



ASRĀR AL-ḤEKAM

ASRĀR AL-ḤEKAM FI'L-MOFTATAḤ WA'L-MOKṬATAM, the title of a book written for Nāṣer-al-dīn Shah Qājār, by the philosopher Ḥājī Mollā Hādī Sabzavārī (1212-89/1797-1872). The Shah, passing through Sabzavār on the way to Khorasan, summoned Mollā Hādī and asked him to write a book in Persian about man's origin and destination (*mabda' wa ma'ād*) together with the mysteries of God's oneness (*tawḥīd*). The book, completed in 1286/1869, deals with matters of illuminative wisdom (*ešrāq*) and peripatetic philosophy, and is rich in intuitive and mystic insights.

Mollā Hādī thought that gnosis falls into three categories: (1) knowledge of God, consisting of knowledge of the beginning and knowledge of the end; (2) knowledge of one's self; (3) knowledge of God's commands, consisting of knowledge of every rule of divine law (*šarī'a*) and knowledge of the spiritual path (*ṭarīqa*). On the basis of this classification, the book is divided into two parts.

Part I comprises seven chapters on (1) proof of the Necessarily Existent (*wājeb al-wojūd*), (2) knowledge of God's attributes, (3) God's actions, (4) knowledge of one's self and psychology (*ma'āref-e nafs*), (5) knowledge of man's origin and destination, (6) absolute prophethood, and (7) imamate.

Part II comprises four chapters on (1) ritual purity (*ṭahāra*), (2) prayer (*ṣalāt*), (3) alms (*zakāt*), and (4) fasting (*ṣīām*).

The most important part of the book is on the proof of the Necessarily Existent



(i.e., God). Mollā Hādī describes several methods of proof, as follows: (1) the method of the deistic philosophers (*ḥokamā-ye elāhīyīn*), which is based on the division of an object into being (*wojūd*), quality (*māhīya*) and non-being (*‘adam*), and the fact that being is genuine and real (*aṣīl*) while quality is subjective and relative (*e‘tebārī*). A potentially existent (*momken al-wojūd*) object has the same relationship to being as it has to non-being, and to bring it out of the state of potentiality, there must be something external; this is the Necessarily Existent.

(2) The method of the natural philosophers, whose sciences are concerned with movement. They deduce their proof of the Necessarily Existent from the fact that a moving object does not move by itself but requires an actuator other than itself, and the latter must have set in motion by another actuator. Given that an infinite series is an impossibility, the motion must be ultimately derived from an immobile mover.

(3) The method of the philosophers who argue from the rational soul, which is *mojarrad* (independent of the body) and cannot have a bodily or physical source; consequently its source must be something which has permanent and superior independence, and this can only be the Necessarily Existent.

(4) The method of the theologians (*motakallemūn*), who argue from the contingency of the world. Given that everything that occurs in the world requires a cause and that notions of cycles or infinite series have to be avoided, the process must stem from a cause which is not caused; this is the Necessarily Existent, antecedent to the universe and eternal.

(5) The method of the *ṣeddīqūn* (literally: speakers of truth), who argue from the thing to the thing in itself, as in the verse “The sun itself is the proof of [the existence of] the sun.”

Another important part of the book is about God’s oneness, which Mollā Hādī sets on three planes: (1) The fact that God has no partner in His intrinsic being, (2) the fact that God has no partner in His creative power, and (3) the fact that God has no partner in His real being, which belongs to His essence and to that alone.

As for God’s attributes they fall into two categories: immutable (such as beauty and majesty) and mutable. Mollā Hādī also mentions the distinction made by mystics between the benign (*laṭīf*) and wrathful (*qahrī*) attributes and the



distinction between the abstract (*tanzīhīya*) and the anthropomorphic (*tašbīhīya*) attributes. He divides God's immutable attributes into those which are absolute, those which are capable of being added to, and those which are purely additional. He explains the difference between God's name and His attributes by saying that adjectives (e.g., omnipotent, omniscient) are derivatives and that nouns are the roots of adjectives. Among God's attributes, he selects omniscience, omnipotence, will, and aliveness for detailed discussion. In the section on God's will, he goes on to discuss predestination and delegation, and demonstrates in detail that God has ordained an intermediate state (*al-amr bayn al-amrayn*).

Throughout this book, Mollā Hādī supports his arguments with quotations from the Qur'ān, the Hadith, the *Nahī al-balāga*, and Arabic and Persian poems. The earlier philosophers to whom he most often refers are Šehāb-al-dīn Sohrawardī (d. 587/1191) and Šadr-al-dīn Šīrāzī (d. 1050/1640). Among the mystics, he shows most interest in Mawlānā Jalāl-al-dīn Rūmī.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

The book was printed in 1303/1885 under the auspices of Mīrzā Yūsof Āštīānī Motawfī-al-mamālek and several times reprinted. The latest edition was brought out in 1380/1960 by Mīrzā Abu'l-Ḥasan Ša'rānī, a scholar and teacher of Islamic philosophy in Tehran, who provided useful notes and comments. See also the introduction to Mollā Hādī Sabzavārī's *Šarḥ ġorar al-farā'ed, ma'rūf be-manzūma-ye ḥekmat, qesmat-e omūr-e āmma wa ĵawhar wa 'arāz*, ed. and annotated by Mahdī Moḥaqqueq and Toshihico Izutso, Tehran, 1348 Š./1969 and *The Metaphysics of Sabzavārī*, tr. from the Arabic by Mehdi Mohagheg and Toshihico Izutso, Delmar, New York, 1977.

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