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IRAN

QUESTIONS ET CONNAISSANCES

VOL. II

PÉRIODES MÉDIÉVALE ET MODERNE

EXTRAIT



TEXTES RÉUNIS PAR

Maria SZUPPE

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Ce deuxième volume des Actes du IV^e Congrès Européen des Études Iraniques comporte trente-trois contributions traitant des époques médiévale et moderne dans le monde iranien, depuis l'arrivée de l'islam en Iran et en Asie centrale jusqu'à la formation des sociétés contemporaines. Comme dans le précédent volume, consacré à l'Iran ancien, les articles ici réunis sont présentés par thèmes : langue et littérature ; histoire et archéologie ; religion, philosophie et histoire des sciences ; histoire de l'art.

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THE HIDDEN WORDS OF FAYḌ KĀSHĀNĪ

RÉSUMÉ

Le *Kalimāt-i makhnūna* de Mullā Muḥsin Fayḍ Kāshānī (m. 1680) constitue une introduction importante, méconnue, au chiisme duodécimain post-safavide. Il a été référé à cet ouvrage, de façon erronée, comme à un livre « sur » le soufisme, alors qu'il peut être défini comme une adaptation, au milieu safavide, du soufisme traditionnel, en même temps qu'il est un manuel de l'école philosophique et mystique appelée *Ḥikmat-i ilāhī* et fondée par Mullā Ṣadrā, maître et beau-père de l'auteur. Certaines caractéristiques d'une méthodologie légale *akhbārī* sont présentées dans l'ouvrage comme dérivant naturellement de la même école philosophique et mystique. La brève analyse de son contenu et de ses thèmes révèle qu'il se concentre avant tout sur l'imamologie, même si les débats et les élaborations qui l'accompagnent empruntent largement à la tradition soufie. La liste des intitulés des 100 chapitres et la traduction des quelques passages sélectionnés permettent de se faire une idée du contenu de cet ouvrage important.

Mots clés : *akhbārī* ; *ḥikmat* ; imamologie ; 'irfān ; chiisme.

ABSTRACT

Mullā Muḥsin Fayḍ Kāshānī's (d. 1680) breviary, *Kalimāt-i makhnūna*, is an important if little studied introduction to post Safavid Twelver Shi'ism. It has been erroneously referred to as a book "on" sufism, but it may more accurately be described as an adaptation of traditional sufism to the Safavid milieu, in addition to being a handbook of the philosophical and mystical school known as *Ḥikmat-i ilāhī* propounded by Mullā Ṣadrā, the author's teacher and father-in-law. Certain features of an *Akhbārī* legal methodology are presented in this handbook as deriving naturally from that same philosophical and mystical school. A brief analysis of its contents and themes reveals that its primary focus is that of imamology, even though the attendant discussions and elaborations borrow heavily from the Sufi tradition. A list of its 100 chapter headings together with a few translations of selected passages provide a description of the contents of this influential work.

Keywords: *Akhbārī*; *ḥikmat*; imamology; 'irfān; Shi'ism.

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The Hidden Words is the name of what may be considered one of the more important works of later Imānī thought since it was written by a man who is considered to be the Abū Ḥamid Ghazālī of post-Safavid Shī'ism and may be thought an authoritative primer or manual of Islam as seen through the lense of *Ḥikmat*.¹ The full title of Mullā Muḥsin Fayḍ Kāshānī's *Hidden Words* (written in 1647/1057H.) is revealing: *kalimāt maknūnah min 'ulūm ahl al-hikma wa'l-ma'rifa*; it could be rendered as follows: "The Treasured Teachings of the Gnostics and Mystics". According to the author himself, he was most surprised to learn that the title of the work was in *abjad* correspondence with the date of completion.² It is written in both Arabic and Persian. It consists of 4,000 verses or lines and is divided into one hundred comparatively brief divisions, each of which is considered a "hidden word" and the two languages of Arabic and Persian may be combined in a given section. Each section is a *Hidden Word* or *kalima* (pl. *kalimāt*) and the range of topics is really quite vast and the book is remarkably dense. Fayḍ Kāshānī was an accomplished poet and his *Dīvān* is highly regarded³; it is therefore not surprising to find a large amount of his poetry in this manual. This is in addition to Quranic quotations, Hadith, Arabic or Persian maxims, quotations from other poets, quotations from the works of earlier thinkers, philosophers and spiritual authorities, and quotations from heroes of the Sufi tradition. Thus questions of theology (*kalām*), law (*fiqh*), mysticism (*'irfān*, *taṣawwuf*), metaphysics, ontology, eschatology, Quranic interpretation (*tafsīr*, *ta'wīl*), Islamic history, the efficacy of prayer and supplication, free will and predestination, transmigration of souls, continuous creation (*khalq-i jadīd*) are all orchestrated into the single unitary and sweeping vision.⁴

Fayḍ Kāshānī was the star student of one of the greatest Muslim philosophers of any period, Ṣadrā al-Dīn Shīrāzī known as Mullā Ṣadrā (d. 1640/1050H.) The vision referred to at the end of the previous paragraph is that interpretation of reality known as *Ḥikmat-i ilāhī* (Divine Wis-

dom; sometimes "theosophy"), the designation used to refer to Mullā Ṣadrā's grand intellectual and sapiential achievement. Thus, it will surprise no one familiar with *Ḥikmat* to discover that a characteristic theme of Kāshānī's *Hidden Words* is the repeated ontological assertion of the primacy of Being (*iṣālat al-wujūd*) over Identity (*māhiya*), summarised as follows:

God is hidden because of the excess of His light; no veil can cover Him because every veil is a limitation and God is above all limitations. Being {is} the Truth which subsists by Itself, while everything else subsists by It. Being is not just a mental concept, the meaning of Being in the mind consisting only of a reflection of Being Itself...

The divine attributes and names are identical with the divine essence, while in themselves they are distinct. Likewise the forms of all beings in the divine intellect, i.e., the quiddities or essences, the *māhiyāt* or *a'yān al-thābitah* are in one respect identical with and in another distinct from essence. Each being subsists by one of the divine names and its very existence consists in the invocation of that name. The archetypes, *a'yān al-thābitah*, have two aspects; on the one hand, they are the mirrors in which Truth is reflected, in which case they are hidden and Truth is manifest; and, on the other hand, Truth is the mirror in which they are reflected; in which case truth is hidden and they are manifest.⁵

As has been pointed out by S.H. Nasr, Fayḍ's dense breviary is an important intellectual link between the later revivification of *Ḥikmat* in Qajar times and Mullā Ṣadrā's era.⁶ To say, however, that it is a book "about sufism" is a little misleading.⁷ True, the "Sufi" topic of the Perfect Man occupies nearly one fifth of the 100 hundred separate sections or *kalimāt*.⁸

5 Nasr 1983, p.928; cf. *KM*, pp. 33-35.

6 According to Nasr, Fayḍ Kāshānī, and his brother-in-law 'Abd al-Razzāq Lāhijī, had been known "mostly for their works on the religious sciences and theology rather than the 'transcendent philosophy' of their master Mullā Ṣadrā. Usually later authorities have tried to explain this strange phenomenon by emphasising the rapid social and religious change which took place in the later Safavid period resulting in severe opposition to sufism and to the teachings of Mullā Ṣadrā. They argue that due to this situation both Mullā Muḥsin Fayḍ and Lāhijī used the principle of *taqiya* or dissimulation and remained silent about their master's teachings in public and in their written works. This argument always appeared somewhat incomplete because Mullā Muḥsin Fayḍ left behind such works as the *Kalimāt maknūnah*, which is a masterpiece among the numerous works dealing with gnosis (*'irfān*): in Kāshānī, 1353 sh., English Preface, pp. 5-6.

1 Corbin 1981, p.181; Nasr 1983, vol. II, p. 926.

2 Tihirānī 1978, pp. 119-20, No.s 987-8. It was printed, apparently for the first time, in Iran in 1878/1296. Although according to Professor N. Pourjavady (verbal communication, September 1999, Paris) it is deficient, the edition used here is edited by 'Azizollāh al-'Utāridī Quchānī, Tehrān, Mu'assasah-ye Matbu'eh-yi Farahānī, 1383 H./1342 sh. [1963], and designated hereafter as *KM*. Other lithographs referred to in the literature but unavailable to me are: Bombay, 1296H./1878 (Corbin 1960); Tehrān, 1316H./1898-99 (Corbin 1960; Nasr 1983, and Arjomand 1984). I am grateful to an anonymous reviewer and to Prof. Shigeru Kamada of Tokyo University for valuable comments and suggestions on an earlier draft of this article.

3 Corbin 1981, p.180.

4 See Appendix for an indication of the scope of topics treated and the ...

Various Sufi personalities of classical and mediaeval Islam are mentioned by name and quoted: such as Bāstāmī, Junayd and Kharrāz. But these quotations are highly selective and appear to be chosen for their agreement with and support of the system of Divine Wisdom elaborated by Mullā Ṣadrā (whose name, interestingly enough, is *never* mentioned). Kharrāz (d. 899 or 890), for example, is quoted (unascibed) in the opening paragraph of the book when the author says: "Praised be to Him who is known only through the joining of opposites".⁹ Junayd's celebrated codicil for the Prophet's answer to the question: Where was God before creation? is quoted and ascribed.¹⁰ Several references to the traditional Sufi topic of "withness" (*ma'īya*) occur throughout the text. But there is much else in the book that would be difficult to classify as *taṣawwuf*. The Perfect Man, for example, is not only the Prophet Muḥammad, but is also each of the Holy Imams and also all of them together.¹¹ These Figures are the Absolute Rulers of the cosmos and are both the proper focus and source of love, knowledge and being (a kind of "holy trinity" of *Hikmat*). Such an extreme veneration of the Imams is exemplified in the copious quotations from the *Mashāriq al-anwār* of the late 14th/8th - early 15th/9th century "heretic" Rajab Bursī (d. 1411/814H.).¹² Furthermore, the theory supporting such a position is argued in the terms of Sadrian *Hikmat*. Such doctrines, it is suggested, are not quite sufism, unless of course one holds to the thesis (which remains to be convincingly argued in historical terms) that Shi'ism is actually the pure and original form of sufism.¹³ In addition, the multiplex, kathenotheic Fig-

⁹ *KM*, p. 1; and *KM*, p. 57.

¹⁰ *KM*, p. 33: "The Prophet said, 'God was and nothing was with Him.' Junayd added: 'And it is now as it was then.'"

¹¹ Cf. the application of the term kathenotheism to an analysis of Shi'i theology: Corbin, 1971-1972, vol. I, pp. 205-6, vol. III, pp. 98, 133, and vol. IV, pp. 113, 432.

¹² See below.

¹³ And, in any case, if this were so, to say that the book is "on sufism" would be somewhat redundant if not tautological. Take for example the word by which the Shi'i mystical tradition/dimension is so frequently designated: *'irfān*. One of the reasons it is difficult to translate this term with the English word "gnosis" is not because both terms do not refer to a kind of esoteric knowledge upon which a kind of salvation depends. Rather, the reason "gnosis" is inadequate is because within the word *'irfān* there are also strong connotations (not to say denotations) of an act of recognition and identification. Why the word was taken up by the Shi'a to distinguish one Islamic mystical tradition from another is doubtless a very complex question. But surely part of the answer resides in the fact that Shi'ism is what it is precisely because it recognises and identifies a distinct line of religious and spiritual authority. Cf. the important Shi'i doctrine: "He who dies without recognizing the Imām of his time dies the death of an unbeliever." On the complicate problem of the relationship of Fayḍ Kāshānī and his school...

ure(s) of the Perfect Man presented here suggests a political theory very much in line with that articulated in the author's "Mirror for the King," his *Ā'ineh-yi Shāhi*, even if it is not clear that this political tract represents "a radical devaluation of earthly sovereignty".¹⁴

Most importantly, copious quotations are cited throughout from the words of the Shi'i Imams and the Prophet who (together with Fāṭima) are known as the Fourteen Infallible or Sinless Ones. Thus, while the book discusses a number of the standard topics of Islamic religion, this discussion ultimately becomes a view of Islam as such through the lens of Mullā Ṣadrā's *Hikmat-i ilāhi*. It is, therefore, an excellent introduction to the highly technical and sometimes very difficult teaching of Ṣadrā.¹⁵

It is important here to add that while Ṣadrā is celebrated in philosophical circles for what is frequently perceived as a strictly ontological preoccupation, it has been pointed out that one of the more important achievements of Mullā Ṣadrā was the accommodation of Twelver Shi'ism to the high sufism of Ibn 'Arabī and his school — a project that had already been started by

¹⁴ Arjomand 1984, p. 175. This interpretation may require some adjustment. See for example the recent assessment of Fayḍ's role in public political life in Babayan 1996, pp. 117-138. Here it is not so clear that such so-called "gnostic" Shi'ism was as sublimely indifferent to politics and general societal questions as is assumed by Arjomand. It also should be pointed out that Arjomand's criticism of Corbin's choice of words is misinformed. Corbin did not intend the word "esoteric" to stand for ambiguous operations of charisma-mongers. He intended it to stand for systems of thought or simply thought that addressed itself to the inner life of the person and the world. Thus Mullā Ṣadrā's work is esoteric (*pace* Arjomand 1984, p. 310 n.12) according to Corbin's usage, just as Corbin could consider Hegel and Heidegger as esotericists because of their respective emphases on such "inner" issues as *Spirit* and *Being* (cf. Arjomand 1984, p.175). In this regard, it should be remembered that Corbin was in fact Heidegger's first translator. It may be that Arjomand's somewhat idiosyncratic use of the term "hermeneutic" (Arjomand 1984, *passim*) indicates, ironically, a sharper understanding of the issues at stake than do his comments on such terminology as "gnostic" and "esoteric". Finally, it is unclear why Arjomand persists in reproducing the title of the work under discussion here as *Kalamāt* (Arjomand 1984, *passim*, and Arjomand 1988, *passim*) rather than the more standard *Kalimāt*.

¹⁵ The thought of Mullā Ṣadrā is a persuasive attempt at a reconciliation of reason and revelation. It depends very heavily on the work of earlier Muslim thinkers and philosophers such as Avicenna (d. 1037/429H.), Suhrawardī (d. 1191/587H.) and Ibn 'Arabī (d. 1240/638H.) and is concerned to demonstrate the essentially spiritual nature of reality and existence, an existence or being-ness that is in a constant state of flux and whose constituent elements are knit together on all levels through a profound existential connection characterised by Ṣadrā as *deep* or *substantial motion*. One of the axioms of this system of thought is the basic syzygical nature of this reality whose external dimension forms a whole only when taken into consideration with an "unseen" or "mystical" interior dimension. The exoteric and the esoteric as-

such thinkers as Bābā Afḍal Kāshānī (d. ca. 1213-14/610-611H.), Sa'd al-Din Ḥamuyeh (d. 1252/651H.), Naṣīr al-Dīn Ṭūsī (d. 1273/672H.), Maytham al-Baḥrānī (d. 1280/679H.), Sayyid Ḥaydar Āmulī (d. ca. 1400/863H.), the above-mentioned Rajab Bursī and Ibn Abī Jumhūr (d. after 1501/907H.).¹⁶ Thus to say that it is "about sufism" is to conceal the specific Shī'ī content and nature of the book. While it may be that the essence of both philosophy and what is sometimes called Islamic gnosis are contained in the many quotations from the Imams, also known as the *Awliyā*, the Friends of God, it is misleading not to acknowledge the importance of these figures as distinct, *sui generis*, centres of devotion for the author of the book. Henry Corbin, for one, celebrated in no uncertain terms what he perceived to be the beauty and elegance of an Imamocentric ethos, and constantly drew the reader's attention to this.¹⁷ The unerring guide to the perception and understanding of the esoteric or inner dimension of Reality or Being is precisely the teachings of the Prophet Muḥammad, and the Imams as found in the Qur'an and the sacred Traditions.

But Mullā Ṣadrā was not without critics. Indeed, he was actually "excommunicated" at one stage and sought refuge in isolation for a number of years in order to escape persecution.¹⁸ However, his radical reinterpretation of religion, coming at a time of various power-struggles amongst the clerical class would eventually issue in a strongly anti-Sufi Shī'ī orthodoxy as found described and defended in, for example, the works the younger Majlisī (a student of Fayḍ Kāshānī, as it happened) whose massive doctrinal work, the *Bihār al-anwār* continues to provide the basic elements of belief for Imāmī Shī'is. This is not to suggest that all mysticism has been drained out of Shī'ism, rather it is to draw attention to the importance of historical developments and influences on religious ideas and tastes and styles in piety and religious observance. In the later Safavid period mysticism and sufism were perceived by some as threats to clerical authority precisely because of the existence of powerful sufi leaders whose authority and charisma vied with the authority of the official ulama and "the state" and was therefore perceived as a serious threat by the wielders of such power. Indeed, so charged was the atmosphere of the time that both Ṣadrā and Kāshānī com-

¹⁶ *KM*, p. 79, where both a *ḥadīth* from Ibn Abī Jumhūr and Fayḍ himself are castigated by the modern editor.

¹⁷ Corbin 1981, pp. 179-187.

¹⁸ On Mullā Ṣadrā generally, see Corbin 1981; Nasr 1978; Morris 1981. Note Hosain

posed substantial polemics against sufism, albeit a sufism of a particular kind.¹⁹

One of the main reasons for the controversy, quite apart from the deep philosophical colouring of Ṣadrā's thought — philosophy being more or less perennially suspect by official religious establishments — was the implications this thought had for popular religion. For such thinkers as Muḥsin Fayḍ, who was befriended and highly regarded by Shāh 'Abbās II, these recent philosophical developments paved the way for, on the one hand a more "democratic" approach to Islamic law, and on the other a more supra-rational and experiential attitude to Islamic scriptures (viz., the Qur'an and Ḥadīth).²⁰ Such an attitude threatened the religious status quo presided over by *mujtahids* whose authority was grounded in the traditional, highly scholastic, discursive approach to the *sharī'a* and general religious questions: *ijtihād*.²¹ In short, Mullā Ṣadrā's philosophy fed into the recent religious developments which would come to be recognised as forming something of an Akhbārī opposition to the very powerful and perhaps phobic Uṣūlī establishment.²²

This scenario is both illustrated and complicated to a very interesting degree by the person and work of Fayḍ Kāshānī. As mentioned above, Kāshānī is esteemed as one of the chief orthodoxers of later Shī'ism. Yet he was deeply influenced by his teacher (and as it happens, father-in-law) Mullā Ṣadrā. Interestingly, in the work under discussion here (e.g. *KM*, #91, pp. 222-226) and other works, Kāshānī is an adamant supporter of the

¹⁹ The existence of such writings by such mystically-minded authors demands that we revise the frequently propagated equivalence: Islamic mysticism = sufism.

²⁰ Shāh 'Abbās II had a *khānaqāh* built for him and later destroyed (Arjomand 1984, pp. 148 and 154).

²¹ Thus Arjomand 1984, p. 146, quoting Wilfred Madelung, "Akhbāriyya", *EI², Supplement*:

Two very important aspects of Akhbārī traditionalism served the vested interests of clerical notables in their effort to meet the challenge of the Shī'ite hierarchy for exclusive hierocratic domination. It explicitly challenged the hierocratic authority of the *mujtahids*, and, by implication, it greatly enhanced the charisma of lineage of the ruling dynasty and of the *ṣayyids* who formed the clerical estate.

The Akhbārīs firmly rejected *ijtihād*, thus wreaking havoc with the newly laid foundations of hierocratic authority. For them

"*Ijtiḥād*, leading to mere *ẓann* [probable opinion, as opposed to certainty] and *taqlīd*, i.e., following the opinions of a *mujtahid*, are forbidden. Every believer must rather follow the *akhbār* of the Imams for whose proper understanding no more than a knowledge of Arabic and the specific terminology of the Imams is needed. If an apparent conflict between two traditions cannot be resolved by the methods prescribed by the Imams, *tawāquf*, abstention from a decision is obligatory."

Akhbārī legal method, a position which insisted that a believer might obtain valid spiritual guidance through direct contemplation and study of the Qur'ān and sacred Traditions (viz.: *akhbār*). This was contrary to the opposing Uṣūlī position which insisted upon the "blind imitation" (*taqlid*) of a religious scholar who gave various opinions and rulings based upon a frequently casuistic approach to sources and a vaunted elevation of book-learning, "reason" and "logic" as the essential tools for arriving at religious truth. Corbin illuminates the whole problem and reduces it to its most fundamental and defining issue when he says that the prime motivation of the Akhbārīs was the quest for a higher degree of certitude than that obtainable through the dialectic of the Uṣūlī *mujtahid*.²³

In the context of this debate and the Sadrian "heresy", it may be thought that the religious *œuvre* of Fayḍ Kāshānī should be divided into two basic categories: 1) works for the majority of Shī'īs and works aimed at an elite cognoscenti. In the first category would be his massive collection of Traditions (Ḥadīth/Akhbār) known as *al-Wāfī* or his important commentary on the Qur'an *al-Ṣāfi* or his reworking of Ghazālī's *magnum opus* the *Iḥyā* in Shī'ī form, *al-Maḥajjat al-bayḍa* upon which his patristic reputation is largely based. The second category would be of works that have as their purpose the continuation and elaboration (and perhaps popularization) of the "dangerous" spiritual philosophy of Mullā Ṣadrā. Although the *Hidden Words* may be the only evidence of Fayḍ's allegiance to *Ḥikmat* widely accessible before 1974 when his *Uṣūl al-ma'ārif* was published in Ashtiyani's edition, there is no evidence, so far, that such a possible subterfuge was at the direction of its author.²⁴ Although clearly aimed at an elite group of scholars and intellectuals, the *Hidden Words* are stated with such clarity and presented as such an orderly "handbook" of elemental *Ḥikmatī*-inspired readings of the various sources of Islamic religion that it may be assumed that like his perhaps egalitarian attitude towards law, his attitude towards *Ḥikmat* was that it was ultimately accessible to all. It should be mentioned, however, that another of his works, the *Qurrat al-'Uyūn* "Solace of the Eyes" is in reality this same *Hidden Words* with the more esoteric and technical philosophical content deleted.²⁵

The commentary on the light verse (Qur'an 24:35) found in Fayḍ's *Hidden Words* when compared with the commentary on the same verse found in the (perhaps) more popular *al-Ṣāfi* offers an instructive sample of

²³ Corbin 1983 (1974), p. 356. On Kāshānī's somewhat complex position vis a vis a severely polarized Akhbārī - Uṣūlī debate, see Kohlberg 1987. See also Madelung, *ET*². Other recent studies of general relevance are by Scarcia 1958, Cole 1985, Newman 1992, Lawson 1993.

²⁴ Near as doubt the teaching motive. See above, note 1.

the kinds of differences that characterise the two works of religious scholarship. Here, in *al-Ṣāfi*, Kāshānī's *tafsir* of this verse opens with a not-so-veiled reference to the teachings of Ibn 'Arabī and while most of the commentary is taken up with specifying more clearly some equivalent for obscure Quranic vocabulary, or specifying the grammar for the purposes of recitation, this work is distinguished from other *tafsir* of the same period by the degree with which it is explicitly concerned with matters philosophical and mystical.²⁶ His commentary on the Quranic imagery: *neither eastern nor western and light upon light* is effective and instructive but patently not philosophical in the tradition of *Ḥikmat*. But unable to resist making the connection between Holy Scripture and the spiritual universe that he himself inhabits, he closes his own comments on the verse, in philosophical language on: *And God strikes similitudes. And God is knower of all things*, saying that this phrase indicates God's method entails drawing the "intelligible close to the sensible". Kāshānī offers credentials for his commentary by quoting several Traditions from the Imāms.²⁷

In his *Hidden Words* the verse is pressed more explicitly into the service of *Ḥikmat*: *God is the light of the Heavens and the Earth* indicates for Kāshānī that His existence (*wujūd*) is more clear (*aẓhar*) than all other things because His existence is sustained through and by Himself, whereas the existence of all else is through another [i.e. God]. He cites a Persian poem, unascribed: "How excellent the ignorance of one who searches with a candle in the desert for the Light of the sun!"²⁸ In his discussion of quiddities and their nonexistence in relation to existence's priority he refers once again to Qur'an 24:35 as something of a proof text for this *Ḥikmatī*-inspired doctrine. In this same section, he refers to the corollary of the Light Verse, the so-called "Darkness Verse" (Qur'an 24:40) as follows:

And to support my theory of the appearance of the quiddities through the light of Being I adduce the *ḥadīth* in which the Prophet said: 'God, the exalted, created creation in darkness, then he sprinkled upon it some of His light.'

The creation thus of quiddities in darkness indicates its fixity in the divine knowledge prior to its appearance through Being. Darkness is the nonexistence of the divine; when it is illumined then the quiddities occur

Like a mirage in sandy deserts, which the man parched with thirst mistakes for water until when he comes up to it he finds it to be nothing. But he finds God ever with him. [24:39]

²⁶ See Lawson 1993, pp. 179-87.

²⁷ See above, note 1.

...
Or is like the depths of darkness in a vast deep ocean, overwhelmed with billow. [24:40]

That is: of individuations and existentiations which prevent the witnessing of absolute existence.

Topped by billow[24:40]

That is: existentiations on top of existentiations

Topped by dark clouds[24:40]

That is: you see the existentiations and their darkness which is like the dark clouds by comparison to the sun of Absolute Being (*al-wujūd al-muṭlaq*).

Depths of darkness, one above another [24:40]

That is, veiled by the darkness of nonexistence from the existence of the Real, who is the Absolute and Transcendentally Luminous Source of All Light and Being (*al-Nūr al-Ḥaqq* = "God").²⁹

The famous hadith "I was a Hidden Treasure" has a special, privileged position in this work since Kāshānī, like countless mystics and gnostics before him referred to this statement of the Prophet in attempting to answer the basic metaphysical question: why are we here? The hadith runs as follows: "I was a hidden treasure and yearned to be known, therefore I created creation in order to be known."³⁰ In his commentary on this hadith, Muḥsin Fayḍ demonstrates his learning by citing other related *ḥadīth quḍṣī*, excerpts from the Qur'an, (e.g. Qur'an 28:77: *All things are passing away except the face of God*), and other statements from the Prophet. Most characteristically, several hadiths from the Imams, 'Alī, al-Ḥusayn ibn 'Alī and the *Prayer of 'Arafa*, Ja'far al-Ṣādiq, (together with the above-mentioned saying of Junayd's) are quoted in characteristic celebration of the principal oneness and transcendence of Absolute Being. The key topics are established by the sacred words, they are: love, knowledge and creation.

On the topic of love, Muḥsin Fayḍ finds yet another opportunity to assert what might be called the existential monism of his master's philosophy. A brief excerpt runs as follows:

Teaching (*kalima*) in which it is made clear that love (*al-ḥubb*) permeates and circulates throughout (*sarayān*) all existence and that there is no lover and no beloved other than God, glorified and exalted be He.

Every structure of creation and existent phenomenon has existence according to the law of love as in 'And I loved to be known, so I created creation in order that I be known'. And if there were not love there would not appear what has appeared, and whatever has appeared is from love and by means of love, and love flows through it. Nay, rather [all manifestation] is love. Each person, nay each thing is nothing except that it is commanded to be through love *maḥabba*... . Consequently, the deeprooted place of love in all created things can never be negated...

(Poetry):

Your heart will move according to what your passion desires
 There is no love except the First Lover

Qur'an [17:23]:

And thy Lord hath decreed that ye love none (lā ta'budū) but Him

...

As for love of another [i.e. other than God], even if it be for comeliness, or beauty or closeness (*qurba*) to God or His perfection ... this is permitted because beauty is beloved by the Divine Essence whether it is external and formal beauty, or internal and spiritual. 'God is beautiful and He loves beauty, so He loves Himself'.

Other than Him there is nothing that can be beautiful or perfect, because each comely one and beautiful and perfect one and glorious one are manifestations of Him... . Every reflection of all the divine lights is the beauty and the traces of perfection of that Extremely Exalted Holiness which appears in the manifestations of the vessels of His appearance, and in the receiving mirrors of those divine reflections.

(Poetry):

Every beautiful one is comely from His beauty

...

If the effects of that beauty fall upon the mirror of the heart... beauty comes to be... All beauty comes from Him: He has no partner.

...

We close this teaching with the topic of moral beauty (*iḥsān*), because *iḥsān* is also beloved of the Divine Essence... And there is no *iḥsān* except from God, and there is no one who is morally beautiful other than God, glorified be His praise. He is the creator of *iḥsān* and its Master and Sole Owner and the maker of the modes and occasions of every *muḥsin*. This is one of the benefits (*ḥasana*) of His

drop from the oceans of His perfection and excellences. (...) Be occupied with Beauty, and do not covet fame or wealth (...).

There is also the love derived from love of self; it can turn to the love of God, exalted be He, as I have taught you. Be not attracted to any face except through the love of God. None truly understands this except the friends *awliyā* and the dear ones (*aḥibbā*) of God, as intimated by the Lord of Martyrs (i.e. Ḥusayn ibn 'Alī), upon him be peace, in the *Prayer of 'Arafat*: "Thou art He who removes all the others from the hearts of thy friends so that they love only you."

So when the True One knew Himself and knew the world [as distinct] from Himself, then there came forth its form. Nothing is more beloved than His self — He sees it in the mirror of the World. There is no Lover but God and no Beloved other than God.³¹

Light, love and truth permeate much of Fayḍ's discourse in this work and nowhere are the productive ambiguities, paradoxes and apparent contradictions inherent in such a theology pointed up better than in the lengthy quotations from the theologically suspect — "*ghālī/ghuluww*" — but nonetheless very influential *Khuṭbat al-tatanjīya* included by Rajab Bursī in his *Mashāriq* and for which the *Hidden Words* is one of the more important later sources.³² A few examples will suffice. Here, 'Alī is quoted as follows:

'Indeed! I know wonders of the creation of God that none but God himself knows. And I know what was and what will be: what was in the first period of primordial existence (*al-dharr al-awwal*) that preceded the First Adam. It was revealed to me and I came to know it. And my Lord taught me. (...) I inform you of what you were and what you will be during that time and what you will meet with on the Day of Resurrection/Rising (*qiyāma*) (...) And indeed He hid the knowledge of it from all of the prophets except the master of this

³¹ *KM*, pp. 85-89; n.b. the self-deprecating pun on the author's name here.

³² *KM*, pp. 196-205; see Lawson 1987, pp. 15, 195-6, 208, 219; Lawson 1992, pp. 261-276; and the recent extremely valuable article by Amir-Moezzi (Amir-Moezzi 1996). Notwithstanding Shaykh Aḥmad's antipathy for Fayḍ Kāshānī (he referred to him as *Mus'i* as opposed to *Muhsin*, just as he referred to Ibn Arabī as *Mumīt al-Dīn* rather than *Muhyi al-Dīn*), this sermon was the subject of a lengthy commentary by al-Aḥsā'i's successor Sayyid Kāzīm Rashtī (d. 1843/1259H.) on which see Corbin 1993, pp. 113-118, and Amir-Moezzi 1996, especially pp. 195 and 207. This sermon was also referred to and commented upon many times by the Bāb throughout his writings. See Lawson 1987, pp. 329-360. Indeed, apart from those

sharī'a of yours, may God bless him and his family. Then he taught me his knowledge I taught him my knowledge.' (...)

Then 'Alī said: 'Indeed! I know what is above the highest paradise and what is below the seventh lower level and what is in the exalted heavens and what is between them and what is under the earth. All of this a comprehensive knowledge, not fragmentary (...)'

'Alī said: 'If it were disclosed to you what I was in the primal eternity and what will be my lot in the Hereafter then you would behold extraordinary wonders and fabulous things and works (...). I am the master of the first creation before the first Noah. If I were to teach you what was the situation with the children of Adam and Noah of the strange things they did and the nations they destroyed, then you would know the truth of the Quranic word against them: *Woe for what they have committed!* I am the master of the first flood/plague [Qur'an 7:133, 29:14], I am the master of the second two floods/plagues, I am the master of the flood [Qur'an 34:16], I am the master of the hidden mysteries [cf. Qur'an 47:26], I am the master of 'Ād and the Gardens, I am the master of Thāmūd and the Signs. I am their destroyer, I am their Convulser, I am their Shaker, I am their Annihilator, I am their Disposer, I am their Explainer, I am their Veiler, I am their Killer, I am their Reviver. I am the First, I am the Last, I am the Hidden, I am the Manifest. I am with Aeon before Aeon, I am with Cycle before Cycle, I am with the Pen before the Pen, I am with the Tablet before the Tablet. I am the Master of the First Pre-eternal Eternity. I am the Master of Jābalqā and Jābalsā. I am the Master of the Heavenly Rafrāf [Qur'an 55:76] and Bahrām. I am the Disposer (*mudabbir*) of the First World when there was not this sky of yours nor this earth of yours.'³³

³³ *KM*, p.167-8. For convenience, the words Aeon and Cycle are used to translate, however inadequately, *kawr* and *dawr* respectively. These terms have a technical meaning in Ismā'īlī cosmogony and eschatology, viz.: *kawr-i a'zam*, *dawr-i satr*, *dawr-i kashf* (see Corbin 1961; Madelung, *EI*.; and Daftary 1990, index, s.v. *dawr*, *kawr*) and may carry something of such an intention to this context. There is some reason to believe that Rajab Bursī was a crypto-Ismā'īlī (Lawson 1992). In general, in Ismā'īlī and Twelver Shī'ism, time is divided into two major periods: one "before" the day of *Alast* and one "after" (Amir-Moezzi, *EI*.). Thus, *kawr* might be taken to refer to the "time" of the pristine, unmanifest godhead, the period prior to the movement indicated in the famous *ḥadīth qudsī* "I was hidden treasure", while *dawr* might be taken to refer to the period after this movement. If the *ḥadīth* is truly from the first Imām, 'Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib, it is very difficult to speculate on how he himself might have defined the terms. I take this statement as something of pleonasm, with the main point being: "I have always existed, even before

This sampling of materials should make clear the kinds of issues and teachings comprised by the *Hidden Words* and also helps to elucidate why these words might have been hidden in the first place. But we know that in Shi'ism hiddenness itself is also a mode of the divine. Forty years ago Corbin published his *Terre céleste* in which he drew attention — it seems for the first time in modern scholarship — to the *Kalimāt maknūna*. Corbin translated the chapter on the abstruse problem of the spiritual interworld or 'ālam al-mithāl because, according to him, Fayḍ's treatment of this topic here is the best available.³⁴ However, it seems that apart from one or two instances, this remarkable book was destined to remain hidden from western scholarship until the publication of Arjomand's influential *Shadow of God* in 1984.³⁵ Why this should be so is difficult to ascertain especially since it has been identified as one of the only published evidences of Kāshānī's allegiance to Mullā Ṣadrā until the 1974 publication of his *Uṣūl al-ma'ārif*.³⁶

Despite the fact that there is probably no more apposite verse (24:35) in the Quran with which to propagate the teachings of that tradition, *al-Ṣāfi* is relatively — but as we saw not completely — innocent of *Hikmatī*-inspired themes. That the *Hidden Words* indulges more in this should not lead us to believe that Kāshānī himself sought to divide his community into groups of knowers and ignorant ones (although such a division may have been perceived to have existed as an expression of the natural order of things). Rather it seems more likely that Kāshānī saw as his duty to make the kind of salvific knowledge he was engaged in available to as many of his fellow Shi'ites as possible. If this had to be done by degrees, then it would not be the first time.

The question also arises as to just how universal Fayḍ Kāshānī considered his teaching to be. How pertinent or compelling could it have been to a non-Shi'i audience? And finally, if we wish to continue the comparison between Fayḍ Kāshānī and Ghazālī, it is perhaps in line with such a comparison to assign an analogous place to their respective "problematic" works: the *Mishkat al-anwār* of Ghazālī, the *Kalimāt maknūna* of Kāshānī. One striking difference here is immediately obvious: unlike the case with the first work, there seems to have been no attempt or need to

³⁴ Corbin 1960/English translation 1977, pp. 176-179. See *KM*, pp. 70-73. Browne 1891, p. 123, discusses the work briefly in connection with a Bābī work of the same name. He here refers to Rieu and relies on the erroneous description found there. Browne further muddies the waters by wrongly claiming that Rieu lists the work as *Kalimāt-i maknūneh-yi Fāṭimeh*. See Rieu, vol. II, pp. 289-290.

³⁵ Chittick, "Muḥsin-i Fayḍ-i Kāshānī", in *EP*², for example, mentions neither the *Hidden Words* nor *Terre céleste*.

deny that the author of the second work was the same man who is so highly esteemed by the tradition he helped to shape.

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APPENDIX

Topic Headings for *KM* (see bibliography). Each topic is preceded by: *Kalima fihā* which can be translated as: "Doctrine concerning", "Teachings on", "Chapter on" etc. In what follows, I have usually left this untranslated.

The contents may be generally described as *ḥikmat*. There are several categories within this broader one: 1) epistemology, including discussions pertaining to the Akhbārī/Uṣūlī question; 2) ontology, a sub-category of which is explicitly along the lines of *waḥdat al-wujūd* and continuous "atomistic" recreation and destruction of the world; 3) theology; 4) mysticism/'irfān; 5) cosmogony; 6) the Perfect Man; 7) eschatology; 8) theodicy; 9) perception; 10) *walāya* / guardianship / Shi'ism; 11) imamology / theophanology. Note that the table of contents of the edition at hand (pp. 251-255) contains numerous mistakes; many of these have been corrected so that the numeration of topics and the corresponding page number below are accurate. Misspellings and typographical errors in the original have not been indicated. The first number is that of the *kalima*; the second number, in parentheses, is the number of the page on which the given *kalima* begins.

- | | |
|-------|---|
| 1(2) | That both direct knowledge (<i>ma'rifa</i>) and direct physical vision (<i>ru'yā</i>) [of the Hidden Imām] are sometimes supported and sometimes refused by the sacred texts. |
| 2(6) | On contemplation and discussion about God — and on the exhortation to acquire <i>ma'rifa</i> . |
| 3(8) | On God's manifestation and His hiddenness. |
| 4(12) | On the spiritual significance (<i>ma'nā</i>) of Being/Existence (<i>wujūd</i>). |
| 5(13) | That there is no quiddity (<i>māhiyya</i>) to the Absolute Reality (<i>al-ḥaqq</i>) other than Being/Existence. |
| 6(16) | On various conceptions of Existence. |
| 7(19) | On the Divine Attributes and Names; they are identical with the Divine |

other point of view.

- 8(24) On the divine reality of the pre-existent archetypes (*a'yān al-thābita*).
 9(25) On how Being is joined to the archetypes in the external [realm].
 10(26) Small collection of statements explaining the relationship (*nisba*) of the objective reality (*maj'ūliya*) of quiddity and its relationship to Being and its refutation from both assertions.
 11(28) On the existence of the archetypes in the external world (outside the mind) and that there is no existence to them in it.
 12(30) On the mutability of the existence of the archetypes.
 13(32) On His independence of all else than Him.
 14(33) On the "why" of creation and that it is a conceptual matter.
 15(35) On the spiritual significance of Existential Oneness and the differences in the other grades of existent things.
 16(36) Some illustrative examples (*tanthīlāt*) in explanation of Existential Oneness.
 17(42) On transcendence and anthropomorphism.
 18(44) Further illustrations in explanation of the connection between Oneness, Multiplicity, Transcendence and Anthropomorphism.
 19(46) On the unity of Divine Reality and the various grades of the Divine Exclusive Unity.
 20(48) On the modality by which pre-eternal divine knowledge comes to the light of day.
 21(49) On the renewal of creation at every moment (*khalq-i jadīd*).
 22(51) That the [instantaneous] substitution of things is not a substitution of essence nor a numeration of deeds and attributes.
 23(53) On God's eternal self-subsisting *qayyūmiya* and that other than Him there is none who can claim to be a self-sustaining, true Riser (*qā'im*).
 24(55) On the spiritual significance of "the generation of the world" (*hudūth al-'ālam*) and the meaning of the doctrine of pre-eternity.
 25(57) On the coming forth of the many from the One and their arrangement according to the divine names.
 26(59) On the spiritual significance of the divine names and the modality of their arrangement.
 27(60) On the spiritual significance of the divine statement (Qur'an 6:73, 16:40, 19:35, 36:82, 40:68) "Be thou! and it is."
 28(62) On the totality of existent things and their gradations and that they are in the process of returning to a single essence (*'ayn wāhida*).
 29(65) On the modality of the descent and ascent of Existence.
 30(67) On the priority of spirits (*arwāh*) over bodies (*ajsād*) and an explanation of their generation by means of the generation of bodies.
 31(70) On the reality of the World of Images (*'ālam al-mithāl*, *hayākha*)

tion and the meaning of the vision and creation through spiritual exertion (*al-himma*).

- 33(74) On the validity of transformation (*maskh*) and the invalidity of transmigration (*naskh*).
 34(76) On the complexity of the soul in its essence and how through it is made to appear the stages of the human soul in its advancements.
 35(78) Exalted word about the sublime world and the modality of the advance of the human soul unto it.
 36(80) Truthful word about the causes of the descent of the spirits from the exalted *malakūt*.
 37(81) That all of existence is good and that evil is without being, not made existent except by means of an accident.
 38(83) That all perfections are subordinate to Him.
 39(85) That love (*al-ḥubb*) permeates (*sayarān*) all existence and that there is neither lover (*muḥibb*) nor beloved (*maḥbūb*) other than God.
 40(89) On God's utter nearness to (*qurba*, *ma'īya*) all existing things.
 41(90) That the entire cosmos (*kawn al-kull*) is upon the straight path (*ṣirāṭ al-mustaqīm*) notwithstanding the [apparent] crookedness of some of the paths/developments (*turuq*).
 42(91) That the final destination of all is Him, exalted be He, notwithstanding the venal mischief of some.
 43(93) That the [true] being of the innate character of all things is [meant to be] in the process of affirming oneness and the explanation of the [apparent] error of some.
 44(94) On the spiritual significance of *al-qadā'* and *al-qadar*.
 45(95) On the nature of God's Proof over His creation, (and it is *not* their proof over Him).
 46(99) On the distinction between the creative command and the compulsive [command], the repudiation of [the problem of] predestination and free will and the establishment of [the correct view which is] "a thing between the two things".
 47(103) On the way in which external causes influence actions and the establishment of requital/punishment for them and the explanation of "the exhaustion of the divine will" and the "drying up of the Pen" as in the case of those things which pertain to the human, like knowledge and power and purpose from a totality/multiplicity of causes.
 48(106) The disclosing of the mystery of effacement and establishment and the linking of vacillation and change of mind to God, praised be He.
 49(109) On the meaning of *taqwā* in linking deeds to God, praised be He, and in linking them to the servants.
 50(112) On the spiritual meaning (*ma'nā*) of *al-faṭā'* in God and *al-haqā'* with

- 51(114) On the spiritual significance of appearance and manifestation.
- 52(115) On the differences (*tafāwut*) amongst the created things in manifestation.
- 53(116) On the appearance of God (*zuhūr al-ḥaqq*) in the manifestations inasmuch as it be the divine names and [inasmuch as it be the case that] the manifestation of the name of Allāh is the Perfect Man.
- 54(117) That the real cause of the existence of [the Perfect] Man is through his being a place of manifestation for the divine Ipseity (*huwīya*) and the perfect Integrator of [all the multiplicity] of the cosmos.
- 55(118) That the Perfect Man is the culmination of all the species of all knowledge in all grades and that he is, in terms of this station, God visible.
- 56(120) That the Perfect Man is the disposer (*al-mudabbir*) of the world through the divine names and that he is the means (*al-wāsiṭa*) for the meeting/ connection (*wuṣūl*) of God (*al-ḥaqq*) with creation.
- 57(121) That the Perfect Man has a Firstness and a Lastness, a quality of being Manifest and a quality of being Hidden, and Servitude and Lordship [cf. Qur'an 57:3].
- 58(123) That the Perfect Man is the Greater World (macrocosm).
- 59(124) That the Perfect Man is the Book of God and His form.
- 60(126) On the [necessity of] the obedience of all created things to the Perfect Man.
- 61(130) That the "destruction of the world" is its emptiness of the Perfect Man and that the "life in the hereafter" is his existence in it.
- 62(132) That the Abode of Existence is one and the world and the hereafter are two relativities.
- 63(134) That the Abode of Existence and creation are eternal.
- 64(135) On the multiplicity of principles in growth.
- 65(136) On the modality of the growth of the last out of the first.
- 66(139) On "purgatory" (*barzakh*) and the blowing of the trumpet.
- 67(145) That the Resurrection (*qiyāma*) is the Perfect Man.
- 68(149) That the Perfect Man sees the affairs of the next world while he is in this world and sees what transpires in this world while he is in the hereafter: He lives in both worlds (simultaneously).
- 69(152) On the types of Gathering (at judgement day) and their allotment to man.
- 70(154) On the spiritual significance of the Meeting with God.
- 71(157) On the "scrolls of recorded deed", that they are the souls of humans.
- 72(159) On the Balance (*mīzān*), that it is the Perfect Man and his guidance.
- 73(160) That the Path is the Perfect Man and his guidance.
- 74(161) On the various types of creatures in the next period of growth (the Hereafter).
- 75(164) On the divisions of Paradise and Hell and the beginning of the growth of them both.
- 76(168) On the reality of Hell and that it is created of accidents

- 78(172) On the legacy of the degrees of ascent and the degrees of descent (*darajāt/darakāt*) and the substitution of the bad and the good.
- 79(179) On the Apportioner of Paradise and Hell, and it is the Perfect Man.
- 80(181) On the gates of Paradise and Hell and they are the animal faculties of perception.
- 81(183) On the word *al-a'rāf* [cf. Qur'an 7:46-48] and that it applies properly to the Perfect Man as long as [he is] in this growth/world.
- 82(186) On prophethood and guardianship (*nubūwa* and *walāya*).
- 83(187) That our prophet and his twelve legatees are the most perfect of all humans, nay rather of all created things.
- 84(193) That the idols of the Quraysh are the most vile of all other humans, nay rather of all created things.
- 85(196) On His sublimity.
- 86(205) On the necessity of the Imam and that recognition of him is not possible except through a clear proof from God and designation by the apostle of Allah.
- 87(208) On the contention that there was no authoritative text (*naṣṣ*) and no consensus (*ijmā'*) governing what took place; rather, the authoritative text (*naṣṣ*) governed what did not happen.
- 88(210) On the reason for the absence of agreement about the succession of the Commander of the Faithful ... even though there was clear designation.
- 89(213) On the cause of the straying away of the generality of the *umma* from the light of the Imāms even though the proof of — as well as the compelling need for — the Imāms appeared clearly to them.
- 90(217) That it is not permissible to take the laws of the *sharī'a* or the doctrines of religion from anyone but the Prophet and his legatee and that it is not permitted to legislate concerning the ambiguous verses except through *ta'wīl*.
- 91(222) Against the use of personal opinion (*ra'y*) in matters of religion (*dīn*).
- 92(226) The various opinions on the questions of religion (*dīn*).
- 93(227) On the reason of the disagreement of mankind with regard to the various *madhabs* and opinions, and thanks for true guidance.
- 94(230) On the grades of faith and unbelief.
- 95(233) In which is distinguished the saved sect from the lost sects.
- 96(239) On the distribution of knowledge and *ulama* and that it is through following/imitating a learned one.
- 97(241) On the place where wisdom is taken from and its status and the necessity of guarding it and keeping it secret.
- 98(244) On the nobility of wisdom and its people.
- 99(246) On the occurrence of the knowledge of wisdom.
- 100(250) On the proposition that the *ulama* are the inheritors of the prophets and how it happens that some of them are enemies and the hateful ones.

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