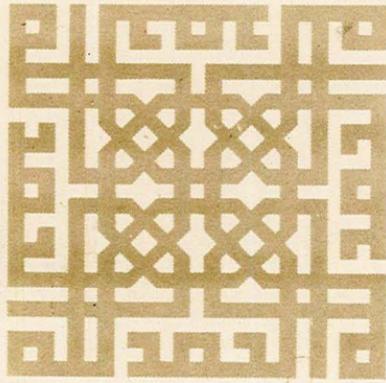


*“FROM THE NICHE OF PROPHECY”*  
NASR’S POSITION ON ISLAMIC  
PHILOSOPHY WITH IN THE ISLAMIC  
TRADITION



Compiled by  
Muhammad Suheyl Umar

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S. H. Nasr defies classifications. He is unique among our contemporary writers and thinkers in the sense that despite, or perhaps because of, his marvellous contributions to a stunning variety of academic disciplines it is difficult to place him in the categories of the present day academia. As W. C. Chittick has remarked, "The first meeting with the writings of Seyyed Hossein Nasr may often leave one either pleasantly surprised or disconcerted and annoyed. The reason in both cases is the same: here we have an intelligent, erudite, articulate and impassioned defence of and apologia for religion, or as Nasr might write, for 'Tradition in its true sense'....Nasr's educational background is exceptional. What is more exceptional is that he was able to integrate all of these currents and fields into a living and active whole, as if by realising in his own being the fundamental Islamic doctrine of Unity (*tawḥīd*) a doctrine referred to constantly in his works – and thus making all these seemingly disparate elements revolve around a single centre. The diversity of his writings reflects the diversity of his background."<sup>1</sup>

His understanding of the role and function of philosophy in Islam is rooted in his personal quest for the eternal *sophia* as he himself described it. In this regard his memoirs provide revealing insights about his philosophic quest that crystallised in the formulation of his position on Islamic Philosophy. Remembering his encounter with the western philosophic mind-set he remarked, "I was first shocked to discover that many leading Western philosophers did not consider the role of science in general

and physics in particular to be the discovery of the nature of the physical aspect of reality at all. Further studies of the philosophy of science and immersion in the debates between such figures as E. Meyerson and H. Poincare only confirmed this early sense of bewilderment and drew me more and more into the study of philosophy and the history of science..... I was fully immersed in the formal study of philosophy and the history of science with well-known figures as G. Sarton, Sir Hamilton Gibb, W. Jaerger and H. A. Wolfson. Meanwhile, access to the unique Commaraswamy library, unbelievable rich in works on various traditions, deepened my knowledge of thing Oriental, while encounters with such figures as D. T. Suzuki and S. H. Hisamutsu only confirmed the pertinence of these living traditions of the Orient." ...."The writings of Sufi masters and Islamic philosophers began to regain the profoundest meaning for me after this long journey through various schools of Western philosophy and science. But this newly gained meaning was no longer simple imitation or repetition of things inherited. It was based upon personal rediscovery after long search and one might add suffering, Islamic wisdom became a most intense living reality, not because I had happened to be born and educated as a Muslim but because I had been guided by the grace of Heaven to the eternal Sophia of which Islamic wisdom is one of the most universal and vital embodiments. Henceforth, I was set upon the intellectual path which I have followed ever since,...a period during which my quest has been to discover an unknown beyond the world within which the hands of destiny have since placed me."....I returned to Persia after the termination of my formal education and long years spent in the West with a new appreciation of the still living Islamic tradition and also a complete awareness of those errors and deviations which

comprise the modern world.....Persia is one of the very few Islamic countries where still today a living tradition of Islamic philosophy flourishes and is in fact being rejuvenated.”<sup>2</sup>

“If I were to summarise my so-called ‘philosophical position’, I would say that I am a follower of that *philosophia perennis* and also *universalis*, that eternal *sophia*, which has always been and will always be and in whose perspective there is but one Reality which can say “I”.”...I have tried to become transparent before the ray of Truth that shines when ever and where ever the veil before it is lifted or rent asunder. Once that process is achieved, the understanding, “observation” and explication of the manner in which that light shines upon problems of contemporary man constitute for me philosophical creativity in the deepest sense of the term. Otherwise, philosophy becomes sheer mental acrobatics and reason cut off from both the intellect and revelation, nothing but a luciferian instrument leading to dispersion and ultimately dissolution. It must never be forgotten that according to the teachings of the *sophia perennis* itself, the discovery of the Truth is essentially the discovery of oneself and ultimately of the Self, and that is none other than what the father of philosophy in the West, namely Plato, defined as the role of philosophy, for he said, ‘philosophy is the practice of death’ (*Phaedo* 66). And the Self cannot be discovered except through the death of the self and that re-birth which is the goal and entelechy of human life and the aim of *sophia* in all its multiple manifestation within the traditions of the East and the West.”<sup>3</sup>

With this background in mind we have traced the journey of his philosophic quest through his published works and collected his views on the position of Islamic philosophy with in the Islamic Tradition. Almost all that is

detailed in the following pages is based directly on his works. We have tried to make few insertions and very little comments of our own, except where necessary for the sake of continuity, in order to offer to the readers of this volume an immediate insight into his mind and a taste of the distinctive characteristics of his writings.

Two points deserve mention here.

S. H. Nasr has consistently maintained his position on the question of the status of Islamic Philosophy with in the Islamic Tradition for a period of 35 years or more. The views he expressed in his works more than three decades ago are essentially the same as those that he upholds today.

Secondly, his thought has two facets. On the one hand it addresses the plethora of settled convictions and received opinions; a spectrum of thought that extends from an outright rejection of philosophy as an alien and alienating intellectual enterprise — a phenomenon manifesting itself within the Islamic Tradition under extraneous influences — to an abject submission to the modern western modes of thinking that tries to replace Islamic philosophy with various borrowings from the West. On the other hand it analyses the western studies of Islam and Islamic philosophy and, while acknowledging their positive contributions, refutes the erroneous views that are so common in the studies made by the official Orientalism.

Amidst a spectrum of conflicting ideas Nasr’s position on Islamic Philosophy with in the Islamic Tradition is the most balanced and sane view expressed in a contemporary language serves as a corrective to much muddled thinking that prevails in both the camps.

To substantiate our claim we would present, in the following pages, a chronological overview of his persevering position, as it emerges from his writings.

Early in his career S. H. Nasr was instrumental in planning and compiling the two-volume work on Islamic philosophy that was edited by M. M. Sharif.<sup>4</sup> His contributions,<sup>5</sup> though limited to the intellectual history of certain sectors of the Islamic tradition and focused on the later phases of Islamic philosophy in the eastern lands of Islam, nevertheless, provided important insights about his views on the position of Islamic philosophy within the Islamic tradition. In these essays he pointed out the richness, continuity and religious character of the Islamic philosophy as well as its formative influence that it exerted upon other disciplines through its historical interaction; themes that he elaborated and explicated in detail in his subsequent works. A few representative quotations would give us the first glimpses of his thinking. "In Islam the attack of Sufis and theologians upon the rationalistic aspect of Aristotelian philosophy weakened its hold at the very time when that philosophy was gaining strength in the Christian West and was replaced in the Muslim world by two elements, the doctrinal Sufism of Muḥyi al-Dīn ibn 'Arabī and the *Ḥikmat al-Ishrāq* or illuminative wisdom of Shaikh al-Ishrāq Shihāb al-Dīn Suhrawardī, both of which aimed at an effective realisation of the "truth" and replaced the rationalism of Peripatetic philosophy by intellectual intuition (*dhawq*).<sup>6</sup>

"Both metaphysically and historically, *ishraqī* wisdom means the ancient pre-discursive mode of thought which is intuitive (*dhawqī*) rather than discursive (*baḥthī*) and which seeks to reach illumination by asceticism and purification. In the hands of Suhrawardī it becomes a new school of wisdom integrating Platonic and Aristotelian philosophy

Nasr’s Position on Islamic Philosophy with in the Islamic Tradition  
with Zoroastrian angelology and Hermetic ideas and  
placing the whole structure within the context of Sufism.”<sup>7</sup>

Regarding Fakhr al-Dīn Rāzī he commented, “His own importance in Muslim theology lies in his success in establishing the school of philosophical Kalām, already begun by Ghazzālī, in which both intellectual and revelational evidence played important roles.”<sup>8</sup>...“his greatest philosophical importance lies in the criticisms and doubts cast upon the principles of Peripatetic philosophy, which not only left an indelible mark upon that school but opened the horizon for the other modes of knowledge like *ishrāqī* philosophy and gnosis, which were more intimately bound with the spirit of Islam.”<sup>9</sup>

“Imam Rāzī’s role in Muslim intellectual life, besides establishing the school of philosophical Kalām begun by Ghazzālī, was to intensify the attack against Peripatetic philosophy, thereby preparing the way for the propagation of the metaphysical doctrines of the *Ishrāqīs* and Sufis who, like Imam Rāzī, opposed the rationalism inherent in Aristotelianism.”<sup>10</sup>

Regarding the theosophers he said, “All of whom sought to reconstruct Muslim intellectual life through a gnostic interpretation of the writings of ibn Sīnā, Suhrawardī, and the Sufis, and who carried further the attempt already begun by al-Fārābī, extended by ibn Sīnā in his Qur’ānic commentaries, and carried a step further by Suhrawardī, to correlate faith (*īmān*) with philosophy.”<sup>11</sup>

About Mulla Ṣadrā his views were as follows: “The particular genius of Mulla Ṣadrā was to synthesise and unify the three paths which lead to the Truth, viz., revelation, rational demonstration, and purification of the soul, which last in turn leads to illumination. For him gnosis, philosophy, and revealed religion were elements of

a harmonious ensemble the harmony of which he sought to reveal in his own life as well as in his writings. He formulated a perspective in which rational demonstration or philosophy, although not necessarily limited to that of the Greeks, became closely tied to the Qur'ān and the sayings of the Prophet and the Imams, and these in turn became unified with the gnostic doctrines which result from the illuminations received by a purified soul. That is why Mulla Ṣadrā's writings are a combination of logical statements, gnostic intuitions, traditions of the Prophet, and the Qur'ānic verses."<sup>12</sup>

“Regarded in this way, Mulla Ṣadrā must certainly be considered to be one of the most significant figures in the intellectual life of Islam. Coming at a moment when the intellectual sciences had become weakened, he succeeded in reviving them by co-ordinating philosophy as inherited from the Greeks and interpreted by the Peripatetics and Illuminationists before him with the teachings of Islam in its exoteric and esoteric aspects. He succeeded in putting the gnostic doctrines of ibn 'Arabī in a logical dress. He made purification of the soul a necessary basis and complement of the study of *ḥikmah*, thereby bestowing upon philosophy the practice of ritual and spiritual virtues which it had lost in the period of decadence of classical civilisation. Finally, he succeeded in correlating the wisdom of the ancient Greek and Muslim sages succeeded in correlating the wisdom of the ancient Greek and Muslim sages and philosophers as interpreted esoterically with the inner meaning of the Qur'ān. In all these matters he represents the final stage of effort by several generations of Muslim sages and may be considered to be the person in whom the streams, which had been approaching one another for some centuries before, finally united.”<sup>13</sup>

The underpinnings of these comments become clear when we approach his next work. In 1964 S. H. Nasr spoke of the “The Intellectual Dimensions in Islam” in his *An Introduction to Islamic Cosmological Doctrines*<sup>14</sup> and included Islamic philosophy as one of the major perspectives that always existed, in varying forms, within the matrix of the “Intellectual Dimensions” of the Islamic Tradition. In this early text he approached the issue from the point of view of the various modes of seeking knowledge that dominated different schools or classes of seekers of knowledge. “The most essential division within Islam is the “vertical” hierarchy of the Sacred Law (*Shari‘ah*), the Way (*Tariqah*) and the Truth (*Haqiqah*), the first being the exoteric aspect of the Islamic revelation, divided into the Sunni and the Shi‘ite interpretations of the tradition, and the latter two the esoteric aspects which are usually known under the denomination of Sufism. Or, one might say that the Truth is the centre, the Way or “ways” the radii and the Sacred Law the circumference of a circle the totality of which is Islam.

Another division of the intellectual perspectives within Islam is the classification of the various intellectual dimensions according to the modes of knowledge sought by each school. From this point of view we may enumerate the seekers of knowledge in the earlier centuries of Islam as being the Quranic scholars and traditionalists, grammarians, historians and geographers, natural scientists and mathematicians, the Mu‘tazilites and theologians, the Peripatetic philosophers, the Neo-Pythagoreans and Hermeticists, and finally the Sufis....<sup>15</sup>

“To discover more specifically how these perspectives appear in the 4<sup>th</sup>/11<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup>/12<sup>th</sup> centuries we turn to the evidence of some of the Muslim authors themselves. In his *Treatise on Being (Risalat al-wujūd)* ‘Umar Khayyām, one

of the most significant figures of the 5<sup>th</sup>/12<sup>th</sup> century, writes concerning those who seek ultimate knowledge, as follows:

Seekers after knowledge of God, Glorious and Most High, are divided into four groups:

1. The theologians (*Mutakallimūn*) who became content with disputation and satisfying proofs and considered this much knowledge of the Creator excellent is His Name, as sufficient.

2. The philosophers and metaphysicians [of Greek inspiration] (*ḥukamā'*) who used rational arguments and sought to know the laws of logic and were never content with satisfying arguments, but they too could not remain faithful to the conditions of logic and with it became helpless.

3. The Isma'īlīs and Ta'limiyūn who said that the way of knowledge is none other than receiving information from a trustworthy (*ṣādiq*) informer, for in reasoning about the knowledge of the Creator, His Essence and Attributes, there is much difficulty, and the reasoning of the opponents and the intelligent is stupefied and helpless before it. Therefore, it is better to seek knowledge from the words of a trustworthy person.

4. The people of *taṣawwuf* who did not seek knowledge by meditation or thinking but by purgation of their inner being and purifying of their disposition. They cleansed the rational soul from the impurities of Nature and bodily forms until it became a pure substance. It came face to face with the spiritual world (*malakūt*) so that the forms of that world became reflected in it in reality without doubt or ambiguity. This is the best of all paths

because none of the perfections of God are kept away from it, and there are not obstacles or veils put before it.”<sup>16</sup>

“Several centuries later, when the various perspectives had become more crystallised, Sayyid Sharif al-Jurjānī, the 9<sup>th</sup>/16<sup>th</sup> century Persian *ḥakīm*, in his glosses upon the *Maṭālī‘ al-Anwār*, writes: “To gain a knowledge of the beginning and the end of things, there are two ways possible: one the way of argument and examination (or observation), and the other they way of asceticism and self-purification (*mujāhadah*).”<sup>17</sup>

The point that he wanted to register was that in the Islamic perspective, philosophy is one of the several valid paths leading towards veritable knowledge.

He elaborated upon this point in his next work *Three Muslim Sages*,<sup>18</sup> and, with reference to the various representative figures of Islamic philosophy, expounded the view that Islamic philosophy was a perspective that was rooted in the Islamic worldview established by the Islamic revelation. “It is a school which, while remaining faithful to the inner consistency and logical demands of the disciplines with which it deals, also assimilates elements that have a profound connection with the intellectual and psychological needs of certain components of the new Islamic community. It thereby creates an intellectual perspective which corresponds not only to a possibility that must be realised but also to a need that must be fulfilled, a perspective that must be created within the total world view of Islam.”<sup>19</sup>

In the philosophic theory of religion developed by the Islamic philosophers “The prophet is distinguished from sages and saints first, because his reception of knowledge from the Divine Intellect is complete and perfect and theirs

partial, and, second, because he brings a law into the world and directs the practical lives of men and societies while the sages and saints seek after knowledge and inner perfection and have no law-bringing function. They are therefore subordinated to prophets, although they are themselves the most exalted and worthy of the vast majority of men who are not endowed with the extremely rare nature which is that of a prophet.”<sup>20</sup>

In his *Science and Civilization in Islam*,<sup>21</sup> that appeared four years after the aforementioned work, Nasr discussed the issue in greater detail and explained the status of Islamic philosophy, firstly, from the point of view “perspectives within the Islamic civilisation”.<sup>22</sup> As in his earlier works, he maintained that Islamic Philosophy was one of the most important and influential perspectives within the Islamic Intellectual universe. Apart from it he devoted three full chapters to the issue entitled, “Philosophy”, “Controversies between Philosophy and Theology” and “The Gnostic Tradition”,<sup>23</sup> wherein he explained in detail the need, rise, formulation, interaction, response and function of philosophy in the Islamic Tradition. The following quotation summarises his position in a succinct manner. “Philosophy in the Islamic world began in the third/ninth century, with the translation of Greek philosophical texts into Arabic. The first Muslim philosopher, any of whose writing has survived —al-Kindī—was also celebrated into the Latin West. He was well acquainted with the main tenets of Greek philosophy, and even had a translation of a summary version of the Enneads made for him. It was he who initiated the process of formulating a technical philosophical vocabulary in Arabic, and of rethinking Greek philosophy in terms of Islamic doctrines. In both these respects, he was followed by al-Fārābī, through whom the basis for Peripatetic philosophy

became well established in Islam. The philosophers of this school were familiar with the Alexandrian and Athenian Neoplatonists and commentators on Aristotle, and viewed the philosophy of Aristotle through Neoplatonic eyes. Moreover, there are Neopythagorean elements to be seen in al-Kindī, Shi‘ite political doctrines in al-Fārābī, and ideas of Shiite inspiration in certain of the writings of Avicenna.

The main tendency of the Peripatetic school, however, which found its greatest Islamic exponent in Avicenna, was toward a philosophy based on the use of the discursive faculty, and relying essentially on the syllogistic method. The rationalistic aspect of this school reached its terminal point with Averroes, who became the most purely Aristotelian of the Muslim Peripatetics, and rejected, as an explicit aspect of philosophy, those Neoplatonic and Muslim elements that had entered into the world view of the Eastern Peripatetics, such as Avicenna.

From the sixth/twelfth century onward, the other major school of Islamic philosophy or, more appropriately speaking “theosophy” in its original sense—came into being. This school, whose founder was Suhrawardī, became known as the Illuminist (*ishrāqī*) school, as contrasted with the Peripatetic (*mashshā’ī*) school. While the Peripatetics leaned most heavily upon the syllogistic method of Aristotle, and sought to reach truth by means of arguments based on reason, the Illuminists, who drew their doctrines from both the Platonists and the ancient Persians as well as the Islamic revelation itself, regarded intellectual intuition and illumination as the basic method to be followed, side by side with the use of reason. The rationalist philosophers, although they left an indelible mark upon the terminology of later Muslim theology, gradually became alienated from the orthodox elements, both theological and gnostic, so that, after their “refutation”

by al-Ghazzālī, they exercised little influence upon the main body of Muslim opinion. But the Illuminationist school, which combined the method of ratiocination with that of intellectual intuition and illumination, came to the fore during that very period that is generally – although quite erroneously – regarded as the end of Islamic philosophy. In fact along with gnosis it occupied the central position in the intellectual life of Islam. At the very moment when, in the West, Augustinian Platonism (which regarded knowledge as the fruit of illumination) was giving way to Thomistic Aristotelianism (which turned away from this very doctrine of illumination), the reverse process was taking place in the Islamic world.

We must, however, make a distinction between the Sunni and Shī‘ite reactions to philosophy. The Sunni world rejected philosophy almost entirely after Averroes, except for logic and the continuing influence of philosophy on its methods of argumentation, as well as some cosmological beliefs that have remained in the formulations of theology, and certain Sufī doctrines. In the Shī‘ah world, however, the philosophy of both the Peripatetic and Illuminationist school has been taught continuously as a living tradition through the centuries in the religious schools; some of the greatest figures in Islamic philosophy, such as Mulla Ṣadrā, who was contemporary with Descartes and Leibniz, came long after the period usually regarded as “the productive phase” of Islamic philosophy.”<sup>24</sup>

Later, in 1971 and 1973, S. H. Nasr turned to certain specific questions that he had touched upon during the course of his earlier writings. These pertained to the role and function of philosophy, various responses to it and a creative interplay or interaction of philosophy with other perspectives of the Islamic Tradition. “Al-Ḥikmat al-Ilāhiyyah and Kalām”<sup>25</sup> deals with the struggle and

reciprocal influence between *falsafah* and Kalām in Islam. In the history of the struggle and reciprocal influence between philosophy and Kalām, Nasr argued, one can distinguish four periods:

1. “The earliest period, from the beginning to the third/ninth century, when the Mu‘tazilite school was dominant in Kalām, and *falsafah* was passing through its period of genesis of early development with such figures as Irānshahrī and Al-Kindī and his students. This period was one of distinct but parallel development of and close association between *falsafah* and Kalām in an atmosphere more or less of relative mutual respect, at least in the case of Al-Kindī himself, although from the side of Kalām certain of its branches such as the school of Basra opposed *falsafah* violently even during this early period.

2. The period from the third/ninth to the fifth/eleventh century, from the rise of Ash‘arite theology and its elaboration to the beginning of the gradual incorporation of certain philosophical arguments into Kalām by Imām al-Ḥaramayn al-Juwaynī and his student Ghazzālī. This was a period of intense opposition and often enmity between *falsafah* and Kalām, a period whose phases have been so ably studied along with those of the first period by many western scholars...

3. The period from Juwaynī and Ghazzālī to Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī, that is from about the fifth/eleventh to the seventh/thirteenth centuries when, while the opposition between *falsafah* and Kalām continued, each began to incorporate into itself more and more of the elements of the other. *falsafah* began to discuss more than ever before problems such as the

meaning of the Word of God, the relation between human and Divine will, the Divine Attributes, etc., which had always been the central concern of Kalām, while Kalām became ever more “philosophical”, employing both ideas and arguments drawn from *falsafah*. As a result at the end of this period, as already noted by Ibn Khaldūn, men appeared whom it is difficult to classify exactly either in the category of *faylasūf* or *mutakallim* and who could be legitimately considered as belonging to either or to both groups.

4. From the seventh/thirteenth century onward, when the school of *al-Ḥikmat al-ilāhiyyah* or *Ḥikmat-i-ilāhī* developed fully and a new type of relation came into being based on the trends established during the third period. Since the *Ḥikmat-i-ilāhī* began to develop particularly in Persia where Shi‘ism was also on the rise, naturally much of the interaction between *Ḥikmah* and Kalām involved Shi‘ite Kalām, although Sunni Kalām must not by any means be forgotten, for even if most of the *ḥakīms* were Shi‘ite, they were nevertheless well versed in and fully aware of the arguments of Sunni Kalām, to which they often addressed themselves.”<sup>26</sup>

Nasr concluded his elucidation with the comments of the famous student of Mulla Ṣadra, ‘Abd al-Razzāq Lāhijī quoting from his *Gawhar-Murād* <sup>27</sup> and says, “In this comparison between *Ḥikmat* and Kalām, which is at once principial and historical, Lāhijī expresses the view of those later *ḥakīms* who were also *mutakallims* and above all Gnostics and Sufis. He therefore alludes to knowledge transcending both *Ḥikmat* and Kalām— that of the *muwahḥid*— while insisting on the superiority of *Ḥikmat* over Kalām on their own proper plane. Lāhijī was to be followed by many men like Qaḍī Sa‘id Qummi, Mullā ‘Alī

Nūrī and Ḥājji Mullā Hādī Sabziwārī who like him were well-versed in both *Ḥikmat* and Kalām, men who while placing a different emphasis upon each discipline all subordinated Kalām to the purer knowledge of things divine contained in this theosophy or *Ḥikmat* which has come to play such an important role in the intellectual and religious life of the eastern lands of Islam and especially Persia.”<sup>28</sup>

One of the most detailed and profound expositions of the question of the position of Islamic philosophy with in the Islamic Tradition that is to be found in the works of S. H. Nasr is contained in his article “The Meaning and Role of Philosophy in Islam”.<sup>29</sup> After recapitulating his earlier insight<sup>30</sup> that “Islam is hierarchic in its essential structure and also in the way it has manifested itself in history. The Islamic revelation possess within itself several dimensions and has been manifested to mankind on the basic levels of *al-islām*, *al-īmān* and *al-iḥsān* and from another perspective as *Sharī‘ah*, *Ṭarīqah* and *Ḥaqīqah*”,<sup>31</sup> S. H. Nasr emphasised that “in order to understand the real role of ‘philosophy’ in Islam we must consider Islam in all its amplitude and depth, including especially the dimension of *al-Ḥaqīqah*, where precisely one will find the point of intersection between “traditional philosophy” and metaphysics and that aspect of the Islamic perspective into which *sapientia* in all its forms has been integrated throughout Islamic history. Likewise, the whole of Islamic civilisation must be considered in its width and breadth, not only a single part of *dār al-islām*, for it is one of the characteristics of Islamic civilisation that the totality of its life and the richness of its arts and sciences can only be gauged by studying all of its parts. Only in unison do these parts reveal the complete unity that lies within all the genuine manifestations of Islam. One cannot understand the

role of “philosophy” or any other intellectual discipline in Islam by selecting only one dimension of Islam or one particular geographical area, no matter how important that dimension or that area may be in itself...”<sup>32</sup>

Having warned us from adopting a truncated vision, in terms of geographical totality of the Islamic Civilisation, he stressed the need to define the term philosophy with utmost precision since, in case of the traditional civilisations, terms have precise connotations. “We can use the term “philosophy” as the translation of the Arabic *al-falsafah* and inquire into the meaning of the latter term in Islam and its civilisation. Or we can seek to discover how the term “philosophy” as used today must be understood within the context of Islamic civilisation. Or again we can seek to find all those Islamic sciences and intellectual disciplines which possess a “philosophical” aspect in the sense of dealing with the general worldview of man and his position in the Universe. For our own part, we must begin by making the basic affirmation that if by philosophy we mean profane philosophy as currently understood in the West, that is, the attempt of man to reach ultimate knowledge of things through the use of his own rational and sensuous faculties and cut off completely from both the effusion of grace and the light of the Divine Intellect, then such an activity is alien to the Islamic perspective. It is a fruit of a humanism that did not manifest itself in Islam except for a very few instances of a completely peripheral and unimportant nature. It is what the Persian philosophers themselves have called mental acrobatics or literally “weaving” (*bāftan*), in contrast to philosophy as the gaining of certainty, or literally the discovery of truth (*yāftan*). But if by philosophy we mean a traditional philosophy based on certainty rather than doubt, where man’s mind is continuously illuminated by the light of the Divine Intellect

and protected from error’ by the grace provided by a traditional world in which man breathes, then we certainly do have an Islamic philosophy which possesses illimitable horizons and is one of the richest intellectual traditions in the world, a philosophy that is always related to religious realities and has been most often wedded to illumination (*ishrāq*) and gnosis (*‘irfān*). If we view philosophy in this light, then the title of “philosopher” cannot be refused to those in Islam who are called the *falāsifah*, *ḥukamā’* and *‘urafā’*.”...Moreover, if one takes the whole of the Islamic world into account, including the Persian and the Indian parts of it, one certainly cannot call Islamic philosophy a transient phenomenon which had a short lived existence in a civilisation whose intellectual structure did not permit its survival.<sup>33</sup>

“For the Islamic *ḥukamā’*,...philosophy was originally a form of revealed Truth, closely allied to revelation and connected with the name of Hermes, who became identified by them with Idrīs, who was entitled “The Father of Philosophers” (*Abū ‘l-ḥukamā’*). The identification of the chain of philosophy with an ante-diluvian prophet reveals a profound aspect of the concept of philosophy in Islam—far more profound than that any historical criticism could claim to negate it. It was a means of confirming the legitimacy of *ḥikmah* in the Islamic intellectual world.”<sup>34</sup>

Having established the existence of Islamic philosophy as a distinct type of traditional philosophy S. H. Nasr probed into the meaning and definition of philosophy. “We must first of all make a distinction between philosophy in the general sense as *Weltanschauung* and philosophy as a distinct intellectual discipline in the technical sense. If we think of philosophy in the general sense of *Weltanschauung*, then outside of *al-falsafah* and *al-ḥikmah*, with which philosophy has been identified by most schools,

we must search within several other traditional Islamic disciplines for “philosophy”, these disciplines including Kalām or theology, *uṣūl al-fiqh*, or principles of jurisprudence, and especially Sufism, in particular its intellectual expression which is also called *al-‘irfān* or gnosis. This fact is especially true of the later period of Islamic history when in most of the Arab world *falsafah* as a distinct school disappeared and the intellectual needs corresponding to it found their fulfilment in Kalām and Sufism.<sup>35</sup> As for philosophy in the technical sense, it embraces not only Peripatetic philosophy in its early phase, known in the West thanks to medieval translations and modern research following the earlier tradition, but also later Peripatetic philosophy after Ibn Rushd and beginning with Khawājah Naṣīr al-Dīn al-Ṭūsī, the School of Illumination (*ishrāq*) founded by Suhrawardī, metaphysical and gnostic forms of Sufism identified closely with the school of Ibn ‘Arabī, and the “transcendent theosophy” (*al-ḥikmat al-muta‘āliyah*) of Mulla Ṣadrā, not to speak of philosophies with specific religious forms such as Ismā‘īlī philosophy, which possesses its own long and rich history...”.<sup>36</sup> In order to emphasise the diffusion of philosophy as well as the richness of the Islamic intellectual tradition he added, “The most profound metaphysics in Islam is to be found in the writings of the Sufi masters, especially those who have chosen to deal with the theoretical aspects of the spiritual way, or with that *scientia sacra* called gnosis (*al-‘irfān*). A more general treatment of the meaning of philosophy in Islam would have to include Sufism, kalām, *uṣūl* and some of the other Islamic sciences as well..”<sup>37</sup>

In the next section S. H. Nasr made a rather detailed survey of the definitions of the terms *falsafah* or *ḥikmah* as these terms have been understood by the traditional Islamic

authorities themselves. His exposition provides us an insight into philosophy's own vision of itself as reflected in the definitions formulated by the authorities of Islamic philosophy over the centuries. These definitions and the views of the authorities of Islamic philosophy reveal that there was a gradual increase of close rapport between philosophy and religion and in the end philosophy became completely wedded to religion in its deeper aspects. In fact the whole later tradition of Islamic philosophy considered philosophy as veritable philosophy only if it is able to transform the being of man and enable him to have a new vision of things made possible by this very transformation. As such it is nothing other than a particular expression of the esotericism (*al-bāṭin*) of religion, accessible only through spiritual exegesis or hermeneutics (*ta'wīl*) of the revealed truths contained in religious sources.<sup>38</sup> A representative piece of writing is given in the following quotation from Mulla Ṣadrā's *Al-Ḥikmat al-Muta'āliyah*..where he defined *falsafah* or *ḥikmah* in a most comprehensive and precise manner<sup>39</sup> and followed it by arguing that the *ḥikmah*<sup>40</sup> mentioned in the Islamic texts is the “first principles discussed in *ḥikmah muta'āliyah*..” and it was the same that the Holy Prophet had in mind in his prayer to his Lord when he said: “ O Lord ! Show us things as they really are.”<sup>41</sup> Nasr adds that, “Moreover, he gives a spiritual exegesis of the Qur'ānic verse “surely we created man of the best stature, then We reduced him to the lowest of the low, save those who believe and do good works” (Qur'ān, 95: 4-6) in this way: “of the best stature” refers to the spiritual world and the angelic part of the soul, “the lowest of the low” to the material world and the animal part of the soul, “those who believe” to theoretical *ḥikmah* and those who “do good works” to practical *ḥikmah*. Seen in this light *ḥikmah*, in its two aspects of

knowledge and action, becomes the means whereby man is saved from his wretched state of the lowest of the low and enabled to regain the angelic and paradisaical state in which he was originally made. *Hikmah* is, in his view, completely wedded to religion and the spiritual life and is far removed from purely mental activity connected with the rationalistic conception of philosophy that has become prevalent in the West since the post-Renaissance period.”<sup>42</sup>

Part of the discussion in this article is devoted to the opposition that philosophy had to face from different quarters of the Islamic Tradition. Nasr reminds us that “opposition”, in the context of a traditional civilisation is “very different from the opposition of contending philosophical schools which have no principles in common. In Islam there has often been a tension between the various components and dimensions of the tradition but a tension that has been almost always creative and has never destroyed the unity of Islam and its civilisation. With this reserve in mind it can be said that “opposition” to *falsafah* in Islam came mainly from three groups, but for different reasons: The purely religious scholars dealing with *fiqh* and *uṣūl*, the theologians (*mutakallimūn*) especially of the Ash‘arite school, and certain of the Sufis.<sup>43</sup> Though he had had occasion to refer to this matter of “opposition” in several of his earlier works<sup>44</sup> he further elaborated certain of its aspects and concluded by saying that, “the criticism of *falsafah* by the *mutakallimūn*, therefore, was more than anything else a creative interplay between *falsafah* and Kalām which left an indelible mark upon both of them. Kalām forced *falsafah*, even the Peripatetic school, to deal with certain specifically religious issues while *falsafah* influenced ever more the formulation and argumentation of Kalām itself, starting with Imam al-Ḥaramayn al-Juwaynī, continuing with al-Ghazzālī and al-Rāzī, and in a sense

culminating with ‘Aḏud al-Dīn al-Ījī and his *Kitāb al-Mawāqif*, which is almost as much *falsafah* as *kalām*. In Shī‘ism also it is difficult to distinguish some of the later commentaries upon the *Tajrīd* from works on *falsafah*. The “opposition” of *Kalām* to *falsafah*, therefore, far from destroying *falsafah*, influenced its later course and in much of the Sunni world absorbed it into itself after the 7<sup>th</sup>/13<sup>th</sup> century, with the result that, as already mentioned, such a figure as Ibn Khaldūn was to call this late *Kalām* a form of philosophy.”...As for the criticism of *falsafah* made by certain Sufis, it too must be taken in the light of the nature of Islamic esotericism. Sufi metaphysics could not become bound to the “lesser truth” of Aristotelianism against whose inherent limitations it reacted and whose limits it criticised. But the criticism against the substance of *falsafah* came, not from the whole of Sufism, but from a particular tendency within it. In general one can distinguish two tendencies in Sufi spirituality, one which takes the human intellect to be a ladder to the luminous world of the spirit and the other which emphasises more the discontinuity between the human reason and the Divine Intellect and seeks to reach the world of the spirit by breaking completely the power of ratiocination within the mind. The final result, which is union with God, is the same in both cases, but the role played by reason is somewhat different in the two instances. The first tendency can be seen in Ibn ‘Arabī, ‘Abd al-Karīm al-Jilī, Ṣadr al-Dīn al-Qūnyawī and the like, and the second in some of the famous Persian Sufi poets such as Sanā’i and Mawlānā Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī and in the Arab world in certain early Sufi poets....In fact both tendencies within Sufism have played a critical role in the later history of *falsafah*, one more positive and the other in a sense more negative, while both aspects of Sufism have remained the guardians and expositors of traditional

*falsafah* or *hikmah* in its profoundest and most immutable sense or what in Western parlance is called *philosophia perennis*. *Falsafah* for its part benefited immensely from this interaction with Sufism and gradually became itself the outer courtyard leading those qualified to the inner garden of gnosis and beatitude....The very substance of *falsafah* was changed during later Islamic history from simply a rational system of thought with an Islamic form to an ancillary of esotericism closely wedded to illumination and gnosis. Likewise Islamic philosophy was saved from the deadlock it had reached with the type of excessive Aristotelianism of an Ibn Rushd and was enabled to channel itself into a new direction, a direction which bestowed upon it renewed vigour and made it a major aspect of Islamic intellectual life in the Eastern lands of Islam during the eight centuries following the death of the Andalusian master of Aristotelianism with whom the earlier chapter of Islamic philosophy had drawn to a close."<sup>45</sup>

Speaking of the changing role of philosophy in Islam and Islamic civilisation S. H. Nasr alerted us to the fact that "*falsafah* performed an important role in the process of the absorption and synthesis of the pre-Islamic sciences and the formulation of the Islamic sciences. The science of logic, the problem of the classification of the sciences, the methodology of the sciences, and their interaction with the rest of Islamic culture were all deeply influenced by *falsafah* and its particular elaboration in Islam. Moreover, during this early period most of the great scientists were also philosophers, so that we can speak during the early centuries, and even later, of a single type of Muslim savant who was both philosophers and scientist and whom we have already called philosopher-scientist."<sup>46</sup> In any case during early Islamic history the cultivation and the

development of the sciences would have been inconceivable without those of *falsafah*. The meaning of the term *ḥakim*, which denotes at once a physician, scientist and philosopher, is the best proof of this close connection. Not only did *falsafah* aid closely in the development of the intellectual sciences, but also it was the major discipline in which tools and instruments of analysis, logic and rational inquiry were developed for the transmitted sciences and other aspects of Islamic culture as well. The tools of logic developed mostly by the *falāsifah* and in conformity with the particular genius of Islam, in which logic plays a positive role and prepares the mind for illumination and contemplation, were applied to fields ranging far and wide, from grammar and rhetoric to even the classification and categorisation of Ḥadīth, from organising economic activity in the bazaar to developing the geometry and arithmetic required to construct the great monuments of Islamic architecture.”<sup>47</sup> ... These and other innumerable proofs “All attest to the important role of *falsafah* in early Islam in providing the appropriate intellectual background for the encounter of Muslims with the arts, sciences and philosophies of other civilisations. This role was in fact crucial during the early period of Islamic history when Muslims were translating the heritage of the great civilisations which had preceded them into their own world of thought and were laying the foundations for the rise of the Islamic sciences.”<sup>48</sup>

“Finally it must be re-asserted that during this earlier phase of Islamic history one of the important and enduring roles of *falsafah* was its struggle with Kalām and the particularly “philosophical” structure it finally bestowed upon Kalām. The difference between the treatises of Kalām of al-Ash‘arī himself or his student Abū Bakr al-Bāqillānī and Rāzī, Ījī and Sayyid Sharif al-Jurjānī is due

solely to the long struggle with *falsafah*. Through Kalām, therefore, *falsafah*, as an Islamic discipline, left its indelible mark upon the Sunni world.”<sup>49</sup>

If the post Ibn Rushdian phase witnessed a different role and function of philosophy in Islam it was due to the impasse that the peripatetic philosophy had reached as well as the firm establishment of various Islamic sciences which from then onwards followed their own course of development. The role and function of philosophy differed in the Eastern and Western lands of Islam as well due to the situations prevailing in these regions. Though it was only pursued sparsely and was not cultivated avidly in the Western lands of Islam, it nevertheless continued to possess a certain mode of life within the matrix of Kalām and Sufism. S. H. Nasr informed us that, as far as the eastern lands of Islam were concerned, “besides its function in aiding to sustain the intellectual sciences, which continued to be cultivated in Persia and India—and also to a certain extent among the Ottomans—up to the 12<sup>th</sup>/18<sup>th</sup> century, and besides its role in the various aspects of the religious life of the community, *falsafah* or *ḥikmah*, which by now had come much closer to the heart of the Islamic message and had left the limitative confines of Peripatetic philosophy, became the bridge for many men to Sufism and Sufi metaphysics.”<sup>50</sup> “On the one hand *ḥikmah* became profoundly imbued with the gnostic teachings of Ibn ‘Arabi and his school and was able to present in such cases as Mulla Ṣadrā a more systematic and logical interpretation of Sufi metaphysics than found in many of the Sufi texts themselves, and on the other hand it became in turn the major point of access to the teachings of Sufism for many men of intellectual inclination who were engaged in the cultivation of the official religious sciences.”<sup>51</sup>

The conclusion that S. H. Nasr draws from these points has been summarised in the following words. “*Falsafah* in Islam satisfied a certain need for causality among certain types of men, provided the necessary logical and rational tools for the cultivation and development of many of the arts and sciences, enabled Muslims to encounter and assimilate the learning of many other cultures, in its interactions with Kalām left a deep effect upon the latter’s future course, and finally became a handmaid to illumination and gnosis, thus creating a bridge between the rigour of logic and the ecstasy of spiritual union.”<sup>52</sup>

In his article “Post-Avicinian Philosophy and the Study of Being”, S. H. Nasr again drew the attention of his readers toward the significant difference of the role and function of philosophy during the course of its later development in the Islamic Tradition. He said, “in the Islamic world philosophy drew even closer to the ocean of Being itself until finally it became the complement of gnosis and its extension in the direction of systematic exposition and analysis.... in the Islamic world also philosophy became inseparable from experience. But in this case the experience in question was of a spiritual and inward character, including ultimately the vision of Pure Being, tasting of a reality which is the origin of this sapiential wisdom or *hikmah*.”<sup>53</sup>

In his *Islamic Life and Thought* S. H. Nasr returned to many of the issues that he had dealt in his earlier works and devoted a large part of the book to the study of Islamic intellectual life and, more particularly, to the elucidation of various aspects of Islamic philosophy.<sup>54</sup> Two points deserve special mention here; continuity of the Islamic intellectual tradition and its Islamic/religious character. Nasr tried to dispel certain misconceptions that prevailed about both these aspects of Islamic philosophy by

reminding his readers: "Because the Western-educated classes in the Islamic world are on the receiving end of general influences from the West, they tend to learn even about Islamic philosophy and their own intellectual heritage from orientalists and other Occidental sources. Even now in the case of the least prejudiced and most sympathetic orientalists – with some honourable exceptions – there is a tendency to substitute that period of Islamic intellectual history which influenced the West for the whole intellectual history of the Muslim world. Thus nearly every branch of the sciences and philosophy terminates, according to most of these sources, around the seventh/thirteenth century, the very period when intellectual contact between the East and West ceased. As a result, most Western-educated Oriental students of Islamic philosophy, who rely upon standard Western sources, think that for the past six or seven centuries there has been no intellectual life in Islam, and they tend to treat their own intellectual tradition as a passing phase in the history of Western civilisation.

There has been a great revival of interest in medieval civilisation on the part of Western scholars during this century and in respectable academic circles one no longer follows the prejudice of the categories alien to the structure of Islam. These and many other factors which have risen from the false view of Islamic intellectual history have made the correct interpretation of the Islamic intellectual history have made the correct interpretation of the Islamic heritage difficult, although the genuine sources, both written and oral, still exist for all who care to explore and study them."<sup>55</sup> ..... "contrary to what most Western sources have written, the intellectual life of Islam did not by any means come to an end merely because of the termination of this contact."<sup>56</sup>

“There are numerous other traits of the philosophical and metaphysical schools in Islam which are worth discussing. Here it is sufficient to mention that there has been a continuity of intellectual tradition in Islam from the beginning to the present day, and that if this tradition is forgotten it is not because it does not exist but rather because we are sleeping over treasures.”<sup>57</sup>

In the quotation that follows he, for the first time gave the title “Prophetic Philosophy” to Islamic philosophy. “First of all, Islam is a tradition based wholly upon a distinct revelation, consequently, the sense of the transcendent and the revealed is a potent force in Islamic society. No philosophy that ignores both revelation and intellectual intuition, and thus divorces itself from the twin sources of transcendent knowledge, can hope to be anything but a disrupting and dissolving influence in Islamic society. Indeed, Islamic philosophy is precisely ‘prophetic philosophy’, that is to say a worldview in which the role of revelation, in both the macrocosmic and the microcosmic sense, looms large on the horizon. And it is in Islam that ‘prophetic philosophy’ finds its most complete and perfect expression.

Secondly, and closely connected to this point, there is the question of the relation between reason and revelation, which occupied the Muslim philosophers from the very beginning and which found its most harmonious solution in the hands of Mulla Şadrā, who like the sages before him expounded that Divine Wisdom or *sapientia*, that gnosis in which faith and reason find their common ground. One need hardly mention that, once the function of the intellect is reduced to reason and also revelation is limited to its most exoteric and outward level of meaning, then faith and reason can never become truly harmonised. Every attempt which is then made to bring about a harmony will meet

with the lack of success that the history of modern times so amply illustrates”..... Islamic philosophy also possesses a unified vision of things—that is, a view of the interrelation between all realms of knowledge. However dangerous the separative tendency (or sclerosis as some call it) of the modern sciences may be for the West, it is doubly fatal for Islam, whose sole *raison d’etre* is to assert the doctrine of unity (*al-tawḥīd*) and to apply it to every aspect of life. To be able to create and maintain an interrelation between various fields of knowledge is therefore of vital importance for all who are interested in the welfare of Islamic society. And here, as in other instances, the Islamic intellectual heritage offers amply guidance.”<sup>58</sup>

“Philosophy turns from the attempt to describe a rational system to explaining the structure of reality with the aim of providing a plan of the cosmos with the help of which man can escape from this world considered as a cosmic crypt. Henceforth, in the East the primary role of philosophy became to provide the possibility of a vision of the spiritual universe. Philosophy thus became closely wedded to gnosis.”<sup>59</sup>

“Gradually the teachings of Avicenna, Shurawardī and Ibn ‘Arabī, as well as those of the theologians, became synthesised in vast metaphysical systems which reached their peak during the eleventh/seventeenth century with Mīr Dāmād and Ṣadr al-Dīn Shīrāzī. These metaphysicians, who are the contemporaries of Descartes and Leibniz, developed a metaphysics which was no less logical and demonstrative than those of their European contemporaries did and yet which included a dimension of gnosis and intuition which the European philosophy of the period completely lacked.”<sup>60</sup>

The question of the integration and assimilation of the intellectual heritage of Antiquity came up again in the discussions of Islamic science and since it holds good for Islamic philosophy as well a few comments would be in place here. “Islamic science came into being from a wedding between the spirit that issued from the Quranic revelation and the existing sciences of various civilisations which Islam inherited and which it transmuted through its spiritual power into a new substance, at once different from the continuous with what had existed before it. The international and cosmopolitan nature of Islamic civilisation, derived from the universal character of the Islamic revelation and reflected in the geographical spread of the Islamic world (*dār al-islām*), enabled it to create the first science of a truly international nature in human history.”...

“Islam became heir to the intellectual heritage of all the major civilisations before it save that of the Far East, and it became a haven within which various intellectual traditions found a new lease upon life, albeit transformed within a new spiritual universe. This point must be repeated, particularly since so many people in the West wrongly believe that Islam acted simply as a bridge over which ideas of Antiquity passed to mediaeval Europe. As a matter of fact nothing could be further from the truth, for no ideas, theory or doctrine entered the citadel of Islamic thought unless it became first Muslimized and integrated into the total world view of Islam. Whatever could not make its peace (*salām*) with Islam was sooner or later dispelled from the arena of Islamic intellectual life of relegated completely to the margin of the tapestry of the Islamic sciences.”<sup>61</sup>

“The most important source for Islamic alchemy, and in fact a major source of inspiration for certain of the other

Islamic sciences and schools of thought, is, however, a number of treatises attributed to Hermes and known in the West as the *Corpus Hermeticum*.<sup>62</sup> What the mediaeval and even post-mediaeval West has known of Hermes comes essentially from Islamic sources rather than directly from Alexandrian ones, where, from the Wedding of the Greek god Hermes and the Egyptian god Thoth, the figure of Hermes as the founder of a alchemy and a whole 'philosophy of nature' come into being.

In Islamic sources the one Hermes of Alexandrian sources became three, hence the term Hermes Trismegistos (from the Arabic *al-muthallath bi 'l-hikmah*), which has inspired so many philosophers and poets in the West. The three Hermes were considered by Muslims as prophets belonging to the golden chain of prophecy stretching from Adam to the Prophet of Islam. Hence Hermeticism was considered as a revealed doctrine and was easily integrated into the Islamic perspective because it was already 'Islamic' in the wider sense of the term as belonging to the chain of prophecy. The first Hermes was identified with the ante-diluvian prophet Idrīs (or Akhnukh). He lived in Egypt and built the pyramids. The second was entitled al-Bābilī, namely 'Babylonian'. He lived in Mesopotamia after the flood and was responsible for reviving the sciences. The third lived again in Egypt after the flood and taught men many of the sciences and crafts. The Muslims saw the three Hermes not only as founders of alchemy, but also of astronomy and astrology, architecture and many of the other arts, and finally of philosophy. The first Hermes is entitled by Muslim sources *Abū 'l-Ḥukamā'* (the father of theosophers or philosophers).<sup>63</sup>

One may like to question the legitimacy and opportuneness of the aforementioned approach, as it is discernible among the theologians, theosophers and

philosophers of Islam. From the point of view that S. H. Nasr has adopted, it derives its legitimacy from the inherent principles and practice of the Islamic Tradition itself. Islamic Tradition, from its vantage point of being the summer-up, incorporated — obviously with alterations, amendments, abrogation and adaptations — the “Judeo-Christian” elements; especially the legal (or Shari‘ite, in the technical sense of the word) aspects of the Mosaic code and the esoteric elements of the Christian message. These elements were brought to perfection in addition to the specifically Islamic aspects of the new faith in the Islamic revelation. This process, as it was accomplished on a purely vertical plane, had the stamp of divine sanction on it which distinguished it from any subsequent attempts that the Islamic community may had envisaged in the same direction. Nevertheless it had the significant role of setting the example for integrating ideas and symbols of pre-Islamic origin into the unitary perspective of Islam and its general framework.

As for the opportuneness of such an approach we can do no better than to quote S. H. Nasr again. This time he has elucidated the point with reference to Ibn ‘Arabi but the argument holds good for Islamic philosophy also.

“The importance of Ibn ‘Arabi consists, therefore, in his formulation of the doctrines of Sufism and in his making them explicit. His advent marks neither a “progress” in Sufism by its becoming more articulated and theoretical, nor a deterioration from a love of God to a form of pantheism, as has been so often asserted against Ibn ‘Arabi. Actually, the explicit formulation of Sufi doctrines by Muhyi ‘l-Din signifies a need on the part of the milieu to which they were addressed for further explanation and greater clarification. Now, the need for explanation does not increase with one’s knowledge; rather, it becomes

necessary to the extent that one is ignorant and has lost the immediate grasp of things through a dimming of the faculty of intuition and insight. As Islamic civilisation drew away gradually from its source of revelation, the need for explanation increased to the degree that the spiritual insight and the perspicacity of men diminished. The early generations needed only a hint or directive (*ishārah*) to understand the inner meaning of things; men of later centuries needed a full-fledged explanation. Through Ibn ‘Arabī Islamic esotericism provided the doctrines which alone could guarantee the preservation of the Tradition among men who were always in danger of being led astray by incorrect reasoning and in most of whom the power of intellectual intuition was not strong enough to reign supreme over other human tendencies and to prevent the mind from falling into error. Through Ibn ‘Arabī, what had always been the inner truth of Sufism was formulated in such a manner that it has dominated the spiritual and intellectual life of Islam ever since.”<sup>64</sup>

This formulation was responsible, apart from other things, for “placing in the ascendancy the trend to expound the mystical experience in philosophic terminology”.<sup>65</sup> As such it was one of the various possible means to justify and prove the religious teachings concerning God’s unity that unfolded themselves gradually during the whole of Islamic intellectual history.<sup>66</sup> Use of philosophic terminology or discussion of philosophic positions shall never be equated, however, with the unbridled activity of the unaided reason that would imply that the norm for the mind is reasoning pure and simple, in the absence, not only of intellection, but also of indispensable objective data. It is an expression in a philosophic style and terminology of specifically Islamic positions and data obtained from mystical experience as well as from unveiling finding as a result of reading and

meditating upon the Qur'ān and fearing God; it can not be legitimately termed as bringing philosophic issues within the pale of Sufism. To quote Schuon, "In a certain respect, the difference between philosophy, theology and gnosis is total; in an other respect, it is relative. It is total when one understands, by 'philosophy', only rationalism;<sup>67</sup> by 'theology' only the explanation of religious teachings; and by 'gnosis' only intuitive and intellective, and thus suprarational, knowledge; but the difference is only relative when one understands by 'philosophy' the fact of thinking, by 'theology' the fact of speaking dogmatically of God and religious things and by 'gnosis' the fact of presenting pure metaphysics, for then the genres interpenetrate. It is impossible to deny that the most illustrious Sufis, while being 'Gnostics' by definition, were at the same time to some extent theologians and to some extent philosophers, or that the great theologians were both to some extent philosophers and to some extent Gnostics ...."<sup>68</sup>

Chittick has also pointed out that "the mainstream of Islamic intellectuality, which in any case was moving more towards philosophy than Kalām. In addition, from the 7th / 13th century onward Islamic intellectuality tends towards synthesis. Many authors contributed to the harmonisation of divergent intellectual perspectives .... It was only logical that Sufism should play a major role in this harmonisation of different intellectual streams."<sup>69</sup>

*Islam and the Plight of the Modern Man*,<sup>70</sup> as the title implies, deals with comparative study of the predicament of the modern man in its varied aspects. Intellectual life is also the focus of attention and in this work comparative aspects of the issue have received greater attention though the position that S. H. Nasr adopted earlier is maintained. Commenting upon the situation of philosophy in the West Nasr said, "Sapiential doctrines and the appropriate

spiritual techniques necessary for their realisation are hardly accessible in the West, and 'philosophy' has become totally divorced from experience of a spiritual nature. In the traditional East the very opposite holds true. 'Philosophy' as a mental play or discipline that does not transform one's being is considered meaningless and in fact dangerous. The whole of the teachings of such Islamic philosophers as Suhrawardī and Mulla Ṣadrā and all of Sufism are based on this point, as are all the schools of Hinduism and Buddhism, especially Vedānta and Zen. The very separation of knowledge from being which lies at the heart of the crisis of modern man is avoided in the Oriental traditions, which consider legitimate only that form of knowledge that can transform the being of the knower.<sup>71</sup> ... "term 'philosophy' (*al-falsafah* or *al-ḥikmah*) used in a traditional Islamic context must not be confused or equated with the modern use of the term, and also that the basic distinction between Oriental metaphysics and profane philosophy must be kept in mind. Moreover, the traditional Islamic 'philosophy' which is usually the subject of comparative studies fills, in fact, an intermediate position in the spectrum of Islamic intellectual life between the pure metaphysics contained in various forms of Islamic esotericism, especially Sufism but also the inner aspect of Shī'ism, and rationalistic philosophy, which through its gradual decadence in the West led to the completely profane philosophy of today."<sup>72</sup> Moreover Islamic philosophy never died. In his words, "The situation for Islamic philosophy is even more startling, since Islamic philosophy and metaphysics have never really decayed at all."<sup>73</sup>

The theme of absorbing the heritage of earlier civilisations comes up again but from a comparative angle. "Because of the integrating power of Islam and the fact that

it was destined to cover the 'middle-belt' of the world, it came historically into contact with many modes of thought, including the Graeco-Alexandrian, Persian, Indian and even, to a certain extent, Far Eastern. The basis of Islamic intellectual life was therefore cosmopolitan and international in conformity with the world-wide perspective of Islam itself and the universal nature of the fundamental Islamic doctrine of Unity (*al-tawhīd*). Moreover, because it was the last revelation and therefore the synthesis of the messages of the traditions before it, Islam developed an extremely rich intellectual life into which was integrated much of the heritage of mankind that had preceded it, a heritage that became transformed by the light Unity and converted into a building block in the new edifice of the Islamic arts, sciences and philosophy.<sup>74</sup> Islamic philosophy, if considered in its totality and not only in terms of the Peripatetic school known in the West, is extremely rich and possesses schools that can be compared with most of the intellectual perspectives and traditional philosophies of the East, of the ancient Mediterranean world and of mediaeval Europe.<sup>75</sup>

In his *Knowledge and the Sacred*<sup>76</sup> S. H. Nasr brought the issue in a still broader perspective. "In the intellectual life of a religious civilisation such as the of Christianity or Islam or for that matter in the Jewish tradition, one can detect three and not just two major schools or ways of thinking: philosophy, theology, and gnosis or metaphysics (or theosophy) in its traditional sense."<sup>77</sup>

"Besides the various cosmological sciences, there are, as already noted, three modes of knowing dealing with principles which one can distinguish in a traditional world, especially those governed by one of the Abrahamic religions: these three being philosophy, theology, and gnosis, or in a certain context theosophy. The modern

world distinguishes only two modes or disciplines: philosophy and theology rather than the three existing in the traditional world of not only Christianity but also Islam and Judaism.

In the Islamic tradition after several centuries during which the various perspectives were formed, a situation developed which demonstrates fully the role and function of philosophy, theology, and metaphysics or gnosis in a traditional context. There were schools such as that of the Peripatetics (*mashshā'ī*) that could be called philosophical in the traditional sense. There were schools of theology (*kalām*) such as that of the Mu'tazilites, the Ash'arites, the Māturīdites, the Ismā'īlīs, and the Twelve-Imām Shi'ites. Then there was gnosis or metaphysics associated with various schools of Sufism. As far as the eastern Islamic world was concerned, there also gradually developed a school associated with Suhrawardī and his school of illumination (*al-ishrāq*) which was both philosophical and gnostic and which should be called, properly speaking, theosophical, while in the western lands of Islam, contemporary with this development, philosophy ceased to exist as a distinct discipline becoming wed to theology on the one hand and gnosis on the other. Likewise, medieval Judaism could distinguish between the same three kinds of intellectual perspectives represented by such figures as Judas Halevy, Maimonides, Ibn Gabirol, and Luria. Needless to say, in medieval Christianity one could also distinguish between the theology of a Saint Bernard, the philosophy of an Albertus Magnus, and the gnosis of a Meister Eckhart, not to speak of a Roger Bacon or Raymond Lull, who correspond more to the school of *ishrāq* of Suhrawardī than anything else if a comparison is to be made with the Islamic tradition."<sup>78</sup>

“All three disciplines have a role and function to play in the intellectual life of a traditional world. There is an aspect of “philosophy” which is necessary for the exposition of certain theological and gnostic ideas as there are elements of theology and gnosis which are present in every authentic expression of philosophy worthy of the name. One can, in fact, say that every great philosopher is also to some extent theologian and metaphysician, in the sense of gnostic, as every great theologian is to some extent philosopher and gnostic and every gnostic to some degree philosopher and theologian as found in the case of an Ibn ‘Arabī or Meister Eckhart.”<sup>79</sup>

“For the Muslims the sages of antiquity such as Pythagoras and Plato were “Unitarians” (*muwahhīdūn*) who expressed the truth which lies at the heart of all religions. They, therefore, belonged to the Islamic universe and were not considered alien to it...The Islamic intellectual tradition in both its gnostic (*ma‘rifah* or *‘irfān*) and philosophical and theosophical (*falsafah-ḥikmah*) aspects saw the source of this unique truth which is the “Religion of the Truth” (*dīn al-ḥaqq*) in the teachings of the ancient prophets going back to Adam and considered the prophet Idrīs, whom it identified with Hermes, as the “father of philosophers” (*Abū ‘I-ḥukamā*). Many Sufis called not only Plato “divine” but also associated Pythagoras, Empedocles, with whom an important corpus which influenced certain schools of Sufism is associated, and others with the primordial wisdom associated with prophecy. Even early Peripatetic (*mashshā’ī*) philosophers such as al-Fārābī saw a relation between philosophy and prophecy and revelation. Later figures such as Suhrawardī expanded this perspective to include the tradition of pre-Islamic Persia. Suhrawardī spoke often of *al-ḥikmat al-laduniyyah* or Divine Wisdom (literally the wisdom which

is near God) in terms almost identical with what Sophia and also *philosophia perennis* mean traditionally, including its aspect of realisation. A later Islamic figure, the eighth/fourteenth (Islamic/Christian) century gnostic and theologian Sayyid Ḥaydar Āmulī, made no reservations in pointing to the correspondence existing between the “Muḥammadan” pleroma of seventy-two stars of the Islamic universe and the seventy-two stars of the pleroma comprised of those sages who had preserved their primordial nature but belong to a world outside of the specifically Islamic one.”<sup>80</sup>

“The belief of the Muslim philosophers that the Greek philosophers had learned their doctrines from the prophets, especially Solomon, and that “philosophy derives from the niche of prophecy” if not verifiable historically, nevertheless, contains a profound truth, namely, the relation of this wisdom to the sacred and its origin in revelation, even if this revelation cannot be confined in the strictly Abrahamic sense to a particular figure or prophet.”<sup>81</sup>

*Traditional Islam in the Modern World*<sup>82</sup> summarises the views that S. H. Nasr expressed in his earlier works but, as before, always with a fresh dimension added to its exposition.

“Islam has created one of the richest philosophical traditions, one which possesses great spiritual significance for Islam itself and which has survived as a continuous tradition to this day. Heir to Pythagoreanism, Platonism, Aristotelianism, Neo-pythagoreanism, Hermeticism and Neoplatonism, and aware of many branches of Stoicism and the later schools of Hellenistic thought, Islam created a powerful and original philosophy within the intellectual universe of Abrahamic monotheism and the Quranic revelation, while incorporating those elements of Greek

philosophy which conformed to the Islamic unitarian perspective. The origin of what is characteristically medieval philosophy, whether Jewish or Christian, is to be found in Islamic philosophy.

Being traditional philosophy based upon the supra-individual intellect rather than upon individualistic opinion, Islam philosophy developed schools and perspectives which were followed over the centuries, rather than being changed and overthrown by one philosopher after another. Already in the 3<sup>rd</sup>/9<sup>th</sup> century, Peripatetic (*mashshā'ī*) philosophy, which itself represented a synthesis of Plato, Aristotle and Plotinus in the context of the Islamic world-view, was begun by al-Kindī, further developed by al-Fārābī, pursued in the 4<sup>th</sup> 10<sup>th</sup> century by al-‘Āmirī and Abū Ya‘qūb al-Sijistānī and reached its peak with Ibn Sīnā, the Latin Avicenna, who became the prototype of the philosopher-scientist for all later Islamic history. Criticised by such theologians as al-Ghazzāī, al-Shahrastānī and Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī, this school was temporarily eclipsed in the eastern lands of Islam but enjoyed a period of intense activity in Spain with Ibn Bājjah, Ibn Ṭufayl and Ibn Rushd or Averroes, the foremost expositor of this school in the Islamic West (al-Maghrib). As for the East, the school of Ibn Sīnā was resuscitated by Naṣīr al-Dīn al-Ṭūsī in the 7<sup>th</sup>/13<sup>th</sup> century and continued henceforth as an important intellectual tradition during the centuries which followed.

During later centuries, while in most of the Arab world philosophy as a distinct discipline became integrated into either Sufism in its intellectual aspect or philosophical theology (*kalām*), in Persia and the adjacent areas including not only India but also Iraq and Turkey, various schools of philosophy continued to flourish. At the same time, the different intellectual disciplines, such as Peripatetic philosophy, the school of Illumination, theology and Sufi

metaphysics were drawing closer together. The ground was thus prepared for the already-mentioned revival of Islamic philosophy in the Safavid period in Persia with Mīr Dāmād, the founder of the 'School of Isfahan', and especially Ṣadr al-Dīn Shīrāzī, his student, who is perhaps the greatest of the later Islamic metaphysicians. Even through the gradual decay of the teaching of the 'intellectual sciences' in the madrasahs, this later school associated with the name of Ṣadr al-Dīn Shīrāzī, as well as those of Ibn Sīnā, Suhrawardī, Ibn 'Arabī and their commentators, continued to be taught and to produce noteworthy figures, some of whom have survived to the present day.

The Islamic philosophical tradition, although of great diversity and richness, is characterised by certain features which are of special significance both for its understanding and for an appraisal of its import for the world at large. This philosophy breathes in a religious universe in which a revealed book and prophecy dominate the horizon. It is, therefore, 'prophetic philosophy'; whatever might be the subject with which it is concerned.<sup>83</sup> Moreover, it is a philosophy which, in conformity with the Islamic perspective, is based upon the intellect as a supernaturally natural faculty within man which is a sacrament and which, if used correctly, leads to the same truths as revealed through prophecy. It is therefore concerned most of all with the One who dominates the whole message of Islam. This philosophy is also concerned with the basic issues of the harmony between reason and revelation and of providing, within the context of a religious universe dominated by monotheism, a metaphysics centred around the supreme doctrine of the One. It is also concerned with providing keys for the understanding of the manifold in relation to the One. It is therefore rich, not only in religious and ethical philosophy, but also in philosophies of nature and

mathematics as well as of art. In fact, as for as the Islamic sciences are concerned, they were cultivated in the bosom of Islamic philosophy and almost always by men who were not only scientists but also philosophers.”<sup>84</sup>

“The nature of this reality, which man is in his essence, is elucidated by traditional Islamic philosophy, for that is wedded at once to intellect and revelation and is related to God, the cosmos and human society. Islamic philosophy is one of the richest treasures of traditional wisdom that have survived to this day and it stands at the centre of the battle which traditional Islam must wage on the intellectual front in the modern world.”<sup>85</sup>

As could be discerned from the foregoing quotations S. H. Nasr is expressing his views not only about the past of Islamic philosophy but also about its role and function in the present day Islam. “Few are aware of the fact that, in the context of present-day education and the current understanding of philosophy, not only is *falsafah* truly philosophy, but that there is also ‘philosophy’ in many other Islamic sciences such as *tafsīr*, *Ḥadīth*, *kalām*, *uṣūl al-fiqh* and *taṣawwuf*, as well as of course in the natural and mathematical sciences, all of which are rooted in principle in the Qur’ān, which is of course the fountain of *ḥikmah* or wisdom.

It is true that the Islamic intellectual tradition is too rich and diversified to provide just one meaning for the Qur’ānic term *al-ḥikmah*, but it is also true that the several intellectual perspectives that have been cultivated in Islam all conform to the doctrine of unity (*al-tawḥīd*), and one can therefore come to understand the term ‘philosophy’ as implying knowledge of the nature of things based upon and leading to *al-tawḥīd*, therefore profoundly Islamic even if issuing originally from non-Islamic sources.”

“The student should be encouraged to know something of this rich intellectual background and not be presented with a picture of the Islamic intellectual tradition as a monolithic structure amenable only to one level of interpretation. Such a perspective only deadens the mind and creates a passivity that makes the penetration of foreign ideas into the Islamic world so much easier.....This interpretation of Islamic history was originally the work of orientalists who could accept Islamic civilisation only as a phase in the development of their own civilisation. The adoption of this view by certain Muslims is, therefore, even more surprising since it does so much injustice to the grandeur of Islamic civilisation and, even more importantly, is manifestly false.”<sup>86</sup>

“The method of reducing philosophy to the history of philosophy is itself something completely modern and non-Islamic. Nor in fact does this method conform to the perspective of any of the other major traditional civilisation. In such civilisation, philosophy is not identified with an individual who gives his name to a particular philosophical mode of thought....Rather, philosophy is identified with an intellectual perspective which lasts over the centuries and which, for from being a barrier to creativity, remains a viable means of access to the Truth within the particular tradition in question. Men who give their names to traditional schools of thought are seen more as ‘intellectual functions’ than mere individuals.”<sup>87</sup>

“Islamic intellectual life should be divided into its traditional schools of *uṣūl*, *kalām*, *mashshā’i* (Peripatetic) philosophy, *ishrāqī* (the School of Illumination), *ma’rifah* or *irfān* (theoretical and doctrinal Sufims) and, finally, the later school of *al-ḥikmat al-muta’āliyah* (the Transcendent Theosophy) associated with the name of Ṣadr al-Dīn Shirāzī. Then each of these schools should be subdivided

according to their traditional divisions, such as Sunni and Shī‘ite *uṣūl*, Mu‘tazilite, Ash‘arites, Ithnā ‘Asharī and Ismā‘ilī kalām, eastern and western schools of *mashshā’ī* philosophy, etc.....In the same manner, the development of *mashshā’ī* philosophy should not stop with Ibn Rushd, as is usually the case, following Western sources for which Islamic philosophy ends with him, but include the later Turkish criticisms of his *Tahāfut al-tahāfut* during the Ottoman period, the revival of *mashshā’ī* philosophy in the East by Naṣīr al-Dīn Ṭūsī and Quṭb al-Dīn Shīrāzī and the continuation of the school of Ibn Sinā up to our own times, when major philosophical commentaries and analyses of his work have continued to appear in Persia, Pakistan and India. The same could be said of the other schools.”<sup>88</sup>

“The traditional conflict between the various school of Islamic thought should also be taught as conflicts between so many different perspectives converging upon the Truth, conflicts which are of a very different nature from those found between contending philosophical schools in the modern world because, in the first case, there are always the transcendent principles of the Islamic tradition which ultimately unify, whereas, in the second case, such unifying principles are missing. It is true that the Ash‘arites opposed the Mu‘tazilites, that the *mutakallimūn* in general were against the *mashshā’ī* philosophers, that Suhrawardī, the founder of the school of *ishrāq*, criticised Peripatetic logic and metaphysics, that Ibn Taymiyyah wrote against formal logic and Sufīms, etc. But had these conflicts been like those of modern thought, the Islamic tradition would not have survived. There was, however, always the unifying principle of *al-tawḥīd*, and a sense of hierarchy within the Islamic tradition itself which allowed intellectual figures to appear from time to time who were at once *mutakallim*, philosophers and metaphysicians of the gnostic school (*al-*

*ma'rifah*), and who realised the inner unity of these perspectives within their own being. The fact that there were many and not just one school of thought should not therefore be taught to students as a sign of either chaos or weakness, but as the result of the richness of the Islamic tradition, which was able to cater to the needs of different intellectual types and therefore to keep within its fold so many human beings of differing backgrounds and intellectual abilities. The diversity should be taught as the consequence of so many applications of the teachings of Islam, some more partial and some more complete, yet all formulated so as to prevent men with different mental abilities and attitudes from seeking knowledge and the quenching of their thirst for answers to certain question outside the structure of the Islamic tradition itself, as was to happen in the Christian West during the Renaissance. This profusion and diversity of schools, which were different but which all drew from the fountain-head of the Quranic revelation and *al-tawhīd*, was the means whereby Islam succeeded in preserving the sacred character of knowledge and different sciences was a necessity.”<sup>89</sup>

“In nearly every branch of philosophy, the Islamic tradition is rich beyond belief, if only its sources were made known. This is especially true of metaphysics. Here Islamic metaphysics should be presented as the science of Ultimate Reality, which is the One (*al-Aḥad*) or Allah, who has revealed Himself in the Qur’ān. There has been no Islamic school whose teachings are not based on the doctrine of the One who is both Absolute and Infinite. In the study of this Sublime Principle, the Muslim sages developed several languages of discourse, some based on the consideration of the One as Pure Being with an ensuing ontology conforming to that view but always seeing Pure Being, not as the first link in the ‘great chain of being’, but

as the Source which transcends existence altogether. Others saw the One as Light (*al-nūr*) according to the Qur'anic verse, 'God is the Light of the Heavens and the earth' – (XXIV:35); and yet others as the Truth (*al-Haqq*) which transcends even Pure Being, as the supra-ontological Principle whose first determination or act is in fact Being for God said *be* (*kun*) and *there was*. It is the Western scholars of Islamic philosophy who have called Ibn Sīnā 'the first philosopher of being'; without any exaggeration or chauvinism, one could say that, in a sense, the development of ontology in the West is a commentary or footnote to Ibn Sīnā, but one which moves towards an ever more limited understanding the Being until finally it results in either the neglect of ontology or a parody of it."<sup>90</sup>

As we remarked earlier, emphasis on the Islamic contours of Muslim philosophy and its religious character becomes more pronounced in S. H. Nasr's works<sup>91</sup> as we approach this period. *Islamic Spirituality—Manifestations*, Volume I,<sup>92</sup> elaborated the point further. S. H. Nasr wrote, "Every integral Religion has within it intellectual dimensions that may be called theological, philosophical, and gnostic-if this latter term is understood as referring to a knowledge that illuminates and liberates. Islam is not exception to this principle and has developed within its bosom all three types of intellectual activity, each possessing a millennial tradition with numerous illustrious representatives. The relative significance of each dimension is, however, not the same in Islam and Christianity, nor do the categories correspond exactly to schools into which their names are translated in a European language such as English. In the Islamic intellectual universe, there exists first of all *al-ma'rifah* or *al-'irfān* (gnosis). Then there is *falsafah*, which is itself derived from the Greek *philosophia* and corresponds to philosophy in the older sense of the

term, before it became limited to its positivistic definition. This school in turn became transformed for the most part in later centuries into *al-ḥikmat al-ilāhiyyah* (literally, theosophia). Finally, there is kalām, usually translated as theology, whose propagators, the *mutakallimūn*, were referred to by Thomas Aquinas as the *loquentes*. The significance of these intellectual dimensions is not the same as corresponding perspectives in the West. This is especially true of Kalām, which does not at all occupy the same central role in Islamic thought as theology does in Christianity. Furthermore, the Islamic schools have interacted with each other in a totally different manner from what one observes in the Christian West. Gnosis has played a more central role in the Islamic traditions than it has in the West, and the destiny of philosophy has been very different in the two worlds despite their close affinity in the European Middle Ages. As for theology, it has continued to harbour over the centuries the profoundest religious and spiritual impulses of Christianity, whereas in Islam it has always been more peripheral although much that is considered to be theology in the West is to be found in Islamic philosophy.

In Christianity not only has theology attempted to provide a rational defence for the faith, but it has also sought to provide access to the highest realms of the life of the spirit, as one finds in the mystical theology of Dionysius the Areopagite or, in the Protestant context, in the *Theologica Germanica* of Martin Luther. Such has never been the case in Islam, where Kalām, which means literally “word”, continued to be “the science that bears responsibility of solidly establishing religious beliefs by giving proofs and dispelling doubts.” The deepest spiritual and intellectual expressions of Islam are not to be found in works of Kalām. Yet this science is important for the

understanding of certain aspects of Islamic thought and must be treated in any work seeking to deal with the manifestations of Islamic spirituality."<sup>93</sup>

Commenting upon the meaning and significance of the Islamic philosophy in the Islamic Tradition he said, "In the Islamic perspective, the intellect (*al-'aql*) and the spirit (*al-rūh*) are closely related and are two faces of the same reality. Islamic spirituality is inseparable from intellectuality as traditionally understood, and those who have been concerned with the intellect in the Islamic cultural citadel and those concerned with the world of the spirit form a single family with profound affinities with each other. This fact is certainly true of the Islamic philosophers who have been considered by most Western scholars of Islam as well as anti-intellectualist elements within the Islamic world to be peripheral and outside of the main current of Islamic intellectual life. In reality, however, Islamic philosophy constitutes an important component of the Islamic intellectual tradition, and the Islamic philosophers belong to the same spiritual universe as the gnostics (*'urafā'*) among the Sufis.

Furthermore, Islamic philosophy has played an important role in the development of Kalām, not to speak of the Islamic sciences such as mathematics, astronomy, and medicine, which have been inseparable from Islamic philosophy throughout their history.

To understand the significance of Islamic philosophy, it is necessary to go beyond the prevalent Western view, according to which Islamic philosophy began with al-Kindī and terminated with Ibn Rushd (the famous Latin Averroes) with Ibn Khaldūn representing an interesting postscript. Moreover, one must understand this philosophy as Islamic and not Arabic philosophy, for, although some of its great

representatives such as al-Kindī and Ibn Rushd were Arabs, the majority, including such major figures as Ibn Sinā, Suhrawardī, and Mulla Ṣadrā, were Persian. Especially during the later centuries, the main home of Islamic philosophy was Persia and adjacent areas of the Islamic world such as Muslim India, which had close links with Persian culture. This philosophy is also Islamic not only because different Muslim peoples cultivated it but because it is related by its roots, dominating concepts, and determining world view to the Islamic revelation, which also moulded the mind and soul of those intellectual figures who developed this philosophy.

Some figures within the Islamic world wrote works on philosophy, for example, Muḥammad ibn Zakariyyā' al-Rāzī (d. ca. 320/932), but their philosophy was not Islamic in this sense of being related in its principles to the Islamic revelation and functioning in a universe in which revelation looms as a blinding reality upon the horizon. The main tradition of philosophy from al-Kindī and al-Fārābī to Shāh Walī Allāh of Delhi and Sabziwārī, however, was Islamic in that it was integrally related to the principles of the Islamic revelation and an organic part of the Islamic intellectual universe. Moreover, this philosophical tradition did not die eight centuries ago with Ibn Rushd but has continued as a living tradition to this day. To understand Islamic spirituality fully, one must gain some knowledge of this long philosophical tradition, which may be called "prophetic philosophy".<sup>94</sup>

The main concern of philosophy was the discovery of the truth wherever it might be. In a famous statement of Abū Ya'qūb al-Kindī, that has been repeated often over the centuries, all Islamic philosophy is characterised.<sup>95</sup> He said:

"We should not be ashamed to acknowledge truth, and to assimilate it from whatever source it comes to us, even if it is brought to us by former generations and foreign peoples. For him who seeks the truth there is nothing of higher value than truth itself; it never cheapens or abases him who reaches for it, but ennobles and honours him."

"It was this universal conception of truth that has always characterised Islamic philosophy—a truth, however, which is not bound by the limits of reason. Rather, it is the illimitable Truth reached by the intellect which al-Kindī, like other Islamic philosophers, distinguished clearly from reason as the analytical faculty of the mind. This intellect is like an instrument of inner revelation for which the macrocosmic revelation provides an objective cadre. The Islamic philosophers considered the call of the truth to be the highest call of philosophy, but this did not mean the subservience of revelation to reason, as some have contended. Rather, it meant to reach the truth at the heart of revelation through the use of the intellect, which, in its macrocosmic manifestation usually identified with the archangel of revelation, Gabriel, is the instrument of revelation itself."<sup>96</sup>

"It was the destiny of Islamic philosophy to become finally wed to gnosis in the bosom of the revealed truth of Islam. When one studies later Islamic philosophers, one realises immediately this wedding between ratiocination and inner illumination, between intellection and spiritual experience, between rational thought and sanctity. This final union characterises the ultimate nature and destiny of Islamic philosophy, which, besides its great importance in the domains of logic, mathematics, and the natural sciences, has always been concerned with the supreme science and that knowledge which is inseparable from inr

realisation. That is why Islamic philosophy has been and remains to this day an important element in the vast and multidimensional universe of Islamic spirituality.”<sup>97</sup>

The most profound and direct treatment that the subject of Islamic philosophy received from his pen is to be found in his recent compilation on the history of Islamic philosophy.<sup>98</sup> He reminds the reader that “On the one hand what is called philosophy in English must be sought in the context of Islamic civilization not only in the various schools of Islamic philosophy but also in schools bearing other names, especially *Kalām*, *maʿrifah*, *uṣūl al-fīqh* as well as the *awāʾil* sciences, not to speak of such subjects as grammar and history which developed particular branches of philosophy. On the other hand each school of thought sought to define what is meant by *ḥikmah* or *falsafah* according to its own perspective.”.....“ “The term over which there was the greatest debate was *ḥikmah*, which was claimed by the Sufis and *mutakallimūn* as well as the philosophers” on the basis of traditional texts. “The Islamic philosophers meditated upon the old definitions of *falsafah* and identified it with the Qurʾānic term *ḥikmah* believing the origin of *ḥikmah* to be divine.”<sup>99</sup> Pointing to the comprehensive nature of Islamic philosophy S. H. Nasr said that it emphasised the “relation between the theoretical aspect of philosophy and its practical dimension, between thinking philosophically and leading a virtuous life. This nexus, which is to be seen in all schools of earlier Islamic philosophy, became even more evident from Suhrawardī onward and the *ḥakīm* came to be seen throughout Islamic society not as someone who could only discuss mental concepts in a clever manner but as one who also lived according to the wisdom which he knew theoretically.”<sup>100</sup> Speaking of the decadence of philosophy in the West he remarked, “Philosophy also suffers from limitations

imposed upon it by those who have practised it during the past few centuries. If Hobbes, Hume and Ayer are philosophers, then those who Suhrawrdī calls *ḥukamā’* are not philosophers, and vice versa.”<sup>101</sup> That is to say that for Islamic philosophers it has to “be realised within one’s whole being and not only mentally.”<sup>102</sup> It included “purification of the soul from its material defilement or what the Islamic philosophers call *tajarrud* or catharsis. Mulla Ṣadrā accepts the meaning of *ḥikmah* as understood by Suhrawardī and then expands the meaning of *falsafah* to include the dimension of illumination and realisation implied by the *ishrāqī* and also Sufī understanding of the term. For him as for his contemporaries, as well as most of his successors, *falsafah* or philosophy was seen as the supreme science of ultimately divine origin, derived from “the niche of prophecy” and the *ḥukamā’* as the most perfect of human beings standing in rank only below the prophets and Imams.”<sup>103</sup> The “Islamic definition of philosophy”, then, would be “as that reality which transforms both the mind and the soul and which is ultimately never separated from spiritual purity and ultimately sanctity that the very term *ḥikmah* implies in the Islamic context.”<sup>104</sup>

Having defined Islamic philosophy thus, S. H. Nasr turned to the discussion of the source of Islamic philosophy that he explained in a new light.<sup>105</sup>

“Viewed from the point of the Western intellectual tradition, Islamic philosophy appears as simply Graeco-Alexandrian philosophy in Arabic dress, a philosophy whose sole role was to transmit certain important elements of the heritage of antiquity to the medieval West. If seen however from its own perspective and in the light of the whole of the Islamic philosophical tradition which has had a twelve-century-long continuous history and is still alive

today, it becomes abundantly clear that Islamic philosophy, like everything else Islamic, is deeply rooted in the Qur'ān and Hadīth. Islamic philosophy is Islamic not only by virtue of the fact that it was cultivated in the Islamic world and by Muslims but because it derives its principles, inspiration and many of the questions with which it has been concerned from the sources of Islamic revelation despite the claims of its opponents to the contrary."<sup>106</sup>

“The very presence of the Qur'ān and the advent of its revelation was to transform radically the universe in which and about which Islamic philosophers were to philosophise, leading to a specific kind of philosophy which can be justly called ‘prophetic philosophy’.....a type of philosophy in which a revealed book is accepted as the supreme source of knowledge not only of religious law but of the very nature of existence and beyond existence of the very source of existence. The prophetic consciousness which is the recipient of revelation (*al-wahy*) had to remain of the utmost significance who sought to know the nature of things. How were the ordinary human means of knowing related to such an extra-ordinary manner of knowing? How was human reason related to that intellect which is illuminated by the by the light of revelation? To understand the pertinence of such issues, it is enough to cast even a cursory glance at the works of the Islamic philosophers who almost unanimously accepted revelation as a source of ultimate knowledge.”....One might say that the reality of the Islamic revelation and participation in this reality transformed the very instrument of philosophising in the Islamic world....The theoretical intellect, which is the epistemological instrument of all philosophical activity, is Islamicized in a subtle way that is not always detectable through only the analysis of the technical vocabulary involved.....The subtle change that took place from the

Greek idea of the “intellect” (*nous*) to the Islamic view of the intellect (*al-‘aql*) can also be seen much earlier in the works of even the Islamic Peripatetics such as Ibn Sinā where the Active Intellect (*al-‘aql al-fā‘āl*) is equated with the Holy Spirit (*al-rūḥ al-qudus*).”<sup>107</sup>

“Islamic philosophy is related to both the external dimension of the Qur’ānic revelation or the Shari‘ah and the inner truth or *Ḥaqīqah* which is the heart of all that is Islamic. Many of the doctors of the Divine Law or Shari‘ah have stood opposed to Islamic philosophy while others have accepted it. In fact some of the outstanding Islamic philosophers such as Ibn Rushd, Mīr Dāmād and Shāh Walliullah of Delhi have also been authorities in the domain of the Sacred Law. The Shari‘ah has, however, provided mostly the social and human conditions for the philosophical activity of the Islamic philosophers. It is to the *Ḥaqīqah* that one has to turn for the inspiration and source of knowledge for Islamic philosophy.....Throughout history, many an Islamic philosopher has identified *falsafah* or *ḥikmah*, the two main terms used with somewhat different meaning for Islamic philosophy, with the *Ḥaqīqah* lying at the heart of the Qur’ān. Much of Islamic philosophy is fact a hermeneutic unveiling of the two grand books of revelation, the Qur’ān and the cosmos, and in the Islamic intellectual universe Islamic philosophy belongs, despite some differences, to the same family as that of *ma‘rifah* or gnosis which issues directly from the inner teachings of Islam.”<sup>108</sup>

“For the main tradition of Islamic philosophy, especially as it developed in later centuries, philosophical activity was inseparable from interiorization of oneself and penetration into the inner meaning of the Qur’ān and Ḥadīth.....The close nexus between the Qur’ān and Ḥadīth, on the one hand, and Islamic philosophy, on the other, is to

be seen in the understanding of the history of philosophy.<sup>109</sup>....they considered Idris as the origin of philosophy, bestowing upon him the title of *Abū 'l-Ḥukamā'* (the father of philosophers)...Muslims considered prophecy to be the origin of philosophy, confirming in an Islamic form the dictum of Oriental Neoplatonism that 'Plato was Moses in Attic Greek'. The famous Arabic saying, "philosophy issues from the niche of prophecy" has echoed through the annals of Islamic history and indicates clearly how Islamic philosophers themselves envisaged the relation between philosophy and revelation....There are certain Ḥadīth which point to God having offered prophecy and philosophy or *ḥikmah*, and Luqmān chose *ḥikmah* which must not be confused simply with medicine or other branches of traditional *ḥikmah* but refers to pure philosophy itself dealing with God and the ultimate causes of things.....These traditional authorities also point to such Qur'ānic verses as "And He will teach him the Book [*al-kitāb*] and Wisdom [*al-ḥikmah*]"....They believe that this conjunction confirms the fact that what God has revealed through revelation He had also made available through *ḥikmah*, which is reached through 'aql, itself a microcosmic reflection of the macrocosmic reality which is the instrument of revelation....All of this indicates how closely traditional Islamic philosophy identified itself with revelation in general and the Qur'ān in particular."<sup>110</sup>

At this point S. H. Nasr draws the attention of his readers to the fact that the Islamic philosophers meditated upon the content of the Qur'ān as a whole as well as on the particular verses to which the uninterrupted chain of the Qur'ānic commentaries testify.

Then he turns to elucidate the Qur'ānic themes that worked as the source of inspiration to Islamic philosophy. "Certain Qur'ānic themes have dominated Islamic

philosophy throughout its long history and especially during the later period when this philosophy becomes a veritable theosophy in the original and not deviant meaning of the term, *theosophia* corresponding exactly to the Arabic term *al-ḥikmat al-ilāhiyyah*. The first and the foremost is of course the unity of the Divine Principle and ultimately Reality as such or *al-tawḥīd* which lies at the heart of the Islamic message. The Islamic philosophers were all *muwaḥḥidūn* or followers of *tawḥīd* and saw authentic philosophy in this light. They called Pythagoras and Plato, who had confirmed the unity of the Ultimate Principle, *muwaḥḥid* while showing singular lack of interest in later forms of Greek and Roman philosophy, which were sceptical or agnostic.

How Islamic philosophers interpreted the doctrine of Unity lies at the heart of Islamic philosophy. There continued to exist a tension between the Qur'anic description of Unity and what the Muslims had learned from Greek sources, a tension which was turned into a synthesis of the highest intellectual order by such later philosophers as Suhrawardī and Mulla Ṣadrā. But in all treatments of this subject from al-Kindī to Mullā 'Alī Zunūzī and Ḥājjī Mullā Hādī Sabziwārī during the thirteenth/nineteenth century and even later, the Qur'anic doctrine of Unity, so central to Islam, has remained dominant and in a sense has determined the agenda of the Islamic philosophers.....The concern of Islamic philosophers with ontology is directly related to the Qur'anic doctrine (of *kun fayakūn*), as is the very terminology of Islamic philosophy in this domain where it understands by *wujūd* more the verb or act of existence (*esto*) than the noun or state of existence (*esse*). If Ibn Sīnā has been called first and foremost a “philosopher of being”, and he developed the ontology which came to dominate

much of medieval philosophy, this is not because of the Qur'ānic doctrine of the One in relation to the act of existence. It was as a result of meditation upon the Qur'ān in conjunction with Greek thought that Islamic philosophers developed the doctrine of Pure Being which stands above the chain of being and is discontinuous with it, while certain other philosophers such as a number of Isma'īlīs considered God to be beyond Being and identified His act or the Qur'ānic *kun* with Being, which is then considered as the principle of the universe...It is also the Qur'ānic doctrine of the creating God and *creatio ex nihilo*, with all the different levels of meaning which *nihilo* possesses, that led Islamic philosophers to distinguish sharply between God as Pure Being and the existence of the universe, destroying that "block without fissure" which constituted Aristotelian ontology. In Islam the universe is always contingent (*mumkin al-wujūd*) while God is necessary (*wājib al-wujūd*), to use the well-known distinction of Ibn Sīnā. No Islamic philosopher has ever posited an existential continuity between the existence of creatures and the Being of God, and this radical revolution in the understanding of Aristotelian ontology has its source in the Islamic doctrine of God and creation as asserted in the Qur'ān and Ḥadīth. Moreover, this influence is paramount not only in the case of those who asserted the doctrine of *creatio ex nihilo* in its ordinary theological sense, but also for those such as al-Fārābī and Ibn Sīnā who were in favour of the theory of emanation but who none the less never negated the fundamental distinction between the *wujūd* (existence) of the world and that of God.

“As for the whole question of “newness” or “eternity” of the world, or *hudūth* and *qīdam*, which has occupied Islamic thinkers for the past twelve centuries and which is related to the question of the contingency of the world *vis-*

*á-vis* the Divine Principle, is inconceivable without the teachings of the Qur'an and Ḥadīth. It is of course a fact that before the rise of Islam Christian theologians and philosophers such as John Philoponus had written on this issue and that Muslims had known some of these writings, especially the treatise of Philoponus against the thesis of the eternity of the world. But had it not been for the Qur'anic teachings concerning creation, such Christian writings would have played an altogether different role in Islamic thought. Muslims were interested in the arguments of a Philoponus precisely because of their own concern with the question of *ḥudūth* and *qidam* created by the tension between the teachings of the Qur'an and the Ḥadīth, on the one had, and the Greek notion of the non-temporal relation between the world and its Divine Origin, on the other."<sup>111</sup>

"It was the Islamic insistence upon Divine Omniscience that placed the issue of God's knowledge of the world at the centre of the concern of Islamic philosophy...This issue is also closely allied to the philosophical significance of revelation (*al-waḥy*) itself. Earlier Islamic philosophers such as Ibn Sīnā sought to develop a theory by drawing to some extent, but not exclusively, on Greek theories of the intellect and the faculties of the soul....While still using certain concepts of Greek origin, the later Islamic philosophers such as Mulla Ṣadrā drew heavily from the Qur'an and Ḥadīth on this issue."....Turning to the field of cosmology, again one can detect the constant presence of Qur'anic themes and certain Ḥadīth.....Nor must one forget the cosmological significance of the nocturnal ascent of the Prophet (*al-mi'rāj*) which so many Islamic philosophers have treated directly, starting with Ibn Sīnā."

“In no branch of Islamic philosophy, however, is the influence of the Qur’ān and Ḥadīth more evident than in eschatology, the very understanding of which in the Abrahamic universe was alien to the philosophical world of antiquity.....The Islamic philosophers were fully aware of the crucial (eschatological) ideas in their philosophising, but the earlier ones were unable to provide philosophical proofs for Islamic doctrines which many confessed to accept on the basis of faith but could not demonstrate within the context of Peripatetic philosophy....It remained for Mulla Ṣadrā several centuries later to demonstrate the reality of bodily resurrection through the principles of the “transcendent theosophy” (*al-ḥikmat al-muta‘āliyah*) and to take both Ibn Sīnā and al-Ghazzālī to task for the inadequacy of their treatment of the subject. The most extensive philosophical treatment of eschatology (*al-ma‘ād*) in all its dimensions is in fact to be found in the *Asfār* of Mulla Ṣadrā.”<sup>112</sup>

“In meditating upon the history of Islamic philosophy in its relation to the Islamic revelation, one detects a movement toward ever closer association of philosophy with the Qur’ān and Ḥadīth as *falsafah* became transformed into *al-ḥikmat al-ilāliyah*.”....the trend culminated in the form of the commentaries on the text of the Qur’ān or on certain of the Ḥadīth and continued in later centuries not only in Persia but also in India and the Ottoman world including Iraq.”

The Qur’ān and Ḥadīth, along with the sayings of the Imams, which are in a sense the extension of Ḥadīth in the Shī‘ite world, have provided over the centuries the framework and matrix for Islamic philosophy and created the intellectual and social climate within which Islamic philosophers have philosophised. Moreover, they have presented a knowledge of the origin, the nature of things,

humanity and its final ends and history upon which the Islamic philosophers have meditated and from which they have drawn over the ages. They have also provided a language of discourse which Islamic philosophers have shared with the rest of the Islamic community. Without the Qur’anic revelation, there would of course have been no Islamic civilisation, but it is important to realise that there would also have been no Islamic philosophy. Philosophical activity in the Islamic world is not simply a regurgitation of Graeco-Alexandrian philosophy in Arabic, as claimed by many Western scholars along with some of their Islamic followers, a philosophy which grew despite the presence of the Qur’an and Ḥadīth. On the contrary, Islamic philosophy is what it is precisely because it flowered in a universe whose contours are determined by the Qur’anic revelation.

As asserted before, Islamic philosophy is essentially “prophetic philosophy” based on the hermeneutics of a Sacred Text which is the result of a revelation that is inalienably linked to the microcosmic intellect and which alone is able to actualise the dormant possibilities of the intellect within us. Islamic philosophy, as understood from within that tradition, is also an unveiling of the inner meaning of the Sacred Text, a means of access to that *Haqīqah* which lies hidden within the inner dimension of the Qur’an. Islamic philosophy deals with the One or Pure Being, and universal existence and all the grades of the universal hierarchy. It deals with man his entelechy, with the cosmos and the final return of all things to God. This interpretation of existence is none other than penetration into the inner meaning of the Qur’an which “*is*” existence itself, the Book whose meditation provides the key for the understanding of those objective and subjective orders of existence with which the Islamic philosopher has been concerned over the ages.

A deeper study of Islamic philosophy over its twelve-hundred-year history will reveal the role of the Qur'ān and Ḥadīth in the formulation, exposition and problematic of this major philosophical tradition. In the same way that all of the Islamic philosophers from al-Kindī onwards knew the Qur'ān and Ḥadīth and lived with them, Islamic philosophy has manifested over the centuries its inner link with the revealed sources of Islam, a link which has become even more manifest as the centuries have unfolded, for Islamic philosophy is essentially a philosophical hermeneutics of the Sacred Text while making use of the rich philosophical heritage of antiquity. That is why, far from being a transitory and foreign phase in the history of Islamic thought, Islamic philosophy, has remained over the centuries and to this day one of the major intellectual perspectives in Islamic civilisation with its roots sunk deeply, like everything else Islamic, in the Qur'ān and Ḥadīth.<sup>113</sup>

More over, he reasserted the point that Islamic philosophy was not only important for the Islamic civilisation in the past. It is important for the present and the future as well. "Today Islamic philosophy remains a living intellectual tradition, and, because of the harmony it has achieved between logic and the spiritual life and because of the profound doctrines it contains within the pages of its long an extended historical unfolding, it remains of the greatest pertinence for the modern world. Furthermore, because of the present encounter of Islam with an alien philosophy and sciences-this time from the West-Islamic philosophy must be called upon once again to play the role it fulfilled in early Islamic history, namely to provide the necessary intellectual instruments and the requisite intellectual background with the aid of which Muslims can face various alien philosophies and sciences

from a position of discrimination and intellectual rigour. Islamic *falsafah* or *hikmah* can fulfil this vital function of providing the Muslims themselves with the necessary intellectual background to confront the modern West and the world with long forgotten but urgently needed truths which Islamic philosophy has been able to preserve within its treasury of wisdom over the centuries and which it is able to present in a contemporary language to the world today.”

“A thorough re-understanding the re-presentation of Islamic philosophy will itself ‘orient’ our thought by clarifying the ultimate end of human existence and the final goal of man’s terrestrial journey. Man is a theomorphic being and cannot escape the profound demands of his inner nature. Only that civilisation and form of thought can survive which conform to man’s entelechy and the ultimate nature of things. The re-understanding of Islamic Philosophy will once again reveal to us that end towards which man and the cosmos are ultimately oriented and towards which all things move. It thus permits us to discover the goal of life and thought itself. By revealing to us the truth, it enables us to reorient ourselves and our thoughts in its direction, on that high road whose end is union with the Truth. The question of the reorientation of Islamic philosophy reduces then to a re-understanding of it and to the discovery of the goal towards which our thoughts and efforts should be directed. Man comes to know the truth not by reorienting it but by reorienting himself so that he can become worthy of being its recipient.”<sup>14</sup>

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NOTES AND REFERENCES

<sup>1</sup> “Preface”, *The Complete Bibliography of the Works of Seyyed Hossein Nasr*, Ed. Mehdi Aminrazawi and Zailan Morris, Kuala Lumpur, 1994, p. XIII.

<sup>2</sup> “In Quest of the Eternal Sophia”, *The Complete Bibliography of the Works of Seyyed Hossein Nasr*, Ed. Mehdi Aminrazawi and Zailan Morris, Kuala Lumpur, 1994, p. 28-29. This essay originally appeared in *Philosophes critiques de'eux-memes Philosophische Selbstbetrachtungen*. Vol. 6. Bern: Peter Lang, 1980 pp. 113-21. The French translation of this essay also appeared in the same issue of this work as “A la recherche de l'éternelle sagesse”, pp. 12-31.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.* p. 31-32.

<sup>4</sup> M. M. Sharif, *A History of Muslim Philosophy*, Vol. I, Wiesbaden, 1963; Vol. II, Wiesbaden, 1966.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.* “Vol. I, Ch. XIX, Shihāb al-Dīn Suhrawardī Maqtūl”; “Vol. II, Ch. \* Fakhr al-Dīn Rāzī”; “Vol. II, Ch. \*, The School of Iṣpāhān”; “Vol. II, Ch. \*, Ṣadr al-Dīn Shīrāzī (Mulla Ṣadrā).

<sup>6</sup> M. M. Sharif, *A History of Muslim Philosophy*, Vol. I, Wiesbaden, 1963, p. 372-3.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.* p. 379.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.* p. 648.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.* p. 649.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.* p. 655.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.* Vol. II, p. 907.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.* Vol. II, p. 939.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.* Vol. II, p. 958-9.

<sup>14</sup> *An Introduction to Islamic Cosmological Doctrines*, Cambridge (Mass.), Harvard University Press, 1964.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.* P.18-20.

<sup>16</sup> Tehran National Library, MS. Bayāḍī (dated 659). Also Afḍal al-Dīn al-Kāshānī, *Muṣannafāt*, ed. Muḥtabā Minovī and Yaḥyā Mahdāvī (Tehran, 1952), vol. I, Introduction; and ‘Umar

Khayyām. “Az nathr-i fārsī-i Khayyām,” *Sharq*, 1:167-168 (1309 [1930]).

Likewise, al-Ghazzālī, in his *al-Munqidh min al-ḍalāl*, divides the seekers of knowledge into the *mutakallimīn*, *bāṭiniyah* (Ismā‘īlis), *falāsifah* and *ṣūfiyah*; see W. Montgomery Watt, *The Faith and Practice of al-Ghazali* (London, 1953), pp. 25ff.

<sup>17</sup> An Introduction to Islamic Cosmological Doctrines, *op. cit.*, p. 20.

<sup>18</sup> *Three Muslim Sages*, Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1964; reprint, Suhail Academy, Lahore, 1988, 1999; pp. 9-10, 12-15, 17-19, 42/43.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.* p. 12-13.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.* p. 42-43.

<sup>21</sup> *Science and Civilization in Islam*, Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1968 and New York, Mentor Books, 1970; reprint, Suhail Academy, Lahore, 1983, 1999.

<sup>22</sup> *Science and Civilisation in Islam*, *op. cit.* p. 33-38.

<sup>23</sup> *Science and Civilization in Islam*, *op. cit.* p. 293-349.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.* p. 293-4.

<sup>25</sup> “Al-Ḥikmat al-Ilāhiyyah and Kalām”, *Studia Islamica*, (34) 1971, pp. 139-149.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.* p. 140-1.

<sup>27</sup> Lāhijī, *Gawhar-Murād*, Tehran, 1377 (A. H. lunar), pp. 15-21.

<sup>28</sup> “Al-Ḥikmat al-Ilāhiyyah and Kalām”, *Studia Islamica*, (34) 1971, p. 149.

<sup>29</sup> See S. H. Nasr, “The Meaning and Role of Philosophy in Islam”, *Studia Islamica*, (36) 1973, pp. 57-80.

<sup>30</sup> *An Introduction to Islamic Cosmological Doctrines*, Cambridge (Mass.), Harvard University Press, 1964, 18-20.

<sup>31</sup> See S. H. Nasr, “The Meaning and Role of Philosophy in Islam”, *op. cit.* p. 57.

<sup>32</sup> See S. H. Nasr, “The Meaning and Role of Philosophy in Islam”, *op. cit.* p. 58.

<sup>33</sup> See S. H. Nasr, “The Meaning and Role of Philosophy in Islam”, *op. cit.* p. 58-59.

<sup>34</sup> See S. H. Nasr, “The Meaning and Role of Philosophy in Islam”, *op. cit.* p. 61.

<sup>35</sup> Already Ibn Khaldūn in his *Muqaddimah*, trans. By F. Rosenthal, vol. 3, New York, 1958, pp. 52 ff., considered the later school of Kalām as philosophy and many contemporary Arab authors have emphasised the importance of Kalām and also Sufism as forms of “Islamic philosophy”. See for example Muṣṭafā ‘Abd al-Rāziq, *Tamhīd li-ta’rīkh al-falsafat al-islāmiyyah*, Cairo, 1959.

<sup>36</sup> See S. H. Nasr, “The Meaning and Role of Philosophy in Islam”, *op. cit.* p. 62.

<sup>37</sup> See S. H. Nasr, “The Meaning and Role of Philosophy in Islam”, *op. cit.* p. 63.

<sup>38</sup> Even the Ikhwān have a conception of philosophy very close to that of the ishrāqīs and the later tradition, see *Rasā’il*, Cairo, vol. I, 1928, p. 23. Also see Nasr, *An Introduction to Islamic Cosmological Doctrines*, *op. cit.* p.33.

<sup>39</sup> Mulla Ṣadrā, *Al-Hikmat al-Muta’aliyah fī ‘l-asfār al-arba’ah*, Tehran, 1387 (A. H. lunar). vol. I, part, I, p. 20.

<sup>40</sup> E.g. Qur’ān, 2: 269.

<sup>41</sup> Mulla Ṣadrā, *Al-Hikmat al-Muta’aliyah fī ‘l-asfār al-arba’ah*, Tehran, 1387 (A. H. lunar). vol. I, part, I, p. 21.

<sup>42</sup> S. H. Nasr, “The Meaning and Role of Philosophy in Islam”, *op. cit.* p. 68.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.* p.69.

<sup>44</sup> See *An Introduction to Islamic Cosmological Doctrines*, Cambridge (Mass.), Harvard University Press, 1964 and *Science and Civilization in Islam*, Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1968 and New York, Mentor Books, 1970; reprint, Suhail Academy, Lahore, 1983, 1999.

<sup>45</sup> S. H. Nasr, “The Meaning and Role of Philosophy in Islam”, *op. cit.* p. 73.

<sup>46</sup> See S. H. Nasr, *Three Muslim Sages*, Ch. I.

<sup>47</sup> S. H. Nasr, “The Meaning and Role of Philosophy in Islam”, *op. cit.* p. 74.

<sup>48</sup> S. H. Nasr, “The Meaning and Role of Philosophy in Islam”, *op. cit.* p. 75.

<sup>49</sup> S. H. Nasr, “The Meaning and Role of Philosophy in Islam”, *op. cit.* p. 76. Also see *Islamic Life and Thought*, *op. cit.* p. 67.

<sup>50</sup> S. H. Nasr, “The Meaning and Role of Philosophy in Islam”, *op. cit.* p. 79.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>53</sup> “Post-Avicinian Philosophy and the Study of Being”, in *Humā’i Nāmāh*, (ed.) Mehdi Mohaghegh, Tehran, 1977, p. 23.

<sup>54</sup> *Islamic Life and Thought*, Unwin, London, 1981; reprint, Suhail Academy, Lahore, 1985, 1999, Chs. 6-19. This book, though appearing in 1981 under the present title, is placed here in its chronological order, precisely because it included a lot of material that S. H. Nasr had written much earlier.

<sup>55</sup> *Islamic Life and Thought*, *op. cit.* p. 148-9.

<sup>56</sup> *Islamic Life and Thought*, *op. cit.* p. 78.

<sup>57</sup> *Islamic Life and Thought*, *op. cit.* p. 150-1.

<sup>58</sup> *Islamic Life and Thought*, *op. cit.* p. 150-1.

<sup>59</sup> *Islamic Life and Thought*, *op. cit.* p. 67.

<sup>60</sup> *Islamic Life and Thought*, *op. cit.* p. 78.

<sup>61</sup> *Islamic Science, An Illustrated Study*, World of Islam Festival Trust, London, 1976, p. 9.

<sup>62</sup> For this corpus, which is not the same in Arabic as in Greek, see A. J. Festugière and A. D. Nock, *La révélation d’Hermès Trismégiste*, 4 vols., Paris, 1953 on; G.R.S. Mead, *Thrice-Greatest Hermes*, 3 vols., London, 1906 and 1949; and W. Scott, *Hermetica*, 4 vols., Oxford, 1924-1936.

<sup>63</sup> *Islamic Science, An Illustrated Study*, World of Islam Festival Trust, London, 1976, p. 198.

<sup>64</sup> S. H. Nasr, *Three Muslim Sages*, *op. cit.*, p.91.

<sup>65</sup> Cf. Chittick, “Šadr al-Dīn Qūnawī on the Oneness of Being” in *International Philosophical Quarterly*, 21 (1981): 171-184.

<sup>66</sup> For a profound discussion of the causes that emphasised this need, see S.H. Nasr. *Three Muslim Sages*, *op.cit.*,p.1-7.

<sup>67</sup> ‘Philosophy, in the sense in which we understand the term (which is also its current meaning) primarily consists of logic; this definition of Guenon’s puts philosophic thought in its right place and clearly distinguishes it from “intellectual intuition”, which is the direct apprehension of a truth.’ F. Schuon,

*Language of the Self*, trans. By M. Pallis and M. Matheson, Madras, 1952, p. 7.

<sup>68</sup> “Il est impossible de nier que les plus illustres soufis, tout en étant ‘gnostiques’ par définition, furent en même temps un peu théologiens et un peu philosophes, ou que les grands théologiens furent à la fois un peu philosophes et un peu gnostiques, ce dernier mot devenant s’entendus dans son sens propre et non sectaire. “Schuon, *Le Soufisme, voile et quintessence*, Paris, 1980, p. 105. See also F. Schuon, “Tracing the Notion of Philosophy”, *Sufism: Veil and Quintessence*, Suhail Academy, 1985, p.125.

<sup>69</sup> See W.C. Chittick, *The Sufi Path of Knowledge*, State University of New York Press, 1993, p. xvii-xix. It is true that, after Ibn ‘Arabi, there have been Sufis who did not use philosophic terminology. Rumi is its foremost example. Yet it is the dominant trend of the Muslim intellectuality; to the extent that commentators of Rumi’s *Mathnawi* also used the ideas and terms of Ibn ‘Arabi’s school down to the present times.

<sup>70</sup> *Islam and the Plight of the Modern Man*, Longman, 1970; reprint, Suhail Academy, Lahore, 1985, 1999.

<sup>71</sup> *Islam and the Plight of the Modern Man*, op. cit. p. 34.

<sup>72</sup> Logic can either operate as part of an intellection, or else, on the contrary, put itself at the service of an error; moreover, unintelligence can diminish or even nullify logic, so that philosophy can in fact become the vehicle of almost anything; it can be an Aristotelianism carrying ontological insights, just as it can degenerate into an “existentialism: in which logic has become a mere shadow of itself, a blind and unreal operation; indeed, what can be said of a “metaphysic” which idiotically posits man at the centre of the Real, like a sack of coal, and which operates with such blatantly subjective and conjectural concepts as “worry” and “anguish”? F. Schuon, *Language of the Self*, trans. By M. Pallis and M. Matheson, Madras, 1952, p. 7.

<sup>73</sup> See S. N. Nasr, *Islamic Studies*, Chaps. 8 and 9; Nasr, “The Tradition of Islamic Philosophy in Persia and its Significance for the Modern World”; also Nasr, “Persia and the Destiny of

Islamic Philosophy”, *Studies in Comparative Religion*, winter, 1972, pp. 31-42.

<sup>74</sup> Not only this. There is an underlying harmony of the Islamic sciences with Islamic philosophy, theology and metaphysics; a harmony that is closely related to the philosophy of nature alluded to in other works.

<sup>75</sup> *Islam and the Plight of the Modern Man*, op. cit. p. 38.

<sup>76</sup> S. H. Nasr, *Knowledge and the Sacred*, Crossroad, New York, 1981; Suhail Academy, Lahore, 1988, 1999.

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.* p. 38.

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.* p. 81.

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid.* p. 82.

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid.* p. 71-72.

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.* p. 35.

<sup>82</sup> S. H. Nasr, *Traditional Islam in the Modern World*, KPI, London, 1987; Suhail Academy, Lahore, 1988, 1999.

<sup>83</sup> The term *philosophie prophetique* was used quite correctly by Corbin to describe Islamic philosophy, which functions in a universe dominated by the presence of a revealed book that is not only the source of religious law and ethics but also the fountainhead of knowledge and a means of access to the truth.

<sup>84</sup> S. H. Nasr, *Traditional Islam in the Modern World*, KPI, London, 1987; Suhail Academy, Lahore, 1988, 1999, p. 131-133.

<sup>85</sup> *Ibid.* p. 139.

<sup>86</sup> *Ibid.* p. 207.

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid.* p. 211.

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid.* p. 212.

<sup>89</sup> *Ibid.* p. 214.

<sup>90</sup> *Ibid.* p. 215.

<sup>91</sup> In 1993 S. H. Nasr wrote a book that was different from his other works in the sense that it was written in a simplified style for the use of young students. The contents, argument and the conclusions are the same as we find in other works. See S. H. Nasr, *A Young Muslim’s Guide to the Modern World*, Kazi, 1993; Suhail Academy, Lahore, 1998.

<sup>92</sup> S. H. Nasr, *Islamic Spirituality — Manifestations*, Volume I, Crossroad, New York, 1991.

<sup>93</sup> *Ibid.* p. 395-6.

<sup>94</sup> *Ibid.* p. 409-410. "The best-known school of Islamic philosophy, the *mashshā'ī* or Peripatetic, which is a synthesis of the tenets of the Islamic revelation, Aristotelianism, and Neoplatonism of both the Athenian and Alexandrian schools, was founded in the third/ninth century in the rich intellectual climate of Baghdad by Abū Ya'qūb al-Kindī (d. c. 260/873). The so-called philosopher of the Arab was a prolific author who composed over two hundred treatises, in which he dealt with the sciences as well as philosophy, beginning a trend that characterises the whole class of Muslim sages who were philosopher-scientists and not only philosophers."

<sup>95</sup> *Ibid.* p. 411.

<sup>96</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>97</sup> *Ibid.* p. 439.

<sup>98</sup> S. H. Nasr and Oliver Leaman, *History of Islamic Philosophy*, part I, Routledge, London, 1996.

<sup>99</sup> "The Meaning and Concept of Philosophy in Islam", in *History of Islamic Philosophy*, part I, op. cit., p. 21.

<sup>100</sup> *Ibid.* p. 23.

<sup>101</sup> *Ibid.* p. 23.

<sup>102</sup> *Ibid.* p. 24.

<sup>103</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>104</sup> *Ibid.* p. 25.

<sup>105</sup> "The Qur'ān and Ḥadīth as source and Inspiration of Islamic Philosophy", Ch. 2, in *History of Islamic Philosophy*, part I, op. cit., p. 27.

<sup>106</sup> *Ibid.* Taking into consideration its whole history, however, one will see that this philosophy is at once Muslim and Islamic according to the above-given definitions of these terms.

<sup>107</sup> *Ibid.* p. 28.

<sup>108</sup> *Ibid.* p. 29.

<sup>109</sup> See the discussion noted earlier on the prophetic origin of philosophy through the prophet Idris.

<sup>110</sup> *Ibid.* p. 30-31.

<sup>111</sup> *Ibid.* p. 32-33.

<sup>112</sup> *Ibid.* p. 34-35.

<sup>113</sup> *Ibid.* p. 36-37.

<sup>114</sup> *Islamic Life and Thought*, op. cit. p. 156.