The Life and Intellectual Output of

Muḥammad Muḥsin al-Fayḍ al-Kāshānī (1007/1598–1091/1680)

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Abstract

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This thesis is a study of the intellectual formation and thought of Muḥammad Muḥsin ibn Murtaḍā ibn Maḥmūd al-Fayḍ al-Kāshānī (1007/1598–1091/1680), a Twelver Shiʿite philosopher, theologian, traditionist (*muḥaddith*), exegete (*mufassir*), jurist, and poet in Safavid Iran (907/1501–1135/1722). I examine al-Fayḍ's intellectual genealogy (i.e. his teachers and his students), scholarly training, intellectual trips, and connections with the major scholars of his time. I situate al-Fayḍ within the religious and socio-political historical context of Safavid Iran and examine his affiliation with legal, philosophical, and mystical schools. Given that al-Fayḍ was a chief scholar in Safavid Iran's religious and dynamic environment, I look for the overall social-scholarly conditions, which shaped his intellectual character and output. I provide a detailed description of al-Fayḍ's epistemology, which forms the foundational basis of his intellectual production. This entails an investigation of the sources of the three structural components of al-Fayḍ's integrative epistemology, namely, demonstrative proof (*burhān*), mystical unveiling (*ʿirfān*), and divine revelation (*Qurʾān*). Through different examples from al-Fayḍ's texts, I examine how al-Fayḍ applies his integrative epistemology in his works. In particular, I show how he tries to achieve concordance between the rationality and the revelatory in a discrete manner. In doing so, I investigate al-Fayḍ's mystical and philosophical epistemic

views and how he attempted to harmonize them with traditional *Imāmī* doctrinal positions. This study addresses al-Fayḍ's adaptation of some of Mullā Ṣadrā's ideas, which are elucidated in his magnum opus, *al-Ḥikma al-Mutaʿāliya* (*Sublime Wisdom*).

Given the significance of the intellectual addition of al-Fayḍ to the Shiʿite tradition, much remains unknown about his life, doctrines, and works. The thoughts, theories, and doctrines of al-Fayḍ have been analyzed in a few studies, some of which fell short in terms of key information about him. Building on a variety of primary and secondary sources, the present thesis contributes to an understanding of the connections between al-Fayḍ's intellectual life, in addition to his doctrinal, methodological, and epistemic positions and the nature of his philosophical-religious outlook.

Résumé

La vie et la production intellectuelle de Muḥammad Muḥsin al-Fayḍ al-Kāshānī
(1007/1598–1091/1680)

Hussein Ibrahim, M.A.

L'Institut d'études islamiques, l'Université McGill, 2019

Ce mémoire consiste en une étude de la formation intellectuelle et de la pensée de Muḥammad Muḥsin ibn Murtaḍā ibn Maḥmūd al-Fayḍ al-Kāshānī (1007/1598–1091/1680), philosophe chiite duodécimain, théologien, traditionaliste (*muḥaddith*), exégèse (*mufassir*), juriste et poète de l'Iran safavide (907/1501–1135/1722). J'y examine la généalogie intellectuelle d'al-Fayḍ (c'est-à-dire ses professeurs et ses étudiants), sa formation académique, ses voyages intellectuels et ses relations avec les plus grands savants de son temps. J'y situe al-Fayḍ dans le contexte historique religieux et socio-politique de l'Iran safavide et j'examine son affiliation avec les écoles juridiques, philosophiques et mystiques. Étant donné qu'al-Fayḍ était une figure imminente au sein de l'environnement religieux et dynamique de l'Iran safavide, je recherche les conditions socio-scolaires générales qui ont façonné son caractère ainsi que son apport intellectuels. Je fournis une description détaillée de l'épistémologie d'al-Fayḍ, qui constitue la base de sa production intellectuelle. Cela implique une exploration des sources de trois composants structurels de l'épistémologie intégrative d'al Fayḍ, à savoir la preuve démonstrative (*burhān*), le dévoilement mystique (*ʿirfān*) et la révélation divine (*Qurʾān*). À travers différents exemples tirés des textes d'al-Fayḍ, j'examine comment al-Fayḍ applique son épistémologie intégrative dans ses travaux. En particulier, je montre comment il essaie de concilier la rationalité

et la révélation de manière remarquable. Ce faisant, j'étudie les conceptions épistémiques mystique et philosophique d'al-Fayḍ et la manière dont il a tenté de les harmoniser avec les positions doctrinales traditionnelles des Imamites. Cette étude porte sur l'adaptation par al-Fayḍ de certaines des idées de Mullā Ṣadrā, qui sont élucidées dans son opus magnum, *al-Ḥikma al-Mutaʿāliya* (*La Sagesse Sublime*).

Compte tenu de l'importance de l'apport intellectuel d'al-Fayḍ à la tradition chiite, il reste encore beaucoup à apprendre sur sa vie, ses doctrines et ses œuvres. Les pensées, théories et doctrines d'al-Fayḍ ont été analysées dans quelques études, dont certaines n'ont pas fourni les informations clés qui le concernent. S'appuyant sur une variété de sources primaires et secondaires, le présent mémoire contribue à la compréhension des liens entre la vie intellectuelle d'al-Fayḍ, en plus de ses positions doctrinales, méthodologiques et épistémiques et de la nature de sa perspective philosophico-religieuse.

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philosophy, Professor Stephen Menn for his enlightening answers to my philosophical inquiries, and Professor Armando Salvatore, who made me more aware of the link between contemporary and medieval intellectual debates. I am grateful to Professor Pouneh Shabani-Jadidi for helping me start my journey with the Persian language. I also owe a special thanks to Professor Fawwaz Tuqan and Professor Maher Jarrar for being a source of inspiration and encouragement since my undergraduate years at AUB.

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In the memory of those who gave their lives so that we may have ours and live them more abundantly; to the martyrs in the path of righteousness, possessing honor and distinction.

Table of Contents

Introduction

After the death of Mullā Ṣadrā (d. 1045/1636), his student and son-in-law Muḥammad Muḥsin al-Fayḍ al-Kāshānī (d. 1091/1680), stood as one of the most prominent religious scholars and played a key role in the development of the religious and philosophical tradition of the school of *al-Ḥikma al-Mutaʿāliya* (Sublime Wisdom).[1] Al-Fayḍ was a polymath and a philosopher, well known in Shiʿite history as *al-ḥakīm al-mutaʾallih* (the divine sage) and *faylasūf al-fuqahāʾ wa-faqīh al-falāsifa* (the philosopher of the jurists and the jurist of the philosophers). Even though the full impact of his life and works on various fields of Safavid-Qajar scholarship is not yet clearly established, we know that al-Fayḍ shaped significantly the theoretical realm of *al-Ḥikma al-Mutaʿāliya* and advanced a unique approach to the understanding of religion, reflected in his notable restructuring of the relationship between rational and religious/scriptural sciences (*al-ʿulūm al-ʿaqliyya wa-al-naqliyya*) in Twelver Shiʿite thought. Such restructuring, reflected primarily in what I call al-Fayḍ's *integrative epistemology*, occupies a critical place in this thesis.

Al-Fayḍ was a leading scholar in Safavid Iran (907/1501–1135/1722) and a contributor to its dynamic socio-religious environment. His religious and intellectual views give us a good idea about the main changes that occurred in that period. Therefore, I analyze the thought of al-Fayḍ partly in connection to the historical changes engulfing Safavid societies. With this, I look for some of the main factors that shaped his intellectual opinions. This has proved to be challenging, given the fact that al-Fayḍ held multiple scholarly and public roles during his life time as a community leader, religious authority, public intellectual, and a pivotal actor at the court of Shah

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[1] On a discussion on the translation of the term "*al-Ḥikma al-Mutaʿāliya*," see Carl W. Ernst, "Sufism and Philosophy in Mulla Ṣadrā," *Afkār: Journal of ʿAqīdah & Islamic Thought* 6 (2005): 144-47.

ʿAbbās II (r. 1052-1077/1643-1666). My thesis aims to provide a detailed and full description of al-Fayḍ's life, compositions, and intellectual character, using a variety of historical and biographical sources. It is also a study of his integrative epistemology and the type of methodology he utilized in his various works. By "integrative epistemology," I refer to al-Fayḍ's attempt to integrate demonstrative proof (*burhān*), mystical unveiling (*ʿirfān*), and divine revelation (*Qurʾān*). In order to delineate and understand the characteristics of this epistemology, I examine representative topics and questions covered in his writings cutting across jurisprudence, philosophy, *kalām* (rational theology), theosophy, *ḥadīth* literature, and *Qurʾān*ic exegesis. I focus, in particular, on his jurisprudential work, *Muʿtaṣam al-shīʿa fī aḥkām al-sharīʿa*, (*The Cleave of the Shiʿites in the Legalistic Rulings*), completed in 1029/1619-20, his philosophical work *ʿAyn al-yaqīn* (*Certainty itself*), completed in 1036/1627, his rational theological work, *ʿIlm al-yaqīn fī uṣūl al-dīn* (*The Knowledge of Certainty in the Principles of Religion*), completed in 1042/1633, his theosophical work *al-Kalimāt al-maknūna* (*The Hidden Words*), completed in 1057/1647, his famous *ḥadīth* compendium, *al-Wāfī* (*The Sufficient*), completed in 1068/1657, his famous *Qurʾān*ic exegesis *al-Ṣāfī* (*The Pure*), completed in 1075/1664-5, and his theosophical-philosophical work *Uṣūl al-maʿārif* (*Principles of the Sciences*), completed in 1089/1678.

In my effort to offer a comprehensive understanding of the life and works of al-Fayḍ, I have researched a variety of bibliographical compendia of Shiʿite compositions, and have drawn out the information on al-Fayḍ's life and works from *ṭabaqāt*, *tārīkh*, autobiographical notes, and Safavid chronicles, including but not limited to the following works, namely, al-Ḥurr al-ʿĀmilī (d. 1104/1693) *Amal al-āmil fī ʿulamāʾ Jabal ʿĀmil*, Yūsuf ibn Aḥmad al-Baḥrānī (d. 1186/1772) *Luʾluʾat al-baḥrayn fī al-ijāzāt wa-tarājim rijāl al-ḥadīth*, Muḥammad Bāqir al-Khwānsārī (d.

1313/1895) *Rawḍāt al-jannāt fī aḥwāl al-ʿulamāʾ wa-al-sādāt*, and Āghā Buzurg al-Ṭahrānī (d. 1389/1970) *al-Dharīʿa ilā taṣānīf al-shīʿa*. It is likely that I have missed some works that fall under this genre, nonetheless, I think that the biography I have put together provides guidelines for future research on the subject. I faced a number of challenges along the way, mainly in finding the exact death dates of certain scholars and family members, and the approximate time for the occurance of certain incidents, as well as the production of certain works.

It is surprising that despite the significance of al-Fayḍ's contribution to the Shiʿite tradition, his life, doctrines, and works remain under-researched. Various aspects of al-Fayḍ's thought has been analyzed in a few studies, but most of them fall short of offering key information about his life and intellectual training. It is clear that al-Fayḍ, especially when compared to his teacher Mullā Ṣadrā, has not gained enough attention by Western scholars. I therefore feel that a deep introductory work on his intellectual, epistemological, doctrinal, and methodological approaches would help reveal this treasure. The initial aim of my thesis was actually to study the development of al-Fayḍ's ethical theory, however, after facing many contradictions concerning his biography in primary and secondary sources, I tried to offer a thorough study of his intellectual life and characteristics. As such, I analyze the character of al-Fayḍ, his main thoughts, including his epistemology and methodology. Now, I am by no means claiming to have produced a perfect thesis, but my hope is that it forms a contribution to future Fayḍian studies and attracts attention to one of Safavid Iran's most famous intellectual figures.

Nonetheless, my work will not neglect some of the great contributions that helped shape my thesis. I have relied and built on current Fayḍian studies. In particular, Wissam Iman Nuwayhid's MA thesis (2016): "Origin, Emanation and Return in al-Fayḍ al-Kāshānī's *ʿAyn al-Yaqīn*," M. N. Saghaye-Biria's MA thesis (1997): "Al-Fayḍ al-Kâshânî (1598-1680) on Self-

supervision and Self-accounting," Cyrus Ali Zargar's article (2014): "Revealing Revisions: Fayḍ al-Kāshānī's Four Versions of *al-Kalimāt al-Maknūna*," and Andrew J. Newman's article (2001): "Fayd al-Kashani and the Rejection of the Clergy/State Alliance: Friday Prayer as Politics in the Safavid Period." These studies have inspired different aspects of my thesis. Nuwayhid explored al-Fayḍ's unique attempt at harmonizing demonstrative proof, mystical unveiling, and divine revelation. His analysis of the themes of origin, emanation, and return in al-Fayḍ's work, namely, ʿ*Ayn al-yaqīn* encouraged me to explore the relationship between these three epistemic components in al-Fayḍ's major works. Nuwayhid argued that, in ʿ*Ayn al-yaqīn*, al-Fayḍ attempts to attain concordance between the revelatory and the reasonable in a distinct fashion. Using the core themes of origin, emanation, and return, he tried to situate al-Fayḍ within the context of a Neo-Platonic philosophical mode of reasoning and a Twelver Shiʿite cast of the Islamic revelation. Even though my study covers part of what Nuwayhid discussed and examined in his thesis, viz., the epistemic method of al-Fayḍ, my thesis is mainly concerned with the manifestation of this epistemic method in al-Fayḍ's intellectual production, searching through its foundations and ramifications. The examination that Saghaye-Biria provided of al-Fayḍ's theories on *murāqabat al-nafs* (self-supervision) and *muḥāsabat al-nafs* (self-accounting) as expounded in his book *al-Maḥajja al-bayḍāʾ fī tahdhīb al-Iḥyāʾ* (*The Pure Path in Refining 'The Revival'*), was also beneficial for my thesis. This is especially true, since the epistemic component of his mystical unveiling is in a way or another related to his ethical theory. Saghaye-Biria's thesis also shed light on al-Fayḍ's thoughts in comparison with Abū Ḥāmid Muḥammad ibn Muḥammad al-Ghazālī (d. 505/1111), who shaped his thought. I have also benefited from Zargar's study of the four mystical treatises by al-Fayḍ, namely, *al-Kalimāt al-maknūna* (*The Hidden Words*) and its three other versions, *al-Laʾāliʾ* (*The Pearls*), *Qurrat al-ʿuyūn* (*The Eye's*

Pleasure), and *al-Kalimāt al-makhzūna* (*The Treasured Words*). Zargar's approach in studying these four treatises, composed at different times for different audiences and his unique analysis of the texts were essential in confirming and verifying my thoughts concerning al-Fayḍ's intellectual shifts and their relation to the socio-religious background of Safavid Iran. An important aspect of Zargar's article was his attempt to reveal changes that occurred in al-Fayḍ's presentation of the thought of Abū ʿAbdullāh Muḥammad ibn ʿAlī ibn Muḥammad ibn ʿArabī al-Ḥātimī al-Ṭāʾī (d. 638/1240) and Mullā Ṣadrā throughout the four treatises. This helps in showing how al-Fayḍ's dealings with the three epistemic components varies from one work to another, even though the conducted works are from the same genre or category. Newman's article, was useful in illuminating al-Fayḍ's relationship to the Safavid state and the socio-religious and political shifts that took place in 11th/17th century Safavid Iran.

In addition to the aforementioned Fayḍian studies, I made use of other pivotal contemporary studies that are related to the topics discussed in the thesis. In this concern, I benefited notably from Rula Jurdi Abisaab's various works on Shiʿism and Safavid Iran, including, *Converting Persia: Religion and Power in the Safavid Empire* (2004) and "Moral Authority in the Safawid State" (2015). Moreover, I benefited from Ata Anzali's book (2017): *"Mysticism" in Iran: The Safavids Roots of a Modern Concepts*.

This thesis consists of three chapters. Chapter One and Two provide the historical setting while Chapter Three investigates al-Fayḍ's integrative epistemology. What follows is a detailed description of the contents of each chapter.

Chapter One offers a summary of al-Fayḍ's background as well as an account on his intellectual life. It goes over his journey as a student, teacher, and then a religious authority. For a clear understanding of the changes that occurred in al-Fayḍ's intellectual life, I have divided al-

Fayḍ's intellectual journey into five main phases, presented at the end of this chapter.

Chapter Two investigates al-Fayḍ's doctrinal ideas, the intellectual shifts in his life, as well as the three bases on which he was criticized by other ʿulamāʾ (scholars of religion). The chapter also covers the intellectual-historical facets of al-Fayḍ's changes and detects the major influences behind his thought. It highlights the process by which al-Fayḍ integrated his scholarly and intellectual interests. In addition, this chapter illuminates also al-Fayḍ's role in legal guidance and public scholarly debates and examines his connections to the Shahs. Finally, it presents the intellectual framework of his opinions and positions against the environment of socio-intellectual shifts that occurred during that period.

Chapter Three highlights al-Fayḍ's particular adaptations of Ṣadrian doctrines and terminology in methodological and epistemic terms. It clarifies al-Fayḍ's integrative epistemology through his assessment of reason, mystical unveiling, and revelatory texts and sources. This chapter also includes a discussion of the main epistemic instruments needed to build a reconciliation between religion and reason, according to al-Fayḍ. By the end of the chapter, the role of the Fourteen Infallibles with regards to the coherent epistemic framework offered by al-Fayḍ is discussed.[2] With this, I attempt to expound on the practical features of al-Fayḍ's integrative epistemology and its three core elements, namely, demonstrative proof, mystical unveiling, and divine revelation.

The Conclusion gives an overall summary of al-Fayḍ's main contributions in the distinct scholarly areas discussed in the earlier chapters, and some implications of his integrative epistemology.

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[2] The term "infallible" that is, ʿiṣma (divine protection from error), applies to Prophet Muḥammad, his daughter Fāṭima, his cousin ʿAlī, who is the first Imam, and his descendants from Fāṭima.

Chapter 1: Life Events and Intellectual Biography of Muḥammad Muḥsin al-Fayḍ al-Kāshānī (d. 1091/1680)

Muḥammad Muḥsin ibn Raḍiyy al-Dīn Shāh Murtaḍā ibn Tāj al-Dīn Shāh Maḥmūd al-Fayḍ al-Kāshānī (1007/1598–1091/1680), was a Twelver Shiʿite philosopher, theologian, *muḥaddith* (traditionist, narrator of traditions, *ḥadīth* scholar), exegete (interpreter of the *Qurʾān*), jurist, and poet in Safavid Iran.[3] He was known as Muḥsin, Mawlā Muḥsin, Mullā Muḥsin, and referred to by his pen-name, al-Fayḍ al-Kāshānī.[4] Al-Fayḍ is sometimes described as *al-mutaʾallih al-ḥakīm* (the divine sage). In addition, al-Fayḍ is famous for being the first of the three late traditionalists (*awwal al-muḥaddithīn al-thalātha al-mutaʾakhkhirīn*).[5]

The few facts we know about al-Fayḍ's life are gained through the traditional biographical dictionaries, which are the basis of most traditional and modern accounts of his life.[6] Biographical dictionaries often offer numerous narrations that allow the compilers to present an image of virtue and scholarship in connection to their subjects. This process could lead to the inclusion of dreams, letters, speeches and other elements to embellish their subjects' qualities, even in the absence of evidence.[7] I attempt to reconstruct an outline of al-Fayḍ's life from the bits and pieces of several imperfect sources, including *ijāza*s (licenses), in order to give

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[3] Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥasan al-Ḥurr al-ʿĀmilī, *Amal al-āmil fī ʿulamāʾ Jabal ʿĀmil*, ed. Aḥmad al-Ḥusaynī, vol. 2 (Qum: Dār al-Kitāb al-Islāmī, 1983), 305.

[4] Āghā Buzurg Muḥammad Muḥsin ibn ʿAlī al-Ṭahrānī, *al-Dharīʿa ilā taṣānīf al-shīʿa*, vol. 5 (Beirut: Dār al-Aḍwāʾ li-al-Ṭibāʿa wa-al-Nashr wa-al-Tawzīʿ, 1403/1983), 82.

[5] See Muḥsin Bīdārfar's "Introduction" to al-Fayḍ's *ʿIlm al-yaqīn fī uṣūl al-dīn*. Muḥammad Muḥsin al-Fayḍ al-Kāshānī, *ʿIlm al-yaqīn fī uṣūl al-dīn*, ed. Muḥsin Bīdārfar, vol. 1 (Qum: Manshūrāt Bīdārfar, 1418 AH/1998 AD), 6. Also, see Muḥammad Muḥsin al-Fayḍ al-Kāshānī, *al-Ḥaqāʾiq fī maḥāsin al-akhlāq*, ed. al-Lajna al-ʿIlmiyya fī Madīnat Bārsā (Qum: Manshūrāt Muʾassasat Dār al-Mujtabā, 2008), 5.

[6] On modern and traditional accounts, see Abū al-Qāsim Naqībī, ed., *Aqwāl al-ʿulamāʾ fī tarjamat al-Mawlā Muḥsin Fayḍ al-Kāshānī* (Tehran: Manshūrāt al-Madrasa al-ʿUlyā li-al-Shahīd al-Muṭahharī, 2008).

[7] For an analysis of the historical tradition, see Albrecht Noth in collaboration with Lawrence Conrad, *The Early Arabic Historical Tradition: A Source Critical Study* (Princeton, N.J.: Darwin Press, 1994), 76-104.

an accurate account of his life and studies. Hagiographical reports paint him as a saintly and exemplary figure, but others thoroughly attack him and his ideas. Accordingly, I will use hagiographical reports in a critical way.

It is normal to find different opinions concerning scholars and their ideas. The figure of al-Fayḍ seems to have been a controversial one in the vibrant intellectual atmosphere in Safavid Iran (907/1501–1135/1722). While many praised al-Fayḍ, others attacked him.[8] However, al-Fayḍ's high scholarly rank and involvement in various intellectual disciplines are clearly recorded in the biographies of the Safavid period. A good reflection of this, is a quote from Muḥammad Bāqir al-Khwānsārī's (d. 1313/1895) entry on al-Fayḍ in his *Rawḍāt al-jannāt fī aḥwāl al-ʿulamāʾ wa-al-sādāt*:

> [Al-Fayḍ's] virtue, understanding, and nobility in the branches and principles of [the religion], in addition to his encompassing [knowledge] of the rational and transmitted [sciences] and the extent of his eloquent writings and compilations are well-known such that it is hidden from none in this sect (Twelver Shiʿism) until the very end of eternity.[9]

1.1. Al-Fayḍ's Intellectual Journey

Al-Fayḍ was born on the 14th of *Ṣafar*, 1007/1598, to a family of well recognized legal scholars in Kashan, a city, which continued to yield prominent *ʿulamāʾ* (scholars of religion) in

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[8] Some of the scholars who praised al-Fayḍ in their biographical, jurisprudential, and historian works, include; al-ʿAllāma al-Sayyid ʿAlī Khān al-Madanī al-Shīrāzī (d. 1120/1708), Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥasan ibn ʿAlī ibn al-Ḥusayn al-ʿĀmilī al-Mashgharī (d. 1104/1693), commonly known as al-Ḥurr al-ʿĀmilī, in his *Amal al-āmil fī ʿulamāʾ Jabal ʿĀmil*, Muḥammad Bāqir ibn Zayn al-ʿĀbidīn al-Mūsawī al-Khwānsārī (d. 1313/1895) in his *Rawḍāt al-jannāt fī aḥwāl al-ʿulamāʾ wa-al-sādāt*, al-Muḥaddith ʿAbbās al-Qummī (d. 1359/1940) in his *al-Fawāʾid al-raḍawiyya fī aḥwāl ʿulamāʾ al-madhhab al-jaʿfariyya*, ʿAbd al-Ḥusayn al-Amīnī (d. 1390/1971) in his *Mawsūʿat al-ghadīr fī al-kitāb wa-al-sunna wa-al-adab*, and Jaʿfar al-Subḥānī in his *Tārīkh al-fiqh al-islāmī wa-adwāruh*. Some of the scholars who attacked al-Fayḍ in their biographical, jurisprudential, and historian works, include; Yūsuf ibn Aḥmad al-Baḥrānī (d. 1186/1772) in his *Luʾluʾat al-baḥrayn fī al-ijāzāt wa-tarājim rijāl al-ḥadīth* and Asadullāh al-Dizfūlī al-Kāẓimī in his *Maqābis al-anwār*.

[9] Muḥammad Bāqir ibn Zayn al-ʿĀbidīn al-Mūsawī al-Khwānsārī, *Rawḍāt al-jannāt fī aḥwāl al-ʿulamāʾ wa-al-sādāt*, vol. 6 (Beirut: al-Dār al-Islāmiyya, 1411/1991), 73-4. Also, see Naqībī, *Aqwāl al-ʿulamāʾ*, 33.

modern times.[10] His father was Raḍiyy al-Dīn Shāh Murtaḍā ibn Tāj al-Dīn Shāh Maḥmūd (d.

1009/1600), a religious scholar, a well-known jurist, an *Uṣūlī* (a jurist who uses *ijtihād*, that is,

rational legal inference, to derive the law), a theologian, an exegete, and poet in Kashan, who

had a vast library, and was described as virtuous and knowledgeable.[11] Al-Fayḍ, however, did

not get the opportunity to study under his father as some contemporary scholars such as William

C. Chittick and Hamid Algar have claimed, since his father died in 1009/1600 when al-Fayḍ was

two years old.[12] Scholars differ when determining the city where al-Fayḍ was born and brought

up. Some say he was born and raised in Qum and later moved to Shiraz to study under the

supervision of al-Sayyid Mājid ibn al-Sayyid Hāshim al-Ḥusaynī al-Baḥrānī (d. 1028/1619).[13]

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[10] In his autobiography, al-Fayḍ does not mention his date of birth. Nontheless, al-Fayḍ wrote his book *Khulāṣat al-adhkār* in 1033/1624 at the age of 26. According to this, he should have been born in 1007 AH. See Muḥammad Mishkāt's "Introduction" to al-Fayḍ's *al-Maḥajja al-bayḍāʾ fī tahdhīb al-Iḥyāʾ*, Muḥammad Muḥsin al-Fayḍ al-Kāshānī, *al-Maḥajja al-bayḍāʾ fī tahdhīb al-Iḥyāʾ*, ed. Muḥammad Mishkāt, (4 vols.) (Tehran: al-Maktaba al-Islāmiyya. 1960-61). I cite Mishkāt from Abū al-Qāsim Naqībī's *Aqwāl al-ʿulamāʾ fī tarjamat al-Mawlā Muḥsin Fayḍ al-Kāshānī*, see Naqībī, *Aqwāl al-ʿulamāʾ*, 221.
Also, see Bīdārfar, "Introduction" to al-Fayḍ's *ʿIlm al-yaqīn*, 1:7; Hamid Algar, "FAYŻ-E KĀŠĀNĪ, MOLLĀ MOḤSEN-MOḤAMMAD," *Encyclopædia Iranica*, last updated January 24, 2012, http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/fayz-e-kasani. On the scholarly and intellectual status of al-Fayḍ, see al-Khwānsārī, *Rawḍāt al-jannāt*, 6:74; and Mishkāt's "Introduction" to al-Fayḍ's *al-Maḥajja al-bayḍāʾ* in Naqībī, *Aqwāl al-ʿulamāʾ*, 190, 221-28. Kashan is a city in Iran, some 258 kilometers south of Tehran.
[11] See Shihāb al-Dīn al-Marʿashī al-Najafī's "Introduction" to ʿAlam al-Hudā Muḥammad ibn Muḥammad Muḥsin al-Kāshānī's *Maʿādin al-ḥikma fī makātīb al-aʾimma*. ʿAlam al-Hudā Muḥammad ibn Muḥammad Muḥsin al-Kāshānī, *Maʿādin al-ḥikma fī makātīb al-aʾimma*, vol. 1 (Qum: Muʾassasat al-Nashr al-Islāmī, 1431/2010), 10-11.
Also, see Mīrzā Muḥammad ʿAlī Mudarris al-Tabrīzī, *Rayḥānat al-adab fī tarājim al-maʿrūfīn bi-al-kunya wa-al-laqab*, vol. 4 (Tehran: Intishārāt-i Khayyām, 1374 SH/1995 AD), 378-79; al-Khwānsārī, *Rawḍāt al-jannāt*, 6:74. See Mishkāt's "Introduction" to al-Fayḍ's *al-Maḥajja al-bayḍāʾ* in Naqībī, *Aqwāl al-ʿulamāʾ*, 221.
[12] William C. Chittick, "Muḥsin-i Fayḍ-i Kāshānī," *Encyclopaedia of Islam* 2, accessed December 9, 2018, http://dx.doi.org.proxy3.library.mcgill.ca/10.1163/1573-3912_islam_COM_0785; Algar, "FAYŻ-E KĀŠĀNĪ."
In his autobiography, al-Fayḍ indirectly indicates his father's absence (death) when al-Fayḍ was at a young age, see Muḥammad Muḥsin al-Fayḍ al-Kāshānī, "Risāla-yi sharḥ-i ṣadr Fayż-i Kāshānī," *Juluweh* 7 and 8 (Bahman 1324): 401, http://www.noormags.ir/view/fa/articlepage/642139/رساله-شرح-صدر-فیض-کاشانی. Also, see Bīdārfar, "Introduction" to al-Fayḍ's *ʿIlm al-yaqīn*, 1:6, 9.
[13] The first opinion is mainly reflected by Sayyid Niʿmatullāh al-Jazāʾirī (d. 1112/1673-74) in his *Zahr al-rabīʿ*, which was transmitted by Shaykh Yūsuf ibn Aḥmad al-Baḥrānī in his *Luʾluʾat al-baḥrayn*, see Yūsuf ibn Aḥmad al-Baḥrānī, *Luʾluʾat al-baḥrayn fī al-ijāzāt wa-tarājim rijāl al-ḥadīth*, ed. Muḥammad Ṣādiq Baḥr al-ʿUlūm (al-Manāma: Maktabat Fakhrāwī, 1429/2008), 126. Shigeru Kamada also states that al-Fayḍ al-Kāshānī was raised in Qum, adding that he later moved to Isfahan, where he died. See Shigeru Kamada, "Fayḍ al-Kāshānī's Walaya: The Confluence of Shiʿi Imamology and Mysticism," in *Reason and Inspiration in Islam: Theology, Philosophy and Mysticism in Muslim Thought*, ed. Todd Lawson (London; New York: I.B Tauris in association with the Institute of Ismaili Studies, 2005), 456. It is unclear how Kamada arrived at the wrong conclusion that al-Fayḍ died in Isfahan.

Others claim that al-Fayḍ appears to have been brought up in Kashan and moved to Qum.[14] My view is that al-Fayḍ was born and raised in Kashan and later moved shortly to Isfahan before heading to Shiraz. My claim is based on some of al-Fayḍ's works which affirm this hypothesis, such as his autobiography *Sharḥ-i ṣadr* (*Expansion of the Mind*), completed in 1065/1655.[15] In addition, the general sketch of al-Fayḍ's journey makes Kashan the most rational location of his birth and growth. This is because, in his autobiography, he mentions that during his early years, he studied under the supervision of his maternal uncle who used to be a prominent scholar in Kashan. Al-Fayḍ does not directly state that he was born in Kashan, but it can be deduced when he says that he began his studies in religious exoteric sciences (*ʿulūm dīniyya ẓāhira*) in his *waṭan aṣlī* (motherland) Kashan, and *waṭan aṣlī* is a term which means the land of birth.[16] In my view, the scholars who hold that al-Fayḍ was born and raised in Qum had built their opinion on Yūsuf ibn Aḥmad ibn Ṣāliḥ ibnʿUṣfūr al-Baḥrānī's (d. 1186/1772) quote of Sayyid Niʿmatullāh al-Jazāʾirī's (d. 1112/1673-4) testimony in his book *Zahr al-rabīʿ* (*The Blossoms of Spring*).[17] However, it is important to note that Yūsuf al-Baḥrānī himself, before quoting al-Jazāʾirī, mentions that al-Fayḍ moved from Kashan to Shiraz to study under Mājid al-Baḥrānī and

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[14] See Muḥammad Bāqir Saʿīdī al-Khurāsānī's "Introduction" to al-Fayḍ's *al-Ḥaqāʾiq fī maḥāsin al-akhlāq*. Muḥammad Muḥsin al-Fayḍ al-Kāshānī, *al-Ḥaqāʾiq fī maḥāsin al-akhlāq*, ed. Muḥammad Bāqir Saʿīdī al-Khurāsānī (Tehran: al-Maktaba al-Islāmiyya, 1961), 9. This may conflict with al-Jazāʾirī who says (*wa-kāna nashʾuh fī Qum*). The word (*nashʾuh*) could either mean both his birth and upbringing or his upbringing only. See al-Baḥrānī, *Luʾluʾat al-baḥrayn*, 126; and Mishkāt's "Introduction" to al-Fayḍ's *al-Maḥajja al-bayḍāʾ* in Naqībī, *Aqwāl al-ʿulamāʾ*, 191. However, according to this narration, he lived in Qum during the early stage of his life. In his autobiography, al-Fayḍ did not mention that he grew up in Qum, rather, he does mention that he later moved from Kashan to Isfahan to study. Al-Fayḍ, "Sharḥ-i ṣadr," 401-3.

[15] This opinion is mentioned by al-Fayḍ himself in his autobiography, see al-Fayḍ, "Sharḥ-i ṣadr," 401. Some contemporary scholars such as Muḥsin Bīdārfar also support this assumption, see Bīdārfar, "Introduction" to al-Fayḍ's *ʿIlm al-yaqīn*, 1:19.

[16] "Exoteric" denotes the knowledge that is gained from outside through teachings and studying. It is not required that exoteric knowledge come automatically or easily, but it should be reproducible and referenceable. "Exoteric" is distinguished from internal "esoteric" knowledge. The term "esoteric" is often associated with esoteric spirituality, as when the believer focuses on the exploration of the inner self.

[17] Al-Baḥrānī, *Luʾluʾat al-baḥrayn*, 126.

Muḥammad ibn Ibrāhīm Ṣadr al-Dīn al-Shīrāzī (d. 1045/1636), known as Mullā Ṣadrā.[18] Still, Yūsuf al-Baḥrānī's statement has two faults. The first is that al-Fayḍ moved first from Kashan to Isfahan and then to Shiraz according to his autobiography. The second is that al-Fayḍ did not study with Mullā Ṣadrā in his first visit to Shiraz. He accompanied Mullā Ṣadrā later in a second visit to Shiraz from Qum as will be elaborated later in the chapter.[19]

As mentioned earlier, during his early youth in Kashan, al-Fayḍ studied the exoteric sciences, i.e. exegesis, *ḥadīth*,[20] jurisprudence, Arabic language, and logic with his maternal uncle Muḥammad ibn Maḥmūd al-Kāshānī.[21] In 1027/1618, the twenty-year old al-Fayḍ traveled to Isfahan, to further pursue his scholarly training. In his introduction to al-Fayḍ's work; *Muʿtaṣam al-shīʿa fī aḥkām al-sharīʿa* (*The Cleave of the Shiʿites in the Legalistic Rulings*), Masīḥ al-Tawḥīdī states that al-Fayḍ studied there with Ḥusayn al-Ardakānī al-Yazdī and Muḥammad Ṣāliḥ al-Māzandarānī, and benefited from this visit in the studies of mathematics.[22] We are told that after spending less than one year in Isfahan, al-Fayḍ moved to Shiraz, a vibrant center of learning, to develop his knowledge of jurisprudence and *ḥadīth* at the hands of the leading *Akhbārī* scholar and *muḥaddith* of the time, al-Sayyid Mājid al-Baḥrānī, a student of al-Bahāʾī, Muḥammad ibn ʿIzz al-Dīn Ḥusayn al-ʿĀmilī (d. 1030/1621).[23] Yūsuf al-Baḥrānī in his

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[18] Ibid.

[19] Al-Tankābunī, in addition to some other scholars, mistakenly mentions that al-Fayḍ studied under Mullā Ṣadrā in his first visit to Shiraz. See Mīrzā Muḥammad ibn Sulaymān al-Tankābunī, *Qiṣaṣ al-ʿulamāʾ*, trans. into Arabic Mālik Wihbī (Beirut: Dār al-Maḥajja al-Bayḍāʾ, 1992), 349.

[20] *Ḥadith* is considered the second source of religious law after the *Qurʾān*. Generally in Islam, *ḥadīth* denotes the record of the words, actions, and the silent approval, of the Infallible. For the Sunni tradition, this would be limited to Prophet Muḥammad, while according to Shiʿite tradition, it also includes those of the other thirteen infallibles from his Family, *Ahl al-bayt* (Fāṭima—Prophet Muḥammad's daughter—and the Twelve Shiʿite Imams).

[21] Al-Fayḍ, "Sharḥ-i ṣadr," 401.

[22] See Masīḥ al-Tawḥīdī's "Introduction" to al-Fayḍ's *Muʿtaṣam al-shīʿa fī aḥkām al-sharīʿa*. Muḥammad Muḥsin al-Fayḍ al-Kāshānī, *Muʿtaṣam al-shīʿa fī aḥkām al-sharīʿa*, ed. Masīḥ al-Tawḥīdī, vol. 1 (Tehran: Munshūrāt al-Madrasa al-ʿUlyā li-al-Shahīd al-Muṭahharī, 1387 SH/2008 AD), 6.

[23] Shiraz is a city in south-western Iran.

The *Akhbāriyya* school was first established as a distinct school in which *akhbār* (*ḥadīth* accounts of the Fourteen Infallibles) were deemed to be the sole source of religious truth. The *Akhbāriyya* epistemic system was formulated by Mullā Muḥammad Amīn Astarābādī (d. 1034/1624). The school's foundation is that *akhbār* are the only source

Luʾluʾat al-baḥrayn fī al-ijāzāt wa-tarājim rijāl al-ḥadīth quotes al-Jazāʾirī, and al-Khwānsārī in

his *Rawḍāt* quotes Yūsuf al-Baḥrānī's testimony that al-Fayḍ's father was hesitant in giving al-

Fayḍ the permission to move to Shiraz, upon which it was agreed that the decision would be

finalized through *istikhāra* (omen-seeking). When opening the *Qurʾān* for *istikhāra*, it revealed

the verse: "And it is not for the believers to go forth [to battle] all at once. For there should

separate from every division of them a group [remaining] to obtain understanding in the religion

and warn their people when they return to them that they might be cautious."[24] Following the

istikhāra, inspiration was sought (*tafāʾul*) through a collection of poems (*dīwān*) attributed to

Imam ʿAlī ibn Abī Ṭālib (d. 40/661). The page opened to the verses:

<div dir="rtl">

تَغَرَّب عن الأوطانِ في طلبِ العُلى   وسافر فَفِي الأسفارِ خمسُ فوائد

تقرّجُ همٍّ واكتسابُ معيشةٍ   وعِلمٌ وآدابٌ وصحبةُ ماجد

</div>

Be estranged from your homes as you seek the height
[A]nd travel for in travel there are five benefits:
[T]he lifting of unhappiness, the attainment of a living,
[K]nowledge, etiquette, and glorious friendship.

Yūsuf al-Baḥrānī considered these verses fitting in al-Fayḍ's situation, especially that which

indicates the companionship of a *mājid* (glorious friendship), referring to later the

companionship of Sayyid Mājid al-Baḥrānī.[25]

This narration indicates another problem with Yūsuf al-Baḥrānī's biography on al-Fayḍ.

The issue is that Yūsuf al-Baḥrānī, following al-Jazāʾirī, claimed that al-Fayḍ took his father's

permission to travel to Shiraz to pursue his studies under Mājid al-Baḥrānī. However, it is known

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of law. The authority of the *akhbār* was deemed to supersede the *Qurʾān* and the *sunna* (tradition) of the Prophet. According to the *Akhbāriyya*, that which is not found in the *akhbār* is better avoided. See two of the most central articles on *Akhbāriyya*, written in the last few years by Rula Jurdi Abisaab. Rula Jurdi Abisaab, "Shiʿi Jurisprudence, Sunnism, and the Traditionist Thought (Akhbārī) of Muhammad Amin Astarabadi (d. 1626-27)," *IJMES* 47 (2015): 5-23; Rula Jurdi Abisaab, "Was Muḥammad Amīn al-Astarabādī (d. 1036/1626-7) a Mujtahid?," *Shii Studies Review* 2 (2018): 38-61.

[24] *Qurʾān*, 9:122.

[25] Al-Baḥrānī, *Luʾluʾat al-baḥrayn*, 126.

that al-Fayḍ's father died when al-Fayḍ was only two years old. In addition, al-Fayḍ travelled to Shiraz from Isfahan and not from Qum or from Kashan as will be explained later. Now this will lead us to question the whole story as narrated by Yūsuf al-Baḥrānī concerning al-Fayḍ's decision to move to Shiraz where Mājid al-Baḥrānī resided.

Although we are sure that al-Fayḍ's purpose in heading to Shiraz was to study under the supervision of Mājid al-Baḥrānī, it is unclear, however, how notable or lengthy al-Fayḍ's studies with this scholar were, since it is likely that he arrived in Shiraz, a few months before Mājid al-Baḥrānī passed away in 1028/1619.[26] However, it is clear that he benefited significantly from his teacher Mājid al-Baḥrānī, as he clearly indicates in several works, such as his famous *ḥadīth* magnum *al-Wāfī* (*The Sufficient*), completed in 1068/1657: "I sometimes narrate the four principle [books] from my teacher, my reliance and foundation in the legal sciences, al-Sayyid Mājid ibn Hāshim al-Ṣādiqī al-Baḥrānī."[27] Nonetheless, in his autobiographical treatise *Sharḥ-i ṣadr*, al-Fayḍ states that he benefited greatly from Mājid al-Baḥrānī in the area of *ḥadīth* and received *ijāzat riwāya* (license to transmit *ḥadīth narrations*).[28] He adds with respect to his stay in Shiraz that he gained enough insight in the area of *fiqh* (substantive law) and other disciplines that he stopped practicing *taqlīd* (emulation of a jurist with an authoritative knowledge in deriving the law), thereby becoming a *mujtahid* (a jurist who derives the law using rational inference or *ijtihād*).[29] This reflects a deep intellectual transformation despite the fact that this was his first visit to Shiraz. The lively intellectual center in the city of Shiraz attracted students

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[26] Al-Fayḍ must have emigrated to Shiraz at least one year before al-Baḥrānī's demise, such that he must have gone there around 1027/1618. See al-Baḥrānī, *Luʾluʾat al-baḥrayn*, 126; and Mishkāt's "Introduction" to al-Fayḍ's *al-Maḥajja al-bayḍāʾ* in Naqībī, *Aqwāl al-ʿulamāʾ*, 192.

[27] Muḥammad Muḥsin al-Fayḍ al-Kāshānī, *al-Wāfī*, vol. 1 (Isfahan: Manshūrāt Maktabat Amīr al-Muʾminīn ʿAlī ʿAlayh al-Salām al-ʿĀmma, 1430/2009), 28-29.

[28] Al-Fayḍ, "Sharḥ-i ṣadr," 402.
Ijāza is a letter given by teachers to students indicating their permission to narrate from their teachers or their permission for a student to practice *ijtihād* (rational legal inference).

[29] Ibid.

of religious studies who were interested in philosophy and mystical studies.[30] Prominent figures, including Ṣadr al-Dīn Dashtakī (d. 903/1497) and Jalāl al-Dīn al-Dawwānī (d. 908/1502), formed the basis of the famous School of Shiraz.[31]

Al-Fayḍ's stay in Shiraz led to one of the most decisive changes in his intellectual journey and scholarly development. As aforementioned, he states very clearly in his autobiography that he turned into a full-fledged *mujtahid*. This raises a controversial issue, which is the duration of his stay in Shiraz. If Mājid al-Baḥrānī died shortly after al-Fayḍ's arrival in Shiraz, then he might not have been the only scholar who shaped his thinking, unless al-Fayḍ believes that an *ijāza* from al-Baḥrānī is enough for him to achieve *ijtihād*. Presently, I support this assumption as it is difficult to speculate who among the other scholars in Shiraz would have been al-Fayḍ's teacher in jurisprudence.

Al-Baḥrānī's death drove al-Fayḍ back to Isfahan, where he studied with a diverse group of ʿulamāʾ in various fields and accompanied many teachers. These interactions shaped his scholarly character and played a role in expanding his intellectual concerns. Although al-Fayḍ tells us very little about his studies in Isfahan, we know that he came across Bahāʾ al-Dīn al-ʿAmilī as well as, perhaps, Sayyid Mīr Muḥammad Bāqir ibn Muḥammad al-Dāmād al-Astarabādī (d. 1041/1632), both of whom were leading jurists of their time.[32] We are thus sure

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[30] On Shiraz circle, see Ata Anzali, *"Mysticism" in Iran: The Safavid Roots of a Modern Concept* (Columbia, South Carolina: The University of South Carolina Press, 2017), 117-25.

[31] Some contemprory scholars have used the term "School of Shiraz" indicating Shiraz's thriving and flourishing era of Islamic philosophy in the late middle period. See, for example, Ghasem Kakaie's "Introduction" to Dashtakī's *Manāzil al-sāʾirīn*, where he comments on maktab-i Shiraz. Ghiyāth al-Dīn Manṣūr al-Dashtakī al-Shīrāzī, *Ghiyāth al-dīn manṣūr dashtakī va falsafa-yi ʿirfān: manāzil al-sāʾirīn va maqāmāt al-ʿārifīn*, ed. Ghasem Kakaie (Tehran: Intishārāt-i Farhangistān-i Hunar, 2008). The early 11th/17th century witnessed the emergence of famous figures such as Mīr Dāmād, thereby shifting the locus of philosophical teachings to Isfahan. However, Shiraz persisted as a significant intellectual and cultural center of the Safavid era.

[32] The relationship with al-Bahāʾī is not evenly acknowledged. See Chittick, "Muḥsin-i Fayḍ-i Kāshānī"; Al-Baḥrānī, *Luʾluʾat al-baḥrayn*, 116-27; al-Tankābunī, *Qiṣaṣ al-ʿulamāʾ*, 350; and Mudarris, *Rayḥānat al-adab*, 4:371. It is affirmed, nonetheless, in al-Fayḍ's autobiographical *Sharḥ-i ṣadr*. Possible study with Mīr Dāmād is not confirmed in all sources or in al-Fayḍ's *Sharḥ*. See Chittick, "Muḥsin-i Fayḍ-i Kāshānī"; al-Baḥrānī, *Luʾluʾat al-baḥrayn*, 127; al-Tankābunī, *Qiṣaṣ al-ʿulamāʾ*, 350; and Mudarris, *Rayḥānat al-adab*, 4:370.

that al-Fayḍ studied under al-Bahāʾī in his second visit to Isfahan, but it is still not clear if he studied under him during his first visit. However, it is probable that he only did so in his second visit, otherwise, he would have mentioned such an important event if it happened in his first visit. As *Shaykh al-islām* of Isfahan, al-Bahāʾī was the chief *qāḍī* (judge) but he was also a leading scholar in various fields of the transmitted and rational sciences, a literary figure, and poet.[33] His interest in Sufism, which has been the center of debate up until the modern period, can be gleaned from his books *al-Milal va al-niḥal* (*The Denominations and the Confessions*) and *al-Kashkūl*.[34] It is also known that al-Bahāʾī appreciated the company of Sufis and dervishes. Additionally, his works, *al-Arbaʿīn* and *al-Kashkūl*, revealed a deep engagement with mystical doctrines. There are even stories that al-Bahāʾī moved around wearing a Sufi cloak.[35] Al-Fayḍ may have followed in the footsteps of al-Bahāʾī, his teacher, as he displayed Sufi interests, yet it is not easy to categorize any of the former's books or practices neatly under Sufism.[36] However, both al-Bahāʾī and al-Fayḍ are known to have given mixed statements in support of and against Sufis. I will tackle this issue further in Chapters Two and Three.

Al-Fayḍ studied for only a few months with al-Bahāʾī, who died in 1030/1621. Al-Fayḍ arrived in Isfahan in late 1028/1619 and from there he traveled to perform the pilgrimage in

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[33] See ʿAqīqī Bakhshāyishī, *Fuqahāʾ-i nāmdār-i shīʿa* (Qum: Intishārāt-i Kitābkhāna-yi Āyatullā Marʿashī, 1983), 209–14.

[34] See Rula Jurdi Abisaab, *Converting Persia: Religion and Power in the Safavid Empire* (London; New York: I.B. Tauris, 2004), 171. Further on al-Bahāʾī, see Dalāl ʿAbbās, *Bahāʾ al-Dīn al-ʿĀmilī adīban wa-faqīhan wa-ʿāliman* (Beirut: Dār al-Muʾarrikh al-ʿArabī, 2010); and Clifford Edmund Bosworth, *Bahāʾ al-Dīn al-ʿĀmilī and His Literary Anthologies* (Manchester: University of Manchester, 1989).

[35] For more about Shaykh al-Bahāʾī's mystical tendencies, see Leonard Lewisohn, "Sufism and the School of Iṣfahān: Taṣawwuf and ʿIrfān in Late Safavid Iran: ʿAbd al-Razzāq Lahījī and Fayḍ-i Kāshānī on the Relation of Taṣawwuf, Ḥikmat and ʿIrfān," in *The Heritage of Sufism, Vol. III: Late Classical Persianate Sufism: the Safavid and Mughal Period (1501–1750)*, ed. Leonard Lewisohn and David Morgan (Oxford; Boston, MA: Oneworld, 1999), 88–89.

[36] Throughout al-Majlisī al-Awwal's commentaries rebutting Muḥammad Ṭāhir ibn Muḥammad Ḥusayn al-Shirāzī al-Najafī al-Qummī's (d.1098/1689) attacks on Sufism in *Uṣūl fuṣūl al-tawḍīḥ*, he often cites his teacher, al-Shaykh al-Bahāʾī, as the authentic figure who taught him about the path of the saints and continuedly warned against perceiving their words literally or believing that one can understand their words without guidance. See Anzali, *"Mysticism" in Iran*, 109.

Mecca.[37] Despite this short period of interaction between the two, al-Fayḍ mentions in his autobiography that he took an *ijāza* from him; but this *ijāza* does not seem to be extant. Much like al-Bahāʾī, the intellectual production of al-Fayḍ spanned a wide range of fields including *Qurʾān*ic exegesis, philosophy, Sufism, law, and doctrine among others.

Mīr Dāmād, nicknamed *al-Muʿallim al-thālith* (the Third Teacher, after Aristotle and al-Fārābī), was one of al-Fayḍ's *shuyūkh* (teachers) and a native of Astarabad. He is considered one of the main founders of what came to be depicted as "the school of Isfahan."[38] He was also a leading scholar of mathematics, jurisprudence, and a *Qurʾān*ic and *ḥadīth* exegete in the 11th/17th century. Although it is not clearly stated in any of al-Fayḍ's writings that he studied under Mīr Dāmād, it would seem unreasnoble to think that al-Fayḍ did not attended his scholarly circle in Isfahan during his two early visits to this city, especially taking into consideration that Mīr Dāmād was one of most important and influencial Shiʿite scholars of 11th/17th century Iran. At the same time, Yūsuf al-Baḥrānī states that al-Fayḍ transmitted *ḥadīth* upon the authority of (*rawā ʿan*) Mīr Dāmād.[39] Due to the fact that he studied with him for a short time, it is difficult to ascertain the role which Mīr Dāmād played in shaping al-Fayḍ's thought, in particular as it relates to the philosophical views at that period of time. What we do know, however, is that

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[37] Dates which are not mentioned by al-Fayḍ are estimated.

[38] Seyyed Hossein Nasr, "Spiritual Movements, Philosophy and Theology in the Safavid Period," in *The Cambridge History of Iran: Timurid and Safavid Periods*, ed. Peter Jackson and Laurence Lockhart, vol. 6 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 670.
Henry Corbin, for the first time theorized about the School of Isfahan in Henry Corbin, "Confessions extatiques de Mīr Dāmād, maître de théologie Ispahan," in *Mélanges Louis Massignon*, vol. 1 (Damas: Institut Français de Damas, 1956), 331-78. The revelation of Mīr Damād's mystical admission was what sealed his position not just as the leader of the rationalist late-Peripatetic and Illuminationist school, but also as a gnostic. This combination was the central character of 'members' of the School of Isfahan. For relevant studies on the School of Isfahan, see Reza Pourjavady and Sabine Schmidtke, "An Eastern Renaissance? Greek Philosophy under the Safavids (16th–18th centuries AD)," *Intellectual History of the Islamicate World* 3 (2015): 248-90; Sajjad H. Rizvi, "The Isfahan School of Philosophy," *Encyclopædia Iranica*, last updated April 5, 2012, http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/isfahan-school-of-philosophy; Andrew J. Newman, "Towards a Reconsideration of the 'Isfahan School of Philosophy': Shaykh Bahāʾī and the Role of the Safawid ʿUlamā," *Studia Iranica* 15, no. 2 (1986): 165-99.

[39] Al-Baḥrānī, *Luʾluʾat al-baḥrayn*, 127.

during a later period al-Fayḍ became affiliated with the school of *al-Ḥikma al-Mutaʿāliya* (Sublime Wisdom) which was in conflict with Mīr Dāmād's main philosophical doctrines.

In 1028/1619, al-Fayḍ went on pilgrimage to Mecca. During his journey, he continued to study *ḥadīth* under Muḥammad ibn Ḥasan ibn Zayn-al-Dīn al-ʿĀmilī (d. 1030/1621), a grandson of the leading jurist, Zayn al-Dīn ibn Nūr al-Dīn ʿAlī ibn Aḥmad al-ʿAmilī al-Jubaʿī (d. 965/1558), better known as al-Shahīd al-Thānī, and earned an *ijāza* from him to transmit *ḥadīth*.[40] When setting off from Mecca to Iran in mid-1029/1620, his brother, Murtaḍā ibn Raḍiyy al-Dīn Shāh Murtaḍā (d. 1029/1620), described as a remarkable young *mujtahid*, and who was travelling with him at the time was murdered by a bandit group.[41] Al-Fayḍ discussed this tragedy in his autobiography noting that it changed him deeply and shaped his future plans. He started searching for a teacher of esoteric sciences (*ʿilm al-bāṭin*), traveling through many villages to find one but to no avail.[42] While it is highly likely that the murder of al-Fayḍ's brother encouraged him to pursue the esoteric sciences, it is also possible that this was not the first time he had expressed an interest in the subject and this may have dated back to his contact with al-Bahāʾī. It is unclear what type of inspiration and training al-Fayḍ was looking for in a teacher. He tells us that his first visit to Isfahan in 1027/1618 was unsuccessful in this respect. But one can safely infer that he was attracted to the esoteric sciences before this time, and that this tragic incident accentuated this tendency and also hastened his scholarly plans.[43]

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[40] Al-Fayḍ, "Sharḥ-i ṣadr," 402; Chittick, "Muḥsin-i Fayḍ-i Kāshānī."
[41] Al-Fayḍ, "Sharḥ-i ṣadr," 402.
Al-Fayḍ did not mention the name of his brother, but I conclude that from the death dates of his brothers. It is also mentioned that his brother Murtaḍā died on his way back from *al-Ḥajj* (pilgrimage to Mecca). On the date of Murtaḍā ibn Raḍiyy al-Dīn Shāh Murtaḍā's death, see al-Marʿashī al-Najafī, "Introduction" to ʿAlam al-Hudā al-Kāshānī's *Maʿādin al-ḥikma*, 1:14.
[42] Al-Fayḍ, "Sharḥ-i ṣadr," 402.
[43] Ibid.

Al-Fayḍ's intellectual pursuits led him to Qum, where he studied exoteric sciences and illuminationist (*ishrāqī*) philosophy for eight years under Mullā Ṣadrā, who was destined to be his major teacher in many other disciplines. Under the guidance of Mullā Ṣadrā, al-Fayḍ spent a long time studying and was engrossed in ascetic exercises. During this period, he wrote that his heart was open to new realities and that his spiritual state had changed the course of his intellectual development.[44] The precise period of his study under Mullā Ṣadrā is not clear. According to Chittick,

> [H]e studied with a large number of teachers, but did not find the qualifications he was looking for until he met Mullā Ṣadrā in Qum (1033/1623-24 or 1034/1624-25). Under the guidance of Mullā Ṣadrā, al-Fayḍ busied himself with spiritual discipline *(al-riyāḍa wa-al-mujāhada)*, until he gained mystical insight.[45]

Sajjad Rizvi, however, noted on the basis of al-Fayḍ's autobiography, that he studied with Mullā Ṣadrā between 1030/1620-1 and 1038/1628-9 in Qum.[46] Chittik's and Rizvi's opinions, however, do not cohere with the chronology offered in the autobiography and other sources regarding al-Fayḍ's whereabouts before and after that time. A close assessment of al-Fayḍ's statement concerning his stay with Mullā Ṣadrā will help us arrive at a more accurate picture.

Al-Fayḍ does not mention the specific year in which he met Mullā Ṣadrā. Rather, he states that after leaving Mecca (1029/1620), he arrived in Qum, having reached the end of his journey in search for a teacher in the esoteric sciences. Apparently, his stay in Qum culminated in meeting Mullā Ṣadrā. Al-Fayḍ wrote that he accompanied Mullā Ṣadrā on his trip to his hometown, Shiraz, after having studied with him for eight years in Qum. We know that Mullā

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[44] Ibid., 403.
[45] William C. Chittick, "Two Seventeenth-Century Persian Tracts on Kingship and Rulers," in *Authority and Political Culture in Shiʿism*, ed. Said Amir Arjomand (New York: State University of New York Press, 1988), 267.
[46] Sajjad H. Rizvi, "Mullā Ṣadrā," *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, first published June 9, 2009, https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/mulla-sadra/#Aca.

Ṣadrā moved permanently to Shiraz in 1040/1630-1.[47] Al-Fayḍ, on the other hand, appears to have stayed in several villages for some time after 1029/1620 and studied with some scholars before arriving in Qum. This is evident in his *Sharḥ-i ṣadr*, where he mentions that he began his search for esoteric knowledge after his brother's death (mid-1029/1620). However, it is not clear who these scholars were and to which scholarly rank they belonged. This interlude would have taken around two years (including the duration of travel). Thus, al-Fayḍ could not have been in Qum before the late 1031/1622 or early 1032/1622. Accordingly, al-Fayḍ seems to have studied with Mullā Ṣadrā in Qum between late 1031/1622 or early 1032/1622 until early 1040/1630. Toward the end of his stay in Qum, al-Fayḍ married one of Mullā Ṣadrā's daughters.[48] I presume that this was no later than the mid 1038/1629, since the birth of al-Fayḍ's eldest son Muḥammad ibn Muḥsin known as ʿAlam al-Hudā (d. 1115/1702-3) took place during the third month (*rabīʿ al-awwal*) of 1039/1629 in Qum.[49]

In 1040/1630-1, al-Fayḍ accompanied his teacher and father-in-law back to his native city, Shiraz. After spending two years in Shiraz, al-Fayḍ returned to his birth-place, Kashan, where he wrote and taught.[50] He had as such remained in the company of Mullā Ṣadrā until he felt that he had attained a solid grounding in the esoteric sciences and was ready to embark on his own independent path.[51] Al-Fayḍ evokes the story of Mūsā and Shuʿayb to describe his

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[47] Ibid.
[48] Al-Fayḍ, "Sharḥ-i ṣadr," 403.
[49] Al-Marʿashī al-Najafī, "Introduction" to ʿAlam al-Hudā al-Kāshānī's *Maʿādin al-ḥikma*, 1:9.
Some would interpret the word (*va ākhir*) in al-Fayḍ's autobiography to indicate the period towards the completion of al-Fayḍ's study under Mullā Ṣadrā. This would lead to the consideration that after he completed this study, al-Fayḍ married one of Mullā Ṣadrā's daughters. See Chittick, "Muḥsin-i Fayḍ-i Kāshānī."
On the other hand, I take the term to mean 'toward the end' because, on one hand, it fits the translation better, and on the other, it is supported by the birth of al-Fayḍ's elder son in 1039/1629 in Qum, which was during the last year of al-Fayḍ study under Mullā Ṣadrā in Qum.
[50] Al-Fayḍ, "Sharḥ-i ṣadr," 403.
[51] Chittick, "Two Seventeenth-Century," 267.

relationship to Mullā Ṣadrā. The prophet Mūsā accompanied his father in law, prophet Shuʿayb, for ten years of his life.[52]

Much evidence illustrates how highly Mullā Ṣadrā valued al-Fayḍ. An example, is the title "*al-Fayḍ*" (from the root (f-y-ḍ)), which Mullā Ṣadrā gave to Muḥammad Muḥsin, which means "emanation". Ṣadrā explained to his daughter (al-Fayḍ's wife) that the title he gave her husband is greater than "*al-Fayyāḍ*" (which takes the form of exaggeration: *faʿāl*), which incidentally is the title he gave his other son-in-law and student ʿAbd al-Razzāq al-Lāhījī (d. 1050/1640). Unlike the latter's title, "*al-Fayḍ*" connotes certainty itself (*ʿayn al-yaqīn*) rather than being an adjective for such certainty.[53]

Mullā Ṣadrā was clearly al-Fayḍ's most important teacher, one who shaped his intellectual character decisively.[54] Mullā Ṣadrā founded a unique philosophical school which synthesized *ishrāqī philosophy*, law, demonstrative proof (*burhān*), sermons, *ḥadīth*, *dhawq* (tasting), mysticism and Twelver religious discourse. The features of this school are apparent in his religious works including his commentary and interpretation of the *Qurʾān*, as well as his analysis of *ḥadīth* in his commentary on *Uṣūl al-kāfī*, where he reached the end of the chapter of *al-ḥujja* (the proof). Mullā Ṣadrā used a unique exegetical approach to both the *Qurʾān* and the *ḥadīth* in an effort to read the religious texts within philosophical and mystical frameworks. This is part of a greater aim of integrating Twelver Shiʿism with philosophical Sufism. However, it is obvious from the Fayḍian works that al-Fayḍ had a much deeper and serious involvement with *ḥadīth* than Mullā Ṣadrā. In this regard, one cannot undervalue the exoteric training which al-Fayḍ undertook, especially in Shiraz, under his aforementioned teacher; Sayyid Mājid al-

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[52] Al-Fayḍ, "Sharḥ-i ṣadr," 403.
[53] Mishkāt's "Introduction" to al-Fayḍ's *al-Maḥajja al-bayḍāʾ* in Naqībī, *Aqwāl al-ʿulamāʾ*, 200.
[54] Rizvi, "Mullā Ṣadrā."

Baḥrānī.

Al-Fayḍ was the first to support Mullā Ṣadrā in rational sciences, and provide an in-depth explanation of his thoughts, especially in his well-known books, ʿAyn al-yaqīn (*Certainty itself*), completed in 1036/1627, and ʿIlm al-yaqīn fī uṣūl al-dīn (*The Knowledge of Certainty in the Principles of Religion*), completed in 1042/1633. Murtaḍā Muṭahharī (d. 1399/1979), a modern scholar and ideologue of revolutionary Islam, states that all the philosophical, doctrinal, legal, and *ḥadīth* works of al-Fayḍ are distilled from the ideas of his teacher, Mullā Ṣadrā.[55] Seyyed Hossein Nasr, in contrast, argued that al-Fayḍ offered a unique perspective on the principles of Mullā Ṣadrā's philosophy.[56] I will come back to these assessments in the final chapter of the thesis where I evaluate the various aspects of al-Fayḍ's integrative epistemology and its sources. In my view, Muṭahharī's statement may have exaggerated the indebtedness of al-Fayḍ to Mullā Ṣadrā, even though he was trying to underscore the deep connection between them. Al-Fayḍ, however, used a methodology similar to that of his teacher where he tried to arrive at an intra-disciplinary synthesis and bring together selective aspects of the *ḥadīth* tradition, jurisprudence, ethics and philosophical Sufism.[57] Features of this methodology are evident in al-Fayḍ's Qurʾānic exegesis, al-Ṣāfī (*The Pure*), completed in 1075/1664-5, and his analysis of *ḥadīth* in al-Wāfī.[58] It also seems that al-Fayḍ adopted a theosophical framework based on the works of

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[55] Murtaḍā Muṭahharī, *Khadamāt-i mutaqābil-i Islām va Irān*, vol. 2 (Tehran: Daftar-i Nashr-i Farhang-i Islāmī, 1975), 632.

[56] Seyyed Hossein Nasr, *Islamic Philosophy from its Origin to the Present: Philosophy in the Land of Prophecy* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2006), 88.

[57] See al-Baḥrānī, *Luʾluʾat al-baḥrayn*, 126; Mishkāt's "Introduction" to al-Fayḍ's *al-Maḥajja al-bayḍāʾ* in Naqībī, *Aqwāl al-ʿulamāʾ*, 188.

[58] See Jalāl al-Dīn al-Ashtiyānī's "Introduction" to al-Fayḍ's *Uṣūl al-maʿārif*. Muḥammad Muḥsin al-Fayḍ al-Kāshānī, *Uṣūl al-maʿārif*, ed. Jalāl al-Dīn al-Ashtiyānī (Mashhad: Muʾassasa-yi Chāp va Intishārāt-i Dānishgāh-i Firdawsī, 1975), 30-31.

Al-Fayḍ tried to apply the theoretical framework of the school of *al-Ḥikma al-Mutaʿāliya* to theological matters. See ʿAlī al-Kinānī, *al-Falsafa wa-al-kalām fī madrasat al-ḥikma al-mutaʿāliya: Dirāsa fī ārāʾ al-Fayḍ al-Kāshānī al-falsafiyya wa-al-kalāmiyya* (Beirut: Dār al-Maʿārif al-Ḥikmiyya, 2016).

Mullā Ṣadrā, as reflected in his analysis of *ḥadīth* in *al-Wāfī*, especially in his attempt to understand and discuss the principle of *tawḥīd* (monotheism/Divine unity) based on philosophical and mystical notions. Al-Fayḍ followed the path of his teacher Mullā Ṣadrā in clarifying thorny questions in philosophy, *ḥadīth* and theology, such as proving rationally the ability of gaining knowledge by witnessing revelation (*al-kashf al-shuhūdī*). It is in this respect that the *Shaykh al-islām* of Isfahan, and leading *ḥadīth* scholar, Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥasan ibn ʿAlī ibn al-Ḥusayn al-ʿĀmilī al-Mashgharī (d. 1104/1693), commonly known as al-Ḥurr al-ʿĀmilī, argued that the analysis of al-Fayḍ in his *al-Wāfī* discloses his inclination toward Sufi ideas.[59] I will discuss these features further in Chapter Two.

Other than the aforementioned prominent scholars, al-Fayḍ was also taught and received *ijāza*s from other scholars including Mullā Muḥammad Taqī al-Majlisī (*al-Awwal*) (d. 1070/1659-60), Sayyid Mīr Abū-al-Qāsim Astarabādī Findiriskī (d. 1050/1640), al-Shaykh Muḥammad Ṭāhir ibn Muḥammad Ḥusayn al-Qummī al-Shīrāzī al-Najafī (d.1098/1689).[60] Nonetheless, al-Fayḍ might have contacted other teachers who are unknown to us, taking into consideration his many travels to intellectual centers of the Islamic World.

Al-Fayḍ trained numerous students, some of whom became philosophers, jurists and *ḥadīth* scholars in their own right. Among al-Fayḍ's pupils were his son ʿAlam al-Hudā. The *ijāza* which al-Fayḍ gave him can be found on the back cover of his own work *Mafātīḥ al-sharāʾiʿ* (*The Keys of the Revealed Laws*). ʿAlam al-Hudā transcribed his father's book *al-Maḥajja al-bayḍāʾ fī tahdhīb al-Iḥyāʾ* (*The Pure Path in Refining 'The Revival'*), compared it to the main copy which carries the handwriting of the author, and added useful comments in the

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[59] Al-Ḥurr al-ʿĀmilī, *Amal al-āmil*, 2:305.
[60] Al-Fayḍ narrated *ḥadīth* from several *ʿulamāʾ* whom he did not study under, such as Muḥammad Ṭāhir al-Qummī, a great scholar in *ḥadīth*, jurisprudence and theology, a leader of *Jumʿa* (Friday prayer), and the *Shaykh al-islām* in Qum. On full list of al- Fayḍ's teachers, see Naqībī, *Aqwāl al-ʿulamāʾ*, 8-9.

book margins. He also wrote a commentary on al-Fayḍ's book *al-Wāfī*. Al-Fayḍ's grandnephew Nūr al-Dīn ibn Shāh Murtaḍā al-Thānī (d. shortly after 1115/1702-3) known as Nūr al-Dīn al-Akhbārī, a prominent scholar of Kashan, also attained an *ijāza* from him in 1079/1668, to narrate *ḥadīth*.[61] Another student of al-Fayḍ was Nūr al-Dīn's brother, Muḥammad al-Hādī ibn Shāh Murtaḍā al-Thānī, who, in contrast to his brother, was an *Uṣūlī*. He attained an *ijāza* from al-Fayḍ in 1072/1661-2. Muḥammad al-Hādī authored a *Mustadrak* (*Supplements*) to al-Fayḍ's *al-Wāfī*, a *Muntakhab* (*Selections*) from al-Fayḍ's *al-Maḥajja al-bayḍāʾ*, and a *Sharḥ* (*Commentary*) on al-Fayḍ's *Mafātīḥ al-sharāʾiʿ*.[62] This indicates his relationship with al-Fayḍ and the influence al-Fayḍ had on him.

Al-Fayḍ was also one of the teachers of the renowned jurist and *ḥadīth* scholar, Muḥammad Bāqir al-Majlisī (d. 1111/1700), known as al-Majlisī al-Thānī, who compiled one of the most comprehensive works of *ḥadīth* in the Shiʿite tradition, namely, *Biḥār al-anwār al-jāmiʿa li-durar akhbār al-aʾimma al-aṭhār* (*Seas of Lights an Encyclopedia for Pearls of Traditions of the Pure Imams*). Al-Fayḍ, like al-Majlisī al-Thānī, was keen on drawing from the four canonical *ḥadīth* works of Shiʿism, namely, *al-Kāfī*, *Man lā yaḥḍuruhu al-faqīh*, *Tanbīh al-aḥkām*, and *al-Istibṣār fī mā ikhtulif fīh min al-akhbār*. But al-Fayḍ was more systematic in terms of his arrangement of *ḥadīth*, nature of the reports, and method of verification. Al-Majlisī al-Thānī worked on gathering all the scattered *ḥadīth* reports in earlier sources with the goal of preventing them from getting lost.[63] This resulted in a combination of both reliable (*mawthūq*)

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[61] Ibid., 56-57; also, see Aḥmad al-Ḥusaynī, *Talāmidhat al-Majlisī* (Qum: Manshūrāt Maktabat al-Marʿashī al-Najafī al-ʿĀmma, 1410/1989), 65.

[62] Al-Marʿashī al-Najafī, "Introduction" to ʿAlam al-Hudā al-Kāshānī's *Maʿādin al-ḥikma*, 1:28-39.

[63] It is said that Al-Majlisī al-Thānī sent guards to libraries throughout the Muslim world, in search of unique manuscripts by Shiʿite scholars who compiled early *ḥadīth*. See Rasūl Jaʿfariyān, *Ṣafaviyya dar ʿarṣa-yi dīn: farhang va siyāsat*, vol. 2 (Qum: Pizhūhishkada-i Ḥawza va Dānishgāh, 2000), 751. Al-Majlisī al-Thānī also gathered many ambiguous works of *ḥadīth* that were almost forgotten by history as well as others of unknown origin that were approved in wondrous (and convenient) meetings with the imams over the 11th/17th and early 12th/18th centuries.

and unreliable (*ghayr mawthūq*) or weak (*ḍaʿīf*) *ḥadīth*.[64] *Al-Biḥār* is closer to another of al-Fayḍ's *ḥadīth* work *al-Nawādir* (*The Rare*), a collection made on the basis of their public appeal, ethical and pietistic value, rather than reliability. Al-Majlisī al-Thānī was keen on showing that he received *ijāza* from al-Fayḍ to narrate several *ḥadīth* in *Biḥār al-anwār*.[65]

The strong and amicable relationship between al-Fayḍ and al-Majlisī al-Thānī seemed to have transcended the formal ties characteristic of teacher-student relations. In his thesis, "Al-Fayḍ al-Kâshânî (1598-1680) on Self-supervision and Self-accounting," M. N. Saghaye-Biria states that Muḥammad Mishkāt, a contemporary Iranian scholar, who introduced one of the last works left to us by al-Fayḍ, namely, *al-Maqām*, argues that the work is incomplete.[66] According to Saghaye-Biria, Mishkāt, following al-Khwānsārī, considers that al-Fayḍ meant to write three chapters, each presenting an exegesis on 33 names of God, adding up to the famous 99 Divine Names. He ended up, however, with 33 names only. Thus, only one third of the book was completed. Al-Majlisī al-Thānī is said to have convinced al-Fayḍ not to complete the book because he learnt that it would include many statements from philosophers and Sufis. It is difficult to ascertain the accuracy of this account because this concern did not prevent him from including such statements in earlier works. At best, this account is a testament to al-Majlisī al-Thānī's reputation of having turned away from his father's (al-Majlisī al-Awwal) Sufi outlook and practice.[67] However, Zarrīn-kūb has pointed out that al-Majlisī al-Thānī distinguished

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[64] This can be noticed in several parts of his introduction, either directly or indirectly. See, Muḥammad Bāqir ibn Muḥammad Taqī al-Majlisī, *Biḥār al-anwār al-jāmiʿa li-durar akhbār al-aʾimma al-aṭhār*, vol. 1 (Tehran: 1983).

[65] Ibid., 106:131-32.

[66] M. N. Saghaye-Biria, "Al-Fayḍ al-Kâshânî (1598-1680) on Self-supervision and Self-accounting" (MA thesis, McGill University, 1997), 19-20.

[67] Regarding al-Majlisī al-Thānī's hostility towards Sufism, two essential points should be considered. Firstly, his position should be understood in the larger framework of the growing dissatisfaction with Sufism in that period. Secondly, as a student of both his father and of Muḥammad Ṭāhir al-Qummī, al-Majlisī al-Thānī was raised in an environment marked with opposition to Sufism, and thus, his attitude makes more sense when examined in this context. See Anzali, *"Mysticism" in Iran*, 109-11.

between those Sufis who abided by the laws of *sharīʿa* (Islamic law) and those with antinomian inclinations. One should not consider al-Majlisī al-Thānī's generalized attacks on Sufism at face value, since his works integrated some aspects of Sufism.[68]

An eminent student of al-Fayḍ was the jurist and *ḥadīth* scholar, Sayyid Niʿmatullāh al-Jazāʾirī. Even though he was critical of Sufism and *ʿirfānī* scholars (*ʿurafāʾ*), he praised al-Fayḍ many times in his book, *Zahr al-rabīʿ*.[69] Qāḍī Saʿīd ibn Muḥammad al-Qummī (d. 1103/1691-2), known as *Ḥakīm-i kūchak* (The Small Philosopher), was yet another student of al-Fayḍ.[70] But unlike al-Jazāʾirī, he appears to have adopted profound features of his teacher's *ʿirfānī* and philosophical outlook.[71] Another less known student of al-Fayḍ was Mawlā Muḥammad Ṣādiq al-Kāshānī al-Qamṣarī. There is an *ijāza* written to him by al-Fayḍ on the back cover of al-Qamṣarī's copy of *Man lā yaḥḍuruh al-faqīh*.[72]

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[68] ʿAbd al-Ḥusayn Zarrīn-kūb, *Dunbāla-yi just-va-jū dar taṣavvuf-i Īrān* (Tehran: Intishārāt-i Amīr Kabīr, 1366 SH/1983 AD), 260.

[69] The term *ʿirfān* is used overwhelmingly in reference to knowledge related to divine mysteries. It is also related to the unmediated nature of this knowledge. *ʿIrfān* is reserved for a few elite, and its realization through exploring the inner self. It is also often used in referring to a progressed spiritual station (*maqām*) that is related to the deep awareness of the real nature of reality (*al-ḥaqq*) in nondual terms.
Scholars have translated the term *ʿirfān* differently as Islamic "mysticism," "mystical knowledge," "Islamic theosophy," "gnosis," and "gnosticism." The semantic sphere of *ʿirfān* can overlap, sometimes with all of the translations, depending on the context used. Throughout the thesis, I tried to keep the word untranslated except when quoting contemprory scholars or represting their postion. Furthermore, for consistency, in most cases I left *ʿārif* (pl. *ʿurafāʾ* or *ʿārifīn*) as well as other cognates of the root *ʿ-r-f* untranslated.
On *Zahr al-rabīʿ*, see Sajjad H. Rizvi, "Sayyid Niʿmat Allāh al-Jazāʾirī and his Anthologies: Anti-Sufism, Shiʿism and Jokes in the Safavid World," *Die Welt des Islams* 50, no. 2 (2010): 224-42.

[70] Muṭahharī, *Khadamāt-i mutaqābil-i*, 2:634-35.

[71] Corbin saw him as a representative of the mystical theosophy of Twelver Shiʿism and called him a Shiʿite *ishrāqī* (illuminator). One of Qāḍī Saʿīd's works is *Risālah fī ḥaqīqat al-ṣalāt* (*Epistle in the Reality of Prayer*), which he presented to his teacher al-Fayḍ. Henry Corbin, *History of Islamic philosophy* (London; New York: Kegan Paul International, 1993), 346-47; also, see Nasr, *Islamic Philosophy from its Origin to the Present*, 219; and Muṭahharī, *Khadamāt-i mutaqābil-i*, 2:634-35.

[72] Mishkāt's "Introduction" to al-Fayḍ's *al-Maḥajja al-bayḍāʾ* in Naqībī, *Aqwāl al-ʿulamāʾ*, 220. On full list of al-Fayḍ's students, see Naqībī, *Aqwāl al-ʿulamāʾ*, 9-13.

1.2. An Outline of al-Fayḍ's Travels and Intellectual Contacts

In the rest of this chapter, I will represent my analysis of al-Fayḍ's intellectual life using a general sketch which summarizes his major travels and studies under different teachers. I have divided al-Fayḍ's intellectual journey into five main phases.

1- The first phase represents his studies of exoteric sciences, including *fiqh*, jurisprudence, exegesis, *ḥadīth* and logic. This involves the time between his childhood in Kashan until his visit to Mecca, including his first two visits to Isfahan and his first visit to Shiraz. This phase witnessed some pivotal achievements by al-Fayḍ, as he received his most important *ijāza*s in addition to becoming a *mujtahid*.

> **In Kashan [roughly from 1007/1598–1027/1618]**, he studied under the supervision of his maternal uncle during his early age.
>
> **In Isfahan [1027/1618]**, he studied with some religious scholars, such as Ḥusayn al-Ardakānī al-Yazdī and Muḥammad Ṣāliḥ al-Māzandarānī. Most probably his studies were in the fields of *ḥadīth*, *fiqh*, jurisprudence, and mathematics.
>
> **In Shiraz [1027/1618–1028/1619]**, he studied with al-Sayyid Mājid ibn al-Sayyid Hāshim al-Ḥusaynī al-Baḥrānī.
>
> **Back in Isfahan [late-1028/1619]**, he studied with Mīr Dāmād and al-Shaykh al-Bahāʾī.
>
> **In Mecca [late-1028/1619 – 1029/1620]**, he studied with Muḥammad ibn Ḥasan ibn Zayn-al-Dīn al-ʿĀmilī and met with the founder of the *Akhbārī* school Muḥammad Amīn Astarabādī (d. 1036/1626-7).[73]

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[73] On Muḥammad Amīn Astarabādī, see Abisaab, "Was Muḥammad Amīn al-Astarabādī a Mujtahid?."

2- The second phase represents his studies of esotericism. This started after al-Fayḍ left

Mecca, when he started his journey accompanying his teacher and father-in-law Mullā

Ṣadrā, until he parted ways with him in Shiraz, heading back to Kashan.

> **In Qum [(late-1031/1622) or (early-1032/1622) – (early-1040/1630)]**, he
>
> studied with Mullā Ṣadrā.[74]
>
> **In Shiraz [1040/1630 – (late-1041/1632) or (early-1042/1632)]**, he accompanied
>
> Mullā Ṣadrā.

3- The third phase started after al-Fayḍ having fulfilled his studies and developed his

expertise in both exoteric and esoteric areas and arrived to Kashan. There, he decided to

expose people to the esoteric sciences, and work on increasing his spiritual rank and

refining his soul. Meanwhile, he was guiding people in religious issues of their daily

lives, while also writing some books and letters in this context. In this phase, we see al-

Fayḍ as the ʿārif and the well-rounded religious scholar, who takes into consideration

both exotericism and esotericism, and lives among people and guides them while at the

same time isolating himself for self-reformation. Al-Fayḍ himself tells us about this

phase, saying:

> I practiced for a while after that in the shadow of conviction to propagate religion
> in potency and actuality within the range of [my] ability. Due to the blessing of
> knowledge, action, and the love of the progeny of the Prophet, I would daily
> advance myself in discovering the secret of their words (may the peace of God be
> upon them) so that I attain openings and effusions in verified religious sciences,
> as every moment a door of knowledge is opened for me, and through them several
> other doors also [open].[75]

> **Back in Kashan [1042/1632-3 – early in 1064/1654 or short time after]**, he
>
> taught, wrote and spread religious teachings in the community.

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[74] Before which he journeyed through several villages in search of a teacher of esoteric sciences.
[75] Al-Fayḍ, "Sharḥ-i ṣadr," 404.

4- The fourth phase started after al-Fayḍ arrived in his third main visit to Isfahan and ended when he dropped his post as *Shaykh al-islām*. This phase reflects al-Fayḍ's strong cooperation with the Safavid court, where he took up his new post as *Shaykh al-islām* and was a prominent scholar in Shah ʿAbbās II's palace. During this time, al-Fayḍ worked hard on spreading religious teachings, trying to establish a strong base for the necessity of performing the Friday prayer. In this phase, al-Fayḍ witnessed strong opposition from contemporary scholars, based on two main issues: his Sufi inclinations and his opinion on the Friday prayer.

> **Back in Isfahan [short time after 1064/1654 – after 1077/1666]**, in the Shah's palace, he taught and spread religion, benefiting from his post as *Shaykh al-islām*.[76]

5- The fifth phase started after al-Fayḍ resigned from his post as *Shaykh al-islām* and lasted until his death. During this time, he was first in Isfahan and then moved to Kashan. I think that this phase held the main transformation in al-Fayḍ's intellectual career. Phase five of al-Fayḍ's life is to a large extent similar to phase three concerning his religious activities in spreading religion and increased intellectual production. In this phase, we can see al-Fayḍ endeavoring to rephrase his works that were completed in phase two and three of his life.[77]

> **Back in Kashan [after 1077/1667 – 1091/1680]**, he taught, wrote and spread religious teachings in the community.

Al-Fayḍ's intellectual transformation was shaped by the personal tragedy he experienced as well as his meeting with Mullā Ṣadrā, whom we can say was his most decisive teacher. His

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[76] Shah ʿAbbās II visited him in Kashan in 1073/1662-63, as will be further pointed in Chapter Two of this thesis.
[77] This idea will be expanded on in Chapters Two and Three.

role as the *Shaykh al-islām* and esteemed legal authority at the Safavid court, was also associated with controversy over his Sufi leanings and theosophical and *ʿirfānī* outlook. Due to the onslaught of mainstream anti-Sufi legal scholars, it is possible that al-Fayḍ was increasingly refraining from utilizing direct Sufi terminology in expressing his esoteric inquiries. On the other hand, he appears to have been concerned with reaching out to the common believer and as such tried to avoid any misinterpretation of his ideas. Toward the end of the Safavid period, powerful jurists led a campaign against a host of Sufi doctrines and practices associated with the Sufi orders. Many scholars turned not only against philosophy but on the school of Mullā Ṣadrā as well.[78] After gradually distancing himself from *ijtihād*, al-Fayḍ's conversion from a *mujtahid* to an *Akhbārī*, was marked by doubts about endorsing Friday prayer, especially given that this conversion entailed a change in his approaches to *ḥadīth* and *ḥadīth* exegesis and the use of *ijtihād*. The doctrinal and methodological shifts in al-Fayḍ's writings can be attributed to, first, his aim to synthesize Shiʿism and philosophical Sufism, second, the intense confrontation between Sufi-bent *ʿulamāʾ* and mainstream clerics, third, his affiliation with the Safavid court, and fourth, his growing doubts about *ijtihād*, and increasing interest in *ḥadīth* interpretation. Al-Fayḍ's intellectual transformation will be addressed more in depth in the following chapter especially when I come to discuss his works and doctrines.

In the following chapter, I will continue my efforts in providing a multifaceted account of al-Fayḍ's intellectual make-up and relations to the Safavid court, giving an overview of the way his approaches to Sufism, *ḥadīth*, and *ijtihādī* rationalism was presented in the main sources.

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[78] Nasr, *Islamic Philosophy from Its Origin to the Present*, 235.

Chapter 2: From a Sufi-Inclined *Mujtahid* to an *Akhbārī* Theosopher

Al-Fayḍ was associated with different centers of learning that helped shape his intellectual output. He received three *ijāza*s to transmit *ḥadīth* authoritatively from three leading *ḥadīth* scholars, namely, Mājid al-Baḥrānī, al-Bahāʾī, and Muḥammad ibn Ḥasan ibn Zayn-al-Dīn al-ʿĀmilī.[79] Al-Fayḍ integrated the *ḥadīth* tradition of Mecca and drew upon the philosophical and theological discourses of Isfahan and Shiraz.[80] Apparently, he was a good example of a scholar from the Isfahan School who was successful in realizing its epistemic "mantra", as Christian Jambet puts it.[81] Al-Fayḍ is also regarded as an exemplar in combining both exoteric and esoteric paths. Early in his life, he embarked on the exoteric path, which helped him turn into a prominent philosopher and a theologian. Al-Fayḍ later deepened his interest in the esoteric sciences with the help of his teacher Mullā Ṣadrā. As we shall see in the next chapter, he appears to have achieved a synthesis of these two sciences within himself before presenting it discursively in his works as a scholar. The fact that al-Fayḍ has loyalties to *ḥadīth*, Sufi, and philosophical studies allows him to be a jurist, mystic, exegete, and philosopher altogether.

An appealing feature in al-Fayḍ's intellectual character is his engagement with contradicting intellectual trends and religious schools. This is obvious in the various branches of knowledge he engages with. He also applies different epistemic approaches when dealing with the issues in each discipline. The origin of al-Fayḍ's pluralistic method is not well known,

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[79] See al-Fayḍ, *al-Wāfī*, 1:28-29.

[80] Sajjad Rizvi argues that Mullā Ṣadrā found a new intellectual school in Shiraz which was different than the original in Isfahan. See Sajjad H. Rizvi, "Reconsidering the Life of Mullā Ṣadrā Shīrāzī (d. 1641): Notes towards an Intellectual Biography," *Iran* 40 (2002): 181-201.

[81] Christian Jambet, *The Act of Being: The Philosophy of Revelation in Mullā Ṣadrā* (New York: Zone Books, 2006), 19-41.

though we know that he studied under various scholars from different intellectual and religious

fields. He does, however, explicitly discuss the foundation of his method in a number of works.

In his *al-Ḥaqq al-mubīn fī kayfiyyat al-tafaqquh fī al-dīn* (*The Lucid Truth in How to Learn and*

Comprehend Religion), completed in 1068/1658, he writes:

> Learning and comprehending religion (*al-tafaqquh fī al-dīn*) is a matter of acquiring
> insight in [all] religious matters, whether theoretical or practical, esoteric or exoteric,
> related to worship or transactions. Mandatory is its knowing and acting on its accordance
> or as a result of tradition and decency.[82]

In his earlier work, *Muʿtaṣam al-shīʿa fī aḥkām al-sharīʿa*, completed in 1029/1619-20, al-Fayḍ

draws the outline of learning and comprehending religion from a jurisprudential perspective. He

states:

> Know that learning and comprehending religion (*al-tafaqquh fī al-dīn*) is of two types:
> verification (*taḥqīq*) and emulation (*taqlīd*):
> Verification is for prophets and imams, God's blessings be upon them, who take their
> knowledge from God mighty and majestic (*ʿazza wa-jall*) and have reached the threshold
> of certainty in this [knowledge].
> Emulation is either through foresight (*baṣīra*), and is named in norm[s] of legislators (*al-
> mutasharʿina*) *tafaqquh* or *ijtihād*, which is the emulation of the prophet or the prophet's
> trustee (*al-waṣiyy li-al-nabiyy*), or either without foresight, which is specified in their
> norm[s] as emulation, which is the emulation of the jurist (*faqīh*) or the *mujtahid*.[83]
> Then the verifier (*al-muḥaqqiq*), whose emulation after our Prophet is permitted, is
> limited according to the surviving *Imāmī* group to the Twelve Infallible Imams, God's
> blessings be upon them, as was proven in its place. They (the Shiʿite religious scholars)
> had regulated their (the Infallibles) *ḥadīth*s in principles, branches, ethics, and manners,
> and had arranged and structured it in books and principle [books]. [The *ḥadīth*s] are
> abundant, especially those from our masters [Muḥammad] al-Bāqir (the Fifth Imam of
> Twelver Shiʿism, d. 114/733) and [Jaʿfar] al-Ṣādiq (the Sixth Imam of Twelver Shiʿism,
> d. 148/765). [The Shiʿite religious scholars] had narrated [their (the Infallibles) words on
> the] manner of dealing with its (*ḥadīth*s) contradictions, the way to act according to
> differences, the command to contemplate suspicions, the prevention of acting according
> to syllogism and what is similar to it of fabricated principles—as the masses (*al-ʿāmma*,
> the Sunnis) do—, the commandment of saving their (Infallibles) *ḥadīth*s and [*ḥadīth*]
> books, and that a time would come where it will be needed and only these books become
> the source of content (*uns*).

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[82] Muḥammad Muḥsin al-Fayḍ al-Kāshānī, *al-Ḥaqq al-mubīn fī kayfiyyat al-tafaqquh fī al-dīn*, ed. Mīr Jalāl al-Dīn al-Ḥusaynī al-Urmawī (Iran: Sāzmān Chāp Dānishgāh, 1390 SH/1970), 2.
[83] See al-Fayḍ's *al-Wāfī* for a discussion on 'verification' and 'emulation', tackling the terms from a mystical and philosophical perspective. Al-Fayḍ, *al-Wāfī*, 1:9-10.

Therefore, we abide by all that according to their saying[s], and hold on to no other than the *Qurʾān* or the *ḥadīth*, which is verified of the Infallible and which does not contradict the *Qurʾān*.[84]

Al-Fayḍ was a prominent *ḥadīth* scholar of the *Akhbārī* school, which was taking clear shape during the 11th/17th century, and whose scholars questioned the political basis and scope of the *mujtahid*s' authority.[85] Early in his career, al-Fayḍ wrote on various points in law and jurisprudence (*uṣūl al-fiqh*). He underwent a major transformation during the latter part of his life, questioning the approaches which the *mujtahid*s took toward *ḥadīth* and their methodology in deriving the law.[86] However, he did not seem to have rejected all forms of *ijtihād* or the legal authority of the *mujtahid*s the way Muḥammad Amīn Astarabādī did.[87] Al-Fayḍ himself, in his *al-Ḥaqq al-mubīn*, acknowledges that Muḥammad Amīn Astarabādī had preceded him in the *Akhbārī* path and that he opened the door of *Akhbāriyya* for whom came after him of the scholars.[88] However, in the same text, al-Fayḍ also criticizes Astarabādī on several issues. The most important criticism, as al-Fayḍ indicates, is that of Astarabādī's absolute trust in the soundness of all the *ḥadīth*s mentioned in the Four major books of Shiʿism (*al-Kāfī*, *Man lā yaḥḍuruhu al-faqīh*, *Tanbīh al-aḥkām*, and *al-Istibṣār fī mā ikhtulif fīh min al-akhbār*).[89] The

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[84] Al-Fayḍ, *Muʿtaṣam al-shīʿa*, 1:37-8.

[85] See Andrew J. Newman, "The Nature of the Akhbārī/Uṣūlī Dispute in Late Ṣafawid Iran. Part 1: ʿAbdallāh al-Samāhijī's '*Munyat al-Mumārisīn*'," *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 55, no. 1 (1992): 22-51; and Andrew J. Newman, "The Nature of the Akhbārī/Uṣūlī Dispute in Late Ṣafawid Iran, Part 2: The Conflict Reassessed," *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 55, no. 2 (1992): 251n.4, 260. Al-Fayḍ among other jurists, both *Uṣūlī* and *Akhbārī*, questioned the scope of socio-political and economic authority claimed by major *mujtahid*s like al-Karakī through *niyāba*. On al-Karakī's approach to *niyāba*, see Abisaab, *Converting Persia*, 21-24; and Rula Jurdi Abisaab, "Moral Authority in the Safavid State," in *The Shiʿi World: Pathways in Tradition and Modernity*, ed. Farhad Daftary, Amyn B. Sajoo, and Shainool Jiwa (London: I.B. Tauris, 2015), 136-40, 146-48.

[86] Abisaab, "Shiʿi Jurisprudence," 15-17. See also Moojan Momen, *An Introduction to Shiʿi Islam* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985), 118; and Said Amir Arjomand, *The Shadow of God and the Hidden Imam: Religion, Political Order, and Societal Change in Shiʿite Iran from the Beginning to 1890* (Chicago; London: University of Chicago Press, 1984), 146.

[87] Mullā Muḥammad Amīn Astarabādī (d. 1036/1626–27) was the first to clearly reject *Uṣūliyya* (the *ijtihādī* rationalism of *mujtahid*s) in the early 11th/17th century. He opposed the prominent Syrian and Iraqi jurists in their derivation of Shiʿite law through the application of *ijtihād*, *dirāya* (scrutiny of accounts), and *ḥadīth* categorization. See Abisaab, "Was Muḥammad Amīn al-Astarabādī a Mujtahid?."

[88] Al-Fayḍ, *al-Ḥaqq al-mubīn*, 12.

[89] Ibid.

second most significant critisizm is on Astarabādī's critique of *mujtahid*s.[90] Al-Fayḍ considers

that Astarabādī did not have a clear understanding of the *mujtahid*s' aims in establishing Shiʿism

very well.[91]

Although al-Fayḍ stands cautiously in support of *ijtihād*, it seems that he was, unlike his

ancestors, against the *ijtihādī* camp, or better coined by Rula Jurdi Abisaab the *ijtihādī*

rationalism.[92] This opposition appears firmly in his very early works, such as *Naqd al-uṣūl al-*

fiqhiyya (*The Criticism of the Principles of Jurisprudence*), completed in al-Fayḍ's youth, and

Muʿtaṣam al-shīʿa, which might indicate that he had never been an *Uṣūlī* scholar like his father

and maternal uncle.[93] However, al-Fayḍ's legal training as a *mujtahid*, in his early age, and its

imprints is reflected in major works, such as *Muʿtaṣam al-shīʿa*, and *Mafātīḥ al-sharāʾiʿ*,

completed in 1042/1632.[94] Modarressi states that al-Fayḍ trailblazed a new method through his

works on *ḥadīth* and law such as *al-Wāfī, Muʿtaṣam al-shīʿa* and *Mafātīḥ al-sharāʾiʿ*. He

combined chapters of *fiqh* and reformed the location of some headings, to arrange them

according to the human lifecycle.[95] This is one of the original attempts that distinguishes al-

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[90] According to Astarabādī, the *ḥadīth* verification methods adopted by the *Uṣūlī*s are considered legal heresy. He argues that these methods are a desertion of true Shiʿism. See Muḥammad Amīn Astarabādī, *al-Fawāʾid al-madaniyya* (Qum: Muʾassasat al-Nashr al-Islāmī, 2005), 98-99, 104-5, 192-201.

[91] Al-Fayḍ, *al-Ḥaqq al-mubīn*, 12.
A comparative study on Astarabādī and al-Fayḍ is essential, given that they were among the very early scholars who revived the *Akhbārī* school and set up its terminology in the Safavid period. The core importance of such a study would lie in examining their different methodological approaches in spreading *Akhbāriyya*.

[92] See Abisaab, "Shiʿi Jurisprudence," 6.

[93] On al-Fayḍ's early criticism of the *Uṣūliyya* principles of juricprudence, see Muḥammad Muḥsin al-Fayḍ al-Kāshānī, *Naqd al-uṣūl al-fiqhiyya*, ed. Ṭayyibah ʿĀrif Niyā (Tehran: Munshūrāt al-Madrasa al-ʿUlyā li-al-Shahīd al-Muṭahharī, 1388 SH/2009 AD); and al-Fayḍ, *Muʿtaṣam al-shīʿa*, 1:38-9. On his support of *ijtihād*, see al-Fayḍ, *Naqd al-uṣūl al-fiqhiyya*, 237-53.
Naqd al-uṣūl al-fiqhiyya was completed before 1029/1619-20, as al-Fayḍ mentioned it in his *Muʿtaṣam al-shīʿa fī aḥkām al-sharīʿa*, completed in 1029/1619-20. On his mentioning, see al-Fayḍ, *Muʿtaṣam al-shīʿa*, 1:38. On the date of completion of *Muʿtaṣam al-shīʿa*, see Muḥsin Nājī-Naṣrābādī, *Kitābshināsī-yi Fayż-i Kāshānī* (Tehran: Munshūrāt al-Madrasa al-ʿUlyā li-al-Shahīd al-Muṭahharī, 1387 SH/2008 AD), 274.

[94] For an entry to these books, see Nājī-Naṣrābādī, *Kitābshināsī*, 125.

[95] Hossein Modarressi Tabātabāʾi, "The Shīʿī Principles of Jurisprudence," in *Expectation of the Millennium: Shiʿism in History*, eds. Seyyed Hossein Nasr, Hamid Dabashi, and Seyyed Vali Reza Nar (New York: SUNY Press, 1989)*,* 70.

Fayḍ's principal works on law. Al-Fayḍ's experience in jurisprudence and Islamic law as well as other religious fields left its marks in his jurisprudential books. This is reflected in his introduction to *Muʿtaṣam al-shīʿa,* where al-Fayḍ states his aim and methodology:

> So, I intended–if [divine] aid may help me–to compose in each of the principles and branches of religion and ethics a book of linguistic and structural refinement, [with] revised topics and meanings, which sticks to what God and the Prophet said, [as it is] purified of the innovations of jurisprudence (*al-uṣūl*, [*uṣul al-fiqh*]).
> So I began primarily–as I called for aid from God–to write this book named *The Cleave of the Shiʿites in the Legalistic Rulings* (*Muʿtaṣam al-shīʿa fī aḥkām al-sharīʿa*), in which I mention in it the principles of the jurisprudential matters and the mothers of the branched rulings, with their proofs and defects, and the difference present in them between our fellows (*aṣḥābinā*), the *Imāmī*s–may God accept them–in addition to its forms (*wujūh*) and causes, such that it would be possible to deduct from them other recurrent branches for the world according to recognized ways.[96]

It is clear throughout this book, as well as other works of al-Fayḍ, how he benefited from the same *Uṣūlī* method to critique their understanding of the revelatory sources. Therefore, we can see how deeply established al-Fayḍ was in the *Uṣūlī* foundations and trained in jurisprudence. Hence, al-Fayḍ wrote books in jurisprudence and made use of them to refute *Uṣūliyya* (the *ijtihādī* rationalism of *mujtahid*s) and prove the right path of *Akhbāriyya*. In closing the introduction to *Muʿtaṣam al-shīʿa*, al-Fayḍ writes:

> And we, by the praise of God, mighty and majestic (*ʿazza wa-jall*), have stated in this book of ours, the proofs of the rulings and the aspects of disagreement[s] according to our capacity, and we have facilitated the manner of action in both of the principle of verification and the branch of emulation. We have even facilitated the path of *ijtihād* for most receivers (*al-muḥaṣṣilīn*). And this is from the grace of God upon us and upon the people, "but most people do not give thanks"[97].[98]

The main principle in the *Akhbārī* movement was the opposition to the *ijtihād* adopted by the *Uṣūlī*s. This opposition appears again indirectly in al-Fayḍ's previous statement. The *Uṣūlī*s acknowledge four sources of the law: the *Qurʾān*, *ḥadīth*, reason (*ʿaql*), and consensus (*ijmāʿ*).

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[96] Al-Fayḍ, *Muʿtaṣam al-shīʿa*, 1:33.
[97] This expression is taken from *Qurʾān*, 40:61.
[98] Al-Fayḍ, *Muʿtaṣam al-shīʿa*, 1:39.

On the other hand, *Akhbārī*s acknowledge only the first two, the *Qurʾān* and the *ḥadīth*. Thus, being an *Akhbārī* scholar, al-Fayḍ primarily relied on *ḥadīth* in deriving law. His method of investigating and verifying the source of the *ḥadīth* differs from the methods adopted in the *Uṣūlī* camp. While the *Uṣūlī*s identify four types of *ḥadīth*, namely, sound (*saḥīḥ*), good (*ḥasan*), corroborated (*mutawātir, muwaththaq*), and weak (*daʿīf*), the *Akhbārī*s identify only two categories of *ḥadīth*: sound and weak. Al-Fayḍ had played a pivotal role in presenting the *Akhbārī*'s position on this matter, and on critiquing the *Uṣūlī*s for their categorization of *ḥadīth*, which al-Fayḍ considers to appear lately in the Twelver Shiʿite tradition of jurisprudence.[99] Nonetheless, his deep and original contribution in *ḥadīth* and *fiqh* studies is influential and pivotal in Shiʿite tradition. For example, al-Khwānsārī states that al-Fayḍ's *al-Wāfī* and *Mafātīḥ al-sharāʾiʿ* are of the strongest and most eloquent works of their kind, unique for their references to *ijmāʿāt* (consensus).[100]

Even though al-Fayḍ was a *ḥadīth* scholar and an *Akhbārī*, he would not by any chance fall under the designation Robert Gleave translates as "scripturalist."[101] It is true that al-Fayḍ, as an *Akhbārī*, distrusted the methods of *ijtihād*, but he also relied on various rational and mystical notions in delving through the revelatory sources, which he considers as the keys to all the religious sciences.[102] Being an exceptional *Akhbārī*, al-Fayḍ, as is clear in many of his works, does no limit himself to the most apparent meaning of a narration, and thus does not oppose interpretation in deriving laws from narrations. This is why his rejection of *ijtihād* appears to have been more distinct when compared to his *Akhbārī* colleagues.

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[99] Al-Fayḍ critiques the *Uṣūlī* late *ḥadīth* categorization, which, as he points, was initiated by al-ʿAllāma al-Ḥillī (d. 726/1325). A discussion on this categorization is seen in al-Fayḍ's *al-Wāfī*. See al-Fayḍ, *al-Wāfī*, 1:22-26.

[100] Al-Khwānsārī, *Rawḍāt al-jannāt*, 6:81-82.

[101] See Robert Gleave, *Scripturalist Islam: The History and Doctrines of the Akhbārī Shīʿī School* (Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2007).

[102] This notion appears widely in al-Fayḍ's introductions to his works. For example, see al-Fayḍ, *al-Wāfī*, 1:9-18.

Al-Fayḍ mostly challenged *uṣūl al-fiqh*, which presents the theoretical foundation of *ijtihād*. His first book on jurisprudence; *Naqd al-uṣūl al-fiqhiyya*, was a polemic against the *Uṣūlī*s, which was completed in his youth. Another of his important works in jurisprudence is *al-Uṣūl al-aṣīla* (*The Primacy Principles*), completed in 1044/1634. In a later work, *Safīnat al-najāt* (*The Ship of Salvation*), completed in 1058/1648, al-Fayḍ went too far in his critique of the *Uṣūlī*s, as viewed by some of his *Akhbārī* fellows, especially al-Baḥrānī.[103]

It appears that al-Fayḍ remained an *Akhbārī* until the end of his life. However, it is obvious that he gradually became more moderate in his *Akhbārī* orientation as he grew with age. This appears clearly when one compares his *Safīnat al-najāt*, which he wrote in his mid-career to *al-Ḥaqq al-mubīn*.[104] Therefore, while he is often identified as an *Akhbārī*,[105] he is better understood as being in the class of *mujtahid-muḥaddith*, in that he encouraged appointing significant community practices to the *faqīh* throughout the period of Occultation.[106] A *mujtahid-muḥaddith* could be defined as a moderate *Akhbārī* scholar who is well versed in the subjects of religious sciences, just like the *mujtahid*. For example, in works like *Mafātīḥ al-sharāʾiʿ* and *al-Maḥajja al-bayḍāʾ fī tahdhīb al-Iḥyāʾ*, completed in 1046/1636, al-Fayḍ supported the *faqīh*'s role in *zakāt* administration and his involvement in *khums* administration by right of *al-niyāba* (deputyship) during the Occultation.[107] Thus, al-Fayḍ continued the legacy of the *Uṣūlī mujtahid*s ʿAlī ibn al-Ḥusayn ibn ʿAbd al-ʿĀlī al-Karakī ʿĀmilī (d. 940/1534), well known as al-

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[103] See al-Baḥrānī, *Luʾluʾat al-baḥrayn*, 116. A discussion on this issue will follow in this Chapter.

[104] While he is strict in criticizing the *mujtahid*s and jurisprudence in *Safīnat al-najāt*, he appears to be more moderate in *al-Ḥaqq al-mubīn*, where he tries to justify the early *mujtahid*s' positions, criticizing Astarabādī for his harsh opposition of *mujtahid*s. For example, see al-Fayḍ, *al-Ḥaqq al-mubīn*, 4, 12.

[105] Al-Baḥrānī, *Luʾluʾat al-baḥrayn*, 116; and al-Tankābunī, *Qiṣaṣ al-ʿulamāʾ*, 345, composed well after the Safavid period.

[106] On the *mujtahid*/*muḥaddith* terminology, see Newman, "The Nature of the Akhbārī/Uṣūlī Dispute in Late Ṣafawid Iran, Part 2," 260 and n.31.

[107] Andrew J. Newman, "Fayd al-Kashani and the Rejection of the Clergy/State Alliance: Friday Prayer as Politics in the Safavid Period," in *The Most Learned of the Shiʿa: The Institution of the Marjaʿ Taqlid*, ed. Linda S. Walbridge (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 41.

Muḥaqqiq al-Thānī or al-Muḥaqqiq al-Karakī, Shaykh Zayn al-Dīn al-ʿĀmilī, and al-Bahāʾī in this respect.[108] Also, like many earlier scholars who supported the expansion in the jurist's public authority and his direct involvement in administering, at the state level, religious practice during the Occultation, he associated with temporal rulers, that is, the Safavid Shahs and viziers. Al-Fayḍ agreed with al-Muḥaqqiq al-Karakī and Jamāl al-Dīn Ḥasan ibn Yūsuf ibn ʿAlī ibn al-Muṭahhar al-Ḥillī (d. 726/1325), better known as al-ʿAllāma al-Ḥillī, who sanctioned a scholar's remuneration from political rulers.[109]

Al-Fayḍ held views in the field of jurisprudence which do not agree with the recognized practice.[110] As a *mujtahid* and *Shaykh al-islām*, some of his legal rulings became the center of debate, such as the definition of impurity, the transmission of impurity from one object to another, and the permissibility and legitimacy of *ghināʾ* (singing/music). These views departed from the *Akhbārī ijmāʿ* (scholarly consensus) and were accordingly criticized.[111] Various *ʿulamāʾ*, such as Bāqir al-Bahbahāni (d. 1205/1791), have complained about al-Fayḍ's departure from *ijmāʿ* in deriving legal rulings, as he placed more weight on the *ḥadīth*, and less weight on consensus as an authoritative source of law and juristic practice.[112] One of al-Fayḍ's prominent students Sayyid Niʿmatullāh al-Jazāʾirī, for instance, blamed al-Fayḍ, in his *Kashf al-asrār fī sharḥ al-istibṣār*, for inspiring his students to listen to music.[113] However, al-Fayḍ's departure

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[108] Ibid.

[109] Ibid.

[110] Hossein Modarressi Tabātabāʾi, *An Introduction to Shīʿī Law: A Bibliographical Study* (London: Ithaca Press, 1984), 16, 51-52.

[111] On al-Fayḍ's controvertial *fiqh* issues and rulings (*aḥkām*), see ʿAlī Riḍa Fayḍ, *al-Fiqh wa-al-ijtihād: ʿAnāṣir al-taʾṣīl wa-al-tajdīd wa-al-muʿāṣara*, trans. into Arabic Ḥusayn al-Ṣāfī, vol. 2 (Beirut: Markaz al-Ḥaḍāra li-Tanmiyat al-Fikr al-Islāmī, 2007), 482-84.

[112] Mishkāt's "Introduction" to al-Fayḍ's *al-Maḥajja al-bayḍāʾ* in Naqībī, *Aqwāl al-ʿulamāʾ*, 201.

[113] Ibid., 202.
On the controversial nature of singing, see Andrew J. Newman, "Clerical Perceptions of Sufi Practices in Late Seventeenth-Century Persia: Arguments over the Permissibility of Singing (Ghināʾ)," in *The Heritage of Sufism, Vol. III: Late Classical Persianate Sufism: the Safavid and Mughal Period (1501–1750)*, eds. Leonard Lewisohn and David Morgan (Oxford; Boston, MA: Oneworld, 1999), 135-64.
On other controversial legal issues, see Mishkāt's "Introduction" to al-Fayḍ's *al-Maḥajja al-bayḍāʾ* in Naqībī,

from relying on consensus as a decisive source of the law, might be justified by his reliance on

ijtihād and logic in *fiqh*, and not merely as a response to his *Akhbārī* emphasis on the

sanctification of *ḥadīth*.[114] In *Muʿtaṣam al-shīʿa*, al-Fayḍ states his own position on *ijmāʿ*. He

writes:

> As for the consensus (*al-ijmāʿ*), if it reaches a stage by which the necessary knowledge is
> attained, that what is related to [the consensus] is attributed to the Infallible, as is the case
> with the wiping of the feet during ablution, the voidness of *ʿawl* (an increase in shares,
> which necessitates a shortage in portions) and *taʿṣīb* (passing down to every heir who has
> no deserved share) in the inheritance, and so on, then it is reliable, otherwise, it is not
> reliable (*lā ḥujjiyyata fīh*) according to our verifiers (*muḥaqqiqīnā*, the Shiʿite religious
> scholars). Even if some of them have written (*ʿamil*) in their books of law (*kutubih al-
> fiqhiyya*) what opposes that which themselves verify in jurisprudence (*uṣūl al-fiqh*), such
> that, they rely upon what is called consensus by those who claim it, who did not come
> across any opposition to it in their era. [These verifiers] made [this consensus] an
> independent route (*madrak*) for legal ruling, even if there is no other proof for it, even
> more if the [same] proof points to its opposite.
> I transmit what they claim of the consensus in this meaning in its matters, even if I do not
> depend except on that which is right to be depended upon in this regard.[115]

Al-Fayḍ adds, tackling another jurisprudential concept, *al-shuhra* (*fame*):

> [T]he fame (*al-shuhra*) [of rulings] and multiplicity of [its] speakers are not reliable in
> our time, as we have verified in [our] book: *The Criticism of the Principles of
> Jurisprudence* (*Naqd al-uṣūl al-fiqhiyya*).[116]

According to al-Fayḍ, legal rulings (*fatwā*s) must be based directly on the *ḥadīth*s, rather than

reasoning and analogy (*qiyās*) tools, which *Uṣūlī mujtahid*s require as part of *ijtihād*. These tools

are employed by the *mujtahid*s and applied to the *Qurʾān* and *ḥadīth* in order to derive legal

rulings decisions. This, however, is rejected by al-Fayḍ and by the *Akhbārī*s in general,

especially since these tools cause legal rulings to be made, in many cases, on the basis of

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Aqwāl al-ʿulamāʾ, 201-3.

[114] In his *Rāh ṣawāb* (*The Way of Worship*), completed around 1040/1631, al-Fayḍ discusses the differences among the various legal schools (*madhāhib*), and delves into the exact meaning and relevance of *ijmāʿ* (consensus) in deriving Shiʿite law.

[115] Al-Fayḍ, *Muʿtaṣam al-shīʿa*, 1:38.

[116] Ibid.

conjecture (*al-ẓann*). On the other hand, *Akhbārī*s accept legal rulings if they are certain

(*yaqīniyya*) and derived from *ḥadīth*s of the Infallibles. Al-Fayḍ writes:

> [S]o he who does not find the Infallible Imam or the jurist who judges by his (the Infallible) saying, must take uttermost precaution (*iḥtāṭ*). However, if it is impossible or difficult [to do so], he should choose between the conflicting *ḥadīth* accounts (*al-akhbār*) and different sayings, which are transmitted from [the Infallible Imam and the jurist], away from the sayings of the *mujtahid*s which are far from the infallible proof, due to the suspicion of whom deserves to be emulated among them, as some of them used to judge by their own opinion.
> On the other hand, conflict and opposition are common, or rather more abundant in the sayings of the *mujtahid*s than in the *ḥadīth*s of the Infallible People, God's blessings be upon them.
> It has also been reported from them in the "*ḥadīth* of conflict between two *ḥadīth* accounts after the completion of [all] the weighting degrees" (*ḥadīth al-taʿāruḍ bayn al-khabarayn baʿd istīfāʾ marātib al-tarjīḥ*): "which ever you take in submission will suffice you." And this is a permission for us to choose. There is no permission from [the Infallibles] to abide by the saying of the *mujtahid*, which is far in its link to the infallible, especially with the instability of the *mujtahid*'s legal ruling (*fatwā*) and its disagreement [with other legal rulings].[117]

According to al-Fayḍ, the faithful must exercise precaution (*iḥtiyāṭ*) when there is no clear text

from the Infallible. As an *Akhbārī*, al-Fayḍ upholds that all believers are emulators (*muqallidīn*)

of the Imam, in that they should emulate the Imam alone in general actions and in matters of

religion including law. In his statement on this topic, al-Fayḍ is also critiquing the *Uṣūlī* division

of believers into two groups of *mujtahid*s and *muqallidīn* (emulators). He rejects interposing any

religious scholar between the Imam and the average believer. For him, one must only refer to the

Infallibles in all religious matters, through sound narrated *ḥadīth*s.

Another controversial jurisprudential issue was al-Fayḍ's support for the ʿaynī

(obligatory status) of Friday prayer.[118] Rula Jurdi Abisaab noted that among the jurists,

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[117] Ibid., 38-39.

[118] A specific touchstone in the arguments over the authority of the clergy and their relationship with the state is the validity of the Friday prayer service during the Occultation. Three likely positions are seen on this matter. Those who categorized the prayer as *wujūb takhyīrī* held that the Imam's presence or the presence of his deputy, in reference to the *faqīh*, is necessary for leading the prayer. Thus, the *takhyīrī* position denoted an attempt to proclaim an authority for the *faqīh*, separate from the ongoing political institution. Those that claimed that the prayer was ʿadam wujūb (not obligatory) or *ḥarām* (forbidden), held that the Friday prayer service was either not mandatory or

especially the *mujtahid*s who were associated with the Safavid Shahs, Shaykh Luṭfullah al-Maysī al-ʿĀmilī, was the only one to promote the obligatory observance of Friday prayer.[119] The *mujtahid*s had actually voiced different opinions related to Friday prayer, some of which supported its obligation and others which encouraged it as an optional performance with or without a designated jurist.[120] Advocates of this position did not propose that a person other than the *faqīh* should perform the prayer but instead, reasoned that the presence of the *faqīh* as a deputy to the Imam was not necessary for the prayer to be conducted. This also proves that having this position did not prevent support for the principle of *niyāba* (deputyship) in other fields. Al-Fayḍ was well aware of the strong opposition faced by his teachers, al-Bahāʾī and Mullā Ṣadrā, due to their involvement in Sufi-style study and of the specific dispute concerning attempts of both Bahāʾī and al-Muḥaqqiq al-Karakī to lengthen *niyāba* to include the prayer.[121] Al-Fayḍ, from the beginning, sided with the political authorities with respect to the necessity of Friday prayer, thus, maintaining the whole issue of *niyāba* related to the prayer. His support for the ʿaynī opinion, which most likely dated from his *Muʿtaṣam al-shīʿa fī aḥkām al-sharīʿa*, was probably partly composed during his study with al-Bahāʾī in Isfahan.[122] In his *Mafātīḥ al-*

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even forbidden during the Occultation, since the Imams did not provide precise authorization for its performance in their absence. Advocates of the third position maintained that the Friday prayer was *wujūb ʿaynī* (an individual obligation), and were not very worried about the presence or absence of a deputy but were more concerned that a practice performed during the presence of the Imams be sustained in their absence according to the instructions of the established political institution; in Safavid Iran the center—the court or *Shaykh al-islām* of the capital—assigned local prayer leaders. Newman, "Fayd al-Kashani," 34-35.

Newman, in his study, examines the writings on the question of many prominent clerics of the early Safavid era concerning the Friday prayer. He established that the debates over the prayer's legitimacy would seem pronounced within or directly informed by a larger political and/or socioeconomic context in that they were the result of the jurisprudential dispute. See Newman, "Fayd al-Kashani."

[119] Abisaab, *Converting Persia*, 56.

[120] Rula Jurdi Abisaab, "Karaki," *Encyclopædia Iranica*, last updated January 24, 2012, http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/karaki.

[121] On the question of Friday Prayer during the Safavid period, See Abisaab, *Converting Persia*, 55-56, 71-72, 112, 124-26; Abisaab "Moral Authority in the Safawid State," 142-48.

[122] The reference of al-Fayḍ in *Mafātīḥ al-sharāʾiʿ* to his previous discussion of the matter was a reference to his famous *Muʿtaṣam al-shīʿa*. This is indicated by his statement: "*kamā bayyannāh fī kitābinā al-kabīr*" (as we have shown in our great book). See Muḥammad Muḥsin al-Fayḍ al-Kāshānī, *Mafātīḥ al-sharāʾiʿ*, ed. Mahdī al-Rajāʾī, vol. 1 (Qum: Majmaʿ-i Dhakhāʾir-i Islāmī, 1401/1980-81), 17-18.

sharāʾiʿ, which was probably completed in 1042/1632 when he was in Mullā Ṣadrā's company, al-Fayḍ reaffirmed his stand.[123]

Al-Fayḍ's *Akhbārī* views are reflected in his work *Safīnat al-najāt*, where he denounces the *Uṣūlī*s.[124] Al-Fayḍ was extremely committed to the *Akhbārī* views that he opposed the *mujtahid*s' assertion that common believers should not be given the right to judge on issues of law and must submit to authoritative legal opinion.[125] Several famous *Akhbārī* scholars, such as Yūsuf al-Baḥrānī, stated that al-Fayḍ criticized the *mujtahid*s, and indicated that they were unbelievers.[126] But, in line with earlier Safavid biographers, al-Samāhijī considered al-Fayḍ to be a *mujtahid-muḥaddith*.[127] This appears to be a more accurate depiction of al-Fayḍ. I consider him to be a "moderate" *Akhbārī* since, as I explained previously, he accepted several aspects of *Uṣūliyya*.

In the same vein, his approach to *ḥadīth* and *ḥadīth* scholarship were unique, hence, his view on *waḥdat al-wujūd* (unicity of being). What made al-Fayḍ stand out more than other *Akhbārī*s was his attempt to merge certain Sufi concepts with an *Akhbārī* approach to *ḥadīth* categorization and the derivation of the law. As such, he validated reliance on *naql* (revelation) without rejecting the use of *ʿaql* (reason), and integrated certain Sufi-*ʿirfānī* precepts with the aim of preserving and spreading the transmitted words of the Imams as reflected in the *ḥadīth* literature. Following Mullā Ṣadrā, al-Fayḍ attempted to synthesize philosophical and Sufi terminology. Hence, he depicts the Twelve Imams in his *al-Kalimāt al-maknūna* (*The Hidden Words*), completed in 1057/1647, as those who are equivalent to "the universal intellect" (*al-ʿaql*

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[123] See Ibid., 17, 20, 23.
[124] See Algar, "FAYŻ-E KĀŠĀNĪ."
[125] See al-Fayḍ, *al-Ḥaqq al-mubīn*, 6-7.
[126] Al-Baḥrānī, *Luʾluʾat al-baḥrayn*, 116.
[127] Newman, "The Nature of the Akhbārī/Uṣūlī Dispute in Late Ṣafawid Iran, Part 2," 260.

al-kullī). According to Muhammad Kamal and Muḥsin Bīdārfar, demonstrative proof (*burhān*), mystical unveiling (*ʿirfān*), and divine revelation (*Qurʾān*) are essential paths in the pursuit of true knowledge, for the school of *al-Ḥikma al-Mutaʿāliya*.[128] Whether this epistemic formula was implemented by al-Fayḍ in his works is open to debate and will be further discussed in Chapter Three.

In my view, al-Fayḍ's orientation toward Sufism was influenced by his teacher, Mullā Ṣadrā, who in turn was inspired by Abū Ḥāmid Muḥammad ibn Muḥammad al-Ghazālī (d. 505/1111) and by Abū ʿAbdullāh Muḥammad ibn ʿAlī ibn Muḥammad ibn ʿArabī al-Ḥātimī al-Ṭāʾī (d. 638/1240), the great Sufi master. Even though al-Fayḍ was influenced by those figures, this does not mean that he accepted all their doctrines and ideas without offering a systematic critique on them.[129] For example, al-Fayḍ's *al-Maḥajja al-bayḍāʾ fī tahdhīb al-Iḥyāʾ* is one of the earliest works written by al-Fayḍ, which represents his early views on religious and ethical issues. The book was based on al-Ghazālī's famous *Iḥyāʾ ʿulūm al-dīn* (*The Revival of the Religious Sciences*). This did not stop al-Fayḍ from criticizing specific features of *Iḥyāʾ* through improving, rather than refuting it.[130] Al-Fayḍ's criticisms of al-Ghazālī should be understood with his belief that al-Ghazālī composed *Iḥyāʾ* before his conversion to Shiʿism. As the title of the book indicates, al-Fayḍ's main accomplishment was to recast al-Ghazālī's *Iḥyaʾ ʿulūm al-dīn* in *Imāmī* form. Therefore, according to al-Fayḍ, *al-Maḥajja al-bayḍāʾ* offers a Shiʿite version of al-Ghazālī's *Iḥyāʾ*, which meant that he preserved al-Ghazālī's central ideas about the believer's obligations toward God and the simplified rituals of worship except when they contradict Shiʿite doctrine. Al-Fayḍ replaces the *ḥadīth* from Sunni sources cited by al-Ghazālī with traditions of

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[128] See Muhammad Kamal, *Mulla Sadra's Transcendent Philosophy* (London; New York: Routledge, 2016), 88-105; and Bīdārfar, "Introduction" to al-Fayḍ's *ʿIlm al-yaqīn*, 1:35-37.
[129] See Abisaab, "Shiʿi Jurisprudence," 17.
[130] Ibid.

very similar meaning from Shiʿite collections. Also, to the second book of al-Fayḍ's version, he added a chapter entitled "Akhlāq al-imāma wa-ādāb al-Shīʿa" (The Ethics of the Imamate and the Customs of the Shiʿites) and completely eliminated the chapter on *samāʿ* (the types of music which Sufis had recourse to). As a result, al-Fayḍ omitted and added parts of the text in accordance to Shiʿite views. This shows to a great extent that al-Fayḍ's ethical theory is reconciled or harmonized with traditional *Imāmī* doctrine. It was both a critical edition as well as a re-shaped *Iḥyāʾ*, which showed al-Fayḍ's skillfulness in understanding the Islamic ethical thought.[131]

Al-Fayḍ, who had studied with al-Bahāʾī and Mullā Ṣadrā, was clearly interested in *ʿirfān* and strongly inclined to philosophical Sufi ideas. He produced various works on theosophy and mysticism throughout his life. Al-Fayḍ, like his teacher Mullā Ṣadrā, adopted Ibn ʿArabī's perceptions and developed and taught an opinion largely marked with philosophy and mysticism. However, al-Fayḍ differs from his teacher in his view of Ibn ʿArabī. Despite his agreement with Ibn ʿArabī on various positions and opinions, al-Fayḍ, specifically in his book *Bishārat al-shīʿa* (*Good Tiding for the Shiʿites*), completed in 1081/1671, asserts his harsh criticism on Ibn ʿArabī and his *al-Futūḥāt al-makkiyya*. His criticism was based on that Ibn ʿArabī purposely neglected the knowledge of the Imams and did not follow them.[132]

Al-Fayḍ viewed Sufism, in its Safavid-Qizilbash form as circumspect. During his early career, he composed *al-Kalimāt al-ṭarīfa* (*The Pleasant Words*), completed in 1060/1650, where he renounced those who pretended to be Sufis, but again, not Sufis themselves.[133] He condemned

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[131] On the comparison of some ethical notions between al-Ghazālī and al-Fayḍ, see Saghaye-Biria, "Al-Fayḍ al-Kâshânî."

[132] Bīdārfar, "Introduction" to al-Fayḍ's *ʿIlm al-yaqīn*, 1:41.

[133] See Muḥammad Muḥsin al-Fayḍ al-Kāshānī, *al-Kalimāt al-ṭarīfa*, ed. ʿAlī Jabbār Kulbāghī (Tehran: Munshūrāt al-Madrasa al-ʿUlyā li-al-Shahīd al-Muṭahharī), 216.

Sufi "excesses" and pointed to a range of inacceptable practices, such as dancing and losing

consciousness, which he found unacceptable. Al-Fayḍ mocked them for their exercise of a forty-

day *khalwa*, and for their abstinence from sleep and meat. He further condemned those people of

for mingling poetry and *ghināʾ* (music/singing), producing braying and moaning sounds, claping,

dancing, remembering God very loudly, and often substituting *sunna* exercises with innovations.

Although he differed with his teacher in approaching critism, al-Fayḍ reiterated Mullā Ṣadrā's

critique of non-madrasa-trained Sufis and dervishes. In dealing with Sufism, he appears to have

followed his teacher's path. Mullā Ṣadrā and later on al-Fayḍ, attacked those people who, under

the slogan of Sufism, presented themselves as masters and spiritual guides of the people. Al-

Fayḍ condemned those who refer to themselves as "dervish" or "*shaykh*", proudly believing that

they have really reached true *taṣawwuf* (Sufism) and *taʾalluh* (God-becoming) and can attain

anything they desire by simply using their intuition or supplication.[134]

Mullā Ṣadrā wrote two main works on Sufism, *Kasr aṣnām al-jāhiliyya fī al-rad ʿalā al-

ṣūfiyya (Breaking the Idols of Ignorance: Admonition of the Soi-Disant Sufi)* early in his career

and another, *Sih aṣl*, toward the latter part of his life. Sufi Dervishism, at the time of *Kasr* was

still active but had begun to collapse afterwards.[135] Mullā Ṣadrā greatly criticized the

mutaṣawwifa, that is, those who pretend to be Sufis but are not "true Sufis" and who in the name

of esoteric knowledge caused the layperson to be confused. In his treatise *Kasr aṣnām al-

jāhilīya*, Mullā Ṣadrā took such people to task and exposed the ignorance of this group. To

distance himself from those types of Sufis, he used the term *ʿirfān* rather than *taṣawwuf*. Thus,

what was challenged and suppressed, specifically by Mullā Ṣadrā and al-Fayḍ, and generally

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[134] Ibid.

[135] Anzali have demonstrated Sufism's solid social position in the early 11th/17th century, before a group of mid-ranking *ʿulamāʾ* began to challenge its legitimacy. He maintains that in less than a century, this position had changed dramatically. Anzali, *"Mysticism" in Iran*, 89-93.

under the Safavids, was the Sufism of the *futuwwa* (the ethics followed by Sufis in order to attain spiritual perfection) and the practices within Sufi orders (*ṭarīqa*s) such as *samāʿ* (listening, a Sufi ceremony performed as *dhikr* (remembrance of God)), preserving *wajd* (spiritual ecstasy, induced by *dhikr* while hearing recitation of the *Qurʾān*, *ḥadīth*, or spiritual poetry) and *shawq* (passionate longing for God).[136] Abisaab argued that Mullā Ṣadrā's attempt to talk about "false Sufis" and "true Sufis" is an attempt to salvage critical aspects of classical Sufi theory, and to validate it for philosophers and the *mutakallimūn*, as an important and authoritative source of knowledge.[137]

According to Ata Anzali, the *ʿulamāʾ* who were integrated into the *madrasa* system, and who were trained in either or both exoteric and esoteric sciences, constantly displayed the Sufis of this era as ignorant and opposed to education and learning.[138] Some scholars of the *madrasa*, such as the famous *Akhbārī*s and Sufi critics, al-Ḥurr al-ʿĀmilī and Sayyid Niʿmatullāh al-Jazāʾirī, despite their opposition to Mullā Ṣadrā's philosophical and mystical views, agreed with his and his students' scorn of the Sufis, presented as "anti-intellectual".[139] The reason behind this shift inside the *madrasa*s falls outside the scope of this thesis.[140] However, one could conclude that jurists and philosophers, in different ways, accepted only particular forms and features of Sufism at that time for various historical reasons. I hold that Mullā Ṣadrā and al-Fayḍ both shared the aim to establish a firm grounding for Sufism in other branches of Islamic knowledge/sciences. Both tried to reconcile Sufism, discursive philosophy, and rational

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[136] Anzali, *"Mysticism" in Iran*, 64-67.

[137] Rula Jurdi Abisaab, "Sufi Habitus and *shariʿa* Practitioners in Late Safavid Iran," in *The Safavid World*, ed. Rudi Matthee (forthcoming).

[138] Anzali, *"Mysticism" in Iran*, 65.

[139] Ibid., 67.

[140] Anzali uses sociological and historical approaches to offer some opinions and present an analytical groundwork that may support a comprehension of the important change of the religious landscape of Safavid Iran. See Anzali, *"Mysticism" in Iran*, 94-116. Also, see Arjomand, *The Shadow of God*, 151-55.

theology. This appears strongly in their discussion of relevant philosophical topics, such as "Origin and Return" (*al-mabdaʾ wa-al-maʿād*), where they combine statements of the *Qurʾān* and *ḥadīth* with philosophical and Sufi notions.[141] Mullā Ṣadrā and later al-Fayḍ had a specific project in mind, which is to synthesize Shiʿism and Sufism.[142] They tried to salvage Sufism as a legitimate form of knowledge. *Sih aṣl*, which was written toward the end of Mullā Ṣadrā's life, in addition to his *Kasr aṣnām al-jāhilīya* confirm that he sees Twelver Shiʿism and Sufism as fully reconcilable.[143]

The classification of al-Fayḍ as a Sufi resulted in extreme reactions from scholars like Yūsuf al-Baḥrānī who denounced al-Fayḍ in *Luʾluʾat al-baḥrayn*. Others applauded al-Fayḍ's brilliant achievements in the various Islamic sciences.[144] Moreover, the *muḥaddith*-theologian Mullā Muḥammad Ṭāhir al-Qummī, in his book *Ḥikmat al-ʿārifīn fī rad shubah al-mukhālifīn min al-mutaṣawwifa wa-al-mutafalsifīn* (*The Wisdom of the Knower in Rejecting the Suspicions of the Offenders of Sufis and Philosophers*) denounced each of al-Bahāʾī, Mullā Ṣadrā, and al-Fayḍ for their Sufi "leanings." Al-Khwānsārī, in *Rawḍāt al-jannāt*, presents what seems like an anecdotal account, that al-Qummī "realized" that he was mistaken about al-Fayḍ and stated that he had misunderstood his approach toward Sufism and his philosophical views on Ibn ʿArabī's *waḥdat al-wujūd*. Repentant, he marched on foot from Qum to al-Fayḍ's house in Kashan to

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[141] For example, see Mullā Ṣadrā Muḥammad ibn Ibrāhīm Ṣadr al-Dīn al-Shīrāzī, *Mafātīḥ al-ghayb*, ed. Muḥammad Khajavī (Iran: Muʾassasat Muṭālaʿāt wa-Taḥqīqāt Farhanghī, 1984); and Mullā Ṣadrā Ṣadr al-Dīn Muḥammad ibn Ibrāhīm al-Shīrāzī, *al-Mabdaʾ wa-al-maʿād*, ed, Jalāl al-Dīn al-Ashtiyānī (Qum: Markaz Intishārāt-i Daftar-i Tablīghāt-i Islāmī, 1422 /2001).

[142] On this matter, see Sajjad H. Rizvi, ""Only the Imam Knows Best" The Maktabe Tafkīk's Attack on the Legitimacy of Philosophy in Iran," *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* 22, no. 3-4 (October 2012): 487-503; and Sajjad H. Rizvi, "Mysticism and Philosophy: Ibn ʿArabī and Mullā Ṣadrā," in *The Cambrige Companion to Arabic Philosophy*, ed. Peter Adamson and Richard C. Taylor (Cambridge: Cambrige University Press, 2005), 224-46. This notion will be further highlighted in Chapter Three.

[143] Sajjad H. Rizvi, *Mullā Ṣadrā Shīrāzī: His Life and Works and the Sources for Safavid Philosophy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 32.

[144] Al-Baḥrānī, *Luʾluʾat al-baḥrayn*, 116-17.

apologize to him.[145] Al-Khwānsārī mentions these connections in the passive voice, which might indicate that he had no concrete evidence for them.

Al-Fayḍ's principal student, Sayyid Niʿmatullāh al-Jazāʾirī, on the other hand, strongly denied that his master was associated with any Sufi order.[146] This may very well be true, because the Sufism which al-Fayḍ and other theosophers turned to was not necessarily practiced in the major Sufi orders. His work, *al-Kalimāt al-ṭarīfa*, which holds some significant ideas of Mullā Ṣadrā's *Kasr aṣnām al-jāhilīya*, especially in Chapter 62 (*al-maqāla* 62), chastised a number of contemporary Sufis and attacked those who pretended to possess supernatural powers. In his *al-Muḥākama bayna al-mutaṣawwifa wa-ghayrihim*, completed in 1071/1660–61, al-Fayḍ also responded to some questions concerning these accusations. He criticized Sufi excesses in a bid to defend himself against accusations of a deep interest in Sufism. Al-Fayḍ defended and separated the Sufi-linked group he calls the ascetics (*zuhhād*) and worshippers (*ʿubbād*) from those he labels as false claimants to Sufism. He worked on resolving the tension between the *ʿulamāʾ* and the ascetics using an ethical approach. He condemned the loud *dhikr* of Sufism, the Sufis' use of poetry, their adding words to the *tahlīl* (the declaration "there is no god but God") as well as their unsuitable statements, especially,

> [S]uch as [saying] that everything is one and such statements that they do not understand; rather they have heard them from others and adopted them in blind imitation, while it is completely unknown [to them] what others meant by it […].[147]

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[145] Al-Khwānsārī, *Rawḍāt al-jannāt*, 6:76.
[146] Ibid., 91; and Mudarris, *Rayḥānat al-adab*, 4:370-71.
[147] See Cyrus Ali Zargar, "Revealing Revisions: Fayḍ al-Kāshānī's Four Versions of *al-Kalimāt al-Maknūna*," *Iranian Studies* 47, no. 2 (2014): 261n.83, quoted from Muḥammad Muḥsin al-Fayḍ al-Kāshānī, "Risālih-yi Muḥākama bayn al-mutaṣawwifa wa-ghayrihim," ed. Muḥammad-Taqī Dānishpajhūh, *Nashriyyih-yi Danishgāh-i Adabiyyāt-i Tabrīz*, no. 2, year 9 (1336/1957): 125.

Al-Fayḍ, in his *al-Inṣāf* (*Fairness*), completed in 1083/1673, upheld his anti-Sufi critique and confessed that he had possibly displayed excessive interest in *taṣawwuf* during his youth.[148] Later, the more aggressive atmosphere in Safavid Iran against Sufism could be the inspiration behind his sharper rejection of Sufism in the *Qurrat al-ʿuyūn* (*The Eye's Pleasure*), completed in 1088/1677: I am not a theologian, nor one who approaches philosophy, nor a Sufi, nor a *mujtahid* (*mutakallaf*).[149] Nevertheless, the rest of the text confirms cosmological principles of Sufism and *ḥikma*.[150] While circumstances might have forced al-Fayḍ to clarify his position, his changes to *al-Kalimāt al-maknūna* probably did not result from prudent dissimulation (*taqiyya*). As Cyrus Ali Zargar correctly notes, al-Fayḍ maintained amiable relations with the Safavid court, showed no restraint in criticizing other scholars, and never disavowed the large corpus of philosophical and mystical works he had composed.[151]

Despite the criticisms, the writings of al-Fayḍ and his outlook placed him within a larger more eclectic group of Sufi thinkers. As such, many Sufis counted him as one of them. Indeed, al-Fayḍ's composition of texts such as *al-Kalimāt al-makhzūna* and *Uṣūl al-maʿārif* (*Principles of the Sciences*) late in his life reflects a more cautious approach to *ḥikma* or *maʿrifa*.[152] As he turned to the *akhbār*, he insisted that all knowledge, including the esoteric discoveries of Sufis and philosophers, can (and, as a later position, must) be discovered in the sayings of the *Ahl al-*

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[148] Al-Fayḍ, in his *al-Muḥākama*, portrayed these clerics—as he later would in his *Sharḥ-i ṣadr*—as *ahl-i dhāhir* whose presence at Shah Ṣāfī's court was one reason he declined the latter's invitation, and who were obsessive in their criticism of truly austere people. See Newman, "Fayd al-Kashani," 51n.37. Also, see Al-Fayḍ, "Sharḥ-i ṣadr," 404.

[149] *Mutakallaf*, alludes to the Shiʿite *mujtahid*s of the time of al-Fayḍ, who debated to endure the legal burden (*takālīf*) of others. This word could be translated to "one who claims to take upon oneself someone else's burden." Muḥammad Muḥsin al-Fayḍ al-Kāshānī, *Qurrat al-ʿuyūn fī al-maʿārif wa-al-ḥikam*, ed. Muḥsin ʿAqīl (Dār al-Kitāb al-Islāmī, 1409/1989), 332.

[150] Ibid., 8.

[151] Al-Fayḍ not once took a fearful stand regarding the scholars of his time and seems to have been outspoken about their mistakes. He often appears more annoyed by the haughtiness of the *mujtahidīn* who claimed to have *ijtihād* amongst the *Uṣūlī*s, than any theoretical inconsistency, and his disapproval is usually on judgment of their character. See Zargar, "Revealing Revisions," 261n.86.

[152] *Al-Kalimāt al-makhzūna* and *Uṣūl al-maʿārif* were completed in 1089/1678.

bayt (Fāṭima—Prophet Muḥammad's daughter—and the Twelve Shiʿite Imams).[153] This implies that the particular form of knowledge provided through Sufism, though distinct from the path of philosophy, is confirmed by the Imams' statements, and is essential in developing a profound understanding of their words. This knowledge, as Rula Jurdi Abisaab noted, cannot be simply achieved through *sharīʿa* but through a new '*ṭarīqa*', so to speak, that involves the development of "spiritual sensitivity, meditative focus, contemplation, and discernment," that peels "sensory-cognitive layers," to find what lies within.[154] In this respect, the writings of al-Fayḍ and his outlook placed him within a larger more eclectic group of Sufi thinkers. As such, many Sufis counted him among their own. This is why al-Fayḍ appears to harbor two contradictory positions. I will discuss this issue further in Chapter Three, where I present and analyze al-Fayḍ's works in an epistemic scholarly framework.

2.1. Critiques of al-Fayḍ's Thought

In this section, I will elaborate on the reasons why al-Fayḍ was criticized by his contemporaries and successors. After searching through various biographical (*tarājim*) and religious books, I came across three central reasons upon which some religious scholars denounced al-Fayḍ in the past. These are: his inclination to Sufism, his adoption of the concept of *waḥdat al-wujūd*, and his open disapproval of the *mujtahid*s. One prominent scholar who strongly criticizes al-Fayḍ on these three bases is Yūsuf al-Baḥrānī in his *Luluʾat al-Baḥrayn*.[155]

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[153] Zargar, "Revealing Revisions," 262. For more on this idea, Zargar refers to ʿAbd al-Ḥusayn Zarrīn-kūb, *Dunbāla-yi just-va-jū dar taṣavvuf-i Īrān* (Tehran, 2010-11), 255-57.
[154] Abisaab, "Sufi Habitus," (forthcoming).
[155] Al-Baḥrānī, *Luʾluʾat al-baḥrayn*, 116-17.

1- Inclination toward Sufism:

Several *tarājim* and religious books mention that al-Fayḍ was inclined toward Sufism and was influenced by Sufi ideas and prominent figures such as al-Ghazālī, for which he was often criticized. Clearly, al-Fayḍ as Hamid Algar noted, was "exposed to the hostility of the exoteric scholars on account of his Sufi inclinations," to the extent that Sayyid Niʿmatullāh al-Jazāʾirī, his student, was compelled to deny that his teacher had any relationship with a Sufi order.[156] Though the "exoteric jurists" and "puritan preachers" as Anzali refers to them, were not the only ones opposing Sufism, they were the most influential branch of the anti-Sufi movement.[157] However, some puritan preachers such as Sayyid Muḥammad ibn Muḥammad al-Ḥusaynī al-Sabzawārī (d. 1087/1676), better known as Mīr Lawḥī, and scholars such as Muḥammad Ṭāhir al-Qummī did not consider Sufis as the most dangerous targets.[158] Instead, more dangerous were the more prominent, charismatic and political religious scholars of the era such as al-Shaykh al-Bahāʾī, al-Majlisī al-Awwal, and later, al-Fayḍ. Al-Bahāʾī was deceased at the time of the opposition, and this afforded his critics some freedom and safety in publicly criticizing him. In addition, al-Majlisī al-Awwal and al-Fayḍ, whose religious views were detested by the puritans, went into an intense debate with *ʿulamāʾ* such as al-Qummī, over who has the authority to define orthodoxy.[159]

The strong accusations against al-Fayḍ actually led him to write a letter in which he denies his acceptance of particular Sufi customs, like blending poetry with *dhikr*.[160] A Sufi-*shaykh* from Mashhad, named Muḥammad ʿAlī al-Ṣūfī, more known as Muqriʾ, asserted that

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[156] See Algar, "FAYŻ-E KĀŠĀNĪ."
[157] Anzali, *"Mysticism" in Iran*, 45.
[158] Ibid.
[159] Ibid.
[160] See Kathryn Babayan, *Mystics, Monarchs, and Messiahs: Cultural Landscapes of Early Modern Iran* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2002), 448.

during his visit to Isfahan, al-Fayḍ permitted certain practices such as forty-day withdrawals (*khalwa*), loud invocation of the divine name (*al-dhikr al-jalī*), forswearing eating meat with the excuse of asceticism, dancing and reciting love poetry in a state of euphoria. A certain man named Muḥammad Muqīm Mashhadī later wrote to al-Fayḍ from Mashhad, asking if this was true; he responded disapproving all the mentioned practices, claiming that they oppose the *Qurʾān* and the teachings of the *Ahl al-bayt*.[161]

While a number of *ʿulamāʾ* attacked al-Fayḍ for his Sufi inclinations, others tried to interpret it as a spiritual feature of his personality. Al-Khwānsārī, in his entry on al-Fayḍ, notes that al-Baḥrānī's assertion that al-Fayḍ and Mullā Ṣadrā were both heretical mystics is incorrect.[162] Al-Khwānsārī argues that al-Fayḍ was a gnostic who, with the help of the Imams, received supersensible unveiling, and is not a "false mystic" who declares to have reached God without their help.[163] Many *ʿulamāʾ* were skeptical of al-Fayḍ, especially those who did not differentiate gnostics from "false mystics." To explain the reasons behind this, al-Khwānsārī mentions al-Fayḍ's connection with some "heretical and extreme" Shiʿites (*mulḥidīn* and *ghulāt*), who disregard recognized *ijmāʿ*, refuse to obey the rulings of *mujtahid*s, and spurn the performance of religious duties.[164]

It could be said that the image of al-Fayḍ as a Sufi originates from Sufi sources themselves. Despite his attacks on Sufism, Sufis tried to depict al-Fayḍ as one of their own.[165] Some biographies of prominent figures like al-Bahāʾī and al-Fayḍ are exaggerated for the purpose of proving that they belong to the Dhahabī spiritual lineage.[166] Looking through Sayyid

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[161] Al-Khwānsārī, *Rawḍāt al-jannāt*, 6:91-92; and Rasūl Jaʿfariyān, "Rūyārūʾī-yi faqīhān va ṣūfyān dar dawra-yi ṣafawī," *Kayhān-i andīsha* 33, 106-7.

[162] Al-Khwānsārī, *Rawḍāt al-jannāt*, 6:92-93.

[163] Ibid., 93.

[164] Ibid., 87.

[165] For example, see Anzali, *"Mysticism" in Iran*, 84, 140, 147-48.

[166] Ibid., 126, 135, 139-40, 147-48.

Quṭb al-Dīn Muḥammad al-Nayrīzī's statement about al-Bahāʾī, we deduct a number of

significant information. First, it is the first time al-Bahāʾī was presented as an initiate to a Sufi

system, the *Dhahabiyya*.[167] In another page, al-Fayḍ is also reported to have been initiated

through Shaykh Muḥammad ʿAlī al-Ṣūfī al-Mashhadī (d. before 1672), more famously known as

al-Muʾadhdhin al-Khurāsānī.[168]

It is true that al-Fayḍ had connections with a number of renowned Sufi figures like al-

Muʾadhdhin al-Khurāsānī, who was one of Iran's leading prominent Sufi characters of his

time.[169] However, I doubt the Dhahabī assertions that figures such as al-Fayḍ were his

followers.[170] I consider the presumed relationship between prominent figures such as al-Fayḍ and

the *Dhahabiyya* network to be an effort to bolster the prestige of the Sufi order by revealing their

network with prominent figures of the *ʿulamā*.[171] However, as Ata Anzali shows, these claims

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[167] Abū al-Qāsim Amīn al-Sharīʿa Khūyī, *Mīzān al-ṣavāb dar sharḥ-i faṣl al-khiṭāb*, ed. Muḥammad Khajavī, vol. 3 (Tehran: Intishārāt-i Mawlā, 2004), 1221.

[168] Ibid., 1222.

[169] Ata Anzali argues that in handling Sufism as a discipline, al-Muʾadhdhin al-Khurāsānī associated himself not just with an extended tradition of scholarly Sufism but with some of Shiʿism's most valued, Sufi-inclined scholars, such as Shaykh Al-Bahāʾī, al-Fayḍ, Mullā Ṣadrā, and the al-Shahīd al-Thānī. See Anzali, *"Mysticism" in Iran*, 84.
In one account, al-Muʾadhdhin al-Khurāsānī is said to have attended a unique session organized by Shah ʿAbbās II to meet with two important dervishes from the Ottoman territories, namely; Dervish Majnūn and Dervish Muṣṭafā, who asked to meet with their Safavid counterparts. Mullā Rajab-ʿAlī al-Tabrīzī (d. 1080/1669) and Dervish Muḥammad Ṣāliḥ Lunbānī, after earning grants from the ruler, were introduced to them. Al-Fayḍ is said to have attended this assembly. See Muḥammad Ṭāhir Waḥīd al-Zamān al-Qazwīnī, *ʿAbbās-nāma*, ed. Ibrāhīm Dihqān (Arak: Intishārāt-i Dāwūdī, 1329 SH/1951 AD), 255. Also, see Muḥammad Ṭāhir Waḥīd al-Zamān al-Qazwīnī, *Tārīkh-i jahānārā-yi ʿabbāsī*, eds. Saʿīd Mīr Muḥammad Ṣādiq and Iḥsān Ishrāqī (Tehran: Pizhūhishgāh-i ʿUlūm-i Insānī va Muṭālaʿāt-i Farhangī, 1994), 662-63.

[170] On this matter, see Anzali, *"Mysticism" in Iran*, 74.

[171] Al-Nayrīzī states these connections in a passive manner, which suggests that he could not prove them. Whether he invented such links or was reciting recent rumors cannot be confirmed. His mission of linking the Dhahabī network to famous figures among the *ʿulamā* was fostered by his exercise of embracing figures such as Shaykh Muḥammad ʿĀrif and Shaykh Muʾmin Mashhadī, who were perhaps famous Nūrbakhshī masters in the early to mid-11th/17th century, into the lineage. For more on the aforementioned figures, see Ata Anzali, "The Emergence of the Ẓahabiyya in Safavid Iran," *Journal of Sufi Studies* 2, no. 2 (2013): 149-75.

where issued to present a new hagiographical phase that paves the way for ʿirfān, as a more

acceptable form of mysticism than Sufism in the Shiʿite Safavid context.[172]

In order to understand the way al-Fayḍ appears in Sufi biographies, one should

understand the aim of the biographer in composing a specific notice. Al-Nayrīzī, for instance,

was strongly opposed to traditional philosophical discourse, he made sure to explain that the

philosophers he approved of in *Faṣl*, such as Muḥammad ibn Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥasan al-Ṭūsī

(d. 672/1274), better known as Naṣīr al-Dīn al-Ṭūsī, al-Dawwānī, and Mīr Dāmād, had converted

to the practices of Sufism at later stages of their life and were thus saved from "the abyss of

philosophical illusions."[173] Moreover, al-Nayrīzī upheld that Mullā Ṣadrā was, from the early

stage of his career, a friend of "the folk of poverty," and that his writings in philosophy were in

line with the his era. With this, he wrote:

> [B]ecause in his age the philosophers were dominant, he had no choice but to speak in
> their language, and [that is why] he explained the divine knowledge in possession of the
> folk of poverty (*al-fuqarāʾ al-ilāhiyyīn*) according to the logic of the philosopher and the
> language of theologians (*mutakallimūn*), and there is no dispute in terminology.[174]

Al-Nayrīzī tries to take Mullā Ṣadrā away from the philosophical camp and categorize him in the

Sufi camp. He did this to fulfill the larger goal of repositioning Sufism by the end of the 11th/17th

century.[175] Here, one must pay attention to the distinctions between Sufi dervishism, Sufi

practices within orders (*ṭarīqa*s) of various kinds, and philosophical Sufism. In addition, it is

important to remember that the proponents of the so-called "School of Isfahan," including Mullā

Ṣadrā, challenged and attacked various aspects of institutionalized Sufism and dervishism, as I

mentioned earlier. Thus, if Mullā Ṣadrā was interested in Sufism or inclined to it, this would

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[172] Anzali, *"Mysticism" in Iran*, 147.
[173] Khūyī, *Mīzān al-ṣavāb*, 3:1204, 1211.
[174] Ibid., 1220. The translation is taken from Anzali, *"Mysticism" in Iran*, 149.
[175] On this repositioning, see Anzali, *"Mysticism" in Iran*, 148-50.

have been exclusively in terms of its philosophical bases and structures, and not to anything else.

Mullā Ṣadrā was among a group of other leading Safavid intellectuals from a wide number of

scholarly disciplines who contributed to the reshaping of Sufism and transforming it to the more

acceptable and philosophically-informed field of ʿirfān. Yet, this does not necessarily mean that

this achievement was Mullā Ṣadrā's major aim in his intellectual career, especially that being

sympathetic to Sufism does not automatically make him a Sufi.[176] Thus, the biographical sources

and comments by other scholars on al-Fayḍ or Mullā Ṣadrā have to be carefully discerned

because, on the one hand, many mainstream jurists condemned Sufi-minded scholars, and

philosophers condemned them as well, even though it was for a different reason.

Some of al-Fayḍ's writings show his explicit opinion on Sufis and Sufism. Dividing the

Sufis into groups, he writes, in his *Bishārat al-shīʿa*:

> Sufis are divided into categories: A group amongst them have tread the path of truth until
> they have attained what they have attained through the predestined [divine] beauty and
> they are those who believe in the leaders of guidance either in the very beginning or
> during their wayfaring, which are a minority amongst them.[177]

In his *al-Kalimāt al-ṭarīfa* he says:

> A collective amongst them are known as the people of remembrance and purity (*ahl al-
> dhikr wa-al-taṣṣawwuf*) which proclaim dissociation from fakeness and pretentiousness.
> They wear the ritual cloths (*khiraq*) and sit in circles as they invent remembrances, sing
> poems and raise their voices in praise. They have no path to knowledge and gnosis (*al-
> maʿrifa*). They innovated loud breath sounds (*shahīqan wa-nahīqan*) as they created claps
> and dances. They have delved the oceans of corruption as they embraced the innovations
> not the prophetic methods.[178]

Thus, it is obvious that al-Fayḍ was not in any way connected to the second type of Sufis

mentioned above. Therefore, we come across a pivotal terminological problem, where some

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[176] It is important to discuss the attraction toward an intellectual philosophical Sufism, which led on the long-run to
the emergence of ʿirfān. Anzali has contributed widely to this in his book *"Mysticism" in Iran*.
[177] Bīdārfar, "Introduction" to al-Fayḍ's *ʿIlm al-yaqīn*, 1:39, quoting al-Fayḍ's *Bishārat al-shīʿa*.
[178] Al-Fayḍ, *al-Kalimāt al-ṭarīfa*, 217.

scholars mix up the concept of Sufism, generalizing the term to claim that everyone who has some intellectual connections to Sufism is consequently a Sufi. On the other hand, some might argue that this assumption is not convincing, especially that we are not sure of what the critiques mean by "Sufism". Critics might have in mind, not the type of Sufism that al-Fayḍ criticizes, but the type of Sufi philosophical doctrines that al-Fayḍ actually adopts. Thus, one should also give those critics the benefit of the doubt when they say that al-Fayḍ's doctrines are not in accordance with a strict view of Twelver Shiʿite doctrine and that al-Fayḍ is stretching the boundaries of orthodoxy too far. This, however, raises an issue about whether the fact that al-Fayḍ and Mullā Ṣadrā wrote works against Sufi practice while adopting their beliefs shows that they had an anxiety that they have pushed the boundaries of true doctrine and now need to justify themselves by redefining the boundaries. This would be part of a future study, which would help in showing and analyzing precisely the actual terms of the debate which occurred between al-Fayḍ and Mullā Ṣadrā, on the one hand, and their critics, on the other.

2- Philosophy and the Concept of *Waḥdat al-Wujūd*:

When talking about a campaign in Safavid Iran that rose against philosophy, Muḥammad Ṭāhir al-Qummī seems to be the most prominent figure to represent this campaign.[179] Notably, in his early career, al-Qummī expressed surprise and disappointment that Mīr Dāmād, the prominent contemporary Shiʿite philosopher followed the "unorthodox" views of earlier famous figures like Ibn Sīnā (Avicenna) (d. 427/1037) on the idea of free will. However, al-Qummī did

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[179] Anzali considers the anti-philosophy works of al-Qummī important in that they signify the first serious effort by a notable religious scholar in challenging philosophy beyond intellectual spheres and to a wider audience. According to Anzali, modern accounts suggest that popular preachers began to denounce philosophy as a foreign study and a profanation about the same period of al-Qummī's opposition. Anzali, *"Mysticism" in Iran*, 52.

not directly attack Mīr Dāmād.[180] As al-Qummī gained popularity and forged strong ties with the

Safavid court, he stretched his attacks to other disciplines "polluted" by Sufi traditions, such as

philosophy as demonstrated in Mullā Ṣadrā's teachings.[181] Al-Qummī asserted that the

philosophy of Mullā Ṣadrā was an innovation. He accused Mullā Ṣadrā of placing ideas of

Sufism within a philosophical structure. Al-Qummī expressed bewilderment in his writings,

arguing that while "some among his contemporaries" attempted to blend philosophy and Sufism,

Sufis detested and mocked the philosophy from the initial centuries of Islam.[182] In *Ḥikmat al-*

ʿārifīn, al-Qummī condemned Mullā Ṣadrā's thoughts on the concept and reality of existence

(*wujūd*) and links it to a critique of Ibn ʿArabī and the idea of *waḥdat al-wujūd* in the final

chapter.[183]

Although it appears in the sayings of early Sufis, the theory of *waḥdat al-wujūd* was not

complete before the contribution of Ibn ʿArabī. Ibn ʿArabī is still the prominent representative of

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[180] Ibid., 46.

[181] Ibid., 51.

Al-Qummī, like a number of other *ʿulamāʾ* of his period, worked to create strong connections with the Safavid court, and was extremely effective in doing so. He announced his allegiance to the political institution through a treatise on the importance of Friday prayers during Occultation as a religious duty in 1068/1658. See Andrew Newman, "Sufism and Anti-Sufism in Safavid Iran: The Authorship of the 'Ḥadīqat al-Shīʿa' Revisited," *Iran* 37 (1999): 101-2.

Al-Qummī was first assigned as the leader of Friday prayer in Qum, and, by the time Shah Sulaymān (r. 1077-1105/1666-1693-4) rose to the throne, he had ascended to the status of judge and *Shaykh al-islām*, the chief religious position in a shrine-city. For a detailed account and analysis of al-Qummī's life and works see Ata Anzali and S. M. Hadi Gerami, *Opposition to Philosophy in Safavid Iran: Mulla Muhammad-Tahir Qummi's Hikmat al-ʿArifin* (Leiden: Brill, 2017), 1-46.

[182] Todd Lawson, "The Hidden Words of Fayḍ Kāshānī," in *Iran: Questions et connaissances, Vol. 2: Périodes médiévale et modern: Actes du IVe Congrès européen des études iraniennes, organisé par la Societas Iranologica Europaea, Paris, 6-10 septembre 1999 in Cahiers de Studia Islamica*, eds. Philip Huyse and Maria Szuppe (Leuven, 2002), 429.

One can find several critiques of *ʿulamāʾ* on al-Fayḍ's engagement with philosophical Sufism and his belief in *waḥdat al-wujūd* in al-Khwānsārī's *Rawḍāt*, most important of which are Muḥammad Ṭāhir al-Qummī and Yūsuf al-Baḥrānī. See al-Khwānsārī, *Rawḍāt al-jannāt*, 6:75-76, 84.

[183] For a more detailed discussion, see Anzali and Gerami, *Opposition to Philosophy*, 33-43.

Al-Qummī added two more works in Persian to his anti-philosophy polemics, namely *Tuḥfat al-akhyār* and *al-Fawāʾid al-dīniyya*. The first is a famous critique of Sufism, with a final chapter targeting philosophers. The second was completed during the rule of Shah Sulaymān in a question-and-answer layout, and its content highlights the framework of the anti-philosophy situation of that period. Anzali, *"Mysticism" in Iran*, 51.

this theory, and it is well known that every scholar who adopted this theory after him was influenced by him in a way or another. The belief in *waḥdat al-wujūd* was controversial for Twelver Shiʿite scholars, especially in the Safavid period.[184] However, it was neither al-Fayḍ nor his teacher Mullā Ṣadrā who first supported this theory among Shiʿite scholars, but there were others, including the prominent Shiʿite scholar of the 14th century Sayyid Bahāʾ al-Dīn Ḥaydar al-ʿUbaydī al-Ḥusaynī al-Āmulī (d. 787/1385) who did so.[185]

Mullā Ṣadrā agrees with Ibn ʿArabī's theory of *waḥdat al-wujūd*. So, Ibn ʿArabī considered unicity to be the truth of multiplicity (*al-waḥda ʿayn al-kathra*), and Mullā Ṣadrā considers that unicity is incarnate in the world of multiplicity through God's names and attributes which are dispersed in the realm of contingency. For this he says: "Oneness for us is not concomitant upon existence."[186] It can be concluded from al-Fayḍ's various philosophical and mystical works that he also agrees with his teacher on this theory. Al-ʿAllāma al-Ṭahrānī affirms and explains al-Fayḍ's engagement with this theory in detail, building his own position in the several sections of al-Fayḍ's *al-Kalimāt al-muknūna*.[187]

These remarks, in my opinion, represent a new stage in the opposition of the Safavid Twelver orthodoxy to Sufism and philosophy. However, as a target, philosophy was very different from Sufism. Philosophical vocabulary became an essential part of the traditional *madrasa* discourse with the help of great Shiʿite intellectual figures like Naṣīr al-Dīn al-Ṭūsī and

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[184] For the ontological perspective of Ibn ʿArabī and Mullā Ṣadrā on *waḥdat al-wujūd*, see Rizvi, "Mysticism and Philosophy," 233-39.

[185] On al-Āmulī's idea on *waḥdat al-wujūd*, see Bahāʾ al-Dīn Ḥaydar al-Ḥusaynī al-Āmulī, *Tafsīr al-muḥīt al-aʿẓam wa-al-baḥr al-khiḍam fī taʾwīl kitāb Allāh al-ʿazīz al-ḥakīm*, ed. Muḥsin al-Mūsawī al-Tabrīzī, vol. 3 (Manshūrāt al-Maʿhad al-Thaqāfī Nūr ʿalā Nūr, Maṭbaʿat al-Uswa, 1431/2010), 160-61.

[186] Mullā Ṣadrā Ṣadr al-Dīn Muḥammad ibn Ibrāhīm al-Shīrāzī, *al-Ḥikma al-mutaʿāliya fī al-asfār al-ʿaqliyya al-arbaʿa*, vol. 2 (Beirut: Dār Iḥyāʾ al-Turāth al-ʿArabī, 1999), 87.

[187] See Muḥammad al-Ḥusayn al-Ḥusaynī al-Ṭahrānī, *Maʿrifat Allāh*, vol. 3 (Beirut: Dār al-Maḥajja al-Bayḍāʾ, 1999), 345-46.

al-ʿAllāma al-Ḥillī.[188] This was most seen in the area of *kalām* (rational theology). In the *madrasa*, the notable teachers of Peripatetic philosophy were considered elite and amongst the highly respected members. They also had a friendly relationship with the higher classes of the political order. Because of some intellectual and socioeconomic causes, the main figures of the institution were against the "innovations" that figures like Mullā Ṣadrā wanted to bring into philosophical thinking. This can help clarify why Mullā Ṣadrā's philosophy, despite its "foreign origins," spread among scholarly circles so late in the Safavid era.

3- Al-Fayḍ's Attack on the *Mujtahid*s:

The attack, which some *ʿulamāʾ* and other vocal preachers and clerics directed against al-Fayḍ, due to his alleged attack on the mujtahids, is mainly presented in al-Baḥrānī's *Luʾluʾat al-baḥrayn*, in addition to some other works of *ʿulamāʾ* such as Asad-Allāh al-Dizfūlī al-Kaẓimī's (d. 1234/1818) *Maqābis al-anwār*.[189] In *Luʾluʾat al-baḥrayn* al-Baḥrānī referred to al-Fayḍ, saying:

> His attacks upon the jurists were many especially in his epistle which is named: *The Ship of Salvation* (*Safīnat al-najāt*). It could even be understood from it, [an accusation] of some scholars of unbelief much less hypocrisy. Like his mentioning of the verse: "O my son, come aboard with us."[190] i.e. do not be amongst the unbelievers.[191]

Perhaps al-Baḥrānī was referring to the following statement al-Fayḍ's *Safīnat al-najāt*:

> When our ship has crossed the ocean of divergent views to the shore of salvation. As it rode through the stations of guidance. So, let's anchor the ship and hold the pen against committing tyranny so "in the name of *Allāh* is its way faring and its anchoring."[192] "O my son, come aboard with us"[193] and include those who have followed us. "There shall be no compulsion in [acceptance of] the religion. The right course has become clear and

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[188] Bīdārfar, "Introduction" to al-Fayḍ's *ʿIlm al-yaqīn*, 1:83.
[189] See Naqībī, *Aqwāl al-ʿulamāʾ*, 30.
[190] *Qurʾān*, 11:42.
[191] Al-Baḥrānī, *Luʾluʾat al-baḥrayn*, 116.
[192] This expression is taken from *Qurʾān*, 11:41.
[193] This expression is taken from Ibid., 11:42.

differentiated from the wrong"[194] and the dead discourse has been differentiated from the lively discourse and the veil has been lifted bringing clarity, and dawn has illuminated the eyes. "So if they believe in what you believe in, then they have been [rightly] guided; but if they turn away, they are only in dissension"[195].[196]

My understanding of the verse "O my son, come aboard with us"[197] differs from al-Baḥrānī's, who accused al-Fayḍ of using the verse to attack the *mujtahid*s. In his critique of al-Fayḍ, al-Baḥrānī assumed, as it is customarily expected, that al-Fayḍ's true position is concealed in the rest of the verse. He analyzed al-Fayḍ's view using the continuation of the verse, namely: "O my son, come aboard with us and be not with the disbelievers." By mentioning this part of the verse, al-Fayḍ meant to refer to the path of salvation, which he had taken, solely reached through the *Qurʾān* and the *sunna* (infallible traditions). Indeed, in *Safīnat al-najāt*, he considers legal demonstrations (*al-adilla al-sharʿiyya*) in Twelver Shiʿism to be limited to the *Qurʾān* and the *sunna*, confirming his *Akhbārī* tendencies. Al-Fayḍ considers *ijtihād* to be void and invalid because it acts according to conjecture (*al-ʿamal bi-al-ẓann*). He argues that God was "the first to prevent trailing opinion and following conjecture" (*awwal man manaʿa min iqtifāʾ al-raʾy wa-ittibāʿ al-ẓann*), deducing his position from two *Qurʾān*ic verses.[198] The first is: "And most of them follow nothing but assumptions; and assumptions avail nothing against the truth. God is fully aware of what they do."[199] The second is: "And if you obey most of those upon the earth, they will mislead you from the way of Allah. They follow not except assumption, and they are

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[194] This expression is taken from Ibid., 2:256.
[195] This expression is taken from Ibid., 2:137.
[196] Muḥammad Muḥsin al-Fayḍ al-Kāshānī, *Safīnat al-najāt*, ed. ʿAlī Jabbār Kulbāghī (Tehran: Munshūrāt al-Madrasa al-ʿUlyā li-al-Shahīd al-Muṭahharī), 132.
[197] *Qurʾān*, 11:42.
[198] Al-Fayḍ, *Safīnat al-najāt*, 73.
[199] *Qurʾān*, 10:36.

not but falsifying."[200] These people, according to al-Fayḍ, represent those who "believe in guessing."[201] Al-Fayḍ criticized the *Ijtihādī* people who employ their conjectures saying:

> And how worthless are the conclusions of conjecture? And how much conjecture is required to make it reliable?[202]

The mid-11th/17th century up until the middle of the subsequent century witnessed dominance of the *Akhbārī* school in most Shiʿite learning centers. Thus, al-Fayḍ's *Akhbārī* tendency was not a legitimate reason to attack his scholarship.[203] Al-Fayḍ criticized the *mujtahid*s starting with his own position as an *Akhbārī*. Therefore, it is imperative that he set up a systematic critique primarily dependent on the *Qurʾān*, and it is his right to prove his position and show the weaknesses in his adversary's theory, claiming the righteousness of the path he follows. Accordingly, his critique of the *Ijtihādī* camp—even if we admit that it was harsh in some areas—does not mean that he claimed that they are faithless or disbelievers, as al-Baḥrānī assumed. This is futher supported by our aforementioned presentention of al-Fayḍ's engagement with *Ijtihād* and his explicit criticism of Muḥammad Amīn Astarabādī's harsh critique of *mujtahid*s.

2.2. Legal Guidance, Safavid Posts, and Relations to the Shahs

The reason Shah Ismāʿīl (d. 930/1524) chose Twelver Shiʿism to be the religion of his state is not certain, yet, in the decades that followed, the religious policy of the Safavids involved promoting Twelver Shiʿism, which gave the rule legitimacy and maintenance of social structure. The Safavid state and the Shiʿite clerics had a mutual interest in supporting the extension of

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[200] *Qurʾān*, 6:116.
[201] Al-Fayḍ, *Safīnat al-najāt*, 73.
[202] Ibid., 115.
[203] See Modarressi Tabātabāʾi, *An Introduction to Shīʿī Law*, 54-55.

clerical power over jurisprudential and theological interpretation as well as the community's

practical affairs.[204] Al-Fayḍ witnessed the unfolding of the rule of four Safavid Shahs, during the

empire's peak: Shah ʿAbbās I (r. 996-1038/1587-1628), Shah Ṣāfī I (r. 1038-1052/1628-1642),

Shah ʿAbbās II (r. 1052-1077/1643-1666) and Shah Sulaymān I (r. 1077-1105/1666-1693-4).

The rising anti-Sufi and anti-Abū Muslim movement, with the targeting of al-Majlisī al-

Awwal, led Shah Ṣāfī I to build a relationship with the *mujtahid*s clerics who have *ʿirfānī*

orientation and connections to the clerics that assisted Shah ʿAbbās I.[205] Among these attempts

was the invitation of al-Fayḍ to the capital. When al-Fayḍ was in Kashan, Shah Ṣāfī I invited him

to settle in Isfahan, but he appears to have refused to do so. This decision was probably a smart

move, given the prevalent atmosphere.[206] However, al-Fayḍ accepted the same invitation when it

came from Shah Ṣāfī I's successor, Shah ʿAbbās II.[207] He was appointed as the leader of the

Friday prayer and the advisor of the Shah on religious issues.

During the reign of ʿAbbās II, the court was struggling to overcome communal clashes as

well as the wide socioeconomic crisis. It slowly implemented a more stable method in dealing

with the struggle of the middle-ranking clerics against the growing Sufi millenarianism.[208] In his

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[204] Newman, "Fayd al-Kashani," 34.
On a deep discussion on the reasons that the Safavid state adopted Shiʿism and the relationship between religion and politics in Safavid Iran, see the significant works of Rula Jurdi Abisaab. Abisaab, *Conveting Persia*; "Moral Authority in the Safawid State;" and "Karaki."
[205] Newman, "Fayd al-Kashani," 40.
For a discussion on the anti-Abū Muslim movement, see Anzali, *"Mysticism" in Iran*, 31-36.
Shah Ṣāfī had an ongoing association with Mīr Dāmād. In addition, before 1044/1634-35 the Shah asked Mullā Ṣadrā to translate segments of al-Ghazālī's *Iḥyāʾ* into Persian. The Shah also contacted Mīr Abū al-Qāsim Findiriskī, a good friend of Mīr Dāmād, al-Bahāʾī, and Shah ʿAbbās I, famous for his interest in Indian faiths and his connections to lower-class Sufis. See Kathryn Babayan, "The Waning of the Qizilbash: The Spiritual and the Temporal in Seventeenth Century Iran" (PhD diss., Princeton University, 1993), 279-80.
[206] On the prevalent atmosphere, see Newman, "Fayd al-Kashani," 41.
On Shah Ṣāfī and al-Fayḍ, see al-Fayḍ, "Sharḥ-i ṣadr," 404.
[207] Al-Fayḍ, "Sharḥ-i ṣadr," 404; Chittick, "Two Seventeenth-Century", 267-68.
[208] Abisaab, *Converting Persia*, 57-59; Andrew J. Newman, *Safavid Iran: Rebirth of a Persian Empire* (London and New York: I.B. Tauris, 2006), 69; Newman, "Fayd al-Kashani," 40; Kathryn Babayan, "Sufis, Dervishes and Mullas: The Controversy over Spiritual and Temporal Dominion in Seventeenth-Century Iran," in *Safavid Persia: The History and Politics of an Islamic Society*, ed. Charles Melville (London and New York: I.B. Tauris, 1996), 119-23.

twenties, the Shah embraced an open interest in Sufism.[209] Therefore, a special attention should be given to Shah ʿAbbās II's appointment of al-Fayḍ, a supporter of the prayer as *wujūb ʿaynī* (an individual obligation), as the leader of the prayer in Isfahan. Early on, before his appointment by ʿAbbās II, al-Fayḍ was mindful of the earlier disputes on Friday prayer, clerical authority, and the connection between the clergy and the court.[210]

In Rabīʿ al-Awwal, 1064/1654, a *firmān* (a royal mandate) was put forth, asking al-Fayḍ to move to Isfahan in order to lead the Friday prayer. This act seems to signify the court attempts to administer the religious dimension of religious oppositions and campaigns.[211] Al-Fayḍ probably preferred to restate his recognition of the political authority with the rise of the new ruler, so in 1055/1645, following ʿAbbās II's appointment, he produced a treaties completely dedicated to the Friday prayer, called *Abwāb al-jinān*.[212] Reciting the name of the Shah in the *khuṭba* (public preaching) emphasized his devotion to the Safavid political regime. Al-Fayḍ's essay was written in Persian which proposes that the issue was still controversial among the Persian-speaking people. In 1057/1647, al-Fayḍ restated his view on the prayer in an Arabic essay titled *al-Shihāb al-thāqib*, where he condemned *aṣḥāb al-raʾy wa-al-ijtihād* (the proponents of opinion and independent reasoning) for persisting on *wujūb al-sulṭān al-ʿādil aw man naṣṣabah* (the presence of the Just Imam or his appointee), the authority of the *faqīh* as *nāʾib al-Imām* and the notions of *al-idhn al-khāṣṣ* (the special permission), and *al-idhn al-ʿāmm* (the general permission). He clarified the absence of proof in the *Qurʾān*, *ḥadīth*, and *ijmāʿ* for such principles associated with the implementation of the Friday prayer throughout the

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[209] On the Shah's unconcealed relation with well-known figures in the "popular" Sufi revival, see Babayan, "The Waning," 85-86, 141.

[210] Newman, "Fayd al-Kashani," 38.

[211] Al-Qazwīnī, *ʿAbbās-nāma*, 185.

[212] Āghā Buzurg al-Ṭahrānī, *al-Dharīʿa*, 1:77.

Occultation and also mentioned proof that the prayer should be done no matter the situation.[213]

Al-Fayḍ's loyalty to the political institution was strong. ʿAbbās II anticipated that al-Fayḍ would be able to instill social order and control many vocal groups in Isfahan, which criticized the court.[214] He states in *Sharḥ-i ṣadr*, that he was called to "propagate the Friday and group prayers, spread the religious sciences, and teach the *sharīʿa*."[215] In *al-Iʿtidhār* (*Apology*), completed in 1077/1666, he explains the situation in a more detailed manner. Before he was invited, al-Fayḍ was writing, studying, and leading the Friday prayer with a few people who also followed the *ʿaynī* opinion. After al-Fayḍ's arrival to Isfahan and meeting with Shah ʿAbbās II, it became clear to him that the aim of the Shah's invitation was to benefit from his deep knowledge in promoting the Friday and group prayers.[216] Al-Fayḍ accepted after discussing the invitation with his companions and concluding that this was a chance to spread their beliefs.[217]

However, once al-Fayḍ was in his new position, he noticed the large religious, jurisprudential, and social divisions in the community and among the *ʿulamāʾ*. He complains in both *Sharḥ-i ṣadr* and *al-Iʿtidhār* of the conspiracies at the court as well as difficulties he encountered when helping the Shah in his honest aspiration to support the religion. The Shah was "tireless" in his attempts to "propagate the religion" amongst the people, and asked al-Fayḍ to commence the prayer "in their mosque; he would have no one else in my place."[218] According to

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[213] Al-Fayḍ's dependence on such *ḥadīth* accounts collections of *al-Kāfī*, *Man lā yaḥḍuruhu al-faqīh*, *Tanbīh al-aḥkām*, and *al-Istibṣār fī mā ikhtulif fīh min al-akhbār* and his condemnation of such *ahl al-ijtihād* as Shaykh Ṭūsī and ʿAlī ʿAbd al-ʿĀlī al-Karakī and their part in the delivery of *niyāba* throughout this text is noticeable. Dependence on the *ḥadīth* accounts certainly supplemented to al-Fayḍ's later label as an *Akhbārī*. Newman, "Fayd al-Kashani," 41.

[214] Newman, "Fayd al-Kashani," 41-42.

[215] Al-Fayḍ, "Sharḥ-i ṣadr," 405. The translation is taken, with minor changes, from Newman, "Fayd al-Kashani," 42.

[216] Al-Fayḍ, "Sharḥ-i ṣadr," 406.

[217] Ibid., 405.

[218] Ibid., 407; Muḥammad Muḥsin al-Fayḍ al-Kāshānī, *al-Iʿtidhār*, in *Dah Risālih-yi Muḥaqqiq-i Buzurg*, Fayż-i Kāshānī, ed. Rasūl Jaʿfariyān (Isfahan: 1992), 280. For the translation, see Newman, "Fayd al-Kashani," 42.

al-Fayḍ, the Shah then waited for the disputes to calm down so that, "the practices of the faith and the performance of the Friday and group prayers" could performed in peace so "that hearts be tamed by pious deeds and spurred on to invoke God and what God had prohibited of [what was] disagreeable and abominable."[219] "However," al-Fayḍ added, "the people (al-qawm) split into groups and made common cause in factions […] This added to their disagreement and aggravated the roots of the tree of their conflict."[220]

Al-Fayḍ explains, in a letter he wrote to the Shah, that the goal of Friday prayer was to bring people together; but instead, it is now "the cause of separation and divisions such that all agree to disagree."[221] Al-Fayḍ also added that the strength of the dispute dispersed the people from "the spiritual harmony of the rows in the mosque."[222]

The situation was so difficult that it seriously disturbed both al-Fayḍ and the Shah. This is made clear in al-Fayḍ's *Sharḥ-i ṣadr*, where he reports that the disputes cause the Shah's weakening resolve (ʿazm) to spread the faith.[223] Additionally, al-Fayḍ stated in his *al-Iʿtidhār* that the Shah lost his interest in "the propagation of the Friday and group prayers and opening up the gates of well-being."[224] Afterwards, the Shah joined the Friday prayers "only rarely, and gave himself up to pleasure." The Shah then confronted al-Fayḍ himself on the issue, and al-Fayḍ asserted: "I was unable to answer. How is it possible to excuse such disputation and such strife

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[219] Ibid.
[220] Ibid. The translation is taken, with minor changes, from Newman, "Fayd al-Kashani," 42.
[221] See Newman, "Fayd al-Kashani," 43, quoting al-Fayḍ's letter to the Shah from Īraj Afshār, ed., *Tʾarīkh-i Kāshān*. In al-Fayḍ's letter to the Shah, he also mentioned his previous engrossment in the Friday prayer in Kashan, remarking that people followed and understood its purpose well and that the local ʿulamāʾ agreed on the legitimacy of the prayer. Newman, "Fayd al-Kashani," 51n.30.
In *Sharḥ-i ṣadr*, al-Fayḍ portrays this opposition as having three circles of origin. In *al-Iʿtidhār*, al-Fayḍ portrayed a fourth group that disregarded orders to command the good and forswear the evil. On the group classification, see Newman, "Fayd al-Kashani," 42-43; on the groups' views, see al-Fayḍ, "Sharḥ-i ṣadr," 406-7; and al-Fayḍ, *al-Iʿtidhār*, 282-84.
[222] See Newman, "Fayd al-Kashani," 43, quoting al-Fayḍ's letter to the Shah from Afshār, *Tʾarīkh-i Kāshān*.
[223] Al-Fayḍ, "Sharḥ-i ṣadr," 407.
[224] Newman, "Fayd al-Kashani," 43, quoting al-Fayḍ's *al-Iʿtidhār*.

and disagreement?" What specifically annoyed al-Fayḍ was the passive attitude of people who, like him, "insist on the necessity of performing Friday prayer and group prayers and who count [these prayers] as [part of] a religious duty."[225] He also stated that the irritation, slur, and accusations were seen among both the masses (al-ʿawāmm) and elite (al-khawāṣṣ).

In both *Sharḥ-i ṣadr* and in *al-Iʿtidhār*, al-Fayḍ's personal unrest is clear. He reports that the only reason he accepted the position was because it was assigned by royal authority. Being faced with constant opposition, he claims that he repeatedly asked to resign from his post, but his request was rejected. He asserted that since the Friday prayer was stimulating rebellion, hatred, division, and corruption, abandoning it at that point was the right thing to do.[226] Al-Fayḍ then confessed that this situation, with the dispute and hypocrisy in the community, affected him personally and caused his isolation. Al-Fayḍ emphasized the *mujtahid*s' moral responsibility in their causing public confusion and divisions as a result of their responding to the same legal question, such as the issue of Friday prayer, with issuing more than one and contradictory rulings.[227]

Al-Fayḍ's letter to the Shah also reflects on how the public situation aggravated him. In the letter, al-Fayḍ states that his material condition is like that of "*khān*s and *amīr*s." This materialism among the ruling classes causes "disunion of the senses, doubt, and confusion." He adds that he believed it was wrong for him to climb the *minbar*, "the place of prophets and legatees" to "exhort the people to forsake the world and take a place on the seat of judgment and *fatwa*."[228] The letter is concluded with an appeal to be dismissed from his duties.[229]

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[225] Al-Fayḍ, "Sharḥ-i ṣadr," 407; al-Fayḍ, *al-Iʿtidhār*, 282-84.
[226] Al-Fayḍ, "Sharḥ-i ṣadr," 407.
[227] Al-Fayḍ, *al-Iʿtidhār*, 281.
[228] Ibid., 289. For the translation, see Newman, "Fayd al-Kashani," 44.
[229] Newman, "Fayd al-Kashani," 43-44.

Al-Fayḍ reports leaving his position in his *al-Iʿtidhār*, which was completed in 1077/1666, during the month of ʿAbbās II's death but before the Shah passed away.[230] The exact date of his resignation is not known, but it is known that he led the prayers in Isfahan in the years 1072/1661-62 and 1075/1665, though the Shah had visited him in 1073/1662-63 in Kashan. It could be concluded that he composed *al-Iʿtidhār* right after he left his post which would then be in 1077/1666.[231]

Other than al-Fayḍ's position as holder of Friday prayer in Isfahan, he also taught at the Mullā ʿAbdullāh *madrasa*.[232] Another proof that al-Fayḍ was respected by Shah ʿAbbās II, is that the Shah built him a Sufi center in 1070/1660 on the banks of the Zayanda River and named it *Takiya-yi Fayż*.[233] This means, however, that he followed a particular *ṭarīqa* or that at least, the *tekke* was a place for spiritual exercise and contemplation of a Sufi nature.

During his stay in Isfahan, al-Fayḍ dedicated at least seven works to the Shah including a text named *Āyīneh-ye shāhī* (*The Kingly Mirror*), completed in 1066/1655, which is a brief treatise that describes the essence of political governance in relation to philosophy and the *sharīʿa*.[234]

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[230]The references to the Shah in *al-Iʿtidhār* do not indicate that he was dead.

[231] On the Friday prayer dates, see Babayan, "The Waning," 142n.345, citing al-Qazwīnī, *ʿAbbās-nāma*, 306. See also Ibid., 325.

[232] Al-Fayḍ, "Sharḥ-i ṣadr," 405.

[233] Al-Qazwīnī, *ʿAbbās-nāma*, 256.

[234] Ibid., 267-70.

Al-Fayḍ, upon request from the Shah, wrote the following works in Persian Language. In his second bibliographical index, al-Fayḍ indicated five of these works, see Nājī-Naṣrābādī, *Kitābshināsī*, 128. The works which were written to the Shah but not indicated in al-Fayḍ's bibliographical index, are designated below by (**).

* Al-Risāla al-mawsūma bi-*Āyīneh-yi shāhī* (*The Marked Epistle the Kingly Mirror*), completed in 1066/1655. See Ibid., 134.

* Al-Risāla al-mawsūma bi-*Waṣf al-khayl* (*The Marked Epistle on the Description of the Horse*), completed in 1067/1657. See Ibid., 349.

** *Lubb al-ḥasanāt* (*The Kernel Righteous Actions*), completed in 1073/1662. See Ibid., 256-57.

** *Zād al-ʿuqbā* (*The End's Provisions*), completed in 1077/1667. See Ibid., 194.

* *Tanwīr al-mawāhib* (*The Illumination of the Divine Offerings*). See Ibid., 128.

* *Tarjamat al-sharīʿa* (*The Interpretation of the Sacred Law*). See Ibid., 156.

* Al-Risāla al-mawsūma bi-*Rafʿ al-fitna* (*The Marked Epistle on the Lifter of Corruption*). See Ibid., 189.

It can be gathered from several primary and secondary sources that al-Fayḍ received

honors and recognition at the Safavid courts of Shah Ṣāfī I and Shah ʿAbbās II. Ḥasan Narāqī,

based on some anecdotal literature, argues that at one point al-Fayḍ appears to have defended the

Jews of Kashan and criticized the Shah for forcing them to convert to Islam. Al-Fayḍ's resistance

to the Shah, the account has it, made the latter change his mind.[235] However, we do not have

enough information or detail about the context of this event, to get a clear idea of al-Fayḍ's role

in the outcome of this incident. In his *Qiṣaṣ al-ʿulamāʾ*, Mīrzā Muḥammad ibn Sulaymān al-

Tankābunī (d. 1320/1902) states that one of the ambassadors from Rome converted to Islam after

a discussion he had with al-Fayḍ.[236] On another account, Mishkāt quotes Niʿmatullāh al-

Jazāʾirī's *Zahr al-rabīʿ* that Shah ʿAbbās II asked al-Fayḍ about the reason behind the strong

earthquakes they were witnessing at that time (probably around 1076/1665, just before the

Shah's death in 1077/1666). Al-Fayḍ answered that, they were a result of corruption and

injustice, and advised the Shah to appoint virtuous judges in every district, which the Shah

consented to do.[237]

Al-Fayḍ was not able to fully avoid the anger of the jurists, even with the many essays in

conciliation and self-explanation. The honors bestowed upon him by the Shah, the building of

the *tekke*, and his validation of Sufi forms of knowledge during this period in time, encouraged

the wrath of a number of vocal clerics.[238] Three tracts were written by the following: Muḥammad

Sharīf al-Qummī, who denounced him in a work titled *Tuḥfat al-ʿushshāq* (*The Masterpiece of

Lovers*); ʿAlī ibn Muḥammad al-Shahīdī al-ʿĀmilī (d. 1098/1687), who condemned him and all

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[235] Ḥasan Narāqī, *Tārīkh-i ijtimāʿī-yi Kāshān* (Tehran: Tehran University Press, 1967), 140.

[236] Al-Tankābunī, *Qiṣaṣ al-ʿulamāʾ*, 345.

[237] Mishkāt's "Introduction" to al-Fayḍ's *al-Maḥajja al-bayḍāʾ* in Naqībī, *Aqwāl al-ʿulamāʾ*, 192.

[238] It was due to the aggression towards Sufism proliferated by al-Majlisī al-Thānī that the *tekke* founded in Isfahan for al-Fayḍ was destroyed around the time of Shah Sulṭān Ḥusayn's rule (1105/1694-1135/1722). Muḥammad-Mahdī ibn Muḥammad-Riḍā al-Iṣfahānī, *Niṣf-i jahān fī taʿrīf-i Iṣfahān* (Tehran: Amīr Kabīr, 1340 SH/1961 AD), 183.

other Sufis, as heretics in his *al-Sihām al-māriqa min aghrāḍ al-zanādiqa* (*The Rogue Arrows of the Heretics Purposes*), completed in 1075/1664;[239] and Muḥammad Ṭāhir al-Qummī, author of the *Tuḥfat al-akhyār* (*The Masterpiece of the Good*), completed in 1075/1664. In addition to his opinion on Friday prayer, the major criticism launched against al-Fayḍ was his supposed association with the "popular" forms of Sufi practice. This attack forced him to drop his post, as it forced al-Bahāʾī and Mullā Ṣadrā to leave Isfahan.[240] Al-Fayḍ's enemies insisted that he withdraw from the Shah's court in 1065/1654-55.[241] This ordeal suggests that his more mystical and philosophical texts were accessible at the time, in which case they must have been written before and during his affiliation with the government.

Even though the connection between al-Fayḍ's critics on the issue of the Friday prayer and the spreaders of anti-Sufi polemic persisted well over this period, he does not mention this opposition in any of his accounts.[242] The fact that he does not mention the anti-Sufi polemic in his reports on the Friday prayer polemic suggests that they were separate issues. Perhaps it was because each had a discrete social ground in the Safavid society.[243] Al-Fayḍ's failure to even launch the Friday prayer regularly all over Isfahan resulted in the denial of *minbar* for both him and the court, which was their means for attempting to soothe the pervasive conflict reflected by the Sufi polemic.[244] The court had placed great trust in its appointment of al-Fayḍ to settle the socio-religious tensions. Therefore, it is understandable why al-Fayḍ and the Shah were

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[239] Jaʿfariyān, "Rūyārūʾī-yi faqīhān," 111.

[240] Criticism of al-Bahāʾī's assumed connections to Sufism, *Akhbārī*-style assaults on his advocacy for *ijtihād* and the extension of the authority of the clergy, as well as condemnations of his connections with the court all caused al-Bahāʾī to quit his position as *Shaykh al-islām* in Isfahan and travel outside the region. On al-Bahāʾī and Mullā Ṣadrā leaving Isfahan, See Babayan, "The Waning," 138n.336, 69; Chittick, "Two Seventeenth-Century," 267n.2.

[241] Chittick, "Two Seventeenth-Century," 267-68.

[242] Muḥammad Ṭāhir al-Qummī, for instance, was highly supportive of the *ʿaynī* position and faithful to the Shah, yet he was very hostile towards Sufism. Newman, "Fayḍ al-Kashani," 44.

[243] Babayan, "The Warning," 143.

[244] Newman, "Fayḍ al-Kashani," 44.

dispirited when the former's attempt to establish prayer in Isfahan failed. However, the accounts of al-Fayḍ propose that there was a form of *Akhbārī/Uṣūlī* component to the prayer opposition he met.[245]

After the death of Shah ʿAbbās II in 1077/1666, al-Fayḍ remained in Isfahan for a period of unknown duration before returning to Kashan where he passed away. Scholars agree that al-Fayḍ died on the 22nd of Rabīʿ al-Ākhir in the year 1091/1680 at 84 years of age.[246] His tomb later became a popular destination for pilgrimage. The following statement was written on his tomb:

> The cleaver to the rope of God the Safe Haven the Dominant, Muḥammad ibn Murtaḍā, who is known as ʿMuḥsin' was taken in the year of 1091 being 84 years of age, may God resurrect him with his Infallible Masters.

It is possible that the pressure, which these vocal anti-Sufi clerics exerted on several ʿulamāʾ made al-Fayḍ reshape and recast some of the tenets of Akbārian theology, which he integrated in *al-Kalimāt al-maknūna*. In this work, he used the vocabulary of the school of Ibn ʿArabī, and rewrote it, as *Qurrat al-ʿuyūn*, using *Qurʾān*ic exegesis and *ḥadīth* lexicon.[247]

Toward the end of his life, al-Fayḍ turned to *ḥadīth*, producing what came to be considered one of three major compendia of Shiʿite *ḥadīth* in the Safavid era, namely, al-*Wāfī*. His comments and interpretations of *ḥadīth* were deeply Neoplatonic and mystical in nature. In this manner, he integrated the paths of reason and revelation emphasizing their inseparability as a source of knowledge about universal truths.[248]

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[245] Ibid., 44-45.

[246] See Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥasan al-Ḥurr al-ʿĀmilī, *Tafṣīl wasāʾil al-shīʿa ilā taḥṣīl masāʾil al-sharīʿa*, vol. 1 (Beirut: Muʾassasat Āl al-Bayt li-Iḥyāʾ al-Turāth, 2008), 69.

[247] This will be further discussed in Chapter Three.

[248] Bīdārfar, "Introduction" to al-Fayḍ's *ʿIlm al-yaqīn*, 1:37-42.

Chapter 3: The Integrative Epistemology of al-Fayḍ al-Kāshānī

The idea of knowledge (*ʿilm/maʿrifa*) has been the center of extensive discussions and debates in the Islamic intellectual tradition. Muslim philosophers adapted particular Greek conceptions of knowledge and many of them established new methods towards attaining knowledge and widened its study.[249] In the classical period, the issue of harmonizing revealed knowledge with reason and intuitive knowledge resulted in a very fruitful debate among Muslim scholars. Muslim intellectuals developed a wide-ranging discourse of knowledge, greatly broadening the limits of what it means to know. This issue also had its repercussions on the debates and clashes between Sufi and Islamic rationalist-philosophical approaches to knowledge.[250] The main issue was how to define and determine the valid and inevitable epistemological criteria and source of "truth," especially when associated with religious questions. Many Sufis were clear in expressing their disregard for philosophy by rejecting rational approaches of inquiry about God and regarding them as useless.[251] This rejection comes from the Sufi view that reason is incapable of perceiving the ultimate truth and that indulgence in it would interrupt one's spiritual growth. On the other hand, jurists and philosophers saw the cult of Sufi saints as the deviation of uneducated and superstitious people. Jurists and philosophers, who engaged in creating rational schemes for the cosmos and human relations, were very concerned with the spontaneous and confusing mystical practices, which destabilize the social organization they sustained.[252] Anzali claims that their "tightly sealed systems" of legal

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[249] Here, I do not mean *maʿrifa* as reference to gnosis. I thank Muhammad Fariduddin Attar for his note that in the intellectual circles that dealt directly with Greek sources, the translation of the Greek word "*episteme*" is usually *ʿilm*, not *maʿrifa*.

[250] Anzali, *"Mysticism" in Iran*, 63.

[251] Ibid., 64.

[252] Ibid.

interpretation as well as metaphysical assumptions opposed the Sufi world where the limits between the conscious mind and the unseen realm were obscured, and this endangered established standards.[253] Both groups battled for what they believed was the true teaching of Islam as presented by the acts and sayings of the Prophet and the Imams. Anzali presents compatible argumentation on the similarities between the philosophers and jurists in their opposition to Sufism. Nonetheless, I agree with Rula Jurdi Abisaab's view that philosophers and jurists are more internally diverse than suggested in Anzali's analysis.[254]

Mullā Ṣadrā and his school of philosophy adopted controversial positions in this epistemological debate. This is more specific in the case of al-Fayḍ, due to his connections to the mentioned disciplines, as explained in previous chapters. Mullā Ṣadrā's philosophy from one perspective could be seen as a synthesis of four principle components, i.e. the Peripatetic discursive philosophy (*mashshāʾī*) of Aristotle and Ibn Sīnā, the Illuminationist philosophy of Suhrawardī who combined the mystic's spiritual experience with the philosopher's demonstrative method, the Sufism of al-Ghazālī and Ibn ʿArabī and last, and perhaps most important the broad class of Shiʿite teachings, comprising of the *Qurʾān*, the sayings of Prophet Muḥammad and the teachings of the *Ahl al-bayt*.[255] He integrated these sources through a unified epistemic method.

Mullā Ṣadrā's synthesis shaped al-Fayḍ's thought, even though the aspect of Sufism is

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[253] Ibid.

[254] Rula Jurdi Abisaab, "Review of *"Mysticism" in Iran*," review of *"Mysticism" in Iran: The Safavid Roots of a Modern Concept*, by Ata Anzali, *IJMES* 51 (2019): 342-44.
Abisaab challenges Anzali's attempt to treat, ""the ahl al-hadith movement … pioneered by scholars of hadith such as Ibn Hanbal and later Ibn Taymiyya, and the Akhbari School of legal thought that emerged during the Safavid era" all as puritan discourses (p. 64)." She argues that, "Ibn Hazm was both a Zahiri and a Sufi, so it is unclear whether Anzali would consider him a puritan or not."

[255] On the relationship between Mullā Ṣadrā and Ibn ʿArabī, see Muhammad Reza Juzi, "The Influence of Ibn ʿArabī's Doctrine of the Unity of Being on the Transcendental Theosophy of Ṣadr al-Dīn al-Shīrāzī," in *The Heritage of Sufism, Vol. III: Late Classical Persianate Sufism: the Safavid and Mughal Period (1501–1750)*, eds. Leonard Lewisohn and David Morgan (Oxford; Boston, MA: Oneworld, 1999), 266-72.

more prominent in his works than in the writings of his teacher. This integrative intellectual

structure gave birth to a new Shiʿite epistemological framework consisting of two main

components *ḥikma* and *ʿirfān*.[256] According to Corbin, this intellectual development paves the

way for the last period in Shiʿite thought which covers the period from the "Safavid

Renaissance" (the first half of the 11th/17th century) to the present day.[257]

The epistemic framework of al-Fayḍ's intellectual project is drawn on the basis of a

group of foundational texts in varied disciplines, which I will enumerate shortly, and the

integration of his own approaches to them in his various works. I use "integrative epistemology"

in reference to the synthetic process attempted by al-Fayḍ in integrating several fields and their

epistemological foundations. Demonstrative proof, mystical unveiling, and divine revelation

made up the raw material al-Fayḍ consistently used to articulate his integrative epistemology in

his vast corpus. Yet each of these materials were in themselves structured out of finer

ingredients. To fully understand al-Fayḍ's project we have to stipulate a series of integration

processes he is engaged in. Firstly, he articulates the constituents of each of the three raw

materials separately. Secondly, he integrates the three raw materials into a unified epistemic

method. The first integrative process is seen in al-Fayḍ's engagement with Islamic philosophers

such as Ibn Sīnā, Suhrawardī, and Mullā Ṣadrā, amongst others, who either influence his text

indirectly or are directly quoted by him. This use of demonstrative proof puts al-Fayḍ in the vein

of his teacher Mullā Ṣadrā, who actively integrated the conflicting Peripatetic and Illuminative

currents of the Islamic philosophical tradition.[258] A parallel integrative method is also applied in

the sphere of mystical unveiling which is characterized by his use of both mystical poetry

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[256] *Ḥikma* is used to replace the term *falsafa* (philosophy) to avoid opposition and stigma.
[257] Henry Corbin, *Histoire de la philosophie islamique* (Paris: Gallimard, 1964), 54-57.
[258] Rizvi, "Mysticism and Philosophy," 227-28.

attributed to Abū Yazīd Ṭayfūr ibn ʿĪsā ibn Surūshān al-Bisṭāmī (d. 261/874) and Abū al-

Mughīth al-Ḥusayn ibn Manṣūr al-Ḥallāj (d. 309/922), on one hand, and al-Ghazālī's and Ibn al-

ʿArabī's systematic mysticism, on the other. The epistemic space of divine revelation is also

guaranteed by a fusion of both the *Qurʾān*ic verses and the main *ḥadīth* texts of the Twelver

Shiʿite tradition with scant references to some *ḥadīth*s from sources canonized by the "Sunni"

tradition.

The manner by which both the above materials interact throughout al-Fayḍ's life and

allow him to construct his epistemology is central to understanding his project. When al-Fayḍ's

texts are laid out chronologically a significant pattern is disclosed. The beginning of al-Fayḍ's

scholarly career is pregnant with texts of a mystical and philosophical nature. Works like *ʿAyn*

al-yaqīn and *al-Kalimāt al-maknūna* attest to an epistemic edifice in which reason and

illumination serve the sub-structure and revelation as the super-structure. For example, in his

philosophical work *ʿAyn al-yaqīn*, al-Fayḍ advances a set of rational arguments then builds upon

them and provides support for them through the scriptures and mystical interpretation. In this

respect, al-Fayḍ sees reason and revelation as symbiotic. Together, they provide a superior

means to understand universal truths. In al-Fayḍ's corpus, we see distinct epistemic registers

being applied. In works where he deems reason as the reference point, revelation became

inferior; while, in other works, where he distinguishes revelation as the reference point, reason

became compliant. Al-Fayḍ treats them as two faces for the same reality and avoided reducing

one to the other.[259]

This epistemological edifice which characterized the beginning of his life will begin to

change over time. The end of al-Fayḍ's life witnessed a major shift towards the revelatory

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[259] Wissam Iman Nuwayhid, "Origin, Emanation and Return in al-Fayḍ al-Kāshānī's *ʿAyn al-Yaqīn*" (MA thesis, American University of Beirut, 2016), 29.

method. During this phase the 'revealed' literary sources, i.e. the *Qurʾān* and the *ḥadīth*, acted as

his epistemic substructure upon which the super-structure of reason and illumination were

erected. This revelatory center of gravity in his thought crystallized at the termination of his

scholarly career. Two seminal texts, *al-Ṣāfī*, his main exegetical text, and *al-Wāfī*, his main

ḥadīth encyclopedia, clearly depict this epistemological theme, which characterized the final

period of his vocation. As a committed *Akhbārī*, al-Fayḍ wants to show and spread the

transmitted charisma of the Infallibles and the reflection of their divine light in the Shiʿite

scholarly community. The idea is that no sources of knowledge outside the teachings of the

Qurʾān and the Infallibles are required to attain salvation or truth. Revelation is superior to any

other source. In the seventh section of his introduction to *al-Ṣāfī*, al- Fayḍ cites a number of

significant *ḥadīth*s that claim that the *Qurʾān* holds and explains all knowledge needed by

people. This is consistent with his position on its authority and high epistemic status. Al-Fayḍ

narrates:

> Abī ʿAbdillāh (Jaʿfar al-Ṣādiq), peace be upon him said: "God revealed in the *Qurʾān* the
> explanation of everything and God did not leave out anything the servant might need so
> that a servant might not say "If only this had been revealed in the *Qurʾān*." Indeed, God
> has revealed it in it." […] Abī al-Ḥasan Mūsā (al-Kāẓim, the Seventh Imam of Twelver
> Shiʿism, d. 183/799) peace be upon him said: "Everything is in the Book of God and the
> tradition (*sunna*) of His Prophet."[260]

According to al-Fayḍ, although the *Qurʾān* holds a sufficient amount of knowledge that is

necessary for the flourishing of human beings and their development, this knowledge is not

accessible to everyone, nor is it understood by whoever tries to study it. It is accessible only to

selected people, whom God had chosen, and who thus have the abilities to properly understand

His revealed words and spread them according to people's intellectual abilities. Al-Fayḍ

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[260] Muḥammad Muḥsin al-Fayḍ al-Kāshānī, *Tafsīr al-Ṣāfī*, ed. Ḥusayn al-Aʿlamī, vol.1 (Tehran: Maktabat al-Ṣadr, 1379 SH/2000 AD), 56.

discusses this matter in prologue five of his introduction to *al-Ṣāfī*. He uses several *ḥadīth*s to

support his opinion. Some of his narrations are as follows:

> The Prophet said: "He who exegetes (*fassar*) the *Qurʾān* according to his own view has mistaken, even when the interpretation is right." He (the Prophet) peace be upon him [also] said: "He who interprets the *Qurʾān* according to his own view should anticipate his seat in Hell." According to him (the Prophet) and to the Imams, who serves in his stead, peace be upon them: It is not permitted to interpret the *Qurʾān* except through sound tradition (*al-athar al-ṣaḥīḥ*) and clear authentic text (*al-naṣṣ al-ṣārīḥ*).[261]

After narrating some *ḥadīth*s on the subject, al-Fayḍ moved on to explain and demonstrate his

position. He adds:

> "[W]hover claims that there is no other meaning to the *Qurʾān* except for its literal exegesis only reveals his own limitation, and he is right in [what he revealed] about himself, but is wrong in judging the whole of creation according to his rank, which is his limit and station. But rather, the *Qurʾān*, *ḥadīth* accounts, and tradition (*āthār*) point that there is a very large and a wide range [of knowledge to gain] in the meanings of the *Qurʾān* for the masters of understanding; God Almighty said: "Then do they not contemplate the *Qurʾān* or are the hearts locked?"[262] [...]
> [...] [Imam ʿAlī ibn Abī Ṭālib] peace be upon him said: "He who understands the *Qurʾān* [is able to] interpret the concepts (*jumal*) of [all] science[s]." [...] [S]o the right thing is to say that he who purifies his submission (*akhlaṣ*) to God, His messenger, may God's blessing and peace be upon him and his family, and to *Ahl al-bayt*, peace be upon them, takes his knowledge (*ʿilm*) from them, follows their trails (*āthārahum*), and gazes upon a portion of their secrets, that person will acquire the depth in knowledge (*ʿilm*) and tranquility in gnosis (*maʿrifa*). [In addition], the eyes of his heart open and knowledge (*ʿilm*) floods him regarding the truth of things as his spirit encounters certainty. And he finds easy what the distracted find hard as he finds peace in what alienated the ignorant and he befriends the world with a body whose spirit is hanging in the highest place. Thus, he may benefit from the *Qurʾān* some of its mysteries (*gharāʾib*) and extracts from it a part of its marvel. This is not strange of God's exalted generosity, nor unknown of his goodness as joy is not standing upon a group rather than another. They, peace be upon them, have equated a group of their companions, as they said: Salmān is of us *Ahl al-bayt*. He who has this attribute is not far from being included among those [who are] grounded in knowledge (*al-rāsikhūn fī al-ʿilm*) and [are] experts in interpretation [of the *Qurʾān*] (*al-ʿālimīn bi-al-taʾwīl*), but [can also be included among *Ahl al-bayt*] as they said: We are those grounded in knowledge (*naḥn al-rāsikhūn fī al-ʿilm*).[263]

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261 Ibid., 35.
262 *Qurʾān*, 47:24.
263 Al-Fayḍ, *al-Ṣāfī*, 1:35-36.

The Infallibles' word becomes the basis for legitimizing illumination as a source of knowledge, and for adopting a particular form of reason that confirms it. The delicate balance of al-Fayḍ's epistemic project is clear in several statements in his methodological introduction to *al-Ṣafī*. He is very concerned with maintaining the harmony between the field of mystical unveiling and the teachings of divine revelation. The truthful sayings of the Imams referred to above are narrations which are explanatory in nature. Those sayings alone are the reliable path into the truth of the *Qurʾān* as is stressed in Twelver Shiʿite theological discourse. The interpreter is expected to be able to access the truth of the sayings of the Imams which leads to the real interpretation of the speech of God, i.e. the *Qurʾān*. This eventually leads to being in the presence of the Divine Speaker Himself. After this journey has been accomplished, the scholar must return with something fruitful for the community. He states:

> [Such an individual will] take his knowledge directly from God not from teachers. […] He will thoroughly penetrate the infallible exegetical *ḥadīth* accounts [attributed to the Imams] until it is purified from what purports dust in the lucid (*al-bayān*), and he will thoroughly elucidate it such that it befits the understanding of people of the time can come out of its waist.[264]

Thus, it can be concluded that for al-Fayḍ, both rational and spiritual training are conditions for penetrating deeper meanings of an infallible's text. It can be said that at the center of al-Fayḍ's work with divine revelation, i.e. *Qurʾān* and *ḥadīth*, is a spiritual journey toward attaining mystical unveilings. Therefore, the process of exegesis without the help of the mystical light of God is completely insufficient. The mystical journey is also meaningless if it is cut off from the realm of divine revelation. Al-Fayḍ further supports this complementary pair of divine revelation and mystical exegesis with what he considers to be demonstrative proof.

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[264] Ibid., 12.

A platonic style of reasonable demonstration which divides reality into intelligible and

sensible realms is clearly assumed in the fourth prologue. Al-Fayḍ states:

> [A]ll things in the sensible-visible world are symbols and emblems of a spiritual reality in
> the realm of the divine kingdom, which is its disembodied spirit and its pure truth. The
> intellects of the common people (*jumhūr al-nās*) in reality are emblems and symbols of
> the intellects of the prophets and saints. [Thus,] the prophets and saints can only talk to
> them through metaphorical examples, because they were ordered to talk to people
> according to the level of [the people] intellects.[265]

This use of Platonic division of reality to describe the different classes of people in their

understanding of religion lends itself to my hypothesis that al-Fayḍ holds to a synthesis of

demonstrative proof, mystical unveiling, and divine revelation in his epistemology. He wants to

argue that the natural processes of demonstrative proof and mystical unveiling in the intellect of

most people are weak compared to the intellect of the prophets and Imams who are blessed with

direct access to divine revelation. The intellects of most people that have no access to divine

revelation are still limited. They required the assistance of non-divine faculties of reason and

intuition to delve into the intellect of the prophets and Imams. This comparison is further

developed and expanded upon:

> [T]o each individual there is a portion [of *intellection* i.e. reason], be it great or small, and
> a *taste* [i.e. mystical unveiling], be it incomplete or complete, as they have variant
> stations of ascensions to the orbs, depths, secrets, and lights [of the *Qurʾān*ic meanings].
> Whereas achieving the complete sufficiency and arriving to the peak is not the desire of
> anyone, even if the ocean was ink for its (*Qurʾān*) exegesis and the trees pens. "Say: If
> the sea were ink for [writing] the words of my Lord, the sea itself would run dry before
> the words of my Lord has run dry, even if we brought the like of it as a supplement."[266]

Here, al-Fayḍ asserts that all mystical tasting or reasonable intelligence asymptotically

approaches the margin of divine revelation only to recognize its own incompleteness. This

particular passage depicts the superiority of divine revelation over reasonable demonstration and

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[265] Ibid., 32.
[266] *Qurʾān*, 18:109.
Al-Fayḍ, *al-Ṣāfī*, 1:33.

mystical unveiling. However, paradoxically, this very superiority cannot be accessed save through reason and mysticism. Both reason and intuition become akin to wings that can reach the luminous heaven of divine revelation. Without either one of the wings the bird is unable to take to flight and without the illuminated sky flight is without purpose. This delicate epistemic method seems to want to recognize the superiority of revelation but is ultimately inaccessible without reason and intuition.

3.1. The Anti-Sufi Campaign and Its Intellectual Ramifications during the Safavid Period

During the first half of the 11th/17th century Safavid Iran, public slander and attack on distinct aspects of organized Sufism began and continued for more than a century.[267] The outburst of controversial works started right after the anti-Abū Muslim campaign, which was limited to the twenty years between 1626 and 1649, as Anzali noted.[268] According to Kathryn Babayan, the length of the attack on the Sufis reflected the vitality and strength of the Sufism and its deep societal roots.[269]

The solid and early formative relationship between Sufis and the Safavid rule is probably the reason why, in the 10th/16th and early 11th/17th century, there were very few written anti-Sufi treatises.[270] In addition, Twelver Shiʿism and its allies of religious authorities were not at the time strong enough to start anti-Sufi campaigns that would include political figures. There did not yet emerge a type of religious political doctrine that would view Sufism as a danger. The

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[267] Anzali, *"Mysticism" in Iran,* 37.
[268] For a discussion on the anti-Abū Muslim campaign, see Ibid., 31-6.
[269] See Babayan, *Mystics, Monarchs, and Messiahs*, 421. For her rationale, see Ibid., 158n.73.
[270] Rula Jurdi Abisaab states that the famous Lebanese jurist of the early Safavid period, ʿAlī ʿAbd al-ʿĀlī al-Karakī (d. 940/1533), refuted Sufism in his treatise *Maṭāʿin al-mujrimiyya fī al-radd ʿalā al-ṣūfiyya* (*Refuting the Criminal Invectives of Mysticism*), completed around 937/1530. Abisaab mentions that this treatise was mainly centered as a disproof of the story of Abū Muslim. See Abisaab, *Converting Persia*, 24. Rasūl Jaʿfariyān also notes that al-Karakī's son wrote a treatise in the 10th/16th century titled *ʿUmdat al-maqāl* (*The Fundement of the Statement*) that included anti-Sufi and anti-Sunni rhetoric. See Jaʿfariyān, *Ṣafaviyya*, 2:520-21.

situation changed after Shah ʿAbbās's I reforms.[271] However, it is important to mention that even

at the peak of anti-Sufi arguments which occurred during the latter half of ʿAbbās II's rule,

Sufism was still popular and very socially present.[272] ʿAbbās II was supportive of the Sufis and

was annoyed when the Sufi heritage, which the Safavid state was built on, was publicly attacked.

Said Amir Arjomand argues that Shah ʿAbbās II's attitude was part of the "anticlerical policies"

which he and his predecessor Shah Ṣāfī jointly adopted.[273] According to Arjomand, ʿAbbās II's

support of Sufis and hostility toward the Shiʿite jurists was "more systematically a part of his

policy of autocratic royal centralization."[274] Najīb al-Dīn Riḍā al-Tabrīzī al-Iṣfahānī noted that

ʿAbbās II's threatened to physically punish and cut the income of jurists and *ḥadīth* scholars

involved in the harsh anti-Sufi movement.[275] But given that al-Iṣfahānī was himself a Sufi, who

wanted to emphasize Shah ʿAbbās II's support for the Sufis, one needs to approach this

statement cautiously. To try and curtail the power of certain jurists, does not entail an overall

anti-clerical attitude, according to Rula Jurdi Abisaab. None of the Shahs could truly dispense

with their leading jurists, for they are the backbone of their socio-religious order. They could

replace them with others who are more favorable to the Sufis. As such, ʿAbbās II's favorable

attitude toward Sufi scholars, did not necessarily entail a hostility toward the Shiʿite jurists

categorically.[276] I tend to agree with Abisaab, especially since some of the Sufi-bent figures

whom ʿAbbās II patronized were trained as legal experts in addition to being prominent *ḥadīth*

scholars, such as al-Majlisī al-Awwal and al-Fayḍ al-Kāshānī.

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[271] Newman, "Fayd al-Kashani," 39-40.
[272] During the reign of Shah Sulaymān (r. 1077-1105/1666-1693-4), a minimum of twenty-one active *khānaqāh*s lived in Isfahan alone. See Muṣliḥ al-Dīn Mahdawī, *Zindagī-nāma-yi ʿAllāma Majlisī* (Tehran: Dabīrkhāna-yi Hamāyish-i Buzurgdāsht-i ʿAllāma Majlisī, Bakhsh-i Intishārāt, 1999), 201-2.
[273] Arjomand, *The Shadow of God*, 147-49.
[274] Ibid., 148.
[275] Najīb al-Dīn Riḍā al-Tabrīzī al-Iṣfahānī, *Sabʿ al-mathānī* (Tehran: Intishārāt-i Khāniqāh-i Aḥmadī, 1981), 365.
[276] Abisaab, *Converting Persia*, 115-20.

Ata Anzali provides a bibliographical summary of anti-Sufi treatises written in Safavid Iran from the year 1033/1633 to 1146/1733.[277] He describes and analyzes in detail a number of works from that list and tries to demonstrate how these works increase our understanding of the religious, political, and intellectual history of this period. Among the most famous scholarly figures who composed anti-Sufi works between 1033/1633 and 1111/1699, were Muḥammad Ṭāhir al-Qummī, who composed in order, *Risāla-yi radd-i ṣūfiyya*, *Muʾnis al-abrār*, *Ḥikmat al-ʿārifīn*,[278] *Fatāwā zamm al-ṣūfiyya*, and *Tuḥfat al-akhyār*, *Muḥibbān-i khudā*, *and al-Fawāʾid al-dīniyya*. Shaykh ʿAlī ibn Muḥammad al-ʿĀmilī who composed *al-Sihām al-māriqa*.[279] Al-Ḥurr al-ʿĀmilī who composed *al-Ithnā ʿashariyya*. Muḥammad ʿAlī Shafīʿ al-Mashhadī who composed *al-Jāmiʿ al-ardabīliyya fī radd al-ṣūfiyya*.

It is important to note that most anti-Sufi treatises were written in Persian instead of Arabic, which was the main language of religious scholarship. The author wanted to broaden his audience and indeed, the writings were more accessible to the Persian public. The main target of the anti-Sufi campaign was not the elite learned circles. Instead, its mission was to change the public's view of Sufism that would result in an aggressive environment for the dervishes and Sufis who dominated public areas such as central squares, bazaars and coffee houses.[280]

Based on these anti-Sufi tracts, Anzali argues that the harshest period of attack was between the year 1061/1651 and 1077/1666 under the rule of ʿAbbās II (r.1052-1077/1643-1666).[281] One cannot rely solely on a quantitative measure, since Muḥammad Ṭāhir al-Qummī

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[277] See Anzali, *"Mysticism" in Iran*, 38-42. Most of the treatises chosen for analysis by Anzali remain in manuscript form and have received little or no scholarly attention.

[278] A significant work in Arabic, mainly opposed to mainstream philosophy and Ibn ʿArabī's philosophical Sufism, written between the years 1067/1657 and 1074/1664. For a critical edition of this work, see Anzali and Gerami, *Opposition to Philosophy*.

[279] See Āghā Buzurg al-Ṭahrānī, *al-Dharīʿa*, 12:260-61.

[280] Anzali, *"Mysticism" in Iran,* 42.

[281] Ibid.

and Mīr Lawhī, who were two famous productive polemicists, were very effective during this period. Despite the fact that the quantity of works produced against Sufism decreased during the end of the 11th/17th century, the number of religious scholars backing the campaign, as Anzali denoted, increased during that period. This can be read as an achievement of the initial efforts led by al-Qummī and Mīr Lawhī to promulgate the anti-Sufi agenda. Their attempts to get others to join their mission won over high ranking ʿulamāʾ such as al-Ḥurr al-ʿAmīlī and Mullā Khalīl ibn Ghāzī al-Qazwīnī (d. 1089/1678).[282] Anzali noted that puritan preachers and exoteric scholars took advantage of the troubled relationship between the Imams and Sufi figures such as Abū Saʿīd ibn Abī al-Ḥasan Yasār al-Baṣrī (d. 110/728) and Sufyān ibn Saʿīd al-Thawrī (d. 161/778) and the "unorthodox" practices, such as *ḥulūl* (incarnation of God in the body) and *ittiḥād* (unity with God), and teachings of figures such as Bayazīd al-Bisṭāmī and al-Ḥallāj to criticize the controversial teachings of Sufism which have Sunni origins.[283] Traditions from recognized *ḥadīth* as well, as traditions from *Ḥadīqat al-shīʿa* on the authority of Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad al-Ardabīlī (d. 993/1585), better known as *al-Muqaddas* al-Ardabīlī, were spread to validate the assertion that the Imams stood against the Sufis during their life.[284] Anzali's assumption that jurists and philosophers only feared Sufism for its link to Sunnism, seems to be very problematic. This is because Sufi traditions had multifaceted Sunni and Shiʿite features. Al-Ḥallāj could be considered an Ismāʿīlī; moreover, the early Irāqī Sufis came before the full-fledged development

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[282] Ibid.
[283] Ibid., 70.
For example, see Muḥammad Ṭāhir al- Qummī, *Tuḥfat al-akhyār* (Tehran: Chāp-i Muṣawwar, 1958), 30–36; and Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥasan al-Ḥurr ʿĀmilī, *al-Ithnā ʿashariyya fī al-radd ʿalā al-ṣūfiyya* (Iran: Darūdī, 1987).
For a contemprory account on ʿĀmilī's *al-Ithnā ʿashariyya*, see Andrew J. Newman, "Clerical Perceptions of Sufi Practices in Late Seventeenth-Century Persia, II: Al-Hurr al-ʿAmili (d. 1693) and the Debate on the Permissibility of Ghina," in *Living Islamic History: Studies in Honour of Professor Carole Hillenbrand*, eds. Yasir Suleiman and Adel Al-Abdul Jader (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2010), 197-203.
[284] On this account, see Andrew Newman, "Sufism and Anti-Sufism," 95-108.
 One of the most comprehensive compilations of traditions from *al-Ḥadīqa* and other sources is al-Ḥurr ʿĀmilī's *al-Ithnā ʿashariyya*. See Newman, "Al-Hurr al-ʿAmili," 198.

of Sunni doctrine, *kalām*, and *madhāhib* (sects).[285] In addition, from the viewpoint of several

Sunni scholars, a number of al-Ghazālī's views come from Shiʿism.[286] Mullā Ṣadrā, for example,

labelled many Sufi practitioners in his *Kasr aṣnām al-jāhiliyya* as "false Sufis," with the aim of

endorsing a new speculative Sufism within Shiʿism, as discussed in Chapter Two. Here, he did

not refer to "Sunnis," but continued to employ ideas that are Sufi Sunni, particularly those of Ibn

ʿArabī. Furthermore, the famous *Akhbārī* jurist al-Ḥurr al-ʿAmīlī, also did not claim that Sufism

was Sunni.[287] In contrast, he quoted Sunni scholars who strongly opposed antinomian Sufi

principles such as *ḥulūl* and *ittiḥād*. He stressed the view that Sunni and Shiʿite jurists united in

opposition to transgressive utterances and practices of Sufism. It is crucial to point out that not

all forms of Sufi thought are fundamentally Sunni and that the attack on Sufism is not simply an

attack on Sunnism.

The pressure that was exerted on the Sufis and dervishes increased during the final

decades of Safavid rule.[288] Al-Majlisī al-Awwal's fame and tendency towards Sufism, Anzali

argued, made him a significant ally of the Sufis, especially when they were attacked and

criticized. His death, in 1070/1660, was therefore, a huge setback to Sufis and their associates.

Another loss for the Sufis followed seven years later, with the death of Shah ʿAbbās II, the last

Safavid king to publicly back Sufis and dervishes. In addition, al-Muʾadhdhin al-Khurāsānī, who

was one of the most significant and influential Sufi leaders of the era died four years later.[289] The

anti-Sufi campaign and the fading royal support caused other famous people to slowly break

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[285] There are unmistakable Ismāʿīlī ideas in al-Ḥallāj's works. This, however, does not mean that he converted from Sunnism, but rather, there is a clear synthesis, an integration of distinct Shiʿite and Sunni elements, which is not unusual among Sufis. This notable idea was reflected by Rula Jurdi Abisaab in many of her class discussions. Her view substantially tackles the idea of hybridity, which refers to a synthesis of several elements that make up an affiliation which is neither purely Sunni nor Shiʿite.

[286] I thank Rula Jurdi Abisaab for noting this information.

[287] Abisaab, "Review of *"Mysticism" in Iran*," 344.

[288] Anzali, *"Mysticism" in Iran*, 89.

[289] Ibid.

away from Sufism. The situation was becoming more and more difficult for Sufis. Figures with

Sufi links such as al-Ghazālī, who was both Sufi and Sunni, were seriously attacked by

polemicists such as al-Qummī and Shaykh ʿAlī al-ʿĀmilī.[290] This, however, extended to al-Fayḍ,

since he, like his teacher, Mullā Ṣadrā was influenced by the personal and intellectual life of al-

Ghazālī.

Al-Fayḍ can be seen as a good example of a famous figure whose life was greatly

affected by his support for Sufism. Early in his life, he wrote treatises that supported Sufis but

eventually distanced himself from them. He even ended up writing a treatise in which he

conveyed regret for what he described as a waste of time on such false teachings.[291] However, I

posit that this view does not apply to the core speculative Sufi concepts, which shaped al-Fayḍ's

thought about introspection, as in fact he did adopt features of the epistemology of ʿirfān

throughout his life as we mentioned earlier. ʿIrfān, which was based on the Sufi tradition,

emerged as an accepted form of Sufism against organized Sufism of the *tekke*s and *khāniqāh*s, as

Ata Anzali argues in his *"Mysticism" in Iran*.[292] Nonetheless, works against Sufism became

more popular as al-Fayḍ's son, ʿAlam al-Hudā, who was also a famous religious scholar, wrote

multiple treatises attacking them. The case of al-Majlisī al-Awwal and his son, al-Majlisī al-

Thānī, is also similar. The father was known for his support and defense of some aspects of

Sufism while his son, who eventually gained popularity after his father passed away, wrote

treatise against Sufism. The year 1098/1687, al-Majlisī al-Thānī, Muḥammad Ṭāhir al-Qummī,

and al-Ḥurr al-ʿĀmilī, who were three of the most famous anti-Sufi critics, were given the

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[290] For example, he refers to al-Ghazālī as "the head of the enemies of the family of the Prophet." See ʿAlī ibn Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥasan ibn Zayn al-Dīn al-ʿĀmilī, *al-Sihām al-māriqa fī aghrāḍ al-zanādiqa*, 1086h, no. 1968 (Kitābkhāna-yi Markazī va Markaz-i Asnād-i Dānishgāh-i Tehran), f. 8a.

[291] For a comprehensive study of al-Fayḍ's position concerning Sufism, see Jaʿfariyān, *Ṣafaviyya*, 2:537-56. For a newer and deeper investigation, see Zargar, "Revealing Revisions."

[292] Anzali, *"Mysticism" in Iran*.

highest clerical positions in Iran's major urban centers (Isfahan, Qum, and Mashhad,

respectively). Anzali argues that the three anti-Sufi *Shaykh al-islām*s formed a significant

triangle in the anti-Sufi movement.[293] This is because in the early decades, only mid-ranking

religious scholars worked against the Sufis, but by the end of the 11th/17th century, the high-

ranking scholars had the authority to attack Sufism and all other types of "heresy."[294]

The relationship between Sufism and philosophy was not much better. Prominent

philosophers in Isfahan such as Mīr Findiriskī, conveyed disapproval of common beliefs and

practices related to Sufism. Although Mīr Findiriskī was known to sympathize with dervishes,[295]

he strictly attacked popular Sufi beliefs, especially those of the Qalandār.[296] The attack from

philosophers stretched beyond Sufi practices, as Mīr Dāmād also objected to some metaphysical

traditions of high Sufism.[297] An example is his position that the Sufi's signature metaphysical

postulate, the presence of mundus *imaginalis*, an intermediate world between the material and

abstract, was a delusion that cannot be logically confirmed.[298] However, Mīr Dāmād wrote an

autobiographical description of his mystical visions.[299] The Third Teacher's doubtful views

towards Sufism was shared by a good number of his students, including the famous Sayyid

Aḥmad ʿAlawī al-ʿĀmilī (d. between 1054/1644 – 1060/1650), a recognized philosopher and

author of *Iẓhār al-ḥaqq wa-miʿyār al-ṣidq*, which attacks the Sufis and condemns the practice of

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[293] Anzali, *"Mysticism" in Iran*, 89.
[294] Manṣūr Ṣifat-gul, *Sākhtār-i nihād wa andīsha-i dīnī dar Īrān-i ʿaṣr-i ṣafavī: Tārīkh-i taḥawwulāt-i dīnī-i Īrān dar sadahā-yi dahum tā davāzdahum-i hijrī-i qamarī* (Tehran: Rasā, 2002), 452.
[295] Lewisohn, "Sufism and the School of Iṣfahān," 99-100.
[296] Findiriski, *Risala-yi sinaʿiyya*, 19. As Anzali notes, though there seems to be an apparent distinction between organized Sufism and Qalandarism as an antinomian social movement, it is not apparent whether both sides could also be distinguished when it comes to dervishism; a common manner of Sufi religiosity. See Anzali, *"Mysticism" in Iran*, 59; and Niʿmatullāh ibn ʿAbdullāh al-Jazāʾirī, al-Anwār al-nuʿmāniyya, vol. 2 (Tabriz: *Kitābjī ḥaqīqat*, 1959), 308.
[297] See Lewisohn, "Sufism and the School of Iṣfahān," 93-95.
[298] Anzali, *"Mysticism" in Iran*, 59.
[299] For an investigation on this account, see Henry Corbin, "Confessions extatiques de Mīr Dāmād."

storytelling.[300]

Many of Mullā Ṣadrā's students were also against Sufism, but none was more influential in the field of rational and mystical Shiʿite thought than their teacher. As mentioned earlier, his *Kasr aṣnām al-jāhiliyya* rails against a group he labels as ʿpseudo-Sufis' (*mutaṣawwifūn)*.[301] Mullā Ṣadrā had two main issues with Sufism. He first accused them of chasing worldly pleasures such as fame and lust and of misleading the simple-minded people to reach their aims. Secondly, he depicted fake Sufis as ignorant enemies of learning, who were too lazy and too occupied in worldly pleasures to educate themselves. In addition, Mullā Ṣadrā clearly criticized institutional Sufism when he said: "Woe to the ignorance of these tail-less and earless donkeys, who have all become *shaykh*-fabricators and *shaykh*-sellers" for, "Every few days they become the disciples of a different fool, bereft of both their religion and their intellect."[302] Mullā Ṣadrā continued, saying "the majority of those who retreat to the monasteries to be praised and who sit in the *khānqah*s to become famous as ascetics and performers of miracles are deficient, damned fools imprisoned by the fetters of lust."[303]

According to Anzali, Mullā Ṣadrā's attack on the Sufis of his time should not be classified with the anti-Sufi treatises that were written later, in the mid-11th/17th century.[304] Mullā Ṣadrā's intellectual views, his works and the twenty years of separate on between the anti-Sufi campaign and his *Kasr*, would make it clear that his criticisms are due to his unique intellectual

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[300] Aḥmad ʿAlawī al-ʿĀmilī, "Iẓhār al-ḥaqq wa miʿyār al-ṣidq," in *Mīrāth-i islāmī-yi Īrān*, ed. Rasūl Jaʿfariyān, vol. 2 (Qum: Kitābkhāna-yi Ḥaḍrat-i Āyatullāh al-ʿUẓmā al-Marʿashī al-Najafī, 1994), 260-68.

[301] As Nasr states, "The term *mutasavvif* is perfectly legitimate in most schools of Sufism, where it refers to the person who follows the path of Sufism, but in Safavid and post-Safavid Iran it gained a pejorative connotation as referring to those who 'play' with Sufism without being serious, in contrast to the real *sufi*s who were called *sufiyya*. It thus acquired the meaning of *mustasvvif*, a term used by some of the earlier sufis to designate those who know nothing about Sufism but pretend to follow it." Nasr, "Spiritual Movements," 679n.4.

[302] Mullā Ṣadrā Ṣadr al-Dīn Muḥammad ibn Ibrāhīm al-Shīrāzī, *Kasr aṣnām al-jāhiliyya fī al-rad ʿalā al-ṣūfiyya*, ed. Muḥsin Jahāngīrī (Tehran: Bunyād Ḥikmat-i Islāmī-i Ṣadrā, 2002), 176.

[303] Ibid., 177-78.

[304] Anzali, "*Mysticism" in Iran,* 61.

route. The distinct intellectual trajectory of Mullā Ṣadrā sets him apart from those of his

colleagues because he thought highly of the teachings of Sufism. As a matter of fact, he made

use of the terms Sufi, *taṣawwuf*, and dervish in positive ways in his *Sih aṣl*, which he wrote

toward the end of his life, with the aim of defending an educated group of ʿ*ārifīn* against the

aggression of literalist jurists and clerics.[305]

Mullā Ṣadrā's *Kasr* should possibly be better understood not as an attack to abolish

Sufism, but as a critique about the limits of philosophy and mysticism intended to improve both

Sufism and the Twelver Shiʿite thought. This could be better seen through the efforts of Mullā

Ṣadrā and al-Fayḍ in reconciling several concepts of Shiʿism and philosophical Sufism, as will

appear in this chapter. As a basis for such reform, Mullā Ṣadrā might have synthesized the

aforementioned four principle components of his thought in order to present a new mystical

ideal. Mullā Ṣadrā points out in his *Kasr*, that the spirituality of real Sufis was unknown among

people. He claims that "the Sufi remains hidden from the eyes of the mind, even though his

body and other aspects of his personality might be visible to the [physical] eyes."[306] He argued

that Sufis were not the only set that could be categorized into "pseudo" and "real" groups. This

division must also apply to philosophers. "Divine" or "real" philosophers as well as "lords of

truth and ʿ*irfān*" (*arbāb al-ḥaqīqa wa-al-ʿirfān*), were not only set in contrast to exoteric scholars

and jurists, but also to mainstream philosophers and their discursive philosophy (*al-ḥikma al-*

rasmiyya). In agreement with his predecessor al-Ghazālī, Mullā Ṣadrā did not regard discursive

scholarship as the highest level of knowledge. Instead, that level was kept for ʿ*ilm al-mukāshafa*

(the unmediated knowledge of mystical visions), which directs one to esoteric knowledge of the

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[305] Mullā Ṣadrā al-Shīrāzī, *Kasr*, 39, 43, 113, 122.
[306] Ibid., 177.

Qurʾān and *ḥadīth*.[307] Moreover, the one and only true domain of knowledge is that of unity (*ʿilm al-tawḥid*), or divine knowledge (*al-ʿilm al-ilāhī*).[308] *Al-Asfār al-arbaʿa*, Mullā Ṣadrā's magnum opus, confirms this notion. Mullā Ṣadrā quotes Sufis such as Ibn ʿArabī of whom he thought highly, and counts some Sufis among "the verifiers among the Sufis" (*al-muḥaqqiqūn min al-ṣūfiyya*) or "*ʿārifīn*."[309]

I regard this intellectual war, so to speak, as not only against Sufis but also about determining the true sources of authority in the religious community. Throughout history, we can find several "Sufi-minded" Twelver Shiʿite scholars whose works were useful in laying a Twelver Shiʿite foundation for Sufi teachings. The significant affinity between Shiʿite and Sufi thought is related to the fact that most Twelver scholars throughout history had operated in a predominantly Sunni environment in which Sufism was a major player. This, perhaps, might have played a pivotal role in shaping the thought of Shiʿite intellectual figures in their deep inclination towards Sufi teachings and literature. This is seen in many well-known scholars who had written treatises that drew upon and resembled Sufi literature. The most popular of these figures were Abū al-ʿAbbās Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad ibn Fahd al-Ḥillī's (d. 841/1437), who wrote *al-Taḥsīn fī ṣifāt al-ʿārifīn*, Naṣīr al-Dīn al-Ṭūsī, who wrote *Awṣāf al-ashrāf*, and al-ʿAllāma al-Ḥillī, who wrote *Minhāj al-karāma*, al-Shaykh Bahāʾī, who wrote *al-Kashkūl* and *al-Arbaʿīn*, and al-Shahīd al-Thānī Zayn al-Dīn ibn Nūr al-Dīn ʿAlī ibn Aḥmad al-ʿĀmilī al-Jubaʿī (d. 966/1559), who wrote *Munyat al-murīd*. In addition to the aforementioned scholars, two other scholars had played a crucial role in connecting Shiʿite and Sufi thoughts. These are Sayyid

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[307] Mullā Ṣadrā Ṣadr al-Dīn Muḥammad ibn Ibrāhīm al-Shīrāzī, *Risāla-yi sih aṣl*, ed. Seyyed Hossein Nasr (Tehran: Intishārāt-i Mawlā, 1997), 96, 104.

[308] Mullā Ṣadrā al-Shīrāzī, *Kasr*, 122. For Mullā Ṣadrā, holding that the knowledge of unity is the one and only true field of knowledge does not impede the necessity of training oneself by studying madrasa-based sciences as pre-requisites.

[309] In *al-Ḥikma al-mutaʿāliya fī al-asfār al-ʿaqlīyya al-arbaʿa*, Mullā Ṣadrā quotes Ibn ʿArabī more than 220 time, see Ernst, "Sufism and Philosophy," 148-49.

Ḥaydar al-Āmulī, who wrote *Jāmiʿ al-asrār wa-manbaʿ al-anwār* and *Tafsīr al-muḥīṭ al-aʿẓam*, and Muḥammad ibn Zayn al-Dīn ʿAlī ibn Ibrāhīm ibn al-Ḥasan ibn Ibrāhīm ibn Abī Jumhūr al-Aḥsāʾi (d. after 904/1498), who wrote *ʿAwālī al-laʾālī*. The works of both al-Āmulī and al-Aḥsāʾī conveyed a more profound and complex interest in Sufi thought than any other Shiʿite scholar.

Naṣīr al-Dīn al-Ṭūsī, in the introductory comments of *Awṣāf*, states that after completing *Akhlāq-i naṣīrī*, a treatise on ethics based on the thoughts of philosophers, he wished to publish another according to the opinions of the wayfarers of the spiritual path (*sālikān-i tarīqat*). The author used the second phrase as a clear reference to Sufi adepts, and repeated the terminology all through the work.[310] In his *Awṣāf*, al-Ṭūsī presents a thorough description of the spiritual stages, relying mainly on the *manāzil* category of Sufi literature. These categories which describe the various spiritual ranks, were previously well represented by ʿAbdullah al-Anṣārī's (d. 481/1088) *Manāzil al-sāʾirīn*.[311] It is worthy to note that al-Fayḍ was heavily influenced by Naṣīr al-Dīn al-Ṭūsī and Sayyid Ḥaydar al-Āmulī, as shown in many of his writings such as *ʿAyn al-yaqīn*, *al-Kalimāt al-maknūna*, *Qurrat al-ʿuyūn*, *al-Uṣūl al-aṣīla* and *Mirʾāt al-ākhira* (*The Mirror of the Otherworld*), completed in 1044/1635.[312]

In Safavid religious literature, the notion of *maʿrifa/ʿirfān* was used in contradiction to the term Sufism.[313] According to Anzali, *Akhbārī* scholars with Sufi inclinations such as Quṭb al-Dīn al-Nayrīzī and possibly al-Fayḍ were swayed by al-Qummī's polemics since they too, started

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[310] Naṣīr al-Dīn Muḥammad ibn Muḥammad al-Ṭūsī, *Awṣāf al-ashrāf*, ed. Muḥammad Mudarrisī (Tehran: Kitābfurūshi-yi Islāmiyya), 28-34.

[311] For a useful examination of al-Ṭūsī's work *Awṣāf*, see Nasrollah Pourjavady, *Ishrāq va ʿirfān: maqāla-hā va naqd-hā* (Tehran: Markaz-i Nashr-i Dānishgāhī, 2001), 224-47.

[312] For the influence of Naṣīr al-Dīn al-Ṭūsī on al-Fayḍ, see al-Kinānī, *al-Falsafa wa-al-kalām*, 36. For the influence of Sayyid Ḥaydar al-Āmulī on al-Fayḍ, see Shigeru Kamada, "Fayḍ al-Kāshānī's Walaya."

[313] Anzali, *"Mysticism" in Iran*, 50. Al-Qummī's anti-Sufi polemics are one of the earliest instances of this use in Safavid literature.

using the notion of ʿirfān as the semantic center of a more openly Shiʿite approach to Sufism.[314]

The reference of al-Qummī to major figures of Shiʿism like al-Ṭūsī, al-ʿAllāma al-Ḥillī, and

Shaykh Ṣafiyy al-Dīn Isḥāq al-Ardabīlī (d. 735/1334) as ʿārifs was central to this progress.[315]

This could be seen as an important move in the direction of creating a community of respected

and like-minded Shiʿite personalities who all shared the belief in ʿirfān. Al-Qummī attempted to

establish an alternate system where the Imam is the principle subject of maʿrifa, or knowledge of

God, taking the place of God. The importance of this shift was at the center of a broader

epistemic change in 11th/17th century Safavid Iran that started the discussion about a new social

and intellectual basis for religious authority.

3.2. *Burhān*, *ʿIrfān*, and *Qurʾān* in Mullā Ṣadrā's *al-Ḥikma al-Mutaʿāliya*

In his recent thesis, "Origin, Emanation and Return in al-Fayḍ al-Kāshānī's *ʿAyn al-Yaqīn*," Wissam Nuwayhid examined al-Fayḍ's unique effort in harmonizing demonstrative

proof, mystical unveiling, and divine revelation by evaluating the themes of origin, emanation,

and return in al-Fayḍ's philosophical work, *ʿAyn al-yaqīn*.[316] Throughout *ʿAyn al-yaqīn*,

Nuwayhid asserts that al-Fayḍ tries to achieve harmony between the reasonable and the

revelatory in a discrete manner. In doing so, I reckon that al-Fayḍ benefited from the notions of

al-Ḥikma al-Mutaʿāliya, which was established by his teacher Mullā Ṣadrā. Nonetheless, al-

Fayḍ's adoption of the Ṣadrian tradition appears indirectly, based on different approaches in his

works. The thoroughness of this adoption is attested when al-Fayḍ links the Ṣadrian method not

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[314] Ibid.

[315] See Jaʿfariyān, *Ṣafaviyya*, 2:607-9.

[316] In making use of the main themes of origin, emanation and return, Nuwayhid attempts to place al-Fayḍ within the framework of a Neo-Platonic philosophical method of reasoning and a Shiʿite tradition of the Islamic revelation. See Wissam Iman Nuwayhid, "Origin, Emanation and Return."

only to his philosophical works, but also to the wide range of categories he writes in, those, for instance, of *ḥadīth* and *Qurʾān*ic exegesis.

It is important to mention that al-Fayḍ does not raise major objections against his teacher's positions, nor does he advance an alternative philosophical view, rather he develops it. The philosophical compatibility and harmony between al-Fayḍ and his teacher Mullā Ṣadrā is evident throughout his philosophical works, especially in the basic philosophical doctrines of *al-Ḥikma al-Mutaʿāliya*, such as the primacy of existence over essence (quiddity); the modulation (*tashkīk*) of existence; the unity of the intellect and the intelligible; substantial motion as a category; the world of the imagination as an independent entity; ontological levels; the similarity between the existence and the light (*al-tashābuh bayn al-wujūd wa-al-nūr*).

It should be stated that one can comprehend the philosophical ideas of Mullā Ṣadrā and his rational topics more easily in al-Fayḍ's "rational" works than in the books of Mullā Ṣadrā himself. This is because al-Fayḍ focuses on the pivotal topics investigated previously by his teacher, and presents them in a clearer and summarized manner. Al-Fayḍ wrote the most significant of his rational works during or close to the period he was accompanying Mullā Ṣadrā. Therefore, when we investigate al-Fayḍ's philosophical works, such as *ʿAyn al-yaqīn*, we notice a systematic agreement between al-Fayḍ and Mullā Ṣadrā. In fact, al-Fayḍ builds his main philosophical opinions on the two main structures of *al-Ḥikma al-Mutaʿāliya*, namely, the primacy of existence over essence and *waḥdat al-wujūd*. In the following section, I will highlight the specific epistemic features of Mullā Ṣadrā's thought which shaped the ideas of al-Fayḍ and the methodology he adopted in many of his works.

The members of the school of *al-Ḥikma al-Mutaʿāliya* appear to have a uniform opinion on Sufism and its relation to other branches of knowledge. Mullā Ṣadrā asserted that the true

quest to attain spirituality can only occur after one undergoes training in the propaedeutic and discursive sciences. He also claimed that the pursuit of *maʿrifa,* cannot lead to valid results if one, like many Sufis and dervishes, does not participate in the disciplinary discourse of the *madrasa* (philosophy and rational theology).[317] Moreover, he attacked the "pseudo-Sufis" who are liable to fall into fictional illusions, as they tend to abandon the study of sciences that would have developed their rational and discursive faculties.[318] Thus, to achieve true wisdom, according to Mullā Ṣadrā's school, a person should develop rational and intuitive faculties. Formal philosophy can only give the rational aspect; the latter necessitates the purification of the soul which could best be attained through mysticism and asceticism.

The idea of *ʿārif*, from when it was first introduced in the 3rd/9th century, emerged as a depiction of a person who has attained a high level of spiritual realization. It is possible that the term *maʿrifa* and the active participle *ʿārif*, were initially chosen as a discrete category in the Sufi vocabulary around the mid-3rd/9th century.[319] I agree with Anzali that the use of this terminology expresses how spirituality was understood mainly as the nurturing of the inner life.[320] However, the term *ʿārif* became understood and associated with the term Sufi. Nonetheless, the term remains restricted and elitist in application. It denoted a level of spiritual achievement reached only by the select few from among the saints (*awliyāʾ*).[321]

In the thought of Ibn ʿArabī, *maʿrifa* reaches its peak as a key notion in what can be described as speculative Sufism. The term *maʿrifa* became used less in reference to some spiritual station, and more in connection to the knowledge of the unseen worlds. Ibn ʿArabī

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[317] Mullā Ṣadrā al-Shīrāzī, *Kasr*, 26-46.

[318] Ibid., 39.

[319] Massignon credits Abū al-Fayḍ Thawbān ibn Ibrāhīm al-Miṣrī (d. 245/856), better known as Dhū al-Nūn al-Miṣrī, with identifying *maʿrifa* as a separate category. See Louis Massignon, *Essay on the Origins of the Technical Language of Islamic Mysticism* (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 1997), 143.

[320] Anzali, *"Mysticism" in Iran*, 11.

[321] Ibid., 14.

devised a technical vocabulary for when referring to the unseen realm (ʿālam al-ghayb).

According to him, the ʿurafāʾ are the ultimate saints and maʿrifa is "any knowledge which can

be actualized only through practice (ʿamal), God-fearingness (taqwā), and wayfaring (sulūk)."[322]

Also, ʿirfān signifies the higher spiritual station where a person acquires the ability to receive

divine knowledge.[323]

On the other hand, the Avicennan model of the perfect ʿārif is different from and opposes

the model adopted by many Sufis. It demands systematic training in the rational sciences,

particularly in discursive metaphysics.[324] It rejects the position that mystical vision (mukāshafa)

is the main source of knowledge but instead, prefers reason and its ability to achieve knowledge

through syllogism. Dimitri Gutas argues strongly against understanding any Sufi terminologies

embodied in Ibn Sīnā's texts as in referring to Sufi terms, such as his reference to the stage of

mukāshafa (mystical visions).[325] Gutas asserts that the notion of ḥads (intuition) and not mystical

visions is the basis of the epistemology of Ibn Sīnā. In Gutas's view, ḥads is "the capacity to hit

spontaneously upon the middle term in any syllogism," and everything embodied in the active

intellect.[326] Gutas, as such did not accept the view that Ibn Sīnā refers or adopts some notions of

mysticism.[327] However, in my opinion, that does not mean that the Avicennan perspective rejects

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[322] William C. Chittick, *The Sufi Path of Knowledge: Ibn al-ʿArabi's Metaphysics of Imagination* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1989), 149.

[323] See Muḥammad ibn ʿAlī ibn Muḥammad ibn ʿArabī al-Ḥātimī al-Ṭāʾī, *al-Futūḥāt al-makkiyya*, ed. ʿUthmān Yaḥyā and Ibrāhīm Madhkūr, vol. 2 (Cairo: Al-Hayʾa al-Miṣrīya al-ʿĀmma li-al-Kitāb, 1972), 370.

[324] An indicator of the variation between Ibn Sīnā's epistemic discourse from the Sufi epistemic discourse is seen in his attempt to redefine the notion of the spiritual master (pīr) in his treatise *Ḥayy ibn Yaqẓān* (*The Living, Son of the Wakeful One*).

[325] For a detailed argumentation and discussion of this topic, see Dimitri Gutas, "Intellect without Limits: The Absence of Mysticism in Avicenna," in *Intellect et imagination dans la philosophie médiévale*, eds. M. Cândida-Pacheco and J. Francisco-Meirinhos, vol. 1 (Turnhout: Brepols, 2006), 351-72.

[326] See Dimitri Gutas, "AVICENNA v. Mysticism," *Encyclopædia Iranica*, last updated August 17, 2011, http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/avicenna-v.

[327] This comes in opposition with the interpretation of many of Ibn Sīnā's successors and followers to some of Ibn Sīnā's philosophical remarks, which tend to analyze Ibn Sīnā as intensly influenced by Sufi thoughts. As is known, centuries after the death of Ibn Sīnā (d. 427/1037), the intellectual, social, and religious landscape of the Islamic world changed drastically.

the spiritual path, which is pivotal in the Sufi tradition. Sajjad Rizvi argues that philosophy for Peripatetic philosophers was a way of life that involved practices of purification and mortification of the human soul.[328] Thus the perfect philosopher, is one who trains his mind in discursive reasoning and at the same time cultivates virtues in his soul.

The Ṣadrian epistemological method differs from both the Sufi and Avicennan methods. For Mullā Ṣadrā and later on al-Fayḍ, cultivation of the intellect must precede ʿirfān; but still mystical visions are considered the primary epistemological source of knowledge. Nonetheless, this epistemological source is not self-sufficient, but requires support from the *Qurʾān* and *ḥadīth* in order to prove its validity. Thus, the philosophical school of Mullā Ṣadrā seems to combine the Avicennan position, Ibn ʿArabī's position, and the Shiʿite tradition. The journey of ʿirfān is a long one: one should start by perfecting the exoteric sciences, which consist of religious studies, rational theology, and philosophy, then attain the world of esoteric knowledge as represented by *kashf* (the unveiling of unseen matters) and *ḥads* after a pursuing the spiritual path and purification of the soul, before reaching the kernel of this journey which is the ultimate truth and the real meanings of *Qurʾān* and *ḥadīth*. Mullā Ṣadrā and later on his prominent students articulated this journey in terms of a rational framework based on the Peripatetic philosophy of Ibn Sīnā, but ultimately going beyond what they perceive to be the limits of Avicennan reason. *Al-Asfār al-arbaʿa,* the title of the philosophical treatise of Mullā Ṣadrā, also demonstrates his approach to Sufism. "The four journeys" theme has been discussed in works of Sufis since the time of Ibn ʿArabī.[329] The journeys are: (1) the journey from the creation to God; (2) the journey in God; (3) the journey from God to the creation; (4) the journey that brings God to the creation.

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[328] Sajjad H. Rizvi, "Philosophy as a Way of Life in the World of Islam: Applying Hadot to the Study of Mullā Ṣadrā Shīrāzī (d. 1635)," *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 75, no. 1 (2012): 8-10.

[329] Ernst, "Sufism and Philosophy," 147.

However, Ṣadrā transferred this symbol from its mystical roots to a philosophical framework. In his work, the four journeys must be "intellectual," and entail the four main branches of philosophy: (1) ontology; (2) physics; (3) metaphysics; (4) psychology.

Ibrahim Kalin, in his *Knowledge in Later Islamic Philosophy: Mullā Ṣadrā on Existence, Intellect, and Intuition* studies how Mullā Ṣadrā tried to harmonize the three main forms of knowledge in Islamic philosophy: revelation (*Qurʾān*), demonstration (*burhān*), and gnosis or intuitive knowledge (*ʿirfān*). Kalin explains that in Mullā Ṣadrā's most important synthesis, called "Transcendent Wisdom," the concept of existence is at the center of his reflections on epistemology. His main assertion that knowledge is a kind of existential state does away with the *kalām* definition of knowledge as a property of the knower and the Avicennan concepts of knowledge as representation and abstraction. According to Mullā Ṣadrā, these latter positions lead to a theory of knowledge where the subject is the focal point of all epistemic assertions. In order to discover the potentials of a "non-subjectivist" epistemology, Mullā Ṣadrā tries to move the emphasis from knowledge as an intellectual act of representation to knowledge as presence and unveiling.[330] It is important to understand that according to Mullā Ṣadrā, when we know new things, we reveal a feature of existence and therefore participate with the numerous modalities of the reality of existence. In this context, we set aside the subjectivist assertions of ownership of meaning.

Mullā Ṣadrā develops his view regarding the intrinsic intelligibility of existence and the resulting non-subjectivist epistemology by recourse to his ontology. Intelligibility and meaning are described as functions of existence, according to which, the knowing subject should be interpreted and revealed. This results in redefining the connection between subject and object or

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[330] Ibrahim Kalin, *Knowledge in Later Islamic Philosophy: Mullā Ṣadrā on Existence, Intellect, and Intuition* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010).

the knower and the known.

In his *al-Ḥikma al-Mutaʿāliya*, Mullā Ṣadrā presents an inventive philosophical framework which centered on the idea of ʿirfān.[331] The work also engages in an effort to merge main concepts of Sufism, such as the validity of mystical visions and the unicity of being, into an integrated philosophical framework. Mullā Ṣadrā's belief in such elements of mysticism ensures that reason and rationality can lead the wayfarer only as far as comprehending the ultimate truth. According to Mullā Ṣadrā, self-knowledge, the afterlife and other major elements of the human state and experience exist outside the dimension of rationality and reason. Achieving true knowledge regarding such questions requires needs prophetic revelation and mystical visions. These must come before rational debates to develop the philosophical credibility of such ideas.[332]

However, while Mullā Ṣadrā makes use of mystical doctrines, he was critical of institutional Sufism.[333] He also argued that philosophical reason is the fundamental standard for acquiring knowledge.[334] With the exception of Ibn ʿArabī, whom he cites a minimum of 200 times in his *magnum opus*, Mullā Ṣadrā rarely states the names of early Sufis, and never mentions later Sufis.[335] It might be a surprising fact that most of the Sufis quoted by Mullā Ṣadrā are mentioned only once. The Sufis who are mentioned more often either had an active involvement with philosophy such as al-Ghazālī and Abū al-Maʿālī ʿAbdullāh ibn Mūḥammad al-Mayānijī (d. 525/1131), known as ʿAyn-al-Quḍāt Hamadhānī, or had been engaged with speculative metaphysics, especially in the tradition of Ibn ʿArabī, such as Ṣadr al-Dīn

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[331] Anzali, *"Mystycism" in Iran*, 63.
[332] Ibid.
[333] I use the term institutionalized Sufism in reference to "The Establishment" of the Sufi community. Sufism adopts in the method of "*Ṭarīqa*s"—in which each *Ṭarīqa* consists of a doctrine structured to guide Sufis down a definite "spiritual path."
[334] Ernst, "Sufism and Philosophy," 144. In his article, Carl Ernst discusses the larger question of the relationship between Sufism and philosophy in Mullā Ṣadrā's writings considering it an important one that has occasioned significant debate.
[335] Ibid., 148.

Muḥammad ibn Isḥāq al-Qūnawī (d. 673/1274), Abū al-Makārim Rukn al-Dīn ʿAlāʾ al-Dawla
Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad al-Simnānī (d. 736/1336) and Sharaf al-Dīn Dāwūd ibn Maḥmūd al-
Qayṣarī (d. 751/1350).[336] Carl Ernst argues that a different image appears when we look into the
extensive quotations from ancient Greek philosophers whose views are cited by Mullā Ṣadrā.[337]
In building his argument, he considers both the number of people and the frequency of reference.
He states that Mullā Ṣadrā refers more in times to ancient Greek philosophers and Muslim
philosophers than to Sufis.[338] This, however, cannot alone prove that Mullā Ṣadrā was closer to
philosophy than Sufism. I take Ernst's method to be somehow mechanical and non-convincing,
since it is based on counting the number of times Mullā Ṣadrā refers to *x* rather than *y*. Instead,
one must look deeply into the content of these references and their contexts. We can notice that
in many cases, the mentioning of ancient Greek philosophers in Mullā Ṣadrā's works are for the
aim of criticizing them and refuting their ideas. Nonetheless, I consider Mullā Ṣadrā to have
integrated and harmonized all the aforementioned sources into one intellectual system, without
himself being closer to philosophy than speculative Sufism. However, we can still see that his
method in approaching his topics is a philosophical one. This is what Ernst himself verifies by
showing how Mullā Ṣadrā reflects on and enhances a Sufi saying using his own philosophical
view, instead of working within a Sufi determined framework.[339]

      Mullā Ṣadrā's unique doctrines can be summarized under the following four headings:
(1) The primacy of existence over essence (quiddity), and the modulation (*tashkīk*) of existence;
(2) The unity of the intellect and the intelligible; (3) Substantial motion (*al-ḥaraka al-
jawhariyya*) as a category; (4) The world of the imagination as an independent entity. I would

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[336] Ibid., 149.
[337] Ibid.
[338] Ibid., 150.
[339] Ibid., 151-55.

note for now that only in the last item do we find a strong influence of Sufism. This is demonstrated by Mullā Ṣadrā's view on the matter. According to Mullā Ṣadrā, as long as the world of the imagination is the locus of eschatology, it can also be seen as the site of mystical vision.[340] One could try to compare between Mullā Ṣadrā and Sufi intellectuals on matters like the nature of love (even though Mullā Ṣadrā is perhaps closer to Ibn Sīnā on this subject). In my view there Mullā Ṣadrā is closer to Sufi thinkers on the subject of mystical vision. Accordingly, one can deduce that Mullā Ṣadrā's approach to philosophy and Sufism depends on the topic in question. Thus, the particular theme in mind is what determines whether he adopts Sufi or philosophical positions.

Nasr reasons that even though Mullā Ṣadrā's thought was very much influenced by that of Ibn ʿArabī, it should still be classified as a type of *ḥikma* (philosophy) instead of *ʿirfān*. Nasr argues that *ʿirfān* indicates theoretical or doctrinal features of traditional Sufism that culminate with the school of thought of Ibn ʿArabī. He also claims that it was very important that Mullā Ṣadrā and his students did not produce "major works devoted purely to theoretical gnosis or *ʿirfān-i naẓarī*." Nasr says that the chief intellectual drive of the Safavid period "lay in creating the School of Transcendent Theosophy, which had incorporated major theses of *ʿirfān* such as the transcendent oneness of being [*waḥdat al-wujūd*] into its philosophical system, but which was distinct in the structure of its doctrines, manner of presentation, and method of demonstration from *ʿirfān*."[341]

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[340] Ibid., 148.

[341] Seyyed Hossein Nasr, *The Garden of Truth: The Vision and Practice of Sufism, Islam's Mystical Tradition* (New York: Harper One, 2007), 225.

3.3. *ʿIrfān* as a Form of Knowledge: Terminology and Usage

Ḥikma and *maʿrifa* are two divisions of knowledge which al-Fayḍ was mainly concerned with in his mystical and philosophical works. Similar to Mullā Ṣadrā, al-Fayḍ makes great use of those terms, though at times in different ways. The term *ḥikma* indicates the peak of inspired and rational sciences, while *maʿrifa*, in these writings, indicates the knowledge that comes from spiritual striving, *kashf* and *shuhūd* (the witnessing of that which has been unveiled). *Ḥikma* results from the sum of the two mentioned divisions of knowledge. Yet, Mullā Ṣadrā and al-Fayḍ sometimes use the term *maʿrifa* in reference to the direct knowledge of the Divine and His creation in accordance to Sufi usage.

Unlike *ʿārif* and *maʿrifa*, the term *ʿirfān* is not frequently repeated in the works of Mullā Ṣadrā. It is also not used explicitly as a discipline in contrast to Sufism. Thus, in Mullā Ṣadrā's system of thought, the terms *maʿrifa* and *ʿirfān* were generally understood as significant expressions under the discipline of philosophical Sufism.[342] Anzali argues that this obvious connection to philosophical Sufism is what makes Mullā Ṣadrā the target of al-Qummī's criticism. Mullā Ṣadrā and al-Fayḍ both consider *ʿirfān* as a term that designates the high spiritual position attained by the *ʿārif*'s realization of unity in multiplicity. Accordingly, when talking about *ʿirfān*, they mean the epistemic notion of the term and not the discipline. In this section, I will not deal with *ʿirfān* or discuss it as a separate discipline, nor will I delve into how this discipline was established and developed. My concern is to understand how, according to al-Fayḍ, *ʿirfān* should be interpreted and what it represents as an epistemological branch of knowledge.

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[342] Anzali determines Shāh Muḥammad al-Darābī (d. sometime in the early 1710s) to be the first author to use *ʿirfān* as an equivalent term for Sufism, transcribing many of the semantic denotations and connotations of latter onto the former. Anzali, *"Mysticism" in Iran*, 136.

Mullā Ṣadrā and al-Fayḍ use the term ʿārif in their respective works according to its traditional meaning which refers to the saints. It is important to note that Mullā Ṣadrā also uses the term in reference to divine philosophers (al-ḥukamāʾ al-mutaʾallihīn).[343] This is reflective of the Ṣadrian synthesis where the ideal ḥakīm and ideal ʿārif are the same.[344] The term ʿirfān, although rarely used, follows this example and is used in combination with phrases and terms such as certitude (yaqīn), demonstrative proof (burhān), and divine philosophy (al-ḥikma al-ilāhiyya). This is also seen in the works of Mullā Ṣadrā's famous students who stressed on the term ʿārif, but not in reference to a follower of a particular group with common beliefs.[345] In two of al-Fayḍ's most significant works, where al-Fayḍ was most influenced by Mullā Ṣadrā, al-Kalimāt al-maknūna and Uṣūl al-maʿārif, the category of maʿrifa is a central theme. Even the full title of the work, al-Kalimāt al-maknūna min ʿulūm ahl al-ḥikma wa-al-maʿrifa, alludes to its importance. We see once more, the coupling of ḥikma and maʿrifa, which shows their growing correspondence in the school of al-Ḥikma al-Mutaʿāliya. Going through the book, one would notice al-Fayḍ's heavy dependence on Ibn ʿArabī's school in discussing essential issues concerning the reality of being. Many of his chapters start by explaining what "the folk of maʿrifa" (ahl al-maʿrifa) state concerning the topic being discussed.[346] Also, what they say is mostly filled with the terms used by the school of Ibn ʿArabī. Furthermore, al-Fayḍ would refer to Jalāl al-Dīn Muḥammad al-Balkhī al-Rūmī (d. 672/1273), the famous Sufi poet, as al-ʿārif al-Rūmī,[347] and refers to Mullā Ṣadrā as the "chief of the folk of ʿirfān" (ṣadr ahl al-ʿirfān).[348] It

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[343] For example, see Mullā Ṣadrā al-Shīrāzī, al-Ḥikma al-mutaʿāliya, 1:2, 4.
[344] See Ibid., 1:6.
[345] Anzali, "Mysticism" in Iran, 121-2.
[346] See Muḥammad Muḥsin al-Fayḍ al-Kāshānī, al-Kalimāt al-maknūna, ed. ʿAlī-Riḍā Aṣgharī (Tehran: Munshūrāt al-Madrasa al-ʿUlyā li-al-Shahīd al-Muṭahharī, 1387 SH/2008 AD), 23, 29, 53, 54, 57, 68, 73, 76, 79, 86, 87, 88, 89, among other pages.
[347] Ibid., 43, 83, among other pages.
[348] Al-Fayḍ, "Sharḥ-i ṣadr," 403.

seems to me, that these references are partly a deliberate attempt by al-Fayḍ to give them

legitimacy by taking away the term Sufi, and displaying their high esoteric status.

When relating *ḥikma* to *maʿrifa*, al-Fayḍ differentiates between the mainstream

discursive philosophy, also known as Peripatetic philosophy, and the philosophy he holds

exemplifies true *ḥikma*.[349] Comparing *Uṣūl al-maʿārif* and *al-Kalimāt* can help one grasp the

difference. In *Uṣūl al-maʿārif*, he seldom mentions *ahl al-maʿrifa*. The work is actually a typical

exercise in discursive philosophy, though like Mullā Ṣadrā, al-Fayḍ strays from the norms of

Peripatetic philosophy and contends for the alternate Ṣadrian doctrines, including the primacy of

existence and substantial motion. When he does mention *ahl al-maʿrifa*, it is usually in reference

to his teacher, to other prominent figures in Ibn ʿArabī's school, or to Ibn ʿArabī himself.[350]

In al-Fayḍ's *al-Kalimāt*, which blends Ibn ʿArabī's metaphysical principles with the

traditions of the Imams, we can better comprehend al-Fayḍ's view on true *ḥikma* and *maʿrifa*. In

the work, many quotations from varying *ḥadīth* sources are mentioned and followed by

explanations according to the doctrines of *ahl al-maʿrifa*. Al-Fayḍ's main goal is to harmonize

principles of mysticism and philosophy with *ḥadīth*s of Imams, thus showing that the way of

prophecy and that of true *ḥikma* are not in opposition to each other.[351] Al-Fayḍ did not only share

this issue with Mullā Ṣadrā but with other *ʿulamāʾ* who had *Akhbārī* or philosophical

inclinations. With the stretching of the new Shiʿite doctrine across many areas of study, there

was a pressing need for supporters of those areas to validate their hermeneutic use of *ḥadīth*

sources. However, al-Fayḍ's *al-Kalimāt* could have been easily labelled as a Sufi work, given its

extensive use of Sufi thought. In his study of *al-Kalimāt*, Todd Lawson states that it is not

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[349] Al-Fayḍ, *al-Kalimāt al-maknūna*, 341.
[350] Al-Fayḍ, *Uṣūl al-maʿārif*, 56, 94, 176, 178.
[351] Ibid., 4.

correct to classify the book in this way.[352] Rather, the work should be understood as representing a developing, autonomous Shiʿite spiritual discourse, later termed ʿirfān.

Now, it is pivotal to look into al-Fayḍ's approach to the nature of maʿrifa as a mystical vision. As mentioned earlier, for Mullā Ṣadrā and al-Fayḍ, maʿrifa is basically witnessing spiritual realities by means of the heart. Al-Fayḍ discussed the ability of ḥads extensively, as he considered it to be a main faculty of his epistemological method. He maintains that the most delicious fruit of paradise (al-janna) is al-maʿārif al-ilāhiyya, which is obtained by looking to the "face" of God. Al-Fayḍ opinion on ḥads and kashf could be derived from his description of a person who attains them. This person would, in al-Fayḍ's words, be:

> He who has been given perfection in the intuitive theoretical faculty until he is completely free of a human teacher. Furthermore, he has been given the stability of the thinking faculty, in addition to righteousness and will, guided by pen of the intellect. [Afterwards,] he then does not pay attention to what forms the sensible world until he witnesses the intelligible world, and what is in it of states, and this is followed by an awakening. Thus, the world and what happens within it takes form within his soul. So through the faculty of soul he can impact the natural world until he reaches the stage of the heavenly souls which are holy souls of ascension and they are "the forerunners, the forerunners – those are the ones brought near [to Allāh]"[353] and they are the best of mankind and those most worthy of the highest degrees of bliss in paradise.[354]

After the wayfarer (al-sālik) traverses the degrees and the stations, many states and stations of unveiling and witnessing which arise out of spiritual exercises and heart visions will occur to him, and this removes the thick dust which has covered the heart due to sin and disobedience when in a state of rashness and ignorance.

Al-Fayḍ regards maʿrifa to be of paramount importance in the life of the wayfarers, since it is their highest goal. It increases in proportion to the reception of the wayfarer during worship

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[352] Lawson, "The Hidden Words," 428-32.

[353] Qurʾān, 56:10-11.

[354] Muḥammad Muḥsin al-Fayḍ al-Kāshānī, Mirʾāt al-ākhira, ed. ʿAlī ʿĀshūr (Beirut: Muʾassasat al-Aʿlamī li-al-Maṭbūʿāt, 2004), 91.

such that "he acquires internal purity, answered supplication[s] and such decent qualities. With every increase of proximity to the Truth exalted, love and light occurs to him. The fruit of knowledge is complete love and sufficient light."[355] Beyond this, *maʿrifa* can lead the wayfarer to a threshold where "he begins to witness most of the otherworldly realities in this world."[356]

Al-Fayḍ considers that the spiritual exercises and strenuous meditation help in discovering true knowledge, and comprehending intuitively what one learns rationally and exoterically. They are, thus, the gateway for esoteric knowledge. In his introductions to various works, he shows that one would have access to divine secrets solely through such mystical experiences. Therefore, for him, true knowledge is the esoteric comprehension of the Infallibles' teachings, accessible only to a few chosen people. In his *al-Wāfī*, al-Fayḍ states the ethical conditions of the knowledge of investigation (esoteric knowledge). He writes:

> The path to know the Godly knowledge of verification is the emptying of the heart for learning, purifying the internal through vacating it from vices and sweetening it with virtues, following the law, and adhering to mindfulness of God, as God most High said: "[A]nd be mindful of God and God shall teach you."[357] And He said: "[I]f you are mindful of God, He shall grant you a criterion [to distinguish between right and wrong]."[358]
> And He said: "And those who strive for Us, We will surely guide them to Our ways."[359] And [it is stated] in the Prophetic *ḥadīth*: "Knowledge is not in the great amount of learning, but rather, it is a light God casts into the heart of he whom He wants to guide." And [it is stated] in it (the Prophetic *ḥadīth*): "He who dedicates himself to God for forty mornings, the springs of wisdom will appear from his heart to his tongue." And in it: "He who knows and acts according to his knowledge is granted by God knowledge of what he does not know."[360]

Al-Fayḍ considers acquiring the right moral disposition and spiritual purification as a condition for arriving at the ultimate truth through mystical visions. He holds that self-discipline

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[355] Mīr Jalāl al-Dīn al-Urmawī, *al-ʿIrfān wa-al-sulūk ʿinda ahl al-bayt: Sharḥ risālat zād al-sālik li-al-Mawlā Muḥsin al-Fayḍ al-Kāshānī* (Beirut: Dār al-Ṣafwa, 2011), 96.

[356] Ibid.

[357] *Qurʾān*, 2:282.

[358] Ibid., 8:29.

[359] Ibid., 29:69.

[360] Al-Fayḍ, *al-Wāfī*, 1:10.

is the foundation upon which the purification of morals and refinement of character lies. This is possible through "erasing of vices and censorious behaviour from it [i.e. the soul] and the attainment and bringing nigh of virtues and beautiful morals to it."[361] This is because the soul is created as an imperfect being that has the potential for perfection. "Its perfection is attained by purification (*tazkiya*), refinement of character, and nourishment by knowledge (*ʿilm*)."[362]

According to al-Fayḍ, the way of purifying morals and refining the character is achieved through struggling with the self (*mujāhadat al-nafs*) "such that the soul is trained to commit actions that brings one closer to the desired virtue of character (*al-khulq al-maṭlūb*)."[363] The process of struggling with the self in performing these actions will become a habit. However, the lofty virtues will not be grounded in the soul "until he becomes habituated to all good traits and leaves all evil traits and acquires the perseverance of one who longs for beautiful actions and enjoys them as he hates ugly actions and is pained by them."[364] In addition, al-Fayḍ holds that the lofty traits of character are grounded by many acts of worship, such that "the recompense is greater, the soul is finer (*azkā*) and purer (*aṭhar*), and morals are stronger and fimer."[365]

Al-Fayḍ categorizes this stage of the discussion within a general ethical scheme under the heading of *al-murābaṭa* (vigilance). According to al-Fayḍ, *al-murābaṭa* consists of six subdivisions: (1) *al-mushāraṭa* (self-preparation); (2) *murāqabat al-nafs* (self-supervision); (3) *muḥāsabat al-nafs* (self-accounting); (4) *muʿāqabat al-nafs* (self-punishment); (5) *mujāhadat al-nafs* (self-struggle); and (6) *muʿātabat al-nafs* (self-recrimination).[366]

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[361] Muḥammad Muḥsin al-Fayḍ al-Kāshānī, *al-Maḥajja al-bayḍāʾ fī tahdhīb al-Iḥyāʾ*, ed. ʿAlī Akbar al-Ghaffārī, vol. 3 (Beirut: Dār al-Maḥajja al-Bayḍāʾ, 2009), 76.
[362] Ibid.
[363] Al-Fayḍ, *al-Ḥaqāʾiq*, 92.
[364] Ibid.
[365] Ibid.
[366] See Saghaye-Biria, "Al-Fayḍ al-Kâshânî," 34-35. For further discussion on each of the six subdivisions, see Ibid., 36-45.

For al-Fayḍ, one should attain good morals through worship. This is because, the goal of morals when one gets used to them is having "the love of the world uprooted from his self since the love of God Almighty is grounded in it, such that nothing is more beloved to him than God and encountering Him."[367] Al-Fayḍ presents the basic epistemic features of this ethical notion. He writes:

> […] It is also [stated] in the Prophetic ḥadīth: "There is no worshiper except that his heart must have two eyes; they are unseen, and by them the unseen is recognized. If God wants good for the worshipper, He opens the eyes of his heart to see what cannot be perceived by his sight."[368]

Thus, the light of the divine revelation can shine only through the eye of the heart of a worshipper, which can see and reflect it through intuition.

The relationship between soul purification, ethical training, and gaining knowledge, which al-Fayḍ mentions and clarifies, appears previously in Mullā Ṣadrā's late work, *Sih aṣl*, formulated as an ethical treatise along philosophical lines. The three principles of the title signify the three hurdles in the path leading to knowledge: (1) ignorance of psychology and philosophical anthropology; (2) love of wealth, power, desire, and pleasure; and (3) the lust for domination, which, when joined with demonic deception, makes the differentiation between right and wrong difficult.[369] Thus, a *ḥakīm* and *ʿārif*, like the Peripatetic discursive philosophers, need to be subjected to worship, practices of mortification, and purification of the soul. Accordingly, the perfect philosopher is one who educates his mind in discursive reasoning while at the same time strives to establish virtues in his soul and uproot the vices.[370] On the other hand, the perfect *ḥakīm* or *ʿārif* needs to first make the ethical step in purifying his soul before gaining the ability

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[367] Al-Fayḍ, *al-Ḥaqāʾiq*, 93.
[368] Al-Fayḍ, *al-Wāfī*, 1:10.
[369] Mullā Ṣadrā al-Shīrāzī, *Sih aṣl*, 153-56. On the terminological translation, see Ernst, "Sufism and Philosophy," 159.
[370] Anzali, *"Mysticism" in Iran*, 18.

to witness spiritual realities by means of the heart. It is only then, with a sharp and purified soul, that he can reach the stage of the acquired soul, which mirrors the source of all knowledge, God, from which the Perfect Man gains his knowledge. The philosopher, on the contrary, requires a purified intellect, the level of acquired intellect (*al-ʿaql al-mustafād*), which reflects the source of all knowledge, including prophetic knowledge: the active intellect (*al-ʿaql al-faʿʿāl*).[371]

3.4. Philosophy, Reason, and *Sharīʿa*: Harmonization and Integration

Ata Anzali argues that towards the end of the Safavid period, a major aspect that assisted the rise against philosophy was the steady growth of *Akhbāriyya* in the *madrasa*s as a substitute structure of legal thought which completely opposed the *Uṣūlī* method in deriving the law. As "a return to the way of the original hadith scholars (*tariqat al-qudama*)," the jurists who followed the *Akhbārī* legal school got rid of the *Uṣūlī* vocabulary that was greatly indebted to logic and Peripatetic philosophy.[372] On the subject of Peripatetic philosophy a great number of *Akhbārī* *ʿulamāʾ* denounced it, claiming that it is an un-Islamic and foreign source of knowledge due to its Greek origins and the heretical beliefs that many of the famous philosophers adopted.[373] Robert Gleave, however, disagrees with the leading scholarly viewpoints that categorize the *Akhbārī* movement as anti-Sufism or anti-philosophy, arguing that there isn't any *Akhbārī* position concerning the role of mystical experience and philosophy in finding religious knowledge.[374] I tend to agree with Gleave on this point. The *Akhbārī* movement, as Rula Jurdi Abisaab argues, was a "discursive" change experienced by the Shiʿite juristic tradition in Safavid

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[371] Ibid.
[372] Ibid., 57.
[373] Ibid., 116.
[374] Robert Gleave, "Scriptural Sufism and Scriptural Anti-Sufism: Theology and Mysticism amongst the Shīʿī Akhbāriyya," in *Sufism and Theology*, ed. Ayman Shihadeh (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2007), 158-76.

Iran.[375] Therefore, my view is that if *Akhbāriyya* holds any negative effect on the development of philosophy, it would be very limited. I would go further to say that the *Akhbārī* movement, in some aspects and to some extent, solidified the long-life relationship and engagement between Shiʿism and philosophy. I consider this relationship to have flourished on the hands of Mullā Ṣadrā and his student al-Fayḍ, where its fruits appear in the latter's integrative epistemology. Al-Fayḍ and other *Akhbārī* scholars were known to be experts in Islamic philosophy and often distinguish between what they refer to as discursive philosophy (*al-ḥikma al-rasmiyya*), which they oppose, and divine philosophy (*al-ḥikma al-ilāhiyya*), which they consider to be derived from the traditions of the Imams and other prophetic sources of revelation.

Works in philosophy, such as *ʿAyn al-yaqīn* and its summary *Uṣūl al-maʿārif*, are arranged according to topics that belong to the genre of Islamic philosophy. Apparent is al-Fayḍ's deep engagement with philosophy throughout his life. The introductions of both books hold the same aim behind dealing with philosophy, as well as al-Fayḍ's own unique methodology in this engagement. It is confirmed through *Uṣūl al-maʿārif*, that throughout al-Fayḍ's life, his relationship with the philosophical sciences had remained steady regardless the clerical opposition to philosophy which escalated in the late 11th/17th century Iran.

In following the words of al-Fayḍ in the introductions to his philosophical works, we notice that his method is built upon several intellectual foundations, most importantly, the impossibility of contradiction between reason and revelation. Al-Fayḍ believes that his role lies mainly on resolving the contradictions that might appear for some people between the demonstrative proof, mystical unveiling, and divine revelation. In this concern, al-Fayḍ adopts

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[375] See Abisaab, "Shiʿi Jurisprudence," 6-7.

the orientation of the saints, aiming to prove the correspondence between the knowledge which is gained through reasoning and that which is gained through revelation or mystical visions.[376]

A second important feature of al-Fayḍ's method is the prioritization of the revelatory sources over those derived from reason. This is because the prophets are considered more precise than the philosophers, whereas reason only deals with the universals. Furthermore, philosophical texts are written only for elites, whereas prophets address both the elites and the common people.[377]

A third significant feature of al-Fayḍ's method is his opinion regarding the mutual relationship between reason and revealed law (*al-sharʿ*). In this regard, al-Fayḍ states in *ʿAyn al-yaqīn*, quoting al-Rāghib al-Aṣfahānī (d. 502/1108)'s *Tafṣīl al-nashʾatayn*:

> [I]ntellect is not guided save through revealed law (*al-sharʿ*) and revealed law is unclear save through intellect […].
> [T]he intellect is similar to eyesight and the revealed law is similar to radiance. For eyesight will yield no benefit if there was no radiance from outside and radiance will hold no value if there was no eyesight […].[378]

This explains that according to al-Fayḍ, there is a symbiotic relationship between revelation and reason. Thus, to achieve the truth, revelation and reason must work together, as they are theoretically and practically unified. He quotes:

> The revealed law is an intellect from outside, and the intellect is a revealed law within [human beings]. They collaborate, and even unite.[379]

Therefore, we see that al-Fayḍ in his philosophical works, tails his rational arguments with a *Qurʾān*ic verse and/or *ḥadīth* to show the deep connection between reason and religion.

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[376] See Muḥammad Muḥsin al-Fayḍ al-Kāshānī, *ʿAyn al-yaqīn*, ed. Riḍā ʿAyyāsh (Beirut: Dār al-Maḥajja al-Baydāʾ, 1432/2011), 14-15; al-Fayḍ, *Uṣūl al-maʿārif*, 4-5.
[377] See al-Fayḍ, *ʿAyn al-yaqīn*, 14-15; al-Fayḍ, *Uṣūl al-maʿārif*, 4-5.
[378] Al-Fayḍ, *ʿAyn al-yaqīn*, 25.
[379] Ibid., 26.

In *Āyīneh-ye shāhī,* another of his works on practical philosophy, al-Fayḍ establishes the superiority of reason over revelation, under the condition of its perfection, probably referring to the Infallible Imam, who happens to be the Master of the Revealed Law (*Ṣāḥib al-sharʿ*). Al-Fayḍ states:

> [T]here is no doubt that intellect and divine law are nobler and more excellent than the other commanders (nature, habit, common law). Of these two, intellect is more excellent, more knowledgeable, and nobler, if it has reached perfection, since through intellect one can know the reality of each of the commanders and discern them from one another. In reality intellect is a revealed law within man, just as the revealed law is an intellect outside of man.[380]

Here, we see that the last sentence is the same as that stated in *ʿAyn al-yaqīn* which proposes that al-Fayḍ is using the same epistemology in both texts and did not change his mind.

A closer reading of al-Fayḍ's philosophical works will show that his aim is not to prove his expertise in philosophy but to assert the compatibility between religious revelation and philosophical reasoning. It is obvious that exegesis and philosophy are often considered separate disciplines, divided according to two different methodological approaches as each discipline seeks to recognize the nature of reality differently. The former does so through hermeneutics of revelation, while the latter through demonstrative proof. Yet, in practice, al-Fayḍ and his teacher Mullā Ṣadrā are well-known for philosophically glossing and commenting upon the revelatory sources. This is closely linked with his attempt to conceptualize the meaning of revelation and trace its harmony with ontological facts that are acquired through demonstrative proof.

Al-Fayḍ notes that the reason/intellect alone is not enough to reach the ultimate truth. Thus, he supplemented it with alternative faculties of knowledge, namely *sharīʿa* and *ʿirfān*, *ḥads*, and *kashf*. Thus, al-Fayḍ's problem with the discursive philosophy is not limited to some philosophical ideas, but also covers the epistemic method used by Peripatetic philosophers. Al-

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[380] Chittick, "Two Seventeenth-Century," 277.

Fayḍ maintains that having a minimal knowledge of the *sharīʿa* is essential for any philosopher in order to understand the religious background of any of his tools for gaining knowledge. This is especially true if the philosopher reaches the status of a leader of the community. Mastering of the exoteric sciences is essential for a person to help unravel the questions and issues of disciples and wayfarers. This provision, however, in my opinion, mirrors Isfahan's intellectual environment, which Mullā Ṣadrā and al-Fayḍ represent. Thus, it is not difficult to understand al-Fayḍ's decision to write and teach extensively on *ḥadīth* after his mid-career.[381]

In *al-Kalimāt al-ṭarīfa*, al-Fayḍ criticizes those who work solely on philosophy without being familiar with revelation, *ḥadīth* and Islamic law, and rank the philosophical sciences on a higher position than the religious sciences. In truth, philosophical knowledge can be achieved only with the help of these disciplinary practices. He holds that everyone who wants to study philosophy must have a sufficient knowledge of the roots and branches of religion (*uṣūl wa-furūʿ al-dīn*). This appears clearly in his statement:

> And among them is he who is enflamed by philosophy books, such that no religious science, whether it is doctrinal or practical, concerns him throughout his life [...] It is as if he considered that the philosophical sciences are higher than the religious sciences or he thought that they (philosophers) attained such knowledge without practical exercises. No, they have not benefitted from its content save by the prophets, and neither from its conclusion save by legal exercises and effort: "Is he who guides to the truth worthy of being followed or he who refuses to guide others unless he is guided?"[382]

Here, al-Fayḍ is indirectly advising pupils or scholars who are commencing on the difficult journey of knowledge and learning. He advises the students not to preoccupy themselves with just one field of knowledge at the expense of other disciplines. They should therefore, assume a moderate method and learn from all domains of knowledge in a balanced way.

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[381] Anzali, *"Mysticism" in Iran*, 87.
[382] *Qurʾān*, 10:35.
Al-Fayḍ, *al-Kalimāt al-ṭarīfa*, 197.

Accordingly, in the disciplines of knowledge, he suggests that they should acquire an equilibrium between the exoteric disciplines (al-ʿulūm al-sharʿiyya) and the rational esoteric ones (al-ʿulūm al-bāṭiniyya al-ʿaqliyya). From this, one would derive two main conclusions. First, that religious texts have priority over the rational-philosophical texts, since prophets are more certain and accurate than philosophers. Second, that reason and sharīʿa coincide. The first conclusion is supported by his opinion on the Qurʾān and knowledge deduced from it. Al-Fayḍ's view is that the Qurʾān:

> [C]ontains sciences and secrets, enfolds types of knowledge and lights, embeds collections of words and the illuminations of wisdoms, which intellects are unable to perceive. Instead, whenever humans dive into the gardens of its arts and profoundly contemplate the seas of its essence, such that paths that lead to what is locked are opened when its problems are clarified through its perceptions and when the markers by which the aspects of truth are perceived are uncovered. A rise of appearances (lawāʾiḥ) weakened the intensity of its hardness, such that through his piercing intellect he is able to extract, the jewels from its seas.[383]

The second conclusion is supported by al-Fayḍ's statement:

> Intellect is not guided save through revealed law (al-sharʿ) and revealed law is unclear save through intellect.[384]

On this matter, al-Fayḍ explained his opinion, stating:

> My intention is to harmonize between the first sages' path of knowledge and secrets and what was stated through the apparent revealed law (al-sharʿ al-mubīn) of sciences and illumination, so that that their relationship [may become known]. As such, it might become clear to the seeker of truth that there is no contradiction between what is acquired by the intellects of the wise (ʿuqalāʾ) scholars who undertake spiritual exercises, practice spiritual retreat, and purify their hearts such that they can receive the emanation of the higher world, and the revealed laws and prophesies, spoken through the tongues of the messengers and prophets, may God's blessings be upon them.[385]

It is apparent that al-Fayḍ avoided reliance on formal knowledge based solely on reason, since

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[383] Muḥammad Muḥsin al-Fayḍ al-Kāshānī, *Anwār al-ḥikma*, ed. Muḥsin Bīdārfar (Qum: Manshūrāt Bīdārfar, 1425/2004), 187-88.
[384] Al-Fayḍ, *ʿAyn al-yaqīn*, 25.
[385] Ibid., 15.

for him, one cannot attain certainty, or witness the divinely inspired knowledge through the path of reason, which holds many thorns of skepticism and doubt. However, if we look into al-Fayḍ's works, we see that his methodology stands on a pivotal base, which is the impossibility of opposition or contradiction between reason and revelation (*al-ʿaql wa-al-waḥy*). In this, he agrees with his teacher Mullā Ṣadrā who believes that his message lies in solving the contradictions that might appear for some people between the religious texts, rational proof, and *al-kashf al-shuhūdī* (the witnessing of unseen matters).[386] Al-Fayḍ does not want his audience to be like those whose outlook is limited to the apparent implication of the verses and do not look deep into the realities they hold, those people who censure "the *ʿulamāʾ* of reality" (*ʿulamāʾ al-ḥaqīqa*) and accuse them of apostasy (*ilḥād*) and unbelief (*zandaqa*). He cautions them against the people who waste their time on the superfluities of the Greek philosophers and who disregard what the carrier of revelation sent down, criticizing "*the ʿulamāʾ of the sharīʿa*" and portraying them as those who have no talent but claim to hold the qualities of intelligence and ingenuity.

It is important to note that al-Fayḍ throughout his works, raises his philosophical and theological ideas in correspondence with his religious beliefs and opinions. Al-Fayḍ points out that, from one side, revelation is superior to reason, just as from another aspect, revelation is in need of reason. Through his declaration of the superiority of both sides, he avoided undermining the positive aspect of each source or reducing the one to the other. In this concern, al-Fayḍ says:

> The kernel of what has been conceived by the intellects have been derived from the illumination provided by religious law and its indicants. Furthermore, it is not possible to add upon what religious laws have brought and particularly the law of our prophet [Muḥammad] may God bless him and his family because there is nothing completer and more coherent than it.[387]

[386] Muḥammad Ḥasan Zarāqiṭ's "Introduction" to al-Fayḍ's *Uṣūl al-maʿārif*. Muḥammad Muḥsin al-Fayḍ al-Kāshānī, *Uṣūl al-maʿārif* (Beirut: Dār al-Maʿārif al-Ḥikmiyya, 2010), VIII.
[387] Al-Fayḍ, *ʿAyn al-yaqīn*, 265.

Theoretical and practical philosophical grounds appear throughout al-Fayḍ's intellectual production. The knowledge of al-Fayḍ in ancient Greek philosophy is clear throughout his philosophical works, especially in his *ʿAyn al-yaqīn*, where he quotes several ancient Greek philosophers such as Pythagoras, Socrates, Plato and Aristotle. Al-Fayḍ quotes these and other ancient philosophers on different philosophical topics, ranging from metaphysics and ontology to ethics.[388] It is worth rementioning that al-Fayḍ, in most places, supports his philosophical citations using selected narrations of the Imams to confirm and emphasize its meaning and the concept it holds.[389] In addition, al-Fayḍ quotes and cites many prominent Muslim philosophers, most importantly Ibn Sīnā, al-Ghazālī, Ibn ʿArabī, and Mullā Ṣadrā.[390]

Finally, the importance of reason as faculty of knowledge appears evidently in al-Fayḍ's works. In addition to *Qurʾān*ic verses, he narrates several *ḥadīth* that show the significance of reason in gaining knowledge especially in his famous work *al-Nawādir*.[391] Al-Fayḍ explains the status of the reason/intellect, saying: "The most noble of creatures is the intellect (*al-ʿaql*)."[392] And:

> The intellect is the wellspring of knowledge, its dawn and its foundation. For knowledge courses in it as the fruit from the tree, light from the sun and vision from the eye. How could the medium of worldly and otherworldly bliss not be considered noble.[393]

In *ʿAyn al-yaqīn*, al-Fayḍ also tries to reconcile pure and practical reason, on one hand, and the roots and branches of religion, on the other. He attempts to apply the distinction between pure and practical reason which comes from the Aristotelian tradition into his scheme. Yet, he stresses this same division's existence in the revelatory sources. Al-Fayḍ writes:

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[388] Al-Kinānī, *al-Falsafa wa-al-kalām*, 93-100.
[389] Ibid., 95.
[390] Ibid., 102-8.
[391] Muḥammad Muḥsin al-Fayḍ al-Kāshānī, *Nawādir al-akhbār*, ed. Mahdī al-Anṣārī al-Qummī (Beirut and Najaf: Dār al-Andalus, 2010), 43, 45.
[392] Al-Fayḍ, *Uṣūl al-maʿārif*, 131.
[393] Al-Fayḍ, *al-Maḥajja al-bayḍāʾ*, 1:149.

[W]isdom consists of theory (ʿilm) and practice (ʿamal). [The theoretical branch is] knowing the truths of the existences in what they are, according to the varied abilities of humans. [While the practical branch is] acting in accordance with how a human ought to, in order to be better in all his circumstances. Both of these [branches] were pointed to by our Prophet. The first in his saying: "[Oh God,] show us things as they are," and the second in his saying: "Act [righteously] as God acts [righteously]."

Al-Khalīl (prophet Abraham), upon our Prophet and him be peace, has [also] pointed to the first, in his saying: "My Lord grant me wisdom"[394] and to the second, in his saying: "and join me to the righteous."[395]

There is no doubt that what is meant here is the two disciplines: the theoretical [wisdom] and the practical [wisdom].

The benefit of the theoretical [wisdom] is the carving of the form of the whole of existence—as it is in its organization and completion—in the human soul, so that it (the existence) becomes an intelligible world that corresponds to the existent world.

All that is mentioned in [the theoretical sphere] resonates from the science of divine unity and its branches.

The benefit of the practical [wisdom, on the other hand,] is emptying of the human soul of vices and sweetening it with virtues such that it becomes a clear mirror within which the signs of Truth, majestic and high, are witnessed. [...]

All that is mentioned in [the practical sphere] resonates from the science of servanthood and its branches.[396]

Al-Fayḍ first quotes the Qurʾān and ḥadīth to differentiate between belief and practice.

He then identifies this differentiation, present in the revelatory sources, with the distinction between pure and practical reason found in the Aristotelian corpus, which might have been available to him through translations or writings of Ibn Sīnā. Lastly, he distinguishes between the use of revelation and reason in both the theoretical and practical spheres. The result is a quaternary division; 1) the use of revelation to understand belief/pure reason, 2) the use of reason to understand belief/pure reason, 3) the use of revelation to inform religious/rational practice and 4) the use of reason to inform religious/rational practice.[397]

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394 *Qurʾān*, 26:83.
395 Ibid., 12:101; Ibid., 26:83.
396 Al-Fayḍ, *ʿAyn al-yaqīn*, 16.
397 For further analysis on this matter, see Nuwayhid, "Origin, Emanation and Return,"24-29.

3.5. Authentic Religious Authority: *Ḥadīth* and the Guidance of the Infallibles

From the early times, Shiʿite intellectuals have dealt with the nature of religious knowledge and its authentic sources. The Shiʿite sectarian identity depends primarily on some important epistemological claims. The most significant of these claims is that the Imams are the only valid sources of religious knowledge, the sole inheritors of the prophetic *maʿrifa*, and the only persons who truly understand the *Qurʾān*. The Safavid period saw a speedy development in scholarly activities related to *ḥadīth*, which used different methods for gaining religious knowledge. This resulted from the sole authority of the Imams over reason, consensus, and the *Qurʾān*.[398]

As a Sufi-minded scholar, al-Fayḍ connected Twelver Shiʿite doctrines to notions of philosophical Sufism. Nonetheless, he strongly believed that embarking on the spiritual path would only be possible by returning to the authentic sources of knowledge, which is *Qurʾān* and *ḥadīth*. Al-Fayḍ points out that God "made the book (*Qurʾān*) and the family [of the Prophet] as the two stretched ropes between Him and us so that He may remove us, through our holding on to both of them, from the pit of our misguidance and cast out our dishonor."[399] Al-Fayḍ dedicated an entire system to explaining the way of guidance, which for him consists of following the path of the Prophet and his legatees, and the sincere among their partisans. In other words, al-Fayḍ like his teacher Mullā Ṣadrā, did not just express what he thought was erroneous with Sufism, but also presented an alternate vision for how a person could spirituality seek the "right" way. There were efforts by Mullā Ṣadrā and al-Fayḍ to put the Shiʿite *ḥadīth* literature and divine philosophy into conversation.[400] This is because it was necessary for scholars like al-

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[398] Anzali, *"Mysticism" in Iran*, 115.
[399] Al-Fayḍ *al-Ṣāfī*, 1:7.
[400] Anzali, *"Mysticism" in Iran*, 124.

Fayḍ to explain how the basis of knowledge such as Sufism and philosophy was actually derived from the teachings of the Imams. Creating firm limits between the false and the genuine quest of *maʿrifa* stressed by al-Fayḍ, ensures that mystical experience would not be comprehended and analyzed in opposition to his understanding of Shiʿite doctrine.

One might assume that the meeting of al-Fayḍ's two interests, *ḥadīth* and Sufism, can be also linked to his loyalty to the *Akhbārī* school of jurisprudence with its attempt to regulate and confine the authority of reason in deriving the law. Dependence on *naql* (revealed texts) rather than *ʿaql* (reason) triggered his understanding both of Sufism and of jurisprudence. Yet, although al-Fayḍ opposes the *ijtihādī* camp, which uses reason as a pivotal tool in deducing legal rulings, he gives reason a high rank in his epistemology, as we saw in the previous section.

Throughout the 11th/17th century, exceptionally prominent figures had a significant impact in redirecting the attention of people from enigmatic Sufi *shaykh*s to the Imams when they wanted help in finding material and mystical aspirations. Some of these popular figures included al-Majlisī al-Awwal, Majlisī al-Thānī, al-Shaykh al-Bahāʾī, and al-Fayḍ. Playing the role of spiritual guides, they led people to different methods of discovering the true meanings of revelation and stay linked to God.[401] The freshly developed Twelver doctrine progressively shifted scholars with Sufi inclinations such as al-Fayḍ, in the direction of a more cautious position regarding Sufi vocabulary and perspective. In al-Fayḍ's works, which cover a period of around half a century, we notice how, with the changing religious environment, he progressively moved away from traditional Sufism and philosophical terminologies, towards *ḥadīth* reports. Regarding his *al-Kalimāt al-maknūna*, Zargar explains how his growing attitude concerning Sufism and philosophy caused al-Fayḍ to produce works such as *Qurrat al-ʿuyūn*, where he

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[401] Ibid., 104-5.

depended strongly on scripture to establish the same claims.[402] *Al-Inṣāf* is another of al-Fayḍ's

works which was completed in 1083/1673, towards the end of his life, and which conveys his

displease with Sufism, theology, and philosophy. "I am not a theologian, a philosopher, or a Sufi

[…] rather, I am an imitator of the *Qurʾān*, *ḥadīth*, and the Prophet, and a follower of the

Household of the Prophet."[403]

Al-Fayḍ's critical evaluation of Sufi masters and Sufism later in his life was discussed by

Leonard Lewisohn. According to Lewisohn, the change in al-Fayḍ's life denotes the

"disillusionment of an old man," such that al-Fayḍ became "a sober pietist whose sole

consolation is the Muslim Scripture and the Shiʿite canon of *ḥadīth*."[404] In my view, the issue can

be stated differently. Throughout his life, al-Fayḍ did not reject Sufism as a science, especially in

its speculative form, which addresses philosophical notions esoterically, but rejected Sufi

masters being the source of the science of Sufism. Instead, for him, the sources should be the

Imams as reported in the *ḥadīth* accounts. Al-Fayḍ argues that Twelver Shiʿite spirituality does

not simply coincide with Sufism but is rather actually its ultimate source. With this, we can

better comprehend that the efforts al-Fayḍ put in writing his earlier mystical treatises were not

just to defend concepts of Sufism and philosophy, but were also aimed at presenting the subtlest

line of criticism against Sufism. Therefore, al-Fayḍ did not reject the Sufi sciences, but claimed

them for Twelver Shiʿism.

Al-Fayḍ seems to have played a significant role in moving philosophical Sufism away

from its Sunni foundations and substituting them with the advanced stage of Shiʿite *ḥadīth*

literature. He empathized with Mullā Ṣadrā's criticism of organized Sufism where he relegated it

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[402] Zargar, "Revealing Revisions," 250.
[403] On this citation and for a deep analysis of al-Fayḍ's later discontent with Sufism and philosophy, see Jaʿfariyān, *Ṣafaviyya*, 2:537-55.
[404] Lewisohn, "Sufism and the School of Isfahān," 127.

to the earlier "vulgar" and "inauthentic" forms that could not conform with the Imams. However, my view is that al-Fayḍ's worries are not simply with the word "Sufi" or "Sufism," instead, his aim is the pursuit of spiritual illumination and the search of real union. Al-Fayḍ served and endorsed a synthetic approach to religiosity which was accessible to the public as it combined common belief and practices. His synthesis blended chief features of philosophical Sufism with the use of traditions from the Imams integrated into a new Twelver doctrine.

What was particularly dangerous in Sufism, as Anzali correctly noted, for the Shiʿite ʿulamāʾ was the social reality of a pole (*quṭb*). Thus, it is not surprising that the master/disciple relationship was a central feature of traditional Sufism and Sufi-minded scholars. In this respect, I agree with Anzali, that the construction of a "*ʿirfān*ian" discourse displays the presence and validity of a separate Shiʿite mystical discourse opposed to the Sufi-Sunni one.[405] However, I again disagree with his gross oversimplification, which considers the Sunni-Sufism to be the traditional Sufi discourse.[406]

The unfavorable view of religious scholars such as al-Qummī and al-Majlisī al-Thānī towards philosophical Sufism cosmology shows an acceptance of al-Fayḍ's efforts to harmonize *kashf* and *naql* (traditional report). In this regard, his ʿ*irfānī* works could have resulted from a later request to harmonize esoteric theory and scripture. It is likely that al-Fayḍ, in acknowledgement of this trend, developed the new account of *al-Kalimāt al-maknūna* called *Qurrat al-ʿuyūn* which argues that true knowledge comes about when scripture is buttressed with contemplation, in contrast to simply depending on the works of philosophers like Ibn Sīnā or Sufis like Ibn ʿArabī. Additionally, the trend would assist an *Akhbārī* purpose, which was conveyed in the autobiography of al-Fayḍ: People who exclusively pursue philosophical and

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[405] Anzali, *"Mysticism" in Iran*, 116.
[406] Ibid.

esoteric teachings and dismissive of the revealed sources can accept that the most difficult

theoretical issues can be seen in a *ḥadīth* collection as common as *al-Kāfī*. This is especially true

since it has been proven with extensive evidences in al-Fayḍ's *al-Laʾāliʾ* and *Qurrat al-ʿuyūn*.[407]

Even though al-Fayḍ's critique of some anti-Sufi religious scholars is clear, his own accounts,

especially those written towards the end of his life, show that he is equally opposed to followers

of Sufism and philosophy who do not regard scripture. He reprimands those who accept that

"among the religious sciences is that which cannot be found in the *Qurʾān* and *ḥadīth*, and can be

understood instead from books of philosophy and Sufism."[408]

On this subject, al-Fayḍ, in his *Bishārat al-shīʿa*, completed in 1081/1670–71 (nearly a

decade prior to his death), urges his followers to value the knowledge of the Imams above all,

even above scholars with extraordinary spiritual insight.[409] He explicitly indicates in his *al-Uṣūl*

al-aṣīla, that all the judgments and wisdoms mentioned in the *Qurʾān* and the purified prophetic

tradition are not known "save to the Prophet and those who have taken their knowledge from

God most high through his [the Prophet] mediation of his Infallible Household and his purified

trustees (*awṣiyāʾ*) generation after generation."[410] He also cautions that the declarations of Ibn

ʿArabī are not reliable and are sometimes even absurd, "despite the abundance of his knowledge,

the precision of his perspective, despite his traversing in the land of realities and his

understanding of mysteries and [cosmological] subtleties."[411] Al-Fayḍ stresses that the measure

of truth in the unveilings of a wayfarer is revelation; when an unveiling challenges revelation,

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[407] See Zargar, "Revealing Revisions."

[408] See Muḥammad Muḥsin al-Fayḍ al-Kāshānī, *al-Inṣāf*, in *Dah Risālih-yi Muḥaqqiq-i Buzurg*, Fayż-i Kāshānī, ed. Rasūl Jaʿfariyān (Isfahan: 1992), 188.

[409] For the date of composition, see Nājī-Naṣrābādī, *Kitābshināsī*, 153.

[410] Muḥammad Muḥsin al-Fayḍ al-Kāshānī, *al-Uṣūl al-aṣīla*, ed. Sayyid Abū al-Qāsim Naqībī and Ḥasan Qāsimī, (Tehran: Munshūrāt al-Madrasa al-ʿUlyā li-al-Shahīd al-Muṭahharī), 35.

[411] Bīdārfar, "Introduction" to al-Fayḍ's *ʿIlm al-yaqīn*, 1:41.
Aware that Ibn ʿArabī was resented by many Shiʿite scholars, al-Fayḍ referred to him as "one of the gnostics" (*aḥad al-ʿurafāʾ*) when citing his works. This method was also followed by Mullā Ṣadrā.

then the wayfarer "has been entered [by Satan] and his unveiling was infirm."[412] In order to preserve the sciences of *ḥikma* and *maʿrifa*, al-Fayḍ, towards the end of his life, produced *al-Kalimāt al-makhzūna*, a discourse on *ḥikma* which is more consistent and brief than the original *al-Kalimāt al-maknūna*. This was intended for the audience who do not require a reminder that scripture is the standard of truth.

Now, one of the central concepts of philosophical Sufism adopted and discussed by al-Fayḍ in the Shiʿite context is that of the Perfect Man (*al-insān al-kāmil*). Some Muslim mystics, including al-Fayḍ, attempt to reduce the gap between man and the Absolute by proposing the concept of the Perfect Man. In his *al-Kalimāt al-maknūna*, al-Fayḍ discusses the concept in the context of a range of the topics under the broad title of mystical philosophy. His comprehension of the concept of the Perfect Man was in the context of the self-manifestation of the Absolute.[413] Al-Fayḍ, using Ḥaydar al-Āmulī's formulation,[414] regards the Prophets and Imams as distinct forms of the Perfect Man, whose manifestations fall under four categories: absolute prophethood (*nubuwwa*), absolute sainthood (*walāya*), limited prophethood, and limited sainthood.[415] In al-Fayḍ's view of *imāma* or *walāya*, we notice the great influence of Ibn ʿArabī's world view. As the concept of Imam took shape, Ibn ʿArabī's world view, particularly his concept of the Perfect Man, was fixed to suit and integrated into al-Fayḍ theories. A good example of the confluence of Ibn ʿArabī's mysticism and Shiʿite Imamology is seen in Safavid *ʿirfān*, and the description of al-Fayḍ in his *al-Kalimāt al-maknūna*.[416]

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[412] See Zargar, "Revealing Revisions," 260.

[413] To better understand this link, some Muslim philosophers and intellectuals use the theory of emanation (*fayḍ*) or self-manifestation (*tajallī*). The Absolute represents the complete reality before "His" Self-determination into the real world. On the Perfect Man and the self-manifestation of the Absolute in al-Fayḍ's thought, see Kamada, "Fayḍ al-Kāshānī's Walaya," 457-61.

[414] See Kamada, "Fayḍ al-Kāshānī's Walaya."

[415] On Prophethood and Sainthood in al-Fayḍ's thought see, Shigeru Kamada, "Fayḍ al-Kāshānī's Walaya," 461-63.

[416] In his commentary on the Āyat al-Nūr (The Verse of Light, *Qurʾān*, 24:35), Mullā Ṣadrā provides an explanation of the concept of the Perfect Man. Nonetheless, it could be debated that he, unlike al-Fayḍ, does not follow a clear

Al-Fayḍ returned to *al-Kalimāt al-maknūna* thirty years after writing it, using its contents to compose *Qurrat al-ʿuyūn fī aʿazz al-funūn*, completed in 1088/1677. According to Muḥsin Bīdārfar's argument, al-Fayḍ might have "aimed at writing a book easier for the majority of people, namely the exoterically-minded, to accept."[417] However, even though the terminology clearly evocative of Ibn ʿArabī is less visible, the main concepts are still presented. In *Qurrat al-ʿuyūn,* al-Fayḍ's revisions emphasizes on clarifying the links to the *ḥadīth* and the *Qurʾān* much clearer, while the non-scriptural components of the proposed cosmology of al-Fayḍ was occasionally withdrawn into the background. Bīdārfar argues that the changes are frequently subtle and simple.[418] He gives an example where "*haqāʾiq al-makhlūqāt*" has substituted "*al-aʿyān*", or where "*al-insān al-maʿsūm*" (the Infallible Man) has substituted "*al-insān al-kāmil*" (the Perfect Man).[419] In both instances, terms in revelatory sources substitute terms that are obviously related to the school of Ibn ʿArabī. Hence, although *Qurrat al-ʿuyūn* and *al-Kalimāt al-maknūna* often match up the cosmological arguments raised and in a number of large sections of writing, the revisions al-Fayḍ made to the original *al-Kalimāt al-maknūna* in *Qurrat al-ʿuyūn* discloses a more scriptural orientation. Thus, the simplified discussion that covers the theories of Mullā Ṣadrā and Ibn ʿArabī forms the basis to the understanding of the cosmology in the Shiʿite narrations.[420]

Al-Fayḍ's later view toward Sufism was perhaps part of a greater anti-Sufi mood in 11th/17th century Iran, one that was caused by a complex set of economic, social, and courtly

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Twelver Shiʿite feature of the Perfect Man. Mullā Ṣadrā Ṣadr al-Dīn Muḥammad ibn Ibrāhīm, *Tafsīr-i āyat-i mubāraka-yi nūr*, ed. and trans. into Persian by Muḥammad Khajavī (Tehran: 1362 SH/1983-84 AD), 171-90. Also, see Mohsen Mahmoud Saleh, "The Verse of Light: A Study of Mullā Ṣadrā's Philosophical Qurʾān Exegesis" (PhD diss., Temple University, 1994).

[417] Bīdārfar, "Introduction" to al-Fayḍ's *ʿIlm al-yaqīn*, 1:34.

[418] Ibid.

[419] Ibid.

[420] Zargar, "Revealing Revisions," 250.

changes that resulted in panic among the clerics. The particular object of criticism was the reverence of the common people for dervishes, Sufi *shaykh*s and the messianic Abū Muslim.[421] A shift was indeed clear in the lifetime of al-Fayḍ, and the mood among the ʿulamāʾ and even the royal court was one of lessening tolerance towards Sufism.[422] Nevertheless, Zargar argues that al-Fayḍ's shifts reveal his increased concern with the authority of scripture that was seen in his later life.[423] This was perhaps part of a wider "*ḥadīth* revival" in the Shiʿite intellectual milieu, which resulted in the emergence of the famous *ḥadīth* compilations of the period, and corresponding decline of non-scriptural sources of religious knowledge. The situation, as Sajjad Rizvi argues, was such that Mullā Ṣadrā's son, Ibrāhīm (d. 1071/1660–61), rejected the study of philosophical and Sufi texts, and studied instead *ḥadīth* and jurisprudence, acquiring the tutelage of Yūsuf al-Baḥrānī, who was an intense critic of Mullā Ṣadrā.[424]

3.6. Al-Fayḍ's Unique Integrative Intellectual Character

In conclusion, what was presented and explained in this chapter shows the great extent to which al-Fayḍ engaged with three branches of knowledge: the rational, spiritual (Sufi-mystical), and traditional Twelver Shiʿite doctrine. If we try to present these three branches in a specific terminology it would be: *burhān*, *ʿirfān*, and *Qurʾān* as Kalin, among others, presented in the case of Mullā Ṣadrā. Al-Fayḍ's epistemological theory can perhaps be presented as the

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[421] See Newman, "Clerical Perceptions of Sufi Practices in Late Seventeenth-Century Persia," 135-64.

[422] As discussed in Chapter Two, in the rules of Shah ʿAbbās I (r. 996–1038/1588–1629) and Shah ʿAbbās II (r. 1052-1077/1642–1666) there was acceptance of philosophical and non-*ṭarīqa* Sufism. Nevertheless, Rizvi argues, that later in Safavid Iran, the inclination towards the spiritual supremacy of the Absent Imam as well as the authority of his representatives (i.e. the Shah and the jurist), resulted in a decrease in the spiritual supremacy of the Sufi circles, which represent the potential supremacy of an individual. See Sajjad H. Rizvi, "A Sufi Theology Fit for a Shīʿī King: The Gawhar-i Murād of ʿAbd al-Razzāq Lāhījī," in *Sufism and Theology*, ed. Ayman Shihadeh (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2007), 85-86.

[423] Zargar, "Revealing Revisions," 243.

[424] Ibid.

following: a scholar must not be a pure theologian with no knowledge except of disputations, nor a Peripatetic philosopher who ruins and deserts religion, nor a pseudo-Sufi who becomes complacent with assertions of visions and realization without evidence. This is why it is necessary to acknowledge the status of al-Fayḍ as the master of the rational and religious/scriptural sciences (*jāmiʿ al-maʿqūl wa al-manqūl*) and as the only scholar—as far as I have been able to determine—to be titled the philosopher of the jurists and the jurist of the philosophers (*faylasūf al-fuqahāʾ wa-faqīh al-falāsifa*). Although this thesis has shown why al-Fayḍ would have been given this unique title, a future study could perhaps better elaborate on this result, examining al-Fayḍ's genuine and parallel engagement with both the philosophical and juristic traditions.

Conclusion

In this thesis, I have provided a general overview of the life, scholarly contacts as well as the intellectual make-up of Muḥammad Muḥsin al-Fayḍ al-Kāshānī. I have listed al-Fayḍ's major travels and indicated the precise or nearly approximation of the dates of these travels and contacts. In addition, I have demonstrated how Mullā Ṣadrā, among other teachers such as al-Bahāʾ ī and Mājid al-Baḥrānī, was important in shaping al-Fayḍ's intellectual ideas and religious and philosophical doctrines. I have also discussed al-Fayḍ's association with different centers of learning (i.e. Mecca, Isfahan, and Shiraz) that helped shape his intellectual output. In addition, I have elaborated on his integration of the *ḥadīth* tradition, his adoption of the *Akhbārī* legal system, and his philosophical and mystical inclinations. Moreover, I have discussed al-Fayḍ's relationship with the Safavid court and its influence on the orientation of his writings. I have shown a systematic assessment of many of the socio-intellectual shifts and the possible factors that molded al-Fayḍ's thought. In doing so, I presented the orientation that occurred in al-Fayḍ's career, where in his early decades (the pre-*Shaykh al-islam* era), he functioned as a popular religious scholar, comfortable in spreading religion over the cities he visited as mentioned in the First Chapter. However, the fourth phase of his career, epitomized by being *Shaykh al-islam*, was markedly different as discussed in Chapter Two. In this concern, I discussed how the affiliation of al-Fayḍ with the state, during the time of Shah ʿAbbās II, clearly impacted his style and method of writing, given his exposure to exoteric jurists, which were uneasy with his strong mystical and philosophical tendencies. His time in Isfahan brought an acute awareness and a concern with issues of religious authority and authenticity that were being debated in the lively intellectual environment of the capital.

In this thesis, I have attempted to understand the doctrinal, epistemological, and methodological features of al-Fayḍ's intellectual character. In doing so, I have identified a consistent approach to sciences that al-Fayḍ uses in his writings. Throughout al-Fayḍ's intellectual character, one could see that Mullā Ṣadrā is the main philosophical inspiration of al-Fayḍ. As I have shown in Chapter Two and Three of this thesis, the structure of the topics al-Fayḍ contributed to, mirrors in large the tradition of *al-Ḥikma al-Mutaʿāliya*. This is particularly true as al-Fayḍ depends on his predecessor's opinions, method, and technical vocabulary as templates for his own, and engages the Ṣadrian system, at least in its structure and terminology. Al-Fayḍ did not intend to present a new philosophical method other than that of his teacher, rather he widely developed Mullā Ṣadrā's epistemic method so that its success is reflected in different religious sciences. Certain aspects of al-Fayḍ's epistemic approach seem on the surface to be restatements of Mullā Ṣadrā's, such as the epistemic faculties and its role in reconciling religious, mystical, and philosophical ideas and teachings, but they are in fact motivated by al-Fayḍ distinctive integrative character. This becomes clearer if we take into consideration that al-Fayḍ was more engaged in religious sciences when compared to his teacher. For example, from his engagement with the Ṣadrian tradition, we learn that the determination of the human's station of knowledge depends on the modification and refinement of the characters. Thus, this is what forms the link between al-Fayḍ's epistemology and his ethical theory, as explained in Chapter Three.

With respect to the epistemic aspects adopted by al-Fayḍ, I have argued that al-Fayḍ's close reading of Mullā Ṣadrā's epistemic doctrines and his building on them was directed in part by the socio-religious changes that took place in the second half of the 11th/17th century Safavid Iran, especially the conditions of philosophy and Sufism and their relationship to other sciences.

Al-Fayḍ's opinion on Sufism and the *Ijtihādī* camp presents a pivotal aspect of his epistemic orientation. As I have discussed in Chapter Two, the basis for al-Fayḍ's epistemology has its doctrinal and socio-political establishment. Therefore, al-Fayḍ does not directly state his adoption of the Ṣadrian method due to the harsh critiques that the main doctrines and the inclinations of Mullā Ṣadrā had faced from the exoteric scholars. This is especially in his later works where he tries to reshape and rephrase his early mystical and philosophical works.

Given how thin the direct discussions surrounding the epistemic issues are in al-Fayḍ's intellectual output, I picked the scattered epistemic pieces in his works to study his method and understand its definitive establishments. For that, I have benefited from a comprehensive account of his works in the fields of philosophy, rational theology, mysticism, ethics, *ḥadīth*, and *Qurʾān* exegesis. By supplementing my reading of al-Fayḍ's epistemology with the contents of some of his major works, I have reconstructed what I take to be al-Fayḍ's core epistemic method. I have shown that his methodology of writing is established on an epistemic basic insight. I was also able to identify and discuss the core elements of his distinctive integrative epistemology, namely, demonstrative proof, mystical unveiling, and divine revelation. In this concern I worked out the theological and philosophical bases that underlie them. Furthermore, I have proven in several parts of this thesis, especially in Chapter Three, that al-Fayḍ's proposed epistemic categorization reflects his own understanding of the true religion during one of the most scholarly diversified periods of Twelver Shiʿism.

Al-Fayḍ's works show the applicational aspects of his epistemic faculties rather than describing the epistemic method itself. Indeed, his presentation of the ontological structure of his epistemic method appears mainly in his philosophical works, especially in *ʿAyn al-yaqīn*, which Wissam Nuwayhid studied structurally in his thesis. The scope of my analysis, however, is

restricted to the epistemic method that appears commonly in al-Fayḍ's corpses. Therefore, by supplementing my analysis of this method with a discussion of al-Fayḍ's methodological features and some main doctrines which appear in his wide range works, I have identified the basic elements of a Fayḍian epistemic method. However, in order to gain a more comprehensive understanding of al-Fayḍ's epistemic method and its development, it would be necessary to deeply examine all his prominent works under every science he covers. In addition, it would also be necessary to study his doctrinal, law, and jurisprudential works in order to understand how his epistemic method relates to the moral, eschatological, and theological dimensions of his thought. Only then would we obtain a clear picture of al-Fayḍ's comprehensive integrative epistemology.

Ultimately, after doing my research for this thesis, I feel that a more intense focus should be stressed on al-Fayḍ, the controversial and integrative figure of Shiʿism and of Safavid Iran. This is especially true if we consider the huge amount of works he left behind, which cover almost all the sciences that the Muslim scholars engaged in, and his direct and indirect influence on the Shiʿite tradition, especially represented in the seminary of Qum nowadays. Al-Fayḍ was an inspiration for many succeeding thinkers, religious scholars, and intellectual establishments, including al-Fayḍiyya seminary in Qum, named after him.[425] His epistemology is also reflected in the ideas and writings of prominent philosophers and political thinkers, such as Muḥammad Ḥusayn al-Ṭabāṭabāʾī (d. 1401/1981) and Ruḥullāh al-Khumaynī (d. 1409/1989). It also helped shape the traditions in several centers of Shiʿite learning in the Middle East.[426] In my view, further studies should be done on al-Fayḍ in his intellectual connection to al-Majlisī al-Awwal, al-Bahāʾī, al-Ghazālī, and Ibn ʿArabī, which my limited time and aim of this thesis did not allow me to shed the light on. More generally, further work awaits on his scholarly training,

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[425] Zargar, "Revealing Revisions," 262.
[426] Rizvi, ""Only the Imam Knows Best"," 487-503.

relationship to his *shaykh*s and students, and the shifts in his intellectual output during different phases of his life. I hope that my findings in the regard of al-Fayḍ's doctrinal, epistemological, and methodological features will mature more brightly, in my hands or by other blessed, so that we can extract the intellectual pearls of al-Fayḍ's massive and deep treasure.

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