

Al-Qushayri's Fatwa and His *Risālah*: Their Relevance to Intra-Islamic Dialog Today

Kenneth L. Honerkamp

This is an epistle that the indigent one in need of God Most High, Abd al-Karim b. al-Qushayri, has addressed to all the Sufi community in the lands of Islam in the year 437/1045.

— *Al-Risālah al-Qusharīyah*

Abstract

At a time when suicide bombers are targeting Sufi shrines in India and Pakistan and, as stated by Hamid Algar, “some Western scholars and numerous present-day Muslims see Sufism as an extraneous growth owing little to the authoritative sources of Islam or as a sectarian development that occurred at a given point in Islamic history,”¹ the relevance of the fatwa issued in 436/1044 by Abu al-Qasim Abd al-Karim b. Hawazin al-Qushayri (d. 465/1072)²; his famous “Complaint of the People of the Sunna Recounting the Persecution that has Befallen them” = “Complaint,” (*Shikāyat Ahl al-Sunnah bimā Nālahum min al-Miḥna*),³ written in 446/1054; and his Epistle on Sufism (*Al-Risālah al-Qushayrīyah fī ‘Ilm al-Taṣawwuf* = *Risālah*) composed in 437/1045 cannot be stressed enough. His fatwa and subsequent imprisonment and exile from his native city of Nishapur exemplifies the sociopolitical ramifications of what is most commonly assumed to be a pronouncement of a juridical or legal nature. The *Risālah* itself historically demonstrates the existence of a virtue-based ethical discourse of formative Sufism that delineates a strategy for attaining wisdom and an intimate knowledge of God. I will refer to this discourse as being a facet of fatwa founded upon correct comportment (*fatwā akhlāqī*).

Introduction

Al-Qushayri, a pillar of Islamic orthodoxy, was known for his mastery of the multiple fields of hadith narration, Arabic grammar, Shafi'i jurisprudence, speculative theology (*'ilm al-kalām*) and the science of Islamic mystical thought (Sufism). He issued his fatwa at a time when Abu al-Hasan al-Ash'ari (d. 324/935), founder of the Ash'ari school, was being cursed as an unbeliever from the pulpit.⁴ His fatwa affirmed that the theological precepts being taught by this man accorded with the Sunni creed of the Ahl al-Hadith scholars of al-Qushayri's day. His *Risālah* is a lengthy essay composed both for the Sufis of his time as a reminder of Sufism's inherently ethical nature and as a vindication of its authentic Islamic roots (i.e., its foundational principles were drawn from the Qur'an and the Sunnah) for those who doubted its legitimacy.

His fatwa and *Risālah* compliment each other and today offer anyone, both Muslim and non-Muslim seekers of an understanding of the human spirit, a testimony of humanity's timeless spiritual quest and the textual sources and interpretive and analytic methodologies from which it is drawn. They also provide for the scholar of Islam a wealth of biographical information on early Sufis and their teachings, an in-depth analysis of terminology, and intimate discourse on its practices and ethical character. These latter elements played a central role in Islamic society, for they served as the vehicle by which Islam's essential ideals and values were integrated into the cloth of the community's spiritual, intellectual, social, and even political life.

The *Risālah* represents the confluence of two seminal Islamic traditions: (1) the intellectual textual discourse derived from the foundational elements of Islamic spirituality (viz., the Qur'an and the Sunnah) in conjunction with the texts transmitted down the generations by the scholarly elite that was dedicated to preserving and transmitting the Prophetic example within the ummah; and (2) with an oral tradition that was an integral facet of the textual tradition. The *Risālah* includes this oral tradition along with all of the relevant individual chains of transmission (*asnād*). This oral tradition established itself in the early works of Sufism, such as Abu Talib al-Makki's (d. 386/996) *Qūṭ al-Qulūb*, the works of Abu Abd al-Rahman al-Sulami (d. 412/1021), and the manuals of the formative period of Sufi development such as the works of al-Kalabadhi (d. 380/990) and Abu Nasr Abd Allah al-Sarraj (d. 378/988).

This paper will treat the relevance of this confluence and the need to reintroduce the importance of its role in affirming the legitimacy of both perspectives within the context of intra-Islamic discourse today. Toward realizing this goal, I will present and critique the newly translated *Al-Risālah al-Qushayriyah fi 'Ilm al-Taṣawwuf* by Alexander D. Knysh and The Center for Muslim Con-

tribution to Civilization (London: Garnet Publishers, 2007).⁵ I do so in the hope that it might play a central role in initiating a new dialog for those less familiar with the major personalities and mentors of formative Sufism as well as its essential teachings and doctrines.

The Fatwa

In 436/1044, al-Qushayri, the renowned scholar and author of *The Epistle on Sufism (Al-Risālah al-Qushayriyah fī 'Ilm al-Taṣawwuf = Risālah)*, issued a fatwa affirming that the Ahl al-Hadith community of Qushayri's day shared al-Ash'ari's theological perspectives and that they were therefore in complete accordance with Orthodox Sunni Islam. His fatwa, signed by Nishapur's most renowned Shafi'i scholars, stated:

In the name of God the most merciful the Compassionate – The companions of hadith [narration] (*aṣḥāb al-ḥadīth*) agree that Abu al-Hasan Ali b. Isma'il al-Ash'ari was an imam among the imams of the *aṣḥāb al-ḥadīth* and his school (*madhhab*) is the *madhhab* of the *aṣḥāb al-ḥadīth*. He spoke on the foundational precepts of religious thought (*uṣūl al-diyānāt*) following the path of the Ahl al-Sunnah criticizing and responding to those who differed from them among the people of deviation and innovation. He was a drawn sword against the Mu'tazilites and Rafidites (Shi'is in the terminology of the time) and the innovators among the People of the Qiblah as well as against those who have left the community (*al-millat*) [all together]. Whoever defames [his character] (*ta'ana*) or maligns him or curses or reviles him has indeed vilified all the Ahl al-Sunnah. We have written these lines in obedience to this [perspective] on this topic in *Dhu al-Qa'dah* in the year 436. The [truth of the] matter is as stated here (*wa al-amr 'alā hādhihi al-jumlat al-madhkūrat fī hādha al-dhikr*). Written by Abu al-Qasim Abd al-Karim b. Hawazin al-Qushayri.⁶

This fatwa was the result of a controversy that had arisen in Khurasan after the Saljuqs replaced the Ghaznavids in 432/1040. The first Saljuq ruler, Tughril (r. 429/1038-455/1063) at first had good relations with al-Qushayri and the Shafi'i scholars of Nishapur. This state of affairs did not last, however, for, in the words of Algar, "Tughril's minister, Amid al-Mulk al-Kunduri, an adherent of the Hanafi legal school and possibly a Mu'tazilite in theological persuasion gained permission from Tughril to initiate a campaign against the Shi'is (al-Rawafid, in the polemical language of the day) and against "innovators" (Ahl al-Bid'ah). The latter is an imprecise term that seems to have indicated primarily, in this case, the followers of the Ash'ari school of theology."⁷ In Nishapur

the Ash'arī school had come to be identified with the Shaf'i school of jurisprudence. This turned the anti-Ash'ari rhetoric into an equally vehement anti-Shafi'i rhetoric, with the result that the city's Shafi'i scholars lost privileges to teach and preach in the city's principle mosque. This animosity led to Abu al-Hasan al-Ash'ari being reviled as an unbeliever from the city's pulpits. All of the above led al-Qushayri to issue the above fatwa. Note the year was 436/1044, only a year before he penned his *Risālah*, to which we shall soon return.

Despite his outspoken position against this anti-Ash'ari campaign, al-Qushayri continued to teach and give public lectures in Nishapur. This tense state of affairs continued for ten years, until in 446/1054 he composed an open letter to the scholarly community of the Islamic world, complaining of how the Ash'ari-Shafi'i scholars were being harassed in Nishapur: *The Complaint of the People of Sunnah Relating the Persecution that Has Befallen Them* (*Shikāyat Ahl al-Sunnah bimā Nālahum min al-Miḥna*). This epistle raised the issue to a broader audience. In the *Shikāyat* he enumerates and then categorically refutes the main accusations lodged against al-Ash'ari and affirms that the foundation of Ash'ari theology is based upon the Qur'an and Sunnah.

This long delineation of the spurious nature of the anti-Ash'ari arguments brought matters to a head; al-Kuduri ordered al-Qushayri's arrest and imprisonment in the city's citadel. He was soon released, however, when the local Shafi'is stormed the citadel and freed him. After this he made his way to Baghdad, where he was well received by the Abbasid caliph al-Qa'im bi Amir'illah and the scholars of the city. Tughril died in 455/1063, and Alp Arslan ascended to the Saljuq throne. Al-Kunduri was killed and replaced by Nizam al-Mulk, the renowned founder of the Nizāmīya institutions of higher education, perhaps the first university of the medieval world. Nizam al-Mulk was a Shafi'i and, in Algar's words, "sympathetic to Ash'ari theology." Under the new sultan and his minister, the Shafi'is regained their privileges as Nishapur's scholarly elite and al-Qushayri returned and spent the remainder of his life there. He died on Rabī' al-Awwal 16, 465/December 31, 1072 and was buried next to his master Abu Ali al-Daqqaq (d. 412/1021). In a citation attributed to al-Imam Abd al-Ghafir, al-Qushayri was

the absolute Imam (*al-imām muṭlaq*); ... the spokesperson of his era and the authority of his time; God's secret among his creation (*sirru Allāh fi khalqhi*)... one who had combined [knowledge of] the Law (*sharī'ah*) and [knowledge of] Divine reality (*ḥaqīqah*). He was knowledgeable of the foundational principles of religion (*uṣūl*) according the school of al-Ash'ari as he was of the branches (*furū'*) of the religious sciences according to the school of al-Shā'fi.⁸

Al-Qushayri: His Life and Social Context

The above events and the textual record we have of them contextualize the sociopolitical and intellectual environment that both nurtured and defined al-Qushayri and the city in which he lived, studied, taught, and preached. Al-Qushayri himself and his *Risālah* reflect an environment, established well before his own time, that resonated with what Laury Silvers has termed Ahl al-Hadith culture, a culture known

for taking the position that one should settle ethical, legal, or theological matters by referring to already established principles transmitted from the Prophet through his companions and their followers . . . and thus [establishing] a common culture of authority grounded in a perceived continuity between the Prophet's community and their own.⁹

This continuity was a measure of the authenticity of all the fields of intellectual discourse of those times. We thus find al-Qushayri, who addressed his *Risālah* to “all the Sufi community of the lands of Islam,” was himself a pillar of Islamic orthodoxy, known for his mastery of the multiple fields of hadith narration, Shafī'i jurisprudence (*fiqh*) and speculative theology (*ilm al-kalām*), and as an initiate to the science of Islamic mystical thought, or Sufism. In al-Qushayri's times, as we have seen, theological discourses directly impacted the sociopolitical atmosphere, legal schools were vying for adherents, and, as Ahmet Karamustafa has stated, “the temptation to process Sufi thought with the new tools of *kalām* and *fiqh* in order to develop a theologically and legally savvy form of Sufism was too irresistible.”¹⁰ These tools are evident in the *Risālah* and we find that al-Qushayri, just a generation after al-Sulami (one of his mentors), employed them eloquently and in a masterful fashion to compose the work that would come to assume, as Karamustafa puts it, “canonical status for most later Sufis and observers of Sufism alike.”¹¹

There is a tendency today to compartmentalize Islamic discourse into the realms of jurisprudence, theology, and mystical ethics (Sufism). Those who study jurisprudence and theology often neglect seminal Sufi works on the grounds that its roots are often derived from their authors' personal experience or as being contextualized within a dated historical ambience. Yet the training and expertise that al-Qushayri brought to bear in his works and the legacy he left testify to his roots in hadith narration and collection, Shafī'i jurisprudence, and Ash'ari *kalām*. Three of the builders of Ash'ari *kalām* served as his mentors¹²: Abu Bakr Muhammad ibn al-Hasan ibn Furak (d. 406/1015), Abu Ishaq al-Isfārayni (d. 418/1027), and the Maliki Abu Bakr al-Baqillani (d. 403/1013).

Under them, al-Qushayri became one of the best known among the Shafi'i-Ash'ari faction of Nishapur, which explains why, along with Abu al-Ma'ali al-Juwayni (d. 478/1085-6), he was persecuted during 445/1053 and 456/1064.

Another key aspect of comprehending the person of al-Qushayri and his participation in the full intellectual discourse of his day is his legacy, namely, his writings. Algar orients these works within his lifetime: "He seems to have been conscious of their value himself, for he employed a number of scribes to copy them under his supervision and used them as texts in many of the classes he taught." Not all his works have reached us today; however, the majority of what has survived is available in print. Along with the *Risālah*, these are:

- *Laṭā'if al-Ishārāt bi Tafsīr al-Qur'ān*, a multi-volume commentary of Sufi exegesis begun in 437/1045.¹³
- *Sharḥ li Asmā' Allāh al-Ḥusnā*, an elucidation of the 99 names of God and the mystical-ethical facet of each name as it impacts personal piety and practice.¹⁴
- *Al-Taḥbīr fī al-Tadhkīr Sharḥ Asmā' Allāh al-Ḥusnā*, a similar work.
- *Kitāb al-Mi'rāj*, a work on the hadith and meaning of the Prophet's ascension and its relationship to the nature of sanctity in Islam.¹⁵
- *Al-Rasā'il al-Qushayriyah*, including three short treatises: *Shikāyat Ahl al-Sunnah bimā Nālahum min al-Miḥna* (already mentioned), *Tarṭīb al-Sulūk* (al-Qushayri's own guide to the traveler on the Sufi path), and *Kitāb al-Samā'* (on the Sufi practice of audition).
- *Al-Fuṣūl fī al-Uṣūl* and *Luma' fī al-I'tiqād*, two short dogmatic works of Ash'ari *kalām* edited by Richard Frank in *Mélanges* (1982), 15:53-74 and (1983) 16:59-75.
- *Naḥwa al-Qulūb*, which exists in two editions, the major (*al-Kabīr*) and the minor (*al-Ṣaghīr*), is a Sufi commentary on the rules of Arabic grammar.

Another facet to our understanding of al-Qushayri and his *Risālah* was the existence in Nishapur of jurist-Sufis like Abu Sahl al-Su'luki and traditionalist-Sufis like Abu Abd al-Rahman al-Sulami, who had already contributed to the understanding of Sufism within the aforementioned ambience of Ahl al-Hadith culture. Nishapur, the capital of Khurasan, was known from early times to be the home of such training masters as Hamdun al-Qassar (d. 271/884-85) and Abu Hafs al-Haddad (d. c. 265/878-79) and his disciple Abu Uthman al-Hiri of the Malamatiyah.¹⁶ The Malamatis represented the city's major mystical-ethical school and held the lower soul (*nafs*) in constant suspicion. According to Karamustafa, "unless the *nafs* was controlled it would

inevitably waylay the pious believer through self-conceit (*'ujb*), pretense (*iddi'a'*), and hypocrisy (*riyā'*) and would thus prevent the believer from reaching his true goal, which was the achievement of sincere, selfless devotion to God (*ikhlas*).¹⁷ They therefore avoided any public display of pious or praiseworthy works. This orientation of the early Malamatiyah teaching masters imparted to Khurasan and Nishapur a reputation for sincerity. Al-Junayd (d. 297/910), known as the “Leader of the Folk,” testified to this trait: “Chivalry is in Syria, eloquence is in al-Iraq, and sincerity is in Khurasan.”

All of the above traits led Nishapur to be known as a center of formative Sufism. Here, the young al-Qushayri frequented the foremost scholars of his days in hadith, Shafi'i jurisprudence, and speculative theology (*'ilm al-kalām*). In this political, cultural, and intellectual center of Khurasan he also encountered and became the disciple of the renowned Sufi masters (shaykh) Abu Ali al-Hasan al-Daqqaq (d. 412/1021) and Abu Abd al-Rahman al-Sulami (d. 421/1021). The *Risālah* is thus a composite work that reflects a multi-faceted reality of intellectual discourse, of oral and textual tradition, and thus portrays in an intimate and personal manner Sufism's central role in Islamic society as the vehicle by which Islam's essential ideals and values were integrated into the cloth of the community's spiritual, intellectual, social, and political life. On the importance of the *Risālah*'s composite nature as being a key to its enduring nature, Karamustafa aptly remarks:

This happy marriage between Sufism and legal-theological scholarship is the hallmark of the Treatise, and Qushayri's harmonious packaging of the two modes of learning and piety, along with his overall reputation among scholars (that is due, at least in part, to the persecution he suffered) as well as the astute inclusion of biographical notices into his survey of Sufism, goes a long way to explaining the Treatise's enduring popularity.¹⁸

Then, from another and perhaps a more academic perspective, one could say as well that Qushayri's *Risālah* will remain an essential reference work for scholars and students of Sufism and Islamic thought and theology, Muslim and non-Muslim alike; Sufi adepts and all those with an interest in “the great spiritual current present in all religions.”¹⁹

Al-Risālat al-Qushayriyah

In the light of the above, the *Risālah* is best understood as a lengthy manual or a missive based upon the fatwa tradition and, as fatwas are, intended for the benefit of the Muslim community as a whole. However, it surpassed the theo-

logical argumentation that had elicited his earlier fatwa, introduced at the beginning of this paper, as well his *Shikāyat Ahl al-Sunnah*. In his defense of Ash'ari and the Ash'ari school, Qushayri addressed the waywardness of his co-religionists and the corrupt attitudes that had afflicted them due to the divisive nature of their discourse. He wrote the first fatwa to meet the perceived need to correct error and, in so doing, to reaffirm ethical rectitude within the framework of the Muslim community as a whole. In the *Risālah* written in 437/1072, just a year after the fatwa, during a period of great trial and social upheaval, Qushayri issued, as it were, a mystical-ethical fatwa (*fatwā akhlāqī*), employing the format of a manual that, owing to its length, must have been in preparation well in advance of its completion date. This perception broadens our historical understanding of the term fatwa as going beyond any purely legal discourse. Qushayri composed his work at a time when "true Sufis" had become nearly extinct and Sufism was misunderstood among both its initiates and the Muslim community. The *Risālah* was therefore composed to rectify this misunderstanding and to affirm, while interpreting, Sufism's validity in light of the Qur'an and the Hadith literature. Its nature as a missive to the ummah is clear in the author's introduction:

Since our age keeps bringing only more and more difficulties and the majority of our compatriots continue to adhere stubbornly to their ways ... I have begun to fear that the hearts of men might think that this whole affair [Sufism] from the very beginning rested upon all those [faulty] foundations and its early adherents followed the same corrupt habits. So I have composed this epistle for you ... that [it] might strengthen the followers.²⁰

The *Risālah*, however, was written with a dual purpose: to remind Sufis of the authentic ancestral tradition and to vindicate Sufism against those who doubted its legitimacy. This aspect and its relevance today is the most important facet of this work's relevance to Muslim intra-faith dialog for, as Algar points out: "Sufis, however, were not the only intended audience of the book; al-Qushayri was also concerned to demonstrate to all the *shar'ī* appropriateness of distinctive Sufi practices (such as *samā'*) and to show that the creed of the Sufis was identical to that of the Ahl al-Sunnah (in its Ash'ari formulation)."²¹ The author's introduction therefore concentrates on explaining the Sufis' beliefs concerning the fundamentals of religion (pp. 4-14) and the Sufis' creed, stressing their perception of divine unity (*tawhīd*) and the relation of the divine attributes to the divine Essence (pp. 14-16). All of the narrations in the *Risālah* are provided complete with chains of transmission (*asnād*). In order to elucidate Qushayri's style and familiarize

readers with this work's key facets, I will cite narrative examples from the text itself employing the translation of Alexander Knysh, unless otherwise noted.

In his introduction, Qushayri discusses the varying categories of knowledge. Among the scholars he draws upon are Abu al-Tayyib al-Maraghi, whose narration he cites from Abu Abd al-Rahman al-Sulami:

Muḥammad b. al-Husayn told me: I heard Muhammad b. Abd Allah al-Razi say: I heard Abu al-Tayyib al-Maraghi say: "To the intellect (*'aql*), belongs argumentative proof, to wisdom (*ḥikmah*) allegorical allusion and to intimate knowledge of God (*ma'rifah*), direct witnessing. The intellect demonstrates, wisdom alludes, and *ma'rifah* witnesses directly the fact that the purest acts of worship can only be attained by the purest belief in God's oneness.²²

He in this narration on *al-tawḥīd*, citing al-Junayd as the source, states:

Someone asked al-Junayd about God's oneness. He answered: Rendering God one by realizing fully His unity through the perfection of His uniqueness (*infirād*), that is, that He is the one and only, Who has not begotten and has not been begotten (Q. 112:3) who has no opponents, rivals, likes, without likening Him [to created things], without asking, how [He is], without representing Him as an image or form, in accordance with [the verse] He has no likeness, He is the Hearing, the Seeing (Q. 42:11).²³

The introduction's final section deals with the Sufis' beliefs as derived from dispersed and collected saying of the masters of the path, as well as their books, reads much like a short overview of Ash'ari theological text.

God Most High – praise be to Him – is existent, eternal, one, wise, powerful, knowing, overpowering, compassionate, willing, hearing, glorious, exalted, speaking, seeing, proud, strong, living, one, everlasting and self-sustaining (Al-Ṣamad).

He knows by [His] knowledge; He is powerful by [His] power; He wills by [His] will; He sees by [His] sight; He speaks by [His] speech; He lives by [His] life; He is everlasting by [His] everlastingness. He has two hands, which are His attributes and with which He creates whatever He wishes and gives it specific form. He has a face. The attributes of His essence are unique to it. One must not say that they are He or that they are not He. They are [His] eternal attributes and [His] everlasting properties. He is unique in His essence. He is not similar to any created thing, nor is any created thing similar to Him. He is neither a body, nor a substance, nor an accident....²⁴

Chapter 1, “On the Masters of this path and their deeds and sayings that show how they uphold the Divine Law (*al-Sharī'a*)” (pp. 17-74), is a concise presentation of the biographies and sayings of eighty-three early Sufi mentors from the first generation up to al-Qushayri's time. Their presence testifies to the reality of an ongoing oral tradition and that Sufism never lost its oral quality as a narrative of its founders' teachings that gave rise to it originally and those who came after them.²⁵ It is this originality that we encounter in the *Risālah*'s narratives that affirms Sufism's centrality as a living oral tradition resonating with the textual tradition of Islamic scholarship. The following examples will present a succinct overview of the biographical style al-Qushayri employs in this oral tradition.

Abu Naṣr Bishr b. al-Ḥārith al-Ḥāfi (c. 152-227/c.766-841)

He came from the city of Marw. He lived in Baghdad, where he died. He was a son of Ali bin Khashram's sister. He died in the year 227/842. He was a man of great stature. The following [episode] became the reason for his repentance. He found on the road a small piece of paper upon which was written the name of God – may He be exalted. This sheet was trampled upon [by passer-bys]. He picked it up, purchased a dirham-worth of perfume, sprinkled the sheet with it and put it in the crack of a wall. Then he saw a dream as if someone told him, “O Bishr, you perfumed My name and I will perfume yours in this world and the next!”

I heard my teacher Abu Ali al-Daqqāq – may God have mercy on him – say: “Bishr was passing by a group of people who said, ‘This man does not sleep all night and he breaks his fast only once in three days.’ On hearing this, Bishr began to cry. When someone asked him why, he said: ‘Verily, I do not remember ever saying that I keep vigil during the entire night. Nor have I said that after fasting during the day I do not break my fast at night. However, God, in His kindness and graciousness, has revealed to the hearts [of the people] more than His servant actually does – may He be blessed.’

I heard Shaykh Abu Abd al-Raḥmān al-Sulami say: I heard Muḥammad b. ‘Abdallāh al-Rāzi say: I heard Abd al-Raḥmān b. Abi Hātim say: I came to know that Bishr b. al-Ḥārith al-Ḥāfi said: “In a dream I saw the Prophet – may peace and blessings be upon him! He asked me: ‘Bishr, do you know why God has raised you above your contemporaries?’ I said: ‘I do not, Messenger of God.’ He said: ‘[It is due to] your following my Sunna, your service to the righteous, your admonition of your brothers [in faith] and your love of my Companions and my family. This is what brought you to the stations of the most pious men.’”²⁶

Among the biographies included in this chapter are:

Abu Ishaq Ibrahim b. Adham b. Mansur

Abu al-Fayd Dhu al-Nun al-Misri (d. 245/859)

Abu Ali al-Fudayl b. 'Iyad (d. 187/803)

Abu Mahfuz Ma'ruf b. Fayruz al-Karhi (d. 200/816)

Abu al-Hasan al-Sari b. al-Mughallis al-Saqati (d.257/865)

Abu Abd Allah al-Harith al-Muhasibi (d. 243/857)

Abu Ali Shaqiq b. Ibrahim al-Balkhi

Abu Yazid b. Tayfur b. 'Isa al-Bistami (d. 261/875)

He concludes this section:

Here I have mentioned some of the masters of this community in order to show that all of them have a great respect for the Divine Law (*shari'a*), that they are committed to the paths of spiritual discipline, that they follow unswervingly the Prophet's Sunnah and that they never neglect a single religious rule. They all agree that whoever is remiss in the rules of proper conduct (*adab*) or in striving for perfection and does not build his or her life on scrupulous piety and fear of God lies before God in whatever he claims. Such a person is deluded. Not only has he perished himself, but also he has caused to perish those who were deluded by his lies.

Chapter 2, "An Explanation of the Expressions used by this [Sufi] Community and of their difficulties" (pp. 75-119), introduces the concept of a specific terminology for each science and the necessity for defining and elucidating each term within the context of its area of discourse. He writes:

It is well known that each group of scholars has its own terms which it employs within its own field. These terms are unique to each group, which has agreed on them for its purposes, namely, (1) to bring these terms closer to the understanding of those to whom they are addressed, and (2) by articulating them, to help people of this science to better comprehend their meaning.

The people of this community [the Sufis] use these terms among themselves with the goal of unveiling their meaning to one another, achieving concision and concealing them from those who disagree with their method, so that the meaning of their words would be hidden from outsiders. They have done so to protect their mysteries from being spread among those to whom they do not belong. For their realities cannot be collected by self-exertion or acquired by any deliberate action. They are subtle meanings that God deposits directly into the hearts of [His] folk, [after He has] prepared their innermost selves for [the reception of] these realities.

By this explanation we intend to facilitate the understanding of the meaning of these terms by those who want to follow their path and their custom.²⁷

For example he explains the term *waqt* (moment) saying:

I heard that the master Abu Ali al-Daqqaq – may God have mercy on him – said: “The moment is what you are in [now]. If you are in this world, then your moment is in this world. If you are in the Hereafter, then your moment is in the Hereafter. If you are in joy, then your moment is in joy. If you are in sorrow, then your moment is in sorrow.” By this he meant that a moment is a state that dominates a person.

The Sufis say: “The Sufi is the son of the moment (*al-waqt*).” They mean that he engages in the worship that is most appropriate for his current situation and performs what is required of him at this moment in time. It is said that the *faqīr* (the aspirant on the path) does not care about his past and future. All that matters for him is the moment in which he is now. Therefore, they say: “Anyone who preoccupies himself with the past moment wastes another moment.”²⁸

On the *nafs*, (ego-self) he writes:

In the Arabic language, a thing's *nafs* is its being. However, when the Sufis utter the word *nafs* they imply neither being nor a physical body. Rather, they imply the deficiencies of one's character traits as well as one's reprehensible morals and acts. The deficiencies of one's character traits fall into two categories: first, those which one acquires by oneself – namely, one's acts of disobedience and one's sins; second one's [inherent] base morals. They are blameworthy in and of themselves. However, when a man seeks to treat them and fight them, these blameworthy traits are extinguished in him through a strenuous and uninterrupted effort.²⁹

He defines twenty-nine terms in all. Historically speaking, these terms are not found in the traditional works of Islamic jurisprudence (*fiqh*) and Qushayri's exposition in the *Risālah*, though not the first, is among earliest examples we have of a glossary for Sufism. It should be remembered, however, that he is narrating from a pre-existent scholarly tradition that had evolved with the circles of Sufi initiates during the generations prior to Qushayri's generation. These terms include *waqt* (the present moment), *maqām* (a spiritual station), *ḥāl* (a spiritual state), *qabḍ* (contraction) and *baṣṭ* (expansion), *haybah* (awe) and *uns* (intimacy), *jam'* (collectedness) and *farq* (separation), *fanā'* (annihilation) *baqā'* (subsistence), *'ilm al-yaqīn* (certain knowledge), *'ayn al-yaqīn*

(essential certainty), *ḥaqq al-yaqīn* (the truth of certainty), *qurb* (proximity), *bu'd* (distance), *maḥw* (erasure), and *ithbāt* (affirmation).

Having defined *maqām* (station on the path to the intimate knowledge of God) in the previous section, Qushayri begins chapter 3, “The Stations of the Path (*maqāmāt*)” (pp.111-339), the longest and most detailed chapter with a detailed list and description of the various stations, beginning with repentance. It helps to recall again that historically speaking the discourse contained in this chapter is not to be found in the traditional works of Islamic jurisprudence (*fiqh*), nor does it originate from Qushayri himself. Among the stations he treats in this chapter are *mujāḥad* (striving), *khalwah* (spiritual retreat), ‘*uzlah* (seclusion), *taqwā* (God wariness), *zuhd* (renunciation), *ṣamt* (maintaining silence), *khawf* (fear), *rajā’* (hope), *ḥuzn* (sorrow), *khushū’* (awe before God), *tawāḍu’* (humility), *qanā’ah* (sufficiency), *tawakkul* (trust in God), *yaqīn* (certainty), and *ikhhlāṣ* (sincerity).

He finishes the *Risālah* with individual sections on:

- How God protects the hearts of the path’s shaykhs and on the necessity of not opposing them (pp. 339-42).
- The Sufi practice of audition (*samā’*) (pp. 342-57)
- The miracles of God’s friends (*awliyā’*) (pp. 357-92)
- The vision of the Sufis (*ru’yat al-qawm*) (392-403)
- Spiritual advice for Sufi aspirants on the path (*waṣīyah li al-murīd*) (pp. 403-16).

Among his advice to the aspirants is that they should not ascribe infallibility to Sufi masters. Instead, they should concede their states to them, think well of them, and observe the limits set by God Most High in everything that the master instructs them to do. This is sufficient for them in distinguishing right from wrong.

Conclusion

The *Risālah al-Qushayriyah fi ‘Ilm al-Taṣawwuf* dates from Islam’s classical period and is the product of a wide reaching intellectual discourse that comprised all of the fields of the Islamic intellectual pursuits of the time. It was written at a time of sociopolitical turmoil, when the Islamic community had separated into factions due to differing opinions along juridical, theological, and creedal and/or ideological lines – not unlike the situation today among a large segment of the community. The *Risālah* contextualizes for us the im-

portance of maintaining intra-Muslim dialog along the broadest possible lines, which means that no areas of traditional discourse, including new ones, should be excluded. A careful study of it and its author's life and times will help us understand some of the following points.

1. *Iftā'* and fatwa are not the sole domain of jurists.
2. The domain of fatwa extends beyond matters of jurisprudence and legal discourse.
3. A given fatwa's relevance may extend beyond its individual socio-historical context. For example, the *Risālah* was addressed to all Sufis in the lands of Islam.
4. Theological and juridical discourse played an integral role in the formulation of what we know and understand of classical Sufism today.
5. The *Risālah* can be read as a virtue-based ethical fatwa (*fatwā akhlāqī*) that affirms and elucidates that Sufism is not an extraneous aspect of "mainstream Islam" that owes little to the authoritative sources of Islamic intellectual discourse or a sectarian development that occurred at a given point in Islamic history.
6. The *Risālah* testifies to a living oral tradition throughout the generations prior to its composition in 446/1054, in which the ethics of virtue was seen as a means to radically transform oneself.

Although Knysh's translation leaves something to be desired, particularly for the Arabist, but on the whole it is complete and faithful to the original text in form and content.³⁰ It reads very well and renders accessible, in its tone and content, this seminal work of formative Sufism to a broader audience than ever before.

Endnotes

1. See Hamid Algar's introduction to *Principles of Sufism* by al-Qushayri, translated from the Arabic by B. R. von Schlegell (Mizan Press: Berkeley, 1990) i-xvii.
2. Preserved in Subki, *Ṭabaqāt*, ed. Hulw and al-Tanahi (Cairo: 1386/1967), iii, 374; and in Ibn al-Asakir's (d. 571/1175) *Ṭabyīn Kidhb al-Futarī fī mā Nusiba ilā al-Imām Abī al-Ḥasān al-Ash'arī* (Damascus: 1347/1928), 113.
3. Subki, *Ṭabaqāt*, 399-423; Ibn al-Asakir in an abridged version, 109-10; and in a separate edition by Muhammad Hasan in *Al-Rasā'il al-Qushayrīyah* (Karachi: 1384/1964), 1-49.
4. Algar, *Principles of Sufism*, vi.

5. Abu al-Qasim al-Qushayri, *Al-Qushayri's Epistle on Sufism (Al-Risālah al-Qushayriyah fī 'Ilm al-Taṣawwuf)*, tr. Alexander D. Knysh (London: Garnet Publishers, 2007).
6. In Subki, *Ṭabaqāt*, iii, 374.
7. Algar, *Principles of Sufism*, vi.; also see H. Halm, "Der Wesir al-Kunduri und die Fitna von Nishapur," *Die Welt des Orients* (1971), 2:205-33.
8. Shaykh Abd al-Halim Mahud in his critical edition of the *Risālah Qushayriyah*. "This state of affairs ended with al-Qushayri because he became, in the words of Imam Abd ul-Ghafir, the absolute imam (*al-imām al-mutlāqan*), jurist (*al-faqīh*), theologian (*al-mutakallim*), legist (*al-uṣūlī*), the interpreter of the Qur'an (*al-mufasssir*), a man of letters (*al-adīb*), grammarian (*al-naḥwī*), writer/poet (*al-kātib al-shā'ir*), the master of his time (*lisān 'aṣrihu wa sayyid waqtihi*), God's secret among His creation (*sirr Allāh bayn khalqihī*), the axis of reality (*mudār al-ḥaqīqah*), source of happiness (*'ayn al-sa'ādah*), the pole of masterhood (*quṭub al-siyādah*), one who joined the Shari'ah and the Truth (*man jama'a bayn al-Sharī'ah wa al-ḥaqīqah*). He was knowledgeable in the foundations of the Ash'ari creed and in the branches of the Shafi'i school of thought."
9. L. Silvers, *A Soaring Minaret: Abu Bakr al-Wasiti and the Rise of Baghdadi Sufism* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2010), 2.
10. Ahmet T. Karamustafa, *Sufism: The Formative Period* (Edinburgh, UK: Edinburgh University Press, 2007), 97.
11. Ibid.
12. Al-Qushayri not only studied but also composed the two short compendiums of Ash'ari *kalām*. See Richard Frank, "Two Short Dogmatic Works of Abu al-Qasim al-Qushayri" ("Al-Fuṣūl fī al-Uṣūl and Luma' fī al-I'tiqād") in *Mélanges* 15 (1982): 53-74 and 16 (1983): 59-36.
13. Published in Cairo, 1981 (2d ed.) ed. Ibrahim Basyuni in three volumes.
14. Published in Beirut, 2006, ed. 'Asim Ibrahim al-Kiyali.
15. Published in Cairo, 1384/1968 ed. Ali Hasan Abd al-Qadir.
16. For the Malamatiyah see: *EP*, art. "MALĀMATIYYA," Fr. de Jong, Hamid Algar, and Colin Imber; Abdūlbākī Gölpınarlı, *Melāmīlik ve Melāmīler* (Istanbul: Devlet Matbaası, 1931); al-Sulamī, *Risālat al-Malāmīyah*, ed. Abu al-Ala al-Afīfī (Cairo: Dar Ihya' al-Kutub al-Arabiyyah, 1945); Sara Sviri, "Hakīm Tirmidhī and the Malāmī Movement," in *Classical Persian Sufism: From Its Origins to Rumi*, ed. Leonard Lewis (London: Khaniqahī Nimatullahi Publications, 1993), 583-613; Fritz Meier, "Khurasān and the End of Classical Sufism," in *Essays in Islamic Mysticism and Piety*, trans. John O'Kane and Berndt Radke (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 2000), 215-217; Alexander, Knysh, *Islamic Mysticism: A Short History* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 2000), 94-99; Hakim Tirmidhi, *Kitāb Ithbāt al-'Ilal*, ed. Khalid Zahra (Rabat: Muhammad V University, 1998), 24-25; also see the collected presentations from the International Conference on the Malamatiyya and Bayrami Orders held in Istanbul in June, 1987 in *Melāmīs-Bayrāmīs*, ed. N. Clayer, A. Popovic, and T. Zarccone (Istanbul: Les Editions Isis, 1998). For

a recent analysis of the Malamatiyyah and their role within the context of formative Sufism, see Ahmet T. Karamustafa, *Sufism: The Formative Period* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2007), citations throughout the work.

17. Karamustafa, *Sufism*, 49.
18. *Ibid.*, 99.
19. Annemarie Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina, 1975) 4.
20. *Al-Qushayri's Epistle on Sufism*, 3
21. Algar, *Principles of Sufism*, xi.
22. *Al-Risālah*, 5.
23. *Ibid.*, 5-6.
24. *Ibid.*, 14-15.
25. One day in the souq of Marrakech, Morocco I encountered my respected friend, Sidi Ahmad Rabwabzi, who was among the more Salafi-oriented scholars of Marrakech, in his shop reading Abu Talib al-Makki's *Qūt al-Qulūb*. I asked him about this, and he said that in *Qūt al-Qulūb* there was the knowledge of the Companions of the Prophet – May the Peace and Blessing of God be upon him - (*ilm al-Ṣaḥābah*).
26. *Al-Risālah*, 25-26.
27. *Ibid.*, 75.
28. *Ibid.*, 75-76.
29. *Ibid.*, 109.
30. Several translations of Qushayri's *Risālah* appeared before the translation under discussion, such as von Schlegell's translation of al-Qushayri, *Principles of Sufism* (Mizan Press: Berkeley, 1990). He translated only chapter 3: "The Stations of the Path (*maqāmāt*).” Four sections not pertaining to states and stations were omitted: ("The Rules of Travel" and "Companionship" (*ṣuḥbah*). The translation, therefore, goes from "Correct Behavior" (*adab*) to "Gnosis." In addition, the sections of "Backbiting" and "Envy" are included under the main heading "Failing of the self." The chains of transmission have been omitted; only the final narrator is cited. Von Schlegell's translation is accurate, eloquent, and reads well, but is not annotated. Algar's introduction contextualizes the *Risālah*'s place in Islamic scholarship and provides a concise biography of al-Qushayri and his works. Rabia Harris, *Sufi Book of Spiritual Ascent (Al-Risālah al-Qushayriyah)*, ed. Laleh Bakhtiar (ABC International Group, Inc., 1997). This is a translation of chapter 3, "The Stations of the Path (*maqāmāt*)," excluding "The Rules of Travel" and "Companionship" (*ṣuḥbah*). Only the first and final narrators are mentioned in the chains of transmission. Harris' translation is accurate and reads well, but is not annotated. Rabia Harris, *The Risālah: Principles of Sufism*, ed. Laleh Bakhtiar (Great Books of the Islamic World, Inc., 2002). This complete translation contains a lengthy introduction by the translator and a forward by Seyyed Hossein Nasr. It cites the first and final narrators of each narration and, in the notes at the end of the translation, provides the missing links for each chain. The translation is well done and accurate.

Bibliography

- Badur, Bassam Muhammad. *Tahdhīb al-Asrār fī Uṣūl al-Taṣawwuf*. Critical edition and notes by Abu Sa'd al-Kharqushi. Abu Dhabi: Isdarat al-Majma' al-Tamami, 1999.
- Böwering, Gerhard. "Two Early Sufi Manuscripts." *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam* 31, 2006.
- . *Abū Khalaf al-Ṭabarī: The Comfort of the Mystics (Salwat al-Ārifīna wa uns al-Muṣṭāqīn)*. Critical edition and notes with Bilal Orfali. Leiden: E. J. Brill, 2013.
- Bulliet, Richard. *The Patricians of Nishapur: A Study in Medieval Islamic Social History*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1972.
- . *Islam: The View from the Edge*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1994.
- Chabbi, Jacqueline. "Remarques sur le développement historique des mouvements ascétiques et mystiques au Khurasan." *Studia Islamica* 57, 1997.
- Chodkiewicz, Michel. *Le Sceau des Saints: Prophétie et sainteté dans la doctrine d'Ibn Arabī*. Paris: Gallimard, 1989.
- Frank, T. "Taṣawwuf is ...; On a Type of Mystical Aphorism." *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 104, no. 1, 1984.
- Ghamari, Abu 'Aṣim Nabil b. Hashim b. Abd Allah, al-. *Manāḥil al-Shifā wa Manāḥil al-Ṣafā bi Ṭahqīq Kitāb Sharaf al-Muṣṭafā* (with critical ed. and notes). Makkah: Dār al-Basha'ir al-Islamiyyah, 2003.
- Godlas, Alan. "Influences of al-Qushayri's *Laṭā'if al-Ishārāt* on Sufi Qur'anic Commentaries, Particularly Rūzbaihān al-Baqlī's 'Arā'is al-Bayān.'" *Journal of Sufi Studies* 2, no. 1, 2013.
- Gölpinarlı, Abdülbākī. *Melāmīlik ve Melāmīler*. Istanbul: Devlet Matbaası, 1931.
- Grandin, Nicole and Gaborieau, Marc (dirs.). *Madrasa: La Transmission du Savoir dans le Monde Musulman*. Paris: Éditions Argument, 1997.
- Gril, Denis. "Adab and Revelation, or One of the Foundations of the Hermeneutics of Ibn 'Arabī." In *Muhyiddin Ibn 'Arabī: A Commemorative Volume*. Edited by Stephen Hirtenstein. Rockport: Element, 1993.
- Halm, H. "Der Wesir al-Kundurī und die Fitna von Nishapur." *Die Welt des Orients* 2, 1971.
- Ibn al-Asakir. *Tabyīn Kidhb al-Futarī fī mā Nusiba ilā al-Imām Abī al-Ḥasān al-Ash'arī*. Damascus: 1347/1928.
- Ibn 'Ajība, Ahmed. *Mi'rāj al-Tashawwuf ilā Ḥaqā'iq al-Taṣawwuf*. Edited by Abd al-Majid Khayālī, Casablanca: Markaz al-Turath al-Thaqfī al-Maghribī, 2004.
- . *Kitāb Sharḥ Ṣalāt al-Quṭb Ibn Mashīsh*. Edited by Abd al-Salam al-'Imrānī. Casablanca: Dar al-Rashad al-Hadithah, 1999.
- Isfahani, Abu Nu'aym, al-. *Hilyat al-Awliyā'*. Edited by Mustafa Abd al-Qadir 'Ata. Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyya, 1997.
- Kalabadhi, Abū Bakr Muḥammad Ishāq, al-. *Al-Ta'arruf li Madhāhib Ahl al-Taṣawwuf*. Edited by Ahmad Shams al-Din. Beirut: Dar al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyyah, 1993.

- Karamustafa, Ahmet T. *Sufism: The Formative Period*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh Univ. Press, 2007.
- Kharqushi, Abu Sa'ūd, al-. *Kitāb Sharaf al-Muṣṭafā*. Critical edition and notes by Abu 'Asim Nabil b. Hashim b. Abd Allah al-Ghamari. Makkah: Dar al-Basha'ir al-Islamiyyah, 2003.
- . *Tahdhīb al-Asrār fī Uṣūl al-Taṣawwuf*. Critical ed. and notes by Bassām Muḥammad Badur. Abu Dhabi: Isdarat al-Majma' al-Tamami, 1999.
- Knysh, Alexander, *Islamic Mysticism: A Short History*, Leiden: E. J. Brill, 2000.
- . (trans. and notes). *Al-Qushayri's Epistle on Sufism (Al-Risālah al-Qushayriyah fī 'Ilm al-Taṣawwuf)*. London: The Center for Muslim Contribution to Civilization, Garnet Publishers, 2007.
- Lorry, Joseph E. (dir.). *Law and Education in Medieval Islam: Studies in Memory of Professor George Makdisi*. London: Gibb Memorial Trust, 2004.
- Makdisi, George. *Rise of the Colleges: Institutions of Learning in Islam and the West*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1981.
- Makki, Abu Talīb, al-. *Qūt al-Qulūb fī Mu'āmalat al-Maḥbūb wa Waṣf Ṭarīq al-Murīd ilā Maqām al-Tawḥīd*. Edited by Sa'id Nasib Makarim. Beirut: Dar Sadr, 1995.
- "MALĀMATIYYA." *EP*, art. Fr. de Jong, Hamid Algar, and Colin Imber.
- Malamud, Margaret. "Sufi Organizations and Structures of Authority in Medieval Nishapur." *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 26, 1994.
- Meier, Fritz. "Khurasān and the End of Classical Sufism." In *Essays in Islamic Mysticism and Piety*. Translated by John O'Kane and Berndt Radke. Leiden: E. J. Brill, 2000.
- Nguyen, Martin. "Al-Taḥfīr al-Kabīr: An Investigation of al-Qushayrī's Major Qur'ān Commentary." *Journal of Sufi Studies* 2, no. 1. 2013.
- . "Al-Qushayrī and His Legacy." *Journal of Sufi Studies* 2, no. 1. 2013.
- Nicholson, R. A. *Kitāb al-Luma' fī al-Taṣawwuf*. Critical edition and notes by Abu Nasr Abd Allah b. Ali al-Sarraj al-Tusi. London: Luzac & Co., 1914.
- Orfali, Bilal. *The Comfort of the Mystics (Salwat al-'Arīfina wa uns al-Mushtāqīn)*. Critical edition and notes with Gerhard Böwering. Leiden: E. J. Brill, 2013.
- Qushayri, Abd al-Karim, al-. *Risālat al-Qushayriyah*. Edited by Abdel Halim Mahmoud and Mahmoud b. El-Sherif. Cairo: Dar al-Ma'ruf, 1995.
- . *Al-Qushayri's Epistle on Sufism (Al-Risālah al-Qushayriyah fī 'Ilm al-Taṣawwuf)*. Translated and notes by Alexander D. Knysh. Reviewed by Muhammad Eissa. London: The Center for Muslim Contribution to Civilization, Garnet Publishers, 2007.
- . *Principles of Sufism*. Translated from the Arabic (*Risālat al-Qushayriyah*: part 3 only) by B. R. von Schlegell. Introductory notes by Hamid Algar. Berkeley: Mizan Press, 1990.
- . *The Risālah: Principles of Sufism*. Translated by Rabia Harris. Edited by Laleh Bakhtiar. London: Great books of the Islamic World Inc., 2002.
- . *Al-Fuṣūl fī al-Uṣūl (Two Short Dogmatic Works of Abu al-Qasim al-Qushayri)* Critical editing by Richard Frank. *Mélanges* 15, 1982.

- . *Kitāb al-Mi'raj*. Edited by Ali Hasan Abd al-Qadir. Cairo: Dar al-Kutub al-Hadith, 1964.
- . *Laṭā'if al-Ishārāt bi Tafsīr al-Qur'ān*. Edited by Abd al-Latif Hasan Abd al-Rahman. Beirut: Dar al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyyah, 2000.
- . *Luma' fī al-I'tqād*, in (Two short dogmatic works of Abu l'Qasim al-Qushayri), Richard Frank (critical ed.), in *Mélanges* 16, 1983.
- . *Naḥwu al-Qulūb al-Ṣaḡhīr*. Edited by Mursi Muhammad Ali. Beirut: Dar al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyyah, 2005.
- . *Naḥwu al-Qulūb al-Kabīr*. Edited by Ibrahim Basyuni and Ahmad 'Alam al-Din al-Jundi. Cairo: Maktab 'Alam al-Fikr, 1998.
- . *Al-Rasā'il al-Qushayriyah*. Edited by Fir Muhammad Hasan. Pakistan: al-Ma'had al-Markazi li al-Bahithat al-Islamiyyah, 1384/1964.
- . *Sharḥ li Asmā' Allāh al-Ḥusnā*. Edited by 'Asim Ibrahim al-Darqawi. Beirut: Dar al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyyah, 2006.
- Sands, Kristen Z. "On the Subtleties of Method and Style in the *Laṭā'if al-Ishārāt* of al-Qushayrī." *Journal of Sufi Studies* 2, no. 1, 2013.
- Sarraj al-Tusi, Abu Nasr Abd Allah b. Ali, al-. *Kitāb al-Luma' fī al-Taṣawwuf*. Edited by Reynold A. Nicholson. London: Luzac & Co., 1914.
- Schimmel, Annemarie, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina, 1975.
- Silvers-Alario, Laury. "The Teaching Relationship in Early Sufism: A Reassessment of Fritz Meier's Definition of the *Shaykh al-Tarbīyah* and the *Shaykh al-Ta'īm*." *The Muslim World* 93, 2003.
- . *A Soaring Minaret: Abu Bakr al-Wasiti and the Rise of Baghdadi Sufism*. New York: State University of New York Press, 2010.
- Subkī, Taj al-Din. *Ṭabaqāt al-Shāfi'iyah*. Edited by Ḥulw and al-Ṭanāhī. Cairo, 1386/1967. iii, 374.
- Sulami, Abu Abd al-Rahman, al-. "Kitāb Adab Mujālasat al-Mashāyikh wa Ḥifẓ Ḥurumātihim." In *Collected Works on Early Sufism*. Edited by K. Honerkamp. Vol. 3, Nasrollah Pourjavady and Mohammed Soori. Tehran: Free University of Berlin, 2009.
- . "Kitāb Adab Mujālasat al-Mashāyikh wa Ḥifẓ Ḥurumātihim." *Ma'ārif* 20, no. 2 (Murdad-Aban 1382), series no. 59. Edited by K. Honerkamp. Tehran: Tehran University, 2004.
- . "Kitāb Fuṣūl fī al-Taṣawwuf." In *Collected Works on Early Sufism*. Edited by K. Honerkamp. 3:178-221.
- . "Kitāb Bayān Tadhallul al-Fuqarā'." In *Collected Works on Early Sufism*. Edited by K. Honerkamp. 3:33-61.
- . "Mas'alat Darajāt al-Ṣādiqīn fī al-Taṣawwuf." In *Collected Works on Early Sufism*. Edited by K. Honerkamp. 3:79-94.
- . "Kitāb Bayān Zallal al-Fuqarā'." Edited by Sulieman Ateş. *Tis'at Kutub li-Abī 'Abd al-Raḥmān Muḥammad b. al-Ḥusayn b. Mūsā*. N.p.: 1993, pp. 429-63.
- . *Mas'alat Darajāt al-Ṣādiqīn*. Edited by Sulieman Ateş. *Tis'at Kutub li-Abī 'Abd al-Raḥmān Muḥammad b. al-Ḥusayn b. Mūsā*, n.p., 1993, pp. 379-410.

- . *Al-Muqaddimah fī al-Taṣawwuf wa Ḥaqīqatīhi*. Edited by Yusuf Zidan. Cairo: Maktabat al-Kuliyyat al-Azhariyyah, 1987.
- . *Jawāmī' Ādāb al-Ṣūfiyyah*. Edited by Etan Kohlberg. Jerusalem: Jerusalem Academic Press, 1976.
- . “The Humble Submission of Those Aspiring” (“Kitāb Bayān Tadhallul al-Fuqarā’”). In *Three Early Sufi Texts*. Translated by Kenneth Honerkamp. St. Louis: Fons Vitae, 2009.
- . “The Stations of the Righteous” (“Mas’alat Darajāt al-Ṣādiqīn”). In *Three Early Sufi Texts*. Translated by Kenneth Honerkamp. St. Louis: Fons Vitae, 2009.
- . *Risālat al-Malāmaṭīyah*. Edited by Abu al-‘Alā al-‘Affī. Cairo: Dar Ihya’ al-Kutub al-‘Arabiyyah, 1945.
- . *Ṭabaqāt al-Ṣūfiyyah*. Edited by Nur al-Din Shuraybah. Cairo: Maktabat al-Hanaḡi, 1969.
- Sviri, Sara, “The Early Mystical Schools of Baghdad and Nishpūr: In Search of Ibn Munāzil.” *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam* 30, 2005.
- . “Hakīm Tirmidhī and the Malāmaṭī Movement.” In *Classical Persian Sufism: from its Origins to Rumi*. Edited by Leonard Lewis. London: Khaniqahi Nimatullahi Publications, 1993.
- Tabari, Abu Khalaf, al-. *Salwaṭ al-Ṣārifīna wa Uns al-Mushtāqīn (The Comfort of the Mystics: A Manual and Anthology of Early Sufism)*. Critical edition and notes by Gerhard Böwering and Bilal Orfalī. Leiden: E. J. Brill, 2013.
- Thibon, Jean-Jacques. “La Relation Maître-Disciple ou les Elements de l’Alchimie Spirituelle d’après Trois Manuscrit de Sulamī ,” In Gobillot, G. (dir.) *Mystique Musulmane: Parcours en Compagnie d’un Chercheur: Roger Deladrière*. Paris: Éditions Cariscript: 2002.
- . *L’oeuvre d’Abū ‘Abd al-Raḡmān al-Sulamī (325/937-412/1021) et la formation du soufisme*. Damascus: Institut français du Proche-Orient, 2009.
- Tirmidhī, Hakīm, al-. *Kitāb Iḥbāt al-‘Ilal*. Edited by Khalid Zahra. Rabat: Muhammad V University, 1998.
- Tusi, Abu Nasr, al-Sarrāḡ, al-. *Al-Lum‘a*. Edited by Abd al-Halim Mahmud and Taha Abd al-Baqi Surur. Cairo: Dar al-Kutub al-Hadithah, 1960.

Discussion

Discussant: Mahmoud Ayoub

Islam is based on submission to God and not the ideas of human beings. The heritage that we attribute to the Sufi tradition – the ascetics, the “weepers” who wept when they read a verse dealing with paradise, for which they longed, or of Hell, which they feared – developed in the early days of Islam. Rabi‘a al-Adawiyyah, the female mystical poetess, is generally considered to be the one who moved Sufism away from asceticism and toward spirituality. We should remember that with the esoteric influences on Sufism there came problems that led to the persecution of al-Hallaj, the Martyr of Love. He gave Sufism a bad name in the eyes of people in general, and thus the need

for someone like al-Qushayri to rehabilitate Sufism, as described by our speaker. The *Risālah* explains the complete rootedness of Sufism in Islamic law and *'aqidah*. I invite Dr. Honerkamp to compare the new translation with the partial translation by the earlier Barbara von Shlegel. Some fatwas are book-length, but in what way is the *Risālah* a fatwa rather than a manual of Sufism? Yes it contains criticism of people who adopt ideas or rituals not practiced by the first and second generation of Muslims. They were usually called Ahl al-Ahwa' wa al-Bid'ah. In the good-old days, and this says a lot about where we are now, people distinguished between good and bad *bid'ah*. I think the formulation that every new thing is a *bid'ah*, that every *bid'ah* is an act of going astray, and that every act of going astray leads to the fire probably is a harsh judgment on a civilization that gave so many new things to the world. I want to remind you that the only religion to produce a truly universal civilization has been Islam. If our ancestors believed in this notion of *bid'ah*, they would not have created the civilization that they did.

Discussant: Moustafa Kassem

This paper opens our eyes to important issues. I see two main themes: the actual fatwa that the Ash'ari tradition is founded in the Sunnah, and the discussion of the *Risālah* that Sufism is rooted in Ash'arism and thus also in traditional Islam. This paper relates to the politics of fatwas. Some opinions may reflect sociopolitical realities beyond the simple interpretation of text. The issue of labeling also comes up. Labeling often takes us off the path of knowledge by causing us to focus on the label rather than the content. I want to talk about interpretation. The right of people to their own knowledge, to not be bound by other people's ideas, is what will keep us free. Sufi scholars interpret traditions and verses in the light of their spiritual understanding. It was important that you reminded us that the Sufi masters are not infallible. Was al-Qushayri's authority to issue fatwas broadly recognized in his own time, or only among his followers? I was glad that you mentioned the chains of transmission in the book. It is important for freethinkers or any who wish to think for themselves that they have the ability to investigate and question the validity of these chains. The notions of good and bad *bid'ah* are essential for our concerns. We must not be scared in our scholarship that someone will accuse us of *bid'ah* because our conclusions differ from traditional scholarship or that one might be accused of guilt by association for communing with those who have unpopular ideas. We want to produce things that will benefit people. This requires us both to be brave and informed.

Honerkamp: Shlegel translated only the terminology, leaving out the biographies. There is another translation by Rabia Harris, partial in one edition and complete in the other. Although the footnotes were put at the end of the book in shortened form and are difficult to access, the translation is very good. I said that his fatwa was signed by the scholars of the day, recognized as an official hadith, and there was no doubt in Qushayri's community, not only among his followers, that he was *imām al-muṭlaq*. The intention behind the book seems to be to address Sufis and non-Sufis on his opin-

ion and this makes it a fatwa. He says of God that “He knows by His knowledge; He is powerful by His power; He wills by His will; He sees by His sight” and this is straight Ash‘ari *kalām*. He states very clearly in the introduction to the text that the Sufi creed is one with the Ash‘ari creed.

Ayoub: That is what makes his book a manual. Its purpose is to lead people to the Sufi path.

Honerkamp: I think this fatwa is in a religious context. He says plainly that people define their terms in a way to make their meaning clear among themselves and to conceal them from those who disagree with their methods. I think he is attempting not to interpret, but to define, terms from the Sufi perspective. I agree with Br. Mustafa completely on the issue of interpretation. People too frequently say, “God said ...” when they should say, “I believe that when the Qur’an says this it means this....” I think Muslims tend to turn off their critical faculties when they hear “God said ...” or “the Messenger said....” People are not always quoting the Qur’an in Arabic when they say *qāl Allāh*.

General Discussion

- The challenge for us today is to try to bring spirituality to the discussion. We may need a new word besides “Sufi.” We cannot help but label, because categorization is part of knowledge. Wisdom is about bringing knowledge to bear on life.
- *Fiqh* is not something to which western converts can necessarily relate. Not only in the West, but when you look at the spread of Islam all over the world *fiqh* is not the attraction. It is interesting that when converts speak of their conversion in a spiritual way they are immediately labeled “Sufi.” That is why the suggestion that we may need a new term for spirituality is so interesting.
- The conclusion that the Risālah is a fatwa takes us back to the point that we need a serious discussion to come up with a clear sustainable definition of fatwa. Certainly *iṣlāh* is not the sole domain of jurists, but a fatwa is a matter of law. Otherwise there would be fatwas in politics, economics, and social science. We need more clarity. We don’t want to face extremism in our material life, but what about in our spiritual life? Islam balances the spiritual and the material, and the challenge is to maintain that balance. The stronger our relationship with Allah, the stronger should be our relationships with our fellow human beings.
- We don’t mind calling someone a *faqīh* or an *usūlī*, but as soon as someone is called a “Sufi” there is a problem. Sufism has its spokespeople, history, and methodology. There is in the world what might be considered an extremely effective de facto Sufi *ṭarīqah* that has had an enormous impact on the world; however, it is not called “Sufi” or even “Islam,” even though it has a shaykh named Fethullah Gülen: the Gülen Movement. Islamic and Sufi principles deeply infuse it.

- However else the fatwa was received, the Hanbalis objected to refuting the Mu'tazilah on the grounds that to refute them would force you to repeat their arguments. Yet the scholars of his day identified it as a fatwa. Al-Qushayri said that you should not ascribe infallibility to the masters because so many critics of Sufism today say that to be a Sufi you must uncritically follow the master. He also says one should not be overly critical of them, but to think the best of them even when you don't understand them. Consider the case of the Moroccan shaykh Ahmad Zarouk, who saw his master sitting with a bottle of wine and a beautiful young girl. He walked out in disapproval, but the master called to him: "Come back! This is vinegar and this is my daughter." In other words, do not be so quick to criticize what you do not understand.
- There is no Arabic word equivalent to the English "mysticism." Sufism became a label that really refers to the initiate's clothing (course wool, or *sūf*), although some try to attribute it to other origins (like *sofia*). A fairly well-known ninth-century Sufi observed: "Sufism used to be a reality without a name, and now it is a name without a reality." Other terms, such as gnosis, can be used. It is about the love of God expressed through poetry or the knowledge of God. Sufism is a rich heritage mirroring a rich civilization. It is not, strictly speaking, a *madhhab*, but cuts across all legal schools. Although the Shi'a were hostile to Sufism in general, it developed in Iran prior to its becoming Shi'a and still prevails there.
- From the vantage point of the conference's theme, some dimensions are missing. A discussion of the methodology of fatwa from al-Qushayri's approach has already been mentioned. The main missing dimension, however, is the pressure as well as the coercion he was under not only from the authorities, but also the intellectual terrorism he faced from his opponents. All of this must be exposed. We must make the point that they are against the spirit of Islam. This addresses the issues of authority and legitimacy we face today.
- Sufism cuts across legal schools and sects. Sufism and *fiqh* have never been mutually exclusive. In saying that *fiqh* is boring or complicated or unattractive to new Muslims, we must be careful not to dismiss this important part of our intellectual tradition. Shaykh Ibn Baha'i al-'Amali from southern Lebanon was an architect, poet, theologian, and hadith scholar. The spiritual masters were also masters of *fiqh* and theology. For these people every act has a metaphysical value attached to it, and it is the scholar's duty to identify each act's metaphysical value.
- The *Risālah* is a coming together of all of these fields. Sufis don't call themselves Sufis. They usually call themselves *fuqarā'*. The negative aspect of the *nafs* in the *malāmātī* perspective is that it is like a piece of charcoal. No matter how much you wash it, it remains black. To change its color you have to put it in a brazier until it glows and turns red. There isn't a Sufi way of making a fatwa. Al-Qushayri gave his fatwa as an *'ālim*.
- One of the greatest Sufis, Abdul Qadir al-Jilani, belonged to the Hanbali *madhhab*, as did others.

- In some places the only thing people know about Islam is Sufism. Perhaps Sufism's origin is nothing more than a reaction against excessive legalism. Different groups emphasize different aspects of Islam. As soon as we name groups, we create opportunities for division and extremism. An excessive emphasis on some values undermines others. Islam is a balanced and harmonized teaching. The devotion in the West of certain days of the week to the spiritual and other days to the secular seems strange. Emphasizing the intellect at the university but not at the church seems strange.
- Good Sufis are very introspective; there are others, however, like one very well-known Sufi in the United States who has spoken against other Muslims and loves to be in the corridors of power. He doesn't know much about Islam or Sufism, but he is Sufi shaykh who is known to the people. Not all Sufis are *'alims* like Qushayri.
- Those coming out of Christianity see that Islam cuts across so many cultures. As soon as they become Muslim they have to ask: "What kind of a Muslim will I be?" It seems that you need a way to distinguish yourself among Muslims.
- Perhaps our negative attitude toward Sufism is in large measure a reaction against our nineteenth-century encounter with the West. We wanted to show it that we were more rational than the Christians, and Sufism became a victim of that desire.