vigorously and opposed his teachings. The School of Isfahān consists in fact of several strands of thought and not only the school of Mullā Sadrā. As for this latter school, whereas in India it was the main influence in Islamic[1] philosophical thought since the end of seventeenth century, in Persia itself it was only from the Qājār period onward, when Sufism itself experienced a revival in that land, that the school of Mullā Sadrā once again became central. In summary, since the School of Isfahān as a whole has dominated much of the intellectual, philosophical and mystical life of Persia during the last four hundreds years and is of great important for the intellectual history of Islam in India, it is eminently appropriate that this last of three major volumes this brief account of the School of Isfahān which constituted the heart of the intellectual life of the Safavid and Mughal periods[2].

1. It is a singular lacunae in Islamic scholarship today that there exists no thorough history of Islamic philosophy in India in any European language.
2. For further discussion of this issue, see S.H. Nasr, "Spiritual Movements, Philosophy and Theoloy in the Safavid Period" The Cambridge History of Iran, V, (Cambridge University Press, 1968), pp. 656-97.

history of philosophy from Adam to Mīr Dāmād which attempts to trace the origin of Hikmat, not only back to the origin of Islam or the beginnings of Greek philosophy, but back to the very origin of humanity itself. Henry Corbin has designated, in his eloquent and beautiful French, this tendency as a speculum historiale of "divine philosophy"[1].

During the same period there occurred a resuscitation of the ishrāqī doctrines of Shihāb al-Dīn Yahyā Suhrawardī (d.587/1191). This renewal of interest in the School of Illumination was quite widespread, and is particulary reflected in texts such as the Anwāriyyah written in India by Muhammad Sharīf Hirāwī who carried out a comparative study between ishrāqī doctrines and the Advaita Vedanta[2]. This current also affected developments in Zoroastrian religious thought.

In summary, the remarkable intellectual activity of the School of Isfahān, which only a generation ago remained virtually unknown in the West, has dominated a great deal of the philosophical and intellectual life of Islam in its Eastern lands during the past four centuries and down to the present day. Although in the Arab world beyond the borders of Iraq, the intellectual activity of the Safavid thinkers has not been very influential, there is much interest in the works of both Mīr Dāmād and Mullā Sadrā in present-day Egypt (an interest which the lack of political and cultural relations between Iran and Egypt has unfortunately done much to stifle). As for India and Turkey, it is nearly impossible to study the development of Islamic philosophy in those lands in recent centuries without taking into account the role played by the School of Isfahān, although the role of the School of Isfahān, is much more manifest in the Indian world than in the Ottoman empire.

That is not to say, however, as some wrongly assert, that after Mullā Sadrā all philosophy in Persia was converted to his doctrines. There were, in fact, other currents of thought which defended their own views quite

1. See Corbin, En Islam iranien, vol, p. 28. On the Safavid philosopher / theosophers see also Corbin, La Philosophie iranienne islamique aux XVII et XVIII siecles, Paris, Buchet / Chastel, 1981.

2. See Anwāriyyah, ed. H. Zlai, Tehran, Amīr Kabīr, 1358, A.H. sh.

Shaykh Ahmad al-'Alawī.

CONCLUSION

By way of conclusion, I would like to present a few general observations on the contribution of the School of Isfahān to Islamic thought. The historical situation of the School of Isfahan inaugurating the last phase of the history of Islamic philosophy gives it special significance which is reflected in the major characteristic of the School mentioned above: namely the emphasis on the integration and reconciliation of the three paths to knowledge: revelation, unveiling and intellection (shar', kashf, 'aql).

Furthermore, more than any of the earlier philosophical schools in Islam, the thinkers of the School of Isfahān were very much interested in understanding the doctrines of other religions. Their philosophical interest in religious diversity embraced, first of all, Judaism and Christianity, religions which had been examined by Muslim theologians before them, yet which had seldom been made the subject of detailed inquiry by Islamic philosophers. Several philosophers of the Safavid period composed treatises on the Bible and a few others studied Hebre with a view to understanding the Torah. Another religion which attracted their interest was Hinduism, so that for the first time in Islamic thought(with the exception of the scientist - cum - philosopher Bīrūnī), one finds Persian-Islamic thinkers composing studies and commentaries on Hindu texts in Persia itself as well as in India where the School of Isfahān had many followers.

Another importan aspect of the School of Isfahān was the great interest of its members in earlier Islamic philosophical texts, so that numerous commentaries on Ibn Sīnā, Suhrawardī, Tūsī, etc. were composed by Safavid sages. Parallel to their absorption in early Islamic texts, an attempt was made by the Safavid philosophers, for the first time in the history of Islam, to synthesize and summarize the entire history of Islamic philosophy down to their own day. One of the best examples of this synoptic thendency is found in the Mahbūb al-qulūb of Qutb al-Din Ashkiwarī (d.11th/17th centure), a

poet, considered by some authorities on the history of Persian literature to be the greatest Persian poet of the eleventh/seventeenth century, but also an authority on the whole Sufi literary tradition in both Arabic and Persian. This is evident in his al-Kashkūl (Begging Bowl) which is justly famous in both the Persian and Arab worlds.

Finally, we come to the greatest and central figure of the Scool of Isfahān, Sadr al-Dīn Shīrazī or Mullā Sadrā (d.1050/1640), mentioned above, whose numerous writings are a testimony to his profound knowledge and love of God, and hose life of intense piety, asceticism and purity of devotion admirable complemented his remarkable intellectual prowess[1]. It is nearly impossible to study the works of Mullā Sadrā without feeling that one is in the presence of one who actually knows the subject he is discussing rather than simply theorizing about it. He was first and foremost a man of gnosis, and it is significant that many of his students openly expressed their interest in Sufism even more than their master. His Student 'Abd al-Razzaq LāhIjī (d. 1072/1661-2), Often considered to be the chief advocate of Shi'ite philosophical theology (Kalām) in the Safavid period, was deeply impregnated with Sufi doctrine. Muhsin Fayd Kāshāni (d.1091/1680), another student of Mullā Sadrā, was a practicing Sufi and author of a beautiful Dīwān of Sufi poetry.

Qādī Sa'īd Oummī (d. 1091/1691-2), a student of theirs, is the last important member of the School of Isfahān of whom space permits me to mention here. He composed a commentary on the kitāb al-tawhīd of Shaykh Sadūq ibn Bābūyah (d.381/992) comprising the inordibly rich work in Arabic Asrār al-'ibādat (Mysteries of Divne Worship). This tratise is one of the best treatments of the inner significance of the devotional practices in Islam very much in the tradition of well-known Sufi treatises on the subject by such masters as Abu Hāmid Muhammad Ghazzālī, Ibn 'Arabī and more recently

1. See S.H. Nasr, The Transcendent Theosophy of Sadr al-Dīn Shīrāzī second edition, Tehran, Institute for Humanities and Cultural Studies, 1977; and the articles of H. Ziai and S. H. Nasr on Mūllā Sadra in S.H. Nasr and O. Leaman (eds.), History of Islamic Philosophy, vol. 2, London, Routledge, 1996, PP. 635-662.

The first of these figures was Mīr Dāmād (d. 1040/1631-2) the father of the School of Isfahān, an author whose writings are extremely hard to fathom, his Arabic prose convoluted and his Persian even more abstruse than his Arabic. Describing the renowned difficulty of one of his Arabic books entit led Sirāt al-mustaqīm (The Straight Path) a popular adage in Persian jests that "The Straight Path (Sirāt al-mustaqīm) has never been fathomed by any Muslim or apprehended any infidel," (Sirāt al-mustaqim-i Mīr Dāmād: musalmān nashawad, kāfir nabīnād)! It is evident, however, that Mīr Dāmād's resort to arcane terminology was mainly a kind of literary contrivance and means to disguise the esoteric nature of his teachnigs. Despite the fact that he was a master of rational philosophical speculation, and even composed a poem (which we cited above) attacking what he perceived to be Rūmī's anti-intellectualism, he was also the author of such a remarkable treatise as the Khalsat al-malakūt which, compsed in Oum, was consecrated to describing his spiritual visions. Indeed, if one did not know the identity of the author of this treatise, one might easily imagine that he was a bonafide Sufi of high spiritual attainment who had realized advanced stations on the mystical Path.

Another important figure in the School was Mīr Dāmād's Contemporary, the enigmatic Mīr Abul-Qāsim Findiriskī (d.1050/1640-1) whose many works include a treatise on alchemy still avaiting publication. He is renowned for his famous poem on divine knowledge beginnig whit the verse:

Heaven whith these stars is clear, pleasing and beautiful.
Whatever is t here above has below it a form...[1]

Mystical tendencies pervade many of his writings; among these may be mentioned a commentary on the Yoga Vasistha, a treatise comparing Sufi and Hindu metaphysical and comsmological doctrines.

Another great figure of the School was Bahā 'al-Dīn 'Āmilī (d. 1030/1621) who was much more popular than Mīr Findiriskī perhaps because he was more "populist" and less "elitist" in his approach to Sufism. He composed many mathnawī peoms such as Nān wa halwā modelled on the great Mathnawī of Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī. 'Āmilī's esoteric dimension is revealed not only in his pipular mathnawis, but also in his devotion to the metaphysical aspect of mathematics and the hidden sciences. 'Āmilī was not only a Sufi

1. For a further study of Mīr Findiriskī's thought and a translation of some of the verses of this poem, see my article: "The School of Isfahān" in M. M. Sharif (ed.) A History of Muslim Philosophy. p. 923-4; also in my the Islamic Intellectual History In Persia, pp. 254ff.

an external organizational framework.

Parallel to the foundation and establishment of the major Sufi orders in the sixth/twelfth century and the division of Islamic mysticism into socially approved and distinct tarīqahs, however, something of t he early, "amorphous" structure of Sufism still persisted among the intellectual elite, carried on in great secrecy. One of the most important recurrent manifestations of this unexplored aspect of Islamic esoterism, not of a popular but of a highly intellectual type, is found in the figures of the mystical philosophers or hakīms of the Safavid period among whom Mullā Sadrā is our prime example[1]. This, at least, is my understanding of the subject on the basis of research into this matter[2]: that all of the great philosophical figures of the School of Isfahan now known to us had been vouchsafed a certain esoteric spiritual training which is virtually invisible to public scrutiny. While it is extremely hard to find and hard evidence of the esoteric affiliation of any of the figures of this School, yet, by their fruits thou shall judge them, It is the fruit of the tree, that is their gnosis, which testifies that they all must have been endowed with an initiatic attachment to the currents of Islamic esoterism; that they were affiliated to a type of Islamic spirituality related to Sufism without actually participating in a formal Sufi order with all the political tensions, disputations and quarrels to which most of these orders (Dhahabiyyah, Ni'matullahiyyah, etc.) were subjected during the Safavid period.

1. See my "Oral Transmission and the Book in Islamic Education: the Spoken and the Written Word" in the Journal of Islamic Studies, III/1 (1992), pp. 10-12, where I have developed a similar thesis in respect to the School of Isfahān and other mystical philosophers in Islam. It is hoped that despite the paucity of documents future students of Sufism will take up this idea and examine it in depth.

2. Even in the recent history of philosophy in Persia, one finds numerous examples of this phenomenon of very high mystical attainment without any outward affiliation with a Sufi order, for instance, in figures such as. (my own teachers) Sayyid Muhammad kāzim 'Assar and 'Allāmah Tabātabā'ī (on the latter's biography, see ' Allāmah Tabātabā'ī, Shi'ite Islam, translated by S. H. Nasr; Albany: SUNY 1977, pp. 22-6; Hamid Dabashi, Theology of Discontent: The Ideological Foundation of the Islamic Revolution in Iran, NewYork Universit y Press 1993, pp. 273-323)Having been Myself intimately acquainted with these teachers, I discovered how they had received initiation and spiritual training from masters of the tradition who were virtually unknown outside the small circle of their intimate disciples. One such master of the esoteric tradition in contemporary Iran and Iraq, unknown until recently to the larger public, was Sayyid Hāshim Mūsawī Haddād who although unaffiliated to andy organized Sufi order, was considered among his disciples to be a sun in t he Spiritual world. His teachnigs were besed on a esoteric transmission which can be traced back exactly like a Sufi order,to the origin of Islam. See 'Āllāmah Sayyid Muhammad Husayn Husaynī Tihrānī, Rūh-i mujarrad, Tehran, Hikmat Publications, 1996.

from a purely spiritual point of view that just as mountains cannot be scaled without a guide, so it is impossible for anyone to climb the spiritual mountain without a spiritual teacher and to have the door to the higher worlds opened unto him unless instruction is vouchsafed him by someone who holds the key. Who then was Mullā Sadrā's guide and how did he obtain such an exalted degree of divine knowledge and gnosis (,irfān/ma'rifat)?

Unlike Ibn 'Arabī, who wrote extensively about his various spiritual teachers, describing his association with them in great detail[1], to all appearances Mullā Sadrā wrote nothing of whether he belonged to andy regular Sufi Order (silsilah) or followed any known master. Examining his biography from the outside, it is thus very difficult to ascertain the source-as understood in the technical Sufi sense - of his initiation and spiritual training and spiritual training. And yet, it is inconceivable that a mystic of his calibre had not undergone the process of initiation or obtained guidance from a living master. Finally, after many years of research and investigation on the matter, I discovered at last a fact of Islamic esoterism in Persia previously little known to scholars whether in the West or the East, and which has not been studied fully until now. This facet, I believe, goes a long way towards explaning the secret initiatic sources of Mullā Sadrā's teachings, and also offers a commentary on the particular relationship of 'irfān and tasawwuf in Safavid Persia.

Although familiar to mystics of the Safavid period, few scholars today recognize the fact that there existed a form of esoteric transmission outside the normative, traditional tarīqah framework, the external institutional form of a silsilah. This was a form of Sufi transmission which can be seen in the late classical and early modern history of tasawwuf, and yet, which was also a form very similar to what existed in the early centuries of Sufism before the establishment of the Sufi orders and even before Abūl Qāsim-Junayd (d. 295/910). As is well known, before Junayd Sufism did not have any organized. institutional form. Although Junayd created a well-known Sufi Circle (halqah) around him, it was not in fact until the fifth/eleventh century when figures such as Ahmad Rifā'I (d. 573/1178) and 'Abd al-Qādir Gīlanī (d. 561/1166) appeared, that the social structure and organization of the Sufi brotherhoods as we know them today became crystallized. Hence, it would be anachronistic to ask, for inst ance, what Sufi order it was to which Junayd belonged; he belonged to none because there were none at that time. In that early classical period of Sufism, initiation into and transmission of Islamic spiritual teachings took place from master to disciple without the existence of

1. See R.W.J. Austin, Sufis of Andalusia: The Rūh al-quds and al-Durrat al-fākhirah of Ibn 'Arabī (London: Allen & Unwin 1971).

To understand the Mathnawī! -
A book which sets the soul aglow
With flashes of the Spirit's light illumines us;
Its verses writ with mother-pearl
and set in ruby-coral! If you, alas
Had but the scope of mind to grasp.
This MathnawI, such taunts and scorn
You'd never speak. For if in tones
Of scorn the poet berated intellect
He meant not that Universal Intellect
Which leads and guides us on every course
And path; his aim was just man's finite mind
The petty reason of philosophy that disdains
The fair looks that lit Joseph's facs
A finite partial reason which poisons
The mind with the gall of its delusions
It's just that reason al saints berate[1].

This example of a poetic jousting contest illustrating contrary philosophical positions and carried on over centuries is indicative of the often creative intellectual tensions prevalent in the Safavid period. As a matter of fact, when we examine the major intellectual figures of the Safavid period, all of them appear to be philosophers interested in Sufism, or at least mysticism in the classical meaning of the term[2].

One must bear in mind, however, that due to the unusual political and religious circumstances of the Safavid period, the various currents of Islamic esoterism and more specifically Sufism were expressed through personal transmission of initiation and spiritual instruction as well as the traditional Institutional, khānāqah-centered tarīqah forms. This distinction between the traditional/institutional, and individual/personal patterns of initiation into esoteric teachings which surfaces in the Safavid period is one of the most difficult and sensitive issues in the entire history of Persian Sufism. One of the best examples of the difficulty of understanding and penetrating this distinction on types of esoterism is found in the works of Mullā Sadrā (d. 1050/1640). For many years, I had investigated his biography whith a view to discovering the source of his spiritual teachings, in order to determine from whence came his esoteric instruction which he had surely received. It is certain

1. Ibid.
2. In using the word mysticism here my reference is solely to the original English sense of the term which relates to the Divine Mysteries, the Mysterium, and not to the nebulous and ambiguous meaning given to the term in some circles today.

Rationalists, legs are just like stilts.
How unfixed and stolid are fet of wood![1]

Mīr Damad chose to take exception and, attempting to refute Rumi, wrote the following verses in reply:[2]

O! You who say the legs on which
rationalists tread "are stilts"... despite these
but since, of course, Your mind is warped and biased,
between Intelligence-the nous,
And vain opinion, You could not see the difference.
But do not dismiss so quick the use of proofs,
Since I have made, by Almighty Grace,
Those "feet of wood" ironclad in proofs of truth,
I've cast at last in stiffest iron those "stilts"
Of inference you mocked and scoffed[3].

The above-cited couplet by Rūmī often formed the basis of philosophical discussions about problems of epistemology and was often bendied back and forth pro et contra among scholars who opposed philosophical discourse, denying the possibility of knowing the truth through the use of 'aql, and those who advocated philosophy and the use of intellection. Mīr Dāmād was advocated philosophy and the use of intellection. Mīr Dāmād was not the only thinker to discuss them. At the end of the safavid period Qutb al-Dīn Nayrīzī (d.1173/1759-60), a leading Dhahabī Sufi master, tookup his challenge and coming to Rūmī's defence, penned this powerful riposte to Mī Dāmād's satire:

O! You who jeer and sneer at Rūmī,
How blind in mind You are, at loss

1. Mathnawī, ed. R.A. Nicholson, 8 vols. (London: 1925-40), I: 2127. Rūmī, however, distinguishes clearly between the meaning of 'aql as intellect and the very instrument of revelation and its connotation as reason whose exclusive claim to knowledge he criticized. See Jalal Humā'I, Mawiawī chahmīgūyad. 2 vols, Tehran, High Council of Culture and Art 1976, which contains numerous reference to the use of, aql in both its positive and negative aspects; and kāzim Muhammadī, Mawlānā wa difā, az` aql, Theran, Mahdi Press, 1994, devoted completely to this subject.

2. Referring to Fakhr al-Dīn Rāzī (d.606/1209), the famous Sunni Ash`arite theologian.

3. Mīr Dāmad's verses are cited by Akbar Hādī, Sharh-i hāl-i Mīr Dāmād wa Mīr Findiriskī (Isfāhan 1363 A. Hsh./1984), p. 42. See also Javād Muslih, Falsafa-yi 'ālī Yā hikmat-i Sadr al-muta'allihin, vol. 1-2, Tehran University Press, 1353 A.H. solar, pp. yz-bh of introduction.

philosophy together in a single perspective and who for the first time coined the famous phrase "Transcendent Theosophy" (al-hikmat al-muta'āliyah) in the sense given to it by Mullā Sadrā later. These facts alone indicate how close the intellectual developments of the School of Shīrāz were to those of the School of Isfahān.

Another figure worthy of mention in the School of Shīrāz is an important peripatetic thinker and a pupil of Khafrī named Shāh Tāhir ibn Radī al-Dīn (d.956/1549) who was a near contemporary of Mīr Dāmād and who wrote a commentary upon Ibn Sīnā's Kitāb al-Shifā, (The Book of Healing). Many are the other important figures in this school who provided the philosophical foundations for the School of Isfahan, but unfortunately, for reasons of space, further discussion of their works is precluded here.

THE SCHOOL OF ISFAHĀN

The main philosophical issue confronting the thinkers of the School of Isfahān was how to create concord between the three grand ways which lie open to man for the attainment of knowledge and spiritual guidance. These paths are respectively that of i.) the divine law (Sharī'ah) which connotes the exoteric and legal aspect of religion, ii.) kashf, intuitive unveiling and illumination; and finally iii.) 'aql, which may be translated as either intellect or reason depending on the context[1]. Almost all of the great thinkers of the Safavid period were involved in the endeavor to reconcile and integrate these three distinct approaches to the attainment of knowledge. Discussions often focused around the meaning of technical terms such as Logical reasoning (istidlāl) and intellect ('aql). As and example of these discussions, one might well cite some interesting verses by the founder of the School of Isfahān, Mīr Dāmād (d.1041/1631-2) whose thought is discussed at length by Ian Netton later on in this volume. To Rūmī's famous verse in the Mathnawī:

1. Regarding the latter term, I might add that for some twenty Years Dr. Javād Nurbakhsh and I, on numerous occasions over lunch and dinner in Tehran, discussed the meaning of this word together, yet never reached an agreement concerning either its meaning or its proper translation. Dr. Nurbakhsh always preferred to interpret and translate 'aql as reason, that is as mere human ratiocination, mental processes having no spiritual significance while I have always understood it to imply the intellect (in the sense of the Latin intellectus used by the Scholastics), connoting the transcendental and cosmic dimension of man's universal intelligence without the term being devoid of the meaning of reason as understood by later philosophers.

Sadrā and Dashtakī were know as "Sadr al-Dīn", later scholars have often confused the two thinkers. Since "Sadr al-Dīn" Dashtakī's thought was expressed mostly in the form of glosses and commentaries on philosophical and religious works, unfortunately his writings have been nearly completely overlooked by both contemporary Persian scholars and Western orientalists. The reason for this sad neglect lies partially in the short-sightedness of nineteenth-century orientalists who considered commentaries to be repetitious, boring and devoid of original ideas, and who therefore resolved to concern themselves exclusively with original texts. Due to their prejudice and lack of interest wihich has also influenced Muslim scholars, many new ideas and discoveries of famous commentators have remained buried in the dust of library shelves even during most of this century. Only today we are gradually beginning to recognize how significant these commentaries are. Mīr Sadr al-Dīn Dashtakī, for example wrote commentaries and glosses on the famous Tajrīd of Nasīr al-Dīn Tūsī and the Quranic commentary of Zamakhsharī as well as composing several books of his own on philosophical theology. He also wrote several treatises on logic and the sciences, specifically agriculture and astronomy, a fact which points to one of the main characteristics of the School of Shīrāz: namely, that most of its main figures were scientists as well as philosophers. This School is therefore of importance for the history of Islamic philosophy and Sufism.

The most famous member of the School wes Sadr al-Dīn's son Ghiyāth al-Dīn Mansūr Dashtakī (d. 949/1542), at once an eminent physician, founder of a well-known medical school in Shīrāz, and a major philosopher renowned for his commentaries on Ibn Sīnā and Suhrawardī. His glosses on Tūsī's commentary on Ibn Sina's Book of Directives and Remarks (Ishārāt) and his commentary on the Temples of Light (Hāyakil al-nūr) of Suhravardī are particularly important; the latter work in fact constitutes the main link - alongside the works of Jalāl al-Dīn Dawānī - between Mir Damad, the founder of the School of Isfahan, and Suhrawardi himself.

Another important thinker of the Shīrāz School was Muhammad Khafrī (d. 957/1550), a pupil of Sadr al-DIn Dashtakī. Khafrī was very much interested in Sufism, in both its theoretical and practical dimensions, and was also author of a large number of works on philosophy, astronomy, the hidden sciences and Quranic exegesis. It was Khafri who sought to bring Sufism and

unique character of the School of Isfahān, which distinguishes it from philosophical developments over the previous centuries, is precisely this synthetic nature of its teachings.

THE SCHOOL OF SHIRĀZ

The School of Isfahān did not, however, so to speak, mushroom up out of nowhere; its historical roots can in fact be traced back some two centuries before the Safavid period to intellectual activities and currents prevalent in the city of Shīrāz, south of Isfahān, currents which may be said to have themselves constituted an independent philosophical School of Shīrāz[1] The School of Shīrāz benefited from the exceptional political circumstances obtaining in the region of Fars which, following upon the wake of the Mongol invasion, thrived as a kind of oasis of relative peace and calm in Iran which was divided into many small provinces under the Il-khanid feudal system of goverment. The result was that numerous scholars took refuge there while those from the area were able to teach and write in an atmosphere of relative security and therefore rerely migrated elsewhere except for those who went to India. The Scool of Shīrāz remains still nearly unknown, and just as only a generation ago scholars who wished to carry out research on the school of Isfahān were obliged first of all to write independent monographs on various figures of this School, today we are almost equally benighted regarding detailed philosophical developments of this earlier school and lack any comprehensive view of its major figures and trends. A brief review of some of its most important figures and key features on the basis of what is known is, therefore, very much in order here.

Most of the primary figures of this School hailed from shīrāz and its surrounding towns and many were members of the influential Dashtakī family, among whom may be mentioned Mīr Sadr al-Dīn Dashtakī (d.903/1497), to whom Mullā Sadrā refers frequently in his Asfār. In fact, because both Mullā

1. In the same way that Henry Corbin and I launched the phrase "School of Isfahān", some four decades ago, it may be an appropriate moment now to inaugurate in English the expression "School of Shīrāz". Already a number of Persian scholars are using this term. See especially Qāsim kākā'ī, "Shīrāz, mahd-i hikmat", Kherad nāmeh-e Sadrā, vol. 1, no. 2, August 1995, pp. 63-69; idem. "Āshnā'ī bā maktabi-i Shīrāz" ibid., vol. 1. no. 3, March 1996, pp. 82-89. and idem. "Āshnā,ī bā maktabi-i Shīrāz Amīr Ghiyāth al-Dīn Mansūr Dashtakī", ibid, vol. 2, no. 5-6 Autumn-Winter 1997, pp. 83-90.

try to "launch" this phrase, and specifically, to utilize it as a generic term to characterize the whole intellectual effort of the Safavid period. Gradually, over the course of several decades, our term has gained popular acceptance and eventually become so prevalent that today it is used by nearly all scholars to denote the school of philosophy/theosophy which began in the city of Isfahān in Safavid persia.

Albeit, I should draw attention to the fact that this school with its salient characteristics probably began in the midsixteenth century in Qazwīn and it was only later, after 998/1589 when Shāh, Abbās transferred the capital of persia from Qazwīn to Isfahān, that the latter city became its main center. In any case the School remained in Isfahān, persisting for nearly two more centuries, down to the early eihteenth century. However, with the invasion and destruction of the cit y by Mahmūd the Afghān in 1135/1722, many of its thinkers were forced to take refuge in other cities especially Qum, and it was only later on, in the Qājār period, that the School was resuscitated in both Isfahān and Tehran. Fortunately, the School of Isfahān is much better known now than it was forty years ago and has been made the subject of numerous articles and books going back to the pioneering works of Corbin[1].

In earlier periods of Islamic thought, the various fields and subject-areas of knowledge were separated into distinct water-tight compartment, and to "mix one field of academic discussion with another" field (in Arabic: khalt al-mabhath) was considered to be a grievous intellectual sin. Each discipline and science had its own individually distinct methodology and approach to tis respective field which it considered to be its own sacrocant preserve. Hence, philosophy, theology (kalām) theoretical sufism (tasawwuf-i nazarī), etc. were all strictly separated from one another. After the passage of centuries, however, and with the advent of the Safavid period in particular, one tends to notice a synthesis taking place between various schools of thought, the most important of which are, for the present discussion, the Islamic Aristotlean philosophy (mashsha'ī), illumintonist (ishrāqi) philosophy/ theosophy, the Akbarian School of Ibn` Arabī and his followers and other schools of Sufism and kalām, both Sunni and Shi`ite. One aspect of the

1. See especially Corbin, ibid.; also- "The School of Isfahan" in my The Islamic Intellectual Tradition in Persia, London, Curzon Press, pp. (This chapter is a reprint of the essay written originally in the early 1960's for M.M. Sharif-A History of Muslim Philosophy, vol. 2, Wiesbaden, O. Harrassowitz, 1966, pp. 904-932.

جایگاه مکتب اصفهان در فلسفهٔ اسلامی و تصوف

سید حسین نصر

چکیده

مهمترین مسأله‌ای که متفکران در مورد مکتب اصفهان با آن مواجه می‌شوند این است که چگونه بین سه نحوهٔ متفاوت اکتساب علم و هدایت و ارشاد معنوی هماهنگی و سازگاری به‌وجود آورند. این سه‌طریقت به ترتیب عبارتند از: ۱ـ شریعت، که وجه ظاهری و فقهی دین است. ۲ـ کشف و ۳ـ عقل. نویسنده معتقد است تقریباً همهٔ متفکران بزرگ عهد صفوی جهد کردند که بین این سه رویکرد گوناگون به اکتساب علم سازگاری به‌وجود آورند. سرآمد این متفکران، صدرالدین شیرازی ـ معروف به ملاصدرا ـ بود که در انجام این مهم توفیق شایانی داشت.

کلید واژه‌ها: تصوف نظری، حکمت متعالیه، شریعت، کشف، استدلال، عقل.

The Place of the School of Isfahān in Islamic Philosophy and Sufism*

S. H. Nasr

In the Name of the Author of the Book of Existence

It will be historical interest and relevance to our theme here if, first of all, we examine the history of the coinage of the expression "School of Isfahān", employed for the first time by Henry Corbin in the mid-1950's in an article on Mīr Dāmād and the School of Isfahān entitled "l'École d'Ispahan"[1]. Following long discussions held between us in Tehran, we decided together to

* Originally thes paper belonfed to the special volume for Ustād Jalāl al-DīnĀshtiyānī, but we received it late, then qublish it in thes volume.

1. Confessions extatiques de Mīr Dāmād, in Mélanges Louis Massignon (Institut français de Damas 1956), vol. I, pp. 331-778. This study also opens Book V of Corbin's En Islam iranien, vol. IV, Paris, 1972, pp. 8 ff. The whole Livre V is entitled "L'École d'Ispahan".