

book on *wilāya* arguably one of the most central concepts in Islamic mysticism. Gratitude is, of course, also due to the translators and commentators, who did their job impeccably. The book clearly breathes a spirit of German *gründlichkeit*, which should not come as a surprise, in view of the fact that the preface ends with an explicit admonition intended in particular for scholars of Sufism in the English-speaking world to show greater interest in German publications.

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Ibn Sīnā and Mysticism: Remarks and Admonitions, Shams C. Inati, London and New York: Kegan Paul International, 1996, viii + 114 pp.

This book is a contribution to the study and translation of Avicennan philosophical texts. It comprises a translation of Namaṭ (here translated “class”) VIII, IX, and X of Avicenna’s influential Arabic text, *al-Ishārāt wa’l-tanbīhāt* (*Remarks and Admonitions*) and an introduction to the text which includes a discussion of Avicenna’s thinking in general. The three Classes of *al-Ishārāt wa’l-tanbīhāt* here translated from the fourth and last part of Avicenna’s text, and correspond, in general, to the second traditional division of philosophy, namely *al-falsafa al-‘amaliyya* (practical philosophy), the first division being *al-falsafa al-naẓariyya* (theoretical philosophy). It is widely accepted that while the first three parts of *al-Ishārāt wa’l-tanbīhāt* include the set of philosophical problems discussed in Avicenna’s magnum opus text *al-Shifā’*, the last part introduces subjects that had not been systematically nor extensively examined in *al-Shifā’*. Specifically, Avicenna in Namaṭ IX and X discusses topics pertaining to the theory of knowledge in ways that have led Islamic philosophers, as well as historians of philosophy, to employ the designation “mysticism” to describe them. Avicenna’s examination of theoretical mysticism—or more appropriately, epistemology of non-standard types of knowledge—was given wider recognition in the two most influential and widely studied commentaries on *al-Ishārāt wa’l-tanbīhāt*, namely those of Nasir al-Din Tusi’s (*Sharḥ al-Ishārāt*) and Fakhr al-Din al-Razi’s (*Lubāb al-Ishārāt*), both composed in the thirteenth century. Inati’s choice of the term “mysticism” in the title of this book reflects this view of Part Four of *al-Ishārāt wa’l-tanbīhāt*. It should be noted, however, that the term “Sufism” ought not be employed in describing this part of Avicenna’s text. Primarily Avicenna himself never uses the term in the text. Moreover, Avicenna’s use of the term *‘arīf* (translated by Inati as “knower”) is in reference to non-standard, extraordinary types of knowledge, which may be designated “mystical” in its general meaning, but not related to Sufism, especially of the practice associated with Sufi orders.

Shams Inati is an expert on translating Avicenna’s *al-Ishārāt wa’l-tanbīhāt*; she has previously published a translation of *Part One: On Logic* and has prepared a translation of *Part Two: On Physics* (1). The present translation reflects

Inati's obvious decades-old involvement with the text, and as such makes available a very readable text by Avicenna to scholars and advanced students of Islamic intellectual traditions who cannot access the original Arabic. But the translation and the book as a whole benefit specialists of Islamic philosophy as well. This by bringing to bear the above-mentioned commentaries on the text and so uncovering the "enigmatic nature" of the text (3ff). Inati, while accepting the traditional title "Sufism" for this part of Avicenna's *al-Ishārāt wa'l-tanbīhāt* (4), is careful to inform the reader (correctly in my view) that what is commonly signified by such terms as "Sufi" may not adequately capture Avicenna's own use of the term *ʿarīf*, which is aptly used in reference to a special, intuitive, and direct mode of cognition. Thus the *ʿarīf*, whose knowledge is the subject of Avicenna's epistemological discussion in *Namaṣ* IX and X, serves to distinguish a special experiential mode of knowing from the "standard" type of knowledge by syllogistic reasoning. In this same vein I think that Inati's philosophical intention would have been served better had she chosen not to employ the term "Sufi" to specify the special epistemological mode of immediate knowledge. For example the statement: "I should point out that this title [Sufism] refers, not to Ibn Sina's personal Sufi experience or mysticism, but to his thought on Sufi experience as expressed in the fourth part of *al-Ishārāt*." (4), may not readily indicate Inati's intention, while expressions such as "mystical experience" or best "direct, experiential knowledge" would be, in my view, more meaningful to the contemporary philosopher with an interest in Islamic philosophy but with no knowledge of Arabic. In this way Avicenna's discussion of the epistemology of "extraordinary" types of knowledge, and the immediate, atemporal, and intuitive modes of cognition would not be stripped of their analytical dimension by association with philosophically ill-defined terms as "Sufism" or "mysticism." In all, Inati's "Introduction" (1-7) serves well to inform the reader that Avicenna's text, while traditionally stated to be on Sufism, is a genuinely philosophical discussion of certain types of non-standard knowledge. I agree with Inati's statement that "Whether Ibn Sina was a Sufi is not essential to the present study" (4), but I would add that there are no records indicating that he was one.

After completing the "Introduction," Inati adds an extensive "Analysis of the Text" (8-66) before the translation of Part Four. This part of the book is arranged according to each of the three Classes, i. e. *Namaḥs* VIII, IX, and X of *al-Ishārāt wa'l-tanbīhāt*. They are: The Eighth Class, "The Nature of Happiness" (8-30), The Ninth Class, "The Stations of the Knowers" (30-42), and the Tenth Class, "The Distinguishing Signs of Knowledge" (42-66). In each of the sections Inati summarizes in a very lucid and meaningful manner Avicenna's arguments and adds, whenever appropriate, additional discussions taken from other Avicennan texts such as *al-Shifāʾ*; *al-Najāt: fī al-Nafs*, etc. as well as from other parts of *al-Ishārāt wa'l-tanbīhāt*. In this way Inati informs the reader of the intricate and often complex issues of the Arabic, which are made accessible by a careful choice of a meaningful set of English technical terminology. Among the many interesting comparative aspects of this part of the book, I would point the reader toward its end where Inati analyzes "the kind of mysticism proposed by Ibn Sina" (62). Here Inati proposes three issues (discussed in

62-66), two of which are: 1) She argues that Avicenna's "mysticism" is similar to that of Plato, Plotinus, and Alfarabi in that it is "speculative, theoretical, or philosophical." Avicenna's thinking on the subject of extraordinary and experiential knowledge is thus distinguished from the mysticism of Ghazzali, Ibn 'Arabi, and Rumi which is stated to be "imaginative, practical, or nonphilosophical" (62). In my view Inati has successfully argued the point, and is correct in concluding that "Ibn Sina's mysticism is something that happens to the theoretical intellect . . . In contrast, nonphilosophical mysticism happens to the heart or imagination, which are destructible faculties, thus . . . it would perish with the perishing of the body" (63). (2) Inati argues (correctly in my view) that Avicenna, unlike Ghazzali, Suhrawardi, and Ibn Tufayl, never tells his readers that he was given to mystical experiences, or that he was a mystic or a Sufi. She further argues, however, that according to Avicenna's own view that to know the experiential mode of knowledge one must have had the experience, concluding that Avicenna "must have been a mystic" (63). While I cannot refute the position that argues for Avicenna's "mystical experience" I must add that Avicenna is foremost a rational philosopher and scientist. The fact that he has examined kinds of experiential knowledge and has discussed the extraordinary attributes of people said to have attained the rank of an 'arif in his philosophical work, *al-Ishārāt wa'l-tanbīhāt*, is mainly indicative of a philosophical intention. Avicenna's aim is to describe within a well-defined philosophical system an epistemological theory capable of rationally describing the range of all manner of knowledge, including the mystical, the immediate, and the intuitive. It remains to be argued as to how successful Avicenna was in this regard, but it is a tribute to his thinking that later constructions of holistic systems that aim to define a unified epistemological system have all been influenced by Avicenna's philosophical discussions in *al-Ishārāt wa'l-tanbīhāt*. It is no accident that every major Islamic philosopher after Avicenna, with an interest in unified epistemological theory, makes reference to Part Four of *al-Ishārāt wa'l-tanbīhāt*. Inati, by making available this significant side of Avicenna's thinking, deserves much credit.

Finally, the translation of Part Four of *al-Ishārāt wa'l-tanbīhāt* is presented (81-108), followed by a selected bibliography of Avicenna's texts (109) and studies (110). The addition of a meaningful index completes the book (111-14). By the time the reader gets to the English translation of the Arabic text he/she is well prepared to follow the intricate details of the terse text.

I highly recommend this book to anyone interested in Islamic philosophy, including the specialists. I should imagine that advanced undergraduate seminars on Islam, as well as graduate courses on Islamic philosophy would benefit from this book. In addition courses on the history of philosophy in general will now have access to an important Avicennan text in philosophically meaningful English.

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Contemplation and Action: The Spiritual Autobiography of a Muslim Scholar, A new edition and English translation of Nasir al-Din Tusi's *Sayr wa Suluk* by S. J. Badakhchani, London: I. B. Tauris in association with The Institute of Ismaili Studies, 1998, xiii + 86 + 22 pp. (includes text in Persian).

Abu Ja'far Muhammad b. Muhammad al-Tusi (597–672/1201–1274), generally known as Khwaja Nasir al-Din al-Tusi, a vizier, philosopher, theologian, and one of the most important Muslim mathematicians and astronomers, was born in a Twelver Shi'ī family in Tus. He received his early education there as an Imami. After having mastered the various fields of knowledge, he began his career as a young man serving the local Shi'ī Nizari Isma'īli prince of Quhistan. The latter is remembered as a benevolent and learned prince who had gathered around his court many men of knowledge pursuing their own intellectual disciplines and interests.

Tusi enjoyed the patronage of this Isma'īli prince for a long time before moving to the famous citadel of Alamut in the service of the Nizari Isma'īli Imam 'Ala' al-Din Muhammad III. The period of Tusi's stay and his association with the Isma'īlis, roughly from his early twenties to his late fifties lasting about thirty years, was not only very long but also one of the most productive of his career. He wrote several important works on ethics, logic, philosophy, and astronomy. During this time he also composed a number of treatises the theological teachings of which clearly bear an Isma'īli imprint.

He was instrumental in negotiating and facilitating the surrender of Alamut to the Mongols in 654/1256. He then entered the services of Hulegu and accompanied him in his western campaigns and the conquest of Baghdad and the destruction of the Abbasid caliphate. Tusi's apparent denunciation of the Isma'īlis, his defection to the Mongols, and the advice he gave to his new master when he hesitated to execute the last Abbasid caliph have raised a number of questions about his political disposition.¹ His role in all those fateful events is not only confusing but also controversial. Likewise his services to an Isma'īli governor, two Nizari Isma'īli imams, and two pagan Mongol khans have been the subject of considerable controversy. Some scholars have condemned his character, while others have questioned his morals.

Khwaja Tusi's presence at the Isma'īli court itself has become a subject of dispute. His Twelver Shi'ī biographers are adamant in their assertion that he was kept in Quhistan against his will and later was forced to go to Alamut. They also deny that he was at any time an Isma'īli. For this reason, the typical Isma'īli works of Tusi are generally excluded from the traditional lists of his books.

Fortunately for us, Tusi has left a brief but important autobiographical account of his early life. It is in the form of an extended letter addressed to the

1. It is said that when Hulegu hesitated to execute the last Abbasid caliph Tusi talked his new master out of his scruples by pointing out that even the decapitation of John the Baptist and the murderers of 'Ali and Husayn had not been avenged by terrible divine punishment. Hence the caliph met his end by throttling, as the Mongols did not want to spill his blood.