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Mašhad, Kitābhāna-i Āsitān-i Quds-i Raḡawī 300, f. 1v
Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, *grec* 1853, f. 186v

Avicenna's al-Ḥikma al-muta'aliya

Initial Begriffsgeschichte¹

Dimitri Gutas

Abstract

Avicenna uses the phrase *al-ḥikma al-muta'aliya* once only, in the *Iṣārāt*, Book Two, *namaṭ* X, section 9. It has been variously interpreted, both in the Islamic tradition and in modern scholarship. In this paper I analyze its meaning in context and trace its reception among the early commentators, following the suggestion of Rüdiger Arnzen that a *Begriffsgeschichte* is required for its proper understanding. The phrase is ensconced in an extremely abstruse sentence, but it is clear from a close textual analysis that it refers to the doctrine (*ḥikma*) relating to the knowledge of universals and particulars possessed by the intellects and rational souls of the supernal bodies (*muta'aliya*). Initial commentators, including Faḥraddīn al-Rāzī, take it at its literal sense as just described, but it was Naṣīraddīn al-Ṭūsī who first interpreted it as mystical knowledge acquired through *dawq* and *kaṣf* (“taste” and “unveiling”), opening the floodgate of various such non-rational interpretations by subsequent Muslim thinkers and modern scholars alike.

As what passed for philosophical thinking after Avicenna began to admit and indeed champion non-rational and thus necessarily personal ways of knowledge, immune to corroboration by others,² in many instances the terminology used in such arguments inevitably lost its specificity and precision and acquired a vagueness that worked by allusion and insinuation rather than direct statement and reference to verifiable reality. This has hampered the understanding and proper evaluation of many a work written under these premises. One of these terms is Avicenna's *al-ḥikma al-muta'aliya* as used by later thinkers. In the case of the celebrated Safavid thinker Mullā Ṣadrā, it even appears in the title of two of his works, thus affecting globally their interpretation. In a groundbreaking study by our honoree, Rüdiger Arnzen attempted to bring some order in the discussion of Ṣadrā's *al-Ḥikma al-muta'aliya fī l-asfār al-'aqliyya al-arba'a*, and in the process suggested that in cases where such ambiguity in terminology clouds understanding what is needed is a historical approach to the concept in question, a *Begriffsgeschichte*, that will explain the historical trajectory of the term and indicate the parameters within which we are to evaluate how each thinker received and used it.³ In recognition and appreciation of the perspicacity and clarity of vision, in this as in many other scholarly *aporiai*, of my friend and comrade-in-arms in the trenches of *GALex*, it is

¹ This is a slightly emended and updated version of the article that first appeared in D.N. Hasse – A. Bertolacci (eds.), *The Arabic, Hebrew and Latin Reception of Avicenna's Physics and Cosmology*, W. de Gruyter, Berlin 2018, pp. 25–41 (*Scientia Graeco-Arabica*, 23), here reprinted with the kind permission of the Publisher.

² I discussed this development in a brief survey in my “Avicenna and After: The Development of Paraphilosophy. A History of Science Approach”, in A. Al Ghouz (ed.), *Islamic Philosophy from the 12th to the 14th Century*, Bonn U.P. – V&R Unipress, Göttingen – Bonn 2018 (*Mamluk Studies*, 20), p. 19–71, at p. 36–9.

³ R. Arnzen, “The Structure of Mullā Ṣadrā's *al-Ḥikma al-muta'aliya fī l-asfār al-'aqliyya al-arba'a* and His Concepts of First Philosophy and Divine Science. An Essay”, *Medioevo* 32 (2007), p. 199–239.

my pleasure to offer him this follow-up on his suggestion by tracing the initial stages traversed by Avicenna's term in Islamic intellectual history.

In Avicenna's known works, the phrase *al-ḥikma al-muta'aliya* occurs in the *Iṣārāt*, Book Two, *namaṭ* X, section 9. I say "phrase" and not "expression" in order not to prejudge the issue, insofar as it is far from clear that, in Avicenna's usage, it is an expression with a distinctive meaning. It also appears to be unique, a *hapax legomenon*. It is not used in any other place in the *Iṣārāt*, and not at all in either the *Ta'liqāt* or the *Mubāḥaṭāt*, among Avicenna's later works, and it is not to be found in similar discussions and contexts in earlier works, as far as I can tell. As usual, it has been vastly misunderstood and misinterpreted because it was viewed in light of what later philosophers made of it, and even they have been to some extent misunderstood. But the ways in which it was used in later philosophy have to be ascertained independently in each particular instance and have no immediate relevance for Avicenna's use of it.

In modern scholarship, the phrase has been variously translated, and, in the translations I consulted (without claiming comprehensiveness), invariably with vague words that do not explain its meaning in context. In his original 1891 edition of the last three *namaṭs* of Book Two, Mehren makes no mention of the phrase itself in his paraphrase of section 9, but seems to render the ambiguity implied in Avicenna's words with the following statement only: "nous pourrions peut-être, avec une certaine vraisemblance, supposer que ces âmes célestes embrassent en même temps et le général et le particulier".⁴ In the first full translation of the *Iṣārāt* in a European language, A.-M. Goichon translates the phrase literally, "la sagesse d'en-haut", but without immediate indication of what this "wisdom of / from on high" would consist of in the context of the sentence she mistranslates.⁵ M. Cruz Hernández follows Goichon slavishly and practically translates her French rather than the Arabic, reading "la sabiduría de lo alto" for "la sagesse d'en-haut".⁶ For their part, Inati and the Turkish translators also translate it literally, "the exalted wisdom", and "aşkın hikmet", respectively, but because they translate the immediately following parenthetical clauses correctly ("namely, that the celestial bodies, etc."), they at least make clear what the contents of this "exalted wisdom" are.⁷ However, why the theory about the knowledge of the celestial souls should be called "exalted, higher, or excessive wisdom" remains unclear, and the aura of a different, esoteric, wisdom beyond what is discussed in the passage hovers in the air in these translations. As a matter of fact, in his introduction to the latest "edition" of the *Iṣārāt*, Mojtabā Zāre'ī goes well beyond just suggesting an aura and instead explicitly states the view commonly held in the past few centuries in the Islamic tradition and, until recently, in most modern Western literature, namely, that Avicenna followed two paths to philosophy, one Peripatetic and rational, and the other the mystical

⁴ *Traité Mystiques d'Abou Ali al-Hosain b. Abdallâh b. Sinâ ou d'Avicenne. II^{me} Fascicule. Les trois dernières sections de l'ouvrage al-Ishârât wa-t-Tanbihât (Indications et annotations) sur la doctrine çoufîque. Texte arabe avec l'explication en Français. Et le traité mystique at-Thair (l'Oiseau). Texte arabe avec la traduction en français* par M.A.F. Mehren, Brill, Leiden 1891 (repr. Institute for the History of Arabic-Islamic Science, Frankfurt a.M. 1999), p. 17. The words I emphasize probably express that ambiguity.

⁵ Ibn Sînâ, *Livre des Directives et Remarques*, ed. A.-M. Goichon, Vrin, Beirut – Paris 1951, p. 508.

⁶ M. Cruz Hernández, *Avicena. Tres Escritos Esotericos*, Tecnos, Madrid 2011² (1998¹), p. 85.

⁷ Sh.C. Inati, *Ibn Sinâ and Mysticism. Remarks and Admonitions: Part Four*, Kegan Paul International, London – New York 1996, p. 96. A. Durusoy – M. Macit – E. Demirli, translators, İbn Sînâ, *İşaretler ve Tenbihler*, Litera Yayıncılık, İstanbul 2005, §330: the word "aşkın" used in this translation is relatively ambiguous in context; it means "higher", and further "excessive", but it is also a technical term meaning "transcendent" (with thanks to Cüneyt Kaya for verifying the polysemy of the word).

“Eastern” one (*mašriqiyya*) of *al-ḥikma al-muta'āliya* (thus also conflating the *mašriqiyya* with the *muta'āliya*).⁸

For the rest, the phrase has been understood primarily as “transcendent theosophy / philosophy”, in the context of the use made of it by Mullā Ṣadrā, to mean more than what Avicenna intended by it in the *Iṣārāt*. Following Henry Corbin's *ad hoc* dubbing of “oriental” *ḥikma* as “theosophy” (“divine wisdom”, rather than philosophy) with transcendent status,⁹ Seyyed Hossein Nasr rendered it as “transcendent theosophy” not only as it applies to Mullā Ṣadrā but also to Avicenna,¹⁰ while those espousing the exuberant interpretation of Corbin and Nasr, like Sajjad Rizvi and Ibrahim Kalin, have tempered it somewhat to “transcendent philosophy”¹¹ and “transcendent wisdom”.¹² Rüdiger Arnzen objected to the use of the word “transcendent” in this rendering, making the pertinent observation that “none of the various distinct meanings attributed to the term ‘transcendent’ during the history of philosophy seems to be applicable to Mullā Ṣadrā's terminology”, and soberly proposed to read Mullā Ṣadrā's title literally as *Wisdom Progressing Upward*,¹³ but Arnzen's remarks fell on deaf ears in those studies that were published after his (2007), like that by Kalin. Other scholars also, like Hossein Ziai, rightly reacted to the Corbin / Nasr exuberance and made a case against such vague and philosophically unspecific terminology, and opted for “metaphysical philosophy”.¹⁴ Given the state of confusion regarding the precise meaning of the phrase as just briefly described, I follow Arnzen's sensible proposal (*ibid.*), as I indicated at the beginning, that “we should rather work on a systematic Arabic *Begriffsgeschichte* of the term in question”. To begin tracing the initial stages of the history (*Geschichte*) of this phrase on its way to becoming a concept (*Begriff*),¹⁵ I shall analyze in some detail in the following pages Avicenna's use of it and its early reception.

⁸ *Al-Iṣārāt wa-t-tanbihāt li-ṣ-Ṣayḥ ar-Rā'is Ibn Sīnā*, ed. M. Zāre'ī, Būstān-e Ketāb-e Qom, Qum 1381Š/2002, pp. 10-12. For the traditional view, see the references in D. Gutas, *Avicenna and the Aristotelian Tradition. Introduction to Reading Avicenna's Philosophical Works. Second, revised and enlarged edition, including an Inventory of Avicenna's authentic works*, Brill, Leiden 2014 (Islamic Philosophy, Theology and Science, 89), pp. XXI-XXII, and D. Gutas, “Avicenna's Eastern (‘Oriental’) Philosophy: Nature, Contents, Transmission”, *Arabic Sciences and Philosophy* 10 (2000), pp. 159-80; repr. in D. Gutas, *Orientalism of Avicenna's Philosophy. Essays on His Life, Method, Heritage*, Ashgate, Farnham, Surrey 2014, no. V. For the reason I put “edition” in quotation marks see J. Lameer, “Towards a New Edition of Avicenna's *Kitāb al-Iṣārāt wa-l-tanbihāt*”, *Journal of Islamic Manuscripts* 4 (2013), pp. 199-248, at pp. 220-4.

⁹ As in, e.g., H. Corbin, *Avicenna and the Visionary Recital*, translated by W.R. Trask, Routledge & Kegan Paul, London 1960 [1961], p. 38, and frequently elsewhere, where he translates *ḥikma mašriqiyya*, Avicenna's work, as “oriental theosophy”.

¹⁰ S.H. Nasr, *Ṣadr al-Dīn Shīrāzī and His Transcendent Theosophy*, Imperial Iranian Academy of Philosophy, Tehran 1978, p. 94, note 1 (where the quotation from Quṭb-ad-Dīn is clearly misinterpreted), and S.H. Nasr, “Mullā Ṣadrā: His Teachings”, in S.H. Nasr – O. Leaman (eds.), *History of Islamic Philosophy*, Routledge, London – New York 1996, pp. 643-62, at p. 645.

¹¹ S. Rizvi, “Mysticism and Philosophy: Ibn ‘Arabī and Mullā Ṣadrā”, in P. Adamson – R.C. Taylor (eds.), *The Cambridge Companion to Arabic Philosophy*, Cambridge U.P., Cambridge 2005, pp. 224-46, at p. 231.

¹² I. Kalin, *Mulla Sadra*, Oxford U.P. – Oxford Centre for Islamic Studies, Oxford 2014, pp. 1, 3, 98-162.

¹³ Arnzen, “The Structure of Mullā Ṣadrā's *al-ḥikma al-muta'āliya*” (above, n. 3), pp. 199-200 and note 1.

¹⁴ H. Ziai, “Mullā Ṣadrā: His Life and Works”, in Nasr – Leaman, *History of Islamic Philosophy* (above, n. 10), pp. 635-42, at 638 and 641-2, notes 8-11; also H. Ziai, “Recent Trends in Arabic and Persian Philosophy”, in Adamson – Taylor (eds.), *The Cambridge Companion to Arabic Philosophy* (above, n. 11), p. 405-25, at 407.

¹⁵ There is a hefty article on the concept by R. Moḥammadzāde, “Ḥikmat-i Mota'āliya”, in *Dā'irat al-mā'arif-i buzurg-i Islāmī*, ed. K. Mūsavi Bujnūrdī, Tehran 1392Š/2013, vol. XXI, 212-216, mostly as it occurs in Mullā Ṣadrā with some brief mention of Avicenna, Suhrawardī, and Ibn ‘Arabī, and principally based on the work of Iranian scholars.

It is necessary to look first closely at the text itself. The phrase is embedded in arguably the most deliberately abstruse sentence in all of Avicenna's works. I say deliberately, because that's no way to write Arabic, and Avicenna knew it. In their commentaries, both Rāzī and Ṭūsī are forced to act the part of professors of Arabic and parse the sentence by specifying what the subject and what the object is, where to find a circumstantial *ḥāl* accusative, etc. I am citing the text below from the editions of Forget,¹⁶ and Zāre'ī,¹⁷ the only editors who provide some semblance of an apparatus with variant manuscript readings.¹⁸

تنبيه. (a) قد علمت فيما سلف أنّ الجزئيات منقوشة في العالم العقليّ نقشاً على وجه كليّ ثمّ قد نُبّهت لأنّ الأجرام السماوية لها نفوسٌ ذوات إدراكات جزئية وإرادات جزئية تصدّر عن رأى جزئى ولا مانع لها عن تصوّر اللوازم الجزئية لحركاتها الجزئية من الكائنات عنها في العالم العنصرى

(b) ثمّ إنّ كان ما يُلوحه ضربٌ من النظر مستورٌ إلاّ على الراسخين في الحكمة المتعالية - أنّ لها بعد العقول المفارقة التي هي لها كالمبادئ نفوساً ناطقةً غير منطبعة في موادّها بل لها معها علاقةٌ ما كما لنفوسنا مع أبداننا وأنها تنال بتلك العلاقة كمالاً ما - حقاً، صار للأجسام السماوية زيادةٌ معنى في ذلك لتظاهر رأى جزئى وآخر كليّ

(c) فيجتمع لك ممّا نَبّهنا عليه أنّ للجزئيات في العالم العقليّ نقشاً على هيئة كليّة وفي العالم النفسانيّ نقشاً على هيئة جزئية شاعرة بالوقت أو النقشان معا

A fairly literal translation would be,

X,9 Reminder

(a) You have come to know in what has preceded that particulars are engraved on the world of [supernal] intellects (*al-ʿālam al-ʿaqlī*) in a universal way. Next, you have been reminded that the heavenly bodies are in possession of souls having particular perceptions and particular wills which proceed from a particular thought (*raʾy*), with nothing preventing them from forming concepts, among the things that are generated from them in the [sublunar] world of elements, of the particular concomitants of their particular motions. (b) Next, if what a kind of theoretical investigation [that is] veiled [to all] except to those thoroughly versed¹⁹ in the philosophy of the supernal [world] reveals - [namely,] that they [the heavenly bodies], in addition to the separate intellects which they have as first principles, [also] have rational souls which

¹⁶ Ibn Sīnā, *Le livre des théorèmes et des avertissements*, ed. J. Forget, Brill, Leiden 1892, p. 210 (repr. Institute for the History of Arabic-Islamic Science, Frankfurt a.M. 1999; repr. Univ. of Michigan Library Repr. n.d.: <http://www.lib.umich.edu>).

¹⁷ Zāre'ī, *Iṣārāt* (above, n. 8), p. 375.

¹⁸ For the sad state of the "editions" of the *Iṣārāt* (as with all works of Avicenna), see Lameer, "Towards a New Edition" (above, n. 8).

¹⁹ Avicenna uses a Qur'ānic term here, *al-rāsiḥūna*, "firmly rooted, thoroughly versed", *fi l-ilm*, in knowledge, Q 3:7 and 4:162. In the former passage in the Qur'ān it is used in a phrase that was controversial for its parsing: *wa-mā ya lamu tāwūlabū* (i.e., *mā taṣābaba mina l-kitābi*) *illā llāhu wa-r-rāsiḥūna fi l-ilmī yaqūlūna āmannā bibī*, "and none knows its (i.e., the ambiguous part of the Book) interpretation save only God and those firmly rooted in knowledge say 'We believe in it'" (Arberry translation, correctly not punctuating after "God", as in the Arabic). Averroes used this passage to support his view that it is philosophers who are intended by the phrase, parsing it as, "and none knows its interpretation save only God and those firmly rooted in knowledge; [they] say 'We believe in it'" (G.F. Hourani, *Averroes on the Harmony of Religion and Philosophy*, Luzac & Co., London 1967, pp. 53-4). But long before Averroes this parsing was generally used by Shi'ites, including certainly the Ismā'īlīs, to refer to the imams (cf. P.E. Walker, *Early Philosophical Shiism*, Cambridge U.P., Cambridge 1993, p. 27). In the second passage of the Qur'ān 4:162, "those firmly rooted in knowledge" among the People of the Book are promised "a mighty wage".

are not impressed in their matters but rather have a certain relation to them just as our souls do with our bodies, and that they acquire, by means of this relation, a certain perfection – is true, then the heavenly bodies come into possession of an additional quality [*mā'nan*] in this regard because they manifest a thought (*ra'y*) that is particular and another [that is] universal.

(c) You can thus gather from what we have reminded [you] that, in the world of [supernal] intellects, the particulars are engraved in a universal form, and, in the world of [supernal] souls, they are engraved in a particular form that is aware of [real] time; or the two engravings are simultaneous.

The passage has syntactical, lexical, and textual problems. The syntax, though convoluted, is clear, and was adequately explained by Rāzī and Ṭūsī. The entire paragraph (b) is a single conditional sentence, having the structure, “if what X reveals is true, then the heavenly bodies have an additional characteristic”.²⁰ The difficulty arises, first, from the fact that the subject (X) in the protasis (the “if” clause) is a lengthy clause – i.e., “what a kind of theoretical investigation [that is] veiled [to all] except to those thoroughly versed in the philosophy of the supernal [world] reveals”, – and second and more misleadingly, from the huge parenthetical sentence (Y) introduced between the verb and its predicate in the protasis: “if what X reveals – namely, Y, that such and such – is true, then ...”. The problem is magnified by the occurrence of *ḥaqqan*, which is the predicate of *kāna*, right after an accusative *tanwīn* in the parenthetical sentence (Y), *kamālan mā—ḥaqqan*, which led to the two accusatives being read by some as belonging together. All this created havoc in the editions and translations, despite Rāzī's and Ṭūsī's clear instructions on how to read the sentence, with only Zāre'ī correctly printing and punctuating the Arabic (except for the accusative *mastūran* which will be discussed below), and the Turkish translators accordingly parsing its syntax properly (and again, only mistranslating *mastūran*).²¹

There are two lexical problems in paragraph (b). In the clause constituting the subject of the protasis, Avicenna uses as verb the root *lwh* with the attached pronoun *-hū*, giving as possible readings either the first form of the verb, *yalūḥubū*, or the second form (*fa'ala*), *yulawwiḥubū*. The first form, *lāḥa*, not being transitive, does not take direct objects, so the reading is clearly *yulawwiḥubū*.²² *Lawwaha* is both intransitive and transitive. As intransitive, it has the same meaning as the first form, “to become clearly visible, to appear clearly” and it is so used by Avicenna a few sections further down in the *Iṣārāt* from the present passage (in X,14 and 15). As such, it can take an object only with the preposition *bi-* to mean “to hint, intimate, allude to” (along with other

²⁰ As Ṭūsī explains: “*Mā yulawwiḥubū* is the subject (*ism*) of *kāna* and *ḥaqqan* is the predicate (*ḥabar*), with the apodosis (*tālī*) of the conditional proposition (*qaḍīyya šartīyya*) beginning with *šāra li-l-aḡsāmi*” in *al-Iṣārāt wa-t-tanbīhāt li-Abī 'Alī b. Sīnā. Al-qīsm ar-rābī, aṭ-ṭab'a aṭ-ṭāniya*, ed. S. Dunyā, Dār al-Ma'ārif bi-Miṣr, al-Qāhira 1968, pp. 122-3.

²¹ The unspeakably incompetent editor Dunyā, *al-Iṣārāt wa-t-tanbīhāt li-Abī 'Alī b. Sīnā* (above, n. 20) pp. 122-3, butchers typographically the sentence and has *ḥaqqan* introduce a new paragraph, giving the impression that he intends it to be understood as an adverb beginning a new sentence, “Truly, the heavenly bodies...”. Goichon, *Directives et Remarques* (above, n. 5), p. 508, misses the structure of the sentence completely and reads *kamālan mā ḥaqqan* (“une certaine perfection véritable”), followed again by Cruz Hernández, *Tres Escritos Esotericos* (above, n.6), p. 85, “una cierta perfección auténtica”. Inati, *Mysticism* (above, n. 7), p. 96, though correctly isolating the parenthetical sentence within brackets, also misses the predicate and reads *kamālan mā ḥaqqan* (“some real perfection”), mistranslating the protasis.

²² A transitive first form, *yalūḥubū*, allegedly meaning “he sees it”, is badly attested and does not appear to have been in use, according to M. Ullmann, *Wörterbuch der klassischen arabischen Sprache (WKAS)*, Harrassowitz, Wiesbaden 1957-2009, II, 1698b32-43. Tzvi Langermann notes (*BMCR* 2019.12.22) that the transitive first form appears in Judaeo-Arabic, as attested in M.A. Friedman, *A Dictionary of Medieval Judeo-Arabic in the India Book Letters from the Geniza and in Other Texts*, Ben-Zvi Institute, Jerusalem 2016, p. 445, though it seems unlikely that this usage would have been current in Avicenna's Buḥāran Arabic.

prepositions: see *WKAS* II,1699-1700, cited in n. 22); but since the text is clearly *yulawwiḥubū* and not *yulawwiḥu bibī*, with no attested variants, these meanings are inappropriate here. Transitive *lawwaḥa* is defined in the dictionaries to mean mainly “to scorch”, also inappropriate in this context,²³ so Avicenna must be using it here as causative of the first form, “to bring something to light, to reveal”, as he does elsewhere.²⁴

The second lexical difficulty concerns the word under scrutiny in this study, *muta‘āliya*. The actual meaning of the word itself is not so much in question, as the active participle of the well known sixth form of the verb, *ta‘ālā*, can only mean “rising above, being on high, being exalted”,²⁵ but the problem is with the precise reference of this *ḥikma*, of this philosophy that is “on high”, in this original phrase Avicenna has just coined, *al-ḥikma al-muta‘āliya*. Happily he proceeds immediately to define it for us in that lengthy parenthetical sentence (Y) in the protasis of paragraph (b): it refers to the doctrine that the celestial bodies, in addition to their separate intellects, also possess rational souls not impressed in their matter which, through their association with their bodies, acquire an additional quality which completes their epistemological range; hence they also acquire a “perfection”, manifestly referring to their ability to cause/perceive particulars in real time. Thus the phrase means, in context, “the doctrine or philosophy dealing with the celestial, ‘on high,’ bodies”, or “philosophy about the supernal/celestial bodies”, or “philosophy of the supernal world”, as I translate above.

The main issue here is, of course, the thorny philosophical problem of knowledge of particulars by the celestial intellects and souls. Regardless whether or not Avicenna is referring by his newly minted phrase to a doctrine that goes beyond Peripatetic standards, as Ṭūsī claims (see further below), the fact is that Avicenna is drawing attention to the problem and his solution of it in terms that rhetorically intend to win acceptance for it and deflect criticism. The Qur’anic reference in *al-rāsīḥūna*, “thoroughly versed”, evokes the sense that only God and the elite know about this doctrine (just as only God and the elite know about the ambiguous parts of the Qur’ān), and Avicenna clearly counts himself among the latter, thus forestalling disagreement on the part of the

²³ R.P.A. Dozy, *Supplément aux dictionnaires arabes*, Brill, Leiden 1881, II,563b gives a couple more meanings of transitive *lawwaḥa* which appear to be topical.

²⁴ In the *Ilāḥiyyāt* of the *Šifā*, as in the *Naḡāt*, he says, *wa-ammā l-ḥaqqu fī ḍālika* [scil. *al-mā‘ādi*], *fa-lā yulawwiḥu* [scil. *al-sānu*] *lahum minhu illā amran muḡmalan* (that is, the lawgiver should reveal to the masses only generalities about afterlife), where *yulawwiḥu* takes the direct object in the accusative, *amran* (M. Marmura, *Avicenna. The Metaphysics of The Healing*, Brigham Young U.P., Provo 2005, p. 366.14 = Ibn Sīnā. *Aṣ-Šifā, al-Ilāḥiyyāt* (2), ed. M.Y. Mūsā – S. Duniyā – S. Zāyid, al-Hay’ al-‘amma li-ṣū‘un al-maḡābī‘ al-amīriyya, al-Qāhira 1380/1960, p. 443.8 = *Kitāb an-Naḡāt*, ed. M.Š. al-Kurdī, Maḡba‘at as-sa‘āda, al-Qāhira 1331/[1913], p. 501.12). Strangely, *WKAS* II,1698b-1703a (above, n. 22) does not cover this definition of the word, and neither do other dictionaries (which admittedly were only casually and not thoroughly consulted), though this meaning is clearly well understood and was known: Inati, *Mysticism* (above n. 7), p. 96, correctly translates it as “reveal” in the *Iṣārāt* passage, and Marmura translates it in the *Ilāḥiyyāt* passage just cited above as “indicate” (perhaps in this case improperly equating *lawwaḥa* with *lawwaḥa bi-*, as I did in my *Avicenna* (above, n. 8), p. 339, “intimate”); but most significantly, the word in the *Ilāḥiyyāt* passage is translated as *detegat* in the medieval Latin translation which means precisely “to uncover, reveal” (*Avicenna Latinus. Liber de philosophia prima sive scientia divina, V-X*, ed. S. Van Riet, Peeters – Brill, Louvain – Leiden 1980, p. 535.54). This usage of the verb can thus hardly be idiosyncratic to Avicenna and requires further research into the texts.

²⁵ Avicenna uses it elsewhere in his works in its regular meaning, as, for example, in his essay on love, *Isq*, followed by the preposition ‘*an*’: *fī ḍātibi l-muta‘āliyati ‘an qabūli ta‘ṭiri l-ḡayri*, “its essence [which is] exalted above receiving the other’s influence”, very much like the use Ṭūsī makes of it in his interpretation, as will be discussed below (Mehren, *Traité*s (above, n. 4) Fasc. III, p. 23.6 = *at-Taḡsīr al-Qur’āni wa-l-luḡa aṣ-ṣūfiyya fī falsafat Ibn Sīnā*, ed. H. ‘Āṣī, al-Mu‘assasa al-ḡāmi‘iyya, Beirut 1402/1983, p. 265.2).

intellectually challenged. And *al-muta'ali*, of course, is also one of the “beautiful” names of God,²⁶ with the implication for the intellectually challenged that the phrase *al-ḥikma al-muta'aliya* refers to what they would take to be “the wisdom of the On-high” – or “God’s wisdom” in creating the souls and intellects of the spheres with such capacities of knowing the particulars – and further bolsters in their eyes Avicenna’s claim that the doctrine referred to by that phrase is true. This rhetorical tour de force is part of Avicenna’s indicative style of writing in the *Iṣārāt*.²⁷

As for the text itself, it is relatively free of variants except for a very significant one that potentially changes the tenor of the passage. The word *mastūr* in the protasis is transmitted both in the nominative, *mastūrun*, and in the accusative, *mastūran*. In the absence of a critical edition of the *Iṣārāt*, it is impossible to gauge the relative worth of the manuscripts that bear the one or the other reading. An additional difficulty is constituted by the fact that some manuscripts contain just the text of the *Iṣārāt* itself – i.e., they are witnesses of the direct transmission of the text – while others have it as lemmata embedded in Ṭūsī’s commentary and represent the indirect transmission of the text. No editor to date has kept the evidence from these two different sources separate and evaluated it differently, as he should have; all have used both indiscriminately. This is of great significance in this case, for Ṭūsī had a particular ax to grind, as we shall next discuss.

To the extent that the apparatuses of Forget and Zāre’ī are reliable, the incidence of the nominative and accusative forms is as follows. Of the nine manuscripts used by Forget for *namaṭ X*,²⁸ four have the nominative (*BCFG*), and the rest presumably have the accusative, assuming Forget’s apparatus is negative and that the manuscripts whose reading is not recorded in the apparatus bear the reading adopted in the text (the accusative in Forget). Of the four having the nominative, one is identified by Forget as being Ṭūsī’s commentary, which is remarkable given Ṭūsī’s express preference for the accusative, while of the remaining three, one is the oldest manuscript used by Forget (Leiden *Or.* 1062, dated 614H). Thus the evidence provided by Forget, sketchy as it is, suggests the primacy of the nominative (if we disregard the bare numerical extent of witnesses). In the case of Zāre’ī’s edition, the evidence is much flimsier. Zāre’ī apparently used only one manuscript containing independently the text of the *Iṣārāt* (ī), or possibly two,²⁹ while the rest of his manuscripts are all of Ṭūsī’s commentary; and according to his apparatus, that single manuscript read the word in the nominative.

There is additional, and ancient, evidence that the original reading in this passage was in the nominative. One of the earliest critics of Avicenna’s thought, Ibn Ġaylān al-Balḥī (d. ca. 1194),³⁰ quotes in his *Ḥudūt al-‘ālam* the very passage from the *Iṣārāt* under discussion, *namaṭ X*,9, and in his text the word appears as *mastūr*, not *mastūran*.³¹ Given the period when he was active, Ibn Ġaylān had access to a manuscript of the *Iṣārāt* that would date from around a century after Avicenna’s death, clearly one of the earliest attestations of this text accessible to us.

²⁶ See, for example, the traditional ways of understanding the term in the Qur’ān discussed in D. Gimaret, *Les noms divins en Islam*, Cerf, Paris 1988, p. 206.

²⁷ See Gutas, *Avicenna* (above, n. 8), pp. 346-50 for this style of writing.

²⁸ According to Lameer, “Towards a New Edition” (above, n. 8), p. 215.

²⁹ See the analysis of Zāre’ī’s use of manuscripts in Lameer, “Towards a New Edition” (above, n. 8), pp. 220-4.

³⁰ A. Shihadeh, “A Post-Ghazālīan Critic of Avicenna: Ibn Ghaylān al-Balkhī on the *Materia Medica* of the *Canon of Medicine*”, *Journal of Islamic Studies* 24 (2013), pp. 135-74, at p. 140.

³¹ *Ḥudūt al-‘ālam, Afḍal-ad-Dīn ... Ibn Ġaylān; al-Ḥukūma ...*, *Ibn Sīnā*, ed. M. Mohaghegh with French introduction by Jean R. Michot, Dānešgāh-e Tehrān, Tehran 1377Š/1998, p. 120.20. The appearance in this edition of the verb *yulawwihubū* as *yhwḡh* is apparently a misprint.

Furthermore, *mastūrun* is justified paleographically as the original reading because it is what is called the “more difficult reading” (*lectio difficilior*; it is also the “shorter”, *brevior*, reading) than *mastūran*, and because *mastūran* can be explained as a mistake due to dittography. To wit: if the original text was, in unvocalized Arabic,

ان كان ما يلوحه ضرب من النظر مستورا لا على الراسخين في الحكمة المتعالية

then the absence of an immediate object to *kāna* – or its appearance as *ḥaqqan* more than two lines down the text which, as recorded above, was missed by almost every modern reader of this paragraph, and so, very likely, by many earlier readers – made *mastūr* the obvious and easy choice as the object in the accusative, where the alif of the following *illā* was read as the final alif with a *tanwīn* for *mastūr*, reading *mastūran*. Once this reading gained currency because of its simplicity, then an additional alif was inserted after the first one, as a dittography (or as thought to have been missing due to haplography), to read *illā* and “correct” the remaining, and manifestly wrong, *lā*. Thus was born the variant *mastūran* relatively early, for it was reported by both Rāzī and Ṭūsī, writing less than two centuries after Avicenna’s death. Despite the seemingly obvious and easy, but faulty, reading *mastūran*, the fact that the correct reading *mastūrun* has been transmitted at all in most manuscripts of the *Išārāt* itself as well in Ibn Ḡaylān’s citation of it is a tribute to the precision with which scribes of Arabic manuscripts approached their task.

There is, finally, the all-important question of what the two variants would mean and the extent to which meaning can dictate, or justify, preferring one over the other. Ṭūsī states the problem very well:

ولفظة “مستور” تورّد في بعض النسخ بالرفع على أنه صفة “لضرب من النظر” وتورّد في بعضها بالنصب على أنه حال من الهاء التي هي ضمير المفعول في قوله “ما يلوحه” وهو الصحيح لأن الموصوف بالاستتار هو الحكم بوجود تلك النفوس التي ذكر الشيخ في مواضع أنه سرٌّ لا النظر المؤدّى إلى ذلك الحكم

The word *mastūr* is transmitted in some manuscripts in the nominative (*rafʿ*), as a complement (*ṣifāʿ*) of *ḍarḥun min al-naẓar*; and in other manuscripts it is transmitted in the accusative (*naṣb*), as a circumstantial accusative (*ḥāl*) modifying the object pronoun *-hū* in *mā yulawwihūbū*: this [i.e., the accusative] is correct because what is being described as being veiled is the determination that these souls [of the spheres] exist – which Avicenna elsewhere said is a secret – not the theoretical investigation that leads to this determination.

In other words, Ṭūsī wants to read the protasis of paragraph (b) in the text as follows:

If what a kind of theoretical investigation reveals as something veiled [to all] except to those thoroughly versed in the philosophy of the supernal [world] ... is true, then ...

rather than, as the protasis would go with *mastūrun* in the nominative,

If what a kind of theoretical investigation [that is] veiled [to all] except to those thoroughly versed in the philosophy of the supernal [world] reveals ... is true, then ...

But this will not do because it is contradictory in Ṭūsī’s terms. Ṭūsī is saying, in effect, that the same thing which theoretical (i.e., philosophical) investigation reveals as something veiled to

the masses it reveals clearly to the elite, to those versed in the supernal philosophy. This would be fine if it was understood to mean that the masses do not fully understand philosophical argumentation but the elite do. However, Ṭūsī goes on in his commentary to make the outrageous claim that the knowledge that the elite have of this issue is through “taste” (*dawq*) and “unveiling” (*kašf*), i.e., non-philosophical direct intuition (see below, paragraph 3c of his text). In that case what Ṭūsī is saying is that what philosophical investigation, *nazar*, reveals clearly to the elite is known by them through non-philosophical direct intuition, equating *nazar* with *dawq*. This is self-contradictory, and obviously Avicenna would (could) not have said anything of the sort. Thus from the point of view of the meaning of the variants also *mastūrun* in the nominative is the correct reading.

The early reception of this passage of the *Iṣārāt* and especially of the phrase *al-ḥikma al-muta'aliya* is relatively uneventful, suggesting that they were understood essentially in the literal, if prosaic, manner in which I translated them above. Already during Avicenna's lifetime, there is no mention of the phrase either in the *Ta'liqāt* or the *Mubāḥaṭāt*, works in which Avicenna's students asked him about difficulties in his theories in his published works. If it had had some of the notorious implications with which it was invested in later times, one might be surprised at this silence and try to account for it by suggesting that Avicenna's students did ask him about it but either orally, in which case there would be no record, or, if in writing, the record has not survived. Another explanation might be that since the *Iṣārāt* was a late work, and Avicenna's injunctions to Bahmanyār and Ibn Zayla that they should not show it to anybody were taken seriously,³² not enough people knew about it, or the *Iṣārāt*, to ask him before his death. But this surprise is unwarranted if one starts not from the positions of later tradition but from Avicenna's own words and thus avoids having to resort to assuming hidden meanings or lost oral teachings. The plain fact seems to be that there was nothing to ask about: difficult though the sentence might be, the meaning of the phrase itself is quite clear, as presented above. Avicenna defined what he meant by *ḥikma muta'aliya*, and those who heard or read it, however many or few, knew exactly what he was talking about and there was no need for further questions.

This conclusion seems to be supported by the absence of any discussion of the phrase in philosophical discussions and literature during the two centuries following Avicenna's death. Among Avicenna's students and successors, Bahmanyār did not mention it in his *Taḥṣīl*, even in the section where he discussed the motion of the spheres and their motivations and sources, and neither did al-Lawkarī in the second part of his metaphysical work *Bayān al-ḥaqq*.³³ The same applies to a critic of Avicenna, Abū l-Barakāt al-Baḡdādī in his *al-Mu'tabar*.

This two-century period also saw the development of a vigorous commentatorial activity on the *Iṣārāt*, which established this work as the main source of knowledge of Avicenna's thought until the Safavids in the sixteenth century.³⁴ Among the earliest critical discussions of it are those by Šaraf-ad-dīn al-Mas'ūdī (fl. 1189-1194)³⁵ and Ibn Ġaylān al-Balḥī (d. ca. 1194). The former wrote

³² See the historical and ideational context of the composition of the *Iṣārāt* in Gutas, *Avicenna* (above n. 8), pp. 155-9.

³³ Bahmanyār b. al-Marzubān, *at-Taḥṣīl*, ed. M. Moṭahharī, Dānešgāh-e Tehrān, Tehran 1375Š/1996, pp. 641-6. Abū l-'Abbās al-Lawkarī, *Bayān al-ḥaqq bi-damān aš-šidq*, ed. I. Dībāḡī, ISTAC, Tehran 1995, pp. 263ff., esp. 333-8.

³⁴ Cf. R. Wisnovsky, “Avicenna's Islamic Reception”, in P. Adamson (ed.), *Interpreting Avicenna*, Cambridge U.P., Cambridge 2013, pp. 190-213, for the development of this tradition and p. 194 for a list of all the known commentaries. The earliest among them are discussed by Id., “Avicennism and Exegetical Practice in the Early Commentaries on the *Iṣārāt*”, *Oriens* 41 (2013), pp. 349-78, at pp. 351-3.

³⁵ Wisnovsky, “Avicenna's Islamic Reception” (above, n. 34), p. 194.

a series of “objections” (*i‘tirādāt*) or “problems” (*masā‘il*) on the *Iṣārāt*, in none of which does he refer to our passage in *namat* X,9.³⁶ In particular, Ibn Ḡaylān, who found great faults with the *Iṣārāt* and even quotes in his *Hudūt al-‘ālam* (p. 120.19-23 Mohaghegh, cited in n. 31) the very passage containing the phrase *al-ḥikma al-muta‘āliya*, as described above, has nothing to say about it. But most importantly, Faḥraddīn al-Rāzī (d. 1210) passes over the phrase in silence, that is, he makes no comment on its meaning, either in his *Lubāb* or in the *Šarḥ al-Iṣārāt*.

What Rāzī does do in the commentary is explain the contents of this *ḥikma muta‘āliya*, expanding on the parenthetical sentence provided by Avicenna himself in that passage (b) cited above, but without mentioning the phrase itself. After repeating what Avicenna says in paragraph (a), namely that the intellects of the spheres know all the particulars in a universal way and that the souls of the spheres know all the particulars that happen in this world in a particular way, al-Rāzī continues:

(b) “Then there is something else here, which is that the celestial sphere, in addition to a separate intellect and a corporeal soul has a third item, which is a rational soul, that is, [a soul] that is neither a body nor corporeal in itself but has a relation to the sphere on account of which it acquires renewed perfections (*kamālāt muta‘āddida*), just like our rational soul, which is neither a body nor corporeal but has a relation to our bodies on account of which it is able to acquire perfections of the intellect (*kamālāt ‘aqliyya*) ... Thus all the particulars which occur in this world are known to (reading *mā lūm* rather than *ma‘lūl*) the separate intellect [of the sphere], to the rational soul [of the sphere], and to the corporeal soul [of the sphere].³⁷

This is a fair summary of what Avicenna says is the content of the *ḥikma muta‘āliya*, without his introductory fanfare of Qur’anic references to the unique knowledge possessed by those versed in “supernal” philosophy, with all the implications of divinity of the word *muta‘āliya*. One wonders whether Rāzī thought anything of this, and if he did, what. He certainly was aware of the rhetorical tactics of Avicenna, but he did not call him on this; perhaps this is because he himself uses similar tactics when he decides to misrepresent or criticize Avicenna’s position to make it more conformable to his views – but this is a separate issue. For our purposes, what is significant is that Rāzī, like all his predecessors, did not consider the use of the phrase *al-ḥikma al-muta‘āliya*, rhetorical tactics aside, as something obscure or unintelligible in need of elucidation: it was something obvious.

Strangely, because we have learned to think of him as the sober Avicennan commentator, it was the great Ṭūsī (1201-1273) who put a spin on the phrase and opened the floodgates of fanciful interpretations that have continued to this very day.

Ṭūsī begins by summarizing the first paragraph (a) of this *Tanbīh* and concludes,

(3a) فَإِنَّ جَمِيعَ ذَلِكَ يَدُلُّ عَلَى جَوَازِ ارْتِسَامِ الْكَائِنَاتِ الْجَزْئِيَّةِ بِأَسْرَهَا الَّتِي هِيَ مَعْلُولَاتُ الْحَرَكَاتِ الْفَلَكَيَّةِ وَلَوْ أَوَّازُهَا فِي النُّفُوسِ الْفَلَكَيَّةِ إِلَّا أَنَّ ذَلِكَ يَقْتَضِي كَوْنَ الْكَلِّيَّاتِ الْعَقْلِيَّةِ مَرْتَسِمَةً فِي شَيْءٍ وَالْجَزْئِيَّاتِ الْحَسِّيَّةِ مَرْتَسِمَةً فِي شَيْءٍ آخَرَ وَذَلِكَ مَا يَقْتَضِيهِ رَأْيُ الْمَشَائِينِ

³⁶ See the list of these “problems” in Wisnovsky, “Early Commentaries on the *Ishārāt*” (above, n. 34), p. 359, and A. Shihadeh, “Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī’s *Response* to Sharaf al-Dīn al-Mas‘ūdī’s *Critical Commentary* on Avicenna’s *Ishārāt*”, *The Muslim World* 104 (2014), pp. 1-61, at p. 10.

³⁷ *Šarḥay al-Iṣārāt li-...ṭ-Ṭūsī wa-li-...Faḥr-ad-dīn ar-Rāzī*, al-Maṭba‘a al-Ḥayriyya, al-Qāhira 1325/[1907], p. 129.5-9, slightly corrected from this faulty imprint.

(3a) “All this shows that it is possible for the totality of the particular existents, which are the effects and concomitants of the motions of the spheres, to be imprinted on the souls of the spheres, except that this requires that the intelligible universals be imprinted on one thing and the sensible particulars on another; this is what the doctrine of the Peripatetics requires”.

Then he continues,

(3b) *ثمَّ إنَّه أشار بقوله ثمَّ إنَّ كان ما يلوِّحه ضرب من النظر إلى قوله لتظاهر رأى جزئى وآخر كلى إلى الرأى الخاصَّ به المخالف لرأى المشائين وهو إثبات نفوسٍ ناطقةٍ مُدرِكةٍ للكليات والجزئيات معاً للأفلاك فإنَّه قول بارتسامهما معاً فى شىءٍ واحدٍ*

(3b) By his statement, “Next, if what a kind of theoretical investigation reveals ... they manifest a thought that is particular and another, universal”, Avicenna then points to a doctrine that is peculiar to him and opposed to that of the Peripatetics, which is establishing that the [celestial] spheres have rational souls which perceive both universals and particulars simultaneously, for it is [a doctrine] that holds the simultaneous impression of both [universals and particulars] on a single entity.

Ṭūsī then proceeds to parse the grammar and syntax of that impossible sentence (as noted above, n. 20), and concludes his analysis of the *Tanbīh* as follows:

(3c) *وقوله أن لها بعد العقول المفارقة نفوساً ناطقةً بدل من قوله ما يلوِّحه وإنما جعل هذه المسئلة من الحكمة المتعالية لأنَّ حكمة المشائين حكمةٌ بحثيةٌ صرفةٌ وهذه وأمثالها إنما تتم مع البحث والنظر بالكشف والذوق فالحكمة المشتملة عليها متعالية بالقياس إلى الأولى*

(3c) His statement “that they [the heavenly bodies], in addition to the separate intellects ... [also] have rational souls” stands for his statement “what it reveals”. He made this issue part of “the exalted philosophy” only because Peripatetic philosophy is a philosophy [based] purely on research, while this one [i.e., the “exalted”] and its likes become complete, along with research and theoretical investigation, only through “unveiling” and “tasting”. The philosophy that includes [“unveiling” and “tasting”] is thus “exalted” in comparison with the former.³⁸

This is completely gratuitous. Ṭūsī, first, correctly identifies that the long parenthetical clause beginning with “that they [the heavenly bodies], in addition to the separate intellects which they have as first principles, [also] have rational souls” is a definition of “what it reveals”, i.e., of *al-ḥikma al-muta'aliya*, as discussed above; and second, he remarks, as did Rāzī before him, that this doctrine is new in that it adds a third entity in the constitution of the spheres in the supernal world: in addition to corporeal souls and separate intellects, which was the regular doctrine, they also have non-corporeal rational souls which are able to perceive universals and particulars simultaneously. The only difference between Rāzī and Ṭūsī is that Rāzī does not label these two doctrines whereas Ṭūsī calls the former the Peripatetic and the latter Avicenna's own, which is fine. But why, having said that, Ṭūsī feels the need to say that this expansion of the doctrine by Avicenna is due to “unveiling” and “tasting”, is problematic. Avicenna himself makes

³⁸ *Šarḥ al-Išārāt* IV, pp. 122-124 Dunyā (above, n. 20). Because Ṭūsī interprets the word *muta'aliya* to indicate rank (one wisdom is higher or better than another) rather than physical space (the supernal world above the earth), as intended by Avicenna, I translate the word here as “exalted” and not as “supernal”.

no mention of *dawq*, something he developed late in his life and even mentions once before in the *Isārāt* but, significantly, not here.³⁹ All Avicenna says is that he came up with the notion of a non-corporeal rational soul for the spheres by analogy to humans: we have both corporeal souls and non-corporeal rational souls, which is a theory that accounts much better for the variety of perceptions and knowledges that we acquire. Hence the application of the same theory to the spheres makes their functions better intelligible; there is no question of *dawq* here. The problem is with Ṭūsī and why he does this, for it is unprecedented.

Moḥammadzāde offers the suggestion (p. 212b-213a, cited in n. 15) that Ṭūsī may have been following Suhrawardī here, who in the introduction to his *Ḥikmat al-iṣrāq* notoriously divides philosophers into a number of classes or ranks (*ṭabaqāt*) according to the degree to which they combine in their method “research” (*baḥṭ*) and “auto-apotheosis” (*ta'alluh*, self-deification).⁴⁰ But this is hardly relevant and even less likely. Suhrawardī talks about *baḥṭ* vs. *ta'alluh* and almost certainly deliberately does not call the latter *ḥikma muta'āliya* (as a matter of fact he never uses this phrase in his works), whereas Ṭūsī talks about *baḥṭ* and *naẓar* vs. *dawq* and *kaṣf* and expressly identifies the latter with *ḥikma muta'āliya*. And even if we assume that Ṭūsī knew Suhrawardī's *Ḥikmat al-iṣrāq* – and it is almost certain that he did – the fact that he avoids using the same terminology as Suhrawardī indicates that he did not wish to follow it. As for the notion in Ṭūsī of two paths to philosophy, *baḥṭ* and *dawq*, this also comes directly from Avicenna, who himself used these very terms as just stated. Suhrawardī also followed Avicenna, but changed the term for *dawq* to *ta'alluh*.⁴¹ Thus Ṭūsī was the first to make the unwarranted and, in the context of the passage in Avicenna's *Isārāt*, unjustifiable identification of *ḥikma muta'āliya* with *dawq* and *kaṣf*. The reason why he did this is important, but it is a separate issue, to be discussed in connection

³⁹ For the concept of *dawq* in Avicenna see Gutas, *Avicenna* (above, n. 8), pp. 343-5 and p. 75 note 18, and the references cited there.

⁴⁰ Suhrawardī, *The Philosophy of Illumination*, ed. J. Walbridge – H. Ziai, Brigham Young U.P., Provo (Utah) 1999, p. 3; H. Corbin, *Œuvres philosophiques et mystiques de Shihabaddin Yahya Sohrawardi*, Institut Franco-Iranien and Adrien-Maisonneuve, Tehran – Paris 1952, pp. 11-12.

⁴¹ Interestingly, Suhrawardī uses the term *dawq* only thrice in the introduction, first to refer to himself and how he came to acquire philosophy (p. 1.10), second to tone it down and generalize its application by saying that all who strive (*muḡtabid*, in philosophy, understood) have some share of *dawq* (p. 1.12), and third to claim for his own *dawq* the authority of the *dawq* of Plato (p. 2.10), who is described both as “the spiritual and secular leader in philosophy” (*imām al-ḥikma wa-rāṣubā*) and as one of those who followed the path of God (*man salaka sabīl Allāh*). When it comes to ranking philosophers, though, he abandons the term *dawq* and uses instead *ta'alluh*, which, together with the participle that introduces it, *mutawāḡḡil fi l-ta'alluh*, must mean something like “he who penetrates deeply into becoming god” in seeking philosophy and knowledge. The religious politics of these terminological variations are relatively obvious, from Suhrawardī's claiming for himself primacy in both religion and philosophy, which are implicitly presented as identical, to his blatant (and blasphemous? in his time) statement that such a perfect philosopher is “God's successor on earth” (*ḥalīfat Allāh fi l-ard*, p. 2.20 and 3.11), which echoes and explains the term *ta'alluh* he used, “becoming divine, becoming Allāh”. Now it may be that *mutawāḡḡil* is intended by Suhrawardī to evoke *rāsiḥ* in the Qur'ānic *al-rāsiḥūna fi l-'ilm*, as discussed above, and that *ta'alluh* is meant to evoke *ḥikma muta'āliya*, taking the adjective to mean “divine”, but Ṭūsī, assuming that he would have seen through the politics of Suhrawardī's verbal acrobatics (or exactly because he saw through it), would have none of it and prefers to stay close to Avicenna's terminology. Similarly, even Šahrazūrī, Ṭūsī's contemporary Suhrawardī enthusiast, in the introduction to his very commentary on *Ḥikmat al-iṣrāq*, markedly avoids the term *ta'alluh*, which he uses only twice in the more subdued form of *al-muta'allibīn* (*Œuvres philosophiques et mystiques de Shihabaddin Yahya Sohrawardi*, p. 5.13 and 6.14 Corbin, cited in n. 40) to refer to the inspired philosophers, and sticks to *dawq* and *kaṣf*, but of course without any reference, just like Suhrawardī, to *ḥikma muta'āliya*.

with his intellectual biography and the many different doctrinal masks he wore throughout his turbulent career.⁴²

After Ṭūsī, it becomes open season for those who want to read into the phrase *al-ḥikma al-muta'aliya* various meanings, and its history – its *Begriffsgeschichte* – will have to be traced among the numerous commentators on the *Iṣārāt* and in subsequent philosophical tradition, culminating, but not concluding, in the two books by Mullā Ṣadrā with this phrase in their title (*al-Ḥikma al-muta'aliya fī l-asfār al-'aqliyya al-arba'a* and *al-Masā'il al-qudsiyya fī l-ḥikma al-muta'aliya*).⁴³ But the developments did not come immediately after Ṭūsī. For some time the response was either to follow Ṭūsī or to disregard the issue completely. Representative of the former attitude is Ibn Kammūna, who completed his commentary the year Ṭūsī died (1273).⁴⁴ His commentary, or actually running commentary, is more in the form of paraphrastic insertions from Ṭūsī into the text of Avicenna, including the distinction between research philosophy and that of “tasting”. The paragraph (b) of Avicenna's text is paraphrased as follows:⁴⁵

(b) > ثم إذا كان ما يلوحه ضرب من < النظر مستوراً إلا على الراسخين في الحكمة المتعالية عن البحثية الصرفة وهي الحكمة التي تشتمل مع البحث والنظر علي الكشف والذوق أن لها أي لتلك الاجرام بعد العقول المفارقة التي هي لها كالمبادئ نفوسا ناطقة غير منطبعة في موادها بل لها معها علاقة ما كما لنفوسنا مع أبداننا وأنها تنال بتلك العلاقة كمالاً ما حقاً صار للاجسام السماوية زيادة معني في ذلك لتظاهر رأى جزئي وآخر كلي

(b) “Next, if what a kind of theoretical investigation reveals as something veiled [to all] except to those thoroughly versed in the philosophy that is exalted” above the philosophy [based] purely on research, which is the philosophy which includes along with research and investigation, [also] ‘unveiling’ and ‘tasting’, “[namely,] that they”, i.e., these [heavenly] bodies, “in addition to the separate intellects which they have as first principles, [also] have rational souls which are not impressed in their matters but rather have a certain relation to them just as our souls do with our bodies, and that they acquire, by means of this relation, a certain perfection – is true, then the heavenly bodies come into possession of an additional quality [*ma'nan*] in this regard because they manifest a thought (*ra'y*) that is particular and another [that is] universal”.

⁴² It is clear from what Ṭūsī says, if he is to be believed, that he revised and edited his commentary on the *Iṣārāt* twenty years after completing it (see Gutas, *Avicenna* [above, n. 8], p. 493). It is also clear that he revised and edited some of his works for political/ideological reasons, as the frequently changing context of his work surroundings in his long and turbulent career required; see his statements in H. Dabashi, “The Philosopher/Vizier: Khwāja Naṣir al-Dīn al-Ṭūsī and the Isma'ilis”, in F. Daftary (ed.), *Medieval Isma'ili History and Thought*, Cambridge U.P., Cambridge 1996, pp. 231-45, at p. 234, and the reasonable assessment of his career offered by Dabashi and by H. Jorāti, *Science and Society in Medieval Islam: Nasir al-Din Tusi and the Politics of Patronage*, PhD dissertation, Yale University, 2014. With further study, it may be possible to discern the reasons for which he may have changed his commentary by adding or removing this interpretation of the phrase *al-ḥikma al-muta'aliya* during revision, or, if he did not change it, why he chose so to interpret it in the first place.

⁴³ The tendency to interpret the phrase at will and according to one's personal or scholarly bias manifested itself even in manuscripts of the *Iṣārāt* itself in which explanations of the phrase are offered in marginal or interlinear annotations, as in the case of MS Aya Sofya 2382, where it is interpreted as “illuminationist”, *iṣrāqī*, despite the fact that Suhrawardī himself never made this identification, as noted above. See the appendix below by Cüneyt Kaya to whom I am indebted for bringing the MS and this note in it to my attention.

⁴⁴ R. Pourjavady – S. Schmidtke, *A Jewish Philosopher of Baghdad. 'Izz al-Dawla Ibn Kammūna (d. 683/1284) and His Writings*, Brill, Leiden 2006 (Islamic Philosophy, Theology and Science. Texts and Studies, 65), p. 59.

⁴⁵ MS Istanbul, Lâleli 2516, f. 277v. The beginning of the quotation here inserted in angular brackets is missing in the manuscript, clearly due to some inadvertent omission.

Quṭb-ad-dīn al-Rāzī (al-Taḥṭānī, d. 1364), as representative of the second attitude in his *Muḥākamāt*, does not even touch *namāṭs* 9 and 10 of the *Iṣārāt*; he ends with the eighth, so we cannot tell what he thought of *al-ḥikma al-mutā'āliya*. Here we have yet another datum in the long history of the reception history of the *Iṣārāt*, namely the fact that some commentators simply stayed away from the final chapters or portions thereof, a datum that has to be incorporated into our analysis of the development of philosophy after Avicenna.

The study of the reception and interpretation of Avicenna's thought – interpretation which included not only commentaries, summaries, and paraphrases of his works but also the fabrication of pseudepigraphs with their particular slant, and which should not be confused with the thought of Avicenna himself⁴⁶ – provides the best chart for the development of philosophy and theology in the Muslim East in the centuries following his death.

⁴⁶ For the distinction between Avicenna and the “Avicenna transformed” of the later tradition see my comments in *Orientalism* (above, n. 8), pp. IX-XII.

Appendix

M. Cüneyt Kaya

Remarkable documentation about how the phrase *al-ḥikma al-muta'aliya* was interpreted after Ibn Sīnā is provided by a MS of the *Iṣārāt* itself. The Turkish translation of the *Iṣārāt* (by Durusoy *et al.*, cited in n. 7) was reprinted by the Turkish Directory of Manuscripts (Istanbul 2014) together with one of its MSS which is located in the Süleymaniye Library, Aya Sofya 2382. According to the illuminated oval medallion on its title page (f. 1r), this MS was copied for Meḥmed II (reigned 1444-1446, 1451-1481), while the colophon registers its scribe and the date as, 'Alī ibn Faṭḥ Allāh al-Ma'dānī al-Iṣfahānī in 12 Rabī' *al-awwal* 867 (December 5, 1462). On the basis of the seals and *waqf* inscription, it is seen that this copy was first transferred to the personal library of Meḥmed II's son, Bayezid II (reigned 1481-1512),¹ and was then moved to the Aya Sofya collection established by Maḥmūd I (reigned 1730-1754).

Some characteristics of this MS are noteworthy. One of them is that pronouns are tagged to their antecedents by means of the same number placed above or below both the noun and its pronoun. More importantly, throughout the MS there are interlinear glosses and marginal notes written by an anonymous author. These glosses and notes draw upon Rāzī's and Ṭūsī's famous commentaries on the *Iṣārāt*, as well as on an array of as yet unidentified sources, which makes it reasonable to suggest that they were written by a scholar for the benefit of Meḥmed II or Bayezid II.²

As for the passage of the *Iṣārāt* (X.9) discussed in this article by Dimitri Gutas, it is easily noticed that the author of the glosses and notes follows Ṭūsī's comments in parsing this difficult passage and in reading the word *mastūr* in the accusative (*mastūran*). His marginal comment is also inspired by Ṭūsī, as follows: "The particular things that occur in the material world are known by those souls, before they occur, in a particular way and are known by the [separate] intellects in a universal way, and this is the doctrine of the Peripatetics" (*al-ḡuz'īyyāt al-wāqī 'a fī l-'unṣuriyyāt qabla wuqū'ihā ma'lūma li-tilka an-nufūs 'alā waḡh ḡuz'ī wa-li-l-'uqūl 'alā waḡh kullī wa huwa maḍhab al-maššā'in*) (f. 170v [p. 679 of the reprint of the Durusoy *et al.* translation]; see the illustration below). More interestingly, though, he writes just under the phrase *al-ḥikma al-muta'aliya*, "namely, the illuminationist" (*ay al-iṣrāqīyya*) (f. 170v5). It seems that this interpretation, for which we have no clear evidence either in Ṭūsī's or in Ibn Kammūna's commentaries, was made on the basis of another commentary of the *Iṣārāt*, or possibly by the author of the glosses and notes himself who, inspired again by Ṭūsī's approach, thought that since *al-ḥikma al-muta'aliya* was not from the Peripatetic tradition it would have to come from Illuminism.

¹ There can be little doubt that this MS is one of the seventeen independent copies of the *Iṣārāt* in the Ottoman Palace Library, which was catalogued by 'Aṭūfī, the royal librarian, in 908/1502-3 following the commission of Bayezid II. The philosophical works in this inventory were analyzed and listed by Dimitri Gutas in "Philosophical Manuscripts: Two Alternative Philosophies", in G. Necipoğlu – C. Kafadar – C.H. Fleischer (eds.), *Treasures of Knowledge: An Inventory of the Ottoman Palace Library (1502/3-1503/4)*, Brill, Leiden 2019, pp. 907-33. The MS is listed in Appendix II of this publication, p. 985 and no. [15], as one of the MSS stamped with Bayezid II's seal and transferred to the Aya Sofya collection of the Süleymaniye Library. The name of the scribe in this Appendix II is written as 'Alī Faṭḥ Allāh al-Madānī al-Iṣfahānī.

² The author of the anonymous introduction to the 2014 reprint of the Durusoy translation argues that these inter-linear and marginal notes were probably written by Meḥmed II or Bayezid II (p. xiv), but he does not provide any evidence for this.



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