

AL-ATTAS: FROM THE ḤUJJAT AL-ŞIDDĪQ TO THE PROLEGOMENA TO THE METAPHYSICS OF ISLĀM

MOHAMAD ZAINI OTHMAN*

1. *Al-Attas and His Commentary on Ḥujjat al-Şiddīq*

Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas has made significant intellectual, religious, and cultural contributions to Malaysia and the Muslim world. He possesses a unique ability to single-handedly solve complex and enigmatic intellectual, historical, religious, and cultural problems related to Islām in the Malay World.¹ Among his many unique contributions are *The Origin of the Malay Sha'ir*,² *The Correct Date of the Terengganu Inscription*,³ the return

* University of Technology, RZS-CASIS, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, zainiy@gmail.com; I wish to thank Dr. Mohd Roslan Abd Jelani, Dr. Mohd Hilmi Ramli, Luqman Johani, Dayang Nurhazieqa Hamzani, Nurhafarahin Md Ali, Amru Khalid Sazali, Muhammad Mohamad Idris and Fahrni Hamdan, students of RZS-CASIS, who have assisted in my writing which enabled me to complete this piece in a short period of time.

- 1 Wan Mohd Nor Wan Daud, *Educational Philosophy and Practice of Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas* (Kuala Lumpur: International Institute of Islamic Thought and Civilization (ISTAC), 1998), 16-21. Hereafter cited as *Educational Philosophy*. See also Wan Mohd Nor Wan Daud, "Al-Attas: A Real Reformer and Thinker", *Knowledge, Language, Thought and the Civilization of Islām: Essays in Honour of Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas*, Wan Mohd Nor Wan Daud & Muhammad Zainiy Uthman (eds), (Kuala Lumpur: Penerbit UTM Press, 2010); also Wan Mohd Nor Wan Daud "Al-Attas: Ilmuwan Penyambung Tradisi Pembaharuan Tulen", *Adab dan Peradaban: Karya Pengi'tirafan untuk Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas*, Mohd Zaidi Ismail & Wan Suhaimi Wan Abdullah (eds), (Kuala Lumpur: MPH Publishing, 2012); and Muhammad Zainiy Uthman's biography on al-Attas in his translation of a work by Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas, *Ma'na Kebahagiaan dan Pengalamannya Dalam Islām* (Kuala Lumpur: ISTAC, 2002; reprint. Kuala Lumpur: Islamic Banking and Finance Institute Malaysia (IBFIM), 2014).
- 2 See Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas, *The Origin of the Malay Sha'ir* (Kuala Lumpur: Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka (DBP), 1968). See also idem., *Concluding Postscript to the Origin of the Malay Sha'ir* (Kuala Lumpur: DBP, 1971; Ta'dib International, 2018).
- 3 In this book, he established the correct date of the Terengganu Inscription, idem., *The Correct Date of the Terengganu Inscription* (Kuala Lumpur: Museum Department, States of Malaya, 1984; first ed. 1970). This important book has been translated into Malay by this author; see al-Attas, *Tarikh Sebenar Batu Bersurat Terengganu*, trans. by Muhammad Zainiy Uthman (Kuala Lumpur: Centre for Advanced Studies on Islam, Science, and Civilisation (CASIS) & Himpunan Keilmuan Muslim (HAKIM), 2015). The Terengganu

of the Jawi script;⁴ he brought Ḥamzah Faṣṣūrī (circa 16th A.D century)⁵ and Nūr al-Dīn al-Rānīrī (d. 1658 A.D.),⁶ two intellectual giants of the Malay World whose metaphysical, religious works to light from relative anonymity; and many other works in a style of writing that is uniquely his Malay and English prose—flowing, lucid, rhythmic, with formal dictions attaining new dimensions of meanings in contemporary penetrating philosophical usage. His distinct, sharp analysis of intellectual, religious, and socio-political problems has opened up new approaches to analyzing and finding solutions to the problems of Muslims, which has piqued the interest of contemporary Muslims around the world.

Al-Attas was named the inaugural Tun Abdul Razak Distinguished Chair of Southeast Asian Studies, established by the Government of Malaysia in collaboration with Ohio University at Athens, Ohio, U.S.A.⁷ to honor the late Prime Minister of Malaysia, Tun Abdul Razak bin Dato' Hussein⁸ at a press conference on 12th May 1981.⁹ Prof. al-Attas responded by saying that he planned to write a book during his tenure as Chair, one that would be a testament to the Chair's worth and a lasting legacy to the late Tun Abdul Razak's memory.¹⁰

Inscription was inducted in the UNESCO Memory of World Register in 2009 and 2012. The Department of National Heritage published a collection of essays to document the importance of the edict; see Muhammad Zainiy Uthman (ed.), *The Terengganu Inscription: Its Correct Date, Scientific and Religio-Cultural Dimensions* (Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia: Department of National Heritage, 2012).

- 4 The Jawi script is the Arabo-Malay script in which the contemporary Romanized Malay language was originally written. Jawi was known as the spoken language of the Malay speaking region of the Malay-Indonesian Archipelago, until it was Romanized in 1960s. See Wan Mohd Nor Wan Daud, *Educational Philosophy*, 6, 13. See also Muhammad Syukri Rosli and Ahnaf Wafi Alias, *Tradisi Ke'ilmuan Bahasa Jawi* (Kuantan: Al-ASAR, 2022).
- 5 Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas, *The Mysticism of Ḥamzah Faṣṣūrī* (Kuala Lumpur: University of Malaya Press, 1979). Hereafter cited as *Mysticism of Ḥamzah Faṣṣūrī*.
- 6 Idem., *Rānīrī and the Wujūdiyyah of 17th Century Aceh* (Singapore: Monograph of the Royal Asiatic Society, Malaysian Branch, 1966); and idem., *A Commentary on the Ḥujjat al-Şiddīq of Nūr al-Dīn al-Rānīrī* (Kuala Lumpur: Ministry of Culture, 1986). Hereafter cited as *Commentary*.
- 7 The Tun Abdul Razak Chair at Ohio University is the only one of its kind in the United States of America. Named in honor of the second Prime Minister of Malaysia and established in 1979 with funds provided by the Malaysian government, Ohio University, and 38 private American and Malaysian corporations, the Tun Abdul Razak Chair at Ohio University has brought unique opportunities to advance greater knowledge and awareness of Malaysian history, culture, economic, social and political life in the United States, "The Tun Abdul Razak Chair Program", *Ohio University Website*, retrieved on 23 March 2022, from <https://www.ohio.edu/razak-chair/overview>.
- 8 *Commentary*, xi.
- 9 It was called by the then Minister of Education of Malaysia, Yang Berhormat Datuk Musa Hitam.
- 10 Born in 1922, in Pekan, Pahang, he was Orang Kaya Indera Shah Bandar who served as the third Chief Minister of Pahang from 1 February to 15 June 1955. He served as the Minister of Education and produced the Razak Report which shaped the National Education Policy. From 31 August 1957 until 22 September 1970, he served as the Deputy Prime Minister of Malaysia and from 22 September 1970 until 14 January 1976 he was the Prime Minister of Malaysia. See also *Strategy for Action: The Selected Speeches of Tun Haji Abdul*

The *Commentary on Ḥujjat al-Şiddīq* is based on a short treatise by Nūr al-Dīn al-Rānīrī,¹¹ a prominent figure at the court of Sulṭān Iskandar Thānī of Aceh in the first part of the seventeenth century.¹² Despite its small size of 27 manuscript pages, the *Ḥujjat al-Şiddīq li-Daf'i al-Zindīq* is significant. In his *Commentary*, Al-Attas produced an edition of the Arabic-Malay or Jawi text (in his handwritten *Jawi*) with a preface, an introduction, indexes, and a list of cited works and articles that is more than 500 pages. This is truly a one-of-a-kind accomplishment and contribution by a scholar of the contemporary Malay World. Al-Attas has not only brought this original work of al-Rānīrī to the attention of the contemporary academic world at large, but he has also continued a revered scholarly tradition in Islamic religious and intellectual activity by publishing a commentary on it in English.¹³ Al-Attas has produced "a line-by-line commentary and word by problematic word as an exposition of the explicit as well as the implicit ideas in it." As the treatise deals with "certain aspects of Islamic religious and intellectual history," al-Attas has expanded the discussion with "philosophical and metaphysical aspects both Islamic and those derived from the Greek philosophical tradition—which have shaped the Islamic vision of truth and reality". He furnished the *Commentary* with three important indexes: 1) Index I of names of persons mentioned in the text of the *Introduction, Translation, Commentary and Epilogue*;¹⁴ 2) Index II of Names of Schools, Sects, Groups;¹⁵ 3) Index III Glossary of Technical Terms in Arabic, Malay, Latin, Greek.¹⁶ These indexes have tremendously facilitated my reading of and access to specific contents of the book in my research and writing of my dissertation on the *Laṭā'if*. The significance of Index III in his

Razak Bin Dato' Hussein Al-Haj, ed. John Victor Morais (Kuala Lumpur: Malaysian Centre for Development Studies, Prime Minister's Department, 1969); Zainuddin Maidin, *Tun Razak: Jejak Seorang Patriot* (Kuala Lumpur: Utusan Publications, 1997); *Tun Abdul Razak: Potret dalam Kenangan*, ed. Abdullah Salleh (Kuala Lumpur: Yayasan Tun Razak & Utusan Publications, 2006).

- 11 For al-Rānīrī's short biography, see al-Attas, *Rānīrī and the Wujūdiyyah of 17th Century Aceh* (Singapore: Monograph of the Royal Asiatic Society, Malaysian Branch, 1966), 12-17; and a detailed biography, see al-Attas, *Commentary*, 3-48.
- 12 *Commentary*, xiii.
- 13 Prof. al-Attas often makes the remark that there are three main genre of religious and intellectual works in the Islamic tradition. They are: 1. commentary (*sharḥ*); 2. abridgment (*mukhtaṣar*); 3. rejoinder (*radd*). To this list, I would like to add that translation of any major work from the original language of Arabic into other Islamic languages such as Malay, Ottoman, Persian, and Urdu is also an intellectual work worthy of its own class, as accomplished by earlier scholars and religious authorities in the past in the wider world of Islam, and in the case of the *Commentary on the Ḥujjat al-Şiddīq*, Prof. al-Attas has gone beyond mere translation where his commentary of this important work in English has made it available to a wider readership and intellectual network.
- 14 *Commentary*, 469-474.
- 15 *Ibid.*, 477-481.
- 16 *Ibid.*, 485-504.

Commentary on the technical terms has gone unnoticed: it is the *first* in modern times that a scholar has created a glossary of key philosophical and metaphysical technical terms in Arabic, Malay, Latin, and Greek demonstrating that the Malay (*Jawi*) language was capable of supporting scholars, luminaries, sages, and religious authorities in carrying out intellectual discourses, composing works of metaphysical importance with acuity and precision. Al-Attas succeeded in elevating the philosophical discourse and mysticism of Islam in the Malay World to the greater global discourse.¹⁷

Since its publication in 1986, al-Attas' *Commentary on Hujjat al-Şiddiq* has remained an indispensable reference of Malay metaphysical ideas of the seventeenth century, a unique work that stands as the only commentary on the metaphysics of existence along the lines of al-Ghazali, Ibn 'Arabi and others in the same school in modern times. After more than thirty years since its publication, it has captured and gained an ever growing renewed interest of a larger readership.¹⁸ With the Arabic-Malay (*Jawi* text) written in his own hand, his English commentary has made available to a wider Muslim readership and the greater world of scholarship the major succinct metaphysical ideas of Nūr al-Dīn al-Rānīrī, an influential scholar, thinker, and religious authoritative figure of the seventeenth century Malay World. Al-Attas, has not only brought al-Rānīrī from obscurity, but he has also elevated him to his rightful place among the constellation of luminaries, sages, thinkers, and the learned in the world of learning and knowledge in Islām. Al-Attas has, for the first time, single-handedly demonstrated "the unity of ideas in the world of Islam pertaining to the intellectual interpretation of the nature of reality," and that it is "not confined only to particular parts of that world, but the whole of it".¹⁹ He has successfully and with great erudition demonstrated that the Malay World was well aware of "this metaphysical system in rational and intellectual terms" and as he has rightly pointed out that although the work by al-Rānīrī was more than 300 years ago, it is "...at our present age, when scientific developments in our understanding of nature have advanced considerably, before its profound significance can be realized." And it was al-Attas whose expertise, requisite erudition, and profundity in philosophy and metaphysics of Islām that enabled him to bring al-Rānīrī's metaphysical ideas and significance to the fore.

Al-Attas' commentary was based on his initial preparation (1960) of a romanized Malay edition of the *Hujjat al-Siddiq* with notes and an annotated English translation, which was first published in 1966 under the title *Rānīrī and the Wujūdiyyah of the 17th century Aceh*.²⁰ This small monograph is the first directed study of its kind ever accomplished, analyzing seminal ideas of two prominent thinkers in the Malay World, namely Ḥamzah Faṣṣūrī²¹ and Nūr al-Dīn al-Rānīrī, when al-Attas was then a student. It was published three years after he published his general survey of *taṣawwuf* and *ṭarīqahs* in Malaysia with the title *Some Aspects of Şūfism as Understood and Practised Among the Malays*.²² al-Attas says in the preface to this book that he does not "presume to present a comprehensive account which would include both the theoretical and the practical, the doctrinal and the ritual."²³ This effort which he describes as "the beginning, and perhaps be regarded as the basis for future research on the subject. In this way we can hope to understand better the implications, moral, social, and political, of the impact of Şūfism upon Malaya and the Malays."²⁴ Despite the fact that it is a preliminary work and his first ever published work, al-Attas has demonstrated the fundamental concepts of *taṣawwuf* and their ramifications in the wider discussion of metaphysics in Islām, not only in the Malay World, but as understood and practised by the luminaries, sages, and thinkers of *taṣawwuf* and its tradition, with singular clarity, expansive breadth, and depth. "Şūfism" he says "in its entirety is both a philosophy and a mysticism. Theoretical and practical, doctrinal and ritual Şūfism are never separated from one another—in fact there is no 'other'—as both these aspects form an indivisible unit." In his exposition, albeit briefly, he "presented, in historical as well as doctrinal perspective, of the origin, spread, development and culmination of Şūfism in Islam, with as concise an explanation as possible, concerning the central core of the Şūfi doctrines which is the doctrine of the Unity of Existence (*waḥdatu'l-wujūd*), based upon that of the Unity of God (*tawḥīd*). The second part is a brief account, based upon personal conclusions drawn from readings in Malay prose and poetical works of famous Malay mystics of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries A.D., as they are likely to be the best representatives of theoretical and doctrinal Şūfism among the Malays. A considerable portion of the second part (Chapter IV) is given to an account of the Şūfi Orders in general and the ones existing

17 I wish to thank Dr. Roslan Abd. Jelani for bringing up this in our discussion.

18 See Wan Mohd Nor Wan Daud's review of the *Commentary on the Hujjat al-Şiddiq*, *The Muslim World Book Review*, Volume 9, Number 3, (Spring 1989), 20-23. Professor Wan highlights that the commentary tradition has been neglected in the Muslim intellectual tradition, but it is al-Attas who brings the tradition back with his *Commentary on the Hujjat al-Şiddiq*.

19 *Ibid.*, xv.

20 See his *Rānīrī and the Wujūdiyyah of the 17th century Aceh*, Monographs of the Malaysian Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society, no. III, Singapore, 1966. Hereafter cited as *Rānīrī and the Wujūdiyyah*.

21 A predecessor to al-Rānīrī at court of Aceh, his biography is provided by al-Attas in his *Mysticism of Ḥamzah Faṣṣūrī*, 3-30.

22 (Singapore: Malaysian Sociological Research Institute, 1963).

23 *Ibid.*, i.

24 *Ibid.*

in Malaya in particular. The third part deals mainly with the practical and ritual aspects of Şūfism based upon my findings in existing text books and literature on the particular subject and on personal experiences of the ceremonies and practices of the *Tarīqahs* and of their Shaykhs.²⁵

Al-Attas' monograph on *Hüjjat al-Şiddīq* which also dealt with a treatment on the controversy over mysticism between al-Rānīrī and Ḥamzah is among his early major contributions.²⁶ It contains a brief introduction, his interpretation and discussion on al-Rānīrī's refutation of Ḥamzah Faṣṣūrī and the pseudo-Şūfīs, with a facsimile of the text.²⁷ Following the monograph's *Preface*, in the *Introduction* al-Attas provides the historical background of the times and the milieu in which al-Rānīrī played a major role as an authority in religion at the court of Sulṭān Iskandar Thānī of Aceh²⁸; there is a brief introduction of who is Nūr al-Dīn al-Rānīrī;²⁹ a summary of al-Rānīrī's refutation of Ḥamzah Faṣṣūrī,³⁰ followed with a resume of the teachings of Ḥamzah Faṣṣūrī.³¹ Al-Attas also provided a detailed discussion of Ḥamzah Faṣṣūrī's concept of the *irādah* within the conceptual structure of the Malay word *hendak*,³² a Romanized Malay edition of the text of *Hüjjat al-Şiddīq li-Daf'i al-Zindīq*,³³ and the English translation of the text.³⁴ The monograph is supplied with two appendices which are the facsimile of the text³⁵ and the brief discussion of the term *zindīq*,³⁶ and a list of bibliography.³⁷ In accomplishing this task, he analyzed the *Hüjjat* and another work al-Rānīrī entitled *al-Tibyān fī Ma'rīfat al-Adyān* which he brought in comparison with the works of Ḥamzah Faṣṣūrī in poetical form entitled *Asrār al-Ārifīn* and the *Sharab ul-Āshiqīn* or *Zīnatu l'-Muwahhidīn*.³⁸ The teachings of Ḥamzah and al-Rānīrī played a significant role in the lives of the people of the time, and according to al-Attas, it serves as a prelude to "a more comprehensive account of the mysticism of Ḥamzah Faṣṣūrī and a more detailed critical analysis of Nūru'l-Dīn al-Rānīrī's

refutation of Ḥamzah's mysticism is the subject of another book to be published shortly."³⁹ The *Hüjjat*, al-Attas says, "reveals the nature of Rānīrī's concepts of Being, Existence, Essence" and with the publication of this small treatise, he has demonstrated his mastery and erudition in explicating profound ideas of philosophy and metaphysics in Islām, where philosophy and mysticism meet, the exposition of metaphysical ideas and concepts of being and existence, which are fundamental to the *taşawwuf* of the *wujūdiyyah*.

This seminal work, which he began in 1961 as a student and completed in 1962 was published by 1966 without any review or changes after it was sent to the publisher. Professor G.W.J. Drewes, a retired Professor of Arabic and Islamology at the University of Leiden published an article in the same series publication in 1974, claiming to re-examine and made comments on al-Attas' work.⁴⁰ Al-Attas made a stinging and caustic rebuttal to Drewes' twenty-one paged essay in closing his 123-paged monograph, by saying that he has "dealt with every comment, criticism and objection against the student's edition and English translation of the *Hüjjat'l-Şiddīq li daf'i'l-Zindīq* of al-Rānīrī."⁴¹ Disparaging the "review" legacy of Western tradition in modern scholarship because it is presumptuous and pompous, and it is frequently carried out by persons with less competency and acumen than those who carried out the original work under review. Notwithstanding the fact that errors, typos, and imperfections are part and parcel of any writing, the pointing out of these should not be considered high intellectual work that a full professor would deign to waste his time and passed it on as high scholarship. On the contrary, al-Attas asserts, "A Muslim scholar, with the work of another before him, would either—according to Islamic tradition—refute it (*radd*), or elaborate it further in a commentary (*sharḥ*) as the occasion demands."⁴² And he proceeds to state that, "no doubt the translation can be further enhanced, and elaborated with detailed commentary such as I have partially done here—a project which I shall myself undertake at some later date,

25 Ibid.

26 Rānīrī and the Wujūdiyyah, iv.

27 Commentary, 49.

28 Rānīrī and the Wujūdiyyah, 11.

29 Ibid., 12-17.

30 Ibid., 18-42.

31 Ibid., 43-56.

32 Ibid., 57-79.

33 Ibid., 80-97.

34 Ibid., 98-112.

35 Ibid., 115-142.

36 Ibid., 143-146.

37 Ibid., 147-153.

38 Ibid., iv.

39 Ibid. The more detailed analysis of the mysticism of Ḥamzah Faṣṣūrī was later published by al-Attas as *The Mysticism of Ḥamzah Faṣṣūrī* (Kuala Lumpur: University Malaya Press, 1966). A separate detailed analysis of the ideas of al-Rānīrī was expanded in greater detail and was published as the *Commentary on Hüjjat al-Şiddīq*, Ministry of Culture, 1986, the subject of this present writing. As such we would not go into summarizing the ideas of Ḥamzah Faṣṣūrī here and will devote entirely on summarizing some of the major ideas of al-Rānīrī from the *Commentary on the Hüjjat al-Şiddīq* and our own edition and translation of al-Rānīrī's other work entitled *Laṭā'if al-Asrār li-Ahl Allāh al-Aṭyār* (Johor Bharu: Penerbit UTM, 2011).

40 G.W.J. Drewes, "Nūr al-Dīn al-Rānīrī's *Hüjjat al-Şiddīq li-Daf' al-Zindīq*, Re-examined," *Journal of the Malaysian Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society*, vol. 47, no. 2 (226) (December 1974), 83-104.

41 Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas, *Comments on the Re-Examination of Al-Rānīrī's Hüjjatu'l-Şiddīq: A Refutation* (Kuala Lumpur: Muzium Negara, 1975), 120-121.

42 Ibid.

God willing”.⁴³ That commentary is the *Commentary on Hujjat al-Siddiq li-Daf‘i al-Zindiq*.

As early as his *Some Aspects of Şūfism as Understood and Practised Among the Malays*,⁴⁴ followed by his *Mysticism of Hamzah Fanşūrī*,⁴⁵ and later his *Commentary on Hujjat al-Şiddīq*, to cite a few, al-Attas has been consistent in the triangulation of ideas from the *faylasūf*, the *mutakallimūn* and the Şūfīs on key ideas of philosophy, theology, and metaphysics in Islām; a counter-thesis to the image which more often than not portrayed the three groups of thinkers as mutual adversaries. He has done so not to establish an artificial coherence amongst them and their ideas, but more importantly—and indeed this is quintessentially his—to put major ideas in their proper places, based on hierarchy and benefits to man, to commensurate the ranks and degrees of authorities in knowledge of reality and truth: that is *adab* towards knowledge.⁴⁶

When reading his *Commentary* it is evident that al-Attas is providing not just a summary but an exposition of the salient features of the position of the Şūfīs on the nature of reality which he has traced back to the school of al-Junayd.⁴⁷ Their vision of reality is based on the intuition of existence (*wijḍān*). As the true *wujūdiyyah*, who affirmed the transcendent unity of existence (*waḥdat al-wujūd*), among their notable early representatives after

al-Junayd were Abū Naşr al-Sarrāj,⁴⁸ ‘Alī al-Hujwīrī,⁴⁹ Abū al-Qāsim al-Qushayrī⁵⁰ and ‘Abd Allāh al-Anşārī.⁵¹ Al-Ghazālī also belonged to this school. The most prominent proponent of this school was ‘ibn ‘Arabī, who first formulated what was originally given in the intuition of existence into an integrated metaphysics expressed in rational and intellectual terms. Among his erudite commentators were Şūfīs such as Şadr al-Dīn al-Qunyawī,⁵² ‘Abd al-Razzāq al-Qāshānī,⁵³ Dāwud al-Qayşarī,⁵⁴ ‘Abd al-Raḥmān al-Jāmī,⁵⁵ and his doctrine of the Perfect Man (*al-insān al-kāmil*) was developed by ‘Abd al-Karīm al-Jīlī.⁵⁶ The philosophical expres-

48 ‘Abd Allāh b. ‘Alī b. Muḥammad b. Yaḥyā Abū Naşr al-Sarrāj al-Ṭūsī, among the early representative of the scholarly tradition of *taşawwuf*. Among his notable students: ‘Abd al-Raḥman al-Sulamī, ‘Alī al-Hujwīrī and al-Sarakhsī, and he was known for his work *Kitāb al-Luma’ fī al-Taşawwuf*. See Ismā‘īl Bāshā al-Baghdādī, *Hadiyyat al-‘Arifīn*, 2 vols. (Istanbul: Milli Egitim Basimevi, 1951), 1: 447; Khayr al-Dīn al-Ziriklī, *al-A‘lām*, 8 vols. (Beirut: Dar al-‘Ilm li al-Malāyīn, 2002), 4: 104.

49 He is Abū al-Ḥasan ‘Alī b. ‘Uthmān b. Abī ‘Alī al-Jullābī al-Hujwīrī al-Ghaznawī, the writer of the celebrated work *Kashf al-Maḥjūb*. See ‘Abd al-Ḥayy al-Ḥasanī, *Nuzhat al-Khawāṭir wa Bahjat al-Masāmi’ wa al-Nawāzīr (al-I‘lām bi man fī Tārīkh al-Hind min al-A‘lām)*, 8 vols. (Beirut: Dār ibn Ḥazm, 1999), 1: 69; Ismā‘īl Bāshā al-Baghdādī, *Hadiyyat al-‘Arifīn*, 2 vols. (Istanbul: Milli Egitim Basimevi, 1951), 1: 691.

50 His full name ‘Abd al-Karīm b. Hawāzin b. ‘Abd al-Malik b. Ṭalḥah Abū al-Qāsim al-Naysābūrī al-Qushayrī (376/986-465/1072). His works include the well-known *Risālah al-Qushayriyyah*, *Laṭā‘if al-Ishārāt*, and *al-Taḥṣīr al-Kabīr*. See Ismā‘īl Bāshā al-Baghdādī, *Hadiyyat al-‘Arifīn*, 1: 607-608; al-Ziriklī, *al-A‘lām*, 4: 57.

51 ‘Abd Allāh b. Muḥammad b. ‘Alī Abū Ismā‘īl al-Anşārī al-Harawī, a prominent scholar from Khurasān during his time and a descendent of Abū Ayyūb al-Anşārī. Among his important works: *Dhamm al-Kalām wa Ahlihi*, *al-‘Arbā‘īn fī al-Tawḥīd*, and *Manāzil al-Sā‘irīn*. See al-Ziriklī, *al-A‘lām*, 4: 122.

52 Muḥammad b. Ishāq b. Muḥammad b. Yūsuf b. ‘Alī Şadr al-Dīn al-Qūnawī al-Rūmī, a stepson and one of the closest student of Muḥyī al-Dīn. A close friend of Mawlānā Jālāl al-Dīn al-Rūmī and lived around the same time with the authoritative commentator and reviver of Ibn Sīnā’s thought, Naşīr al-Dīn al-Ṭūsī. Has written many important works, among them: *al-Fukūk*, *Miftāḥ Ghayb al-Jam’ wa al-Wujūd*, *I‘jāz al-Bayān fī Ta’wīl Umm al-Qur’ān*, *al-Nuṣūṣ fī Taḥqīq al-Tawr al-Makḥṣūṣ*, and *Sharḥ al-Aḥādīth al-‘Arba‘īniyyah*. See al-Ziriklī, *al-A‘lām*, 6: 30.

53 ‘Abd al-Razzāq Jamāl al-Dīn b. Aḥmad Kamāl al-Dīn b. Abī al-Ghanā‘im Muḥammad al-Kāsh, or al-Kāshānī, or al-Qāshānī, a scholar coming from the circle of Şadr al-Qunyawī’s students, Mu‘ayyad al-Dīn al-Jandī and Sa‘īd al-Dīn al-Farḡhānī who has written several significant works: *Sharḥ Fuṣūṣ al-Ḥikam*, *Işṭilāḥāt al-Şūfiyyah*, *Lāṭā‘if al-I‘lām fī Ishārāt Ahl al-Ilhām*, *Sharḥ Manāzil al-Sā‘irīn* and *Sharḥ Tā‘īyyah ibn al-Fārid*. See al-Ziriklī, *al-A‘lām*, 3: 350.

54 Dāwud b. Maḥmūd b. Muḥammad Sharaf al-Dīn al-Qayşarī, a scholar from Qayşar who taught many students at Iznik. He was a student to ‘Abd al-Razzāq al-Qāshānī. Among his works: *Maṭla’ Khuṣūṣ al-Kilām fī Ma‘ānī Fuṣūṣ al-Ḥikam*, *Nihāyat al-Bayān fī Dirāyah al-Zamān*, *Sharḥ al-Khamriyyah ibn Fārid* and *Taḥqīq Mā’ al-Ḥayāt*. See Ismā‘īl Bāshā al-Baghdādī, *Hadiyyat al-‘Arifīn*, 1: 361; al-Ziriklī, *al-A‘lām*, 2: 335.

55 ‘Abd al-Raḥman b. Aḥmad b. Muḥammad Nūr al-Dīn al-Jāmī (1414/817-1492/898), a well-known scholar in Herat and regarded as one of the greatest Persian poet, has written various works in language, *kalām*, philosophy, Şūfī metaphysics, Şūfī biography (*tarājīm*), and various forms of poetry (*mathnawī*, *rubā‘ī*, *tarji‘band*). Among his works: *Fawā‘id al-Ḍiyā‘iyyah*, *Risālah fī al-Wujūd*, *Naqd al-Nuṣūṣ*, *al-Durrah al-Fākhīrah*, *Nafaḥāt al-Uns*, *Lawā‘ih fī Bayān Ma‘ānī ‘Irfāniyyah*, *Sharḥ-i Rubā‘iyyāt*, and an anthology of seven *mathnawīs* called *Haft Awrang* containing, among others, *Yūsuf wa Zulaykhā*, *Tuḥfat al-Aḥrār*, and *Laylā wa Majnūn*. See Ismā‘īl Bāshā al-Baghdādī, *Hadiyyat al-‘Arifīn*, 1: 534; al-Ziriklī, *al-A‘lām*, 3: 296.

56 ‘Abd al-Karīm b. Ibrāhīm b. ‘Abd al-Karīm al-Jīlī al-Qādirī, a representative of al-Shaykh Ismā‘īl al-Jabartī

43 Ibid.

44 Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas, *Some Aspects of Şūfism as Understood and Practised Among the Malays* (Singapore: Malaysian Sociological Research Institute, 1963; reprint: Kuala Lumpur: Ta‘dib International, 2020).

45 In his *Mysticism of Hamzah Fanşūrī*, al-Attas makes a note saying that, “Furthermore the Muslims were not merely passive translators of the Greeks. Their philosophy centered around concepts mainly influenced by the Qur’ānic worldview. This worldview is non-Aristotelian in nature—a worldview that Korzybski would perhaps define as ‘non-elemental’ as against ‘elemental’ worldview of Aristotelianism.”, *Mysticism of Hamzah Fanşūrī*, 190, n. 31. Wisnovsky observes that Ibn Sīnā was uncomfortable with many elements of Aristotelianism and Neoplatonism, see R. Wisnovsky, *Avicenna’s Metaphysics in Context* (London: Duckworth, 2003), 113-114. See my *Al-Attas’ Psychology* (Kuala Lumpur: Himpunan Keilmuan Muslim (HAKIM), 2022), 51.

46 Muhammad Zainiy Uthman, *Al-Attas’ Psychology* (Kuala Lumpur: Himpunan Keilmuan Muslim (HAKIM), 2022), 148-149.

47 For a study on Junayd see Ali Hassan Abdel-Kader, *The Life, Personality and Writings of al-Junayd* (London: Luzac, 1976); *Rasā‘i‘il al-Junayd* (The Letters of al-Junayd), ed. ‘Alī Ḥassan ‘Abd al-Qādir (Cairo: Bara‘i wa Jiddāyi, 1988).

sion of the transcendent unity of existence was formulated by Şadr al-Dīn al-Shīrāzī,⁵⁷ or Mullā Şadrā. As a Şūfī, al-Rānīrī belonged to this school, and this becomes evident in the present commentary.”⁵⁸

2. *Al-Rānīrī's Thought on the Fundamental Aspects of Şūfī Doctrines*

Throughout his career as the *Shaykh al-Islām* of Aceh at the palace of Sulţān Iskandar Thānī (1637-1644)⁵⁹, al-Rānīrī had been most influential and instrumental in combatting erroneous beliefs and pagan practices. Sulţān Iskandar Thānī ‘Alā’ al-Dīn Mughāyat Shāh ascended to the throne in Aceh in 1637 and died in 1641. He was a young prince, the son of Sulţān Aḥmad Shāh of Pahang, whom al-Rānīrī brought to Aceh. Because of his familiarity with Sulţān Iskandar Thānī and the house of Pahang, he was made the *Shaykh al-Islām* of the Abode of Peace, Aceh. From the descriptions of his works in the list supplied by Prof. al-Attas in this *Commentary* it is evident that he has written on every one of the major aspects of life that concerns a Muslim and that these works bear testimony to his tireless effort in combatting aberrant teaching and practices.⁶⁰ His works not only deal with the creeds, religious practices and eschatology,⁶¹ but range from history⁶² to physiognomy and medicine⁶³ including works which are directed at putting into a proper perspective metaphysical concepts and formulations in arresting the influence of the deviating *Wujūdiyyah*. According to Prof. al-Attas, al-Rānīrī is the first man in the Malay world to clarify in Malay the distinction between the true and the false interpretation of Şūfī theosophy and metaphysics.⁶⁴ The main

figure at whom he directed his accusation of deviationist teaching figure is Ḥamzah Faṣṣūrī, his predecessor at the court. The main ideas of Faṣṣūrī, which are the onus of his attacks, are summarized by Prof. al-Attas in his *Rānīrī and the Wujūdiyyah* as thus:

1. That Ḥamzah’s ideas regarding God, the world, Man and the relationship between them, in short Reality, are identical—to mention some—with those of the Philosophers, the Zoroastrians, the Metempsychosists, the Incarnationists, the Brahmins.
2. That Ḥamzah’s belief is pantheistic in the sense that God’s essence is completely immanent in the World; that God permeates everything that is seen. That like the Philosophers, Ḥamzah believes that God is Simple Being.
3. That Ḥamzah, like the Qadariyyah and the Mu’tazilah, believes the Qur’ān to be created.
4. That like the Philosophers, Ḥamzah believes in the eternity of the World.⁶⁵

Shortly after his arrival in Aceh in 1637, al-Rānīrī entered into a debate with the deviating *Wujūdiyyah* from among the disciples of Shams al-Dīn al-Sumatrānī,⁶⁶ which culminated in their banishment from Aceh.⁶⁷ The debate exposed their erroneous beliefs which stemmed from their misinterpretation of the concept and reality of being. The deviating *Wujūdiyyah* were charged with unbelief and some of them, because of this debate, repented, while some others who remained adamant in their apostasy were executed. Al-Rānīrī, as the *Shaykh al-Islām*, through his writings, engaged in polemics in order to bring about a gradual process of correction in the interpretation and comprehension of Şūfī doctrines and metaphysics brought about by the deviating *Wujūdiyyah*.⁶⁸ Being a Şūfī of the ‘Aydārūsiyyah Order,⁶⁹ an order which stressed sobriety (*ṣaḥw*) over intoxication (*sukr*) as a way of knowledge of the nature of reality, and which aligned itself with the Shari‘ah, he was poised in the best position to provide

and a descendant of ‘Abd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī. His notable works, among others, *al-Insān al-Kāmil fī Ma‘rifat al-Awākhir wa al-Awā’il*, *Sharḥ Mushkilāt Futūḥāt al-Makkiyyah*, *al-Kamālāt al-Ilāhiyyah fī al-Şifāt al-Muḥammadiyyah*, *Marātib al-Wujūd wa Bayān Ḥaqīqat Ibtidā’ Kulli Mawjūd* and *al-Manāẓir al-Ilāhiyyah*. See Ismā‘īl Bāshā al-Baghdādī, *Hadiyyat al-‘Arifīn*, 1: 610-611; al-Ziriklī, *al-A‘lām*, 4: 50-51.

57 See Fazlur Rahman, *The Philosophy of Mullā Şadrā* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1975).

58 *Commentary*, 44.

59 *Ibid.*, 7.

60 *Ibid.*, 25-28.

61 See for example his *Şirāt al-Mustaqīm* which is printed in the margin of *Sabīl al-Muhtadīn* of Muḥammad Arshad in Makkah in 1892; *Durrat al-Farā‘id bi Sharḥ al-‘Aqā‘id*; *Tibyān fī Ma‘rifat al-Adyān*, which is published in facsimile edition by P. Voorhoeve, Leiden, Stichting de Goeje, 1955; *Akhbār al-Ākhirah fī Aḥwāl al-Qiyāmah*; *‘Umdat al-‘Itiqād*, *Fath al-Mubīn ‘alā al-Mulḥidīn*; *Kifāyat al-Şalāt*; *al-Lama‘ān bi takfīr man qāla bi khalq al-Qur’ān*. See *Commentary*, 20-28.

62 *Bustān al-Salāḥīn*. See Books I, II, and III parts of which have been published separately.

63 *Ibid.*, Book VII.

64 *Commentary*, 46. For a comprehensive study on the differences between al-Rānīrī and the deviating *Wujūdiyyah*, see al-Attas, *Rānīrī and the Wujūdiyyah of the 17th century Aceh*, 18-42. See also al-Attas, *The*

Mysticism of Ḥamzah Faṣṣūrī, 31-65.

65 Al-Attas, *Rānīrī and the Wujūdiyyah*, 18; *The Mysticism of Ḥamzah Faṣṣūrī*, 31. See also note above.

66 See C.A.O van Nieuwenhuijze, *Samsu’l-Dīn van Pasai: Bijdrage tot de Kennis der Sumatraansche Mystiek* (Leiden: Brill, 1945) for further details.

67 *Commentary*, 8.

68 *Ibid.*, 9.

69 This spiritual line begins with Sayyid Muḥammad al-‘Aydārūs, the Master of Sūrat (d. 1620) in an ascending order ending with Sayyid Abd Bakr al-‘Aydārūs, the great saint of Aden who died there in 1509. See *Commentary*, 13. Al-Rānīrī belonged to the Shāfi‘ī school of law, the Ash‘ariyyah school of theology and through this ṭarīqah he was initiated into the Rifā‘iyyah ṭarīqah, see al-Attas list of his spiritual lineage in *Commentary*, 29.

the right interpretation concerning these matters.⁷⁰

The *Nubdhah fī Da'wā al-Zill ma'a Şāhibihi*⁷¹ written between 1637 and 1641 in response to the allegations of the pseudo-Şūfīs is another one of his writings that addresses these perplexing problems. This is followed by his *Hall al-Zill*,⁷² written in 1638, in which he discussed the nature of the world and its creation according to Sūfī metaphysics; it is an adaptation of the *Nubdhah*. He wrote *Hujjat al-Şiddīq li-Daf'i al-Zindīq*, the subject of al-Attas' commentary between 1638 and 1641. Al-Rānīrī's *Jawāhir al-'Ulūm fī Kashf al-Ma'lūm*⁷³ deals with the Şūfīs' position on Being or Existence and its identification with the Truth, an exposition on the Divine Names and Attributes, the permanent archetypes, the exterior essences (*al-a'yān al-khārijīyyah*), and invocation and vigilance.⁷⁴ In his other work the *Laṭā'if al-Asrār li-Ahl Allāh al-Aṭyār*⁷⁵ al-Rānīrī clarifies the fine and subtle aspects (*laṭā'if*),⁷⁶ spiritual mysteries or secrets (*asrār*) which are bestowed upon the Şūfīs at their attainment of illuminative knowledge (*ma'rifah*) of God and their experience in affirming Divine Unity (*tawḥīd*) as they scale the different spiritual stations (*maqāmāt*) and states (*aḥwāl*). Al-Rānīrī begins the *Laṭā'if* with a brief but comprehensive treatment on ontology. He then proceeds with a discussion on illuminative knowledge of God (*ma'rifat Allāh*). This is followed by the longest chapter in the work, which is devoted to his discussion on the affirmation of Divine Unity (*tawḥīd*). A brief treatment on states and stations of the Şūfīs then follows. He concludes the *Laṭā'if* with a concise treatment of spiritual exercises that an aspirant must take up in his spiritual journey—a kind of a short Şūfī manual. The work as a whole is intended for both novices and adepts, and it covers both the beginning and the end of the spiritual journey, so that the aspiring novice who intends to embark on the journey along the spiritual path (*taṣawwuf*) can comprehend

these spiritual experiences and advance on sound foundation. As for the adept, upon reaching his goal of 'union' with or 'arrival' at the Truth, the knowledge which he gained from those spiritual experiences should not lead him to think of God, of his individual self and of the nature of reality as other than what is within the bounds of Sharī'ah upon his eventual returning to the realm of multiplicity. The 'union' with or the 'arrival' at the Truth should not cause one, in the state of sobriety, to claim divinity or to consider oneself exempt from performing any obligations mandated by the Sharī'ah such as the performance of the daily prayers, fasting, paying the *zakāt* and performing the *Hajj*, and other Sharī'ah related obligations. For as we can see in the course of reading the *Laṭā'if*, al-Rānīrī and many other great Şūfīs before him have observed many aspirants slip into deviant and heretical practices as a result of their misunderstanding and misinterpretation of the spiritual experiences which they had during their journey.

Al-Attas goes on to say in his *Commentary* that these spiritual experiences must not be construed as devoid of meaning or intellectual or cognitive content. To be sure, the Şūfīs' spiritual ascension experiences provide them with knowledge of a higher order, namely that of the transcendental order.⁷⁷ At the ordinary level of reason and sense experience knowledge is dependent on the prevalent framework of subject-object dichotomy where the ego-consciousness of the subject confronts the multiplicity of external objects of reason and sense experience.⁷⁸ Experience which operates at this level involves separateness, and it is referred to by the men of spiritual experience and discernment as the first separation.⁷⁹ At this level the certainty that is attained from reason is that of intellectual and cognitional certainty or '*ilm al-yaqīn*'. At the higher level of spiritual experience, reason and experience remain as valid channels by which knowledge is attained, only that they are of a transcendental order.⁸⁰

The attainment of knowledge at the higher level is possible only with the complete annulment of their subjective consciousness,⁸¹ and al-Attas describes this experience thus: "whereby they pass away (*fanā'*) from the realm of multiplicity to that of unity where they experience gathering where they 'see' or 'witness' with their spiritual organ of cognition, that is the heart (*qalb*), all forms of the phenomenal world assembling together into a single, unified Reality."⁸²

70 *Commentary*, 29.

71 *Ibid.*, 26, no. 5.

72 *Ibid.*, 27, no. 10.

73 *Ibid.*, 27, no. 12.

74 *Ibid.*, 153.

75 See my *Laṭā'if al-Asrār li-Ahl Allāh al-Aṭyār of Nūr al-Dīn al-Rānīrī* (Johor Bharu: Penerbit UTM, 2011). Hereafter cited as *Laṭā'if al-Asrār*.

76 According to al-Jurjānī, *laṭīfah* (pl. *laṭā'if*) is a technical term adopted by the Şūfīs to refer to every indication that is subtle (*ishārah daqīqah*) and fine in meaning which cannot be contained in an allusion or metaphor (*'ibārah*) which nonetheless appears in the understanding; it is a term generally used in matters pertaining to the science of spiritual taste and experience (*'ulūm al-adhwāq*) in Sayyid Sharīf al-Jurjānī, *Kitāb al-Ta'rīfāt* (Beirut: Maktabah Lubnān, 1990), 202. A more precise description of *laṭā'if* is given by Prof. al-Attas: It is a spiritual substance which God puts in man in exchange for what God has deprived him of as he experiences the stage of passing away from the passing away. This substance is of His Essence (*dhāt*) and is neither separate from Him nor joined to man. See his *Commentary*, 137.

77 *Commentary*, 135.

78 *Ibid.*, 134.

79 *Ibid.*, 131.

80 *Ibid.*, 135.

81 *Laṭā'if al-Asrār*, Illuminative Knowledge (*Fī Ma'rifati Allāh*), 283/585-586, paragraph 135.

82 *Commentary*, 140. See the chapter on The Heart and Spiritual Cognition in Muhammad Zainiy Uthman, *Al-Attas' Psychology* (Kuala Lumpur: Himpunan Keilmuan Muslim (HAKIM), 2022), 55-111.

‘Ayn al-Qudāt al-Hamadānī, borrowing from ‘Abd Allāh al-Anşārī, describes the experience of gaining that knowledge thus: “...by a knowledge (*ma’rifah*) which occurs by force necessitating the gathering together of all forms and their obliteration, such that in so far as forms they are negated, but in reality it is real (*ma’rifah*).”⁸³ al-Attas further explains: “then again they are to be passed away from that state (*fanā’ al-fanā’*) and, depending upon their spiritual disposition and the gift from God, to the state of being ‘sustained’ (*baqā’*) in Him where they experience the gathering of gathering (*jam’ al-jam’*). Experience at this level which involves the returning to the condition of separation is the stage of the second separation.”⁸⁴ The spiritual adepts, at this stage, witness the gathering of gathering where “the forms of the phenomenal world assembling into one single unified Reality and that Unity individuating itself into multiplicity without impairing its original Unity.”⁸⁵ At this level, the ‘seeing’ or ‘witnessing’ is of a different order, an unveiling of what has been hidden, and certainty that is attained from experience at this level is that of visual certainty or ‘*ayn al-yaqīn*. Knowledge of a transcendental order, or better, illuminative knowledge is attained where “the rational has merged with the intellectual, and the empirical with what pertains to authentic spiritual experiences such as ‘inner witnessing’ (*shuhūd*), ‘tasting’ (*dhawq*), presence (*ḥuḍūr*), and other interrelated states of trans-empirical awareness (*ḥāl*).”⁸⁶ This illumination occurs in the spiritual organ of cognition, that is the heart (*qalb*). At this stage, the knower and the known become one in ‘union’ (*tawḥīd*). It is referred to as ‘union’ because at this level the soul has come into ‘unification’ with the very Truth (*al-Ḥaqq*) that underlies all meanings,⁸⁷ and ‘union’ with the Truth means ‘union’ not with the Truth as He is in Himself, but as He manifests Himself in the form of one of His Names and Attributes.⁸⁸ The certainty gained from this direct experience is referred to as *ḥaqq al-yaqīn*, the highest of the three degrees of certainty.⁸⁹ Those who attain to this level are the people who attain to unification (*tawḥīd*) and metaphorically they are referred to as

‘the arrivers’ (sing. *wāṣil*) or those who are ‘in union’ (*ittiḥād*) with God.

The spiritual journey or the ascent of the soul culminates in the ‘arrival’ or ‘union’ with the Truth Most Exalted. Those who achieve such an elevated status are the People of God (*Ahl Allāh*) who in their contemplation are said to have ‘arrived’ at or come into, ‘union’ with God.⁹⁰ The journey begins with contemplation and the ascent takes them through various spiritual stations, hence they vary in their spiritual attainments and ranks. In addition to the various stations, there are different trans-empirical states. As mentioned earlier, the illuminative knowledge gained by each and every one of those who scale these spiritual heights differs by virtue of their inherent capacity of beholding the unveiling and the manifestation of the Truth. They range from those who in their contemplation of the Truth Most Exalted attain to the levels.⁹¹

At the highest station where they attain to the affirmation of Divine Unity or unification as the Truth Most Exalted unveils it in their innermost ground of being (*tawḥīd ḥaqq*).⁹² It is the highest stage attainable in their spiritual ascent where certainty is felt by the servant’s whole being—his spirit, heart, soul and body—at the manifestation of the light of contemplation.⁹³ These are the People of the Truth (*Ahl al-Ḥaqq*) or the super-elect (*khawāṣṣ al-khawāṣ*). At this stage, the servant verifies (*taḥqīq*) the realities (*ḥaqā’iq*) by means of that higher order knowledge, including that of his own. Verification (*taḥqīq*) is defined by Prof al-Attas as spiritual intuition based on direct experience (*dhawq*), of their own realities.⁹⁴ That is, they witness and see, with their intellectual vision just as keen as their ocular vision, their true ontological situation or order during ‘the final unveiling’ in the context of the ‘gathering of gathering’, and in the condition of ‘subsistence’ in God, in which condition Multiplicity is seen as Unity, and Unity as Multiplicity.⁹⁵ Those who reach this level of verifying their ontological situation are known as the People of Verification (*Ahl al-Taḥqīq*). They are referred to as the People of Verification because they “have actualized their truth completely”,⁹⁶ meaning they transcend their own subjective selves and realize their true selves and reach the ontological plane of the

83 Omar Jah, *The Zubdat al-Ḥaqā’iq of ‘Ayn al-Qudāh al-Hamadānī* (Kuala Lumpur: ISTAC, 2000), 172.

84 *Commentary*, 143.

85 *Ibid.*, 141.

86 *Ibid.*, 135. See also al-Tahānawī, *Kashshāf Iştilāḥāt al-Funūn*, ed. Muḥammad Wajih, ‘Abd al-Ḥaqq, and Ghulām Qādir, 6 vols. (Beirut: Khayyāt, 1966), 1: 656.

87 Al-Attas, *Prolegomena to Metaphysics of Islām: An Exposition of the Fundamental Elements of the Worldview of Islām* (first impression, Kuala Lumpur: International Institute of Islamic Thought and Civilization (ISTAC), 1995; reprinted Johor Bharu: Universiti Teknologi Malaysia (UTM) Press, 2014), 183. Hereafter cited as *Prolegomena*.

88 *Prolegomena*, 184.

89 The other two degrees of certainty are certainty by knowledge (‘ilm al-yaqīn) and certainty by vision (‘ayn al-yaqīn). Qur’ān, al-Takāthur (102): 5, 7. For further elaboration on *ḥaqq al-yaqīn*, see *Commentary*, 141.

90 Al-Rānīrī, by quoting the author ‘*Awārif al-Ma’ārif*, is quick to remind the readers that ‘arrival’ and ‘union’ here is not to be understood in physical terms. For his description of the stages of ascent, see our discussion on states and stations in our *Laṭā’if al-Asrār*, 87-90.

91 *Ibid.*, *Illuminative Knowledge*, 274-275/574, para. 126.

92 *Laṭā’if al-Asrār*, *Affirmation of Divine Unity*, 350-351/674-676, para 103.b.4.

93 *Ibid.*, 274-275/574, para. 126.

94 *Commentary*, 182.

95 *Ibid.*, 153. Prof. al-Attas says that in the language of Ibn ‘Arabī realities refer to the Fixed Essences or Permanent Archetype: (*al-a’yān al-thābitah*).

96 *Ibid.*, 128.

Divine Names and Attributes where they ‘see’ that their true selves are but particularized manifestations and individuations of the Absolute.⁹⁷ They who reach this level attain to knowledge of their true selves, namely “knowledge of a particularized form of the Truth or *al-Ḥaqq*, by which God as the Absolute in all the forms of manifestation is called.”⁹⁸ They attained to this level of knowledge through the acquisition of “what Ibn ‘Arabi calls their ‘pure intellect’ (*‘aql mujarrad*), or intellect that is free from all bodily and physical connections, which not only discloses to him his own reality, but also the realities of things of the nature as they are.”⁹⁹ They are the People of Detachment (*Ahl al-Tajrīd*) and the People of Isolation (*Ahl al-Tafrīd*) because at this level of spiritual experience and realization they affirm their true and real nature (*ḥaqīqah*) and the knowledge afforded them out of this spiritual experience is true and certain.

Certainty (*yaqīn*) of the order referred to above is the degree of certainty attained through spiritual tasting (*dhawq*) and finding or intuition of existence (*wijdān*)—that is *ḥaqq al-yaqīn*. The relation drawn above between certainty and veracity is evident in the case of Abū Bakr al-Şiddīq and his closeness to the Prophet as the bearer of the truth. It is to him that the famous statement “Incapacity of knowing the Truth is itself knowing” is ascribed. His nearness to the Prophet is recorded in the Qur’ān for he is the second in the cave with the Prophet on his flight out of Makkah to Medina. This nearness of his with the Prophet is indeed a dignified and an excellent fellowship. It is described in the Qur’ān that four groups of people enjoy the different degrees of nearness (that is ‘fellowship’) to God. They are in descending order: The Prophets (*al-nabiyyīn*), the Veracious (*al-şiddīqīn*), the Witnesses (*al-şuhadā’*) and the Righteous (*al-şāliḥīn*).¹⁰⁰ Nearness (*qurb*) that is meant here is not to be understood in physical terms. To be sure, here nearness is spiritual in nature, in that the Prophets are the closest ones to the Truth while the Veracious, as referred to in the saying of al-Rānīrī above, come next, for they cannot come close to the degree of nearness which the Prophets enjoy in relation to God. Those who attained to such a degree of certainty are said to have arrived at the Truth Most Exalted (*Ahl al-Wuṣūl*).¹⁰¹ According to al-Rānīrī, those who scale these spiritual stages do so in two ways: those who travel (*sālikīn*) to God and those who are possessed (*majdhūbīn*) by God.¹⁰²

The travellers are those who see creation first and God as ‘behind’ it. As for those who are possessed, they see God first and creation as ‘behind’ Him, that is God in His very essence (i.e. Existence) becoming manifest as the essences of created things. Those who traverse these stages to reach the highest level of spiritual attainment in a swift manner are known as the surpassing ones (*shattār*), for they surpass others of the excellent ones (*akhyār*) and the virtuous or righteous ones (*abrār*), as if they were in flight, hence they are described as the swiftly ascending ones (*aṭyār*).¹⁰³

The reference ‘taking off in flight’ was said earlier by Abū Yazīd al-Biṣṭāmī at the height of his spiritual experience describes himself ‘flying’ (*ṭayrān*). According to Yahyā b. Mu‘ādh al-Rāzī, who renounce worldly pleasures (sing. *al-zāhid*), the travellers (*al-sayyār*), the true knowers God (sing. *al-‘arīf*), who have attained illuminative knowledge God, are the swiftly ascending (*al-aṭyār*).¹⁰⁴ Al-Sarrāj, author of *Kitāb al-Luma’*, refers to Junayd in order to explain meaning the word *ṭayr*. According to Junayd, it refers to the ‘height of concentration’ (*sumuww al-himam*), the ‘exhilaration of the heart’ (*ṭayarān al-qalb*) the idiom commonly in the Arabic language.¹⁰⁵ Those who attain to illuminative knowledge of God are referred to metaphorically as those who are ‘drunk’ under the influence the spiritual wine. This wine, says Jalāl al-Dīn al-Rūmī is the wine from the jar of *Balā*, that wine drunk on the Day of Spiritual Testimony (the Day of *Alastu*, Qur’ān (7): 171). It is that wine which overpowers the Sleepers of the Cave and put them to sleep for more than 300 years; it is also the wine which drove the women of Egypt to cut their hands as they behold the beauty of Joseph; it too won over the Magicians of the Pharaoh when they saw the miracle of Moses and willingly submitted to Pharaoh’s punishment of death by crucifixion; and it is the wine that earned Ja‘far¹⁰⁶ the title *al-ṭayyār*, at the losing of his hands and feet.¹⁰⁷

The foregoing discussion has shed light on the stages in the spiritual journey of an aspirant along the path, and the stages represent the different levels attainable by different aspirants and adepts given the different capacities inherent in every human being. Hence the Şūfīs’ attainment to illuminative knowledge of God and their affirmation of Divine Unity vary accordingly. Quoting his master, Sayyid Ḥusayn Shāṭirī, al-Rānīrī classifies the affirmation

103 Ibid., 272/571, para 124.

104 Abū Naṣr al-Sarrāj, *Kitāb al-Luma’ fī’l-Taṣawwuf*, ed. Reynold A. Nicholson, E.J.W. Gibb Memorial Series XXII (Leyden: Brill & London: Luzac, 1914; reprint. London: Luzac & Co., 1963), 385.

105 Ibid.

106 He is Ja‘far b. Abi Ṭālib, see Ibn Hishām, *al-Sīrah al-Nabawīyyah* (Cairo: Dar al-Fikr, n.d.), vol. 3 & 4, 1206.

107 Reynold A. Nicholson, *The Mathnavi of Jalal al-Din al-Rumi* (Cambridge: E.J.W. Gibb Memorial Trust, 1930), Books IV, 388.

97 Ibid., 182. Absolute here means Absolute Existence i.e. the Truth as an aspect of the Necessary Existence.

98 *Commentary*, 183.

99 Ibid., 183.

100 Qur’ān, *al-Nisā’* (4): 69.

101 *Laṭā’if al-Asrār*, 274/573, para. 125.b.

102 Ibid., 269-270/568. para. 123.

of Divine Unity attained by the Şūfīs into three, which correspond with the three degrees of certainty. Knowledge of certainty (*ilm al-yaqīn*) lends one affirmation of Divine Unity with knowledge (*tawhīd ‘ilmī*); eye of certainty (*‘ayn al-yaqīn*) lends one affirmation of Divine Unity with spiritual vision (*tawhīd ‘aynī*); and finally, the truth of certainty (*ḥaqq al-yaqīn*) lends one true and real affirmation of Divine Unity (*tawhīd ḥaqqī*), that is unification.¹⁰⁸ Although the progress along the spiritual journey marked by the stages briefly described above seems to be a progressive one, it must be borne in mind that not every aspirant or novice attains to each station and state progressively. The progress from one station to another is attained by the servants through their own serious effort, while states are bestowed as gifts by God. Many aspirant for that matter are hindered or stopped from further progress in their journey because of veils. There are two kinds of veils: the veils of darkness which are prohibitions dictated by the Sacred Law and the veils of light which consist of the very spiritual states and stations themselves. Those who are established in their station are those who remain steadfast during their spiritual experience and they are referred to as the People of Spiritual Steadfastness (*Ahl al-Tamkīn*). As to those who experience what is related to a spiritual state they are the People of Spiritual Inconstancy (*Ahl al-Talwīn*) whom al-Rānīrī in another place refers to as the People of Subjective Vision (*Ahl al-Shuhūd al-Ḥālīyy*).¹⁰⁹ The People of Subjective Vision are prone to ecstatic utterances and deviation from the truth. They are, according to Ibn ‘Arabī and Ḥaydar Amūlī, from amongst the *ahl al-khawāṣṣ* “who slipped from the path of the truth” (*zallat aqdāmu ṭā’ifatin ‘an majrā al-taḥqīq*).¹¹⁰ Al-Rānīrī, in the second chapter on his exposition on affirmation of Divine Unity, provides a discussion as to what is said by these people in view of the Sacred Law. The different degrees of spiritual experiences lead to many sayings and statements attesting to and describing the different levels of attainment of illuminative knowledge and unification. Some appear to be repetitious and some even appear to be contradictory. Those that appear as repetitious are so because of similar experiences attained which may be either complete¹¹¹ or incomplete,¹¹² and those which appear to contradict another cannot be taken as such because the statements are derived out of different spiritual states

at contemplating (*mushāhadah*) different degrees of manifestation. Those who are of higher level of spiritual attainment see reality in a different light compared to those who experience only the lower ones, albeit they experience the one and the same reality. In fact, according to al-Rānīrī this is the main reason for these People of Spiritual Discernment to talk or narrate their experiences in metaphorical language as an indication (*ishārat*) and allusion (*ibārat*) to those experiences. Nonetheless, he did not, albeit in passing and without going into much detail, fail to mention two works of Shams al-Dīn al-Sumatrānī namely *Kitāb al-Ḥarakat*¹¹³ and *Mir’āt al-Muḥaqqiqīn*¹¹⁴ as containing erroneous ideas which are misleading.¹¹⁵

On the concept and reality of being and existence, a clear distinction has to be made between the different degrees of existence—namely the necessary, the possible and the impossible of existence. One of the main aspect, attribute or aspect of God, also referred to as the Truth Most Exalted is known as The Necessary Existence (*ṣāḥib al-wujūd*) is also Absolute Existence (*wujūd muṭlaq*).¹¹⁶ By Absolute Existence, al-Rānīrī is referring to the Reality of Existence at the first stage of its determination.¹¹⁷ The Absolute Existence of the Şūfīs is different from that of the theologians’ and the philosophers’. The Theologians and the Philosophers admit the necessity of Absolute Existence but they accord it as something purely in the mind, a concept, not existing externally. On the contrary, the Şūfīs are of the position that Absolute Existence is existent (*mawjūd*), there is no other fundamental existence in reality other than it. It is possible to mentally posit such a thing, yet the theologians and the philosophers stop short of coming to that conclusion, thus creating a great divide between the real and the conceptual.¹¹⁸ For the Şūfīs, the myriad of things existent out there are the determinations of the Absolute Existence actualized in various modes and aspects which correspond to the quiddities of the theologians and the particular existences considered as dissimilar realities of the philosophers.¹¹⁹

The reality of that Absolute Existence is such that it cannot be thought of as having duality or plurality—this is the condition of being absolute. Otherwise it would be a serious com-

113 Refer van Nieuwenhuijze, *Samsu’l-Din van Pasai: Bijdrage tot de Kennis der Sumatraansche Mystiek* (Leiden: Brill, 1945).

114 Ibid.

115 *Laṭā’if al-Asrār*, 412/767, para. 219.

116 Ibid., in the *Introduction: On Affirming the Existence of the Truth Most Exalted/Muqaddimah: Pada Menyatakan Wujūd Allāh*, 195/469-470, para. 2

117 For a schema of the ontological descent of Absolute Being, see *Commentary*, 172.

118 *Prolegomena*, 301-302.

119 Ibid., 302.

108 *Laṭā’if al-Asrār*, 348/671, para 103.

109 *Commentary*, 426.

110 *Commentary*, 431.

111 Al-Rānīrī, as a sign of concern, asks for God to grant him and the reader perfect or complete illuminative knowledge and perfect or complete unification.

112 As for those who experience incomplete spiritual experience, they are the People of Subjective Vision, *Ahl al-Shuhūd al-Ḥālīyy*, and they are known as the People of Spiritual Inconstancy, *Ahl al-Talwīn*. See *Commentary*, 102, 426-428, 430-432, 458.

promise of absoluteness. There are three ontological categories: necessary existence, possible existence, and non-existence. Necessary existence is by nature self-manifest and its existence is real, whereas what is possible of existence becomes manifest in reality when and inasmuch as it is related to Necessary Existence. There is no possibility at all for non-existence (*'adam*) to become externally manifest because if there were manifestation of non-existence (*'adam*), then there would be nothing. Although what is non-existent is known to God in His Knowledge, yet it does not become manifest in reality. Therefore there is only One True and Real Existence and the others are degrees of It in this realm of multiplicity and plurality. And the reality of these existent things that are many and plural is due to the individuation (*ta'ayyun*) and limitation (*taqayyud*) which Absolute Existence goes through; they are the actualization of It in various modes and aspects.¹²⁰ Hence, the manifestation of existent things in the realm of plurality is described as particular existence (*wujūd khāṣṣ*) or relative existence (*wujūd idāfī*); and as mentioned above, they are real only in relation to the Absolute Existence, in themselves, they are not real, for as such they do not possess real existence.

Since in reality there is no manifestation of non-existence (*'adam*) and there is only Real Existence on the one hand and the different degrees of Its manifestation in this realm of plurality on the other, al-Rānīrī proceeds to say that, according to the People of Verification (*Ahl al-Taḥqīq*), there are two categories of existence, one limited and the other absolute. Absolute existence is Necessary existence, that is, it in itself is existence *in actu*, continuous and enduring, does not diminish or expire, whereas others are but things with limited existence, they do not endure and finally reach a termination. These existent things, in a manner of speaking, borrowed their existences from that One Absolute Existence. Since they are existent by virtue of what existence they borrowed, they are only possible of existence (*mumkināt*). In reality, without that limited borrowed existence they would not have existed, hence they are also referred to as pure non-existent (*'adam maḥḍ*) because ultimately their existence reaches a termination. A non-existent returns to non existence. A similitude is made by al-Rānīrī concerning the existence of possible existences. It is as the existence of an image in the mirror when the gazer looks into it. The image seen in the mirror remains so long as the gazer looks at the mirror. Limited existence is categorically the reality of the existence of pure non-existence, and also of all possible existences. Considered in itself, possible existence is non-existent, but considered as an image of the Real Absolute Existence, it is existent.¹²¹ Real

Existence therefore encompasses both the absolute and the limited, hence references can be made to it as being absolute, limited, universal, partial, general, particular, multiple or plural, having shape and limit. But it must be borne in the mind that these categories are degrees (*martabāt*) or stations (sing. *maqām*) proper to Him (that is God's existence) and they are only mentally posited, and there is no changing in the Reality of His essence.¹²²

The varying degrees of existence is illustrated by al-Rānīrī using the similitudes of light, illumination, and luminous body. The sun is an example of a self luminous body, while the moon is an example of a body which is illuminated by another, namely the sun, and the moon in turn illuminates another body, namely the earth. The self luminous body such as the sun is never considered as suffering from increase or decrease in its luminosity. As regards the moon's reception of the sun's illumination it varies depending upon its position with respect to the sun.¹²³ And so is the case with earth in its reception of illumination from either the sun or the moon. The manifestation of existence (*kenyataan wujud*) in varying degrees as existent things (*mawjūdāt*) through the process of self manifestations (*tajalliyāt*) and determinations or individuations (*ta'ayyunāt*) renders the mind to consider all limited manifestation (*wujūd muqayyad*) as plural and multiple. With respect to plurality and multiplicity, those limited manifestations are referred to as the perpetual creation and the World, and they are the exterior manifestation of the Truth Most Exalted through the medium of His name the Exterior (*al-Zāhir*). By virtue of His name the Interior (*al-Bāṭin*), the Truth Most Exalted, prior to His manifestation is the very essence of the World.¹²⁴ This is indeed a subtle point, one that often misleads those who are not properly grounded in these matters to sway toward the wrong side—those who say that God is identical with the world and vice versa. It is precisely because of this subtle meaning that there arise two groups of the People of Unity (*Ahl al-Waḥdah*). One group is of the opinion that since every thing other than God does not have real existence, therefore only God's existence is real, and thus all that exists (that is the world of plurality and multiplicity) is God's existence. This identification of God with the World is erroneous as al-Rānīrī remarks in another treatise:

The deviating Wujūdiyyah say: Being is one, and that is the Being of God. This unique Being of God does not exist (*ada: mawjūd*) independently (*mustaqill*) for it to be distinguished (from the creatures) save by being contained in the creatures. The creatures are

122 Ibid., 196, 471, para. 4.

123 Ibid., 196-197, 471, para. 5.

124 Ibid., 197/472, para. 6.

120 *Laṭā'if al-Asrār*, 195/469-470, para. 2.

121 Ibid., 195-196, 470, para. 3; 374-375/709-710, para 149.

God's Being, and the Being of God is the being of the creatures. The world is then God and God is the world. In this way, they affirm God's unique Being as immanent in the being of creatures and they say: "There is no existent (*mawjūd*) except God". Furthermore, they believe the formula: "There is no God but God" to mean: "There is no being in me save God's Being". They desire its meaning to be: "There is no being in me save that God's Being is my being". They further say that: "We and God are of one kind (*se-bangsa*) and one being (*sewujud*)"; and yet further that God Most Exalted can be known in His essence and that His qualitative and quantitative categories are clearly visible by virtue of His being concretely existent (*ada: mawjūd*) temporally (*pada zaman*) and spatially (*pada makan*).¹²⁵

The second group, that is the true People of Unity, is of the position that there are two kinds of existence. The first kind is Real Existence (*wujūd haqīqī*) that is the existence of the Truth Most Exalted, absolute and invisible. They believe, as al-Rānīrī remarks:

God's Being is one; neither a thing numbered nor limited, nor a whole having constituent parts, nor substance nor body—and such that are created by Him as are all the things mentioned above. God's Being is unchanging and never becomes (*jadi*) these things, for 'He is now even as He was', that is to say, His existence (*ada*) now is the same as it was; 'before' He brought forth (*menjadikan*) all things into existence, He was not those things and, 'after' He brought them forth into existence (*menjadikan*) He does not become (*jadi*) similar to (*serupa*), and have one and the same existence as, those things. God's existence is in fact His Very Essence, and it never becomes the existence of the created things, and the existence of the created things never becomes the existence of God.¹²⁶

The second kind according to them (that is also referred to as the true *Wujūdiyyah*) is imaginary existence. By imaginary existence, they refer to existence which is only a concept brought about by the imagination. It is the existence of the whole universe, visible and existent but in reality not possessing real existence because what existence it has is borrowed, or attributed to it (that is, *wujūd idāfī*) like an imaginary form seen in a mirror; its appearance remains so long as the gazer looks into the mirror. Like a shadow (*zill*) its manifestation is due

to the sun as the source of light and an intervening object whose shadow falls on the ground. The shadow does not possess real existence, although one cannot deny that it does manifest itself.¹²⁷

Next al-Rānīrī proceeds with the categories of existence according to the Theologians.¹²⁸ There are three logical categories of existence according to the Theologians. The three categories are Necessary Existence (*wājib al-wujūd*), possible existence (*mumkināt, jā'iz al-wujūd*) and impossibility of existence (*mumtani' al-wujūd*). They are as follows:¹²⁹

Theologians' Categories of Existence:

1. Necessary Existence (*wājib al-wujūd*);
2. Possible Existence (*mumkināt, jā'iz al-wujud*) Lights, spirits and Hereafter (*anwār, arwāh, ākhirah*) Bodies, form, this world (*jasmānī, qālab, dunyā*);
3. Impossible existence (*mumtani' al-wujūd*).

God is Necessary Existence whereas lights, spirits, the Hereafter, bodies, forms and this world fall under the category of possible existence. Their existence is dependent upon the will of the Creator. As for impossible existence, its being is not possible at all, as in the case of the partner to *al-Bārī*, the Creator.¹³⁰

In concluding his *Introduction* to the *Laṭā'if*, al-Rānīrī quotes 'Abd Allāh al-'Ajalānī who says that there are five kinds of existence. The five kinds of existence are essential existence (*wujūd dhātī*) which is used in reference to the existence of God which does not increase or decrease; concrete or individual existence (*wujūd 'aynī*) which is used in reference to the existence of what is other than God; while existence in the mind (*wujūd 'aqlī*), existence in verbal expression (*wujūd lafẓī*) and existence in writing (*wujūd khaṭṭī*) is common between the Truth and the servant, that it is equivocal. All the five kinds of existence denote the different levels of being, as al-Ghazālī puts it, "Existence as individuals is the fundamental real existence, while existence in the mind is cognitional, formal existence; and existence in speech is verbal and indicative."¹³¹ All these levels of existence are necessary for the transfer and communication

127 For further discussion see our summary on Affirmation of Divine Unity of al-Rānīrī's *Laṭā'if al-Asrār*, 66-86, in the Introduction to our study on *Laṭā'if al-Asrār*, 198/473, para 8.

128 Concerning this issue, Jāmī in his *al-Durrah al-Fākhirah* has dealt with the positions of the Sūfīs, the Theologians and the Philosophers at length and in detail. See Nūr al-Dīn 'Abd al-Raḥman Jāmī, *al-Durrah al-Fākhirah*, together with Jāmī's Glosses (*hawāshī*), Arabic commentary of 'Abd al-Ghafūr al-Lāri, and Persian commentary of 'Imād al-Dawlah, ed. Nicholas Heer & A. Musavi Behbahani (Tehran: Institute of Islamic Studies, McGill University, 1980).

129 *Laṭā'if al-Asrār*, 198-199/473-47, para. 9.

130 Ibid.

131 Al-Ghazālī, *al-Maqṣad al-Asnā fī Sharḥ Ma'ānī Asmā' Allāh al-Ḥusnā*, see the translation, David B. Burrell

125 *Commentary*, 91.

126 Ibid., 95.

of meaning from an individual, real thing existing out there to the knowledge of it that arises in the mind.

3. From the Commentary on the Hujjat to the Prolegomena to the Metaphysics of Islām

In his book published in 1987 with the title *Islām and Modernity*,¹³² Fazlur Rahman raises the need for a reformulation of metaphysics in Islām that is based on the Holy Qur’ān¹³³ because there has not been much writings of note on Islamic metaphysics in modern times. According to Rahman, in the medieval centuries there were brilliant, original, and influential Muslim metaphysicians, but the primary basis of their *weltanschauung* was Hellenic thought, not the Qur’ān which means that some of their doctrines were repugnant to main stream Islām and down the centuries all metaphysical thought became anathema to it.¹³⁴ Metaphysics is an important requirement in any attempt at Islamizing several fields of learning because “unless Muslims effectively perform the intellectual task of elaborating an Islamic metaphysics on the basis of the Qur’ān”¹³⁵ the Islamization project can never be one worthy of any intellectual content.

Rahman’s call for a reformulation of metaphysics in Islām and he is insistent that such effort must be cognizant of and based upon the very foundation that shapes the Muslim society: the Holy Qur’ān and the Tradition of the Prophet, however he is frustrated with commentaries and super-commentaries by pre-colonial learned Muslim scholars in many disciplines of the Islamic sciences.¹³⁶ In theology, particularly the main school, the Ash’arite, although

and Nazih Daher, *al-Ghazali: The Ninety-Nine Beautiful Names of God* (Cambridge: The Islamic Texts Society, 1992), 6.

132 Fazlur Rahman, *Islam and Modernity: Transformation of an Intellectual Tradition* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1982), 132-133.

133 He raised the need to base the education of the Muslim state on the parameters defined by the Qur’ān for the state of Pakistan; see his “Quranic Solution of Pakistan’s Educational Problems” in *Journal of Islamic Studies*, Vol. 6, No. 4 (December, 1967), 315-326, from the Islamic Research Institute, International Islamic University, Islamabad.

134 Fazlur Rahman, *Islam and Modernity*, 132.

135 Ibid., 133. “Fazlur Rahman is a late and indirect participant in this agenda of Islamization of knowledge,” see Wan Mohd Nor Wan Daud, *Educational Philosophy*, 395-405. Prof. al-Attas mentioned to me that he gave a copy of *Islām and Secularism* to Fazlur Rahman during their first meeting in 1982.

136 Ibid., 150-151.

Rahman admits important individual writers do make their contributions, it is certainly not true of jurisprudence. Although, the basic framework of the “roots of law”—the Qur’ān, the Prophetic example, *qiyās*, or *ijtihād*, and *ijmā’* (consensus)—various prominent jurists of Islām have contributed a surprising range and richness of interpretation he noticed “a certain tendency to emphasize uniformity and even to project it backward, this artificial trend cannot eliminate the variety and should not be allowed to discourage fuller investigation. The second factor is the uninviting character of the literature of the commentaries and super-commentaries on theological and legal compendiums (but not juristic works).” To him this is “largely a dreary field of literature, devoted mostly to hair-splitting and basically unoriginal details, but one must not suppose that it is all repetition, for there is a good deal of acuteness of mind displayed therein, and one can still hit upon pearls even in these stagnant waters.” Contrary to Rahman’s frustration, these commentaries were produced with the worldview of Islām and its metaphysics informing the minds of the scholars who contributed to the tradition of deep reading.¹³⁷

Independently, al-Attas has worked out the outline of the metaphysics of Islām with his *Prolegomena to the Metaphysics of Islām*, published in 1995,¹³⁸ with the specific aim of defining the meaning of worldview from the perspective of Islām.¹³⁹ It “sets forth preliminary discourses on the nature of the metaphysics of Islam.” It is a unified opus based on his earlier works which were published by ISTAC as independent monographs. In the preface Prof. al-Attas writes, “With the exception of chapter I, which was written twenty years ago in the month of Ramaḍān, the other six chapters were written and completed during the months of the years 1989 (III); 1990 (IV, V and VI); 1993 (II); and 1994 (VII). In chapter II, which is

137 For a discussion on deep reading, see Khalid el-Rouayheb, *Islamic Intellectual History in the Seventeenth Century: Scholarly Currents in the Ottoman Empire and the Maghreb* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 120-125.

138 First published by the International Institute of Islamic Thought and Civilization, Malaysia (ISTAC) in 1995, several parts of the *Prolegomena to the Metaphysics of Islām* have been translated into various languages. The *Introduction* has been translated into Persian; Chapter I into Arabic, Persian, Turkish, Serbo-Croatian, Macedonian, Albanian, Urdu, Malayalam, Mandarin, Japanese, Korean, Malay and Indonesian. Chapter II into Arabic, Turkish, German, Italian, Albanian, Serbo-Croatian, Macedonian, Mandarin, Malay; Chapter III into Persian, Turkish, Serbo-Croatian, Macedonian, German, Indonesian; and Chapters V, VI and VII together into Persian. The entire book has been translated into Russian under the auspices of the Institute of Islamic Civilization, Moscow, in collaboration with the Russian Academy of Science and its Institute of Philosophy in Moscow in 2001. A complete translation of the book into Turkish and Bengali has been published. A second printing of the book by the International Institute of Islamic Thought and Civilization, Malaysia (ISTAC) was published in 2001. The Center for Advanced Studies on Islam, Science, and Civilization secured its third publication under Penerbit Universiti Teknologi Malaysia in 2014.

139 *Prolegomena*, xi.

a commentary of the explanation on happiness given in chapter I, I have introduced a new theory of my own on the meaning and origin of tragedy. The whole book, as I have explained in the Epilogue, leads ultimately to an interpretation of the hidden meaning of the Quranic passages on the Creation in Six Days.”¹⁴⁰ In fact, the idea of the Muslim *weltanschauung* was mentioned by al-Attas as early as 1970 in his book on the *Mysticism of Hamzah Fanşūrī*.¹⁴¹ His summation of the ideas therein are supported by other celebrated luminaries, sages, and thinkers as we have listed them in pages 10 until 11, and 40 until 42.

In 1987, Prof. al-Attas was honored as the University Professor of Islamic Thought and Civilization by the International Islamic University Malaysia. Among his immediate task was to set up and direct the International Institute of Islamic Thought and Civilization (ISTAC). He was its Founder-Director until 2002. When the building of ISTAC which he designed and supervised its construction completed, ISTAC moved its operation there in 1991. That was the year I returned from my studies at the University of Chicago and joined ISTAC as Junior Research Fellow. Despite his busy schedule directing, planning, and running ISTAC, Prof. al-Attas was involved in teaching, supervising students, making selections for references, manuscripts, rare books, books and journals for the Library of ISTAC. In 1992, at the request of the academic staff of ISTAC and others Prof. al-Attas began a series of lectures, what was later became a much awaited event every Saturday at ISTAC, known as the *Saturday Night Lecture Series*, where he elaborated as commentaries on each monograph which formed the book *Prolegomena*. It was attended by all professors, visiting professors, research fellows, and students of ISTAC, as well as by professors and academic staff from other institutions of higher learning, and by professionals and senior officials from government departments, institutes, and ministries.¹⁴²

Al-Attas does not limit his formulation of the metaphysics of Islām on and from the works of the philosophers only; he also draws from the depth and breadth of the works of the Şūfīs—whom he regards as the true metaphysicians in Islām—the *Mutakallimūn*, and the *Faylasūf*.¹⁴³ He outlines the framework for the metaphysics of Islām thus: it is encapsulated in the Arabic phrase *ru’yat al-Islām li’l-wujūd*, the vision of truth and reality as projected by

140 Ibid., x.

141 See footnote 48.

142 *Prolegomena*, x.

143 For a survey on the methods and analyses of these three schools of thought in Islām, see ‘Alī Sāmī al-Nashshār, *Nash’at al-Fikr al-Falsafī fī al-Islām*, 3 vols. (Alexandria: Dār al-Ma’ārif, 1965), and *Manāhij al-Baḥth ‘inda Mufakkirī al-Islām wa-Iktishāf al-Manhaj al-‘Ilmī fī al-‘Ālam al-Islāmī* (Alexandria: Dār al-Ma’ārif, 1966).

Islām, encompassing the life in this world (*al-dunyā*) and the Hereafter (*al-ākhirah*).¹⁴⁴ The fundamental elements of the metaphysics of Islām are permanently established; for brevity’s sake the elements are as follows: 1) the nature of God; 2) revelation; 3) creation; 4) man and psychology of the human soul; 5) knowledge; 6) religion; 7) freedom; 8) values and virtues; and 9) happiness.¹⁴⁵ Here lies the novel contribution of al-Attas on the formulation of the metaphysics of Islām: he emphasizes that these fundamental elements—far from being artificially grafted, tried and tested, perfected over time, and dependent on the different and opposing philosophical, theological, and mystical approaches—have always been and will always be treated in the minds of the proponents and representatives of Islamic thought—theologians, philosophers, metaphysicians—whose pursuits are guided by the Islamic framework of *tawḥīd* and who neither preponderating to any one method nor merely copying that of the Western conception of metaphysics.¹⁴⁶ Thus, it was with his ingenuity that he strings together different streams of ideas from the rich and vibrant intellectual-spiritual-religious history of Islām and proposes a unified and broadened worldview of Islām.

In the preface to the first publication of the *Prolegomena*, he emphasizes that, from the worldview of Islām:

...knowledge is not entirely the property of the human mind, and that the sciences derived from it are not the products solely of unaided human reason and sense experience possessing an objectivity that preclude value judgment... [Since] knowledge and the sciences need guidance and verification from the statements and general conclusions of revealed Truth, it is incumbent upon scholars and the learned among us who are entrusted to teach and to educate to acquaint themselves with a clear understanding of the metaphysics of Islām and of the permanently established constituent elements of the worldview derived from it. This is because that metaphysics is not only established upon reason and experience as reflected in the intellectual and religious tradition of Islām, but

144 *Prolegomena*, 1-3. The vision of truth and reality as projected by Islām is not captured in its translation into Malay as *taşawwur Islāmī*, because *taşawwur* is a mental concept, a product of a subjective contemplation or the intellect’s arrival at a concept (*taşawwur*) or judgment (*taşdīq*) along the methods of logic based on the theoretical intellect (*‘aḳal nazarī*). See the “Pengenalan Kepada Terjemahan” by Muhammad Zainiy Uthman in *Ma’na Kebahagiaan dan Pengalamannya dalam Islām*, xlii, n. 13.

145 Ibid., 5.

146 Ibid., 3. As early as 1970, al-Attas has developed the concept of Islamization and its relation with worldview, where in his analysis on the metaphysics of Hamzah Fanşūrī, he says, “...the Muslims were not merely passive translators of the Greeks. Their philosophy centered around concepts mainly influenced by the Qur’ānic world view,” *Mysticism of Hamzah Fanşūrī*, 190, n. 31.

also upon the articulation of the revealed religion itself about the nature of reality and of truth in verification of the Revelation. The book that now lies between your hands sets forth preliminary discourses on the nature of the metaphysics of Islām.¹⁴⁷

This certainty that al-Attas places on the rootedness of the metaphysics of Islām to Revelation is not a newly-thought idea that came about out of relatively recent considerations in the development of the corpus of his intellectual works. Rather, as earlier mentioned, quoting from his work on the *Mysticism of Ḥamzah Fanṣūrī* with its in-depth analysis on being and existence therein, and in his *Commentary on the Ḥujjat*, al-Attas' explication of the metaphysics and the worldview of Islām is a new formulation from the cumulative concepts articulated from the works of Şūfīs, theologians, and philosophers.¹⁴⁸ Al-Attas expresses this coherence in his *Prolegomena* thus:

Based upon the position established by our philosophical and scientific tradition as integrated into a coherent metaphysical system, we maintain that many important similarities are found between our position and that of modern, contemporary philosophy and science with regard to the sources and methods of knowledge; the unity of rational and empirical ways of knowing; the combination of realism, idealism, and pragmatism as the cognitive foundation of a philosophy of science; the philosophy and science of process. But these similarities are apparent and pertain only to their external aspects, and they do not negate the profound differences that arise from our divergent worldviews and beliefs about the ultimate nature of Reality. Our affirmation of Revelation as the source of knowledge of ultimate reality and truth pertaining both to created things as well as to their Creator provides us with the foundation for a metaphysical framework in which to elaborate our philosophy of science as an integrated system descriptive of that reality and truth in a way which is not open to the methods of the secular philosophic rationalism and philosophic empiricism of modern philosophy and science.¹⁴⁹

For Al-Attas, the metaphysics he has outlined is “. . .based on knowledge gained through practical devotion to that Being Whom we contemplate and sincerely serve in true submission according to a clearly defined system of Revealed Law.”¹⁵⁰ Al-Attas explains:

We do not in the least imply here that when *'ibādah* becomes identified with *ma'rifah*, the former as work or service (*'amal*) including prayer (*ṣalāt*)—i.e. the prescribed (*farḍ*), the confirmed practice of the Prophet (*sunnah*), the supererogatory (*nawāfil*)—is no longer incumbent on the one who attains to the latter, or that for such a one prayer means simply intellectual contemplation, as some philosophers thought. *Ma'rifah* as “knowledge” is both right cognition (*'ilm*) and right feeling or spiritual mood (*ḥāl*); and the former, which marks the final stages of spiritual ‘stations’ (*maqāmāt*), precedes the latter, which marks the spiritual transition-point between the spiritual station and the spiritual state. As such, and since it is knowledge that comes from God to the heart (*qalb*) and depends entirely on Him, it is not necessarily a permanent condition unless continually secured and fortified *'ibādah*. He who discerns knows that it is absurd in the case of one who receives knowledge from God about God (i.e. the *'arif*) to transform thereby his *'ibādah* solely into contemplation, for the *'arif* is acutely aware of the fact that he becomes one at least partly due to his *'ibādah* which is the means by which he approaches his Lord.¹⁵¹

Al-Attas' metaphysical framework is not a mere philosophical construct. It is in complete agreement with the theological precepts of the People of Tradition and Community (*Ahl al-Sunnah wa al-Jamā'ah*), moreover it is built upon spiritual cognition which comes from God and deposited in the heart; that special knowledge which affords one with the knowledge of an integrated system that describes reality and truth upon which right action is based. Such position of certainty is the state and station of a person who is among the People to Truth (*Ahl al-Ḥaqq*), and al-Attas is clearly one of them, as described by Rūzbihān Baqlī Shīrāzī,¹⁵² thus:

For the People of Truth (*Ahl al-Ḥaqq*) in this world, there are gardens in their hearts (*qulūb*), intellects (*'uqūl*), spirits (*arwāḥ*) and innermost ground of beings (*asrār*).

147 *Prolegomena*, ix-x.

148 Al-Attas arranges them in this series because he holds the position that the Şūfīs are metaphysicians who represent the highest of the class of the learned and enlightened in the knowledge and experience of metaphysics, followed by the Theologians and then the Philosophers; such is the classification by Nūr al-Dīn al-Rānīrī in his *Laṭā'if al-Asrār*. See Muhammad Zainiy Uthman, *Laṭā'if al-Asrār li-Ahl Allāh al-Atyār of Nūr al-Dīn al-Rānīrī*, 68-69; 295.

149 See his *Islām and the Philosophy of Science* (Kuala Lumpur: ISTAC, 1989), 8; *Prolegomena*, 117-118.

150 See his *Islām and Secularism* (Kuala Lumpur: Angkatan Belia Islam (ABIM), 1978; reprinted ISTAC, 1993; IBFIM, 2014; Ta'dib International, 2019), 26.

151 *Prolegomena*, 60-61, n. 37.

152 Rūzbihān b. Abū al-Naṣr al-Baqlī Ṣadr al-Dīn Abū Muḥammad al-Şūfī al-Shīrāzī al-Kāzīrūnī. His works include the *tafsīr 'Arā'is al-Bayān fī Ḥaqā'iq al-Qur'ān*, his own autobiography and spiritual experiences, *Kashf al-Asrār*, *Mashrab al-Arwāḥ*, *Abhar al-Āshiqīn*, and *Sharḥ al-Shaḥīyyāt*. See Ismā'īl Bāshā al-Baghdādī, *Hadiyyat al-Ārifīn*, 1: 371; al-Ziriklī, *al-A'lām*, 3: 35.

The garden of the hearts is the meadow of perfection (*rawḍat al-itqān*), the garden of the intellects is the park of illuminative knowledge (*bustān al-‘irfān*), the garden of the spirits is the sanctuary of clear exposition (*ḥadīqat al-bayān*), and the garden of the innermost ground of beings is the paradise of eye-witnessing (*firdaws al-‘iyān*).

Each of these gardens has rivers, trees, fruits and flowers. The river of the garden of the hearts contains the water of eternal life, which flows in it with the characteristic of [Divine] manifestation (*na‘t al-tajallī*) from the springs of [Divine] Unity (*‘uyūn al-waḥdāniyyah*), and it is not contaminated by the imperfections of the human condition (*kudūrāt al-bashariyyah*). It makes the hearts alive with the light of certainty so that the death of ignorance does not inflict them. Its trees are the trees of faith (*ashjār al-īmān*), and its fruits are the lights of certainty.

The river of the garden of the intellects is from the milk of Omnipotence (*albān al-Qudrah*) from which God (*al-Ḥaqq*) gives them to drink, for them to witness the purity of the lights of His Omnipotence, whose illuminative knowledge is inherited through the aspect of His Benevolence and Majestic Omnipotence. Its trees are wisdom and its flowers are intelligence.

The river of the garden of the spirits is the river of the unveiling of His Beauty (*Jamāl*), whose spring is the sea of Majesty (*Jalāl*), from which God gives them to drink to ameliorate the hearts as they taste the delightful pleasure at apprehending the beauty and the vision of Majesty. Its trees are love (*maḥabbah*), its flowers are longing (*shawq*), and its fruits are passionate love (*‘ishq*).

The river of the garden of innermost ground of beings is the unveiling of the Holy Essence (*al-dhāt al-muqaddas*) in the separation of His endless effulgence (*fayḍ*). Then God strengthens the human condition [of the person] as long as their hearts remain firm and steadfast at arrival (*waṣl*). And there its trees are affirmation of Divine Unity (*tawḥīd*), its flowers are affirmation of isolation (*tafrīd*), and its fruits are realization (*taḥqīq*).

The companions of the hearts are the people of witnessing (*ahl al-shuhūd*), the companions of the intellects are the people of unveiling (*ahl al-kushūf*), the companions of the spirits are the people of intoxication (*sakr*) and ecstasy (*wajd*), and the companions of the innermost ground of beings are the people of effacement (*maḥw*) and sobriety (*ṣaḥw*). The people of the witnessing are the companions of awareness [of God] (*murāqabah*), the people of unveiling are the people of stations (*maqāmāt*), the people of

intuition of existence (*ahl al-wujūd*) are the people of states (*aḥwāl*), and the people of effacement and sobriety are the people of steadfastness (*istiqāmah*). Blessed is he who is gifted with the likes of these gardens in the abode of examination (*dār al-imtīhān*).¹⁵³

Al-Attas is known for his precision (*itqān*) in his productive and creative works, from the buildings he designed and built, the intellectual framework of institute and advanced centers of research that he designed, built and directed. His intellectual, scholarly, philosophical, metaphysical, and religious writings to the eyes of the informed readers are composed in his unique writing style, in prose and poetry with clarity and indelible imprints of his precision in thought and argumentation.¹⁵⁴ His exposition of Şūfī metaphysical ideas are expounded with such clarity, erudition, and profundity signifying that he possesses the illuminative knowledge where secrets of the realm intelligible and imaginal worlds are deposited in his heart with *‘irfān* and succinct clear exposition of *bayān*. Divine Unity is *sine qua non* in his exposition of the metaphysics of Islām, and the fruits of his labors are now appreciated by new generation despite being in the midst and amongst those who fail to understand and appreciate him and his contribution. In his refutation, with great aplomb and panache, to confound Drewes he refers to the knowledge that he possesses “...as matter of ‘basic’ knowledge; whose knowledge is not merely gathered from books, but more so from experience and reflection; whose insight into it is not merely a matter of academic preoccupation, but a matter of belief and faith and definite commitment to a particular attitude towards life” because unbeknownst to Drewes, al-Attas is “not merely a nominal Muslim” because “he is brought up and nurtured in a milieu alien” to Drewes; because al-Attas “is, after all, studying and reflecting upon his own culture and tradition and religion, which are for him familiar and coherent” because, unlike Drewes, he has smelled the breath of a Şūfī and “he not only comes from a family of Şūfīs, but is directly descended from generations of ancestors who were Şūfīs and saints, scholars and savants of Islām, stretching over a thousand years. One of these ancestors was Sayyid Muḥammad al-‘Aydarūs, the *Shaykh* of Sayyid Abū Ḥafs ‘Umar Bā Shaybān of Ḥaḍramawt,

153 I have translated this quotation from Rūzbihān’s *‘Arā’is al-Bayān* anew and the readers may for comparison sake see this quotation as translated by Pieter Coppens in his *Seeing God in Sufi Qur’an Commentaries: Crossings between This World and the Otherworld* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2018), 117. See also the original Arabic in Rūzbihān Baqlī, *‘Arā’is al-Bayān fī Ḥaqā’iq al-Qur’ān*, ed. Aḥmad Farīd al-Mazīdī, 3 vols. (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyyah, 2008), 3: 305-306.

154 One example is his *Refutation* against G.W.J. Drewes published as Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas, *Comments on the Re-Examination of al-Rānīrī’s Ḥujjatu’l-Şiddīq: A Refutation* (Kuala Lumpur: Muzium Negara, 1975).

who initiated al-Rānīrī into the Rifā‘iyyah Order”.¹⁵⁵ Al-Attas is the thirty-eighth descendant of the Prophet from the line of al-Ḥusayn, the grandson of the Prophet.

Al-Attas has never failed to enlighten with his lucid interpretation and penetrating insights. He stands as the only Malay scholar of global reputation who has made epoch-making, original, and ground-breaking contributions in the field of Islamic studies, especially in providing a new interpretation of Islamic metaphysics. He is also the only contemporary Malay scholar who has made significant contributions to the field of Islām in the Malay world, in Malay history, language and culture, whose influence and reach have become a global phenomenon, providing Muslims the world over with a new outlook and a reaffirmation in their understanding of their religion of Islām and its religious, intellectual, and spiritual traditions. He has the unique ability to identify long-standing, perplexing problems, offering fresh analyses and providing solutions to those problems, which opened up new areas of research that deserve further and rigorous intellectual attention and focus. His main ideas, as can be gleaned from his writings, rejuvenate and reverberate what many are accustomed to understand as well-established tradition of interpretation of the Qur’ān, the Ḥadīth corpus, and the widely accepted teachings of renowned and exemplary Muslim sages, thinkers, metaphysicians, jurists, and the learned who were illuminated with the light of true knowledge.

Highlighting further some of his main ideas, in my recent work, entitled *Al-Attas’ Psychology*, I have made a brief analysis on al-Attas’ reformulation of, among others, the soul, the intellect, the heart and spiritual cognition, prophecy and happiness.¹⁵⁶ I have shown how al-Attas has been consistent in dealing with triangulation of ideas of the *faylasūf*, *mutakallimūn*, and the Ṣūfīs by bringing their ideas together not in an artificial coherence, but in an organic system. He has woven their main ideas based on a hierarchy and benefits to man, in line with the ranks and degrees of authorities in knowledge of reality and truth—this is *adab* towards knowledge. Indeed, it is this rare gift which he possesses that enables him to independently formulate and elaborate the metaphysics of Islām, to which he has given a unique phrase—and it is *ru’yat al-Islām li’l-wujūd*, the vision which Islām projects on reality and existence. That metaphysics which is so fundamental for the Islamization¹⁵⁷ of several fields of learning

155 Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas, *Comments on the Re-Examination of al-Rānīrī’s Ḥujjatu’l-Şiddīq: A Refutation*, 10-11.

156 Muhammad Zainiy Uthman, *Al-Attas’ Psychology* (Kuala Lumpur: HAKIM, 2022). Hereafter cited as *Al-Attas’ Psychology*.

157 A term which al-Attas is famed for, and for exposition of this see Wan Mohd Nor Wan Daud, *Educational Philosophy and Practice of Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas* (Kuala Lumpur: International Institute of Islamic Thought and Civilization (ISTAC), 1998).

that should be based on the Qur’ān is outlined by al-Attas complete with its fundamental key elements in his *Prolegomena to the Metaphysics of Islām*.¹⁵⁸ Perhaps in modern times, after Iqbal in the East and in the West since Kant’s lament of the uncertain future of metaphysics, al-Attas has brought metaphysics to its rightful place, placing it as the bedrock for any meaningful discussion on knowledge and thinking framework.¹⁵⁹ That metaphysics, al-Attas states, is not only established upon reason and experience as reflected in the works of intellectuals and religious authorities in Islām, but more importantly it is based “upon the articulation of the revealed religion itself about the nature of reality and of truth in verification of the Revelation.”¹⁶⁰ He has rightfully placed the root of that metaphysics in Revelation, and the sheer certainty derived therefrom would dampen and hold the problem of confusion and error in knowledge at bay.

His *Prolegomena* is important for contemporary Muslims to identify “the confusion and error in knowledge”¹⁶¹ as among the key problems confronting the Muslims, as he has succinctly done and it is synonymous with the widespread pathos known also as the loss of *adab*¹⁶². Corruption and error in knowledge and the loss of *adab* can be traced back to the soul. He has reformulated the discourse on the nature of man and his soul, where human nature is both body and soul—and it is the soul, together with its other faculties which are spiritual-intellectual in nature, that is associated with its other aspects known as the spirit, the intellect, and the heart.¹⁶³ These aspects of the human soul contribute in its arrival at and attainment to knowledge. It is based on these inner faculties of human soul that I have briefly discussed in that work of mine al-Attas’ exposition on the nature of the human soul in so far as it relates to knowledge, action, thinking framework, and the soul.¹⁶⁴

Al-Attas defines thinking as “the movement of the soul towards meaning”¹⁶⁵; and this is a

158 *Prolegomena*, 5.

159 See Muhammad Zainiy Uthman, “Al-Attas on Action, Thinking Framework, and the Human Soul,” in *Thinking Framework*, ed. Muhammad Zainiy Uthman, Suleiman Mohammed Hussein Boayo & Mohd Hilmi Ramli (Kuala Lumpur: RZS-CASIS, UTM, 2020), 7-44.

160 *Prolegomena*, x.

161 Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas, *Islām and Secularism*, 106.

162 *Ibid.*, 105-106.

163 See the chapter on the Nature of Man and Psychology of the Human Soul in *Prolegomena*, 143-176.

164 See the chapter on The Human Soul and The Intellect in *al-Attas’ Psychology*, 21-53. Here, I am referring to the activity of the soul (Ar. *naḥs*) employing the intellect (*‘aql*) to operate on the intelligible forms—these are sensible forms having gone through the soul’s internal faculties of common sense (Ar. *al-ḥiss al-mushtarak*), imagination (Ar. *khayāl*) or representative faculty (Ar. *al-khayālīyyah*), retention-recollection (Ar. *ḥāfiẓah*), and estimation (Ar. *wahm*), *ibid.*, 29.

165 *Prolegomena*, 124.

new definition that encompasses his comparing and synthesizing the different expositions on ontology and epistemology of the philosophers (*al-faylasūf*), theologians (*al-mutakallimūn*), and metaphysicians (*al-şūfiyyūn*). Thinking, intellection, and making judgment are not independent from any framework of thought or a worldview. According to al-Attas, in its active quest for knowledge, having the backdrop of the nature of metaphysical reality underlying human nature and knowledge, the soul arrives at meaning; and as thinking involves sensibles (*maḥsūsāt*) and intelligibles (*ma'qūlāt*), in the soul's quest to arrive at meaning and simultaneously the arrival of meaning in the soul, and as they are intellectual forms, they have limits as intellectual forms—this is another novel concept brought forth by al-Attas as the limit of truth to every object of knowledge. Al-Attas also coins a new concept to refer to the soul's capacity in relation to its arriving at the limits of truth to every object of knowledge; and that is 'intellectual capacity'¹⁶⁶: the soul employs it in arriving at judgment, clarification, discrimination, and distinction on every object of knowledge.

On the conception of the soul, al-Attas stands apart from the *faylasūf* such as al-Fārābī, Ibn Sīnā, and Aristotle in their analyses on the workings of the soul in arriving at meaning and knowledge. Their position is that the intellect receives aid from the Active Intelligence to render the forms it receives, thereby making it active and habitual to contemplate on the forms of the intelligibles. The difficulty in grasping and understanding intelligibles lies in their lacking empirical-sensitive counterparts. Al-Attas emphasizes rational proof, the prerogative of the intellect (*'aql*), which is not the product of conjecture or doubt.¹⁶⁷ This is also something new that al-Attas introduced: rational proof or conclusive thought must conform to true and real ontological and logical conditions. From our point of view, this is a finer and substantial analysis of the epistemology of the *Ahl al-Sunnah wa al-Jamā'ah*, in addition to sense perception (*al-ḥawāss al-khamsah*) and true report (*khābar ṣādiq*)¹⁶⁸. His exposition on the soul sheds light on the result of thinking in Islām, which is to arrive at certainty (*yaqīn*) and by so doing he has re-established the importance of the heart (*qalb*) over the intellect in the reception of *ma'rifah*, and that it is the *qalb* functions as the spiritual organ for cognition, higher than that of rationally and logically signified knowledge.

In modern times, in my humble estimation, al-Attas is perhaps the only thinker who in his exposition of the philosophy of the nature of man and the psychology of the human

soul within a greater metaphysical framework of Islam reintroduces and emphasizes the heart (*qalb*) as the spiritual organ for cognition. He delineates clearly the relation between spiritual experiences and intellectual cognition in the soul's quest for and attaining to certainty, wisdom, illuminative knowledge, and guidance. His insistence on God as the ultimate source of knowledge is important because the apex of knowledge is the event of the Prophetic reception of Revelation, shown as the highest level of apprehension of the highest degree of knowledge which occurs to the heart of the best of God's sentient being. Al-Attas clarifies the position of the intellectual tradition in Islām where the soul is viewed as having four modes: these are the *nafs*, *rūḥ*, *'aql* and *qalb*, and in that work of mine, I have developed from his explanations that the degrees of knowledge which arrive in the soul and which the soul arrives at are four: these are revelation (*wahy*), wisdom (*ḥikmah*), intuition (*ilhām*), and knowledge (*'ilm*).

In addition, Al-Attas' placing the primacy of the *qalb* as the spiritual organ of cognition and elaborating its ontological reality are consistent with trans-empirical states; for the latter, I have also provided a brief exposition there of the stations and states of the soul which are in agreement with Rūzbihān and al-Rānīrī.¹⁶⁹ The central position and function of the *qalb* is supported by verses from the Qur'ān and the writings of earlier Muslim scholars such as al-Ghazālī, al-Junayd, al-Jāmī, al-Qaṣṣālānī, and al-Rānīrī as well as Shāh Walī Allāh. And from among the *mufasssīrūn*, the exegetes, I have brought forth in support of al-Attas' exposition from the exegeses of Ibn 'Arabī,¹⁷⁰ Fakhr al-

169 See the sub-chapter "Trans-empirical States" in *Al-Attas' Psychology*, 85-111.

170 Muḥyī al-Dīn Abū 'Abd Allāh Muḥammad b. 'Alī b. Muḥammad b. Aḥmad b. Abd Allāh b. al-'Arabī al-Ḥātimī al-Tā'ī al-Andalusī. A prolific scholar, an established metaphysician with an immense knowledge who has written on various subjects and was given the titles *al-Shaykh al-Akbar*, *al-Kibrīt al-Aḥmar* and *al-Fard al-Muḥaqqiq*. He wrote many important works and the notable ones among them: *al-Futūḥāt al-Makkiyyah*, *Fuṣūṣ al-Ḥikam*, *al-Tadbīrāt al-Ilahiyyah fī al-Mamlakah al-Insāniyyah*, *Mawāqī' al-Nujūm*, *Mishkāt al-Anwār*, *Inshā' al-Dawā'ir*, *Tarjumān al-Ashwāq*, *Rūḥ al-Quds*, and *'Anqā' Mughrib*. See al-Safādī, *al-Wafī bi al-Wafayāt*, ed. Aḥmad al-Arnā'ūt & Tazkī Muṣṭafā, 29 vols. (Beirut: Dār Iḥyā' al-Turāth al-'Arabī, 2000), 4: 124-127; al-Sha'rānī, *al-Ṭabaqāt al-Kubrā*, 2 vols. (Cairo, 1315), 1: 163; Yūsuf al-Nabhānī, *Jāmi' Karamāt al-Awliyā'*, ed. Ibrāhīm al-Saqā, 2 vols. (Cairo: Muṣṭafā al-Bābī al-Ḥalabī wa Awlādūhu, 1873), 1: 198-210; Ibn al-'Imād, *Shadharāt al-Dhahab*, ed. 'Abd al-Qādir al-Arnā'ūt & Maḥmūd al-Arnā'ūt, 11 vols. (Damascus: Dār Ibn Kathīr, 1991), 7: 332-348; al-Ziriklī, *al-A'lām*, 6: 281.

166 For illustration on the intellectual capacity, see *Al-Attas' Psychology*, 34.

167 Ibid., 44.

168 See Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas, *The Oldest Known Malay Manuscript: A 16th Century Malay Translation of the 'Aqā'id of al-Nasafī* (Kuala Lumpur: University of Malaya, 1988), 53, 66, 101-102.

Dīn al-Rāzī,¹⁷¹ al-Tha‘labī,¹⁷² Muqātil ibn Sulaymān,¹⁷³ al-Bayḍāwī,¹⁷⁴ al-Ṭabarānī,¹⁷⁵ al-Ṭabarī,¹⁷⁶ Abū Ṭālib al-Makkī,¹⁷⁷ Abū al-Layth al-Samarqandī,¹⁷⁸ al-Zamakhsharī,¹⁷⁹ and Abū al-Barakāt al-Nasafī¹⁸⁰ to support his ideas, which I have expanded and indicated therein.¹⁸¹ Al-Attas continues this tradition by bringing to the fore the recognition of

and the central position of the *qalb* in the reception and understanding of the meanings derived from knowledge gifted to it, such as in the revelatory experience of the Prophet and trans-empirical experiences by others. The *qalb*, unlike the intellect, does not act on meanings logically or by way of ratiocination; it leaves the content as it is, unimpaired by the receiver’s act by the subjective imagination of the intellect.

- 171 Muḥammad b. ‘Umar b. al-Ḥasan b. al-Ḥusayn Abū ‘Abd Allāh al-Taymīy al-Bakrī Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī. Has written various works, among them *Mafātīḥ al-Ghayb* or *al-Tafsīr al-Kabīr*, *Lawāmi‘ al-Bayyināt fī Sharḥ Asmā‘ Allāh*, *Muḥaṣṣal fī Afkār al-Mutaqaddimīn wa al-Muta‘akhirīn*, *al-Mabāḥiṭh al-Mashriqiyyah*, *al-Maṭālib al-‘Āliyyah*, *Asās al-Taqdīs*, *Nihāyat al-Uqūl*, and *Sharḥ al-Ishārāt wa al-Tanbīhāt li ibn Sīnā*. See Ibn Khallikān, *Wafāyāt al-A‘yān wa Anbā‘ Abnā‘ al-Zamān*, ed. Iḥsān ‘Abbās, 7 vols. (Beirut: Dār Ṣādir, 1971), 4: 248-252; al-Ziriklī, *al-A‘lām*, 6: 313 for relevant details on his life, scholarship and contributions.
- 172 Aḥmad b. Muḥammad b. Ibrāhīm al-Naysābūrī Abū Ishāq al-Tha‘labī, a renowned exegete and historian. His major works include the exegesis of the Qur’ān, namely *al-Kashf wa al-Bayān fī Tafsīr al-Qur’ān* or famously known as *Tafsīr al-Tha‘labī*, and *‘Arā‘is al-Majlis* on the history of the Prophets. See Ismā‘īl Bāshā al-Baghdādī, *Hadiyyat al-‘Arifīn*, 1: 75; al-Ziriklī, *al-A‘lām*, 1: 212.
- 173 Muqātil b. Sulaymān b. Bashīr al-Azdī Abū al-Ḥasan al-Balkhī. Among his works: *al-Tafsīr al-Kabīr*, *Nawādir al-Tafsīr*, *al-Radd ‘alā al-Qadariyyah*, *Mutashābih al-Qur’ān*, *al-Nāsikh wa al-Mansūkh*, and *al-Wujūh wa al-Nazā‘ir*. See Ismā‘īl Bāshā al-Baghdādī, *Hadiyyat al-‘Arifīn*, 2: 469; al-Ziriklī, *al-A‘lām*, 7: 281.
- 174 ‘Abd Allāh b. ‘Umar b. Muḥammad b. ‘Alī Abū al-Khayr Nāṣir al-Dīn al-Bayḍāwī al-Shīrāzī. Among his works: *Anwār al-Tanzīl wa Asrār al-Ta‘wīl (Tafsīr al-Bayḍāwī)*, *Ṭawālī‘ al-Anwār*, *Minḥāj al-Wuṣūl*, *Lubb al-Lubāb fī ‘Ilm al-Rāb*, and *al-Ghāyat al-Quṣwā fī Dirāyat al-Fatwā*. See Ismā‘īl Bāshā al-Baghdādī, *Hadiyyat al-‘Arifīn*, 2: 73; al-Ziriklī, *al-A‘lām*, 4: 110.
- 175 Sulaymān b. Aḥmad b. Ayyūb b. Maṭīr al-Ḥāfiẓ Abū al-Qāsim al-Lakhmī al-Shāmī, among the great *muhaddithūn* mentioned in various biographies of the scholars of *ḥadīth*. His works include *al-Mu‘jam al-Ṣaghīr*, *Dalāil al-Nubuwwah*, *Kitāb al-Awā‘il*, *Kitāb al-Da‘awāt*, and a *Tafsīr* attributed to his name. See Ismā‘īl Bāshā al-Baghdādī, *Hadiyyat al-‘Arifīn*, 1: 396; al-Ziriklī, *al-A‘lām*, 3: 121.
- 176 Muḥammad b. Jarīr b. Yazīd Abū Ja‘far al-Ṭabarī. Known as a scholar who wrote mostly on history with his voluminous *Ṭarīkh al-Ṭabarī* or also known as *Akhbār al-Rusul wa al-Mulūk*, and exegesis of the Qur’ān, the *Tafsīr al-Ṭabarī (Jāmi‘ al-Bayān fī Tafsīr al-Qur’ān)* in 30 volumes, and other works such as *Ikhtilāf al-Fuqahā‘* and *al-Qirā‘āt*. See Ismā‘īl Bāshā al-Baghdādī, *Hadiyyat al-‘Arifīn*, 6: 26; al-Ziriklī, *al-A‘lām*, 6: 69.
- 177 Muḥammad b. ‘Alī b. ‘Aṭīyyah al-Ḥārithī Abū Ṭālib al-Makkī al-Mālikī. Among his works is the famous *Qūt al-Qulūb*, a work which was referred by many scholars writing on *taṣawwuf* after his times. He has also written *Mushkil I‘rāb al-Qur’ān* and has a *Tafsīr* attributed to him. See Ismā‘īl Bāshā al-Baghdādī, *Hadiyyat al-‘Arifīn*, 2: 55; al-Ziriklī, *al-A‘lām*, 6: 274.
- 178 Naṣr b. Muḥammad b. Aḥmad b. Ibrāhīm b. al-Khiṭāb Abu al-Layth al-Samarqandī, known as a *faqīh* in Ḥanafī school and was given the title Imām al-Hudā. Among his works: *‘Umdat al-‘Aqā‘id*, *Bustān al-‘Arifīn*, *Tanbīh al-Ghāfilīn*, *Sharḥ al-Jāmi‘ al-Ṣaghīr*, *‘Uyūn al-Masā‘il*, *Muqaddimah fī al-Fiqh*, *Nawādir al-Fiqh*, and *Tafsīr Abū al-Layth al-Samarqandī*. See Ismā‘īl Bāshā al-Baghdādī, *Hadiyyat al-‘Arifīn*, 2: 490; al-Ziriklī, *al-A‘lām*, 8: 27.
- 179 Maḥmūd b. ‘Umar b. Muḥammad b. Aḥmad Abū al-Qāsim Jār Allāh al-Khwārizmī al-Zamakhsharī. Known for his proficiency in the science of language reflected in his works *Tafsīr al-Kashshāf*, *Asās al-Balāghah* and *al-Mufaṣṣāl*. See Ismā‘īl Bāshā al-Baghdādī, *Hadiyyat al-‘Arifīn*, 2: 402; al-Ziriklī, *al-A‘lām*, 7: 178.
- 180 ‘Abd Allāh b. Aḥmad b. Maḥmūd Ḥāfiẓ al-Dīn Abū al-Barakāt al-Nasafī al-Ḥanafī. Among his works *I‘timād al-I‘tiqād*, *Sharḥ al-Muntakhab fī Uṣūl al-Madḥhab*, *Kashf al-Asrār*, *Kanz al-Daqā‘iq fī al-Furū‘*, and an exegesis of the Qur’ān, *Madārik al-Tanzīl wa Ḥaqā‘iq al-Ta‘wīl*. See Ismā‘īl Bāshā al-Baghdādī, *Hadiyyat al-‘Arifīn*, 1: 464; al-Ziriklī, *al-A‘lām*, 4: 67.
- 181 See the earlier part of the chapter on “The Heart and Spiritual Cognition” in *Al-Attas’ Psychology*, 55-85.

The heart’s central role in the reception and understanding of meanings obtained via gifted knowledge and the meaning thus acquired is fundamental in the soul’s aptitude to arrive at certainty, specifically, and knowledge in general—these in turn plays a key role in the meaning and experience of happiness. Therefore, I have also described al-Attas’ exposition on the meaning and experience of happiness in Islām in relation to the spirit, the soul, the heart, and the intellect.¹⁸² The tragic life of the Greeks and the philosophy of the Sophists which supports it are brought into comparison with al-Attas’ explanation on *sa‘ādah*, the meaning and experience of happiness in Islām where he drew comparison between *shaqāwah* (Ar.) and tragedy that is derived mainly from the exposition by Aristotle, along with its differing psychological states. Al-Attas is of the position that happiness is directly related with certainty (*yaqīn*). Certainty has intimate relation with intention (*niyyah*) that serves as the premise for all human actions. The confluence of what is rationally and intellectually intended in thought (*maqṣūd*) and what has arrived as meanings in the heart (*ma‘nā*) is the instant at which and the point where *niyyah* arises.¹⁸³ This is in the same line as al-Attas’ exposition on the arrival of meaning in the soul or the soul’s arrival at meaning. This certainty informs intention which initiates action into manifestation—this is right action, instantiated by what is rightly intended coinciding with true meaning as it arrives in the heart. What is received or arrived in the heart is the foundation of right and true belief. And belief (*īmān*) is the cornerstone of happiness in Islām, which is entirely based on knowledge and certainty.

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- 182 *Al-Attas’ Psychology*, 113-146. See also my *Ma‘na Kebahagiaan dan Pengalamannya Dalam Islam* (Kuala Lumpur: ISTAC, 2002; reprint. Kuala Lumpur: Islamic Banking and Finance Institute Malaysia (IBFIM), 2014), which is an annotated translation of al-Attas’ *Meaning and Experience of Happiness in Islām* (Kuala Lumpur: ISTAC, 1993).
- 183 *Al-Attas’ Psychology*, 134, 152.

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