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Hafez, *Lisān al-Ghayb* of Persian Poetic Wisdom

Poetry is to Iranian civilization what philosophy is to the Greek and prophecy to the Judaic. Beyond its literary appeal, poetry is regarded by Persians as a repository of wisdom—a representative formulation of the whole of reality. Persian poetic wisdom (*hikmat-e shā‘īrāneh*) is thought to continue the divine revelation by constructing a metalanguage of metaphor, allegory, and symbol that transcends periods of historical time and courts of temporal rule. The foundation of this tradition is a collectivity constituted by theoretical principles (predominantly Greek in conception); historical events and processes (derived from Near Eastern, Islamic, and “Iranian” sources); mythological narratives and concepts (predominantly Iranian); religious dictums and worldview (derived from the Judaeo-Christian-Islamic traditions, and the indigenous Zoroastrian and Zurvanite interpretations); as well as popular tales and sentiments (from multiple sources: Indian, Iranian, Near Eastern, and Hellenic). This complex foundation, however, is rendered “Persian” through poetry and has

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1 Hafez, *Divān*, edited by S.A. Enjavī, Second Edition (Tehran, 1984), (hereafter cited as Enjavī), p. 88. (For a translation of the poem see below, n. 15) I consider Enjavī’s edition to be one of the few reliable ones in print. I have carefully checked every line that I quote from Hafez against also the edition by Ghanī and Qazvīnī (Tehran, 1988), (hereafter cited as Ghanī). All translations of the poems are mine.
become the identifying nature of the Iranian worldview. The complexity and the diversity, however, of the wisdom of tens of thousands of Persian poets of the past one thousand years whose poetry has been recorded in their own dīvāns (collected works), in anthologies, and histories, or otherwise copied and circulated, merges into a single archetype. This “unity” is seen in almost every Persian dīvān and combines the epic heroes of Ferdowsi’s Shāh-nāmeh; the sceptic, “nihilist” soul of Khayyām’s quatrains; the ecstatic “lover” of Rūmī’s Masnavī and the Dīvān-e Shams; the sober practical sage of Sa’di’s Golestān and Būstān; the chivalrous lovers of Neẓāmī’s Khamsheh; and the “intoxicated” wayfaring rend of Hāfez’s Dīvān.

In such a distinctly “poetic” civilization Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad Shīrāzī, commonly referred to as Hāfez, or Khājeh Hāfez, stands out for the unsurpassed beauty of his word and for the penetrating depths of his meaning. He is the proven master of Persian lyrical poetry and any one of his odes stands out as an exemplum that indicates the collectivity of the tradition defined above. During his lifetime and since his death six centuries ago, Persian speaking men and women, old and young, kings and paupers, illiterates as well as learned scholars, have turned to him for wisdom and inspiration. Moments of extreme sorrow as well as heights of felicity are shared with Hāfez by the common practice of using his Dīvān for divination (qāl-e Hāfez). His collected works, testimony of his unmatched genius, consisting of some 500 ghazals, a few qīṣas, masnavīs, and qasidas, has had a major impact in shaping attitudes concerning every facet of life in the Iranian world. In almost all Persian speaking homes one will find at least one edition, or an abridgement, or a quire or two of his poems.

Since his death, Hāfez was given a number of titles and epithets such as: Bulbul-e Shiraz (Nightingale of Shiraz), Khájeh ye Shiraz (“Sir” of Shiraz), Khājeh-e Irān (Master of Gnosis), Tarjumān al-Haqqāqa (Interpreter of Truth), Kāshif al-Haqqāqa (Reveler of Truth), Tarjumān al-Asrār (Interpreter of Secrets), and most prevalently, Līsān al-Ghayb (a term meaning “Tongue of the Unseen”) – exclusively bestowed on Hāfez. The following analysis of the sources and usage of this term will argue that beyond a mere honorific and poetic designation, it is a signifier of Hāfez’s status as a source of divine inspiration and of prophetic vision. It is, in addition, an indicator of a more inclusive

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5 No other Persian Dīvān is used as extensively (if at all) as that of Hāfez for divination, a most widespread practice. Many histories, biographies, and autobiographies report instances when a person (usually a king, or a high ranking official) would make a divination to determine a specific course of action. See, for example, S. ‘Abd al-Rahīm Khākhāli, “Ta’lul az Dīvān-e Khājeh.” [Using the Dīvān for Divination] in Hāfez-Nāmehe (Reprint: Tehran, 1987), pp. 57–69.

6 See, for example, A.A. Dehkodā Lughatnāmehe, entry “Hāfez-e Shīrāzī,” vol. 8, pp. 112–130.


8 Poets in many civilizations have been considered to be divinely inspired “prophets” whose poetry informs man through the metalinguage of metaphor and myth. In a recently published volume ten scholars write on the association of poetry and prophecy in classical and medieval cultures, and discuss the “intimate” relationship between the two. See James L. Kugel, ed., Poetry and Prophecy: The Beginnings of a Literary Tradition (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1990). In the Islamic civilization, however, because of the position “end of prophets” (khatam al-anbā‘a) given to Muhammad poets are never actually called “prophet” (nabi). In the one instance of the famous Arab poet al-Mutanabbi, whose name does intimate prophetic claim, many medieval Muslim scholars, as shown by Professor
truth, namely, that Iranian civilization as a whole inclines to seek enlightenment in the context of poetic wisdom.

The earliest written evidence of the epithet *Lisân al-Ghayb* is given in the “Introduction” (*Dibâcheh*) to a *Divân* of Hâfez compiled by Abu’l-Fâth Feredyûn “Hasan Mirzâ” son of Sultan Husayn Bâygarâ written by the famous calligrapher and court secretary (dâbîr) Shihâb al-Dîn Murvârîd known as “Bayânî” (d. 922/1516). The compiler indicates in the “Introduction” that since Hâfez’s *Divân* has a “miraculous” language it has been given the epithet *Lisân al-Ghayb*, and the poet is so known. The “Introduction” includes the following quatrain in which the *Divân* is further said to be well-known as “Manifestation of the Holy Spirit.”

این گنج معانی که تهی از عیب است
تقشیست که از صفحهٔ دیگر رضی
مشهور جهان به فضی روح القدس است
مذکر زبانها به لسان الفرقان است

Wolhart Heinrichs, felt compelled to devise elaborate arguments to reject the notion that he was claimant to prophethood. See Wolhart Heinrichs, “The Meaning of Mawânib,” in Poetry and Prophecy, ibid., pp. 130-133. But in some instances prophetic qualities have been attributed to poets, as best exemplified in the well-known statement said of the Persian poet Mawlânâ Jalâl al-Dîn Rûmî: *nîs râyghamar vâli dânt ketâb* (“He is not a prophet, but does have a book.”)

9 See Qâvûnî, ibid., n. 1, pp. 84-86. Jan Rypka refers to this fact, however his reference to *Tadhkareh-e Maykhânâk* is taken from a review of the work by M. Moqarrebi in *Râhnamâyeh Ketâb* (vol. 4, no. 2, [1961], pp. 158-163), and he does not indicate the significance of the passage nor the poem in praise of Hâfez. See Jan Rypka, History of Iranian Literature (Dordrecht: D. Reidel Publishing Company, 1968), pp. 269; 276, n. 78; 277, n. 115.

10 There is a two-fold attribution of *Lisân al-Ghayb* in the *Dibâcheh*, once to Hâfez, and once to the *Divân* itself: *tâmisîyeh ye in divân-e mu’jez bayân be-lisân al-ghayb eştâfâf ufûd* (“the name of this Divân with miraculous language was agreed upon as *Lisân al-ghayb*). See Qâvûnî, *op. cit.*, pp. 84-85, n. 1. The identity between the poet and his poems collected in the *Divân* is clear, and the epithet is commonly associated with Hâfez himself.

Turning to biographers of Hâfez of which there are many, but who mostly repeat the known facts of his life, we find that in several other instances his poetic genius is discussed in terms of an inspiration by the Holy Spirit (*Râh al-Qudus*).11 This is a significant identification, since, as we shall see below, inspiration and emanation received from the Holy Spirit is equated on the one hand with being informed by the angel Gabriel (or its Persian counterpart the angel Surûsh), and on the other with union (*itthâd* or connection (*ittişâl*) with the Active Intellect, both indicative of prophet-like qualities.12

Jan Rypka identifies the following possible reasons for the epithet: “They named him lisânul-ghayb, ‘the tongue of secrets’, referring to his alleged mysticism. Others take this expression to mean that his verses are free from artificialities or that his *divân*, like the Koran, can be consulted to interpret the future.”13 While Rypka is one of only a few historians of Persian literature known to me who have made reference to the epithet in question,14

11 See Dehkhdâh, *op. cit.*, p. 112, n 3, who quotes from “recent” manuscripts (no dates are given, but the manuscripts in question are believed to be from the early Safavid period in the 16th c.) of the “Introduction” to the *Divân* written by Muhammad Golândam, wherein not only Hâfez is associated with inspiration given by the Holy Spirit, but the following rather bold statement is said of him as well: *va sâd-e fehâyeh ye ma yânti* “en al-hawâ in huwa itlâ wahyu” (Koran, LIII.3-4) dar â‘fâq va anfus andâkh ("He [Hâfez] spread the true and joyous sound of [his own] desire. It is naught saved a revelation that is revealed [Koran, LIII.3-4] in heavens and on the earth.") A statement indicative of the attribution of prophetic qualities to the poet.


14 Other brief references are found in the following articles: E. Segahbodi, “Hâfez Mu’assese-e Alam-e Ghâyib” (Hâfez Interpreter of the Unseen Realm), Majâleheh-e Dânekeh-kadeh-ye Adabiyyat va ‘Ulûm-e Insânî, vol. 18 (1971), no. 2, pp. 35-49; M.A. Islami-Nadoushan, “Hâfez Shâ’er-e Dâmâneh-ye Râz”
such explanations and the vague notion of an “alleged mysticism” do not add to our understanding of the phenomenon of a prophetic-like “tongue of the unseen.” That the Divān is consulted to “interpret the future” does confirm, however, the view that Hāfez is considered to have received emanation from the “Holy Spirit.” But the epistemology of the phenomenon must be analyzed in order to understand how “tongue of the unseen” can “interpret the future,” as well as its other miracle-like implications. It has to be emphasized that medieval Arabic and Persian philosophical and mystical texts commonly equate the Holy Spirit (Rūḥ al-Qudus) with the Archangel Gabriel and with the Active Intellect, and being “related” to it does imply “miraculous” powers. The epithet, therefore, would give Hāfez the elevated rank of a “prophet-like” figure, and Lisān al-Ghayb would thus carry the weight of the sages-poet who, inspired by the divine, acts as recipient of God’s emanation, and then relates the divine message to man.

To be the “Tongue of the Unseen” is to possess knowledge of the “Unseen” (ghayb), a property which in the Koran, as we shall examine now, is said to be God’s alone. The term ghayb occurs in the Koran in 49 āyas, with its plural ghayb occurring an additional 5 times. The Koranic term is usually translated “unseen” or “invisible.” In the Koran it is contrasted with the term shahāda, translated “visible” or “seen.” A most prevalent theme is that God is the “Knower of the Unseen and the seen” (VI.73; XXIII.92; XXXIX.46; LXI.22). Further, God alone knows the ghayb (V.109, 116; IX.78; X.20), and man can only know, or obtain, what he “sees”, that is the world of shahāda (XII.81). Even the Prophet Muḥammad does not possess knowledge of the ghayb (VI.50; XI.31). In fact no human can obtain the ghayb, for if so they would “see” things “unseen” and would write about them (LIII.35; LIII.41; LXVIII.47) which is God’s own issue. Not even the jinn know the ghayb (XXXIV.14).

While the basic Koranic dictum on the ghayb is clear — To God alone belongs the ghayb (X.20) — it is not clear whether the ghayb is to be equated with the divine realm alone, or if it is a “thing” that may pertain to other realms as well. It seems that the ghayb may be manifest on earths as well as in the heavens: “To God belongs the ghayb of the heavens and of the earth” (II.3; XI.123: XVI.77; XVIII.26). Possessing the “thing” ghayb is equated with obtaining “abundance of wealth” and with triumph over adversity (VII.188) — desirable ends indeed. In one instance alone, a “place” is associated with the ghayb: “Gardens of Eden, which God has promised to His obedient servants in the ghayb” (XIX.61), and in two āyas knowledge of the ghayb is indirectly

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15 See above, n. 8. Hāfez himself uses the concept “Emanation given by the Holy Spirit” in three verses. The most indicative of the theory of a divine emanation brought to man through intermediation (by the Holy Spirit, or the angel Surūsh) is the following:

Should the emanation given by the Holy Spirit come to aid once more, Others too, will accomplish what the Messiah did. (Enjavī, p. 88.)

16 Alfarabi is the first philosopher in Islam to discuss the activity of the “law-giver” (al-shārīf) in terms of union with the Active Intellect (al-taqī al-faʿlī). The mystical and prophetic dimensions of such union were systematized and in a way accentuated by Avicenna for the first time in the 9th and 10th Namāṣ of al-Ishārāt wa al-Tanbīhāt. Avicenna’s and other views are examined by Fazlur Rahman in Prophecy in Islam (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1958), CH II. The multiple identification among Gabriel, the Holy Spirit, Surūsh, Jamshīd’s World Revealing Cup, and the Active Intellect, made, however, by Suhrwardi in his Arabic “theoretical” works and in his Persian philosophical allegories, impacts Persian poetry to a far greater extent. The role of the Active Intellect personified in Persian literature as the angel has been demonstrated in an excellent recent study by T. Fūrnānmārīn, Symbolism and Symbolic Stories in Persian Literature (Tehran, 1988), especially pp. 240-275. I have elsewhere analyzed Suhrwardi’s epistemological arguments in identifying the Active Intellect with the Holy Spirit and with the Persian Rvān Bakhsh (dātor spiritus). See Hossein Ziai, Knowledge and Illumination (Brown Judaic Studies 97: Atlanta, 1990), pp. 137 n.1, 144-146, 153-155.

17 The edition and translation of the Koran I have used is The Glorious Koran, tr. M.H. Pickthall (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1980). I have made a few changes in the translation such as “God” for Pickthall’s “Allāh”, “revelation” for Pickthall’s “inspiration” when the Arabic is (waḥy), and in some places I have kept the Arabic ghayb instead of Pickthall’s “Unseen” or “Invisible” for emphasis.

18 See also D.B. Macdonald-[L. Gardet], “al-Ghayb,” in EI².
associated with being an angel: “I [Muhammad] say not unto you [that] I possess the treasures of God, nor that I have knowledge of the gḥayb; and I say not unto you: Lo! I am an angel” (VI.50; XI.31). Quite clearly God, “Knower of the Unseen and the seen,” “Possessor of the Unseen of the heavens and of the earth,” does not reveal to any one the gḥayb which is His alone (LXXII.26; also X.20). The only way the gḥayb may be obtained by someone is through revelation (wahy): “This is the tidings of things hidden (gḥayb), We reveal it to thee [Muhammad]” (III.44; XI.49; XII.102); and then only through God’s own choice: “And it is not [the purpose] of God to let you know the Unseen. But God chooseth of His messengers whom He will [to receive knowledge thereof]” (II.179).

In sum, the Koranic edicts do not leave any doubt that man is incapable by himself of obtaining of the treasures of the Unseen. But, one who does possess it is a chosen one with access to extraordinary knowledge and power. Thus belief in the gḥayb is indeed to be counted among the essential acts of faith in Islam. This fundamental position of the association of God and gḥayb; Paradise and gḥayb; belief in the angels and the gḥayb is firmly stated in a widely repeated and well-known opening four verses of the second Koranic Sūra, where belief in the gḥayb precedes the establishment of prayer (salāt) – one of the fundamental Pillars of Islam: “This is a book wherein there is no doubt, a guidance for the God-fearing. Those who believe in the gḥayb, and establish prayer, and find sustenance in what we provide them” (II.2-3). The gḥayb is “contained” in the “Clear Book” (fi kitāb mubīn), that is, the Koran (XXVII.75).

A sampling of four Koranic commentaries: the “mystical” Kashf al-Aṣrār of Khājiṣe Abūd Allāḥ Ansārī,19 and the “juridical” Taṣfīr al-Qurān al-Karīm, Known as Taṣfīr al-Minār,20 and Taṣfīr al-Qurān al-Karīm by Ibn Kathīr,21 and the contemporary “philosophical” al-Mīzān fi Taṣfīr al-Qurān by al-ʿAllāmā Muhammad Husayn al-Ṭabāṭābāʾī,22 on the concept gḥayb reflects a general agreement among them all. In all four gḥayb is equated with the foundation of belief. This is because belief in the gḥayb is identified with belief in God and His unity, the angels, the scriptures, prophets, the day of judgement, paradise, and hell. All four emphasize that revelation and the gḥayb are connected, for they stipulate that it is only through revelation that the latter may be known.23 None of them indicate a possibility of an individual and personal connection with the gḥayb, emphasizing the significance of faith (Arabic īmān wa huwa tāṣīq, Persian geravidan) in relation to it. Thus we can underline the significance of the gḥayb for the Muslim, as expressed in Koranic commentaries, by repeating famous sayings quoted in them: al-gḥayb al-Qurān, “the gḥayb is the Koran”; and, man āmāna bi-Allāh fa-qad āmāna bi-l-gḥayb, “he who believes in God believes also in the gḥayb.”24

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23 The “connection” may be through the faculty of imagination (al-qawwā al-mutakhāṣṣa), as discussed by philosophers and Mutakallims. Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī, for example, discusses three qualities of prophets (khawāṣṣ al-nabī), the second one concerns the relation between the gḥayb and the prophet: “The second quality of the prophet is in the strength of his faculty of imagination, which enables him to see, in his state of wakefulness, the angels of God, to hear the Word of God, and to tell of the present, the past and future unseen things.” See Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī, al-Maḥbūbīh al-Maṣīrīṣṣa (Tehran, 1966), vol. II, p. 523.
24 See Ibn Kathīr, op. cit., p. 73. The Shiʿa position on the gḥayb is essentially the same, but they add that the hidden Īmām dwells in the gḥayb and possesses his knowledge. So that for them belief in the gḥayb means belief also in the occultation of the Imām and in his powers. See Tabāṭābāʾī, op. cit., p. 46, who relates a tradition from Jaʿfar al-Sādiq (the 6th Shiʿa Īmām) explaining the Koranic verse “[Those] who believe in the Unseen” (II. 3) as those “who believe in the resurrection of the 12th Īmām.”

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19 This Koranic commentary, while well known as Taṣfīr-e Khājiṣe Abūd Allāḥ Ansārī, was written by Abūl-Fidāʾ Rāshīd al-Dīn al-Maybūdī in 520 A.H. based partially on Ansārī’s work. See Maybūdī, Kashf al-Aṣrār wa Uddat al-Abrār: Maʿrif be-Taṣfīr-e Khājiṣe Abūd Allāḥ Ansārī (Tehran: Majes, 1952). I, pp. 45-47.
There are 19 verses in the Divan of Hafez, where the term ghayb occurs. In three of them the position stipulated is an agreement with the Koranic principle we have outlined above:

No one knows secrets of the unseen, don’t tell me stories.
No one privy to the inner heart has found a way to that sanctuary.

Šāqīya Jamā’īyyī, Dāh ke ṭak̡arzīndē ghuman
[Nisṭ mālom ke dā pārdē y āsār Chē kurd]
O cup bearer, pour me a cup of wine! For it is not known
What the maker of the unseen did mold beyond the veil.

Hān māsho ‘āsīmī jōon wāqf tē hāy ‘āz sē rīz
[Pašd āndār pārdē bahā hay ‘ān ghun ghum gūrd]
Do not despair! You do not know the mysteries of the unseen,
Many a secret game unfolds behind the veil, grieve no more.

In further agreement with the Koranic edicts Hafez associates miraculous powers with the ghayb:

Do rōndé tīwē shēd, pašd ke ‘āz rīz
[Chārgahī ber kund khūlōt nīshīnī]
The inner being has become dark. Let the vigilant one
Bring out a light from the unseen.

As we turn to mystical texts we find that in agreement with the Koranic dictum, belief in the ghayb is also equated with faith. But while in many instances God is said to be unique in His knowledge of the ghayb, there are equally many instances where Sufis are said to have a “way into the ghayb.” For Persian mystics ghayb is the supra-sensory realm, beyond discursive knowledge whose existence is attested by every manner of the attributes of divine manifestation such as “true dreams” (ru’yā sa’dīqa) divine inspiration (ilhām), and by the mystics’ “inner” experience of a spiritual journey (sāy va sulūk-e bātin). In many mystical texts ghayb is considered a realm beyond time and space: “there is no yesterday, today and tomorrow in the realm of ghayb ... there is no extension of time there. Whatever is and whatever will be are all there,” writes the celebrated Persian mystic ‘Azīz al-Dīn Nasafi. In the same type of mystical texts

29 Ibid., p. 46. A clear reference to the Koranic āya VI.50, and XL31: qul lā aqūlu la-kum ‘indī khazā’ta’ Allah wa lā a’lamu al-ghayb (al-āya).
30 See for example, Tarjumeh-y Risāleh-y Qushuaryeyeh, ed. B. Furouzanfar (Tehran, 1981), p. 16: tāmān bāvār dāhīnta ast be-del be-dāncheh haqqū ā hā ṣaygāhāndad as ghayb-hā (“faith is belief in what God reveals to him [the sufi] from the ghayb in the heart.”). A statement typical of early Sufism where the “heart” is the locus of inspiration given by God. Equally typical is that God reveals the ghayb, and the mystic does not obtain it by himself.
31 In contrast, typical of sufi esoteric terminology, we find such concepts introduced by the mystics as “unseen of the unseen” (ghayb-e ghayb) and “unseen of the unseen of the unseen” (ghayb-e ghayb-e ghayb), to which the sufi have access. See, for example Nūr al-Dīn Ispārīn, Kāshf al-Ašrāfī, edited and translated by H. Landolt (Paris: Verdier, 1986), pp. 10, 150.
32 ‘Azīz al-Dīn Nasafi, Kūṭāb al-Insān al-Kāmil, ed. M. Mōle (Tehrān: Insti-
ghayb is made known to humans by the intervention of angels who imprint “unseen” forms in the heart of man.\(^{33}\) In sum, knowledge of “unseen” divine mystery, may be obtained according to the mystics by a) intervention of angels; by b) the “experience” of gnosis (\(ma'rifa\)); or by c) divine inspiration and personal revelation (\(mukāshafa\), \(musnāhada wa ilhām\)).\(^{34}\)

All three ways of “access” to the ghayb are found in the poems of Häfez. The angel Surūsh serves as messenger of the Unseen, and brings “news”, or “good tidings” to the poet:

:\(\frac{33}{33}\) פאר באדה קד דושם סרוש עולם גיֵי
נואיד דאד קד עאם אסט פייש רזמה אד
Bring me some wine! Last night, Surūsh angel of the unseen world, brought me splendid news: His Grace does emanaate upon us all.

סרוש עלים גיֵי בושטי קרו שור דא
כדר בר דרא מים דרמ נתחה מאנד
Surūsh, angel of the unseen world, brought me good tidings. No one will remain untouched by His Grace.

\(\frac{33}{33}\) tut Français d’Iranologie, 1962), p. 242. The same type of an idea of a space beyond the Euclidian is found also in Häfez. For example (Enjavi, p. 14):

\(\frac{34}{34}\) درآء عاش مرحله ی قرب و بعد نست
\(\frac{35}{35}\) می بينستم عيان و دعا می نخواهد ماند
There is no nearness nor farness on the path of love. I see you clearly [from here] and send you prayers.

\(\frac{33}{33}\) Nasafi, op. cit.

\(\frac{34}{34}\) In a telling passage in \(Hikmat al-Ishrāq\) Suhrawardī stipulates that knowledge of the unseen is obtained by prophets (\(al-ānbiyā\)), saints (\(al-awliyā\)), and by other philosopher-sages (\(hukama\)) through illuminationist experience, which may be as something heard in the heart, or by seeing someone (an angelic figure) who talks to the subject, or by seeing a Form (\(miůhāl mu'tallaqa\)). Such experiences, not confined to God’s choice, inform the subject of knowledge of the unseen realm (\(‘ālam al-ghayb\)). See Suhrawardī, \(Hikmat al-Ishrāq\), ed. H. Corbin (Tehran, 1954), pp. 240-242.

\(\frac{35}{35}\) Enjavi, p. 221.

\(\frac{36}{36}\) Ibid., p. 82.

\(\frac{37}{37}\) \(چهٰ گوییم؟ چه‌ی میخانه‌نوش می‌دوش مسیت و خراب\)
\(\frac{38}{38}\) سروس عالم غیب‌سنگ چه‌ی مزده‌ها داداسیت
What can I tell you. Last night, when drunk in the tavern, Such good tidings did Surūsh, angel of the unseen, bring me.

On many other occasions Häfez refers to the angel simply as “messenger of the unseen”:

\(\frac{38}{38}\) ساقی بیا که هانیف غیب‌سنگ به مزده‌ها کفت
\(\frac{39}{39}\) پا دارد صبر کن که درا می فرستمیت
Come, o cup bearer! Messenger of the unseen gave me good tidings:
“Remain patient with pain! I will send you the potion.”

\(\frac{39}{39}\) سحر ز هانیف غیب‌سنگ رسید مزده‌ها به گوش
\(\frac{40}{40}\) که دور شاه شجاع است می دلیر بنوش
At dawn, messenger of the unseen world gave me good tidings:
“Now is the reign of Shâh-Shujâ’ drink boldly of wine.”

\(\frac{40}{40}\) دروش کفت‌م: یکند لعل لیش چاره‌ی دل؟
\(\frac{41}{41}\) هانیف غیب‌سنگ کدنا داد که آری، یکند
Last night I asked: “Will the beauty of her lips cure my afflicted heart?”
Messenger of the unseen cried out: “Yes, it will.”

The \(Dīvān\) of Häfez is fraught with the idea of an “experience” of the divine, characteristic of the second “access” to the ghayb, which serves as the foundation for the poet’s knowledge and awareness. For example:

\(\frac{40}{40}\) Ibid., p. 19.

\(\frac{41}{41}\) Ibid., p. 51.

\(\frac{42}{42}\) Ibid., p. 148.

\(\frac{43}{43}\) Ibid., p. 98.
O inspired one! You who dwell amongst ranks of sacred Cherubim,
And receive continuous divine emanation in your mind.
Everything God possesses in the unseen realm,
Are all revealed openly to your heart.

And in the same manner the intellect (kherad) is also inspired by the ghayb:

خرد كه مليم غيب است بهر كسب شرف
ز يام عرش صدب بوسه بر جناب زده

The intellect, inspired by the unseen, seeking virtue,
From way up in heaven, kissed the divine majesty a hundred times.

This type of experience of the divine “unseen” realm is considered the basis for knowledge, and is incorporated in the reconstruction of philosophy by the Illuminationist philosophers of the post Avicennan period. Notably by Suhrwardi and his immediate followers such as Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad Shahrzūrī, Sa’d b. Mansūr Ibn Kammūna, and Qutb al-Dīn Shirāzī, who objectify the “unseen” realm as a real, separate realm of existence desgnaed mundus imaginalis (ʾālam al-mithāl). Existence of this “unseen” realm is “proven” by illuminationist knowledge, which is obtained in durationless moments (ānār) of experience, called vision (mushāhada and also mukāshafa) and illumination (ishrāq), or by even strong intuition (hads qawī, hads sarīḥ). Häfez, like the mystics and the Illuminationist philoso-

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41 Ibid., p. 178. “light of God” is among the prevalent Persian poetic metaphors for mystical knowledge (maʿrīfah).
42 Ibid., p. 78. Qazvīnī relates that this poem was a direct result of a dream-vision of Häfez in which “a royal mounted man” (shāhsawār), from whose mount’s hoofs all the way up to the heavens light was emanating, appeared to him, spoke to him, and while feeding him a morsel of light he had taken out of his mouth, told him ‘Rise Häfez! We have granted your wish. Knowledge shall be revealed to you.’ See Qazvīnī, Tadhkāre-ye Maykhāneh, op. cit., p. 87. People of Shiraz mark the very place where Häfez is considered to have had his “visionary” experience. See Dehkhodā, op. cit., p. 120, p. 120, n.5.
43 Enjavā, p. 286. From the qaṣīdeh in praise of Shāh Shujā’.
44 Qazvīnī, Divīn, p. 421.
46 Elsewhere I have discussed the epistemological structure of “intuition” and “vision” (which covers ilḥām, mushāhada, and mukāshafa, as well). See Ziai, Knowledge and Illumination, pp. 155-166.
phers, accepts the objective validity of the unseen. The real and its “secrets” are real. Only pretenders deny them:

مرآ به رنده و عشق آن فضول عيب کند
که اعتراض بر اسرار علم غيب کند

Only one who protests secrets of the unseen,
Will find fault with my love and my wayfaring.

مدعی خواست که آید به تنامشاغه راز
دست غيب آمد و بر سپته یا محرم زد

The pretender thought he could come and gaze upon the secrets.
The “hand” of the unseen world came out and jostled the upstart away.

The real, objectified “unseen” realm may even act to alleviate pain and suffering of the wayfarer:

صبح امید که بد متعکف برده ی غيب
کو برون آی که کار شت پت تار آخر شد

Tell the dawn of hope, which lay attending the unseen,
To rise. The dark night of the soul has passed

Illumination allegories in Iran use “Jamshid’s Cup” as a metaphor for the Active Intellect. Thus to “possess Jamshid’s Cup” is equated with “connection” (ittisāl) or “union” (ittihād) with the Active Intellect. Those who possess the Cup, it is further interpreted, are the ones given divine “inspiration” (iḥām) – in some instances “revelation” (waḥy) – by the angel Gabriel, named Rāvān Bakhsh (dator spiritus) in Persian, and identified with the angel Surūsh of Iranian mythology. Hāfez, like authors of the philosophical allegories, allows potential access by every individual to the Cup – not confined to prophets and mythological Persian kings. The individual in possession of the Cup knows the “secrets of the unseen,” and is to be equated with the ranks of prophet-like divinely inspired poets:

برق غیرت چو چنین می جهد از مکمن غيب
تو بی‌فرما که م مسوخته خرمن چه کلم

Light of divine ardor strikes thus from the hidden unseen.
You tell me, my bounty lost up in flames, what shall I do?

In the poetic metaphor the “unseen” may become manifest in the heart of any subject who, as in the examples below, has come to possess Jamshid’s “world-revealing” Cup:

دل که غيب نمايشت و جام جهاد
زن خانه که مر که غم دارد

Why should a heart, who possesses Jamshid’s Cup and reveals the unseen,
Lament the ephemeral loss of a mere jewel?

If you wish, like Jamshid, to acquire secrets of the unseen, Come and befriend his world revealing cup.

47 Hāfez was well acquainted with the tradition of Islamic philosophy, which by the 14th century was heavily influenced by the Illuminationist tradition. This is well attested by his biographers, who mention the texts he had studied, among them Baydā’i’s Matūli’ al-Anzār fī Tawālī’ al-Anwār (on philosophy, which by that time was commonly designated ikhmat); Qutb al-Dīn Rūdī’s Shahr al-Matūli’ (on logic); Skakki’s Mifās al-Ulūm, as well as many others on Koranic commentary and on the poetic arts. See, Dekhdā, op. cit., p. 117, nn. 6-11. See also Khorraframshahi, op. cit., p. xii, who states that Hāfez was proficient in philosophy; and R. Mozaffari, “Diš-e Falsafi-ye Hāfez [Hāfez’s Philosophical Views], Jahān-e Now, vol. 9, pp. 17-21.
48 Enjāvī, p. 108.
49 Ibid., p. 69.
50 Ibid., p. 83.

51 Ibid., p. 71.
52 Ibid., p. 75.
53 Ibid., p. 145.
So far we have seen that knowledge of the ghayb, while associated with revelation in the Koran, may become manifest through a special process, or means, designated personal revelation, or vision and illumination. But in order to make sense of the epistemological process by which this type of knowledge is obtained we must turn to a philosophical and structural analysis of the phenomenon associated with the poet. The way in which the poet obtains his wisdom, which is then translated by way of a totality—the poem—into an all-encompassing metaphor and continues to unfold as the mythos base for the culture, permeating it totally, can be explained by an intricate epistemological system. Briefly, knowledge is obtained not by the input of sense-data and the extraction of universal principles. Rather, knowledge rests on an intuitive total and prior relation with what the whole is unrestrictedly. The knowing subject, here the poet, has, on certain conditions, direct access to the origin, to the one beyond being, to the Divine Itself. To quote Hâfez on this point:

میان عاشق و معشوق هیچ حایل نیست
تو خواب حجاب خودی حافظ آز میان بر خیز

There is no veil blinding the lover’s vision of the Beloved, Thou art thyself the veil Hâfez! Remove thyself from the midst.

The subject (here the “lover”) comes to know the object (here the “Beloved”) at the moment of encounter between the two barring obstacles of vision. The poet obtains knowledge—translated to “wisdom” in the metalanguage of metaphor—and thus continues to serve as the “link” between the human and the divine, and so keeps open, as it were, the doors of revelation. The “unseen world” continues to “manifest” itself to him until which time he attains such a degree of sagacity that he is designated Lisan al-Ghayb.

Let me now discuss a structure in relation to which this designation, and its basic position in Persian poetic wisdom, may be understood more fully.

The personal experience of truth which underlies the notion of inspiration is a process explained fully in illuminationist philosophy. This process can be used to explain both the poetic experience of Hâfez as well as the epithet Lisan al-Ghayb. It comprises four stages: 1- Praxis: asceticism and other forms of practice including the “poetic” way of life, which serve as preparation for: 2- Visionary experience: this is when the poet becomes existentially “acquainted” with the whole of reality, which leads to: 3- Analysis: discussion, contemplation, and examination of the experience, which in turn finally leads to: 4- Expression: setting to writing results of the first stages through the use of language employing philosophical construction, myth, and poetry. In the last stage, metaphors, signs

54 Ibid., p. 137.
55 The epistemological principle at work here, which in my view is evident in the quoted poem, is called “knowledge by presence” (al-‘ilm al-hudūrī). This principle posits that knowledge of primary things cannot be obtained by the Aristotelian essentialist definition (horos and horismos in the Greek, and al-hadd al-tamm in the Arabic), but is obtained when a knowing subject “sees” (yushāhīd) the manifest, evident (zihir, or musta‘nīr, similar to Husserl’s notion of Evidenz) object in a durationless instant, which results in an “illumination relation” (al-idāfā al-isthārāyda) between the two. I have elsewhere analyzed this principle in detail. See Ziai, Knowledge and Illumination, pp. 137-143.
56 The epistemological characteristic of knowledge based on inspiration is that it is “knowledge by presence,” when as stated by Suhrwardi: yu’ayyad ibn al-bashar bi-rāh qudsī yarīr al-shay’ kāmi‘a huwa. See Ziai, ibid., p. 137.
57 Hâfez is known to have undergone šu‘ī practices. See Qazwini, op. cit., p. 87; H. Amir, “Mara‘īl Tazwīf va ‘A‘dīm-e ‘Irān-e Hāfez” [Šu‘ī stages, and Mystical Sentiments of Hâfez], Nashīr-e Farhang-e Khorasan, vol. 4, no. 3, pp. 35-37; and A. Gulchin Ma‘a‘nī, “Usūd va Mar‘a‘īl-e Khājeh Hāfez” [Hâfez’s Master and Spiritual Guide], Keshvar-e Iran, vol. 19, pp. 23-26. But the point concerning undergoing hardship and pain, akin to a “dark night of the soul,” before visionary experience can best be surmised from his own poems where the metaphor “den of woe” (kalbe-ye azādān) is used. This metaphor is used in three poems, and in each one we observe the view that time spent in the “den of woe” leads to a revelatory experience. See Enjavī, pp. 133, 186, 237.
58 See above n. 41.
59 As exemplified by the use of metaphors such as “study” (dars), “prayer” (du‘ā), “nightly vigil” (wird), etc. throughout the Divān.
60 As exemplified by Hâfez’s own metaphor “Hāfez-poems” (she’-e Hāfez,
and symbols are incorporated in a new mode of expression, which thus form, and so define a special language beyond simple, everyday discourse. Here poetry is considered the highest means by which one may “speak” of the experience, and this is where poetic wisdom reigns. In the technical terminology of illuminationist philosophy such a “poetic” metalanguage is designated Lisān al-Iṣrāʾīl, said to be metaphorical (marrūza) and the highest means for the expression of experiential knowledge. The poet is therefore considered the “tongue,” lisān, (i.e. messenger) through which the essence of the unseen, ghayb, is revealed.

The process of the experience of the wisdom of the unseen and of the subsequent communication in poetic form may by further elaborated in the simplified paradigm of a subject, conscious of self and related to the manifest object. The transition from the subject, to the knowing subject, to the knowing, creating subject, marks the transformation of man as man, to man as poet, whose creative wisdom transcends simple cognizance. This is when the knowing subject enters the realms of power, jabarāt, and the divine, lāhut – equated with the “unseen realm” (ālam al-ghayb) – and obtains the reality of things and is thus transformed into the knowing, creating subject. What are created are finally poems, and as poems they incorporate metaphors for all future individuals to contemplate, from within which they may then, by themselves and in their own eras, unravel the wisdom that will guide them on their own quest for truth and happiness. This is the final distinguishing character of Persian poetry taken as a whole. It is an existential perspective that regards the end of philosophy to be poetry. From this vista, wisdom of the unseen can only be communicated through the poetic medium, and the congenital poetic wisdom thus informs man of his response to his total environment, of the corporeal and of the spiritual, of the ethical and of the political, of the religious and of the mundane. The ensuing perception of reality and of historical process is “constructed” (the Persian she'r sāktan) in a form, in an art-form, at times of a metaphysics, that consciously employs metaphor, symbol, myth, lore and legend.

The consequence is that Persian wisdom is more poetic than philosophical, always more intuitive than discursive. The way then, for example, that Persian poetic wisdom seeks to unravel the mysteries of nature is not by examining the principles of physics (as say, would the Aristotelians) but to look into the metaphysical world and into the realm of myths, dreams, to the phantastic and the sentimental, as do Hāfez, and other majors Persian poets.

The result of the experience of the ghayb may be revelation (wahy sārih), inspiration (iḥām), divine call (nīdāʾ), or true dreams (nīʿā sādiqa). All of these result from the “unseen” becoming manifest through the active imagination affecting the sensus communus, and thus may have an Epiphany that can be actually seen. Just as Prophets have seen Gabriel in varying forms, or have heard a sound from the burning bush, as well as many other such occurrences.

In conclusion, Lisān al-Ghayb can be finally seen as an “activity” on the part of the poet, and not just a superlative attribute. If we consider the realm of the cosmic, of the political processes of history, and the individual being, we can see how Persian poetic wisdom serves as the principle by means of which the cosmic and the human may be connected. The poet serves as the link between the “unseen” realm – the cosmic, the divine – and the human. He is the “tongue of the unseen,” a veritable prophet-like “messenger” figure whose words of wisdom affect everyone from king to pauper.

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which occurs 15 times in the Dīwān, and such attributes as “lucidity,” “power,” and “heavenly expression” are associated with it. The metalanguage, eternal and divine significance of “Hāfez-poems” can best be seen in the following (Enjavī, p. 59):

شمار حافظ در زمان آدم اندار پاغ خلد
دفتر نسیم و کل را زیست ارواق بود

During the time of Adam, in the Garden of Paradise, Hāfez-poems
Adorned the heavenly book of wild roses and hyacinths.