical plane, just as reckoning the word-form alone does not exhaust apprehensible meaning; but, on a discursive plane, the one cannot do without the other.

The term *haqīqī* (“real”) in Arabic philology is usually contrasted with *majāzī* (“metaphorical”), and is used to denote both objectivity and inclusiveness. In our present context, while God’s knowledge of something that is “real” is primordial – prior, that is, to ours – a “real entity” indicates the inclusive object-centeredness of that knowledge in its heuristic representation. The word *haqīqah*, however, has not been spared new creative transformation at the hands of mystics, for whom the interplay between the literal form and the inner “meaning” is a human journey as well as a manifested procession from the Divine Reality, the noblest object of knowledge.³⁹ This being so, it would seem only natural that Ibn Sīnā should express his concatenate views in epistemology and Qur’anic exegesis throughout his writings. A good instance is the following account.

Based on the conception of knowledge established so far, God, he says, performs a determinate act (*fi'l muhkam*) which grants each thing all that it needs for self-preservation

and “existence” (*fi wujūdih*) within the range of *possibility* (Tal 21). Whatever is needed for *sheer existence* Ibn Sīnā designates as the “first perfection” (*al-kamāl al-awwal*); everything beyond that is a “second perfection,” namely, “[philosophical] wisdom” (*al-hikmah*). He identifies the source for this rationale in the Qur’anic words, “Our Lord is He who hath granted each thing [*shay*] its nature [*khalqabu*] and hath given guidance [*wa hadd*]” (20:50); and, “the One who created me, it is He who guideth me” (26:78). While guidance (*al-hidāyah*) is not indispensable for sheer existence and survival, he says, nature (*khalq*) is. The term “perfection” points to a key aspect of our problem, but it will not detain our attention as yet. What is also noteworthy is the element of possibility he introduces into the picture, one that admits of movement. Since possibility “comprehends” matter (*al-māddah*), and is not equivalent to it, he reasons it is realized naturally to the extent permitted by the predisposition of matter (*al-istiḍād alladhi fīhā*). Where matter is clearly not involved, the possibility of something is “considered by itself,” as in the case of the active intellects (*al-‘uqūl al-fa‘ālāh*). There are different sorts of possibility, indicating the varying levels of the existents (*darajāt al-mawjūdāt*) construed in respect of perfection or imperfection. Only with absolute perfection (*al-kamāl al-mutlaq*) qua necessity (*baythu al-wujūb*) is there no element of possibility whatsoever; here existence is never considered together with non-existence, or actuality with potentiality, truth with falsehood.⁴⁰

It is within this general framework of contingency, in fact, that sensation comes into play first of all as an “affection” (*infiāt*) precipitated by the sensed object (Tal 23). With respect to the “instrument” (*al-ālah*), the sense organ, it is an affection insofar as

something ceases and something else occurs (Tal 77). The trouble is that the soul habitually takes as truth, in the manner suggested above, whatever experience and induction cast before it, be it a mere product of the imagination, of which only the active intellects are free (Tal 22). Neither the “separate intellects” (*al-‘uqūl al-muṣāraqah*) nor the First Being (*al-Awwāl*), on the other hand, need the intermediacy of “sensible forms” in their contemplation of their essences (*lammā kānat ‘aqilah bi-dhawātihā*) (Tal 23), since all perception at that level of the intelligible forms is strictly by means of “reasoned facts” and “causes” (*asbābihā wa ‘ilābihā*), which are unchanging. Indeed, our incapacity to know the realities of things as they really are, along with their concomitants, is due to the fact that we do not know things in the same manner as the separate intellects – through their causes. The realities are given first through our sense organs, and we know them only insofar as they exist (*mawjūdah*) and are sensed *by us* (*mahsūsah lanā*) (Tal 77).⁴¹ More generally, instrumentality is indefeasible to a knowledge parceled out into what is given and what is sought-after; more so as the givenness of the *senses*. Since man cannot do without sense organs for his cognition (Tal 23), his perception of the universals is a function of his sensation of particulars.⁴² First and foremost, he perceives particular things as sense experience (*hissan*) and sensation (*al-ihsās*), *once they have been created*, never before (Tal 25, 77). But there is here not only the makings of the general philosophical observation on the nature of human knowledge, which we met above, but an adumbration of what one modern writer has described as the “aporetic” of the individual and the universal, traceable to the controversy over Plato’s Forms relative to the

individuals that participate in them (Booth AAO 3). And the implications are as follows.

Ibn Sīnā's pronouncements on man's cognition of things through what his senses present to him should not be taken as his last word, since other types of perception have to be just as particular as those of the senses *and* yet remain universal. That is the paradox of perception. The "particular individual" is not only sensed by man but known by the immaterial intellect, though in a different sense, as we shall see below. The notion of "intelligible particular individual" (*al-shakhs al-juz'i al-maqūl*) raises a whole gamut of questions.⁴³ Assuming that it is capable of it at all, the soul must in that instance perceive, firstly, the sensible forms of the "particular individual" (*al-shakhs al-juz'i*) through its sense organs and, then, their "intelligible forms" (*suwarahā al-maqūlah*) by means of their "sensible forms" (*bi-tawassut suwarahā mahsūsah*). Furthermore, what is intelligible of the sensible forms should correspond (*mutābiqan*) to what is sensed, otherwise it could not have been intellectued from them (Tal 23). In short, man perceives the intelligibility of things (*maqūliyat al-ashyā'*) through the intermediary of what properly belongs to that which he senses (*wisārat mahsūsiyatihā*) beyond his person, his "soul alone" being insufficient for a concocted perception of the intelligible forms. The senses furnish elements of knowledge originating from outside the perceiver. This intelligible "objectiveness" is what lends immediacy and givenness, however tentative, to what would otherwise remain a vacuous solipsistic knowledge.

In Ibn Sīnā's view, the "primary premises" (*al-awā'iḥ*) here may even be compared to those of any empirical induction (*istiqrā'*) (Tal 22). But although he confirms that the

individual intelligible linked through *correspondence* to the sensed object is perceptible through the intermediary of the sensible forms (Tal 23) and then transcended, he draws nevertheless an important difference between sensation and other kinds of primary premises. He notes, for instance, that a child may be *predisposed* to apprehension through *primary* premises and principles (*al-awā'il wal-mabādī*) which he possesses without the aid of any sense organ. Further along in life, in fact, when the soul finally “separates from the body,” ready to receive the intelligibles, it can do without the bodily faculties altogether (*al-quṣwā al-jīsmīyah*), which it foresakes “without any specific intent or awareness.” The difference between these two stages partly explains why Fārābī, in his own *Talīqāt*, might have seemed to Fazlur Rahman to be contradicting his other doctrines when he asserted that both the potential and the actualized intellects may survive after death, being also separate (Rahman PrI 65). I find nothing anomalous in this, unless Rahman is assuming that Fārābī could not have believed that there is some residual, separate “reality” – which is what it comes down to in the end – beyond what the various faculties, including even the intellectual faculty, can collectively procure. As Davidson emphasized, the human intellect is merely prepared by these faculties for reception of a knowledge from without (Davidson AAA 95). No doubt, so long as the soul is enveloped in matter it cannot know its pure essence (*mujarrad dhātihā*), the goal of its search, nor any of those attributes which would attach to it once it enters a state of immateriality (*mujarradah*) (Tal 23, 107). It needs to *learn* (i.e. through effort and acquisition) that should it finally intellect its essence, it would be as perfect as the

intellects contemplating their own essence (Tal 107).

If Ibn Sīnā here is, among other things, nudging us to an understanding of theoretical reflection as only a preparatory stage before the Active Intellect's noetic suffusion,⁴⁴ it is exactly how Qūnāvī takes him to be saying – although there is another edge to his argument that is of more than just propaedeutic interest and where, again, as Qūnāvī claims, accords a certain spiritual reality to theoretical reflection. To answer the point about the possibility of residual spiritual survival in the afterlife, however, it is clear that in the distant event of intellectual illumination all hindrance posed by the bodily faculties – or any other faculty, for that matter – will have been removed, and the soul's own unique individuality (*al-tafarrud bi-dhātihā*) and special perceptions (*wa khāss idrākātihā*), rooted in its essence, will come to light. What this seems to signify is quite interesting. We shall seek an explanation of this notion in the rest of this chapter.

Because of the soul's dependence on sensations, the faculties force the soul always to *imagine* rather than to intellect (*mutakhayyalah tā md qūlah*) things (Tal 24). And man, if we are to understand Ibn Sīnā correctly, may perceive things in two ways. Either through the vagaries of the natural sense organs (*al-hawāss*) and the imagination (*bil-wahm*), or immaterially and “intellectually” (*aqlan*) (Tal 22). The latter allows him to participate in something called knowledge, yet without having to claim a perfect or complete knowledge demanding a *full separation* from his facultative moorings. We find that, with respect to the apprehension of the “realities of things,” Ibn Sīnā also posits two correlated types of sapient being: active and passive. The higher, active being consists

of what Ibn Sīnā calls the immaterial, “self-knowing” thing, which ostensibly closes the gap between knower and object of knowledge. In this respect, however, God remains the highest immaterial being:

the existence of the Creator is an intellected existence [*wujūd maqūl*], that is, an immaterial existence [*wujūd mujarrad*]. And every immaterial existence intellects its [own] essence. The forms to be found of Him (*al-suwar al-mawjūdah 'anhu*) are [likewise] immaterial and contemplate their own essences. (Tal 60)

God is “intellect” firstly by virtue of the fact that He is “immaterial ipseity” (*huwīyah mujarradah*): like all intellects, of course, He intellects (*āqil*) His Essence. And He is that which is intellected “because His Ipseity [‘he-ness’] is immaterial due to His Essence [*huwīyyatahu al-mujarradah li-dhātihī*]” (Tal 78).

But that He intellects and is intellected must not imply that there is a duality either in essence or in mental consideration. Mentally, any priority and posteriority here differs in terms of conceptual order (*fi tarfīb al-mafāni*), but it is inconceivable that the reality of anything could occur twice on account of this. Immateriality is supposed to ensure against that. Yet duality does arise with every theoretical attempt to apprehend the object. It must, therefore, be overcome through correspondence, though not between theoretical construct and object but between what is intellected and what items of knowledge were pre-given of the individual thing. If these must agree with each other by way of correspondence, this does not mean that the intelligibility (*maqūliyyatahu*) of the particular has always to pass through its sensibility (*hissiyatihī*). God’s own knowledge of the *universal*⁴⁵ causes and attributes allows sensory perception to find its true fulfilment, Divine knowledge (for mystical philosophy) being what imparts uniqueness to the

particular (Tal 24). This paradoxical projection from a sensory base of knowledge militates against any easy analogy between either sensory and intelligible givens, or between the sensory and the scriptural givens. There is no real symmetry.

With respect to particularization, his argument is that “each cause and attribute is a species collected within the individual [*majmū’ fi shakhsihī*] having a universal intelligible [*maḍqūl kullī*], knowledge of which is thus neither corruptible nor subject to change” (Tal 24). This, he says, is especially true of what is intellected by the First Being. Hence, the knowledge of any individual phenomenon through its universal causes⁴⁶ and attributes, each of which is a species “collected within the individual,” remains universal. Though universal in themselves, he says, in the sense of being predictable of many things, these causes and attributes are nevertheless peculiar to it (Tal 25). We ourselves would have access to a knowledge of “things” through their causes and concomitants (*bi-asbābihā wa lawāzīmihā*) if we could only know the Reality of the Necessary Being (*haqīqat wājib al-wujūd*) and what His essence demands by way of concomitants (*al-lawāzīm*) in their totality (Tal 15).

Ibn Sīnā’s views here clearly rest on the assumption that an abstract knowledge alone cannot suffice, or substitute for direct illumination. So where exactly do we situate our knowledge within this scheme of things? As matters now stand, there are really three levels of intelligence. Briefly, the first indicates that everything obtainable through human intellects – e.g. the intelligibles (*al-maḍqūlāt*) – is “potential” in every respect, being merely potentially knowable (Tal 27). Only here, as we said, the “primaries” possess a

unique structural necessity and cannot be *acquired*; how they occur or whence they originate is beyond our present ken. Something must already be given at this lowest level for there to be knowledge in other respects. The second type of intellect, God's, is *actual in every respect*. Unlike the dualism that attends solipsistic knowledge, knowledge of His essence for Him is attached to nothing else. Moreover, that "God is everything" to Ibn Sīnā signifies that He *knows* everything through intellect. A third type is that which is *potential in one respect but actual in another*. It is said *by analogy* with the "First Being" (*bil-qiyās ilā al-Awwal*) to intellect Him, although "it is He who grants all things both intellect and knowledge." He gives the intellects existence by connecting their knowledge to Him, which makes them actual at least in one aspect; if they are considered in themselves, then the potential aspect comes to view. All things particular or individual (*shakhsī*) are said to be intelligible in exactly this manner (Tal 28).

According to this scheme, the scientific knowledge of things requires first that the "individual" object be expressed as an "abstracted particular quiddity" (*māhiyah mujarradah juz'iyah*), which is impermanent (*fāsidah*) insofar as it is commensurate to it and occurs in the mind through sensation (Tal 26). At this level, one ordinarily speaks of knowledge of the "individual" only after the coming into being of the individual, never before. The intelligible concept (*al-ma'nā al-maqūl*) is said to be particular (*juz'*) in this respect. Contrasted to this is a knowledge of the individual *through its causes*, being neither particular nor impermanent. Such a knowledge holds before, during and after the latter comes into being (*hudūthibhā*), based on a single definition (*'alla hadd wāhid*). The First

Being intellects the impermanent individual thing (*al-shakhs al-fāsid*) in this universal respect, such that neither His knowledge nor the object of knowledge (*maṭṭūmūhu*) is subject to change. Here, “intellec[t]ion” is employed in only two opposite senses, depending on whether the reference is to an impermanent individual, whose intelligible may be particular and corruptible, but intellected all the same; or to an individual thing where the species is “collected” in its individual (*nawfūhu majmūl fi shakhs*) and whose intelligible is universal. In the former case, no definition can be given. Whereas what the First Being intellects of the individual is, as we said, the intelligible form, e.g. absolute humanity (*al-insāniyah al-mutlaqah*), rather than some humanity particularized through accidents and concomitants that indicate something that is sensible. This, at least, is what Ibn Sīnā derives from “knowledge” as an essential attribute of God having a peculiar priority of its own relative to other attributes.

The most glaring difficulty has to do with the status of knowledge obtained through the potential intellect, which, while facing its object has not achieved identity with it. The errancy of its cogitative powers is, as we noted, due to the theoretical duality of its mental conception. The question to be asked is the following. How can the Necessary of Existence, known to Himself or knowing its own essence, and thus completely “self-identical,” be known by a “potential intellect” that fails in this regard, and what does this knowledge entail? (Tal 20). In principle, He cannot, if by intellect we mean the limited faculty or bodily instruments of the soul, based as they are on the “sense principle.” Potential intellect can relate only to *impermanent* things and their intellection: to its

potentiality corresponds the corruptible individuality of external objects. But to the actuality of separate intellect corresponds the permanence of the noetic object, inseparable from it save by conceptual distinction. The contemplation of God in a state of immateriality entails several things. In the contemplation of the Creator, for example,

I intellect Him [*aqaltu al-bār*] through His concomitants [*lawāzimihī*] and from His concomitants the existence of these concepts through Him. So, I intellect Him as the source [*mabda'an*] of these concepts and intellect Him as He is in Himself in existence, such that this very intellection [*al-maqūlah*] is existence itself. Thus, when I know that He is their source, the occurrence of this consists in my mentally attaining [*hasala fi dhībñi*] His Form qua immaterial form [*sūratān mujarradah*], and in finding in my mind His concomitants to be immaterial. Therefore, their existence in my mind is identical to their intelligibility... (Tal 60)

This marks out the furthest limit of formal reasoning short of actually pretending to embody whole that knowledge. Ibn Sīnā is trying to show what the highest obtainable philosophical knowledge must consist of without having to substitute this for what lies beyond the formal construct as opposed to the object directly perceived. What lay beyond philosophical formality he never made clear in his lifetime, aside from a certain frequency in references to a new science. But there are already interesting hints of a full-fledged philosophy of language and Divine speech. Distinguishing the “two phases of human thought,” as Davidson states, Ibn Sīnā

explained that in the first phase, the active intellect emanates an “absolute” or “abstract” intellect, in which thought is not differentiated. Thought becomes differentiated in the second phase, which is an emanation beginning and ending within the soul. Avicenna states clearly that the second phase comes about “through the mediacy of cognition.” From the absolute intellect, which had been emanated in the first phase, the cogitative faculty induces the further emanation of “differentiated forms,” it puts those forms into “terms” [*affāz*], and it “arranges[s]” the terms in sequences. Since differentiated knowledge emerges through the mediation of the cogitative faculty, Avicenna terms such knowledge “cogitative,” as distinct from the undifferentiated “simple knowledge” of the first of the two phases. Since the soul possesses differentiated knowledge “insofar as it is soul” – whereas it receives the first phase not insofar as it is a soul but by virtue of its

intellect – he also calls such knowledge “soul-knowledge” [*nafsāni*]. (Davidson AAA 96)

The elucidation of this had to await the later schools of thought, founded on elaborate mystical philosophical doctrines. According to Ibn Sīnā, though, as far as the potential intellect is able to determine through its own power, the unitary knowledge of God also entailed that “God is everything.” Although He intellects the intelligibles in a perpetual state of actuality, His intellection is of an infinite number of things. But He is also the very *cause* of every *thing* intelligible (Tal 28).

Shay' and *ashyā'* here designate the content of Divine knowledge, in reference to what Ibn Sīnā calls primary things (*al-awā'iḥ*) (Tal 29). But since only one act can emanate from a simple thing, God need have only one, simple “emanating act,” called the “first concomitant” (*al-tāzim al-awwāḥ*); this concomitant happens to be part of what the potential intellect must formally know about God (Tal 27). Ibn Sīnā offers up our own “primaries” (*al-awā'iḥ*) as the closest epistemic equivalent humanly possible to the single, *active* Divine knowing. For it is, first, as “primaries” that the only knowledge accessible to *human* intellects, the first of three types of intellect, can be properly broached. By their very nature, primary things cannot be said to “come into existence” one moment and then be prevented from “having existence” the next (Tal 29). As we observed above, they possess a kind of structural necessity when represented systematically and discursively. Now, because God contemplates things all together, not one by one (Tal 28), all things intelligible are present in Him in their every state before and during their existence without triggering any change in Him whatsoever. That God knows the “particular things” (*al-ashyā'* *al-juz̄īyah*) does not, therefore, entail anything bolder than

that He knows all things through His essence, it being their source. For He intellects His own essence and the concomitants of His concomitants and so on up to the furthest existence (*illa aqṣā al-wujūd*). By the same token, He knows each of the primary existents (*awā'il al-mawjūdāt*), their concomitants and the concomitants of their concomitants, all the way to the most distant. In relation to Him, everything is necessary of existence. Intellecting this or that individual through its causes, His mere knowledge of the existent and its “inscription” (*irtisāmuḥu*) acts as the cause of its existence (Tal 29), since the cause of their existence is that He knows them for all eternity.

To go back to a position first held by Aristotle, let us conclude with a consideration of Ibn Sīnā’s construal of philosophical wisdom (*hikmah*) as conceptually coinciding with the notion of “complete knowledge” (*al-ilm al-tāmm*), but not identical to it (Tal 20). A thing is said to be fully and completely known only when its cause is known; whereas definition, to which “conception” happens of course to be closely tied, preempts the mental operation necessary for causal knowledge. Ironically, even if demonstration were given full play to procure for us a knowledge of the cause, cause is not quite what we want to know about God: for He has no cause. Demonstrative knowledge in this limited sense tells us something about an external object. The science we are looking for is not based on the concept rooted in the sense principle, but an active, immaterial intelligibility that instructs us as to differentiated order according to a primary unity that takes precedence over all parts and itself acts as their cause. Aristotle did not explain how this was to be done. And, according to Ibn Sīnā, forming a conception of that

which has no cause can only be done directly through the essence, for it is only in that sense that God may be thought of ultimately as a “knowable object” (*ma'lūm*). There is no definition which can mediate knowledge of Him. Yet He (that is, His Essence) is “conceptualizable” directly through His Essence – above all, to Himself (Tal 21), being in need of nothing else beside that Essence.

In this way, the meaning of “Wise” (*hakīm*) is kept within the formal, philosophically discernible dimensions in God’s knowledge of His essence; His “wisdom” is that He knows His essence, and through this essence He knows the causes of everything. “essence” is accorded much more dynamism as a technical concept than one is apt at first to grant. This is ably brought home by Qūnāvī. But it is quite different from what a response to the quidditive inertness of the query “What is it?” informs about, and different also from demonstrative knowledge by cause; although here, too, is found some glimmering of “wisdom.” There is an active sense of “essence” which, though attached to God as *He is in Himself*, nevertheless constitutes the source which the causal knowledge of other things tends to and finds its ultimate resolution in. Acting as the source allows it to *confer*, first and foremost, a mode of “oneness” upon creation. But that is something we shall investigate in more detail later in this study. It remains that at the very pinnacle of causal knowledge as presented to the potential intellect lies God’s knowledge. From our vantage point, it is closely intertwined with the causal knowledge of things by virtue of the fact that He knows His concomitants and the concomitants of His concomitants, from His Essence, through the arrangement of cause and effect (*‘alā tarfīb al-sababī wal-*

musabbabi) (Tal 14).

One is at pains sometimes to decide, based on the text, whether Ibn Sīnā regarded this knowledge as accessible to the “potential intellects” of human beings, on the assumption that they can surpass the limits of their faculties. But perhaps the ambiguity was intended with the anonymous use of the word “intellect,” effectively standing for the most common denominator for all instantiations of the intellect, some of which are potential, some actual. All we can say about Ibn Sīnā’s true convictions on this matter is that our theoretical access is as good as the tools we use to refer to the nature of Divine knowledge. And philosophical knowledge can humbly inform us only that God knows such and such an effect to be dependent on such and such a cause which corresponds to it (*mutābiq labu*), etc. (Tal 14). He knows all things in a universal way; that is, His knowledge of existents is universal. Because His knowledge encompasses (*ahāt*) the particulars and the order of existents in a universal way, the world is known as a *single* intelligible order (*nizām al-‘ālam nizām wāhid ayy nizām mdqūl*). If His knowledge did not comprehend the oneness of the intelligible order (*wahdāniyat al-nizām al-mdqūl*), He would not know the world in its “reality” (*haqīqatib*), even though He is said to be Wise. His Wisdom is His knowledge through His essence precisely *in this unique respect*. That lesser intellects may even conceive of such wisdom is largely due to the inherent “ambiguity” of the theoretical function, which Qūnāvī was keen to acknowledge.

What Ibn Sīnā did not do was to base his views on man’s knowledge of the realities on the idea that Divine knowledge as such was attainable by virtue of the state of

immateriality gained by moving from the sensory level toward an intellectual state devoid of sense experience. Such an avenue was foreclosed by the unexpungeable impermanence associated with the “sense principle.” The “holy intellect” was thought to be the highest attainable by any human being, the Divine light understood only with reference to its recipient and, more particularly, to the *human* condition where it finds its most perfect recipient. Indeed, that the facultative shortcomings insisted upon almost uniformly by Islamic thinkers were not forcibly incompatible with a genuine perception in the same individual appears defensible. Both Ibn Sīnā and, more elaborately, Qūnāvī maintained that one might be utterly certain that something is true even in the absence of rational proof. In this case, the very faculties that confounded man’s perception merely render the demonstration inconclusive.

Genuine truth required an inscrutably sublime, creative perception that lay beyond the reach of ordinary, even extraordinary, human “natural faculties,” one that was the *sine qua non* of human knowledge for which no proof suffices. It is exactly the inclusiveness of demonstration, despite inner certainty, which Qūnāvī sets out to explain in the first part of the Introduction to *Ijāz al-bayān*, as we will now see in the next chapter.

NOTES

1. Eliot SEM 287.
2. That is, regardless of personal belief. As T.S. Eliot once said, “I deny, in short, that the reader must share the beliefs of the poet in order to enjoy the poetry fully” (Eliot SED 269). While theoretically true, Eliot later sagaciously thought back with this qualification:

Actually, one probably has more pleasure in the poetry when one shares the beliefs of the poet. On the other hand there is a distinct pleasure in enjoying poetry as poetry when one does *not* share the beliefs, analogous to the pleasure of ‘mastering’ other men’s philosophical systems. It would appear that ‘literary appreciation’ is an abstraction, and pure poetry a phantom; and that both in creation and enjoyment much always enters which is, from the point of view of the ‘Art’, irrelevant. (Eliot SED 271)

3. Lat. *scire, noscere*.
4. Lat. *experiencia, experimentum*.
5. Lat. *ratio, sermo, oratio, mentio*.
6. Lat. *sapientia*.
7. Cf. Hope’s more literal translation: “But, of the traits specified, that of knowing totally must be his whose knowledge forms a systematic whole; for in a way he knows something about any given subject.” (Met [Hope] 6)
8. Ross points out that the following syllogism is implied in these passages (Met [Ross Commentary] 121):

Knowledge that is διδασκαλικωτέρα is σοφία.
Knowledge of causes is διδασκαλικωτέρα.
Therefore knowledge of causes is σοφία.

9. It is true that ἐμπειρία is occasionally accorded a wider, more pregnant sense apparently indistinguishable from νοῦς; νοῦς as in σοφία, which knows first principle (Met [Ross Commentary] 122). The ἐμπειρία of ἀμέσα (immediate) mentioned in PoA 72^b 19 is affirmed as being ἀναπόδεικτος (undemonstrated), while in 88^b 36 ἐμπειρία ἀναπόδεικτος is employed with νοῦς seemingly as an equivalent expression (Met [Ross Commentary] 122). Aristotle frequently used the term ἐμπειρία ἀπόδεικτική, suggesting that the qualification ἐμπειρία ἀναπόδεικτος (“undemonstrated knowledge”) was not ordinarily considered a contradiction in terms.

10. He states in the *al-Ishārāt wal-tanbīhāt* the following:

Ne fais donc pas attention à ce qui se dit: les démonstratifs seraient nécessaires, les dialectiques seraient possibles la plupart du temps; les rhétoriques, possibles à chances égales sans [que la fréquence] penche en leur faveur comme sans rareté; les poétiques enfin seraient menteurs et impossibles. Il n'y a point à prendre cela en considération, et le Maître de la logique ne l'a pas indiqué. (SIT [Goichon] 224-25)

11. For ḍ̄t̄, see Liddell-Scott GrLex 1265.
12. This point was not missed by Ghazzālī in his *Munqidh min al-dālāl*, where he refers to the nature of knowledge sought in demonstration with respect to the certainty of the pre-given fact (cf. Jabre MD 13-4).
13. His formal account is presented in the next several lines.
14. The latter being that of a mathematician, for example.
15. Although he adds that the more exact and prior science is the one that contains both types of knowledge, as the following makes clear (87¹ 27:31).
16. He contends that,

The premisses must be the causes of the conclusion, better known than it and prior to it; its causes, since we possess scientific knowledge of a thing only when we know its cause; prior, in order to be causes; antecedently known, this antecedent knowledge being not our mere understanding of the meaning, but knowledge of the fact as well (PoA 71^b 29-33).

17. One may try to deny this by arguing that once the (primary) premises are assumed to be any further, scientific knowledge should be considered superfluous or even questionable (PoA 72^b 5-18), since it can never surpass the former apodictically in any meaningful sense. Aristotle has had here to reject the sweeping view that only those things are knowable which can be demonstrated, arguing that an infinite regress would result if the series did not end in immediate truths; some things cannot be demonstrated. Later he argues,

Since the object of pure scientific knowledge cannot be other than it is, the truth obtained by demonstrative knowledge will be necessary. And since demonstrative knowledge is only present when we have a demonstration, it follows that demonstration is an inference from necessary truths. (PoA 73a 20-4).

The entire problem has created considerable difficulties, with reverberations as much in Islamic philosophic (especially Ibn Sīnā) as in mysticism.

18. That is, "It is clear that if the conclusion is to show an attribute inhering as such... " (PoA 75^b 37-9).
19. Aristotle had had to contend with immense difficulties when he sought to coordinate among key terms like definition, essential nature, cause, etc, each of which was based on a

specific question about the object. The problem has a direct bearing on the themes we intend to discuss from Qūnāvī's works. The relation between definition and demonstration was also of great interest to Suhrawardī. For a cursory overview of his philosophical project, see Ziai KAI 55, 67, 85-6; Suhrawardī himself remains the best source (see *inter alia* SHI II 20-2, SKT 75-80).

20. Short of this, “a proof even from true, indemonstrable, and immediate premises does not constitute knowledge” (75^b9:39).

Our knowledge of any attribute's connexion with a subject is accidental unless we know that connexion through the middle term in virtue of which it inheres, and as an inference from basic premisses essential and “*appropriate*” (my emphasis) to the subject... (76^a 9:4-6)

The elementary demand for “appropriateness” is critical to deciding whether a given syllogism is able to display the actual *cause* or merely shows through the effect that something, *is*, i.e. in a copulative sense; Ibn Sīnā has expended much effort to explain the difference. Furthermore, every science has its own domain, a single genus (PoA 87^a 28:37-8). In other words, he says, “all the subjects constituted out of the primary entities of the genus – i.e. the parts of this total subject – and their essential properties” (PoA 87^a 28:37-8). This genus, in turn, possesses certain basic truths (unprovable within that science) that must be assumed (76^a 10:31). Formally, this may be expressed as follows:

if the middle term also belongs essentially to the minor, the middle must belong to the same kind as the major and minor terms. (PoA 76^a 9:8-9).

In a disciplinary sense, this means that there are always basic truths “peculiar” to each demonstrative science, although certain truths may be common to several (76^a 9:38-9); not every question is relevant to a given demonstrative science. The issue of appropriateness, therefore, touches on two aspects of knowledge: one classificatory, relating each of the demonstrative sciences to the rest, the other having to do exclusively with logical predication. There is a constant attempt to correlate the two, and we shall see how Ibn Sīnā and Qūnāvī try to resolve the matter in their respective ways.

21. Aristotle indeed held that “the most exact of the sciences are those which deal most with first principles; for those which involve fewer principles are more exact than those which involve additional principles, e.g. arithmetic and geometry” (Met 982^a 25-7).

22. As Aristotle put it, “There are... as many ‘elements’ of the demonstrated conclusion as there are middle terms, since it is propositions containing these middle terms that are the basic premisses on which the demonstration rests...” (84^b 23:26-8).

23. The problem now becomes how both to reveal the essential nature and to show “in what way it can be reduced to demonstration” (90^a 3:36) – if at all, since not everything demonstrable can be defined (90^b 3:18). Can the same stability found in definition be assured in demonstration without causing us to fall into a circular reasoning? We shall not follow Aristotle's sinuous arguments on this point but rather how he resolves to answer the question raised in Met 93^a 8:4-6, simply whether or not knowing the essential nature is identical to knowing the cause. If they

are distinct (i.e. if essential nature has a cause distinct from itself), as we would have to presuppose for the strict purpose of the syllogism – assuming that the essential nature is at all demonstrable – the cause may still be the middle term in its demonstration. But Aristotle is hardly committed to this view. He insists that if the essential nature of anything has a cause distinct from itself, it can be known *neither with nor without demonstration*. Strictly speaking, of course, there is no demonstrative syllogism of essential nature. But it is no less true that essential nature can be laid bare only through the demonstrative syllogism (93^b 8:15-20). The fact remains that, ideally, there are things that have a cause but from which the cause is not distinct; in other words, there are essential natures which, qua immediate, become the “basic premises” whose “that” and “what” must *both* be assumed (93^b 9:21-4).

24. Lat. *divinum*.

25. The first point is fundamental to Greek natural theology qua science of explanation. That “God” must be *ἀρχή*, or cause and first principle, is an idea that predates Aristotle and Plato. The pre-Socratic search for genetic explanations was a response to the need for “a hypothetical, explanatory entity” that could provide a scientific account of the world (Gerson GGP 3). The term *ἀρχή* itself signified a beginning or “the principle of any orderly arrangement” whatsoever, standing also for the ultimate or overriding principle of explanation. On Simplicius’ account (*Physics* 1097.2), “a spring, the heart, an individual, a point and the government are all called *ἀρχή*, though they differ from each other so much in nature. (Urmson GPV 32). One might easily infer from this that the Greeks’ interest in God was dictated by nothing more than a preoccupation with *causal* explanation. This would not have distinguished them appreciably from, say, the medical tradition with which ancient Greek philosophy had been so closely allied. Ancient causal explanations were needed to account for what we may, with L.P. Gerson, peripherally call “non-evident entities,” both “that which is *de facto* and that which is in principle unavailable to the senses” (GGP 3). They require a type of inference which presupposes that causes are somehow revealed in their effects (e.g. the observed symptoms of an illness), without this implying any strict deduction from effect to cause. The first hurdle to be overcome in theology was how a unique *ἀρχή*, being entirely separate from matter, can act as a *principle* of creation is not immediately obvious. What made causal cosmogony palatable to the pre-Socratics was precisely that cause and effect had certain affinities as *natural* substances (Gerson GGP 7). For example, water may serve as the primal cause of the rest of the elements and of the world’s creation; or fire, etc. All these elements act as “causal principles,” although they themselves belong to the natural world. While causality in the ordinary sense may plausibly explain natural objects, knowledge of God as cause or *ἀρχή* entailed some additional considerations that raised it above other kinds of knowledge. God conceived as *ἀρχή* is different from the causal factors commonly inferred in the world of the senses. The Greeks insisted on a *separate* causal principle, or *ἀρχή*, that was characteristically a monotheistic deity, although divinity was also spoken of in the plural. One reason, intrinsic to the Greek scientific endeavour itself, is, as Gerson proposes, the following.

An illuminating contemporary example of this feature of science is the working hypothesis among cosmologists that the four basic forces of nature can be explained as expressions of a single, unified force. The germ of such a tendency towards simplification is already evident in the technical use of the concept of

arche⁻. Thus, an *arche*⁻ which is different from that which it explains will stand in a one-many relation to the data. A number of *archai* may be posited to explain different data. Yet the more complex the nature of the posited *archai*, the greater is the tendency to seek out another *arche*⁻ for these. Alternatively, as the posited *arche*⁻ is made more simple and posited to explain a greater diversity of data, the tendency towards a reduction in their number is obvious. For the more each *arche*⁻ explains, the fewer are needed. Thus, a tendency in the development of natural theology is explained by its essentially scientific character. (Gerson GGP 7-8)

Although the object of Aristotle's universal science of being *qua* being had to be unqualifiedly separate – only a separate substance counted as *arche*, or an ultimate explanans itself needing no explanation – he and Greek philosophy did not abandon those objectives which made theology what it is. Philosophical theology remained “the abiding underlying link within Greek philosophy” and “the common ground which made dialogue among them a fact” (Gerson GGP 13). There is considerable “convergence” among Greek thinkers on those attributes of $\alpha\rho\chi\eta$ even which give the “uncaused cause” the unmistakable character of a deity. While the need to show that divine attributes can be *scientifically* known (Gerson GGP 13) was a vital concern for Christian, Judaic and Islamic thought, it was also felt by Greek philosophy, which was itself committed to a *logos* of *theos* whose explicit identification of the *arche* with God was a most telling feature. This point brings us back to the second question noted by Aristotle above, concerning whether an explanatory science of God *qua* cause either God alone can have or God above all others.

26. *Lat. intellectus.*

27. If Divine thought were not the “*act of thinking*” itself but a mere potentiality, the continuation of thought would lead to weariness, since it has to think of that which is most divine and precious, without ever changing (Met 1074^b 26-7); moreover, there would remain something more precious than thought (1074^b 29-30), there being things which are better left unthought. In this general sense, “thinking” and “the *act of thinking*” may be performed even by the one who thinks of the worst thing in the world and, therefore, would not be regarded as the best of things (1074^b 30-2): there would be something better still than thought.

28. However, there are cases where knowledge itself ($\epsilon\pi\iota\sigma\tau\eta\mu\eta$) is the object ($\pi\rho\alpha\gamma\mu\alpha$). He explains:

In the productive sciences it is the substance or essence of the object, matter omitted, and in the theoretical sciences the definition or the act of thinking is the object. Since, then, thought and the object of thought are not different in the case of things that have matter, the divine thought and its object will be the same, i.e. the thinking will be one with the object of its thought. (Met 1075a)

This noetic exception, based on the claim that the $\alpha\rho\chi\eta$ is thinking, was disputed by Plotinus, who argued that thinking always required a distinction between thinker and object of thought; wherever there is thought there must be duality and, hence, no primary principle (Gerson GGP 193). He did agree, though, that the primary thinker is also a self-thinker. In a strictly theoretical

sense, Qūnāvī, while no Neo-Platonist, certainly would not have quibbled with that. Ironically, Aristotle's motive for identifying *voūs* and *voeōis* was not only to remove the possibility of potency, but also to safeguard unity. Plotinus' objection was that this identification itself presupposed a distinction between the subject and its activity that preempted unity at the source.

29. This is a typical Avicennan position (cf. Tal 48).

30. For example, as debated by the Nestorian Christian Abū Bishr Mattā b. Yūnus (ca. 256-328/ca.870-940) and Muslim *mutakallim*, jurist and philologist Abū Sa‘īd al-Sīrāfi (280-368/893-979). Abū Bishr's Aristotelian bias was hardly conventional in its insistence on the universal validity of logical jargon and applications; whereas Sīrāfi denied this and opted for language-dependence – though, it is important also to note, without the inner meanings or ideas (*mā‘āni*) that then need to be rendered in appropriate language. (Cf. Mahdi LLI 51-83).

31. This refers to *qarīban aw ba‘idān* (cf. Ījī MIK 7).

32. Sextus Empiricus stated that,

Our attitude is similar when we say, “All things are non-apprehensible.” For we interpret the words “all things” and supply the additional qualification “to me” in a similar way as before. Consequently, what we say is this: “In all the dogmatic investigations I have inspected, the non-evident things they speculate about appear to me non-apprehensible.” And this does not mean that the Sceptic is absolutely certain that the things which the dogmatics speculate about are of such a nature as to be non-apprehensible, but simply that he is reporting his own state of mind about the matter. He expresses this state of mind when he says, “I suppose that because of the equal validity of the things opposed I have thus far not been able to apprehend any of those things; and for the same reason all arguments aimed at making us refute ourselves seem to me to be irrelevant to the things we report on.” (SES 84)

33. In the latter case, he can perceive merely one of God's concomitants (*lāwāqimihī*) and what is perceptible here of its truth is, at most, the “necessity of existence” (*wujūb al-wujūd*), which is the most distinctly characteristic (*akhass*) of the Divine concomitants (Tal 34). In other words, once established, Ibn Sīnā's structural distinction applies at every level. Not only is it abundantly clear that apprehending the realities of things is not within the power of mortals (*al-wuqūf al-haqā‘iq al-ashyā‘ laysa fi qudrat al-bashar*), but we are at the same time informed about what is knowable of these realities and what is not (Tal 34). In the case of God, we only know “that by necessity He has existence or that for which existence is necessary,” which is a concomitant His, not a reality. The point seems nevertheless central to the discussion here as it was in their correspondence.

34. “Constitutive” indicating that which is part of the quiddity, as opposed to the accidental, concomitant or derived (Goichon, *Lexique* 606:328).

35. See Suhravardī's brief remarks on the notion of “*haqīqah*” in the “Third Rule” in SHI II 15-6. On the uses of the notion of *shay'* from an historical point of view, see van Ess EAI 187-200. He

describes its relation to the “reality” as follows:

„„Ding“ heißt alles, was im Wissen Gottes enthalten ist. Wenn man jedoch an das menschliche Wissen dachte, so bedeutete dies nichts anderes, als daß alle psychischen Bewußtseinsinhalte zu objektiven Realitäten erhoben waren, daß auch das Irreale, ein „Wissensinhalt“ immerhin, mit unter die „Ding“ einbeschlossen war – womit der Lehre vom *ens in potentia* der Boden entzogen war. Abū Ḥaṣim stellte sich demgegenüber auf den Standpunkt, daß man Irreales nur durch Vergleich und Analogie mit Realem erkenne (Icī II 212,3); Wissen um Irreales ist ein „Wissen ohne Objekt“ (*ilm tā mā tūma labū*; vgl. Cuwainī, *Sāmil* 36, -7f.), denn das Irreale ist kein „Ding“ – Ṣāḥḥām’s These, daß nur das *mādūm mumkin* ein „Ding“ sei! –, das Wissbare (*mātūm*) aber immer *ṣay*’ (vgl. Icī VI 59, 4ff. mit weitere Diskussion). (Van Ess EAI 195-96)

36. *Al-mādūm al-mumkin*, the *ens in potentia*, is synonymous with *haqīqah* and *thābit*.
37. The section on *Ideengeschichtliches* should, in particular, should be consulted (Nyberg EKS 44-56).
38. Cf. van Ess EAI 191 in the case of *ījt*.
39. This is particularly evident in the works of Suhravardī. Although his article focuses mainly on literary theory, Wolfhart Heinrichs offers some brief introductory remarks on links between Arabic literary theory, Qur’anic interpretation, theology and mysticism. See Heinrichs SiHeLi 253-84 and his GeHaDi 111-40.
40. According to Ibn Sīnā, by moving from the known to the unknown, as in science, the soul betrays the presence of an element of potentiality, as we shall see, something which is at first unknown and in a potential state and then becomes known actually (Tal 168). There is nothing potential, on the other hand, in pure intellect (*al-aql al-mahd*); everything in it that is intellected is always present with it (*hādiran mā abu dā’iman*) (Tal 168). Both the First Being and all other “immaterial beings” share in a type of “intellectuality” (*aqlīyyah*) which the limited faculties of perception do not partake of and the soul only by separating from matter. The “intellectuality of a thing” (*aqlīyat al-shay*), in the manner employed by Ibn Sīnā here, then, indicates primarily its separation (*tajrīdahū*) from matter (Tal 80). Its meaning, he says, is that both the one who intellects (*al-āqil*) and what is intellected (*al-maṭqūl*), the intelligible, are separate from matter (Tal 81) – which, in other words, applies to every intellect. The thing, he says, whose existence is intellectual (*wujūd ‘aqlī*), that is, immaterial (*mujarrad*), is the intellect; and so is “that whose essence belong to itself” (*alladhī huwa labu dhātuhu*) – i.e. does not exist for anything else, as does the accident for the substance (Tal 77). It cannot be possessed, act as an instrument, attribute or accident, in the manner of the faculties to the soul (Tal 77).
41. In principle, if we ourselves knew all the causes, we too would have a universal knowledge, without having to suffer any change (Tal 14). The problem, he reiterates, is that we cannot avoid mentally *imagining* at least some of the causes, even if we are able to intellect others (Tal 14).

42. As Ibn Sīnā otherwise put it, the universal concepts (*al-ma‘ānī al-kulliyyah*) must be taken in respect of what particular is suggested by its knowledge.

43. As Ibn Sīnā puts it,

The individual intelligible is that whose species [*naw‘uhu*] is collected within its individual [*alladhbī naw‘uhu majmū‘ fi al-shakhsibī*][check text]], does knowledge of it change. Its attributes and causes are proper to it, predicated of it alone. All that to which it is related and upon which it relies is perceptible through the intellect and, hence, does not change. (Tal 25)

44. On the historical sources for the “transcendence” of the Active Intellect, see Davidson AAA 13ff.

45. While the senses offer the particulars, there can be no knowledge without universality, and the intelligible of anything whatever is universal thanks to causes and attributes. This is the classical *aporia* described by Booth (AAO 19), citing in support Met XIII: “This is evident from the facts; for without the universal we cannot acquire knowledge, and the separation of the universal is the cause of the difficulties which we find in the Ideal theory.” His solution is that universals qua quality are “second substances” (*Categories* 3^b 13; Booth AAO 22). Ibn Sīnā’s account of universal knowledge is as follows:

Knowledge is through causes [*al-asbāb*] and acquaintance through experience [*bi-mushāhadah*]. Knowledge never changes even when it is particular. And so, our knowledge that the eclipse will take place tomorrow is composed of both knowledge and acquaintance. If it were tomorrow, there would be no [direct] indication of it [*mushār ilayhi*], but rather would be known through its causes [*ma‘lūm bi-asbābī*] and be nothing but universal knowledge. Nor could it change or be temporal. Indeed, every knowledge not apprehended through a sign [*al-ishārah*] or through a reliance on something that is a sign for it is through cause. And knowledge through cause never changes so long as the cause continues to exist. Whereas that knowledge changes which is obtained from the [external] existence of the thing and its experience. The Necessary of Existence is above that, because he does not know that thing from its [external] existence, which would make His knowledge temporal, transformable and changing. If we were to know the reality of the Necessary of Existence and what His essence requires [*tawjibuhu dhātīhī*] with respect to the emanation of all the concomitants from Him [*min sūdūr al-lawāzim kulliyyā minhu tāzīman*], one concomitant after the other up to the furthest existent, we would undoubtedly know the things in their causes and concomitants; moreover, our knowledge would not be changing. If He intellects His essence and whatever His essence requires, it is necessary that His knowledge be through the causes of things and their concomitants without changing (Tal 15).

46. Aristotle distinguished between two senses for causes: one proximate (associated with individuals), the other always general.

CHAPTER TWO

The Limits of Science

In the last chapter, we have seen how Ibn Sīnā had argued that human faculties alone were incapable of knowing the realities of things, for which the culprit cause passed under the heading of the “sense principle.” Pursuing this line of argument further, he appears to have committed himself irrevocably to the task of finding another path to the abstract knowledge of the realities. These realities were not themselves in doubt so much as the means employed to demonstrate them; hence the value of his analysis to Qūnāvī. Reason, as it would presumably have extended its scope waywardly and unchecked in search of a theoretical basis for knowledge, was chastened at Qūnāvī’s hands by a condign dose of intellectual scepticism inspired by the example of Ibn Sīnā. Refurbishing theoretical knowledge without relapsing into new philosophical hairsplitting, though, was no mean task. It required first (as with Ibn Sīnā) that sensory knowledge be unequivocally shown to be too flawed to serve as a *complete* foundation, though without denying it its appropriate didactic value in epistemology.

What is curious is that, having expressed the otherwise hazardous demurral of a doubting epistemologist, Qūnāvī should not then have been transformed into an out-and-out sceptic, a denier of the realities of things themselves. For, as an intellectual realist, he too admitted to their existence and, therefore, to their status partly as prior

knowledge and partly as *object* of knowledge, if we go by the syllogistic model to be examined more closely later in this chapter. While this did not make demonstrative science any the more divine, sensations were not simply replaced in their role as "givens." Something else needs to be given in theoretical clarification before we can be brought closer to some such legitimate appraisal of "reality" as the scope of rational expression would allow.

As we said in the last chapter, the sensorial knowledge denied us in intelligible perception is of a different order than what the primordial awareness of something *perforce* denotes. While perceived, it cannot be wholly relied on. We shall spend the better part of this chapter, first, in establishing the main principles of demonstrative science (subject, object of inquiry, etc.) and, second, in elucidating the structural content of "givenness" in order better to understand the difference that separates sensory from intelligible perception in the syllogistic division of knowledge. Finally, this will be carefully measured against what Qūnāvī has to say regarding "thing" and "thingness," in particular, as he tries to draw out those aspects of traditional Peripatetic philosophy that most readily admit of philological analysis of the *act of writing*.

§ QUNAVI'S OPENING ARGUMENT IN I'JAZ AL-BAYAN

There is a view in medieval Islamic philosophy that the denial of something need not preclude its existential affirmative. Let us begin by looking at how, in adopting a line of attack armed with this chary piece of deduction Qūnāvī hoped to steer away from the

abnegating consequences of classical sceptical arguments. Availing himself of what are typically “sceptical” devices, he hoped in the main to establish the *rational* indeterminateness of what philosophy is frequently tempted to try and secure by force of argument alone. He does this without denying the perception of the realities of things in another sense.

The “sceptical” character of Qūnawī’s opening arguments in *Ijāz al-bayān* concerning demonstrative reason is all the more interesting for its careful acknowledgement of the scriptural attachment of all theoretical activity. Unfortunately, the logical side of his science receives only intermittent treatment in his treatises, though with a convincing enough display of his expertise in this technically abstruse area of intellectual tradition to permit us at least a brief glimpse into the intellectual role that devolved, in his view, upon scripture. But we shall examine his sceptical arguments before developing some of the finer points in science and logic relevant to this thesis, and thereafter move on to his philosophy of language. All these strands of thought together will take us beyond the narrow and rather obvious structural similarities that exist with his *philosophical* – as opposed to mystical – forerunners.¹

Although the points raised below are presented in *Ijāz al-bayān*, they are identical almost verbatim to passages found in Qūnawī’s *Muṣīḥah*, one of two treatises he dispatched to Nasīr al-Dīn Tūsī during their correspondence. After some brief introductory remarks, Qūnawī begins his discussion by observing the differences in “intellectual affirmations” (*muwjibāt ‘uqūlibim*), “reflective requirements” (*muqtadāyāt*

afkārīhim) and conclusions (*nafā'iyyihā*) among the proponents of theoretical reason (*ahl al-aql al-naṣārī*), which he says are legion (IB A:16, B: 115; MQM 13). We shall have occasion to consider the reasons at greater length in the next chapter through his mystical doctrine of spiritual realization. At this early stage, he starts by referring to the perceptions (*madārik*) on account of which *theoretical* questions, to use his exact terms, or “theoretical precepts”² (*al-ahkām al-naṣāriyyah*), tend to differ according to each theorist’s own decidedly contingent “objects of inquiry” (*maṭalib*). Theoretical proofs (*al-adillah al-naṣāriyyah*) so depend on their proper objects of inquiry that sound rational argument completely free of any “reflective doubts” or objections is simply unrealizable (IB A:15, B:114; MQM 12). The result is that theoreticians are never of the same opinion on any single issue (IB A:16; B:115). What is proof (*dālit*) to one is specious to another (IB A:16, B:116; MQM 13). Truth for the observer is what he prefers or deems correct.

Qūnāvī’s point, though, is that the indeterminateness (*ishkāl*) of an object can never be conclusively argued solely on the grounds that the proof has been falsified beyond doubt or that its validity is unprovable.

We find many things whose soundness we cannot establish through demonstration [*burhān*], even though no doubt exists as to their reality, both for us and for many of those who insist on theoretical proofs [*al-mutamassikīn bil-adillah al-naṣāriyyah*.³ But we also find that many things are established through demonstrations whose soundness becomes certain to some people and to those around them during their lifetime, once they are unable to discover any premises in these demonstrations that are amiss or false; and thus no impairing doubt is entertained. So, they think the demonstrations evident and their sciences certain. After a period, they or someone else coming after them may reconsider as a result of their own perception of defects in some or all of these premises (IB A:16-7, B:116; MQM 13).

In other words, there are things which, while conceivable at one time through

demonstration, can still be reduced to mere instances of indeterminateness, or *ishkālat*. And invalidations leading to a judgment of indeterminateness may themselves be either of a specious or of a sound character (IB A:17, B:116; MQM 14). The only way of justifying, indeed, of escaping this predicament is to suggest a kind of relativism that closely connects the demonstrative enterprise with employment of human faculties variegated according to capacity. This makes the possibility of error ubiquitous, and without error the discovery of error and “the reliance [*itmi'nān*] of some people on both that which is not free of error and what one cannot be [fully] sure is wrong,” there would not be any religious (*khilāf fil-adyān*), doctrinal (*madhāhib*) and other disagreements among scholars (IB A:17; B:117). One also needs to note that what some theoreticians confidently agree, as a matter of course, is sound should not be accorded the same weight of an exact contrary view (*mukhālifah*) held by other theoreticians. This is not to say that either the preference (*tarjīh*) of one option or the unity between two opposite statements (*al-jānt bayn al-qawlayn aw al-aqwāl al-mutanāqidah*) is unassailable so long as a correlation exists where one statement implies affirmation and the other its contrary (IB A:17-8; B:117). The two opposite statements remain irredeemably separate so long as the correlation is upheld. One alternative cannot be given preference over the other solely by virtue of a demonstration of the reason or factor of preference (*murajjib*), since, Qūnāvī reasons, one side has the exact same status as that of its opposite (IB A:18; B:117). Yet, if there were no demonstration at all, there would not even be a preference, there being no reason for the preference in the first place. Briefly, no certainty or

complete satisfaction can ever be achieved through what thought and theoretical proofs alone can yield.

For at least some of the above, Qūnawī appears to be relying on a species of equipollence, which consists in balancing any given proposition against its opposite. The technique was commonly used by the Greek Sceptics in order to prove at least the *apparent* impotence of reason when applied to complex metaphysical questions and to establish a mental state where all judgement is banished.⁴ To be sure, Qūnawī's was not simply a *sceptical* critique of reason and its possibilities, aiming to achieve a state of "mental tranquility" through a suspension of judgement. If we go by Sextus Empiricus' own definition, a sceptic is one who has the "ability to place in antithesis, in any manner whatsoever, appearances and judgements, and thus – because of the equality of force in the objects and arguments opposed – to come first of all to a suspension of judgement and then to mental tranquility" (SES 32-3). As James Collins explains, Sextus Empiricus himself may not have "intend[ed] to deny God's existence and human knowledge thereof but only to preserve the skeptical suspension of judgement" (Collins GMP 34). Moreover, the sceptical argument was not without its salutary effects whenever it was deployed against those who put forward highly speculative theoretical claims about God or the inner constitutive reality of anything. But the method was not meant to demolish religious belief and practices – as intellectual libertinism and dilettantism in the early modern period, enamoured of the Greek sceptics, have sought to do in France and elsewhere.⁵ It is not surprising, therefore, that, for Qūnawī, embracing a critical view of

reason did not obscure the fact that many proponents of theory and proof (*ahl al-nazar wal-dalīl*) – so inadequate as these may be for the purposes they are intended to serve – are otherwise “quite resolute [*jazman*] in regard to many matters over which they harbour no doubts whatsoever” and in which, indeed, they have found firm anchorage (IB A:18; B:117). But whence do they acquire this resoluteness?

He answers by pointing to their “state” (*hālubum*).⁶ This resoluteness bears comparison in one sense with that found among the “Masters of Tasting” (*ahl al-adhwāq*); and, in another, with that of the “Masters of the Imagination” (*ahl al-wahm*), especially in respect of the intellect (*al-‘aql*) with the admission of the premises (*fi taslim al-muqaddamāt*) and the clinching of the conclusion (*wal-tawaqquf fi al-natījah*) (IB A:18; B:117-8). The imagination, it might be recalled, has a positing function, where images are essentially deposited for use by the intellect in its synthesizing activity. The People of Tasting, on the other hand, are those whom Ibn ‘Arabī described as being in possession of what he called a “knowledge of the states” (*ilm al-ahwāl*),⁷ which occurs to them only through direct experience, or “tasting” (*dhawq*) (FuM I 67:139, *l.* 11). Ibn ‘Arabī himself had divided knowledge into three categories: knowledge by intellect (*ilm al-‘aql*), knowledge of the states and knowledge of the secrets (*ilm al-asrār*). Briefly, the first may either be a “necessary” form of knowledge (*darūratan*), i.e. intuitive, or result from the study of a proof (*aw ‘aqib nazār fi dalīl*) (FuM I 66:139, *l.* 8). Through it one seeks principally “to differentiate the true from the false” (FuM I 66:139, *l.* 10). While this is the same distinction made by Ibn Sīnā between conception and assent defining the types of

premises possible for a syllogism, Ibn ‘Arabī here uses the vocabulary of *kalām* instead of *falsafah*. Qūnāvī himself adopted it generally for the purpose of clarifying the requisite logical ordering of instructive knowledge (cf. IB A:19; B:118).

The next category, the one which concerns us at present, is knowledge of the states, that is, “knowledge by tasting” (FuM I 67:140, *l.* 12), which no man of reason can adequately define and whose knowledge can never be captured by any proof – e.g. the sweetness of honey, etc. (FuM I 67:139, *l.* 11-2). Finally, the third and highest type, knowledge of the secrets, is simply described as situated “beyond the stage of the intellect” (*al-ilm alladhi fawq tawr al-‘aql*); it indicates knowledge of the suffusion of the spirit by the Holy Spirit (*ilm naftu rūh al-quds fi al-rūh*) (FuM I 68:140, *l.* 1-2). The notion of Revealing or Disclosing Light “beyond the stage of the intellect” found in Ghazzālī’s *Mishkāt al-anwār* conveys something of the same sense. This is the level which belongs to both the Prophet and the “friend of God” (*al-nabī wal-wāli*) (FuM I 68:140, *l.* 2). But it is of two sorts. In one, surprisingly enough, perception still takes place through the intellect, as in the first level mentioned above (FuM I 68:140, *l.* 2-3). The other sort is affiliated, to a degree, with the second category but at a higher state; or it may pertain to the Science of the Reports (*‘ulūm al-akhbār*) (FuM I 68:140, *l.* 4-6). Hence, the person who possesses the sciences of the secrets (*sāhib ‘ulūm al-asrār*) may declare, based on a knowledge of the report, that “there is a Garden” (*thamma jannatan*); his declaration on the resurrection (*qiyāmah*), that “It contains a basin [*hawdān*] sweeter than honey,” is based on a knowledge of states or by tasting; while the statement that “God was and nothing

was with Him" and the like is based on intellectual knowledge, and has been theoretically perceived (FuM I 69:140, *ls.* 10-3).

Seen from this overall perspective, then, Qūnāvī's main concern is to identify the underlying *experiential* source of intellectual knowledge. Properly anchored, reflective reasoning can provide a legitimate – albeit narrowly limited – avenue to the expression of a noetic truth garnered from experience, though without it being implied that there is anything resembling a conclusive proof. The vigilance kept alive by a robust, if not unconventional, scepticism met with above did not prevent Qūnāvī from searching for a way to legitimize that thin crust of cogitative understanding which nevertheless encloses more consequential developments within apprehension that are relatively hidden from public view, not because of any deliberate choice but as the ineluctable fact of all private experience. The problem is how to find it without contradicting what he earlier tried to illustrate concerning all the known inconsistencies of the pure thinkers.

It is in this vein, nevertheless, that one ought to take his tantalizing question about whether there is a proper canon or standard of thinking (*al-qānūn al-fikrī*) to speak of that can be used by those who choose to rely on thought or reflection. We know from his other writings that he is not looking for a new logical doctrine or anything more abstract still than logic, but a standard that is somehow adapted both to the specific requirements of thinking and to the concrete character of experience. Something more than a purely formal procedure is intended, for he complains again that there is no firm opinion concerning *which* inference or proof for any given matter, one that all can agree on (cf.

IB A:18; B:118). The fact of the matter is that the same inferences (*bād al-qarā'in*) (Cf. Afnan PLex 232; SIT [Goichon] 197-99; Goichon *Lexique* #579) which some believe yield true conclusions, others consider otiose (*'akīmah*); some accept as concomitants to the proposition what others do not, etc. To reiterate, from his later arguments (which we shall study in this thesis) our present construal must simply be that the canon has somehow to achieve a distinctive level of semantic concreteness not found in the syllogism; it must be properly anchored in individual experience and yet distant enough to allow for a more public order of inquiry.

The question of whether a “canon of thinking” is at all possible or even needed, especially given the directness of the apprehension as the pre-given fact upon which reflection is based in the first place, may be challenged on the following technical grounds. Going by the same division employed by Ibn 'Arabī above, it may be argued that the “reflective part” of the canon must always terminate in the “intuitive” one (*yantahī ilā al-badīḥī*), and, ensuingly, any sound natural disposition (*al-fitrah al-salīmah*) would be sufficient to procure every species of knowledge. This is one reductionist possibility in logic met in the previous chapter whereby logical predication is denied any role alongside the definition, itself to be regarded as the exclusive source of knowledge. But one should not accept an all or none situation. For there are those who believe that canons have their legitimate uses, and counter by further insisting that even if some people can do without a standard, this does not excuse all others from doing so, especially in view of the widespread errors committed (IB A:19; B:118). They are in effect

responding to the following challenge, hinted just above:

You acknowledge that the canon is divisible into “necessary” and “reflective” knowledge [*dari‘ī wa naṣṣārī*], and that the reflective part is acquired from the necessary. Therefore, the necessary, if it be truly sufficient for the acquisition of knowledge in this canon [*hādhā al-qānūn*], must suffice for all other knowledge. Else, the acquired part would also need another canon (IB A:19; B:118-19).

The answer to this is, first of all, that “comprehending all methods” (*al-iḥātah bi-jamī‘ al-turuq*) is preferable to committing error; the need for the canon arises simply in the natural course of every effort to comprehend (IB A:19; B:119). It is perfectly conceivable that one person’s thoughts be correct on many matters due to the “soundness of his natural disposition” (*li-salāmat fitratihī*). But that one person may be correct on *all* matters without exception, this without any personal effort to acquire but through a Divine Support (*ta’yid itabi*) uniquely intended for him, does not mean that the rest have no need for a canon. One who is considered to be a poet by virtue of his natural talent is quite different from another who possesses a knowledge of prosody (*‘urūd*); the same applies to the Bedouin who, unlike the sedentary person who has to take up the study of the Arabic language (*al-hadārī al-muṭārīb*), has no need of grammatical science (*nahw*).

The study of language and grammatical rules is a particularly appropriate example. From the earliest days, it presented a problem and stood in need of some adroit justification as a science before the unimpeachable eloquence of the native Arabic speaker. With this debate arose the question of whether the grammatical rule devised by scholars actually corresponded to linguistic reality. According to Zajjājī, on whom we shall be relying for certain aspects of grammar relevant to the Ibn ‘Arabī school of mysticism, it was a man named al-Khalīl b. Ahmad who provided the first learned answer

when asked whether he had borrowed from the Arabs or invented on his own the "reasons" (*al-ila*) he was wont to use for explanatory purposes in grammar (ZID 65).

The Arabs, he answered, speak spontaneously and naturally [*alā sajiyatihā wa tibāihā*]. They know where to place their words and the reason for it, even if nothing about this has been transmitted. As for myself, I try to provide explanations in terms of what I regard as the reason for whatever I am seeking to explain. (ZID 65)

This partitioning off of a class of linguistically-gifted persons, as the nomadic peoples were invariably considered to be by Arabic philologists, finds its parallel in philosophy. But Qūnavī contends that the rare person who can do without any logical scale or measure (*mīzān*) thanks to a healthy predisposition (*sulāmat fitratihī*) and percipience (*dhakā*) is, when lacking such predisposition, related to the one who receives his higher learning directly from God (*al-mu'ahbiñ̄ lil-talaqqī min jināb al-Haqq*) no differently from anyone who has to rely on a scale (IB A:19; B:119). Although the "compressed," immediate nature of the former's knowledge is certainly conceivable, and even comparable to the highest spiritual kind, the basic division of instructive knowledge must be preserved for the rest, who enjoy neither the linguistic gifts of the Bedouin nor the spiritual superiority of the accomplished teacher. The words *fitratihī* and *dhakā'ihī* seem to point to a division not unlike Zajjājī's – i.e. *sajiyatihā wa tibāihā* – which one is equally tempted to render as facultative (*fitratihī/ tibāihā*) and performative (*dhakā'ihī/ sajiyatihā*). The point is that a comprehensive type of linguistic aptitude, where no scale needs to be learned, may be hypothetically balanced against a *process* of apprehension bifurcated into two aspects of knowledge. While inconclusive as a purely cogitative standard for the one, scale is an indispensable tool for the other, those who are used to living by

“instruments” – in other words, who need to employ their faculties. In the language of science, “demonstration” (*burbān*) here is primordial and recognized as the principal form of the syllogism (*al-‘umdaḥ ‘indahum fī al-aqīsah*).² It concerns itself with the “thatness” (*innī*) and “whyness” (*līmī*) of a thing. Such a division of logical query, of course, is typically Aristotelian, expressible in terms of subject and object of inquiry. But about this we shall have much more to say later.

All these findings are incorporated in *Ijāz al-bayān*, although Qūnavī here does not dwell on the nature of the scale of theological science but proceeds directly to a discussion of the elements of the syllogism. He does this using expressions, like “spirit” and “pole,” coined largely by Ibn ‘Arabī for that purpose. His aim is not to rehash commonplace conceptions of logic, but to point to what demonstration purports to represent in the first place. All this will pave the way for an exposition of the concrete features of the proper scale for “Divine science.” This ruling objective enables him confidently to identify the correspondences with mystical language but, more importantly, to draw out the fluid noetic process informing every logical representation; and, in this manner to move beyond the formal veneer of communicable knowledge.

Here is a summary of his conclusions so far. To begin with the “spirit” and “pole” of the demonstration (*rūh al-burbān wa qutbuhu*) are the middle term (*al-hadd al-awsat*) (IB A:19; B:119). But they cannot be “acquired” through any demonstration. Rather, they require conceptualization (i.e. in place of assent), based on the Avicennan dichotomy (IB

² Lit., the “prop” of the syllogism.

A:19-20; B:119). In the light of this, Qūnavī accepts from the preceding discussion on the “pure theoreticians,” first, that one of the “two parts” of the syllogism (which he calls the “scale”) has to be given, not acquired (*ghayr muktaṣab*) (IB A:20; B:119). Second, the one that is acquired cannot be had through something else that has been acquired. Third, the “spirit of demonstration” and “root” (*asl*) on which it is contended that the “validated knowledge” (*al-ilm al-muhaqqaq*) may be realized refers to the part that is “not acquired.” Fourth, there are things which are not doubted and yet whose truth or falsity cannot be clinched through any demonstration that is not itself called into question or subject to ambiguity.

These preliminary observations describe perfectly the kind of restrictions and essential predicament faced by those who cling to a doctrine based on imbibation when they hold that “true knowledge” (*al-ilm al-saḥīḥ*) is Divinely granted (*mawhūb*)⁸ rather than acquired through effort (IB A:20; B:120). Qūnavī’s purpose so far has been to explain why it is that, although one may have no doubt or hesitation as to its truth, the knowledge received from God (*tariq al-talaqqī min jāniū al-Haqq*) admits of no theoretical demonstration (*al-burhān al-naẓarī*). The remedial approach is to consider that the real goal (*ghayab*) with respect to any given science should simply be what occurs to the adept of that science through the imbibation, which is immediate and requires no “instrumental proof” (*dūn datīl kashī*) of its truth (IB A:20; B:121). Experience is primary; it is what gives meaning, direction and concreteness to all subsequent operations of the spirit. He makes it clear that there is no sense in asking once again whether or not the thing upon which,

in a literal sense, “one comes to rest” (*al-amr al-maskūn ilayhi*) – that is, whose veracity has been acknowledged – has to be true in exactly the way one may think it is, since this can be known only through the actual realization of a noetic “unveiling” (*iltā bi-kashf muḥaqqaq*) and Divine intimation (*ikhbār itābi*) (IB A:20-1; B:121). What cannot be doubted is that knowledge that is certain (*al-ilm al-yaqīnī*), containing no element of doubt (i.e. “*lā rība fīhi*”), is difficult of access through any canon hewed solely to thinking (*bil-qānūn al-fikrī*) or theoretical demonstration (IB A:21; B:121). Reaching a cognition of “things” (*marifat al-ashyā’*) by way of demonstration alone (*al-burhān wahdan*) is either absolutely impossible or impossible only in the majority of cases.⁹

Yet, in the end, Qūnāvī opts for a prudent course of resolution by elaborating his previously announced position thus. People of insight and sound intellect, he says, argue for two possible paths to the attainment of valid knowledge (*al-marifah al-sahīhah*). The first is that of demonstration, by which he means exclusively theoretical reflection and inference (*al-burhān bil-naẓar wal-istidlāl*). The second is the path of “direct observation” (*tariq al-‘iyārī*), as in the case of “the one [experiencing] unveiling through the purification of the interior [*lī-dhī al-kashf bi-tasfiyat al-bātin*] and refuge in God [*wal-iltiġā’ ilā al-Haqq*]” (IB A:21; B:121). While they are presented as two distinct paths, their relation will become clear in the course of this thesis. Briefly, it is dictated by the fact that the second path is that which finds its specification in the “conative focus” upon God through ascetic divestment (*al-tawajjuh ilā al-Haqq bil-tarbiyah*), perfect poverty (*al-iftiqār al-tamm*) and “the complete emptying from the breast of all creational attachments, formal

sciences and canons" (IB A:21; B:121-22). This is the more fundamental option, though one that does not deny the other its narrow legitimacy.

Now, if one is incapable of it, it still rests upon him as a duty to follow those more advanced than he in their apprehension, i.e. the "Accomplished Ones" (*kummal*), who travel the Way of God and the entire length of attainment (*khāda lujjat al-wusūl*). Here the basic division typical of all "instructive knowledge" crops up in a manner that almost suggests an alternate route to direct experience. It is, of course, misleading to put it quite that way. At the core of this division lies prophetic knowledge, for among those who can directly achieve the highest degree of apprehension are God's Messengers (*rusul*) (IB A:21; B:122). God has made them the recipients of His knowledge and providence (*mazāhir 'ilmihī wa 'ināyatihī*) and the "interpreters" of His command and wish (*tarājimat amrihī wa irādatihī*). Therefore, whoever claims his heritage from them will be fortuned, for only then will God bestow upon him a revealing light (*nūr kāshif*) that exposes things, indeed, as they really are.¹⁰ The "station" (*maqām*) of those who "guide" and those who are "well-guided" (*al-hādīn wal-muhtadīn*) is taken up again by Qūnavī in his exegesis of the phrase, "*ihdinā al-sirāt al-mustaqīm*" ("Guide us upon the straight path") of the *Fātīhah* of the Qur'ān. What is noteworthy is that their functional division reflects the same complex relationship we saw in the previous chapter in connection with the logic of the *falāsifah*, who imbued the noetic dichotomy of conception and assent, reproduced here by Qūnavī, with a pedagogical value expressible in the form of pre-given premises and the inference, respectively.

In the end, there is no simple, broad formula that could somehow capture every dimension of what Islamic scholars and mystics alike intend when they try to wed intellectual endeavour to scriptural revelation, the correct account of which undoubtedly figured as the philosophers' principal goal. Scripture and its injunctions here are certainly admissible on authority as one kind of pre-given premise, no different from what the *mutakallimūn* have been saying on the matter, even if the inceptive range of revelation implied is far greater than what the derivative premises of any commonplace science based on the logical syllogism can locally encompass. The latter has more to do with the structural ordering of the noetic relations of the parts than with the effluent content of Divine communication received, assimilated and, in turn, transmitted to others whose role is to be "guided." The "scale" Qūnāvī is searching for has to embody content as well as form, and this formal means of representing their relationship offers a conventional way of dealing with the passage from a pre-given component, on the one hand, and the object of inquiry, on the other. These two elements occur with every act of apprehension. But this aspect of epistemology begins to look like more than just a simple matter of logical order when the "comprehensive purpose" of scripture is taken into consideration.

In the "theological science" of the philosophers, the pre-given is usually denoted by the "primary concepts," e.g. "existent," "thing" and "necessary." We shall try to keep in mind the rough functional equivalency of these three "concepts." What follows from the level of the pre-given is the rameose necessity of the ancillary or branch sciences, states,

attributes, etc. However, before considering more fully what repercussions upon the role of the revealed texts flow from this, we ought to recall briefly how Ibn Sīnā's theory of logical classification fit into the conception Qūnavī was trying to work out.

By the thirteenth century, Ibn Sīnā's division of the sciences had become widely influential, if not accepted wholesale, and yet Qūnavī seemed to operate from a different vantage point than was possible in Ibn Sīnā's time, when *falsafah* was still deeply embroiled in controversies which arose directly from classical writings.¹¹ There is, of course, no denying general similarities in form and structure. But when one compares the technical terms used by both, an unmistakable *linguistic* filiation with the “non-philosophical” sciences comes to light in Qūnavī's case, especially *kalām* and *fiqh*. The close technical kinship with *kalām* does not imply a concordance of method and results, though. A common technical language does not make for common cause, and Qūnavī has generally eschewed the predominant approach of *kalām*. This will become evident shortly.

In one of his clearest statements regarding what science – more precisely, the “highest science” – is, exactly, he states that the sciences (*ulūm*) are ordered thus. On the one hand are what he calls the “primal roots” (*ummahāt aslīyah*), on the other the (special) branches (*fūriūt tafsīliyah*) (MG 2:3).¹² These terms are not customarily used by philosophers. And yet the overall aim is remarkably similar. In retaining the jurisprudential distinction between *asl* (“root”) and *far* (“branch”), he does not appear to be giving pride of place to either *fiqh* or *kalām* per se, but instead stresses an underlying

continuity of instructive science with the scriptural sources or roots (Qur'ān and *hadīth*). This seems to cohere with Ibn Sīnā's own approach on two counts: an interdisciplinary and a logical one.

The classification of the “philosophical sciences” (*al-‘ulūm al-falsafīyyah*) Ibn Sīnā proposes was divided into a theoretical and a practical part, the former comprised of physics, mathematics and theology (*īlāhiyyah*). Under this scheme, knowledge aims for “perfection,” and so the first part seeks to perfect or complete (*istikmāl*), in particular, the soul’s *theoretical* faculty, thereby allowing it to attain to the intellect *in actu* (SIL 3-4). By affirming this, Ibn Sīnā infused a kind of spiritual dynamic in his otherwise ponderously formal system that Qūnavī had hoped to recover for his own salvational motifs. It is precisely the linkage between the soul’s ascent toward its own spiritual perfection and the “commensurability of the essential attribute” (i.e. the goal of each discipline or knowledge) that allowed Ibn Sīnā to proffer, with his epistemology, anything more than a logical husk (SIL 4).¹³ He thought that all of the sciences shared in at least one thing: their usefulness in helping the human soul to reach *actual* perfection; they helped it prepare for happiness (SIL 17). But there is a difference, according to him, between what is *useful* in this respect and the *good itself*, just as the harmful (*darr*) is not to be identified with evil (*al-sharr*). In view of this, theological science possesses only a necessary utility permitting us to move toward the good and away from evil. It is not an end in itself, certainly not the type of knowledge we would want to ascribe to God. Yet being “derivative” in this latter sense does not technically relieve it of the task of preserving something of the

prescriptive force of a scriptural source of knowledge, prescriptive force which Qūnavī makes a point of assigning to his own science in unmistakable terms. For this to be feasible, a congenital identity must exist between formal science and, as we shall see, scriptural injunctions. Their identity is no doubt more acceptable when science is conceived as an *instructional* vocation, rather than an absolute acquisition. The affinity of a derivative science with scriptural injunctions is bound up with the principle enunciated by Aristotle that “[a]ll teaching and learning by way of reasoning proceeds from pre-existing knowledge” (PoA 71^a 1:1). Indeed within the framework established by Peripatetic philosophy, it is not merely the subject (*mawdūl*) of science that “pre-exists” or is “prior.” Also prior in philosophy – as Davidson pointed out for the second, differentiated noetic phase – are the first principles of judgement (*tasdīq*) that compose it, or the primary premises of the demonstration (cf. SIL 29).¹⁴ The *transference* of priority to the subject’s constituent elements is important to bear in mind as we try to identify the *logical* and, eventually, the *linguistic* distribution of this “priority” as distinctly as possible from that which is “posterior.” Continuity with the revealed sources is more readily understood through this logical “breakup.” However, there is no strict, one-to-one correspondence between logical premises and scripturally-based doctrine.¹⁵ The likely reason is that while Qūnavī’s main concern in adopting the root-branch division has been to emphasize *scriptural revelation* as the primary noetic source, logic moves in a different direction, aiming at purely relational determinations *irrespective* of content. In order to see the connection, therefore, let us examine more closely Qūnavī’s

epistemological scheme, drawing appropriate comparisons with Ibn Sīnā and Ibn ‘Arabī. The last section of this chapter will deal more fully with Qūnawī’s philological reading of this connection.

§ THE SUBJECT-MATTER OF THEOLOGY VS. THE OBJECT OF INQUIRY

In *al-Burhān min al-mantiq* (“Book of Demonstration”), Ibn Sīnā had established that every science must possess something that constitutes its subject, other things that comprise its object of inquiry (*ashyā’ biya al-matlūbah*) and, finally, its own principles admitted beforehand or pre-given (*mabādī’ musallamah minhā*) and capable of producing a demonstration (*tu’allif al-burhān*) (SIL 5). The first substantial matter dealt with in the *Itābiyyāt* is the question of what the “subject” of the Divine Science must be (*mawdūl lil-‘ilm*), which he tells us has not been clearly determined by the Greek philosophers. A sharp distinction between subject and object of inquiry, in fact, marks his contribution to the question of “existence,” his main preoccupation. Whereas in the case of every other science the existence of the subject must be admitted (*musallam*) and its “modes” investigated, theological science for Ibn Sīnā takes God’s existence and His attributes as its very objects of inquiry (SIL 6).¹⁶

In typical Avicennan fashion, Qūnawī held that the sciences have in common all three components: subject (*mawdūl*), principles (*mabādī’*) and objects of inquiry (*masā’il*) (MG 2:3).¹⁷ The “subject,” according to Qūnawī, is “that whose reality [*haqīqatihī*] is being

investigated” together with “the states ascribed to it [*al-ahwāl al-mansūbah ilayhi*] and the things predicated of its essence [*al-umūr al-‘āridah lahu fī dhātihi*]” (MG 3:3). Curiously, however, he chooses “existence” (*wujūd*) as an example in the case of theological science (*al-ilm al-ilāhi*), “according to one view” (*‘alā ra’y*). If the wording is correct, and it appears to be, its concision hardly assists us to a satisfactory interpretation of the text, for “existence” is normally assumed to be the object of inquiry, not the subject. It is possible that he may have intended all along to say “existent,” especially since his second example – “measure” (*miqdār*) in geometry – is then duly noted with a repetition of the word “subject”¹⁸: “*kal-miqdār fī kawnihi mawdūf ‘ilm al-handasah*” (MG 3:3). As far as Ibn Sīnā was concerned, the common subject (*mawdūf*) of “the science concerned with everything not subsisting through objects of sense” (i.e. Theology) can only be one thing: the “existent” (*mawjūd*) (SIL 12). Strangely enough, though, the Persian expression *hasti mutlaq*, or “Absolute Existence,” is used in his *Dānishnāmah-ye ‘alā’i* in place of existent, meaning “absolute existence” or “absolute *being*.” A little below, he appropriates the term to argue parenthetically that “a substance is that which is not an accident, whose *being* [*hasti*], moreover, is not in a subject, but *is a reality* [*haqīqah*] such that the being of that reality and that essence are not receptive to another thing having the aforesaid characteristics” (Morewedge MOA 15). Though sententious, this passage makes it clear that he maintained a single view of what a subject should and should not be. Qūnāvī may equally have had in mind this second more particular connotation of “existence,” in contradistinction only to existence understood as what existents have in common and,

lesser still, the copulative. In the *Shifā'*, while Ibn Sīnā feels that nothing is more *verifiably* general than “the reality of the notion of existence” (*haqīqat ma nā al-wujūd*) (SIL 12),¹⁹ in fact, only the existent qua existent is common to all things and, thereby, qualifies as the *subject* of this discipline. The evidence he adduces for this is disciplinary: the subject is considered independently of any additional need to examine (*ta'allu*) both its quiddity and its affirmation (*iħħabatihi*); that would require another *science*, since the operation cannot be performed within the same discipline (SIL 13). In this he stands on the familiar Aristotelian view that the “subject” of demonstrative science is incapable of demonstration within the same science, being “already given as a postulate, prior to the investigation of its nature and attributes” (SuMaMe 139). But whereas in the other sciences its “thatness” (*innīyah*) and its quiddity are given beforehand, in theology “existence” requires investigation (SIL 13) and, in this sense at least, is posterior to the subject.

But what exactly is pre-given in this science?

Predictably, the school of Ibn ‘Arabī holds to the view that the intellect can receive nothing else than what it already knows intuitively (*badīħatañ*) (FuM II 95:100, *L* 11). In Avicennan philosophy, this naturally beckoned to the three aforementioned primary concepts – “existent” considered in its more general and conventional sense, “thing” and “necessary” – which Ibn Sīnā determined to be etched in the soul by means of a “primary inscription” (*irtisām awwaliyyān*) (SIL 29). Things (both the existent and the single thing [*al-shay' al-wāhid*]) are primary because, in Ibn Sīnā’s words, they are “inherently

conceptualizable" (*mutasawwarah li-anfusihā*). Beyond them nothing else is better known. And, being common to all things, any attempt to prove them would lead to a vicious circle (SIL 30), since if each conception (*tasawwur*) were preceded by another, there would be an infinite regress. Indefinable, they are for these reasons the most basic of an entire class of pre-given knowledge.

But it turns out that Ibn 'Arabī, unlike Qūnawī, was more specific and direct about the nature of the subject than one would expect a mystic perhaps to be in such a technically-wrought philosophical system. Briefly, he argued that true knowledge of God (*al-'ilm bil-lāh*) is scarcely perceptible by the intellect and the soul *except* in respect of the fact that God is "existent," that is – and in a further variation of this theme – literally, "found": "*illā min haythu annabu mawjūd tā'ala wa taqaddasa*" (FuM II 81:92, *ls.* 9-10). And the emphasis is duly noted to be on the *deistic* instead of the creaturely denotation of "existent." He justified this in the following manner. For everything uttered (*kull mā yatalaffaz bihi*) in accordance with what he referred to as the "right of created things" (*fi haqq al-makhlūqāt*) or imagined with respect to composite things (*aw yatawahham fi al-murakkabāt*) – in other words, what may *properly* be ascribed to them – a sound intellect must take God to be radically different (FuM II 81:92, *ls.* 10-12) on account of His transcendence. Whenever such utterances are applied to Him, the purpose is merely to bring the listener closer to awareness by giving positive affirmation to "finding" (or *existence*) (*thubūt al-wujūd 'inda al-sāmi'*) rather than to the full Reality of which He is deserving (*al-baqīqah allati huwa al-Haqq 'alayhā*) (FuM II 81:92, *ls.* 13-15). This

ambiguity of “existent” has also been pointed out by Ibn Sīnā earlier in his career (SIL 14). But Ibn ‘Arabī throws into relief more masterfully the resulting paradoxical situation, which does not allow for a proper cognizance of God (*marifat bihi subḥānahu*) except through *our own inability to know Him* (FuM II 83:93, *l. 5-6*). The reason for this impotence is perfectly acceptable, once we recall that often we seek to know Him in the same way that we do all things – in terms of “the particular reality about which these things inform us in the first place.” Therefore, he asks, when we know that there is an Incomparable Existent (*thamma mawjūdan lā yasa lāhu mithl*), who cannot be conceived through the mind, how could we at the same time be so bold as to assume that the intellect can fully “ascertain Him” (*yadbutuhu*) (FuM II 83:93, *l. 7-8*)? This is not what obtains when knowledge of His “finding” (or existence) is affirmed (FuM II 83:93, *l. 8-9*). We only know that God is “found” (or existent) (*annahu mawjūd*) and is unique in His Divinity (*wāhid fī ulūhatihī*), not the reality of His essence (*bi-haqīqat dhātihī*) through which He knows Himself (FuM II 83:93, *l. 9-11*). We will see that this position is reaffirmed in Qūnāvī’s correspondence with Tūsī in determining the manner in which we know God; for, different questions may be asked concerning the quiddity, His reality, etc.

Our comprehension of God’s “existence,” in the specific sense intended by Ibn ‘Arabī, would then have to hinge on – and can only be understood through – a deliberate contrast with the “unknowability” of His reality, contrast that incidentally is basic to Qūnāvī. Ibn ‘Arabī leaves little doubt that the intuitive knowledge of God cannot be more accurately determined intellectually than by reference to *the fact that* God is the

Existent, and that He has an incomparable nature. This, in its authentic deistic denotation, is incontestably the primary knowledge suggested earlier by one of the three subject-concepts – namely, “existent.” The points so far raised will help us analyze Qūnavī’s famous debate with Nasīr al-Dīn Tūsī on this issue. The mainspring of his own doctrine is that theoretical utterances, collectively comprising our intellectual knowledge, are intrinsically *about* God, which is what “knowledge through the absence of knowledge” (*al-ilm bi-‘adam al-ilm*) had earlier signified to Ibn ‘Arabī (FuM II 83:93, *L* 11). The latter referred to it as “first knowledge” (*al-ilm al-awwal*) (FuM II 83:93, *L* 14), the principal reason being that the goal is not a human knowledge of God’s reality as it is in itself, but rather, as we shall see, an apprehension of His self-manifestation in hierarchical and necessary fashion, as we shall see in the next chapter.

The brevity of Qūnavī’s own remarks do not permit a more detailed treatment of his theoretical justification of the “subject,” short of a complete exposition of his later account in terms of the Divine Names, to be presented also in the next chapter. The upshot at this point is that wherever employed the term “subject” denoted an entitative but primary knowledge of existence, and not a copulative or general notion of existence, as used in other instances. The confusion of terms probably reflects the difficulty of separating the same reality intended in prior knowledge from what is posterior in the object of inquiry.

§ THE OBJECTS OF INQUIRY AND THE PRINCIPLES

We have so far seen that for Ibn Sīnā and Ibn ‘Arabī the “primary subject” (*al-mawdū’ al-awwād*) of theological science is the existent qua existent, so long as one understands by this that it is pre-given. The “objects of inquiry,” on the other hand, are those things which make up its derived attributes (*tulhaqūhū*) insofar as it is the unconditional existent subject (*min ghayr shart*) (SIL 13); the exact term Ibn Sīnā uses to designate the object of inquiry in theology is “existence.” We ought to bear in mind that the logic of the sciences is closely intertwined with the internal disciplinary division of theological science. Being the noblest science (*al-ilm al-afdat*) of the noblest knowable object (*mālūm*), theology is the science of the first causes of everything, and under this aspect offers the soundest and most exact knowledge in various branches of scientific investigation (SIL 5). In his search for its true subject, Ibn Sīnā found its scope to be quite large:

You have [no doubt] heard also that theology is [the science] through which are investigated the first causes of physical and mathematical existence and their concerns, the cause of causes, the principle of principles, and that is the Deity, most exalted (SIL 5).

It is hardly surprising, therefore, that “true wisdom” (*al-hikmah al-haqīqah*) should appear to Ibn Sīnā in the form of a “first philosophy” that can be used to verify the principles (*mabādi’i*) of the other sciences. Combined with what we have said so far about the nature of theoretical science, this important function renders the relationship between Divine Wisdom and systematic science much more manageable. Theology is the discipline that investigates those things which are derivatively and definitively separate from matter. It seeks that which does not subsist through sensible objects .

mahsūsāt) (SIL 12), investigating the mode of the substance qua existent and qua substance, that of body qua substance, of measure and number qua existents and the manner of their existence, of “formal things” (*al-umūr al-sātiyah*) which are either separate from matter or are in a different kind of matter than that of bodies (SIL 11). By studying the “mode of existence” of all these things, it makes clear the principles of all the special sciences investigating the modes of existing particulars (SIL 15). It is also said “to study the modes of the existent as such, its divisions and kinds.”²⁰ And, similarly to Ibn ‘Arabī, he explains further that considering the principles (*mabādi*) in a broad sense does not mean that “principle” pertains to the “existent” taken in all senses (*al-mawjūd kullihi*). His own justification of this is that an existent cannot be its own principle but that of a *caused existent* only (SIL 14).

This is not just an innocuous play of words but represents a conceptual distinction of major proportions, marking a crossroads in the type of systematic knowledge of the object sought and a shift in our quidditive grasp towards the *caused* existent. God, on the other hand, has no cause. Therefore, the “principle” commonly referred to is only with respect to a certain type of existent, not the unconditionally existent (*al-mawjūd mutlaqan*) (SIL 14). Hence, the questions or objects of inquiry belonging to the “science of principles” have to do with the reasoned facts (e.g. *limā*) of the caused existent (*asbāb al-mawjūd al-maf‘ūl*) qua *caused* existent, some being the *accidents of the existent*, others the actual *principles of the ancillary sciences* (SIL 15), as Qūnāvī also points out below.²¹ Finally, in his view, the questions investigated by theology must collectively balance the philosophical

(or rational) method with religious truths. In essence, they all indicate the dignified rank proper to *prophethood*, the obligation to comply with it and its origin in God; equally, the morality (*akhlāq*) and deeds (*āmāl*) needed by human souls together with “the wisdom that they hold the promise of nextworldly felicity” (*al-sādādah al-ukhrawiyah*) (SIL 28). These are the things sought in theological science.

Qūnawī states plainly that the objects of inquiry – which he calls *masā'il*,²² a term Suhravardī also prefers (SKL 93) – may comprise both the roots (*uṣūl*) which comprehend all that a science contains, such as the genus in relation to what is below it, and the branches ordered (*furuṭ*) (cf. IB A:97; B:205) beneath the principles, e.g. species and the subspecies. In another passage, he agrees that theological science possesses its own subject, principles and objects of inquiry (*masā'il*),²³ just like every other science, and that those of other sciences are “branches for [its] subject [*furuṭ mawdūf al-ilm al-īlāhī*], principles and objects of inquiry, respectively” (MG 7:5). Therefore, while espousing the same connection as Ibn Sīnā’s between the internal division of theological science and the classification of all other sciences, he carries the division of “roots” and “branches” to the objects of inquiry themselves. Just as the foundational subject constitutes an undifferentiated whole, so the object of inquiry embodies in the first instance this noetic bifurcation into root and branch – an important theme that will be taken up in the last chapter of this thesis. Once the roots, primal sources (*ummūhāt*) and their precepts (*ahkām*) are known, he explains, then the manner in which “the branches are related to them, the form of their subordination [*sūrat tabdīyyatihā lahā*] as well as their ordering

beneath them [*indirāj tahtā*] will also be known” (MG 6:5). According to him, theological science encompasses each and every science in the same way that its first concern, literally, its primary “object of attachment” (*iḥāṭat mutḍilāqīhī*) – viz. the “Reality-through-everything” (*al-Haqq bi-kull shay'*) – is itself encompassing (MG 7:5). The “reality-manifested-through-each-thing,” then, constitutes the “object of inquiry.” The internal logic of theological science, notably in coordination with the entire classificatory order of the sciences, is oriented toward a common *ontic* point of reference that leaves the investigator without any need to step beyond the bounds of his foundational science just in order to apportion his energies according to each of its ancillary branches. While theological science’s restrictive subject (*mawdūhu al-khaṣīd*) is, in Qūnāvī’s words, “God’s existence,” its “principles” are the “primary realities” (*ummabāt al-haqqā’iq*) which follow necessarily from His “found” or manifested existence – otherwise called the names of the essence (*asmā’ al-dhāt*) (MG 8:6).

This points to the same conceptual shift in our quidditive knowledge towards those things that must flow in orderly fashion from the primary subject – in effect, the schematic properties of its manifestation, if not of an outright “definition.” Ibn Sīnā was bound in his afterthought on the “existent” first by something which was itself governed by the First Principle as a *caused* existence, thereby giving rise to this necessary hierarchy. Likewise, existence for Qūnāvī is conceivable only in respect of what he calls *specified* things (*mutḍayyanāt*), not unconditionally. He, by contrast, endeavoured more persistently to portray the hierarchical mode of governance resulting therefrom according to a

scheme of things based on the Divine names. Thus, the essential names may include “that whose precept (or ‘status’) is specified *in the world* [*mā tāqyān hukmuhu fil-‘ālam*] and by which He – that is His existence – is known” (MG 8:6). This pervasive multiplicity of names does not alter the fact that there are basically two ways of knowing God. In other words, He can either be known from behind the veil of the effect (*hijib al-athar*), in the case of one group of people, “the knowledgeable among the pious” (*al-‘ārifīn min al-abrār*), or be perceived through unveiling and “witnessing” (*kashfān wa shuhūdan*) without any intermediary or veil per se, in the case of those who are in intimate proximity to Him – namely, the Accomplished Ones (*al-muqarrabīn wal-kummaḥ*). The only other division of Essential names is that for which *no precept* in the world is specifiable (*yatdāyyān*) and which God appropriates for Himself in His unseen state (*alladhbī ista’thara al-Haqq bihi fī ghaybīhi*) (MG 9:6).²⁴ Below the names of the essence are those of the “subordinate attributes” (*asmā’ al-sifāt al-fabīah*); then come the names of the (Divine) acts (MG 10:6-7) and, finally, the relationships and links (*al-nisab wal-idāfāt*) between the names of the essence and those of the attributes, on the one hand, and between the names of the attributes and those of the acts, on the other (MG 10:7).

As we said, the objects of inquiry, or the *masā’il*, are “elucidated through the primal names [*ammā yattadhib bi-ummuhāt al-asmā’*]” (MG 11:7). Of all the “realities of these objects’ attachments” (*haqā’iq mutḍallāqātihā*), the primal names comprise the actual principles, levels (*marātib*), abodes (*mawātīn*) and the “relation of differentiation” (*nisbat tafāṣīl*) belonging to the precepts of every one of their (i.e. objects of inquiry) divisions

and its place. The objects of inquiry include those descriptions or epithets (*nūfūt*), attributes, ancillary names (*al-asmā' al-far'iyyah*) and their effects (*athāriā*) through which there is specification (*tdāyyana*). He refers all this back to two central aspects of the God-world relationship: “knowledge of the world’s connectedness (*irtibāt*) to God and of God’s connectedness to the world.” The knowledge sought is inaccessible when these two aspects are combined (*majmūt*). But we shall defer discussion of this theme until we get to the notion of *ulūhiyyah* (“Divinity”) in *Ijāz al-bayān*, a notion he takes as the perfect exemplification of God’s connectedness with the *al-ma'lūb* (“that for whom He is a Deity”).

§ THE TRANSFORMATION OF LOGIC

a. The Question of the “Scale”

As we saw earlier, every discipline possesses some device – Qūnāvī calls it a “criterion” (*miyyāt*) – intended for discriminating between the true and the false in that which is said to be proper to that particular discipline: in the field of linguistic interpretation (*ibārah*) it is called grammar (*nabw*), in theoretical science (*al-'ilm al-naqṣārī*) logic, etc. (MG 13:8). Theological science being no exception in this regard has additional methodological requirements; the specificity desired for its scale, one whose form and content could be agreed upon, is dictated by the peculiarities of the discipline. After all, theology is the highest and noblest of all the sciences because of the nature of its “object of attachment,” viz. God (MG 14:8). As such, what it requires most pressingly is a “knowledge of scales”

appropriate to this object which includes its principles and canons (*uṣūlihā wa qanānīhī*) (MG 14:8-9). The difficulty is how to reconcile this with the fact that the knowledge of God or Divine knowledge itself – the expression “*al-ilm al-itāhī*” is deliberately left ambiguous – cannot be governed by or “subsumed under the precept” of any scale, being too broad and too great to be captured by any fixed canon (MG 14:9). But while it cannot be confined to any “designated scale,” he insists that this does not mean that it has no scale at all. On the contrary, all those accomplished in their spiritual realization (*al-kummāl dhawī al-tahqīq*), whom he calls God’s Devotees (*ahl Allāh*), have found that theological science indeed has a “scale,” one that is closely coordinated and *in consonance with* (*yunāsib*) each level, Divine name, station, abode, state, time and individual (*shakhs*).²⁵ Such a “scale” enables them to distinguish (*al-tamyīz*) between “the various kinds of Divine disclosures [*al-faṭḥ*], experiential sciences [or sciences of ‘direct witness’] [*al-‘ulūm al-shuhūdīyah*], instructions [*al-ilqā’āt*], obtainments [*al-wāridāt*] and manifestations [*tajalliyāt*] occurring to the denizens of such levels as are recognized by tradition [i.e. *li-ahl al-marātib al-sunnīyah*], along with their states and stations” (MG 14:9). It enable man to separate between genuine Divine and angelic intimation, on the one hand, and diabolic instruction, on the other. In fact, the broader aim of *Miftāh al-ghayb* is to present a “synoptic” view of what is *intellectually* “allotted to us by God in the form of canons [*qawā’id*], precisions [*al-dawābit*], premises, primal existential roots [*ummahat-al-usul-al-wujūdīyyah*], root presences [*al-hadarāt al-astīyah*]²⁶ and final goals [*al-maqāsid al-ghā’īyyah*]” (MG 15:10). Such a view, he says, will serve to “lengthen their tether in the way of

knowledge of what details [*al-taṭaṣṣil*], sciences, names, levels, etc. they [happen] to contain" (MG 15:10). Within this overall picture, each part of the whole is interconnected with the other so as to disclose it through a "disclosure" from God (*bil-faṭḥ al-ilāhī*) and the pre-eternity of the root itself (*wal-qidam al-asti*).

Our discussion of the problem of knowledge thus far has brought us not only to the notion of a simple coordination between principal science vis-à-vis the causes studied by each ancillary science but, more manifestly, to a theology of the Divine creative act in its downward descent through the Word revealed and intimated in various forms to man. This happens to be the hub of the transformation of logic into a scale that could accommodate the particular requirements of the highest science insisted upon just above. The question we posed in the first chapter concerning the relation between Divine wisdom and the knowledge accessible to human beings, which Ibn Sīnā tried to resolve by showing how philosophy is always a formal knowledge *about* God, is reinterpreted by Qūnāvī more definitely in terms of "consonance." This consonance would not conceptually differ to any great degree, if not for the scriptural dimension, from the commensurability and appropriateness Aristotle described with respect to each discipline or, indeed, syllogistic inference. Significantly, the key word that Qūnāvī uses in MG 14:9 above is *yunāṣibū*, implying a relatedness based on consonance – namely, here, the consonance between the scale and the Divine noetic level. What this consonance also tells us is that every systematic or scientific elaboration can hold only in accordance with a priori Divine Will (*al-maṣḥī'ah al-ilāhīyah*); more specifically, with what the Pen

engenders “as it inscrolls” (that is, “*mā yajrī bibi al-qalam hāl al-tasfir*”) (MG 15:10). The nature of this priority demands special attention, since the act of writing in this “art” (*kitābat hādha al-fann*) is not based on something premeditated or prepared beforehand. That is why he takes the trouble to point out that the Pen construed by the “formal scholars” (*ulamā’ al-rusūm*) who would object to “associationism,” or *ishtirāk*, has more to do with verbal form and conventional terminology (MG 17:10), a consideration hardly relevant to what is being delimited here (MG 16:10-11). What is said to be pre-eternal, as the priority of God’s Act of Writing clearly entails, has often been viewed with suspicion, as only God can be pre-eternal in any real sense. The expression he himself accepts, however, renders “most appropriately” and “most perfectly” the intended meaning for the subject-matter at hand, at least from the perspective of the *speaker* employing it (MG 16:11). On this score, Qūnavī adds that at his “station of speaker” (*al-maqām al-mutakallim fibi*), a person has the choice of embracing either whatever he is apt to receive from “someone who is veiled and oriented essentially by his own thinking [*al-mahjūb al-mutawajjah bi-fikrīhi*],” or whatever “he who relies on his heart is devoted to [*al-mutawajjah bi-qalbīhi*]” (MG 16:11). He relies on his heart, though, “who takes the expression through unveiling [*kashfan*] and witnessing [*shuhūdan*] without any effort [*dūn tādammul*], at a pure and unsullied place [*bi-mahall tāhir tā shūb fīhi*]” (MG 16:11). Whereas the purity of the one who truly finds its root endures, the one who is veiled receives the Command (*yatalaqqī al-mahjub al-amra*) from behind the veil of thinking and human mortality (*basharīyah*) by striving in an impure place.²⁷

b. The Different Types of Priority and Pregivenness

In order to appreciate to the fullest possible extent the nature of priority intended here, let us look more closely at how it was altered from the original logical framework Ibn Sīnā had established for it. This transformation played a capital role in defining the way in which the mystical school would eventually distinguish itself from philosophy.

The notion most closely affiliated with priority is, of course, *mawdū* – that is, the “subject.” As matters now stand, whenever one “subject” is said to be more “specialized” (*akhass*) than another, such as “cosmological science” (*al-ilm al-kawnī*) in relation to the “Science of Lordship” (*al-ilm al-rabbānī*), it must lie below it (MG 5:4). The entire framework carries the indelible mark of that single science which alone can act as the ground for the rest, in a manner similar to that envisioned by Ibn Sīnā for the First Philosophy. The assortment of sciences follows a pattern of priority that is tightly coordinated with a single science, in an ascending movement whose final resolution is in the predominant noetic source – the root, or *asl*.

While priority is no doubt complicated and, indeed, “broken up” by this hierarchical movement, the question rests, as it did in the “*Itāhiyāt*,” on the following epistemic division of pre-given principles taken in their functional role within this closely-knit scheme. This division is laid out in the perfectly conventional terms and expressions we have learned so far, but what he makes explicit is rather interesting. Hence, “principles” consist of either conceptions and judgments. As definitions, conceptions fall squarely

within the compass provided by the particular “subject of knowledge under investigation” (MG 4:3); whereas judgments, he says, are the premises (*muqaddamāt*) on which this knowledge is internally established (*yubtānā*). Now, judgments may be referred to simply as “pregivens” or “postulates” (*awdā*) for a particular domain of science and serve to “pluralize” the subject into its constituent parts, as we saw (MG 4:4).²⁸ Shihāb al-Dīn Yahyā Suhravardi (d. 587/1191) had maintained that the *awdā* were really principles taken as premises whose “acceptance is not necessary” (SKL 93). For Qūnāvī, however, some pregivens are *certain* (*yaqīniyyah*), others admitted on faith (*musallamah imāman*) or through the favourable opinion of the one reporting them (MG 4:4). Within the same science, they are all prior and constitute the “pregiven [or posited] roots” (*uṣūl mawdūtah*), thus recalling their special kinship as well as etymological link with “*mawdūt*” (“subject”). Some types of premises admitted introduce further the factor of time, insofar as they appear in another “subject matter” but within the same listener (*al-sāmī*). Ibn Sīnā assumed that the latter “are not self-evident” (*bayyinah fī nafsihā*), their explanation being found either in another science or “at some later point within the same science.”²⁹ In this instance, the “learner” (*al-mutdallim minhā*), says Qūnāvī, may continue to entertain certain doubts pending clarification by theoretical, natural or Divine proof (*burhān nāzārī aw fitrī aw itāhī*), in which case they are said to be “pre-posed” (*musādarāt*) (MG 4:4). But syllogistically, this latter notion was used more in reference to the instance where the conclusion, in particular, is said to be pre-posed, although it was agreed by and

^b Otherwise known as Shaykh al-Ishrāk.

large that anything the learner admits to only grudgingly, with a certain degree of resistance, must be “pre-posed” (*musādar*) (Goichon *Lexique* 177); whereas among the *awdā* which the learner admits to “without any resistance” is the “pregiven root” (*aslan mawdūlān*). For Ibn Sīnā, though, the term *usūl mawdūlāh*, referred to *all* pregivens (*awdā*) which the learner admitted “without there being any resistance on his part” (Goichon *Lexique* 177).

In contrast to the “facticity” of the subject, the *masā’if* are those objects of inquiry for which proof and affirmation are sought – viz. “*allatī yubarhan ‘alayhā wa yuqṣad ithbātuhā ‘ind al-mukhāṭib*” – for the benefit of the interlocuter (*mukhāṭab*) (MG 6:5). In pointing this out, Qūnavī associates himself with Ibn Sīnā’s effort to link the consequence with the receiving end of the pedagogical process, as we will see below – indicated, in his case, by the *mukhāṭib* in dialogue. In the event of ignorance, however, a unique situation develops before the consequence can become fully plain to the recipient. Both the principles of theological science (*mabādī ‘ilm itābī*) and the *objects of inquiry* must be admitted (*musallamah*) by whoever has no knowledge of them from someone who does and in whom they have been realized (MG 12:7). Tentative admission holds in a general interdisciplinary sense, where some objects of inquiry may serve as roots, even primal roots. At any rate, the person unfamiliar with a given object of inquiry must admit them until the truth of the matter becomes clear (MG 12:7-8) in one of two ways: either he lights upon some discernible evidence (*dalīl md̄qūl*) confirming that it has really occurred

^c Ibn Sīnā uses more often the word *matalib*.

to the knowledgeable reporter from whom he has taken it (MG 12:8); or the listener realizes for himself their soundness, whereupon the truth of the matter is indicated “through something he discovers that is itself true.” The almost circular reasoning resulting from the case where the object of inquiry is expressly unfamiliar and yet temporarily admitted to obviously resembles the instance where the conclusion is pre-posed with “some resistance,” pending an act of assent. The only difference is, as Qūnawī stresses, the operation in the end *cannot be explained through any extraneous factor or cause (sabab khārijī)* – such as a syllogism (*aqīsah*), premises (*muqaddama*), etc. Direct experience is primordial.

What this does, in effect, is to allow for a process of discovery going from a state of reception of transmitted knowledge to a new order of synthetic complexity that is that of the object of inquiry proper, all within the initial scope admitted for the *pregiven* “object of inquiry,” as it were. The theological uses of this way of putting the matter are obvious. Scriptural verities can then be safeguarded, admitted to by the learner and, subsequently, “rediscovered” without having to overstep the original boundaries by introducing “new premises.” It is not for nothing that Qūnawī speaks of a *pregiven* “object of inquiry.” The higher priority generally associated with the object of inquiry presents us with a set of questions of a plainly different character than that which arises with respect to the fragmentary subject posited in the form of *awdā*, or any “mere” premise. So, the *fact* closely tied in with the *reasoned fact* – indicated by the conclusion and, here, temporarily accepted beforehand – may, at the same time, be regarded as an “object

of inquiry" and, consequently, more a fact having a certain "poise" or "inclination." What Qūnāvī may have had in mind is the following question: while logical structure ideally allowed one to move from the "pregiven" element to a "knowledge of the reality of the thing," how can the noetic process of discovery be a knowledge of a reality if, even when presumed to shift from simplicity to some sort of re-unified synthetic state, the reality, over and above our knowledge of it, remains simple in nature. The initial knowledge, through which the unknown becomes known, and the consequence must *both* be simple; the *process* of judgment has to be composite and yet unitary. But, as the emphasis now clearly suggests, the "fact" may be considered as a kind of knowledge which foreshadows the object of inquiry, fully exposed.

c. Teaching and Learning as a Twofold Process

Ibn Sīnā has tried systematically to show the various ways in which the reality and the judgement may be connected. To do this he had had to analyze other types of teaching and learning beside, for example, mathematics, logic and the "speculative sciences." The framework, which Qūnāvī largely accepted, leads us into the crux of the problem raised by his declaration concerning "knowledge of the realities of things"; namely, that "priority" in knowledge assumes two forms: an initial root and a consequence.

Teaching and learning (*ta'lim wa ta'allum*), according to Ibn Sīnā, are equally indispensable for apprenticed artisans in carpentry and painting, who must ply their trade before they can master it; and "instruction" (*talqīn*) is needed in poetry or language,

where practice in pronunciation is requisite (SBU 57). It may be moral (*ta'dībī*), relying on proper counsel; or based on authority (*taqlīdī*), with the aim of “familiarizing the person with belief in a certain opinion [*ittiqād ra'y mā*],” realized only through a trust in the teacher (*al-thiqab bil-mu'allim*). Higher up is the instructive activity Ibn Sīnā describes as being “mental” (*dhībī*) and “reflective” (*fikrī*) – as in the Arabic rendering of Aristotle’s opening statement of *De Interpretatione*. These are acquired through either a transmitted or an intellected statement (*qawl masnūf aw mafqūl*) whose very nature is to posit a belief (*ittiqād*), opinion (*ra'y*) or conception (*tasawwur*) that was not there before. The mental (*dhībī*), usually taken as poised most closely with respect to the knowledge gathered through the senses, may take place either between two persons or inside a single individual in different respects. Considered in terms of the intuitive grasp (*hadsī*) of the middle term in a syllogism, it signifies and is associated with the teacher (*mu'allim*); and in terms of the consequence (*nafījah*), the student (*mutdallim*), as mentioned above. The pedagogical process with respect to the intuitive (*hadsī*) is a specific form of assimilation (*tamaththul*) of the middle term that occurs when the object of inquiry occurs to the mind, in the absence of any conscious search or request for it (SBU 59). Whereas teaching and learning through thinking or reflection (*al-fikrī*) need a kind of search that implies the temporary presence of the *quaesitum* (*matlūb*).³⁰ With understanding (*fahmī*), as the soul moves in search of a middle term for the syllogism, the middle term does not occur through any such request, but specifically through an audible transmission from the *outside* by a teacher.³¹ “Mental teaching and learning” Ibn Sīnā regards as the most

general category and, being so, calls to mind the Aristotelian apothegm that every kind of mental knowledge or presumption (*zann*) is acquired only through some prior knowledge or assumption (SBU 60). Moreover, not just any kind of priority (*sabq*) is intended, but one that is useful in teaching and learning (*nāftan fī al-ta'līm wal-ta'allum*) (SBU 58). And just as priority and posteriority are two aspects of the same mental operation, so instruction and learning must be thought of as two aspects of a single

process [*insti'aq mā*] toward the acquisition of the unknown by means of the known [*iiktisāb majhūl bi-ma'lūm*], which, on the one hand, is called learning [*ta'allum*], in relation to whomever it occurs to; and, on the other, is called instruction [*ta'līm*], in relation to whomever it results from, viz. efficient cause [*al-'illah al-fā'ilah*] (SBU 57)

The same rules which apply to transmitted knowledge (*masmū'*) in the productive arts are only more true in the teaching and learning of “intelligible things” (*al-umūr al-'aqliyyah*). But in the mental process – which includes thinking, intuition and understanding (SBU 60) – knowledge is said to be prior (*sābiq*) by essence rather than in time (SBU 62), whether it is acquired through personal inference or learned from the outside through another person (SBU 61).

Ibn Sīnā illustrates his point as follows. For every thing to which formal assent (*taṣdīq*) may be given, this assent is potentially obtainable through something else (SBU 60), either an implicant (*ma'lūm*) or a preventive condition (*mu'tanniduhu*). With the proposition, “every *b* is *a*,” as an example, the pre-givens (*ma'wādat*) of *b* – not any object of predication *b* (*al-mahmūl*) – are already contained (*mutadammīnān*) in the judgement (*hukm*) (SBU 61). If we understand by *b* every subject falling under *b*, should the implication (*luzūm*) existing between *b* and *a* not be through pre-givenness and predication

(*hāmī*) then the implicate or conclusion (*lāzīm*) would not be contained by the implicant (*ma'lūm*).¹² A representation of this is when,

supposing there is a major, a minor and a middle term, upon finding that the middle extends [*hāsil al-wujūd*] obtained for the minor you inquire whether the major does so to the middle, from which results [*lī-yāntī minhū*] its extension to the minor. Once it is evident to you that it extends to the middle, then it becomes immediately clear that it does so to the minor. You do not need to await anything [else] or to investigate the attachment of the minor to the middle. The two questions become manifest together at the same time [*ma'an fi al-zamān*]. (SBU 61-2)

After finding that the major obtains for the middle, “you do not need to ask if it is present for the minor, be it within the shortest duration, if any” (SBU 62). This prior knowledge is prior by essence (*sābiq bil-dhāt*) and “it is to [this knowledge] essentially that the initial search [*awwal al-talab*] is oriented” (SBU 61-2).

What kind of a search it is naturally depends, from the outset, on the nature of the question; one may ask, for example, “what” (*mā*) a thing is, “whether” (*hāl*) it is, “why” (*līmā*) it is, etc. (cf. SBU 68).¹³ What is important is that, if we are to gain access to anything by means of prior existing things, that thing must be neither *essentially* absent nor impossible of existence. Otherwise, “what-is-it?” and, in its wake, “whether-it-is” can be neither coordinated nor conceptualized (*tatasaawwār*) (SBU 72). If the object of inquiry is either known or unknown to us beforehand *in every respect* in which it is being investigated, then what is the use of searching for it (SBU 75)? His contention is that it may be known in two respects and unknown in one. It is known through both conception *in actu* (*al-tusawwur bil-ji'l*) and assent *in potentia* (*bil-tasdiq bil-quwwah*). It is unknown qua something specific *in actu* (*min haythu huwa makhsūs bil-ji'l*) and known only qua something non-particularized *in actu*. Knowledge is prior because the judgement that “such and such a

thing is that thing" has not yet been sought. Moreover, noetic priority, as we know, is readily available through the natural endowment of the mind (*bi-fitrat al-aql*), sensation, etc.; many things are potentially comprehensible through this. The particular things (*juz'iyāt*) spontaneously observed without having been sought enter into an actuality subsumed under "first knowledge" (*al-'ilm al-awwal*).

Furthermore, other "parallel" cases exist where the object of inquiry is known first through conception and whatever precedes the object known so as to lead toward a cognizance (*mdrifah*) of that object by way of assent. For example, we might say that the *way* to the place where a runaway prisoner may be found is known before the place.

When we make our way towards the object of inquiry [*salaknā al-sabīl ilā al-matlūb*] with a conception [*tasawwur*] of the object that is prior to it, together with the pathway leading to it, upon reaching it we have a perception of the object [*adraknā al-matlūb*]. (SBU 75)

By the same token, if we make our way toward the prisoner while retaining a prior conception of him and the pathway leading to him, upon reaching him we would recognize him (SBU 75-6). We would be able to do so without ever even having seen him before, but only by conceptualizing a sign (*alāmah*) of his (SBU 76). Whoever conforms to this sign would automatically be a runaway, indeed *our* runaway prisoner. If we attach to this a knowledge that either fits the observation (*ittifāq bil-mushāhadah*) or is acquired (*lā bi-kash*) through a request, this sign becomes linked to a prisoner. We thus know that *this* prisoner has run away. The sign in this sense is like the middle term in a syllogism. And the capture of a prisoner is always relative to the sign, comparable to the occurrence of the minor, since the knowledge that whoever possesses this sign must also have run away indicates the preceding major; and thus the discovery of the runaway constitutes

the conclusion. But the runaway prisoner was not known to us beforehand in *every* respect, else we would not have had to search for him. He was known only inasmuch as we possessed a “conception” of him. He was unknown in respect of his *place*, in view of which we began our search for him.

Briefly, then, the actual assent is said to be preceded (*yataqaddamu*) by three items of information (*ma'lūmat*). The first is conception (*tasawwur*) of the object of inquiry – even if the assent falters thereafter. Second, the conception of the *statement* (*tasawwur al-qawl*) having priority of order to the assent (*yataqaddamu 'alayhi fil-martabah*). Third, the act of assent upon this same statement (*tasdiq al-qawl*) (SBU 58). Assenting to the object of inquiry follows naturally from these three items. Knowledge obtains in two respects: first through conception and then assent, until a *final assent* of something that had previously been absent is “gained.” This is how Ibn Sīnā can sedulously tie what happens to be missing with the operation of assent. The result is that assent is really assenting to the new element only; that is its entire *raison d'être* and why it happens to be governed by a unique set of rules corresponding to its complexity.

As we know, the “object of inquiry” mentioned in the first point is what is sought through a process of reasoning from the known to the unknown, *the form* (*sūrah*) of the *object known having been established according to a necessary order* (*tartīb*) *through which the mind can pass through to the unknown* (*al-majhūl*). The “consequence,” which does not simply come later but consists of whatever the syllogism advances, is of course, literally, the “object sought,” *matlūb* (Goichon *Lexique* 204-5). What is now most interesting about this

statement are both the supervention of the form – which we had encountered in the last chapter when discussing the noetic complex of knower, knowledge and the object known – and the “necessary order” that results. This is because form imparts a particular “poise” to everything pre-given, and is especially useful in providing a philosophical grounding for the tricky passage to a doctrine of Divine speech, which both Ibn Sīnā and Qūnāvī shared at least in inspiration. We shall defer discussion of this to the next chapter. For the present, let us conclude this section by reiterating that the movement from the known to the unknown suggested to Qūnāvī that the “known” is likely to be consonant with or, in a disciplinary sense, commensurate, to the unknown object. This consonance finds certain relevancy in the notion of “pre-position,” and may be gleaned from the “items of information” listed by Ibn Sīnā above. It is what minimally informs us that the “unknown” is known in some respect prior to judgment. For Qūnāvī, it

undergirds the whole view that “there must be a [prior] awareness of that whose knowledge is sought [*al-shū‘ūr bimā yurād mārifatihī*]” (IB A:122; B:123). Since there is no uncomplicated, mechanical movement from one end to the other, consonance offered Qūnāvī much wider scope for setting the issue to rights in formulable but extra-logical rules – as we will see in subsequent chapters – which take into account the critique of the rational mode he has tried to incorporate in his work from various quarters, not just Ibn Sīnā. Having established the problematic nature of man’s receptive faculties, he has had to work out the full implications of what it means to have knowledge of that which is too sublime to be rationally comprehended. If this reality is affirmed to exist, despite the

absence of clinching *logical proof*, then the effort to bridge the gulf separating what two aspects of the same thing happen to display in their consonance or commensuration certainly requires an unusual degree of creative innovation.

d. The Transformation of Logical Priority and Pregivenness

Medieval thought set its energies to finding a device that could account for the noetic process described above, which embraced *pregiven* knowledge of the object, on the one hand, and an object *qua* object *sought*, on the other. It sought to do this – and this appears to hold across the cultural divide separating the Islam from Latin Christiendom³⁴ – in a manner befitting the spiritual aspirations of the age.

For Ghazzālī, it was at the precise moment when a proof patterned on the limpid certainty of “indemonstrables” or primary concepts becomes impossible that, ironically, even the faintest hope of overcoming the circularity involved in the problem of preposition can be entertained. Ibn Sīnā’s solution had been to use the process of assent in order to portray how the “new” element of any discovery is properly reckoned. The unwieldiness of this procedure in metaphysical problems, however, prompted Ghazzālī to resort to the metaphor of “light,” which, in place of “systematic argument” and “structured discourse” (*naṣrāt dalīl wa tartīb kātām*), he felt, provided the sole “key to most knowledge” (GMD 13-4). “It is through this light,” he says,

that one seeks [mystical] unveiling [*al-kashf*]... The point of our accounts is that the quest may be rigorously prosecuted until one reaches an object of search which ought never to be sought [*battā yantabī ilā ṭalab mā lā yutlab*]. Hence, the first premises [*al-awaliyyāt*] are not [what is] sought, being already present [*fa’innahā hādirah*]. Whenever that which is already present is sought, it becomes lost and vanishes; although whoever is seeking what

is never sought cannot be accused of being remiss [*fa-tā yattahim bil-taqṣīr*] in his search of whatever it is he seeks [*fi talab mā yutlabu*]. (GMD 14)

However much we may wish for a fixed trajectory from the epistemically pre-given to a tacit knowledge of the object beyond it, if followed through to the furthest limit of certainty, either a self-identical object or sheer incoherence will be our only recompense – should we insist, that is, on retaining the premises. The highest class of received knowledge is dubbed “inspired,” something communicated through a Divine intervention infusing each “event” of noetic discovery with an immediacy, wholeness, singularity and simplicity that must preclude composition in the trivial sense, and yet is no longer at some remove from the object qua subject. The “rediscovery” does not render the object of inquiry immediate in the primary sense commonly associated with the pre-given premise. This said, however, even the premise is artificially distilled from something more basic and integrally given. One possible candidate that Aristotle had considered for completing this difficult path was, as we saw, definition. While conveying the desired unitary conception of the definiendum, however, definition is not only made up of “parts,” albeit of a particular sort, but leads to the exact same circular reasoning one presumably was trying to avoid. Aristotle realized that definition *per se* was incompatible with what demonstrative method sought to achieve even while it was seen to gravitate toward it.

All sides considered, Islamic thinkers’s critical verdict on the philosophical approach as a whole appears to have been the following – that all that demonstrative science really does in face of these difficulties is to transpose the religious truism that true wisdom is

knowing God, the noblest object of knowledge, into a new structured discourse of rather uncertain spiritual (or even intellectual) fecundity. The *rational* mode of knowing God was meant to render in the most intellectually astute sense what that knowledge must and must not consist of. But it spoke always *about* things. Still, it ought to be said as well, in all fairness, that the noetic interplay alone between the “what” and the “whether” – two of Ibn ‘Arabī’s “primal objects of inquiry” (*ummuhāt al-matalib*)³⁵ (FuM 84:94) – had already reached so far afield than is often let on that philosophical inquiry itself was impelled into areas of which Aristotle and perhaps Ibn Sīnā himself were decidedly less conscious than their mystical successors. It almost seems inconceivable that philosophy would be so staunchly defended for ages if it were thought merely to yield judgements *about* things. Such a knowledge would tell us very little by itself unless the “judgment” happens to conceal a further articulation of a more positive or concrete nature, something like a *scriptural* act of Divine self-manifestation, as the prime guarantor of a discursive certainty that all rational judgment in effect seeks to express.

Extracting the positive from the negative (i.e. “*about* so and so”) is, incidentally, what Qūnavī tried to do through certain logical “rules.” Although this issue will detain us briefly in Part II of this study, we ought to examine more closely the passage from Ibn Sīnā’s *Talīqat* which figures in Qūnavī’s famous correspondence with Nasīr al-Dīn Tūsī, since it is critical to any transition contemplated from a logically to a linguistically based understanding. The dialogue with Tūsī centered on the fundamental question of man’s incapacity to grasp through his intellect the “realities of things,” a common expression

among Islamic thinkers, from al-Fārābī to Qūnāvī, Ibn ‘Arabī³⁶ and Suhrawardī. Instead of viewing the perception of the realities as a purely intellectual act, in the facultative sense, the general consensus revolved increasingly around the *open-ended* character of natural human articulation as the prime model. Language has the advantage of offering a rough equivalent to the almost unfathomable fluidity of apprehension, not to mention its tendency to deepen further a theoretical realism that ran counter the dry formalism of Peripatetic philosophy. Logic proved to be a rigorous but still impoverished way of describing the priority, complexity and, as we will see, comprehensive interlacing of a *unitary* knowledge of the realities of things. A knowledge of the latter kind did not require us to disclaim, in overcompensation before the overwhelming transcendence of Divine Speech, the concrete dimensions introduced by any discourse. But in discourse's lettered concreteness, it was essential that a dynamic relation be shown to exist, animating all the parts of speech and, with them, the self-manifesting act of speech.

Before we move on, let us quickly consider the provision attached to the passage quoted by Qūnāvī in his correspondence, where Ibn Sīnā declares that all we know are merely the *accidents* of things, not their realities. Either the accidents in a statement tell us something about the reality or they do not; if they do not, then what is their function? This was difficult to discern in a non-empirical field – and sometimes disputed in empirical ones as well – in a logically consistent manner. The sticking point was precisely the internal ordering and the interlacing of accidents, attributes, states, etc., the manifoldness of which somehow did not translate into a coherent whole on a par with

the individual unitariness of the object known. Because of the passage's importance to our study, we shall quote liberally from the original, noting any discrepancies between the two versions; those portions which do not appear in Qūnavī's correspondence are placed in large parentheses. According to Ibn Sīnā,

It is not within the power of the human being [*qudrat al-bashar*] to grasp the realities of things [*haqā'iq al-ashyā*]. Of things, we only^d know their properties [*al-khawāṣṣ*], concomitants [*al-lawāṣim*] and accidents [*al-ārād*.^e But we do not know the constitutive differentiae^j [*al-fusūl al-muqawwimah*] for each one of them, indicating [that thing's] reality [*al-dāllah 'alā haqīqatihī*]. We only know that they are things which have properties, accidents and concomitants [*annabā' ashyā' lahā khawāṣṣ wa ārād wa lawāṣim*.^f We do not know^g the reality of the First [Being] [*haqīqat al-awwal*], the Intellect [*aql*], the soul [*nafs*], the [heavenly] spheres [*falak*], fire, air, water and earth. Nor do we know [even] the reality of the accidents.

{ By the same token, we do not know the reality of the substance [*haqīqat jawhar*]. We only know something [*shay'an*] which has this qualification that it is that existent which is not in any substrate. But this is not its reality [*haqīqatibū*]. We do not know either the reality of the body [*haqīqat al-jism*] but only a reasoned fact [*sababan*] which has these properties: length, width and depth. We do not know the reality of the animal [*haqīqat al-hayawān*] but only a reasoned fact qualified by perception and activity [*al-idrāk wal-faṣl*]. However, perceiver and agent [*al-mudrik wal-faṣl*] are not the reality of the animal, merely a property or concomitant. The “real specific difference” [*wal-faṣl al-haqqī*] we cannot perceive. That is why differences arise over the quiddities of things: each person perceives a concomitant which the other does not, judging [*fa-hakama*] according to what that concomitant requires. We affirm some qualified thing [*nātibutā shay'an mā makhsūsan*] we know to be qualified by virtue of one or more properties, and later recognize other properties belonging to this thing through the intermediary of what we first knew [*bi-wāsītāt mā 'arafnāhū awvalān*]. Thereupon we gain access to a knowledge of its haecceity [*āniyyatihā*], as in the case of the soul, place [*wal-makān*] and other things whose haecceities we affirm, not from their own essence [*tā min dhawātihā*], but from their relations [*nisab*] to other things, accidents or concomitants we know. An example

The following abbreviations indicate the source: Q for Qūnavī's *As'ilah*, S for Ibn Sīnā's *Talīqāt*.

^d Q: *fa-innā lāsnā nārifū* / S: *wa nahnu tā nārifū*.

^e Q: *khawāṣṣahā* / S: *al-khawāṣṣ*, Q: *wa lawāṣimahā* / S: *wal-lawāṣim*, Q: *al-ārādahā* / S: *al-ārād*.

^f Q: *khawāṣṣ wa ārād wa lawāṣim* / S: *khawāṣṣ wa ārād*.

^g Q: *fa-lā nārif* / S: *fa-innā tā nārif*.

this movement. Then we observe a motion that differs from that of other bodies and thus know that it has a special mover [*muharrikan khāssan*], whose first and special attribute does not belong to other movers. Thereupon, we trace one property after another [*thumma tatabbānā khāssatan khāssatan*] and one concomitant after another, until we gain access through them to its haecceity.}

Similarly, we do not know^b the reality of the First [Being] [*haqīqat al-awwal*], although we do know from God that He must exist [*annahu yajib labu al-wujūd*] or that He is that for which existence is necessary. This is one of His concomitants, not His reality. And we know by means of this concomitant [*bi-wāsitah*] other concomitants, such as unicity [*wahdāniyah*] and the rest of the attributes. His reality, [supposing] its perception is at all possible, is that which exists by virtue of itself [*al-mawjūd bi-dhātihī*], that is, what has existence by virtue of itself. But the meaning of our expression "what has existence by virtue of itself" points [*ishārah*] to something whose reality we do not know. Its reality is not identical to existence nor is it merely one of the quiddities. For existence is extrinsic [*khārijan*] to the quiddities' realities, whereas He is the cause of existence by virtue of Himself [*buwa fi dhātihī illat al-wujūd*]. Either, on the one hand, existence enters His definition [*tahdīdihī*] in the manner of the genus and the differentia in the definition of simple [beings] [*al-basā'ī*] according to what the intellect determines them both to be^c, thus making existence a part [or "term"] of His definition [*juz'an min haddihī*], not His Reality – just as genus and differentia are parts of the definitions of simple [beings] rather than of their essences [*dhawātihā*].³⁸ Or, on the other, He has^d a reality above existence, and existence is one of His concomitants. (MQA 31-2; Tal 34-5).

Although Tūsī proffered his own interpretation of this passage – admitting of not being aware even that Ibn Sīnā could advance the idea that the "realities of things" are unknowable – Qūnāvī's own testimony bears comparison to the portrayal given by his contemporary, Suhrawardī, who himself believed the Islamic Peripatetics to be doubtful that accidents by themselves could lead directly to a secure knowledge of a reality. The point is that if this was not the real intent of philosophy, the value of the accidents had nevertheless to be carefully weighed in their function as "parts" of some entity seen to

^b Q: *tā nahnu tā nārifū* / S: *wa kadhālikā tā nārifū*.

^c Q: *tākin mānū* / S: *wa mānū*.

^d Q: *mā yafraduhā* / S: *mā yafraduhumā*.

^e Q: *imma an takūna* / S: *innamā yakūna*.

comprise a whole. This presented certain problems which Suhrawardī adeptly analyzes.

We find him arguing in this same vein, for instance, that:

The Peripatetics have made it [intellectually] incumbent that a thing could not be known from [many] things, as substances have unknown differentiae [*fusūl majbūlah*]. Substantiality [*al-jawhariyyah*] they make known through something negative [*bi-amr salbi*], while the soul and immaterial entities [*wal-mufrāqāt*] for them have unknown differentiae. They let an accident like “blackness” be known, for example, as a colour that connects to sight, and thus the connection with sight is accidental. The state of “coloration” [*wal-lawāniyyah*] is [likewise] made known. Therefore, bodies and accidents are not originally conceptualized [*mutasawwarah aslān*]. The state of existence, which is the most manifest of things for them, is also made known. But if conception is alleged to occur through the concomitants [*bil-lawāzim*], then the concomitants themselves [must] have properties, to which [in turn] what has been said should be equally applicable. But that cannot be, since it would follow that nothing about existence is known. The truth is that “blackness” is one simple thing [*shay' wāhid basīt*]; it is intellected with no other part of it being unknown. It is indefinable [*ta'rifubu*] to someone who cannot perceive it in itself [*yushāhiduhu kamā huwa*], while he who perceives it has no need for a definition. Its form in the intellect [*sūratuh fi al-'aql*] is similar to its form in sensation [*ka-sūratuhu fi al-biss*]. Nothing akin [to these] has any definition. Only the realities composed of simple realities [*al-haqā'iq al-murakkabah min al-haqā'iq al-basīt*] which we imagine to be immaterial [*mutafarraqah*] are known. (SHI II 73-4).

Qūnāvī was, therefore, not alone in his construal of the “Peripatetics.” Logical syllogism, definition and predication are notoriously ill-suited to show how a complex of “parts” could yield anything remotely resembling the simple truth of what knowledge of a reality had in the end to be. It is true that Ibn Sīnā's more youthful expatiations on “theological science” in the *Shifā'* indicate that he may not have despaired of finding some conceptual foundation for a “science” of the realities (SMA 12). But it was more in the conscious vein of formal conditions of intellectual apprehension, as we now recognize – and as Qūnāvī indefatigably insists on – that he sought to establish the interconnectedness, as it were, of all the necessary concomitants of the subject. This is not inveterately anathema to his other recognition in the *Ta'liqāt* of the difficulty of a true “knowledge

the realities of things" – or, for that matter, to the intricate flowering of later mystical philosophy at the hands of many of those who would later become most intimately familiar with his works. There is no doubt, though, that the scepticism propitiously expressed in his *Taṣlīqat* with regard to this method of approach provided an impetus to Qūnāvī's masterly elaboration of an exegetical *grammar* – which, it must be stressed, had already, several generations ago, begun to emerge. Qūnāvī did not have to resort to philosophy's piecemeal determinations that many took pains to show could never go into the abstract reconstruction of the "reality of a thing" as required. It was Qūnāvī's firm conviction that this exegetical *grammar* befitting what he had earlierly called the "most appropriate" rendering of "Pen."

e. The "Thing" (*Shay'*)

Our discussion in this chapter is intended to give a more comprehensive view of the intellectual foundations of philosophy which Qūnāvī had been able to use for his own objectives as a mystic than is usually done in similar studies. *Falsafah*, especially the Avicennan variant, has given Islamic prophetic tradition a more systematically-argued, pedagogical theory of the noetic process, where something had to be pre-given and something else derived. The key factor that Ibn Sīnā had identified in this process is the form's role of mediation. All three aspects – the structurally given, the sought after and the form – are ubiquitous, and have pretty much determined the organization of this thesis. Our task will not be completed without some clarification of the pre-given aspect,

the “subject *qua shay’*.” The word *shay’* not only connects Ibn Sīnā’s expression “the realities of things” to this systematic approach to knowledge – hence, *haqīqat al-shay’*, which man has been deemed “incapable of grasping by himself,” and ‘*aqlīyat al-shay’* (“the intellectuality of the thing”) – but also helps coordinate the internal ordering of its parts along more palpably linguistic lines. Let us turn to what Qūnawī’s says about it in an important work of his called *al-Nafahāt al-itābiyyah*.

*Shay’*³⁹ happens to be one of the “primary concepts.” One cannot imagine Avicennan science without such notions as “existent,” the “thing” and “existence” (i.e. the object of inquiry). Of these, *shay’* (“thing”) has played an interesting and rather significant role. It is, therefore, to be expected that in the introduction, or *Madkhal*, to Ibn Sīnā’s encyclopaedia work, *Kitāb al-Shifā’*, the entire object of science is encapsulated in the single suggestive remark duly expressing the need to search for “the realities of things” (*haqā’iq al-ashyā’*). “The goal of Wisdom⁴⁰,” he declares, “is to apprehend all the *realities of things* to the extent that is *humanly possible*” (SMA 12). This naturally could still pass for evidence of a rationalistic bias in his thought. A “demonstrable knowledge” of the object of inquiry, the *matlūb*, could well turn out to be merely an oblique representation of knowledge of the reality of the thing – otherwise to be taken in a contrastively undefined sense – if by “demonstration” nothing more were implied than a completely transparent method. But his interpretation of the noetic process, we saw, involved certain considerations that were additional to the initial simple conception, and hence require a new precept. It is not clear that Ibn Sīnā’s revision of the Peripatetic

doctrine of science and knowledge could have achieved anything more than making philosophy a trifle more amenable to the constant prescriptions of religion without everything he left unsaid and barely suggested in his works providing a personal touchstone.⁴¹ Yet however one may choose to construe his famed pronouncements on the “Wisdom of the Matinal Orient,” Qūnavī set out to accomplish through exegetical grammar what the philosophers were widely seen to have been ill-equipped to do, this without relinquishing logic as the choice didactical tool for practically any science worthy of its name. His discussion of *shay'* falls squarely in the ambit of the logical subject (*mawdūl*). But the question of how a simple reality may be conveyed through a series of postulative distillations from the subject he answered by marking off the strictly syllogistical sense of priority from a deeper lying, linguistic one he has come to identify with *shay'*. The notion of *shay'* lends itself congenially to the new task he set himself because it contained the very “building blocks” of discourse: the pre-given letters, words, etc. In the purview of science, *shay'* is first and foremost something given, being a primary concept. We will next see that it may indicate further a relative givenness within Divine hiddenness, so far as is theoretically ascertainable. All in all, Qūnavī deals with two sets of considerations on priority, one existentially external and the other internal to God’s hiddenness.

i. Knowledge in relation to God. Like “existent,” its functional equivalent, “thing” is described by Ibn Sīnā as having an existence that may be either “for itself” or “for

another” (*wujūdūhā labā aw wujūdūhā li-ghayrihā*) (Tal 69). This makes knowing “things” a more tangled affair than simply getting to know the items of the world before us. Where the separate existent (or immaterial beings) (*fal-mufāraqah*) is said to exist for itself, the result – as we found out in Chapter One – is that it also perceives itself (*tudrik dhawātahā*). “Thing” follows suit, in this respect, being no different in its percipience. Among the immaterial entities Ibn Sīnā considered was the soul. But though the soul may be included within this class, its bodily organs (*al-ātāt al-jasadiyah*) – such as the eye, which, being a faculty, cannot perceive itself – are not.

While “immateriality” in Ibn Sīnā’s scientific theory of knowledge, i.e. knowledge of God, has a functional importance, Qūnāvī draws attention to the danger of erasing all distinctions in knowledge. It may beguile us into thinking that an ideal knowledge possessed by any *single* individual entity (*ilm kull ahad*), by simple virtue of its immateriality, can somehow correspond (*mutābiq*) to God’s own knowledge, which alone encompasses all noetic objects (*bi-kull mātūm*) (NI A:6b-7a; B:3b). Such a consequence may follow from a theory of knowledge relying on the redemptive capacity of “immateriality.” Since there is no question for Qūnāvī of an apprehension of the reality of a thing by dint of one’s own powers, immateriality alone offers little hope of overcoming the hindrances to perfect intellectual apprehension. Neither can it settle the larger issue of non-facultative knowledge of the realities. It is merely a theoretical palliative that cannot detract from the fundamental fact that man is distinct from God, his Creator. Whatever its degree of perfection, his knowledge is rooted in something

more fundamental still to which, it is permissible to add, this knowledge is “consonantly” related, but whose internal articulation it is likely only to “mirror.” The highest knowledge is reserved for God and safeguarded through what Qūnavī’s calls Divine “Perfection” and “Concern” – two terms which play a vital role in his elucidation of the existentiating act of God. This highlights the preponderance of the source of illumination.

Qūnavī position is based on a distinction found in his *Kitāb al-Nafahāt al-ītāhiyyah* which we shall have to bear in mind throughout this study. God’s knowledge taken as an attribute is quite different from its linkage or “attachment” to the “knowledge of another” (*mughayir li-ta'alluq 'ilmīhi bi-'ilm ghayrihi*) (NI A:7a; B:3b). In the latter case, what happens is that Divine knowledge is transmuted into an attribute-for-the-other (*bi-tibār annabu sifah lil-ghayr*). What does this really mean? Is he arguing for two grades or types of immateriality?

What the distinction will eventually do is to render the noetic consonance between two disparate considerations of the same manifestation more palatable by insisting on a vertical integration *in the difference*. Knowledge is seen to be particularized “for the other” and yet rooted in a Divine state. Accordingly, while God’s knowledge of Himself remains in its utter simplicity free of any attachment to the “other,” the self-knowledge of each particular (immaterial) entity is marked by its multifarious attachment to “many objects,” all differing in their capacity to *contain* or encompass (*al-ibātah*). That identity and containment are, as systemic features, key factors at every level of manifestation will

become more evident as we proceed. It was precisely to enable theological science better to represent the internal ordering of *pregiven* knowledge that this whole march was begun. This does not, of course, gainsay what we have learned from both Suhrawardī and Ibn Sīnā. The difficulty of discovering the simple reality by the accidents or attributes logically ascribed to it remains. But the concept of *shay'*, far from being discarded for its association with the school of philosophy, acquires a regulative function belied by its subordinate status relative to the simple reality. In *al-Nafahāt al-itāhīyyah*, the “things” are specifically connected with what he calls the “primal sciences” (*ummīhāt al-‘ulūm*), which concern themselves above all with God’s concomitants, etc. (NI A:5a; B:2b). So that, although derivative in relation to God’s own knowledge of Himself, they are completely primal with respect to us, basic to all levels of understanding. In short, “thing” is allowed to act as a factor of transmission of the *manifold givenness* of what is known in philosophical demonstration as the “subject”; it stands for a level of rootedness by which knowledge is featured according to its “containing” capacity, giving it essentially the character of *uttered discourse on God*, and not just some artificial construct of logic.

Considering the importance of this dimension of knowledge, let us see what Qūnāvī says in his preliminary remarks to the *Nafahāt*. There, he traces the origin of “containment” to a revealed tradition⁴² to the effect that God desired (*ahabba*) to manifest Himself through the attribute of His *Perfection* (*bi-sifat kamālihi*) (NI A:5a; B:2b). Based on this, his first observation is that the attribute of Perfection lies concealed within the Hiddenness of God’s Ipseity (*huwīyyah*), along with the precepts of other Essential

“Concerns of God’s” (*al-mustawfiib li-ahkām sā’ir shu’ūnihi al-dhātiyyah*). However, He manifests Himself in each of these other Concerns (*fi kull sha’n minhā*) in accordance with this First Concern of Perfection – thus *derivatively* – and never purely as the particular Concern taken by itself or His essence unadulterated. “Concerns,” as he was later to explain, are used synonymously with the terms “possible entities” (*al-mumkināt*) and “realities of the existents” (*haqā’iq al-mawjūdat*), which, subsisting in God, have not acquired an external existence of their own (NI A:8b; B:4b).⁴³ Each Concern “gathers” within it the precept of the remaining Concerns (*hukm sā’ir shu’ūnihi*) (NI A:5a; B:2b). For this, every instance of the entire whole must be manifested through a form and an attribute (NI A:5a; B:2b). The precept of the whole consists in an acquaintance (*ta’arruf*) with all of these Concerns, but according to what the peculiarity of *each* Concern requires *at the absolute essence of God*, in respect of what he calls His “Comprehensive Union of Everything” (*min baythu jam’ibi li-sā’irihā*).

The consequence is that any awareness of them must be consistent with the principle of attribution enunciated just earlier, both *through them* and *through Him-qua-them* (*fa-ashfarabā bihā wa bibi min baythu hiya*). Two distinctly different directions are discernible: one from below, the other from above. God’s multiple manifestation (*zuhūrūhu*) on these Concerns’ own terms (*hasabihā*) goes generically by the name “created being” (*khalqan*) (NI A:5b; B:2b). Created being remains intact and distinct not only when the “precept” of the whole (i.e. the First, derived Concern) prevails over (*ghalabah*) that of the particular entity or *essence*, but vice versa as well. Other than this, each Concern encompasses (*hīlat*

bād al-shu'ūn) the precepts of other Concerns by way of priority and posteriority (*al-taqaddum wal-ta'akhkhar*), subordination and superordination (*al-tabdīyyah wal-matbīyyah*), unconditionality and delimitedness (*al-ittaq wal-taqyīd*), etc.⁴⁴ The twin element of polarity and interconnectedness, plainly evident in this enumeration, is what gives each essence its level and particularity. According to this scheme, then, on the one hand, we have the Concerns' precepts of multiplicity and, on the other, those of the specific essence's oneness of God (*ahkām wahdat 'aynihi*). The real upshot, though, is that this essence is really specified in two ways: first, qua Concerns and their hidden, intangible commixtures (*al-mazajat al-ghaybiyyah al-ma'awiyyah*); and, second, qua *derivation* from the unspecified absolute hiddenness of His essence.

This, he says, is what gives rise to the Divine name ‘Last’ (*āakhir*), affirmed of God primarily through the operation of a *posterior* precept (*hukm al-muta'akhkhar*); the Divine Name ‘First’ (*al-awwal*) is affirmed through that which is *prior* in manifestation (*bi-sābiq al-zuhūr*). Thence remains the precept of ‘Pre-Eternal’ and ‘Everlasting’ (*hukm al-azal wal-abad*), and so on down to the plants, animals until, finally, man is called ‘Man’ (*fa-sammāhu insān*) and ‘God’s viceregent and shadow’ (*khalifah wa zālī*) (NI A:6a; B:2b). God has, however, made Man a terminal point and locus (*mansil wa mahall*) that His Commands be fulfilled in the rest of creation (*li-tanfidh awāmirihi fī sā'ir khaliqatihī*) (NI A:6a; B:3a): to know God is to be felicitously embowered where ‘the special requirement of each ‘thing’ [derived] from Him [*ma'an bayn mā yaqtadīhi khusūsiyyat kull shay' minhu*],’ in the manner noted above, ‘and the requirement of the ‘singular oneness’ of His

comprehensive union with respect to the totality of ‘things’ [*bayn mā yaqtadīhi ahadiyyat jamīhi bil-nisbat ilā jamī al-ashyā*]” are both fulfilled (NI A:6a; B:3a).

In more practical terms, this suggests that there are several ways of knowing God and of amalgamating noetic limits according to the pattern of relationship with God. For instance, some people, in Qūnāvī’s words, are acquainted with Him through a predominance of the precepts of the effect (*ghalaba ‘alayhi ahkām al-athar*) and, therefore, persist within the compass of “existentialization” relegated to “effect” and “affectedness” (*al-athar wal-ta’aththur*). Some others are acquainted through what is specifiable of His attributions (*awṣafīhi*) and Concerns, but only on the basis of the latter’s variation. This variation (*al-tafāwut*)¹ at the same time elicits a kinship of those “concealed,” both with the “root” (*idāfat al-mustajann minhā ilā al-ast*) and with the “other” (*ghayr*), who is equally concealed with God. Yet another person may be acquainted with God through knowledge’s precept in him (*bukm ‘ilmīhi fīhi*) and his kindred (*amthālihi*), a precept variously referred to as discourse (*khitāb*), speech (*kalām*), noetic descent (*tanzīl*), light (*nūr*), guidance (*hud*). This indicates that Divine knowledge’s precept in the addressee has a “form” (*sūrat bukm ‘ilmīhi fī al-mukhātib*) and that there is an interpretation (*tarjamah*) of God’s “states” concealed within this knowledge, whether the noetic object is one or more. Qūnāvī’s contention is that this defines God’s Concern with respect to each and every existent. In fact, there is no state possessing a “universal cycle”^m (*dawratuhu al-*

¹ That is, according to *abl al-taqyīd*, or those who turn their attention strictly to what is “delimitable” (*al-mutaqayyad*).

^m That is, no universal state.

kulliyah) that can truly refer back to Him (*lā yadūda 'alayhi wa lā yarjū 'alayhi*) which is more perfect than the form of the precept of knowledge belonging to the existent's Lord *through that existent*, through his Lord's concomitants (*bukm 'ilm rabbīhi bihi wa bi-lawāqimīhi*) and everything else encompassed by the “circle” of His reality (*wa mā yuhīt bihi dā'irat haqīqatīhi*). This is the circle that consists of the Form of his Lord through Himself (*sūrat rabbīhi bi-nafsihi*) and in respect of His Concern (*min haythu sha'nīhi*) qua existent, form and, indeed, locus of manifestation (*maṣḥarīhi*). Rephrasing this, Qūnavī states that nothing that can either “existenate or be existentiated [*mimma awjada wa yuwjad*] refers back to the root except the Form of His knowledge of Himself qua Himself [*sūrat 'ilmīhi bi-nafsihi min haythu nafsihi*] and qua His multiple Concerns, by which His manifestation is made multiple [*shū'īhi al-mutaddadah zubūruhu fīhā*]” (NI A:6a-b; B:3a). This, one ought to keep in mind, despite the “singular oneness of God's singular essence” (*md ahadiyyat 'aynīhi al-ahadiyyah*), which constitutes the very source of both oneness and the manifold (*manbd al-wahdah wal-kathrah*). Stated more fully, the upholders of God's name (*ahl Allāh*), says he,

seek to discover [*yastajīlūna*] the form of God's knowledge through Himself and in Himself, and the Form of His knowledge through Himself in respect of His Concerns and their precepts. [These precepts] are specified in them and by them [firstly] at the levels of His manifestation through them and in them [*tatā'ayyan fīhim wa bibim fī marātib zubūrīhi bibim wa fīhim*]; and [secondly] at other levels where they are manifested within Him [*zubūrātibim fī janābīhi*], insofar as He acts as a mirror “to them” and “to their states with Him” [*min haythu huwa mīrā'ah labum wa li-abwālīhim mā'abu*]. They also seek to discover the Form of God's knowledge [that obtains] through them and through their states relative to each other, with which they vest themselves in successive order [*'alā sabīl al-tā'iqub*], one thing after another and one state after another. Therefore, they take their knowledge from their Lord through their realities and states insofar as their Existentiator's knowledge is attached both to [the Lord] and to them [*min haythu tā'īlūq 'ilm muwjjidīhim bihi wa bibim*]. (NI A:6b; B:3a)

These differences in noetic level and purpose arise because people's knowledge "through themselves" (*ilmihim bihim*), "through their Lord" and "through that which they know as their Lord's knowledge through all of that" (*bimā 'alamūbu 'ilm rabbihim bi-dhālika kullihī*) is not quite the same as that higher pre-eternity (*qidam*), containment (*ihātab*), perfect extension to all noetic objects (*kamāl al-inbisāt 'alā al-maṭūmat*) and everlastingness (*dawāmīhī*) which uniquely belong to God (NI A:6b; B:3a). Qūnavī describes God's knowledge as being never passive but pre-eternal (*qadīm*), all-encompassing (*muhīt*), exhaustive (*munbasīt*), everlasting (*dā'im*) and active (*fīlī*). What people manage to obtain of this knowledge is exactly equal to the amount afforded by the compass of their own station's circle (*mā yastadīhi sītāt dā'irat maqāmīhīm*). This in his view explains why the knowledge of any particular person cannot truly correspond to God's, which encompasses every noetic object (NI A:6b-7a; B:3b) and alone establishes the enduring, unexpungeable link with the root.

ii. The significance of "thingness" (shay'iyyah) for the Act of Writing. So far, we have seen how the question of primacy or priority (*sīr al-awwaliyyah*) properly falls within the province of the relative subject. Qūnavī wishes now to isolate the notion of "thingness" (*shay'iyyah*) (cf. SKM I:125) which, in contrast to the ordinary awareness of thingness in this world, makes for a primary noetic priority of objects as they subsist in a single unity within God's knowledge (cf. NI A:9a; B:4b). So, while yielding a multiplicity which we said was congenial to utterance about God, thing must also contain the secret of unity

for the manifold.

He begins by recalling that the first degree of being, for all existents, is their hiddenness and their remoteness qua intelligibles (*baqidah min haythu al-madna*) from the separate distinctness of the root by way of the precept (“*an mughayarat al-asl bi-muwjib al-hukm*”) (NI A:7b; B:3b-4a) – as told by the following Qur’anic words: “God was and nothing was with Him [*ta shay’ madahu*]” (NI A:7b; B:4a). But here “things” are in a state of pre-eternal self-identity (*azalan ‘aynan*), rather than of “otherness [from God]” (*ghayr*). The precept of that through which there is unity (*hukm mā bibi al-ittihād*) is for that reason stronger and more dominant than the precept of that through which there is distinction (*imtiyāz*). And the latter, in turn, is stronger and more dominant than the Lordly coursing (*al-sayr al-rabbāni*) through the whole range of creational levels (*al-marātib al-kawniyyah*) and “possibilistic recipients” (*al-qawābil al-imkāniyyah*), going from Divine hiddenness to the world of witness (*min al-ghayb ilā al-shahādah*). In keeping with this internal order of priority, he envisages a new dialectic between what is exterior and what is interior that is rather different from the one normally associated with external *vs.* mental events. Within the hidden “expanse” of Divine knowledge, this dialectic is best described as an act of writing.

In the *Nafahāt*, Qūnavī recounts an unusual experience he once had.⁴⁵ He characterizes it as a “Lordly Event” (*wāqī’ah rabbāniyyah*), by which he desried the secret of the primordial act of Divine writing (*sirr al-kitābah al-ūlah al-ilāhiyyah*) (NI A:8a; B:4a). This secret had to do with what he calls the sources of the “knowledge of God and of

unity" (*usūlān min mārifat al-Haqq wal-ittibād*), the "secret of the letters," perfections, *suwar* (the Qur'ān's "chapter divisions"), *āyāt* ("verses"), books and all other things descended from Heaven (*al-nāzīlat*). These are all recapitulated in a type of subsistence called "general existence," which envelops all the things that have not yet acquired external existence – that is, "externalized" in a material sense – but which subsist in God's knowledge by grace of the light of God's essence over His Concerns. While the Concerns play a vital role in this, there is much the same preoccupation with that peculiar sense of existence possessed by the "non-existent possibilities" that was earlier examined in connection with Ibn Sīnā and the Mu'tazilah. Here, anyhow, is how he recollected his discovery.

...I found the general existence [*wajadtu al-wujūd al-‘āmm*] in which the possible entities vested themselves [*talabbasat bibi*] to be essential light's profuseness [*huwa fa'id al-nūr al-dhāti*] stretched over [*inbasata 'alā*] the Divine Concerns. Thus were manifested their specifications, which had been concealed within the hiddenness of the essence and which had vanished in His singular oneness [*wal-mustablakah fi ahādiyyatib*]. [Also manifested, though] not unconditionally [*tā mutlaqan*], was the delimitation of absolute hiddenness [*taqayyud al-ghayb al-mutlaq*] qua existence through the precepts of the Concerns and in accordance with the noetic requirement of the eternal essence [*bi-hasab al-iqtidā' al-ilmi al-dhāti al-azali*]. (NI A:8a-b; B:4a)

The "Reality of the Supreme Pen" (*fa-haqīqat al-qalam al-dhātī*), as the First Intellect (*al-‘aql al-awwal*), has an inclusive reach over all its subsequent exteriorization by means of "the intangible meaning that combines the intangible meanings of all the specifications of possibility [*al-mānū al-jāmi' li-mānī al-tā'ifūnāt al-imkāniyyah*] that God intended to display from among the infinite possibilities" (NI A:8b; B:4a). In other words, it acts as a single archetypal meaning in which are collected all other intangible meanings. God has etched (*naqashahā*) all Concerns or specifications upon the "papyrus veneer" "of the

existential light (*zāhir safhat al-nūr al-wujūdī*) through both a hidden volitional movement (*al-harakah al-ghaybiyyah al-irādiyyah*) and the supreme precept of the essence. It will be recalled that “specifications” are synonymous with “Concerns,” “possible entities” (*mumkināt*) and “realities of the existents” (*haqā’iq al-mawjūdāt*).

Whatever is attainable from the absolute hiddenness of the essence by way of a comprehensive union realized in the *integrated conjunction* of knowledge [*al-jam’ al-mutahassal fi ijtīmāt al-‘ilm*], will [*irādah*], power [*qudrah*], life [*hayāt*] and existence [*wujūd*] is exteriorized by the Pen upon the papyrus veneer of existential light. (NI A:8b; B:4b)

The “papyrus veneer,” then, is what is manifested of God (*zāhir al-Haqq*) and is to be contrasted with His interior (*bātinīhī*), which contains all the specifications in unitary fashion. The specifications are “imprinted” (*muntabītah*), in the same way as in a mirror, upon that which is manifested of God. The spirit (*rūh*) – indeed, all spirits – and the “parchment leaves” (*awrāq*) resemble (*muthul*) the papyrus veneer of existential light in this respect relative to God’s efficacy. Relative to the sphere it is intended to reflect, writing itself merely consists in the exteriorization of the precepts of the specifications (*izhār ahkām al-tā’iyūnāt*) inscribed in God Himself (*al-murtasimah fi nafs al-Haqq*) (NI A:8b; B:4a).

The exteriorization, however, is done through the forms. But each epistemically significant form – whether it is beheld sensorially (*mashhūdah hissān*), imaginatively (*khayālān*), spiritually (*rūhan*) or “imaginably”⁴⁷ (*mithālān*) – is in the end nothing but the “specified Concern” itself (*laysat ghayr al-tā’iyūnāt al-shu’ūniyyah*) (NI A:8b; B:4b). In this regard, the “givenness” analogously ascribed to both the sensory and intelligible forms in the first chapter is redrawn for the level of “relative exteriority” of non-existence (or

perhaps, more inclusively, “General existence”), in terms of a creative act of writing, where the “Concerns specified” – and, consequently, the forms – rather than Concern *tout court*, are said to consist of:

- (1) the primary letters (*hurūf al-ūlā*) qua noetic inscriptions (*nuqūshibā 'ilmīyyatān*);
- (2) “words” (*kalimāt*) qua appearances of their specifications in that which is manifested of God (*zāhir al-Haqq*), namely, the papyraceous veneer of the existential light;
- (3) *ayāt* (the Qur'ānic verses; lit. “signs”), indicating “signification” (*dalālah*) in the “form of some configuration of conjunctive union” (*sūrat bay'ah min bay'at al-ijtimā'iyyah*);
- (4) *suwar* (the Qur'ānic “chapter divisions”), or that which contains a set of direct experiences (*jumlah min al-shawāhid*) attached to one of the nominal and existential levels (*al-marātib al-ismā'iyyah wal-kawnīyyah*);
- (5) the Books revealed (*al-kutub al-munazzalah*), which are the forms of the noetic precepts of existence and possibility (*suwar al-abkām al-'ilmīyyah al-wujūdīyyah wal-imkānīyyah*) and are characteristic of one of the universal levels. (NI A:8b-9a; B:4b)

With regard to the fifth point, Qūnāvī adds that the *Qur'ān* constitutes the “precept-form of that knowledge which comprehends all things, based on the different classes of existents [*ikhtilāf tabaqāt al-mawjūdat*] and their concomitant states, acts [*al-afāl*], relations [*al-nisab*] and linkages [*al-idāfāt*] in every knower” (NI A:9a; B:4b). Exhibiting relative priority with respect to us, the *Qur'ān* acts as the *form of comprehensive knowledge*. As such, it reflects what is concealed above it; and so on down the ladder of knowledge and priority.

It is small wonder that Qūnāvī should name Ibn Sīnā, having accredited him with the discovery of the spiritual substantiveness of the thinking faculty, “Teacher of the Theoreticians” (*ustādh ahl al-nazar*) (IB A:25; B:126). He was prompted to this because, for thinking to be “spiritual,” it need be only *reflective*, much like a mirror, *rendering explicit* to our faculties a higher level without having to affect identification with it. This runs analogous to what at all times occurs *per* Divine manifestation. The significance it holds for him is as follows. At the level of ordinary human discourse, one of Qūnāvī’s dilemmas in *Ijāz al-bayān*’s Introduction was that, if talking about personally-realized knowledge (*al-kalām fil-tahqīq*), for example, happens itself to be merely “one of the relations [*nisbah min nisab al-ilm*] or precepts of knowledge [*hukm min ahkāmihī*],” how can one then claim to convey anything of real substance about the secret of knowledge *in its entirety* or, for that matter, its levels, universally-inclusive attachments (*mutalliqātihi al-kulliyah al-hāsirah*), precepts (*ahkāmihī*), etc. (IB A:7-8; B:105)? The type of hierarchical relations noted above, exhibiting linkages based on priority and posteriority where each level mirrors the one above it, makes it far easier conceptually to circumvent, at the very least, the looming quandary of this train of thought. Yet failing to take the full *logical* consequences could still compound the problem. That is why the “Divine Concerns,” “things” and the basic components of speech are played up. They surmount the traditional difficulties faced by philosophical science by requiring a careful reconsideration of the nature of discourse and language. We shall see in the next chapter that in posing the question “what is it?”, quiddity all but seals its own technical

irrelevance to God, though not necessarily to the things which follow from the knowledge of Him.⁴⁸ A more formal type of unity and cohesiveness of the object is meant in that case, even if equally tinged with the multitudinous variety of contingent objects answerable to the quidditive question. This variety is what keeps all discussion relating to the quiddity at arm's length from that final focus of "knowledge of God" claimed as being "what He is." In sum, Qūnātī, in taking the turn that he does toward language, is not looking for a redundant universality but an epistemic angle that can mirror the ontic reality and retain well enough its form-wholeness at another level to qualify as something that can represent it.

Shay', in contrast to quiddity, may licitly refer to God. Therefore, its link with Divine knowledge has less of a roundabout character than seems at first glance to be the case. Directing his sights to the wide versatility of its substantive, viz. "thingness" (*shay'iyyah*),⁴⁹ he extracts two semantic poles: existence (*wujūd*) and permanence (*thubūt*) (NI A:9a; B:4b). The aim is to portray "thingness" – and not only "thing" – in its philosophical career as an *object of knowledge* in its own right, to be viewed in terms of the unique function he sees fit to confer upon it. The "thingness of existence" (*shay'iyyat al-wujūd*) indicates, first, the commonplace human awareness "that a thing exists in itself," as an entity apart (*mawjūdan bi-'aynihī*), with respect both to itself and to another (NI A:9a-b; B:4b); that is, as something both unique *and* distinguishable from another. Quiddity could qualify as the best-suited to convey these two qualities through the genus and differentia, if the definition is complete.

The "thingness of permanence" (*shay'iyyat al-thubūt*), on the other hand, indicates above all the *form* of the "knowability" (*sūrat ma'lūmiyyat*) of everything within Divine

knowledge (NI A:9b; B:4b). Pre-eternal and everlasting (*azalan wa abadan*), this “knowability” is based on a single permanent, unchanging mode he calls “*watirah wāhidah thabitah ghayr mutaghayyirah wa tā mutabaddilah*,” possessing its own special character (*bi-khusūsatihā*) and marking it off from other objects of knowledge. Qūnāvī is searching for the original, concrete uniqueness of knowledge he could not find in a universalizing philosophical concept like quiddity. Such a concreteness of knowability encompasses literally everything to which our relationally-driven access has otherwise been through a featureless universalism, rather than the uniqueness he is emphasizing now. The “single mode” (*watirah*) referred to, therefore, stands on its own: God in His perpetual knowledge of it distinguishes it (*yutamayyizuhā*), in fixed manner, from other types of knowledge such that His Knowledge never has to be altered or renewed (NI A:9b; B:4b-5a). No new designative precept need be generated for any higher containment still to allow for God’s utter transcendence above His own creation (*naṣāhatihī ‘an qiyām al-hawādith bīhī*) (NI A:9b; B:5a). From such an expedient no advantage would redound to us, the reason simply being that the sort of discourse we sought to define for scientific purposes will always presuppose that there is something unknown, and that something previously unknown can later become known typifies our own ineluctable human condition but says nothing at all about God’s knowledge. Rather, His act of existentialization (*ijādūhū*) through the “Power subordinate to His Will” (*bi-qudratihī al-fābi’ah li-irādatihī*) takes place “subsequent to” a pre-eternal and prior knowledge (*bādā ‘ilmīhī al-sābiq al-azlī*) the precept of whose designation is being manifested – and this is the

reason for the concrete uniqueness at this permanent level – through *the Will qualified by the “designation”* (*bil-takhsīs*).

The single mode of “thingness” – the thingness of permanence – corresponds to the “Third Thing,” which Ibn ‘Arabī contrasted both to the First Thing (the absolute existent, *al-mawjūd al-mutlaq*) and to the Second (delimited existent, *al-mawjūd al-muqayyad*) (LAI 15). The Third Thing, collected together all the realities in their perfection and is, in consequence, variously named the “reality of the realities,” the first matter (*al-hayūlā* *aw al-māddah al-ūlā*), genus of the genera (LAI 19). Now, Qūnavī stipulates further that “thingness” is really derived from that which, in the Qur’ān, is “addressed” by the “creational command” (*al-shay’iyyah al-mukhātabah bil-amr al-takwīni*): “For Our word to a thing, when We will it, is but to say to it: Be! and it is” (Qur’ān 16:40) (NI A:9b; B:5a). In this sense, he says, it appears to possess “some touch of existence” (*darb mā min al-wujūd*), though in respect only of God’s knowledge of it; that is, its specification and distinction in His pre-eternal knowledge from other types of “objects of knowledge.” The same applies to the possible entities, since the permanence of anything that precedes external existence is required equally in existence and at the Presence of General Possibility (*fi hadrat al-imkān al-‘āmm*) through its condition of non-existence.⁵⁰ The thingness implied in the Qur’ānic verse quoted above, stands for that which had not yet been addressed (*yukhātib*) for the purpose of creation nor existentiated through Power.

It is indicative of the fact that every one of God's objects of knowledge has a "pre-eternal and permanent form" (*sūrah aṣ-ṣalīyyah thābitah*), but at the Presence of His Knowledge. In fact, he says, it is upon that "presence" that "creational address" (*al-khitāb al-takwīnī*) is conatively focused (*mutawajjih*), inasmuch as specification and particularization are first carried out exclusively with respect to it and in contradistinction to other, lower "objects of knowledge" (NI A:9b-10a; B:5a).

All these objects, while having "a touch of existence," are non-existent in themselves; they subsist only through the knowledge of their existentiator, not as something existentially realized. And, to get back to the subject of Qur'ānic revelation, Qūnavī explains their status of relative interiority – "relative" to the externalized order – directly by reference to the descent of the "Mother of the Book" (*umm al-kitāb*) (NI A:10a; B:5a), whose thingness brings into full relief both its pre-given aspect, depicted as follows, and the concrete uniqueness proper to language at different levels of unified subsistence. At one level, it is the "Mother of the Book put into writing [*yastamid minhu*] by the Supreme Pen [*al-qalam al-ālī*] upon the Tablet preserved from forgetfulness [*fi al-lawh al-mahfūz min al-nasyān*], alteration [*tabdīl*] and change [*taghyīr*]" (NI A:10a; B:5a). In this respect, the Mother of the Book is as unchanging as it is pre-given; it is in effect but one remove above the Preserved Tablet descended in a single moment upon the "heaven of this world" (*al-samā' al-dunyā*) during the Prophet Muhammad's "Night of Immensity" (i.e. "*laylat al-qadr*"), and only subsequently set forth in detail through further revelation (*bi-wahy ākhar*). This Tablet was brought down to earth gradually (*mundijaman*) over a period of 23 years,

the time it took for the Qur'anic revelation to the Prophet, as we know, to be completed. In it, God has written down the measure of each created being (*kataba maqādir al-khalā'iq*) and in doing so, he emphasizes, “*evoked it [fi al-dhikr]* before having created it [*qabl an yakhlūqabum*]” (NI A:10b; B:5b). By declaring in the Qur'an that a thing is *madhkūran* (“evoked”), God really means that it was *written*. Accordingly, the permanent thingness refers simply to something preceding another, derivative thingness specified and distinguished through essential distinction (*al-tamayyuz al-dhāti*) in God's Knowledge at the “station of permanence.” This is the transitional point marking the difference between a direct reference to God and one that is mediated by the thingness of the “other.” Since the “form” is specially redeployed in view of the linguistic aspect of self-manifestation, and God reveals Himself through language, the “*form of the knowability*” of each thing in Divine pre-eternal knowledge has a specific letter, more precisely, a *consonantal-level*⁵¹ (*martabat al-harfiyyah*), that allows the Divine “tincture” (*sabghat al-Haqq*) to take its course through the existential light of God's essence (*bi-nūrihi al-wujūdī al-dhāti*) (NI A:11a; B:5b). It does so through an “intelligible, intangible movement”⁵² (*bi-harakah maqūlah ma-nawiyah*), as required by some Divine “Concern,” and is fittingly described as an act of writing.

It is, therefore, quite fitting that the form of the knowability of a thing whose creation is intended be called “word.” All existents being words, the Qur'an applies the term to an assortment of beings – e.g. Jesus is word (*kalimatān*) and logos (*qawlān*).⁵³ But Qūnāvī's objective is twofold. He would, of course, like to show that existentiation takes place through complete words (*al-ījād bil-katām*), but also that these words themselves are really *posterior* (*muta'akhkharah*) in rank to the *level of consonants* as such (*al-martabat al-*

harfiyyah) (NI A:11a; B:6a). The circuit finds resolution where the “thingness” of things, taken in their “consonantality” (*harfiyyatihā*), subsists permanently (*thubūtiyyah*) within the “innermost knowledge” at a station of “evanescence in God” (*fi 'arsat al-'ilm wa maqām al-istiblāk fi al-Haqq*). On the other hand, the specification of things in the “heart of entitative existence” (i.e. “*fi 'arsat al-al-wujūd al-'aynī*”) – inasmuch as the light of God’s existence extended (*inbisāt*) upon thingness, its concomitants and manifestation belongs to them rather than to Him – is cast in the role of “existential word” (*kalimah wujūdīyyah*). In this second sense, he says, things have an existential thingness, as it were, whereby the existents rise through various degrees of “comprehensive union” (*fi darajāt maqām al-jam'*) understood as a station in its own right. These degrees of comprehensive union are vouchsafed as *āyāt*, *suwar*, *kutub qayyimah* and, finally, all together in the single instance of *kitāban jāmi'ān* (“the Comprehensive Book”) – all within the range displayed by entitative existence.

Conclusion. From our lengthy discussion in this chapter we may draw the following conclusions. Qūnāvī’s critique of theoretical reason has centered on the argument that no proof can either establish or invalidate conclusively the *reality* of a thing. This reality the theoretician may fully accept beforehand without compunction, it may indeed first be given precariously through the senses. The “scale” that would then be needed as a formal confirming sign for the truth of its existence requires a structuring principle based on an instructive science which can at least represent the epistemic process as a

movement from some *conceptually* known pre-given toward the “object of inquiry” sought. Demonstrative science, in Qūnāvī’s view, though, fails to safeguard sufficiently the “concrete uniqueness” we have been alluding to so far, in short, the articulative character of this process, as opposed to the formal patterning of relationships normally exhibited by logic. Utterances, after all, if they are truly to be significant, transmit particular and disparate items – letters, words, meanings, etc. – not just indistinct relations among the parts of speech. In order to get at its concrete, articulative thrust, he proposed to analyze the pre-given component, normally called the “subject,” qua “thing” – i.e. the thing whose reality we wish to know – and “thingness.” These can accommodate more readily the constructive exigencies of articulation whence arises meaning – or on the basis of which our knowledge of the thing’s *reality* is ultimately predicated. This function of utterance will occupy most of our attention in this study. It provides the main avenue through which Qūnāvī will effect his passage from a philosophical mode of discourse to a more palpably “mystical” one, with all its typical traits and interests. The key terms of this passage are “form,” “perfection” and “existentialization.” To be sure, knowledge is – just as the *fātāsifah* had insisted – primarily God’s knowledge of Himself, but transposed it becomes a Divine attribute-for-the-other. The problem of knowledge hinges on this operation; whereas, unqualified, God’s knowledge of Himself implies knowledge in a single mode of undifferentiated “permanence,” as we saw. Its articulation in terms of pre-given building-blocks – letters, etc. – entails a final resolution or perfection through created being. Existence signifies this perfection, and its elucidation in philosophy must

be understood to be both an existentiating self-manifestation and Speech. How well our methodological concerns are accommodated by this conception will perhaps be better seen in the following chapter, when another philosophical concept, quiddity, is investigated more vigorously in relation to absolute existence. Before studying Qūnāvī's philological approach to these problems in Part II of this thesis, we shall consider several key notions and their place in his mystical philosophy.

NOTES

1. The link with Ibn Sīnā in this section of the work was, not surprisingly, picked up by Ruspoli, who even notes textual similarities with the Cairo edition (1960) of *al-Ishārāt wal-tanbīhāt* (7th *Nahj*, Sect. 3 ("On the Subject, Principles and Object of Inquiry") (pp. 523-533). I am not convinced that Qūnavī necessarily had to borrow any passages from the *Ishārāt*, although it would have been quite natural for him to do so from such a standard work. His summary here seems to me to pertain directly to the immediate objectives of his treatise. Ruspoli himself observes that he does not appear to have been working on the same recension of Ibn Sīnā's book we know; the discrepancies are more readily explained by simply accepting the authenticity of the passages. (Ruspoli CMS I:216).
2. The notion of *hukm*, which denotes a single ruling property, is briefly explained in Chittick SPK 39. Jurjānī defines it as "the positing (*wad*) of a thing in its proper place (*mawdīhi*)" (JKT 92). Its application is very wide-ranging and includes the act of judging something concerning another, which yields the relational complex of "judge," "what is judged upon" and "judgement." This will be analyzed later.
3. This has been asserted by many thinkers. One version is that of the famous physician, Abū Bakr al-Rāzī (d. 313 AH/925 CE), who argued that "We are not obliged to invoke anything [simply] (*an nadā*) because people are ignorant or have erred; it behoves them, if they truly are people of good sense, good standing and circumspection [*abl ra'y wa tathabbut wa tawaqquf*], not to deny [*inkār*] what they have not demonstrated to be false [*mā laysa 'indabum 'alā butānīhi burhān*] (Mūsā MBI 181; cf. Abū Bakr b. Zakariyā' al-Rāzī, *Khawāṣṣ al-ashyā'* Ms. 264, Tibb Taymūr, al-Maktabah al-Taymūriyyah, Dār al-Kutub al-Misriyyah, folio 2.)
4. Qūnavī's use of this technique does not entail conferring any specific truth value upon the propositions in the way that Galen, for instance, seemed to do. The principle was used for various purposes. As James Collins states, Cicero developed it "in order to determine the more probable position on a question." (Collins GMP 38) The Skeptics' formula expounded by Sextus Empiricus was that "to every argument an equal argument is opposed," by which he meant, in his words, "for every argument which I have examined, and which seeks to establish a point dogmatically, it appears to me that there is another argument opposed to it which seeks to establish a point dogmatically and is equal to it in point of credibility and incredibility." (SES 85; cf. on the ten tropes (*tropoi*) or modes of balancing the scale, which lead to the "suspension of judgement," pp. 44-72.)
5. See James Collins' intelligent work, *God in Modern Philosophy*, for the employment of sceptical arguments by various advocates and adversaries of tradition in the early modern period. The Greek Sceptics, it must also be remembered, were historically associated with medicine, which had its own ancient conflicts between untrammelled speculation on causes and an empirical temper in fact predating the latter. The notion of causality itself as we have come to understand found its first proponents in the experimental crucible that was ancient medicine.
6. According to the classical definition given by Jurjānī, *hādī* is something that befalls or prevails upon one without being planned or acquired. It is something given by God (*mawhūb*), and continues until the soul's own attributes manifest themselves. But if it lasts, becoming

ingrained (*malakan*), it could be called “station” (*maqām*) (JKT 81). Whereas a *ḥāl* is effortlessly received, *maqām* requires work. Qāshānī gives an almost identical definition (QIS 57). Kalābādhī, on the other hand, adds that every *maqām* has a beginning and an end, and in-between each two are various “states” (KTM 101).

7. Kalābādhī, in a similar vein, referred to ‘*utūm al-abwāl*, which translates rather as “science of the states” (KTM 97-103).

8. Just as “state” (*ḥāl*) is Divinely granted.

9. This describes very well the main thrust of the argument propounded by some Greek Sceptics, of the New Platonic Academy version (hence, the Academic Skeptics), who both rejected any possibility of human beings ever grasping metaphysical truths by way of demonstration and “held for a theory of probability and consistency among our ideas” in its place (Collins GMP 32). This was about as far as they were willing to go on the question of certainty. Whereas Arcesilaus had developed the notion of *eulogon* (“the reasonable”) from Timon’s phenomenalism as a guide for everyday life, Carneades, another sceptic, expounded his more rigorous doctrine of *pithanon* (the probable) denoting degrees of plausibility or probability (cf. “A Polemical Introduction” by Philip P. Hallie, SES 23).

10. ‘Abd al-Rahmān Jāmī (d. 898 AH/1492 CE) makes a similar statement, using the same expressions (e.g. *nūr kāshīf*) in *al-Durrāh al-fākhīrah*, p. 37, Par. 11.

11. In fact, the *fālāsifah*’s singular interest in these texts tends perhaps to leave the impression among many modern scholars that the early were strict “rationalists,” men of pure reason.

12. His commentator, Hamza Fanārī (b. 751 AH/1350 CE), furnishes us here with an interesting scheme for the “divine religious sciences” (*al-utūm al-shāfiyah al-itābiyah*) which not only differentiates the principal roots from what he calls the “general branches” (*al-furū’ al-kulliyah*) (FMU 4), but at the same time throws into the relation both cosmology and religion. Fanārī invokes some prophetic traditions holding that science in fact consists of two sciences (*ilmān*): that of bodies (*ilm al-abdān*), such as medicine, and that of religions (*ilm al-adyān*) (FMU 4). This is an old division, quite important because, as he adds, of the mixture (*mizāj*) – i.e. “temperament,” as technically known in medical tradition – which results from the four elements (*al-mutahassal min arkānihā*) of “natural reality” (*al-haqīqah al-tabi’iyah*)...It is rooted in one of God’s names. By naming it *rāhm* (womb), God made it share in His Name *rahmān* (FMU 4). This is crucial, he argues, for the specification of the human spirit (*ta’ayyun al-rūh al-insāni*) and thus its capacity to join knowledge of the universals with the particulars (*jam’ bayn al-ilm bil-kulliyyāt wal-juziyyāt*), by which it finds its way toward (*tawassul*) realization through the intermediary level (*al-martabah al-barzakhīyah*) encompassing the precepts of necessity and possibility (*abkām al-wujūd wal-imkān*) and the manifestation in the form of the Presence and the world (*al-zuhūr bi-ṣūrat al-hadrāh wal-ālam*) (FMU 4). The specification of the human spirit is based on what the natural mixture yields, although the manifestation of its perfections (*zuhūr kamālātibī*) is discursively prior (*taqdīmubu fil hadīth*) to the science of bodies. By broaching the issue of disciplinary ordering and precedence, Fanārī of course anticipated Qūnāvī’s own later discussion argued in more clearly Avicennan language.

13. The goal of theoretical science, in particular, is to arrive at an opinion (*ra'y*) and a belief (*i'tiqād*), but not with respect to any mode of practical activity or of the principle of such an activity as such (SIL 4).

14. Ibn Sīnā mentions also conceptualization (*tasawwur*), for which some things (*ashyā*) act as principles and are conceived for themselves (*mutasawwarah li-dhawātihā*) (SIL 29). On “principles,” see the previous notes, or SIL 14-5.

15. See MD:15-6 (Jabre), where Ghazzālī shows how the experts of opinion and theoretical inquiry (*ahl al-ra'y wal-nazar*) – namely, those who practiced *'ilm al-kalām* – distinguished themselves through their simple acceptance of premises in their method of reasoning, whether these premises are consensual in nature or drawn from the Qur'ān and Tradition. Cf. also Ibn Rushd's *Fasl al-Maqāl* 21.

16. And, Ibn Sīnā adds, since that is the objective, His existence unlike the “existent” cannot at the same time be presupposed (SIL 6).

17. Or *matālib* (MG 6:5).

18. Later logicians defined the *mawdū* in a propositional statement as anything upon which a judgement is given (*mabkūm 'alayhi*), whether what is called the “theme” of a nominal sentence or the verb of a verbal one (ShGM 87, 162). For a detailed, late 18th century discussion of the issues, see also ShIS 2-127.

19. He expresses the same thought in the *Dānishnāmah-yi 'atā'i*:

Being (*hasīl*) is recognized (*bashināsād*) by reason itself (*khirad khwānd*) without the aid of definition (*hadd*) or description (*rasm*). Since it has no definition, it has neither genus (*jīns*) nor differentia (*fāṣl*) because nothing is more general (*'āmmītār*) than it. Being does not have a description since nothing is better known (*mārūf*) than it. (Morewedge MoA 3:15)

20. This study proceeds with a restriction accompanied by the emergence (*takhsīs yahduth mā'abu*) of the subject of Physics, to which it is thereupon admitted, etc. (SIL 15).

21. Ibn Sīnā enumerates the sorts of things which this science investigates. Let us summarize them before turning to the major concern of this chapter, which is to clarify the mechanics behind the relationship between the *givenness* of the subject and its principal object of inquiry. The “highest science” is divided in the following manner. First comes the study of the ultimate causes (*al-asbāb al-quswāt*), which are causes for every caused existent in respect of its existence (*kull mawjūd mā'lūl min jihat wujūdihī*). There is the study of the First Cause, from which every caused existence qua caused (i.e. rather than simply moved) existent emanates. The accidents of the existent and, finally, the principles of the special sciences (*mabādi' al-'ulūm al-juz'iyyah*) are also investigated here (SIL 14), each principle of which is taken up as a question. When we speak of “First Philosophy,” he says, we refer to the science of the first of things in existence (viz. the First Cause [*al-illah al-ālī*]) and the first of things in general (*al-umūr fil-'umūm*) (viz. existence and unity [*wahdah*]) (SIL 15). After describing the relation between “the thing” or “the existent” and those matters which constitute its disciplinary “objects of inquiry” (*matālib*) described, Ibn Sīnā

mentions causality, the categories (*maqūlat*); the mode of non-existence (*hāl al-mādūm*) and that of necessary existence (*al-wujūd al-darūrī*); the mode of possibility and its reality (i.e. the study of potentiality and actuality [*al-nazar fil-quwwah wal-fa'l*]); the universal and the particular; anteriority and posteriority; the one and the many, etc. (SIL 25-6). By studying the principle of existents and affirming the First Principle (*al-mabda' al-awwal*) (SIL 7), theological science determines both that God is the One Real, in all His splendour, and in what ways He is “one” and “real” (SIL 27). But it also establishes how He “knows” (*yā'lām*) everything, is capable (*qādir*) of everything, and what these signify; that He is Generosity (*jawād*), Peace (*salām*), the Beloved unto Himself (*al-māshūq li-dhātibī*), etc. (SIL 27). It also determines what His relation to the existents and what primary thing existing through Him are; how the order of creation (from the angelic, intellectual substances to man) and how all return to Him (*ta'ud ilayhi*); how He is “perfectional principle” to existent things (*mabda' labā kamātī*) (SIL 28).

22. Just above, however, he refers to the *matālib*, which consist of *hal* (whether the thing exists), *mā* (the concept of the name [*mafhūm al-ism*]), etc. (SIL 92) On the same division into the “parts of science,” see the note below.

23. Suhrawardī explains that “the parts of sciences [*ajzā' al-'ulūm*] are the subjects, the principles [*mabādi'*] and the objects of inquiry [*masā'i*]...; the objects of inquiry are the propositions [*al-qadāyā*] whose assent is sought [*yathlub al-tasdīq bihā fīhi*]” (SKL 93).

24. Based on the hadīth: “Or You appropriate it in the knowledge of your unseen state” (MG 9:6).

25. Cf. MQM 16 on concept of “*mīzān*.”

26. Namely, the “five universal presences” which will be discussed in later chapters.

27. The matter, in the end, revolves around two aspects. Qūnavī adds that this is clear through the independent verification (*tahqīq*) of the two precepts suggested by the following words of the Qur'an:

To all do We extend this and that of thy Lord's bounty. Thy Lord's bounty has not been interdicted. (17:20)

That is the grace of God which He gives to whomever He wills, for God's is the grace abounding. (57:21).

28. Goichon translates it as *postulats* (*Lexique* 437).

29. See quotation given in Goichon *Lexique* 437.

30. I am indebted to Professor Eric Ormsby for this Latin term, which translates the Arabic for “object of inquiry” quite neatly and without recourse to what would have been an awkward English construction.

31. Ibn Sīnā envisages the possibility of a combination of understanding and deliberative in instances where the teacher supplies a term in the syllogism which the student learns in one stroke (*daf'atān*) through conceptualization. If another term is added thereupon, he has a

premise, which he may, however, doubt despite what his teacher may say (SBU 59). If he does, he must think for himself and only then is he said to learn. This implies the combination. The syllogism in this case is compound (*murakkab*), although every syllogism, as a whole, is single in its conveyance of knowledge (*kull qiyās min jumlatibī fa-huwa tā'īm mufrad*) (SBU 59).

32. *Al-malzūm* is equivalent to the *shart* or the condition in a conditional.
33. Ch. 5, “On Objects of Inquiry (*matalib*) and Related Issues.”
34. This question is common to Islamic and Latin Scholastic tradition. St. Thomas Aquinas, for instance, responds thus to those who would uphold the method of reason above the Holy Writ:

But the end must first be known by men who are to direct their thoughts and actions to the end. Hence it was necessary for the salvation of man that certain truths which exceed human reason should be made known to him by divine revelation. Even as regards those truths about God which human reason could have discovered, it was necessary that man should be taught by a divine revelation; because the truth about God such as reason could discover, would only be known by a few, and that after a long time, and with the admixture of many errors. (*Summa Theologica* I:1)

Reduced to its barest logical elements, this idea reflects the widely held view that all genuine knowledge is grounded in a “pre-existent” knowledge (to borrow Aristotle’s expression), be it theological, medical, mathematical or philosophical. This naturally brings Aquinas and the middle Scholastics much closer to the main trend of Islamic thought. And, it is not essentially different from the conception we are analyzing in this thesis.

35. Ghazzālī uses the same expression in GMI 248-49.
36. With respect to knowledge of God, cf. *FuM* II 92.
37. “Constitutive” indicating that which is part of the quiddity, as opposed to the accidental, concomitant or derived (Goichon *Lexique* 606:328).
38. As Ibn Sīnā says just below,

The parts of the definition of the simple [being] are those of the definition not the constitution [*ta l-qiwāmīhī*] of [this being], the latter being determined by the intellect, whereas in itself it has no parts. [Moreover,] we know about the First [Being] in a primary way without any act of acquiring [*iqtisāb*] that He is necessary of existence in Himself [*wājib al-wujūd bi-dhātibī*].

And again,

definition has parts, while that which is definable has no parts, if it is simple. But just then, the mind invents something that subsists with the status [*maqām*] of genus and something else with the status of the differentia. In composite [being] genus corresponds to matter and differentia to form. Existence is one

of the concomitants of quiddity, not one of its constituents. On the other hand, the judgment [*bukm*] regarding the First [Being], who has no quiddity apart from His “thatness” [*al-anīyyah*], seems to be that existence is His reality, if based on an attribute. Such an attribute is an affirmation of existence [*ta’akkud al-wujūd*]; but such an affirmation of existence is not itself existence characterized [*yukhaṣṣ*] as affirmation. It is a meaning which no name can express through the affirmation of existence. (Tal 36)

39. Cf. Goichon *Lexique*, q.v. “*Šay*” and “*Šay’ya*,” for the relevant Ibn Sīnā texts. Curiously echoing the Mu’tazilī position, al-Sharīf Jurjānī defined *shay’* as linguistically denoting that which may legitimately be known (*Tarīfāt* 130). He refers to Sībawayh’s view that it consists of existence, embracing all beings, whether accidents or substances, so long as it is something known and given attribution (*yūlam wa yūkhbar ‘anbu*). Frank points out that Jubbāt used the word “*shay’*” to mean something equivalent to Aristotle’s “substance” (*ousia*), namely, the entity which is the object of our knowledge, or *al-mātūm al-mukhbar ‘anbu* (Frank, *Beings and Their Attributes*, pp. 14; 31, n. 14); but it was not employed with respect to what we know *about* that entity. In later philosophy and mysticism, the term was generally used to mean both the entity and its attributes (or accidents). For Ash‘arī’s account of this particular issue, see his *Maqālat*, p. 55-6, 70, 181-2, 196-7.

40. There are variant readings for this term throughout this section, alternating between *hikmah* and *falsafah*.

41. This is especially reflected in the rationale behind the entire thematic program of the *Šifā’*. What is most striking about this scheme is that “choice” and “activity” served only to mark out the domain of practical wisdom but did not account for any human limitation in the acquisition of knowledge. They figured only as a factor that distinguished between two objects or orders of existence (*wujūd*): existent things (*al-ashyā’ al-mawjūdah*) either may or may not exist by way of choice and activity (SMA 12). Those matters (*umūr*) which pertain to the first order of existence are what he calls “theoretical philosophy” (*falsafah nazariyyah*); those belonging to the second constitute practical philosophy (*falsafah ‘amaliyyah*) (SMA 12). Choice and activity relate strictly to the ethics and arts of practical philosophy, and are completely irrelevant to epistemology, the latter being either imagined or intellected. However, in themselves they all refer to “objectivities,” *al-ashyā’ al-mawjūdah*, of one sort or another, whether human beings study them or not. As subjective as they may appear to us, that which displays choice is itself an “objectivity,” part of a world of human endeavour and human products which is amenable to scientific study (*khayr*) (SMA 14). In this respect, they are comparable to the objects falling within the scope of theoretical philosophy, whose ultimate goal is “knowledge of God” (*ma’rifat Allāh*) (SMA 14); and the *ashyā’* per se are precisely what *science* seeks to elucidate. But their goal is also the “good.” Like practical philosophy, the theoretical aims at the perfection of the soul (*takmīl al-nafs*), but through learning alone (*ta’allum faqat*). It aims at the kind of belief that accompanies opinion (*tiqād ra’y*) – *ra’y*, Lat. *sententia* – in the sense of something received or admitted, but in the absence of all practical activity. Technically, *ra’y* is taken by Ibn Sīnā as “a universal, approved premise” (*mugaddamah kulliyah mabmūdah*) and employed for purposes of persuasion. As Goichon also pointed out, the facts of moral consciousness are placed at the level of laudable opinions. In our context, however, Ibn Sīnā wishes to emphasize both the incontrovertible character of whatever knowledge is given and the “developmental” nature, as

it were, of human activity. As a process, it can never reach it alone, but this does not impugn the truth of the goal which had already somehow been transmitted. Finally, theoretical philosophy is prior (*ūlā*) by virtue of its close relation to supposition (SMA 12).

42. Probably alluding to the famous *hadīth qudsī* to the effect that God desired to be known. “I was a Hidden Treasure and, desiring to be known, I brought forth created people. I made myself known to them and so they came to know Me.” (Quoted by Ibn ‘Arabī *FuūMA* 12, 496:574, among numerous other places where it is analyzed or commented on from different angles, depending on the occasion.)

43. On *shu‘ūn*, cf. *FuūMA* IV, Bāb 558, “*Hadrat al-suhbah*,” p. 267. ‘Abd al-Razzāq Qāshānī (d. 736 AH/1335 CE) describes *shu‘ūn* tersely as *afāt*, *al-shu‘ūn al-dhātiyyah* consist of “the essential individualities and realities etched (*nugūsh al-āyān wal-haqā’iq*) in the singular oneness of the essence, such as the tree, along with its leaves, branches, etc...which are exteriorized at the Presence of Unitary Oneness and differentiated through the Pen” (QIS 154).

44. All these terms will be discussed in detail in the course of this thesis.

45. He describes the event as being different from another one experienced in Damascus.

46. Just by itself, the word *safbah* may denote exteriority. But in the present context, Qūnavī wishes to convey first that the “existential light” is of the nature of paper (i.e. on which letters and words are written); and second that it implies exteriority. English does not always lend itself to easy rendering of foreign expressions, and I must apologize to the reader for the often stilted constructions with which in many instances I have had to make do.

47. To borrow one of Henry Corbin’s favourite translated expressions.

48. See Izutsu’s account of Ibn Arabī’s position on the quiddity (Izutsu SAT).

49. Cf. Goichon *Lexique*, q.v. “*Say’iya*.”

50. *Thābit* was used in contradistinction with *mawjūd* (van Ess EAI).

51. The term *harf* corresponds to consonant more than to “letter,” although it is sometimes used in this special sense in philosophical or theological discussions. Here, I believe it is contrasted to *harakah*, which itself could mean either “vowel” or “movement.”

52. According to Arabic philology, *harakah* also means vowel. This should be kept in mind for our later discussion on *I‘jāz al-bayān*.

53. Moreover, as God has Himself declared, neither His words nor His creation is alterable (*lā tabdī li-khalq Allāh wa lā tabdī li-kalimāt Allāh*) (NI A:11a; B:5b).

CHAPTER THREE

Knowledge of God in the Technical Language of Experience

Islamic philosophy has traditionally represented the theological knowledge of God in the abstract, rarefied terms of a formal argument for His *existence*. In his correspondence with Nasīr al-Dīn Tūsī, Qūnawī carefully scrutinizes this approach in the hope of bringing to our attention the underlying motives of philosophical inquiry as it was envisioned – not just by any theoretician – but by the “Teacher of the Theoreticians,” Ibn Sīnā. It is these motives which, in his mind, had led to Ibn Sīnā’s sobering verdict upon ordinary reason before the formidable goal of attaining to the noblest of all knowledge, a true knowledge of God. The transition from one approach to the other appears, in breadth at least, to be without precedent, although earlier mystics like Ibn ‘Arabī had a similar predilection for topics relating to the *existential* office of philosophical science, declaring that the “goal of this book [i.e. his *al-Futūhāt al-makkīyyah*] is to illuminate and to render explicit allusions [*ishārāt*] [which pertain to] the secrets of *existence*¹ [or ‘finding’] [*min asrār al-wujūd*]” (FuM I 433:255, l. 6-7).

Before proceeding any further, therefore, we should like to gain a better idea of the dialectical uses to which the philosophical formulation of the problem of God’s existence was put in Qūnawī’s correspondence with Tūsī. This will permit us to identify more

easily the relationship between *falsafah* and Qūnavī's brand of mysticism and, therewith perhaps, a more accurate valuation of his contribution. In the shift toward a more dynamic understanding of the language which, as we have shown so far, purports to convey a knowledge of the realities, the notion of the quiddity, or *māhiyyah*, occupies a key place. Quiddity² is governed principally by the quest for a serviceable knowledge of things of a kind that is understood to be fixed for all time. In this sense, and because it fell squarely within the domain of scientific method as it was then known and practised, it never quite disencumbers us of the question of the veracity of a statement or proposition with respect to external reality, nor of a constellation of allied themes. Yet by its very nature, it fails to bring us closer to a plenary apprehension of a reality as it is in itself, in the manner contemplated by mystics and philosophers alike; it is informative in another, more autonomous sense. I have seen it fit to examine it apart because of its recognized natural affinity with one aspect of language – fixedness. This makes it less subject to the doctrinal fluctuations that generally attend exegetical reflection and religious debate. In fact, the issues it raises will later be considered in the light of Qūnavī's highly interesting classification of the schools and methods, based on the famous theological provision which in one way or another had come to be widely accepted – that knowledge of God must be articulated in accordance with and in the language of God. At the same time, one must not forget that quiddity stands for knowledge of the *things* ascribed to God more than it does God's Reality. We shall end

this chapter with a short consideration of the twofold function of consonance,¹ as a measure of the “commensuration” or “appropriateness” that brings faculty and acquired attribute closer to the quested ideal of knowledge through the shift in focus toward “things” just mentioned. This is what gives his conception a vastly more complex coloration than is had through the historically-truncated angle through which the case is otherwise presented for maximum logical rigor. Once the underlying purpose is more fully appraised, it will be easier to advance in Part Two to *Ijāz al-bayān*’s cogently-argued Introduction and to undertake the detailed analysis of the structural, linguistic matrix of the act of mystical “apprehension” that still lies ahead.

§ THE CORRESPONDENCE WITH TUSI

a. The Philosophical Knowledge of God as Existence

Qūnavī corresponded³ with scholars in many parts of the Islamic world, but his most famous dialogue, certainly the most influential, was carried on with Tūsī⁴ (d. 672 AH/1274 CE), the celebrated philosopher-scientist. It consists of three main parts⁵: first, his letter and introductory treatise called *al-Risālah al-muṣībah ‘an muntabāh al-afkār wa sabab ikhtilāf al-umām wal-muwaddiḥah ‘irr al-iḥtida’ ilā al-tarīq al-ashraf al-umām* [“The Treatise Making Plain the Utmost Limits of Thought and the Reason for Disagreement Among the Communities, and Clarifying the Secret of Guidance Toward the Loftiest and Commanding Path”], to which he attached a series of philosophical questions, “*al-*

¹ “Consonance” here is not in the sense used in the last chapter, relating to the consonants of the alphabet, but in that of affinity or commensuration.

As'ilah"; second, Tūsī's own personal letter and a point-by-point response to these questions, "*al-Ajwibah*"; and, finally, Qūnavī's rejoinder, entitled *al-Risālah al-hādiyah*. We shall examine several arguments made in his two treatises but only one of Tūsī responses – the explanation of *tashkīk*, or the "ambiguity" of existence.

The first problem Qūnavī discusses in the section appended to *al-Risālah al-muṣīḥah* has to do with existence (*wujūd*) and quiddity (*māhiyyah*). A difficulty appears to arise whenever these two theoretical notions are applied to God. "Would you assert," he asks Tūsī,

that the existence of the Necessary of Existence [*wujūd wājib al-wujūd*] is something superadded [*zā'id*] to His reality (*haqīqatihī*), or [that] His existence is identical to His quiddity [*wujūd 'ayn māhiyyatihī*] and that He has no reality behind His existence? And what demonstration [*al-burbān*] can explain how it can be so? Everything that has been mentioned with a view to establishing each of the two [positions] appears incomplete and unsatisfactory to the understanding, because even as one claims that His existence is identical to His reality by relying on and approving of what one group says in support, another may simply insist and say: "I do not submit [*lā nusallim*] that the existence of God is His very reality." (MQA 28-9)

This is in keeping with the critique of reason presented in the previous chapter. In the lines that follow, he considers the problem from various angles and their logical implications. When we specify the concept of existence intellectually, he begins, it appears as a single concept (*mashūm wāhid*), but with three possible implications (MQA 29). It may entail either being accidental to the quiddity of a thing or not being accidental, or, finally, none of these two. If, according to the first argument, every existence were an attribute of its reality, the existence of the Necessary of Existence would likewise have to be an attribute of His reality (*sifah li-haqīqatihī*). Qūnavī is using the expression "the existence of the Necessary of Existence" in order to point to the

duplication produced by this circular thinking. If, in the second, none of the intellected existents (*al-mawjūdāt al-mutdāqqaalah*) were associated with any of the quiddities, these “possible quiddities” (*māhiyyāt al-mumkinah*) would either not exist at all or exist insofar as their existence is identical to their reality, in which case the concept of existence would no longer be one, as we had initially assumed. Finally, the rejection of these two alternatives entails the presence of an immaterial (*lit.*, separate) cause (*illā li-sabab munfasil*) by which the “existence of the Necessary of Existence” (*wujūd wājib al-wujūd*) is said to be free of the quiddity (*mujarradan ‘an al-māhiyyah*). But in that case the Being whose existence is necessary to Himself would be the same as that whose existence is necessary to the other.

In putting forward these alternatives, Qūnavī seeks primarily to illustrate – based on much the same “sceptical” assumptions already noted – the inherent difficulty of achieving *intellectual* certainty in the knowledge of God. One would like to know the conditions under which to speak of a “knowledge of God.” Consequently, those who take the position of the philologists (*arabīyyah*)⁶ insist that positing the name “knowledge” would have to depend on a cognizance of the reality of the unique essence (*mutawaqqaf ‘alā mārifat haqīqat al-dhāt*), whereas God’s essence cannot be known by the created being; consequently, they reason, it would be wrong to posit any knowledge (AH 11b). He expands on this theme in the Introduction to *Ijāz al-bayān*. In the present context, and in line with the philosophical principles established by Ibn Sīnā, knowledge of God really denoted knowledge of *many things about* God, with an emphasis on the fact that not one

but many things may be known about a single thing. That is really what is at issue, theoretically speaking, and not the possibility of knowing the one thing, namely, His pure essence; with this problem firmly in view, in fact, Qūnāvī devotes a separate section in the “*As’ilah*” to the ancient problem of how the many proceeds from the one (MQA 42-6). For one thing, convinced that the Necessary of Existence has to have a specification (*tdāyyūn*), if it is to be known, the person intellectualizing demands to know that *one* specification (cf. MQA 29), which is essentially what a logical proof would need to offer if it is to be a proof of anything.

The difficulty is that the intellection of God does not only entail a necessary denial (*salb*) of certain things about Him and an affirmation (*ithbāt*) of others. Most of the intellectually-inclined (*‘uqalāt*) are compelled further to assume that His Reality in truth remains unknown (MQA 29-30). However, if His existence were said to be identical to His reality, one would have to admit that His reality is known (MQA 30). But no one may claim that His Essence is known in some unknown respect. That would be tantamount to a single intellection of His essence under two different aspects, and there cannot be any multiplicity of aspects in the intellection of His essence once He is said to be One in all respects. Clearly, then, “multiplicity” can never arise in this fashion. Should a thing be known in its pure oneness (*sirāfat wahdatib*), on the other hand, we would then be forced to say that its reality is also known, which is falsified by the prior assumption that His reality is unknown.

This represents another preliminary, “agnostic” side of Qūnāvī’s position on

knowledge. And it is here that he cites a lengthier version of what he earlier quoted from Ibn Sīnā's *Taṭīqāt* about man's incapacity to know the "realities of the things," which comprise the things we seek to know about God. It perfectly illustrates how multiplicity arises. In this passage, Ibn Sīnā is arguing among other things that, philosophically, we only know *that* existence is necessary for God, which is not the same as knowing His reality, and from this concomitant we know others, such as unicity (*wahdāniyah*) and the rest of His attributes (MQA 31-2). The reality of something, if it could be known, is merely the existent itself (*huwa al-mawjūd bi-dhātihī*) (MQA 32). However, the expression "the One who possesses existence by virtue of Himself" signifies, emphatically, the sense of something whose reality is unknowable.⁷ Still, Ibn Sīnā's insistence that we can only make formal philosophical statements *about* God (viz. "that" so and so is the case) seems to be room enough nonetheless for the mystical amplifications Qūnavī is particularly noted for. After all, we saw that knowledge of the "that" alone, even for Aristotle, implied knowing in some degree also the "what," as in "what is it?" But it is really to Ibn 'Arabī that credit must go for plucking from what we must intellectually deny of God a "first knowledge." What lacked was the proper language with which to express not only *that* but the *what* of God. It needed to be done in the exact manner in which He makes Himself known, and not in that which just anyone would seek to do it who happens to reflect upon God. We must recall that while, in Qūnavī's view, Ibn Sīnā had established that philosophical commitment is strictly a function of the formal conditions under which one may speak of a knowledge of God, no more, God's quiddity

– through which we would expect to know “what He is,” assuming that one can be ascribed to Him at all – must also be known in some way. The trouble is that, supposing this to be a valid expectation, *His* quiddity must then have to be quite different from other quiddities, with respect to whose realities existence happens to be extrinsic (*khārijan*)⁸; whereas God is by essence the cause of existence (*illat al-wujūd*). For this reason, we need to inquire into what the question “What is it?” yields with respect to God, compared to what we might ordinarily expect from any other quiddity.

Two concepts employed in the passage from Qūnāvī above, *māhiyah* and *haqīqah*, are of central importance. But they are also closely connected to each other. Both, for example, loosely imply “possible existent,” the “non-existence,” and – obliquely, in the case of quiddity – the Necessary of Existence. Technically, the genus and differentia used in any definition may legitimately apply to simple things; and had God possessed a quiddity in any meaningful sense, He too would have a genus and a differentia (MQA 32).⁹ But to get back to the initial problem presented to Tūsī, existence would then also have had to enter into God’s “definition” as a “term” (*juz'*), just as genus and differentia invariably do with all simple realities (*basā'i*). Although this is what the inquiring intellect demands, even in the case of the simple realities, genus and differentia pertain only to definitions, not to the essences themselves, which Qūnāvī places apart. If God were to have a definition, existence would be reducible to merely one of its terms rather than to His reality or essence. The only alternative is to admit that God possesses a reality above His existence, reality whose existence is one of its

concomitants.

Be that as it may, Qūnāvī finds that, ultimately, it matters little whether we say that existence is superadded to His reality or that it is identical to it (MQA 33-4). Indeed, his purpose in the discussion was to show that theoretical proof alone cannot produce a completely satisfactory resolution. However earnestly a person's cognition is held up as a cognition of God, if it is not "through God" (*bil-Haqq*) rather than one's own resources, it is scant (MQA 32-3). In support, Qūnāvī includes the passage from the *Taḥqīqāt* where Ibn Sīnā cites sensation (*hiss*), the "source of *human* knowledge" (*mabda'* *mārifat al-ashyā'*), as the prime reason why man can never apprehend "the reality of the thing" by himself (MQA 32; Tal 82). Briefly, the intellect admittedly is able to distinguish between what is ambiguous and what is clear (*al-mutashābihāt wal-mutabāyināt*),¹⁰ and from there to know at least some of the concomitants of a thing, its acts (*afālihā*), effects and special properties (MQA 32). However, the only knowledge it gains in this manner is "synoptical" (*mujmalah*) rather than personally realized or verified (*muhaqqaqah*). What concomitants are known are merely the easiest ones to detect, but these by no means suffice.¹¹

Tūsī's response to the whole issue of knowing the "realities of things" has been to propose an alternative reading of the *Taḥqīqāt* passage. What Ibn Sīnā really meant by the "things" whose realities we do not know, he states, was simply those *existent* entities (*al-dyān al-mawjūdāt*) known as the "natures of existent things" (*tabā'īt al-mawjūdāt*). It is these, not the "realities of intelligibles," what he called *haqā'iq al-mdqūlāt*, which are

exceedingly difficult to define (MNT 68). Logicians like al-Sayyid al-Sharīf al-Jurjānī (816-740 AH/1413-1340 CE) in *al-Ghurrah fi al-mantiq* have traditionally acknowledged the difficulty, if not impossibility, of giving either an essential or a descriptive definition (*haddan kāna aw rasman*) of what they were wont to call “reality,” which Jurjānī’s two commentators on that work specifically designated as being *existent*, *al-haqā’iq al-mawjudah*, but that it was easy to do so for “conventional concepts” (*al-mafhūmāt al-ittibāriyyah al-istilāhiyyah*) (JGM 52, 151-2). Indeed, the difficulty lay simply in separating what is essential from what is accidental among the genus, general accident, species and property (cf. al-Rāzī’s ShGM¹²).

While Tūsī’s distinction tends to reflect the logicians’ division between the *existent* reality and the concepts, that of course was hardly the sense Qūnāvī had inferred from Ibn Sīnā. In his view, existence is a primary consideration neither for the thing nor for the reality. Tūsī illustrated his distinction between things and reality by pointing out that anyone failing to acknowledge the “reality” of affirmation and denial, as a mental operation, would be unable to go on to judge their union as being intuitively impossible. Another example was, how can someone who does not even acknowledge the reality of the body determine intuitively that it is impossible for two bodies to be completely joined in a single space or for a body to exist in two different places at the same time; or, for that matter, someone who fails to accept the realities of 10 and 5 judge 10 to be the double of 5, etc.? (A similar argument was used by Aristotle himself in PoA 71a, *l.* 26-30.)

Clearly, the term *haqīqah* had several connotations, implying different things to different people. But reality – whether of existent entities or of intelligibles – at least was something distinct from whatever it represented. And while the word “things” may be used more restrictively to mean *existent* things, this distinction was precisely what the term “realities of things” in Qūnāvī’s view was designed to convey. For Qūnāvī, though, while non-existent, the realities are still not quite as determinate as either the logicians’ “conventional concepts,” thought to be easily definable, or Tūsī’s *haqā’iq al-ma’qūlat*. Not unlike Yahyā Suhrawardī (died c. 587 AH/1191 CE) – who so altered the nature of the Peripatetic “definition” as to make it more amenable to systematic inquiry of a somewhat different, broader and far more subtle reality than any heuristic use of logic so far – Qūnāvī acknowledge “realities” of which we had a modicum of (non-discursive) knowledge without actually “grasping” them. Now, the feebleness of ordinary modes of reasoning “in encompassing things as they really are,” he emphasized with Ibn Sīnā, was attributable to what we have referred to as the “sense principle,” on the basis that the senses are the source of ordinary human knowledge (*mabda’ mārifatihī*); although sense experience ironically also played an indispensable role in the development of the philosophers’ epistemological argument – as the emphasis placed by Tūsī on *existent* realities, being the unknowables along with his new concept of “analogical existence” intended to overcome its obvious limitations, clearly shows. Tūsī, who preferred to work rather conventionally¹³ within the dimensions of the Peripatetic problem of God’s existence and quiddity (and rhetorically within the query posed to him by Qūnāvī), in fact

proposes two kinds of existence, as a means of escaping the resulting conundrum. He attempts to account for the anomalous and radical disjunction between “reality” and “existence” by introducing a new notion of what the existence of the thing is likely to mean – the second sense below. “Univocal existence” was intended with respect to the multiple units associated with distance and bodies (MNT 67-8). The other more significant type of existence denotes things that manifest differences in power, precedence, intensity and quantity; the “logical implications” (*muqtadayāt*) of this concept, he says, are not derived uniformly for God (MNT 65). It is in this second sense, in fact, that existence for God stands by virtue of its own essence (*bi-dhātihī*), without having to be predicated of its quiddity (*min ghayr 'urūdihī li-māhiyātihī*); whereas everything else besides God’s existence is accidental to the quiddity (MNT 65-6). This “analogical existence” (*bil-tashkīk*), which he says is also of a rational nature (*amr 'aqīlī*) (MNT 66), denotes both Necessary Existence (standing by itself without being attributed to its quiddity) and the possible existents (which take on existence as an accident).

b. Knowing God Through God

From that perspective, perhaps Tūsī’s and Qūnāvī’s views may not be so irreconcilable, especially if we keep in mind the integrative function of “analogical existence” associated with necessary and possible existence. Some such bringing into *analogical* relation is intended by Qūnāvī himself, as we shall see in later chapters. Philosophy (especially that of Ibn Sīnā) has determined that what lies between these two denotations – Necessary

Being and possible existent – must in some measure be possible in itself yet necessary through another. Our knowledge must be rooted in some such “intermediate” and “necessary” world, and in so being becomes linked not only to God’s knowledge of Himself but to God’s knowledge of things. A language as rooted in the sensorial world as that of the philosophers’ was alleged to be, on the other hand, always takes us back to the level of the “natural faculties.”¹⁴ Qūnāvī spoke more sweepingly of a “creational intellection” (*al-tdāqqul al-kawnī*), whose main feature is the intellection of God by “what is not God” (MQH 98).¹⁵ There is nothing in it that corresponds (*mutābiqan*) to God as He is in Himself or to His own specification to Himself so as to distinguish Him from all else (*mā yamtāq min sawāhu*) (MQA 33). Recalling that God’s Reality cannot be reduced to the quiddity, saying that the *existence* of God is superadded or is identical to His Reality cannot alter the fact that His specification by the one intellectoring Him in this fashion cannot correspond to what He truly is in Himself.¹⁶ God simply

is unspecifiable [*ghayr mutāayyan*] through any kind of specification which is intellectual [*aqlan*], mental [*dhibhan*] or sensorial [*bissan*]; He neither resembles [*lā mumāzij*] nor is He intermingled with anything; nor is He remote, except in respect of the distinctiveness of His Reality above everything else. (MQA 33)

This does not mean that no specification at all is possible. But if the first kind of intellection does not correspond to His own specification of Himself – that is, what His own knowledge of Himself determines this distinction to be – what then does it signify? When it does not correspond to the thing as it is in itself, any precept based on such an intellection and wrongly ascribed to God – either affirmatively or negatively – refers in the first instance to such intellection and specification as are apt to be particularized in

the conception (*tasawwur*) itself, conception belonging to the one intellecting (*al-mutashakkhas fi tasawwur al-‘aqil*) (MQA 33). Instead of the object intended, it refers to an *intellected* particularization. We shall see below that this further implies two kinds of judgments upon the object, depending on whether the judge himself is “permanent” – as in the case of God in His knowing Himself – or “shifting” with respect to that object. Qūnavī’s inference is important. By following its own language and logical momentum, thinking reproduces the same truncation blighting all of the the human faculties, and deflecting the inquiry from its initial objective (i.e., knowledge of God) toward secondary goals.

Since there is no “correspondence” to speak of, strictly speaking, every affirmation or negation is futile, every knowledge or precept about God lacks soundness. The only proper “principle of knowledge” is a knowledge of God through God, rather than through any limited faculty or intellect (*takin bil-Haqq tā bi-quwāhim wa ‘uqālibim*) (MQA 32-3). Indeed, once the “advocates of God’s [rights]” (*ahl al-haqq*) – those who assign what properly belongs to God¹⁷ – know God through God, they can then come to know their own souls (*nufusahum*) through God by way of that through which they know Him (MQA 33). In respect of His Oneness, of course, the *absolute* specification of God here remains to Himself and to no other. But another kind of specification, the proper “first,” His most *perfect* and the closest to bearing a correspondence to “that which is in itself” (*limā huwa al-amr ‘alayhī*) or to being “just as God’s nature [*sha’n*] requires,” occurs in the intellection performed by the First Intellect (*al-‘aql al-anwāh*) (MQH 98). Of all the

possible entities, it is the freest of any judgement of multiplicity and delimitation. It also occupies the intermediary position between the Necessary Being and the possible existent mentioned above, reflecting them both.

But how does this improve our understanding? In making such a claim, is Qūnāvī not simply substituting the First Intellect and the remaining intellects for the limited faculties of mortal beings, for whom reflection *about* God inevitably brings the limited human faculties in its train? There is no doubt that *intellect* is used in the two senses employed by Ibn Sīnā and other *fālāsifah*. It includes both the facultative and the immaterial intellect, which contemplates God with no intermediary faculty to disrupt contemplation. Intrinsic to the intermediary level are no doubt two distinct “processes” or considerations of knowledge – descent and ascent. What concerns us about the intermediary level of the First Intellect are the separate dimensions and levels of perception it brings into play. There is a critical assumption, played up both in the Avicennan commentary tradition and by Qūnāvī himself, that a *causal* relationship exists between God’s knowledge of His essence and His knowledge of all things, as two distinct poles in the descending “movement” of self-manifestation. Within this overall framework, “quiddities” play a crucial role. Ontologically, they are here dependent on their intellectual fixity, which renders them peculiarly disposed, collectively, to acting as the ideal theoretical point of intersection, or intermediary (corresponding, in systematic science, to the contemplative intermediacy of the Intellect), between the ordinary powers of reflection and Divine contemplation.

It was disagreement over their ontological status in God's knowledge which prompted Qūnavī's second major question in MQA 34-7, where Qūnavī solicits Tuṣī's views on whether or not they are "originated" (*mafūlah*). Direct investigation and sound experience, says Qūnavī, confirm that they must be non-originated while possessing a "touch of existence," insofar as their specification in the knowledge of God in a single mode (*'alā waṣirah wāhidah*) is at least pre-eternal and everlasting (*azalan wa abadan*) (MQA 35).¹⁸ Briefly, they refer to God's knowledge of things *before* they acquire the existence attributable to things in the sense discussed above, being the epistemic counterparts of the "realities," which in turn are the ontic pole of a single relation. Whereas "things" (*al-ashyā'*), as we saw in Chapter Two, connote the *specifications* of God's universal and particular (or "differential") intellections (*taṣayyunāt tāqqulatīhi al-kulliyah wal-tafsīliyyah*), quiddities are those very *intellections*, or at least their "forms" (KN 275): the "forms," that is, in the guise of quiddities in Divine knowledge. And form, as we now know, is the functional equivalent of the device for the conveyance of meaning.

In broad terms, intellection at this level performs two basic noetic functions; it must comprise, on the one hand, the "Divine *root letters*" (*al-hurūf al-asliyyah al-ilāhiyyah*) and, on the other, the quiddities (KF 1, 15-6:189). The first consists of God's intellection of things in respect of their "internality" within His unitariness (*kaynūnatiḥā fi wāhdāniyyatīhi*), in analogy with "human psychical conceptualization" (*al-tasawwur al-nafsāni al-insāni*) – before the actual specification of their forms in knowledge – e.g. single conceptions (*tasawwurāt mufradah*) devoid of any notional, mental or sensory construction of parts (*al-*

tarkīb al-maṣnawī wal-dhīhnī wal-hissī (KF 1, 15:189). Since this comprises the *root* or primary letters, there is no construction as yet to speak of. The second intellection, that of the quiddities proper, may also be thought of in terms of “letters,” though not roots. It occurs in the knowledge of the one essence in its *relational* distinctiveness (*al-imtiyāz al-nisbi*). He calls this the “presence of inscription” (*hadrat al-irtisām*), in that “the things are inscribed inside God” (*murtasimah fi nafs al-Haqq*); but whether quiddities are viewed apart from the concomitants or together with them, the main point is that their primary collective function is to be intellections whereby the “act of intellect for the one *stems from* the other” – on account of the overarching oneness of the ontic essence.¹⁹

Obviously, Qūnawī wishes to maintain both that quiddities, too, (i.e. all instances of “what-is-it?”) subsist in a single, pre-eternal and everlasting mode – in accordance with what their realities require (being their noetic counterparts) – and that the intellection of the one is posterior (*muta’akhkir*) to that of the other in respect of order of rank (*rutbah*) (KN 275). There are two senses in terms of which one may speak of intellections according to what the quiddities’ realities themselves – that is, the referents – “require.”

They occur as:

- (1) their realities’ intellection in respect of the “expiration” (*istiblāk*) of their multiplicity in the oneness of God, or what he takes to mean the *synoptical* intellection (*mujmal*) of detail (*mufassal*); and, in opposite direction to this expiration,
- (2) the intellection of the precepts of oneness (*ahkām al-wahdah*), one “set” or “totality” at a time (*jumlah bdd jumlah*), so that each totality is intellected through what *quiddities* are contained therein and which are the forms of such multiple and manifold intellections that belong to the single existence (*lil-wujūd al-wāhid*) (KN 275).

The principle informing this definitive view of the quiddities and their place accommodates very well the noetic relational complex described by Ibn Sīnā in Tal 13, where knowledge must connect every “knower” to every given “object known” (at the Divine level, being the “realities” of the quiddities) according to what that object of knowledge is in itself (KN 276).²⁰ It must hold for any knower whatsoever, God or man. The proper intellection of the multiplicity of attachments is, by the same token, based on the objects of knowledge in their *eternal* connections and multiplicity – in his words, “*ta'aqqul ta'addud al-ta'alluqāt bi-hasab al-mā'lūmāt ta'alluqan wa ta'addudan azaliyyan*” (MQA 35).²¹ But this can only mean that,

The manifold [*ta'addud*] is linked to the unitary knowledge that [properly belongs to] the essence [*al-'ilm al-wahdāni al-dhāti*], thanks to the latter's attachment to the objects of knowledge [*bil-mā'lūmāt*]. Perception of these [objects] is never realized except in respect of the specifications and attachments [of the unitary knowledge]. (KN 276)

For this to be, the objects must be known insofar as the essence, no longer unqualified, is a *knowing* essence, that is, inclined toward its object. Since this may hold for any knower whatsoever, Qūnāvī turns to the main point of his argument – namely, deriving “knowledge-for-the-other” from “knowledge-for-God” – by first setting forth, in the rest of his passage, the main features of “subordination,” the structural principle behind this whole noetic calculus:

But the attachment [*ta'alluqib*] of this knowledge to every object known is subordinate to the object known according to what that known object is in itself [*tābi' ilī-mā'lūm bi-hasab mā huwa al-mā'lūm*] – whether it be simple or composite, [linked to] time and place or not...And from the *nusūs*²² considered thus far, a further ramification is that the “judgement” from every “judge of every thing judged” [*al-bukm min kull hākim 'alā kull mālikūm 'alayh*] is subordinate both to the “status of the judge” [*tābi' li-hāl al-hākim*], at the

²⁰ The treatise is divided into *nusūs*.

time of judgement [*bīna al-hukm*], and to the “status of that which is judged” [*tābt li-bāl al-mahkūm ‘alayhi*] at the time of “judgement” of the “one judging it” [*al-hākim ‘alayhi*]. Therefore, if “that which is judged” is of those things which are by nature shifting from state to state [*min sha’nihi al-tanaqqul fi al-abwāl*], then the judgements of the “one judging over it” proliferate into every [one of these] states [*tanawwāt ahkām al-hākim ‘alayhi fi kull bāl*], and [what is judged] differs insofar as it vacillates through these states [*talabbuthihi bi-tilka al-abwāl*]. If, on the other hand, it is in the nature of “what is judged” to be permanent in a single mode [*al-thabāt ‘alh wafrāh wāhidah*], then the judgement of the “one judging it” is laid down in accordance with the primary attachment designated for the judge’s judgement, along with its requirement [*al-tā’alūq al-awwāl*]. The rest depends on the status of the judge [*hākim*]: is it a requirement of his essence to shift through states [*al-tagallub fi al-abwāl*] according to these states, or to be permanent and for the states to shift according to him? The subordination of the judge’s judgement (*tabā’iyat hukm al-hākim*) depends on one of these two considerations, which cover the levels of judgement of every judge and every thing judged. No other judgement of either judge or object judged has been left out (KN 276-77).

This, then, is the principle by which all the elements involved in any kind of “judgement” are interconnected. And each aspect is related to the other through “subordination” or *tabā’iyah*, a key concept in Qūnavī’s theoretical introduction to *Ijāz al-bayañ*. This analysis of the judgement act, viz. of *hukm*, gives coherence to the overall scheme of epistemology envisaged by both the philosophers and the mystics. Coordinated with “level,” or *martabah*, it helps to establish the pattern of analogical linkages that all but permeate every component feature of his scheme. What is particularly interesting in this connection is that it is expressed in terms of a fundamental duality between each level’s *integrative, concealing* function, on the one hand, and the necessary *exteriorization* of forms and existence (cf. IB A:90; B:198), on the other. For the moment, let us just say that “judgement” raises the all-important question of whether a “subordinate judgement” is that of the “permanent judge” or springs directly from man’s constantly shifting perceptive faculties. On this score, quiddity is unequalled as a *philosophical* device through which one may talk about the object known without designating the type of knower

involved. It makes it irrelevant conceptually whether the knower is “permanent” or of the shifting kind, since it is not the knower but the noetic modalities of his object of knowledge that are of concern when discussing the quiddity.

The remaining problem is how to maintain the distinction between the knower and the object known through the mediation of the quiddity without vitiating the eternal and unitary purity of God’s knowledge (ultimately, of Himself as a single object), irrespective of the pattern of *subordinate* and hierarchical relations enclosed within this knowledge. In response to our earlier query, “quiddity” in ordinary parlance does not, given its “creational” origin, stand unqualifiedly for God’s reality. God’s “quiddity,” if any, is unique inasmuch as the term, implying knowledge of something (“what is it”), can legitimately refer only to His eternal, unitary and hierarchically-ordered knowledge of *all things* rather than to His reality. In this sense, therefore, it is inclined toward the object, not in its hidden uniqueness, but as a noetic modality. In other words, while ostensibly about God, it implies a knowledge which is equally tolerant of multiplicity and is oriented toward those “other” realities of things that subsist before they acquire external existence. This would almost amount to a formal equivalence between God’s knowledge of Himself and the knowledge of things, if the former were not more aptly described as the “cause” of His knowledge of everything, thereby maintaining the independent stature of the judge. The intellection of the quiddity apart from its myriad concomitants yields only a “hidden notional letter” (*harf ghaybi mad nawi*), just as actively “ascribing knowledge” (*wasf al-ilm*) can only be by way of its *relational distinction* from the essence (*imtiyāzīhi al-*

nisbī 'an al-dhāt) – not as a direct ascription of the essence as it is in itself or as if God's knowledge were identical to His essence (NF 1, 15:189). This way of stating the problem opens up a new avenue by which noetic and existential words can be constructed, it being understood that the question depends on a proper understanding of *speech*, that knowledge is a “knowledge that ascribes” and that, in the final analysis, God's own “description” of Himself is His self-manifestation in the form of speech.

So far, Qūnavī has drawn up a picture where no specification (*tatayyun*) or intellection (*tataqqu*) of God based solely on reason could ever correspond to a thing as it is in itself. The relation to God of things like oneness (*wahdah*), source (*mabda'iyyah*), influence (*ta'thīr*), the existentiating act (*al-īt / al-iqāz*), etc., elicits an element of multiplicity, and so falls most appropriately under the aspect of “specification” (*ittibār al-tatayyun*) (KN 275). The point is that, in respect of the absoluteness or unconditionality of His essence (*ittiqāhi al-dhāt*), God remains subject to no judgement or precept whatsoever, nor can “One” or “Necessity of Existence” be linked to Him in any way prior to such a specification. The first specification earlier referred to as the “First Intellect” – whereby the noetic relation of the essence is intellected, clearly distinguishable from that essence – Qūnavī insists on calling a merely relational, not the “real,” distinction (*al-imtiyāz al-nisbī tā al-haqīqī*). God's oneness, the necessity of His existence (*wa wujūb wujūdihī*), etc., are all intellected through the intermediary of the *noetic relation* of the essence (KN 275).²² Only His knowledge at the station of His singular oneness (*maqam ahadiyatihī*) remains His very essence (*ayn dhātihī*) MQA 3. In this complete sense, His knowledge of

Himself is said to be “through and in Himself” (*ilmahu nafsahu bi-nafsihi fi nafsihi*). And this is the “knowledge through Himself” that acts as the *cause* of His knowledge of things (*ayn ‘ilmihī bi-nafsihi sabab ilmihi bi-kull shay’*) (KN 275). Knowledge clef in this way underlies quiddity’s transference from the absolute existence to a position where it pertains strictly to created things and God’s knowledge of them. God by essence remains the causal source (*al-mu’aththir bil-dhāt*), though not a causal source in the sense of an essence completely distinct from the specification of the *relation* of a knowledge attached to one or more objects of knowledge having different realities (MQA 36).²³

In sum, argue as one may that our knowledge of God or, perhaps, His own knowledge of Himself is expressible in answer to the “what is it,” quiddity (if any) has paradoxically more to do with His knowledge of the “what is it?” of a thing, although He Himself cannot be reduced to a finite entity. Rounding out the argument in a simple identity would, in hindsight, only have served to eliminate the vital “linguistic” components of utterance about God, and with it presumably the very possibility of *spiritual* contact by the worshipper and the “knower of God” as a result of the absence of a concrete medium of communication. Quiddity cannot fulfil this function alone, because, as we will see, it is immobile, something it shares with “reality,” or *haqīqah*. However, quiddity’s linguistic connection allows it also to carry along some of the features of language. It is, indeed, highly significant that Qūnavī should use *tabdīyyah* (i.e. to follow in order or to be subordinate to something) in order to describe how its various levels are related; *tabdīyyah* is a term he borrows from Arabic philology. Presumably, one could

equally fast on on the strictly logical aspect of predication superfluously reintroduced by the philosophical term "quiddity," but only at the expense of the more valuable *syntactical* features of speech. These features are what links the knowledge available to us analogically to Divine wisdom.

§ THE LANGUAGE OF EXPERIENCE

So fundamental has the question of Divine speech historically been, that the proper use of reason in the obtainment of knowledge would scarcely have arisen as an issue in the medieval period without scriptural authority operating to inform philosophical inquiry itself of its bounds. It is quite anachronistic, as we pointed out before, to picture theoretical reason isolated from the sinuous web of *exegetical* problems that had given rise to it in the first place, those problems that are succinctly recapitulated in the philosophical pronouncement that only God knows Himself, or that we know God only in the way He describes Himself.

In view of this, and at the risk perhaps of engaging in circular kind of reasoning, it must be asked *what* theoretical reflection must consist of in order to accord with Divine speech. For one thing, what exactly constitutes the *pre-given* element in mystical discourse? For there seems to be no simple correspondence between any part of the logical syllogism (e.g. premises based on sense data, the primary concepts, etc.), as we have studied it so far, and the structural constituents of mystical discourse serving as a vehicle for Divine speech. Qūnāvī worked his way to something that lay beyond the

pregivenness of the “articles of faith” (*qawā'id*), as a possible candidate, although these articles seem to be the clearest equivalents to logical premises. The articles of faith which have so exercised the minds of medieval scholars for centuries certainly could easily be admitted as premises, if only they were not themselves derived from a more basic content revealed in scriptural form through Divine Speech. The new linguistic interplay between “address” or “speech” (*khitāb*), in all its varied forms, and the meanings they transmit reveals a continually unfolding kind of pre-givenness, not a static one. Form qua quiddity, on the other hand, imparts fixity. Priority (*taqaddum*) as a structural feature of mystical utterance may consist of an expression, act of witness or experience relative to some other order of expression purporting to interpret it and taking it as a linguistic *datum* in its own right for a synthesis that is to occur at a level transcending both elements. In this sense, each priority is reflected in multitudinous and interconnecting levels of expression – as we will now see. Even Ibn Sīnā reckoned that logical demonstration ultimately aimed at a “higher” resolution which is, in turn, “prior,” normally relative to something else. Seeing how language is so clearly central to his doctrine, it is interesting to note how Qūnavī hoped to reveal the manner in which priority in discursive knowledge worked its way through every level, starting from some initial, pre-given core in God's own speech about Himself. It must be remembered that discourse had to admit of spiritual striving and purification, which imply process rather than fixity; but it had to do this without vitiating the new priority that must also feature at some further point to which it is oriented, along the lengthy path of self-manifestation.

At this stage, the reader may find this series of associations still somewhat abstract. It is better visualized, perhaps, in terms of spiritual journeying. This lends it a certain degree of immediacy and, naturally enough, moral intensity. As a journey, though, the “process” consists of a return to origin – logically speaking, the indistinct “subject” – although it is no mere origin. The “process” is also one of self-manifestation from a unique source. The essence here being a *knowing* essence – firstly of itself and secondly of everything else – a dynamic is at once established between the *causative* source and its effect, whence arises the multiplicity.

From this perspective, several possible positions on the nature of Divine discourse follow. Qūnāvī’s first proposes a bedrock theological division between two distinct but interconnected ways in which “utterance” is employed by human beings – one is veiled (*al-lisān al-hijābī*), relating to the level of possibility and its precepts (*ahkām*), and “creational,” being rooted in sensation; the other he calls *necessary*, having its own precepts (*lisān martabat al-wujūb wa ahkāmihi*) (MQH 93). The second form of utterance is normally associated with mystical unveiling (*kashf*) and insight (*basīrah*). Attained through “a perfectly realized spiritual ascent” (*al-ittilād al-muhaqqaq al-atamm*), it indicates a certain pause (*wuqūf*) upon the true state of affairs by way of their eternal and everlasting specification in God’s knowledge through a “single mode.” It implies realization as opposed to mediated reflection upon something else of primary significance. There are further subtleties to this conception which we need to take account of if we are to fathom the full meaning of noetic priority, the nub equally of

spiritual journeying and logical coherence.

Closer to matters spiritual, priority ranges from what is internal to God to what man internalizes in his mystical experience. In a letter to Abū al-Qāsim al-Tilimsāñi (d. 690/1291), for instance, Qūnāvī describes an experience he had had in the Holy City of Mecca.²⁴ His inspiration came in two verses, replaced the ritual words normally pronounced with the performance of supererogatory duties (KT 176a). But each verse was given at a different “station” (*maqām*) and with a different “voice” (*lisān*). One set of utterances he construed as the servant speaking to his Lord (*kawn al-‘abd yuķātib rabbahu*), according to his own limited state and time (*basab hālibi mā‘abu wa waqtibhi minhu*); in the other, it was God speaking to one of the servants “selected in every age” (*al-mukhṭār fi kull ‘asr*) for his true realization through the two secrets: “comprehensive union” (*jam‘*) and “singular oneness” (*ahadiyyah*) (KT 176a). We shall have much more to say later in this study on the twin, primal aspect of unity he calls *jam‘* and *ahadiyyah*; clearly the integrative function associated earlier with judgement (*hukm*) by level (*marṭabah*) reflects something of this primally manifested unity.

One is struck by the bi-directionality of “inspired communication” with God, which Qūnāvī had earlier tried to regulate through the mechanism of the quiddity. Indifferent as it is to the nature of the judge, quiddity fails to account for this bi-directionality; in other words, it cannot confirm the nature of *both* judge and object judged. In the first verse, the servant is speaking to his Lord upon being “confined” with Him (*hāl al-husūr mā‘abu*), though “without any specific mental consideration [*lā bi-‘tibār mu‘ayyan*] or article

of faith,” as the latter has been extrapolated “from what may be learned from God, transmitted from Him or witnessed in one of His manifestations [*tajalliyātihī*]” (KT 176a). Qūnavī insists the experience is independent of all these, and anything else is merely *derived* from what the “servant’s Lord knows Himself” in place of what the “other” does only indirectly (*tā mā yd̄ lamuhu ghayruhu*) (KT 176b). The directness of the experience cannot be done away with; it is indispensable.

Yet, the “object of search” (*matlūb*) can finally be reached only when the soul has devoted itself entirely in the *way* of God (KT 176b). This implies motion. Spiritual journeying must – just as the activation of the senses did for Ibn Sīnā – have its rightful role to play. God’s calling upon man’s soul has two unique aspects. One, since God is ever manifesting Himself (*mutajalliyān ‘alā al-dawām*) and pouring forth the “signs” (*fayyād ‘alā al-ayāt*), there is absolutely no hindrance to His unadulterated Mercy (*khālis rahmatihī*) and no other realization through complete witness (*tā ‘ayn al-tabaqqūq bi-shuhūdī al-ātamm*) and knowledge of Him (*marifatihī*) save that selfsame soul (*nafs al-nafs*). The soul being deserving of “universality” (*mā istahqqa bil-kulliyah*) – to put it philosophically – both the dark and the higher luminous veils will vanish (*zālat al-hujub al-zalmāniyyah wal-nūriyyah al-‘uyyah*). That a philosophical term like universality should be used to describe the state of spiritual accomplishment illustrates further not only the extent to which he was able to recover the underlying spiritual themes informing Avicennan philosophy, but also how he prudently aligned the interpretive language, which has to reflect upon first-hand experience, with respect to that experience.

The second aspect of God's calling, on the other hand, has to do with the requirement of the *intellect* – usually a negative requirement – to be correlated with direct experience, but which is forced to contravene the fact that all the Divine acts, names and attributes are primordial and must be *directly verified* (*al-āsālah wal-tahqīq*). What this means is, as we saw, that all sound knowledge should be oriented in the most direct fashion possible toward the actual object – in this case, the “reality” – and not some synoptical version of it. In opposition to this, whenever those who are veiled (*abl al-hijāb*) imagine (*tawhīmu*) a deficiency (*naqṣ*) in any of these acts, names and attributes, God is forthwith declared to be “far above them” (*nāzūha al-Haqq ‘anbā*).

Consequently, intellect alone is of dubious value when we try to relate these names and attributes to God, since those who are veiled do not usually perceive any dimension of *real* – i.e. as opposed to figurative – superiority in them (“*adam idrāk wajh al-husn al-haqiqī fīhā*”) (KT 176b). Nevertheless, the Divine address may descend even here, though always in strict accordance with the state of those speakers whose nature is so inclined. Even so, whenever some of God's servants choose, they may “penetrate deeper [or apprehend] in utmost clarity [*jaliyyat al-amr*], as the veils between themselves and the *reality of the secret as it is in itself* [*haqīqat al-sirr ‘alā mā huwa ‘alayhi*] are lifted and they themselves are freed of the fetters of their imaginings, intellects and sensations through an unexpected sign from God [*bi-dāllihim min Allāh mā lam yakuñū yahtasibūn*]” (KT:176b). Thereupon, they will see that, in all that to which they bear witness, God's purpose has all along been for them to affirm Him even at the most complete “station of denial”

(*maqām al-nafī al-akmal*), as in this second aspect. Indeed, their very experiences within the world of created being will all have proved to be veils “upon Him through Him” (*fa-yakūnū fi ‘ālam al-kawn hijāban ‘alayhi bibi*).²⁵

Here Qūnavī is speaking of a particular kind of experience or beholding here, one that is both “personal” and expressible as – of all things – *universality*. What will interests us more and more is the broader relationship between two discursive, contrastively distinct poles: the ground *experience* (“the closest possible act of witnessing”) and the material *instruments* needed to convey it. We have seen how Qūnavī freely related his own rational insights into the noetic core to Ibn Sīnā’s. He is now anxious to show that intellectual perception, as incomplete as it may be, lays claim to a degree of substantiveness which one may justify more conventionally by means of this antipodal relation. Indeed, the two poles, experience and instrument of interpretation, have largely determined how the various schools of thought in Islam have had historically to deal with exegetical issues. For the givenness of scripture has always been the most vital source of all “rational discourse”; it is what gives it substance. However near to being a perception in its own right, rational discourse is meaningless without this scripture. Within the parameters allowed for philosophical reason, or reasoning for the purpose of “instruction,” while the premises of a syllogism may well be accepted on authority, this does not imply a hard-and-fast rule equating *textual* content with sensory information or, for that matter, the “articles of faith.” It is more in the manner of a pre-posing of the conclusion we saw in the last chapter. In some paradoxical way, the text as a whole has to serve as both the

start and the conclusion of an original encounter, as any “conversation” with God (even versified, like the one we just saw) can only do. The experience that first emerges may subsequently, and only in hindsight, come to rest upon a polarity such as the one between the encompassing field of direct beholding and the interpretation. This, incidentally, accords well with Ibn ‘Arabī’s whole philological motif that informs his meticulous analysis of the immobility and the motion aspects of discourse which, in any case, we need constantly to keep in mind. Ibn ‘Arabī had pointed, for example, to the opposition of the “motion” associated with *īrāb* (“inflection,” also “expression” or “interpretation”) to the more singular immobility of *binā’* characteristic of uninflected words. To these corresponded two noetic creatures: *mutalawwīn* and *mutamakkīn* (FuM II 18:60-1).

It is noteworthy that in response to Tūsī’s disagreement, even puzzlement, over Qūnāvī’s position on the quiddities, which he compared to that of the older schools of *kalām*, Qūnāvī delivers a poignant defence of “beholding” or “witnessing” as the commanding center relative to which the intellectual endeavour can never shed its character as mere interpretation. But this holds for every noetic level, where one expressive sphere may exfoliate from the other. It is crucial to Qūnāvī that interpretive reason in every capacity be understood in its habit of concealing rather than of unveiling. Accordingly, he begins his treatise by drawing attention to the peculiar difficulty weighing upon anyone attempting to express (*īrāb*), within a forum of dialogue and investigation, certain “mysteries” (*asrār*) (MQH 92). The relation between the “sphere of expression [or

interpretation]" (*falak al-ibārah*), he explains, to that of the notional meanings and simple realities (*falak al-mā'ani al-mujarradah wal-haqā'iq al-basītah*) is very hard to specify mentally (*ta'ayyunihā fi al-adhhān*) (MQH 96). He notes the same difficulty in

the sphere of conceptions [*tasawwurāt*] and mental specifications relative to the domain of the psychical attachments [*arsat al-ta'alluqāt al-nafsāniyyah*] and the simple concepts [*al-tasawwurāt al-basītah*]. The same holds true of the simple concepts of the soul relative to the universal things [*lil-umūr al-kulliyah*]; and of the causal realities [*al-haqā'iq al-illiyah*] relative to the intellection of the intellects; and of the universal souls [*al-nufūs al-kulliyah*] to the universals [*kulliyāt*]. [However,] the intellects' and the souls' attachments are related to the specification of the objects of knowledge in God's own knowledge in the same manner that the intellection belonging to He who has no intellects or universal souls at the level of knowledge is to them. (MQH 96-7)

His immediate purpose in contributing this interesting clarification, already quoted once before in Chapter One, is that while different schools of thought may employ the same terms and expressions (*al-asma' wal-alfāz*), they often differ in their usage; although it is illuminating in more important respects as well, as noted earlier in Chapter One. Schools differ because technical expressions are so difficult to grasp, which leads to a general breakdown of terminological precision (MQH 97).²⁶ More fundamental, though, is the centrality and primordiality of direct experience. The "Lordly inspirations" (*al-nafahāt al-rabbāniyyah*) come suddenly without any effort (*ta'ammul*) in the form of Divine gifts (*nafahāt rabbāniyyah*) and, most tellingly, at *particular* moments (MQH 92). The subject matter of his treatise, he adds, is precisely to determine the state (*ḥāl*) in which a hidden spiritual conversation (*mufāwadah ghaybīyah rūhāniyyah*) takes place somewhere between one of the veritable Lordly levels (*martabah min al-marātib al-rabbāniyyah*) and one of the creaturely stations (*maqām min al-maqāmāt al-'abdāniyyah*) (MQH 92). For purposes of discipline, or "adab," and confirmation (*tahqīq*), the best way to render (*tarjamah*) this

“conversation,” as he calls it, is through a type of exchange that is, in turn, suited to the station of worship (*bi-maqām al-‘ubūdīyyah*) demanded by the moment and the state. In short, one cannot hope to consider all at once the possible avenues to knowledge, irrespective of the circumstances or particularities of each inquiry.

He hastily adds that his exposé is meant “to shed light on an intellected journey [*al-riblah al-maqūlah*] from the noetic [*al-hadrab al-‘ilmīyyah*], essential and unitary Presence,” which happens to be the “place [*mahall*] of the eternal and everlasting inscription [*al-irtisām*] of all objects of knowledge” (MQH 92). The reference is unmistakably to the “consonantal”²⁷ level of written letters. Intellected, this “presence” signifies the fact that God is the ultimate source (*mabda’iyyat al-Haqq*), and indicates His creative emanation (*fayddubu al-ijādī*) through a noetic, essential and actual necessity (*bil-ijāb al-‘ilmī al-dhātī al-iftī*). Knowledge of this noetic primacy (*al-anwāliyyah al-‘ilmīyyah*) allows us to specify “the origin of the spiritual path [*mabda’ al-sulūk al-maqnawī*] that properly belongs to the human perfectional and lordly reality [*lil-haqīqah al-insānīyah al-kamāliyyah al-rabbāniyyah*], together with its goal [*ghāyatuhā*] and outcome [*husūluhā*]” (MQH 92). Although in this case sensation is no longer either the origin or principle (*mabda’*) of knowledge, between the origin and the goal lies the wayfarer’s interpretation (*tarjamah*) of his state (*hāl al-sālik*) in his shifting phases (*tanaqqulihī fī l-al-ātwar*), stages (*adwār*) and levels of consignment and dwelling (*marātib al-istīdā wal-istiqrār*). Any admonition of the traveller would then strictly depend on his nature and his capacity of expression²⁷ at every terminal point

²⁷ In the sense of letter consonants, not commensuration.

(*manzil*) and station he reaches and then surpasses. Finally, through such an “interpretation,” the wayfarer is made privy to a knowledge of the mysteries of the origin and the return (*al-mabda' wal-madād*), the crux of religion which constitutes the highest reaches of both intellectual scholar and believer. However, before disclosure (*kashf*) and perception (*mushāhadah*) can take place – always through the instruction of an accomplished figure – the seeker must understand the mode of his own shiftings from one created, natural or Lordly abode to another.

§ THE DIFFERENT APPROACHES TO SCRIPTURAL SOURCES

Qūnavī is, therefore, concerned to coordinate technical discourse with content of knowledge given either on authority or through personal experience in the form of a “Lordly inspiration” from the wayfarer’s Lordly source. In this, the canonical text of the Qur’ān plays a central, instructive role as the *primary* root and the nearest temporally articulated expression of God’s knowledge of Himself, being in short what God says about Himself to man. As such it has a regulative impact upon the reflective peregrinations of human beings in all their “interpretive” efforts.

In the *Correspondence*, he compares the approaches to scripture of different schools of thought in Islam, referring to a variety of tendencies, among the best known of which for its predominantly theoretical approach to the knowledge of God is, of course, *falsafah*, and Ibn Sīnā in particular. Regarding *falsafah*, his main point is that even if reflective thinking is incapable of discovering or “encompassing” things as they really are, so long

as it relies on the limited faculties that depend on sensory perception, the matter does not rest here. On the contrary, under certain conditions it may, as we can now see, play a valuable role; for, behind Ibn Sīnā's statement about the "realities of things," in his view, lay the significant discovery that the thinking faculty (*al-quwwah al-fikriyyah*) was also one of the attributes or characteristics of the "spirit." Man's incapacity to grasp the "realities of things" through his limited faculties implies neither that nothing at all can be uttered nor, as we also saw, that the object does not exist. But Qūnāvī thought out the problem more finely, in the hope of showing how the rational faculty must correspond with an attribute which is similar to it and which it can perceive. There is "correspondence" only in this sense. This way of putting it easily accommodates the kind of associations he alluded to just above between the different "spheres," more specifically between the Divine and the intellectual or spiritual. The general principles governing the consonant relation that needs to hold between any faculty (or science, for that matter) and a given attribute are delineated in the Introduction to *Ijāz al-bayān* (which we shall examine in the next few chapters).

This strategy by consonance bears a resemblance to Ibn Sīnā's and, indeed, Aristotle's formal linking of each science to an object of study commensurate to it. However, Qūnāvī was interested in drawing attention to the vital source of knowledge, in the mystics' opinion inadequately defined by the Peripatetics thus far, and taken paradoxically also in respect of the goal. No doubt, this was a matter to be expressed more satisfactorily in terms of spiritual journeying, rather as another way of classifying

the sciences. And, drawing upon a longer Islamic tradition, Qūnavī was less hampered in this task than were Ibn Sīnā and the *fatāwīyah* before him by the need to systematize beforehand the sciences of antiquity. Yet he continued to regard Ibn Sīnā's approach, formal as it may have been, as distinctly important when compared to that of the dialectical theologians, the *mutakallimūn* – a point scrupulously emphasized on the grounds that the greatest shortcoming of the *mutakallimūn* was indeed their unbridled and improper use of reason. This is a decisive difference which his “historical” treatment of various schools points up and which tends to corroborate our view about the signal importance of scriptural revelation in the historical debate over the employment of reason in our knowledge of God. It receives pointed emphasis in Qūnavī's correspondence with Tūsī.

We have already shown, on a number of occasions so far, that knowledge of the realities of things must be rooted in the formula that God knows His essence and knows things through His essence; this is a philosophical way of saying that this knowledge is what He reveals of Himself, in both a cosmological and a scriptural sense. In the *Muṣṣibah*, Qūnavī deals with the latter sense and proposes a first series of doctrinal divisions. He enumerates three universal types – without naming any specific school of thought or religious faction, as he will in fact do shortly – depending on their relationship to two poles or “categories,” as he calls them: the intellectual (*al-qismah al-‘aqliyyah*) and the Divine communicational (*al-ikhbārāt al-itābiyyah*), on the other. These three types are referred to simply as “high,” “intermediate” and “low” (MQM 4-5). To the first type, the

highest, belong those persons whose intentions (*bimam*) ascend toward the acquisition of the “loftiest things” (*mađāhī*) – i.e. the enduring perfections and virtues – and who are always in quest of a knowledge of the “reality of things” as they are in themselves (MQM 5). Knowledge of God is here the highest attachment (*tađalluq*) of the highest science (*ilm*), where the nobility of a science depends on the nobility of the object of science and where God’s own knowledge remains the very root (*asl*) of the knowledge of everything, both simple and compound. Within this category, moreover, existent beings are intellected and sensed in their different types, inasmuch as science is formally concerned with them.

But two subdivisions are equally discernible here. The first is classed by reference to those existents for whose perception the faculties and compound instruments (*al-ālāt al-mizājīyyah*) are bestowed upon man by his Creator, either alone or in combination (MQM 5). This is possible, he says, when it is in the nature of what is perceptible to be perceived through these particular faculties. Other objects are perceived only theoretically (*nazarīhī*) and cogitatively (*fikrīhī*) through the intellect (*‘aql*), as in the science of God’s existence, the immaterial spirits and the simple concepts (*al-mađāni al-basītah*). Unable to reach a true knowledge of things as they are in themselves, people differ in what they *can* perceive, according to the things perceived, their own temperament and the goals that fit their disposition (MQM 9). An entirely different class of things exists, however, whose perception is impossible through any faculty whatsoever, it being understood nonetheless that they are perceptible. In this class, he includes God’s

Essence (*dhāt al-Haqq*), the realities of the names, the names ascribed to Him through revealed traditions (*al-sharā'f*) and the intellects (*al-'uqūd*), and the sound way of attributing them (*kayfiyyat sifāt al-idāfah*) to His essence (MQM 5). Such a knowledge, he says, presupposes an awesome station (*maqām muhibb*) and cannot be reached through the rational and cogitative method of theory (*nazarihi al-'aqīl al-fikrī*) (MQM 5-6). At that station, it is “the necessity of a judgement on the necessary existence of God” which is required (*wujūb al-hukm bi-wujūb wujūd al-Haqq*) (MQM 5) – to say nothing of the acknowledgement of His affirmation as being one in all respects distinct in His reality from everything else. In the absence of this acknowledgement, falsehoods arise. But no matter how hard he tries, the impartial investigator (*al-mustabṣir al-munsif*) will never be completely satisfied in his search for a knowledge of these things. Upon proper examination of what knowledge is offered by his theoretical and cogitative reasoning, every such investigator discovers that the human faculties are in fact incapable of attaining to a knowledge of the “realities of things” – such as the nature of the names, actuality or Divine emanations, let alone to God’s essence (MQM 6).

When God decides to complete the level of knowledge along with its precepts concomitant to His necessary existence (*ahkāmihā al-tā'īmah*), He does so for those, at the second pole mentioned above, who are ready to penetrate the realities of things both as they are in themselves and in the manner of their specification in God’s knowledge (MQM 9). This is the station of the prophets (*anbiyā'*) and the “Friends of God” (*awliyā'*), chosen by God in accordance with what He knows about their “non-created

predisposition” (*istiḍādātihim al-ghayr al-majūlāh*), through which they had accepted existence in the first place. This is the second predisposition mentioned in the second chapter of this thesis. God raises them to what He wishes them to know of His names’ realities and the secret precepts of the “necessity of His existence.” They are summoned from among the very best of every age and every nation in order to invite people to their Lord and to acquaint them with the proper way that leads to Him and to their own felicity (*sdādātihim*), all “in good wisdom and counsel” (*al-mawt̄ib al-hasānah*) (Qur’ān 16:125; MQM 9). They act from a station that joins concealment (*katm*) and disclosure (*ifshā*), thus fulfilling what legitimately belongs both to wisdom and to the wise (MQM 10).

The tribulations encountered at that station are only a function of differences of predisposition among those whom God solemnly addresses (*mukhātibīn*). These differences emerge *only upon the reception and study* (*talaqqī*) of what the Messengers, “accomplished ones” and “Friends of God” have reported (*akhbarū*) (MQM 10). Now, those who are said to be unconditionally receptive (*qabila mutlaqan*), knowingly or unknowingly, are the people who submit to God and who have faith (*ahl al-islām wal-imān*), despite any differences that may exist among them. Others, the “people of denial and unbelief” (*ahl al-kufr wal-jubūd*), are disavowers *tout court* (*ankara mutlaqan*), of both the knowing and the unknowing type. Next, Qūnāvī mentions the person who “partially accepts and partially denies,” one who is wavering and bewildered (*al-mutawaqqaf al-hā’ir*). Before the “extraordinary signs” (*al-ayāt al-khāriqah*), demanding from him assent (*tasdīq*)

and a certain degree of intellectual boldness, he is simply unable to penetrate the secret and reality of what is already conveyed and reported. His intellect must abstain because it cannot join whatever he is acquainted with and already knows with that which has been reported but remains unfamiliar. With no inkling about the latter, he is incapable of harmonizing the intellect with the legitimate body of religious edicts (*al-tawfiq bayn 'aqlihi wa sharihi*).

The first group mentioned, consisting of those Muslims and unconditional believers, is very diverse. It includes those who take an exoteric stand (*waqafa mā'a al-zāhir*) that does not surpass the *literal* meaning of the text (MQM 10). They simply affirm, without any form of interpretation (*ta'wīl*), unconcerned to find what is intellectually acceptable and what is unsound. Then there are those who, while believing unconditionally whatever is textually presented, are able to benefit from their study in a manner that assists them in their facultative perception. Whatever they fail to perceive they accept on faith, though without rigid insistence on the exoteric and in accordance with the purpose willed by God (*murād Allāh*), the “accomplished ones” among His mediators (*sufrā'ihi*) and those adequately informed about Him (*mukhabbarīn 'anhu*). Whenever they affirm God's attributes of perfection, seeking to safeguard the transcendence of their Lord (*munazzahan rabbahu*) above everything unbefitting to His exaltedness (*jatālihi*), they base themselves on that which God knows about Himself, rather than what happens “to be conceivable or discernible to them by method of attribution [*sūrat al-idāfah*] of imperfections or perfections to God and to everything else” (MQM 11). This shows to

what extent Qūnavī had accepted the “traditionist” objections to the methods of *kalām* at its most critical point, which even a figure as self-avowedly sympathetic, initially, to the aims of the school of Hanbalism as Ash‘arī was not quite able to do convincingly, despite all his recorded overtures to the proponents of the primacy of prophetic traditions.²⁸ The ability to explain Divine communications (*al-ikhbārāt al-itābiyyah*) does not necessarily translate into apodictic knowledge (*‘ilm yaqīnī*). In fact, Qūnavī explains, enough lacunae and weaknesses appear in this group to lead to exegetical deviations (*zaygh al-ta’wīl*) like anthropomorphism (*al-tajassum wal-tashbīh*). The faithful creed (*maṣj al-‘Iiqād iṁmānī*) becomes then tainted by futile speculation and comparison (*shawā‘ib al-zunūn wal-aqīsah*).

An even worse violation, however, is committed by the dialecticians (*mutakallimīn*) (MQM 11). This is because they accept whatever they are able to discern through their own theoretical inquiry and faculties even when an interpretation flatly contradicts the apparent sense of the report about God. In this case, the disadvantages of the interpreter’s (*muta’awwīl*) proneness to error and his failure to stand on a firm, personally realized foundation (*asl muhaqqaq*) “far outweigh the benefits of adventitious correctness [*isābatuhu muṣādāfah*], which can by no means be certain” (MQM 11). In this connection, Qūnavī emphasizes that the dialecticians routinely fail to stand on what “tested faith” postulates (*mā yaqtadīhi al-īmān al-muhaqqaq*), or even to fulfill the conditions of logical assent. One decisive point is that the “true state of affairs” (*jaliyyat al-amr*) cannot be discerned without a knowledge of the “willed purpose” (*maṣrifat al-murād*) of what is being reported.²⁹ Their shortcoming in critical respect does not put them alongside the

“grammatical and logical theoreticians” (*ahl al-naṣar al-sarf wal-mīzān*), whom he thinks have a more secure footing, if still unable to reach by their methods alone the goal of true verification (*sha’w al-tahqīq*). The element of “willed purpose” is, therefore, more than indispensable to his entire conception of Divine Speech. In relation to Will, Speech is what the speaker intends (*maqūd al-mutakallim*) (IB A:3; B:97). Qūnawī describes it as the secret of his will and a locus of manifestation (*mazhar*), showing to every person addressed, or listener, what lies hidden inside the speaker.

Predictably, the category above the dialecticians is made up of those who partake of the same sources and states as the prophets. They exhibit the sound faith (*al-sālib fi-l-imān*) of their predecessors, in regard to what is textually given, based on exactly the purpose willed by God (*murād Allāh*) (MQM 11-2). They entrust what true knowledge (i.e. “*jaliyyat al-amr*”) they cannot themselves clearly perceive, both to God and to those reporting on Him who are knowledgeable in His willed purpose, who alone are able to penetrate the “realities of these things” (*haqā’iq tilka al-umūr*) (MQM 12). The noble souls and lofty intentions (*himam ‘āliyah*) of the former enable them to avoid being blindly imitative or complacently to accept “the wretched portion” (*al-ridā bil-haz̄z al-haqīr*) of those others who are merely content with their lot. The difference is that they are also able to reflect upon what is conveyed to them, perceiving their own powerlessness (*ajzahā*) and, interestingly enough, that of other categories and states of people mentioned above. Surpassing them all, they reach and eventually pass beyond the station of the theoretical thinkers (*maqām ahl al-naṣar al-fikrī*), whose powerlessness they can

perspicaciously see. They are able to perceive the weakness of the theoreticians' state preventing "the crowning moment of true realization" (*al-zafar bil-tahqīq*).

While it turns out that it is the dialecticians, not the philosophers as such, who are to be most harshly criticized because of their improper use of the reasoning faculties, "theoretical proofs" (*al-adillah al-nazariyyah*) are nevertheless judged, as we saw before, as being perpetually dependent on contingent goals, namely, their immediate objects of inquiry (*maṭālib*) (MQM 12). This is what renders them limited and precarious. Exegetical affirmation through intellectual argument (*al-hujaj al-‘aqliyyah*) alone is tenuous at best, because these proofs are never impervious to the doubt attending all thought and dialectical objections. Those who rely solely on theoretical reason for their intellectual affirmations (*mūjibāt ‘uqūlibim*), reflective requirements (*muqtadiyā afkārihim*) and conclusions all disagree with each other; whatever is correct for one is wrong for the other (MQM 13). In this specific sense of theoretical proof, the truth is relative to the observer.

This whole passage is found in *I‘jāz al-bayān*, the gist of his sceptical argument being: that something can be shown to be manifestly ambiguous is insufficient; nor is the failure to prove its soundness any the more decisive (MQM 13). Indeed, Qūnāvī finally asks, is talk about those very "ambiguities" we find so objectionable itself any more valid (MQM 14)? The only way of escaping this vicious circle is by adopting a kind of "pragmatic relativism" based on the close dependence of theoretical reason on the efficiency of the faculties employed. Theoretical precepts (*al-abkām al-nazariyyah*) vary according to

differences in the perceptions of those espousing them, which perceptions are determined by the conative foci of the perceivers (*al-madārik tābi'ah li-tawajjuhāt al-mudrikīn*) (MQM 12). These conative foci are subordinate to their purposeful intentions (*maqāsid*), which are in turn variegated according to diverse opinions, beliefs, habits, temperaments and circumstances. He is basically contending that this diversity is due to nominal causes. In a word, it exists because there are differences among the effects of the names' manifestations (*athār al-tajalliyāt al-ismā'iyyah*). Indeed, it is these names, specified and multiplied at various levels of reception (*marātib al-qubūl*) in accordance with predisposition which produce (*muthirah*) the intentions in the first place, determining the conduct (*'awā'id*) and the creeds (*al-'aqā'id*) of the very thinkers and dogmatists who seek to "internalize" them (MQM 12-3). The entire picture is thus permeated by Divine self-manifestation and communication. It will be our task in subsequent chapters to see structurally how this is so.

This is another way of saying, in short, that it is God who completes the knowledge and precepts required by His necessary existence, whenever He wills it, thus bringing to perfection those of His servants who are themselves prepared for the manifestation of a knowledge. He completes the ascent toward "the realities of things" as they really are and according to the way in which these have been determined in His own knowledge (MQM 9). The quest for knowledge and self-realization – i.e. for an actual state (*hālan*), knowledge or some other level – entails that state (*hāl*) which somehow joins (*jam*) intention (*hamm*) with universality based on both God's Will and on ascetic exercise

(*zuhd*). Only in this sense can knowledge emanate from Him, being, in the end, a grace offered without need of any effort by the seeker to achieve it. And yet what calls it forth is “the full breadth of the elite’s knowledge [*ṣifat dā’irat ‘ilmihim*] and the perfection of their uncreated predisposition [*kamāl iṣṭidādihim al-ghayr majūl*]”. This, Qūnāvī adds, brings to bear the simplicity of the light manifested to them from God, which ensures that they become permeated by the precepts of His knowledge, His description (*wasfihī*) and simplicity.³⁰

Qūnāvī’s verdict on the intellect is indeed double-edged. Expressed differently, human intelligence, unaided, becomes trapped in an impossible dilemma whose logical features are described in the *Muṣīḥah* as follows. The complete intellection of the reality of things – that is, of God’s attributes, the mode of their attribution (*kayfiyyat idāfatihā ilayhī*), His creative act and the emanation (*sūdūr*) – will forever elude man so long as the original rootedness and comprehensiveness of knowledge and essence are steadfastly with God (*thabit al-asālah wal-iḥātah bil-ilm wal-dhāt*) (MQM 6). What this means, he says, is that the very judgement that God’s perfect attributes are universal and comprehensive (*kullīyan iḥātīyan*) must itself somehow enclose all judgement (*shāmil al-bukm*). Man qua created being, on the other hand, can perceive only as a specified and delimited being (*mutdāyyan mutaqayyadan*), at a station determined by his own thinking faculty. That is why at the level of their immateriality the realities of existent beings (*haqā’q al-mawjūdāt*) will always remain unknowable to the human faculties, a point Qūnāvī develops in *Ijāz al-bayān*. Before these existent entities ever don the existence that occurs to them

through the existentiating emanation of God, one cannot intellect them nor perceive their mutual differences according to their particular determinations and distinctions in the unitary and essential knowledge of God, which is without beginning or end. In other words, they must acquire some individual existence before we can perceive them through our faculties. But, through this means, human intelligence cannot gain knowledge of “the secret of the world’s hierarchical arrangement, its precepts and universal characteristics [*sirr tarīb tabaqāt al-ālam wa ahkāmihi wa khanāsihi al-kulliyah*]” (MQM 7).³¹

Knowledge of God is through Him (“*arafa al-Haqq bil-Haqq*”). Divine speech alone imparts the willed purpose of each manifested word (MQA 33). Short of this, no knowledge of the “reality of things” is possible, and it is on this score that the dialecticians are said to have committed their greatest blunders. Man’s limited faculties simply do not affirm or negate anything about God according to God’s knowledge through Himself. And knowing God through God for a human being is also to know one’s own soul.³² Once again, though, the soul may be known through God or by way of what one knows of God only because of what God *wills* us to know of them, in their uniqueness, either all at once or piecemeal. Unfortunately, philosophical proof fails us in this respect, too. It cannot combine intention with universality, for it does not comprehend the transcendent purpose, in this complete sense, which eternal knowledge conceals within itself. Indeed, rational argumentation is tenuously attached to the elusive *contingent* goal of man’s spiritual illumination and realization, its purpose being of an entirely different order – that of systematic presentation of arguments for instructive

purposes extrinsic to its method.

In conclusion, this interplay is precisely what quiddity, as the aspect of noetic and spiritual immobility, cannot exhibit on its own, even though it does signal a crucial transference of focus away from God's *Pure* essence or reality, toward both the "realities of things" in our knowledge of Him and their mutual relationships. Movement is essential to mystical philosophy, and Qūnāvī uses the problem posed by the quiddity in his correspondence with Tūsī in order to throw into relief those aspects of philosophical language that show the greatest promise of satisfying the need for spiritual movement without, at the same time, countenancing the suppression of the root source of all this dynamism.

Knowing the realities of things clearly entailed many complex issues. Although typically difficult to follow or to organize in succinct fashion, the arguments amount to a problem of identifying the source of uniqueness and distinction of each thing in God's knowledge of it. But this has to pass first through God's utter distinctness, as reflected in the assertion that only He can know and describe Himself. Yet, this very distinctness prevents us from quite grasping the reality of a thing, God being the supremely distinct, the ultimate source. It follows from this that if we can know God – and Qūnāvī obviously means to deny this in the bare intellectual sense only – then knowing the realities cannot be far behind; the realities of things relate, as we saw, to His names, the sound way of attributing things to Him, etc. The series of problems that arise within this framework will be taken up in Part II of this thesis.

NOTES

1. Ibn 'Arabī uses the term *wujūd* in at least two senses, "existence" proper and "finding." What is interesting about this declaration is that the exegetical orientation of this major work has not prevented him now and then from utilizing important philosophical terms. In his discussions on nomenclature and the technical aspect of his doctrine, he has often noted the "parallels" and must have considered *wujūd*, taken in the former sense, as a philosophical rendering of the object of his exegetical enterprise.
2. Lat., *quidditas* ("whatness") (cf. Aristotle *Met* 1030a). Whenever someone asks philosophically "what is it?" he is asking for the thing's quiddity or definition. *Mābiyyah* is, accordingly, a direct translation of *quid est esse rei*; Ibn Sīnā postulated that every "thing" has a quiddity (Goichon *Lexique* 679:386; Goichon DEE 32).
3. Many important treatises have been written in the form of correspondence, and Qūnāvī and Nasīr al-Dīn Tūsī were no exceptions. However, there is no telling how long their exchange continued. The only observation one can make is that the present correspondence, at least, was of rather short duration, being limited to a series of philosophical questions. Often, this type of dialogue sheds a helpful light on certain ill-defined aspects of a great thinker's doctrine; since the questions raised there are usually specific, requiring a direct response or definition. Another kind of epistles was the one addressed to a particular person or circle of colleagues, as part of an ongoing dialogue. One examples is Tūsī's letter to Katabī (Aya Sofya Ms. 4862); there is also the case of Ibn 'Arabī's famous epistle to Fakhr al-Dīn Rāzī ("Risālat al-Shaykh illā al-Imām Rāzī," in RIB 6-14).
4. Born in Khurasan, Tūsī lived in a tumultuous period. Before becoming one of the most respected theologians in Shī'ī Islam, he became involved with the Ismā'īlīs of Alamut, which was eventually overrun by the Mongols. By joining the administration set up by the Mongols to govern the conquered land, he was subsequently able to convince the rulers to sponsor the building of an observatory. Its empirical contributions were very important, and nourished both his fertile scientific and metaphysical mind, which often exhibit astonishing, almost mathematical precision. See, for example, Heer's graphic representation of his scheme in *The Precious Pearl* 85, which summarizes a passage found in his correspondence with Qūnāvī. This quotation is perhaps more accessible to the reader than one in the correspondence, which remains unpublished. On Tūsī's life and accomplishments, see Dr. 'Abd al-Amīr al-Asam's *al-Faylasūf Nasīr al-Dīn al-Tūsī*; Henry Corbin HPI 437ff.
5. A fourth document, which Qūnāvī says was sent by error, consists of elementary lessons for *mūrids* (see Chittick MyPhEa 87-104).
6. That is, *tā'ifah min 'ulamā' al-'arabiyyah*.
7. H. A. Wolfson's discussion of the phrase "*bi-dhātibī*," which he takes as reference to *all* of the Divine predicates, seems somewhat misleading. To say that "all predicates are applied to God *bi-dhātibī*" (pp. 148-50) is to ignore the exclusive "right" (to use one of Ibn 'Arabī's apt expressions) to certain attributes which the expression is intended to reflect over and above any other argument from "ambiguity" (*tashkīk*) Wolfson may bring to bear upon his analysis. In the contexts where I have seen it employed, the term clearly refers to *some* not all – i.e. if it does not

indicate simply the essence – of the attributes. Other attributes, which may apply to both God and men also in different senses, embody a distinctly different relationship to the essence (Cf Wolfson SHP 148ff). As Ibn Sīnā says here, “what has existence by virtue of itself” signifies something whose reality we do not know – “*ishārah ilh shay' tā na'rifu haqīqatāhu*.” He is not speaking of all the predicates. This shows that his real reference is to a particular class of attributes of the essence: those *about* God. *Philosophically* derived, they refer to something we cannot know directly. This is the purpose of the expression and the thesis in his capacity as a philosopher.

8. In the case of quiddities, existence is external to each reality; whereas God is by essence the cause of all existence (MQA 32).

9. This is precisely how Ibn Sīnā himself puts it in the *Najāt*, for example – namely, that quiddity is distinguishable above all by the fact that anything it describes has to be subsumable under genus and differentia, its two parts. (Cf. Goichon *Lexique* 175)

10. The *mutashābihāt* and *mutabājināt* of Qur'anic exegesis.

11. If we could somehow know the reality of the thing, he says, we would know all of its concomitants; but if this proves impossible, then we cannot work our way in reverse back to the reality (MQA 32). Tūsī obliges with his own philosophical account on this point by noting a theme dear to the philosophers, that knowledge of the cause necessitates a complete knowledge of its effects, whereas knowledge of the effect offers only a defective kind of knowledge (MNT 69).

12. The author's complete name is Najm al-Dīn Khidr b. al-Shaykh Shams al-Dīn Muhammad b. 'Alī al-Rāzī (d. ca. 850/1446 AH). Cf. also Jurjānī JKT 88, q.v. “*al-haqīqah*” and “*haqīqat al-ashyā'*”

13. “Conventional” because, no matter how innovative he may have been, his thoughts were generally formulated Peripatetically, being one of the foremost interpreters and, in fact, staunchest defenders of Ibn Sīnā. But this pertains mostly to his technical approach and method. I certainly do not mean that he lacked originality or insight of his own.

14. This approach, as we saw, is traceable to Aristotle's psychologically-based epistemology, which seeks to account, for example, for the relation between sense perception, memory, experience, skill, science, skill in the sphere of coming to be and science in the sphere of being. “We conclude,” he says,

that these states of knowledge are neither innate in a determinate form, nor developed from other higher states of knowledge, but from sense-perception. It is like a rout in battle stopped by first one man making a stand and then another, until the original formation has been restored. The soul is so constituted as to be capable of this process (PoA 100^a 4-14).

15. It is, he says, tinged (*munṣabagh*) with the created, compound faculties (*al-quwāt al-mizājiyyah al-hādithah al-imkāniyyah*).

16. In his words, “*lā yumkin an yakūn mutābiqan limā huwa al-Haqq ‘alybi fi nafsihī*” (MQA 33).

17. *Haqq* in this expression is often either left unexplained or mistranslated as truth, reality or God. After classifying knowledge according to type, Ibn ‘Arabī postulates three “rights” (*buqūq*) which inspire those who adopt the highest way of approach to God (*al-tarīq ilā Allāh*), in its four varieties: namely, a right belonging to the Creator (*haqq bil-Allāh*), one to other people, (*haqq bil-khalq*) and a third to themselves (*haqq li-anfusibim*) (FuM I 88:148, ls. 10-14). The first right demands that they worship God, associating nothing with Him (FuM I 89:149, ls. 1-2). The right assigned to people requires them to desist from harming them (*kaff al-adhā kulluhū anhum*) in any way that contravenes religious injunctions (*sharī’*), and to produce acts of accepted fairness (*sānā’ al-mā’rūf mā’abum ‘alā al-istitā’ah wal-i’tibār*) based on love and altruism (FuM I 89:149, ls. 2-4). The right assigned to themselves consists in shunning any other path (*tarīq*) except the one which contains their felicity and salvation (*sādātuhā wa najātuhā*) (FuM I 89:149, ls. 5-6).

18. In sum, the existence acquired (*al-wujūd al-mustafād*) from God by the quiddities is simply the specification of the non-existent objects of knowledge (*tā’ayyun al-mā’lūmāt al-mā’du’mah*), which nevertheless are said to possess certain existential aspects (MQA 36).

19. That is, “*ta’aqqulat mintashi’ah al-ta’aqqul bā’du bā’ min bā’d*.”

20. Moreover, he says, it is incorrect to say that a knowledge has an effect on some knower, so as to mean, for example, that this here is knowledge and that is the *object* of knowledge (MQA 35).

21. They thus have a noetic, eternal and everlasting existence (MQH 100). Compare this with the definition of the Acquired Intelligence proposed by Ibn Sīnā, who refers to it as a quiddity separated from matter, deeply engraved in the soul by way of realization from the outside (Goichon *Lexique* 317)

22. That is, “*bi-wāsītāt al-nisbah al-ilmīyyah al-dhātiyyah*.”

23. The dynamics behind Ibn Sīnā’s technical *conceptual* innovations in philosophy are briefly discussed by David B. Burrell in relation to Greek thought. However philosophical he may have been in his technical language, Ibn Sīnā, Burrell says, was “reaching for...an essence prior to universality or particularity, without any conditions at all” (Burrell EsExAv 62). But the problem was “to keep the principle from being identified simply with the first in the scheme – in short, to secure a notion of creation, will be a way of clearly distinguishing being (*buwīyya*) from essence (*mabīyya*)” (Burrell EsExAv 59). This seems congruent with the spirit of the present correspondence.

24. Unfortunately, he furnishes no details concerning date or circumstances of this pilgrimage (see *EF* 752).

25. Each of them is but the share that the deficiencies imagined (*mutawabbamah*) have in the attributes, names and acts is aimed for (KT 176b).

26. What is true of the relation between expression and pure meaning, furthermore, is equally so at every other level: the sphere of mental imaginations and specifications (*al-taṣawwurāt wal-*

*ta'ayyunāt al-dhibniyyah) in relation to the domain of psychological intellections and simple imaginations (*al-ta'aqqulāt al-nafsiyyah wal-tasawwurāt al-basīrah*); the simple spiritual imaginations (*al-tasawwurāt al-nafsiyyah*) relative to universal things (*al-umūr al-kulliyah*); the causal realities (*al-haqā'iq al-illiyah*) to the intellection (*ta'aqqu*) of the intelligences ('uqūb); and the universal souls (*al-nufūs al-kulliyah*) to the universals (*kulliyāt*). But the relation between the intellection of the intelligences and of the souls to the specification of the objects of knowledge in the knowledge of God (*al-mā'lūmāt fī 'ilm al-Haqq*) is that of the one possessing no universal intellects or souls at all to that level of knowledge which properly belongs to these (MQH 97).*

27. That is, “*al-tanbīh 'alā sha'nibī wa lisānibī*.”
28. See Allard PAD 46 and OpFa 93-105.
29. And “what the whole matter is about [*mā huwa al-amr 'alaybi fī nafsihi*].”
30. As in the case of most people who mistake their arts (*funūn*) for the real sciences (*al-'ulūm al-haqiqiyah*).
31. Nor can intelligence obtain knowledge of “the cause limiting every kind, genus and species to a certain number or certain temporal periods; nor of each one's uniqueness...and the distinction of each after association with the other in different ways by means of attributes and properties shared by no other species or kind.” What is commonly found instead, he adds, is a knowledge based on guessing and imagination, even if some of it be more dependable than the rest. This knowledge varies according to perception, temperament and the goals which attach to particular capabilities. There is nowhere near the same kind of agreement here as even in the bulk of geometric problems. And yet when people feel unable to pass beyond the level of spatial measurement, they become dissatisfied, since they strive for the loftiest kind of knowledge, if only because of the majestic power and of the lasting fruits promised after separation from matter and body in their quest for perfect realization (MQM 7).
32. There is a famous *hādīth*, of which several versions exist, to the effect that “Whoever knows himself knows his Lord.” See Takeshita IAT 26 and Jabre NMG 87ff.

PART II

CHAPTER FOUR

Consonance and the Integrity of Knowledge

In the previous chapter, we have seen that a purely rational acquaintance with God's reality or existence yielded a knowledge of things *about* God, philosophically expressible in terms of concomitants of His existence. For we cannot know the reality of God as He is in Himself. If we grant further that only God truly knows His own reality, and that this knowledge is the "cause" of His knowledge of everything else, then our own knowledge of the realities of things – if we are to have it – would have to bear some relationship to His knowledge of them and *ipso facto* to God's knowledge of Himself. For, in some intellectually abstruse sense, we *do* know Him. Theoretically, this relationship could be expressed either as a straight identity or as a consonance between the Divine root and the noetic level of the seeker. Qūnavī, like all mainstream mystics and philosophers, chooses the latter. For him, it is more specifically understood as a root knowledge particularized according to predisposition. Although knowledge of God's reality is not given through any quiddity, quiddities are nevertheless an essential if immobile link to Divine knowledge; they are part and parcel of our own *philosophical* knowledge of God. Above all, they have proven to be a congenial step towards a theory of Divine speech that purports to offer a more satisfactory account of our knowledge of God by way of an "exegetical grammar."

In short, the question of whether or not the realities of things can be known is one

that takes Qūnāvī from Peripatetic logic, via the quiddity, to a new science of language and the conveyance of meaning. In the last chapter, we saw that the quidditive hierarchy was only the intellectual pendant of a deeper objective order of the realities, whose internal dynamic is apprehended through meaning and parts of speech brought forth together in a single communicative act. This is not to say that Qūnāvī means to liken Divine to human speech; Divine speech remains Divine in the full sense of the word even as it is “particularized” by the recipient. The study of natural language does not signal an alternative avenue to the knowledge of the realities of things so much as a methodical elaboration of a disciplinary “scale” designed to preserve the spiritual cohesiveness and integrity of knowledge, a task that conventional philosophy was committed to without necessarily possessing the requisite theoretical tools. In this part of the thesis, we shall be focusing on Qūnāvī’s lengthy introduction to his important work, *Iḥāz al-bayān*. The Introduction conveniently begins where we left off in the last chapter.

§ THE EXEGETICAL PURPOSE OF THE WORK

The degree to which Qūnāvī believed his work to be complementary to that of the philosophers is illustrated by the following. While Qūnāvī’s discussion of theoretical knowledge or systematic science in *Iḥāz al-bayān* stands or falls on the assumption that the human faculties by themselves are powerless to apprehend the realities of things, and that they perceive only the properties, concomitants and accidents of things, etc., this

does not mean that he did not believe that the thinking faculty could still constitute one of the attributes and properties of the spirit -- in his own words, “*sifah min sifat al-rūh wa khāssah min khawāssihā*” (IB A:25; B:126). We have referred to this point on several occasions before, but let us now include his full statement in order to see how the broader question of “consonance” will be used to deal with the difficult dilemmas raised by epistemology.

In his estimation, Ibn Sīnā’s discovery of this peculiar role for the theoretical faculty, “through sound mind or by way of ‘tasting’ [*bi-tarīq al-dhawq*], in the manner indicated in certain themes in his discourse,” is precisely why he ought truly to be considered the “Teacher of the Theoreticians,” “*ustādh ahl al-nazār*” (IB A:25; B:126). That thinking is one of the “spiritual faculties,” as all those who have reached the stage of personal realization in knowledge (*muhaqqiqīn*) concur with, implies that the *nāzir*, the theoretician, must know some reality. Thinking is tied to the particular attribute where study, knowledge and object of attachment (*mutdallaqīhī*) all coincide. At this precise point, it must perceive an attribute that is similar to it before it can function properly. This “correspondence” of attributes, rather than that of concept and object, constitutes essentially the only egress from a dilemma Qūnāvī poses at the very outset, which is that of all abstract reflection and which leads to circularity: if the discourse on “the realization (of knowledge)” (*al-kalām fī al-tahqīq*) happens itself to be either one of the relations of knowledge (*nisbah min nisab al-ilm*), one of its precepts (*hukm min ahkāmihī*) or simply an attribute subordinate to it (*sifah tābi‘ah labu*),

how then can I, deeming it necessary to do so, claim it incumbent upon myself to give instruction concerning the secret of knowledge, its levels, its universal inclusive objects of attachment [*muta'alliqātihi al-kulliyah al-hāsirah*], precepts, scales [*mawāzīnīhī*]; or its paths [*turuqīhī*], signs [*ālamātīhī*] and loci of appearance [*mazāhirīhī*], which [constitute] the receptacle of the rays of His Lights [*maball ashīt anwārīhī*]...? (IB A:7-8; B:105)

This is his cardinal consideration in *Ijāz al-bayān* as he turns to the general rules (*al-qawādīd al-kulliyah*) of knowledge, their levels and concomitants, together with the primary root-levels of the names (*al-marātib al-ālla al-asliyyah al-asmā'iyyah*), etc. (IB A:8; B:105). The names are viewed in their descending order of manifestation – where relative priority is the hallmark – presumably in contrast to the ascending one of spiritual journeying. We saw in the last chapter how interconnected these two dimensions are.

If he claims to be searching for “general rules,” Qūnāvī nevertheless does not seek a logically self-enclosed doctrine. His first objective is didactic, to accommodate those persons who, while relying mainly on theoretical reasoning, hope to assure themselves of a proper manner of approach to the question of knowledge. There is no denying that a certain distance from the object is necessary here, too, although this may render the didactic approach itself almost as precarious as what the theoreticians too easily imagine to be either a proof (*bujjah*) or a condition for certitude (*ilm yaqīn*). The reality, self-manifesting, remains incontrovertible even in the absence of any proof, and his own didactic approach is no different from the way of proof when measured solely by its distance from the object-reality. While far from complete and of small advantage (*gillat jidwāhu*) in the end, proofs are more than outright ignorance. And Qūnāvī is able to claim a higher degree of theoretical penetration still thanks to the nature of the experiential realization he wishes to convey. This realization, as we saw in

the previous chapter, was not only absent from other speculative approaches like those of *kalām* and *falsafah*, but when it was present it was of a rather different order.

In the Introduction, hence, he takes all liberties in formulating several interconnected “universal rules” each of which, he warns us, presupposes the other. All of the rules taken together rely on a particular understanding of Divine speech and words that is dependent on scriptural sources properly interpreted in the light of spiritual realization. His main objective in this work is to uncover secrets that pertain to the *Fātihah*, above all, which knowledge he describes as that “rare knowledge” (*gharā'ib al-‘ulūm*) that includes cognizance of the “universal realities” (*kulliyāt al-haqā'iq*) (IB A:10; B:109). While textually and experientially concrete, his objective will nevertheless be to present the *general* concerns of “interpretive effort” which will assist him in identifying “what is [most] suitable to the discourse on the *Fātihah*, as much as this summary will bear, so as to bring out the secrets of this *sūrah* through these rules [*qawā'id*]” (IB A:9; B:107). But the whole effort is perforce rooted in a knowledge to which the mind, paradoxically, has no access except through those “extraordinary acts” he calls “*al-himam al-khāriqah hijab al-‘awā'id*” of spiritual realization (IB A:11; B:109). This knowledge is far beyond even such givens as the precepts of any creed (*ahkām al-‘aqā'id*), discounted earlier in his reflections on the verses which he received through inspiration on the occasion of his pilgrimage. This is a knowledge that has come originally in the historical form of prophetic revelation, through which certain non-*prophetic* figures also may have privileged access, though in a strictly defined sense. But no one can attain to such knowledge except

through Divine solicitude or providence (*al-‘ināyah al-itābiyyah*) and what was bequeathed (*bi-mīrāth*) by the Prophet, whose Lord brought him closer to Him one night at the station known as “Two bow’s length away, or nearer” (*Laylat asrā bihi bi-maqām qāb qawsayn aw adnā*) (IB A:11; B:109).

It is with this specific sense of rootedness that all the “rules” presented in his Introduction are linked to what he additionally calls the “primal realities” (*bi-ummahāt al-haqā‘iq*) and the Divine sciences (*al-‘ulūm al-itābiyyah*), the primal realities being analogous to the “primal roots” (*ummahāt asliyyah*) encountered above in *Miftāh al-ghayb* (MG 2:3). Once again, he owns to the now familiar fact that there are various ways of promulgating the rules of instructive science. Some are established through “legal-religious argument” (*al-hujaj al-shar‘iyyah*), others through “theoretical proofs” (*al-adillah al-nazariyyah*) and the rest through demonstrations based on tasting and unveiling (*al-barāhīn al-dhawqiyyah al-kashfiyyah*). The last named alone are indubitable, at least to those who have realized the unveilings of light (*tahaqqaq bil-mukāshafat al-nūriyyah*) and what he calls the “complete, momentous experiences” (*al-adhwāq al-tāmmah al-jalīyyah*) (IB A:11; B:109). But each school retains its own sources (or root knowledge) (*usūl*) and premises on whose soundness the school’s members have agreed beforehand. These sources and premises serve as the “scales” (*mawāqīnūbūm*) over which they are able to build and to which they can refer. Only on this basis can a valid syllogism (*aqīsah sabīhab*) and complete, irrefutable proof be constructed, presumably in the didactic sense intended in this context.

The rules Qūnāvī has in mind for his Introduction are specially adapted to the science of Divine Speech and do not pertain to just any kind of logical predication. Moreover, while every method is bound by a doctrine of “forms,” his exegetical vision is more specifically informed by a notion of the *cosmological* significance of Divine Speech according to which God originated (*ja‘ala*) the “First Macrocosm” (*al-‘ālam al-kabīr al-awwal*) insofar as the “form” (*sūrah*) is a Book, one that contains the forms of God’s names and the forms of the relations of His knowledge deposited in what he calls the “Nominal Pen” (*al-qalam al-ismī*). God also created the Perfect Man, who is the “Microcosm” in respect of the form qua “intermediary Book” (*kitāban wasṭan*) joining the “presence of names” to what is named (*jam‘an bayna hadrat al-asmā’ wa hadrat al-musammā*) (IB A:3; B:98). The purport of these claims will be better seen when we consider each of the technical terms and issues presented in the Introduction as the components of a theological science. The general rules he has in mind are, for example, based on a root knowledge relating the whole theological enterprise to the primal ontic “realities” that make it what it is. The procedure that Qūnāvī himself follows leads from a systematic presentation of the key concepts in this science up to an analytical consideration of the general rules he intends eventually to apply to his exegesis of the *Fātiḥah* in the main body of his work. There will no doubt be some repetition of points made in Part I of our study. However, the Introduction is almost a treatise in its own right and worth studying in the order of presentation given to it by the author, now that we have dealt at length with the difficult background we need before undertaking this.

§ WHAT ARE THE REALITIES?

When one speaks of science, i.e. “systematic” science, the object in Qūnavī’s understanding exhibits the following distinctions. The ontic “realities” refer generally to the “simple, immaterial, expository realities” (*al-mujarradah al-basītah al-muzbirah*), which include both the realities of created being (*kawniyyah*) and those that are related to God by way of naming and attribution (IB A:22; B:122). The latter are, in fact, the two extremities in a conception of the realities that Ibn ‘Arabī had himself been teaching. He held, for instance, that *haqīqah* was of four kinds: the “sacred essence” (*al-dhāt al-muqaddasah*); the attributes of transcendence (*al-sifat al-munaẓẓabah*), meaning the relations; the acts (*afāl*), i.e. “Be!” and connected issues; or, finally, the “effects” (*maṣūlāt*), which comprised created and generated beings (*al-akwān wal-mukawwanāt*) (FuM I 92:150). Briefly, the “creational realities” consisted of the higher intelligibles (*maṣūlāt*); the lower sensory (*mabsūsāt*); and the intervening imaginative (*al-barzakhīyyah wa hiya al-mukhayyāt*). The realities of the essence, on the other hand, being inexpressible through any sign, were correlated with every locus of witnessing (*kull mashhad*) which did not entail an anthropomorphism or qualification of any kind (FuM I 93:150). And the “realities of the attributes” (*al-haqā’iq al-sifatīyyah*) led to a knowledge of God as one who is, for example, “knowing” (*‘alīman*), “capable” (*qādiran*), “willing” (*murīdan*), “living” (*hayyan*), etc. Ibn ‘Arabī considered the “creational realities” as loci of witnessing on the basis of which we may attain to a knowledge of the spirits (*maṣrifat al-arwāh*), simple and composite beings, bodies, means of (linguistic) conveyance (*ittisāl*) and passivity (*infitāl*) (FuM I 94:150). The realities of the Acts (*al-haqā’iq al-afliyyah*) signified the loci of witnessing on the basis of

which we have a knowledge of the Divine Command, “Be!” (*md̄rifat Kun*), the special attachment of power to what is decreed (*wa t̄d̄alluq al-qudrab bil-maqd̄ir bi-darb khās*) (FuM I 95:150).

According to Qūnavī each and every reality furthermore has its own concomitants (*lawāzim*) and attributes. These attributes comprise the realities’ set of precepts and relations, some of which are said to be proximate (*qarībah*) properties, others remote (*bātīdah*) (IB A:22; B:122). Now, these are the different attributes to which the seekers become attached according to predisposition. Not unlike the Peripatetic scheme of commensurate accidents, which combines both ascriptive and classificatory considerations, a “consonant relation” (*munāsabah*) must exist between the seeker and the object sought in that respect where there is knowledge, and a “dissonant relation” (*al-mughāyarah*) as a counterweight where there is not (IB A:22; B:123). A precept of dissonance signifies the absence of any request (*talab*), but that of consonance requires also a *prior* awareness (*shūr*) of that whose knowledge is sought in the first place.¹ In short, a person seeking knowledge of a thing must do so, literally, according to that which is already consonant or commensurate to that thing. Should there be no consonance at all, there would be no object of inquiry, in keeping with the principle that that which is absolutely unknown (*al-majhūl mutlaqan*) cannot be requested. We have already dealt with the logical repercussions flowing from this in our review of Ibn Sīnā’s views on syllogistic inferences. Needless to say, as a formal underpinning to what Qūnavī henceforth has to say in *Ijāz al-bayān*, they are quite central.

To continue, consonance in *every* respect implies a knowledge so complete that a request for it is inconceivable; whereas awareness of merely one of the attributes or accidents acts as the motive cause (*bā'ith*) for requesting a knowledge of the reality, knowledge in respect of the root of which the attribute is but an appearance (cf. IB A:22-3; B: 123). The soul has to pass through the attributes, concomitant, etc., which it already knows, before obtaining a knowledge of the reality, its root (*aslibā*) and properties (IB A:23; B:123). The construction (*tarkīb*) of syllogisms and premises is one method by which the seeker may try, through reflective theory (*naẓarībī al-fikrī*), to obtain knowledge of any reality to which his perception; so long as a “noetic supersession” (*ta'addīyyan 'ilmīyyan*) eventually takes place beyond the levels of his own attributes, properties and concomitants. A noetic supersession indicated for Qūnāvī that a true apprehension has in fact occurred, one that Ibn Sīnā was at pains to show through logical paradigms was an act of assenting to the middle term. This is essential, since the seeker is incapable of such a supersession whenever the weakness of the theoretical faculty, or some other impediment, results in a defective perception of his own secret — which of course lies in the knowledge of God and offers him the key to the knowledge of everything else (IB A:23; B:123-4). It acts as his specific noetic source, or that cognizance which Divine knowledge grants to each individual. But the goal is to move beyond (*yata'addī min*) a knowledge of one set of properties, attributes or concomitants of a thing, whether proximate or remote, toward another where his knowledge of the reality properly terminates in closest proximity to what was both initially perceivable and served as the

actuating motive (IB A:23; B:124).

“Remoteness” (*al-buṭṭa*) in this permanent consonance suggests the presence of an element wedged between the seeker and that whose knowledge he desires. Depending on its strength, the theoretical faculty may terminate through the precept of a consonant relation with what attributes and properties of the reality in question happen to occur in him, but still without any penetration into the true state of a thing (*ilā kunkh haqīqah al-amr*) (IB A:23-4; B:124). A person may remain completely unaware of the limited range of knowledge thus achieved; while another may be drawn toward the reality through some weak or latent consonance for an attribute which, nevertheless, lies beyond the first person’s ken altogether, persisting through syllogism and premises until he terminates in an attribute through which he will come to know the reality in another respect – attribute marking the furthest limit of his knowledge of this reality (IB A:24; B:124-5). Considering the weakness of the relation, his acts of assent or judgements may be limited to the reality’s “thatness” (*inniyyatih*), in accordance with what that attribute requires, not “what” the reality is in itself. This is not the complete and comprehensive knowledge (*maṭrifah tāmmah iḥātiyyah*) often claimed by the advocates of rational proof (IB A:24; B:125).

Once we have granted that these weak accidents and properties act as the only likely objects of attachments (*mutḍalliqāt madārikīhim*) of the theoreticians’ perceptions, it is easier to construe theoretical disagreements as being essentially differences among the contingent attributes themselves (IB A:24; B:125): each object of attachment of the one

is different from that of another. That is why thought (*fikr*) must be understood to be one faculty among many that belong to the human spirit. The thinking faculty can only perceive an attribute that is *partial*,² as it is. Qūnāvī views Ibn Sīnā's declaration that we can only know the attributes and concomitants of the realities from this minimal perspective. Something (in this case a partial view of the reality) cannot be perceived by another (presently, the thinking faculty) that does not resemble it. The advantage of this conception is that it obviates incongruous comparisons and, most of all, the need to conjure up an additional object – to which the intellectual, mental, imaginative or sensory perception must then have to be attached, collectively or individually – to the simple immaterial realities sought (IB A:26; B:127).

That there is but one reality under investigation is fundamental here. Indeed, in the last chapter we saw how all the multiple realities together had to form a single undivided existence (*ta'allafat bi-wujūd wāhid ghayr munqasim*). It is because of this singleness that one object of attachment is subordinate (*ba'dahā...tābi' li-ba'd*) to the other by way of its exteriorization, precept, containment (*ibārah*) and attachment (*ta'alluq*) (IB A:26; B:127). Within this hierarchy, there are always some things to which others are related by way of subordination (*matbū'*) and in order of priority (*taqaddum*) – they follow, in one way or another, other things, namely, the superordinate realities. We shall refer to those things which have precedence as “superordinates.” They consist of the realities, causes (*ilāh*) and intermediaries (*wasā'il*),³ owing to the fact that they are situated between God and what follows or is subordinate to them by way of existence (*mā yattabī'uhā fi al-wujūd*).

Briefly, the “subordinates” refer to any single entity’s properties, concomitants, accidents, attributes, states (*ahwālan*), relations (*nisaban*), effects (*maḥlāh*), conditions (*mashrūtah*), etc. (IB A:26; B:127). When all these realities are considered separately from existence, the one neither connected to the other nor linked to its root, they are simply nameless. But they are said to be devoid of any attribute, epithet (*ndf*), form or precept only by reference to a state of actuality rather than to one of potentiality. Before one can affirm of the immaterial realities their names, attributes and epithets like “composition” (*tarkīb*) and “simplicity” (*basātah*), “appearance” and “invisible” (*khafā*), “perception” and “perceptiveness” (*al-idrāk wal-mudrakīyyah*), “universality” and “particularity,” “subordination” and “superordination” – in short, everything associated with the immaterial realities – the precept of existence in the externally entitative sense must first be withdrawn (IB A:26-7; B:127-8). When existence is given specification through exteriorization at any given level, one precept is connected with another and one effect (*athar*) manifested through the existence of the other (IB A:27; B:128).

A “primary synoptic intellection and witnessing” (*al-taqqul wal-shuhūd al-awwal al-jumli*) must envelope both the superordinate realities (*al-haqāiq al-matbūtah*) and the subordinate realities (*al-haqāiq al-fabītah*). With respect to the former, the superordinate realities, this implies a knowledge of them as immaterial intangible entities (*mdāni mujarradah*) (IB A:27; B:128).⁴ The reason is that when intellected as both being superordinate (*matbūtah*) and having the power to contain (*muhītah*), they accept – it is their nature to do so – diverse forms, with which they combine by virtue of some *essential consonance* (*li-munāsabah*

dhātiyah) existing between each and the form said to be congenial to it in the first place. However, the type of consonance in question here, Qūnāvī emphasizes, depends on the precept of the root (*hukm al-asl*) joining and comprehending them both. The primary synoptic intellection and witnessing with respect to the subordinate realities, on the other hand, technically implies – as we mentioned – knowing the immaterial realities as having neither precept, name nor description. Whenever they are externally manifested – viz. have an “external existence” (*al-wujūd al-‘ayni*) – it is their nature to be accidents to substances and, naturally, to the superordinate realities prior to them, or they can be forms, attributes, concomitants, etc. Indeed, his point now is that the “primary realities” (*al-haqā’iq al-uwal*) are intellected, and make their exteriorization, only through the *forms*. “Form” (*al-sūrah*) is a general term (*ism mushtarak*) that denotes everything from the reality of each thing, whether substance or accident down to the *shape* of an assembly or conjunction of things (*al-hay’at al-ijtima’*) – e.g. the form of a “row” or of soldiers.⁵ This generally is how the hidden realities (*al-haqā’iq al-ghaybiyyah*), insofar as they are hidden, make their appearance (IB A:28; B:129).

Based on this formulation, Qūnāvī argues, exteriorization (*zuhūr*), conjunction (*ijtima’*), existentialization (*ijad*), the causing-to-be-exteriorized (*iżhār*), illation (*iqtirān*), apprehension (*tawaqquf*), consonance (*munāsibah*), priority (*taqaddum*) and posteriority (*ta’akhkhur*), configured shape (*hay’ah*), substantiality (*jawhariyyah*), accidentality (*aradīyyah*), formality (*sūriyyah*), the state of something either being the cause of exteriorization (*muzhiran*) or being the thing exteriorized, superordinate or subordinate, etc. – all these constitute

immaterial, intangible entities and intellectued relations (*nisab mdqūlah*) (IB A:28; B:129). In the single existence by which they manifest themselves, differences in comprehensiveness, attachment, precept, priority and posteriority appear among them by way of reciprocal connections and synthesis (*ta'allufīhā*). These differences occur on patterns of relations which are active and passive (*fīlan wa infīlan*), effective and capable of being effected (*ta'thīran wa ta'aththuran*), show subordination and superordination (*tabdīyyah wa matbūyyah*), attribute and object of attribution, etc. However, the survival and existence of the whole is due to a diffusion (*saryan*) of the precept belonging to what may be referred to as the Divine “comprehensive union” of singular oneness of existence (*al-jam' al-abādī al-wujūdī al-ilāhī*). But while the latter causes their “exteriorization” to take place, everything whose precept appears at this level of “presence” (*hadratīhī*) remains hidden away in the secrecy of God's Command (*amrīhī*) and Will (*irādatīhī*).

We have already seen Qūnāvī argue along these lines in the *Nafahāt*.⁶ The present is in preparation for his more elaborate account of the “linguistic” aspect of knowledge and existence. What he is trying to do is to describe a “oneness” of the reality such that a commensurate cohesiveness can be affirmed where a proliferation of “things” may be said about a reality. This oneness is “comprehensive” in the same manner that meaningful utterances may be said to be. Indeed, the resulting linguistic nuances of his terms “superordinate” and “subordinate” realities conform quite well to prevailing opinion in philology, as Qūnāvī's later amplifications on these matters will show.

§ THE SIMPLICITY AND ONENESS OF THE REALITIES

The problem of knowledge – “knowledge of God” in all the dimensions referred to so far in this study – is complicated by the following constitutive factor of every epistemic approach. The realities of things at the level of immateriality are simple (*basitah*) and unitary (*wahdāniyyah*), but what is one and simple can only be known by what is equally one and simple (IB A:28; B:129). In order to perceive them, therefore, we ourselves need to have the same simplicity (IB A:28; B:129). Although the knowledge of a reality needs to be cohesive, in the sense elucidated above, our knowledge of things is naturally bound by precepts that belong more to multiplicity, and so is never quite identical with the immaterial reality itself or even reducible to the sheer existence of the one perceiving (IB A:28; B:130). This is what Ibn Sīnā before him had in fact understood Aristotle to be saying (cf. Gutas SLK 61; Badawi AIA 120.9-122.8). Ibn Sīnā had narrowed his sights to the “sense principle” as the main culprit, making it clear “from the import of [Aristotle’s] argument that perceiving through the senses, both in its external and internal aspects can only come about by means of something divisible; [Aristotle] consequently wished to investigate the intellectual faculties.” A few lines down, he adds: “On the topic [concerning the fact] that the divisible cannot receive the intelligible I have descanted in [another] treatise in quite specific and unequivocal terms” (Gutas SLK 62). Yet, in the Arabic recension Ibn Sīnā had used, Aristotle is made to say that “this intellect also... is separable, unmixed and impassive” (Gutas SLK 62; cf. *De An.* III.5, 430a17).

Qūnāvī agrees, explaining that human perception is impeded because we are unable to grasp the realities in their simplicity and immateriality, at the noetic level or presence

(*hadrat al-‘ilmīyyah*), before our own entity [*dyānūhā*] has acquired its proper existence -- literally, “has been ascribed existence” (IB A:28; B:129). Although we ourselves need to be “simple,” we cannot be so before acquiring our own existence. We need to be born before we can perceive. But then our unique reality becomes separable from that reality which we seek to know – quite apart from the fact that, being externally existent, our sensory organs are “partial.” The incompositeness that characterizes our *hidden* subsistence in Divine knowledge is an elusive goal if pursued from the limited angle of the senses, but one that is not entirely futile if the noetic complex can be satisfactorily dealt with. Once existence is ascribed to our own essential individuality (*dyānīnā*), and we are said to possess life, knowledge and the removal of the impediments separating us from the things we desire to perceive will depend on predisposition (IB A:29; B:130). Specified and delimited (*mutdāyyan mutaqayyad*), the human being perceives intellectually at a station determined by his own thinking faculty (MQM 6), where the realities of existent things (*baqā‘iq al-mawjūdat*) will always remain unknowable in their immateriality. Before they don the existence that occurs to them through the existentiating emanation of God, man can neither intellect nor perceive their mutual differences according to their particular determinations and distinctions as these are found in the unitary and essential knowledge of God, since the thinking faculty by itself cannot gain access to “the secret of the world’s hierarchical arrangement [*abkāmihā*] or universal properties [*khawāṣṣihī al-kullīyyah*]” (MQM 7). This, however, is what Qūnāvī reckons ultimately needs to be done, on the grounds that the oneness of the object itself calls for a tight exfoliation of one

level from the other; we know of a thing its attributes and accidents only insofar as they are the attributes and concomitants of some thing, even if we are unable to know it as an *immaterial* reality (IB A:29; B:130).

The synoptical knowledge^a of the realities of things alluded to earlier – the kind obtained through philosophical inquiry – is realized precisely after attachment to them, qua specified entities, has taken place through the attributes, properties and accidents that properly give specification. But this holds true in much the same way in which we speak of specification in connection with any ordinary attribute – for example, when we say that the accident belongs to a subject (IB A:29; B:130).⁸ Should we ever perceive a thing in its reality, there could be no question of any attribute, property, accident or concomitant, but rather perception by “similar” (viz. *idrāk mithlihi*) (IB A:29; B:130). It must not be forgotten that the knower himself occupies a part of the picture. And so, “realities” such that of the knower and that of the known must exhibit some sort of reciprocity, indeed must be comparable to each other (*mutamāthilah*) – above all, in their simplicity – before there can be any knowledge. In point of fact, then, knowledge of the true state of the realities as *immaterial*, or *separate*, entities is impossible, except in the special sense where the precept of created attributes and relations of delimitation^b is somehow removed from the knower himself (*ārif*); that is, upon his confirmation in a state determined by God’s words, “I was his hearing and his sight,” and beyond that level

^a A: *al-ma’rifah al-ijmāliyah al-mutāallaqah*; B: ... *al-mutāaqabah*.

^b A: *al-nisab wal-sifāt al-kawniyyah al-taqiyyah*; B: ... *al-taqiyyah*.

(IB A:29; B:130). Strictly speaking, all knowledge is God's, our own limited knowledge being freely bestowed by Him rather than arbitrarily snatched through some mechanical inference. Those who have surpassed through the “captivating holds of Divine Providence” (*jadhabāt al-‘ināyah al-ilāhīyah*) what veils there are, at every level of realization, ideally can see the form of the world as a reflected “image of the world of intangibles and realities” (*mithāl li-‘ālam al-mdāni haqīqah*), every instance (*fard*) of whose forms is the locus of exteriorization (*mazhar*) and reflected image of a hidden intangible reality (*haqīqah mdawiyah ghaybīyah*) (IB A:30; B:131).

This “comparability” of realities, involving two components for every act of knowledge, is given certain embodiment in man pictured in his exclusive analogical wholeness. The noetic act between two distinct realities requires not only a relation of consonance, “comparability,” “similarity,” etc., but most importantly a *human* embodiment, though not of course in the purely physical sense. To illustrate the epistemic skew resulting from this polarity between the knower and the ontic reality, Qūnavī draws a parallel between what is observable through the ordinary senses and what is spiritually “witnessed” or beheld. This parallel is explicable by the fact that the parts of Man (the “comprehensive epitome,” or *al-nuskhah al-jāmi‘ah*), are to his internal powers what the forms of the world are to the hidden realities – but with their respective precepts (IB A:30; A:131). Human sight (*al-baṣr*), he says, bears a similar relation to the “objects seen” as spiritual vision (*baṣīrah*) does to the “intangible intelligibles” and the “hidden objects of knowledge” (*al-mdqūlāt al-mdawiyah wal-mdlūmāt al-ghaybiyyah*).

Hence, the intellects' inability to perceive, on the one hand, the loftiest, most dominant realities (*al-haqā'iq al-āliyah al-qāhirah*) – such as God's essence and the realities of His names and attributes, which can only be had through God (*bil-lāh*) – and, on the other hand, the lowest of intellectual things is not unlike the eyes' inability to detect either the tiniest or the greatest of natural phenomena (e.g. the movements of the smallest animals and motion of the sun) (IB A:30-1; B:132). More to the point, our inability to perceive, either intellectually or physically, our own “selves,” is attributable to its excessive nearness (IB A:31; B:132). A person is more apt to perceive what is “other” than he (*ghayrabu*), than his “self” or reality, let alone the Divine existential realities or the created ones, and whatever is included therein by way of intangible meanings (*mađāni*) and secrets (*asrār*) (IB A:31; B:133).

For this reason, the truest, most desired knowledge cannot be “acquired” (*bil-kash*), nor can any human faculty, being powerless to find God through the holiest and most secret emanation of hiddennes (*al-fayd al-aqdas al-ghaybī*), be fruitfully employed for this purpose (IB A:31; B:133). At the level of acquisition, there will always be a chasm to span, but only through Divine help (*imdad*), otherwise known as a luminous self-manifestation and a knowledge of the essence (*al-tajallī al-nūrī wal-ilm al-dhāfi*). Based on what we have so far seen, however, all manifestation must be based on a consonantal relation (*munāsibah*) between “that which is manifested” (*mutajallī*) and the one for whom there is manifestation (*mutajallā labu*), according to predisposition (*istiđād*), until the connection upon which the effect depends is authenticated. Every instance of manifestation has its

own precept, effect and form; and foremost in this respect is the state of witnessing, or beholding (*al-hāl al-shuhūdī*), which most appropriately belongs to the domain of knowledge that is realized only through tasting (*al-ilm al-dhawqī al-mubaqqiq*). This holds in spite of the fact that the manifestation, specified and exteriorized as it must be from the absolute hiddenness of the essence (*al-ghayb al-mutlaq al-dhātī*), may be described as a Divine effect specified from the presence of the essence (*mutḍayyan min hadrat al-dhāt*); for it occurs *at the level of “that for whom there is manifestation”* (*martabat al-mutajallā lahu*) – the specifying and particularizing agent (*al-mutḍayin wal-mukhassī*). As a rule, the effect of any agent whatever (*al-athar min kull mu'aththir*) upon the thing affected would not hold without some connection (*irtibāt*) existing between them in respect of consonance. An intangible relation (*nisbah md'�nawiyah*), consonance is all but central. Intellection can take place only between two things that are consonant with each other.

It is perfectly understandable, he points out, why the “real experts of law,” the “proponents of experience and people of sound mind” all insist that the reality of God as He is in Himself is unknown (IB A:32; B:133). The consonance intended here is not between God qua *essence* and His creation. Otherwise, we would be speaking instead of a resemblance (*mushābihah lil-khalq*). And withal God’s efficacy (*ta'thīr*) upon creation is something that is hardly doubted by anyone. The joining of these two aspects – absolute hiddenness and Divine efficacy – being an exceedingly difficult thing to do and not at all as easily understood as many people are wont to believe (IB A:32; B:134), the question rather should be, as we have tried to emphasize so far in this study: how does God make

it known to us? not, how can *we*, through our own devices, come to know it. The subsequent discussion of the Introduction hinges, in fact, on a key set of concepts whose main purpose is to show how this is so. Qūnavī has no pretension of filling in for the Prophets through some new revelation that goes beyond the foundational limits of their knowledge; he speaks in the “rhetorical” voice of a teacher who relies on transmitted knowledge, rejuvenated through personal witness perhaps but always authoritative.

§ SINGULARITY AND THE RELATIONAL CHARACTER OF DIVINITY

One of the things that “God wishes to familiarize us with” concerning these difficult matters, says Qūnavī, is firstly the “secret of qualifying His essence, independently of anything else” (*bi-sirr nāt dhātīhi al-ghaniyyah ‘an ‘ālamīn*), with what he calls “divinity” (*bil-*ulūhiyyah**) and all that is associated with it – names, attributes and epithets (IB A:32; B:134). Qūnavī considers even “divinity” to be a qualification of God’s essence. Its importance, in his view, is due to the fact that it is quintessentially “relational” and underlies all noetic consonance – “*wal-ulūhiyyah nisbah*,” he says (IB A:33; B:135). But it is an *intellected* relation (*nisbah maqūlah*) having no entitative source in existence (IB A:32-3; B:134); and Ibn ‘Arabī informs us that *ulūhab* is a *level* of the essence (*martabah lil-dhāt*) (FuM I 262:195). But it is God, once again, who shows us the connection between the names and *the one for whom He is a Deity* (*irtibātahā bil-ma’tūh*) (IB A:32; B:134).⁹ He informs people of the secret of “association” (*sirr al-tadāyuf*) determining both the existential (*wujūdan*) and the virtual (*taqdīran*) dependence of each side upon the other in any association. This first

and most basic dimension of consonance exhibits an interdependence similar to the one encountered earlier, whereby a permanent unitary (or inclusive) oneness (*al-wahdāniyyah al-thābitah*) is ascribed to Divinity, and is acceptable to both reason and religion (*‘aqlan wa shar‘an*).

But another dimension comes to the fore. Every existent (*kull mawjūd*), whether composed of many parts or relationally simple (*basītan bil-nisbah*), has its own “singular oneness” (*ahadiyyah takhīssuhu*); even multiplicity is said to have its singular oneness – a singular oneness of multiplicity (*ahadiyyat kathrah*) (IB A:33; B:134). Ibn ‘Arabī had originally derived the abstract noun, *ahadiyyah*, directly from the Qur‘ān’s *Sūrat al-Ikhlās*: “Say He is God the *One* [*al-ahad*].” *Ahad* is supposed here to preclude number, however (FuM I 104:156). For any given “singular oneness,” Qūnavī reasoned, there must be some precept that is predominant and “decisive” (*al-ghālib wal-hākim*) at some moment for the simple or compound existent in its state of exteriority and interiority (*zāhirīhi wa bātinīhi*). The precept may be that of one of its attributes or realities composing its multiplicity. “Predominance” (*ghalabah*) in respect of the existent’s exteriority is, hence, one of the four qualities (*al-kayfiyyāt al-arbā‘a*) – meaning elements (earth, water, air and fire) whose *ijtimā‘*, that is, integral conjunction (or assembly), initiates its body’s particular type of mixture (*badatha ‘an ijtimā‘ihā mizāj badanīhi ‘alā baqī‘hā*) (IB A:33; B:135). The same holds in respect of its interiority, where the will (*irādah*) of every willing person (*murīd*) in any given state and time can have but a single object of attachment; the heart is capable of only one thing at a time, even if everything be within its capacity. This

granted, it becomes more clearly arguable, in his view, that what God wishes to show to people is that “oneness” makes for the singularity of *each* thing by way of a separate reality that goes by names like “quiddity” and “permanent individuality” (*ayn thabitah*). The emphasis on permanence or immobility we earlier associated with quiddity is now applied to the famous notion coined by Ibn ‘Arabi, *ayn thabitah*. The term basically suggests that the thing is specified pre-eternally (i.e. without beginning) in God’s knowledge (*azalan*).

That each thing has its own singularity is at bottom traceable to the fact that God’s knowledge – which entails knowledge of everything – is one of the *relations* of His essence (*nisbah min nisab dhātihi*), even if, as attribute of the *essence*, it is also indistinguishable from the object of attribution (*lā tufāriq al-mawsūf*) (IB A:33; B:135). Qūnavī wishes to underscore that it pertains to the knowability of *every* existent (*matlūmiyyat kull mawjūd*), in respect of its permanence (*thubūtihā*) in Divine knowledge (*fi l-ilm al-ilāhi*) – as he also argues in the *Nafahāt*. Despite the “permanence” of the existent, this is still short of any real distinction from the object of attribution, namely, the essence. But from this perspective, certain other consonant relations follow suit, especially as there is no question of any alteration (*mughāyirah*) in the knowledge of the essence for the One who possesses it. Everything thus regarded, in short, is a relation:

Divinity [*ulūhiyyah*] is a relation; the fact of being known [*matlūmiyyah*] is a relation; specification is a relation, and the same goes for the oneness ascribed [*al-wahdah al-mantūt bihi*] through it and through Divinity... The possible individuality [*al-ayn al-mumkinah*] insofar as they are denuded of existence; the Divine “conative focus” [*al-tawajjuh al-ilāhi*] upon existentiation [*lil-iqdā*] through the Word “Bel!” and so on; the manifestation specified from the “absolute hiddenness of the essence”; that which is particularized through the relation of Will and its objects of attachment [*al-mukhassas bi-nisbat al-irādah wa mutadallaqātihi*] insofar

as it is specifiable as a relation; existential and noetic commonality [*wal-ishtirāk al-wujūdī nisbah wa kadhā al-‘ilmī*]...[all these are relations] (IB A:33-4; B:135)

The entire “secret of connectedness” (*sīr al-irtibāt*) – i.e. God’s “connectedness to the world” and the world’s “connectedness to God”¹⁰ (MG 11:7) – is divulged accordingly; the “Divine effect” is itself realized through a bond of consonance (*rābiṭat al-munāsibah*) between the “Deity” and “the one for whom there is Deity” (*al-ālih wal-ma’tūb*) (IB A:34; B:135).

It must be underlined that this staple understanding of the Ibn ‘Arabī school is itself regarded as being dependent on Divine providence, at every juncture, and this not merely in the primary sense of transmissible *prophetic* revelation. The wayfarers (*al-sālikūn*) who emphasize Divine providence, whom he calls *Ahl al-‘ināyah*, may well possess a knowledge by tasting that is realizable through pure and perfect unveiling (*al-kashf al-kāmil al-sāriḥ*), but their experiential knowledge depends entirely on Divine providence, before it can be authenticated with any measure of certainty and finality. It equally depends on their tenacious deferment (*taṭṭīl*) of all the “detailed elaborations” (*al-tasrifat al-tafsīliyyah al-mukhtalifah*) “intended for the person to whom they are related and spawned by the exercise of the particular faculties, both internal and external.” In the case of the latter, where effort is called for, the conception being steadily but painstakingly worked out by Qūnāvī is one where the premises of instructive science and “collective beliefs,” indeed anything beyond the true object of inquiry (*al-matlūb al-haqq*), *tout court*, as it now must present itself, need to be emptied out and a new apprehension sought. Epistemologically speaking, the pre-given element of science in the rudimentary

sense we have learned so far must be superseded, as its composite derivation from the integral subject fails to safeguard on its own the *singular oneness* of the core object perceived and which now needs to be maintained at the far end of the process. The receptivity (*iqbāl*) of this object qua object of inquiry is based on what we know through “a universal and synoptic [kind of] conative focus” (*tawajjuh kulli jumli*) sanctified (*muqaddas ‘an*) against all ordinary credal specifications (*al-tdāyyunāt al-‘ādiyah al-‘iqādīyyah*), authoritative preferences (*istihsānāt taqlīdiyyah*) or “relational yearnings” (*ta ḍashshuqāt nisbiyyah*) in their various attachments to creation (IB A:34; B:136). For this to take place, he says, there must first be a “unified intention” (*tawāḥḥud al-‘azīmah*), comprehensiveness (*jamīyyah*), perfect sincerity (*al-ikhlās al-tāmm*) and unwavering diligence in the knower himself at this state. Towards the end of the last chapter we considered *hamm*, or “intention,” as seen through its broad but indispensable role in the climb toward the noetic state known as “universality.” Qūnavī had construed it in the sense of “concentration” or “purposefulness.” Its present usage is no different; purposefulness or wilfulness is an essential ingredient, and is meant here even if the term actually used is *‘azīmah* rather than *hamm*. The object is to shun “dispersal” – that is, the “dispersal of intention” (*lā tashattut ‘azīmah*).

Only then is the consonance between the soul, on the one hand, and the Divine hidden together with the “presence of sanctity” (*badrah al-quds*), on the other, completed. The “presence of sanctity” is, in fact, the wellspring of existence by virtue of its denial of everything extrinsic to the object sought. As such, it acts as the source of the names’

manifestations reaching every existent; in short, it is source for all of that which is specifiable and manifold (*al-mutā'ayyanah al-mutā'addadah*) at the level of the “one who receives manifestation,” rather than of the absolute One, Who brings everything to a state of manifestation in the first place (IB A:34; B:136). This is the key to the intellectual paradox of “universal knowledge,” where the complete intellection of “things” as they really are (i.e. God’s Attributes, mode of attribution, His creative act and the emanation, etc.) eludes the unaided intelligence chiefly because the original, root comprehensiveness of knowledge and essence remain with God. Instead of insisting on the commonplace, discrete existence of two noetic realities, Qūnāvī here is stressing the relational aspect of a single Divine act of knowing. Hence, “universal” knowledge is viewed under the aspect of a relation. The nebulous suggestion that asking about the object’s “thatness” is, in a sense, also asking about its “whatness” was attended by conceptual difficulties which only a noetic relation seen in an entirely new key could overcome. Qūnāvī’s elucidation moves in that direction by showing that the central noetic reality in question, God’s self-manifestation, is itself inherently relational, while being sustained through a singular oneness by means of which the Divine purpose is conveyed to every other given level.

Theology, as an instructive science, on the other hand, may partake of this ubiquitous manifestation only to the extent that it can conform to the Word of God at that level of receptive capacity it happens by nature to occupy. It strives to represent, though only imperfectly and then through the mechanisms offered it by a long tradition, a concrete

personal rediscovery that is buttressed by Divine providence and succour. While this rediscovery basically results from the dialectic between what is known and what is unknown, Qūnavī's discussion at this point becomes quite involved and not at all easy to follow, but we shall see how the unity of this dialectical play is to be maintained throughout.

§ DIVINE SUCCOUR AND SELF-MANIFESTATION

Having established the relational character of *ulūhiyyah*, Qūnavī briefly summarizes the “process” of self-manifestation, its precepts, mode of reception and the “intimation of its effects” (*talaqqī athārihā*), in order later to give a more complete rendition of the “station of knowledge” (*al-maqām al-‘ilmī*) and of Divine speech. Although essentially God’s *self*-manifestation, *tajallī* reflects the same division evident in any epistemic relation between source and recipient – the whole immediate purpose, lest we forget, is to overcome in theoretically satisfactory fashion the dilemma which arises whenever we consider that every act of knowledge has two noetic elements, not just one, as the selfsame act self-manifestation otherwise implies. The Divine effect has its own precept. Viewed as a relation of consonance (*munāsibah*), however, the dichotomy gives way to a kind of singularity in the difference. It does so through an intermediary, regulative level that gives embodiment to the relation, as we shall shortly see.

Tajallī is a key concept in his doctrine of knowledge which rests on the idea that the real source of all succour, or *imdad*, remains God. Since the aim is to elaborate a concept

of knowledge that takes the knower as a recipient of knowledge or manifestation, “succour” here adds certain methodological clarity to the discussion. The first issue dealt with is multiplicity. Although there is essentially a single manifestation (*tajallī wāhid*), God’s succour and its various “manifestations” (*tajalliyātahū*) must reach a world of immense variety, down to every soul (IB A:35; B:137). As it descends to the world, in accordance with the receptivities (*qawābiḥ*), their levels and predispositions, it appears in the guise of myriad specifications. In view of this, it is perfectly acceptable that manifestation be characterized by multiplicity without having to be *intrinsically* multiple (*nafsihi mutḍaddid*) on account of the variant ascriptions (*nū’id*), names and attributes given to the same reality. Rather than multiple in itself, it is equivalent to what he calls the “existential light” (*al-nūr al-wujūdī*) in the widest possible sense; and apart from this “existential [though relatively ‘non-existent’] light” nothing else can reach the possible entities before or after their attribution with eternal existence. Upon their exteriorization through a “unitary existential manifestation,” each precept of the possible entities and its “effects” must lead to the other (IB A:35; B:137). But since the “existence” in question belongs by essence to no one but God, and is, on the contrary, acquired from His self-manifestation (*mustafādān min tajallīhi*), the world in effect cannot do without “the existential succour of singular oneness [*al-imdād al-wujūdī al-abādī*], which perdures [*fi baqā’ihi*] at moments that have neither duration nor interruption [*mā a al-ānāt dūn fitrah wa tā inqīdā*]” (IB A:35; B:137). Although this succour precedes *external* existence in the more conventional sense, if it were cut off by a mere “wink of an eye” the whole world would

vanish at once. The precept of (relative) “non-existence” being indissociable from the possible entity in its career inside God’s knowledge, (external) existence is merely an accident conferred upon it by He who wills to existentialize it (IB A:36; B:137).

Qūnāvī’s motive for this discussion ulteriorly is to transpose the problem of the two realities in the act of knowing into a higher relation than the one where the knower has to acquire external existence and a physical life of his own before any act of knowing can take place. The relative “non-existence” of the entities inside God’s knowledge, therefore, provided the path to a solution based on a consonant relation of two noetic realities. In order to reinforce his earlier argument for this consonance, he now emphasizes the unitary purposefulness of the recipient’s intention and perception which has to correspond to the dominant nature of the object of inquiry itself and to the singular oneness of the Divine succour received. This singleness of purpose, incidentally, is precisely how the singular oneness by grace of the Divine succour maintains itself in the face of a multiplicity of receptivities. As far as the wayfarer is concerned, however, a precept either of dispersal (*hukm al-tafriqah*) or of the “comprehensive union of single qualification” (*al-jam‘ al-wāhidāni al-naf*) must prevail upon him (*al-ghālib ‘alayhi*) at every instant (*kull bīna*) (IB A:36; B:137). He is never destitute of some state or other; the precept of one of his attributes must prevail over those of the rest. Dispersal indicates that his interiority (*bātin*) is not free of the precepts of createdness and the “stains of attachment” (*shawāl al-tdalluqāt*). If he happens to be in a state of dispersal (*bāl tafriqah*), the manifestation he is said to receive is endued, as it were, with just that precept that

happens then to govern the heart (*qalb*), and becomes “tinged with whatever precept of *multiplicity* has seized him [*yansabigh bi-hukm al-kathrah al-mustawliyah ‘alayhi*]” (IB A:36; B:138). Under the aspect of connectedness, a single thing permeates all of the soul’s attributes (*al-sifat al-nafsaniyyah*) and bodily faculties by means of attributes which flow downwards upon the soul with every act and effect associated with man (including offspring), the religious devotions dependent on his intention (*‘ibādātihī al-tābi‘ah li-niyyatihī*) and the particular noetic presence he happens to occupy. The “attributes of manifestation” are thus multiplied – in the same way that a colourless light receives shades of colour from glass – with the corresponding attributes and faculties of the recipient (*mutajallī labu*) the manifestation radiates light upon (*yashru ‘alayhi*) or reaches. This takes place until the Divine command necessitating the manifestation in the first place thoroughly permeates him (*yanfudh fīhi*). If the wayfarer succeeds in reaching the limit in God, he will have removed all attributes of createdness (*al-sifat al-kawniyyah*) from the manifestation in such a manner as to effect a return at a level of inner intangibility (*fa-yadūdu ‘awdan mā nāniyyan*) to his real origin at the presence of hiddenness. Despite the religious demand of conscious deliberation for every deed, something or other relating to God’s essential Will will penetrate even those unwary of the source and origin of this infusion (IB A:37; B:139).¹¹

The recipient of the manifestation may, on the other hand, be in a state of unified comprehensive union (*hāl jam‘ mutawabbid*), rather than of dispersal, and denuded (*al-tā‘arrī*) of the precepts of creational attachments (IB A:37; B:139). Once the light of

manifestation radiates (*sharaqa nūr al-tajallī*) upon a heart that is “unitary of qualification” (*wahdānī al-nūrī*), for which manifestation is complete and intelligible without the “rust” of created things and attachments, then the precepts of all instances of “universal singular oneness” (*ahkām al-abadiyyāt al-kulliyah*) ramifying from the original or root singular oneness, or “*al-abadiyyah al-asliyyah*,” upon all levels encompassed by the Divine essence are likewise unified (*tawāhhadat*). But these precepts are unified into the single precept both of the singular oneness of the “permanent essential individuality” belonging to the recipient of the manifestation (*hukm abadiyyat ‘aynīhi al-thābitah*) and of the “singular oneness of the primary manifestation” (*abadiyyat al-tajallī al-awwal*) through which his essential individuality (*‘ayn*) appears to him (*zahara bihi ‘aynuhu labu*). It is through his own exclusive singular oneness, qua manifestation, that the worshipper (*‘abd*) receives the “Divine succour” in question which allows him thence to survive to the “last hour” before being delivered before the Creator. This conceptual refinement with respect to the existential succour at a level of relative non-existence, meaning where his permanent essential individuality resides, must comply with what happens to predominate in him and the exclusive oneness of the attribute ruling over him. It is a second manifestation (*al-tajallī al-thānī*), in the event that a mystical opening (*hāsil laday al-fath*) should occur. Presumably, this “dependence” of sorts by the manifestation upon the recipient for its relational character to be exhibited leaves the recipient – in essence a religious creature – the liberty of two moral alternatives: dispersal or unity. The intriguing point is that a single precept should encompass two singular onenesses: that of the recipient’s

permanent essential individuality in God's knowledge and that of the primary or first manifestation. But Qūnavī is anxious to maintain a unity of conception even at the level of the particularized being, where the problem of two noetic realities first arises. There, the Divine source of revelation needs to remain ever active, not unconditionally, but always within those bounds it needs to specify for the recipient and are imposed by a pervasive singular oneness.

Upon the first manifestation the only thing that properly belongs to the permanent essential individuality in question, strictly speaking, is his delimitation through the attribute of *specificity* (*tagyīdūhu bi-sifat al-tā'ayyun faqat*) (IB A:37; B:139). A preponderant existential attribute (*al-sifat al-ghālibah al-wujūdiyyah*), on the other hand, then, colours the manifestation, doing so only after the latter had already been specified with "a special attribution" signifying either one specific precept or several precepts, as we saw. If there is to be unicity (*tawhīd*), instead of dispersal, "the many precepts assigned to the various instances of singular oneness whence they branch out [*wal-mutafarrāh minhā*] may then be said to be graded [*indarajat*] at the very root that is assumed to comprehends them [*fi al-asl al-jāmi' lahā*]" (IB A:37; B:139). In this way, the substrate (*mahall*) – whatever accepts accidents or attributes – along with its ruling attribute themselves are tinged with the precept of the comprehensive manifestation of singular oneness (*al-tajallī al-ahadī al-jamī'*), just as the manifestation in its turn is tinged with the precept of the substrate. The root is thereby maintained, just as what flows from it is contained by it within a graded or hierarchical order that does not itself undermine the original unity assumed. For

hierarchical arrangement, Qūnavī is also saying, is not inconsistent with unicity. But it is a unicity of a particular type. It might as well spelled it out at this point that what he is seeking is a sense of the Divine (*utuhīyyah*) in which God's *dominance*, His exclusive preserve and singularity, is also a dominance of *something* – indeed something whose origin is precisely that through that very dominance. This is what he is driving at.

In view of this, and to continue the present train of thought, the attributes and faculties (*quwā*) are permeated by the precept of the light radiating upon them, just as the realities and attributes of the one receiving the manifestation become “adorned” with the precept of this unitary manifestation (IB A:37-8; B:140). Although coloration by the radiating light’s precept requires that the precepts of multiplicity vanish, these precepts ironically do not disappear completely with universality (*dūn ẓawālihā bil-kullīyyah*) (IB A:37; B:140). The reason is that manifestation in its hierarchical articulation is specified according to the levels of three names: Exterior (*al-ism al-ẓāhir*), Interior (*al-ism al-bātin*) and Comprehensive (*al-ism al-jāmi*); these include all the “universal levels of manifestation” so far discussed (IB A:38, B:140; cf. also FuM III 30:80-1). If, for example, manifestation is marked by the name “Exteriority,” and thus takes place in the “world of witnessing [or experience]” (*ālam al-shahādah*), the recipient may see the vision of God (*ru'yat al-Haqq*) in everything, vision he obtains at a state where the secret of the precept of unicity (*bukm al-tawhīd*) is exteriorized primarily at the level of his nature along with its sensory and imaginative faculties, without foresaking a single existent (*ma'jūdat*) (IB A:38; B:140). For this type of experiential vision, of course, the faculties are

indispensable, and the items of existence in a multiple manifestation all have to be contemplated, not eschewed as required in intellection. They have a certain propinquity with the sensory content of knowledge that had so exercised Ibn Sīnā's mind in an effort to disentangle the immaterial intellect from the transience of the senses.

The manifestation may, in the second place, be marked by the "hidden name," whereby the recipient perceives things through a world from which he is absent (*‘ālam ghaybī*), obtaining thus a cognizance of the "singular oneness of existence" (*marifat abadiyyat al-wujūd*) and, only then, a denial of all besides God, though without having to do so at any particular state (IB A:38; B:140). Both the secret of unicity and the cognizance implied therein appear at the level of his intellect. But he foregoes the apparent existents (*al-mawjūdāt al-zāhirah*), eschewing all multiplicity and its precept.

Thirdly – and this is the crucial element – manifestation may be distinguished by the "comprehensive name" (*al-ism al-jāmi‘*) that combines the exterior and the interior names. Perception here occurs at the level of "middles" or "intermediaries" (*martabat al-wustā*), comprehending both the hidden (*ghayb*) and what is directly beheld. At this station, two ends are superseded and the precepts intermeshed (IB A:38; B:140). *Man*, as we said, is assigned this intermediary noetic level combining these two opposite poles of experience. Methodologically, this is key to overcoming the rigid scientific division we saw earlier on in this thesis and which Qūnāvī adopted as a formal starting point between what is given and the object of inquiry, in favour of the more fluid, dynamic process of noetic unveiling intended all along, whether by him or by Ibn Sīnā. The intermediary,

combinative level as a methodological device would indeed have to supersede the element of givenness in unveiling, whatever is initially deposited (sensory, imaginative, etc.). But this supersession Qūnavī endeavours to explain through several types of imageries – the prime one being the metaphor of “light,” which we will examine in the next chapter.

First and foremost, though, all manifestations are manifestations of the Divine names.¹² And so, once the judgement is made that no precept either of an attribute conferring specificity, or complete purification from all other attachments, prevails upon (*yaghlib 'alā*) the recipient's heart – and these attachments include the conative focus (*tawajjuh*) upon God through a “particular belief” or a refuge in Him through a particular name (*ism makhsūs*), level or specific “presence” (*hadrah mu'ayyanah*) – then and only then can the manifestation appear in respect of the singular oneness of the comprehensive union of the essence (*ahdiyyat al-jam' al-dhāt*) (IB A:39; B:141). Being nominal, manifestations denote a descent from a level that, in this sense at least, is indifferent to the upward *process* of purification normally undertaken by the aspirant to manifestation; and indifferent obviously also to the *particular* givens of credal beliefs.

The “sun of the essence” (*shams al-dhāt*) radiates upon the mirror of the *reality* of the heart (*mirā'at haqīqat al-qalb*) in respect of the “singular oneness of the heart's comprehensive union” (*ahdiyyat jam' al-qalb*), the most fitting attribute for the human heart to possess by way of resemblance at a station he says is that of “resemblances” (*maqām al-mudāhāt*) (IB A:39; B:141; cf. MNU 143-4). Indeed, whereas the heart is capable of

impression (*yattasf lil-intibā*) by the essential manifestation, neither the “higher world” (*al-ālam al-dhārī*) and the “lower” (*al-ālam al-asfāl*) – presumably, interiority and exteriority – is (IB A:39; B:141). For support, Qūnawī adduces the “Divine communication” (*al-ikhbār al-ilāhi*) reported by the Prophet that “Neither my earth nor my heaven did contain me, but [only] the heart of my servant, believing, vigilant, immaculate.” Furthermore, there is a kind of “adjustment” between the two noetic realities at this new level which Qūnawī tries to relate by using the term *mustawan* (“evenness”), in order to describe how the heart appears in the “form” of the Divine (*zāhiran bi-sūratihī*). And form, as we now know, is fundamental to all manner of articulation.

The words “sitting” and “evenness” (or “levelness”) in Arabic admit of a wide variety of meanings and, having the same radical, *s w y*, they permit the following interpretation of the tradition in question. Within the space of the heart is exhibited a level “evenness” with respect to the Divine (i.e. “*al-mustawī labū*”) that is in direct proportion to the act of the “Divine sitting” (*al-istiwā’ al-ilāhi*); such a “space,” he assures us, is as wide and as deep as the sea (*tatabahhara sābat al-qalb*) (IB A:39; B:141). After the “broadening” (*tababbūr*) and “unification” (*al-tawabbud*) resulting from this “mutual adjustment,” as it were, between the “sitting” and the heart upon which comes to rest the succour of God, the “streams” of the heart themselves – continuing the metaphor of the sea – then proliferate (*tatafarrajdā jadāwiluhū*): on the one hand, in the upward direction of the names’ relations at ranks associated with the spiritual attributes (*sifātihī al-rūhāniyyah*) and, on the other, in a downward direction at ranks belonging to the “natural faculties.” From an

intermediary position, in other words, flow ranks of relations in both an upward and a downward direction.

Going by the metaphor used earlier of the “sun” that is the essence, though, the solar rays are instances of “sublimity” (*bil-subūhāt*) which “burn up” the objects of attachment of sight’s perceptions (*mutdallaqāt madārik al-baṣr*). In a more textually-inspired frame of mind, he states that the kind of “rising” (*qiyāmah*) which befits this ultimately signals nothing but that of God’s true name, literally, “the One who possesses the Day,” where no creational relation through precept or essential individuality remains (IB A:39; B:141). This is not only the upper limit of the intermediary zone, but the very root, since the boundaries of the heart are not conceived in any mechanical sense. The scriptural allusion to “*Mālikī yauymi al-dīn*,” literally, the “One who possesses the Day,” gives certain rhetorical depth to the philosophical formulation on God’s knowledge of Himself – one we shall need to bear in mind all the time, since, states Qūnavī, only God can answer Himself through Himself (*aqāba al-Haqq nafsahu bi-nafsib*). Whether it is the particular that is in question or an archetypal intermediary, self-manifestation is one and it remains God’s. The textual evidence he offers here is, “To God, the One, the Dominant” (*al-wāhid al-qahhār*), explaining that God exercises His dominance (*qahhara*) through to the very final precept from the point of His first manifestation, which is concealed from anyone whose state is predominantly defined by the “precepts of created things.”¹³ That God is the Dominant (*qahhār*), Qūnavī explains in *al-Asmā’ al-husnā*, means that He dominates or prevails over (*gahara*) His creation by way of their expiration in Him; it

implies preponderance (*ghalabah*) and rule (*taslīt*) (AH 26a). Actually, the latter perish (*istablabū*) beneath the *dominance*, or subjugation, of singular oneness, whereupon the secret of the Divine, comprehensive and perfectional act of sitting (*al-istiwā' al-ilāhī al-jamī' al-kamāhī*) upon the Throne is “divulged to the human heart [*al-qalb al-insānī*]” (IB A:39; B:142). The act of sitting occasions a level of “evenness” (*al-mustawā*) that refers to something which “results from the sitting of the Merciful [*aqīb al-istiwā' al-rahmānī*]” (IB A:39; B:142). But the dominance in the act of sitting tends also to correlate with the upper limit of the heart.

Qūnavī tries to shed light on the relational entailments of *istiwā'* by extracting a number of finer senses contained in other expressions found in the Qur'ān and the hadīths. Hence, the heavens – in the words “To Him belongs all that is in the heavens” – indicate the level of “loftiness” (*al-'ulūw*) one of the attributes of man, who constitutes the very *level* of the name “*Allāh*” (*alladhī huwa mustawā al-ism Allāh*) (IB A:39-40; B:142). But because man has also the “level of resemblances” (*sāhib martabat al-mudāhāt*) mentioned earlier, the words “...and all that is on earth” represent the lowly and natural level (*martabat siflah wa tabī'ah*). The level of comprehensive union is signalled by, “...and what is between them” (IB A:40; B:142). He goes further and maintains that “below the soil” (*taht al-tharā*) lie the results of the precepts of man's nature. These occur “below” the level of nature because they are passive in relation to it (*munṣifah 'anhā*), the “patient” (*al-munṣifah*) being always below the level of the “agent” (*al-fā'il*) qua agent.¹⁴

In order to emphasize the cosmological polarities implied in “loftiness,” before they

are applied to man, he employs more imageries borrowed from scriptural sources. God, he points out, also says, “The day the heaven bursts with cloud” (Qur’ān 25:25), where heaven stands for the level of loftiness (*al-martabat al-‘ulūw*). But “loftiness” now indicates those levels governed by “efficacy” (*al-muḥakkamah bil-ta’thīr*) with respect to all created existents (IB A:41; B:143), since “effect” (*athar*) is peculiar to created things. By the same token, one may speak of the causal agent (*mu’aththir*) as being *above* that which is caused (*mu’aththar fīhi*). His point is that there is an obvious sort of relational commonality between man and Divinity which, to its credit, does not debar subjugation by the Essence, as commonly feared whenever the latter has to be rendered as a “creative agent,” in close coordination with the notion of “loftiness.” The prime example is the “cloud” (*ghamām*), which he appoints as the precept of “cloudiness” (*al-hukm al-‘amā’i*) mentioned in many Divine and prophetic teachings. An active element is conveyed contextually relative to a “patience” that properly belongs to the world thence created. In this respect, it may be identified with the Breath of the Merciful (*al-nafas al-rahmāni*), the presence of comprehensive union (*badrat al-jam*) and the “expository light” (*al-nūr al-kāshif*); similarly, the light discloses the existents and encompasses them. Through its “opening” (*fathīhi*) and “bursting forth” (*inshiqāqīhi*) – clearly in the manner of the cloud’s “bursting forth” – it causes their hidden, pre-eternal noetic distinctiveness (*ta’mayyuzahā al-‘ilmī al-ghaybī al-aqālī*) to appear. Through a dextrous use of scriptural support, Qūnavī tries to graft on an eschatological significance to all of this, whereby God is said on the Day of Resurrection to “divide everything” (*yufassil bayn al-umūr*) and to distinguish

between good and evil. With this, he remarks, the secret of the “first precedent” (*sīr al-sābiqah al-īlahi*) is said to appear in that of the “closure” (*sīr al-khātimah*). Thereupon, the “resemblances” (*mudāhāt*) that reveal the precept of that which joins (*al-muzhirah hukm al-amr al-jāmi*) the first and the last, the hidden and the visible, come to an end (*tammah*).

Closer once again to our own human scale, he considers the level of the worshipper, who forms part of the aggregate levels (*jumlat al-marātib*) subsumable under the compass of the cloud. The distinctiveness of his level, understood in terms of his “non-existence” (*nisbatibi al-‘adamiyyah*) and the “darkness” that is the world of possibility for us (*zalmatibi al-imkāniyyah*) relative to the level of his Giver of existence (*muwjjid*), his Existentiator, begins to manifest itself only once the (literally) “borrowed” (*al-mustār*) precept of existence is returned to God (IB A:41; B:144). “His” existence is of grammatical import and is *metaphorical* in intent; only God may be described as sheer existence (*al-wujūd al-bābi*) and pure light (*al-nūr al-khālis*). Being the names’ loci of appearance, the angels descend down to terminal points (*manāzil*) “carrying the messages of the essence” at the station of the worshipper. The assumption though is that the worshipper needs to be comprehensive and inclusive (*al-hā’iz*). For, understood in this sense, man is a perfect copy and mirror (*nuskhah wa mirā’ah tāmmah*) of the *Form* of his Lord’s “presence” (*sūrat hadrah rabbihī*), as hinted earlier, whenever he exalts (*taqdīs*) his Lord and places Him above all human tenebries and precepts of createdness (IB A:42; B:144).

But Qūnāvī provides more explanatory detail of what exactly takes place. First, he tellingly notes, the names dwell (*istaqarrat*) in the terminal points through a *conversion*

(*inqilāb*) of the servant's attributes and powers into Divine names and attributes, so that, again in an eschatological sense, "That Day shall the dominion rightly belong to the Merciful [God], and it will be a day of dire difficulty for those who disbelieve [the truth] (*al-kāfirūn*)" ("*al-mulku yawma'idhin al-haqq lil-Rahmān kāna yawman ʻalā kafiriṇ ʻasirān*") (Qur'ān 25:26) (IB A:42; B:144). For Qūnavī, as for his teacher, Ibn ʻArabī, *al-kāfirūn* denotes in the first instance *sāfirūn*, anyone who "veils," for example, through multiplicity. The wayfarer in this state cannot escape having, first, to realize for himself things that are of the "greatest difficulty" through the station of detachment (*insitākh*) and renunciation (*takballī*); and, second, to confirm (*tabaqquq*) and to "adorn" (*taballī*) what calls for strenuous effort. But once he dispenses with this veiled station (viz. *al-maqām al-mastūr*), achieves confirmation and finally sees his Lord with the eyes of his Lord (*raʼa bi-ʻayn rabbīhi rabbahu*), he ascribed knowledge and cognizance in respect of his Lord rather than of himself, as the proper goal of spiritual journeying ought to be; and so forth with the rest of his attributes (IB A:42; B:145). The problem having been initially described in terms of consonance, Qūnavī, we must recall, is concerned with how the *conversion* (*inqilāb*) of human attributes into 'Divine' ones takes place without the wayfarer's approach to God issuing in a simple identity. Thereby, beyond his "veiled station" and in virtue of his more authentic knowledge of God, the worshipper will know "himself"; for in relation to himself he is the "closest created thing," if by this, however, two things follow: that he remain the inclusive mirror and that the Divine attribute's sole claim to uniqueness is that it is a *Divine* knowledge of him, the servant, as an inclusive entity. He

will then know himself after confirmation through his acquaintance with the Lord (*marifat al-rabb*). Because he is “comprehensive” in the manner of a combinative intermediary, he will come to know that which God wishes to let him know of the immaterial universal names and realities by means of a “unitary, comprehensive universal and unadulterated attribute” (*sifah wahdāniyyah jāmiyah kulliyah nāzīyah*). While he must achieve a reciprocal kind of universality, his knowledge and perception of the “realities of things” may occur at the level of these realities’ universality (*marbat kulliyatihā*) only upon the attainment of the Divine “unitary and comprehensive attribute” (*hāsilah bil-sifah al-wahdāniyyah al-jāmiyah al-ilāhiyyah*) in the manifestation that colours him (IB A:42-3; B:145). His own singular oneness is the precept of his creational, possibilistic multiplicity (*hukm kathratīhi al-kawniyyah al-imkāniyyah*) and (IB A:43; B:145). But he perceives the precepts of these realities, their properties, accidents and concomitants through the precepts of the comprehensive manifestation of singular oneness (*hādhā al-tajallī al-ahādī al-jāmiyah*), that is, through the universal attribute he needs in the first place in order to endue himself with the precept of this manifestation of the essence and the hidden noetic light (*wal-nūr al-ghaybī al-ilmī*). This is the essence of the solution to the epistemological dilemma of knowing the realities of things by way of “consonance.”

Qūnavī next returns to the fact that, in an ideal sense, man is the isthmus (*barzakh*) between the “presence of the Divine” and that of creation, an epitome (*nuskhah*) comprehending both (IB A:43; B:145). There is not a thing that is not inscribed at the level of his comprehensiveness. The “epitome of his existence” (*nuskhah wujūdihī*)

embraces his level at every moment, state, nature (*nash'ah*), abode, and so on; and what it specifies is precisely what the precept of consonance between himself and that very state, moment, nature and abode calls for (IB A:43; B:146). So long as man's perception is not freed of the "noose" of delimitation of the "particular attributes" (*riqbat quyūd al-sifāt al-juz'iyah*) and the creational precepts, he remains delimited by whatever *particular* attribute happens to govern him (*al-hākimah 'alayhi*). Through this particular attribute, he perceives only those things which are similar to it and which lie below it. Moreover, the limitations and distorting allurements, from which he must disentangle himself, are as marginal (*itrāfiyyah*) as they are particular (*juz'iyah*). The goal is to arrive at the intermediary station of comprehensive union, which Qūnavī here calls the "zenith of universality" (*nuqtat al-musāmatah al-kulliyah*), or the very center of the circle comprehending all levels of symmetry – "wa markaz al-dā'irah al-jāmi'ah li-marātib al-tidātāt al-kulliyah" – including the intangible (*ma'nawiyah*), spiritual (*rūhāniyyah*), imaginal (*mithāliyyah*), sensory (*bissiyyah*). Anyone ascribed a state that pertains to two presences at a station where everything intangible and of the nature of an isthmus lies adjacent to him (IB A:44; B:146). He faces these two presences through his essence in the same way that the point does each part of the circumference, confronting each Divine and creational reality with what he already possesses of them, seeing that he is an epitome of their collectivity (*nuskhah min jumlatibā*). He thus perceives in every individual "instance of the epitome of his existence" (*kull fard min afrād nuskhah wujūdihī*) what "reality" lies opposite this epitome in these two Presences. His knowledge is obtainable through the

“realities of things,” their roots and origins because he can perceive them at the station of their immateriality.

Qūnavī here is trying to deal more effectively with the difficulties which arose with the notion of immateriality, in the absence of any conceptual provision by which the priority of God’s essential knowledge could remain unadulterated in the course of the inquiry. However, the distinction, even here, is not always very clear or without certain ambiguity. Any reservations expressed elsewhere about the theoretical collapse of two things into one through their immateriality do not appear to apply here. He has taken it upon himself further to establish that one may perceive the realities in respect of their totality (*jumlatihā*) and comprehensiveness through one’s own totality and comprehensiveness based on a consonant relation, which is a little different from identity. He avers that the contemplation would continue unabated as befits the perfect epitome but for each person’s natural delimitations (*quyūd*): his own effects paradoxically appear in the experiences (*mashāhid*) (IB A:44; B:147). Consequently, complete perfectional comprehensiveness is thwarted owing to the own encompassment it demands (*tagtadī al-istfāb*), which necessitates exteriorization through every single description (*wasf*) and enduing with every state. Yet affirmation of the Divine attributes, is based on this limiting condition. The perfectional containment and encompassment through which God manifests Himself in this “general existential and perfect form” (*min baythu hādhīhi al-sūrah al-‘āmmah al-wujūdīyyah al-tāmmah*) constitutes the most perfect “scale,” if ever there was one, and “the most complete, inclusive and broad locus of

exteriorization” (*al-mīzān al-atamm wal-mazhar al-akmal al-ashmal al-dāmm*). Qūnavī, we may recall, had certain reservations about finding the proper “scale” to be used in depicting something that was beyond measure. By formulating his position on the basis of a perfect scale, being also the most complete locus of exteriorization that corresponds to the “general existential and perfect form,” he is acceding to a prior *articulation* of the Divine Word within the manageable dimensions of science.

To *witness* this first-hand, however, is to experience the unique in what is given by way of what he calls an “tasting in full” (*al-dhawq al-shāmil*) and perfect unveiling (*al-kashf al-kāmil*). The experiential element of the one tasting – God is never said to taste (*dhawq*) – that effectively divides the different classes of the learned comes once again into play. The result of this tasting is a supersession of even the furthest limits attainable by reflective perceptions (*al-madārik al-fikriyyah*) and theoretical and non-theoretical apprehensions, which we saw never passed beyond the level of accidents, attributes, properties and concomitants (IB A:44; B:147). He has already argued that, should it be achieved, such a supersession would permit one to recognize the specific limitation of “what a thinker [*ghayat kull mufakkir bi-fikribi*] is apt to perceive or penetrate on his own and through study, and the reason for the theoreticians’ mutual recriminations [*takhti’t al-nāqirin*], their perceptions and what they are wont to miss” (IB A:44-5; B:147). But one would also become acquainted with those people of tasting themselves who have not known personal realization through such *integral* or comprehensive tasting (*lam yatahaqqaq bil-dhawq al-jāmi’*) (IB A:45; B:147). What is most interesting, however, is that he wisely

counsels against regarding the knowledge Divinely bestowed to each individual (*al-ilm al-mawhūb*) and the “perfect unveiling” so desired sought by the most constant of the “upholders of God” (*al-mutamakkīnūn min abl Allāh fi ‘ilmihim*) as being that furthest limit of perfection we associate with God. The most that can be said is that, because of the latter group’s continual supercession of attributes, there can be no question inconsistency; there are no differences among the messengers, prophets and the most accomplished of the saints in respect of their *sources* (or roots) of knowledge (*usūl ma’ākhibdhibim*), the results thereof (*nata’ijihā*) and what precepts of the “root presences of Divinity”¹⁵ they have clarified without diverging in their apprehension and clarity (*al-ittilā’ wal-bayañ*) (IB A:45; B:148). What apparent incongruencies may have been transmitted by tradition have to do with the “particulars of things” (*juz’iyyāt al-umūr*), being the Divine precepts belonging to the states of those upon whom they are incumbent. They relate more to their own times and what has to do with their welfare, since Divine precepts have to be specified for every age through the intermediary of the messenger of that particular period (*wāsitat rasūl dhālika al-żamān*), with a view to what is best for his people but also based on what is actually requested by their predisposition or preparedness (*mā yastadīhi istīdāhibim*), state, nationhood and abode. Beyond the particular precepts (*al-abkām al-juz’iyyah*) they are all in agreement.

What Qūnavī is thus emphasizing for the purpose of the present discussion is the sameness of what is given, despite the concrete uniqueness of each act of witness. Each one reaffirms and assents to the message of his predecessor, he says, because their root

source (*asl*) is one and the same at the moment when the intimation or instruction (*talaqqi*) from God is received. This is true, for instance, with regard to the precepts of the “acquired sciences” (*al-‘ulūm al-muktaṣibah*), the creeds and the various attachments (*al-‘aqā’id wal-taṣṣalluqāt*) (IB A:45-6; B:148), and all that needs to be derived through proper means and, eventually, used as premises for the spiritual apprenticeship of others who have still to learn both the use of their intellectual faculties and their supercession. No difference can arise at the “Divine root qua root” (*asl ilāhi aslan*). This equally holds for the greatest Friends of God (*akābir al-waliyā*) who do not possess the external authority of prophethood. Their spiritual station is so elevated, though, that any apparent discrepancies arising among them are strictly a function of particular matters of concern or of differences that necessarily exist between the relatively advanced (*al-mutawassafīn*), on the one hand, and the beginners from among the “advocates of states” (*ahl al-bidāyah min ahl al-abwāl*) and the “advocates of visible unveilings” (*ashāb al-mukāshafāt al-ṣāhirah*), on the other. For the latter, the realities and the presences disclosed have to be shrouded in parable (*kashfān fi malābis mithāliyyah*) before they can be understood (IB A:46; B:148). Knowledge of this specific kind of unveiling is realized only on the basis of *God’s purpose* (*murād al-Haqq*), which is vital, through a *science* (*ilm*) that is itself obtainable from another unveiling, that of “the intangible and hidden world” elevated above the levels of the parables and those “matters” (*mawādd*) which are needed for comprehension.

The “matters” used in communicating meanings will occupy our attention in the next few chapters. These consist of any type of device, sound or organ which, in the concrete

articulation of a message, acquires a set form. The phenomenon admits of various levels of articulation. One may come to know the secret of Divine Speech and Writing (*sîr al-kâlâm wal-kiṭâbâh al-ilâbiyâyân*), and not just the outward form (namely, the given features of the “written message”) through tasting, whereby their precept is planted in the hearts as the attribute of knowledge, faith and the reality of the proximity of obligations and supererogatory duties (*haqîqat qurb al-fârâd wal-nawâfiḥ*), along with their results (IB A:46; B:148-9). Upon the suspension of all intermediaries, however, Divine communication (*al-ikhbâr al-ilâbi*) is seen as elevated above the “presences of delimitation” and the creational precepts. The full length of the “passage” (*khurûj*) trodden by God’s servant runs from the precept of creational delimitations and the delimitation of the names and attributes toward “the spacious presences of the Holy” (*ilâ fasîh hadarât al-quds*) (IB A:46; B:149). Only then is he finally confirmed in the “knowledge of things” (*bi-mârifat al-ashyâ’*). This is the gist of this part of the Introduction.

NOTES

1. He explains that as a totality (*jami'*) Man is not the same as each individual creational entity. Only as an epitome (*nuskhah*) of the totality (*majmū'*) of the realities of created being (*al-haqā'iq al-kawniyah*) does Man agree, so to speak, with the totality (*jami'*). The particulars, on the other hand, require further considerations, as follows.
2. In the sense of both “not whole” and “biased.” Epistemologically, these two senses are closely associated.
3. See IB A:47 for nomenclature.
4. For Ibn Sīnā's understanding of *ma'āni*, cf. Goichon *Lexique*, esp. 255.
5. His exact words are “*ka-sūrat al-saff wal-'askar*.” The intellection of the form itself is an immaterial reality, like all others.
6. See Chapter Two, s. “d” (“Knowledge in relation to God” and “The significance of ‘thingness’ [*shay'iyyah*] for the act of writing”).
7. That is, in the last book of *De Anima*.
8. Ibn 'Arabī uses the exact same example in FuM I 391:240.
9. According to Ibn 'Arabī, the one for whom there is Deity seeks Divinity, just as the Deity seeks him (FuM I 262:195).
10. For use of the term *irtibāt*, see Ibn 'Arabī, FuM I 384:237.
11. That is, “*awāmir al-Haqq al-irādiyyah al-dhātiyyah tanfudh fīhim wa hum tā yash'arūn bi-sīr mawridibī wa masdaribī*.”
12. There is a long line of famous commentators on God's “most beautiful names” (*asma'* *Allāh al-husnā*). Although Qūnāvī was no exception in this regard, he lived at a time when much of the intellectual groundwork – embracing both grammatical and theological issues – had already been laid. The notion that God has 99 names is based on a *hadīth* – whose line of transmission is usually traced back to Abū Hurayrah – to the effect whoever commits them to memory will enter paradise. (For a thorough documentary treatment, see Gimaret NDI 51-68.) Two grammatical treatments of the 99 names are *Tafsīr asmā' Allāh tā'ālā al-tas'ah wal-tis'īn* by al-Zajjāj (d. 311 AH/923 CE); and the much lengthier and systematic *Ishtiqāq asmā' Allāh* by al-Zajjājī (d. 337 AH/949 CE). The names were widely debated by the early *mutakallimūn*. With the waning of Mu'tazili influence, the most penetrating and influential writing on the Divine names soon became linked to figures of Ash'arite affiliation, in one form or another. The eleventh century saw, for example, the rise of men like the traditionist Abū Bakr al-Bayhaqī (d. 458 AH/1066 CE) and the great mystic Abū Qāsim al-Qashayrī (d. 465 AH/1072 CE), the latter whom composed his own *Sharh asmā' Allāh al-husnā*. Drawing on a flourishing tradition of Sufism, Qashayrī was able to give a more ethical dimension to this important debate, whereby the names of God would be assimilated through what was commonly known to mystics as *takhallus* (Gimaret NDI 24). Qushayrī was greatly admired by Ibn 'Arabī for his doctrinal lucidity, in an area of spiritual life that had its fair share of free-thinking interpreters. There have been many

efforts to establish a solid conceptual framework for the questions, including Fakhr al-Dīn Rāzī's *Lavā'īt al-bayyināt fi al-asmā' wal-sifāt*. Perhaps the most famous commentary shortly after the tumultuous period in which Qashayrī, a key figure, had lived was Ghazzālī's *al-Maqṣad al-asmā' fi sharḥ ma'āni asmā' Allāh al-husnā*, which again stressed the ethical imperative of acquiring the attributes associated with the Divine names. Its mystical themes, however, reveals also a serious concern to put a proper interpretation on certain sensitive aspects of spiritual life, namely, those having to do with actual "union" with the Deity, which he naturally denied in the crude sense intended and so ardently desired by some. The complexity of these and related issues demanded not only constant vigilence with respect to the overzealousness often displayed in the spiritual path, but a certain intellectual acumen and, above all, didactic abilities. The influence exercised by the school of Ibn 'Arabī since its founder was decisive in this respect, at least as far as the mystical side of life was concerned.

13. God's own transcendence, on the other hand, is so complete that He is above all "how" and "where" (IB A:40; B:143), as when He says, "We shall come upon what work they have done and make it scattered dust" (Qur'an 25:23) ("wa qadimnā illā mā 'amītū min 'amal"). 'Amal points to what Qūnavī takes as the precepts of created things (*al-abkām al-kawniyah*), which make manifest the precept of multiplicity (*al-muzhirah hukm al-kathrabh*) insofar as they appear in the human being. But act (*fi*) is scattered like dust particles (*babā' manthūran*) through the singularity of Divine conjunctive union (*ahadiyyah al-jam' al-ilāhi*) (IB A:40; B:143). God speaks of the companions of paradise (*ashāb al-jannah*) – or the "people of the Divine curtain of hiddenness (*ahl al-sitr al-ilāhi al-ghaybi*) – as in, "the 'companions of paradise' that day, dwelling well in the best place of rest" (*yawma idhin khayrun mustaqarran wa abṣanu maqīlan*) (Qur'an 25:24) (IB A:41; B:143). And what better place of rest, he asks, than permanence in the hiddenness and curtain of the essence (*al-thubūt fi ghayb al-dhāt wa sitrīhi*), impregnable to the worship of created things ('ubūdiyyat al-akwān).

14. In this manner, too, appears the proximity of the "obligatory duties" (*qurb al-farā'id*), which is receptive of the proximity of the "supererogatory duties" (*nawāfiḥ*). Qūnavī here refers back to the two *hadīths*: "I was his hearing and his seeing" and "Verily, God has declared through His servant's tongue, 'God doth heareth the one who praiseth Him.'" Hence, the expression of the level of the name (*lisān martabat al-ism*), namely, "God (Allāh), there is no god but He" (*Allāh lā ilāha illa huwa*). To Him then belong the goodly names (*al-asmā' al-asmā' al-husnā*) (IB A:40; B:142). Every one of the servant's attributes and powers (*kull sifah wa quwwah*) turns out really to be a name belonging to God (*Haqq*), whereas the servant remains behind the veil of his Lord's hiddenness (*al-'abd mustūr khalaf hijāb ghayb rabbīhi*).

15. That is, "*abkām al-hadarāt al-āshiyah al-ilāhiyyah*," by which he means the "Five Divine Presences."

CHAPTER FIVE

Knowledge, its Perfectability and Transmission

So far, Qūnāvī has established knowledge as a Divine attribute to be viewed in its course of manifestation from a state of absolute hiddenness and essence – which indicates “God’s ipseity [*hūwiyatihī*] qua interiority [*butūnīhī*], unconditionality [*ittaqīhī*], the ‘fathomlessness of His inner recesses’ [*adām iħātah bi-kunhīhī*] and priority to all things encompassed by Him” (IB A:47; B:149). At this point, however, he feels that a separate inquiry into the notion of ‘ilm is in order. He has deferred a detailed definition of it in the hope of availing himself first of such technical clarifications as pertain to the intermediary combinative level of man. Such a level entailed the supersession of certain dimensions of knowledge, ordinarily given as sensory and imaginative items, as a solution to the problem of “two noetic realities.” In this problem, the object sought is a *haqīqah*, taken in its epistemically objective character, whereas the knower is *haqīqah* in view of his *external distinction* from the object; but the ideal knowledge, freed of all matter, is one and the same thing regardless of its varied aspects, dimensions and considerations. Supersession, therefore, suggests a kind of *leap* in the act of apprehending the “other” reality, and is more easily conveyed through the imagery of light. The cardinal distinctions touched on so far between essence and essence qua concomitants, etc., give rein to innumerable epistemological issues the theoretical dissection of which might be doomed to failure in the absence of an heuristically useful analogy. Illumination, with

its unifying sweep, lends itself to such an analogy. And Qūnāvī's splendidly resourceful exegesis of light hinges on the close association of light's manifestness with the concatenate nature of meaningful discourse; "meaning" interacts with the "matter" at its disposal and by which it is transmitted.

The nature of this association will become clearer. We shall go through his exposé piece by piece not only in order to appreciate his uncommon lucidity of conception, but to clarify, before moving on to his philological exegesis, how "forms," *suwar*, are linked to speech. Thanks to their common etymological origin with *tasawwur*, the *suwar* are so linked by way of "conceptualization," as we shall see.

§ KNOWLEDGE AND LIGHT

Before discussing his interpretation of light, let us begin as he does with a succinct summary of knowledge's most distinctive features and why, in fact, it cannot be "defined." Knowledge, says Qūnāvī, is one of the Divine names of the essence and a universal immaterial reality (IB A:48; B:151). It has its own relations, properties, precepts, accidents, concomitants and levels. Once its level has been specified – that is, upon actually being named "knowledge" and invested with a sense reflecting its primary function of disclosing and exposing things – it then becomes distinguishable from "absolute hiddenness." Although not synonymous with "absolute essence," on the other hand, it is easily compared with light, if by the latter one means, in his words, "that without which nothing is perceptible [*lā yudrak shay' illā bihi*]" (IB A:49; B:151). This, in

turn, cannot substitute for the definition of knowledge in the true sense and its evocation does not really advance us. But how may one provide a more exact definition when it is clear that the very intensity of light's manifestation renders all definition (*taṣrif*) problematic? For how could light itself be perceived?

In this section, the theoretical muddle generated by the *definition* of knowledge is skillfully composed with the more accessible simplicity of the light imagery, the result being that our lack of definition may no longer be a liability but an advantage. Qūnāvī's first concern is to show that the attempt to define knowledge (or light) requires a structural certainty for something so unmanageably complex that only the syllogism is suitably designed to represent it, albeit in a different mode. And even if we should some day stumble upon a definition, the result would still be unwieldy duplication, since yet another degree of knowledge (or light), the source of "knowledge about knowledge," will have had to be assumed.

All this logically stems from the demand for a simple definition, whether of knowledge or of light; on this count, in fact, things have not appreciably changed since our discussion of Aristotle. There is duplication because in order to be able to say anything about light one has to be an "informant" already, literally, a "giver of knowledge" (*muṭarrif*). And the condition for being an informant of anything, let alone a definition, is to be "clearer than" (*ajīl*) and prior to "the one informed" (*al-muṭarrif*) (IB A:49; B:151). But nothing is more manifest or prior in knowledge than, paradoxically, the hiddenness of the essence (*ghayb al-dhāt*), that is, the definiendum itself; *no knowledge*, save

God's, can encompass it. God Alone knows Himself, and any distinction in His knowledge is more logical than real. Even the life's anteriority to knowledge for one of the two noetic realities is one of "condition" (*shart*), and merely indicates the distinction (*mughāyarah*) of having to be created before coming to know, but not in any absolute sense (*mutlaq*). In point of fact, anteriority itself could not have been affirmed without knowledge. The "informant" may even be completely ignorant of his own "secret," or, knowing it, undertakes to inform at the level of only one of his attributes, without however ever having to be privy to a *complete* definition.

The most that we can legitimately expect, therefore, is simply an "*instructional definition*" (*al-tarīf al-tanbīhi*) with its own "secret" directly tied to the "knowing informant," *al-muarrif al-ārif*, who knows through some precept or other only or through *one of the attributes* of knowledge itself (IB A: 49; B:151). Every degree of cognizance obtained through that knowledge is realized through this type of "definition." The difference is that the object of knowledge, *shay'* ("the thing"), can remain the thing that informs (the informant) but not in its "singular oneness" (*ahadiyyatihī*); rather, it informs in respect of its *relations* (*nisabihī*) (IB A:49; B:152). This is the special feature, indeed, the "secret" of all rational proofs, definitions and every other observable "effect" (*ta'thīrat*) of knowledge: they each vary according to level and attachment, and never embody the whole of the reality. Thanks to this, our minds may be informed well in advance of actually setting out to realize – always by means of Divine unveilings – the secret of the words proffered by those who know first-hand that "None but God knows God" and

“self-manifesting as a singular oneness is impossible” (*al-tajallī fi al-ahadiyyah muhāl*) (IB A:49; B:152).

In the end, how we come to know the pure light is not unrelated to our coming to know God. We know as much as either the attribute of knowledge or of the “revealing light” discloses of things. Qūnavī, in all of this, is not attempting to replace Ibn Sīnā in matters of pure logic and definition, even if the problem is initially set against a backdrop of logical concepts, closely coordinated with a notion of objective reality. His purpose, though, remains pedagogical: he professes to follow this course for the benefit of those who enjoy no measure of mystical unveiling (IB A:53; B:156), but who wish to come to terms with perplexing issues of epistemology. Having little or no first-hand experience in this domain, they easily lose the anchorage that knowledge needs to have in objective reality. His distinction between “pure” and “relative light” is especially interesting for its close alignment with another division, between the exclusive uniqueness (i.e. “singular oneness”) of Divinity and the lower existential orders.¹ God in Himself is both the pure light (*nūr mahd*) and sheer existence (*wujūd bāh*), to whom is ascribed the station of “Might” (*izzah*) and of being “Self-Sufficient” (*ghaniyy*) (IB A:47; B:150). Therefore, *knowing* Him is knowing existence as well as light. And all existents that become manifest are, in turn, to be regarded as “specifications of the relations of knowledge taken as the pure light [*al-nūr al-mahd*]” (IB A:49; B:152). Each act of particularization (*takhassus*) is dependent solely on the precept of the “permanent essential individualities” (*al-dyān al-thābitah*) we met earlier, which Qūnavī says are also tinged with each other’s precepts in

accordance with their nominal levels (IB A:49-50; B:152). Just as they appear through this light, so light is specified and multiplied by them (IB A:50; B:152).

Conversely, when “a hidden manifestation of the essence” (*tajallī dhātī ghaybī*) occurs in its most distinctive manner (*al-wajh al-khāṣṣ*), the precepts of all intermediaries have to be removed and something else therewith appear, such that all “precepts of the creational tinctures of individualities” (*ahkām al-asbāgh al-‘ayniyyah al-kawniyyah*) are subjugated through the singular oneness of the light. Here, one of two sorts of precepts is said to be “subjugated” (*yaqbar*): the “precepts of spiritualities” (*ahkām al-rūhāniyyāt*), otherwise called the “veils of light” (*hujūb nūriyyah*), and the precepts of the natural and corporeal existents (*ahkām mawjūdāt al-tabi‘īyyah wal-jiṣmāniyyah*), dubbed the “veils of darkness” (*hujūb ḥalmaṇiyyah*). Earlier, Qūnāvī argued that once subjugated by the manifestation that ultimately causes the exteriorization of the precept of the singular oneness still concealed within the manifold – itself necessary for the existent receiving the manifestation (i.e. *mutajalla labū*) – then the precepts of all the singular onenesses become united at the root that comprehends them (*al-asl al-jāmi‘ lahā*) (IB A:50; B:153). The epistemological circle is rounded out in this manner and all “causes of differences,” or *muwjibat al-tagħāyur*, among things are removed with “the appearance of the precept of unity of all the precepts that had branched out from the single one” (IB A:50; B:153).² The precepts of the “differential relations” (*al-nisab al-taṣṣāliyyah*) and the creational aspects are cancelled out with the rise of the “sun of singular oneness” (*sharq al-shams al-ahadiyyah*).

In this connection, Qūnāvī reminds us that the scope of the world is limited to two

levels – that of creation (*khalq*) and that of the Divine command (*amr*), for which the level of creation is merely a “branch” (*far*) subordinate to it. But God prevails over His command, and whenever Divine “preponderance” is manifested under the precept of singular oneness, then that which has no “real existence” (*wujūd haqīqī*) – namely, the originated relations of possibility (*al-nisab al-hādithah al-imkāniyyah*) – is said simply to vanish as God pre-eternal perdures. The reiteration of this point reflects his paramount concern to show that the precept of Divine knowledge appears in all its distinctiveness – his initial purpose being to isolate knowledge as a theme of discussion by way of analogy with “light” – only in the state of pre-eternity (*al-bāl al-azātī*). There, nothing changes for Divine knowledge except by force of its exteriorized link with the entity specified pre-eternally in it. This very entity – by which he means the “essential individuality” of the seeker – can be ascribed “knowledge” only through the medium of light’s manifestation, but with the understanding that its self-perception is subject to change. Nevertheless, God may still wish to raise it, as Qūnavī would like equally to show, to the “presence of God-given knowledge” (*hadrat al-ilm al-ladunni*)³ through its own attribute of *oneness*, the light of its existentiator and what exteriorized “existential manifestation” it receives from Him and through its unique specification in the pre-eternal knowledge of God (IB A:50; B:153). The purest knowledge God wishes to bestow manifests two aspects – the exteriorized existence issuing from Him and His pre-eternal knowledge of it. This is just to say that it is God who is known *and* yet this pre-eternal specification is thereby also known. In this manner, the epistemic complex of

the two-realities is dealt with on another plan which, without eliminating the distinction altogether, has the advantage of showing that the object of knowledge is known in its articulated existence between what remains hidden and what is exteriorized. Let us now turn to these two notions.

§ EXTERIORITY AND INTERIORITY

By now it has become clear that knowledge considered as the light of Divine ipseity (*nūr al-huwiyyah al-itābiyyah*) has two precepts or relations, one exterior (*zāhir*), the other interior (*bātin*) (IB A:50-1, B:154; AH 69a-72a).⁴ The *existential* forms normally witnessed by everyone comprise the differential features of the exterior relation (*tafāṣīl al-nisbah al-zāhirah*) (IB A:51; B:154). The light which extends over all the created beings perceived through the senses, barring the forms' mutual distinctions (*tamayyūz*), is generally a function of the precept governing the *exterior* relation, in respect of universality and singular oneness. By nature directly or "externally" undetectable because of its simple immateriality, therefore, light is perceivable only through the intermediary of colours and the surfaces of forms; in other words, what relative to it is external. Just as immaterial realities are externally imperceptible without matter (*māddah*), so light is imperceptible without "colours" and "surfaces." Whether taken in a physical sense or in the sense of a communicative device conveying meaning, matter is external to the immateriality of a reality. Indeed, interior relation, being the intangible part of light (*ma'nū al-nūr*), literally stands for the dimension of "meaning" (*ma'nū*) normally contrasted with "matter," or any exteriorized existence.

It is just that: the meaning attending external existence (*mānā al-wujūd al-zāhir*).

The interior relation consists of its spirit (*rūh*), laying bare the “intangible objects of knowledge” (*al-mālūmāt al-mānawiyah*) and the “hidden universal realities” (IB A:51; B:154). Although these hidden realities are exteriorized in the world of sense, this does not remove the precept of (immortal) intelligibility from them. The interior noetic relation of light typically ensures three things: cognizance of their essential individuality, oneness and root (that is to say, in God and His ipseity, where His root names [*asmā' ubu al-ashiyah*] are to be found). This entails cognizance of their mutual distinctions and division into a “subordinate branch” (*far' tābi'*) and the “superordinate root” (*asl matbū'*). Interconnectedness is therefore critical, as indeed we have noted already. Knowledge here is not just an amalgamation of disconnected items of information and utterance not a purely fact-descriptive exercise. Because of their broader sweep, internal noetic divisions advert to a knowledge both of those realities which are attached to matter along with the relations of construction,⁵ and those which are not so attached – neither to matter nor to anything having to do with things composed or “constructed” (*al-murakkabāt*). (IB A:51; B:155). On the one hand are those precepts or “subordinate differentials” which pertain to the world; on the other, those that pertain to God. While the existents’ forms are the relations of exteriorized light, the intelligible objects of knowledge, being the specifications of light’s interior relations, are the permanent possible individualities and the universal nominal realities (*al-haqā'iq al-ismā'iyyah al-kulliyah*), along with their subordinate names (IB A:51-2; B:155).

In order to clarify matters with respect to the totality of knowledge's sensory forms and its hidden intelligible realities, he offers the following observations. Going by its analogy with light, firstly, knowledge consists also of the "rays" of God's light. These "rays" include the relations of God's knowledge, the forms of His states (*suwar ahwālihi*), the multiplicity of His attachments and those specifications of His manifestations in His states referred to, in one sense, as the essential individualities. Secondly, as we now know, exteriorized light is the very *form* of the internal light, which in turn is said to be the intangible inner part of light, or *maṣnā al-nūr*. Both "form" (synonymous with the various components of speech) and intangibility (*maṣnawiyah*: lit. "meaningfulness") hold the key to his philosophy of language, where the utterance that conveys the meaning may be thought of as a reflection of that meaning. What Qūnāvī is particularly keen to stress is that the outer appearance associated with light's "form" is dependent on a prior distinction (*imtiyāz*) of the name "exteriority" from the *intangible* ("meaning") dimension of the light, executed by way of the very subordinates (*tawābiṣīḥā*) linked to that name (IB A:52; B:155). Predictably, the whole process is likened to a mirror reflection. What happens is that as the interior manifests itself it becomes impressed upon the "mirror" of that which is exteriorized from it. Every relation of that which is exteriorized is a mirror for some relation of the noetic interiority of light, all the while that the singular oneness of the essence continues to comprehend (*jāmi'ah*) both the interior and the exterior relations.⁶ That, of course, is the point of this exercise: to account for both the interior and the exterior..

§ DIVINE KNOWLEDGE AND ITS ANALOGUES

As a pre-eternal relation, knowledge is attributable and linked to something for which no mere priority of level can be intellected, no beginning perceived nor the whole procession of knowledge's "effects" and precept ever witnessed directly (IB A:53; B:156). It is only in this respect that there is pre-eternal knowledge. But there are other types of deducible ascriptions. Below the relation of pre- eternity, for example, the precept of knowledge is qualified by origination (*hudūd*). Qūnavī maintains with good consistency that concomitant features of knowledge like origination, activity and passivity (*fi wa infāl*), intuition and acquisition (*bidāhah wa iktisāb*), conception and assent, harmful and useful (*darar wa manfāh*), etc., do not constitute knowledge "as it is in itself." They are merely its precepts and properties known through its objects of attachment (*mutḍalliqātihā*) and the levels that comprise the loci of appearance of its effects (*mazāhir athārihā*).⁷ "True knowledge," he says, is in principle a light that discloses "things" (*al-nūr al-kāshif līl-ashyā*); its most distinctive feature consists in being a Divine manifestation at the presence of the light of God's essence (*hadrat nūr dhātihī*) (IB A:53-4; B:157). He has so far held that this knowledge can be accepted by the recipient of this manifestation only through the attribute of his own unicity (*wahdatuhū*), after omission of the precepts of the receptive relations of multiplicity and every creational aspect, in the manner required *through* the precept of the recipient's permanent essential individuality subsisting as the pre-eternal knowledge of his Lord (IB A:54; B:157).

He contends that in virtue of this alone is it valid to declare that no intermediary stands between him and the One who gives him existence. Quite fittingly, also, the

recipient's knowledge at that level consists of pure conceptions (*tasawwurāt*), in the sense prescribed by the philosophers. The reasoning behind this is as follows. Knowledge in this respect consists of a cognizance of God's unicity at a level of hiddenness; the viewer (*mushāhid*) to whom knowledge is ascribed must rise "in the light of his Lord" (*nūr rabbīhi*) toward such knowledge and to the level of His unicity (*wahdah*) by means of a single attribute, which we said was that of his own unicity (IB A:54; B:158). It is through just such "noetic manifestation of light" that he can perceive at all the *immaterial* realities God wishes to show him. Yet knowledge at that high point is no longer divided in the usual manner between "conception" and "assent." It can only be a *tasawwur*, or conception, since the separate *realities* of everything – including conception and the object conceived (*mutasawwar*), predication (*isnād*), priority and posteriority – are all perceived in their immateriality in one instant through a single, unmodifiable act of beholding (*shuhūd wāhid ghayr mukayyif*). In other words, the objective exigencies and attachments of knowledge require that there be an inclusive *unitary* attribute (*sifah wahdāniyyah*) in the recipient where no distinction exists between conception and assent. Such an attribute stands alone as the integral conception of the witness. We shall examine the role of conception again below. Qūnavī here avails himself of *tasawwur*'s common root with *sūrah* and its close association with the exteriorizing thrust of utterance by remarking that, in its primary sense, "conception" at least imparts a wholeness to perception. While other senses may equally be derived which take us to the world of construction and writing (*"ālam al-tarkīb wal-takhīf"*), only when we attest to the precepts belonging to this "abode" (*al-mawtin*), as

he calls it, does the priority of “conception” over assent duly arise as a *mental* intellection (*al-taṣṣaqul al-dhibhī*).

Therefore, before the exclusive activity of the Divine, direct witnessing is a unitary conception; but, being merely “mental,” the intellected distinction is a far cry from the “presence of simple immaterial knowledge” (*hadrah al-ilm al-basīt al-mujarrad*) where “the realities of things are indeed perceptible and their precepts and attributes also seen as standing contiguously by them in mutual correspondence [*mujawarah lahā wa mumāthalah*]” (IB A:54; B:158). But because he is himself delimited, man accepts only what is itself delimitable and distinguishable from him (IB A:54-5; B:158). While not of the “world of delimitation” (*ālam al-taqayyud*), the Divine manifestation is coloured, as it unfolds, by the precept of his nature (*nash'ah*), state, time, abode and level – including that attribute of the one who receives it (*al-mutajallī lahu*), an attribute whose “precept happens to predominate” (IB A:55; B:158). What this assumes is that there are mutual distinctions which must be taken into account according to those who can witness directly for themselves. These differ from each other in their degree of detachment from the precepts of all these delimitations, without being entirely eradicated (IB A:55; B:159). And it becomes simply a question of strength or weakness (*yaqwā wa yaḍaq*) how far the singular oneness of the manifestation is preponderant over the precepts of relational multiplicity. To get back to the notion of conception, where each individual conception is in question, it is permissible to speak of *degrees* of integrity; with the leap to conception as such, in its articulated *wholeness*, then something else is required of a more active nature,

to which each conception is convertible without being identified with it. To the extent that the person possessing this knowledge applies himself to the task of seeing through the quest for preponderance by singular oneness – or, as Qūnavī says, is conatively focused (*tawajjuh*) – his perception, cognizance and encompassment (i.e. those levels subsumed below him, all but obliterated by this manifestation’s precept) will be greatly enhanced. Everything depends on the capacity of his level’s “circle” (*sifat dā’irat martabatibī*) and his detachment from the delimitations of the precepts through the preponderance of the attribute belonging to the singular oneness of comprehensive union (*ghalabat sifat abadiyya al-jam’*). Indeed, it is here that the precept of his knowledge of the “things” knowable in this respect may then be *recast in God’s knowledge of Singular Oneness*² as both “root” and “level” (*al-asl wal-martabah*). Only a unitary knowledge can achieve this, and then only as a definitive phenomenon having precisely this final conversion as its end (NI A:29a; B:15a).

In spite of this astounding resolution of the problem of knowledge initially posed, Qūnavī adduces the following scriptural evidence, “They cannot encompass anything save through what He wills” (“*wa lā yuhī tūna bi-shay’in illā bi-mā yashā’*”) (IB A:55; B:159). Yet knowledge of this sort, he says, is the clearest, most perfect form of unveiling, where “no doubt at all” (i.e. “*lā rība fīhi*” [Qur’ān 2:1]) can enter, nor, even more significantly from an historical perspective, any “exegetical interference” (i.e. *ta’wīl*). The knowledge Qūnavī and, for that matter, numerous others before and after him have in mind cannot

² B: ‘ilmīhi al-ahādī; A: ‘ilmīhi al-ahādī.

be *acquired* through any higher knowledge, act, capacity or effort (IB A:55-6; B:159-60).⁸ Once ensconced in the bosom of a scientific view as we have come to know it so far in theological science, the “knowledge” flourished by the mystics, reformed and adapted to their own experiential matrix, must jettison the philosophical enterprise’s most constant fixture: the *movement* from the known to the unknown. The person fortunate enough to receive it must doubtless act as a locus of appearance for the manifestation of light (IB A:56; B:160). But just when cessation of “movement” at one end is insisted upon, the implements of communication – once the parts of instructional science – immediately come into play at the other, open to “perfection.” The prized knowledge may be “real” (*al-ilm al-haqīqī*), but the inexplicable has still to be expressed in some way. In order to ponder better the “definition” of knowledge through the discrimination between the source and its locus, Qūnāvī prepares us for the central theme to be discussed in his introduction to the treatise. “Knowledge” must be viewed as a discrete reality, yes, but it is transmissible in written or uttered form *through parts*, the consequence being that numerous levels are discernible in it. The two most basic ones, as stated before, are:

- (1) the relationally simple (*basiṭ bil-nisbah*), being intangible (*mānawiyah*), spiritual (*rūhāniyyah*), formal-imaginal (*sūriyyah mithāliyyah*), and
- (2) the composite and material (*murakkabah māddiyah*) (IB A:56; B:160).

Although our paramount concern is with the originative role of the relationally simple, we should understand but little of the dynamic of meaning-transmission through speech if the forms, equivalent to the letters (*al-burūf*) and the words written or uttered, are

ignored. These comprise all of the “devices of conveyance,” or *adawāt al-tawṣīl*. And, in confirmation of what we have learned so far from our discussion of manifestation, Qūnāvī emphasizes that these “devices” are ranged according to exteriority (*zāhirah*), on the one hand, and the hidden order of intangible meaning (*mānawiyah*) that has also comes into play as a result of his present occupation with knowledge as a unitary process, on the other. Hence, knowledge is a process where unitary meaning is conveyed and, naturally, to be sustained, through the exteriorized “parts.” This is not to say that what is exteriorized itself may not still act as a kind of veil, and “meaning” the elusive focal point.

Among the “devices of conveyance” are to be counted the “different concepts” (*mashūnāt*) used as the terms and letters (*al-ibārah wal-burūq*) of constructions (*tarākīb*) and conventional expressions (*al-iṣṭitāḥāt al-wadīyah*). They depend on the “thinking faculty” and other faculties, articulations (*makhārij*) and conceptions that make up the various levels acting as “substrates for the exteriorization of the attributes of knowledge and their loci of manifestation [*mabāll zūhūr sifāt al-ilm wa majālibā*]” (IB A:56; B:160). Now, it is upon those substrates that “flows” the precept of knowledge from the rank of its unicity (*rutbatīhi wa sīrr wahdatīhi*), a precept he identifies with the “spirit of knowledge” (*rūh al-ilm*) referred to earlier. It “flows” by way of any literal or numerical “matter” offered it (*al-lafzīyah wal-raqmīyah*) at these substrate levels. This is the manner, and the “precept,” through which knowledge permeates the person “whose heart God has brought to life,” replacing his ignorance with “a bright, existential and noetic state or attribute.”⁹ In this

way, also, Qūnāvī can maintain the perfectional station of man in his spiritual strivings, which run a parallel course to the linguistic “perfecting” to be elucidated in this Introduction.

But the intangible knowledge as implied in the preceding paragraph is still indissociable from the hidden manifestation of the essence, since God’s attributes at His level of hiddenness and oneness cannot exhibit any multiplicity (IB A:56; B:161). An appropriate response to the need to balance unity with the proliferation of parts expressing the intangible meaning, therefore, is somehow to demonstrate the feasibility of a conveyance of knowledge through linguistic devices in a *comprehensive act of communication* whose cosmological reverberations go outward beyond God’s strictly inner and yet to be exteriorized knowledge of Himself.

Philology recommends itself particularly well to this task. Arabic grammarians regard the essential “meaning” conveyed by a complex statement, while transmissible in stages, is the unitary center. Projected on the larger scale of creation theology, this allowed Qūnāvī to clinch, as he does here, a grammatical equivalent for the philosophical truism that an attribute of the essence, as knowledge theologically is – at least in respect of the “Right of God” (*ilm fi haqq al-Haqq*) against that of His Creation – inseparable or indistinguishable from the object of attribution (*mawṣūf*) without losing his bearings by having to fall back again on the selfsame root. Knowledge operates as the same noetic source of unicity we must from the first instance assume it to have as a separate reality, whereupon whoever is “called on by God to witness for himself His essence [*fa-man*

ashhadahu al-Haqq tā'lā dhātabu shuhūdan muhaqqaqan] is ascribed an act of witness [*shuhūdan*]” that is *commensurate* with this primary knowledge (IB A:57; B:161). However, from the fact that knowledge is separate and independent, several things now follow. We have already seen how commensuration or consonance plays a key role in the conversion of attributes. His inclusion of this point here seems to pose in the fresh light of linguistic science the bare issue of how root oneness is to be maintained through a *commensurate* but still disparate “other,” with comparable unity, that must give outward expression to what lies hidden in the inner recesses of Divine knowledge and mystery. And what this reveals is a cosmic theatre of *linguistic* communication – not the mundane kind of everyday human commerce – where perfection is attained through the parts and the completedness of the parts relative to a single core meaning. How that is so, of course, will have to be shown in more concrete fashion later. This is only a minimal account, requiring much further elaboration, as we will try to do in the coming chapters. For the time being, it is the perfection of knowledge that will be of immediate concern.

Let us then see how he reformulates, from this new linguistic angle, the process of manifestation from the inner recesses of Divinity to the outermost point of implemental exteriorization.

a. Perfection of Knowledge

If such is the process meant by *perfection*, perfection then is indicative of the timeless completion of the utterance, whereby the gradual conveyance of meaning is driven

forward toward a perfected whole, presumably present in the “speaker.” Within a single individual, completion is attained through that individual’s particular level by way of “form” and “conception.” The precepts of manifestation are thus delimited according to the particular acts of witnessing (*mashāhid*), making knowledge at every act of beholding and manifestation a particularized result (*natījah juz’iyyah*). Qūnavī adds that this may occur either in one person or in a *community* of minds. Were it not for these precepts, anyone made to witness His essence through the removal of all intermediaries would, in fact, have God’s knowledge of His creation within grasp “from now to the Day of Resurrection [*ilā yawm al-qiyāmah*], [though always] in the manner known by the Supreme Pen [*al-qalam al-dīlā*]” (IB A:57; B:161). Therefore, one should not take this as an endorsement of the view that those who abide felicitously and unconstrained in a state approaching knowledge of the source are not subject, all the same, to the constraints of “the perfectional level of man [*al-martabah al-insāniyyah al-kamāliyyah*] which offers them its great comprehensiveness [*jamīiyah tibā al-kubrā*].” Clearly safeguarding the axiological end of scientific knowledge Ibn Sīnā had espoused, Qūnavī’s notion of “perfection” rests on an articulation of the distinction between the source and the locus of Divine knowledge that seeks to avoid rupturing the moral dimension of revelation by according a large place to the *scriptural* moral edicts of God. This, after all, is the whole purpose for broaching the articulative aspect of Divine manifestation.

Qūnavī assumes that knowledge has its own “single universal reality” [*haqīqah wāhidah kulliyyah*] above and beyond the elements that articulate it – its precepts and relations

specified according to and at the level of the “the one perceiving it” (*mudrik lahu*). The most troubling question that then arises is whether or not an entirely *new* object of perception is presented whenever the essence is dissembled, as indeed it should be from its “unadulterated purity.” This is irrespective of how knowledge is to be elucidated: either definitionally or linguistically. He takes the stance that, technically, nothing in the noetic relation changes for the perceiver (*mudrik*) to such a degree that it becomes incongruent with the “root unicity of knowledge” (*al-wahdah al-ilmiyah al-asliyyah*), save that “selfsame specification occasioned by the beholder [strictly] on his own terms” (*bi-sabab al-mushāhid wa bi-hasabih*) (IB A:57-8; B:162). In this minute sense, however, the “reality of knowledge” remains indistinguishable from absolute hiddenness, except in certain unspecified respects. When God wishes to *perfect* this “noetic relation” in some locus of appearance and *in accordance with it*, not with Himself, the “perfection” (*takmīl*) as we now know must occur through what is exteriorized of the noetic precepts and the diffusion of knowledge’s effects upon a goal consonant with (*al-ghayah al-munāsabah*), and proper to, the predisposition of this locus of manifestation (viz. the receiver and seeker of knowledge). This follows from the accepted behaviour of all realities: their “perfection” can take place only through an exteriorization of their precepts and of their *effects upon those things closely connected to them* and falling within the ambit of the precept of each receptive reality (IB A:58; B:162-3). There is a double structural articulation here; Qūnāvī says that these things are subsumed within the scope of each reality (*bilatiba*) through the intermediary of its *own* loci of appearance. And knowledge, being an isolable

“reality,” is perfected (*kamāl al-ilm*), in like fashion, through the exteriorization of *its own differentiations and relations*, just as these differentiations are perfected through different attachments and the attachments in proportion to the objects of knowledge (*‘ala qadar al-md̄lūmāt*). The various objects of knowledge, too, are specified according to the scope or “containing capacity” of the levels by which they become attached to knowledge, and according to what levels are enfolded by the realities. They are said to be *subordinate* to knowledge (*tabīt lil-ilm*) insofar as this knowledge (i.e. its reality) retains its primacy (*awwaliyyatib*) and its own “singular oneness” and containment; whereas their specification relative to every knower must be in accord with his delimitations.

A key concept in this overall picture, “subordination” (*tabdīyyah*) has so far been raised rather perfunctorily in connection with the ordering of the quiddities and realities. It is fundamentally a grammatical concept,¹⁰ one that has been insinuated into an unconventional terrain for the philologists where the linguistic conveyance of *meaning* is given definitive treatment more as a spiritual operation characterized by noetic unitariness (*al-wahdāniyyah al-ilmīyyah*). From this perspective, the issues raised in the previous paragraph appear in a new and richer light. Whenever there is any question of attachment to the objects of knowledge, he explains, differentiation follows in subordinate (*tabdāhu*) fashion upon the goal at which the precept of such a relation ends (IB A:58; B:163). The perceiver (*mudrik*) posits this differentiation in accordance with his own unitary contemplation or witnessing (*shuhūdībī al-al-wahdānī*), clothing knowledge with the *form* of detailed differentiation and the exteriorization from hiddenness toward

sensory experience (*shahādah*), until the goal designated for him alone is finally reached (*ilh al-ghāyah al-mahdūdah lahu*). Qūnavī takes his bearings from the concretizing force of “form” and portrays the entire affair as an act of perfection by the perceiving agent of his part of this noetic relation through the exteriorization of its precept. This is how it constitutes a perfection for the agent’s own level and at the agent’s station of knowledge with respect to everything *distinctively subordinate to his specification*.¹¹

As a final note, what this stipulation at bottom also means for Qūnavī is that the mystic’s discourse must be based on the “knowledge by tasting” (*ilm dhawqī*), where the soundness of cognizance can be *directly* confirmed. But this is really another way of saying that knowledge has wholeness already in experience, and demands the mediation of the “natural faculties” only when a reflective distance from the original experience is assumed. Wherever cognizance is directly realized, every appearance (*mazhar*) is, both by *design* and by *nature* (i.e. *bil-qasd wal-dhāt*), “present with God” (*hādir mā a al-Haqq tā’alā*) as the *substrate* (*mahallan*) and *locus* of manifestation (*majallan*) for a reality *effortlessly* exteriorized, “whether by special or general, universal permission [*bil-idhn al-miṣāyyan aw idhn kullī ‘āmm*]” (IB A:59; B:164). That knowledge which fails to conform to this minimal requirement is “authentic” only in a remote and weak sense, having failed to satisfy a general epistemological condition for true knowledge. The closest philosophical equivalent has traditionally been described in terms of general correspondence. There being no real correspondence between a mental construct and the “reality” in all its full and unique dimensions, the only genuine knowledge left is experiential, but in the

elevated rather than trivial sense. Real knowledge suggests the perception of the realities of things as they are – in other words, based on the way they are ideally known by God. Apprehension in any other sense, he insists, indicates a “knowingness” that is based on nothing more than accepted conventions (*istiṭṭah ba'd al-nās*), other people’s doctrines, the mere forms of concepts occasioned either by personal experiences or by opinions, etc.; all these are just the accidents and concomitants of knowledge, its precepts in its recipients (*qawābiḥ*). As we have so far argued, revealed scripture as the root discourse of God to man is only superficially related to these. Experientially realized, cognizance can never be conflated with these levels of givenness, which ordinarily qualify only as premises. When God raises a person to the station of “real knowledge,” the person comes to understand that whatever he formerly used to take as noetically “realized” was mere conjecture (*wahm*) and opinion (*zann*). These either happen to coincide with the truth in certain aspects or fail completely even there, if drawn from false opinion.

b. Forms and Conceptualization

In drawing attention to the pivotal role played by the “forms” in perfection, exteriorization, manifestation and, hence, speech, Qūnavī is also exploring the congenital ambivalence of “knowledge” which overlooks the indissoluble difference between the Divine and the non-Divine. Laying aside for the moment consideration of what kind of “knower” is involved, we shall examine this difference with respect to knowledge’s “*object of attachment*.” It is true, as we have just seen, that all things are “attached” to

knowledge by way of the subordinates and differential concomitants of the “universal and encompassing *objects of attachments*” proper to knowledge (IB A:60-1; B:165). Hence, the objective predominance of a given reality is maintained at every level. But it matters a great deal whether the object to which the knowledge is attached is God or what is other than God (*aw siwāhu*, i.e. the non-Divine), this being the underlying cause of the structural dichotomy between the two noetic realities observed above. If the former, then there are five different aspects (*Fitibār*) to consider. Knowledge may be attached to God in respect of,

- (1) His “Self-Sufficiency” (*ghinā*) and “Divestment” (*tajarrud*) of all attachment to another qua “other” (*ghayrihi min haythu huwa ghayr*);
- (2) His attachment to the “other” and the latter’s bond to Him (*irtibāt al-ghayr bihi*);
- (3) the intelligibility (*maqūliyyat*) of a relation joining these two “things”;
- (4) unconditionality (*nisbat al-itlāq*) over and above the three relations; and
- (5) unconditionality over and above the delimitedness of unconditionality (*al-itlāq ‘an al-taqayyud bil-itlāq*) and every fetter (*qayd*) (IB A:61; B:165-6).

These five “levels” (*marātib*), as he calls them, are inclusive.

Knowledge whose object is the so-called “others” (*aghyār*) may be considered either with respect to their own realities, which constitute their essential individualities; with respect to their spirits (*arwāhīhā*) comprising their realities’ loci of appearance alone; or with respect to their forms, which are *both* the spirits’ and the realities’ loci of appearance – these are three separate considerations to be made. The realities, spirits and forms have their respective precepts qua single, immaterial individualities (*āyānihā al-mufradah al-*

mujarradah). They have precepts also in respect of the “existential manifestation” that permeates them and causes their essential individualities qua “intangible configuration” (or form) (*hay'ah al-maṣnawiyah*) to be exteriorized in the manner engendered by their conjunction of precepts (*al-hāsilah min ijtīmā'iḥā abkām*) (IB A:61, B:166; cf. NI A:14a, B:7b). These different emphases indicate that while one may appreciate subordination’s ontological orientation to one pole or, more accurately, the “root reality,” Qūnavī is especially attentive here to the manifoldness of knowledge of the object and its transposition into the noetic “other.” Also important is the discursive nature of the only level (that of the “forms”) at which one may licitly ponder this question without having prematurely to reduce concept to ontic reality – both of these have their respective precepts. Of the three levels of the noetic “other,” the one that most sharply marks the transition from philosophic science to mysticism, as we have stressed, is precisely that of the forms and of conceptualization.

At a strictly discursive level, however, anyone having the benefit of first-hand experience (namely, the *ahl al-istibṣār*) will freely admit the “limitations of the world of interpretation” (*dīq 'ālam al-'ibārah*) when measured by the full breadth of the Presence of Realities and Intangible Meanings. Generally, technical renditions alone cannot be expected to identify adequately the interior of something as it is in itself. The transition from Ibn Sīnā’s formal to a decidedly linguistic model is meant to ensure a kind of comprehensibility that the congealed notions of philosophy did rather imperfectly. If, at the heart of the shift of the quidditive question from the *reality of God* (in response to

“what-is-it?”) to the reality of His creation, both the Qūnāvī school and *falsafah* held in common the pivotal role of the forms and the quiddities as conceptual adjuncts to the realities they seek to define, the strategic turning point at which knowledge in the order of relative subordinate relations becomes that of the “other” rather than of the Divine betokened a more particular methodological readjustment, whereby the forms were but the “words” qua exteriorization of specification, *ayāt*, *suwar*, etc. (NI 8b-9a; B:4b). Qūnāvī regards the existentiating act of construction as one of “writing,” exhibiting subordinate relationships and dependencies. The “subordinate” (*tābtah*) consists of the states, attributes (*sifāt*) and concomitants (*lawāzim*), etc., that belong to something else that is “superordinate” (*al-matbūt*). While the “superordinate roots” (*al-ūsūl al-matbūtah*) are the realities, the subordinates are relations and attributes, properties and accidents, etc.; to each precept is a reality which happens to be the essential individuality (IB A:61; B:166).

One can hardly overlook the emerging web of relationships between, at one end, “existential manifestation” and, at the other, the linguistic character of the entire movement mediated by the forms. Before moving on, however, let us look further into the nature of the forms, considering the important role they play. Their true significance, in fact, comes to light in this section of his introduction.

The definition of form offered by Qūnāvī shows not only its inherent link to the process of exteriorization but also its derivative and functionally integrated nature relative to the realities. “By form,” he states, “I mean that by which the exteriorization of the reality of the object of knowledge – whatever it may be -- is completed [yatamm zuhūr al-

haqīqah al-mālūmah]” (MG 294:207-08). Forms are the *technical loci* of appearance (or exteriorization) of the realities and the spirits alluded to just above. In this function, they may be either simple of relation (*basītah bil-nisbah*) or composite (*murakkabah*); they are delimited by way of mixtures (*amzījah*) and elemental states (*al-abwāl al-‘unsuriyyah*), together with their respective precepts and “time” (IB A:61-2; B:166). The “time” intended here is divided into two “extremities” (*dhī al-tarafayn*): the world at hand (*al-‘ālam al-dunyā*) and the world of the hereafter (*‘ālam al-ākhirah*), the exteriorization of whose precept’s substrate (*tdāyyūn zūhūr maball hukmihī*) is specified. This division affords Qūnavī the chance to return briefly to the “five presences,” which he considers to be inseparable from the hereafter. The five presences are as follows:

- (1) hiddenness: God’s knowledge, His ipseity (*huwīyyatuhū*), the immaterial intangible meanings and the realities;
- (2) the world of witnessing (*shahādah*) and the “exteriorized name” (*al-ism al-żāhir*), etc.;
- (3) the “lower imagination” (*al-khayāl al-muttasi*), whose relation to sense (*hiss*) is strongest;
- (4) The world of the spirits (*‘ālam al-arwāh*), whose relation to the Hidden (*ghayb*) is strongest; and
- (5) the absolute imaginal world (*‘ālam al-mithāl al-mutlaq*), given the “existential circle” (*al-dā’irah al-wujūdiyyah*), is intermediary between the absolute hidden and the world of witnessing in terms of encompassment (*iḥālah*), comprehensiveness (*jam‘*) and inclusiveness (*shumūl*); its special distinction is to be the Mother of the Book (*al-mukhtass bi-umm al-kitāb*), which is the “form” of the Cloud (*sūrāt al-‘mā’*) (IB A:62; B:167; cf. Chittick SPK 117).

The theoretical value of this model depends on the form’s ability to mediate the exteriorizing process of knowledge with respect to the “realities of things.” We have

discussed earlier in some detail the inscriptional entailments of “thingness.” When a person knows a “thing” at the noetic presence of apprehension (*iħħa*) and unveiling (*kashf*), he knows it in terms of those attributes and *loci of appearance* by which an object known is specified at both the general and the special levels of *formal conceptualization* (*fi al-marātib al-taswīriyyah al-‘āmmah al-khāssah*) (IB A:62; B: 167). This takes place according to the various types of construction (*anwār al-tarkīb*), as in writing or what he calls the “figurations” (*tashakkulāt*) that occasion the exteriorization (*asbāb al-zuhūr*). It all unfolds according to a precept of particularization assigned to will, as will must accompany every act of writing. There are, of course, differences to be noted in terms of the proximity and remoteness (*al-qurb wal-biđd*) of the ascription, strength and weakness, clarity of light and concealment (*wal-jalā’ al-nūrī wal-iħtijāb*). However, the exigencies of exteriorization are laid bare in this exposition in terms of the form and the inscriptional dynamics that underlie the form. Before considering the latter, let us see how Qūnavī classifies the different types of “conception” (*tasawwur*), which he needs in order to depict the full dimensions of the apprehension by which the Divine command is made known.

The first level of “conception” (*al-tasawwurāt fa awwal marātibahā*) comprises the sort of enraptured synoptic sentience or awareness (*al-shūrūr al-ijmāli wijdāni*) he associates with the higher limit of the world – i.e. its “loftiness” (*istishrāf al-‘ālam*), which we analyzed before. This “synoptic sentience” occurs through “what is either exteriorized of the world or remains interior to it of the secret of comprehensiveness [*sirr al-jam’iyyah*] and the precept of light and its rays [falling] upon the noetic presence [*hadrah al-ilmiyyah*] from

behind the curtains of the precepts of [the world's] multiplicity" (IB A:63; B:167-8). This initial "sentience" in conception is not yet full knowledge, but only a kind of "spiritual" *synoptic* perception (*idrāk rūhānī jumli*) from behind the veil of endowed nature (*hijāb al-tab'*) and bonds ('*alā'iq*). He even admits that it does not truly belong to any class of conceptions. If it pertains to any level of knowledge, it does so only as a faculty close to the act.^b There is a difference, he says, between awareness through the faculty close to the act, going by the name of knowledge, on the one hand, and a person's state before awareness, on the other. Next comes simple enraptured, psychic conception (*al-tasawwur al-basit al-nafsāni al-wijdāni*), as when one is asked about some familiar matter concerning whose knowledge one is not quite resolutely certain about. Only upon the mention of details and with subsequent reflection upon it are the various "parts" of the theme in question (*ajzā' al-mas'alah*) and the specificity of detail, or *ḍyān al-tafāṣīl*, consolidated. Awareness allows the matter gradually to gain shape and character in the person's mind as he goes through the motions of responding. Instinctive or intuitive conceptions (*al-tasawwurāt badihiyyah*) are all grouped within this division. Finally, there is the mental-imaginative conception (*al-tasawwur al-dhibnī al-khayāthī*) and sensory conception (*al-tasawwur al-hissī*).

Beyond these, the only other level of conceptualization is a relation composed (*mutarakkaba*) of all these divisions by way of the singular oneness of comprehensive union (*ahadiyyat al-jam'*). This has to do with the precept of knowledge and its lights

^b A: *al-quwwah al-qarībah min al-‘amal*; B: ... *min al-fīl*.

which radiate upon the faculties' levels (IB A:63; B:168). When God wishes that a command be conveyed (*tawṣīl amr*) to a person either through another – that is, “*bi-tawassut insān ākhir*” – or without any intermediary, but through these levels – then this command makes a gradual intangible descent from the hidden noetic presence; in his own words, “*tanazzala al-amr al-murād al-tawṣīlubu min al-hadrab al-ilmiyyah al-ghaybiyyah tanazzulan mānawiyān*” (IB A:63-4; B:168). Without any change in location (*intiqāl*), the command reaches the level of sensation (*intahā ilā al-hiss*). Once it does, then, if it is verbal, either the person's hearing organ – or, if written, his vision – will come into play. It will next be transferred to the level of mental-imaginative conception (*martabat al-tasuwwur al-dhibhī*) and then to psychic conception (*al-tasuwwur al-nafsānī*). The soul will subsequently divest it of all the “blemishes” it had accumulated from the facultative precepts and its raiments of matter (*malābis al-mawādd*), so that through this “return” it might embrace its origin (*mādānī*), the noetic presence (*al-hadrab al-ilmiyyah*). This “origin” is both the *raison d'être* of its pursuit and, in a derivative sense, its ultimate destination.

One is struck by how much the logical underside of this “return,” examined in the earlier part of this thesis, has been transformed through the language of mysticism that Qūnāvī employs. His pithy remark on the origin serves to remind us of the spiritual nature of the return (*rujūr*), which consists in the removal of all facultative precepts and matter. With the point of origin (*mādād*) attained, however, the Command becomes perceptible in the form of writing, address (*khiṭāb*) or other devices of conveyance (*adawāt*

al-tawṣīl), but through the precept of the person's permanent essential individuality that lies contiguous to this command (*al-mujawarah li-hādhā al-amr*) at the noetic presence (IB A:64; B:169). It is with the specification of the Divine Will in the course of its descent through the levels that the command acquires the intangible configured forms (*hay'at mānawiyyah*) and attributes that, metaphorically speaking, impart colour to the light, before the latter can ever be perceived. In this way, the command comes to have a distinction and specificity (*tamayyuz wa tā'ayyun*) it did not possess before, doing so "through the effects which descend upon it by way of this precept of distinction." At a higher state, the soul can determine and perceive in a manner previously denied it, for lack of specificity (*adam tā'ayyunīhi*), once its essential individuality contiguous to the command and closely associated with the noetic presence is affirmed. In consideration of this upward "mobility," Qūnāvī discusses briefly the factors of proximity and remoteness or, alternatively, excess and dearth.

c. Proximity and Remoteness

Since the task is to find one's way through the labyrinthine, relational complex of the two noetic realities, each having its respective precept, the problem obviously is partly linked to the perceptive powers and capabilities of the knower. Since the object is epistemically present primarily in proportion to its *distance* from the perceiver, Qūnāvī figures that the difficulty of every higher attainment of knowledge is caused by excessive closeness and the veil of the "one" (*hijāb al-wahdah*).¹²

Actually, there are essentially two extreme points, or *tarafan*, involved: excess (*ifrāt*) and dearth (*tafrit*). One may speak of pure light and pure darkness, for example, or the sight or discernment of perceptible things manifested in either great or low intensity (IB A:65; B:170). In view of this, the sense (*fā'idah*) of an utterance must operate at moderate proximity through the “secret” that joins the two ends of excess and dearth. This “joining” has a special significance, since at one extreme lies the proximity of singular oneness, at the other that of the construction conveying it. Only moderation provides the access to the “secret” of everything from existentiation and delimitation to signifying and grasping (*al-ifādah wal- istifādah*). All of these would otherwise elude any attempt at exhaustive explanation. Such “extremities” as singular oneness (*abadiyyah*), multiplicity (*kathrah*) and *pure* light or darkness do not exhibit moderate proximity (*qurb mutawassat*) when conceptually isolated, or anything that is either perceptible or positively affirmable. More importantly for our present theme, perception varies according to how close or how far the soul is with respect to the noetic presence of light (*al-hadrab al-nūriyyah al-ilmiyyah*). It varies with respect to the perceiver’s distance to the station of singular oneness, the first level of specificity (*ta'yīn*) furnishing his own differentiated precept and discourse (*tafsīl bukmihi wa hadīthihī*). This variation is in exact proportion (*miqdār*) to his capacity to participate in the Divine Form, depending on the number he has of veils, degree of purity and capacity.

Qūnavī hastens to point out that, having a reality and a precept of its own, the “presence” of Divinity possesses its own loci of appearance, thus maintaining the

conceptual distinction between the Divine and the non-Divine. From that angle, “Divine proximity” (*al-qurb al-īthī*) can refer to two things only (IB A:65-6; B:170). One is primary Divine singular oneness (*al-ahadiyyah al-īthiyyah al-ūlā*). The most perfect existent partaking of this station is the “world of [Divine] command” (*ālam al-amr*); what is most perfect in the world of command in terms of proximity and participation (*haz̤zan*), in turn, are the First Intellect and the Angels of Suzerainty (*al-malā'ika al-muhayminah*); and so on down the chain of existence. These collectively comprise the principal, strategically situated recipients of singular oneness among the “fettered entities” (delimited by their specificity). The most perfect of the existents delimited by *form* (*al-mutaqayyadah bil-ṣirah*), however, are the Throne (“*arsh*”), the “accomplished ones” (*kummal*) and individual human beings (*al-afrād min bani ādam*) upon their realization (*tahaqqiq*) at the station of single individuality and perfection (*maqām al-fardiyah wal-kamāl*). It goes without saying, then, that the existent whose relation is closest to the level of singular oneness and first specification – the intermediaries between it and its existentiator having been either reduced or removed altogether – is in effect closest to God by way of the noetic presence of singular oneness and the “interior name” (*min baythu al-ism al-bātin*). Singular oneness for the recipient denotes interiority.

But there is a “second proximity,” which arises when we consider the exteriorization of the precept of *Divinity*, or *ulūhiyyah*, and personal intellectual realization (*wal-tahaqqiq*) through Divinity’s Form. In contrast to the first proximity, there is one existent who is most closely related to God by way of the “exterior name,” whose “portion” (*bissab*) of

the Form is greater, and in which and by which the exteriorization of the realities of Divinity is complete.¹³ Nothing is more fully endowed in this regard than the Perfect Man (*al-insān al-kāmil*), the closest creation relative to God and the most knowledgeable (IB A:66; B:171).

In view of the themes to which he will next turn, Qūnāvī reiterates the conceptual linkage of the manifold form-manifestations to speech which we have emphasized all along. The loci of appearance, the exteriorized attributes and the “matters” – both the simple and the compound forms – are called simply “devices” for conveying the inner intangible meanings; that is, “*ātāt li-tawṣīl al-mdāni*.” This relationship between device and inner meaning expresses the constant interplay between “interiority” and “exteriority.” The loci of appearance, the “exteriorized attributes,” are responsible for making those meanings perceptible¹⁴ (*sabab li-idrakīha*), initially at the presence of hiddenness and subsequently at ever-descending levels (IB A:66-7; B:172). But though they are Divine in the full sense of the word, they stem from what he calls the spirit’s “attentiveness” (*ilhifāt al-rūb*) and, above all, “the heart’s orientation away from the world of generated being [*ālam al-kawn*] toward the noetic presence of light [*al-hadrab al-ilmīyyah al-nūriyyah*] by way of a special orientation [*al-wajh al-khāss*].” This ensures that what is Divine and what is not remain distinct at the same time that they are connected at some level or other where it is appropriate to speak of a noetic consonance (*munāsabah*).

§ SPEECH

Qūnavī's theory of knowledge, as we have noted so far, is driven especially by certain imperatives derived from "human discourse"¹⁵ – this whole treatise has been written for the benefit of those who rely mainly on instructive discourse – taken as an act of interpretation. The more stable, or permanent the consonance between the knower and that which he seeks to know, and the stronger the relation of proximity, the less the need for "devices of conveyance" (*adawāt al-tawṣīl*). So much so that a single word or gesture would suffice¹⁶ in conveying the plethora of meanings and information in the speaker to the one spoken to (IB A:67; B:172). Qūnavī remarks that the consonance may be complete and the precept of proximity and unity (*tawabbud*) strong enough to facilitate independence from all intermediaries, namely, the instruments or devices used in communication. These devices are superfluous to the relation of intangible "analogues," personally realized (*nisbat al-muhādhāt al-muhaqqaqah al-mdnawiyah*) in a "perfect encounter" (*al-muwājahah al-fāmmah*). Emancipation from them stems from this *transmuted* unification (*li-istibālat al-ittihād*) and conversation (*al-mukhātabah*) at the station of singular oneness. For this reason, upon making utterances based on consonance about what is usually rendered as the "realities" or the "levels," one either knows the entire secret of any given matter in question or one does not. One either understands or fails to understand the meaning. But apprehended, the meaning is grasped whole.

The *transmission* of or the mere reference to meaning, by contrast, involves the use of various components of speech, such as letters, words, etc. – in short, the loci of manifestation. Their use gives rise to a similar problem we encountered earlier in

Chapter Two; for example, in logic, the *parts* of the judgement in the syllogism are governed by the precept of judgement, which precept is additional to that of the bare factual (i.e. the root). No sooner does a vowel (*barakah wāhidah*) or consonant (*barf wāhid*) act, under the aspect of exteriority, as a locus of appearance for a “hidden relation” that exists prior to transmission than the secret of the comprehensive union (*sīr al-jam*) make its appearance. It is only in this fashion that both effect (*athar*) and semantic value (*fā'idah*) obtain through loci of appearance, no meaning being transmissible without either a consonant or a vowel. But Qūnavī stresses that, viewed from the perspective of the “analogues” (*muhādhāt*) and “comparisons” (*muwājahāt*), in particular, with respect to Divine manifestation, the single word, letter or vowel actually “sustains the manifold” (*al-mabqiyah lil-tā'addud*) at the same time that the special secret of the address, the “*mukhātabah*,” is consolidated; they are thus consigned to the category of the *exteriorization* of the “secret of the addressing” and the very occurrence of the effect ascribed to that word. Under the heading of “analogues” (*al-muhādhāt*), at least, the single vowel or consonant behaves very much like any meaningful word would: without it there is no semantic value to the whole (IB A:67-8; B:173). Likewise, “speech” (*kalām*), being a word from which derives the appellation “speaker,” stands for the *effect* and act of the speaker upon the person spoken to.¹⁷ All these stand in analogical relation to each other.

It is interesting that while Qūnavī evokes the act of communication between two persons, Ibn Sīnā referred to the more impersonal relation of utterance (*lafz*), calling it the “psychical effect” (*al-athar al-nafsāni*) (SIB 5), to meaning (*ma'nā*) (SIB 3). Although

conversation intrinsically has to “unfold,” Qūnavī held that there can be no effect without the singular oneness of comprehensive union that the realization of connectedness (*mdā tahaqqūq al-irtibāt*) and consonance affords, which he has so far meticulously shown to be the case in manifestation (*tajallī*) (IB A:68; B:174). It is a technical way of affirming the integral, *singular* nature of the general complex of meaning and any type of utterance, for there can be no effective communication of meaning if the parts or “intermediaries,” as he calls them, are interminable, or if the transmission is not structurally cohesive. Analogically, though, words are posterior in level compared to their elementary units, the letters; but there are rising levels of comprehensive union (*jam’*) (NI 19), each of which joins and supersedes what constituent parts lie below. When the precept of the comprehensive “one” (*wahdah al-jam’ah*) prevails over that of “manifold” and “separation” (*tafrīqah*), the communication becomes keener and quicker (*al-amr aqwā wa asrā*) (IB A:68; B:174). This rudimentary provision is equally true of the station of singular oneness and comprehensive union itself, where, of the two relations of proximity enumerated above, the most typical for the level of Divine speech^c is proximity to the First Station of singular oneness and comprehensiveness.

A lack of structural cohesiveness would lead to several consequences, including the absence of any effect. The absence of the effect on the hearer by the speech of someone whose language and expression he does not understand is the result of a surfeit of intermediaries, a precept of remoteness (*al-buṭd*) and, naturally, a concealment (*khifā*) of

^c A: *al-mukhtass bi-martabat al-katām min nisab al-qurb*; B: ... *bi-nisbatay al-qurb*.

the precept of singular oneness and consonance. With respect to things Divine, the precept of the primordial station of singular oneness has to be exteriorized, whether through intermediaries or without them. When it is, that inner core which is not exteriorized retains its essential individuality and acts as the dominant factor whose sway is not impeded or delayed despite transmission through parts. Whatever is “conveyed from the intermediaries themselves [*al-wāṣil min jihat al-wasā’i*], though differing in epithet, will have swift impact only if the precept of comprehensiveness encompassing all the parts is *consonant* with the precept of singular oneness of that inner core,” in the very same way “that a limpid mirror with proper configuration [*hay’ah*] is proportionally ‘consonant’ with the image ‘imprinted’ on it” (IB A:68; B:174). The mention of this at such an early stage of his analysis of speech stems from the need to apply the same fundamental principles observed earlier for the manifestation to the phenomenon of speech. The dynamic between comprehensive oneness and singular oneness comes close to what, in his words, “is most judiciously ascertained about the nature of speech itself, its root origin and precept, and of discourse [*khitāb*], writing and other primal secrets and sciences [*min ummabāt al-asrār wal-‘ulūm*]” (IB A:69; B:174).

If, alternatively, the devices of conveyance do not quite match the message, and the difference^d between the learner (*mutaallim*) and the cognizance he seeks (*ma yātlub mārifatihu*) is too strong while the precept of the proximate relation is too weak, the informant (*muarrif*) is then justified in his endeavour to increase the number of devices

^d B: *mubāyinah* (“difference”); A: *munāsabah* (“consonance”).

needed for explanation (*tafhîm*) and conveyance (*tawṣîl*) in order to diversify the constructions and material formations¹⁸ of letters and imageries (*amthilah*) – in short, everything that acts as the locus of appearance for a hidden meaning. For explanation has been stymied for one of two reasons. Either the level of what is meant to be conveyed or expounded is too elevated for the level of external renderings¹⁹ and the devices used; or, the learner's (or hearer's) faculty is simply not equal to the perception of what is meant to be conveyed or understood, because the consonance is too remote.

§ THE DEVICES OF CONVEYANCE

Having explained the “secrets” of speech, its precepts, attributes and concomitants in close analogy with manifestation as it unfolds through its interplay of interior and exterior names, Qūnawī next tries to give a more precise account of the “devices of conveyance of that which is in the soul” (IB A:69; B:175). These devices are what constitutes the speech (*kalām*) intended to instruct the interlocutor (*td̄rif al-mukhāṭab*), and fall into three categories:

- (1) an intangible psychical vowel (or movement²⁰) (*al-harakah al-md̄nawiyah al-nafsāniyyah*) that triggers the display of the meaning residing in the soul, abstracted (*al-mujarradah*) and perceived through simple conception (*al-tasawwur al-basīt*);
- (2) a vowel (or movement) he likens to the preparation of the *forms* of meaning and words in the mind, vowel (or movement) which happens itself to be a precept of the will attaching itself to the goal so as to display it (*talban li-ibrāzihī*);
- (3) the consonants and words externalized through pronunciation (*al-lafz*) and writing, or whatever inscriptions (*naqarāt*) and signs (*ishārāt*) are drawn by the limbs, either with or without tools (*ālāt*) (IB A:69-70; B:175-6).

The “precepts” of these three categories comprise the levels of conceptions (*marātib al-*

tasawwurāt) delineated above.²¹ This is the general division into which all the elements of discourse naturally fall. However serviceable, phonological analogues alone cannot sustain Qūnavī's longer range objective of wedging the assertive husk offered him by systematic science to the inscrutable sentience of the kernel noted in his discussion on the various levels of conceptionalization. Though this sentience is much more deep-rooted than anything the human mind can churn out by itself, these levels do give us an idea of the *structural relation* involved even in the simplest mode of meaning-transmission. God, he interjects, "originates" (*yadala*) speech at *all* levels and moments^c and He does so in due regard to what path leading to knowledge is already willed by His worshippers (IB A:70; B:176). Human beings can only intellect and behold the "reasoned causes" (*al-asbāb al-mdqūlah wal-mashhūdah*) as "constructions," or *tarākīb* and "formations" (*tashkīlāt*), as attributes and the loci of appearance specified in experience for the hidden realities. Just as quiddities and forms had exhibited a conceptual internal ordering that reflected that of a more fundamental ontic core of realities, assembled together or subordinate one to the other, so the discursive constructions must display their own syntactical arrangement independently of the "intangibles" they purport to convey. The letters and words act as a base of morphological building blocks, and God being the one who originates them. Words are formed when letters are brought into "reciprocal relationship," or what he calls "*indimām bādīhā illā bādī*," with the genesis of the "structural relation" (*hudūth al-nisbah al-tarkībiyyah*) and the precept of comprehensive *union* that alone can lead to a cognizance

^c A: *al-marātib wal-abyān*; B: ... *wal-āyān*.

of the meanings of “abstract unitary speech” (IB A:70; B:176).²²

Finally, Qūnāvī is conscious of the analogy with the way in which the senses and the objects of sense (*mabsūsāt*) are conducive to knowledge. There are, he says, many ways of attaining to knowledge for anyone who avails himself of intermediaries and causes. Therefore, the same dynamic studied in the syllogism between a directly infused knowledge, as in the premises of Ibn Sīnā’s proof of God’s existence, and the apprehension of the middle term is active here as well; since exegetical grammar does not preclude but actually presupposes the formal paradigm of philosophy. In a most comprehensive sense, God teaches without intermediaries at all those of His worshippers who realize for themselves and are confirmed in their knowledge of Him through their concentrated powers (*himamahum*), which can pierce through the veils of created being (IB A:70; B:176-7). They gain this knowledge from Him without any intermediary so long as the “special property” perdures by means of which He governs all knowledge prior to what is determinable at the worshipper’s state. For all other seekers, this “prior knowledge” is the constant, and nothing can alter or substitute for it (*tā yaqbal al-tabdīl*).²³

In the text published by ‘Abd al-Qādir Ahmad ‘Atā, the sentence reads, “*idh mā sabqa
bibi al-qalam... ,*” rather than “...‘ilm.” The latter seems to emphasize the strictly preordained nature of knowledge, rather than the more strictly inscriptional meaning which the word *qalam* normally conveys. My preference for the Hyderabad version is due to its parsimony and its logical continuity with the preceding argument. While the two versions certainly are not mutually exclusive, the wording in the Hyderabad text has

a more limited purpose which, while militating against any kind of “substitution,” as Qūnavī adds, does not evoke issues relating to existentialization (*ijād*); whereas “Supreme Pen” notably does.²⁴

We began this chapter by drawing a parallel between knowledge and light, which led to the discovery that their respective “definitions” implied a structural articulation that may itself be compared to a process of self-manifestation. The various aspects of this manifestation, such as interiority and exteriority, were then discussed. Under the category of “analogy” or “analogues,” Qūnavī continued his investigation but with increasing emphasis on the structurally given relations by which the organized parts (the “loci of appearance,” if we go by the analogy with manifestation) are intended to convey an intangible core meaning. In this connection, the “devices of conveyance” acquire great importance, since any manifestation can be exhibited only through its own delimitations, by both recipient and particular device. The devices of conveyance are supposed to embody – much like a locus of appearance – the essential reality in question. All these analogies that we have been alluding to so far in this thesis are made quite explicit in this part of the Introduction.

NOTES

1. God, he says, has communicated to us that He is “the Light of the heavens and the earth,” then conveyed allegories and details (*al-amthilah wal-tafasîh*) which are then specified by the loci of appearance according to what their levels require (IB A:52; B:155). Hence, the Qur’anic passage ending with “light upon light, God guideth towards His light whomever He wills.” In this passage, God *relates* the light to Himself, although He is the very essence of light. Being linked to the higher and lower worlds (*nûrahû al-mudâf ilâ al-âlam al-dâlî wal-asfâl*), His light is made a guidance for a cognizance of His absolute light (*hâdiyan ilâ mârifat nûrihi al-muâlag*) and something that beckons to it (*dâlan ‘alayhi*). Qûnavî explains that the lamp (*mîshâh*), the niche of light (*mîshkâh*), the tree (*shâjarah*), and other allegorical utterances (*amthâl*) in the Qur’an are intended as a guidance to God’s delimited light (*nûrihi al-muqayyad*) and its specified manifestations, which are specified at the levels of its loci of appearance. To support his interpretation, he points out more emphatically that the Prophet had said that God was the Light, but that light was also His veil; that “He encompasses everything through knowledge”; and that “He comprehends everything through mercy and knowledge” (IB A:52; B:156). This all-encompassing mercy (*al-rahmâh al-shâmilah*) Qûnavî refers to as “general existence” (*al-wujûd al-âmm*). He maintained that this is verifiable through “tasting” with respect to Divinity (*al-dhawq al-itâbi*) and noetic unveiling (*al-kashf al-îlmî*). What lies beyond existence permits, not inclusiveness but, only particularity and distinction (*takhsîs tamyîz*).

2. “*Bi-zuhûr hukm ittihâd al-ahkâm al-murtafah min al-wâhid al-abâd*.”

3. I have used Chittick’s useful rendering of the term *ladunni* as “God-given” (cf. Chittick SPK 235).

4. AH 69a-72a offers a compact definition and account of *zâhir* and *bâtin*.

5. His exact words: “*mârifat al-haqâ’iq al-mutâallaqah bil-mawâdd wal-nisab al-tarkîbiyyah*.”

6. Part of this sentence is missing in Ms. B.

7. Qûnavî proceeds to define other properties of knowledge. For example, active knowledge (*îlman fi liyyan*), which indicates that the occurrence of knowledge does not depend on anything extrinsic to the knower; and passive (*înfiâli*), meaning the opposite; knowledge where no intermediary (*wisâlat*) exists between the worshipper (*abd*) and his Lord (*rabbibi*); one that requires no exertion (*tdâmmul*), even if it initially demands intermediaries, namely, the knowledge bestowed by God (*al-îlm al-mawhûb*); acquired knowledge (*muktasab*), achieved through both exertion and intermediaries. Knowledge may be attached to the possible entities in respect of their possibility, viz. creational knowledge (*al-îlm al-kawnî*); or that knowledge attached to God, His names or attributes, which are intermediaries between His hidden essence (*dhâtihi al-ghaybiyyah*) and His creation (*khalqibi*) (IB A:53; B:157).

8. Nor is it realizable, he says, through the spiritual-psychical or the temperamental-bodily faculties, the succour of the higher spirits (*imâd arwâh ‘alawîyyah*) or supernal faculties and “individuals” (*qûwât wa ashkhâs samawîyyah*) (IB A:55-6; B:159-60).

9. “*Bi-hâlah aw sisah nîrah wujûdiyyah ‘îlmîyyah*” (IB A:56; B:161).

10. The notion of *taba'iyyah* refers to relative position – that is to say, the relation based on position – of one word to another. Obviously, the order of words as such is not exactly what Qūnavī has in mind here. A different, not strictly grammatical order of priority is intended.
11. That is, “*wa mā yakhussuḥu min al-umūr al-tābi’ah li-tā’ayyunīhi*.”
12. These are “veils” because of the absence of specificity and distinction (*‘adam al-tā’ayyun wal-tamayyuz*), mentioned above, the Divine Hidden being the point of origin which neither contains multiplicity nor can itself be specified (IB A:64-5; B:169).
13. That is, “*zuhūr haqā’iq al-utāhiyyah fīhi wa bīhi atamm*” (IB A:66; B:171).
14. *Sabab* seems to have a sense somewhat close to the one it carries in Arabic grammar. Cf. Carter TeSaĀr 53-66.
15. For the twofold ascription of discourse (*khitābah*) to man and God, see Ghazzālī MIU 241-43.
16. He says, “*la-taghnī al-kalimah al-wāhidah aw al-ishārah*.”
17. Ibn Sīnā on *āthār*, see SIB 5.
18. In his words: “*tanwī’ al-tarākīb wal-tashkīlāt al-māddiyah*.”
19. “*Mustalīyyah ‘alā marātib al-ibārāt wal-adawāt al-zāhirah*.”
20. For Ibn ‘Arabī, *harakah* denotes both movement and vowel, while *harf* may stand for either consonant, letter or particle.
21. That “fourness” is subordinate to “threeness,” he says, is of the same precept (IB 70; B:176).
22. That is, “*tariqan ilā mārifat mā’āni al-kalām al-mujarrad al-wahdāni*.”
23. This, however, is not to say that some worshippers do not, with the “seeds of the Divine redolences of Liberality” (*inda hūbūb al-nafahāt al-jūdiyyah al-itāhiyyah*) attain at some moment or other to states which require exposure to what is “other than God” (cf. first sections of *Kitāb al-Nafahāt al-itāhiyyah*). Receptivity through their hidden dimensions (*al-iqbāl bi-wujūh qutubihā*) occurs only after the requisite “complete evacuation” (by the subject) had taken place (*bā’id al-tafrīqah al-tāmm*), receptivity according to the presence of absolute Divine hiddenness. This occurs faster than the wink of an eye. For in this way both the Divine and the creational secrets become perceptible. The soul is then cognizant of all or some of these levels and elaborations (IB A:71; B:177).
24. On the Supreme Pen and the existents, see MG 46-48:29-31.

CHAPTER SIX

The Elements of Speech as Willed Act

None of the factors of knowledge we have so far encountered – meaning, letter utterance, transmission, devices of conveyance, naming, etc. – is autonomous; every act of transmission, whether through speech or through writing, must be “willed.” The intention to communicate something is fundamental to proper and intelligible knowledge transmission at every level of communication. In this chapter, we shall begin with a brief discussion of “speech” as an act of the will, before going on to investigate the special characteristics of willed language which have traditionally recommended the study of grammar to the mystical school. Then, to continue our inquiry into how “form,” the *fātāsiyah*’s main vehicle for expressing their epistemological claims and now given its definable status in Qūnāvī’ own scheme, has been pressed into service by the mystics, we shall analyze the organizational features of meaningful speech, whose configured “shape” Qūnāvī adduces as the prime equivalent to the philosophical notion of form. For the combinations of letters and words that proliferate in speech, intertwined as they are with the meanings they are intended to convey, are no less “forms” than the delimited shapes even of geometrical figures. Indeed, “figuration” is exactly the mechanism Qūnāvī will adopt to provide a coherent overview of the *linguistic* dimension of those forms associated with a Divine self-manifestation unfolding through its loci of appearance.

§ SPEECH AND WILL

Qūnāvī makes it very clear that it is never the function of language, any kind of language, to be so completely limpid as to enable one to view the object or essence as it really is in itself. Since every name or attribute specified for that object acts, in fact, as a kind of “veil upon the root” (i.e. the name’s root, which remains *unspecified* and indistinct without a special designative factor [*bi-mi/ayyin*]), it follows that speech (*kalām*), an attribute, is a veil upon the speaker (*mutakallim*) with respect to his knowledge of the essence (IB A:71; B:177-8). And so, a problem arises as to what kind of knowledge that speech, a specified attribute, is supposed to convey. While our faculties cannot function without specification, which in this context is thought to obfuscate the reality, speech has to reflect nonetheless something previously hidden entirely and yet intended or willed. In relation to God, this something is the Divine manifestation from hiddenness and the presence of His knowledge, otherwise denoted by the “Cloud” (*al-‘amā*) (or, the “Breath of the Merciful” [*al-nafas al-rahmāni*]). He also describes it as the terminus of specification (*manzil tā’ayyun*) for all the levels and realities (IB A:71; B:178). But the precept of such a “performative” manifestation is initially specified by the “conative focus” of the Will (*al-tawajjuh al-irādī*) in its inclination toward existentialization (*ijād*) or address (*khitāb*) (two equivalent terms); and in its inclination toward the particular locus of appearance of the level and the particular name which Divine “Breath” and the creative Word (*al-qawl al-ijādī*) are determined to be linked up with. “Existentialization” (*ijād*) depends on the single word, “Be” (*Kun!*) (Qur’ān III:47), whether it be inner intangible “meaning,” form, or both together (IB A:3; B:98; cf. FuM III 92:127), where Ibn ‘Arabī refers to *ahadiyyat*

“*kun!*”); the name “Efficacy” (*ism al-ta’thir*) is derived from this idea in respect of Divine existentiating power (IB A:3; B:98).

Through the creative Word – which ultimately refers to the Divine command contained in the Qur’ān, “Be!” – appears the relation of the name “Speaker” (*al-ism al-mutakallim*). Stated in terms closer to Qūnāvī’s theoretical concerns, what happens is that the precept associated with the station of “Merciful Breath,” indicating the higher “presence of the names,” passes to the interlocutor (*mukhātab*) through a process of particularization of the will (*al-takhsīs al-irādī*) – and by way of the creational predispositional receptivity (*al-qubūl al-istīdādī al-kawnī*). But Will precedes the act of *existentialization*, whether of writing or of creating, in that process where the “conative focus” is closely aligned to “receptivity” as a factor of multiplicity. The prime result of this connection is that the most characteristic traits of ordinary language are intelligibly projected upon a cosmological plane from a single point of origin for speech, designated as the Word (*qawl*) and to the successive levels of subordinate relationships evinced by more profuse speech (*kalām*). The contrast between the one and the other type of communication is necessary if the perspective of even the theoretician discoursing on the problem is to be accommodated.

The issue of speech has been thoroughly debated in Islamic theology for centuries, and we need only take note of the importance of the purposeful act of speaking as it is progressively concretized and specified without, as Qūnāvī is anxious to show, incurring any change or alteration in its essential purport. The creative power of “Divine Speech”

(*kalām*), no less than that of unitary *qawl* (implying the *single* command *to be*), have prompted Qūnavī, at any rate, to make an arresting personal admission of some subsequent fame thanks to its inclusion in didactic works like Jāmī's *al-Durrah al-fākhirah* (JDF 63-4). Among the weighty things God has shown him about the Divinely-existentiated Noble Book, he says, is that

it appeared through a hidden conflict [*muqāra ab ghaybiyyah*] between the two attributes “power” [*al-qudrah*] and “will” [*al-irādah*], coloured by the precept of that which knowledge encompasses at a level [*martabah*] joining the hidden [*al-ghayb*] to what is witnessed [*al-shahādah*]. This, in a manner required by the abode [*mawtin*] and the station [*al-maqām*], and specified by the precept of the interlocuter [*bukm al-mukhātab*], together with his state and time, by way of subordination and concomitance [*bil-tabā'iyyah wal-istilzām*]. Though immaterial in respect of its reality, speech [*al-kalām*] combines in its own way the precept of the two said attributes; its exteriorization in the world of witness is dependent upon them. It is as if it were composed of them [*kal-murakkab minhūmā*]. (IB A:2; B:96-7)

To repeat, speech is normally understood to hold together by virtue of what is *intended* (*maqṣūd al-mutakallim*) by the speaker; it contains the secret of his will and its locus of appearance (*maẓhar*) (IB A:3; B:97). Its function is to disclose to the person addressed (*mukhābib*) what lies hidden inside the speaker, doing so according to a dynamic inspired by an older, likely philological distinction where *qawl* (as opposed to *kalām*) refers specifically to something that collectively embraces, in unitary fashion, all of the *meanings* which are said to subsist in the soul (USZ I:86). Al-Sharīf ‘Alī b. Muhammad al-Jurjānī (d. 816 AH/1413 CE), the famous *mutakallim* – not to be confused with the theoretician of rhetoric ‘Abd al-Qāhir al-Jurjānī (d. 471 AH/1078 CE) – described *kalām*, on the other hand, as “any two words [related through] predication [*bil-isnād*]” (JKT 185), which happened also to be the standard definition of the sentence, or *jumlah* (Bohas ALT 155).

However, it is only in its relation to *power*, as the quotation above makes clear, that speech (*kalām*) has usually been regarded by theologians as a *creative* instrument (*ālah*) or even counted as integral to both Divine and creational efficacy (*al-ta'thīr al-īlāhī wal-kawnī*) (IB A:3; B:97-8). So far, however, we have discussed the nature of the relation between *qawl* and *kalām* rather intermittently. Subordinate relations among internal parts requires a little more attention than that, but we shall not deal with this matter as yet. Let us first examine some of the syntactical features of language which Qūnāvī essentially presents as the only way in which “intangible ideas” may be wilfully expressed by the speaker.

§ THE PARTS OF SPEECH AND THEIR ARRANGEMENT

Since the act of existentiation – whether of the “elemental world” or of the “world of letters” – is willed, rather than being something which unfolds mechanically from some initial point, it will be easier to follow the methodological reasoning behind many of the arguments in the light of the *philological* principle that Qūnāvī intends to expound shortly. Will is a common feature of every instance of existentiation. But language is a most perfect embodiment of will and purpose. In view of this, the following series of analogical relationships, sketched in the Preface to his work, merits attention at this point.

Qūnāvī maintains firstly that God has created the first macrocosm (*al-'ālam al-kabīr al-anwār*) in respect of the fact that the Form which contains all other forms is that of a *Book* (IB A:3; B:98). This Book carries both the forms of God’s names and the forms belonging to the relations of His knowledge (to the existents), knowledge deposited in

the “nominal pen” (*al-mūdd fi al-qalam al-ismī*) containing all the names. Secondly, God created the Perfect Man (*al-insān al-kāmil*), whom Qūnavī and others call the Microcosm (*al-ālam al-saghir*) “in respect of the fact that the Form [is equally] an intermediary book [*al-sūrah kitāban wasatan*] that joins the ‘presence of the names’ with the ‘presence of the named’ [*al-musammā*].” Thirdly, God made the Qur’ān the very nature of created being (*khalq al-makhlūq*) according to His Form, in order that He may reveal something of His hidden mystery and, in Qūnavī’s words, *sīrr sūrat martabatīhi*. The word “*sūrah*” here is spelled not with a *sād* but with a *sīn*, and indicates a Qur’ānic “divisional chapter.” The Qur’ān itself is referred to it as the “epitome” (*nuskhah*) propounding the attributes of perfection which appear through man. The *Fātiḥah*, whose mystical exegesis he undertakes in the main body of his work, is an epitome of this Qur’ānic epitome (*nuskhah al-nuskhah al-qur’āniyyah*), but without any deficiency or loss. Finally, there are five “Divine universal books (*al-kutub al-itāhiyyah al-kulliyyah*), corresponding to the five root and primary presences (*al-hadarāt al-uwal al-asliyyah*) described in the last chapter (IB A:3, B:99).

The Book itself may be taken in respect of its elementary and *factually* manifested utterance or inscription consisting of (pregiven) letters. In the Arabic language, these letters combine together in groups ranging from two to five (IB A:7; B:105; KF 1, 17:189-90). A word’s essential individuality (*qyn al-kalimah*) manifests itself through the *nazm* (“arrangement”) of these letters; that of the *ayāt* (or Qur’ānic “verses”), in turn, does so through the arrangement of the words; and that of the *sūrabs* through the arrangement

of the “verses” (IB A:7; B:105).

The key term employed here is *nazm*.¹ The person most renowned for the elaboration of this important grammatical concept was ‘Abd al-Qāhir al-Jurjānī (d. 471 AH/1078 CE) (Zaytun IQA 41).² We shall consider other allied concepts in this chapter – such as *ijtimā*, *indimām* and *tarkīb* – but none, it would appear, quite matches the scope of *nazm*. Qūnāvī nonetheless does not offer any definition of *nazm*, perhaps because of its wide currency by that time. The second key concept, *ijtimā*, we shall translate by the somewhat cumbersome “integrated conjunction,” placing special emphasis on systematic cohesiveness as the primary structural feature of language, although without any suggestion that language, whether spoken or written, constitutes a closed system. The term is slightly more removed from philology than *nazm* and illustrates well another, seldom studied avenue by which linguistic and philosophical reflection has ventured beyond the sphere jointly occupied by both grammar and logic. But it is less inclusive in application than *nazm*.³

There is, of course, nothing peculiarly philosophical or mystical about asserting that words and letters must coalesce into a singular meaning occurring at a deeper level of the uttered whole than the mere collection of the parts. Qūnāvī’s statement echoes the familiar dichotomy of most Arabic philologists between meaning (*ma’na*) and utterance (*lafz*). His views, in fact, appear to cohere very well with ‘Abd al-Qāhir Jurjānī’s position that to utterance may go the elemental primacy of the parts without, in another more significant sense, affecting its secondary status with respect to the meaning. Briefly, for

Jurjānī, there can never be “any arrangement [*naṣm*] or order [*tartib*] among words until each is attached to the other [*hattā yuallaqu btduhā bi-btd*] and the one is erected upon the other [*yubnā btduhā ‘alā btd*]” (JDI 98). But more than that, “when uttered, words are ordered [*al-kalim tatarattib fi al-natq*] because of the ordering of their meaning in the soul [*bi-sabab tarattub mānihā fi al-nafs*]” (JDI 98). Indeed, he regarded *naṣm* as the arrangement of words or letters according to the intended meaning, of which utterance is then the “effect” (*athar*) (JDI 94). Hence, words are utterly dependent on a prior arrangement of meanings (JDI 95), and *naṣm* differs from the mere “reciprocal relationship” of one thing to another (*damm al-shay’ ilā al-shay’*), in Jurjānī’s mind, precisely in that “the goal [*al-gharaad*] of word-arrangement is not [*bi-naṣm al-kalim*] a succession of sounds uttered, but a coordination of their significations [*tanāsaqat dalālatihā*] and the coherence of their meanings [*talāqat mānihā*] in the manner required by the intellect” (JDI 95).

Furthermore, while Qūnavī presupposes the distinction between meaning and utterance, and perhaps *naṣm* in the broad sense imparted by Jurjānī, his use of ‘*ayn* (“essential individuality”) pointed to an even more epistemologically significant contrast in grammar between *naṣm* itself and ‘*ayn*. Qūnavī’s own theologically-honed vocabulary is an advertence to a literal scriptural interpretation insisted upon by many *mutakallimūn* and *ahl al-hadīth*; he himself was an authority on prophetic *ahādīth*, teaching and commenting on them in Konya, his hometown. And literal exigencies usually translate into much more circumspect views of the distinction between meaning and utterance. If words and letters are ordered, meanings are also. Not only that but relative words and

letters are discernible in the intangible meanings themselves. This met a longstanding literalist objection by *mutakkalimīn* who were insistent upon the idea advanced by the Hanbalites and similar-minded *ahl al-hadīth* that none but the most tangibly clear sense could be used here. From this angle, any difference between meaning and utterance is always relative.

Qūnavī refers to the letters, words, “verses” and “divisional chapters” – which we have already determined to be equally loci of appearance for “the hidden discourse in singular oneness” (*maṣāhir al-kaiūm al-ghaybī al-ahadī*), the termini of its exteriorization (*manāṣil zuhūrī*), as it were – as the four basic “elements” (*arkān*) of the Qur’ānic text. This may be easier to understand when we consider what Ibn ‘Arabī had himself taught about the nature of elements. He held, for example, that the four elements (water, fire, air and earth), which also go by the term “form,” are capable of being transformed into one another – for instance, by God (FuM I 415:249) – just as the letters, words, “verses,” and “divisional chapters” here are. The context of Ibn ‘Arabī’s discussion was the synthesis of the primal realities into form: each form consisted simply in the synthesis of two realities (*ta’līf haqīqatayn*) (FuM I 414:248). The four elements, however, had a fifth, a *manjūd khāmis* (“existent”), acting as their root (*asl*) (FuM I 421:250). All of this is laid out through a complex grid of interconnecting letters and celestial orbits (or spheres) (*asflāk*) the sole aim of which is to systematize the synthetic activity at every level of manifestation through symbolic representation. For instance, to each elemental sphere (e.g. water) corresponded a series of letters, each of which stood for a specific set of

properties germane either to the seen or to the unseen worlds – the world of human beings, the obscure *jinn* or the *mala'ikah*. There are basically four such levels (cf. FuM I 367-403:231-43).

The problem which then arises is this: how are what appear intellectually to be single (*mufradāt fi al-aql*) and incongruous primal elements bound together as “forms” to become yet “new” synthesized realities (FuM I 412-14:248-49). Stated differently: how can integral forms which purportedly express our knowledge of things remain whole while we know them also through their primary constitutive parts. Two basic levels have to be distinguished from the very outset; Ibn 'Arabī simply referred to the “singular” and “compound realities” (FuM I 412:248). But the issue is perhaps simpler to grasp when we construe, with Qūnāvī, the four elements (letters, words, etc.) as “principles of discourse” (*mabādī al-kalām*) at various levels of utterance and writing. They may be considered “branches” (*furu'*) as well, if there are roots above them (*fawquhā min al-usūl*) (IB A:7; B:105), roots whose knowledge in his view is verifiable only by those who can apprehend the secret of the “five presences,” named in the last chapter, along with exteriority and interiority. Qūnāvī's overriding goal is to elucidate the nature of the writing act (*kitabah*), discourse (*kalām*), letters, words, etc. (IB A:7; B:105). While it is true, moreover, that he is working out the basic framework for the more limited task of interpreting the *Fātiḥah*, these theoretical amplifications have much wider scope than might at first appear.

§ THE ACT OF COMMUNICATION

This said, let us go on with Qūnāvī analysis of the communicative act, both oral and written. We have already seen that the “secret of the manifestation of speech” (*al-tajallī al-kalāmī*) is exteriorized in every perceiver (*mudrik lahu*) and hearer (*sāmi’*) in a manner conforming to the precept of the will. The communicative act is thoroughly imbued with the power of the will. He now repeats this verity, but adds that the will itself is coloured both by the precept of the state (*hāl*) of the one “upon whom it happens to come across” (*man warada ‘alayhi*) as interlocutor and by the levels and precepts of time and abode (IB A:71-2; B:178).⁴ Thus, every level of speech occurs only through the intermediary of a veil that lies between the speaker and the one spoken to (*al-mukhātib wal-mukhātab*). He draws support for this from the Qur’ān, where God is described as revealing Himself only “from behind a veil.” This “veil,” he reasons, must stand for the actual level of the message (*martabat al-risālah*) addressed to the one who acts as the substrate (*maball*) of this veil. Just as the two noetic realities in Qūnāvī’s theory of knowledge never quite disappear methodologically, so there is an irreducible “relation of the address” linking the two partners in dialogue (*al-mukhātibayn*). The veils and intermediaries may either decrease or increase in number, but there will always remain this one relation. These observations lead to the following picture:

The ordered [*al-manzūmah*] letters and words making their appearance are “messengers” [*rūsūl*] and veils for the “mental words and letters” [*al-dhibniyyah*]; while the mental are messengers and veils to the “intelligible letters” [*al-hurūf al-maqūlah*]. The intelligible letters, in turn, contain the message of the inner intangible meaning of “unitary speech” [*risālat mā’na al-kalām al-wahdāni*], and unitary speech implies the message of the one expatiating through it [*risālat al-mutakallim bibi*], in respect of the relation of that on which he is expatiating. What is understood from the one expatiating through it, moreover,

includes the intention [*murād* – *lit.*, “that which is willed”] of the speaker with respect to the particular matter understood from his speech. Apprehending this particular matter means knowing the motive [*al-bā’ith*] behind the profusion [*sudūr*] of speech from the speaker toward the interlocuter. But this is [precisely] the secret of the will from which originates [*tantashī*] the attribute of speech qua speech [in the first place]. Above this is the all-encompassing level of knowledge of the essence [*martabat al-ilm al-dhātī*] (IB A:72; B:179).

The difference between meaning and utterance being relative, Qūnāvī has then to take us beyond the manifold levels of manifestation and toward their ultimate source in God’s essence. And each level, like the one below it, contains letters and words – without this having to destroy the unitary character of the meaning – all the way up to the unitary speech of God. At this point, he uses a minimalist “mathematical” argument to show that it is through *ends* and their precepts (*al-ghāyāt wa abkāmihā*) that the secret of the primary motives (*awwaliyyāt al-bawā’ith*), the intentions (*maqāsid*) and their causes really become known. The basis for this, he submits, is that “closure” is nothing but the antecedent⁵ that disappears somewhere between the beginning (*bidāyah*) and the end (*ghāyah*) through a kind of mixing (*maṣṣ*) with those precepts that come into play (*tadākhul al-abkām*) (IB A:72; B:179-80). This we have already seen in our early analysis of Aristotle’s and Ibn Sīnā’s views (otherwise stated in terms of a syllogistic model for science), and serves to illustrate how the same issues may be treated in different contexts. Theologically at least, in the particular instance where “will” pervades *every* aspect of the communicative act, preponderance at the “end” is said to be carried toward what comes first (*taṣḥar al-ghalabah fi ākhir al-amr lil-awwal*) (IB A:72-3; B:180).

a. The Construction of Manifested Forms

So far in his introduction, Qūnavī has been steadily developing the technical language he will need for a general, theoretically consistent rendition of Divine unicity. The aim is to give a theoretical account of the core apprehension in question that is more than just a mechanical exercise allowing one to claim possession of a purely intellectual knowledge by correspondance, whereby God is the object known as it is in itself. Rather, every theoretical claim has to be experientially rooted. For this, the seeker's "personal attribute" needs from the start to be consonant with that of the object sought. Ultimately, it is the object which offers itself in a purposeful process of self-manifestation, one that takes on the unmistakable form of willed Speech. And speech, as a willed act, according to Qūnavī, is recognizable by the particular *purposeful arrangement* of its parts. It is easy to take it merely as a structural phenomenon, rather than the outpouring of will that it has to be and which is clearly reflect in the concrete arrangement of its manifestations. We have already seen in Chapter Three how the forms or quiddities, by themselves, display uninhibitedly their interdependence for the discerning observer. From that theoretical distance, however, we had not yet discerned with exactitude the *actual* modality of their reciprocal relationships. At most, they were dubbed in rather bland fashion the "loci of self-manifestation." Loci of self-manifestation are related to each other in the same way that the parts of speech are. Having shown in this section that every act of speech exhibited the purposefulness of will, Qūnavī has now to coordinate the integrative and particularizing function of

meaning disclosing the essential individuality (*‘ayn*) through the external features of speech – namely, words and sounds.

He reminds us first that each thing exteriorized from absolute hiddenness to the world of witness, whether considered as one of the “nominal and attributive realities” or as abstracted creational individualities, makes its appearance only through the “relation of integrated *conjunction*” (*nisbat al-ijtimā’*), which is a subordinate feature of the precept of the “presence of comprehensive union (IB A:73; B:180). From a state of absolute hiddenness, the precept of comprehensive union actually *flows* by way of singular Oneness (*ahadiyyah*) into all things both intelligible and sensory (*ma‘qūlah wa mabsūrah*); and the *conjunction* of these things is specifiable in two ways:

- (1) in general terms: as a *conjunction* of the universal Divine will, on the one hand, and the request (*talab*) and predispositional receptivity (*al-qubūl al-isti‘dādī*) belonging to the possible essential individualities, on the other;
- (2) in particular terms: as a conjunction of the relations of the absolute will (*al-irādah al-mutlaqah*) in respect of the level of each instance from among the individual instances of names and attributes (*marṭabat kull fard fard min afrād al-asmā’ wal-sifāt*), on the other hand, and every possible individuality that lies concealed before the precept of comprehensive union of the individualities fused together is ever exteriorized (IB A:73; B:180).

The integration is thus principally vertical. But Qūnāvī wishes above all to say that with the “integrated conjunction” (*ijtimā’*) of any two realities, the exteriorization of whatever has been specified and willed (*murād*) by way of names, attributes and levels, finds its “created beginning” in external existence only qua particular things (*al-umūr al-juz‘iyyah*), forms, figurations (*tashakkulāt*¹), particular states (*al-ahwāl al-shakhsiyah*), etc. (IB A:73;

¹ A: *tashakkulāt*; B: *al-tashkītāt*.

B:180). And this is especially true of *particular speech*, or *al-katam al-juz'i*, constructed from human letters (*al-huruf al-insaniyyah*) – where neither “effect” nor sense (*al-athar wal-fa'idah*) is possible without there being something constructed from at least two letters, two nouns (*ismayn*) or a noun and a verb (*fi'l*). The same holds also with regard to the “spiritual” (*rūbāniyyah*). At the spiritual level, according to him, the “morphology [*tasrif*] cannot help exhibit any effect [*athar*]” – in short, there can be no morphology – without the presence of at least two letters (IB A:74; B:181). Learned scholars, he points out, hold that a single letter by itself can have no effect or signification. We are informed that while concurring with this, his teacher, Ibn 'Arabī, believes there is a letter particularized in the mind (*mushakkhas fi al-dhibh*) somehow joined to another letter exteriorized in (i.e. “*mudafan il'a al-harf al-zāhibi*”) particularized utterance (*al-lafz al-mushakkhas*) or writing.⁶ The same relationship between intangibility and palpability, or meaningful utterance, of course, is applicable to words (KF 1, 16:189); but the point is that the radical forming the word may not always be explicitly constituted. There is a hidden letter which subsists at a level of intangibility or, grammatically speaking, implicit meaning. In reply to what the Arabic philologists say about the “effect” with respect to the letters *sh*, *q* and *'ayn*, Qūnavī proposes that the radical or root itself must consist of two letters, even if a single visible letter suffices in these cases once the root is known (i.e. “*bi-sabab al-amr ri'āyatān lil-ast'*”) and so long as the listener himself understands what the speaker intends (lit. “wills”) (*murād al-mutakallim*) (IB A:74; B:181). Supported by inference (*qarīnah*) or whatever happens to inform it of the source (*al-mu'arrif bil-ast*), the understanding (*fahm*) has to

represent for itself the missing letter; otherwise the effect would not be plain. Beyond this, however, a certain asymmetry has to hold between the two sides of this division. This is most clearly illustrated by the extreme case where the meaning implicit in a phrase requires extrapolation when some of its constituent elements have been elipted. The doctrinal value of such a combination or construction is not difficult to figure out.⁷

In order to establish the basic mechanisms of communication, whether Divine or human, Qūnavī investigates six possible “constructions” of speech (*tarākīb*). The exact same tripartite division of words propounded by the grammarians into noun (*ism*), verb (*fīl*) and particle (*harf*) is used in *theology*.⁸ The “six constructions” consist of different permutations of these. Although well-known by the “grammarians” (*al-nahwīyyīn*), Qūnavī says, they are not uniformly accepted (IB A:75; B:182). All agree on the constructions based on two nouns or a noun and a verb, but differ on some aspects concerning the noun-particle combination in the vocative (*nidā*). Completely devoid of meaning are the verb-verb, verb-particle and particle-particle combinations.⁹ He then proceeds to give an account of what he regards as the proper framework within which the terms *ism* (normally, “noun,” “name” or “name-noun”) and *fīl* (“verb,” “act” or “act-verb”) are to be used in “theological science” (*al-‘ilm al-ilāhi*). Before reviewing his arguments, though, it might be useful, seeing how laconic Qūnavī is on the whole affair, to mention briefly how Ibn ‘Arabī tried to relate the findings of grammar to his science.

The “divine science” envisaged by Ibn ‘Arabī postulated the following division of the essence: the independent essence (*al-dhāt al-ghaniyyah*), the essence dependent upon it

(*dhāt fuqīrah illa hādhihi al-ghaniyyah*) and, finally, the “essence of the connection” (*dhāt al-rābitah*) that depended on the two others (FuM II 12:57).¹⁰ This, in his view, corresponded to the division accepted by both grammarians and logicians among, namely, noun, verb and particle (FuM II 14:58). For example, *ism* is to *dhāt* (“essence”) what *fīl* is to *hadth* (“creation”), and what *hurf* is to *rābitah* or, at times, *khalq* (FuM II 14:58). The *hadth*, which Zajjājī (d. 340 AH/951) likened to the *masdar*, is whatever emanates from the Creator (*sadara min al-muhdith*), and is the name of the act (*ism al-fīl*) (FuM II 15:59).¹¹

Ibn ‘Arabī’s scheme, on the whole, sheds interesting light on the degree of theoretical mastery prevalent by his time in mystical thought, which was increasingly open to commerce between two distinct disciplinary jurisdictions. Qūnavī himself does not elaborate much on this exchange, but proceeds directly to these terms’ deployment in theological science, or *al-ilm al-ilāhi*. What is particularly striking is the important role accorded to such noun-modifying devices (*tawābi*) as *badal*, *‘atf al-bayān* and *nāt* (or *sifah* or *wayf*), which may betray a special predilection for the name-noun (cf. FuM I 305:208). He describes the name-noun, or *ism*, as “the manifestation [*al-tajallī*] that causes the permanent essential individuality of that which is possible [*li-‘ayn al-mumkin al-thābitah*] in knowledge to be exteriorized” (IB A:75; B:182). This holds true insofar as this manifestation, originating in absolute hiddenness, is specified at the level of this essential individuality – namely, its locus of appearance and designation (*mu‘ayyanatihī*). The “possible essential individuality,” acting as the locus of appearance, is really a *name*, or *ism*, meant for the manifestation specified through it and at its own level.

The question now to be asked is, How does the name function with respect to what it ultimately has to name?

In respect of its specificity, or *ta'ayyunibi*, manifestation is a *sign* for the absolute hiddenness (*datāl 'alā al-ghayb al-mutlaq*), which alone is unspecifiable (IB A:75; B:182). Therefore, “naming” (*tasmiyah*), Qūnavī explains, simply consists in the name’s very pointing (*nafs datālat al-ism*) to the root of which it is a specification.¹² In FuM IV 125:108-9, Ibn 'Arabī argues forthrightly that the term *wāsilūn*, said of those who approach God in keeping with the appropriate levels (*al-wāsilīn 'alā marātib*), refers to whoever reaches the name (of the essence pointing to God)¹³ qua sign that can only point to the essence (*datīl 'alā al-dhāt*).¹⁴ And yet, for Ibn 'Arabī, all the Divine names point to the essence in one way or the other, albeit with their palpable “differences in utterance” (*lafz*) and “intangible ones in their meanings” (FuM IX 155:157-8).¹⁵

Qūnavī’s apparent “noun bias” notwithstanding, the verb also receives considerable attention since the verb-act is the “relation of efficacy” (*nisbat al-ta'thīr*): the existentiative precept’s “permanent connection” (*irtibāt al-hukm al-iḍādī al-thābit*) of God qua Existentiator (i.e. *muwjjidan*, rather than as He is to Himself) with the “essential” individuality, not essential qua individuality but insofar as it is made to exist for God (IB A:75; B:183).¹⁶ In this mode, nevertheless, the individuality accepts the precept of His existentiating act and effect according to its own predisposition (*istifdādīhā*), which demands a preponderating factor (*tarjīh*) for its existentiation in the “circle” of exteriorization (*dā'irat al-zuhūr*). The precept of such an existentiation, he explains, has

been “inscribed” (*muntaqish*) in essence within the supreme pen (*al-qalam al-dīlā*). But we shall return to all this below.

Having described the theological function of the “name” and the “act,” Qūnavī next turns to their various combinations. The first of the six constructions is that of two nouns, being the first “integrated conjunction” (*al-ijtimā’ al-awwal*) that occurs among the primary names (*al-asmā’ al-uwal*) and the primal root attributes (*ummahāt al-sifāt al-asliyyah*). In themselves, these names and attributes demand the essence’s conative focus (*tawajjuha*) upon the instantiation of created being and its presentation from hiddenness (IB A:76; B:183). It is here that Qūnavī locates what he and his school call the “first wedlock” or *al-nikāh al-awwal*, there being four levels of “wedlock” or “nuptials” the one more particular (*akhās*) than the other above it. These have been outlined in *Miftāh al-ghayb* as follows:

- (1) the Divine conative focus of the essence, in respect of the “first root names” (*al-asmā’ al-ūlā al-asliyyah*) comprising the “keys” both to the hiddenness of ipseity (*hunayyāh*) and to the creational presence;
- (2) The spiritual nuptials (*al-nikāh al-rūhāni*);
- (3) the natural nuptials of the world of supernal souls (*al-nikāh al-tabi’i al-malakūti*)¹⁷;
- (4) the lower elemental nuptials (*al-unsurī al-safalī*) (MG 127-31:74)

The second type of construction is that of the name and the permanent essential individuality qua locus of appearance for the act’s own essential individuality (*‘ayn al-fa’*) (IB A:76; B:183). The verb-act itself bespeaks the precept of the name ‘Existentiator and Creator’ (*al-muwjid wal-khāliq*) by way of the attribute of receptivity and predisposition.

Now, “utterance” based on these two constructions is instructive, has “semantic value” (*yufi dān darūratan*) and occurs at all the different existential levels where things are exhibited.

Because of certain considerations,¹⁸ Qūnavī accords special attention to the elliptical character, already alluded to, of one of the six constructions and the only grammatical instance of a noun-particle combination (cf. JDI 51). Otherwise known as the vocative, it testifies to the enduring interdependence of the source and its loci of manifestation, for Qūnavī’s purpose here is to establish the intelligibility of the source’s diffusion. What is distinctive about the vocative¹⁹ is that it requires the interlocuter’s interpretive leap before the construction’s meaningfulness can be properly understood. This fact allows him to draw an interesting parallel between the vocative, with all its hidden intangible meanings and the Word (*qawl*) by which God commands the essential individuality to be created out of the levels of the *particular* names and their loci of appearance (IB A:77; B:184).²⁰ The analogy brings into relation two distinct modes of speech, to be sure, but, more significantly, two methodological considerations as well: the intelligibility proper of the Word and another that pertains to the “virtual reconstructiveness,” as it were, characteristic of the vocative form. Qūnavī’s contention is that if the *diffusion* of the “secret of essential manifestation” in the unitary Word from the “presence of comprehensive union” (*hadrat al-jam*) were not *intelligible* in itself, then the precept of essential manifestation would not permeate anything (*lam yanfudh*). For simple purposes of illustration he closely analyzes, in relation to this overall conception, the possibilities

offered by the “virtual reconstruction” (*ka-taqdīr*) used in Arabic linguistics in cases of ellipsis. “Oh, Zayd” (“*Yā Zayd*”), for example, is meaningful because it really says, “I call upon (*adū*) Zayd” or “I call (*anādī*) Zayd” (IB A:77; B:184).

By the same token, the Divine command transmitted through some intermediary found within the limits of our own world could never penetrate if the precept of Will, which is a name of the essence, were not adjoined to it (*yaqtarin mafāhu*). This is why, for example, God enjoins prayer upon someone by means of the name “Guide” (*lisān al-hādī*) from the station of the Prophet bearing the command “Pray!” The person may fail to pray; and so “prayer will not be found [*lā tawjīd al-salāt*]...so long as the attribute of predisposition and acceptance [*sifat al-istīdāl wal-qubūl*] of the existentiative precept [*lil-hukm al-ījādī*] is not linked to the essential individuality commanded [*indāfat al-‘ayn al-ma’mūrah*] through a manifestation of the essence attached to the essential individuality of prayer [*al-mutdallaq bi-‘ayn al-salāt*] and its exteriorization at the level of appearance called ‘the praying person’ [*al-musallī*]” (IB A:77; B:184).

Qūnavī is able to draw this analogy between the vocative and Divine command in the main because of that historical affinity which the late Michel Allard had observed already existed between the grammatical use of *taqdīr* and the exegetical procedures, for example, of certain Mu‘tazilī figures close to the grammarians.²¹ It is interesting that the question of *taqdīr* was rarely examined separately or exhaustively by the early grammarians, acquiring prominence only later with such works as *Mughnī al-labīb* by Ibn Hishām’s (d. 761 AH/1359 CE) (Bohas ALT 62). *Taqdīr*, however, carried certain the risks that

normally accompany any speculative effort which, consciously or not, discloses a sense that is not immediately apparent in the text.²² Although easily manageable under normal circumstances and quite often necessary in grammar for finding the correct inflectional reconstruction of a word (Bohas ALT 63), the procedure was more difficult to reconcile with the incessant need in the traditional sciences for a tightly controlled, almost unbreachable, coordination between textual meaning and its outward expression. Indeed, Ash‘arī’s position was precisely that a reasoning patterned on grammatical devices of this sort could not render Qur’ānic meanings properly or to the satisfaction of those who bothered to confirm their views by returning to the original text itself. We need not dwell on the history of this debate. What is interesting is, first of all, that Qūnāvī avails himself of this obvious theological-linguistic heritage in order to explicate, in the case of the vocative, not merely the “reconstruction of the sentence” where it remained hidden from direct view, but the extrapolation of meaning.²³

However laden with danger, *taqdīr* thus served as the key to understanding the “movement” whereby the “essential manifestation” becomes bound up with certain other factors and finally results in existentiated being. This takes place through the Divine command accepted by the recipient, much as prayer is accepted by the worshipper through the intermediary of the Prophet, whose message and teachings constitute the instructive material upon which all subsequent knowledge is built. Qūnāvī indeed is at times clearly addressing his views to the exoteric exegetes who, while well-versed in their own fields, hoped also to benefit from a correctly executed analysis of a

sort that was hardly touched on by traditional Peripatetic method. Thanks to the strong natural historical link between Arabic philology and theology, a link that allowed him to speak of Divine self-manifestation at once as the Avicennan “forms” of systematic science and the constituent letters composing Divine self-knowledge revealed unto man, the notion of *ijtimā* offers a ready linguistic model for what he wanted to demonstrate.

b. Types of Construction and Integrated Conjunction

Construction (*tarkīb*), comprehensive union (*jam'*) and fusion (*istibālah*) all stand for the interpenetration of the precepts of the parts making up any assembled thing (IB A:77; B:184). They are distinguishable by virtue of a factor, or *furgān*, which occurs at the level of forms rather than of spirits or intangible meanings (*al-arwāh wal-mā'āni*), since it would be unusual to consider the latter with its matter. Qūnavī's purpose in taking up this question is to study at closer range precisely the *integrated* character and behaviour of “integrated conjunction” (*ijtimā*), whose parts must collectively yield something which, though generable, is unique. The precept of integrated conjunction – alternatively, “assembly” – as such is no different from an “assembly” of persons (*ka-ijtimā ashkhās al-nās*), say, in military formation (*sūrah al-‘askariyyah*), in a row (*saff*), etc. (IB A:78; B:185). The precept that integrated conjunction and construction both share suggests a resemblance in the collective patterning of things of the kind observable, for example, in the wood pieces and bricks that go into the making of a house. But the precept of integrated conjunction, construction and fusion (*istibālah*) taken all together signals the

elemental features typical of *generated* entities (*kā'ināt*), the real subject of this particular inquiry into structural behaviour. The interaction of these elements stems from the fact that constituent elements have been assembled and constructed in such a way as to enter into contact (*iltimās*) with each other, mere alignment (*talāqī*) being insufficient.

Created entities, furthermore, spring from the interaction of active and passive elements. The perfection of all “active-passive movements” (*al-harakāt al-fīliyyah wal-infiṭāliyyah*) suggests that a quality of *indistinctness*, what he refers to as “*kayfiyyah mutashābihah*,” has been consolidated for the collection (*yastaqīr lil-jumlah*). The goal is a “commixture,” or *mizāj*, whereby the whole prepares for a species-form (*tastāiddu lil-sūrāh al-naṣīyyah*); species-form cannot be achieved without the consolidation of this “quality of commixture,” *al-kaykiyyah al-mizājiyyah*, which in fact results from the cause-effect movements of the elements. The reason that “fusion” and its precept had been thrown in earlier in the investigation, according to him, was simply to apprise us of the fact “that it is one of the goals [ghāyāt] of the precept of comprehensive union [*jam'*] and construction,” but not the only one (IB A:78; B:185). Qūnāvī also discloses that while the *murād* (literally, “what is willed”) discussed earlier is certainly amenable to analysis in terms of the integrated conjunction of two realities or more, it is meant as something whose exteriorization emerges within external existence, without this being the ultimate end (*al-ghāyah al-quswā*) to which the will is attached.

It was [solely] for this reason that I had delimited the command through the names and levels and that, presently, I assert that the result and the precept of fusion [*nafījat al-istihālah wa hukmihā*] constitute [only] one of the goals. Indeed, I am thereby alluding to the secret of Divine regulation [*al-taswīyah al-ilāhiyyah*], whose precept permeates [*al-sāriyah al-hukm*] every form, or everything to which form happens to be connected, since the “particular

existential predisposition” [*al-istiṣṭad al-wujūdī al-juz’ī*] occurs through regulation. [This is the regulation] rendered in the foregoing example as the “consolidation that occurs to the whole” [*bil-istiqrār al-hāl lil-jumlah*], in respect of the quality of commixture that results from the aforementioned movements at all levels of conjugations and the levels of the “three movements” (IB A:78-9; B:185).

Commixture is, hence, related to each of the three perfections, be it intangible meaning (*ma’nawiyah*), spiritual (*rūhāniyyah*) or, finally, simple or compound of form (*sūriyyah basītah wa murakkabah*).²⁴ These movements are not self-perpetuating; they are purposeful acts of a will that is acknowledged as the universal Divine Will (*ghayāt al-irādah al-kulliyah al-ilāhiyyah*) (IB A:79; B:186). Construction (*tarkīb*), at the apogee of its movement, itself becomes intangible (*ma’nawī*), and can be distinguished from other types of synthesis only by form and matter, which introduce a plethora of distinctions. It becomes intangible when the integrated conjunction assigned to the names comes to lie just at the point where the conative focus verges on an existentialization of creation.

The difference between construction and comprehensive union, likewise, appears only at the level of forms, far below the spiritual and intangible levels. At its own, higher level, integrated conjunction has the peculiar trait of behaving as the very “principle of Lordly writing and synthesizing of the noetic letters,”²⁵ which seek to display the “name-words” and the “realities of creation”²⁶ giving expression to the secret of God’s essence and its precept intended for “His existents” (*fi mawjūdātih*) through the Divine names and attributes. Any “matter” (*māddah*) of this act of synthesis, or *al-ta’līf wal-insbā’*, is indicated by the Breath of the Merciful, otherwise known as the “comprehensive repository” (*al-khizānah al-jāmtah*) and Mother of the Book. This is the paragon of intangible construction, namely, the integrated primary conjunction (*al-ijtimā’ al-awwal*) he also

identifies with the First Wedlock, while formal and material construction (*sūrī wa māddī*), known as the Second Wedlock, is another (IB A:80; B:186). Closer to material construction are, for example, the conative focus of the “luminous spirits” (*tawajjuhāt al-arwāh al-nūriyyah*), this time considered in respect of their faculties and “whatever permeates them of the special names” (*khawāss al-asma'*) (IB A:80; B:187). Integrally conjoined, these names occasion the spirits’ existence in the imaginal world (*‘ālam al-mithāl*). The spirits’ own conative foci spawn their respective acts only after these spirits have been delimited (*taqayyudihā*) by their proper imaginal loci of appearance in conformity with their attributes, doing so “according to those levels of the spirits’ loci of appearance to which the faculties and any special qualities reaching them from the nominal levels [*al-marātib al-ismā'iyah*] give rise,” thereby yielding what he calls the “higher forms” (*al-suwar al-‘alāmiyyah*) and “bodies” simple of relation (*wal-ajrām al-basītah bil-nisbah*) (IB A:80; B:187).^b

Before going on to the *lettered* construction, of which the integrated conjunction is the “principle,” let us point out one crucial aspect of conjunction having to do with the “unitariness” of the effect that most clearly typifies it. As a rule, Qūnavī explains, every unitary effect (*kull athar wahdāni*) is conducted from the “presence of comprehensive union and existence” by means of a hidden movement, or *harakah ghaybiyyah*, that must flow through the singular oneness of comprehensive union (*ahadiyyah al-jam'*) (IB A:80; B:187). The unitary effect determines for the realities an integrated conjunction,

^b A and B differ in wording. For this interpretation, I have relied more on Ms. A.

previously absent but now exteriorized as their special character through the conative focus of the will. He avers that every conjunction resembles construction (*tarkīb*) at least in this respect. What distinguishes construction is that it also produces a form according to the one precept that renders the construction unique in its own right, and another it shares with others in the sense delineated just above. Constructions as a class uniquely consist of “Divine letters,” whose precept is relatively general and inclusive – that is, “*al-hurūf al-itābiyyah al-‘āmmah al-shāmilah al-hukm*” – and the “human letters [i.e. consonants]” (*al-hurūf al-insāniyyah*), which naturally belong to every level of human articulation (*makhrāj*)²⁷ (IB A:80; B:187).

Hence, every level of the macrocosm (*al-‘ālam al-kabīr*) is a point of articulation (*makhrāj*) for the general Form of the Divine “presence.” Collectively, these levels are infinite, yielding inexhaustible varieties of forms, words, and so on down to the concomitant precepts (*al-abkām al-lāzimah laba*) – e.g. names, attributes, properties, qualities. The Divine and creational words themselves are inexhaustible on account of the infinite number of possible entities and the interminable kinds of conjunctions and constructions.²⁸ However, every *formal* object of perception, no matter what perception or human conception at levels belonging to human existence, or articulations, has also to be an integrated *conjunctive* relation (*nisbah ijtīmā’iyyah*) at some level or other, distinctly different from other integrated conjunctions, with their respective types and differential or universal levels (*marātibihā al-tafsīliyyah wal-kulliyyah*). It takes, then, an equivalent “comprehensive construction” (*al-tarkīb al-jam‘i*) to initiate the form such that the

twofold exteriorization of this form by way of construction and comprehensive union is intended by an “agent of construction and comprehension” (*al-murakkib wal-jāmi’*). This agent is conditional to the essential individuality of the structure (*murakkab*). From this, Qūnavī infers that the immediate object of attachment (*mutḍalliq*) belonging to the “initial creation,” construction, integrated conjunction and exteriorization is the forms,^c not the immaterial essential individualities (*al-dyān al-mujarradah*) and the universal realities (*al-haqā’iq al-kulliyah*) themselves. The latter are the structural roots, that is, “*usūl al-murakkabāt*,” and whatever has been conjunctively integrated (*al-mujtamāt*) at all levels where comprehensive union (*jam’*) and construction are both to be found; they act as matter for both comprehensive union and construction. His main concern is, once again, to isolate “form,” the key term that alone admits of a structural analysis in terms of the *lettered* exteriorizations which must be given even as we assume that both an integrated conjunction and a comprehensive union are equally necessary for the crowning moment at which pervasive meaning is finally imparted to the entire manifestation.

By disclosing various aspects and moments of articulated structure, this methodological probe adds new depth to the Avicennan philosophy of forms. However, it could easily have been a kind of Pyrrhic victory were Qūnavī to lose sight of the originative interrelatedness of the ontic *realities* themselves, as opposed to the forms or the quiddities. But Qūnavī’s perspicacity here seems only to confirm what the classical philologists always advanced in their account of the miraculous character of the Qur’ānic

^c B: *wal-zubūr al-suwar*.

text. ‘Abd al-Qāhir Jurjānī, for example, attributed the Qur’ān’s *iṭāz* to the arrangement (*nazm*) of its content (Zaytun IQA 42), by which he meant that the arrangement of the outer forms of articulation is dependent on an *inner* arrangement existing either in the soul or according to some other order of intelligibility (JDI 95). There is always a “parallel” level of arrangement which finds expression in another. The term is quite inclusive in scope, similarly to “integrated conjunction,” whereas Qūnavī at this point is seeking to isolate one aspect of that suggested by the form associated with construction; and, more basic still, the minimal requirement of articulated sound or letters: *indimām*, or “reciprocal relationship.” If conjunction and construction refer to anything it is first of all to the “reciprocal relationship” of the immaterial realities themselves – in his words, “*indimām al-haqāiq al-mujarradah ba ḫuhā ilā batin*.” And just as Jurjānī considered arrangement to be dependent on the *intended* meaning of the speaker, so Qūnavī thought that the realities are interrelated through a movement that originates in a distinct *intention* (*bi-harakah minba’ithah ‘an qasd khāss*) belonging to the “conjoining” and “constructing” agent (*al-jāmi’ al-murakkib*) (IB A:81; B:188). This agent’s “movement” must display either an existential form or a word “whose exteriorization is sought within an interlocutor’s soul.” After being hidden, the word (*kalimah*) thus is “witnessed” according to its most rudimentary characteristics first through a relation of reciprocity, or *indimām*.²⁹ Because of *indimām*’s signal importance in the attempt to give greater linguistic specificity to the hierarchical ordering of the realities with which we have by now become familiar, let us look a little closer.

c. The Reciprocal Relationship

The term *indimām*, as we saw, was taken by Jurjānī as the most basic requirement for any syntactical construction of utterances or *alfāz* – in contrast to *naẓm*, which comprehends the meanings of expressions as well. The term *damm* refers, directly referring to the “construction of an expression” (*tarkīb al-ibārah*), more properly belongs to “syntactical science” (*waqf ‘ilm al-naḥw*) than to the “science of meanings” (*ilm al-maṣāni*)³⁰ as these two were known until around the thirteenth century. The science of meanings is one of the two principal fields of *balāghah* (Arabic “rhetoric,” not to be confused with Greek “rhetoric”³¹). According to al-Sakkākī (d. 626 AH/1228 CE), *balāghah* consists in “the study of the properties of the structure of speech and the evaluation thereof, with the aim of avoiding mistakes in the use of language, depending on the requirements of the situation” (Bohas ALT 118-19). As Jonathan Owens explains, this science “dealt primarily with the correlation between word order variation on the one hand and on the other the different sentential meanings associated with this variation, and the pragmatic implications of the different choices” (Owens FG 243). The science of expression (*ilm al-bayān*), the second field in Arabic rhetoric, deals with how to “produce the same meaning in different ways with different degrees of clearness” (Bohas ALT 119); it has to do, in short, with metaphorical meanings. Therefore, while the first field is concerned with semantics, the second is concerned with figures of speech. Other subfields include *ilm al-istiḍāl* (“science of logical deduction”), concerned with “establishing the truth value of various types of nominal sentences”; *ilm al-faṣāḥah*, with “correct and appropriate

pronunciation”; *ilm al-shīr*, the study of poetry; *nahw* (“syntax”); and *sarf* (“morphology”) (Owens FG 244).

The idea of *damm* or *indimām* may be traced back to ‘Abd al-Jabbār³² (d. *circa* 414 AH/1023 CE), the famous reviver of Mu‘tazilī doctrine, who derived it in turn from al-Rummānī’s seminal studies on *ta’lif* (Zaytūn IQA 38-9) – i.e. sentence construction or composition. Grappling with the nature of *fasāḥah*, one of the aspects of speech long considered crucial to understanding the inimitability of the Qur’ān, he settled on a view that seemed to hark back more to Abū Hāshim b. al-Jubbārī (d. 231 AH/845 CE), one of his teachers (Zaytūn IQA 39). His position was that *fasāḥah*, being primarily “authenticity of expression and excellence of meaning,” is not exhibited through isolated words, or “*ifrād al-kalām*,” but through words which are associated with each other (*al-kalām bil-damm*) in a special manner through attribute (*sifah*), inflectional case endings (*Irāb*) and position (*maqātīl*). We have argued all along that on the question of *damm*, Jurjānī was much more restrictive than this, reserving the large sweep envisaged for it initially by predecessors like ‘Abd al-Jabbār more to the study of *naṣm*, which he considered the very essence of any given text.

This is the same general division of labour adopted by Ibn ‘Arabī and his school. The concept of *damm* may normally apply to elements belonging to the same level. In Ibn ‘Arabī’s sense, however, level can be either of meaning or of outward expression. For example, *damm* may be applied exoterically to consonants (*burūf*) and to vowels (*harakāt*) – the latter also known as the “minor letters” (*al-burūf al-sughār*) (FuM II 2:51). Their

commixture (i.e. *imtīzāj* ‘alam al-harakāt bi-‘alam al-hurūf) is meaningful only once the consonants, which alone make up the word radical in Arabic, are assigned “some kind of arrangement [*bād nizām*] and enter into reciprocal relationship [*wa damma bādūhā ilā bād*] so as to become a word [*fa-takūna kalimah*]” (FuM II 2:51). Yet we also know that the level of intangible meanings may itself be described exoterically in terms of mutually-related letters whose organized assembly into word radicals yields unique meanings.

In Ibn ‘Arabī’s mind, this implied the following. It is conceivable that one meaning be reciprocally associated with another meaning, as in the case of the word “*intām*,” which denotes what both God and man are capable of bestowing (FuM XIII 525:470). There is a sense in which meanings are “mutually related” in this way, and another in which erstwhile meanings are also separate from each other – God and worshipper are not identical (FuM XIII 525:470) – and thereby taken in their *structural* mode as letters or words before any consideration of their integral unity in the intangible meaning.³³ Ibn ‘Arabī’s conception tends to be quite elaborate, and we need not enter into its truly enormous detail to get the gist of his idea. Elsewhere, for instance, he points out how God declares about His creation, “Thereupon have I fashioned it [*sawwaytubu*] and blown into it [something] of my Spirit [*wa nafakhtu fīhi min rūbi*]” (Qur’ān 15:29) This he translates as the positing of vowels on the basis of the consonants that are fashioned together (*bād taswīyyatihā*) (FuM II 2:52). Vowels are not expressed in written language, and so are hidden; through them, therefore, something new emerges called “word,”³⁴ much the same as when “each single person” (*al-shakhs al-wāhid*) becomes a human being

(*insānan*) (FuM II 2:52).³⁵

Ibn ‘Arabī’s discussion in *Inshā’ al-dawā’ir* on the “three things” leads him even to identify the “change” itself (*mughāyarah*) – which the vowel (*lit.*, the “movement”) introduces into the word, as an example – with a reciprocity affirmed of one thing in relation to another (*indimām shay’ mā ilā shay’ ākhār*); the chief consequence of this is that something new,³⁶ some *form* (*sūrah ma*), arises (LAI 17). The vowel itself may not be identical to the reciprocal relationship, but change in this peculiar sense in fact is *indimām*’s sole claim to creative efficacy, if a theory advocating the mere mechanical generation of meaning through the disparate, constitutive elements of its appearance is to be avoided. But upon the *whole* phenomenon willed in the act of conative focus is conferred a manifest uniqueness that is both apposite to Divine contemplation and borne by structural relations essentially conceived on the pattern of human discourse. Although this takes place by virtue of the realities’ own perceptibility by way of reciprocal relationship, realities which themselves may become mere letters – consonants and vowels – all this would still pass for redundancy were it not for Qūnavī’s unremitting insistence on the comprehensive union and singular oneness as the true unexpendable source of uniqueness, where the “thing” exteriorized through Divine existentiation at any existential level whatsoever itself carries an intangible uniqueness that is all but unfathomable without the intermediation of both will (*masbī’ah*) and predisposition (*isti’dād*) (IB A:81-2; B:188).

It is not surprising then that “movement” (more precisely, vowels³⁷) and intention

(*qasa*) should be the very means by which not only what Qūnāvī now compresses into the single term “comprehensive construction” (*al-tarkīb al-jamī*) but perception itself, “witnessing” and integrated conjunction all begin (IB A:82; B:188). But although perception is thrown in as well, as something that “takes its appearance” through that which is exteriorized, Qūnāvī reminds us that we will even then be speaking of relations and not external, actually-existing entities or individualities – that is, *dyān mawjūdah*. And in this sense, it is to be observed that the object of attachment in any act of witnessing is constructed from *simple* things (*al-mutrakkab min al-basā’it*), to which nothing else may be added. Nothing can be added to the simplicity of its elements except the “relation of comprehensive union,” whose function is to exteriorize whatever lies concealed (*al-amr al-kāmin*); and this is guaranteed only if the integrated conjunction is performed in the intended manner (*al-nahwā al-maqṣūd*); otherwise neither the object concealed could be known nor its essential individuality exteriorized. It is for this reason that radical simplicity (*bisātah*) may well be regarded as “our veil,” *hijabuka*, but – and this is the most paradoxical thing of all – the act of construction (*tarkīb*) that shrouds (*sīr*) the realities and, at the same time, allows the veil (that is to say, the veil of “radical simplicity”) to be lifted. How it is that the veil (at least partially and suggestively) is lifted can be answered only by looking directly at the structural matrix discernible at any given level of intelligibility. It is precisely in order to deal with this paradoxical aspect that he isolates the more typically structural characteristics of meaningful utterance apart – that is, the meaning analyzed into those parts externally constituting it, irrespective of that level of

subsistence into which they are assimilated through the different phases of fusion, construction and conjunction. The structural matrix being at this stage the paramount concern, Qūnavī gradually narrows down his discussion from the “figuration of *utterances*” to that of the letter, given especially that intelligibility is a “sphere” mediated principally by forms, whether considered as a manifold or as collected within a single comprehensive form.

§ FIGURATION

In his treatment of “figuration,” Qūnavī begins by considering the word *kitāb* or “book,” which he says is derived from *katibah*, or “squadron”; it is the sort of “integrated conjunction” which makes for a “military formation” (*ijtimā’ al-sūrah al-askariyyah*) by virtue simply of that common trait that exhibits reciprocal relationship (*indimām*), which in the case of the “book” exists among the letters and words to be found in a book.³⁸ Reciprocity at this basic level requires, just as we saw, the reciprocal association at another Jurjānian level where the hidden immaterial meanings themselves³⁹ are patterned on subordinate relations (*tabdiyyah*) with respect to each other (IB A:82; B:189). A familiar example of this is the accidents’ intrinsic propensity, or *tahayyus al-darād*, to being subordinate to substances (*tabdiyyat al-jawāhir*); if they themselves were determined to be immaterial, the “propensity” would have to be a separate attribute attached to them.

In order better to understand the structural dynamic involved, Qūnavī further postulates for this reciprocal relation two different, ruling *precepts* that allow it to perform

its function in view of the higher, integrated character of the reality:

- (1) “arrangement” and “continuity” (*al-nazm wal-ittisāl*), synonymous with the combinative factum of comprehensive union and construction (*tarkīb*); and
- (2) separation and specificity (*al-fasl wal-tamayuz*), to which category belong two things: substitution (*tabdīl*) and figuration (*tashkīl*) (IB A:82; B:189).

Although elementary, reciprocity seems, therefore, to contain the precept which alone foreshadows the “higher functions,” as it were, by way of *nazm* and *ittisāl*. Since he has already examined it, Qūnāvī turns his attention to separation and specificity. Separation (*fasl*) is indicative of all the precepts of intertwined (*mutadākhilah*) intangible meanings and realities, where each is linked to the other in respect of consonance and subordination (IB A:82-3; B:189). Clearly, subordination which has the weighty question of the ontic realities clearly in view is knowledge obtained through “informative and explicative devices” (*adawāt al-mūtarrafah wal-shārihah*) – in other words, through any method whatsoever – that seeks to specify the secondary precepts governing the realities’ interconnections by relating them first back to their ontic roots (*usūlibā*). It seeks to do this in order to remove, through such a distinction, the ambiguity (*iltibās*) naturally attending the precept of the overarching “single existence” (*al-wujūd al-wāhid*) that extends over them (IB A:83; B:190). We are, indeed, seeking to learn the precept of this “single existence” upon the specific reality we choose to consider by relating it “incontrovertibly and without any mixing”⁴⁰ to that specific reality and to no other. In this fashion, every intangible meaning may admissibly be linked to its own root, which remains distinctive in itself and in firm possession of precepts that belong to it alone. The root indeed is

what confers the distinctiveness of each entity.

Qūnavī is thus groping for yet another application of a principle showing the perdurance of the source through the different phases of its existence. He wishes to consider this principle here, however, through the *particular* forms and figures (*al-suwar wal-ashkāl al-juz'iyah*) that, all together, are precepts of the realities, the *universal* immaterial and intelligible figures and, finally, by extension, the discrete “object of attachment [presupposed by] substitution” (*mutḍallaq al-tabdīl*). *Tabdīl*, or substitution is linguistically a branch of *tabdīyyah* (“subordination”) whose “metaphysical realization” within existence, though delimitable methodologically in the above manner, obeys the same principles of association enumerated in this chapter – namely, integrated conjunction and disjunction (*al-wujūd bil-ijtimā' wal-iftirāq*), construction and dissolution (*al-tablīl wal-tarkīb*), etc. But it has the additional feature of abiding equally by the exteriorized specifications⁴¹ associated especially with various types of figurations (*anwād al-tashakkutāt*) in the category of separation and specificity (IB A:83; B:190). Substitution is a grammatical operation that marks the difference between the inclusiveness of comprehensive union, on the one hand, and what we shall now call the “substituted” forms in a borrowed, structurally parallel sense.

It is not so difficult to see why this should be so. Here is a grammatical concept which promises to capture the knowability of a thing in its creative presence qua something-in-the-act-of-knowing, in contradistinction to the singularity of its essence, and thereby emphasizes the continuity but not the identity with the source. And yet this

knowability is peculiar to it alone. It performs this role as an act of speech whereby the referent of self-predication or -description, while remaining distinct, and exclusive, is equally known through the predicate, which then becomes designated as its *substitute*. The school of Ibn ‘Arabī generally regarded *badal* (“substitution” or “permutative”), together with other *tawābi* (“noun modifiers”) – such as *nāt* (“descriptive adjective”) and ‘*atf al-bayān* (“explicative”)⁴² – as part and parcel of any endeavour to inform about or to define (*al-tarīf*) a thing (FuM II 17:60; I 305:208). In addition to those terms, later grammarians generally included or *ta’kīd* (“emphasizer”) and ‘*atf al-nasq* (“conjunct”) among the *tawābi* (Owens FG 154). Ibn Mālik (b. ca 600), Qūnavī’s Damascene contemporary (and, incidentally, fellow-member of the Shāfi‘ī *madhhab*),⁴³ described this class of noun complements by referring to their *inflectional* subordination to the “primary names” (*yatba‘u fi ḥrab al-asmā’ al-uwal*) in a sentence (SIB 506:399). But *badal* had the special distinction of being able to stand independently for the noun it modified; thanks to this it behaved more like a “substitute.”⁴⁴ Jurjānī’s more rigorous definition required simply that the “substitute [*badal*] take on the inflection of that for which it is a substitute” – in more technical jargon, *al-mubdal minhu* (JKM 929). Moreover, he adds, it could be either proper or primary in meaning,⁴⁵ some part of the noun object it stands for (*badahu*) or the whole of it (*aw mushtamilan ‘alayhi*).⁴⁶

Ibn ‘Arabī employs the same device in a wide range of topics – for example, to differentiate between *wudū’* (“ablution”) and *tatmīm* (namely, purification through earth). He

⁴² For example, “‘Umaran” in “*Ra’aytu akhāka ‘Umaran*” (JKM 929).

denies that *tatmīm* can be regarded as a substitute (*badalan*) for *wudū'*; instead, it is a religiously-binding duty (*mashrū'ah*) whose “performance has a special stipulation” (*lāhā wasf khāss fī al-‘amal*) (FuM V 518:419). It is quite a different matter, however, with *ghasīl* (“complete purification”). It conforms to the rule of substitution, where the “substitute” is capable of replacing the “one substituted” (i.e. “*an yahūl maball al-mubdal minhū'*”) (FuM V 518:420). Another area closer to our present discussion is where “knowledge of the object known” (*al-ilm bil-mdūm*) does not imply that the object itself has to occur in the soul, but only that the object be known in its quality (*haythiyatibā*) as “object of knowledge,” whether it exists or not (FuM I 304:208). By granting further that there are four levels of knowable objects (*mdūmat*) – mental (*dhīnī*), individual (*‘aynī*), verbal (*lafzī*) and written (*khattī*) – Ibn ‘Arabī proceeds to argue that in the case of the last two, which act as “subjects for signification” (*mawdū‘ān lil-dalālah wal-tafahhum*), a verbal and written object of knowledge never “descends” (i.e. correspond by signification) qua verbal and written form, *alone*, to another form (FuM I 305:208). In a verbal and written sense, “Zayd” consists merely of three letters: Z-Y-D. And in this same respect, “Zayd” has no physical dimensions to speak of; hence, there is no descent toward another form, but only signification (*dalālah*). In the event of confusion with another person, which would undermine the signification (*dalālah*), we would need either an epithet (*naṣīḥ*), substitute (*badaḥ*) or conjunct (*‘atf al-bayān*) for better precision.

Set against this background, what Qūnāvī purports to do with the idea of substitution in the case of the particularized figures becomes somewhat more comprehensible. The

“particular figures” (*al-ashkāl al-juz’iyyah*) and particularizations (*tashakkhusāt*) specified in the “world of direct witnessing” define the shapes of the exteriorized groupings of letters and words appearing in their particular dimensions as loci of the exteriorization for the “precepts of hidden universal figures [or shapes]” (*al-ashkāl al-kulliyah al-ghaybiyyah*) (IB A:83; B:190), for which they presumably then act as the direct substitutes. The simple realities we have found so epistemologically problematic, along with the qualities (*kayfiyyāt*) observable in them, are here analyzed almost geometrically in terms of the states (*ahwāl*) of “that thing which is figured” (*mutashakkal*) qua *figured*, level for level. The realities share in a common immateriality, substantiality (*al-jawhariyyah*) and the attribute of “essential individuality” (*ṣifah al-‘ayniyyah*). Indeed, they resemble each other to the point of being, as noted, united both in their common existence (*al-wujūd al-‘āmm al-mushtarak baynabā*) and in a hidden Divine secret. This, however, does not confer upon them the multiplicity they need to be what they are. A constant refrain, therefore, is Qūnāvī’s view that all differences among them arise only through the forms and manifested figures, which alone permit us to see them in their exteriority at least. As a general rule, any “essential limits” or bounds (*budūd dhātiyyah*) postulated for the object are “essential” only to these forms and figures, not to the thing itself that is formed (*mutasawwar*) or figured (*mutashakkil*) as an essential individuality (*‘aynāt*). Granting this, though, does not mean that the object of figuration, the *mutashakkil*, can be seen in any other manner except through the figure (*shakl*) it happens to have. The problem simply is this, that the object of figuration may wrongly be supposed to be delineated in respect

of its hidden essence (*dhātihī*) (IB A:83-4; B:190-1). This is not the goal, nor is it the purpose of the figuration, which enables us to view the object and to do so under this aspect – since “viewing” already implies a particularized perception. And yet one also speaks of the figure (*shakl*) only with the provision that it can be described strictly through the object of figuration (*mutashakkil*). Therefore, as the object of figuration is perceptible only through the intermediary of the figure (*wāsitat al-shakl*), so the figure is discernible only through that object (IB A:84; B:191).

Through the insight offered by communicative structure, the limited scope permitted by Ibn Sīnā’s position – restated as the error of thinking that knowing the accidents and the attributes of the “realities of things” can procure for us a knowledge of the attribute qua the reality of which it is an attribute (IB A:84; B:191; cf. Tal 34, MQA 31) – may now be distended for a more fecund use of theoretical reasoning. In point of fact, we come to know the attribute “insofar as it is attribute to some *object-of-attribution* [*min baythu kawnihā sifah li-mawsif mā*], where the qualities [*al-kayfīyāt*] discerned are “states” [*ahwāl*] which belong to *something* figured qua *figured* [*li-amr al-mutashakkal min baythu huwa mutashakkal*] and not to the thing unconditionally [*mutlaqan*]” (IB A:84; B:191). This type of cognizance (*marifah*), he says, is primarily concerned with relations, rather than the ontic realities themselves. What comes to our ken are the relations of realities in terms of negative or relative delimitations (*quyūd salbiyyah aw idāfiyyah*), while in their inner recesses they remain unknown. This is the goal of method and theoretical inquiry, which nevertheless does not preclude a knowledge of the realities’ inner recesses through

another means based on “tasting,” as practised in this domain by “the greatest of mystics.”

This argument may be clearly illustrated, in his view, by reflecting on the whole nature and purpose of definition with respect to any simple thing. The parts⁴⁶ of the simple reality are, for example, not those of the reality itself, but of the *definition* determined mentally by the intellect (IB A:84; B:191). Moreover, the thing in its essence is not known well enough as it is in itself to permit either a disavowal or an affirmation of those parts. Qūnāvī employs this example in order to suggest an alternative, or at least a contingent sense in which one may have a rational knowledge of a thing, however limited our ability or enduring our inability to know its reality in its simplicity and absoluteness (*itlāqihā*) as it subsists at the “presence of Divine hiddenness.” Divine hiddenness remains always its source in the most original sense; and should the *object* of figuration ever be regarded separately from the figure, this can only be at that “presence of Divine hidden knowledge.” It cannot be specified, distinguished or determined with exactitude in any conception (*tasawwur*). And it stands to reason, in turn, that it cannot be defined (i.e. *taṣīfuhu wa taḥdiḍuhu*), named (*tasmiyyatuhu*) or rendered by any expression (*wal-ta bīr ‘anhu*). The only realizable knowledge of it has the synoptical or summary (*mujmal*) significance that “there is *something* [*thammata shay’an*] behind the figure the nature of which, when considered separately from the forms [*mujarradan ‘an al-suwar*], attributes, designated aspects [*al-ītibārāt al-miṣayyanah lahu*] and figures, cannot be precisely determined through conceptualization” (IB A:84-5; B:191-2). It can be neither intellected

on the basis of specificity (*td̄yin*) nor witnessed directly.

In sum, there must be some distinct factor (*amr*) through which appears the figure, one that delimits (literally, “fetters”) another distinct factor to which is ascribed the term “figuration” – in his words, “*taqayyada bibi al-amr al-mawṣif bil-tashakkul*” (IB A:85; B:192). Both the figure *and* the object of figuration are perceptible only according to that first, overriding factor, which Qūnavī describes as being the “relation of comprehensive union” (*nisbat al-jam‘*), the factor making for exteriorization in the first place. The “reality of the thing” considered separately from the figure (*mujarradan ‘an al-shakl*) and the precept of figuration, on the other hand, cannot be known; that reality distinguishes it by essence, though not through any intellected aspect (*tawassut itibār*), distinction (*taṣayyuz*), specification (*td̄ayyun muta‘qqaṭ*) or some informative locus of appearance (*maz̄har mitarrif*).

NOTES

1. The *Lisān* explains that the verbal form of *nazm* – *nazmū* (“I arranged”) – indicates joining in series or in a thread. The word is used to describe what a poet does, namely, versification. *Nazm* has this connotation, in particular.
2. ‘Abd al-Qāhir Jurjānī is thought to be the first to have conceived of *nazm* in the sense used here – i.e. without reference to prose (*manthūr*), as opposed to versification (*al-manzūm*) (Zaytūn IQA 41). Zaytūn disputes this, however, pointing instead to one of Jurjānī’s teachers, the Mu’tazilī ‘Abd al-Jabbār, as the first person to have “elaborated” if not conceived of the idea.
3. Some relevant studies on logic and grammar include: Elamrani LAG; Zimmermann FCS; Jihāmi ILF; Mahdi LaLoIs; Muhaq CTP. On their differences, see Langhade MeGrMe.
4. That is, “*al-marātib wal-ahkām al-waqtiyyah wal-mawtiniyyah wa ghayribimā*.”
5. “*Li-anna al-khawātīm ‘ayn al-sawābiq*.”
6. This is not to be confused with what Zajjājī calls *burūf al-mā’ānī*, referring to the particles *ilā*, *thumma*, etc. (ZID 54); in fact, one book ascribed to him, *Kiṭāb burūf al-mā’ānī wal-sifāt*, deals solely with this topic.
7. Speech consists of the speaker’s effect upon the interlocutor (*mukhātab*) by means of a power (*quwwah*) subordinate to his will. This will, in turn, is attached (*mutaqallibah*) to the transmission (*iśāl*) of what is *in his soul* and its presentation to the interlocutor (*ibrāzibh ilā al-mukhātab*). If this holds, then a similar process takes place in God’s existentialiation of the possible essential individualities, namely, His words and letters. Jāmī was quite correct in pointing out, as did other *mutakallimīn*, in this connection the comparability of *al-katām al-nafsi* with one aspect or other of Divine Speech (JDF 61). God, however, exteriorizes from Himself (*min nafsihi*) by means of a hidden motion of love (*al-harakah al-ghaybiyyah al-hubbiyah*) known as the “conative focus of the will” (*al-tawajjuh al-irādī*) (IB A:74; B:181). The precept of this *tawajjuh irādī* is exteriorized by means of the comprehensive union of essential individualities (*wāsitat jāmt al-ayān*) through the “single existence,” which encloses them (*al-shāmil labā*) along with their construction (*tarkibihā*). In this way, God both knows and exteriorizes the precept of His attributes, names and perfection.
8. See Zajjājī’s extensive discussion of this classical division in the *Idāh* (ZID), especially Chs. 1-4.
9. This basically agrees with the position of Jurjānī, who mentioned three main combinations: name-name, name-verb and the particle with either of them (JDI 48-51).
10. The third kind refers to the bond between two independent essences, two dependent ones, or one of each (FuM II 12:57).
11. Cf. FuM III 63[a]:107). Ibn ‘Arabī here broaches Zajjājī’s distinction between the *masdar* and the *fi*/ derived from it, without committing himself to any side in the old debate concerning which one derives from the other (ZID 52-3, 56-63), and is quite consistent in his non-committal (cf. FuM IV 584:414-15).
12. See SIB 7-16 for Ibn Sīnā on *ism*. Elamrani-Jamal sheds some light on the origins of this debate, especially the cross-influences between *katām* and *nafw*, including Ghazzālī’s discussion

of the issue in *Maqsad al-asnā fi sharh mā'ānī asmā' Allāh al-husnā*, where he distinguishes between *ism*, *musammā* and *tasmīyyah* (Elamrani QNN 80-93). Ghazzālī distinguished sharply between these three terms, and Elamrani-Jamal believes his views are traceable to Aristotle, especially the *Peri Hermēneias* (16^a I:10) (Elamrani QNN 83). The definition of the name in particular points to the well-known dichotomy between words and the soul's intelligibles, obviating the use of any grammatical notions (Elamrani QNN 83).

13. That is, “*wusūl ilā ism dhātī tā yadull iltā 'alā Allāh tā'ālā*.”
14. Jurjānī has a lot to say grammatically on *datīl* (cf. JDI).
15. Qūnāvī calls the letter the “individuality of the permanent essential individualities” (*ayn al-'ayn al-thābitah*) when isolated even with respect to its precepts and all of its subordinates (*tawābīhā*) (IB A:75; B:182). See KF 1, 15:189 for similar view of quiddity considered as “letter.”
16. “*Bal min kawnihā mawjūdah lil-Haqq*.”
17. On *malakūt*, see Corbin LPM 175-76. The term has been used in various senses. Qāshānī simply defines it as the “hidden world” (QIS 89).
18. The remaining constructions consist in one possible essential individuality entering into a “reciprocal relationship” with another individuality, but qua possible only. But just as in Arabic grammar the reciprocal relationship, namely, “*indimām*,” of two verbs yields no intelligible meaning, so restricting one's gaze to ontic (objective) individuality alone without attending to the “noetic requirement” (*al-iqtidā' al-'ilmī*), as Qūnāvī puts it, is deemed so uninstructive as to have no semantic value whatsoever. The objective aspect alone precludes intelligibility. The “relation of manifestation's” intelligibility eludes every measure when the *diffusion* considered noetically is ignored. Diffusion is part and parcel of the precept of the comprehensive union necessitating the bond (*irtibāt*) between God and the world in the first place. And the same goes for the intelligibility of the notion of existentiation (*iḍād*) relative to the “possible entity,” that is, in the absence of the diffusion (*sarāyān*) of Divine Manifestation qua “Divinity” (*ulūhiyyah*) (where Divinity as a relation signifies consonance and connectedness [*al-munāsabah wal-irtibāt*]). By the same token, the “relation of connectedness” between one manifestation and another where the third factor (*amr thālith*) causing the verb-act to appear, or giving rise to the specification of the manifestation from the essence's absolute hiddenness, is completely absent would be unintelligible. Such a factor needs to be kept distinct from the manifestation itself, since it was by distinguishing the process, namely, the diffusion from the source, that the multiplicity of the essential individuality was established (IB A:76; B:183-4). Likewise, if the permanent essential individuality is said to be “reciprocally related” to the attribute of its *acceptance* of the existentiating command (*mundammah ilayhā sifat qubūlibhā lil-amr al-iḍād*) without the *existential* manifestation being also adjoined (*iqtirān al-tajallī al-wujūdī*) to it, then nothing can result (IB A:76-7; B:184). In fact, two manifestations having no recipient (*qābi*) are no different, in Qūnāvī's view, from the multiplication of the arithmetic one alone, which does not produce anything new (IB A:77; B:184). That is why the integrated conjunction of one possible individuality with another individuality by itself yields nothing, even when the latter is one of its subordinates (*tawābīt*) – such as the attribute of its acceptance of the existential manifestation; or when it is a superordinate, “independent in itself” (*mustaqillah bi-nafsihā*).
19. See Jurjānī's JKM 753-91; Ibn Mālik's MSA 432-44 (for *nadā'* and *tābīt al-munādī*).
20. That is, “*bil-takwīn min marātib al-asmā' al-juz'īyyah wa mazāhirihā*.”

21. According to Allard,

Il semble bien que l'on ait dans tous ces exemples un mode de raisonnement très proche du *taqdīr* des grammairiens: dans les deux cas, il s'agit de donner à des termes ou à des expressions le droit d'exister dans le système en supposant que ces termes ou expressions en recouvrent d'autres qui sont acceptables. Pour les grammairiens de Basra, le système c'est celui qu'ils ont construit en morphologie comme en syntaxe; pour Ǧubbā'i la construction systématique que semblent postuler ses raisonnements est plus difficile à préciser. Il s'agit sans doute d'une conception, particulière à l'école mu'tazilite, de la transcendance de Dieu (3). Et c'est bien finalement au nom de cette conception que les termes du langage humain utilisé pour décrire Dieu sont critiqués: tous les termes qui sont compatibles avec la transcendance divine sont acceptés; aux autres, on applique des raisonnements analogues à ceux que les grammairiens appliquent aux exceptions, soit pour les éliminer, soit pour les interpréter. Il s'agit de savoir, comme le dit al-Ǧubbā'i dans un texte sur les attributs, quels termes sont dignes (*istahaqqā*) de Dieu. (Allard PAD 131-32)

See also Fleisch TPA I:7. On ellipsis in general, Jonathan Owens offers useful hints (Owens FG 186-98). A basic principle that quickly became established in “the interpretation of deleted items” (i.e. *taqdīr*) is that nothing can be deleted, there being something that refers to it in the context, and unless there is “an awareness of it in its absence” (Owens FG 186).

22. Suyūṭ discusses the difference between *taqdīr al-ṭrāb* and *tafsīr al-maṭnā* (cf. esp. SAS II 394-402, but also SAS I 303-9).

23. When routinely used in grammatical illustrations, *taqdīr* entailed nothing more than a virtual reconstruction of the phrase (e.g. Jurjānī JKM 929, as a random example).

24. Qūnāṭ also draws a lesson from this for the wayfaring worshipper, who is after all the intended beneficiary of this exegetical work – the main body of which happens to be somewhat less formal than the present introduction. Hence, if matter (*māddah*) is distinctively human (*insāniyyah*), it is predisposed to accept the Divine exhalation (*al-nafkh al-ilāhī*) and the secret of God's words, “Then We willed that it be another creation” (“*thumma ansha'nahū khalqan ākhir'*), whereby the regulation (*taswīyah*) occurs to the wayfarer (*sālik*) upon a sound conative focus (*al-tawājūh al-sabīḥ*), complete detachment (*tafrīgh al-tāmm*) and other conditions (*shurūt*). The wayfarer readies himself to accept the Divine manifestation (IB A:79; B:186).

25. That is, “*al-tasnīf wal-ta'īf al-rabbānī lil-hurūf al-'ilmīyyah*.”

26. He says, “*talban li-ibrāz al-kalimāt al-ismā'iyyah wal-haqā'iq al-kawnīyyah*.”

27. As in *'ilm makhārij al-hurūf*, sing. *makhraj*.

28. Qūnāṭ summarizes this analogy between Divine and human articulated construction in KF 1, 17-22:189-91.

29. Ibn 'Arabī, too, asserts that *indimām* is a relation (*nisbah*) (LAI 17).

30. *‘Ilm al-mā‘ānī* derives from the works of various linguistics, such as Sarrāj, Ibn Fāris and Thā‘alibī. But it was especially marked by the influence of Jurjānī (Owens FG 243).

31. According to Aristotle, rhetoric is “the complement of dialectic and is useful as an art of giving effectiveness to truth because it resembles the discursive presentation of propositions and ideas...” (Dahiyat ACP 47). On Ibn Sīnā’s interpretation, it is the art of persuasion and statement of opinion. The definition given in the text makes Arabic rhetoric differs substantially.

32. On his life and works, see J.R. Peters GCS 8-12.

33. Cf. FuM XIII 525:471 for the remaining explanation.

34. “*Taqūmu nash’ah ukhrā tusammā kalimah.*”

35. Although Ibn ‘Arabī used the term *damm* in a wide variety of contexts – as, for example, when cold is combined with humidity and dryness, hot combined humidity, etc. (FuM IV 477-78:346-47) – its principal use was linguistic.

36. “*Yakūna minhu amr ākhir.*”

37. In Arabic the same word refers to both movement and vowel, the latter normally seen as a movement from one “limit” (or consonant) (*harf*) to another, unless no movement is recorded at all.

38. Actually, *katībah* itself may also mean a “writing” or “document.” According to *Lisān al-‘arab*, *kitābah* may refer either to a collection of between 100 to 1,000 horses on the move (*jamādat al-khayl idhā aghārat*) or, more specifically, to a large military unit (*al-qīfah al-‘azīmah min al-jaysh*) (*Lisān* 1:701). *Kitāb*, on the other hand, stands for anything written in compiled form (*ism limā kutiba majmū‘an*) (*Lisān* 1:698).

39. “*Indimām al-mā‘ānī al-ghaybiyyah al-mujarradah.*”

40. That is, “*an yaqīn dūn mazj.*”

41. “*Al-tā‘ayyunāt al-zāhirah.*”

42. I am using Owens’ translation of these terms (Owens FG 154). M.G. Carter has translated *badal* as “substitution,” which I reserve for Qūnavī’s more categorical *tabdīl*. (Carter ALI 474). On the *tawābi*, see also Owens NoPhAr 47-86.

43. Qūnavī was a frequent visitor to that city, an important scholarly influence on Anatolia.

44. We do not need to enter into any details; I am here referring to the two devices called *kull min kull* and *bād min kull*. See Jurjānī JKM 930-33; SIB 428-29.

45. See previous note. The *badal* must always maintain the same inflectional case ending as the *mubdal minbu*, since they are both governed (*mā mūl*) by the same particle. For example, “*Marartu bi-akhīka Zaydin*” – “*Zaydin*” (in this case, the *badal*), just like *akhīka* (the *mubdal minbu*), is governed by the preposition *bi* (Owens FG 154).

46. That is, its genus and differentia.

CHAPTER SEVEN

The “Forms” of Language

A form not only exhibits something of the object but, in a certain respect, *is* that object, without being reduced to it. Since forms, moreover, comprise the articulated items of speech, Qūnavī sets out methodically to show how *all* the denotations of the concept – existential or otherwise – have a kindred origin as speech. With this, he begins his section on the “general rules,” this one dealing with the “secret of the letters, words, points, inflection,” but also of existence, possibility and the world as a Book “written on a parchment spread out or unfolded [*al-ālam kitāb mastūr fi raqq manshūr*].” Within the canonical limits established in the preceding chapter, he will now try to demonstrate how this Book is organized according to certain principles of word-formation – most importantly, inflection (*frāb*) – which reveal further aspects of the dialectic existing between the exterior and the interior of the Divine text, its letters and the intangible meanings, etc.

Since language at any level is a “luminous manifestation,” at least in the sense argued so far, he can reaffirm this connection by likening the parchment to “extended existence” (*al-wujūd al-munbāti*), which is also light (*nūr*) (IB A:85; B:193).¹ The synonymy with the “parchment unfolded” (*al-raqq al-manshūr*) is conceivable because the *inbisāt* (“extension” or “spreading out”) of existence is simply “interpreted” (*al-mutabbar ‘anhu*) as *nashr* (“unfolding”) for the parchment of the Book, and is what befalls the “realities of the

possible entities.” By the same token, given its uniqueness (*infirādihā*) in being permanent and distinctive (*thubūtihā wa tamayyuzihā*) in God’s knowledge, a reality is, furthermore, a hidden *letter*, or *harf* – a point Qūnavī was especially anxious to establish earlier in connection with the “six constructions.” As the components of speech, going by the analogy, the realities must then also consist of both subordinates (*tābītah*) and superordinates (*matbītah*), as we saw, where the subordinates are designated as the states (*ahwāl*), attributes and concomitants of the superordinate. In order to understand the exact function of *Irāb* within this schema, we shall need to look afresh at the *linguistic* background to this mystical version of predication.

§ SUBORDINATION AND SUPERORDINATION

Tabdīyyah or “subordination,” one of several other types of noun complements,² is said to exist when the inflectional case ending (*Irāb*) of a word is syntactically dependent on its position following the noun it modifies. That is the definition advanced by Jurjānī, Ibn Mālik – the most likely influences on Qūnavī – and numerous other classical Arabic philologists.³ It likely represents Qūnavī’s grammatical position as well. We ought to be mindful that the notion of *tabdīyyah* in his mystical doctrine, however, carried certain nuances differentiating it from its conventional grammatical usage. The *tawābi* were, as just noted, states, attributes and concomitants. Even if all of these pass for noun complements, it is another question still whether they would all be grammatically acceptable as *noun modifiers*. Qūnavī uses the term quite loosely for a wide variety of

applications, but the net effect is to underscore all the more the “noun bias” we first observed in the last chapter. In fact, if *tabdiyyah* is of *relative* grammatical importance even among the noun complements, it is all but central when one is seeking, as is Qūnavī, a refurbished interpretation of articulation to carry through what logical formalists like Ibn Sīnā had begun on the question of technical language in philosophy and the truths it purports to convey. We shall have occasion to qualify this assessment once this methodological recasting is left behind for the more substantial issues that will next come within the purview of his investigation.

In agreement with the grammarians, the second of two entries concerned with *tawābi* in ‘Alī b. Muḥammad Jurjānī’s *Kitāb al-ta’rīfāt* tersely states the principal definition used by everyone, including theologians, as being: “any second [thing] [*kull thānin*] whose inflectional case ending is that of its antecedent in one respect [*draba bi-trāb sābiqihī min jihah wāhidah*]” (JKT 71). But so defined, subordination can be anything at all subject to this condition. It is hardly surprising, then, that Ibn ‘Arabī should refer to the “precept of subordination” in numerous contexts. One such context has to do with the difference between real possession of the things or property – i.e. *al-ashyā’ wal-awwāl* created by God – and proprietorship by delegation (*niyābah*) (FuM X 56:91; cf. VII 24:571 and VIII 569:389, etc.). Things are created for the exaltation of God, and any “profit” obtained therefrom is strictly derivative, that is to say, by way of the *precept of subordination* (FuM X 56:91). Also, he is “*matbu’*” (“followed” or is “superordinate”) who possesses priority (*taqaddum*) – in, say, as the *hadīth* goes, his familiarity with the Qur’ān (viz. *qirā’ah*), prophetic mores

(*sunnah*) and spiritual migration (*bijrah*) (FuM XI 202:215). The precept of subordination may also more specifically belong to certain types of *knowledge* relative to others – for example, knowledge of the “matters” of natural endowment (*mawādd al-tabi‘iyah*) (FuM XII 5:59-60). In a more philosophical vein, Ibn ‘Arabī invokes the “propensity” of the accident for the substance through subordination (FuM I 391:240), and to the “possible entities” as being the subordinates – perhaps closer to the grammatical sense of “noun modifiers” – of the Necessary Being (FuM I 236:188). The Divine names of Mercy (*asma‘ al-rahmah*) may equally be said to be followed by or subordinate to those of Grandeur (*asma‘ al-kibriyā*) (FuM IV 277:209).

In a strictly grammatical sense, subordination no doubt implies an internal relation that occurs within the compass of a single phrase or sentence. However, here one element has not only to precede another but also to *govern* it, indeed to act as its “governor,” or *‘āmil*. This takes place through inflection, whose functions are still transferable to non-grammatical contexts. Given that besides the familiar grammatical description of *frāb*’s role in “making manifest that which is in the mind” (*bayyana mā fī dāmūrihi*) (JKM 97)⁴ – which incidentally is close to the sense given by the school of Ibn ‘Arabī – there is ‘Abd al-Qāhir Jurjānī’s statement that “word endings vary according to the variation of the [word that] governs it [*an takhtalif awākhiru al-kalim li-ikhtilaf al-‘āmil*]” (JKM 97), certain things tend to follow. For to this definition ‘Abd al-Qāhir tellingly adds the words *lafzan aw taqdīran*; that is, whether on the basis of the actually given or the virtual form to be reconstructed (JKT 31). The Ibn ‘Arabī school brings all these

considerations to bear upon theoretical inquiry. Being richer and even more spirited intellectually than anything found in traditional Peripatetic philosophy, with its almost exclusive reliance on syllogistic logic, this approach indicates that the grammatical standard of *frāb* had found new and licit employment, in the way observed by Massignon (ReStPr 11-2). This is precisely what Qūnavī now will try systematically to develop. Before discussing the forms of the letters, though, two final notes: one on *frāb*, the other on *talfiyyah*.

a. *Ifrāb*

It was widely agreed that there are two types of inflected words: nouns and imperfect verbs.⁵ More relevant to our discussion, furthermore, *frāb* was usually contrasted with *binā'*,⁶ which is typical not of nouns or verbs but of particles, conferring upon them a fixed ending. A longstanding controversy nevertheless developed as to whether verbs should not also be included within this class. Jurjānī, for one, seemed to agree with his Basran predecessors that both the verb and the particle belong to *binā'*, the *asl* – i.e. “base” or “roots” (JKM 107)⁷ The issue is important enough to note at least in passing, since Ibn ‘Arabī takes pains to draw a parallel between, on the one hand, the root of the letters (*asl al-hurūf*) and its constancy or *tamkīn* – as opposed to *talwīn* – in short, *binā'*; and, on the other, everything having to do with human nature (i.e. “*mithl al-fitrah fi nā'*”) (FuM I 21:62). What he hoped to achieve through this was to show that *binā'*, being primary, demands *talwīn*, if the simplest act of communication to another is at all to be

possible. This is the structural setting that introduces movement or vowels (FuM I 21:62). Where the verbs are situated in this scheme should no doubt influence the outcome; since it is verbs that most directly convey the *creative* aspect of Divine self-manifestation, according to Qūnavī. The main point, though, is that while *iṭṭab* implied motion and variation (viz. according to either case or mood), *binā'* suggested the idea of immobility and constancy. We shall next see what this dialectic between variation and constancy implies with respect to analogical relations.

b. Three Aspects of Subordinate and Superordinate Relation

Now that the link between *tabdīyyah* and *ṭrāb*, which open up new possibilities for a coherent account of self-manifestation, have been explained, there are three main considerations to be made about the “constant root” of the structural relation establishing the order of priority for every type of entity included in a construction, be it letter, word, existent or “non-existent.”

- (1) When the superordinate is considered through the aspect of its own states’ subjunction (*ṭibār indiyāf ahwālihā ilayhā*) and subordination to it, upon being intellected as devoid of external existence, it is a “hidden word” (*kalimah ghaybiyyah*).
- (2) When the superordinate quiddity is intellected (*al-māhiyyah al-matbūah*) as being “coloured” by existence and yet singled out from² its concomitants, whose existence is posterior to its own, then it is called an “existential letter” (*harfan wujūdiyyan*).
- (3) When the superordinate quiddity is intellected in terms of its “reciprocal association” with its subordinate concomitants, existence having been ascribed

² A: *mufradah*; B: *mufrazah*.

to it,⁸ then it is an “existential word” (*kalimah wujūdiyyah*) (IB A:85-6 B:193).

This fixes the general correspondences said to hold between the ontic and the verbally-articulated roots according to the pattern of subordinate-superordinate relations elucidated above. Since the “Book of God” has organizational features of articulation as well, based on *āyāt* and *suwar*, the same syntactical rules are valid within an *āyah* composed of “existential words” as for an *āyah* composed of utterable words. As a structural unit, the *āyah* entails “signification,” which must be based on the *reality* of some special attribute (*alla baqīqat sifah khāssah*), designated state (*hāl muṭayyanah*), some special species of “such concomitants as are related to a universal root [*al-mudāfah ilā asl kulli*]” or, finally, a genus “designated by the form of the configuration of an integrated conjunction [*muṭayyan bi-sūrat bay'ah min al-hay'āt al-ijtimā'iyyah*]” between two or more words (IB A:86; B:193). A “signification” thus gives expression to a set⁹ of intangible meanings (i.e. “*muṭarribah 'an jumlah min al-mā'ānī*”), which can be construed and perceived only by means of the configured form (*bay'ah*) of an integrated conjunction.

This treatment of the *āyah* as an *organizational* unit is continued all the way up to the most comprehensive and cohesive unit – namely, the Book itself. A *sūrah*, or “chapter division,” of all the items mentioned so far for the *āyah*, entails a coming to light (*bayān*) of the precepts of some level, universal attribute or universal condition (*hālah kulliyah*) that includes a variety of other attributes or states (IB A:86; B:194). Finally, the “revealed Books” embody “the rendition [*tarjamah*] of the forms of the precepts of Divine knowledge and the states of possibility [*al-ahwāl al-imkāniyyah*] which characterize some

universal level or special group of people [*ta'ifah makhsūsah*]” receiving it (IB A:86; B:194). The *Qur'an* itself Qūnavī describes as “the *form* of the knowledge that encompasses [*sūrat al-ilm al-muhib*] all the possible states which are characteristic of existent entities according to their different classes [*alā ikhtilāf tabaqātihā*]...” (IB A:86; B:194). This it does through discrete communications whose precept is specially designated “for the denizens of the entire temporal period that will remain until such designated time as will determine that the precept of all Divine law has expired [*intihā' hukm al-sharā'ī qāttibatan*]” (IB A:86; B:194). He likens that final, climactic event to the time when the sun will rise from its “twilight dusk” (*tulū' al-shams min maghribihā*).

§ THE FORMS OF THE LETTERS

a. The Five Presences and the Five Points of Articulation

Before concentrating on the “letter” as an articulated form exemplifying in miniature the whole process of manifestation, Qūnavī summarizes once again the highest scale of created being, known as Divine speech (that is to say, the parchment unfolded and the “existence” extending over all the realities), identifying the various points of correspondence with the more familiar scale of human articulation. Divine speech makes its downward descent towards particularization in a temporal plane according to a cosmological hierarchy known as the “five universal presences,” which he says serve as “a basis and reference point” (IB A:86; B:194).¹⁰ We have already listed them. The difference this time around is that, self-manifestation being essentially Divine *speech*, he

hopes to show these presences' analogues (or correspondences) (*nazīrūbā*) in the verbal articulation characteristic of the “realm of human breath” (*ālam al-nafas al-insāni*). We should note that he is now manoeuvering himself into a position where he can show the exact *linguistic* dimensions of the “forms” that both he and the philosophers have in common by elaborating the philological phases of utterance essentially encapsulated by the letter-form – what he calls the “levels of articulation” (*marātib al-makhārij*) – and then to compare them analogically to those of a different ontological order.

Within the human proportions familiar to us, the first level of verbal articulation is the interiority of the heart (*bātīn al-qalb*), the very “source of breath” (*yanbūl al-nafas*) – literally, its “wellspring.” Then come the two lips, the chest (*sadr*), the throat (*halq*) and the palate (*hanak*) (IB A:87; B:194).¹¹ The two lips (*shafatān*) are said to stand to it in the opposite relationship of “direct witness” to Divine hiddenness. However, there must be one level that combines all others. And just as every existent has either to be based on one of the five levels or act as a locus of exteriorization for the precept that combines all levels (*maz̤harān li-hukm jāmi'iḥā*) – i.e. the Perfect Man (*kal-insān al-kāmil*) – so each letter must be based on one of the levels or points of articulation,¹² or else comprehend the precept that combines them all (IB A:87; B:195). To this combinative function corresponds the letter “w” (*Ar.*, *wāw*).

b. The Six Precepts

The hierarchy does not end here. In between these principal roots (*al-ummahāt al-asliyyah*)

– the five presences or five points of articulation, respectively – there are levels of differentiation, or *fa-marātib tafsīliyyah*, to be specified. This is because every instance of the individual existents, or simply the “letters” of the Breath of the Merciful, is, as mentioned, identifiable qua exteriorization with one of the principal roots and has, in turn, five *positive* or *affirmative* precepts (*ahkām thubūtiyyah*). But there is a sixth, negative precept (*sādis salbī*) which “permeates” (*sārin*) the other five. This is held on the mere strength of the fact that “affirmation,” or giving positive ascription to something, entails also a denial of that which it excludes¹³ (IB A:87; B:195). In the diminutive world of an individual existent or “letter” there are consequently five affirmative, “hierarchically-ordered signs” (*alāmāt thubūtiyyah murattabah*), one of which combines the other four inclusively; and, a sixth, negative sign. But this is not all. This negative sign itself engenders a positive precept (*tantij hukm thābit*), on the grounds that any omission of a sign is itself a sign (*tark al-‘alāmah ‘alāmah*) (IB A:88; B:195).

It may be pointed out that Yahyā Suhrawardī (d. 587 AH/1191 CE) made a similar claim.

Know that the proposition [*al-qadiyyah*] is not a *proposition* by sole virtue of being affirmation, but also because it is negation [*al-salb*]. Moreover, negation is an intellectual judgement [*hukm ‘aqlī*], whether it is interpreted as removal or denial, and, [by the same token,] is not a mental judgement [*hukm fi al-dhīhīn*] merely for being a denial; it is itself a positive affirmation precisely from the standpoint that it is a *judgement* of denial. A thing [*wal-shay*] cannot escape affirmation or denial, and affirmation and denial are both mental judgements whose status is another *thing*. (SHI II:30)

To bring home his point, Suhrawardī argues further that if, on the other hand, the object of intellection (*ma‘qūl*) is not given any judgement by which it is either affirmed or denied, then it is neither affirmed nor denied, but rather it is in itself (*huwa fi nafsīhi*) something

that is affirmed (*thābit*) or denied (*muntafin*) (SHI II:30). It is the mental proposition that gives a judgement about it, the object. Although his meaning is basically the same, Qūnavī mentions only the “omission of a sign,” without breaking up, as does Suhravardī, the act of omitting something; but that is what he intends. These fine distinctions in his view, at any rate, yields a total of twelve items, all apparently quite important for understanding the remaining themes in the Introduction. Briefly, the five *affirmative* precepts with respect to the precept of the existent refer to the following:

- (1) its noetically stable quiddity (*māhiyyatihī al-thābitah fī al-‘ilm*);
- (2) its “spiritualness” (*rūhāniyyatihī*);
- (3) its form and nature (*sūratihī wa tabī‘atihī*), since the “spiritualness” which every existent possesses, upon investigation, must itself have a form that acts as a locus of appearance for the precept of spiritualness;
- (4) the Divine manifestation (*al-tajallī al-ilāhī*) exteriorized through the existents and permeating them by way of the singular oneness of comprehensive union, which we said was necessary for the intangible configured form [of meaning] (*al-hay’ah al-md̄nawiyah*) that results when a totality is assembled together (*ijtimā‘ jami‘ihā*);
- (5) the level which constitutes an end (*ghayāyah*) (IB A:88; B:195).¹⁴

The same principle of six precepts of the existent are equally germane to the system of “signs” (*alāmāt*) that are used for pointing the letters and for indicating inflectional case endings, assuming that each letter, like every existent, can carry all six precepts. These are the two basic categories mentioned here. As we discovered, Qūnavī was more concerned to apply the rules of affirmation and denial to signs, that which the object of knowledge manifests of itself in such a manner as to indicate it – in short, to be a sign for it. The signs used for *pointing* consist of five levels, the sixth being the negative (IB

A:88; B:196). Levels are indicated by the number of points (1, 2 or 3), their location above or below the letter and, finally, the total absence of points, which stands for the negative (*salbiyyah*).

The second category is comprised of the signs used for *inflection* (*īrāb*). As far as nouns¹⁵ are concerned, *īrāb* consists of *rāf'* (pronunciation of the final consonant with the *u*-sound, indicating the nominative case); *nāsib* (pronunciation of a final consonant with the *a*-sound, indicating the accusative case); *jarr* (for the *i*-sound, indicating the genitive case); *tanwīn* (the *nūm*-sound giving the indefinite form); *sukūn bayy* (the voiceless sound); and the sixth, negative one, *al-sukūn al-mayt* (the mute or “dead” sound), or simple elision of the letter (*badhf al-barf*) replacing the inflection (*al-qā’im maqām al-īrāb*) (IB A:88; B:196).

c. The Sukūn

Ibn ‘Arabī had illustrated the grammatical use of *sukūn bayy* for the letters “*wāw*” and “*yā*” using words like *bi-mayt* in “*wa mā huwa bi-mayt*,” where the “*y*” is voiceless but figures nonetheless in the pronunciation (FuM I 503:280). In its mystical exegesis, *sukūn* accounts for the noetic “degrees of certainty” (*darajāt al-yaqīn*). Hence, mystics are said to be “stirred” through the *sukūn bayy*; whereas they are directly attached to God (*yatdallaqu bi-llāh*) through *sukūn mayt* within that over which they are “set astir” (*fi mā yadtaribu fīhi*) and without any “disjoined specification” (*ghayr tāyīn muzayyāl*) (FuM XIV 129-201-2). Basically, this account seems to point to a conditional role played by *sukūn bayy*, as a state, in bringing about greater proximity to God.

Along with the vowellessness of the *sukūn*, the three basic inflectional signs indicating vowel movements are without exception shared by all Arabic consonants. For Ibn ‘Arabī, each of these signs possesses a different hermeneutical value (FuM I 630:31), based on an all-embracing nominal classification whereby to the *damma* (*u*-sound) of the *raf* correspond the Divine names subsumed under the name “*Alīyy*” (“the Ever-High”); to the *fath* (*a*-sound) correspond the Divine names belonging to “*Rahmān*” (“the Merciful”), the Qur’ānic basis for which claim is, “*mā yaftahu Allāh lil-nās min rahmatin*” (“How God extends [His] Mercy!”); to the *kasr* (*i*-sound) belong the Divine names under *Mutāliyy* (“the Elevated”).¹⁶ While ultimately dependent on this classification, the scheme Qūnavī proposes runs a parallel but more narrowly defined theoretical course where *raf* corresponds to “spiritualness” (*rībāniyyah*), *nasb* and *jarr* to the exteriorized and natural form. The *sukūn bayy*, in his case, indicates “the first Divine precept of singular oneness [*al-hukm al-abdī al-ilāhī al-anwāl*] distinguished by the ‘presence of the general comprehensive union’ [*al-mukhtass bi- hadrat al-jam‘ al-‘āmm*], whose jurisdiction embraces all things”^b (IB A:88; B:196). In its theoretical career, it is something intellected and permanent, whose effect alone is observable, not its essential individuality, as other things are in existence (IB A:88-9; B:196). In this connection, Qūnavī quotes a line from Ibn ‘Arabī apprising us that,

Comprehensive union but a state,
Whence – dominion,¹⁷ not units,¹⁸

its essential individuality cannot exist
it doth alone possess (IB A:89; B:196).

^b A: *al-hukm ‘alā al-ashyā’*; B: *al-hākim ‘alā al-ashyā’*.

The *sukūn* holds particular significance for Qūnavī¹⁹ because it indicates “the return to the precept of affirmation [*al-hukm al-thubūtī*] through evanescence in God [*bil-istiblāk*],” such that the precept of the evanescent’s *existence* survives^c as the precepts of creational relations are removed (IB A:89; B:196). In grammatical parlance, the “vowel” (*harakah*, lit. “motion,”), which here stands for “a kind of existence,” is latent (*khafiyah*). Therefore, the positive precept exists even though the essential individuality of the one to whom this precept is ascribed has not been exteriorized. In the language of the wayfarer, that precept is, at the most, one of “proximity through the obligatory duties” (*qurb al-farā’id*), whereby the worshipper becomes concealed through God (*yastatir bil-Haqq*). His precept, not his essential individuality, is exteriorized in existence; the same as in all cases of “isthmi,” or *barāzikh*. In applied terms, the *tanān* qualified by the level of the *sukūn bayy*, such that two consonants stand at opposite sides, comes to possess permanence and stability of *ends* (*ghayāt*) once the precept of predisposition has been terminated, from the standpoint of universality. Otherwise, so long as there are differential particulars, anything at this level is always said to have an *end* (*ghayah*) and a *terminus* (*intibā’*) only by way of relation, obligation (*fard*) and *sukūn mayyit* – as in the cases of death, solidity,²⁰ dissolution, evanescence, etc. (IB A:89; B:196). In this sense, an “end” appears to be a terminal point for all preceding lines of demarcation or differentials that arise by dint of intellect or some other predispositional power.

^c A: *mā a baqā’ hukm wujūd al-mustablik*; B: *hukm al-mustablik*.

Because of their structural importance, it might be useful to note briefly what a contemporary of Qūnavī's, Tāj al-Dīn Muhammad b. Muhammad b. Ahmad Isfara'īnī (d. 684 AH/1285 CE), had to say of grammatical significance about *ghāyāt*. Briefly, in the "science of inflection" ("ilm al-*frāb*) one speaks of *ghāyah* when an object (i.e. *mudāfan*) is pronounced at the outset and "thereafter *al-mudāf ilayhi* omitted in utterance [*lafṣan*] but not in intention [*tā niyyatan*]; that is, explicitly, not implicitly (ILI 201). For example, in "I met him before, after, above and below" ("*Laqaytuhu min qablu wa min ba'du wa min fawqu wa min tahtu*"), the subject need be mentioned only once, since the intention, or "end," of the sentence is quite clear. Something similar seems to be happening in our case, save that the intended limit is not always identical to the object initially "pronounced." We have so far encountered three instances of intentionality in coherent speech: Divine purpose embodied in the revealed text, the willed end of constructions and integral conjunctions and, now, the ends and termini that make for the evanescence of the "vowel of existence," its covert persistence and, ultimately, the demise indicated by one of the two limits of any ordinary *tanwīn*. One might perhaps object that it is not so clear that the syntactical rules of a complete construction, such as the one intended in Isfara'īnī's definition of ends (*ghāyāt*), can be applied to as minute a particle of a word as *tanwīn* or *sukūn*. Yet a discrete phonetic operation like the *tanwīn* easily recommends itself as a compact illustration of the interplay that exists between manifestness and concealment by structural features which lend it the capacity to explain what, in the wayfarer's path toward evanescence, is actually suppressed and what perdures. Beyond

that still, there lies the view that Divine speech itself need be no more than a single enduring command, indeed a word; hence Qūnavī's protracted exposition just on the *letters* that make up the word. Indeed, the difference between the vowelized center of the "nun" sound in *tanwīn* and that of "kun?" in the Divine command is besides the point. The same internal relationships exist when one further considers that the One Word embracing all words is itself composed both of "letters," firstly, and then of the patterned constructions of solitary words enclosed within it.

§ THE ELEMENTS OF METHODOICAL ANALOGY

a. Precept and Level: Integrative vs. Articulative Functions

Jurjānī's fine ear for language had keenly detected the meaningful resonance of these sound constructions even within singular meanings – not just the flashes of "eloquence" insisted on by others – each borne by the concreteness of human speech's patterned sound and form. But in the hierarchy of forms that runs analogically from letter to word, *āyah*, *sūrah*, *kitāb* and, finally, to the Qur'ān, Qūnavī's dissection of *sukūn* and *tanwīn*, however interesting in itself, is merely a prelude to a more concentrated exposé of the full letter-form as a prototype. This we will see shortly.

His presentation so far has accomplished two things with respect to the principles of exteriorization: it elucidated the inflectional shiftings from movement to repose as well as the conjunctive relations over which presides the appropriate *precept*, said to be structurally exteriorized. If successful, this should afford us a pattern clarifying the analogical relations which, ultimately, coordinate between a noetic and an ontic point of

reference in technical language. Within the general perspective of the earlier chapters, we have seen that the object of knowledge is known only after the rootedness of its singular oneness has been secured, after which lie the intricate processions of noetic relationships among the quiddities, etc. In our present context, the external and internal variations of the letter-form itself, as imperceptive to the novice as they may intellectually be, provide the first tangible results of Qūnāvī's methodological probings in this direction.

His point of departure remains, of course, Ibn Sīnā's admission of man's incapacity to know the realities of things, which we agreed in essence to be the incapacity of abstract logical paradigms to represent the concrete apprehensions of those realities. He now wishes to make the point that the presiding *precept* in things (*al-hukm fi al-ashyā*) – presently, in the letters – which is said to require exteriorization, directly corresponds to the notion of *level*, as opposed to an existential entity (*lā lil-āyān al-wujūdiyyah*) already exteriorized in respect of existence. Therefore, the link extending from the precept to the existents indicates the process of exteriorization, through these existents, of the precept of their *level* only (i.e. “*bi-tibār zuhūr hukm martabatihā bihā*”) (IB A:89; B:197).

From this it follows that any creative effect, or *athar*, would have to spring from amid the levels, in the following two now familiar ways. The first, naturally, is in respect of the diffusion of the Divine comprehensive precept of singular oneness into all “things” (*ashyā*) (IB A:89; B:197). From the opposite direction comes the second in respect of the “collectivity” (*aghlabiyah*) subordinate to the relation of primacy (*al-nisbah al-awwaliyyah*).

He feels that the precept's permanence (*thubūt al-hukm*) and the preponderance (*ghalabah*) of one level over another may be soundly affirmed thanks to containment (*ihātah*), since the precept in question is exteriorized strictly in accordance with the “primacy of containment.” This is fine, however, so long as the start of the process is not identical to the end – that is, when there is no perfect symmetry. When the “closure acting as the outer limit is identical to the preceding one [*al-khātimah ‘ayn al-sābiqah*]” (as illustrated by the nunation form) and when the end (*ghāyah*) determined to have finality (*ākhirah*) is “primacy’s very form of perfection” (*bīya nafs sūrat kamāl al-awwaliyyah*) – he does not say “identical” – then the one cannot be distinguished from the other (IB A:89; B:197). The precept of primacy that would otherwise separate the two extremities of start and finish is, in this case, concealed (IB A:90; B:197). It is on account of this, he points out, that the shape, or figure, of the nunation (*shakl al-tanwīn*) is evidently “weak” compared to that of “inflection proper” (*shakl mujarrad al-īrāb*), which indicates the precept. Its “duality” – presumably in reference to the two *n*’s flanking the faint vowel – account for the two considerations mentioned above (IB A:90; B:197).

Now that we are speaking of the letter-form, its existential counterpart is not too remote, for every existential form capable of being perceived according to *level* of perception,²¹ in turn, consists in the integrated conjunction of intelligible immaterial realities (IB A:90; B:197). Having established the dimensions of figuration in the last chapter and in the wake of the discussion on the form of inflected case endings in this chapter, Qūnavī is of course clearly heading toward a notion of the letter qua

“constructed,” “conjoined” form. Definitionally, though, the form is exteriorized by virtue of its constituent elements, and this includes the realities of the “existential form,” which are exteriorized through the relation of *integrated conjunction* subordinate principally to the precept of the singular oneness of Divine comprehensive union. This is not problematic; what we are now beginning to understand is that exteriorization (*zuhūr*), whatever its name, unfolds analogically – manifestation is intrinsically relational, hence the pertinence of concepts like consonance and technical analogy – upon *every level* of existence. The trick clearly is neither to sever away the singular point of origin nor to destroy its relational affinity with the “end.” But the only way toward a felicitous conceptual resolution is as follows. Qūnavī first re-establishes that the Breath of the Merciful is to the hidden “existents” (*mawjūdat al-ghaybiyyah*), called “letters,” what “human breath” is to the letters it disgorges. This follows in absolute conformity with all five universal levels at the main points of articulation – otherwise named the universals’ “analogues” (*nazā’irihā*). Next, he tries to show that the analogy must reflect a descending, twofold articulation *qua precept of construction* (*al-tarkībī*), and *qua synthesis of integrated conjunction* (*al-ta’lif al-ijtimā’ī*) (IB A:90; B:197). What this means is this. With the difference between Divine and human speech intact, there is no question of self-identity. Qūnavī’s analysis of the letter *qua form* transpires as a structural rendering of the “secret of comprehensive union” (*al-sirr al-jamī’ī*) through which the speaker is initially “coloured” – distantly echoing the philosophical maxim that the unknown is disclosed only through what is already known – but which comprehensive secret is the selfsame speech

articulated at five distinct levels. But that is how its effect permeates *everything spoken in the manner of interconnectedness and commixture (tadākhul wa masj)*. The point is that for any given state (*hāl*) of the construction (*tarkīb*), preponderance (*ghalabah*) and exteriorization is displayed by one and only one of the elements subject to commixture (*imtiqāj*) and synthesis (*ta'līf*) (IB A:90; B:198). This occurs according to the two cardinal *aspects* of utterance so far learned in this section. That is,

- (1) qua level (*martabah*) – and hence in terms of the precept of comprehensive union, and
- (2) qua precept's (*bukm*) existential exteriorization (*al-zuhūr al-wujūdī*), which first gives rise to primacy, or priority (*awwaliyyah*) (IB A:90; B:198).²²

Although distinguishable, these two “aspects” are accomplices in a common analogical procession in which the integrative *vs.* the articulative interact continually to yield ever higher “spiritual” instances of disclosure, so that the overflowing *primacy* of the object disclosed itself may impart new finality to the seeker. To get back to linguistics, however, the letter-points and inflections are, in their respective ways, what makes these matters known (*mu'arrifat*) by contributing the precise element of distinction and designation (*tdrīf tamyīz wa ta'yīn*) to entities, as they “become instructive [*munabbihāt*] as to their roots” (IB A: 90; B:198).

Within this scheme, then, the points indicate the levels, and the “inflectional [vowel] movements” (*al-harakāt al-īrābiyyah*) the precepts and attributes exteriorized (IB A:90-1; B:198). Moreover, to the five said levels may be added three new ones, as a result of which analogical relations may now be discussed with even greater precision in terms of

activity, passivity and a third level combining both (IB A:91; B:198). This third level, he meaningfully remarks, requires equivalency (*takāfir*), balance (*fitidāl*) and commensurability (or proportionality) (*muqāwamah*). All three levels' loci of appearance in the "human epitome" (*al-nuskhah al-insāniyyah*) comprise the remaining factors going into the making of natural speech which have not yet been mentioned: the voice, the tongue and the teeth.

Qūnāvī thus manages to isolate all the levels indicated by the points in the letter-form. But the points also need first to distinguish between two designative precepts that belong respectively to the first five levels and to the three that remained. Furthermore, each of these two must, in turn, conform to the two "aspects" named above – i.e. *primacy* (*awwaliyyah*) by way of exteriorization and the *comprehensive union of singular oneness* (*al-jam' al-ahādī*). In other words, just as a total of two "aspects" have been postulated for the exteriorization of the precept belonging to the five levels, so the remaining three levels possess two counterpart "aspects." The first of these two ancillary aspects pertains to the exteriorization of the particular preponderance of a single element in a given construction: in respect of the *spiritual faculties* (*al-quwāt al-rūhāniyyah*) accruing to created being. The other pertains to its exteriorization in respect of the natural faculties (*al-quwāt al-tabi'iyyah*). According to this hierarchy, "the individualities" [*al-āyān*] differences in predisposition, along with those of the names' attachments [*ta'alluqāt al-asmā'*] and their respective conative foci upon existential instantiation require that some, upon passing into existence, be specified at the levels of the spirits with which they become linked up; [and

others] be specified at the levels of nature [*al-tabi'ah*]..." (IB A:91; B:198). Exteriorization according to these two aspects is presumed to be "coloured" also by the precept of one of the two relations also named above, activity or passivity, or "whatever joins them together."

b. The Pointed Letters

Now, as the Divine command is exteriorized, the letters (*huruf*) may be specified, say, at the level of "activity" (*al-martabah al-filīyah*) *qua spiritual relation*, the first of the two secondary aspects (belonging to the three remaining points of articulation), on account of the preponderance of one of the five precepts – which, in turn, is exteriorized in respect either of the "primacy in exteriorization" or of the "level-precept in comprehensive union of singular oneness" (*al-hukm al-jam'i al-ahadi al-martabi*). The nature of the analogical linkages permeating the letter-form at different levels is such that the one remains predominant and the other "borrowed"; Qūnavī is quite explicit about this and later describes their relation as one of subordination (IB A:95; B:202). At any rate, the specification has to be instructive of the preponderance according to this preponderance's two main aspects: level- and precept-exteriorization. It is instructive of the precept through inflection, and of the level through the point (IB A:91; B:198). In the present case, with the spiritual relation adjoined and consonantly linked up to the precept of comprehensive union, the specification is marked by the single point above the letter. Generally, when preponderance occurs in terms of the secondary aspects, the

spiritual *and* the natural, then two points are placed. When the letter's distinctiveness (*tamayyuz*) is posited at the *level of passivity* (rather than of activity) – whether in terms of one or both of the same two secondary aspects – then all the points lie below the letter (IB A:91; B:198-9). If the precept of primacy (*bukm al-awwaliyyah*) through exteriorization (otherwise the aspect of the five levels that correspond to the natural secondary aspect) relative to the double instance of the spiritual and natural level is linked to this level of passivity, and assuming there is consonance or “compatibility” (*tanāsub*), then the inflection, too, occurs below the letter (just like the points) (IB A:91-2; B:199). This holds, for example, when one of the two upper aspects (he calls them here “precepts”) of the five levels (namely, *primacy* through exteriorization and the *level of comprehensive union*) is added to the level of the *sukūn mayt* and the other to the natural form (*al-sūrah al-tabi'iyyah*) – viz. of the three remaining levels. When two aspects (the spiritual and the natural) are consonant or compatible with any of the five precepts in the active mode, then both the inflection and the points are situated above the letter. Should the preponderance of one of the precepts not be that of any of the two types of *sukūn* (*mā 'adā al-sukūnayn*), and the specification at all levels be in respect of the relation of passivity, the inflection occurs above and the points below.

The exact opposite of this is when the points lie above and the inflection below. Indeed,

if the preponderance [of one of the five precepts] occurs at the level of comprehensive union and equivalency [*al-takāfu*], the last of the three levels, and if one precept from among the five is that of the *sukūn bayy*,²³ then there are three points above [the letter]. Since this comprehensive union of construction [*al-jam' al-tarkībī*] emerges only in respect of both aspects mentioned above, the spiritual and the natural relations, the only letters

that have three points are the “*thā*” and the “*shin*.” The “*thā*” [is pointed] because of the precept comprehending [all of] the spiritual faculties [*li-hukm jam’ al-quwāt al-rūhāniyyah*], and the “*shin*” because of the precept of the comprehensive union of [all] the natural faculties (IB A:92; B:199).

Interestingly, there are no Arabic letters with three points below. Qūnāvī’s explanation for this is that commixture can occur only between the spirits and the natural endowments comprising the loci of appearance of intangible meanings, realities and levels. If it is the relation of spirit that preponderates, the points must lie above. Whenever the natural faculties do, they lie below, where they indicate the level of the spirits and natural endowments under this aspect. A third point normally apprises us of their balanced equivalency, or *al-takāfi’ al-Itidātī*, and the Divine secret of comprehensive union and singular oneness (*al-surr al-jam’i al-abādī al-itāhī*) upon which all precepts and effects ultimately rest on account of the inclusiveness (*shumūl*) of its own precept (IB A:92-3; B:199-200). But there is never a third point below the letter because the Divine Command is always preponderant and never prevailed upon, which is what it would amount to if it were indicated below. It can only be located above the two points, corresponding to the spirit and the natural endowments. The “single row” in which these two points are drawn indicates their parity (*tasāwīhimā*), in the sense that each acts upon and affects the other in some respect. The reason why the precept of comprehensive union is indicated only by two letters, “*thā*” and “*shin*,” is that the precept of the comprehensive union of singular oneness (*hukm al-jam’ al-abādī*), and the existential balance (*wal-Itidāt al-wujūdī*) at every other “level” besides these two letters, is intellected and not directly beheld (*ma’qūl ghayr mashhūd*); since no form is capable of being either

produced or exteriorized for this “complete balance” (*al-iftidal al-tāmm*). This is true also of what he calls the “universal comprehensive union inclusive of all precepts” (*al-jam‘ al-kulli al-shāmil al-hukm*), whose perfection is surpassed by none (IB A:93; B:200). Neither of these can be specified in existence as required in the exteriorized nature of the letters.

They can only be beheld, though strictly according to the level and the “locus of appearance in which and by which alone the whole is exteriorized [*al-mazhar alladhi yažhar al-kullihi wa bihi*],” never on its own terms (IB A:93; B:200). In this manner, intellection and direct witnessing are brought to bear upon the letter-signs divided into points and inflectional markings. The points signify (*datalah*) the levels, the “inflectional markings” (*al-khutūt al-īrābiyyah*) the precept. The point, being something intellected rather than directly beheld, acts as the “primary root” of lines, planes and circles (*dawā’ir*), all of which appear through the *point* without it ever having to be exteriorized as it is in itself. Similarly, while the levels signified by the point are themselves intellected realities, never directly witnessed, they are the primary root of all that is beheld and over which they rule (*al-hākimah ‘alayhi*). They both have this in common.

On the other hand, a marking (*khatt*, lit., “line”) consists of adjacent points (*nugat mutajawarah*) and must indicate the precept,²⁴ rather than the level. However, *hukm* (“precept,” but *lit.*, “judgement”), too, is an intellected relation situated between a “judge” (*bākīm*) and the object of judgement (*mabkūm ‘alayhi*) (IB A:93; B:200). Qūnavī is referring to a principle we have examined early on in Chapter Three. Accordingly, the assentive connection in any inference occurs through an existentiating movement (*al-*

harakah al-ijādiyyah) that marks it off from the integrative, concealing function of levels, so that the selfsame “judgement,” the judge qua judge (“*ayn al-hukm wal-hakīm min kawnihī hakīman*) and “that through and upon whom there is judgement” (*mahkūm bihi wa ‘alayhi*) make their appearance rather than become concealed qua level (IB A:93-4; B:200; KN 276-77).

To illustrate his idea, Qūnavī has a word to say about “*tashdīd*,” viz. phonetic stress or “doubling.” The term signifies the joining of the precept of the relation comprehending the three secondary levels noted above with the precept for the level of *sukūn bayy*, characterized as it is the *singular oneness* of Divine conjunctive union (IB A:94; B:200-1). “Primacy through exteriorization” becomes directly associated with whatever is exteriorized therefrom, since judgement as the domain of primacy by virtue of the assentive connection of inference is identical with the process of exteriorization (IB A:94; B:201).

As a doubling effect, *tashdīd*’s “secret” among the existent beings – chiefly, the wayfarer – is recognizable from what issues forth from the “proximity of supererogatory duties” (*nafījat qurb al-nawāfiḥ*) and the “proximity of obligatory duties” (*qurb al-farā’id*): the former is epitomized by *two* “seekers” (*tālibayn*), the latter by the *two* goals being sought (*al-murādāyn al-mattūbāyn*) (IB A:94; B:201). But when the one in whom knowledge is realized – namely, the *muhaqqiq* – passes over into (*ta’addū*) the station of “*aw adnā’*” (“Or nearer”) and the *line* (*khat*) – whence come the “markings” – dividing the circle into

two arcs (*qawṣayn*, lit., “two bows”) is removed,^d the one object of inquiry is then said to have primacy and exteriority qua precept (or judgement) (*bukm*), and the seeker (*tālib*) himself finality (*ākhiriyyah*) and its concomitants.²⁵

c. The Unpointed Letters

By now it has become clear just how intimate is the relationship between forms, whose philosophical origins we have investigated in the first part of this study, and the letters. A host of devices may be employed for interpreting a written or “witnessed” text, each one a function of the particular noetic object’s relative position. There are always secondary and tertiary aspects to any given problem. Although we saw where form’s proper position lay in relation to other noetic factors, its versatility makes it uniquely adaptable to vastly different purposes. In order to complete his argument, which began with figuration, Qūnavī turns once more to them, only this time as letters pared down to their basest, unpointed shape. They continue to be informative despite the complete absence of points.

Forms, he repeats, are either simple of relation or composite (IB A:94; B:201). Because every simple thing’s parts (*ajzā*) and bonds (*urwib*) bear a close likeness to what variegated qualities there are in perceptible objects of every conceivable sort, the simple thing’s construction (*tarkib*) can no more have a “sensorially exteriorized precept” (*bukm mahsūs*) qua essence than the latter, but one that is merely *intellected* in it. An even more

^d In reference to the Qur’ān.

intensive sense of form may thus be given to those letters which have properties based on the precept of preponderance (*hukm al-agħlabijyah*) belonging to the simple form, letters which, being in effect subjoined (*mundafah*) to the latter, are *free of points*. Points are, of course, placed for instructive purposes only. Whereas the relation of these letters to nature (*zabiħah*) and to the forms is confined strictly to one sense; and so the bare form suffices in their case in conveying their level, just as the inflection operates in the normal fashion to give their precept. The need for yet another “informant” (*muarrif ākħar*) does not arise.

The conventional letters of this type number fourteen. Qūnavī contends that actually only twelve are unpointed, since the “*alif*,” upon verification, cannot be regarded as a complete letter (IB A:95; B:201). The “*alif*” is usually regarded as an “extension of breathing” (*imtidaħ al-nafas*), lacking the specification required and deliberately undertaken at one of the points of articulation (IB A:95; B:201-2). It may be combined with the “*hamzah*” to produce a single letter. And they are indeed so considered. Similarly, the “*lā*” is thought to be “one letter” compounded of “*lām*” and “*alif*.” The combination relays the actuating “secret” of the construction intelligibly without its precept ever having to be exteriorized as or embodied whole in the *construct* itself (IB A:94; B:202). Indeed, its intelligibility may reach such spiritual heights as to permit it to give instruction regarding even the secret of the *bond* (*irtibāt*) *between the Divine and the creational presences*. But in the letter-science envisaged here, this promise, at heart, is what inspires the daunting theoretical task of describing the warp of analogical relationships streaming

gracefully *downwards* to the lowest rungs of created being. This task is vastly simplified by the rudimentary bifurcation into root and branch permeating every level, and nowhere more adeptly described than where the letters and philosophical forms show, as they do at this juncture in his analysis, every sign of finally being fructuously assimilated into the vast intellectual synthesis of the Ibn 'Arabī school. In confirmation, Qūnavī remarks that the *lām-alif*-letter-combination ought also to reveal how simple and compound things are commixed (*imtizāj*), just as "forms" are. Besides being itself a fusion of two letters, the *lām-alif* is at once the letter-equivalent of the God-world relation (i.e. between the two presences of the Divine and the creatural) and the constructive locus of *discursive* meaning; form at this encompassing level, after all, must not only tell us about but in some sense itself actually be a concrete manifestation of the *analogical parentage*²⁶ of the existentiating agent, qua existentiator not as pure essence – that is, with respect to what is existentiated.²⁷

And for this reason, "form" is more than just a philosophical form assimilated into a mystical conception; it is a transformed form. There is, also, no denying the overlapping between the ontic pole of the analogy and the epistemic and methodological one, as observed in the early chapters of this study; between the internal logic of theological science and the cosmic order; or between theology and the ancillary sciences. It will be fascinating to see how, in light of all that he has managed to say on the letter-forms and, previously, the types of structured arrangements of speech, this matter will be further clarified in the remaining sections of his Introduction. Let us go

on, though, to the last few words on the pointed and unpointed letters and their association with the root-branch bifurcation so basic to the kind of analogy predicated of the God-world relation. This last discussion will take us to the next chapter, where we shall see how Qūnavī presents in this light a more richly informed analysis of the fundamental distinction we met before between God and “what is other than God.”

The unpointed letters are twelve in number and, for this reason, easily accommodated to the twelve cosmological (or “zodiac”) signs (*burūj*) “decreed and determined in the Throne” (*arsh*) (IB A:95; B:202). The Throne is “first among the *simple bodies*” (*awwal al-ajām al-basīt*) and the greatest (*dżamūhā*) insofar as *form*, precept and containment (*ihātab*) are concerned. The “cosmological signs” (*alāmāt al-burūj*), on the other hand, are the terminal points (*manāzil*) witnessed in the eighth sphere (*al-falak al-thāmin*)^c and the levels – the second “aspect” postulated earlier – whose precept permeates all of the letters. Indeed, the number twelve, it transpires, is so ubiquitous that all existent beings fall under the number twelve. He restates what we have already seen about the “five presences” – referred to here as the “five *roots*” – along with their two concomitant aspects and the three secondary “existents” to which are attached their own two subordinate aspects.

Pointed letters, on the other hand, add up to fourteen, and act as signs (*ishārah*) and markings (*alāmah*) for the seven heavenly levels (*marātib al-samawāt al-sab'*), the four elements (*anāsir*), the three generated (*muwalladāt*) and the eighth sphere, namely, the

^c That is, the comprehensive isthmus (*al-barzakh al-jāmi'*).

“comprehensive isthmus” (*al-barzakh al-jāmi*) (IB A:95; B:202).²⁸ All this has been laid out in meticulous detail by Ibn ‘Arabī in the second *bāb* of the *Futūhāt* and need not be analyzed here.

One will begin to notice once again Qūnāvī’s marked tendency to relate his discussion to the scientific division of instructional knowledge, with talk about “existents” and epistemic “roots,” both of which must be given. His longer range goal is to square the existential cast of traditional philosophy, weighted down as it is by a “sense principle” confounding its theoretical results, with his “letter science.” As we found, sense experience and Divine knowledge qua speech bear some striking *logical* resemblances, most importantly in respect of their epistemic rootedness. His interest in this is resumed here with a new reckoning of the time-honoured symbolism of the ink and the inkwell. Thus, the inkwell serves to ensure that the manifold remain separate from the “container” engulfing the myriad instances of possibility brought to life from an inscrutable state of hiddenness, and yet remains one (IB A:96; B:202). The ink and the inkwell (*al-midād mā a al-dawāt*) are analogous (*nazīr*), respectively, to the *unitary level* of possibility (*martabat al-imkān*) and the *possible entities* contained by this level (*mā hawat-hu min al-mumkināt*), insofar as God encompasses them all both in existence and in knowledge (*ibātāt al-Haqq bihā wujūdan wa ‘ilmān*). The *level* of possibility is simply the hiddenness of the possible entities it contains; it has only “darkness” (*zulmāh*). Accordingly, it is the possible entities contained therein, not possibility as such, which are specified within the “light of existence,” so that their precepts can be exteriorized

with respect to each other “in and through God” (*al-Haqq wa bibi*), who acting thus to bring them into existence suffers neither delimitation (*qayd*) nor designation (*tamayyuz*). The result is that “that image occurring in existence [*mithāl al-wāqt fi al-wujūd*] corresponds to the root [*mutābiqan lil-asl*]” (IB A:96; B:202).

By the same token, then, the ontic “realities of the possible entities” are like the letters which lie latent in the inkwell (*al-kāminah fi al-dawāt*) in a state he had earlier presented in connection with the secret of the words, “God was and nothing was with Him” (“*Kāna Allāh wa lā shay' mā 'abū*”), whereby “nothing in the Divine hiddenness of the essence has any existential multiplicity or specificity [*ta'ayyun wujūdī*]” (IB A:96; B:203). To continue the metaphor, the paper and everything written upon it are coordinated by a comparable twin extension of the *general* existential light (*inbisāt al-nūr al-wujūdī al-'āmm*), one within which the existents’ forms are specified. The act of writing itself, as we now know, corresponds to the “secret of existentialization” (*sīr al-iḍātī*) and exteriorization (*zuhūr*). An “intermediary instrumental factor” is represented by the “Divine Pen” (*al-qalam al-itāhī*), and the writer (*kātib*) by God Himself qua existentialator, creator and giver of form (*musawwiran*), in the linguistic sense expounded for the six intentional constructions. To the three fingertips (*al-anāmil al-thalāth*) corresponds the “primary singleness” (*al-fardīyyah al-ūlā*); among them and through them “reproduction” (*intāj*) takes place. The intention stands for the Will; the preparation of (*istihdār*) that which has been willed to be written down is the wilful particularization (*al-takhṣīs al-irādī*) subordinate to (or following upon) the all-encompassing knowledge of the objects of knowledge exteriorized.²⁹ Within this

encompassment, the “predisposition”^f of the knower and writer for what he wills to be written has really two legitimate *roots* or pre-given types of knowledge: one, primary knowledge (*al-ilm al-awwali*) and, two, the sensory knowledge acquired from objects of sense – i.e. “*al-mustafād min al-mahsūsāt*” (IB A:96; B:203). Qūnavī is, therefore, very explicit about the structural similarity, if not equivalence, of these two pre-givens, to which we have given sufficient attention above. “Primary knowledge” in man corresponds to God’s knowledge of His essence, by virtue of which He has knowledge of everything – as we have learned from Ibn Sīnā. To our knowledge acquired from an object of sense, by contrast, corresponds God’s Sight of the “realities of the possible entities” (*ru’yatuhu subḥānabu haqā’iq al-mumkināt*) at the integral “presence of possibility” (*hadrat al-imkān*) (IB A:96; B:204). The difference is that His knowledge remains attached to these realities pre-eternally and by essence (*dhātiyyan*). Their display in existence leads to the *subordinateness* we ordinarily impute to the knower’s knowledge of any object of knowledge, in the sense that the knower’s knowledge depends on the object of knowledge and what it reveals of itself to him.³⁰ What is shared by both Divine and sensory givens is this basic distinction between the noetic reality toward which the knower is inclined and the knower, God and what is other than God. It is only through such a distinction that one can speak of a scientific analogy at all, analogy being a relation between two realities or elements.

^f A: *istimdād*; B: *istīdād*.

NOTES

1. This is discussed it in his chapter on “knowledge” and “light.”
2. The other types of noun complements are (Owens FG 150):
 - (1) *mubtada'* and *khabar* (“Topic-predicate”)
 - (2) *matbū'-tābi'* (“noun-modifier”)
 - (3) *mudāf-mudāf ilayhi* (“noun possessor”)
 - (4) *ism-hāl* (“noun-condition”)
 - (5) *masdar-silah* (“verbal noun - its complements”)
 - (6) *mumayyiz-tamyīz* or *tabyīn* (“noun [specified]-specifier”)
3. For example, Suyūtī in SAS 202-3 and al-Sharīf al-Jurjānī in JKT 71.
4. The expression is *lughat al-bayān* in the *Ājurūmiyyah* (cf. Carter ALI 34).
5. Carter ALI 68. The perfect being *mabnī*.
6. Carter calls it its antithesis (Carter ALI 35).
7. For an alternative view, see Ibn ‘Aqīl (LAA 31). On the Basran position, H. Fleisch, “*Irāb*,” *EF* 79.
8. That is to say, “*mundammah ilayhā lawāzimuhā al-tābi'ah hāl ittisāfihā bil-wujūd*.”
9. The word *jumlah*, which I have rendered as “set,” also carries the customary grammatical meaning of “sentence.”
10. That is, “*allatī ilayhā al-inṣinād wal-marjāt*.” The first “presence” is the Divine hiddenness, the original source (*ma'dan*) of the realities and immaterial intangible meanings. The second is the “relational” (*idāfi*), to which belongs the world of the spirits (*ālam al-arwāh*); at opposite end to it is the “level of direct witness” in this world, to which belong the natural forms that are both of composite and of simple relations. Then comes the presence whose relation to the world of direct witness is closer. And, finally, the “presence of the comprehensive command” (*al-amr al-jāmi'*) (IB A:87; B:194).
11. The points of articulation were meticulously analyzed by Arabic linguists. The most basic work in phonology was, of course, the *Kitāb* of Sībawayh (d. c. 177 AH/798 CE). For the basic division of the *makhrāj* (“points of articulation”), see Semaan LMA 412. A more detailed and updated analysis is given by Nassir STP14-9. For a physiological account of emitted sound by a philosopher-physician, there is Ibn Sīnā's own *Makhrāj al-burūf* (SMH 5-12); translated in Semaan APH.
12. For consistency's sake, we shall say “level” instead of “point” of articulation for *makhrāj*.
13. “*Yastalzīm nañ mā yanāñhi*.”
14. For the notion of *ghāyah*, see below.

15. Qūnāvī here is clearly referring to noun rather than verbal inflection, which consists of *raf* (indicative), *nasb* (subjunctive) and *jazm* (jussive).

16. See preceding chapter for Qūnāvī's use and interpretation of these words.

17. *Al-tabakkum.*

18. *Āhād.*

19. Suhravardī was much less expansive in his interpretation of the *sukūn*, making no distinction between *hayy* and *mayt*. For him, *sukūn* was just a matter that concerned the intellect (*amr 'aqlī*). It was “the absence of movement in that in which movement might be imagined [*intifā' al-harakah*],” “absence” (*intifā'*) being understood as something purely mental (*dhabīnī*) rather than realizable in [external] entities (*mubaqqaq fī al-d'yān*) (SHI II:70).

20. *Jumūd*, lit., “mineralization.”

21. Levels of perception, that is, according to the strength or weakness, deficiency or perfection of the perception (cf. TIT 175).

22. He will contrast *awwaliyyah* with *ākhiriyyah* (“Finality”); see IB A:94; B:201.

23. *Sukūn hayy* is characterized by the singular oneness of Divine comprehensive union (IB 94; B:201); see below.

24. That is, “*datī lan 'alā al-hukm*.”

25. The person who construes properly the secret of the words “Limitless in His Splendour is He who hath taken His servant for a night journey” (Qur'ān 17:1) and “*Qiff inna rabbaka yaslā*,” as he cryptically adds, will readily understand what he means (IB A:94; B:201).

26. Ibn 'Arabī indeed spoke of *abb* (father) and *umm* (mother) during the First Wedlock (*al-nikāh al-awwal*) (FuM II [Yahya] 482:311-12), whereas Qūnāvī does not mention a word of this here.

27. And there are many more “secrets” awaiting the diligent pupil, adds Qūnāvī, which he admits having to abstain from divulging in this book for simple lack of space.

28. Or the “*A'rā*.”

29. That is, “*al-tābi' lil-'ilm al-muhīt ma'lūmat allatī tazhar*.”

30. Concerning the “relation” combining these two noetic roots (*al-ashayn al-'ilmīyayn*), there are many other “secrets” to be fathomed in their differential details. Qūnāvī mentions, for example, the secret of, “We shall test ye until We knoweth” (“*wa la-nublīnakum hattā na'lām*”) (IB A:97; B:204).

CHAPTER EIGHT

Analogy and the “Permanent Distinction” between God and the “Other-than-God”

Now that we have analyzed over the the previous chapters the various dimensions of the problem of knowledge associated with “knowing the realities of things,” let us turn to one central question Qūnavī feels the urgency at this point to elaborate. This question bears particularly on the methodological irreducibility of the two noetic realities which we said was presupposed in every theoretical inquiry. The present discussion makes up the second “general rule” of the Introduction. The method, or “scale,” of theological science rests on a twofold ontology that is fundamentally analogical in character. The nature of the analogical relation, only intermittently discussed so far, is now taken up for more systematic examination in the light of the philological discussion of the last chapter. In this chapter, we will consider the hub of this relation, what Qūnavī calls the “levels of permanent distinction” (*al-tamayyuz al-thābit*) between God and “what is other than God.”

These levels make up the “primal secrets” (*ummahāt al-asrār*) of his science, each subordinately and concomitantly related to the other (IB A:97; B:205). They are of vital importance to the search for a concrete “scale,” of the sort Qūnavī purports to be establishing for a “Divine Science” which can perform the instructive role intended for it, but without laying claim to the noetic absoluteness God alone possesses. As we

argued in Chapter Two and the early part of Chapter Four, each science has its own scale, and theological science is no exception despite its forbidding task of having to give expression to what is, after all, too noble and too elevated to be reducible to common terms and expressions. Therefore, while mainly of methodological or theoretical – below he says, “intelligible” – interest, the “scale” proposed here has, nevertheless, its own “reality,” just as it has to negotiate between two other, noetically related realities, not one. This being so, the only possible level corresponding to the *noetic* relation has to be an intermediary one, in this case between the two noetic realities called the Divine and the “non-Divine.” Let us see how he goes about defining their concrete relation and what he makes of it within the special context of his theoretical introduction to *Ijāz al-bayān*.

§ THE INTERMEDIATE LEVEL AMONG THE FIVE ROOT PRESENCES

Qūnāvī begins this section of the Introduction by investigating how each successive root from the Five Root Presences (*al-hadarāt al-khams al-asliyyah*)¹ is subsumed by the other² (IB A:97; B:205). He begins with the instance where two presences flank both sides of a third, intermediate level (*al-martabah al-wastā*). One of these two presences is “incorporated” at the level of the “manifested name,”³ otherwise qualified as the world of “direct witnessing”; the other is incorporated at the level of “Original Hiddenness” (*al-ghayb al-asti*), in opposition to the first. Now, the intermediary (*wasat*) that is reducible

to both sides is merely a relation – that is to say, a “combination [*jam'iyyatuhumā*] which results from them [*al-nātij min baynibimā*],” rather than anything superadded (*zā'id*) (IB A:97; B:205).

This relation, we ought well to recall, is not between two equal things. As we said, the “reality of the intermediary” considered by itself – in short, what allows us to isolate the “intermediary” – is partly a “hiddenness of the interior” (*al-ghayb al-bātin*), the root, and partly a “manifested name” (*al-ism al-zāhir*) and exteriority (*zuhūr*), the two branches that spring forth from it. Exteriority is sustained from the “inner recesses of something which is prior,” be it implicitly or explicitly (IB A:97; B:205). So much so that the four other considerations are effectively subsumed under the “primary hiddenness” (*al-ghayb al-awwal*). Before such a “subsumption” (*indirāj*) can become *intelligible*, all must be prescinded from view: precepts, multiplicity, speech, aspects and, what he calls, both the Divine and the creational nominal differentiations (*al-tafāṣīl al-ismā'iyyah al-ilāhiyyah wal-kawniyyah*). Included among them are even the levels of these Five Universal Termini^b – corresponding to the five presences – without which there could not properly be any contemplation (*shuhūd*), speech, precept or differentiation (*tafsīl*) to speak of in the first place (IB A:98; B:205). All these must be suppressed. But then why not throw in “intelligibility” as well?

Qūnavī retains it somewhat artificially, with seemingly no more higher justification

^a A: *jam'iyyatuhumā*; B: *jam'iyyatuhumā*.

^b A: *al-marātib allatī tantahī*; B: *al-marātib allatī yantahī*.

than a compensatory advantage to be gained in doctrinal consistency, if we remember his earlier pronouncements in the Introduction on the need for *scholastic* validation as well as realization through experience. Although intelligibility (*maqūliyyah*) may suggest an Archimedean point for setting the world in motion, for him it implies no particular ontological commitment, even where he claims to isolate its “reality.” Qūnavī is not offering an exact reproduction of the true order of things. The intelligibility he has in mind where no precept or direct witnessing of any kind can be considered is, technically, indistinguishable from the apotheosis of Divine presence or hiddenness. Moreover, attachment to the creational presence of “direct witnessing” colours the intellection of the source from which it issues forth, thereby lending a positive aspect to hiddenness qua *creative* source. And, lastly, intelligibility has to be attached to the secret *joining* the two (IB A:98; B:205).

This has an important bearing on the way in which analogy is to be conceived. Analogy is not a uniform, closed relationship; we found that it was skewed towards a final source, the root, whose uniqueness it must preserve along with the originality of the “offspring.” Intelligibility straddles both “sides” and, to that extent, reifies the analogical method on a theoretical plane, in close coordination with the intermediary level, as we will now see. Its object of attachment remains the universal Divine command (*al-amr al-kullī*), which Qūnavī proceeds to divide in accordance with the foregoing “principles” into three categories:

- (1) that which is proper to God (*yakhtass bil-Haqq*);

- (2) that which is unique to created being (*yanfarid bibi al-kawn*)
- (3) that in which there is commonality (*ishtirāk*) at the station of the Breath and the Cloud, i.e. the comprehensive secret (*al-sirr al-jāmi‘*) (IB A:98; B:205-6).

Qūnāvī discusses in detail the first category comprising all those things that figure nowhere else. They are of two types: affirmation (*thubūtiyyah*) and negation (*salbiyyah*) (IB A:98; B:206). Affirmation, he states, entails God’s “existential and noetic *containment*” (*ibātatuhu al-wujūdīyyah wal-ilmīyyah*), the *priority* of His existence (*taqaddum wujūdihī*) to every thing to which existence is ascribed. It must also entail the primacy of His Will, the “request for existence” and the actual acceptance of existence (*qubūluhu*) according to time, state, abode, locus of appearance and at the level which he has already described as that of “each judgement according to the judge” (*martabat kull hukm bi-hasab kull hākim*), rather than to the “one judged upon.” There is an irrevocable union between affirmation in this category and the necessity of existence which he describes as the combination of “*wujūb al-wujūd wa wujūb al-thubūt ‘alā al-dawām*” (IB A:98; B:206). It must be stated clearly that this category is not that of the absolutely hidden, but an intelligible one which isolates the Divine down to the most discretely definable level of reception, without having, with the same stroke, to cross over into the function of the recipient qua recipient.

While this is true of *affirmation* with respect to the Divine names, negation, on the other hand, signals the fact that God cannot be “fettered,” delimited, designated or restricted; that there is no primacy (*awwaliyyah*) beyond His existence; and that He cannot be contained. God is in every sense deserving of all ascription because it is most

assuredly what His essence requires *at the level of the creational loci of appearance (mawtabat al-mazāhir al-kawniyyah)* and relative to them alone. If it were not so,

such essential individualities and realities would be referred – either through Him or through them and collectively or individually – back to God as are not require pre-ternally by His essence. God (Exalted) then would have to accept a new precept or qualification from or through another [thing] [*min ghayrihi aw bi-ghayrihi*]. And it would be affirmed of Him whenever it is affirmed of the “other” [*al-ghayr*]; although, if the other were then declared expired [*zawāt*], the thing in question, too, would be defunct [with respect to God]. The reason is that His essence had not required it without the other [*bi-dūna hādhā al-ghayr*]. But this cannot be valid, since it would entail that originations are predictable through God’s essence and that He accepts change [*lil-taghayyur*]. Upon affirmation, in turn, an opposite judgement would have to be made: that it be either necessary of affirmation or possible (IB A:98-9; B:206).

While this is inconceivable, he assures us, it tells us something about the “transmutation of the realities” (*qalb al-haqāiq*) (IB A:99; B:206).

As unlikely as we are to succeed in finding a perfectly felicitous description of God’s essence as it is in itself, no degree of theological fastidiousness can quite banish the conviction that it is the essence after all that is exhibited. But Qūnawī moves directly to the more scripturally appraisable requirement that it is God who must describe Himself.

There is, he finally declares, a “subtle secret” at work:

It is that the true affirmation and specification of all these attributes and many others remain unknown and unmanifested except within the Cloud [*al-‘amā*], which is the isthmus mentioned before that separates the absolute hiddenness of the essence from the [world of] “direct witnessing,” as you will find out shortly, God willing. But what becomes affirmable of God in each and every Divine concern [*sha’n*] is [fully] what His essence requires pre-ternally. The same goes for what is affirmed of the non-Divine [*li-ghayrihi*] in respect of its reality, or denied of it and of another [*‘anhu wa ‘an sawāhu*]. That which varies is the specified exteriorization of these things and their cognizance through and for the sake of the essential individualities, rather than their affirmation or denial of the object of affirmation or denial as such. Exteriorization can only take place within and through the “Cloud” referred to here... (IB A:99; B:207)

To go on to the second of the three categories named just above, what distinguishes

created being from God is “the absence of everything whose affirmation is specified [*td̄ayyana thubūtuhu*] for God; not being ascribed, for instance, primary Will [*irādah ʻulūb*] and pre-eternal necessity [*wujūd qadīm*]” (IB A:99; B:207). There is no more analogy in this category than there was in the first. Created being is distinguished by being “necessary of affirmation” but not “necessary of existence” (*infirādihī bi-wujūb al-thābit dūn wujūb al-wujūd*), both of which are combined in God’s case; it is ascribed origination (*hudūth*) and the “shifting of states” (*taqallub al-ahwāl ‘alayhi*).

The third category concerns other attributes which are both affirmed and negated. But it pertains to those “things” he says are “common” to both God and created being. These things make their appearance strictly in the “first isthmus” and have two aspects and two precepts: a relation to God and a relation to the non-Divine. The affirmation of these things of God by way of “commonality” (*isbtirāk*) at the level of the isthmus coheres with what His essence demands from another direction for accepting them at the isthmian level, though without implying complete symmetry (IB A:100; B:207-8). The assumption that receptivity is conditional upon commonality is vital and understood firstly as a precept of one of God’s proper attributes. The relation of commonality signifies the acceptance (*qubūl*) of each judgement at some state, level, time period, abode and locus of appearance according to the rule of the *one making the judgement* (i.e. the judge) (*bi-hasab kull hākim*). In this fashion, within the compass provided by the isthmus, the precept of creational individualities for “things common” is ultimately based on *haqq al-Haqq* (“Right of God”).

Ibn ‘Arabī had used “*haqq*,” as Su‘ād Hakīm noted, to indicate a kind of attribution that safeguards “rightfulness” (*istihqāq*) according to an essential attribute (Hakim *Mu‘jam* 343). The “Right of God” would, in this sense, signal His lordship (*rubūbiyyatuhu*); whereas the “right of creation,” or *haqq al-khalq*, signals its servanthood (“*ubūdiyyatuhu*). Ibn ‘Arabī states that “we are servants though we may appear through His traits (*ni‘āthi*), and He is our Lord though He may appear through ours” (FuM III:356). The expression is well-suited to this context; for Qūnavī explains that the realities of these “creational individualities” require that they be accepted in whomever actually accepts them in accordance with the recipient’s own conditions (*sharā‘i*) (IB A:100; B:208). What varies in such a situation is strictly the exteriorization (*zubūr*) and cognizance of those “things” (*mdarifatuhuhā*), not their affirmation or negation *per se* with respect to the one receiving the affirmation or denial. God remains both the “one who judges” and the “one who receives the judgement.” The difference in this category of the isthmus is the intervening process of exteriorization, at the same time more nebulous than the essence’s unalloyed “intensity,” and yet more luminous than pure createdness.

It is for this reason that Qūnavī adds that the attribute of *luminosity* (*sifat al-diya*)—belongs specifically to the isthmus; whereas whatever distinguishes God from created beings is of the level of hiddenness and of *pure* light (*al-nūr al-mahd*) (IB A:100; B:208). It is the nature of light, as earlier defined, to be “that through which there is perception” without itself being perceived. Of all the specifiable Divine levels elucidated in this treatise, he states, pure light’s closest analogy (*nazīruhu*) is the root.

§ EXEGETICAL SIGNIFICANCE

The secret of Light is consecrated by the “first division” of *Surat al-Fatiha*, where belong the mystic “heirs of the Light” (*warathah*), those who steadfastly uphold the overriding right of its manifestness and, lastly, the obligatory daytime acts of worship (*al-ibādāt al-wājibah al-nabāriyyah*) (IB A:100; B:208) – viz. every act of worship occupying a degree of priority, or *darajah awwaliyyah*.

The other, creational presence, on the other hand, is characterized by darkness (*zulmab*) – not to be confused with the “hiddenness” of the essence due to its sheer intensity – signifying the level of possibility and intellectually non-existence (*al-‘adam al-maqūl*). Contrary to light, it is intrinsically *perceptible*, though nothing can be perceived *through it*. It occupies the very last division of the *Fatiha* and the “request” (*su‘āl*) whose object is the “guidance” extended to those who, towards the end of the *Surah*, are ascribed the two attributes of affirmation and the transcendental denial (*al-nafi‘ al-tanzīhi*) of detachment from creational relations and non-essential attributes (*al-sifat al-‘āridah*) (IB A:101; B:208). Perdurance (*baqā‘*) based on the root, which he compares directly to light, he describes as “a possibilistic permanence [*al-thubūt al-imkāni*] that faces the light, just as complete servanthood does Lordship” (IB A:101; B:208). He calls this the “station of the second expiry in God,” or *al-astiħtak al-thāni fi al-Haqq*.⁴ It is exemplified by “nightly acts of worship” – as opposed to daytime ones – having what he calls “finality” (*ākhiriyyah*) (IB A:101; B:209).⁵

a. The Isthmus

The isthmus characterized by luminosity is otherwise called the “Cloud.” It supports the station of “Thee do we worship and from Thee do we seek aid” (*maqām “Iyyāka nāfīdu wa iyyāka nāstāīnu”*) (IB A:101; B:209). Its inherent nature is to be *both* what is perceivable and “that through which there is perception,” its principal claim to distinction being the “comprehensive twilight acts of worship,” namely, “*al-ibādāt al-barzakhīyyah al-jāmi‘ah*.” These acts are performed at dusk and at dawn. In short, the isthmus is everything that is not delimited by either “firstness” or “lastness.” The “moderate one” (*muqtasid*)⁶ stands at a midway *point* (*wast*) among the “heirs [al-warathah] who uphold the proofs of God [*bujaj Allāh*] and the rightful due that belongs to being the locus of exteriorization of these greater stations of Divinity [*al-maqāmāt al-kubrā al-ilāhiyyah*]” (IB A:101; B:209). He seeks to fulfill the “right of every possessor of right,” in diffidence to his own Lord’s granting to everything its nature. Qūnavī calls this the “station of the primary individualness (or singleness)” (*al-fardīyyah al-ūlā*), which we said is where reproduction and procreation occurs through hidden, spiritual, natural and elemental nuptials and whatever combines all of these. Acquaintance with the latter leads to acquaintance with all “five pillars and prayers of Islam” – viz. the *sharā‘i al-islām al-khamsah wal-salāt* – and, in turn, to the five root presences.

Because of its distributive capacity, the isthmus provides the key to Qūnavī’s understanding of the analogical “precept” embedded in the relationship between God

⁶ In B:209, the term is ‘*aqā‘id* rather than *sharā‘i*; see B:209, n. 3.

and His creation. Just how much it facilitates our comprehension will be judged by its success in yoking the downward descent of Divine manifestation with a created being stirred to spiritual ascent and noetic illumination that derives its true meaning from a source lying beyond the palpable grasp of any single creature. The isthmus is offered as the sole guiding principle, both for the unity it confers and the respective “rights” it is capable of dispensing. At the “comprehensive station of the isthmus,” the Divine precepts are describable as being at once exhibited from God’s presence of hiddenness and returning to Him as the possible entities subsisting in His knowledge; entities whose own precepts, in turn, link up with each other only through God (IB A:101-2; B:209). The possible entities are rendered existentially manifest and, accepting this lot, act as the condition (*shartan*) for the “return” of the precepts of the Divine names specified through them. Lying midway, they help manifest the names’ effects in a course that goes from God towards God (*min al-Haqq ilā al-Haqq*).⁷

The isthmus, in short, establishes the parameters of what is essentially God’s self-address by bringing out in full relief a luminous Divine extension toward “another” and vice versa, as the most fitting creational analogue of the Divine. From this perspective, primacy of noetic level is an everpresent fact for created being, insofar as knowledge is attached to a knower according to what his own reality, the specific “reality of the attachment” and, finally, the object of attachment qua attached (*al-mutdallaq min kawnihi mutdallagan*) all require (IB A:102; B:209-10). Moreover, attachment as a *relational element* is technically subordinate to that to which there is attachment (*mā tdfallaga bīhi*) and its

precept (IB A:102; B:210). But since God knows the “realities of things” through His essence because they are inscribed in Him (*irtisāmihā fīhi*), His knowledge not being acquired from the outside, His knowledge may be said to be anterior and posterior only in a special relational sense and only by way of level. This safeguards the primacy of existence in God, even if only from within the relative world of created being. The immediate theoretical repercussion is that there is a residual existentiating factor or agent in the calculus; and, within the particular range offered by the analogy, God’s is the creative source that ensures His knowledge is never posterior to any noetic object. Qūnavī maintains that such existential priority is expressed in the Qur’ān by the following words: “God creates everything” (“*Allāh khāliq kull shay'*); “He is the First... and the Hidden” (“*huwa al-awwal... wal-bātin'*); and in the Prophet’s words, “God was and nothing else was with Him” (“*kāna Allāh wa lā shay' maf'ahu*”) (IB A:102; B:210).

Being relational, however, every Divine act has a twofold character, as we just pointed out. And this character is indicated by the words, “If you assist God, He will assist you” (“*in tansurū Allāh yansurkum*”), “He will recompense them with a quality of their own” (“*sayajzihum wasfahum*”) (Qur’ān 6:139 [140]), etc.; and the Prophet’s words, “God does not tire though ye be tired” (“*inna Allāh lā yamalla hattā tamallū*”), “Whoever knows himself knows his Lord” (“*man 'arafa nafsahu 'arafa rabbahu*”), “Whoever approaches Me but a handbreadth, I shall the length of an arm draw nearer to him” (“*man taqarraba ilayy shibrān taqarrabtu minhu dhirān*”) (IB A:102; B:210). This kind of “reciprocity” is illustrated in the fact that the *totality* of elements going under a particular judgement (or precept)

(*majmū' al-hukm*) must coincide with, and is never detached from, the *totality* of that to which it is attached (*majmū' mā tā'allaqa bihi*) (IB A:102-3; B:210). Hence, every existent's precept with respect to the names is in every sense the Names' precept with respect to the object named (*musammā*). The two sides of this reciprocal relationship cannot be disengaged from each other (IB A:103; B:210). Perceptive specificity for the one is matched by perceptive specificity for the other. It is impossible, he insists, for there to be complete disengagement^d in every aspect, state, measure or level. The "world as a totality" is the locus of appearance of "sheer existence" (*al-wujūd al-bābi*); upon specification every existent becomes the locus of appearance of existence qua relation of a distinctive name (*nisbat ism khāss*) at a some particular level or other. Indeed, *existence itself* acts as both the locus of the essential individualities' precepts (*ahkām al-dyān*) and "conditional for these precepts' reaching one possible entity after another" (IB A:103; B:210). It is also a condition for the "knowledge through self" (*al-'ilm bi-nafs*^e), in the manner hinted at in one of the *hadīths* above, and for "each other's knowledge within the isthmus [*al-barzakh*]" which serves as the "universal mirror" (*al-mirā'ah al-kulliyah*).

While Qūnāvī refrains from giving more ample details, the following conclusions may be drawn. The intermediary position between the Divine and the creational does not simply hand down the original ontological division without further ado, as if uniting two equal opposites. Its real value resides in its capacity to establish the apprehension of the

^d A: *al-infitāh*; B: *wal-infikāk*.

^e B: *fi al-'ilm bi-nafsihā*.

noetic object as an instance of that object's self-disclosure in a "process" going from utter hiddenness to the manifested dichotomy of *knower* and *known*, where, furthermore, an analogical link holds them together in a single act of knowing. The "transitional moment" is indeed a unity of two precepts, that of the names' descent and that of the existent's ascent. Instead of a simple correspondence between image and object (futile in the case of God) we have a full-fledged analogy between the specific precept of the existent in the names, on the one hand, and the names' original precept in the object named. The farther we ascend the more complete is the self-manifestation of the reality in question, with its emphatically singular, hidden character. Whether this reality is the ultimate ontological root or merely one among many others makes little difference at this stage of the argument. What is important is that, the search for knowledge in an absolute sense without any regard to its receptive vehicle being utterly pointlessness, a derivative noetic relation is necessary in the ascent, in the course of which, however, the precept of one whole becomes inextricably linked with that of another descending upon it by virtue of their relational consonance. The same structural patterns and distinctions among root, branch and differentials are identifiable at every level.

This is something to which Qūnāvī will give even more systematic form towards the end of his Introduction. So far, he says, the presentation has tended to stress the question of how the root survives through this process of self-manifestation – that is all the way to the manifestation qua locus of exteriorization. He has endeavoured to give what – in acknowledgement of Ibn Sīnā's famous declaration – we need in order to

elucidate the “things” in terms of their roots and to give instruction as to their realities (IB A:103; B:211). In the course of this thesis we have come to realize as well to what extent the controversies over the employment of reason, in this endeavour, are situated within boundaries set by exegetical problems of rather long date. Relation by analogy, in the manner divulged above, came to the aid of those who hoped to treat systematically of these problems within an authoritative framework for which the concrete speech of Divine revelation constituted the ground event. This by itself throws in sharp relief the root character of revealed scriptures as they have been known and recognized throughout history. However, Divine speech is also God’s own knowledge of Himself, the root of all roots, as it were. This entails that the eternal Word has to be received differently. Its reception is based on a pervasive dichotomy, beginning at the source, between knower and known. Although resting ultimately on perfect resolution with the hidden precept of God’s knowledge of Himself, such a dichotomy implied, secondarily, a noetic posteriority for the recipient relative to this precept. This gives knowledge, in a pedagogical and systematic sense, a particular kind of divisibility expressible in terms of roots (*usūl*), branches (*furu’*) and differential details (*tafāṣīl*); and, therefore, transmitted authority (*naqlan*), reflection (*fahman*) and experience (*dhawqan*).

Since knowledge has a single reality, as we saw, the difficulty is that using this terminology tends to inflate the number of implications or “consequences of the realities [*nata’ij al-haqā’iq*] and the stations that appear at the level either of thoughts [*al-khawāṭir*], reflections [*al-afkār*] or hearts” (IB A:103; B:211). Someone who is directly cognizant of

the reality of a level or a station apart, on the other hand, is able to be considerably more concise in the specialized knowledge he wishes to impart. This is conducive to his ability to particularize (*yatashakhhās*) it in the interlocutor's soul, as it ought to be, almost as if the latter were to see it with his own eyes. Only when the former has succeeded in this task would he begin to talk about their relations, differentiations and precepts. These – and here Qūnavī continues his reflections on the question of the “root” – tend to crowd out the precept of the roots upon which every detailed explanation is based in the first place. The roots, however, must not contradict any of the details predicated of them. Most people who engage in such discussions cannot attain to the primal realities and the roots of the stations (*usūl al-maqāmāt*), but merely ruminate on details they can too readily transfer (*muntaqīlāt*) from one branch to another, creating differences and confusion in the event of contestation. When this danger arises, the priority of the roots must be kept well in mind.

Therefore, with the general “derivative” aspect of the intermediary level of the isthmus, we need to take stock of how the “emergence of the world” (*kayfiyyat budūth al-‘ālam*)^f from a state of hiddenness to perceptibility (or “witness”) takes place concretely through the Breath of the Merciful, which Qūnavī deems foundational to the whole scientific analogy associated with this intermediacy (IB A:104; B:211). From this stage, Qūnavī later will gradually move toward a notion of the *original* moment of the transition toward manifestness in the form of Divine Speech. The point he wishes ultimately to

^f B: *kayfiyyat burūq al-al-‘ālam*.

make is that to speak of “emergence” is primarily to posit the root/branch division itself.

b. The Emergence of Letters from Indistinct Breath

Let us keep to the issue of the emergence through the Breath of the Merciful, where the analogy of human breath with that of the Creator is played up in order to account for the rise of letters – for example, the *hamzah*. So far, a vertical correlation has been established between the precepts of two “wholes” or “totalities” (*majmū’*) which, besides being *essentially* commensurate, have *each* an exclusive right to integral oneness, even as the root/branch division is applied to every other ancillary level itself. This sets the two sides of the analogical relationship in a mode of articulate differentiation where, despite this differentiation, as Qūnavī informs us once again, the primacy remains with the station of oneness (*awwaliyyat maqām al-wahdah*) and its corollaries (i.e. the secret of the names and the names of the name, that of naming itself [*tasmiyah*], etc.) (IB A:104; B:211). Oneness needs to be maintained throughout in a way that does not undermine the commensurability of the essential analogy. The commensurability he has in mind at present occurs between two kinds of “emergence” (*intishā’*). There is, on the one hand, the emergence of the letters and words from human breath at various levels or points of articulation; and there is, on the other, its counterpart (i.e. “*nazīr*”), the emergence of the existents from the Breath of the Merciful upon finding egression first from hiddenness through Divine Will and word of command (*al-qawl al-amrī*). But the analogy continues with the existents’ specification at levels of existence which end in the world of witness

(IB A:104; B:211-12). The general structural skew of the analogy imposes upon existential considerations of this cast a subsidiary role relative to the descending processions of Divine names. In other words, all existential variances depend on the nominal levels (*al-marātib al-ismā'iyyah*) and their variegated conative foci (*tanawwūtāt tawajjuhātihā*), just as they also depend on differences among the creational realities (*al-haqā'iq al-kawniyyah*), their levels and predispositions (*istīdādātihā*) (IB A:104; B:212).

Analogous to these variances are, in the microcosmic sense that is solely man's, those found among our own “human letters” (*al-hurūf al-insāniyyah*), whose phonological characteristics he will draw heavily upon. Variances here, in turn, are based on the “segments” (*basab al-maqātī*) and “stops” (*intihāt*) that make up our natural articulations (*makhārij*). On the face of it, breath as such is definitionally something unbound (*lam yakun mutanābiyan*); and, conversely, what is specifiable of it in existence at any given time period is finite (*amr mutanābin*). In asserting this, he is conceding the incontrovertible in his theory so far: that the receptivity of the recipients and levels alone constitute the limiting factors of manifestation by virtue of their delimitedness and finitude. His textual justification for this position is to be found in the words, “Upon My *creation* have I written My knowledge till the Day of Resurrection” (IB A:104; B:212). In other words, Divine knowledge receives its determinate quiddities through the finitude of the created. But here this finitude is aptly pictured through the “segment,” as against the continuum of infinity. What is infinite enters into existence in segments. Although “breath” is a “single reality,” in its articulations it may acquire as many names for that very

distinctiveness as are occasioned by the segments (*maqātī*).

The *temporal* extension of breath (*imtīdād zamānihi*) left unspecified by any particular segment is the “*alif*” (IB A:104-5; B:212). With breath’s “first specification” by the segment lying in closest proximity to the “heart,” the source of breath (i.e. “*yanbūt al-nafas*,” going by the physiological account of speech), one may speak of an “*hamzah*.” And so on from one letter to the next: “*bā*,” “*sīn*,” “*mīm*,” etc. The order of the letters presented here is that of the *basmallah* of the *Fātihah*, which exemplifies what is fundamentally a Divine act of creation having the Pen (*qalam*), the Tablet (*lawh*), the Throne (*‘arsh*), etc. as its symbolic accompaniments (IB A:105; B:212). The latter are instruments in the lettered structuration of Divine revelation brought down through a textual and semantic peculiarity pre-given in the Qur’ān. What is important is that each letter is different from indistinct breath by virtue of specification alone (*taṣayyūnī*). The reader will perhaps recall, from our discussion of “thingness” in Chapter Two, the pivotal importance of specification for the Creative act, here taken in the more recondite sense of Divine self-contemplation. The same principle holds for every instance of the existential entities and the nominal realities (*al-haqā’iq al-ismā’iyyah*). It is always relative to the root that a letter is a letter, or an entity is an entity at all. And it is indistinguishable from sheer existence (*al-wujūd al-baḥt*) (synonymous with Breath) – to which is ascribed everything issuing from a state of hiddenness to witness or perceptibility – save through the manifoldness (*taḍaddūd*) that follows in the wake of the First Specification.

Now, specification finds its original terrain in a level Qūnavī calls that of the

hiddenness of possibility (*martabat al-ghayb al-imkāni*) in relation to God, not to the “things.” The level of witness itself commences only with the “first nominal specification” (*awwaluhā al-tādīyun al-awwal al-ismī*), distinguished from Divine hiddenness, at a state of what he calls “relative hiddenness” (*al-ghayb al-idāfi*) (IB A:105; B:212-13). Relative hiddenness before the multitudinous aftermath of specification is taken as an upper limit (*hadd*). As he would later put it, it is primarily “that whose precept one seeks to elaborate [*mā yarid tafsīl hukmihī*], whereas the ‘real hidden’ [*al-haqīqī*] is the very Presence of God’s essence and ipseity [*hadrat dhāt al-Haqq wa huwiyyatihī*]” (IB 114; B:222) and is not subject to any kind of epistemic penetration. Although hidden (*ghaybān*), relative hiddenness is poised to be known; and its most obvious counterpart (*naṣīruhu*) in human breath is the “*hamzah*,” which, predictably enough, is specification itself understood in human terms (IB A:105; B:213). On the grave matter of the essence’s manifestation exteriorized from absolute hiddenness, and “to which Breath is linked [*al-mudāfi layhi al-nafas*],” he informs us that it is specified through just such a specification (IB A:105; B:213). For the first thing specified in our own breath is by means of specificity itself (i.e. the *hamzah*). God’s singular oneness, on the other hand, is indicated by the “*alif*,” its *mu’arrif bi-abadiyyatihī*. Of all the *complete* letters occurring within the world of witness (*shahādah*), the “*bā*” is the specifying agent (*muta’ayyan bihī*). What is peculiar about the *hamzah* and the “*alif*” is that they are so linked as to form a single unit. He justifies their association by pointing to the fact that it is through comprehensive union, construction (*tarkīb*), “levels varying according to different ways,” and diffusion

(*sarayān*) of the precept belonging to the comprehensive union of singular oneness that all of the existents are exteriorized – and with them the various *forms* of the utterances (*suwar al-alfāz*), words and letters at the five universal levels or points of articulation (*makhārij*).

Just as, linguistically speaking, the meanings signified in the articulation are said to “inhere” in these forms (*hāmilah lil-mdāni*), so the level-precepts of the names and the very secret of the object named (*sīr al-musammā*) must inhere in all entities of created being (*al-dyān al-kawniyah*). They must signify that object (*min haythu datītāhā ‘alayhā*), being their immediate root, in some respect. Even if they are not exactly identical to it, being only names or signs, they are assumed to stand for it and cannot differ completely (IB A:105-6; B:213). It is to this new nominal continuum that Qūnavī will next turn.

§ THE PURPOSE OF NAMING AND NOMINALLY SUBORDINATE RELATIONSHIPS

In his discussion of analogical relationships, Qūnavī has insisted on the structural “polarity” of root and branch reproduced at every level, from the source to the source’s ramified exteriorizations. Intrinsically a lettered articulation, this polarity possesses a further nominal function whereby every act of “signification” points to something “signified.” In Part I, we reviewed what . . . troubled the Peripatetic philosophers most about a logical judgement, which essentially *translates* the pre-given “fact,” the “root knowledge,” into its proper syllogistic consequence qua “reasoned fact.” In Part II, we discovered the *semantic* exteriorization of the root. This exteriorization constituted its

“perfection” into an “object of inquiry” and no longer as merely the root. Moreover, both the letters and the intangible meanings they indite are reciprocally associated with each other (*indimām*) in every utterance. This is based on conspicuous patterns of subordination clearly borrowed from Arabic philology. Without the *nominal* unfolding of structural relations, however, no method of analogy can hope to succeed, let alone supersede the abstract logic of old, as mystical philosophy seeks to do. This will constitute the third “general rule” included in this Introduction, dealing specifically with the Divine names and what the act of naming actually does of signification. Later, Qūnavī will return briefly to this topic in a somewhat different context.

Briefly, at the contemplative source of Divine naming, some names are said to be foundational (*asliyyah*) and superordinate (*matbūtah*), while others are differentiated and subordinate (*tābi'ah tafsīliyyah*), serving as parts, branches, attributes and concomitants, without this implying that a real partition (*tajzīyah*) or division (*inqisām*) exists at the original “presence of names” (IB A:106; B:214). Qūnavī, like Ibn Sīnā, is clearly interested in the sign-signified complex, which happens to rest on just such a division. Where the latter had utilized a strictly syllogistical model to represent the inferential operation by which the “recaptured prisoner” was identified on the basis of his manifested “sign,” Qūnavī builds on a *linguistically* subordinate relation having the following features. Thus, the superordinate is the “name of the sign in general⁸” (*asma'* *al-dālam fi al-'umūm*) as in “sun,” “light,” etc.; or it may consist of the “names of the attributes” with respect to the attributes⁹ as in the *meaning* of “knowledge” (*ma'nā al-'ilm*),

with respect to the utterance “knowledge” (*lafz al-‘ilm*). *Ism* actually refers to “meaning”; in the case of knowledge, it refers to knowledge alone, without any reference to the one to whom knowledge is ascribed (namely, *al-musammā ‘aliman*, the “knowledgeable”).

The subordinate names, on the other hand, consist of attributes *and* verbs (*afāl*); attributes like “red” (*ahmar*) in anything to which “redness” is ascribed (*al-mawsūf bil-hamrah*); or “living” (*hayy*) in anything to which “life” is ascribed (*hayāt*). They may also be “verbal nouns” (*asma’ al-afāl*), such as “the one who resurrests” (*bāith*) or “the one who forgives” (*ghāfir*). The verb-act (*fī*) points to the agent (*yadull ‘alā al-fā’il*), such that the “relation” (*al-nisbah wal-idqab*) – “possession,” grammatically speaking – signifies the two things (*amrāyn*) thanks to which the relation is manifested (*zahara ‘ayn tilka al-nisbah*).¹⁰

The distinctions drawn above for the name, part of a threefold division – i.e. name, naming and named – are clearly vital to the operation that takes one, as we just mentioned, from the root to the final object sought. What Qūnāvī wishes to clarify here is this. All three divisions share in at least one thing: they point to or signify God (*dalālah ‘alā al-Haqq*). This he justifies through a rule of reduction according to which anything that is a sign pointing to that which is a sign for something must itself be a sign of that thing – or, in his words, “*al-dāll ‘alā al-dāll ‘alā al-shay’ dālla ‘alayhi*” (IB A:107; B:215).¹¹ For one will note that *dalālah* (“signification”) is of two kinds. It may operate either through a kind of “middle” (*wasat*), or directly without any middle. The first refers to the signification typical of concomitance and subordination (*dalālat iltizām wa tabdīyyah*), the second to signification by direct correspondence (*mutābiqah*).

This being so, it is hardly surprising that inference, or *istidlāl*,¹² should take place through the “subordinate names,” which behave like attributes and parts dependent on the “root superordinate realities” (*al-haqā’iq al-asliyyah al-matbū’ah*) (IB A:107; B:215).¹³ While not quite the same as the syllogism, this process nevertheless relies on a somewhat similar division between root-general aspect and branch-specific one for grammatical predication. This way of putting the matter down shows just how far he took the grammatical exigencies of theological science and how he consciously set about to develop the philological basis of its reasoning without displacing conventional logical principles. To this end, he had had first to derive from that which is “truly hidden,” as we might recall, a “relative hidden” that bifurcates into the two main structural features of his science: the root and the branch. The entire problematic, being one of self-manifestation or exteriorization of what lies concealed in a single mode of subsistence in Divine knowledge, is, secondly, analyzed into its main constituents in the act of naming (*tasmiyah*) and signifying (*dalalah*) the one object. The result is that there are two main considerations to be made, depending on whether or not the *object named*, the ontic factor in every act of apprehension, is taken into account. Nearer to the source are deposited the “root names” (*asma’ asliyyah*), on account of which the “essential individualities” of the differential subordinates (*dyān al-tawābi’ al-tafsīliyyah*) are properly exteriorized, in conformity with the root – something that had seemed exceedingly difficult to achieve within the narrow confines of formal logic.

From this Qūnāvī derives a strategic lesson. His next step is to analyze what the root

is a root of. He thus begins by explaining that the subordinate has in fact two precepts or goals (to be elaborated below): to signify and to give instructive definition¹⁴ (*al-dalālah wal-tarīf*) of itself, its root and levels (IB A:107; B:215). Just as the subordinate's role is to be both signification and cognizance, so the superordinate becomes precisely that root which belongs to the existing subordinates. There is a necessary complementarity of sorts. If anything, incidentally, this consolidates the tie on another plane between what (stated somewhat radically) may well be defensible in theological science as scientific *method* and the *substantive* propositions advanced beyond the level of method. But let us follow his reasoning carefully. Every act of distinction (*tamayyuz*) and quantification (*ta'daddūd*), he says, is intellected in such a way as to achieve a knowledge of the ontic reality of the thing so distinguished – that is to say, “*haqīqat al-amr al-mutamayyiz bi-dhālika al-tamayyuz*.” That this reality is known at all is due only to that distinction; in other words, its knowability is in respect of the distinction (*min baythu dhālika al-tamayyuz*) and conforms to the necessity that it be “quantified.” Distinction is a condition for cognizance of the root (*md'rīfat al-asl*) which, he now openly states, is actually equivalent to the very origin (*mansha'*) of manifoldness (or quantification) and the source (*manba'*) of all distinction. Indeed, because the root indicates priority of level merely to *manifoldness and distinction*,¹⁵ it must itself be merely a name and sign for another “root” (*al-āmah 'alā al-asl*) which cannot be specified without a *distinguishing factor* (*mumayyiz*) and a distinguishing act (*tamayyuz*) we associate with the first root.

In this particular context, Qūnāvī employs the term “name” in its exoteric sense

relative to the absolute root, but in a both passive *and* active role which gives rise to the distinguishing factor necessary for any manifestation of the absolute root to take place. In that sense, he says, manifoldness and distinction seem to be two *concomitant* precepts of the name (*hukm tazimān lil-ism*). And so, when applied to the “relative root,” which he calls a name for the absolute root, it adopts this manifoldness. Generally, the sign pointing to the “intangible meaning” (*mañā*) is that distinguishing factor (*mumayyiz*) which gives indication of the root (*al-dāl ‘alā al-ast*). He calls it the “name of the name” (*huwa ism al-ism*). That the “name of the name” can be understood to stand symbolically for the intangible meaning in this fundamental sense is typical of the Ibn ‘Arabī school. Before going on, let us just point out that the branchings of the name themselves emerge as a result of the multiplicity generated by differences among the attributes,¹⁶ properties, accidents, concomitants, dimensions (*wujūh*), aspects (*fitibārāt*) (IB A:107; B:215). And moving upwards from this immense variety only produces more variety of names, not the insular stillness of the One. But multiplicity results also from the branchings of integrated conjunctions (*tanawwūt al-ijtīmāt*) occurring at different levels among the realities; while these conjunctions themselves emerge with the precept of exteriorized plurality of the qualities and constructions (*hukm al-kayfiyyāt wal-tarākīb al-zāhirah*) (IB A:107-8; B:215-16).¹⁷

In this light, a “name” (*ism*), , as we noted earlier, is anything “exteriorized in existence and distinguished [*imtiṣā*] from hiddenness according to the branched variation in exteriorization and distinction [*‘alā ikhtilāf anwāt al-zuhūr wal-imtiyāz*]” (IB A:108; B:216).

Its value (*fā'idatuhu*) rests on the fact that it is *subordinate* to what the signification and the instructive definition (*al-dalālah wal-tarīf*) posit by way of precedence of level and existence, be it individual and collective. But it may also be something interior (i.e. *kull mā batana*), to which belong a level of primacy (*martabat al-asālah*) and conditionality (*shartiyyah*) relative to whatever happens to be subordinate to it or to be one of its own branches (*far'*). While a manifoldness and a multiplicity appear with the “first object distinguished” (*al-mumtāz al-awwal*) from absolute hiddenness and to which is ascribed “oneness” (*al-manūt bil-wahdah*), this first object distinguished is said to precede every other specification.¹⁸ A *unique* meaning (*md nā yanfarid bihi dūn mushārik*) not shared by anything else appears for it through the secret of comprehensive union and construction, the conditions (*shurūt*), the particular causes (*al-asbāb al-juz'iyyah*) and the qualities (*kayfiyyāt*) concomitant to every reality. Likewise, each name distinguished and specified gains a precept shared by no other thing distinguished, over and beyond the significance and instructional value (*al-dalālah wal-tarīf*) it has in common with every other thing distinguished – that is, if we go by their functional description of names alluded to above. This is important, since it is in this connection that every name acquires two values (*fā'idatān*) in the manner of the root-branch division:

- (1) what it has in common with the rest of the names, viz. a signification pointing to its root (*al-dalālah 'alla aslīhi*), which renders the name identical to the object named (*'ayn al-musammā*);
- (2) its own instructive value based on its reality (*tarīfuhu bi-haqīqatihī*), which render his attributes distinguishable from those of another name (IB A:108; B:216).

These two functions define the name's particular range of “elevation,” or *sumūn*.

Now, “elevation” may be affirmed of a name when the name is sought at a level that combines all the names; whereas the name’s special distinction, without which it cannot be intellected, appears with it only through a “request” that precedes the recipient’s other, predispositional request for it we met before. What Qūnāvī is in effect saying is that no “natural faculty” can possibly serve as an instrument for the name’s apprehension in its genuine uniqueness; another higher type of request is needed. Once we grant this, it is far easier to see how every Divine name which becomes attached to the world has a perfection unique to it (*kamālan yakhtassuhu*) which serves as its point of reference – to which it, literally, “returns” (*yarjd ilayhi*) (IB A:109; B:217). And this perfection comes to pass through the exteriorization of its precepts and effects in the existential individualities. The latter indeed are its particular loci of manifestation (*majāli*) and specifications (*mutdāyināt*). He describes them as the “places for the exteriorization of its dominion” (*mahāl zuhūr sultānatib*), based on its unique precept and effect, by way of the name’s own request (*su’al al-ism bi-lisān martabatib*) as put forth to the name “*Allāh*.” Qūnāvī holds that the name “*Allāh*” constitutes the “presence of comprehensive union” and its “succour” is existence itself (*wujūd imdādubu*). What the name, therefore, needs to request is for that by means of which its perfection is completed, to be rendered manifest (*izbār mā fī kamāluhū*) (IB A:109; B:217). He explains that every name requires a characteristic mode of expression or “voice” (*lisān yakhusṣuhu*) corresponding to its own level. The mode of expression comprehending all of these names (*lisān al-jam’iyyah hādhibi al-asmā*), that of the name “*Allāh*,” receives all the differentiated relations (*huwa qābil lil-*

*nisab al-tafsīliyyah*⁸) and the essential individualities of the names' forms (*āyān suwarihā*) in a manner conforming to the words: "I yearned to know" ("*ubbibtu an drafū'*") and "I have not created [all manner of] beings imperspicuous and people but that they may worship me" ("*mā khalaqtu al-jinn wal-ins illā li-yād budūni*"), etc.

Due to the "non-predispositional request," there is a further need for each name to declare (*yaqūlu*⁹) these words in the same language of *comprehensiveness* as well to the differential relations (*al-nisab al-tafsīliyyah*¹⁰) subsumed below the overarching level (*hītat martabah*) of the highest name.²⁰ What this means is the following. The request of each name put to the name "Allāh" "to render manifest that through which its perfection is completed and its dominion [*sulṭānūhā*] secured can be fulfilled only under strictly defined conditions" (IB A:109; B:217). For example, the precept of "each successive instance within the whole must pervade the entire whole [*bi-sarayān hukm kull fard fard minhā fi majmū' al-umūr kullibi*]" and subsequently be returned to the root after having been coloured by the precept of the whole. It does this while its reality perdures (*baqā*) within the Divine hiddenness.²¹ Therefore, each one of the existents' essential individualities' enveloped in Divine hiddenness demands a perfection which only God can realize; and He does it by granting existence¹. Paradoxically, the "request" itself originates at the level of the names. But this does not make them self-willed. There is nothing in the end but

⁸ A: *qā'iṭ*; B: *huwa qābil lil-nisab al-tafsīliyyah*.

⁹ A: *yaqūlu*; B: *yaqūlu hādhā*.

¹⁰ B: *kull 'ayn min āyān al-mawjūdāt*; A: *kull 'ayn min al-mawjūdāt*.

¹ A: *bil-wujūd al-mustafād min al-Haqq*; B: *bil-mawjūd*.

the object named (*huwa al-musammā*).²² And “what is named” is not intended in the jejune sense, but as one who knows through His own essence and its concomitants *pre-eternally*, unlike the essential individualities of the existents, which possess only a temporally created existence (*wujūdahā hādith*) (IB A:110; B:218).

These existents by themselves cannot be ascribed a pre- eternal knowledge (*qidam*); the conditions upon which their limited knowledge of existents utterly depends prevent this. We have seen, for instance, that before they can lay claim to knowledge, they themselves need to have “existence” and “life.” Pre- eternal knowledge, though, precludes this; and so they have no primacy (*awwaliyyah*) even at the “station of request” (*maqām al-talab*). The hiatus is so deep-seated that Qūnāvī offers a familiar philosophical ground in justification:

since seeking [or “requesting”] what is unknown [*talab al-majhūl*] by the one for whom it is unknown [*li-man huwa ‘indabu majhūl*], both while he has no knowledge of it [*hāl jahlibi bibi*] and in respect of his nescience, simply cannot be sustained. (IB A:110; B:218)

He invokes the identity of the name with the named, the first of two functions of the name listed above – viz. the root – to illustrate this. The second function of the name betokens the uniqueness without which it would be meaningless to speak of a sign, let alone a name. But something, as we said, is specified through the “hidden request” (*al-su‘āl al-ghaybī*) at the presence of comprehensive union relative to each name. Its nature is difficult to describe. However, Qūnāvī offers the following apothegm based on the hierarchical order of all the various elements going into this specification. What is

specified is that which “the precepts of that name require^k from such relations of the level of possibility as are connected to one of the ‘possible individualities’ [*al-murtabitah bi-ba‘d al-‘ayān al-mumkinah*]” (IB A:110; B:218). Without belabouring the point, the following elements bear mention: the name, its precepts, possible relations and their connections to the essential individualities. These “possible essential individualities” are, of course, the loci of exteriorization for the precept of the name. Alternatively, what is specified for every genus (*jīns*), type (*sarf*) and species of knowledge – according to which the names of knowledge are structured, always within the ambit and precepts of comprehensive union (*taht hītat hadrah al-jam‘ wa ahkāmiha*) – is what that species’ and genus’s own *predisposition* (*isti‘dād*) requires. And what it requires also includes,

the relation of the [comprehensive] presence [*nisbat al-hadrab*] specified through the “secret of lordship” [*bi-sirr al-rubūbiyyah*] at the level either of this species or of the creational reality making the demand [*al-mustadfiyah*], the one designated for that [secret] [*al-mutayyanah labu*]. Through this specification and demand [*al-isti‘dād*], the dominion of the name [*saltanat al-ism*] “*Allāh*” and “*al-Rahmān*” (“Merciful”) manifests itself upon the creational reality [*ya‘thar... ‘alā al-haqīqah al-kawniyah*], once [the latter] is penetrated by the precept. Lordship thus becomes appropriate to these two names, both individually and in combination, through such a relation and on the basis of this reality. A name appears which, thanks to the effect [*al-athar*] witnessed in the reality receiving this effect, enters into relationship with God [*yudāf ilā al-Haqq*], [doing so] qua level of one of these two names – “*Allāh*” and “*al-Rahmān*.” This, in exactly the way that God has made it known when He declared: “Whether ye calleth upon God or upon the Merciful: by whatever name calleth thou upon Him, to Him belong the Most Beautiful Names...” [”*Qul uđū Allāh uđū al-Rahmān ayyan mā tadū fa-labu al-asmā’ al-husnā*”] (Qur‘ān 17:11). (IB A:110-11; B:218).

We shall not comment on this rather convoluted account of the relationship. What he would like to emphasize is simply the inference, rudimentary at this stage, that while everything seeks perfection, there is no *external* hindrance (*mā thumma ‘ā’iq min khārij*) –

^k A: *huwa mā yaqtidhi ahkām dhālika al-ism*; B: *huwa mā taqtidhi ahkām dhālika al-ism*.

such as from God – preventing its realization: nothing but the “presence of the names, the possible entities and the secret joining them – namely, man (*insān*), whose own precept makes him unique (*yanṣarid bīhī*) (IB A:111; B:218-19). The Divine essence qua relation of “self-sufficient” (*ghaniyy*) and absence of attachment (*‘adam al-taṣlīq*) or consonance (*munāsibah*), as a negative limit, does not even enter this “discussion” (*lā kālām fīhā*). What is said to be “hindered” (*muṭawqān*), rather, is the precept of one essential individuality *with respect to another*, precept whose perfection appears through God always in a manner peculiar to it and to no other. The same principle applies to deficiencies (*naqā’is*), veils (*bujub*), torments (*ālām*) and the like. Now, the “universal goal,” *al-ghāyah al-kulliyah*, which, as we saw early on in this thesis, poses certain conceptual difficulties, stands for the point “where every existent terminates in accordance with the [Divine] command and that state which is decided for it” (IB A:111; B:219). Its precept persists (*yadūm*) “universally” irrespective of the particular level, abode¹ or form, since any differentiation would immediately suggest relation, or *nisbah*, and obligation (*fard*).

To conclude, this goes a long way in clarifying what the theological object of inquiry fundamentally ought to be like, linguistically, and, in particular, nominally. We have seen that Qūnavī, far from rejecting the philosophical expression “object of inquiry,” adopted wholeheartedly the entire disciplinary division on which it was then based for the pedagogical reasons we mentioned. In this chapter, we have portrayed within a nominal

¹ A: *mawāṭin*; B: *mu’min*.

frame the bifurcation of knowledge into a Divinely infused component acting as the primary and pre-given root, on the one hand, and a posterior component, on the other, as the second aspect of a scientific analogy having at its core the distinction between God and what is other than God. How this special relationship “begins,” and from what initial state, will be elucidated further in the next chapter. However, the second, outermost aspect of knowledge (namely, the *matlūb*, or the “object of inquiry”) – for which Qūnavī’s special consideration of the limits posed by the essential individuality qua loci of the Divine names, themselves already a thread removed from the state of pure Divine self-sufficiency thanks to a general *distinguishing factor* in the act of naming, has paved the way – is now clearer. He has already demarcated the nature of the whole operation by reference to the necessary *perfection* of the essential individualities *through* their exteriorization from the tranquility of external non-existence. One theme which will occupy him in the next section is: In what manner can the many be said to issues from the one. While this, in a sense, is what we have been trying to find out all along, there are some new and decisive considerations to be made in this final stretch.

NOTES

1. Namely, the levels of the Divinely hidden, spirit, soul, sensory and the intermediate Perfect Man, which combines the traits of all the above.
2. “*Ba'dahā aydan dākhil taht hītat bā'dihā.*”
3. “*Tandarij fī martabat al-ism al-zāhir.*”
4. Qūnāvī says he will show this later when he gets to the “secret of guidance” relative to the secret of disclosure and knowledge (*sīr al-fa'th wal-ilm*) (IB A:101; B:208); cf. Ibn 'Arabī's *Mawāqīr al-nūjūm*.
5. Among those who uphold the rightful due of the manifestness (*mazharīyyat*) of these universal stations is the “Transgressor” (*zālim*) (IB A:101; B:209); as the editor points out, “*fa-minhu zālim li-nafsibī.*”
6. As in “*fa-minhum al-muqtasid*” (cf. editor's note, A:209, n. 2).
7. Qūnāvī had explained this earlier in connection with the “secret of conceptualizations” (*sīr al-tasawwurāt*).
8. Or “as a class.” Linguistically, Jurjānī notes, “*al-'umūm*” refers to the encompassment of the individuals (*qfrāt*) in one stroke (*daf'atan*). On the other hand, *Ahl al-haqqa*, the “specialists,” use it in the technical sense of “that by which commonality of attributes [*mā yaqrī bihi al-iṣhtirāk fi al-sifāt*] obtains, whether they are Divine or the creaturely attributes.” (JKT 157)
9. That is, “*ka-asmā' al-sifāt lil-sifāt.*”
10. Instead of *idāfah*, Ibn 'Arabī had referred to *rābitah*, the closest equivalent of Zajjājī's *harf* (“particle”) (FuM II 12-15:57-9).
11. *Dalālah* may, of course, be translated as “indication” and *'atāmah* as “sign.” Modern philosophy has it that “[a]ny event of character A whose occurrence is invariably accompanied by another event of character B may be said to be an *index* of that event. Any index which is recognized as being such may be said to function as a *sign*. Thus, as contrasted with ‘index’, the use of ‘sign’ presupposes a triadic relation.” (DictP 292). Al-Sharīf al-Jurjānī that *dalālah*, consists in the thing existing in [a certain] condition and the knowledge of which entails [*hiya kawn al-shay' bi-hālah yalzam min al-ilm bihi*] the knowledge of something else. The first thing is the index [*dāll*], the second the indicant [*al-madlūl*]. (JKT 104)
- Although this is the sense intended here, we prefer “sign” or “signification” because of the semantic continuity that needs to be maintained with “sign” and “signified,” etc.; although we will on occasion also use the word “pointing.”
12. Jurjānī describes *al-ilm al-istidhātī* as “that which cannot take place without study [*nazar*] and thought [*fikr*] and whose realization is not said to be decreed [*maqdūr*] for the worshipper [*al-*

‘abd].” (JKT 156)

13. His exposition is to be found in the section on the “secret of the figure, figuration and the thing figured” (*sirr al-shakl wal-tashakkul wal-mutashakkal*).
14. The word “definition” is used here in a very loose manner that will help us follow the argument closely. The strict definition, on the other hand, is the *hadd*.
15. Compare with IB A:96; B:202, where God has no *tamayyuz*.
16. “*Al-nāshi’ah bi-sabab ikhtilāf al-sifāt*.”
17. He remarks that multiplicity arises through the different predispositions (*al-istīdādāt al-mutafāwītah*) and the secret of the command of singular oneness proper to the presence of conjunctive union and existence (IB A:108; B:216).
18. Indeed the distinguishing factors multiply (B: *wa katharat*; A: *wa kathrat al-mumayyizāt*). Cf. cf. Isfarā’īnī’s *hukm al-mumayyiz mā a al-‘adad* (ILI 333).
19. “*Bi-lisān hādhībī al-jam’iyyah lil-nisab al-tafsīliyyah*.”
20. “*Taht hītat martabatīhī hādhībī al-muqālah al-madhkūrah*” (IB A:109; B:217).
21. A more detailed account of how this occurs is given in the discussion on the levels of conceptions (*marātib al-tasawwurāt*).
22. He notes that the letters are related to “breath” in the same way that the names are to the named (*musamma*): the one precept is the same as the other (*al-hukm biya kāl-hukm*) (IB A:110; B:217-18).

CHAPTER NINE

The Emergence of the Root and its “Product”

Thus ends the section of the Introduction where Qūnāvī discusses the “general rules” needed in the interpretation of the *Fātiḥah*. What follows is a small “chapter” dealing with the “secret of beginning and existentiation, oneness and multiplicity, hiddenness and witness, the station of the ‘perfect man,’ the secret of love and that of “*Bismillāh al-Rahmān al-Rahīm*.” Let us now see how he analyzes what he has designated as the “emergence” of the entire root-product relation.

First of all, by the “fruits and products of the roots” (*al-natā’ij wa thamarāt al-usūl*) Qūnāvī professes to mean specifically what the principal or primal pillars of the sciences, namely, “*ummahāt al-‘ulūm*,” must furnish us for our knowledge of the object (IB A:112; B:220). This distinction is to be expected, seeing that his goal is to clarify the nature of a single, theological object of inquiry literally and structurally rooted in a pre-given subject-matter. It is also fundamental to the problem of the two noetic realities, since existential priority is assigned to the knower in every act of knowledge, insofar as he must have existence and life before he can know. This priority tends constantly to undermine his reflective understanding of the true order of things, no matter what science he has at his disposal.

In an instructive science of theology, though, God is considered the root of all *knowledge*. Such a root, Qūnāvī believes, is indispensable before the very possibility of

knowing Him qua self-manifested – or as “object of inquiry” – can be evoked in any disciplinary sense. And between the root and the branch lies a human journey of spiritual realization. We shall, therefore, dwell a little longer on the thematic context of the hidden “root of knowledge” in order better to see how he will set out next to isolate the sense in which one may speak of a knowable object derived from a root. The *absolute* root itself, or God’s essential hiddenness, remains apart and is normally assumed to be what lies beyond all relation or analogy. The problem is far from certain of final theoretical solution when analyzed in the simplistic terms of the one and the many, as Qūnāvī himself agrees. For how can the many spring from the one without breaching its oneness – particularly when the one is said to have no relation at all. But Qūnāvī avails himself of a rich literature on the subject of the “one,” in both *falsafah* and *kalām*. As the reader will find out, the “one” of this emergence of the manifold will be viewed in the light of the basically asymmetrical relation that holds between the root and the branch, after the case for this relation has been put in more systematic form in this chapter. The problem essentially is one of figuring out how such a *relation* emerges, and not just how the some root does in order to become known. Looking ahead, let us simply assert that the what is referred to commonly here as the many is actually “premises” which derive from the root. But these premises need to be correlated with the *singular* object of inquiry. The many do not in and of themselves constitute the object of inquiry, since they have yet to be resolved into the new synthetic unity.

§ EXISTENTIATION AND THE SECRET OF THE BEGINNING

God, as we have seen, knows everything by virtue of His knowledge of His essence. That is the absolute root and origin of all other senses attached to “knowledge.” Divine knowledge, Qūnavī insists, is not acquired from or through what is other than God (IB A:112; B:220), and it is not the job of the “analogical method” to try to reduce this “essential knowledge” to another (even scientific) type of knowledge, however more “manageable” it would then become to the human mind. Knowledge in our scale normally demands of the person possessing it “to exist and to live” before its *acquisition* can be claimed. This is not to say, however, that the two realms may not be linked, indeed in such a way that the one becomes the “root” of the other. This is the problem we began with in this study when Aristotle’s concept of “wisdom” was first considered.

It is true that God brings the world into existence in the way He knows it pre-eternally in Himself. And the world is the form and locus of appearance of His knowledge (*sūrāt ‘ilmīhi wa masbūrīhi*), so that He never ceases to encompass all things in both knowledge and existence. But while He reports (*akhbāra*) about Himself that “He is God, other than whom there is no god” – that “He knows what is hidden and what is seen and that He is the Merciful, the Compassionate” – He proclaims another matter. Qūnavī notes that as far as the attributes of His perfection are concerned, God also says that “He is the first and the last, the manifest and the concealed, and of everything He is all-knowing”¹ (IB A:112; B:220-21). Qūnavī takes his cue from this.

First of all, perfection, as we saw, took place through exteriorization of one sort or another. Taken as a “process,” though, it is characterized by the interplay between the

“hidden” and the “visible,” where the one cannot go without the other. More to the point, the hidden is literally the root of the latter. For contingent beings the existential exigencies for spiritual perfection, in particular, which the mystics have done their utmost to emphasize – in kindred spirit to the wider trend of intellectual and devotional reflection in Islam – are crucial to the upward-downward movement of noetic manifestation. But when one looks outward to an ideal object of inquiry, as the ascending apex of revelatory descent, so to speak, a somewhat bewildering array of levels, or *marātib*, arise whose multiplicity is nonetheless reducible to the two basic notions or levels just mentioned – the hidden and the visible – along with the “reality joining them together” (IB A:113; B:221). In short, everything has an *exterior* (its form [*sūratuhu*]) and what can be seen of it [*shahādatuhu*]), on the one side, and an *interior* (its spirit, its intangible meaning [*maṭnāhu*]) and hiddenness, on the other (AH 69a-72a). We know that all forms, whether apparent or concealed (*al-khafiyah wal-jaliyah*), share an intrinsic association with the “exterior name,” qualified as “*shahādah*” (“witnessing”); whereas the intangible meanings and the immaterial realities, the very roots of the specified particular forms that appear, are linked to hiddenness and the “hidden name.”

What Qūnāvī is driving at is, first of all, that every existent entity having intangibility and spiritualness (*rūhāniyyah*) (i.e. incorporeality) is, exclusively in respect of these two dimensions, *prior* in level and elevation (or nobility) to the form. But while the entity possesses a degree of priority in one sense, the form is prior to intangible meaning and spiritualness in another, *noetic* sense (*al-taqaddum al-‘ilmī*).² This is what enables us to refer

to things that are ontically prior to our very act of theoretical gazing without falling into a vicious cycle. What it means is that *knowledge* of the exterior must, strictly in this sense, precede that of the interior and even qualify as a condition for its cognizance.

Therefore, if Qūnāvī has been making the substantive claim that the human spirit in its upward journey toward the object of inquiry may acquire the specification it seeks only after its own compound creation – that is, only after the entire organism, life and limb – has come to be, he is equally driving toward a recognition of the spirit's necessary priority in another sense. Immateriality, as we saw, is certainly part of the solution, but what it must do at heart is to indicate the emergence of a root-branch relation, where the root truly belongs to the knower. In this way, the thought is related to its proper ontic root, not the absolute one that is God's hiddenness.

§ THE SECRET OF THE ONE AND THE MANY

For Qūnāvī, this “relative priority” achieves what “relative hiddenness” has done elsewhere. There is, on the one hand, an utterly unique absolute hiddenness denoting God’s reality (*haqīqatuhu*), something which cannot be encompassed by any knowledge but His – certainly no specifying precept or delimiting ascription (IB A:114; B:223). Since no intellect can encompass that which is indeterminate (*mā lā yandabit*) or indistinct (*lā yatamayyaza ‘indahu*), what is said to be indistinct, conversely, cannot be intellected. As Qūnāvī has taken pains to show throughout this treatise, if God is specifiable in any way, He is knowable through His specification only in respect of that by which He is

specified, never unconditionally. But this small measure of cognizance of hiddenness is merely synoptical (*ijmāliyyah*), the implication being that it is no different from the kind of antiquated *philosophical* knowledge of God he and Ibn Sīnā alike had so cogently disputed before vital indomitable experience (IB A:115; B:223). Cognizance, by contrast, has to be obtained through what he calls the “clearest unveiling”; that is, “*bil-kashf al-ajlī*” and “*al-ta’rīf al-itāhī al-ālī*” (“the highest Divine instruction”), which is specifiable from that “presence of hiddenness.” In this “noetic conveyance,” there is no intermediary, except perhaps the “manifestation itself” (IB A:114-5; B:223). “Hiddenness,” however, remains the “root” of all that appears and is known (IB A:115; B:223). It constitutes God’s ipseity (*huwīyyah*) (IB A:116; B:224). Now, in order to understand how it may act as a root and what that “clearest unveiling” can possibly be, let us turn to another, brief work of Qūnāvī’s for an explanation of “*huwīyyah*.”

The word “*huwīyyah*,” in his view the very “secret of *itāhīyyah* [‘Divinity’],” is a “pre-eternal existent” (*maṇyūd aṣṭalī*) – namely, one whose existence is pre-eternal and not the commonplace existence of the items of our world. He isolates it through the attributes “majesty” (*jalāl*) and “perfection” (*kamāl*) (AH 5a). It is the “first word” – as in, “Say: *He is...*” (“*Qul huwa...*”) – through which all words find their perfection. *Huwa* (“He”) is the “special comprehensive name” (*al-ism al-jāmi’ al-khāṣṣ*) that points to the essence in its singular oneness (*al-dāll ‘alā al-dhāt al-ahādīyyah*) by means of the totality of its letter-parts and the pre-given realities – that is, the *haqā’iqihi wadīyyah*. Though “constructed” (*murakkaban*) of two letters, the word begins with the permanent root (*al-asl al-thābit*), the

“*hā*,” which has the level of primacy (*awwaliyyah*). *Ilāhiyyah* (of which it is the secret) denotes the secondary level (*al-martabah al-ākhiriyyah*), and signals many “secrets” and “meanings” (AH 5a-b). With this succinct description, he goes on to give an interesting exegesis of the letters of the word “*buwa*,” which unfortunately we cannot examine here.

What this application of his letter-science reveals is that beyond the insular ontic reality something else is adumbrated which finds expression in what God, still alone, knows at the station of “independent of everything” (*maqām al-ghaniyy ‘an al-‘ālamīn*) and the relation to which no “other” is attached, all consonance having been removed (IB A:115; B:223).³ As we saw before, consonance and “otherness” go together. Interestingly, Qūnavī defines the term *ghaniyy* in his *Sharḥ asmā’ Allāh al-busnā* in very similar fashion to al-Zajjājī (cf. ZIA 117-18). He first points to its Qur’ānic source – “*al-ghaniyy ‘an al-‘ālamīn*” (AH 77a-b) – and then notes two possible applications: one with respect to God (*ghanā al-Haqq*), the other to people (*wa ghanā al-khalq*).

In relation to people, Qūnavī, like Zajjājī, mentions independence through both material property (*māl*) and the more intangible qualities of a person. Applied to people, the term is described by Zajjājī as “metaphorical” (*majāz*), there being no one in the world who is truly independent (*ghaniyy fi al-haqīqah*) (ZIA 118). In this respect, he differs slightly from Qūnavī – although, as noted below, the latter also makes similar contrasts. Zajjājī refers to those few who, apply their thinking to the world “in one stroke” (*daf’atan*) (presumably in their intuitive knowledge) and, bring devoted to the Creator, seek independence (ZIA 118). These people merit the epithet “independent.” In that same

connection, Qūnavī evokes the possibility of “attainment” (*maṣṣūl*) to the status of *ghaniyy*, but through impoverishment: “*fa-iftiqāruhu ilā al-Haqq iftikhāruhu*” (AH 77b). According to his more mystical interpretation, however, one has traversed the “narrowest station” (*al-maqām al-afṣa*) needed to be traversed when the mystic can perceive the Divine ipseity diffused (*sarayān*) within the entitative denizens of the world’s levels (*dyān marātib al-‘alam*) (AH 77b). “Independence” applied to God, on the other hand, is independence “over and above everyone else” (*an al-‘ālāmiṇ*); that is, in respect of his sanctified essence (*dhātihi al-muqaddasah*). That God is independent transpires only in the ulterior sense relative to those seeking His knowledge (i.e. “*wa dawām itlāqīhi al-haqīqī tā yaẓḥar illā bibim*”). Being independent means that He is independent of them (*kawnahu ghaniyyun innamā huwa ghanāhu ‘anhum*). Qūnavī will argue momentarily that the question of multiplicity first arises here; this is its origin. The level closest to this hiddenness of God’s essence, however, has been designated the “Cloud” (*amā*), the Breath of the Merciful (IB A: 115; B:223).⁴

And we now know that the hidden is *either relatively or truly hidden*.⁵ The “relatively hidden” is something the elaboration of whose precept is sought (*mā yarid tafsīl hukmīhi*). Whereas the “truly hidden” is the very presence of God’s essence and His ipseity (*huwa hadrat dhāt al-Haqq wa huwiyyatīhi*).⁶ In relation to Divine hiddenness, the relative constitutes the “first level of witnessing” (*awwal martabat al-shahādah*), although it remains hidden to what lies below it. The “presence of the Cloud” – the closest thing to God’s hiddenness – is the presence of all the names, attributes, along with everything that

carries an epithet. Interestingly, though, Qūnavī points out that insofar as the multiple forms and intangible meanings are finite, it is also the *last* level of witnessing (*ākhir martabat al-shahādah*). It furnishes both limits, not a limit and an infinity. In order to account for the multiplicity contained within the Cloud, the one witnessed in the world as a diffusion from singular oneness, he has to furnish a definitive idea of the epithet “One.” For multiplicity, it transpires, appears through singular oneness, not in the sense of the one *qua* one but in that of a lower order of oneness where God’s exclusive noetic *self-attachment*, a key concept, becomes the wellspring (*manbdān*) of multiplicity *qua* multiplicity (IB A:115-6; B:224).⁷ In this manner, the “one” actually possesses two precepts. The first gives the sense that it is “one for itself alone” (*wāḥid li-nafsihi fa-hasab*), without there being any need to rationalize that “oneness” is an attribute, name, epithet, permanent precept (*aw hukm thābit*), accident or concomitant. The only consideration making the difference between absolute hiddenness (identical to the ipseity [*al-huwiyyah*]), on the one hand, and what is the nominal specification “singular oneness,” on the other, is the *specification itself* (*ghayr nafs al-tdāyyun*). This safeguards the absoluteness of hiddenness from any hint of specification or tincture of “existential manifoldness”; otherwise God, he says, would have to be like a vessel for everything else (*zarfan li-ghayribi*).

It is only with the second precept of the “One” that Qūnavī invokes what he describes as God’s knowing Himself through Himself, His knowing both that He knows this [*wa ya’lamu innahu ya’lamu dhālika*] and that He knows His Oneness and level” (IB

A:116; B:224). This precept also consists in “oneness” (*al-wahdah*) being a permanent – i.e. eternal, single – relation to Himself (*nisbah thabitah lahu*); a precept, concomitant or attribute in which nothing else can share and which is true only of God. The difference may not be so clear at first, but Qūnavī will continue to elaborate and systematize it in the rest of his Introduction. His point is that “independent from attachment to the world” (“*al-ghani ‘an al-ta'alluq bil-‘ālam*”) is a relation that is known principally from this perspective; and it is precisely from this relation (*nisbah*), moreover, that multiplicity emerges (*intashdāt*) from the one in a manner dictated by what he calls the “permanent relational manifold” (*bādhā al-ta‘addud al-nisbi ‘al-thabit*) (IB A:116; B:225). This holds insofar as the intellection of the relation – by which God knows Himself through Himself and by which He is One for His essence without any associate sharing in His existence, “*lā sharīka lahu*” – is different from the pure oneness (*al-wahdah al-sirfah*) of the first precept. The manifold of “relational multiplicity” causes the manifold of the essential individualities to be exteriorized (IB A:117; B:225).⁸ What is curious is that these two precepts or concomitants of the “One” are themselves preceded by an essential hiddenness of unknown epithet (*al-majhūl al-na‘t*) and for which no special precept can be established. No distinguishing attribute (*sifah mumayyizah*) can be made out for it, whether of oneness (*wahdah*), multiplicity or anything else. This, incidentally, puts him leagues away from any “neo-platonic” tendency we may wish to impute to him.⁹

Qūnavī, once again, is seeking above all to avoid a serious misconstrual of the term “encompassment” (*iħāħah*) in knowledge or existence, whereby “that which encompasses

would act as a kind of ‘vessel’ [*zurjan*] for that which is encompassed, or where the encompassed would be one of the parts of whatever encompasses it” (IB A:118; B:226). This is not the case here. That there are attributes concomitant to the “One” (*wāhid*) does not vitiate its *singular* oneness (*ghayr qādīhah fī ahadiyyatihī*). To this extent, the exclusivity of the “One,” in effect, parries every attempt to collapse Divine into human knowledge, or vice versa. The critical element introducing the manifold is given by an appellation for God’s essence free of all attachments and yet already presupposing their existence – viz. “independence of.”

§ THE SECRET OF HIDDENNESS AND WITNESS

Qūnavī feels that identifying the precise point where the procession from the one and the many begins, what he calls the “secret of the beginning” (not to be confused with the “Hiddenness of no epithet”), provides “the key to the Great Book” (*miftāh al-kitāb al-kabīr*) (IB A:118; B:226). This Book, of course, is synonymous with the “world” (*ālam*), which clarification should help the reader to grasp more easily the “epitome” of the Great Book (*md̄rifat nuskhatihī*), the epitome of the epitome (*nuskhat al-nuskhab*) and so on until the last transcription of the book is reached, called the *Fātiḥah* (*lit.*, “the opening,” or “that which opens”). The elucidation of the *Fātiḥah*’s “secrets” is, after all, what he seeks to do in this treatise.

Understanding how the begining (*bad'*) of the many “originates” – in short, conceiving the many from its point of departure, not merely as a series but as an inclusive event

presaged from within the hidden root – should help us decipher the sense in which we may speak of the “*Fātihah*” as itself an “opening,” or a beginning. In fact, he says, anything amenable to an intellectual or universal measure of this nature may be described as an epitome, or *nuskhah*. But the *Fātihah* is at once a moment, in the Book itself, and an epitome in which everything else is prefigured. What this kind of “beginning” does for the question of Divine knowledge is to introduce the element of precedence and pre-givenness as an epistemic corollary to the epithet “independent of everything,” so that knowledge becomes divided for the first time into root and “object of inquiry” in the very act of creation. This act the object of knowledge itself mirrors and becomes a relative root in its turn. Being the primary root, however, God’s knowledge remains transcendent and all-encompassing. Qūnāvī is particularly anxious to assert that, since everything subordinate to the noetic root must be so commensurately to His knowledge, then the object of inquiry must also be *encompassing*, albeit in a different sense.

God sees or gazes (*nazara*), he continues, through a knowledge which is His light at the presence of the essence’s hiddenness (IB A:118; B:226). Qūnāvī actually names two types of Divine “gaze” (*nazar*). Firstly, God’s gaze is transcendent in the “unconditional existential perfection” of the essence (*al-kamāl al-wujūdī al-dhāfi al-mutlaq*), an indirect or negative mode of reference; the permanence of this *existential* perfection does not depend on anything extrinsic, since nothing there is extrinsic or external to Him. Such a “gaze” is different from the second one (which we will consider below). This negation of externality illustrates the truth of “independent” (*ghāni*), above which lies “something

relating to manifestation that is even more concealed.” Therefore, gaze, in the first manner, is judged minimally to depend on no preceding veil. At that level no new factor can intervene, nor any “renewal” (*tajaddud*), “beforeness” (*qablīyyah*) or “afterness” (*ba'diyyah*), since these may be appropriately designated only by way of relation to the “other” (IB A:118; B:227). By way of example, for someone located anywhere in our world, determinate knowledge comes only *after* a cognizance of things and their differences in terms of precept, epithet, priority and posteriority. In that instance, his perception of them at the hidden presence of noetic light can render the secrets of the realities⁴ only by what the interpretation [*al-ibārah*] can bear and what the state of the speaker [*al-mukhātib*] demands at the time of speaking, together with the levels and abodes of both. This is because each thing whose explanation we desire possesses its own precept which imposes an effect upon what is being interpreted, bringing it out of the transcendence and the unconditionality [*al-nazāhah wal-itlāq*] that precedes the delimitedness which follows from it or is merely predictable of it.¹⁰ [This is] due to the “matters” [*al-mawādd*] and the qualities [*wal-kayfīyyāt*] differing according to what the devices of conveyance [*adawāt al-tawṣīl*] and these delimitations require, as I have indicated with regard to the “secret of speech” [*sīr al-kalām*] (IB A:119; B:227).

Since Qūnavī's Introduction has a clearly pedagogical purpose, this is a central consideration. While the statement holds true for all manner of expression, Qūnavī is more particularly concerned with the indirect mode of reference to God which must ultimately take the form of the hidden qua “object of inquiry.” The naturally-endowed faculties of man are by themselves too weak to determine with precision what the “gnostic” (*ārif*) actually perceives upon witnessing and in a state of “immateriality” (*tajrīd*); not that precision in the way envisaged by our faculties can give proper value to this perception. Since the faculties are too weak to interpret or to relate (*al-ta'bīr 'anhu*)

⁴ A: *yūtarrib 'an asrār al-haqā'iq*; B: *yūtarrib 'an asr al-haqā'iq*.

knowledge in exactly the same way it is found in experience, nothing more substantial can be “mustered [*lā yastahdīr*], upon returning to the world of witness [*‘ālam al-shahādah*], than the *universals* of whatever is witnessed [*kulliyāt mā shahādahu*]” and some, but not all, of the “particulars.” The naturally-endowed faculties provide no assistance, being “insufficient in scope” for full clear-sightedness (*qusūrihā ‘an madā madrak al-basīrah*) and “too narrow of sphere for the soul’s vast range [*fasīh masrah al-nafs*] and capacity” judged according to the “circle of its level in the presence of the Holy [*wa sītāt dā’irat martabatihā fī hadrat al-quds*]” (IB A:119; B:227).¹¹ And yet a type of terminology that can at least partially and intelligibly render the core experience is precisely what is purportedly needed.

As for the second type of Divine gaze, God beholds through His gaze another perfection besides the “first necessary, existential perfection of the essence” earlier explained by indirect reference to the receiving faculties. This second perfection, as the reader might surmise, lies concealed (*mustajannan*) within the “hiddenness of His ipseity” (IB A:120; B:228). It is for this reason that the second, concealed perfection (*al-kamāl al-mustajann*), as he calls it, is the pinnacle of the sought-after *perfect manifestness and translucency* (*kamāl al-jalā’ wal-istijā’*) – a term we shall try to keep in mind. Qūnāvī adds that a “lamina” (*raqīqah*) joins the two perfections after the manner of “complete, amourous connection” (*ittisāl tāashshuq tamm*). This is possible because the second noetic, contemplative gaze (*al-naṣrāb al-‘ilmīyyah*) – sanctified of all precepts of createdness associated with the relation of witness and anything that may correspond to our own

“eyesight” (*al-ism al-basîr*) – engenders the emanation of another, hidden manifestation (*tajallî ghaybî âkhar*); namely, the first one mentioned. He explains this phenomenon by alluding to the fact it is a question of self-manifestation, where the manifestation’s specification is to itself (i.e. self-contemplation). This “doubling” effect is “coloured by a hue of love [*munsabîghan bi-sibghah hubbiyyah*^b] attached to whatever is beheld by knowledge [*mutdallaqa bi-mâ shâhiduhu al-ilm*], and whose exteriorization is sought [*yatlub zubûrabu*]” (IB A:120; B:228). Love can only become attached to something known, knowledge being prior to it in level (*martabat al-mahabbah*); it can have no *root* attachment to something that is absolutely unknown.¹² But the logical priority of knowledge does not diminish the great significance that “hue of love” in fact holds for the act of creation and as indicated by the verbal element in Divine speech, since the “hue of love” signifies the *unity* of these two perfections, one issuing from the other.

The same twofold event is compared with what “attaches” our own eyesight to intelligence, or *‘aqliyyah*, which are not only two loci of appearance but two analogues (*nazarayn lahumâ*) of Divine love and knowledge, respectively (IB A:120; B:228-29). But the basic rule has to be upheld, since there is nothing in the general concept of hiddenness which indicates that God does not know or behold; He encompasses all things and they, in turn, are inscribed in His essence. There is encompassment of knowledge but also the ubiquitous presence and efficacy of love.

All this is perfectly consistent with the Avicennan view that only that which is already

^b A: *fa-tâ’ayyun dhâlikâ al-tajallî li-nafsîhi*; B: *li-tâ’ayyun*.

known is sought, where the “seeking” is just as easily reduced to an illative relation that illustrates how the many issues forth from the one through the premises. The plurality of the two premises *conceals* as much as it exhibits of the original subject. For the moment, this is not exactly what Qūnavī is concerned with. The object of inquiry, he informs us, is attainable through the *assembly*, or (to be consistent with the grammatical side of his argument) construction (*tarkīb*), of two premises that must embody the “one,” taken in some particular sense. The “one” alone, in respect of its “oneness” at the station of *singular oneness*, cannot yield anything but the one (IB A:120-21; B:229). But if the “one” cannot, in an absolute sense, give way to the multiplicity of the premises, perfection can never be sought (*matlūb*) – that is to say, exteriorized – since it cannot be done without just such multiplicity (IB A:121; B:229). There can be no object of inquiry either in the absence of multiplicity, or when the separation between the one and the many is absolute or true in every sense.

At this point, Qūnavī plays up once again the inherent multivalence of the concept of “one.” The one is both singular root and “object of inquiry” (*matlūb*). Numerical parity, based on the philosophical rule that nothing can issue from the one except the one, has to be maintained. Translated back into the logical syllogism, however, it implies several steps things. It means, first of all, that nothing from absolute hiddenness can be specified in any state except a *single premise*, to begin with; and that, in Qūnavī sense, is the manifestation induced by love (*al-tajallī al-bāith al-hubbi*). In this he is reiterating for something that utterly defies conception, though embedded within the logical dimensions

of a syllogism, what he had earlier tried to portray by an indirect mode of reference. In doing so, he believes the sanctity of a more original oneness and uniqueness is safeguarded, its manifestation continually tied to the essence. Qūnavī finally recapitulates his whole argument by stating that, in fact, the precept of the secret of “oneness” (*sīr al-wahdāniyyah*) – let alone that of the hidden essential and existential secret of the “independent” (or “self-sufficient”), with its own dominion (*lāhu al-saltānah*) – cannot penetrate in any other way except through a preponderance over something else.

§ ACTION AS ESSENCE QUA CREATOR

This is the question which Qūnavī had been seeking to answer on a philological platform, especially with respect to how singular oneness is exhibited through one of the “six constructions.” Generally, a construction has no “semantic value” or, logically speaking, no consequence, without there being something that acts as a locus of appearance for the *singular precept* upon which it (by definition) rests and going by the name of “action” (*fīlan*). Conversely, the locus on its own neither yields grammatical sense nor produces a consequence (IB A:121; B:229). This new focus on the verb-act, however, compensates for the “noun-bias” observed earlier by concentrating on the single creative act as an entity of varied dimensions and relations to the essence qua *existential*. The word *ittisāl* is used to refer to the “interconnectedness of the precepts of manifestation”¹³ – in other words, the “joining” of the two manifestations or “premises.” But the locus of appearance itself has also to emanate as a *single act* from a

single agent (since, as we said, only the “one” can proceed from the “one”) action (*fīl*), or the act, is perfectly adapted to this conditional presentation of the essence qua something, since “action” is nothing but the manifestation measured in relation to the effect, or creative efficacy (*nisbat al-ta’thīr*).

It might be pointed out that grammarians like Ibn al-Sarrāj (d. 316 AH/928 CE) described the movement of the verb’s action using the words *ta’aththara* and *laqā* “to refer specifically to the phenomenon of transitivity, the number of accusative complements the action of the verb, and hence the verb itself, is associated with” (Owens FG 169-70). ‘Abd al-Qāhir Jurjānī himself described the verb as, among other things, *hadathan mu’aththiran* (JKM I:61); *hadath* being a term that Ibn ‘Arabī associated especially with Zajjājī (ZI 52-3) (cf. FuM II 12-15:57-59). More significantly still, conveyed by God qua Existentiator and Creator, “effect” for Qūnavī is exhibited in all of the following: “the object of His action” (*mafūl fīhi*), “that through which there is Action” (*mafūl bihi*), “what accompanies the action” (*mafūl mafāhu*) and “that for the sake of which the action is performed” (*mafūl lahu*) (IB A:121; B:229). It is difficult to overlook the similarities with Arabic grammar of these distinctions, especially, according to whose “different levels” he says the effect is conveyed.

Before pursuing this issue any further, let us first agree on what a verbal sentence is. A verbal sentence has two essential parts, the agent (*fā’il*) and the verb (*fīl*), where the verb is either *fīl muta’addī* or *fīl ghayr muta’addī* (JKM I:595); that is, either transitive or non-transitive: literally, “passing over” (to an object) or not doing so (Owens FG 170-1).

Qūnavī moves straightaway to the transitive verb. It is in this one respect that the four different questions above can arise – viz. *mafūl bibi*, *mafūl fībi*, *mafūl mā abu* and *mafūl lahu*,¹⁴ in the exact order found in Jurjānī's *Kitāb al-muqtasid* (JKM I:591-680).¹⁵ And after giving the basic “structural” division between the agent and the object, he lists the same verbal distinctions; the only difference is that instead of “*ta'addī* [of effect]” (lit., “passing over”) he employs the synonymous term “conveyance” (“*bi-nisbat al-ta'thīr al-wāsil*”), which is also used in grammar.¹⁶

Now, one may speak of “*mafūl fībi*” (“the object in it”) if the object is intended (*maqṣūd*), presumably in its circumstantial existence,¹⁷ since the *mafūl fībi* normally refers to the *zārf*, the circumstance or time/place locative (JKM I:631); it is the object that tells where and when an action occurs (Owens FG 131¹⁸). One may speak of “*bibi*” (“through it”), grammatically the direct object, when the object is “the intermediary and the condition” (*al-wāsitah wal-shart*); of “*mā abu*” (“accompanying it”) if it is part of a cause (*juz' illah*) or one of the reasons (*ahad al-asbāb*), or that which is in some manner desired (*murād*); of “*lahu*” (“for the sake of which”) if the sense of such action (*fā'idat dhālika al-fīl*) refers back to it (*ta'ud 'alayhi*) or constitutes its goal (*ghāyah*) (IB A:121; B:229). The last mentioned pertains to the “secret” of God's instantiation of the world *for the sake of the world* (*ijād al-Haqqu al-ālima lil-ālam*). To this secret, Qūnavī compares the “secret of worship” (*ibādah*), performed “for the sake of the worshipper” (*li-qjal al-ābid tā lil-mā būd*) rather than the worshipped (*lā lil-mā būd*), since in respect of might (*izzibī*) and self-sufficiency (or “independence”), God does not act for any “goal” as such (*ftūhu li-*

gharad); His act is the “mercy of the essence through created being” (*rahmah dhātiyyah bil-kawn*); all other levels of action strive for it.

If we follow closely this train of thought, the tenet which now comes to the fore is that the actualization of every act or product suffers a certain delay with respect to the agent. And another requirement necessitating the posteriority of the result (*husūl al-natiyah*) – i.e. the one in respect of which oneness cannot yield another (cf. IB A:120-1; B:229) – and for the penetration of the manifestation’s precept (*nufūdh al-hukm*), strictly by means of the manifestation of love, becomes necessary. His explanation is that if we presupposed something to take place “alone through a single premise, as the manifestation of love is a single premise, or merely the possibility of it, some of those specified by the precept of manifestation would have the ‘preconception’ that the real attachment and goal of existentiality and created generation is to realize only that which is most distinctive of the ‘presence of God’ [*mā yakhtass bi-hadrat al-Haqq tā ghayr*]” (IB A:122; B:230). But that would be tantamount to a deficiency imagined at the level of the perfectional, existential and essential “self-sufficient.”¹⁹ That is principally why each locus of manifestation has its own precept, conforming to its secondary, posterior status indicated by the *labu*. The “precept of manifestation” (*hukm al-tajallī*) is prevented from penetrating only by the improprieties enumerated above, and it continues to request from absolute hiddenness a “dwelling-place” (*adā yatlub mustaqirrahū*) designated by the *labu*, the mechanism for whose own emerging distinctiveness from *Divine* manifestation as such is explicable in terms of “sanctified yearning.” The rest of the manifestations

specified as “by” and “in” the loci of appearance (*al-mazāhir wa fīhā*), display the same pattern once their precept reaches this *lābu*, “one for whom [or ‘for the sake of whom’] they are manifested” (IB A:122; B:230).

Qūnavī hence uses of the various distinctions above in order to mark the following points concerning the “sanctified yearning” behind the return of the manifestation back to the source. In essence, all manifestations,

seek a return to [*rujū*] and a retrenchment in [*al-taqallus*] their root upon the termination of their precept *by* and *in* the loci of appearance, because they lack consonance with the world of multiplicity [i.e. in which they find themselves]. This is the reason for detachment [*insitākh*] [characteristic of upward movement] with respect to the differential manifestations [*lī-tajalliyāt al-tafsīliyyāt*] after being enshrouded with the precepts of the “one for whom there is manifestation” [*al-mutajallā lābu*], and their return to the Hiddenness...[It is also] the reason why human spirits part with the created natures [*nashā’at*] with which they are enshrouded after seeking perfection through them [as they] embraced the deepest secrets of every created nature [*zubad asrār kull nash’ah*] and the most rarefied properties [*lata’if khaṣṣā’is*] of every form and abode; and [finally, the reason for] the return to the root having been coloured by the precepts of multiplicity rather than by their forms, which impair their unity [*wahdatihā*] (IB A:122; B:230).

With this “return” to the root, the precept of the “hidden motion” (*harakah ghaybiyyah*) and “sanctified cycle of desire” (*dawrah muqaddasah shawqiyyah*), in turn, permeates the “nominal and creational realities” that hiddenness embraces. In the course of its return, manifestation comes upon all the noetic specifications, “churning them [*fa-makhadahā*] through this hidden and sanctified motion of desire [*al-harakah al-qudsiyyah al-ghaybiyyah al-shawqiyyah*]” (IB A:122; B:230). Through this agitation emerge the “inducements of yearning” (*al-bawā’ith al-‘ishqiyyah*)²⁰ and the “intangible motions of love” (*al-harakāt al-mdnawiyah al-hubbiyyah*) from the realities’ midst. What that signifies is simply that it is the *precept of the effect* – the main focus at this stage of his argument – of the manifestation

of love (*athar al-tajallī al-hubbī*) permeating the realities that enables them to request from God the exteriorization of their essential individualities and whatever makes for their perfection (IB A:123; B:231). Love for them is not so incongruous as to require unfathomed embrace. This hidden process is the “key,” he explains, to all the cyclical containing (or circumscriptive) motions (*al-harakāt al-dawriyyah al-ihātiyyah*) which render visible what essential individualities of created beings are concealed. But as we have mentioned, not only does it bring out what lies within the potentiality of possibility and hiddenness toward actuality, it also marks an important transition, as we noted, from Divine manifestation to the “one for the sake of whom,” the *lāhu*. Qūnavī shows this through a meticulous application of grammatical distinctions to questions, after all, usually considered to be the exclusive province of logic or theological disputation. This hardly means that all reference to the syllogism is now out of place. He continues to avail himself of the intellectual resources of *kalām* and *falsafah* and which are often deployed in the more familiar language of logic. That avenue remains fruitful so long as one is willing to forego everything but the barest elements of reasoning argued by a learned tradition all too aware of logic being merely an instrument of exchange between the root- into the branch-knowledge of things.

§ ACTUALIZATION IN THE LANGUAGE OF THE SYLLOGISM

It is not surprising, therefore, that Qūnavī should again resort to the syllogism in an attempt to determine both the differences and the consonances between the root and its

derivations. The differences are naturally most clearly evident where one thing is subordinate to another, as in any reasoning process. One could generalize this further and picture the “request” (*talab*) within an act of intellection which inferential reasoning merely seeks to capture within the narrow, abstract confines of the logical syllogism. The immaterial realities are no different in this respect. Knowing the root from the branch, however, gives proportion to one reality’s relationship to another, higher one.

By way of example, he explains that the “relation of munificence” (*al-nisbah al-jūdiyyah*) is one of the realities which expire (*al-baqā’iq al-mustablakah*) before the supremacy (*qabhr*) of the singular oneness of hiddenness and, therefore, itself needs *to request* the exteriorization of its essential individuality (IB A:123; B:231). At this relational level, all realities are actuated by an inducement that causes them to “desire” exteriorization (*hubb zubūr ‘aynihā*) and, therewith, a perfection, that depends on the penetration of their own precept.²¹ If one were to interpret this situation syllogistically, the first premise would consist in the request (*talab*) entailed by the higher manifestation of love (*al-tajallī al-hubbi*), presumably the “major”; the other is the “predispositional request of creation” (*al-talab al-istīdādī al-kawnī*) through an attribute of receptivity, which exteriorizes the action. Furthermore, the relation known as “power” (*qudrab*) is “specified in request of the object of attachment to be specified for it by the Will” (IB A:123; B:231). Once this occurs, all the “elements” (*arkān*) are in place: from the manifestation imposing upon knowledge an act of beholding, qua manifestation of the ipseity (*hūriyyah*), to the precept of the “relation of life” that colours it. It is a manifestation which renders visible the very

essence of the hidden existential light.²²

Being two premises, these are the roots on which depends the appearance of the “conclusion sought” (*al-nafījah al-matībah*). Qūnāvī goes further in his analogy with the logical syllogism: each premise is composed of two “singles” or terms (*mufradayn*), giving a total of four terms. One of these terms recurs from one premise to the other, being the “middle term.” He identifies it with the “secret of the singular oneness of comprehensive union,” but only qua “relation of the Will colouring the remaining three parts, while remaining concealed within them [*hīna khīfā’ihā fī al-thalāthah*],” with a view to the realization of the effect and its perfection. It is in this way, he notes, that “individualness” is realized (*fardīyyah*) (IB A:123, B:231; A:75, B:183). With this “hidden motion,” known as the “recurrence” (*tirdād*) of one of the terms, appears the secret of Nuptials (*sīr al-nikāh*) from which “the consequence [or conclusion, ‘*al-nafījah*’] follows concomitantly [*tabdīyyat al-iltizām*], rather than successively, in exteriorization [*lā tabdīyyat al-zuhūr*]” (IB A:123-4; B:231). Only the designation of the level – in other words, the substrate for the penetration of “powerfulness” (*mahall nufūdh al-iqtidār*) – needs to be designated through the “motion of love” so as to ensure that the intended “end” itself (*ayn al-murād*) is exteriorized in a manner consistent with the precepts of the roots (IB A:124; B:231).

The complexity of this scheme is due to the epistemic impossibility of conceiving through any faculty something, anything, as it really is in itself. “What is in itself,” according to this scheme, indicates merely a singular oneness, not the inclusive,

individual unity inside of which it happens to be deeply and imperceptibly embedded. There is no question of any direct efficacy of the thing in itself, that is in respect of its oneness and utter simplicity (IB A:124; B:232). But Qūnavī relies on the equivocacy of singular oneness to get his meaning across. Though just as primordial and pre-given as the syllogistic facticity we met with Aristotle, singular oneness must be translated into a “*this* singular oneness” qua something dissembled as the middle term. Also, he claims there is a difference between the “station of oneness” distinguished by itself (*tamyīz maqām al-wahdah*) and “what differentiates it in level *from everything else*”²³; this is well before “that which becomes properly recognized as a locus [*maballan*] for the penetration of ‘powerfulness’ [*li-nufūdh al-iqtidār*] can in turn be distinguished [*li-yatamayyaz*]” (IB A:124; B:232). This is the original operation that gives the much-vaunted “scale” of theological science the *concreteness* and specificity we said it must theoretically possess without forcing a retreat back to the originally concealed oneness.

The relation between agent and action implied in Divine creative efficacy involves considerably more than just a relatedness or comparability between two things. Here, we are speaking of a root-branch relation. For emphasis, he argues thus. Things which are strictly comparable to each other (*mutakāfi'īn*), whether by virtue of a reciprocal relation or as two actually existing things may be so without the other necessarily enjoying the “primary” particularity of being called an “active agent” (lit., “agent of an effect”)(IB A:124; B:232).²⁴ If there is to be *active agency*, there must be some requirement or “perfectional cause [or reason]” (*muwjjib aw mafnā kamāli*)²⁵ by which one is favoured

over (*yarjah*) the other as the “active agent” (*mu’aththir*). They may well be “comparable” in every other sense, but the second thing will fall in level before the first whenever we refer to such an attribute of perfection or “determining factor for preponderance.” In this latter sense alone, the second is said to behave like a substrate (*mahallan*) for the effect of the preponderant “active agent” (*al-mu’aththir al-murajjih*).

The question is how oneness is to be maintained through the multiplicity that goes with the recipient, since multiplicity exists at a “station of opposition to the One” (*maqām al-muqābalah min al-wahdah*) and, for this reason, may be viewed from the vantage point of one of the two aspects of the “one” expounded earlier. Only, here the upward-downward movements toward oneness are considered. The precepts and relations of the “one” construed under one aspect face downward in the direction of multiplicity (*nāzirah ilā al-kathrab*) (IB A:124; B:232). When One is taken in the second sense, it is multiplicity which inclines towards it in a relation of *exteriorization*. And the *combination* of both faces towards the station of the perfection of *manifestness and translucency*, namely, “*kamāl al-jalā’ wal-istijlā’*” (IB A:125, B:232; cf. A:128, B:236 and A:126, B:233). This perfection, he explains, consists in an act of gazing which properly belongs to “loving” and “yearning”²⁶ on account of “the consonance and the hidden connection that exist [*al-irtibāt al-ghaybi*]” (IB A:125; B:232). What such a “gaze” promises to show is that the essential precept of singular oneness *and* comprehensive union penetrates the noetic relation (*al-nisbah al-‘ilmīyyah*) in the proper manner only as both the object of action intended (*maqsūd*) and the exteriorization of *its essential individuality* (*izbār ‘aynīhi*) begin to be reached.

The chief consequence of all this is that Divine hiddenness may now be diagrammatically “split” up, according to the two aspects of a single act, into two halves or “hemistichs,” or *shatrayn*, as he calls them (IB A:125; B:232). Although the secret of love certainly has dominion over the entire affair, the precept of the essence is not thereby robbed of its “precept of supremacy.” The precept of supremacy acts as a concomitant of both “love” and the “vigilant exclusiveness” (*ghīrah*) that is understandably one of the subordinates of singular oneness (IB A:125; B:232-33). It is the supreme factor without which nothing – neither utterance nor any other composition – would have meaning. However, the precept of supremacy belonging to singular oneness (*al-bukūm al-qahī al-ahādī*) attaches itself to multiplicity strictly in respect of that which *contradicts* multiplicity – for example, by way of “might” and “opprobrium” (*sukhut*). In other words, it behaves in this manner in direct consequence of its *contiguity* with this multiplicity. It is something else without this specific consideration. It attaches itself once multiplicity has received specification and enters the picture as a relational pendant of that whose immediate task is to preside over it in the first place. Before their specification, no precept can be exteriorized either for contraries or for “vigilant exclusiveness,” or like relations (IB A:125; B:233). This, in Qūnavī’s view, should alert the discerning mind of the “binary” nature of the most perplexing of secrets: the origin and emergence of transcendence (*sīr mansha’ al-tanzīh wa mabdāhu*), of mercy (*rahmah*) and anger (*ghadab*) and the precedence of the former, satisfaction (*ridā*) and opprobrium (*sukhut*), majesty (*jatāl*) and beauty (*jamāl*), supremacy (*qahī*) and Benevolence (*lutf*). These, in fact, return to the most basic

binary relation of all, two principal roots the most perfect expression of which and “the closest by way of correspondance” are, as taught by God Himself: “mercy” and “anger” (IB A:125; B:233).

As far as the first “hemistich” (*ahad al-shatrayn*) is concerned, then, the “relation of oneness” of which multiplicity may be predicated is isolable or “separable” in respect of its precepts, which multiply according to all of what is subordinate to it. For the sake of accuracy, though, the emphasis is on “separation” (*infīāl*), not “mechanical division,” in the sense that the original entity is transformed into a slightly more determinate (yet degraded) *root* that entails the existence of the branch. The exteriorized name’s unitary level (*martabat al-ism al-zāhir*) is specified – by virtue of this “separation” – from the presence of hiddenness. Hence, and in accordance with what we have learned before, specification is,

specified both for itself [*fa-idāyyana al-idāyyun li-nafsib*] and for the object of specification [*lil-mutāyyan bibi*] before manifoldness is ever exteriorized for manifold things at the station of quantity [*maqām al-kamm*], quality [*al-kayf*] and their kin – e.g. the “when” [*ka-mātā*] and the “where” [*ayn*] (IB A:125; B:233).

Being specified “for itself” is a tidy way of dealing with the syllogistic conundrum encountered in our second chapter with regard to the additional set of requirements that arise with every logical judgement, noetically separate from the *original* fact under interpretation. For, syllogically at least, that is the bottom line as far as the distinctiveness of the station of singular oneness and its distinction from everything else is concerned. Specification is distinguishable from hiddenness by the very act of “witnessing” (*imtāza bil-shahādah ‘an al-ghayb*). But it is not meant to coincide completely with the separate

requirements of judgement or predication – that would be more what the precept is designed to do – since it pertains to an object as well, as indeed he hastily adds. What happens with “witnessing,” in any case, is that an “integral level” (*martabah jumliyyah*) is specified retroactively for an interior by way of a contrast of this interior with what constitutes the exterior (*bi-imtiyāz al-żābir ‘anha*). At this level of witnessing, however, it is merely as “the exterior’s hiddenness qua hiddenness’s exteriority” (*ghayb al-żāhir min baythu zubūrīhi*) that what is manifested of the precepts, attributes, forms and the concomitants subordinate to it are witnessed (IB A:125-26; B:233).^c It is thus that the hiddenness to this exterior becomes known while remaining interior. Finally, he says, everything that had been “separated” in order to yield the first hemistich and qualified as the exteriorized name is “inherently subordinate to and serves the desired end of achieving the combinative vision of perfect *manifestness* and *translucency* [fa-innamā huwa fi tabdīyyat kamāl al-jalā’ wal-istijlā’ wa khidmatihī],” which contains the upward and downward gazes between the one and the many (IB A:126, B:233; cf. A:125, B:232; A:128, B:236).

The second hemistich pertains to the station of God’s Might Most Guarded (*maqām ‘izzibī al-ahmā*) and His perfection, which transcends (*al-munażżah*) all epithets, delimitations, precepts and perceptual attachments (*wa tā'alluqāt al-madārik*) (IB A:126;

^c Ms. B reads as follows:

What is exteriorized of it [*al-żābirah minhu*] is known through witnessing, but witnessing knows [*alimāt*] that which is yet to be fathomed [*mustabtīn fīhī*] through what is hidden (IB B:233).

B:233-4). It comprises what lies beyond the synoptic attachment referred to above, which took interiority to be an “integral whole” (*al-td alluq al-ijmālī*). This station is not called an “hemistich” (*shātrān*), he says, because God Himself is specifiable or delimitable in any sense. His unspecifiability makes of the “specification” represented through the hemisitich hardly more than something redolent of God as a Being who simply cannot be specified.^d In view of this, God is in effect both the “sign” (*datīl*) and what the sign stands for (*madlūl*). And we have seen that every sign acts as a veil (*hijāb*) upon what it stands for. This is so even though “it has to make it known [*mu'arrif labu*], if it is to be a sign pointing to it”; there is no question that the sign is devised for that which it stands for as a sign, and what it stands for appears according to its precept in each thing through which it is given specification (*kull mā tdayyana bihi*). Therefore, when one speaks of *shātr*, which is a “half” of something, a name has automatically been assigned even if, upon specification, it is merely something redolent of or pointing to Him (*datīlan 'alyabi*). Once this is done, two things follow; first, that precept which is peculiar to the thing and marked out for that which is specified; the other is something “synoptic,” informing us that the object is the root of everything so marked out (*tu'arrif annahu asl kull mā tdayyana*) (IB A:126; B:234).

This is the “secret of naming” (*sīr al-tasmiyah*), faithfully transposed into a configuration of two hemistichs. In fact, all that we have learned appears now gradually to reach a point of consummation in this diagram of the two hemistichs. If the model

^d Ms. B reads: “This is because it is the root [*al-as*]. What is certain about it must point to it [only] [*fa'l-mutayaqqin minhu datīl 'alyabi*], insofar as it is unspecifiable (IB B:234).”

is to hold, he states, there is need of a “conserving agent” (*bāfiż*) to safeguard the *limit* itself (*hadd*) which separates the two hemistichs and prevents one “separated hemistich” (*al-shatr al-munfasil*) from commixture and unification with “whatever it has been separated from.” This ensures the “continuation” of the exteriorized name and its precepts, the precept of existential manifestation and that of specification. When the conserving agent ceases, order (*nizām*) at once dissipates, owing to the presence, within what is distinguished and separated (*al-mumfaż al-munfasil*), of “something whose essential request is for primary hiddenness [*mā yatlub al-ghayb al-anwal talban dhātiyyan*], and that is the place of origin of everything [*mdan al-jamī'*]” (IB A:126; B:234). But its fulfillment for us would be no better than a mere affection of identity with what is most uniquely God’s. This is clearly interdicted.

Even so, he says, things long for their roots (*al-ashyā' takinnu ilā uṣūlibā*), and particulars for their universals. Such a propensity cannot, therefore, be entirely deleterious, especially given the order that so plenarily depends on it. Movement towards the limit is at the beck of an urge impelling toward the *root*. That singular oneness is an epithet for the limit (*nāt al-hadd*), however, is already giving some incipient shape to what lies beyond the (relative) root. Intellected from what is hidden, the limit has no essential individuality of its own qua root. As a rule, it is simply the precept of every separating agent (*kull fasil*) veiled between two things – not the actual agent (*lā 'aynubu*) – which is exteriorized (IB A:126-27; B:234). Going by our model, the agent safeguarding the limit is God Himself, this time qua “interiority of the exteriorized name” (*bātin al-ism al-żāhir*):

this is the surviving relation of [the name] within that hiddenness [*al-nisbah al-baqiyah minhu fi al-ghayb*] which ensures both the perdurance of [the name] [*sahhab baqā'uhu*] and its [role of] signifying the thing named [*datlah 'alla al-musammā*], the selfsame interior [*al-bātin*]. (IB A:127; B:234).

§ THE COMPREHENSIVE RELATION

The “relation that is interior with respect to exteriority,” namely, “*al-nisbah al-bātinah min al-zāhir*,” cannot in turn accept separation (*infīl*), since it comprehends both the exterior and the absolute interior, activity and passivity, both the request and “the facticity of the object of request” (*mattūbiyyah*) (IB A:127; B:235). It has an aspect which draws it toward the exterior and another toward the absolute interior; an aspect that approximates the absoluteness of hiddenness and another the delimitedness and the manifoldness of witnessing (*al-taqayyud wal-taddud al-shahādī*). It also has a certain affinity with the ipseity from which a hemistich has been extracted, leaving a total of two hemistichs united at the root. It is a “non-existential” realtion (*nisbah 'adamiyyah*) and, therefore, existent but not in the commonplace sense of the word. In fact it is something of a simulacrum of what the “conserving reality” (*al-haqīqah al-hāfiẓah*) confers as the level of the Perfect Man, the isthmus between hiddenness and witness, a “mirror” (*mirā'ah*) in which the very reality of servantship (*ubūdiyyah*) and mastery (*siyadah*), is exteriorized. The religiously-sanctioned “name” given this level is “Cloud,” for which the epithet is always singular oneness (*nātūhā al-ahadiyyah*).

So, singular oneness is the epithet not only of the limit, conceptually the lowest among

all the discernible aspects of the isthmus, but of every touchstone origin of manifoldness. The attributes specified in it are collectively known as the names of the essence (*al-asmā' al-dhātiyyah*), and the “intellected form” resulting from the totality of correlative names (*al-asmā' al-mutaqābilah*) we met earlier, along with their concomitant precepts, attributes and properties concomitant in respect of their inner recesses (*min baythu butūnihā*), is the form of Divinity (*sūrāt al-utūbiyyah*) that was discussed before. Moreover, these names and what “universal names” follow in level below are never disconnected from each other (IB A:127; B:235). None of them is free of the precept of the rest. That holds true even though preponderance (*ghalabah*) at any given level and moment, relative to that which constitutes the names’ locus of appearance^c, is exercised invariably by a single name only – which, of course, makes it inevitable that the precepts of the remainder come under the sway of that one name (*maghūrah taht dhālika al-wāhid*).

If we follow this train of thought through, it becomes clear that the Perfect Man’s relation to each specific name is equilibrated in much the same way as a center which lies equidistantly from every point on the circumference. This has certain repercussions on the mobility of the worshipper in his upward ascent. Ideally, a servant’s relation to any name should be no stronger than to another; he should not be drawn away from the “middle point” (*wāsīt*) toward some level or other due to “excessive consonance” (*li-mazīd munāsibah*), precept or yearning without a particularization designated by God as to time, state and abode (IB A:128; B:236). Such a worshipper is fittingly named “servant of the

^c B: *bil-nisbah ilā mā huwa mazhar labā*; A: ... *mazharuhā*.

‘One who is comprehensive and all-embracing’ (*abd al-*jamī* wal-*mustawīb**). He is servant to the ‘One who is all-embracing’ *in actu* (*bil-fī*) without God Himself having to be delimited by comprehensive union (*dūn taqayyudīhi bil-jam*), exteriority (*zuhūr*) and exteriorization (*iżbār*) – or, for that matter, to be devoid thereof – while what is willed, when it is willed, is duly being established for the servant qua locus of appearance.

With respect to the ‘reality of servanthood and mastery’ – indicating the human and the Divine levels^f – the Form becomes the Perfect Man (IB A:128; B:236). Qūnavī tries now to relate this twin reality to the previously expounded combinative principle of manifestness and translucency (cf. IB A:125, B:232 and A:126, B:233), by which the ‘gaze of love’ is understood to be both upward and downward. One of the proximate names (*al-asmā’ al-qarībah*) of the Perfect Man being ‘servant of God’ (*abd Allāh*), perfect manifestness (*kamāl al-jalā*) is uncomplicatedly identified with the perfection of God’s exteriorization *through this servant* in the person of the Perfect Man (IB A:128; B:236). The second aspect of this combinative gaze, perfect translucency (*kamāl al-istijlā*) (IB A:126, B:233; A:125, B:232), relates more exclusively to God’s beholding of Himself, but with the following peculiarities. It consists in the comprehensive union (*jamī al-Haqq*) between, on the one hand, God’s beholding of Himself, through Himself and in Himself (*bayna shuhūdīhi nafsahu bi-nafsīhi fi nafsīhi*) at a ‘presence of unicity’ (*hadrah wahdāniyyah*); and, on the other, His beholding of Himself in that which is distinguishable from Him (*fi mā imfāqā ‘anhu*) (IB A:128; B:236). Indeed, the only true justification for calling God ‘other’

^f A: *nisbatā al-martabatay al-Haqq*; B: *nisbatā al-martabatay al-Haqq wal-khalq*.

(*ghayr*) arises from the fact that the Divine deigns to this distinction; “before” the distinction He was “self-identical.” Having said this, Qūnavī then proceeds to a series of subtle distinctions within this second mode of “Divine self-contemplation through the other.” He defines perfect translucency as consisting in this “other’s” contemplation of itself through itself (*mushāhadat dhālika al-ghayr ʻaydan nafsahu bi-nafsibi*) qua distinct “other” (*min kawnihi ghayran mumtāz*). This admits of a double contemplation of that which is distinguishable from the other: through both its own essence (*bi-‘aynibi*) and that of its proper other. The One (*wāhid*) becomes distinguishable from “him who praises Him” (*amman thanābu*) through this “interjacent criterion of bifurcation” (*al-furqān al-bayni*), which lies and is manifested “*between* them and from them” (*baynahumā wa minhumā*) (IB A:128-29; B:236). This, he says, is how everything is made unique (*infarada*) through God’s singular oneness and comprehensiveness.

But this, too, is how the contrapunctual logic of theology envisaged by Qūnavī is vindicated in its own disciplinary derivation of the object of inquiry from the root. With this programmatic end in mind, let us look a little more closely at how he explains the manner in which a prototypal singular oneness can give way to a derivative oneness mediated by multiplicity. His next account is, therefore, of multiplicity as the prime consideration in this sophisticated analysis of “other” – otherness intended, that is, in the sense of the contradistinctiveness of unicity with respect to multiplicity. In this he is helped by the fact that *ghayr* and *tagħayur* in Arabic have a common radical.

§ SINGULAR ONENESS AND MULTIPLICITY

To begin with, the essential individualities of existents (*āyān al-mawjūdāt*) are basically noetic relations concealed within God's hiddenness (IB A:129; B:237). But they are also regarded as loci of appearance for the precepts of multiplicity and singular oneness. Naturally, they resist this singular oneness – the closest epithet to God's unconditionality (*ittaq al-Haqq*), unlimited capacity (*stāhibi*) and hiddenness (*ghaybatīhī*) – strictly in respect of their *relational* manifoldness. With the intelligible comprehension of all their specifications and distinctive precepts, they collectively comprise also what is called the level of possibility, assuming they are as equally capable of exteriorization as non-exteriorization. There, multiplicity for them is actually only a concomitant attribute (*lazimah labā*) – in much the same way that “fairness” is concomitant to “four” (IB A:129; B:237). And yet, it is in this respect that the difference, or *tagħayur*, between the level of the essential individualities and that of unicity (*marhabat al-wahdāniyyah*) becomes plain.

Through this analytic pathway to exteriorization, the Will becomes attached primarily to the distinctive station of unicity (*tamayyuz maqām al-wahdāniyyah*) that lies above and beyond the multiplicity which lacks all consonance with it. But the Will does this only under a “differentiating aspect” – as Qūnavī says, “*min al-wajh al-mugħayir*” – together with one of the two precepts of oneness discussed above as being the first source of all multiplicity (*mansha' al-kathrab*) (IB A:129; B:237). Difference (*mugħayarah*) can never occur in that sense that uniquely belongs to the hidden noetic presence of the *essence*, where no manifoldness whatsoever can arise. Hence, “things” remain constant within hiddenness in their “realities,” differing (*tufāriq*) not at all from the noetic presence, since neither

manifoldness nor existence has been conferred upon them. Their distinctions, when they do arise, are based on another sense of “difference” (*mughāyarah*), the one presently proposed. The “perfection” of the level of unicity (*wahdāniyyah*) is exteriorized, through existentiation (*iḍād*), by “separating” what multiplicity the relation of this perfection is capable of. In this manner, the precept of unicity permeates every relation of multiplicity in exactly that respect we now know allows it to become multiple. The dominion of singular oneness (*sultān al-ahadiyyah*) over multiplicity thus appears. Every *multiple thing* (*kull mutakaththir*) becomes known as both “non-multiple” (*ghayr mutakaththir*) and yet “many” (*kathīr*). This means that everything to which is ascribed multiplicity possesses a singular oneness peculiar to it alone (*ahadiyyah takhussubu*). The significance of the “oneness of manifoldness” is due to this.

As we have seen at the very outset of our analysis of Qūnāvī’s treatise, what occurs to the set of multiple parts (*majmū’ ajzā’ al-kathrah*) is a singular oneness that is somehow comparable to the other kind of singular oneness (which is incompatible with the manifold) and yet not quite identical with it (IB A:130; B:237). Proceeding in an upwardly direction, final attainment is possible once the multiplicity reaches its goal (*ghayatihā*) through the root, which we now agree is the proper origin of both oneness and multiplicity. That which is given specification and, indeed, manifests itself through both oneness and multiplicity is Divine hiddenness, the source (*mdan*) of all specifications and the wellspring (*manbd*) of all the “manifolds” that occur to the senses, intellects and minds.

§ THE ASPECTS OF DIVINE SELF-KNOWLEDGE

Throughout this study we have emphasized that the problem of knowledge needs to be understood from the first in terms of Divine self-knowledge, well before the human capacity for true wisdom is even posed as a problem. As a consequence, our discussion has revolved around a number of themes relating to Divine self-knowledge. Qūnāvī will now attempt a definitive statement of his doctrine intended to capture all the complex “dimensions” of what he basically sees as a single problem.

Hence, the “first cognitive level and dimension” (i.e. “*awwal al-marātib wal-xtibārāt al-‘irfāniyyah*”) to be confirmed with respect to the hiddenness of ipseity,⁸ the basis for all other considerations (*al-masqat li-sā’ir al-xtibārāt*), is absoluteness unadulterated by any delimitedness or “even absoluteness itself” (IB A:130; B:238). This absoluteness is not bounded by anything either affirmative or negative, as one would normally find among the names and attribute, nor by anything that can be conceptualized, intellected or postulated in any way. In fact, there is no authoritative expression for or “voice” by which to express this station, being the utmost limit of what can be communicated about God (*ghāyat al-tanbīh ‘alayhi*). His knowledge of Himself through Himself and the fact that He is “for Himself alone” are conveyed simply by the word “He,” or *huwa* (*kawnihi huwa li-nafsihi huwa fa-hasab*), excluding every intellected or conceivable attachment, precept and affirmative or negative specification. These are all what someone other than God would intellect under some aspect or other, beyond the one intended here.

⁸ B: *al-muhaqqaqah li-ghayb al-huviyyah*; A: *al-ghayb al-huviyyah*.

This is followed by the “second dimension,” where the textual basis for “independent” (*ghamī*), “essential perfection of existence” (*al-kamāl al-wujūdī al-dhātī*) and “true, unadulterated oneness” (*al-wāhid al-haqīqiyah al-sirfah*) is found in God’s words, “God was and nothing was with Him” (*kāna Allāh wa lā shay' mā fīhu*), etc. (IB A:131; B:238). What follows is God beholding Himself through Himself²⁷ at the level of His first exteriority (*martabat zāhiriyatibī al-ūlā*) and by way of His root names (*asma'ibī al-asliyyah*). It is a first level of exteriorization relative to the absolute hiddenness of the essence. Any “specifications” so far are those of “what is exteriorized, *through itself and for itself*” (*bi-nafsihi li-nafsihi*), prior to the exteriorization of any of the essential individualities or precept *for the other* (*ghayr*) at the level of the other.

Qūnavī complains that “[formal] expressions are as narrow as can be and weakest when it comes to the expressive translucency [*al-ifṣāḥ*] needed in the case of God’s inner essence [*an kūnhibī*] as He is in Himself” (IB A:131; B:239). This seems obvious enough for the Divine, but hardly diminishes the technical uncertainties of the next aspect, where “He who is exteriorized beholds Himself [*shuhūd al-zāhir nafsaḥū*] at the level of the other [*martabat sawāḥū*] without perceiving this other itself [*min ghayr an yudrika dhālikā al-ghayru nafsaḥū*]” (IB A:131; B:239). Whatever is exteriorized through or for the latter (*bihi* or *lahū*), on the other hand, is strictly a function of the proximity of his relation and bond (*'ahdī*) to Whomever is distinguishable from him. Moreover, the precept of absolute hiddenness and the Unitary Manifestation is preponderant²⁸ over him (*wal-tajallī al-wahdānī*). This is an attribute and the state belonging to those who are captivated (*sifat*

al-muhayyamūn^b) within God's Majesty-Beauty (*fi jalāl jamāl al-Haqq*). At this level, one may speak of consonance, but it is so complete as to exhibit *through a counter-movement* the exteriorized face of a self-recognition in the descent. This way of putting it may help illuminate further the whole meaning of "analogy," which is another way of describing the consonance embracing all the precepts put together and not just the two elements of a consonant relation. God's beholding of Himself does not, as a self-manifestation, have a uniform, mechanical path of descent. It has to reflect the particularizing factor of the "other" recast in the role of its locus.

This aspect calls to mind the kind of structural relationships that the school of Ibn 'Arabī was especially adept at showing in the light of Arabic philosophy. Qūnavī draws attention to them once again. The association between the operation of the Will and its exteriorized "result" is all the more direct when one considers that the precept of the Will's exteriorized attachment to the twin relations of differentiation and organization (*nisbatay al-tafsīl wal-tadbīr*) brings into existence the world of writing and inscription (*ījād 'ālam al-tadwīn wal-tasīr*), which exhibits the Divine words (*ibrāz al-kalimāt al-ilāhiyyah*) (IB A:131; B:239). The Divine Words comprise the "loci of appearance of His light [*mazāhir nūrihi*], the raiments of relations of His knowledge [*malābis nisbah' ilmihi*] and the visibilities of the names [*marā'i asmā'ihī*] and what is specified of them, all contained in the parchment of His inscription [*fi raqq mastūrihi*]" (IB A:131-32; B:239). What also results from this attachment of the Will is the self-beholding of the "One Who is Manifested"

^b B: *sifat al-muhayyamūn*; A: *sifat al-mubayyamanūn*.

(*shubūd al-żahir nafsahu*) at the level of the “Other” (*martabat al-ghayr*) distinguishable from Him in the first beholding (*al-shahādah al-ūlā*) (IB A:132; B:239). Hiddenness’s precept will then be “exteriorized through a manifestation in every relation whose specification appears, at the level of exteriority, after the manner of its permanent specification in [Divine] knowledge [*bi-hasab tā'ayunihā al-thubūtī fī al-ilm*] and in accordance with the Will’s conative focus [*tawajjuh al-irādī*] upon such a relation.” Conversely, what is distinguished-from-Him-through-Him (*mā imtāza bibi dñhu*) may perceive Him at the level of witnessing. An exterior relation named “creature” and “other” (*nisbah żāhirah sammā bibā khalqan wa sawan*) is specified of Him. Through this manifestation, God perceives the following: His own essence,²⁹ that which is distinct from Him (*mā imtāza ‘anhu*) and that which is distinguished from the other (*mā imtāza bibi ‘an ghayribi*) (IB A:132; B:239).

The “noble canon” (*dābit sharīf*) that enshrines this whole idea is that the precept and effect of “every existent or thing” combining several attributes or relations¹ is conveyed to each recipient (*kull qābil*) at every point or moment by being specified according to:

- (1) the primacy of that existent or thing (*awwaliyyat al-amr*) invoked on the basis of such a precept and efficacy (*al-bāith lahu ‘alā hādhā al-hukm wal-ta’thīr*);
- (2) the particular attribute whose precept, relative to its remaining attributes, happens to be preponderant for it (*ghālibah*), once both the precept and the effect have entered into play for the recipient;
- (3) the state and predisposition of the recipient himself (*hāl al-qābil wa istīdādihī*) (IB A:132; B:240).

Each conative focus (*kull tawajjuh*) of every “one turning” (*kull mutawajjib*) toward the

¹ A: *jāmi‘an li-sifāt shatthi aw nisab mutaddidah*; B: ... *aw nisab mutadāddah*.

“object turned to” (*kull mutawajjah ilayhi*) is specified according to at least one of these three considerations. The precepts of the relations and attributes belonging to the recipient are all subordinate to a preponderant “root.” As a result, the form of the consequence of conative focus (*sūrat thamrat dhālika al-tawajjub*) is subordinate to the precept of preponderance referred to (*aghlabiyah*). Exteriorized though it may be in accordance with the latter, such a form is no less imbued (*intajān fīhā*) with the precept of the remaining relations and attributes. Its own precept is no match, is in fact indiscernible, in relation to the precept of “this single preponderant thing” (IB A:132-33; B:240). Qūnavī attributes this to the fact that the “conative focus” of the “one turning” toward an “object turned to” obtains only when the conative focus’s object of attachment is a *single* thing (*amran wāhid*). When attached to two things or more, no root precept (*hukm aslan*) is produced or can penetrate. The effect in anything said to be subject to an effect (*kull mu’aththar fīhī*) can occur only by way of singular oneness in such a way that the consequence is subordinate to the root (*al-nāfiyah tattabī’ al-ash*).

Qūnavī reinforces this by pointing out that the commencement (*mabda*) of Divine conative focus toward instantiation itself originates in the “wellspring of the One” (*sadara min yanbū’ al-wahdah*¹) by means of the singular oneness of comprehensive union (*ahadiyyat al-jam*) (IB A:133; B:240). It is attached to a perfect manifestness and translucency (*kamāl al-jatā’ wal-istijlā’*) the precept of which is described religiously

¹ B: *min kull mutawajjih ilā kull mutawajjah ilayhi*; A: *kull tawajjub sādir min kull mutawajjah ilayhi*.

² A: *al-athar min kull mu’aththar fīhi*; B: *al-athar min kull mu’aththir fī kull mu’aththar fīhi*.

³ A: *sadara min yanbū’ al-wahdah*; B: *min yanbū’ abādī*.

sometimes as worship or servanthood (*ibādah*) and sometimes as a cognizance (*marifah*); as in the *āyāt*: “*wa mā khalaqtu al-jinn wal-ins*.” What is exteriorized from God’s hiddenness through such a conative focus is merely that existence which extends over the essential individualities (*al-munbasit ‘alā al-dyān tā ghayr*).

In answer to our query about knowledge of the realities of things, therefore, when the knower, with respect to what is inside him (*mā fīhi*), is declared the “Shadow of God’s Presence” (*zill li-hadrat al-Haqq*) and a locus of appearance for His knowledge (*mazhar li-ilmīhi*), then and only then has the precept of the reality truly permeated, having been emitted into everything subordinate to or derived from knowledge (IB A:133; B:240-41).

NOTES

1. “*Huwa al-awwalu wal-ākhiru wal-żābiru wal-bātinu wa huwa bi-kulli shay'in 'alīm.*”
2. By the same token, knowledge of the particular (*al-'ilm bil-juz'*) precedes that of the whole (*kull*) (IB A:113; B:221).
3. And thereupon God's attachment to the world and the world's attachment to Him by way of Divinity (*al-utūbiyyah*) and its precept, their consonance in respect of knowledge and effect comes into view: only “that is judged [for God] which is based on what appears through Him [*fa-mahkūm 'alayhi bi-mā zahara bibi*] and which He causes to be manifest” (IB A:115; B:223). God informs, bestows knowledge and makes manifest (*jāl*) for whomever of His servants He wishes to do so always from the Hiddenness of His Essence, no matter how much is manifested (IB A:115; B:223).
4. Given that God comprehends everything through His Mercy and knowledge, so that Mercy is all-encompassing existence (*al-wujūd al-shāmil*) – an encompassment and generality (*'umūm*) which nothing beyond Mercy may possess – it is clear that the name “*Rahmān*” (“Merciful”) contains all things. And if it is true that each thing has a special property and a specified portion from absolute existence (*bissah muta'ayyanah min al-wujūd al-mutlaq*) which cannot be shared by anything else, then the generalities concerning the precepts of the name “*Rahmān*” (*'umūm ism al-rāhīm*) are also knowable according to each thing in particular. Hence the correctness of the statement that God comprehends (*muhib*) all things through knowledge and existence both in accordance with His essence and in respect of the universal names (*al-asmā' al-kulliyyah*) indicated by the two *ayāt* just cited (IB A:113-14; B:222). Everything exteriorized and witnessed springs from these hidden recesses which precede exteriorization in the same way that hiddenness is prior to witnessing (IB A:114; B:222).
5. “*Al-ghayb ghaybān idāfi wa haqīqī*” (IB A:114; B:222).
6. The “exterior name” (*al-ism al-żāhir*) and all the forms exteriorized through it are hidden in God's hiddenness, perishing beneath the dominance of unitariness (*mustahlakah taht al-qabr al-wahdāniyyah*), which happens to be the nearest epithet (*aqrab al-nūr*) to Divine hiddenness. The “veil of unitariness” (*bijāb al-wahdāniyyah*) and the “perishing of excessive nearness” (*al-istihlāk bil-qurb al-mufrāt*) prevent the forms' perception of their essence and the perception of their Lord (*idrākibhā dhātihā wa rabiħā*). God then causes these forms to appear through the light of His manifestation whenever He distinguishes them according to His knowledge of them (*basab-mā 'alimuhā*). They are illuminated (*istanārat*) through His light and exteriorized through His exteriority (*zaharat bi-zubūrībī*), thereby becoming witnessed and existent after they had been hidden and absent (*bātinah wa mafqūdah*). The level combining them all in their exteriority is that of witnessing; just as the interior level preceding it is inclusive of all that appears in hiddenness (IB A:114; B:222).
7. Nothing whatsoever can give rise to that which is contrary to its reality; there is no hiding the oneness's opposition to multiplicity. So, in respect of their contrariety, the one cannot emanate from the other. However, “one” (*wāhid*) and oneness (*wahdah*) each have many relations (*nisab muta'addidah*), and multiplicity possesses a permanent singular oneness (*ahadiyyah thābitah*) (IB A:116; B:224). When this happens, the one becomes linked (*irtabata*) to the other

through the “agent of comprehension” (*jamīt*) discussed before.

8. Relative to number (*‘adad*) the precept of “oneness” is “to be intrinsically suited to the purpose of enumeration and to be what causes number to appear, without itself having to arise from number” (IB A:117; B:225). “Duality” (*ithnaynīyah*) is also a cause of number (*‘illah li-l-‘adad*), although it is more akin to material cause (*‘illah al-māddiyah*). Three, on the other hand, is the first complete number, its first multiplicity and the first of its “compounds” (*awwal tarkībātihī*). (On the grammatical side of number (dual, plural), one early work is KSR 52ff. But Qūnavī divides multiplicity, too, into two sorts (*qasmayn*). The first is the multiplicity of parts and constituent elements (*wal-muqawwamāt*) with which the essence is assembled (*talā‘im fihā al-dhāt*) (e.g. from matter and form, substance and accident in the case of body; or genera and differentiae [*kal-ajnās wal-fusūl*] relative to the species which they yield [*al-anwār al-hāsilah minhūmāt*]). Multiplicity needs all these first, in order for the “thing” realized through them to be conceptualized (*yatasawwar busūl al-shay’ minhā thāniyan*). The second type of multiplicity consists of the concomitants of the “thing,” such that the thing which is one in itself (*al-wāhid fi nafsīhi*) retains true oneness (*al-wahdah al-haqīqiyah*) (IB A:117; B:225-26). Even in the case of something composed of parts or constituent elements, once in existence, the “meanings” and “descriptions” (*mā‘anīn wa awṣāf*) become concomitant to it in its very essence (*dhātihī*); which essence, however, is not “assembled” (*multa‘imah*) from them, whether or not, in itself, that thing is something assembled out of other elements. These meanings are subordinate to the essence through existence and by necessity (*darūratān wa wujūdān*), so that neither the thing’s existence nor its intellection would be conceivable without the “meanings” also being concomitant to the thing. One example is the number “6” whose “existence,” he says, can only be conceived of as a pair (*zawjan*). Not that “pairness” (*zawjīyyah*) is one of the “parts” belonging to “6” (IB A:118; B:226). Rather, it is concomitant to it in the manner of necessity (*idārat*) and posteriority in rank (*ta’akhkhur fil-rutbah*). It also implies the intelligibility of “half” (*māt qūliyyat al-nisf*), “third,” etc.

9. In any case, whatever elements of this subterranean current in Islamic scholarly tradition had survived were, by his time, completely assimilated.

10. See Goichon *Léxique* 363-4, s.v. “*tābiq*.” That is, what is incidentally and what is essentially connected with it; probably intended in the same sense as *al-lawāhiq al-dhātiyyah*, that is, essential to the individuality of a thing but not constitutive of its being (*Léxique* 363).

11. In comparison, the state of the gnostic resembles that of a skillful writer (*bāl al-kātib al-mujīd*) who, while trembling (*dhi al-irfāsh*), inside knows perfectly how to write (*mārifah tāmmah fi nafsīhi*) and yet is unable to show it in the manner familiar to him because the “instrument” (*ālāb*) fails to provide him with the assistance he needs (IB A:119; B:227). Someone not quite familiar with the nature of intermediaries, instruments and their shortcomings relative to what is inside the one deploying them is apt to ascribe deficiency to the user himself (*mustā‘im*) (IB A:119-20; B:227-28). Qūnavī concludes that the trouble is with the instrument and its lack of “fitness” either as a particular, originated and existential predisposition, or as a hidden universal one external to the “circle of existence” (*al-khārij ‘an dā’irat al-wujūd*) (IB A:120; B:228). The most propitious things (*husn al-muwāfiq*) for the agent (*al-tāmmah li-l-‘ālī*) depend on what he needs and desires to exhibit.

12. He points this out in *Miftāh al-ghayb*. (Section on “*al-Talab al-ismā’i wal-kawnī*.”)

13. “*Ittisāl abkām al-tajalliyāt bā’duhā bi-bā’d*.”
14. Eight different types of objects are recognized by Arabic grammarians. For examples, see Owens FG, esp. 167-68ff.
15. For a different order, see MSA 252-264.
16. As Owens says, “Transitive verbs are those in which an action is placed on (*awqātā*) or carried over to (*awṣala*) an object...” (FG 169).
17. Or, he adds, some such thing associated with it (*min jumlat al-maqṣūd*) (IB A:121; B:229).
18. See Owens FG 167 for an example.
19. “*Martabat al-ghānī al-kamātī al-wujūdī al-dhānī*.”
20. See FuM I on *bawā’ith*.
21. Or, he notes, what is known as “assistance to those who ask for it” (*is’āf al-sā’iñ*).
22. That is, “*muz̄bir ‘ayn al-nūr al-wujūdī al-ghaybī*.” Briefly, the manifestation of love externalizes by means of knowledge the overriding relation of Will, which subsumes the secret of love (*‘unwān al-sirr al-bubbī*), thereby giving specification to “power” (*qudrab*) (IB A:123; B:231).
23. “*Amma yughayiruhā mimmā huwa dūnahā fī al-martabah*.”
24. “*Ikhtisās ahabibimā bil-mu’aththiriyah fī al-ākhar*.”
25. This resembles the causal sense given *mānā* by some of the Mu‘tazilīs, especially Mu‘ammar (d. 220 AH/835 CE) Nader SPM 209.
26. “*Kull hādhā naṣṣar tawaddud wa tā’ashshuq*.”
27. In his words, “*yākhi martabat shuhūdihī subḥānahū nafsabu bi-nafsihi*.”
28. “*Ghalabat hukm al-ghayb al-mutlaq*.”
29. “*Fa-yudrik bi-hādhā al-tajallī ‘aynabu*.”

CONCLUSION

In this thesis, we have examined Qūnāvī's views on knowledge, not in its common usage, but with respect to the "realities of things." Although widely used, the expression "knowledge of the realities of things" acquired a particular sense in his work. Tūsī, as we saw, had his own interpretation. His notion of *tashkīk*, which coordinated distinctly different applications of a given utterance, suggests an interesting early source for Mullā Sadrā's own concept of the "analogy of existence."

The central question in this epistemological debate is whether the realities of things are knowable in some way; and, if they are, how they are to be known. If they are said to be known "as they are in themselves," the implication then would be that such knowledge ought to correspond to the *object* known. Now, Qūnāvī and practically every medieval scholar true to his name denied correspondence in any strict or literal sense in the case of God. Either the object – i.e. the reality – does not exist at all or our knowledge of it is mediated by something else.

In his Introduction to *Iḥāz al-bayān*, Qūnāvī takes pains to show that not only does the reality of a thing exist, despite the absence of decisive proof, but that the realities of things (for example, God's) are *already* in some sense known. But does that imply that our knowledge must be mediated by something else? That could lead to circularity.

The conclusions to be drawn in the light of our investigation are as follows. Reflective knowledge of the object *is* mediated by something else, namely, the form, which we

traced to Ibn Sīnā's noetic complex of knower, known and the "configured form" between them. This is a key theoretical term, one he used to define how we know the realities of things and, basically, to move from a logically-based to a linguistically-based paradigm, though without the one excluding the other. This theoretical passage is precisely what we have been trying to come to grips with in this study. Form tends to facilitate it by occupying an intermediary point between basically two elements in every act of knowing – what we have called the "two *noetic* realities." His solution rests essentially on this, that the real correspondence is not between the "cognizance" and the object or the reality as such, but between two orders of knowledge – one Divine and pre-eternal, the other theoretical and suited more to the purpose of systematic instruction.

Since Aristotle and other ancient philosophers figure intermittently in his work, we took it upon ourselves to examine from the outset older issues taken up in Aristotle's writings relating to the notion of "wisdom." A certain ambiguity arises when we consider that "wisdom" may be equally applied to man and to God, even if in the latter case we are compelled to amend our view in a way that befits the Divinity of God. Indeed, from the theme of "Divine Wisdom" arose the problem of God's knowledge of the "particulars," as opposed to the "universals" (which impart knowledge of the cause), since no knowledge can be considered to be complete if the particulars are not somehow encompassed by that knowledge. It was left to Ibn Sīnā to elaborate this aspect of the problem and to Qūnāvī to give it a theological character essentially based on the root-branch division. Finally, the highest order of knowledge was, early on in man's

intellectual tradition, described philosophically as being God's self-knowledge, since God is knowledge's noblest object and goal. Needless to say, this has had some interesting theological ramifications.

Although somewhat attenuated in Aristotle, the dichotomy between Divine and human knowledge played a catalytic role in Islamic thought. Aristotle had set certain limits to what systematic knowledge one may obtain in every field of science. Among these limits was that the goal and object of each discipline had to be appropriate or commensurate to it. In fact, the only kind of correspondence to be speak of, as far as Qūnavī was concerned, in our knowledge of God is predicated on just such an "appropriateness" or perhaps, in Scholastic parlance, "proportionality." Qūnavī calls it *munāsabah*, or "consonance," being a consonance among realities (that of the the knower and that of the known). But this consonance may further be understood in terms of a theoretical *analogy* holding between a root- and a branch-level of knowledge. This explains his alacrity to demonstrate why the noetic root-branch relation has its own "emergence." Basically, his reasoning was that what we commonly call the root is always a root "of something." By the same token, being "knowing" or "creative" is always in relation to something. In this respect, the distinction between "absolute hiddenness" and "relative hiddenness" draws attention to the need to maintain both the immediate source of the noetic object qua known and its irrelevance to that knowledge which a knower receives at his own particular ontological level.

In the earlier chapters, we saw how this root is "deposited," being the pre-given

component of knowledge. Syllogistically, it is represented by the “subject,” or the *mawdū*, from which derive multiple premises containing the middle term, or the “cause.” The ultimate root of our knowledge remains God’s knowledge of His own essence, which is portrayed as being causal on account of its role as the cause of all noetic content and all entities within our range of experience. But it is oriented away from God’s essence, since theological demonstration does not seek to know God’s cause.

In order to grasp this idea, we have sought to study the form and the epistemically immobile “quiddity.” Within the logical scheme of things, one must always reckon two noetic components: the fact (“subject”) and a reasoned fact (“object of inquiry” or, in the ancillary sciences, “knowledge of the cause”). The notion of quiddity (i.e. *quid est*, or “what is it?”), which indicates the facticity of knowledge, has been pivotal in shifting emphasis from the mistaken inquiry into the – for us unknowable – “absolute root” (God’s reality), to the *māhiyyah* of things. These “things” may be taken in their manifoldness, yet they must be so related to each other as to preserve the unity of the whole. This is chiefly because it is still a knowledge of God in His unity that we seek, even if His reality, as it is in itself, is beyond our capacity to fathom, and even assuming that it is improper to ask the question “what is it?” in relation to God. The quiddities, we found, are merely the intellectual pendants of the ontic “realities” and, ultimately, of the one object of knowledge sought (namely, God). Taken together, they reflect the structural features of the realities, whose singularity or bare ontological natures it would be just as absurd to try to define. The quiddity’s attachment to the reality allows us to

have a knowledge of the object rather than of a definition. The hierarchical order they exhibit is likewise due to the unity of the object, since the things the realities of which we wish to know are the things ascribed to God. Relative to us, they comprise the roots of our knowledge of God. In other words, they are “pregiven,” in much the same way that every instructive knowledge is made up of both a pre-given component (*mawdūl*) and what is sought (*mattūb*), with the conceptual integrity denoted by the abstract noun *shay'iyah* (“thingness”) imparting a unity to the whole.

The basic structure of this knowledge of God has been described in terms of *tabdīyyah*, a concept taken for the most part from Arabic philology for the purpose of identifying one part of an utterance in relation to another located at a syntactically prior position. Qūnāvī has in mind the priority and posteriority existing among the Divine names and attributes, manifestations, loci of appearance, concomittances, etc. These are ultimately all posterior to the essence itself. Furthermore, their structural order is described in much the same way as language is, using terms like *nazm* (“arrangement”), *indimām* (“reciprocity”), *ijtimā'* and so on. It expresses basically the same dynamic relation in human communication between the utterance and the inner meaning that utterance purports to articulate through various devices. The path towards this linguistic interpretation from the more conventional doctrine propounded in philosophy was assured through Qūnāvī's careful analysis of the form. Indeed, just how important “form” was to him may be gleaned from his second consideration later on of the letters' shapes as meaningful signs.

In this area, we have tried to portray his views as meticulously as possible, considering the rare number of occasions that this subject has been raised and knowledgeably discussed. We have taken care to analyze all the linguistic aspects presented in the Introduction in view of their importance in “theological science.” The same linguistic principles apply cosmologically, for example, to the “Breath of the Merciful,” which contains all the “letters” of existence. Upon speaking, God in effect creates the world according to the same principles known to us through language that connect each letter, word, etc. to the other in subordinate fashion.

Interestingly, since Qūnāvī bases his theoretical conception on the movement from a root- to a branch-knowledge of the object, his discussion of the “emergence” of the entire root-branch relation has to elucidate essentially the same epistemic process of discovery Ibn Sīnā had tried to express syllogistically as a process going from what is known to the unknown. But it has to perform this methodological task as it explains the cosmological unfolding, in all its existent and “non-existent” ramifications. Because of this underlying similarity of purpose, Qūnāvī easily found correspondences for his cosmological account in the syllogism itself, to which he indeed returns towards the end of the Introduction when discussing the “movement” that is an inherent feature of existentialiation. This part of the Introduction, though, has a specific goal: to clarify the sense in which the “many” issues forth from the “one.” Such a minimalist account of the movement does not, however, have the methodological depth of a consonantal and, above all, analogical view of existentialiation based on what he calls the “permanent

distinction between God and the ‘other than God.’” Despite this distinction, the most basic analogy is that which holds between an *intermediary* level comprehending the two sides of this distinction (serving, in effect, as their meeting point), and an active source poised toward its creation; such a source is accepted by the recipient through consonance with it.

In view of the particularizing capacity of this intermediary, God’s beholding of Himself, Qūnavī carefully summarizes the various dimensions of knowledge. Hence, God perceives His own essence, what is distinct from Him and what is distinguished from the other. Far from displaying the logical generalities of the demonstrative method, Qūnavī’s “scale” at this point appears to have the requisite linguistic concreteness and particularizing elements corresponding to this act of beholding.

To get back to the central question posed in this thesis with regard to our knowledge of the realities of things, we can now make the following concluding statement. The knowledge of any given reality is apprehensible according to three main precepts: that of the reality, that of the attribute, and that of the state and predisposition of the recipient himself. Once the precept of the reality in question has penetrated every noetic level, the knower may be said to have attained the highest possible knowledge of that reality. The summit of all knowledge is knowledge of God where the distinction between the two noetic realities, while theoretically latent, has been utterly transformed by the worshipper’s proximity to God.

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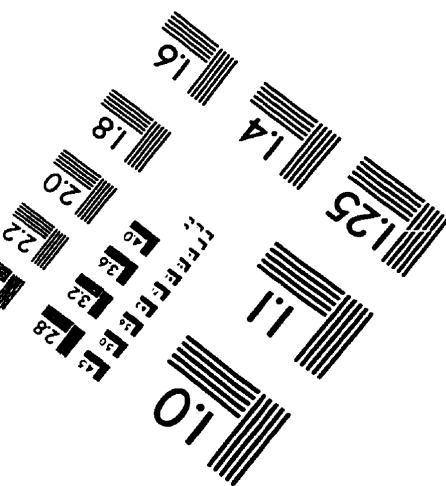
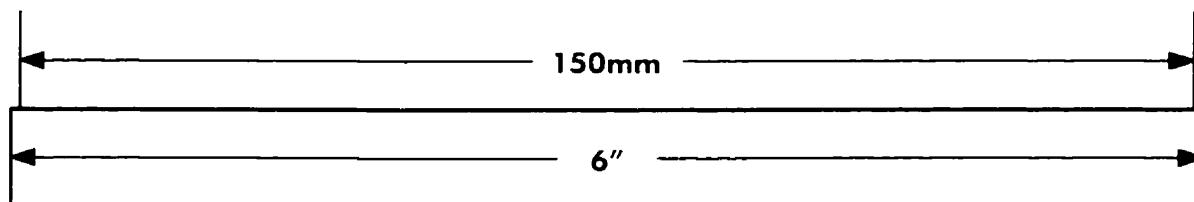
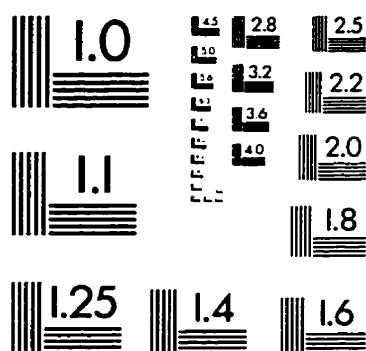
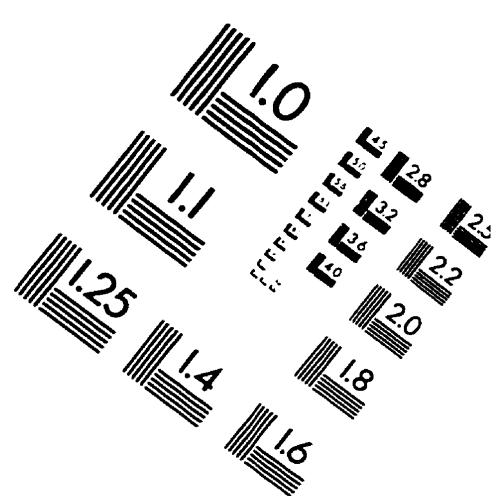
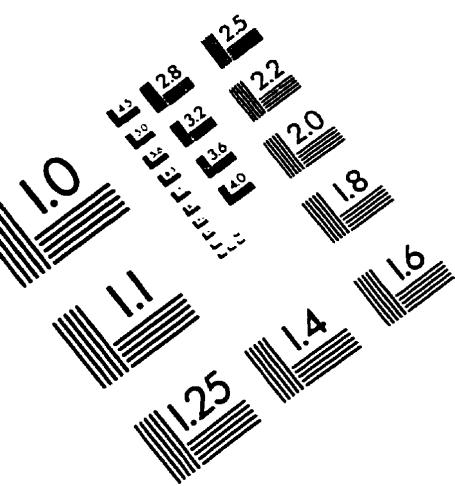
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