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Shushtarī's Treatise *on the Limits of Theology and Sufism: Discursive Knowledge (ʿilm), Direct Recognition (maʿrifa), and Mystical Realization (taḥqīq)* in *al-Risāla al-Quṣāriyya*

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Abstract: Abū l-Ḥasan al-Shushtarī's (d. 668/1269) heretofore unedited and unstudied treatise, "On the Limits [of Theology and Sufism]" (*R. al-Quṣāriyya*) is a succinct account of the celebrated Andalusī Sufi poet's understanding of the relationship between discursive knowledge (ʿilm) of the rational Ashʿarite theologians, direct and unitive recognition (maʿrifa) of the Sufis, and verified knowledge (taḥqīq) of the monist Realizers. Following a broad discussion of the major trends in Sufism that form the background out of which Shushtarī emerges, this article analyzes the *Quṣāriyya* and presents a full English translation and Arabic edition of this text. The *Quṣāriyya* is a treatise on epistemology that was written in order to provide guidance to a disciple on how to respond to accusations of doctrinal heresy and deviation from the revealed Law. As such, it offers a window into Shushtarī's thought as well as his understanding of his own place within the 7th/13th century Islamic intellectual tradition. The hierarchy of knowledge that he outlines represents an early response to the growing epistemological debates between what may be called "monotheist Ashʿarites," "monist-inclined Sufis," and fully fledged "monist Realizers." The differences between these three perspectives lie in how each understands God's bestowal of existence (ījād) and, consequently, the ontological status of the created realm. The Ashʿarites are "monotheists" because they inhabit an atomistic creation that actually exists by virtue of God's existentiating command. For them, God transcends creation, and creation proves the existence of a transcendent Creator. The Sufis, for their part, incline toward the monists for whom God is the sole Reality, and for whom all else is nonexistent (ʿadam). However, they begin by affirming the logic of the Ashʿarite monotheist paradigm, and as they acquire direct recognition of God through spiritual purification, they assert that the Creator proves the existence of creation, because the latter is an "empty tent" sustained by the divine command. Finally, the "monist" Realizer maintains that nothing other than God exists. Having realized the truths that the theologians speculate about and that the Sufis begin to experience, the Realizers can engage, affirm, and refute both groups at their respective levels without committing to the cosmological doctrines of Ashʿarism, the ontological categories of Avicennan philosophy, or even the Sufi conception of the spiritual path to God.

Keywords: Al-Andalus; Mamlūk; Sufism; mysticism; Ashʿarism; theology; monism; monotheism; realization (taḥqīq); Islamic epistemology

1. Introduction

Sufism began to consolidate as a self-conscious school of Islamic mysticism by the beginning of the second half of the 3rd/9th century.¹ Practitioners of Sufism achieved recognition as proponents and transmitters of an independent science (*‘ilm al-taṣawwuf*) by the middle of the 5th/11th century with the emergence of Arabic Sufi hagiographies (*ṭabaqāt*), as well as compilations of Sufi lore in the central and eastern lands of Islam, especially around Baghdad, Basra and the region of Khorasan. The great theorists of the renunciant way of life penned the classical manuals of Sufism, including “The Book of Gleams” (*K. al-Luma’ fī l-taṣawwuf*) of Abū Naṣr al-Sarrāj (d. 378/988), “The Nourishment of the Hearts,” (*Qūt al-Qulūb*) of Abū Ṭālib al-Makkī (d. 386/996), and the “Epistle of al-Qushayrī” (*R. al-Qushayriyya*) of Abū l-Qāsim al-Qushayrī (d. 465/1074). In chronicling the transformations of the soul on its journey back to God, these authors conceived of the spiritual path primarily, though not exclusively, in psychological terms. They described a progressive ascension of the soul through various states and stations (*maqāmāt*, *ahwāl*) of ethical perfection in tandem with a gradual unveiling of the heart as it acquires direct recognition of God (*ma’rifā*). (Casewit 2017, pp. 1–90; Bowering 1979, pp. 18–35).

The idea that the ethical transformation of the wayfarer through ritual practice goes hand in hand with the acquisition of heightened powers of perception and direct knowledge of God (*ma’rifā*) through divine grace seems to have been shared by many Sufis from the earliest period. The employment of the term *ma’rifā* to mean direct, unmediated, non-discursive, experiential, and unitive recognition of God through spiritual purification can be dated back to texts of the 2nd, 3rd/8th, 9th centuries. *Ma’rifā* appears to take on a distinct technical significance in statements attributed to figures like Ja’far al-Šādiq (d. 148/765) as well as the surviving writings of Dhū l-Nūn al-Miṣrī (d. ca. 245/859) (Ogunnaike forthcoming). For these authors, *ma’rifā* is usually contrasted with *‘ilm*, or knowledge of the religious sciences that is based on the transmitted tradition (*naql*) and acquired through formal training. These transmitted religious sciences, moreover, were often seen as being complementary to various intellectual sciences (*al-‘ulūm al-‘aqliyya*) that are conditioned by the delimited rational intellect (*‘aql*), including logic, theology, and philosophy (*falsafa*, *ḥikma*).

While the contrast between conceptual *‘ilm* and experiential *ma’rifā* was largely adopted in Sufi discourse, its epistemological implications were yet to be fully worked out. Sufis expressed a variety of attitudes toward discursive theology and the role of the rational intellect (*‘aql*) in knowing God. Some were strongly opposed to actively involving the intellect in acquiring knowledge of God and dismissed theological speculation as a veil, or, at best, as an adequate rational attempt at knowing God (Ebstein forthcoming). Early Sufis like Nūrī (d. 295/907–8) famously proclaimed that “the intellect is impotent and only provides proof for that which is impotent” (*al-‘aql ‘ājiz lā yadullu illā ‘alā ‘ājiz mithilī*) (Sarrāj 1914, p. 40). Such figures tended to discourage their followers from delving into the speculative rational teachings of the theologians and favored the use of the intellect for the purpose of contemplating the signs and traces of God’s attributes in creation. Following the Qur’ānic injunctions to contemplate God’s signs, they regarded contemplation to be a means of cultivating certainty and aligning the believer’s will with God’s command.

Some Sufis, such as Ḥakīm al-Tirmidhī (d. 255/869), held a mildly favorable view toward theology and were even trained in it. Such figures presented the findings of Sufism as complementary to theology. Like early Mu’tazilite and Ash’arite theologians, they insisted that the intellect can increase the believer’s certitude in God’s existence and the afterlife when employed in order to contemplate God’s signs. Well-known figures such as al-Ḥārith al-Muḥāsibī (d. 243/857), Abū Bakr al-Kalābādhī (d. 380/990), Abū l-Qāsim al-Qushayrī (d. 465/1074), and Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī (d. 505/1111) were professionally trained in the discursive methods of theology (*kalām*) and incorporated Ash’arite

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doctrines and creeds within their own works (Ebstein forthcoming). Although these Sufi-theologians expressed a certain skepticism toward the science of theology vis-à-vis direct experience and mystical unveiling, they affirmed the utility and validity of the Ashʿarite Sunni creed. Their perspectives stood in contrast to the non-Sufi theologians such as Abū Bakr al-Bāqillānī (d. 403/1013) and Abū l-Maʿālī al-Juwaynī (d. 478/1085) who did not accommodate Sufi claims to accessing esoteric knowledge through unveiling (*kashf*), and instead articulated a theological epistemology that seeks to know God and defend the tenets of the faith exclusively through rational evidence.

Setting aside these diverse Sufi attitudes toward rational theology, it is important to note that early Sufis did not develop a full-fledged cosmological and ontological discourse of their own. As such, pre-5th/11th century Sufis generally did not pose a formidable intellectual challenge to the emerging Ashʿarite and Māturīdite theological consensus. This allowed for Sufism and theology to develop as more or less distinct disciplines with little interdisciplinarity. Moreover, the pithy insights, ecstatic utterances (*shaṭhiyyāt*), and the theological “errors” (*ghalaṭ*) of early controversial Sufis such as Abū Yazīd al-Bisṭāmī (d. 261/874) and Ibn Mansūr al-Ḥallāj (d. 309/922) tended to be cautiously filtered out or interpreted along theologically acceptable lines by the abovementioned Sufis, thus ensuring the development of Sufism and theology side by side with little cross-disciplinary interaction (Shihadeh 2012, pp. 1–14).

The epistemological rifts that divide theologians and Sufi theoreticians gradually widened in the 6th, 7th/12th, 13th centuries as the latter developed an increasingly monist cosmology and ontology in both conversation with and opposition to late Ashʿarite theology and Avicennan philosophy. In the early 6th/12th century Muslim East, theologically and philosophically inclined mystics such as ʿAyn al-Quḍāt Ḥamadānī (d. 525/1131) articulated a “higher” theology of their own to explain their mystical unveilings, and this discourse posed a direct challenge to the theologians. Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī (d. 505/1111) was among the first influential Sufi-theologian-philosophers who both mastered and transformed theology and tried to theorize a method of “demonstrative unveiling” (*inkishāf burhānī*) that combined the ineluctable certainty of the philosophers with the mystical experience of the Sufis (Ghazālī 1971, pp. 54, 55). As many medieval and contemporary scholars have noted, he oscillated in his writings between monotheism and monism, and often presented the latter in the language of a higher mystical metaphysics. In “The Niche of Lights” (*Mishkāṭ al-anwār*), he expresses monist views and conceives of the intellect more in light of Ikhwānīan Neoplatonism and Avicennan philosophy as a cosmic principle that mediates between the divine and the corporeal realm, without denying the utility of theology in removing rational doubts and correcting creedal errors.

The efflorescence of a syncretic and Neoplatonized Sufi cosmology is detectable in al-Andalus already in the writings of figures like Ibn Masarra (d. 319/931). His controversial teachings and monist leanings (Casewit 2017, pp. 33–38) were forced underground periodically between the 4th, 5th/10th, 11th centuries, then reemerged as a fully developed mystical philosophy with Ibn Barrajān (d. 536/1141) and his peers in the formative early 6th/12th century.² Andalusī mystics of the 6th/12th century were loosely committed to Ashʿarism, explicitly opposed to Muʿtazilism and Avicennan philosophy, and were actively articulating their own Sufi metaphysics at the same time. They merged Qurʾānic teachings and Sunnī Ḥadīth with the Neoplatonizing treatises of the Brethren of Purity (*Ikhwān al-ṣafā*), the writings of Ibn Masarra and, through indirect contact, Fāṭimī Ismāʿīlī cosmological doctrines circulating in the intellectual milieu of al-Andalus (Ebstein 2014). As such, exponents of this mystical discourse seemed to be more interested in cosmology, the science of letters, cyclical notions of time, and the principle of associative correspondence between heaven and earth than in the discursive methods of the Ashʿarites, or even Sufi wayfaring, ethics, and the psychology of the soul. These mystics emphasized the centrality of contemplative “crossing over” from the visible signs of God to the unseen celestial realities (*ʿtibār*,

² For Ibn Masarra on the divine names, see also Abū l-ʿAbbās b. al-Uqlīshī’s discussion of his teachings in (Ibn al-Uqlīshī 2017, vol. 1, pp. 240–43).

or *al-ibra min al-shāhid ilā al-ghāib*), adding, as per early Eastern Sufis, a mystical dimension to the theological tenet of “inferring from the visible that which is hidden” (*istidlāl bi'l-shāhid 'alā al-ghāib*). (Ebstein forthcoming; Casewit 2017, pp. 266–78).

These *i'tibār*-centered teachings were further developed in the 7th/13th century in the elaborate writings of Ibn al-ʿArabī (d. 638/1240), ʿAfīf al-Dīn al-Tilimsānī (d. 690/1290), ʿAlī al-Ḥarrālī (d. 638/1240), ʿAbd al-Ḥaqq b. Sabʿīn (d. 669/1270), as well as Abū l-Ḥasan al-Shushtarī. These authors were indebted not only to the *i'tibār* tradition but also to Avicennan teachings and late Ashʿarite philosophical theology. However, the ontological discourse of these 7th/13th century mystics distinguished itself from the epistemological foundations of Ashʿarism and Avicennan philosophy and moved away from the formative Andalusī mystical discourse. As such, they no longer held *i'tibār* so centrally to their worldview. (Casewit 2017, pp. 1–13, 57–90). Instead of using the term *i'tibār* to mean a crossing over into the unseen, they generally employed this term to denote a shift in metaphysical perspective and described the highest religious experience in terms of *taḥqīq*.

Indeed, the term *taḥqīq*, or Sufi “realization,” “authentication,” or “verification,” looms large over Islamic mystical discourse from the 7th/13th century onward, and seems to replace the earlier Andalusī mystics’ emphasis on “contemplative crossing over” into the unseen. Like *i'tibār*, the term *taḥqīq* has a long history. It was employed by Arabic lexicographers such as Sībawayh (d. 177–80/793–6), and is arguably prefigured in al-Kindī’s (d. 260/873) discussion of the philosopher’s quest for the truth (*al-ḥaqq*) in his treatise *On First Philosophy* (Adamson and Pormann 2012). Moreover, the early 4th, 5th/10th, 11th century theologians used the term *taḥqīq* to mean the rational demonstration of the tenets of the Islamic faith. They typically employed it in contrast to *taqlīd*, or the uncritical acceptance of transmitted teachings and delegation of authority to one’s teachers (Frank 1989; El-Rouayheb 2015, p. 59). The Brethren of Purity (*Ikhwān al-ṣafā*), Avicenna (d. 428/1037), and Ibn Ṭufayl (d. 581/1185) used *taḥqīq* to mean the independent logical demonstration of the veracity of philosophical teachings. As such, a verifier (*muḥaqqiq*) critically engages and assesses received teachings, whereas a conformist (*muqallid*) simply delegates authority to experts and transmits and explains the teachings of a school to his pupils (Gutas 1988, pp. 187–93).

While the theologians and philosophers use the term *taḥqīq* to mean the critical engagement with the views that are passed down in one’s intellectual school through the independent application of the tools of logic and dialectic, for Ibn ʿArabī and his followers, the term has an entirely mystical connotation. Qūnawī (d. 673/1274) calls his path “the School (lit. drinking place) of Realization” (*mashrab al-taḥqīq*) (Geoffroy 2013), while Shushtarī and Ibn Sabʿīn reserve the term for the most elevated Friends of God (*awliyāʾ*) who experience complete, direct and unmediated immersion in and authentication of God’s all-embracing reality. According to Shushtarī and his likeminded peers, this verified reality is what the common believers assent to through uncritical acceptance (*taqlīd*), the theologians attempt to demonstrate through logical reasoning (*ʿaql*), and the Sufis begin taste through direct knowledge and experience (*maʿrifa*). Although the teachings of the “Realizers” (*muḥaqqiqūn*) became controversial for their bold monist conclusions, this 7th/13th century mystical discourse also offered nuanced and sophisticated solutions to age-old philosophical-theological problems, such as the relationship between the Essence and the attributes. By articulating a distinct ontology in conversation with the late Ashʿarite and Avicennan philosophical traditions, they effected a long-term epistemic shift in Islamic thought and became the subject of heated debates over the centuries.

Abū l-Ḥasan al-Shushtarī (b. ca. 610/1213; d. 668/1269) was a product of this 7th/13th century Andalusī-Maghribī mystico-philosophical tradition. Due partly to the instability of the Muslim West in the late Almohad period, he and other members of the school of Realization settled in the East, and their teachings left an indelible mark on Islamic thought. His heretofore unstudied treatise, “On the Limits [of Theology and Sufism],” (*R. al-Quṣāriyya*), which is analyzed, translated, and edited below, is a succinct account of the author’s understanding of the relationship between theology, Sufism, and the “school of realization.”

2. Life and Educational Formation

The life of Abū l-Ḥasan ‘Alī b. ‘Abd Allāh al-Numayrī al-Shushtarī al-Wādī Āshī al-Lūshī al-Fāsī al-Ribātī,³ has received scholarly attention in medieval biographers and modern Arabic and European languages.⁴ While a full study of his life can be dispensed with here, as the relevant details have been presented elsewhere, it is worth highlighting a few biographical details that are mentioned in modern Arabic secondary literature that have been overlooked in many secondary studies in European languages. Shushtarī himself is silent concerning his family background, though he appears to have been born into a prosperous family of emirs associated with the ruling Almohad authorities in al-Andalus (Shushtarī 2004, p. 41). The late Moroccan Sufi exegete, Aḥmad b. ‘Ajība (d. 1809), claims that “he was a vizier and a scholar, and his father was an emir.” (Ibn ‘Ajība 1985, p. 28). He was born the year of the crushing defeat of al-Nāṣir the Almohad to the Christians in the battle of al-‘Uqāb (July 609/1212), or Las Navas de Tolosa, northeast of Cordoba, which ushered a long period of decline that continued for almost three centuries and resulted in the eventual fragmentation of Islam in al-Andalus and the fall of Granada in 1492. Despite these circumstances, he seems to have received a refined Andalusī education and was trained in a broad range of religious sciences, although little is known about his teachers.⁵

Shushtarī was a merchant by profession, and like many Andalusī mystics of his day, he lived an itinerant life of voluntary poverty and in service of the poor. We are told that he traveled widely across the politically fragmented regions of al-Andalus, visiting the cities of Granada and Malaga, and crossing the straits to Morocco where he visited Fes and stayed in Meknes for some time. By the time he reached North Africa, he may have already been initiated into the Sufi tradition as transmitted by the Granadan judge Muḥyī l-Dīn Muḥammad b. Muḥammad b. Ibrāhīm b. Surāqa al-Shāṭibī (d. 662/1263) at the fortified outpost (*ribāt*) of al-‘Uqāb. The latter, not to be confused for his father who was also known as Muḥyī l-Dīn, traveled to the East where he studied with or became the disciple of ‘Umar al-Suhrawardī (d. 632/1234), the author of the widely acclaimed Sufi classic, “The Benefits of the Gnostic Sciences” (*‘Awārif al-ma‘ārif*). This Ibn Surāqa later settled in Cairo, and it is also possible that Shushtarī was initiated by him there (Ibn al-Khaṭīb 1977, vol. 4, p. 206; Massignon 1949, p. 33).

Shushtarī was noted for his intense renunciation and withdrawal from the world (*tajrīd*) and for wearing the Sufi patched cloak (*muraqqā‘a*) (Pérez 2000). It is in Meknes that he probably wrote his famous poem “A little Shaykh from the land of Meknes” (*shuwaykh min ard meknes*). He then headed to

³ The tribal designation (*nisba*) of al-Numayrī traces back to Numayr b. ‘Amir b. Ṣaṣa‘a, one of the clans (*buṭūn*) of the Arab tribe (*qabilā*) of Hawāzin. “Al-Shushtarī,” from “Shushtar” is a village near Wādī Āsh (Guadix), east of Granada. It was named “Shushtar” because settlers from Tustar, or Shushtar (Yodar), a city in the northern region of the Ahwāz province in Iran, settled there. “Al-Lūshī,” an ascription to the town of Loja, in the western province of Granada. Our author is also referred to as al-Fāsī—tracing his lineage back to the Moroccan city of Fez where he probably stayed. He is also called *al-Ribātī*, which refers either to his stay in the city of Rabat (*ribāt al-fath*), or that he spent time in fortified outposts (*ribāt*). He was also known as al-Madyanī (follower of Abū Madyan), and al-Sab‘īnī (follower of Ibn Sab‘īn). For more, see (Ben Arfa 2015, pp. 135–38).

⁴ For medieval biographers see (Ibn al-Ṭawwāḥ 2008, pp. 120–33, no. 6; Ibn al-Ṭawwāḥ 1995, pp. 103–15; Ghubrīnī 1979, pp. 239–42, no. 67; Ibn al-Khaṭīb 1977, vol. 4, pp. 205–16; Bābā 2000, pp. 321–23, no. 409; Maqqarī 1968, vol. 2, pp. 185–87, no. 114. 345; Makhhlūf 2003, vol. 1, p. 281, no. 696). For modern secondary literature see (Massignon 1949; Shushtarī 1960, pp. 3–20; Corriente 1988; ‘Adlūnī 2005, pp. 135–46; Shushtarī 2004, pp. 5–27; Shushtarī 2008, pp. 9–48; Ben Arfa 2015; Omaira 1987; Fierro 1998; Alvarez 2005, pp. 3–34; Ben-Nas 2012; Casewit 2019; Casewit 2020).

⁵ As far as his education is concerned, Maqqarī only tells us that “he met Shaykhs” (*laqiya al-mashāyikh*). (Maqqarī 1968, vol. 2, p. 185). Shushtarī was skilled in grammar, legal theory (*uṣūl*), ḥadīth, Qur’ān variants (*qirā‘āt*), and was a gifted Qur’ān reciter. He taught Ghazālī’s *al-Mustasfā*, as well as *al-Mufaṣṣal fi ‘ilm al-‘arabiyya* of Zamakhsharī (d. 539/1143) in grammar; and the *Maqāmāt*, presumably of Muḥammad al-Ḥarīrī (d. 516/1122), not Hamadānī (d. 395/1007) whose text was less widespread in the Islamic West. Ben Arfa speculates that in his young age, he would have likely studied in Guadix with Yahyā b. Muḥammad b. Aḥmad b. Ibrāhīm b. Arqan al-Numayrī (d. 648/1250), a great littérateur of al-Andalus and a scholar of language; ‘Isā b. Shihāb, known as Ibn al-Asbagh (d. ca. 640/1242), a scholar of ḥadīth; and ‘Alī b. Muḥammad b. Baqī al-Ghassānī (d. after 627/1230). At a mature age, he would have probably studied with famous Andalusī scholars such as the judge Muḥyī l-Dīn b. Surāqa al-Shāṭibī (d. Cairo 662/1264), a follower of the school of Shihāb al-Dīn al-Suhrawardī (d. 632/1234) author of *‘Awārif al-Ma‘ārif* and teacher of Ḥadīth in Aleppo and Egypt. (Ben Arfa 2015, pp. 135–38).

the Mashriq, stopping en route in Bougie (Bijāya, Béjaia) in the Eastern region of modern-day Algeria. This port city connected East–West Muslim Mediterranean trade and was a meeting place for Sufis and scholars at the time, as well as an important stopping point for Ḥajj pilgrims. The famous Sufi renunciant Shu‘ayb Abū Madyan al-Ghawth (d. 594/1198), who is known for founding one of the earliest Sufi orders (sing. *ṭarīqa*) in the Maghrib, was a longtime resident of Bougie (Maḥmūd 1973; Urvoy 1976; Cornell 1996). Shushtarī joined the circle of his surviving disciples there. It is also in Bougie that Shushtarī, now in his mid-thirties, met Ibn Sab‘īn around 645/1247. Ibn Sab‘īn is reported to have told Shushtarī: “If you seek Paradise, go and find Abū Madyan. If you seek the Lord of Paradise, come to me” (Maqqarī 1968, vol. 2, p. 185). Commenting on this, he added: “Abū Madyan is a servant of good works (*‘abdu ‘amal*), and we are servants of the divine presence (*‘abūd ḥaḍra*).” (Munāwī 1999, vol. 2, p. 441).

2.1. The Qalandariyya Incident in Tripoli

Shushtarī’s attachment to Ibn Sab‘īn marks an important transitional moment in his life, and it is likely through the latter that he received much of his training in the intellectual sciences, including theology (*kalām*) philosophy (*ḥikma*), Hermetic, and perhaps “Hindu” teachings (Akasoy 2006; Cornell 1997, 2007). Following his stay in Bougie, Shushtarī visited the Tunisian city of Gabès (Qābis) and settled in the Libyan city of Tripoli (Ṭarābulus) to teach. The Tunisian biographer Ibn al-Ṭawwāḥ (d. after 1318) tells us that he taught various sciences there, including grammar (*naḥw*), Arabic prosimetric literature (*maqāmāt*), and legal theory (*uṣūl al-fiqh*). He was also nominated for the official post of judgeship but was turned down by the Ḥafṣid emir al-Mustansir who accused him of insanity (Ibn al-Ṭawwāḥ 2008, p. 121). Burmūnī describes the incident in colorful terms:

“Some Sufis say that he [Shushtarī] contrived to free himself from the judgeship that the people of Tripoli wanted him to assume by shaving his beard and his eyebrows, dying his limbs with henna, and putting on dyed (*mu‘asfar*) and showy (*muzaawwaq*) clothes. They gave him a mule that he rode, and he went to the sultan and conversed with him in that state. When he [the sultan] saw him like that, he said: ‘Get him out of my sight, I have no need for a madman like this,’ so he immediately left town” (Burmūnī 2009, p. 456).

Describing in verse what appears to be this incident, Shushtarī writes:

The prisoner of love (mutayyam) is content in his lunacy
leave him to exhaust his days in his own ways.
Do not reproach him, for your reproach has no efficacy,
For in his faith, love will never leave his gaze (Ibn al-Ṭawwāḥ 2008, p. 121).

Shushtarī’s decision to repel public attention through socially transgressive behavior bears the mark of the Qalandariyya, a strand of socially-deviant mysticism that flourished in 6th/12th century Syria and Egypt under the organized leadership of the Persian mystic Jamāl al-Dīn Sāwī (d. after 620/1224). The Qalandariyya built lodges in Damascus, Damietta, Cairo, and Jerusalem, then spread into Anatolia, Iran, and India from the 7th/13th century onward. The Qalandarī ascetics (*nussāk*) were known for the practice of shaving the head and all facial hair, coloring their hands with henna, wearing outlandish clothing, and carrying distinguishing tokens like banners (*‘alam*) and battle-axes (*tabarzīn*). Although they are often portrayed as living the ideal of spiritual perfection and enjoyed the admiration of poor rural communities, they tended to unsettle the established Sufi orders and were sometimes accused of deviating from the Sharī‘a and smoking ḥashīsh. They received scathing rebukes by the sharp-tongued Ḥanbalite theologian Taqī al-Dīn b. Taymiyya (d. 728/1328) (Karamustafa 2015, pp.

101–25; [Karamustafa 2006](#), p. 33).⁶ Various types of Sufis were known to have associated with the Qalandariyya at different phases in their lives. Shushtarī's antinomian statement signals the fact that he may have already had an association with the Qalandarīs whom he visited a few years later in Damascus. He was drawn to this group, which, like him, also practiced full withdrawal from the world (*tajrīd*). Like him and his master Ibn Sab'īn, the Qalandarīs were also admired but held with suspicion by the established Sufi orders. Shushtarī entered the Ribāṭ al-Qalandariyya in 650/1252 in Damascus where he met Ibn al-'Arabī's direct disciple al-Najm b. Isrā'īl al-Dimashqī (d. 667/1268) and probably the disciples of the Qalandarī leader Jamāl al-Dīn Sāwī.

2.2. His Tomb in Cairo

After roughly seven years of being under Ibn Sab'īn's tutelage, Shushtarī assumed leadership of the "Sufi Order of Ibn Sab'īn" (*al-ṭarīqa al-Sab'īniyya*) around 652/1254 and took the title "The Leader of the Withdrawn Sufis" (*Imām al-mutajarridīn*). Around this period, Shushtarī's followers began self-identifying as "Shushtariyya" rather than "Sab'īniyya" ([Massignon 1949](#), p. 42). Shushtarī had over four-hundred disciples who followed him on his travels, and he moved with a group to Cairo where he withdrew in al-Azhar mosque for a prolonged retreat (*i'tikāf*). In Cairo, he continued to attract disciples and appears to have been active around Bāb Zuwayla, the southern district gate of the old Fāṭimid city. He undertook several visits to Medina and performed Ḥajj multiple times. In Mecca, he rejoined with his Shaykh Ibn Sab'īn. During his journeys, Shushtarī visited monasteries in the deserts of the Levant and the Sinai and described the monks and their practices in his poems.

Toward the end of his life, Shushtarī and his followers made contact with the newly established Shādhilī order in Cairo and were formally initiated into the order. Whether or not this move was triggered by controversies over Ibn Sab'īn's teachings and his difficult character cannot be fully substantiated by the primary sources. It is unlikely, in my opinion, that his association with the Shādhiliyya represents a breaking with Ibn Sab'īn. Massignon postulates that he may have met the aging founder of the Shādhiliyya order, Abū l-Ḥasan al-Shādhilī (d. 656/1258), along with his two foremost disciples, Abū l-'Abbās al-Mursī (d. 684/1285) and Ibn 'Aṭā' Allāh al-Iskandarī (d. 709/1309) whom he cites in his writings ([Shushtarī 2004](#), p. 38). Shushtarī himself expresses his attachment to the Shādhiliyya order in rhyme:

My masters, they are Shādhilī,
in loving them, my heart finds its pleasure ([Shushtarī 2008](#), p. 30)

One biographical corrective that is important to note is that Shushtarī is buried in Cairo, not the graveyard of Damietta (Dimyāṭ). This has been convincingly established by the contemporary Moroccan scholar 'Abd al-Ilāh Ben 'Arfa ([Ben Arfa 2015](#), pp. 139–44). The biographer Ghubrīnī relates from one of Shushtarī's followers that on the year of his death (668/1269), he departed the Levant and headed back to Egypt across the Sinai desert. He fell ill in the plain of al-Ṭīna near Port Said (Būr Sa'īd) on the Egyptian Mediterranean:

"I was told by some pupils (*ṭalaba*) among our companions (*aṣḥāb*), that he arrived at it, and on its coast (*sāhil*) he said: 'What is the name of this area (*balda*)?' and they said: 'It is al-Ṭīna (lit. the clay).' He said: '[My] clay (*ṭīna*) is drawn to this Clay/Ṭīna (*ḥannat al-ṭīna ilā l-ṭīna*)'" ([Ghubrīnī 1979](#), pp. 239, 240).

This is Shushtarī's final statement on record. He died in Ṭīna on 17th Ṣafar 668 (16 October 1269) and was subsequently carried to the graveyard of Damietta, where he was buried. The port city of Damietta,

⁶ For a compilation of medieval refutations and responses to the Qalandariyya, see ([Qūnawī 2002](#)). Their moral code, according to the testimony given by Khaṭīb al-Fāsī, consisted of five pillars: Modesty (*qanā'at*), subtlety (*laṭāfat*), repentance (*nadāmat*), religiosity (*idīyānat*) and asceticism (*riyādat*). ([Fārsī 1983](#); [Kadkanī 2007](#); [Estos 2019](#)).

located in the delta of the Nile River, was repeatedly captured by Christian Crusader ships coming from Cyprus (*qubrus*) in the 7th/13th century. According to the Ayyūbid historian Abū l-Fidā's (d. 732/1331) "Concise History of Humanity" (*al-Mukhtaṣar fī tārikh al-bashar*), the Mamlūk sultan leveled the city to the ground in 648/1251, transferring its inhabitants to the village of Menshiya. Shushtarī had once fought the Crusaders in the fortified outpost (*ribāṭ*) of Damietta, and he and his followers seem to have been drawn to its ruins. Since Shushtarī was already a popular figure, his followers feared that the Crusaders would desecrate his tomb. His remains were, therefore, disinterred shortly after his death and carried to his final resting place in Cairo.⁷

Pre-modern scholars were aware of Shushtarī's grave in Cairo. One pre-16th century poet describes him as the "Possessor of Two Graves" (*bū qabrayn*) (Burmūnī 2009, p. 459). Similarly, 'Abd al-Ghanī al-Nābulusī (d. 1050/1730) records visiting his tomb in the Christian neighborhood of Cairo in his travel memoir (Nābulusī 1986, p. 244). Another 18th century scholar, Aḥmad b. 'Abd al-Qādir al-Qādirī al-Ḥasanī (d. 1133/1721) mentions that he paid his respects at Shushtarī's grave, which was then a gathering place for many visitors.⁸ His tomb in Cairo is located near the Avenue of Abī l-Ḥasan (*shāri' Abī l-Ḥasan*) in the Christian neighborhood of al-Muskī. The annual commemoration of Shushtarī's death (*mawlid*) occurs at his tomb in Ṣafar, the month of his death.

3. Shushtarī's Writings

3.1. Poetry

Shushtarī's extraordinarily popular poetic corpus earned him the title the "literary voice of the withdrawn Sufis," (*adīb al-mutajarridīn*)" (Ghubrīnī 1979, p. 239). He has also been aptly called the "Rumi of Western Islam" (Alvarez 2005, p. 6) though it may be more accurate to compare him to Ibn al-Fāriḍ (d. 632/1235) of the Arab East. While it is rare to find a mystic who has *not* composed poetry, and most of the prominent Sufis of the 7th/13th century also conveyed their teachings and expressed their spiritual states through poetry, Shushtarī's compositions are almost universally appreciated. Generally speaking, the more abstract and technical prose works of the monist Sufis tended to have limited circulation and were confined to smaller circles of highly trained followers. In contrast, their collection of poems (*dīwān*) tended to be more widely disseminated and were appreciated by both scholars and non-specialists. However, the contrast between the popularity of Shushtarī's Sufi poetry and the relatively limited circulation of his technical prose works is particularly striking in his case. His *Quṣṣariyya* seems to have only survived in one unique and faulty manuscript, in contrast to the hundreds (perhaps thousands) of copies of his *Dīwān*, which remain scattered in manuscript libraries and private Sufi lodges (sing. *zāwiya*).

⁷ Brockelman and Massignon say that he died on the 7th (instead of the 17th) of Ṣafar, which is probably a scribal error. (Massignon 1950, p. 256). Massignon reports several visits to Damietta between 1934–36 and claims to have located Shushatī's grave with the help of Shādhilī Shaykhs. According to the latter, Shushtarī was buried east of the mosque of 'Amr Abū l-Ma' āṭī. Massignon adds that one Shaykh mentioned that "there is another grave of Abū l-Ḥasan al-Shushtarī in Cairo, in the neighborhood of al-Muskī . . . which I visited on 27 February 1936, and again on 18 January 1937, and thanks to Mr. Pauty I obtained a copy of the plaque that is engraved in the prayer niche (*miḥrāb*) in seven lines" (Massignon 1950, p. 275). The plaque reads that the mosque was built by the Mamlūk Emir Tuqtubā'ī Tuqmbāz al-Zāhirī al-Salāhdār in 748/1347. Massignon speculates that the *zāwiya* was built for Ḥasan al-Tustarī (d. 797/1396), the Cairene Sufi, fifty year prior to his death. Sāmī 'Alī al-Nashshār, editor of *Dīwān al-Shushtarī*, claims that the grave was not identified by Massignon (Shushtarī 1960, pp. 12, 13). (Massignon 1949, p. 35). Cf. (Ben Arfa 2015, pp. 140–44).

⁸ This verse is found in *Rihlat nasamat al-ās fī hajjat sayyidinā Abī l- Abbās*. Cf. (Ben Arfa 2015, pp. 142, 143).

Shushtarī's poetry covers a wide variety of topics.⁹ However, one reason why his poetic legacy was preserved and spread widely—his poems continue to be chanted in Sufi orders in the modern period¹⁰—is likely due to his gift for communicating the most sublime Sufi teachings in accessible poetry. He transposed profane themes and symbols employed in the colloquial rhythmic poems of the preeminent Andalusī *zajal* composer, Abū Bakr b. Quzmān (d. 554/1159), onto a spiritual plane, through religious *zajals*, strophic *muwashshaḥa*, love poetry (*ghazal*), and formal monorhyme *qaṣīdas* (Nashshār 1953; Shushtarī 2006; Alvarez 2009; Shākir 2012; Farḥān 2013; 'Adlūnī 2014; Hammāda 2015). Thus, his poetry was likely adopted by Sufi orders because he popularized the complex teachings of the 7th/13th century monist tradition through easily accessible poetry. On a more practical level, his poetry was popularized by the Shādhilī Sufi order, which he joined at the end of his life in Egypt. This order, which is originally North African, spread into the Muslim East, Syria, Egypt, and then back into al-Andalus and North Africa, and was most responsible for incorporating his poetry into communal Shādhilī and broader Sufi rituals.

3.2. Prose

It is safe to assume that Shushtarī authored approximately ten short to medium-length treatises (*rasā'il*).¹¹ The medieval biographers list several of these treatises, but their number, exact titles, and chronological order has yet to be definitively established by modern scholarship.¹² One noteworthy feature of Shushtarī's prose treatises is his emphasis on taxonomy. He devotes much attention to defining technical Sufi terminology and displays close familiarity with the vocabulary of both his master Ibn Sab'īn as well as Ibn al-'Arabī.¹³ Many of his prose writings feature glossaries of technical Sufi philosophical terms that are found in his poetry. In this sense, his prose works serve as keys to understanding his poetry. Aside from these glossaries of technical terms, Shushtarī also wrote on cosmology (*R. al-Mi' rājiyya*), the classification of the sciences (*R. al-'Ilmiyya*), identifying proper belief (*R. al-Qudsiyya fī tawḥīd al-'amma wa'l-khāṣṣa*), and a defense of the contested Sufi practice of wearing

⁹ Some of these are characteristic of the wider tradition of Arabic Sufi poetry, while others seem to be more unique to Shushtarī. Some poems, especially the formal *qaṣīdas*, include doctrinal discussions of ontology, metaphysics, eschatology, or polemics against the Naturalists (*aṣḥāb al-ṭabā'i*) who argue for the causative power of natures (elements), and scenes from Christian monasteries. He also writes about classical Sufi themes such as the necessity of being trained by a Sufi master, code of conduct toward the Shaykh, struggling against the lower soul, Sufi wandering, wearing the patched cloak (*khirqā*, *shāshiyya*), invocation (*dhikr*), spiritual audition (*samā'*), states and stations of the soul, symbolism of wine, ecstatic spirituality, and direct witnessing or visionary experiences (*mushāhada*). Shushtarī also takes on the role of social critic and comments on tensions between Sufis and jurists, the hypocrisy of the learned scholars (*'ulamā'*) who serve political rulers, and nostalgia for al-Andalus.

¹⁰ Scholars who praise his poetry include Ibn al-Khaṭīb (d. 776/1374); Ibn 'Abbād al-Rundī (d. 792/1390), 'Abd al-Ghani al-Nābulusi (d. 1143/1731); and North African Sufis like Ibn 'Ajība (d. 1224/1809) and Muḥammad al-Ḥarrāq (d. 1261/1845).

¹¹ The following is a list of the title of prose works attributed to Shushtarī:

- *al-'Urwa al-wuthqā fī bayān al-sunan wa-iḥṣā' al-'ulūm*
- *Mā yajib 'alā al-muslim an ya 'lamahu wa-ya 'taqīdahu ilā wafātihi* (which is shortened as *al-Risāla al-'ilmiyya*; see *al-Iḥāṭa*, vol. 4, p. 207)
- *R. al-Qudsiyya fī tawḥīd al-'amma wa'l-khāṣṣa*
- *Al-Marātib al-īmāniyya wa'l-islāmiyya wa'l-iḥsāniyya*
- *R. al-Baghdādiyya* (Shushtarī 1977; Ben-Nas 2016)
- *R. al-Maqālīd al-wujūdiyya fī l-dā'ira al-wahmiyya*

Ibn Luyūn (d. 750/1349) mentions in his *tahdhīb* that Shushtarī has other works (*Tahdhīb al-risāla al-'ilmiyya*, pp. 42, 43). In 'Abd ar-Rahmān al-Badawī's introduction to *Rasā'il Ibn Sab'īn* (Ibn Sab'īn 1965), he mentions a treatise ascribed to Shushtarī entitled *al-Risāla al-qadīma li'l-Shaykh ash-Shushtarī* in a list of works included in a manuscript codex containing *Sharḥ li-'ahd Ibn Sab'īn li-talāmīdhīhi*.

¹² For a brief discussion of the plausible chronology of Shushtarī's works, see (Massignon 1949, p. 57).

¹³ For instance, Shushtarī quotes a poem by Ibn al-'Arabī in *R. al-Mi' rājiyya* (Casewit 2020), and cites the "Ringstones of Wisdom" (*Fuṣṣūṣ al-ḥikam, faṣṣ Sulaymān*) in the *Maqālīd*, p. 100.

the patched cloak (*R. al-Baghdādiyya*). Some treatises, including his *Maqālīd* and the *Quṣāriyya*, were written for a disciple for the purpose of defending Sufi monists from accusations of doctrinal heresy and transgression of the Sharīʿa.

4. “On the Limits [of Theology and Sufism]” (*al-Risāla al-Quṣāriyya*)

4.1. Title, History, Description of the Manuscript, and Editorial Principles

The *Quṣāriyya* appears to be one of Shushtarī’s shortest and most succinct treatises, and there is little reason to question its authorship. To my knowledge, the title of the treatise is only mentioned by the Tunisian biographer Ibn al-Ṭawwāḥ (d. after 717/1318) in *Sabk al-maqāl* (Ibn al-Ṭawwāḥ 2008, p. 121), although the edition does not provide the vocalization. The surviving manuscript identifies the author as “al-Shushtarī.” It vocalizes the title on f. 55v as *al-Risāla al-Qaṣṣāriyya* which is probably a scribal mistake, for there appears to be no correlation between the treatise and the 3rd/9th century Malāmātī Shaykh of Nīshāpūr Ḥamdūn b. Aḥmad b. ʿUmāra al-Qaṣṣār. Rather, like his other prose treatises such as the *Mī rājiyya* (Casewit 2020), the title of the *Quṣāriyya* is likely a later copyist’s addition that was gleaned from a word in the text. The word that was chosen for the title, “*quṣārāhum*” (paragraph #4) denotes that the “furthest limit” of common believers and exoteric scholars is to defer authority to the theologians. In my edition and translation, the title is therefore vocalized as *al-Quṣāriyya*.

To my knowledge, the *Quṣāriyya* is only extant in MS Istanbul, Süleymaniye Kütüphanesi, Hz. Nasuhi Dergahı 275, ff. 55v–64r. It was part of the collection of the Seyyid Muḥammad Nasuhi (1057–1130/1647–1718) Sufi lodge in Üsküdar. The codex spans 149 folios, with 15 lines per page, and is in good condition with little physical damage. The *Quṣāriyya* is bound in a codex along with several other prose treatises by the author, including *R. al-Mī rājiyya* and *R. al-Baghdādiyya*, as well as works of Ibn Sabʿīn and Shaʿrānī. This is a “miscellany codex” (*majmūʿa*), which is to say that the volume consists of different works that were copied by the same scribe during the same period.¹⁴ I have not been able to identify any biographical reference to the copyist, Muḥammad b. al-Darwīsh. The manuscript is dated mid-Dhū l-Qiʿda 956 (late March to early December 1549) based on the dates appearing in the three dated colophons.¹⁵ The manuscript, moreover, includes poems (ff. 87, 123v) by Muḥammad Wafāʾ (d. 765/1363) and the poem on 87v is appended to Shushtarī’s poems. This suggests that the works making up the manuscript (at least the first half up to f. 89v) was likely transmitted during the 8th, 9th, 14th, 15th centuries through the Wafāʾiyya Sufi order, a branch of the Shādhiliyya in Cairo (McGregor 2004). As such, the codex seems to signal an influence of Ibn Sabʿīn and Shushtarī on the Wafāʾiyya. Moreover, the fact that a short work by ʿAbd al-Wahhāb al-Shaʿrānī (d. 973/1565) dated 952H (f. 125v) is included in the codex indicates that it was copied during his lifetime, shortly after Shaʿrānī wrote this short work. Although it is not possible to ascertain if the manuscript was copied in Cairo, the inclusion of a treatise by Shaʿrānī shortly after he wrote it, in addition, the poems by Muḥammad Wafāʾ, suggest that the manuscript was compiled in a milieu that is closely connected with Cairo and the circle of Shaʿrānī. One may also speculate about a possible line of transmission from the Sabʿīniyya to the Shushtarīyya to the Shādhiliyya to the early Mamlūk Wafāʾiyya Sufi order to the circle of Shaʿrānī.¹⁶

The bookhand of the manuscript appears to be put together rather unprofessionally, though it is not the product of a complete amateur. It does not seem to have been assembled for personal purposes since it would likely be more carelessly crafted. Therefore, it is possible that the codex was reproduced in and for a Sufi lodge where it was held. There are no seal or ownership or reading statements. The copyist, Muḥammad b. al-Darwīsh, is quite inelegant and unprofessional, but he is easy to decipher.

¹⁴ In contrast to a miscellany codex, a composite codex compiles different treatises written by different hands at different dates at a later period.

¹⁵ See marginal note on ff. 29r, 38r, 149v.

¹⁶ I am grateful to one of my anonymous reviewers for these hints.

He writes in a readable *naskh* hand with a thick calamus. The manuscript features fully dotted ductus, and the copyist uses two inks: Black for the main text, and red for the titles and for some remarks. The manuscript includes almost no marginal notes or glosses. It is fully vocalized and contains frequent shaddas. I have standardized the use of *hamzas* and the final *yā's* in defective forms. The Qur'ān verses, which are fully integrated into the manuscript, appear without red ink and are fully vocalized in the present edition. Although there are a few signs of revision, the copyist is not very accurate and appears to introduce (or reproduce) syntactical and grammatical errors into the text. Given the scribal errors, my editorial intervention was sometimes required to make sense of certain parts of the treatise. I add angle brackets < ... > to indicate my editorial interventions, and the vocalization that I provide in the edition is not always consistent with the manuscript due to the grammatical errors that are introduced by the scribe.¹⁷

4.2. Analysis of the *Quṣṣariyya*

Shushtarī begins by proclaiming the unfathomability of God's innermost secret (*sirr*), which neither discursive knowledge of the Ash'arite theologians nor the direct mystical knowledge of the Sufis can attain. Rather, the seeker accesses higher realms of knowledge when he delves into divine oneness experientially and becomes aware of his incapacity (*'ajz*) to know God.¹⁸ The knowers of God thus fall into four sorts: Common believers who know God by imitation and who delegate authority to the Ash'arite theologians, the Ash'arites who know God through rational argumentation, the Sufis who are directly aware of the divine presence and for whom rational proofs are secondary to direct experience, and finally monist Realizers who transcend the binary between the knower and known, subject and object, and are the locus for God's self-seeing.

Given the content of the *Quṣṣariyya*, it seems to be a mature treatise that Shushtarī composed after meeting Ibn Sab'īn in 645/1247. The dating of the manuscript cannot be definitely established, however, and further research comparing Shushtarī and Ibn Sab'īn's thought is required. What is notable is that despite Shushtarī's reference to the Sufi notion of an uncreated intellect in the *Quṣṣariyya* and the *Mi'rājiyya*, he does not adopt Ibn Sab'īn's full Neoplatonic conception of the intellect as a cosmic principle that is found in Plotinus, Alexander of Aphrodisias, Proclus, and Iamblichus. Instead he adheres to a religious-Qur'ānic worldview. At the same time, the hierarchy he outlines in the *Quṣṣariyya* bears some similarities to Ibn Sab'īn's more complex and detailed discussion of the definition of knowledge (*ḥadd al-'ilm*) in his *Budd al-'arīf* ("The Escape of the Gnostic"). In *Budd al-'arīf*, Ibn Sab'īn presents and critiques the methods of the jurists, Ash'arites, philosophers, Aristotelian logicians, and the Sufis.¹⁹ Shushtarī's distinction between the way of Sufis and the way of *taḥqīq* bears the mark of Ibn Sab'īn's *Budd al-'arīf*, and it features prominently in the writings of Ibn 'Arabī and his disciples as well. Shushtarī's hierarchy of knowledge also finds echo in the introduction to Ibn al-'Arīf's well-known epistemological discussion in chapter 1 of *Maḥāsīn al-majālis* ("The Splendors of the Mystical Gatherings"), a short treatise on Sufi ethics that was frequently studied and quoted by 7th/13th century Andalusī Sufis.²⁰ Finally, Ibn Sīnā's "The Stations of the Knowers" (*maqāmāt*

¹⁷ I have not discovered a second witness of the *R. Quṣṣariyya*, though the scribe Muḥammad b. al-Darwīsh also copied the *Mi'rājiyya*. I had the opportunity to edit the latter against a more reliable text and am accustomed to his editorial peculiarities and grammatical errors (Casewit 2019).

¹⁸ Shushtarī describes this state as the first "breaking of his concealed secret" (*kasr al-ṭalsum*), an expression that he uses in his poetry as well (Shushtarī 2008, p. 112).

¹⁹ See his discussion of the "categories of Sufis and their sciences" (*Aqṣām al-ṣūfiyya wa-'ulūmuhum*) which offers a much more detailed discussion of the various sciences, modes of knowledge, and practices of Sufis, in *Budd al-'arīf*, pp. 95–113, 121–35.

²⁰ This dense and allusive treatise is influenced, by the author's own admission in the introduction, by a variety of sources. These include 'Abd Allāh al-Anṣārī al-Harawī's (d. 481/1089) *Manāzil al-sā'irīn* and *Ilāl al-maqāmāt* (Halff 1971), as well as Muḥammad b. 'Abd al-Jabbār al-Niffarī's (d. 354/965) *Mawāqif*. Compare the first sentence of the *Maḥāsīn al-majālis* on *'ilm* versus *ma'rifa* with *Mawqif al-tadhkira* of Nicholson's edition, p. 28. According to the Moroccan scholar 'Adlūnī, Shushtarī was influenced by Ibn al-'Arīf (d. 536/1141). It is worth noting that Chapter 1 of the *Maḥāsīn al-majālis*, as well the

al-ʿarīfīn) in his *Ishārat*, may have also been accessible to Shushtarī, though there seems to be little overlap between the two texts.²¹

Although Shushtarī's epistemological trichotomy is clean-cut, it is important to remember that when theologians, Sufis, and monist proclaimers of absolute oneness put these conceptual epistemological schemas together, they are in reality practicing Sufis who think in terms of Ashʿarī theology or they are Sufi-philosophers such as Ibn Sabʿīn who are trained by Sufis, philosophers, theologians. The Islamic tradition is replete with examples of theologians such as Ghazālī who mix multiple systems of thought, or Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī (d. ca. 604/1210) who turns to Sufism at the end of his life. Some were committed Ashʿarite-Sufis like Ibn al-Marʿa (d. 611/1214), who define mystical unveiling along Avicennan terms.²² Others still were philosophers such as Avicenna (d. 427/1037) with mystical inclinations. Shushtarī's own life and works blur the lines between "mainstream" and "extreme" Sufism, "theological" and "philosophical" doctrines, "praxis-oriented" versus "theoretical" mysticism. This picture is further complicated by the fact that Shushtarī evolved throughout his life as he moved from master to master. As is common with many 5th–7th/11th–13th century figures, he seems to have been comfortable engaging a plurality of perspectives and affiliating himself with a range of spiritual teachers. Owing to his school of realization and its perspectival engagement with multiple viewpoints, he tended to see them as complementary and hierarchical, rather than oppositional differences, and thus had ecumenical mystical interests and affiliations. Shushtarī evinces this syncretism in his approach through his direct association with the whole spectrum of Islamic mysticism of his day, including Abū Madyan, Ibn Sabʿīn, Ibn ʿArabī's student al-Najm b. Isrāʾīl, the socially-deviant Qalandarī mystics, Suhrawardī (author of *ʿAwārif al-maʿārif*) and the founders of the Shādhilī tradition.

4.3. The Way of the Theologian

In his discussion of Ashʿarism (paragraphs #3–22), Shushtarī quotes the theologian as saying: "I see nothing except that I see God after it." In other words, the theologian knows God "by theological proofs, and seeks proofs of the Creator from things." The created realm serves as an intermediary for the theologian to arrive at the truth through the study of the cosmos. In explaining the way of the theologian, Shushtarī offers a clear summary of the basic Ashʿarite cosmological and teleological arguments for God's existence, describing the created realm as one that is composed bodies, or combinations of indivisible atoms (sing. *jawhar lā yanqasim*) that take on accidents (sing. *ʿaraḍ*). A body "must necessarily have a combiner," for "when one sees a built wall, one knows by self-evidence that it has a builder." Shushtarī outlines the Ashʿarite arguments for the cosmos' origination in time and explains that since the cosmos is composed of temporally originated atoms and accidents—which are noneternal since they change and must inhere in a locus (*maḥall*)—it must be created. Its Creator must be eternal and noncorporeal, given the impossibility of infinite regress. In arguing for God's existence, the theologian resorts to the proof of reciprocal hindrance (*burhān al-tamānuʿ*), and the impossibility of infinite regress (*al-dawr waʾl-tasalsul*).

This argument, which is explained in the Qurʾānic language of God as Artisan (*ṣānīʿ*) and His creation as artisanry (*maṣnūʿ*), traces back to Aristotle's First Mover argument. Simply put, things are in motion, and they require something to put them and keep them in motion based on the laws of physics. Therefore, there has to be an Unmoved Mover, otherwise one must believe in an infinite regress of

commentary of Abū Ishāq b. Dihāq, also known as Ibn al-Marʿa (d. 1214), who influenced Ibn Sabʿīn presumably through his student Ibn Aḥlā (d. 645/1247), cover similar themes and are worded in somewhat similar fashion as Shushtarī's *R. al-Qusāriyya*.

²¹ It came to be treated as an excellent systematic summary of the Sufi path and provides an outline of the categories of seekers (*ṭalibīn*): The renunciant and the knower of God (*ʿarīf*). See *al-Namaṭ al-tāsiʿ* of *al-Ishārat waʾl-tanbīhāt*, (Ibn Sīnā 2002, pp. 353–67).

²² See my forthcoming study, edition, and translation of Ibn al-Marʿa's commentary on Ibn al-ʿArīf's *Maḥāsīn al-majālis*.

movers. Following this argument, Shushtarī guides the reader through the standard proofs for God's oneness, as well as essential attributes of life, knowledge, power, will, speech, hearing, and seeing. He refutes the doctrine of unificationism (*ittiḥād*) and the Mu'tazilite denial of divine attributes (*ta'tīl*). He views these teachings as deviations from the consensual "*Sunnī* doctrinal position," a position that he describes as the "safest and best approach" since it is aligned with scripture and strikes a balance between extreme doctrines pertaining to the relationship between the Essence and the attributes.

Shushtarī is also critical of the philosopher's denial of the existence of attributes that are additional to the divine Essence. According to the only surviving manuscript, Shushtarī claims that Ghazālī collapses the attributes [life, power, will, seeing, hearing, speaking] into the attribute of knowledge (see #21). This reading flatly contradicts Ghazālī's own position in his work "Moderation in Belief" (*al-Iqtisād fī l-ʿitiqād*), and it is hard to believe that Shushtarī had such little knowledge of Ghazālī's theology. Given the latter's enormous influence in al-Andalus and given that Shushtarī was licensed to teach his *Mustasfā* on legal theory, it seems likely that the unprofessional copyist corrupted the text. The original archetype manuscript may have the word *ʿitizālī* which was eventually corrupted by scribes and read as *ghazālī*. This passage, then, would be a continuation of the discussion on the Mu'tazilite denial of the attributes rather than a discussion of Ghazālī.²³

If we take the extant manuscript to be accurate and assume that Shushtarī misread Ghazālī, then one possible explanation for this error would be that our author assumes that Ghazālī's true position is more aligned with that of the philosophers as expressed in "The Aims of the Philosophers" (*Maqāṣid al-falāsifa*)²⁴ or the pseudo-epigraphic work, "That Which is Withheld from the Unqualified" (*al-Maḍnūn bihi ʿalā ghayr ahlihi*). Shushtarī's misreading may then indicate his awareness of early polemics against Ghazālī, who was accused by his adversaries of being tainted by philosophy. Whatever the case, Shushtarī opposes the position of the philosophers and those who maintain that all the attributes (apart from will and speech) are reducible to the Essence. He seems to prefer earlier classical Ashʿarism's understanding of the attributes as being neither other than nor identical with the Essence. Presumably, he agrees with Bāqillānī and Juwaynī, whose works were also in wide circulation in al-Andalus.²⁵

While Shushtarī passes over Māturīdism and the Ḥanbalite legal-theological tradition in silence, as well as the Zāhirite literalist school of Ibn Ḥazm (d. 456/1064) of Cordoba, it is important to note that his attitude toward theology as a whole is not dismissive. In the *Quṣṣariyya* and other treatises, Shushtarī takes Ashʿarism as the soundest and most adequate expression of the truth at the rational level. He clearly states in the *Maqālīd* that the great saints are those who can engage each discipline at its own level. The saints who master the discursive knowledge of the theologians (*ʿilm*) are superior to illiterate saints who are not schooled in the Islamic sciences. In this sense, the discursive knowledge (*ʿilm*) of the theologians, which he describes as "a veil over God," is nonetheless a prerequisite for full acquisition of Sufi direct recognition (*maʿrifa*) (Shushtarī 2008, pp. 88, 89) even though it is a mere medication that must be taken with caution and only when necessary (idem, pp. 90, 91, 96, 126).

In addition to his affirmation of Ashʿarism, Shushtarī insists that with regard to belief in God and correct religiosity, the common believers must delegate authority (*taqlīd*) to the Ashʿarites in matters of religious belief even without evidence. His concern with proper creed bears the mark of Almohadism and is the subject of other treatises.²⁶ He also holds that non-Sufi scholars, including Qurʾān variant experts (*muqriʿ*), Ḥadīth experts (*muḥaddith*), and jurists (*furūʿī*), must subscribe to

²³ I am grateful for my anonymous review for pointing out this possibility.

²⁴ For Ghazālī's discussion of divine knowledge in the *Maqāṣid*, (Ghazālī 2000, pp. 113–21). Ibn Sabʿīn's criticism of Ghazālī in *Budd al-ʿArif* does not engage his views on the divine attributes (Ibn Sabʿīn 1978, pp. 144, 145). I am grateful to Frank Griffel for his help on this point, and to Hussein Abdulsater for his advice on the translation of this passage.

²⁵ For Ghazālī's discussion of the divine attributes in *Moderation in Belief*, see (Ghazālī 2017, pp. 129–55).

²⁶ According to Ibn Luyūn, Shushtarī wrote "The Holy Treatise Concerning the Assertion of Divine Unity by the Commoner and the Elite" (*Al-Risāla al-quḍsiyya fī tawḥīd al-ʿamma waʾl-khāṣṣa*), as well as "What is Incumbent upon a Muslim to Know and Believe until his Death" (*Mā yajib al-ʿalā l-Muslim an yaʿlamahu wa-yaʿtaqidahu ilā waḥātihī*) (Shushtarī 2004, pp. 42, 43).

the empirical judgments and rational argumentations of the Ash'arites. They must assent, even uncritically if necessary, since understanding theological arguments is not a condition for sound belief. He compares the belief of these uncritical "conformists" (*muqallidūn*) who affirm the correct articles of faith without evidence to that of the slave-girl who, after proclaiming God's oneness by pointing to the heavens, was considered to be a believer by the Prophet. Shushtarī, therefore, not only presents the Ash'arite worldview but relegates the realm of rational argumentation to the authority of the theologians, and distances himself from Almohad scholars who questioned the validity and soundness of a conformist's uncritical belief (*muqallid*).

4.4. The Way of the Sufi

While the Ash'arite "sees God after" studying creation, the Sufi "sees nothing except that he sees God before it" or "with it" (paragraphs #23–26). For Shushtarī, this perspectival shift is the fruit of a rational system of belief (*ʿaqīda*) that is firmly grounded in the soil of Ash'arism. The theologian thus cultivates a discursive form of knowledge that the Sufi needs in order to acquire direct, unmediated, fruitional experience of God (*maʿrifa*). Although the Ash'arite's rational proofs do not in themselves inspire direct knowledge of God, they serve as a means to it. Having grasped the basic Ash'arite notion of and arguments for God's existence through formal learning, the Sufi devotes himself to spiritual practice and the acquisition of existential knowledge through unveiling. Gradually, he overcomes his fixation on created things and begins to move in the opposite direction, seeking "proofs for [created] things through their Creator." The Sufi "delves more deeply into divine oneness [than the Ash'arite] and professes that things provide no proof for their Maker whatsoever. Rather, the proof of things comes only from God" (paragraph #23).

As it turns out, the supposedly self-evident judgments of the theologian (e.g., orderly creation proves the existence of the Creator) based on rational judgment and scriptural support prove to be less reliable than previously assumed. The Sufi, however, does not reject these Ash'arite proofs out of doubt. He rejects them due to an increase in his certainty about God. As his fruitional experience of the divine reality intensifies, he loses certainty in the rational proofs for God's existence, for God is His own proof. The Sufi confirms that the reality of things issues from the "realm of the divine command" (*ʿālam al-amr*) into "the created realm" (*ʿālam al-khalq*). Like the Qur'ān itself, which repeatedly states that God is the Witness over all things (e.g., Q 41:53), the Sufi locates certainty self-referentially in God's own undeniability.²⁷

But despite this perspectival reversal, the experiential knowledge that is gained by the Sufi is largely in harmony with the doctrines of theology. For Shushtarī, Sufism both reverses some tenets of theology and adopts others. Like the Ash'arite theologian, the mainline Sufi strikes a balance between theological extremes and avoids the heresies of those who claim "unificationism" (*ittihād*) with God. This doctrine entails the interpenetration of human essence and the divine Essence, and Shushtarī attributes it to the Christian doctrine of incarnation. Moreover, the Sufi accepts the theological doctrine of the constant renewal of all things at each individual moment. He also accepts that there is no causal connection between events, that God is in charge at every moment, and that His predetermination prevails. Finally, the genuine Sufi never forsakes proscription of the divine law on the grounds that all things are predestined and controlled by God.

Thus, the Sufi experientially tastes the doctrines that the Ash'arite arrives at discursively. Through ethical transformation and spiritual practice, the Sufi accesses a higher reach of the intellect. As Shushtarī states in the *Miʿrājiyya*, this intellect does not pertain to the created realm (*ʿālam al-khalq*) but to the

²⁷ The most striking verse in this regard is the Qur'ānic verse: *We shall show them Our signs upon the horizons and within themselves till it become clear to them that it is the truth. Does it not suffice that thy Lord is Witness over all things?* (Q Fuṣṣilat 54:53; see also cf. 4:33; 5:117; 22:17; 33:55; 34:47; 58:6; 85:9). God is His own greatest "proof" since He is His own witness through the forms of creation which act as loci or His self-seeing. For a lucid exposition of Avicenna's philosophical discussion of *Burhān al-ṣiddiqīn*, or "the demonstration of those who sincerely affirm the truth" see (Kalin 2014, p. 76).

uncreated realm of the divine command (*‘ālam al-amr*). It is moved by the Spirit (*rūḥ*) and recognizes that the rational proofs are ontologically and epistemologically preceded by the all-embracing reality of God. The Sufi thus relinquishes the faculties that the theologian clings to so dearly in order to access a higher realm of inspired knowledge. In Shushtarī’s words, he realizes that “the proof of things comes only from God, and it is He who alerts us to them, for they have no existence except insofar as He pours [existence] upon them.” After all, divine existence cannot be inferred by the created intellect through rational proof, because He transcends the Ash‘arite’s rational construct of God. The Sufi thus critiques the theologian for constraining the reality of God’s existence in accordance with the conceptual constructs of his delimited rational faculty. The theologian, for his part, insists that divine existence must fit in his conceptual constructs, which is absurd because the latter’s conceptual constructs are none other than a modality of God’s being. Through a type of internally irrefutable empiricism of the self which removes all rational doubts, the Sufi recognizes that the divine reality cannot be contained or constrained by conceptual construction. God is the proof of things, not the reverse. Rational proofs and conceptions are grossly insufficient in providing certainty.

4.5. The Way of the Realizer

Shushtarī presents realization (*tahqīq*, paragraphs #27–32) as the culminating and transformative experience that the Sufi seeks to attain. The Sufi considers material things not as proofs for God, but as “mere apparitions.” They are “essentially dead,” or “raised up apparitions, tents of the divine command that are pitched by it.” From the perspective of the Realizer, a Sufi is one who begins to proclaim that God is the sole Reality but has not fully realized that assertion. He still perceives created existence as the empty space of a tent and is aware of the difference between God and the cosmos, the latter being the locus of God’s manifestation. While the Sufi sees the created realm as a dim shadow, or a silhouette, the Realizer experiences a complete absorption in direct and unitive knowledge of God and the separative realm of other-than-God is extinguished. The Realizer is not a monist in the sense of believing that God and creation form an ontological, unitary whole with one underlying ultimate substance. Rather, the Realizer verifies the bold assertion that creation does not exist at all. It is not a separate entity from God. The Realizer affirms a non-dualist truth and denies the very existence of the Sufi’s empty “tents” of material creation. God is not veiled by anything, and the category of other-than-God is illusory and non-existent. The Realizer (*muḥaqqiq*), therefore, neither discovers God through creation like the Ash‘arite, nor creation through God like the Sufi, but rather knows “God through God, and sees none alongside God but God, and considers things [other than God] to be nonexistent.”

For Shushtarī, the station of the Sufi is located midway, as it were, between the theologian and the Realizer. Sufism stands in relation to Ash‘arism just as the school of Realization stands in relation to Sufism. Because while the Sufi recognizes the inadequacy of the rational constructs of Ash‘arism in proving God’s existence, the Realizer rejects the Sufi conception of a “journey to God” altogether. For the Realizer, conceiving of the journey to God in terms of arrival at, separation from, union with, proximity to, or distance from God is as inadequate as the theologian’s cosmological and teleological arguments for God’s existence. The Realizer is both the perceived and the perceiver, the subject and object of awareness. He is unaware of his awareness and is no longer aware of himself since his awareness is none other than God’s. The Realizer attains actual realization after losing awareness of his awareness of God, in contrast to the Sufi, who is aware of his awareness.

The Realizer loses his “traces” (sing. *rasm*), or the illusion of separative existence that he once ascribed to himself and to creation. He returns to where he began, thereby discovering his pre-eternal station in God, and completing the full circle of the journey “to” God. Upon completing the journey, the Realizer proclaims that there is no journey to God in the first place since He is beginningless and endless and cannot be “arrived at.” The Realizer professes sheer divine oneness (*ṣāḥib al-waḥda al-maḥḍa*) and is directly aware of divine unity (*shā‘ir biḥā*) through God. In Shushtarī’s treatise entitled “The Keys of Existence: Calling Attention to the Circle of Illusion” (*al-Maqālīd al-wujūdiyya fī l-tanbīh*

‘alā al-dā’ira al-wahmiyya), he describes a visionary experience that he had in Egypt which illustrates this circle of realization. He explains that the rationalist (*‘āqil*) theologian completes one-third of the circle, the Sufi knower of God (*‘ārīf*) completes two thirds, and the Realizer completes the full circle, thereby returning where he started, and immersing himself back in society once more (Shushtari 2008, pp. 110, 111). The Realizer, therefore, meets the rationalist, the Sufi knower of God, and the monotheist (*muwāḥḥid*) at their own levels, assenting to the knowledge and experience of each one while critiquing them at the same time.

Shushtari’s lengthiest and most important discussion of realization (*taḥqīq*) is found in the aforementioned *Maqālīd* (Shushtari 2008, pp. 104–14). In this treatise, as in the *Quṣṣariyya*, he clearly self-identifies as a Realizer, not a Sufi. In the *Maqālīd*, he explicitly proclaims himself to be a monist follower of Ibn Sabʿīn.²⁸ He insists that Realization is inexpressible by definition and that all attempts at defining it or “giving a report about it” (*ikhbār*) are qualifications of the Realizer’s state, not actual realization. Playing on the language used in discussions about *taqlīd*, i.e., the uncritical acceptance of transmitted reports (*khābar*), Shushtari describes the Realizer (*muḥaqqiq*) as one who is unaffected by the “corporealized fantasies” of creation. For in relation to the Real (*ḥaqq*), creation is falsehood (*bāṭil*). It is just a transmitted report. However, since there is no absolute falsehood, or else it would be absolute nonexistence (*‘adam muṭlaq*), the realm of other-than-the-Real, or the transmitted report, is neither completely real nor completely unreal. As such, it is composed of names that signify essences, levels, forms, rulings, and numbers. These are all suppositional, or posited (*mafrūdāt*) names. They are names that you have named—you and your father—for which God has sent down no authority (Q A’ rāf 7:71).²⁹ The Realizer verifies the truth that these names are fantasies (*wahmī*) with no essence (*dhāt*). They are means of arriving at one’s essence, or one’s entity in God (*‘ayn*) yet when that arrival takes place, there is no longer any need for them.

For the Realizer, existence is one, yet it is qualified by the names that the children of Adam assign to its parts. All things, both good and evil, come from God but are qualified by the act of naming. God casts veils over His creatures by assigning names to things that have no agency. These illusory separative entities of creation are a fulfillment of God’s wisdom, and the Realizer observes courtesy with these veils through which God acts, but he is not affected or distracted by them. Shushtari’s most explicit description of realization in the *Maqālīd* is worth quoting in full, notwithstanding the obscurity of his language and the poor quality of the available critical edition:

“Know that what is necessary is your entity (*‘ayn*) and what is impossible is your report (*khābar*). So it is impossible to report about other than yourself. If you report—whatever you may report—you are reporting about yourself, even by turning away from reporting. So it [the report] is itself an imagined fantasy (*wahm*) in view of its reporter, real in respect of existence. So it reports about you, and it is from none other than you. [Just as] your head is yours, and even if it is constantly in search for the resplendent archetype (*al-mithāl al-jalī*)³⁰ it is but a head that can be cut off. So whatever sort of life you live, you will not find a “not” nor will you understand “where” [with your delimited intellect].

The Real is real, and all other than Him is a report (*khābar*), and there is none other than Him. Moreover, the report (*khābar*) consists of names, and names are composed of letters whose

²⁸ The *Maqālīd* is an important treatise that needs a full critical edition. It was penned after Shushtari’s move to Cairo, and after the year 652/1254 when he assumed leadership in, or of, Ibn Sabʿīn’s order. He still refers to Ibn Sabʿīn as “our master” and had yet to join the Shādhiliyya (Shushtari 2008, pp. 108, 111).

²⁹ Translations of Qur’ānic verses are from (Nasr et al. 2015) with some modifications.

³⁰ I have doubts about how to translate this sentence. The term *al-mithāl al-jalī* seems to be a technical term. Assuming there is no editorial or scribal error in the 2008 edition of the text, it may correspond to *al-mithāl al-wujūdī* that Shushtari refers to later in the treatise. It is, therefore, the Alif from which all the letters of the names of the Real issue. In relation to other images, it is like the archetypal number one, which contains all numbers. It thus contains all forms and corresponds to the Tablet, the Pen, and the First Intellect (p. 108).

composition breaks down into dots supposed by the imagination. There is no report (*khavar*) in the Real, [because the Real is just the Real, no “other” can be “in” Him] and none can report of Him (*mukhbir*), for He is other than the report (*khubr*) and the reporter (*mukhbir*). Rather, He is He. Rather: He. Rather, through Him any verbal expression is supposed. The name “existence” is applied only to the Essence of the One, the Real, the Existent, and the imagined report (*wahm al-khavar*) suggests that nonexistence has an essence in existence. However, in fact, nonexistence (*‘adam*) is not found. It possesses nothing in existence other than the supposed ‘ / D / M of *‘adam* ... Thus, imagined fantasy (*wahm*) and existence pervade the suppositions (*mafrūdāt*), imagined fantasies (*awhām*) and the one who reports of them (*mukhbiriḥā*). Thus, there is nothing with God except God in each thing, nor is any part His.

Imagination (*wahm*) and nonexistence (*‘adam*) are synonymous in a certain sense. Names possess a secret. Whoever understands it understands the letters, and whoever understands the letters finds that they have no reality. And whoever finds no reality therein is not deceived by the fantasy of duality (*shaf*), and whoever is not deceived by the fantasy of duality is odd (*witr*, [a divine name]) ... Whoever is odd is real. And whoever understands the secret of the names is and there is no thing with him. Thus, you are you if you do not report, and you are other than you in a certain respect if you report. And you report only about you, and you find none other than you, and the line of your report extends infinitely from you. Therefore, you are the real and your report is imagination. You are the encompassing and your report is encompassed. You are the odd by which there is the pair. You are the fixed proposition and it is disappearing. You are the spirit and it is the body. You are the lord and it is the servant. From it you must withdraw (*takhallī*), and in order not to report, you must adorn yourself (*tahallī*). Your existence for it is the disclosure (*tajallī*) ... God alone (*Allāh faqat*). Scattering (*tashattut*) occurs in existence only on account of supposing essences, levels, forms, laws, numbers, and things of that sort that are too many to number. And all of that is through the existence of names. *They are none other than names that you have named* (Q A rāf 7:71). The one who taught [those names] is called the vicegerent, Adam ... and [the names] are everything other-than-God, and *everything is perishing except His Face* (Q Qaṣaṣ 28:88) ... they have no essence apart from [their letters] ... The names, therefore, move from the Essence, the Essence of the Real, the One. Their ascent to the Real is through imagination, for they are other than the Real even though they realize the Real and give clarity to the levels. They are, therefore, the instrument that enable you to attain your essence, but when you attain it, you have no need for them.” (Shushtarī 2008, pp. 104–6).

Shushtarī explains that the names are not disjointed breaks (*infikāk*) in the chain of existence. Rather they are images of the Real that enable you to arrive at a particular essence. He compares the essence (*dhāt*) that the Realizer arrives at to a king, and the content of the report (*khavar*) to the doorkeeper (*ḥājib*) who allows the seeker to enter into the king’s court. Upon entering, there is no more need for the doorkeeper who no longer alludes to, but veils from, the king. Similarly, the seeker comes to know God through His names, which are veils in themselves. However, the seeker’s essence (*dhāt*) is the king and the doorkeeper (*ḥājib*). By positing a division, he generates his own veil, thus becoming the veiled doorkeeper (*ḥājib*).

Shushtarī’s understanding of the “school of realization” (*madhhab al-tahqīq*) or “school of non-dualism” (*madhhab al-laysiyya*)³¹ in the *Maqālīd* (and presumably the *Quṣāriyya*) is deeply influenced by Ibn Sab‘īn’s uncompromising monism who states axiomatically: “God alone” (*Allāh faqat*). Ibn Sab‘īn is, moreover, considered to be the first Muslim thinker to speak of the “oneness of being”

³¹ Shushtarī begins one of his treatises with the statement: “God alone, and none other” (*Allāh faqat wa’ laysa illā*, see *Iḥāṭa*, vol. 4, p. 212). Ghubrīnī describes Shushtarī’s as “the path of realization” (*tariqat al-tahqīq*, see *al-Dirāya*, p. 239).

(*waḥdat al-wujūd*) as a major concept. The Cairo-based Shāfiʿī traditionist Quṭb al-Dīn al-Qaṣṣālānī (d. 686/1287), as well as heresiographers of the Muslim West including Ibn al-Zubayr (d. 708/1308), Ibn al-Khaṭīb (d. 776/1375), and Ibn Khaldūn (d. 808/1406), blacklisted Shushtarī along with other mystics of the Muslim West, including Shūdhī, Ibn al-Marʿa, and Ibn Sabʿīn as “extremist proponents of absolute oneness” (*ahl waḥda muṭlaqa min al-mutawaghghilīn*).³² Ibn Khaldūn, moreover, offers a thoughtful summary of this perspective, which may be informed by a reading of Shushtarī’s prose treatises (especially the *Maqālīd*) given the terminological and doctrinal overlap.³³ He offers a similar assessment of the school of *taḥqīq* as promulgators of “absolute oneness” (*waḥda muṭlaqa*).³⁴ He accuses them of meddling with the Law, highlights the importance of the term *taḥqīq* in their works, importance of the letters and their properties and powers and numerical symbolism. Shūdhī, known as al-Ḥalwī, died in Tilimsān in the early 7th/13th century, is considered the “founder” of this “school” which maintains that “God is the sum total of what manifests and what does not manifest, that there is nothing other than that.”³⁵

In the *Quṣāriyya* and in the *Maqālīd*, Shushtarī responds to allegations of violating the revealed Law as a theological problem that is raised by Realization. That is, debates over human ethical accountability in light of divine omnipotence, not ontological debates over the oneness of being (*waḥdat al-wujūd*), were at the forefront of these early debates. He responds to the accusation that monism invalidates prophetic laws and frees the Realizer from all religious and moral accountability. This accusation is leveled against Shushtarī by Ibn al-Khaṭīb (Knysh 1999, p 183). While later scholars such as Suyūṭī tended to criticize monists for introducing Avicennan philosophical terminology into Sufism and rejected the doctrine of “absolute unity” (*al-waḥda al-muṭlaqa*), Shushtarī is concerned with human accountability: How can we be judged for actions that are ascribed to us and are actually from God? To this, he does not resort to the Ashʿarite doctrine of acquisition (*kasb*). He adopts the strongly predestinarian “Ḥadīth of the two Handfuls.”³⁶ This predestinarian position aligns more with Shushtarī’s monist metaphysics and describes the felicitous as those who uphold the truth at every level. The Realizer affirms that all things come from God. He does not ascribe an act to any agent other than God, because that would be a form of associating partners with Him (*shirk*). The Realizer observes courtesy with all of God’s disclosures, and one aspect of observing courtesy with God is not disclosing truths to those who are unqualified.

In conclusion, Shushtarī’s thought is an appropriate topic for a comparative Special Issue on mysticism and spirituality in medieval Spain for several reasons. Its author not only influenced figures

³² (Ibn al-Khaṭīb 1970, vol. 2, p. 604). On al-Qaṣṣālānī, see (Ohlander 2008, p. 319). For an examination of Ibn al-Khaṭīb and Ibn Khaldūn’s reception of Ibn al-ʿArabī, see Knysh, *Ibn ʿArabī in the Later Islamic Tradition*, pp. 167–201. Following Ibn al-Khaṭīb, Ibn Khaldūn, in *Shifāʾ al-sāʾil*, cites Shushtarī and Ibn Sabʿīn as being among those who believe in Oneness (*waḥda*); in contrast to those who believe in disclosures (*tajalliyāt*), including Ibn al-Fāriḍ, Ibn Barrajān, Ibn Qasī, Būnī, and others. Ibn al-Khaṭīb (d. 1374), who had an established friendship with Ibn Khaldūn and shared the same teacher, al-Maqqarī and Abū Mahdī ʿIsā b. al-Zayyāt in mysticism, a commentator on Harawī’s *Manāzil al-sāʾirīn*.

³³ Ibn Khaldūn, *Shifāʾ al-sāʾil*, p. 111; Yumna Özer, *Remedy for the Questioner*, Eng. trans. pp. 62–69. “The Creator (*al-Bārī*) (may He be exalted and glorified) is the totality of what is visible and invisible: there is nothing besides this. The multiplicity of this Absolute Reality and the All-encompassing Existence (*al-aniyya al-jāmiʿa*)—which is the source of every existence—and of the Essence (*huwiyya*)—which is the source of every essence—is only the consequence of illusions (*awḥām*), such as time, space, difference, occultation and manifestation, pain and pleasure, being and nothingness. This opinion affirms that all things, if delved into, are but illusions that refer back to the elements of information in the conscience and they do not exist outside it. If there were no such illusions, the whole world and all it contains would be the One, and that the One is the Truth.”

³⁴ See Yumna Özer’s introduction to *Remedy for the Questioner*, (Ibn Khaldūn 2017, pp. XIX–XII).

³⁵ For a summary of the doctrine of “absolute oneness” (*waḥda muṭlaqa*) according to (Ibn al-Khaṭīb 1970, vol. 2, p. 605).

³⁶ In this ḥadīth, which experts generally consider to be authentic (*ṣāḥīḥ*), God takes the two handfuls, the felicitous and the damned, casting one into paradise and the other into hell, saying, “this group to the Garden, and I do not care! And this group to the Fire, and I do not care!” It can be found in several versions in various collections (e.g., Mālik, *Muwattaʾ*, Abū Dāwūd, *Sunan*, Nasāʾī, *Sunan*, al-Ḥākim, *al-Mustadrak*). It is often cited by Qurʾān commentators in the context of the verse: *And when thy Lord took from the Children of Adam, from their loins, their progeny and made them bear witness concerning themselves, “Am I not your Lord?” they said, “Yea, we bear witness”—lest you should say on the Day of Resurrection, “Truly of this we were heedless.”* (Q Aʿ rāf 7:172).

like the Catalan mystic Ramon Llull (d. 1316) but also spent time visiting Christian monasteries in the Muslim East. His interest in comparative mysticism, moreover, is evidenced by the fact that he positions his Andalusian school of realization and the spiritual lineage of his master Ibn Sabʿīn (*sanad al-ṭarīqa al-sabʿīniyya*) as part of a larger trans-historical and trans-regional spiritual lineage that includes a motley handful of Greek forerunners (Hermes, Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, Alexander the Great), Muslim Andalusian and non-Andalusian philosophers (Ibn Sīnā, Ibn Masarra, Ibn Ṭufayl, Ibn Rushd, Suhrawardī), Sufi monists (Ḥallāj, Shūdhī, Ibn Qasī, Ibn Masarra, Ibn ʿArabī, Ibn al-Fārīd, Niffarī) and early Muslim ascetics.³⁷ In a sense, the hierarchy of knowledge that Shushtarī outlines in the *Quṣṣariyya* and his discussion of “realization” (*taḥqīq*) is a specifically Islamic counterpart to the universal spiritual tradition of his master Ibn Sabʿīn that he describes in the *Nūniyya*.

5. Translation and Edition: On the Limits [of Theology and Sufism]

5.1. *Al-Risāla al-Quṣṣariyya*

[1] Praise belongs to God who veiled creation by Him and from Him, and who rendered praise of Him by Him. Greetings upon the master of the successors and the predecessors, who affirmed the word of [the pre-Islamic poet Labīd] who said: “Indeed, everything apart from God is unreal.”

[2] To proceed: Lessons do not contain God’s mystery, nor do souls limit it, nor does paper announce it. *That is God’s bounty, He gives it to whom He wills* (Q 5:54). Discursive knowledge is a veil over Him, and direct recognition cannot reach Him. Rather, the furthest limit of these two is to make the knower aware of his own incapacity, and that is the first break in the seal of [the knower’s] treasure, and the undoing of his riddle.³⁸ Therefore, the one who recognizes God by following the authority [of Ashʿarites] is a common believer. The one who recognizes Him by theological proofs, and seeks proofs of the Creator from things, is an Ashʿarite. Moreover, the one who seeks proofs *for* things by their Creator is a Sufi. And the one who recognizes God through God, and sees none alongside God but God, and considers things to be nonexistent, is a Realizer (*muḥaqqiq*).

[3] Thus, the one who seeks proofs for the Artisan by the artisanry says: “I see nothing except that I see God after it,” and this is the way of the theologians. The one who considers things through God says, “I see nothing except that I see God before it,” and that is the way of the Sufis. So also the one who says: “I see nothing except that I see God with it” or “[I see] it from Him,” or “in Him” or “by Him” or “for Him” and things of that sort. As for the one who says “I see nothing,” he is among those who have become realized in one sense. The sciences of people are thus classified in accordance with these levels.

5.1.1. [The Way of the Theologian]

[4] As for how they seek to exposit their proofs: The common believer, the Qurʾān expert, the Ḥadīth expert, and the legal expert limit themselves to following the authority of the theologian. The measure of their faith is like the faith of the slave-girl whom the Messenger of God—may God’s blessings and peace be upon him—asked about God and she pointed to the sky. So he said: “Free her, for she is a believer.” (Muslim 1955; K. al-Ṣalāt, #537) Despite her pointing to a direction, he was satisfied by her affirmation of [God’s] existence because she affirmed the existence of the Artisan and His exaltedness, and this too is a sort of existence and a declaration of incomparability.

³⁷ See Shushtarī’s famous *Nūniyya*, a poem in *baḥr al-ṭawīl* meter which has received many commentaries. In the *Nūniyya*, he also expounds upon the goal of the philosopher as well as the limits of the intellect (*ʿaql*) (Shushtarī 1960, pp. 72–76; Ibn al-Ṭawwāḥ 1995, pp. 106–11; Ibn al-Ṭawwāḥ 2008, pp. 123–29; Ibn al-Khaṭīb 1977, vol. 4, pp. 208–11; Faure 1998; Festugière 1950, pp. 390, 400; Ibn ʿAjība 2013).

³⁸ The expression “*kasr al-ṭalsam*” appears in Shushtarī’s poetry (*Maqālīd*, p. 112) and the expression “*fakk mi māṣ ramzihi*” in *Maqālīd*, p. 84.

[5] The theologian's approach, in turn, yields the following doctrine: All things other than God are bodies, and bodies are combinations of atoms and accidents. The term "substance" (*jawhar*) comes from Persian, and it was appropriated by the theologians to mean "indivisible part," although the term also has many other meanings depending on the discipline. According to the theologians, a body is defined as two or more atoms (sing. *jawhar*). Therefore, anything that is divisible is a body. Moreover, an atom must have accidents such as motion, rest, color, or being. All qualities are accidents, and an accident cannot subsist by itself, nor is it able to do without an atomic locus wherein it manifests. Thus, it is in need of [atoms], and anything that is needful is originated in time. Since accidents are originated in time, the atom is also originated in time, because it is qualified by something that is originated in time. Moreover, an atom is never devoid of accidents nor does it precede accidents. And that which does not precede the temporally originated is just like it. And something originated in time that has no beginning is absurd by the very statement "originated in time," since the theologians consider temporal origination (*ḥudūth*) to be the negation of eternity (*qidam*).

[6] Moreover, their discipline is centered around five axes: (1) Affirming that accidents exist, and (2) that they are temporally originated, (3) whatever does not precede the temporally originated thing is a temporally originated thing, (4) temporally originated things that have no beginning are impossible by the very fact that they are temporally originated, and (5) that no atom is devoid of accidents.

[7] The evidence for affirming accidents is that a body either moves by itself, or by something added onto it, or by neither this nor that—which is impossible, for if a body were to move by itself, then it would continue to move as long it exists [which never happens], and therefore, the only option left is that it [moves] by something added onto it, which is the accident.

[8] Furthermore, an accident occurs after it had not been. It is replaced by what is similar, opposite, other than, or contrary to it, and this is an attribute of the temporally originated. The whole cosmos is a combination of atoms and accidents, therefore, the cosmos is temporally originated. Similarly, to affirm the existence of the Artisan, you say that a body must necessarily have a combiner who joins one atom to another. When one sees a built wall, one knows by self-evidence that it has a builder, or that a cut door has a carpenter. Doubtless, whoever supposes that a wall stands on its own, or that a door makes itself, is a wretched madman. Therefore, let us not address the obvious and self-evident.

[9] When the existence of the Artisan and the eternity of the Essence become clear through this approach, [the theologian] turns to the attributes. He affirms their existence while maintaining God's incommensurability. The attributes are seven, and they are mentioned in the Qur'ān: Hearing, seeing, speech, desire, power, knowledge, and life.

[10] Incomparability is oneness and eternality. Negating the attributes of temporal origination is the way of [affirming] eternality. Moreover, we have already established "existence" and mentioned its logical demonstration. It follows that the existence of the cosmos is as possible as its nonexistence. Neither possibility is more likely to occur than the other. Whether [the cosmos] pertains to existence rather than nonexistence, requires a specifier, which is the Existenciator of "existence." Put differently: The cosmos consists of bodies, and bodies are combinations. Since every combination must have a combiner, the cosmos must have a combiner.

[11] Now that the temporal origination of the cosmos and its need for an Originator to give it existence is apparent, we say concerning the eternity of the Artisan: If He were temporally originated, then He would have a need for an originator. This case either leads to an infinite regression, or we arrive at an Originator, not an originated thing. Since infinite regression is impossible, nothing remains but the existence of an eternal [Originator] who has no beginning.

[12] Oneness: The approach [of the theologians] is to suppose that if there were two gods, then we might also suppose the possibility of them disagreeing, which is not impossible. This being the case, let us imagine that there is a body, and one god wants it to move, while the other wants it to be still. If their wishes are fulfilled, we obtain from that body something which is both moving and still, or both living and dead, and this is impossible. Alternatively, if the will of one god is fulfilled and the other's is impotent, then the impotent is not a god, and if both are impotent then the god is neither of them,

and if one seeks help from another then both are impotent, and God is far above that. If we suppose that [the two gods] agree, then oneness would be unnecessary, duality would not be discernible, and both gods would be impotent.

[13] Furthermore, this discussion is premised on the possibility of disagreement, which, according to them, is a proof of mutual hindering. God mentions this in His book: *Were there gods other than God in them [i.e., in the night and day], they would surely have been corrupted* (Q 21:22), He also says: *And some [gods] would overcome others* (Q 23:91). Thus, those who hold polytheistic beliefs, such as two [gods], are contradicted by a third, a tenth, or even a hundredth [god]—a corrupt contradiction to a corrupt [doctrine]. They cannot affirm their claim without another claim [contradicting theirs], and thus they fall back on the One [God] who is agreed upon.

[14] Life: [This essential attribute] accounts for the fact that the cosmos has a single, eternal Artisan, and that divine artisanry is not produced by someone who is dead or by an inanimate object. Therefore, He is Living and Self-Sustaining. Moreover, life is an attribute of perfection, and it is, therefore, His attribute.

[15] Knowledge: We observe that existent things are arranged according to a hierarchy, a harmonious arrangement, and a habitual course of nature that is wisely interconnected and meticulously perfected. We thus know that it necessarily issues from the knowledge of a Wise Knower. *Does He who created not know?* (Q 67:14). Knowledge is also an attribute of perfection, for were we to suppose that He is devoid of knowledge, then He would be qualified by its opposite, and He is exalted above that.

[16] Power: We observe that existent things come forth from nonexistence and that they are created from naught. Likewise, living creatures are created from water, and plants from nutrients, [we observe] blood, to seminal fluid, to sperm-drop, to a blood clot, to the known developmental stages [of the fetus]. Thus, we know necessarily that all of that comes from a power that exerts influence and brings things forth from naught or another thing, *and God is powerful over all things* (Q 2:284). Were God not qualified by power, then He would be qualified by its opposite. Therefore, power is an attribute of perfection.

[17] Will: We observe that existent things pertain specifically to existence over nonexistence. Since it would have been [logically] possible for existent things to remain in nonexistence, we know that [their existence] is through will of a willing God who chose their existence over their nonexistence, *He acts fully on what He wills* (11:107). Therefore, Will is an attribute of perfection.

[18] Speech: This is an attribute of perfection which, were He not qualified by, would render Him thoughtless; exalted is He above that. God says: *And God spoke to Moses directly* (Q 4:164). Now, when Will is specified and Power is perfected, the [attribute of] Speech calls upon an existent thing to manifest and come to be, so it comes to be. God says: *His command when He wills for a thing is only to say to it "Be!" and it is* (Q 36:82)—thereafter, He gives it commands and prohibitions.

[19] Hearing: This is an attribute of perfection which, were He not qualified by, would render Him deaf, *and He is the hearing, the seeing* (Q 42:11). After existent things become manifest, they speak, and He hears what they hide in secret and what they declare openly: *He knows what is secret and what is more hidden still* (Q 20:7).

[20] Seeing: This is an attribute of perfection, and it presupposes that which is necessary in the others. *Who sees thee when thou standest [to pray]* (Q 26:218). *That thou mightiest be formed under My eye* (Q 20:43). Having originated existent things, God sees them, just as He hears, knows, wills, and overpowers them in being hallowed beyond the attributes of creation in the realm of noneternity.

[21] Among these [characteristics of creation that are wrongly ascribed to the attributes] is otherness and unificationism that is ascribed to the exalted attributes. As for the philosophers, they deny the attributes, which is against the doctrine of the Sunnīs. The Muʿtazilites,³⁹ for their part, interpret them figuratively as referring to God's knowledge, in contrast to the Ashʿarites. In so doing,

³⁹ The manuscript has Ghazālī, which I assume to be a misreading of *Iʿtizālī* (see discussion above).

[the philosophers and Mu'tazilites] flee from multiplicity [in the Essence]. However, we have no need for the sects such as Mu'tazilites, the Karrāmites, and their fleeing! As for those who make the attributes noneternal, that is [heretical] unbelief. Some claim that the attributes [are completely distinct from the Essence], and this doctrine leads to multiplicity [in the Essence]. Others claim that they hark back to the meaning of the Essence and that there is no multiplicity, and thus they are neither He nor other than He, and that is the safest and best approach, for the demonstration shows that multiplicity must be negated, and scripture informs us of the attributes. Thus their [the Ash'arites'] approach is to reconcile the two approaches.

[22] Likewise, one must not say that the God of the cosmos is "inside" the cosmos nor that He is "outside" of it. For that is an attribution of bodies, and He is exalted above that. For if He were "inside" the cosmos, then the cosmos would encompass and surround Him, and He is exalted above the attributes of bodies. Therefore, what remains, as we have said, is an approach between two [extreme] approaches, for it is impossible for Him to dwell in something or for something to dwell in Him—He is far exalted above that.

5.1.2. [The Way of the Sufi]

[23] The Sufis, for their part, profess the doctrine of the theologians at the beginning [of their path]. Then they delve more deeply into divine oneness and profess that things provide no proof for their Maker whatsoever. Rather, the proof of things comes only from God, and it is He who alerts us to them, for they have no existence except insofar as He pours [existence] upon them. The proof comes from God, not from things:

Thou Thyself reveal, then dost Thou conceal,
Thou provest Thyself, the proof, and I.

[24] Existent things are essentially dead. They are raised up apparitions, tents of the divine command, pitched by it. Good and evil are spiritual forms that descend upon them from the world of the divine command and by the command. This is [what the Sufis call] the high command and the holy spirit. The cosmos conforms to the eternal will and the overpowering destiny. God says: *And you threw not when you threw, but God threw* (Q 8:17), and He says: *Fight them and God will punish them by your hands* (Q 9:14).

[25] Furthermore, they consider bodies to be [of] the world of creation whose accidents renew at every instant and with each individual moment. The divine command moves them as it wishes. Moreover, a group among those who have not gained master in the sciences may slip by committing acts of disobedience that were destined for them, and they claim that theirs is God's speech, or that God speaks through us. Some even proclaim [the doctrine of] unificationism, which is absurd. For interpenetration occurs between two essences, and that is an attribute of bodies. The proof [of the absurdity of the doctrine of unificationism] is that there are either two existent things, or two non-existent things, or one is existent and the other nonexistent, and there is no unification in either of these possibilities. This doctrine is a horrendous heresy, a doctrine taken from Christian sects.

[26] Know also that the intellect (*'aql*), according to the Sufis comes from the world of the command, whereas the lower soul (*nafs*) is the blameworthy creature. *Nafs* is also the word that the Arabs use to denote the very totality of a thing. The spirit (*rūḥ*) for them is the divine command that enters upon the realm of being so that it comes to be, and so that it moves or rests. The spirit is the pure meaning of the Kāf and the Nūn ["Be!"], and it is God's exalted word which they call the Universal Spirit. For it is any essence that is stripped from spirit, soul, or intellect. It possesses no act, unlike the body, except what reaches them from the secret of the Holy Spirit, which is the Pen of Differentiation, inscribes existent things without interruption eternally and without end.

5.1.3. [The Way of the Realizer]

[27] As for the Realizers, they say that engendered things are veils over their essences, and the Real is not veiled by a veil. Rather, nothing exists within Him. Existence for them is one, and the [divine] names separate, divide into parts, and veil. God proves His own Essence and is Himself proven by Himself. The servant, for his part, is passing in his essence and exists by accident and illusion. For the Realizers, there is no arrival [at God], since arrival implies an in-betweenness prior to arrival, yet God is closer than arrival, separation, union, difference, proximity, farness, mental or spatial distance, all of which are attributes of bodies.

[28] Furthermore, angels and devils, like humans, have no agency. Rather, God seeks to fulfill His wisdom by casting veils over His creatures, and by assigning names to things that have no power. He then teaches us to observe courtesy and to address [Him]. Hence, one way of observing courtesy is not to ascribe evil to Him. He appoints the quiddity of Satan as the locus of evil and ugliness. He has no power except for whatever descends upon him from the high command and the overpowering spirit. This [etiquette with God] is similar to the way rulers are to be addressed in this world. That is, when addressing kings and notables who commit evil deeds, the speaker ascribes them to himself and admits his lack of power and weakness. Do you not see what Abraham, God's intimate friend, said of God in his whispered prayers: *[The Lord of the worlds] who created me, and thus He guides me, and who gives me food and drink, and when I am sick, He cures me* (26:78–80). He ascribes sickness, given its hardship, to himself. As for the rest, namely creation, guidance, food, and drink, he ascribes to God. Such is the proper etiquette of the law while believing that there is no actor but God.

[29] Among the things that the Realizers, may God be pleased with them, say is: "Whatever the beautiful deed, it is enacted by God, and whatever the ugly deed, it comes from me and by me." The angels of death, [the terrifying angels of the grave] Munkar and Nakir, Satan, the ocean, snakes, scorpions, lions, sultans, poison, and every frightening form are all appearances created by their Creator from naught. They are given authority over whomever He wills among His servants by His command that is concealed within their bodily frames. For the human being only recognizes a bodily frame that is like him: A corporealized body. However, God is the absolute Agent who acts through those veils. Therefore, whoever realizes that all things are mere corporeal bodies, and understands the divine command within those bodies, and fears only God rather than corporealized fantasies, then these forms of the command have no authority over him.

[30] If you say "since we have no agency, we should not be rebuked for what occurs through us, for it all comes from God" just as others have said before you, then know that God's act is all good as we have already said. He made the good to be a sign for the People of the Right and Paradise, and evil a sign for the People of the Left and Hell, may God shelter us from it. Good and evil are signs of the two Handfuls, and what we take into account is the final moment of death. Whoever believes that there is no god but God, and that Muḥammad is the messenger of God, and that there is absolutely no agent but God, and if God preserves him in matters addressed by the Law which are also God's command, and he achieves conviction that all things come from Him—including the sword and the whip—and that the Fire is a decree that cannot be repelled and a command that prevails, and he persists upon the standard path of uprightness which God describes as upright on the tongues of His creatures—even though He is the actor through those corporeal tongues that He originates—then he is among the felicitous. Indeed, God expresses that world, and displays generosity toward the upright, and disdain toward the depraved in this abode, for axiomatically, nothing other than God's command exercises control.

[31] Furthermore, whoever is informed of a secret and pronounces it publicly will not be informed of secrets so long as he lives, [and] is to be executed [for breach of] courtesy, even if the Real were to call him a liar. May God make us among those who obey Him and His messenger by His favor and grace, there is no Lord but Him, and no object of worship but Him.

[32] Moreover, know that to affirm an act to anyone other than God is to ascribe partners to Him. To those who claim this idea, recite to them: *That is because when God alone is called upon, you*

disbelieved, and when partners are ascribed to Him, you believe (Q 40:12). Tell them when they call upon you to abandon your proclamation of God's oneness: Oh my people, how it is that I call you unto salvation while you call me unto the Fire? You call upon me to disbelieve in God and to ascribe as a partner to Him that whereof I have no knowledge, whereas I call you unto the Mighty, the Forgiving. There is no doubt that that unto which you call me has no call in this world or the Hereafter (Q 40:41–43). May God protect us from ascribing partners to Him, from hidden doubt, falsehood, and stupidity. He is the All-Bestower, the Exalted, the Forbearing, the Generous.

God bless our master Muḥammad, his family, and his companions, and may He greet them with abundant greetings of peace until the Day of Requital.

الرسالة القصارية
لأبي الحسن الششتري⁴⁰
بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم، رب يسر برحمتك

[١] الحمد لله الذي حجب الخلق به عنه، وجعل الحمد له منه، وصلى الله على سيد الأواخر والأوائل، مصدق كلمة القائل: «ألا كل شيء ما خلا الله باطل».

[٢] أما بعد: فإن سر الله لا تقتضيه⁴¹ الدروس ولا تقيده النفوس ولا تفيده الطروس، ذلك فضل الله يؤتيه من يشاء (٥: ٤٥). العلم حجاب عليه، والمعرفة لا توصل إليه، بل غايتها إشعار المتصف بهما بعجزه، وذلك أول كسر طلسم كزده وفك معمار رمزه، فمن عرف الله بالتقليد فهو عامي، ومن عرفه بدلائل التوحيد فاستدل بالأشياء على موجدتها فهو أشعري، ومن استدلل على الأشياء بموجدتها فهو صوفي، ومن عرف الله بالله ولم ير مع الله إلا الله، والأشياء معدومة عنده، فهو محقق.

[٣] فالمستدل بالصنعة على الصانع يقول «ما رأيت شيئاً إلا رأيت الله بعده»، وهذه طريقة المتكلمين. والناظر للأشياء بالله يقول «ما رأيت شيئاً إلا رأيت الله قبله» وهو طريق الصوفية، وكذلك القائل «ما رأيت شيئاً إلا رأيت الله معه»، أو «هو عنه»، أو «فيه»، أو «به»، أو «له» أو ما أشبه ذلك. ومن قال «ما رأيت شيئاً» فهو ممن تحقق بوجه ما، وهذه الرتب الحاصرة لمعارف الخلق.

[٤] وأما كيفية بيان استدلالهم فهو أن العامي والمقري والمحدث والفروعي قصاراهم التقليد للمتكلم، وحاصل إيمانهم كإيمان الخادم التي سألها رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم عن الله، فأشارت إلى السماء، فقال «اعتقها فإنها مؤمنة»⁴² مع إشارتها إلى الجهة قنع منها بالإقرار بالوجود، وذلك لأنها أقرت بوجود الصانع ورفعته، وهو وجود وتنزيه ما.

[٥] والمتكلم حاصل طريقه أنه يقول: إن ما سوى الله أجسام، والأجسام مؤلفة من جواهر وأعراض - والجوهر لفظة فارسية عرفت ونقلها المتكلمون للجزء الذي لا ينقسم، ويطلق باشتراك على معان كثيرة بحسب الصنائع - والجسم عند المتكلمين يطلق على جوهرين فصاعداً، فكل ما انقسم فهو جسم، والجوهر لا يخلو عن عرض كالحركة والسكون واللون والكون، والصفات كلها أعراض، والعرض لا يقوم بنفسه ولا يستغني عن محل جوهر يظهر فيه، فهو مفتقر له، وكل مفتقر حادث، والعرض حادث، فالجوهر حادث لا تصافه بحادث، والجوهر لا يعرى عن عرض ولا يسبق العرض، وما لا يسبق الحادث فهو مثله، وحادث لا أول له محال من نفس قولنا حادث، فإن الحادث عندهم هو نفي القدم.

[٦] وتدور صناعتهم على خمسة أقطاب: ثبوت الأعراض وحدوثها، وما لا يسبق الحادث حادث، وحادث لا أول لها محال من نفس قولنا حادث، والجوهر لا يعرى عن عرض.

[٧] والدليل على ثبوت الأعراض أن الجسم إما أن يتحرك لنفسه أو لمعنى زائد عليه أو لا لهذا ولا لهذا، وهذا محال، ولو تحرك الجسم لنفسه لبقى متحركاً طول بقاءه، فلم يبق إلا المعنى الزائد وهو العرض.

⁴⁰ آ: لأبو

⁴¹ آ: تقتضى

⁴² صحيح مسلم، كتاب الصلاة، ٥٣٧.

[٨] وأيضا العرض يطرأ بعد أن لم يكن، ويعقبه المثل والضد والغير والخلاف، وهذا وصف الحادث. وجملة العالم مؤلف من جواهر وأعراض، فالعالم حادث، وثبوت الصانع أن تقول الجسم فبالضرورة له مؤلف ضمّ الجوهر للجوهر، وأن تعلم بالضرورة أنه إذا رأيت حائطا مبنيا أن له بناء، أو بابا منجورا أن له نجارا، ومن ظن أن الحائط قام وحده أو الباب انعمل من ذاته فلا يشك في حقيقته وشقاوته، فلا يخاطب بديهي ضروري.

[٩] فإذا تبين له وجود الصانع على هذه الطريقة، وتبينت الذات القديمة، يرجع للصفات < و > يثبتها، وللتزيه < ف > يبين طريقه، والصفات سبعة نطق⁴³ القرآن < بها > وهي السمع والبصر والكلام والإرادة والقدرة والعلم والحياة.

[١٠] والتزيه: الوحدة والقدم، ونفي نعوت الحدث هو طريق القدم، وإذا قد ثبت الوجود، وبرهانه كما ذكر، ونسقه هو أن العالم ممكن وجوده وممكن عدمه، وليس أحد الممكنين أولى⁴⁴ من الآخر بالوقوع، فاختصاص وجوده على عدمه اقتضى⁴⁵ مخصصا، وهو موجد، ويقال العالم أجسام، والأجسام مؤلفة، وكل مؤلف لا بد له من مؤلف، فالعالم له مؤلف.

[١١] وإذا قد ظهر حدوث العالم وافتقاره لمحدث أوجده، فلنقل في قدم الصانع لو كان محدثا لافتقر إلى محدثه، فإما أن يتسلسل الأمر أو نقف عند محدث لا محدث، والتسلسل محال، فلم يبق إلا وجود قديم لا افتتاح له.

[١٢] الوجدانية: طريقها عندهم أنه لو قدرنا إلهين لقدّرنا جواز اختلافهما وهو غير ممنوع، وإذا كان ذلك فلنفرضه في جسم أراد أحدهما تحريكه والآخر تسكينه، فإن تمت إرادتهما حصل من ذلك جسم متحرك ساكن، أو حي ميت، وهذا محال، وإن تمت إرادة أحدهما وعجز الآخر فالعاجز غير إله، وإن عجزا فالإله غيرهما، وإن استعان أحدهما بالآخر فهما عاجزان، والإله يتره عن ذلك، وإن قدرنا اتفاقهما فالواحد لا حاجة به، والمشوية غير متبينة، وكلاهما عاجزان.

[١٣] وأيضا الكلام مبني على جواز الاختلاف، وهو عندهم دليل التمانع، وقد ذكر الله ذلك في كتابه، لو كان فيهما آلهة إلا الله لفسدتا (٢١: ٢٢)، وقال تعالى وَلَعَلَّا بَعْضُهُمْ عَلَى بَعْضٍ (٢٣: ٩١)، فمن قال بالزائد كالإثنين عورض بالثالث، والعاشر والمائة معارضة فاسدة بفسادة، فلا يقدر على إثبات دعواه دون دعوى غيره، فيرجع للواحد المجمع عليه.

[١٤] الحياة: تبين أن العالم له صانع قديم واحد، والصنعة لا تصدر عن ميت ولا عن جماد، فهو إذا حي قيوم، وأيضا الحياة صفة كمال، فهي صفته جلّ وتعالى.

[١٥] العلم: ولنا رأينا الموجودات على ترتيب ونظام محكم وعوائد مربوطة بالحكمة وفعل متقن، علمنا ضرورة أن ذلك صادر عن علم عالم حكيم ألا يعلم من خلق (٦٧: ١٤)، وهو أيضا صفة كمال، لو قدرنا خلقه عن العلم لا تصف بضده تعالى عن ذلك.

[١٦] القدرة: ولنا رأينا الموجودات تصدر بعد عدم وتتكون من لا شيء، أو كالحیوان من ماء النبات لغذاء لدم لنبي لنطفة لعلقة إلى الأطوار المعلومة، علمنا ضرورة أن ذلك عن قدرة مؤثرة تخرج الشيء من لا شيء أو من شيء، والله على كل شيء قدير (٢: ٢٨٤)، ولو لم يتصف بالقدرة لا تصف بضدها تعالى عن ذلك، وهي صفة كمال.

⁴³ كذا في المخطوط، ولعله « بنطق » أو « نطق بها » وبها ساقطة

⁴⁴ في المخطوط: أولا

⁴⁵ في المخطوط: اقتضاء

[١٧] الإرادة: ولما رأينا الموجودات حُصِّصت بالوجود على العدم، وكان بقاؤها في العدم جائز، علمنا أنَّ ذلك بإرادة مريد اختار الوجود على العدم، فَعَالَ لِمَا يُرِيدُ (١١: ١٠٧)، وهي صفة كمال.

[١٨] الكلام: صفة كمال لو لم يَتَّصِفْ بذلك لكان موقفاً تعالى عن ذلك، قال الله تعالى وَكَلَّمَ اللَّهُ مُوسَى تَكْلِيمًا (٤: ١٦٤)، ولما حُصِّصَت الإرادة وأُبدعت القدرة استدعى الكلام الموجود للظهور والتكوين فكانت، قال الله تعالى إِنَّمَا أَمْرُهُ إِذَا أَرَادَ شَيْئًا أَنْ يَقُولَ لَهُ كُنْ فَيَكُونُ (٣٦: ٨٢)، ثُمَّ أَمَرَهَا وَنَهَاها. [١٩] السمع: صفة كمال لولا اتصافه به لكان موقفاً، وَهُوَ السَّمِيعُ الْبَصِيرُ (٤٢: ١١)، ولما ظهرت الموجودات تكلمت فسمعها أَسْرَتْ وأعلنت، يَغْلُمُ السَّرَّ وَأُخْفَى (٢٠: ٧).

[٢٠] البصر: صفة كمال يلزم فيه ما يلزم في سواه من الصفات، الَّذِي يَرَاكَ حِينَ تَقُومُ (٢٦: ٢١٨) وَلِتُصْنَعَ عَلَى عَيْنِي (٢٠: ٣٩)، ولما أبداع الله الموجودات رآها كما سمعها وعلمها وأرادها وقدر عليها التنزيه عن نعوت الخلق من سماء الحدود.

[٢١] فمن ذلك ما يلحق الصفات العلى من التغاير والاتحاد، أمّا الفلاسفة فيسلبونها، وهذا خلاف مذهب أهل الستة، والغزالي يأولها بمعنى العلم خلافاً للأشعرية، وهروبهم هو من الكثرة، ولا حاجة بنا للفرق كالمعتزلة والكرامية وهروبهم، ومن جعلها حادثة فهو كفر، فمن قائل إنَّ الصفات < غيرية > وهذا القول يؤدي إلى الكثرة، ومن قائل يقول هي راجعة لمعنى الذات، وأن لا كثرة، فإذا لا هي هو ولا هي غيره، وهي أسلم الطرق وأحسنها، فإنَّ البرهان قام على نفي الكثرة، والنص يخبر بالصفات فيوقفوا بين الطريقتين، وهكذا طريقهم.

[٢٢] وكذلك إله العالم لا يقال فيه إنه داخل العالم ولا خارجه، فإنَّ ذلك من صفات الأجسام تعالى عن ذلك، إذ لو كان داخل العالم لكان العالم يحيط به ويحويه، تعالى من صفات الأجسام، فبقي كما ذكرنا طريق بين طريقتين، فمن المحال أن يحلَّ في شيء أو أن يحلَّ فيه شيء، تعالى عن ذلك علواً كبيراً.

[٢٣] والصوفيّة يقولون بقول المتكلمين في بدايتهم، ثمَّ يتوغلون في التوحيد فيقولون إنَّ الأشياء لا دلالة لها على صانعها البتّة، وإمّا الدليل من الله على الأشياء، وهو المنبته عليها إذ لا وجود لها إلّا ما أفاض عليها، والدلالة من الله لا من الأشياء:

ظَهَرْتُمْ خَفِيَّتُمْ فِي ظُهُورِكُمْ * أَنْتُمْ دَلَلْتُمْ عَلَيْنَا لِلدَّلِيلِ وَلِي

[٢٤] فالموجودات ميّنة بالذات، أشباح منصوبة وفساطيط لأمر الله وبه مضروبة، والخير والشرّ صور روحانية تنزل عليهم من عالم الأمر بالأمر، وهو الكلمة العلية والروح القدسيّة، فيجري الكون على حسب الإرادة القديمة والقدر المستولي، قال الله تعالى: وَمَا رَمَيْتَ إِذْ رَمَيْتَ وَلَكِنَّ اللَّهَ رَمَى (٨: ١٧)، وقال تعالى قَاتِلُوهُمْ يُعَذِّبُهُمُ اللَّهُ بِأَيْدِيكُمْ (٩: ١٤).

[٢٥] والأجسام عندهم عالم خلق تتجدد⁴⁶ أعراضها في كل زمان ومع كل زمان فرد، وأمر الله يحركهم كما شاء، وقد تزل طائفة ممن لم تحذقه العلوم فيفعلون ما قُدر عليهم من عصيان، ويقولون هو < قول >⁴⁷ الله، أو هو المتكلم فينا، ويقولون بالاتحاد وهو باطل، وهو تداخل الذاتين، وهو من صفات الأجسام، وبرهانه إما أن يكونا موجودين أو معدومين، أو أحدهما موجود والآخر معدوم، ولا اتحاد في إحدى هذه الأقسام، وهذا كفر عظيم، وقوله من فرق النصارى مأخوذة منهم.

[٢٦] وعلم أن العقل عند الصوفية هو من عالم الأمر، والنفس هي الخلق المذمومة عندهم، ويطلقها العرب على جملة الشيء، والروح عندهم هو أمر الله الوارد على الكون بالتكوين، ثم بالتحريك أو بالتسكين، وهو معنى الكاف والنون، وهي كلمة الله العلية < و > يسمونه الروح الكلبي، فإنه أي ذات قدرة مجردة من روح أو نفس أو عقل، فلا فعل لهم كالجسم إلا ما يرد عليه من سِر الروح القدسي، وهو قلم التفصيل الراقم للموجودات لا انقطاع لها أبد الآبدين.

[٢٧] والمحققون يقولون إن الأشياء المكونة حجب على ذواتها، والحق تعالى لا يحجبه حجاب، بل لا يوجد معه شيء، والوجود عندهم واحد، والأسماء فرقت وبعثت وحجبت، والله هو الدال على ذاته وهو المدلول عليه، والعبد ذاهب بالذات موجود بالعرض والوهم، فليس عندهم وصول، فإن الوصول ينبئ عن بين قبل ذلك، والله تعالى أقرب من الوصول والانفصال والوصل والفصل والقرب والبعد والمسافة الذهنية والحسية، كل ذلك من صفات الأجسام.

[٢٨] والملك والشیطان لا فعل لهما مثل الإنسان وإتما أراد الله إتمام حكمته بضرب الحجب على خلقه بهذه الأسماء على هذه الذوات المقهورة، وعلمنا الأدب والخطاب، فمن الأدب أن لا ينسب الشر إليه، بل جعل ماهية الشيطان محلاً للشرور والقبائح، لا حيلة له إلا ما يرد عليه من الأمر العلي والروح القهري، وكذلك المخاطبة للرؤساء في هذه الدار الدنيا التي هي مثال، أعني مخاطبة الملوك والمعلمين إن فعلوا شراً ينسب المخاطب لهم لنفسه مع اعترافه بقلّة الحيلة والضعف، ألا ترى إبراهيم الخليل عليه السلام كيف قال عنه في مناجاته الذي خلّقني فهو يهْدِينِ وَالَّذِي هُوَ يُطْعِمُنِي وَيَسْقِينِ وَإِذَا مَرِضْتُ فَهُوَ يَشْفِينِ (٢٦: ٨٠ - ٨٧)، فنسب المرض لما فيه من المشقة لنفسه وغيره من الخلقة والهدى والطعمة والشفاء لله تعالى، وهذه الآداب الشرعية مع الاعتقاد أن لا فاعل إلا الله. [٢٩] ومما قال بعضهم رضي الله عنهم، « ما كان من حسن فهو الذي فعله⁴⁸ ، < و > ما كان من سيئ متي ومن قبلي « فملك الموت ومنكر ونكير والشیطان والبحر والحية والعقرب والأسد والسلطان والسم وكل مفزع صور شبحية أبدعها خالقها من لا شيء وسلّطها على من شاء من عباده بأمره المستور بهيكلها، إذ ولا يعقل الإنسان إلا هيكلأ مثله جسداً مجسداً، وهو الفاعل على الإطلاق بحجبها، فمن تحقق أن كل شيء إتما هو جسد ووقف مع أمر الله عنده، ولم يخف من غير الله، فإنه وهم مجسد، لم تسلط عليه تلك الصورة بالأمر.

⁴⁶ في المخطوط: تتجدد

⁴⁷ في المخطوط: بقول يقل

⁴⁸ في المخطوط: فعلوا

[٣٠] فإن قلت فإذ < ن > ولا فعل لنا فلا عتب علينا فيما وقع منا إذ < ن > وذلك لله، فقد قال غيرك قبلك، فاعلم أن فعل الله خير كله كما⁴⁹ ذكرنا وجعله علامة على ما سبق من قضائه على وفق علمه وسماه⁵⁰ خيرًا وشرًا فجعل الخير علامة على أهل اليمين والجنة، وجعل الشر علامة على أهل الشمال والنار أعادنا الله منها، فالخير والشر علامتان على القبضتين، والمعتبر الخاتمة، فمن اعتقد أن لا إله إلا الله وأن محمدًا رسول الله، وأن لا فاعل إلا الله على الإطلاق، وحفظه الله في الأمور الشرعية التي هي أمر الله أيضًا، وتيقن أن كل شيء منه، فالسيف أيضًا والوسط منه، وكذلك النار حكم لا يرد وأمر قد ظهر، وحمل على طريق الاستقامة العرفية التي سماها الله استقامة على السنة خلقه - وهو الفاعل لتلك الألسنة الأجساد التي أبدعها الله - فهو من الأشقياء⁵¹ قد أنطق الله بذلك العالم وأظهر الكرامة للمستقيم والإهانة لغير المستقيم في هذه الدار، إذ لا يتصرف فيها غير أمر الله ضرورة.

[٣١] وأيضًا من أطلعوه على سرّ فباح به لم يطلعوه على الأسرار ما عاش⁵² قتل أدبًا له، وإن قال الحق تعالى له «كذبت» . جعلنا الله ممن يطيعه ويطيع رسوله بمته وكرمه لا رب سواه ولا معبود إلا إياه.

[٣٢] واعلم أن إثبات فعل لغير الله شرك، فالقائلون بذلك اتل عليهم ذلك بأنه إذا دعي الله < وحده > كفرتم وإن يشرك به تؤمنوا (٤٠: ١٢)، وقل لهم إذا دعوك لترك توحيدك ويا قوم ما لي أذعوكم إلى التّجاة وتدعوني إلى النار تدعوني لأكفر بالله وأشرك به ما ليس لي به علم وأنا أذعوكم إلى العزيز الغفار لا جرم أنما تدعوني إليه ليس له دعوة في الدنيا ولا في الآخرة (٤٠: ٤١ - ٤٣)، أعادنا الله من الشرك والشك الخفي والبطالة والجهالة برحمته إنه وهاب عزيز حلیم كريم.

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⁴⁹ في المخطوط: كما

⁵⁰ في المخطوط: وسماه

⁵¹ كذا في المخطوط، ولعله «السعداء»

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