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CHAPTER 31

The school of Ibn 'Arabī

William C. Chittick



The term “school of Ibn ‘Arabī” was coined by Western scholars to refer to the fact that many Muslim thinkers – most of whom considered themselves Sufis – took seriously Ibn ‘Arabī’s title as the “Greatest Master” (*al-shaykh al-akbar*) and consciously rooted their perspective in their own understanding of his theoretical framework. They considered their approach as different from that of *falsafah* and *kalām* as well as from that of the vast majority of Sufis. Sometimes they referred to their specific way as “verification” (*taḥqīq*) and called themselves “the verifiers” (*al-muḥaqqiqūn*).¹ Who exactly fits into this category is an open question.

Ibn ‘Arabī established no specific *madhhab* or *ṭarīqah*. He did have spiritual disciples and does seem to have passed on a cloak of investiture (known to later generations as *al-khirqat al-akbariyyah*) that passed through his disciple Qūnawī, but there is no recognizable organization that carries his name. No Sufi order has attempted to claim him as its exclusive heritage, and his books were studied and considered authoritative by members of most orders at one time or another.² For other reasons also, we have to use caution in talking about Ibn ‘Arabī’s “school”. The term may suggest that there is a set of doctrines to which a group of thinkers adhered. In fact, Ibn ‘Arabī’s followers did not accept some common catechism, nor did they all follow the same approach to Islamic thought. James Morris’s observation here should be taken seriously:

The real philosophic and theological unity and diversity of these writers have not begun to be explored in modern research. . . . None of the writers are mere “commentators” of Ibn ‘Arabī. . . . As with “Aristotelianism” or “Platonism” in Western thought, Ibn ‘Arabī’s writings were only the starting point for the most diverse developments, in which reference to subsequent interpreters

quickly became at least as important as the study of the Shaykh himself.³

In what follows, I will limit myself to discussing a few figures who considered themselves Ibn 'Arabī's followers and who are looked back upon as Sufis. No attempt can be made here to investigate the larger radiation of the Shaykh's influence among, for example, thinkers who have been called *falāsifah* and/or *mutakallimūn*, such as Šā'in al-Dīn 'Alī Turkah Iṣfahānī, Jalāl al-Dīn Dawānī, Mullā Ṣadrā or Mullā Muḥsin Fayḍ Kāshānī; nor can we look at the ways in which Ibn 'Arabī's practical instructions and spiritual blessing permeated the Sufi organizations in general.⁴

Ibn 'Arabī had a number of close disciples, including Badr al-Ḥabashī and Ibn Sawdakīn al-Nūrī, who wrote works that are more important for the light that they throw on the Shaykh's teachings than for their influence on later Islamic thought.⁵ The most influential and at the same time independently minded of Ibn 'Arabī's immediate disciples was Ṣadr al-Dīn Qūnawī (d. 673/1274). He can be given more credit than anyone else for determining the way in which the Shaykh was read by later generations. This means, among other things, that Qūnawī began the movement to bring Ibn 'Arabī into the mainstream of Islamic philosophy. As a result, he and his followers placed many of Ibn 'Arabī's important teachings in the background. Michel Chodkiewicz considers this to have been a necessary, though perhaps unfortunate, adjustment of Ibn 'Arabī's teachings to the intellectual needs of the times.⁶

❧ ṢADR AL-DĪN QŪNAWĪ AND HIS CIRCLE ❧

Ibn 'Arabī met Qūnawī's father, Majd al-Dīn Iṣḥāq, during his first pilgrimage to Mecca, when he began writing the *Futūḥāt*. In the year 601/1204–5 they travelled together to Anatolia. Ṣadr al-Dīn was born in 606/1210 and, according to some early sources, Ibn 'Arabī married Ṣadr al-Dīn's mother after Majd al-Dīn's death. When Ibn 'Arabī died, Qūnawī seems to have taken over the training of some of his disciples. Presumably those with a philosophical bent would have been attracted to him. The most important of these was probably 'Afīf al-Dīn al-Tilimsānī (610/1213–690/1291), who is mentioned as one of the listeners on a manuscript of Ibn 'Arabī's *al-Futūḥāt al-makkiyyah* that was read in the author's presence in 634/1236–7. Al-Tilimsānī seems to have become Qūnawī's closest companion; Qūnawī dedicated a short treatise to him and left his books to him when he died.⁷

Al-Tilimsānī's writings have played some role in the spread of Ibn 'Arabī's school, but they have not been studied in modern times. He is

the author of a published *Dīwān* as well as a *Sharḥ al-asmā' al-ḥusnā* and a commentary on the *Manāzil al-sā'irīn* of 'Abd Allāh Anṣārī (d. 481/1089). At least one contemporary Sufi shaykh felt that al-Tilimsānī had surpassed his master Qūnawī in matters of verification. This was Ibn Sab'īn (d. 669/1270–1), who was discussed by early Western scholars as a philosopher because of his answers to the "Sicilian Questions" posed by Emperor Frederick II Hohenstaufen.⁸ However, Ibn Sab'īn was a Sufi with connections to Ibn 'Arabī, though he probably cannot be considered a member of his school. He seems to have been the first to employ the famous expression *waḥdat al-wujūd* as a technical term.⁹

The first firm record we have of Qūnawī's teaching activities pertain to the year 643/1245–6, five years after Ibn 'Arabī's death. At that time Qūnawī travelled to Egypt, where he began to comment on Ibn al-Fāriḍ's 700-line poem, *Nazm al-sulūk*, for "a group of the learned [*fudalā'*], the great possessors of tasting [*akābir-i ahl-i dhawq*], and the reputable [*mu'tabarān*]"'. During the return journey and back in Konya, he continued the lessons, teaching all the while in Persian. Several of the scholars who attended his lectures took notes with the aim of composing books, but only Sa'īd al-Dīn Farghānī (d. 695/1296) succeeded. All this Qūnawī tells us in a letter of approval found at the end of Farghānī's introduction to *Mashāriq al-darārī*, a work that fills six hundred pages in its modern edition. According to Ḥājji Khalīfah, al-Tilimsānī also attended these lectures and wrote a commentary, but Farghānī finished first; despite the brevity of al-Tilimsānī's commentary, Ḥājji Khalīfah opines, it is to be preferred over Farghānī's.¹⁰

Having written his Persian commentary, Farghānī rewrote the text in Arabic with many additions, especially to the introduction. He named the Arabic version *Muntaha'l-madārik*, and it was being taught in Cairo in 670/1271.¹¹ Both the Persian and the Arabic versions of Farghānī's commentary were widely read. The great poet and scholar 'Abd al-Raḥmān Jāmī (d. 898/1492), one of the most learned and successful popularizers of Ibn 'Arabī's teachings, considered the introduction to Farghānī's Arabic work the most disciplined and orderly exposition of the problems of the "science of reality" (*ilm-i ḥaqīqat*) ever written.¹²

Qūnawī taught *Ḥadīth* in Konya and attracted students such as the philosopher and astronomer Quṭb al-Dīn Shīrāzī (d. 710/1311). Presumably Qūnawī explained *Ḥadīth* in the manner found in his *Sharḥ al-ḥadīth al-arba'īn*. This work aims to bring out the deepest philosophical, theological, cosmological and mystical implications of the *Ḥadīth* discussed, and many of the explanations run into dozens of pages.¹³

Qūnawī is the author of at least fifteen Arabic works, along with a few Persian letters; his longest book is only about four hundred pages long, making him laconic compared to his master.¹⁴ Seven of these works

can be considered significant, book-length statements of his teachings. But the influence that these books – and the books of Qūnawī's immediate disciples – exercised upon the way in which Ibn 'Arabī was interpreted by later generations was enormous. Jāmī presents a view of Qūnawī that seems to have been accepted, in practice at least, by most of Ibn 'Arabī's followers, especially in the eastern lands of Islam. Note in the following that, like most scholars from about the ninth/fifteenth century onwards, Jāmī associates Ibn 'Arabī's name with *waḥdat al-wujūd*: "Qūnawī is the assayer of Ibn 'Arabī's words. One cannot grasp Ibn 'Arabī's purport in the question of *waḥdat al-wujūd* in a manner that accords with both reason and the *Shari'ah* unless one studies Qūnawī's verifications and understands them properly."¹⁵

What is especially obvious in all of Qūnawī's writings is the systematic nature of his thinking. If Ibn 'Arabī's writings dazzle because of the non-stop rush of inspirations, Qūnawī's soothe because of his calm and reasonable exposition of metaphysical principles. Some of the contrast between the two is caught in a remark attributed to their disciple al-Tilimsānī: "My first shaykh was a philosophizing spiritual [*mutarawḥin mutafalsif*], whereas my second was a spiritualizing philosopher [*ḥaylasūf mutarawḥin*]."¹⁶ Though more philosophically inclined than Ibn 'Arabī, Qūnawī also experienced the lifting of the veils between himself and God, and he frequently tells us that this is how he knows what he knows. In fact, Qūnawī considered himself the most spiritually gifted of Ibn 'Arabī's disciples. He writes that fifteen years after the Shaykh's death, on 17 Shawwāl 653/19 November 1255, Ibn 'Arabī appeared to him in a vision and praised him for having achieved a spiritual rank greater than that of all his other disciples.¹⁷ But even when Qūnawī speaks of visionary affairs that are inaccessible to reason, he presents the discussion in an eminently rational and lucid manner.

Qūnawī's style of exposition is certainly indebted to his knowledge of the Islamic philosophical tradition. Where this is proven beyond a shadow of a doubt is in his correspondence with Naṣīr al-Dīn Ṭūsī (d. 672/1274), the great scientist and theologian who revived Avicenna's philosophy. Qūnawī opened the correspondence by sending Ṭūsī a warm letter in Persian. This was accompanied by an Arabic treatise explaining the limitations of the rational faculty (*'aql*) and presenting a series of technical questions concerning Avicenna's positions on such issues as the *wujūd* that is attributed to the Necessary Being, the nature of the possible quiddities, the relationship between *wujūd* and the possible things, and the reality of the human soul. Ṭūsī replied with an even warmer Persian letter and a relatively brief, but precise, answer to all the questions.

In the Persian letter accompanying the third instalment of the correspondence, Qūnawī clarifies his motivation for writing to Ṭūsī:

“Concerning certain basic problems I had hoped to bring together the conclusions derived from logical proofs with the fruits of unveiling [*kashf*] and direct vision [*‘iyān*].” In his Arabic response to Ṭūsī’s answers, Qūnawī demonstrates an excellent knowledge of Avicenna’s writings. In one passage, he suggests that Ṭūsī’s answer shows that his copy of Avicenna’s *Ta’līqāt* must be defective. He also refers to the text of Ṭūsī’s commentary on Avicenna’s *al-Ishārāt wa’l-tanbīhāt*. His argument represents an important attempt to show that the Sufi position – i.e., Qūnawī’s interpretation of Ibn ‘Arabī’s teachings, which he refers to here as the “school of verification” – agrees by and large with that of *falsafah*. Generalizing about this position, Qūnawī writes,

The Verifiers agree with the philosophers concerning those things that theoretical reason [*al-‘aql al-naẓarī*] is able to grasp independently at its own level. But they differ from them in other perceptions beyond the stage of reflection [*fikr*] and its delimiting properties. As for the *mutakallimūn* in their various schools, the Verifiers agree with them only in rare instances and on minor points.¹⁸

Qūnawī’s direct disciples do not demonstrate the same explicit attempt to bring the School of Verification into harmony with *falsafah*. However, as a rule their works contain highly sophisticated expositions of Ibn ‘Arabī’s philosophical teachings, in particular *wahdat al-wujūd*, the perfect human being (*al-insān al-kāmil*), the immutable entities (*al-‘ayān al-thābitah*), and the levels of existence (*marātib al-wujūd*). These last are often presented in terms of the “five divine presences” (*al-haḍarāt al-ilāhiyyat al-khams*), an expression that seems to have been coined by Qūnawī.¹⁹

Two more of Qūnawī’s students deserve special mention. One is Fakhr al-Dīn ‘Irāqī (d. 688/1289), author of the short classic of Persian prose, *Lama‘āt*, which was written after he attended Qūnawī’s lectures on the *Fuṣuṣ*. The work presents Qūnawī’s rendition of Ibn ‘Arabī’s teachings accurately, coherently and with great poetical beauty, but in a highly abbreviated form. The earliest of several commentaries on the *Lama‘āt*, by Yār ‘Alī Shīrāzī, explains it largely by quoting passages from Qūnawī and Farḡhānī. The introduction to and commentary on the *Lama‘āt*’s English translation provide a relatively detailed analysis of Qūnawī’s metaphysics.²⁰

It is sometimes claimed that Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī (d. 672/1273), the most famous of the Persian Sufi poets, was influenced by Ibn ‘Arabī’s teachings, and the fact that he was a good friend of Qūnawī is cited as proof. However, there no evidence in Rūmī’s writings for this claim, and the early hagiographical literature suggests that Rūmī was highly sceptical of the philosophical approach of Qūnawī and his followers.²¹

❧ THE *FUṢŪṢ AL-ḤIKAM* ❧

Ibn 'Arabī wrote numerous works. By far the most famous and widely read of these was the *Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam* ("The Ringstones of Wisdom"). There is no doubt that the Shaykh considered this relatively short text one of his key writings. Although he claims divine inspiration for several of his books and treatises, including the *Futūḥāt*, the *Fuṣūṣ* is the only one that was, on his own account, handed to him in a vision by the Prophet. According to Qūnawī's disciple Jandī, Ibn 'Arabī forbade his disciples from having the *Fuṣūṣ* bound together with any other book.²² Qūnawī explains the importance of the work in terms that must have found favour with most of Ibn 'Arabī's followers:

The *Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam* is one of the most precious short writings of our Shaykh, the most perfect leader, the model of the perfect human beings, the guide of the Community, the leader of leaders, the reviver of the truth and religion, Abū 'Abdallāh . . . Ibn al-'Arabī. . . . The *Fuṣūṣ* is one of the seals of his writings and one of the last books to be sent down upon him. It came to him from the Muḥammadan Station, the Fountainhead of the Essence, the Unitary All-Comprehensiveness. It brought the quintessence of the tasting [*dhawq*] of our Prophet – God's blessing be upon him – concerning the knowledge of God. It points to the source of the tasting of the great prophets and friends of God mentioned within it. It guides all those who seek insight into the prophets to the gist of their tastings, the results of the focus of their aspirations, the sum of all they achieved, and the seals of their perfections. The book is like the stamp upon everything comprised by each prophet's perfection. It calls attention to the source of everything which the prophets encompassed and which became manifest through them.²³

More than a hundred commentaries have been written on the *Fuṣūṣ*, and they continue to be written in modern times. In addition, an extensive parallel literature was written attacking and condemning the text or its author.²⁴

Authors wrote commentaries for many reasons. Clearly, they considered the book of great importance, either because of its intrinsic content or because others had paid so much attention to it. The first commentaries dealt only with ideas, but as time passed the general tone of the commentaries changed. The early works typically cite a paragraph or a page and then provide detailed philosophical explanations. Gradually, however, commentators pay more attention to the meaning of sentences and technical terms. This becomes so much of a preoccupation with 'Abd al-Ghanī al-Nābulī (d. 1143/1730) that he finds it necessary to explain

the meaning of practically every word, technical term or otherwise, and he pays little attention to the grand ideas that underlie the text. Though this work suggests a steep decline in understanding in the Arabic-speaking countries, commentaries being written elsewhere are seldom so elementary.²⁵ As the commentary tradition developed, many authors took into account the broader issues raised not only by the numerous theoretical works being written by those who considered themselves Ibn 'Arabī's followers but also by works written by *falāsifah* and *mutakallimūn*.

The earliest commentary on the *Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam* is Ibn 'Arabī's own short treatise *Naqsh al-fuṣūṣ* ("The Imprint of the Ringstones") in which he re-expressed the essential prophetic wisdom discussed in each chapter. The connections between this work and the *Fuṣūṣ* are not always clear, and several commentaries were written upon it.²⁶ The first commentary on the *Fuṣūṣ* by Ibn 'Arabī's followers seems to be that by al-Tilimsānī, who presents us with the whole text but singles out a relatively small number of passages for comment, frequently remarking, "The meaning of the remainder of the chapter is obvious." It certainly was not obvious to later generations.

Al-Tilimsānī's work illustrates already that the great reverence in which the *Fuṣūṣ* was held did not prevent the commentators from expressing their opinions or interpreting Ibn 'Arabī in new ways. He focuses mainly on *wujūd*, non-existence (*'adam*) and the immutable entities, issues that were to concern most of the later commentators as well. He registers his difference of opinion (*khilāf*) with "my master, Shaykh Muḥyī al-Dīn" in several passages. In particular, he disagrees with Ibn 'Arabī's explanation of the nature of the immutable entities, the idea that "they are immutable before they become engendered" (*thubūtuhā qabl kawnihā*). Al-Tilimsānī claims that the entities must be non-existent in every respect. Hence they cannot be immutable (thus contradicting, for example, the first sentence of the *Futūḥāt*).²⁷ Typical are his remarks in the following:

Wujūd, which is light, is that which is thing [*shay'*] in every respect. Hence, it must have controlling power over an infinite number of attributes that become manifest. However, before they become manifest, these attributes have no immutable entities, because no existence can precede a thing's existence. . . . As for the Shaykh, he says that their existence is distinct, but this is contradictory. Even though the Shaykh would not deny what I say, I deny what the Shaykh says.²⁸

In another passage, al-Tilimsānī excuses himself for disagreeing with the Shaykh by suggesting that Ibn 'Arabī had rhetorical reasons for expressing himself as he did:

The Shaykh's words here come not from the presence of gnosis [*ma'rifaḥ*] but rather from that of learning [*'ilm*], except for a small amount. And that small amount is not pure. The reason is that he observed the levels of the rational faculties of those who are veiled. . . . Learning, not gnosis, is appropriate for the [common] people.²⁹

Al-Tilimsānī's critical remarks are not untypical for Ibn 'Arabī's followers, although few are quite as overt. Even Ibn 'Arabī's most fervent admirers did not take too seriously his statement that he had received the book from the hand of the Prophet; otherwise, they would not have dared to differ with him. This is further indication that being a member of Ibn 'Arabī's school, even a faithful member, does not suggest slavish repetition of the master. In fact, Ṣadr al-Dīn Qūnawī is the great model here, for his relatively systematic exposition and his focus on philosophical issues rather than on Qur'ān and *Ḥadīth* do not square with his sources, and presumably not with the oral instructions that he had received from his master.

Qūnawī did not write a commentary on the *Fuṣūṣ*, but he did explain the significance of each chapter heading of the work in his *al-Fukūk*, and in the process he brought out the basic points made in the book. The later commentators all concerned themselves with this issue of chapter headings, and most of them followed Qūnawī's leads.³⁰

Qūnawī also exercised influence on the tradition of *Fuṣūṣ* commentary through his disciple Mu'ayyid al-Dīn Jandī (d. c. 700/1300), who is arguably the most widely influential of Qūnawī's students because of this commentary. Jandī wrote a number of books in both Persian and Arabic. He tells us in the introduction to his *Fuṣūṣ* commentary that he owes the work completely to the spiritual influence of his master. As Qūnawī began to explain to him the meaning of the book's preface, he took spiritual control of Jandī's understanding and taught him in one instant the meaning of the whole book. Qūnawī then told him that Ibn 'Arabī had done the same thing to him. This account establishes a claimed spiritual unity with the source of the book. At the same time, the author is saying that he had no need for a line by line explication of the text. His understanding and interpretation are "original", that is, tied to the book's very origin, and hence they do not have to follow explicit texts in Ibn 'Arabī or Qūnawī. This clearly gives him authority to express his own opinions.

Jandī's work is by far the longest of the early commentaries, and it sets the pattern for the theoretical discussions in many of the later commentaries. This is obvious, for example, in the famous work by 'Abd al-Razzāq Kāshānī (d. 730/1330), a prolific author of works in Arabic and Persian. In fact Kāshānī studied the *Fuṣūṣ* with Jandī, and he frequently paraphrases or quotes his commentary.

In an autobiographical remark in the midst of his famous letter to the Sufi 'Alā' al-Dawlah Simnānī (d. 736/1336), who criticized Ibn 'Arabī's position on *wujūd*, Kāshānī maps out his own pilgrimage to certainty. His account would seem to be typical for those followers of Ibn 'Arabī who engaged in philosophical writing. Like all scholars, Kāshānī began by studying basic sciences such as grammar and jurisprudence. From there he went on to the principles of jurisprudence (*uṣūl al-fiqh*) and *kalām*, but he found no way to verify his understanding. Then he thought that investigating the rational sciences (*ma'qūlāt*) and metaphysics (*'ilm-i ilāhī*) would provide him with true knowledge and deliver him from wavering and doubt. For a time he pursued this investigation. He writes, "My mastery of it reached a point that cannot be surpassed, but so much alienation, agitation and veiling appeared that I could find no rest. It became obvious that the true knowledge I sought was found in a stage beyond reason."³¹

Then, like al-Ghazzālī, Kāshānī turned to Sufism. He was eventually able to find the certainty that he was looking for. Given his early philosophical training, it is not surprising that his *Fuṣūṣ* commentary accentuates the trend established by Qūnawī to present the text in philosophical terms. The manner in which Kāshānī's approach differs from that of Ibn 'Arabī is especially obvious in his *Ta'wīl al-qur'ān*, which, ironically, has been published in Ibn 'Arabī's name.³²

Perhaps the most widely read commentary on the *Fuṣūṣ* in the eastern lands of Islam was that by Sharaf al-Dīn Dāwūd Qayṣarī (d. 751/1350), who wrote several books in Arabic, but none, apparently, in Persian. Qayṣarī studied the text with Kāshānī and sometimes paraphrases Jandī's explanations. His introduction to his commentary is one of the most systematic philosophical expositions of this school of thought, and commentaries on his introduction have continued to be written down to modern times.³³

The first Persian commentary on the *Fuṣūṣ* was probably written by Ruḳn al-Dīn Shīrāzī (d. 769/1367), a student of Qayṣarī. As a rule the several Persian commentaries are heavily indebted to one or more of the Arabic commentaries.

The process of integrating Ibn 'Arabī's teachings into the Shi'ite intellectual perspective was undertaken with great perseverance by Sayyid Ḥaydar Āmulī (d. 787/1385). The 500-page introduction to his *Fuṣūṣ* commentary has been published, but not the text itself, of which the introduction represents only about ten per cent. Āmulī investigates each passage of the *Fuṣūṣ* in terms of three levels: transmitted teachings (*naql*), including the Qur'ān and the Shi'ite *Hadīth* literature; reason (*'aql*), i.e., *kalām* and *falsafah*; and unveiling (*kashf*), in particular the writings of Ibn 'Arabī and his followers.

This hierarchy of *naql*, *'aql* and *kashf* is already implied or explicitly discussed in the teachings of many earlier Sufis, and by the time of Āmulī

it has become a commonplace. The third and highest approach was seen as attainable only after thorough training in the lower-level sciences, including *falsafah*. This helps explain why even today many of the 'ulamā' in Iran, although typically condemning Sufism because of its popular elements, consider 'irfān or "gnosis" a path that leads to the highest spiritual attainments. Those texts that discuss 'irfān present it in terms that show it to be a direct continuation of the attempts by Ibn 'Arabī and Qūnawī to harmonize reason and unveiling, or philosophy and Sufism.

OTHER MEMBERS OF THE SCHOOL

Several seventh/thirteenth-century authors not directly affiliated with Qūnawī deserve mention as important conduits of Ibn 'Arabī's teachings. Sa'd al-Dīn Ḥammūyah (d. 649/1252) corresponded with Ibn 'Arabī and was a friend, but probably not a student and certainly not a disciple, of Qūnawī. He wrote many works in Arabic and Persian, most of which are difficult to decipher. His terminology suggests that he was influenced by Ibn 'Arabī's teachings, but he was far less interested than Qūnawī, or even Ibn 'Arabī himself, in the rational exposition of Sufi teachings in a manner that would have found favour with the philosophically or theologically inclined. Jāmī seems to be on the mark when he remarks about Ḥammūyah, "He has many works . . . full of symbolic speech, difficult words, numbers, diagrams and circles. The eye of reason and reflection is incapable of understanding and deciphering them. Until the eye of insight is opened with the light of unveiling, it is impossible to perceive their meaning."³⁴

Probably more important than Ḥammūyah himself for the dissemination of Ibn 'Arabī's teachings was his disciple 'Azīz al-Dīn Nasafī (d. before 700/1300), who wrote exclusively in Persian. He makes no claims to represent Ibn 'Arabī's teachings, but he uses terms such as *waḥdat al-wujūd* and "perfect human being" and explains them in ways that are not unconnected with discussions found in Ibn 'Arabī's writings. Ibn 'Arabī and Qūnawī wrote mainly for the 'ulamā', whereas Nasafī's works are directed at a less learned audience.

Another contemporary of Qūnawī who deserves mention is Awḥad al-Dīn Balyānī (d. 686/1288), a native of Shiraz. The English translation of his short Arabic treatise *Risālat al-aḥadiyyah* has been published in Ibn 'Arabī's name, thereby helping Westerners to gain a skewed picture of the Shaykh's position on *waḥdat al-wujūd*. Balyānī's mode of expression, which harmonizes with some rather ecstatic Persian verses of his cited by Jāmī, represents a relatively peripheral development in Ibn 'Arabī's school. No one should be surprised to hear that his treatise aroused the ire of those who attacked the supporters of *waḥdat al-wujūd* for believing that "All is He" (*hama ūst*).³⁵

By the eighth/fourteenth century, it becomes increasingly difficult to say who deserves to be called a member of Ibn 'Arabī's school. For example, some Sufis begin to take issue with his positions in rather severe fashion, but they do not necessarily step out of his intellectual universe. Ibn 'Arabī's most severe early critic had been Ibn Taymiyyah (d. 728/1328), who was affiliated with a Sufi order, but had no sympathy for *falsafah* or philosophizing. In contrast, the already mentioned 'Alā' al-Dawlah Simnānī was an important shaykh of the Kubrawī Order and wrote works in both Arabic and Persian. He was highly critical of Ibn 'Arabī's ascription of the term *mutlaq* to *wujūd*. Some observers have suggested that Simnānī opposed Ibn 'Arabī's school of thought, but his writings show that most of what he says is prefigured in the ideas and terminology of the "school of verification". The same goes for the writings of Indian Sufi critics of Ibn 'Arabī such as Gīṣū Darāz (d. 825/1422) and, most famous of all, Shaykh Aḥmad Sirhindī (d. 1034/1634). The last proposed *waḥdat al-shuhūd* ("the oneness of witnessing") as a corrective to *waḥdat al-wujūd*.

Among eighth/fourteenth-century authors who were especially influential in spreading Ibn 'Arabī's teachings was Sayyid 'Alī of Hamadan (d. 786/1385), the patron saint of Kashmir. He wrote a Persian commentary on the *Fuṣūṣ* and several short Persian and Arabic works that deal with Ibn 'Arabī's teachings. His sometime travelling companion, Sayyid Ashraf Jahāngīr Simnānī (d. probably in 829/1425), studied as a youth with 'Alā' al-Dawlah Simnānī but sided with Kāshānī in the dispute over Ibn 'Arabī. Especially interesting is the *Latā'if-i ashrafi*, put together by his disciple Nizām Ḥājji al-Yamanī. This long work is Jāmī's source for the text of the Simnānī-Kāshānī dispute and also for the idea that it concerns *waḥdat al-wujūd*, since the two principles do not mention the term.

'Alā' al-Dīn 'Alī ibn Aḥmad Mahā'imī (d. 835/1432), from Gujrat, wrote several important Arabic works in the philosophical style of Qūnawī, including commentaries on Ibn 'Arabī's *Fuṣūṣ*, Qūnawī's *Nuṣūṣ*, and a *tafsīr* of the Qur'ān, called *Tabṣīr al-raḥmān*. He also wrote an Arabic commentary on *Jām-i jahānnumāy*, a Persian work by the poet Shams al-Dīn Maghribī (d. 809/1406-7). Maghribī's work was largely inspired by Farghānī's *Mashāriq al-darārī*. Several more commentaries were written upon *Jām-i jahānnumāy* in India, all in Persian.

It would be possible to enumerate dozens of other authors from the Indian subcontinent who deserve to be called members of Ibn 'Arabī's school,³⁶ but I will limit myself to probably the most learned and faithful of all his followers there, Shaykh Muḥibb Allāh Mubāriz Ilāhābādī (d. 1058/1648). He is the author of commentaries on the *Fuṣūṣ* in both Persian and Arabic and of several other long works explaining Ibn 'Arabī's teachings. He appears to be the best informed of all the Indian authors on the contents of the *Futūḥāt*.

Coming back to the central Islamic lands, a number of names need to be mentioned simply to indicate that they represent some of the most famous figures in the history of Ibn 'Arabī's school. As Morris remarks about 'Abd al-Karīm al-Jilī (832/1428), he is "undoubtedly both the most original thinker and the most remarkable and independent mystical writer" among Ibn 'Arabī's well-known followers.³⁷ Two of the most prolific supporters of Ibn 'Arabī's teachings in the Arab countries are 'Abd al-Wahhāb al-Sha'rānī (d. 973/1565) and the aforementioned 'Abd al-Ghanī al-Nābulī. In the Ottoman domains, 'Abdallāh of Bosnia (d. 1054/1644) made an especially valuable contribution to the philosophical exposition of Ibn 'Arabī's ideas. About each of these authors, and dozens more down into the twentieth century, a great deal deserves to be said.³⁸

The study of Ibn 'Arabī's influence is still in its infancy. Without doubt many more important authors will come to light when further research is carried out. Enough has been said to suggest the rough outlines of his "school" and the tasks that remain to be accomplished.

~ NOTES ~

- 1 Qūnawī sometimes refers to his position as *madhhab al-tahqīq*, "the school of verification", and *tahqīq* is Ibn 'Arabī's preferred term to refer to his own approach. However, diverse Sufis, philosophers and other thinkers both before and after Ibn 'Arabī referred to what they were doing as *tahqīq* to differentiate themselves from the common people, who were in the grips of *taqlīd*, "imitation" or "following authority".
- 2 See Addas, *Ibn 'Arabī* (Paris, 1989): 276, 341; Chodkiewicz, *Emir Abd el-Kader: Ecrits spirituels* (Paris, 1982): 22; "The Diffusion of Ibn 'Arabī's Doctrine", *Journal of the Muhyiddīn Ibn 'Arabī Society*, 9 (1991): 36-57.
- 3 Morris, "Ibn 'Arabī and his Interpreters", *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, 106 (1986): 751-2.
- 4 On the second point, see Chodkiewicz, *op. cit.*
- 5 See D. Gril, "Le *Kitāb al-inbāh 'alā tariq Allāh* de 'Abdallāh Badr al-Ḥabashī: un témoignage de l'enseignement spirituel de Muḥyi l-dīn ibn 'Arabī", *Annales Islamologiques*, 15 (1979): 97-164; M. Profitlich, *Die Terminologie Ibn 'Arabīs im "Kitāb wasā'il as-sā'il" des Ibn Saudakīn* (Freiburg im Breisgau, 1973).
- 6 Chodkiewicz writes that Qūnawī "a donné à la doctrine de son maître une formulation philosophique sans doute nécessaire mais dont le systématisme a engendré bien des malentendus". *Epître sur l'Unité Absolue* (Paris, 1982): 26.
- 7 O. Yahia, *Histoire et classification de l'oeuvre d'Ibn 'Arabī* (Damascus, 1964): 209, *samā'* no. 12; Chittick, "The Last Will and Testament of Ibn 'Arabī's Foremost Disciple and Some Notes on its Author", *Sophia Perennis*, 4(1) (1978): 43-58. The treatise addressed to al-Tilimsānī is called *Kitāb al-ilmā' bi ba'd kulliyāt asrār al-samā'*; Turkish manuscripts include Ibrahim Efendi 881/8, Kara Çelebi Zade 345/15, Şehid Ali Paşa 1344/4, and Konya Müzesi 1633, 5020.

- 8 Ibn Sab'īn was asked, "How did you find Qūnawī with the eye of the knowledge of *tawhīd*?" He answered, "He is one of the verifiers, but there was a young man with him even more proficient [*aḥdhaq*], al-'Afif al-Tilimsānī." Quoted by A. Taftāzānī, *Ibn Sab'īn wa falsafatuhu al-ṣūfīyyah* (Beirut, 1973): 81. On Ibn Sab'īn's philosophical writing, see S. Yaltkaya, *Correspondance philosophique avec l'empereur Frédéric II de Hohenstaufen* (Paris and Beirut, 1941).
- 9 See Chittick, "Rumi and Waḥdat al-Wujūd", in *The Heritage of Rumi*, ed. A. Banani and G. Sabagh (Cambridge, 1994).
- 10 Hājji Khalifah, *Kashf al-zunūn*, (Istanbul, 1971), cols 265–6, s.v. *Tā'īyyah*.
- 11 See Chittick, *Faith and Practice of Islam: Three Thirteenth Century Sufi Texts* (Albany, 1992): 258–9.
- 12 Jāmī, *Nafahāt al-uns*, ed. M. Tawhīdīpūr (Tehran, 1957): 559.
- 13 Published with a Turkish introduction by H. K. Yılmaz, *Tasavvufi Hadis serhleri ve Konevīnin Kırk Hadis Şerhi* (Istanbul, 1990). For a translation of two passages from the text, see S. Murata, *The Tao of Islam: a Sourcebook on Gender Relationships in Islamic Thought* (Albany, 1992): 101–2, 219–22.
- 14 For a tentative list, see Chittick, "Last Will". I would remove from that list the two Persian works, *Tabṣīrat al-mubtadi* and *Maṭāli-i imān* (on which see Chittick, *Faith and Practice*), and would add two short Arabic works, *Tahrīr al-bayān fī taqrīr shu'ab al-imān* and *Marātīb al-taqwā*.
- 15 Jāmī, *op. cit.*: 556.
- 16 Ibn Taymiyyah, *Majmū'at al-rasā'il wa'l-masā'il*, ed. Muḥammad Rashīd Riḍā (n.p., n.d.), 1: 176.
- 17 Qūnawī, *al-Nafahāt al-ilāhiyyah* (Tehran, 1898): 152–3.
- 18 On the correspondence, see Chittick, "Mysticism versus Philosophy in Earlier Islamic History: the al-Ṭūsī, al-Qūnawī Correspondence", *Religious Studies*, 17 (1981): 87–104. A critical edition is being prepared by G. Schubert (*Manuscripts of the Middle East* (1988), 3: 73–8).
- 19 See Chittick, "The Five Divine Presences: From al-Qūnawī to al-Qayṣarī", *Muslim World*, 72 (1982): 107–28.
- 20 Chittick and P. L. Wilson, *Fakhrūddin 'Iraqi: Divine Flashes* (New York, 1982).
- 21 I have investigated this question in some detail. See Chittick "Rumi and Waḥdjat al-Wujūd". See also Chittick, "Rūmī and the Mawlawīyya", in *Islamic Spirituality: Manifestations*, ed. S. H. Nasr (New York, 1991): 113–17.
- 22 *Sharḥ Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam*, ed. S. J. Āshtiyānī (Mashhad, 1982): 5.
- 23 Qūnawī, *al-Fukūk*, on the margin of *Kāshānī*, *Sharḥ manāzil al-sā'irīn* (Tehran, 1897–8): 184.
- 24 For a list of commentaries and criticisms, see O. Yahia, Arabic introduction to Sayyid Ḥaydar Āmulī, *Naṣṣ al-nuṣūṣ* (Tehran, 1971).
- 25 See Chittick, Persian introduction to Jāmī, *Naqd al-nuṣūṣ fī sharḥ naqsh al-fuṣūṣ* (Tehran, 1977): 38–44.
- 26 The most famous is by 'Abd al-Raḥmān Jāmī, *Naqd al-nuṣūṣ*, mentioned in the previous note. This work, which is Jāmī's earliest theoretical work on Sufism, is an explicit compendium of some of the key theoretical discussions by Qūnawī and his direct followers. For a translation of *Naqsh al-fuṣūṣ* along with many pages from Jāmī's commentary, see Chittick, "Ibn 'Arabī's own Summary of the *Fuṣūṣ*: 'The Imprint of the Bezels of Wisdom'", *Journal of the Muhyiddin Ibn 'Arabī Society*, 1 (1982): 30–93.

- 27 See Ibn 'Arabī's comments on the meaning of this sentence in Chittick, *The Sufi Path of Knowledge: Ibn al-'Arabī's Metaphysics of Imagination* (Albany, 1989): 103.
- 28 Istanbul MS Şehid Ali Paşa, 1248, commentary on the chapter on Abraham. Compare his remarks in the chapter on Joseph.
- 29 *Ibid.*, chapter on Solomon.
- 30 For passages on this issue from *al-Fukūk* and the major early commentaries, see Chittick, "The Chapter Headings of the *Fuṣūṣ*", *Journal of the Muhyiddin Ibn 'Arabī Society*, 2 (1984): 41–94.
- 31 Jāmī, *op. cit.*: 486; the full correspondence is translated in Landolt, "Der Briefwechsel zwischen Kāshānī und Simnānī über *Waḥdat al-Wuḡūd*", *Der Islam*, 50 (1973): 29–81; and in P. Lory, *Les Commentaires ésotériques du Coran d'après 'Abd ar-Razzāq al-Qāshānī* (Paris, 1981).
- 32 On Kāshānī, see Morris, *op. cit.*: 101–6. Kāshānī's philosophical strength helps explain why his commentary was chosen by T. Izutsu, whose later works focus on the Islamic philosophical tradition, to help him explain Ibn 'Arabī's teachings to English-speaking readers. See Izutsu, *Sufism and Taoism* (Los Angeles, 1983). For passages from Kāshānī's Qur'ān commentary and other works, see Murata, *op. cit.*, index under Kāshānī.
- 33 The latest of these is by the contemporary ḥakīm S. J. Āshtiyānī, *Sharḥ-i muqaddima-yi qayṣarī bar fuṣūṣ* (Mashhad, 1966).
- 34 Jāmī, *Nafahāt al-uns*: 429. The only work of Ḥammūyah to have been published is the Persian *al-Miṣbāḥ fi'l-taṣawwuf*, ed. N. Māyil Harawī (Tehran, 1983).
- 35 See Chodkiewicz's important study and translation of this work, *Épître sur l'Unité Absolue*; see also Chittick, "Rumi and Waḥdat al-Wujūd".
- 36 See Chittick, "Notes on Ibn al-'Arabī's Influence in the Subcontinent", *Muslim World*, 82 (1992): 218–41.
- 37 Morris, *op. cit.*: 108.
- 38 Among the most fascinating late representatives of Ibn 'Arabī's school is Amīr 'Abd al-Qādir of Algeria (d. 1300/1883), the well-known freedom fighter. For his connection to the school and samples of his writings, see Chodkiewicz, *Emir Abd el-Kader*.