The Philosophical Discourse of Mīr Dāmād: A Comparative Study of Meta-Temporal Origination and Mullā Ṣadrā’s Origination by Renewal

Zaid Alsalami

2021

A thesis submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy at the Australian National University

Zaid Alsalami

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Declaration of Originality

I hereby declare that this thesis is my own original work and has not been submitted before to any institution for assessment purposes.

Further, I have acknowledged all sources used and have cited these in the reference section.

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Zaid Alsalami Date
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Abstract

This study explores the topic of the incipience of the cosmos and the God–world relationship in the writings of the famous seventeenth-century Safavid philosopher Sayyid Muḥammad Bāqir Mīr Dāmād (d. 1631). The thesis explores the life and philosophical thought of Mīr Dāmād, with a particular focus on his theory of metatemporal origination (al-ḥudūth al-dahrī), presented as a solution to the ongoing debate between Islamic philosophers and theologians on eternity and creation.

Mīr Dāmād’s theory offers a ratiocinative explanation to the creation of the world, which continues to resonate strongly within Twelver Shi‘i discourse. He is considered a recognised jurist, a scholar of many disciplines and the last of the traditional peripatetic Islamic philosophers. Polemicising with Mīr Dāmād’s theory, his student Mullā Ṣadrā (d. 1640) presented a divergent and better-known view regarding creation within his unique philosophical system. This research will critique Ṣadrā’s position based on a revised and in-depth reading of Mīr Dāmād’s original philosophy.

The thesis highlights Mīr Dāmād’s outstanding place in the history of Shi‘i intellectual studies and renders his theory accessible to the English-language readership. It concludes that Mīr Dāmād’s insights into the creation of the cosmos constitute a culmination of the philosophical ideas advanced by Aristotle, Avicenna and Suhrawardī, and remain both robust and valid when compared to subsequent alternative theories, including those of Mullā Ṣadrā.
Transliteration and Translations

The transliteration system used is the IJMES Transliteration System. Arabic and Persian names, words and book or article titles have been transliterated without i’rāb (case endings). In most cases, I have not distinguished the method of pronunciation in Arabic and Persian transliterations. For example, Riḍā instead of Rezā, or wā instead of vā.

Transliteration Symbols

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Note on Translations

In most cases, where the original text is Arabic or Persian, the translation to English is my own, unless there is an available English translation (which is then specified in the footnote). The Islamic hijrā date is represented as ‘AH’, the Persian shamsī calendar is represented as ‘SY’ (solar year), and the Christian date is represented as ‘CE’ (common era). If only one date is mentioned, it refers to the Common Era.
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Introduction: The Argument about Creation and Eternity in the Islamic Tradition

Prelude

Throughout humanity’s history, an interest in understanding our creation and the origin of the world in which we live has always existed. The mission to discover answers to our questions about the universe has been an ongoing challenge. Historically—and continuing up to the present—various scientific disciplines have dedicated research to investigating the formation of the universe and questions relating to creation, time and temporality. From where did the universe originate? What do ‘eternal’ and ‘created’ mean, and how are they related? Is creation eternal with God, or is it temporal? Is time exclusive to the material world? How can we conceptualise time in the immaterial realm? These matters and more have posed challenging questions that have been developed into vigorous, detailed and often highly technical debates in certain disciplines—in particular, physics, philosophy and theology.

The question of creation’s origin and its relation to God became fundamental for philosophers and theologians, as the primary subject matter in these fields of studies is the God–human relationship. Philosophy concerns itself with existence, and the coming-into-existence of our material world is a topic of importance for the philosopher. In theology, when discussing God’s eternity, the topic of whether God is alone in eternity is also discussed, along with when creation and contingent beings came into existence. One’s answers to these questions defined one’s cosmological worldview. Answering these questions has involved not only physics and time, but also reason and philosophy. Such answers also have theistic and religious implications, defining this God–human relationship insofar as how one sees the necessary attributes of God. Researchers from different disciplines have
tried to understand why scholars have been fascinated throughout history with discovering whether the universe had a temporal beginning or if it is eternal.¹

No matter which side of the argument one took, the topics of creation ex nihilo, ḥudūth² or qidam were very important in defining the attributes of the God in whom both sides believed. In general, philosophers and theologians saw each other’s positions as irreconcilable and, therefore, devoted their efforts to refuting the other side’s position within their own framework of understanding. According to the philosophical outlook, the cosmos exists by necessity; according to the religious perspective, the contingent world depends on God’s will to create it.

The arguments for or against creation evolved from ancient Greek times³ and passed through the hands of Jews, Christians and Muslims, with each attempting to solve this problem. In the words of contemporary philosopher Gill Evans, how can a God who is eternal and unchanging have begun at some time to do that which He had not eternally done, and bring the world into being?:

Christians were confronted, just as the ancient philosophers had been, with the problem of explaining how a God of absolute goodness and simplicity could be the Creator of a universe different from himself.⁴

This was an area of interest for people who wanted to know how we as humans had arrived here, along with our origins. This reveals that, from ancient times, the focal point of creationism was engaging in teleological arguments.⁵ Per Sajjad Rizvi:

² As will be explained, creation ex nihilo is not a synonym for ḥudūth. Ex nihilo is Latin for ‘from nothing’, and the term ‘creation ex nihilo’ refers to God creating everything from nothing—as it is said in the Biblical sense that God created the heavens and the earth (Genesis 1:1), and prior to that there was nothing. The Arabic term ḥudūth means ‘coming into being’, or ‘createdness’, referring to the world being originated in perpetual time. Qidam or qadīm means ‘eternal’, or ‘without a temporal beginning’.
³ On the topic of creationism and its detailed arguments in ancient (Greek) thought, see David Sedley, Creationism and its Critics in Antiquity (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993).
⁴ G.R. Evans, Philosophy and Theology in the Middle Ages (London: Routledge, 1993), 96.
⁵ Sedley, Creationism and its Critics in Antiquity, 559.
Creationism, the idea that the cosmos came about as a result of some intelligent artisan, regardless of whether one held that the process of creation was ex nihilo or in time, seems to have been a long standing position in ancient thought, and was, even in the late antique period not seen as being entirely separate to the instrumental emanation of the cosmos from the One.\textsuperscript{6}

This thesis deals with one of the most complex, extensive and challenging of philosophical topics,\textsuperscript{7} the question of the universe’s eternity or createdness,\textsuperscript{8} with a focus on analysing the position of the Safavid philosopher Muhammed Bāqir Mīr Dāmād (d. 1631 CE). In this task, the alternative theory offered by Mīr Dāmād’s celebrated student Mullā Şadrā (d. 1640)\textsuperscript{9} (creation based on substantial motion or natural creation [ḥudūth ṭab‘i] or origination by renewal [ḥudūth tajaddudī]) is examined and critically refuted in accordance with the philosophical framework of Mīr Dāmād.

Throughout history, Muslim philosophers and theologians have been at the forefront of studies concerning the universe’s eternity or createdness. Their investigations show deep levels of opposition to one another. Early Muslim philosophers, who were strongly influenced by Aristotle (c. 384–322 BCE), presented their views based on established philosophical principles. Conversely, Muslim theologians considered these views to conflict with the obvious tenor of religious scriptures. Philosophers branded theologians as ignorant, while theologians accused philosophers of disbelief and blasphemy. Philosophers typically believed in the world’s temporal eternity, while theologians adopted the theory of the world’s temporal createdness. Debate on this has evolved through


\textsuperscript{7}This topic being the most complex and challenging of issues was stated by Mullā Şadrā. See Şadr al-Dīn al-Shirāzī, “A Treatise on Creation (of the World),” in \textit{Risāla fī al-Ḥudūth}, ed. Dr Seyyid Ḥusain Musawiyan (Tehran: Bunyad Ḥikmat Ṣadrā, 1378 SY/1999), 9.

\textsuperscript{8}There are numerous English-language words for the term ḥudūth, the most common being ‘creation’. However, this can be confusing, as ‘creation’ is also the English-language translation for khalq. For this reason, I prefer to use the term ‘origination’ when referring to ḥudūth, but will also regularly use other common terms and expressions such as ‘creation’, ‘incipience’, ‘createdness’, ‘coming-into-being’ and simply ḥudūth. Similarly, I will refer to the term dahr as either ‘meta-temporal’, ‘perpetual’ or simply dahr. These terms will be explained in detail in Chapter 1.

\textsuperscript{9}Recent scholarship has challenged the traditional date given for Mullā Şadrā’s death and argued that he died in 1045 AH/1635–36 CE. See Sajjad H. Rizvi, \textit{Mullā Şadrā Shirazi: His Life and Works and the Sources for Safavid Philosophy} (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 30.
different phases, with many Islamic philosophers and theologians attempting to bring some sort of rational or religious conciliation to resolve the ongoing dispute.

The process of the forming and evolution of these theories must be explained to enable an understanding of this research. Accordingly, the greater portion of this introductory chapter is devoted to detailing this, including the history of the topic of eternity and creation, an explanation of the terms used, and the unique solution offered by Mir Dâmâd. Mir Dâmâd—a philosopher, theologian, jurist and a many-sided Islamic thinker—developed a new notion of ḥudūth al-ʿālam, or the origination of the world. This thesis provides a comprehensive exposition and detailed analysis of his theory. Mir Dâmâd offered a preferable alternative that expressed harmony between religious demands and philosophical thinking regarding the origins of the universe.\textsuperscript{10}

The debate about creation and eternity is important in the history of Islam and continues to be pivotal for several reasons, the most important being:

\begin{itemize}
  \item the topic of the world’s temporal origin or its eternity (ḥudūth wa qidam al-ʿālam) is itself highly complex, ambiguous and vague
  \item the arguments presented by each side are vast, with much variance and many branches
  \item each side has strong feelings regarding the other side’s incorrectness, which has at times resulted in harsh attacks and accusations of ignorance or heresy.\textsuperscript{11}
\end{itemize}

This introductory chapter provides an account of the historical development of the debate on eternity and creation, focusing principally on those aspects essential to understanding Mir Dâmâd’s arguments and logic as he delved into the question. Mir Dâmâd’s life and works are detailed in Chapter 1. Crucial terms and arguments are explained in Chapter 2.\textsuperscript{12}


\textsuperscript{11} Later chapters will detail what theologians have said about philosophers no longer being believers and why philosophers branded theologians as ignorant.

\textsuperscript{12} However, some of this terminology is necessarily used in this introductory chapter. The terms are discussed in detail in Chapter 2.
Chapter 3 descriptively analyses Mīr Dāmād’s theory of meta-temporal origination, extracting and explaining his arguments from his primary works, and critically investigating secondary texts about him and his theory. Chapter 4 undertakes a critical comparison of Mīr Dāmād’s theory of meta-temporal origination and the alternative theory presented by his student Mullā Şadrā of origination by renewal. Chapter 5 concludes the thesis with thoughts on Mīr Dāmād’s legacy and the contributions of this thesis.

The main objectives of this thesis are to 1) introduce the English-speaking audience to Mīr Dāmād—a very influential personality within the Shiʿi tradition who has been relegated to relative obscurity due to several objective and subjective factors—and 2) present a comprehensive theory that answers the fundamental question about the inception of the world. Solutions to a topic as contentious topic as the creation of the cosmos within the tradition of Islamic thought often either fell short, in terms of faith or the standards of reason. However, Mīr Dāmād offered a convincingly adequate theory on both counts, though his unique position has yet to be elucidated or explicated in the English language. This thesis presents Mīr Dāmād’s views in a systematic and accessible manner, while also explaining why he and his philosophical system have been overlooked.

**Literature Review**

Extensive scholarly forays have been made into the area of creation and eternity, where certain theologians wrote in favour of their common view on the creation of the world, and certain philosophers presented their arguments on the eternity of the world. However, to date, there has been no comprehensive study on Mīr Dāmād’s theory based on all of his main books. Aside from the printed commentaries on Mīr Dāmād’s works, there is no complete study related to Mīr Dāmād in Arabic. In the modern era, the likes of Sayyid Muḥammad Ḥusain Ṭabāṭabā’ī (1892–1981 CE) and his student Murtaḍā Muṭahhari (1919–1979 CE) have referred to Mīr Dāmād and his theory of creation, but their mentioned did not exceed a few pages.

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There is a doctoral thesis in Arabic by Raʾūf Sabḥānī on Mīr Dāmād’s philosophical thought, which will shortly be discussed in detail.

In the English language, there are a few select studies on Mīr Dāmād, such as the articles written by Fazlur Rahman, Toshihiko Izutsu, Sajjad H. Rizvi and others. These writings, as valuable as they are, are limited to research papers and do not delve extensively into the topic of Mīr Dāmād’s theory. There is only one English-language doctoral thesis on Mīr Dāmād and his theory on the origination of creation and the world, by Keven Brown, which will shortly be discussed in detail. There are also a number of studies on Mullā Ṣadrā—by far exceeding the very limited studies on Mīr Dāmād—but no available study on Mullā Ṣadrā and the topic of creation. The aforementioned gaps in the Arabic- and English-language literatures are addressed by this thesis.

To date, only two doctoral theses have been written on Mīr Dāmād’s theory of meta-temporal origination—one (in English) by Keven Brown and the other (in Arabic) by Raʾūf Sabḥānī. As extensive as Brown’s thesis was, its focus was on translating and analysing Mīr Dāmād’s best-known book, Kitāb al-Qabasāt, and providing explanatory commentaries and glossa. It does not present any background information for the topic at hand and does not explain the specific milieu that situated Mīr Dāmād in the Safavid era, his influence as a unique thinker or his founding of a new philosophical system. The present thesis is set apart from Brown’s

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18 While this thesis is in English—as required for submission to the Australian National University—pending acceptance, key portions will be translated into and published in Arabic.
20 Raʾūf Sabḥānī, who is of Iranian origin, presented his PhD thesis to the Islamic University in Beirut, under the supervision of Dr Suʿād al-Hakim. His thesis was then published as a book: Raʾūf Sabḥānī, al-Fikr al-Falsafi ʿinda al-Mīr Dāmād al-Astarābādī (Philosophical Thought according to Mīr Dāmād al-Astarābādī) (Beirut: Dār al-Mu’arrikh al-ʿArabī, 2011).
thesis in regard to these aspects—I have gone beyond one central text (attempting to survey all of Mir Dāmād’s works that deal with the topic of creation) and provide the necessary details and temporal and spatial contextualisation to fully engage with the philosophy and works of Mir Dāmād and others.22

Sabhānī’s doctoral thesis (later published as a book) is of varying quality when it comes to researching the scientific and religious status of Mir Dāmād. Overall, there is a lack of detailed citations, with very brief referencing. There are many instances of the author simply reproducing text from Mir Dāmād works without any commentary or explanation, or referencing numerous pages without further detail.

There are also numerous instances of translated Persian text without any accompanying explanation or referencing. Further, even though the thesis professes to deal with the philosophical thought of Mir Dāmād and to do so for the first time in the Arabic language in modern times, it only devotes a few pages to the topic of creation and eternity in general. The discussion of Mir Dāmād’s idea of al-ḥudūth al-dahri— one of Mir Dāmād most important contributions to philosophical thought—spans a mere five pages.23 I also identified factual discrepancies in Sabhānī’s subsequent book (the published form of his thesis), which will be detailed as necessary in footnotes in the present thesis.

Other studies on Mir Dāmād in general or his theory of meta-temporal origination specifically are either too brief, derivative or generic. They largely fail to situate the intellectual output of Mir Dāmād within the tradition of Islamic rational sciences,


and philosophy in particular, or highlight the innovative nature of his venture to solve the debate on creation versus eternity.\(^{24}\) A noticeable pattern seen in most books (in any language) on the history of Islamic philosophy is that should Mir Dāmād be mentioned, it is only in the discourse of mentioning others and stops there, with no additional detail provided.

Persian work on Mir Dāmād is wide, with the majority of studies written in the last decade, but most are too brief or too abstract. The first research paper on Mir Dāmād and a critical analysis of al-ḥudūth al-dahrī was written by Sayyid Jalāl al-Dīn Ashtiyānī (1925–2005 CE) in volume one of his voluminous book Muntakhābi az Athār-e Ḥukamā-ye Ilāhī-ye Irān: Az ‘Aṣr Mir Dāmād wa Mir Finderiskī tā Zamān-e Haḍer (Selected Works from Iranian Divine Philosophers: From the Era of Mir Dāmād and Mir Finderiskī until the Present Era).\(^{25}\) Ḥakīm Astarābād: Mir Dāmād (The Sage of Astarābād: Mir Dāmād), Sayyid ‘Alī Mūsawī Mudarris Behbahānī, is a valuable analysis on the life, works and theories of Mir Dāmād.\(^{26}\) This book discusses the theory of al-ḥudūth al-dahrī, albeit briefly.

Ḥāmed Nājī Esfahānī’s introduction to his edit of Mir Sayyid Aḥmad al-‘Alawī’s commentary on al-Qabasāt is also a useful explanation of Mir Dāmād’s theory of al-ḥudūth al-dahrī.\(^{27}\) There are also the writings of ‘Ali Awjābī, especially his introduction to his edit of Mir Dāmād’s Taqwīm al-Īmān.\(^{28}\)

An important reference book on the topic of the origination of the universe was written by Sa‘īd Naẓari Tawakullī, titled Nazariye Paydāysh Jahān dar Hikmat

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\(^{24}\) Besides Sabhānī’s book, the only other contemporary Arabic book on the philosophical views of Mir Dāmād is ‘Aḍīl Maḥmūd Badr, Maḥfūm al-Ḥudūth al-Dahrī fi Mitāfiziqiyya al-Wujūd ‘ind al-Mīr Dāmād Muḥammad Bāqır al-Dāmād al-Ḥusainī (Latakiya: Dār al-Jīwār, 2008). This concise book contains a basic introduction to the ontological and metaphysical contributions of Mir Dāmād as merely one in a long line of Muslim philosophers. Discussion of the issue of meta-temporal existence spans only a few pages, and the author then presents an Arabic translation of Izutsu’s article on Mir Dāmād that was published in the first edition of Kitāb al-Qabasāt. Other commendable works have touched on meta-temporality, but only within their documenting of Mir Dāmād’s philosophical views along with other topics. An example for this is Sayyid Muḥammad Khāmene‘ī, Mir Dāmād (Tehran: Bunyād Ḥekmat Islāmī Ṣadrā, 2005). Throughout this thesis, I will mention other works written on Mir Dāmād and include my comments on them.


\(^{27}\) See Mir Sayyid Ahmad al-‘Alawī, Taqwīm al-Īmān, ed. ‘Alī Awjābī (Tehran: Muṭālā‘at Islāmī, Tehran University, 1997).
Yamānī wa Ḩikmat Mutaʿāliye (The Theory of the Creation of the World in Yamānī Philosophy and Transcendent Philosophy). This extensive work includes a fairly detailed review of al-ḥudūth al-dāhri, but does not position the valuable contribution of Mir Dāmād’s theory (or his unique philosophical system, al-Ḥikmat al-Yamānīya) within the temporal and spatial context, nor is it critical of Mullā Ṣadrā’s view on this topic. This book provides insight into the theory of creation and delves into Mir Dāmād’s theory, along with others, but does not engage in a comparative analysis of theories or draw conclusions as to which theory is correct or supersedes the others. Mir Dāmād’s al-ḥudūth al-dāhri theory has been mentioned in books on the history of philosophy, like those written (in English) by Seyyed Hossein Nasr and Mehdi Aminrazavī, or volume two of Ghulām Ḥusain Ibāhīmī Dīnānī’s (Persian) Mājarā-ye Fikr Falsafi dar Jahān-e Islām (The Adventure of Philosophical Thought in the Muslim World). Dinānī has also recently written an extensive book on the topic of time and the creation of the world, titled Mu’ammā-ye Zamān wa Ḩudūth-e Jahān (The Riddle of Time and the Creation of the World), in which he discussed Mir Dāmād’s views in this regard. This book can be considered an introduction to the topic of time in Islamic philosophical and theological heritage. This book differs from the present thesis in that the former does not focus completely on the incipience of the world from the viewpoint of Mir Dāmād, is not a comparative study and is not critical of Mullā Ṣadrā’s viewpoint.

In the non-Muslim world, Henry Corbin was the first to write on Mir Dāmād, portraying him as a spiritual saint and esoteric mystic, and not engaging with his theory of creation. Corbin built a strong relationship with Ashtiyyānī, and while

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30 This is the name Mir Dāmād gave to his philosophical system. The origins and meanings of this term are discussed in detail in Chapter 1. Mir Dāmād’s primary reason for giving his philosophical system this name was to distinguish it from that of ancient Greek philosophy and also previous philosophical trends such as Avicennian philosophy and Suhrawardian philosophy.
32 Ghulām Ḥusain Ibāhīmī Dīnānī, Mājarā-ye Fikr Falsafi dar Jahān-e Islām (Tehran: Ṣar Naw, 1998). There are also ‘Ali Asghar Ḥalabi’s writings on the history of Islamic philosophy, but again, the topic of Mir Dāmād does not exceed more than a few pages. See ‘Ali Asghar Ḥalabi, Tāriḵ Falsāfe-ye Irānī az āghāz-e Islām tā emrīz (Tehran: Intishārāt-e Zuvvār, 1972); ‘Ali Asghar Ḥalabi, Tāriḵ Falsafe dar Irān wa Jahān Islām (Tehran: Asāṯīr, 1994).
33 Ghulām Ḥusain Ibāhīmī Dīnānī, Mu’ammā-ye Zamān wa Ḩudūth-e Jahān (Tehran: Mu’assasāe Pejūheshī Hekmat wa Falsafe Iran, 2014).
Corbin directed the French Institute of Iranian Studies, he suggested to Ashtiyānī to compile a voluminous book outlining the thoughts and works of Iranian philosophers. The first edition of this book, Muntakhabī az Athâr-e Ḥukamā-ye Ilāhi-ye Irān: Az Āšr Mīr Dāmād wa Mīr Finderiskī tā Zamān-e Ḥaḍer, was co-published in Paris and Tehran. There were very important French introductions for each of the philosophers, which were unfortunately removed in later editions. Ashtiyānī based his understanding of Mīr Dāmād’s theory of al-ḥudūth al-dahrī on Mullā Ḥādī Sabzawārī’s explanation, which is far from a correct understanding of the theory, which led to flawed critiques. I will refer to these as necessary in footnotes throughout this thesis.

This thesis fills the gaps in the exegesis of Mīr Dāmād’s legacy, providing a comprehensive account of his views on the topic of creation and explaining the context that influenced Mīr Dāmād’s writings on this issue. This thesis also provides a detailed account of the continuation of this contentious topic after Mīr Dāmād, focusing on the scholars who kept within the tradition of the Yamānī philosophy and their contributions to further develop the theory of meta-temporal origination (see Chapter 5). The theory of al-ḥudūth al-dahrī from Mīr Dāmād’s perspective has not yet been correctly defined based on the complete works, arguments and broader thinking ideology of Mīr Dāmād, and previous studies have demonstrated problems with the context of discovery and an incomplete understanding of the context of justification. This thesis addresses all of these issues. This thesis explains in detail Mīr Dāmād’s theory on creation, reviewing and examining all of his works (philosophical and non-philosophical, in any language), as well as the commentaries written by his students and those who followed his legacy of al-Ḥikmat al-Yamāniya, like Mīr Sayyid Aḥmad al-ʿAlawi and others. A comparative study of Mīr Dāmād’s student Mullā Ṣadrā on the topic of ḥudūth al-ʿālam also identifies the latter’s flaws and demonstrates how Mīr Dāmād’s theory supersedes Mullā Ṣadrā’s.

Preliminary Notes on Mullā Ṣadrā and Mīr Dāmād

Throughout this thesis, the reader will come to understand how theories on the incipience of the world developed, how these theories were related to each other,

35 Henry Corbin and Jalal al-Dīn Ashtiyani, Muntakhabī az Athâr-e Ḥukamā-ye Ilāhi-ye Irānī, 2 vols. (Tehran: Institute of Franco-Iranian Research, 1972). This was the first edition. The other editions are referred to as necessary throughout this thesis.
and how theories were adopted, abandoned or influenced. This section provides the reader with some preliminary details regarding the two most important dramatis persona in the ensuing discourse.

As will be explained in detail (in Chapter 4), Mullā Ṣadrā was a student of Mīr Dāmād and was certainly influenced by Mīr Dāmād, but surprisingly did not say anything about al-ḥudūṭ al-dahrī—one of Mīr Dāmād’s most important concepts. Mīr Dāmād wrote numerous books, most of which were incomplete upon his death, and he did not have a book that was used as an official textbook. Conversely, Mullā Ṣadrā did have textbooks and completed most of his works. The first person to teach his textbook on philosophy was Mullā ‘Alī Nūrī (d. 1246/1831 AH/CE), about 100 years later. Mullā ‘Alī Nūrī was not a full-pledged follower of the Ṣadrian philosophical school of al-Ḥikmat al-Muta‘āliya, but was considered its reviver. It is said he taught philosophy for close to 70 years and established what is referred to as the philosophical school of Tehran. If not for his efforts, the works of Mullā Ṣadrā would not have the status they do today. Prior to this era, the standard texts for seminary studies in the Islamic world were the philosophical textbooks of ʿAbd al-Ghiyāth al-Dīn Maḥṣūr al-Dashtakī al-Shīrāzī (866/1461–949/1542 AH/CE), from the School of Shiraz.

After Mullā ‘Alī Nūrī, other philosophers continued as proponents of the Ṣadrian philosophical school, teaching his textbooks and writing commentaries on his works and theories. The texts that were mainly used were al-Ḥikmat al-Muta‘āliya fi al-ʿAṣfār al-ʿAqliya al-ʿArbaʿa, al-Ṣawāhid al-Rūbiyya fi al-Manāḥīj al-Sulūkiyya, and in

36 One of the teachers of Mullā Ḥādī Sabzawārī (1212/1797–1289/1873 AH/CE).
38 This was the view of Ashtiyānī, and this view has been challenged by arguments that the true reviver of Mullā Ṣadrā was Mullā Ḥādī Sabzawārī, the student of Mullā ‘Alī Nūrī. See Ashtiyānī’s introduction to: Muḥammad ibn Ibrāhīm Saḍr al-Dīn al-Shīrāzī, al-Ṣawāhid al-Rūbiyya fi al-Manāḥīj al-Sulūkiyya, with glosses of Mullā Ḥādī Sabzawārī, ed. Sayyid Jalāl al-Dīn al-Ṣawāhid (Qom, Bustān Kitāb, 2004) 88.
India, Mullā Ṣadrā’s commentary on *al-Hidāyat al-Athiriya*. Some of the philosophers strongly influential in spreading *al-Ḥikmat al-Mutaʿāliya* were Mullā Hādi Sabzawārī (1212/1797–1289/1873 AH/CE), Mullā ʿAbdullah Zanūzī (d. 1257/1841 AH/CE), Sayyid Abū al-Ḥasan al-Rafīʿī al-Qazwīnī (1897–1975 CE), Sayyid Jalāl al-Dīn Ashtiyānī, Sayyid Muḥammad Ḥusain Ṭabaṭabāʾī (1892–1981 CE) and Murtaţā Muṭahharī (1919–1979 CE). They carried on the Ṣadrian legacy, which is why they are very important as commentators. The result was the link of the tradition of Shiʿi rational studies with all the dynamics of how these philosophers continued in the form of textbooks, commentaries, glosses and marginal explanations.

In regard to locating Mīr Dāmād within this narrative, he taught his books and theories while he was alive and also had a continuous line of commentators and philosophers who continued and expanded on his legacy. The difference is that his legacy—insofar as it was perceived—did not last very long as it was soon overshadowed by those of his students. The structure of Mīr Dāmād’s philosophical system can only be understood by referring back to this era and reviewing his contemporaries’ commentaries on and understanding of Mīr Dāmād’s theory of *al-ḥudūth al-dahrī*.

Prior to Mīr Dāmād was the philosophical School of Shiraz. Mīr Dāmād brought about something new that made the philosophical School of Esfahan distinctive from previous philosophical schools. (The details of the School of Esfahan, which is broader than Mīr Dāmād’s philosophical system of *al-Ḥikmat al-Yamāniya*, will be provided in Chapter 1). The School of Esfahan returned to the burhānī philosophy, without the influence of *jadali kalāmi* methods. This greatly distinguished it from the School of Shiraz, which had a significant theological influence, with its curriculum centred around the commentaries of ʿAlī al-Qūshjī (d. 879/1474 AH/CE),

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41 For a detailed account on Sabzawārī’s strong influence on the philosophical formulation of Mullā Ṣadrā’s views in Qajar Iran, see Sajjad H. Rizvi, “Hikma mutaʿāliya in Qajar Iran: Locating the Life and Work of Mulla Hadi Sabzawari (d. 1289/1873),” *Iranian Studies 44*, no. 4 (July 2011): 473–96.

42 For more information on how Mullā Ṣadrā’s works entered into the curriculum of Shiʿi seminary, see Rizvi, “Hikma mutaʿāliya in Qajar Iran.”

43 The specifications of this era and school will be explained in Chapter 1.
glosses of Shams al-Din al-Khaфиз (d. 956/1550 AH/CE), commentaries of Jalal al-Din al-Dawani (d. 908/1502 AH/CE) and works of Sadr al-Din al-Dashtaki (828/1424–903/1497–8 AH/CE).\textsuperscript{44} Sadr al-Din al-Dashtaki is considered the founder of the School of Shiraz and also the father of Ghiyath al-Din al-Dashtaki (both Sunni). In general, both were strongly influenced by the kalâmi and dialectic (jadali) arguments, which is what theology is based on, and which is why their arguments were inconclusive. Further, the figures of this era were generally of Sunni belief or Sunni influenced; even al-Dawani, of whom it is unclear as to whether he was a Sunni or Shi'a, defended Abû al-Hasan al-Ash'ari (260/876–324/936 AH/CE).\textsuperscript{45}

Conversely, Mir Damad emphasised demonstrative (burhani) arguments, focusing on teaching the books of Avicenna, like al-Shifa' and al-Isharat. He had complete command of this field and also had a strong Shi'i background and foundation, distinguishing the School of Esfahan era from the generally Sunni-influenced era of the School of Shiraz. Mir Damad did make reference to the works of al-Dawani, and al-Dawani discussed ḥudūth in his books Unmustaj al-'Ulum (Exemplars of the Sciences) and Sharh al-Aqâ'ed al-'Adudiyyah. In Mullâ Muhammed Isma'il Khwajû'i Esfahani's treatise Risâlah Ibtaâl al-Zamân al-Mawhûm, printed in Sab' Rasâ'il, he attributes the theory of al-ḥudūth al-dahrî to al-Dawani.\textsuperscript{47} This is demonstrative of how Mir Damad's theory was something that other philosophers and theologians were engaging with, but also of how his theory was misunderstood and sometimes misattributed.\textsuperscript{48}

Mir Damad had a strict approach to how his worldview was influenced by the Qur'an and hadith, using these sources effectively and successfully within his scientific framework and as a primary subject matter in his philosophical discourse.

\textsuperscript{44} For an account on the major philosophers of Shriaz, see Nasr, Islamic Philosophy from Its Origin to the Present, 195.

Mullâ Ismã'il Khwajû'i (d. 1173/1760 AH/CE) lived after Mir Damad and was the teacher of Mullâ Mehdî Naraqi (1715–1795 CE).


\textsuperscript{48} For one of the more recent studies refuting the attribution of the theory of al-ḥudūth al-dahrî to al-Dawani, see Hamed Naji Esfahani and Husain Najafi, "Ta'ammûli dar Intisâb Nazariy-e ʿhoundûth dahri be Jalâl al-Dîn Dawani," Khiradnâme-ye Sadrâ 97 (Autumn 2019): 81–96.
Whenever he had the chance, he would flavour his philosophical views with Shi‘i thought, for example, in discussing the essence of the taking of the soul,⁴⁹ or what it means for God to be with the human.⁵⁰ Prior to Mīr Dāmād, Shi‘a Kālam was different to philosophy, but Mīr Dāmād brought them together. He praised the likes of Naṣīr al-Dīn al-Ṭūsī, yet also criticised them. He delved into the realm of naqli sciences, using verses from the Qur’ān and traditions from the Shi‘i Imāms, but he completely distanced himself from the common jadali approach theologians used and stayed within the parameters of rational and burhānī methodology. This approach can also be seen in his student Mullā Ṣadrā, specifically in his commentary on Uṣūl al-Kāfī. Mīr Dāmād did not only see the Qur’ān and traditions as a means, but also as an ultimate end. To elaborate on this last point, Mīr Dāmād aimed to align his philosophical views with negating certain attributes of God (nafi‘ al-ṣifāt) and indicating God’s transcendency (tanzih).⁵¹

In Mīr Dāmād’s expansion on his theory of al-ḥudūth al-dahrī, he says there are three explanations to temporal origination (al-ḥudūth al-zamānī):

1. Temporal origination in real extended time (zamān ḥaqiqi‘ imtīdādi) and separated time (fakkī).

2. Temporal origination in virtual, hypothetical or imaginary time (al-zamān al-mawhūm).

3. Temporal origination in a supposed time (mutawāhham).

Mīr Dāmād says that God is above all these proposed aspects of time, and that is because the Qur’ānic verses are the objective goal of all these discussions, and what the Islamic and Shi‘i traditions say defines the prospective conclusion of what a Muslim philosopher should end up with.

All of the aforementioned concepts are significant to the School of Esfahan, and, in particular, to Mīr Dāmād’s al-Ḥikmat al-Yamāniyaal-Ḥikmat al-Yamāniya. This philosophical school of Mīr Dāmād preserved the overall structure of the


⁵⁰ This is a reference to a Qur’ānic verse [57:4]: And He is with you wherever you may be. See Mīr Dāmād, Kitāb al-Qabasāt, 123.

⁵¹ This is based on a Qur’ānic verse [42:11]: There is nothing like unto Him.
philosophical system of Avicenna. Mīr Dāmād expanded on this field and explained certain concepts, such as the meaning of sarmad, in a way that would adjust to his theory of al-hudūth al-dahri. However, the loyalty Mīr Dāmād had to Peripatetic philosophy did not mean he rejected spiritual/religious experiences, like unveilings and witnessings (kashf/shuhūd). For example, in his book Khulsat al-Malakūt, Mīr Dāmād says that he saw dahr in a higher realm.52

As imperative as it is to understand Mīr Dāmād within the School of Esfahan and his own philosophical system of al-Ḥikmat al-Yamāniya, his exclusive school continued to flourish and was represented in the works of Mīr Sayyid Aḥmad al-ʿAlawī, Nizām al-Dīn Aḥmad al-Gilānī (993/1586–1071/1650 AH/CE),53 Mullā ʿAbdul-ghaffār Gilānī (?) and Mullā Shamsā Gilānī (d. 1041/1654 CE).

The Problem of Time and Creation in the Classical, Judeo-Christian and Muslim Traditions

Theists and those who accept the existence of a divine supreme being (i.e., God) strongly believe that God was directly involved in creation and the universe. Therefore, the position of God and His role in place and time is something scholars strive to understand. This concern about the relation of God to creation has been explored in medieval physics, metaphysics and—to great extents—philosophy. This is despite most contemporary Western scientific research on the world’s origins being conducted in physics (e.g., the Big Bang theory).55 Rational debate on this topic in philosophy and theology continues, and it is one of the most complicated and oldest philosophical problems.

The subject of the world’s creation or eternity can be traced back to ancient Greece. Greek philosophers presented different theories, with Plato (c. 428–348 BCE)

52 At various points throughout this thesis I will explain what is meant by Mīr Dāmād never overstepping his rational burhāni methodology for the sake of mystical witnessing.
53 Nizām al-Dīn al-Gilānī was one of Mīr Dāmād’s students and loyal to al-Ḥikmat al-Yamāniya. When he migrated to India, he taught the theories of this philosophical school. He was also an expert physician and distinguished architect who brought together Iranian and Indian architecture.
54 The words ‘world’ and ‘universe’ are hereafter used interchangeably.
55 Of course, the topic of hudūth and qidam is purely metaphysical, and it looks at the general principles of existence inasmuch as it is existence, and not existence inasmuch as it has ‘materialised’. Hence, topics that deal with the material formation of the world (e.g., the Big Bang theory) are irrelevant to this study.
believing that the world was created, and Aristotle\textsuperscript{56} believing that it was eternal.\textsuperscript{57} Greek, Jewish,\textsuperscript{58} Christian and Islamic scholars have argued about this since ancient times, through the medieval era and up to the present day. Aristotle argued for eternity, and this was challenged by those who believed in the world’s creation from nothing (creation \textit{ex nihilo}).\textsuperscript{59} Those opposed to Aristotle’s argument said that God created the universe, which means that it had a definite beginning in time. On this issue, Herbert A. Davidson observes:

The initial issue of natural theology for Muslims and Jews, the most fundamental issue where opinions divided, was, it may be ventured, the inquiry concerning whether the world is eternal or had a beginning. Much more is at stake than the chronology or hermeneutics—the age of the universe or the question of whether the scriptural account of the genesis of the universe should be taken literally or allegorically.\textsuperscript{60}

Therefore, after God’s existence had been established and proven by theologians and philosophers (who are unanimously united on this), some areas of debate still remained regarding the form of God’s connection and relation to the universe.\textsuperscript{61} Yet,

\begin{itemize}
  \item Important note to here is that there was a certain way in which Arabic/Islamic philosophers and theologians understood Aristotle, Plato and other Ancient Greek philosophers and how they were introduced and known in the Islamic world. Whether this interpretation perceived these Greek philosophers as how they really were (i.e., correctly understood them) is another issue. What we must examine is how Muslim thinkers understood ancient philosophers as attributed to them in the Islamic philosophical tradition—that is, how these philosophers were understood, not how they really were.
  \item One example of a Jewish account demonstrating that the universe was created and not eternal is Seymour Feldman, “Gersonides’ Proofs for the Creation of the Universe,” in \textit{Essays in Medieval Jewish and Islamic Philosophy}, ed. Arthur Hyman (New York: KTAV Publishing House, 1977), 219–43. This book also contains an interesting discussion on Maimonides’ perspective on creation (pp. 321–34).
  \item Professor Harry A. Wolfson elaborated on this term in his highly influential work \textit{The Philosophy of the Kalam} (Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1976), 355–408, regarded as a milestone book in the field of Islamic theology in the West. In this book, Wolfson discusses the historical background of the controversy of creation and eternity, presenting views from Ancient Greek philosophers, Christian and Jewish Scholars, and various Muslim sects.
  \item Davidson, \textit{Proofs for Eternity}, 1.
  \item There are two ways as to how God can be proven, philosophically or theologically. The philosopher deems God as the Necessary existence, the Prime cause or the Cause of causes. Theologians, in general, emphasise God being ‘eternal’. These positions are not contradictory; rather philosophers and theologians differ in their approach on how God is described or seen. The differences in conceptualising lead to differences in the arguments of proving God versus those of proving creation/eternity. Such discussions can be seen in classical Islamic theology and philosophy texts. For example, Avicenna mentions this in \textit{al-maqa’ala al-sādiqa of al-Shifā’}, and Islamic theologians like al-Malāhēmi who discusses this in his book \textit{Tuhfat al-Mutakallimin fi al-Radd ‘ala al-Falāsifah}. See: Rukn al-Dīn al-Malāhēmi al-Khwarazmī, \textit{Tuhfat al-Mutakallimin fi al-Radd ‘ala al-Falāsifah}, edited with an introduction by Hasan Ansari and Wilferd Madelung (Tehran: Iranian Institute of Philosophy & Institute of Islamic Studies Free University of Berlin, 2008) 15.
\end{itemize}
these two topics—proving the existence of God and the issue of eternity and creation—are often linked.62

One reason for this concept of creation’s temporal createdness63 or eternity being so important is its direct involvement in religious belief. Theologians regard contingency and eternity as being limited to temporal contingency and eternity, and examples of proponents of this view will be provided in detail. Something that is temporally contingent is preceded by temporal non-existence; something that is eternal is not preceded by temporal non-existence. Therefore, Almighty God is eternal in temporality, and everything else is temporally contingent. Philosophers claim that the world is temporally eternal, believing that its contingency is ‘essential contingency’; that which precedes the contingent is like the precedence of a primary cause over the effect, which is essential and not temporal.

To summarise the issue of creation being temporal or eternal (or connecting the temporal to the eternal), we can ask (after accepting the existence of an infinite eternal origin of this existing world, and that God created this world through His knowledge, will and power), what occurred at this time? Given that everything in existence—with ‘everything’ including time itself—was created by the First Origin (i.e., God), is it conceivable that a gap or vacuum exists between the Infinite Origin (God) and the creation of the first existence in the contingent world, or not?

In other words, is everything set apart from God (i.e., the contingent realm), such as the First Origin, eternal and infinite, or is everything preceded by nothingness and, thus, created? To deal with this problem, many complex philosophical and theological principles and presuppositions must be understood. For example, regarding the First Origin (al-mabda’ al-awwal), it is the absolute cause of existence; an effect cannot be without a cause, which means that the existence of the effect cannot be separated from the existence of the absolute cause. Therefore, existence, like the First Origin, must be infinite and eternal. From another perspective, God is

62 Davidson, Proofs for Eternity, 2. Of course, there are various sources that discuss the topic of philosophy of religion with arguments related to proving existence of God, or philosophers who pose questions related to these proofs. Oppy was previously mentioned (see fn. 1 of this chapter). Another modern-day philosopher who objects to the traditional perfect being is Yujin Nagasawa, with one of his objections being that although it might be claimed that God is knowledgeable, powerful and benevolent, “He might or might not be omniscient, omnipotent, and omnibenevolent” (Maximal God: A New Defence of Perfect Being Theism [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017], 92).
63 The term ‘creation’ is used instead of ‘createdness’ hereafter, referring to the world coming into existence after having not existed.
the active cause, who through His knowledge, will and power created the world from nothing. Influential personalities have held contrasting views on this topic, such as al-Ghazālī, who believed the world was created from nothing whatsoever, versus Averroes, who believed the world was not created ‘after privation’.\(^6^4\)

In explaining the relation between time and temporality, Sayyid Muḥammad Khāmeneʿī,\(^6^5\) a contemporary philosopher, states:

One of the important subjects in Islamic philosophy is ‘the timeless world’ (in contrast to the physical and material world). Thus, here, existents are divided into two general groups: temporal or changing existents and non-temporal or unchanging existents.

Plato’s Ideas are of the type of time-less existents, and the world of these Ideas must be regarded as the world of unchanging and timeless things. This theory has been, more or less, accepted in Islamic philosophy through some justifications and interpretations.\(^6^6\)

This matter was a central concern in Mīr Dāmād’s philosophy. He tried to understand the meaning of time in relation to eternity and the related question of the originated or eternal nature of the world (\(hudūth/qidām\)).\(^6^7\) In his philosophical and religious discourses on time and nature, Mīr Dāmād presents the notion of perpetual creation, or perpetual origination (\(hudūth dahrī\)); that is, that a meta-temporal dimension exists in which creation takes place. This position aimed to resolve the arguments and confusions of other philosophers. As will be explained in Chapter 2, it is crucial to correctly understand the term \(hudūth\) as used by Mīr Dāmād as a technical term. Its literal meaning is ‘being new’ or ‘not having a beginning’, and although I have chosen to translate it as ‘creation’ (this being the customary English equivalent used), other words can be used (e.g.,


\(^{65}\) Sayyid Muḥammad Khāmeneʿī (b. 1936), the brother of Ayatullah Sayyid ‘Ali Khāmeneʿī (the current Supreme Leader of the Islamic Republic of Iran), is the founder and president of the Ṣadrā Islamic Philosophy Research Institute and leads the International Mullā Ṣadrā Conference (see http://www.mullaSadora.org/).


\(^{67}\) Nasr, \textit{Islamic Philosophy}, 215.
‘origination’ or ‘coming-into-being’). The correct, technical meaning is that there is existence after non-existence in reality, which means that its existence is real, its non-existence is real and its ‘afterness’ (baʿdiyah) is real. The meaning of this latter term ‘afterness’ is disputed. Does the afterness refer to temporal afterness, estimative afterness, essential afterness, real afterness or quantifiable (mukammam), which is dahrī. As for being created or creation, this in its literal sense refers to khālq and jaʿl, which is different to ḥudūth or incipience and coming-into-being.

Philosophers and Eternity versus Creation

Eternity and creation were discussed in a distinct way by ancient Greek philosophers.\^66 Plato discusses the eternity and creation of the world in his dialogue Timaeus,\^67 where he says that the world was created because it is visible, tangible and has a body.\^70 In contrast, Plotinus (204–270) believed that the world was eternal.\^71 Proclus (417–485), another Neoplatonist, wrote a treatise specifically on this topic called On the Eternity of the World.\^72 This became the foundational text for all later arguments about the eternity of the world and the existence of God. Islamic philosophers later merged some of Proclus’s ideas into their own theories.\^73

These arguments are apparent in most sources that discuss this topic. With the Greek philosophical tradition entering the Judeo-Christian world and later the Islamic world (as will be discussed), scholars of these faiths began to analyse the theories from this tradition and develop their own views. Greek philosophy, in particular Aristotelian metaphysics and Neoplatonic philosophy, made its way into the Arabic-speaking world during the translation movement under the rise of the ‘Abbasid dynasty (eighth century CE). These primary sources from the Greek

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\^72 Rahman, “Mīr Dāmād’s Concept of Ḥudūth Dahrī,” 140. For a brief explanation of this fusion, see also Pirooz Fatourchi, “Four Conceptions of creation ex nihilo and the Compatibility Questions,” in Creation and the God of Abraham, ed. David B. Burrell, Carlo Cogliati, Janet M. Soskice and William R. Stoeger (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 84.
philosophical heritage had long-term effects on Islamic philosophical discourse. Many Neoplatonic texts were translated into Arabic and used for centuries. All major Islamic philosophers referred to the Hellenic philosophers and engaged with their thoughts. As an example, the strong influence of this transmitted heritage of Neoplatonic philosophy can be vividly seen in the ideas and works of Suhrawardī. The main Greek philosophical works became textbooks, and a primary focus of Islamic scholars was to write commentaries and glosses on these. Sajjad Rizvi, an expert in Islamic philosophers of the Safavid era, mentions how prominent the Greek tradition was among Persian Islamic philosophers up through the Safavid period:

Hellenic thought remained significant in the Safavid period, in particular the famous Theology of Aristotle (*Uthūlūjiyyā*) being an adapted paraphrase of sections of *Enneads* IV to VI of Plotinus, and even (neo-)Pythagorean thought in the form of the *Golden Verses* (*carmina aurea*) attributed to Pythagoras with the commentary of Iamblichus.

The thinker that the present research focuses on, Sayyid Muḥammad Bāqir Mīr Dāmād, explains the contrasting views held by ancient Greek philosophers in detail in his magnum opus *Kitāb al-Qabasāt* (*The Book of Blazing Brands*), which is devoted exclusively to the subject of the eternity (*qidam*) and creation (*ḥudūth*) of the world. He states in *Qabas* One:

> It is widely known and confirmed by unbroken traditions, both oral and written, transmitted over the course of centuries and ages, that there has

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74 For a list of the Arabic translations of Neoplatonic works, see Christina D'Ancona, “Greek into Arabic: Neoplatonism in Translation,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Arabic Philosophy*, ed. Peter Adamson and Richard C. Taylor (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 23–24. This research gives a detailed insight into the origins and strong influence of Neoplatonism in the Arabic/Islamic world.

75 Rizvi, *Mullā Ṣadrā Shirazi*, 151.

been continuous and widespread disagreement between the respected philosophers regarding the creation (ḥudūth) of the world and its eternity (qidam) and the First Maker being the Fashioner (ṣāni’) of the whole system in its entirety or its Originator (mubdi’).

The leader of philosophy, the divine Plato, and the six philosophers preceding him,77 are the seven primary philosophers. These philosophers and others who followed them believed that this Great Man (al-insān al-kabīr), which is [in other words] the cosmos (al-ʿālam al-akbar)—with all of its parts and members, whether concrete or intelligible, material or spiritual, in other words, everything in the two realms of Command and creation—was created (hādith) and not eternally existent (mutasarmad al-wujūd), and that the true Creator is both its Originator and its Fashioner.

The teacher of the Greek Peripatetics, Aristotle, and a number of his followers and supporters, like the Greek Master [Plotinus], Proclus, Themistius, Alexander of Aphrodisias, and Porphyry, and their followers believed that part of the cosmos, like the individual originated existents and the unqualified natures of the species and genera, is eternally existent (qadīm al-wujūd) and eternally perpetual (mutasarmad al-dawām) in actuality, and that the First Maker is their Originator, while the only created parts of the cosmos are the individual generated, material existents, which are subject in essence and existence to dispositional possibilities, and nothing else, and that the Agent Maker is their Fashioner.78

Here, Mīr Dāmād explains his view on Plato and his followers:79 according to them, everything other than God, whether material or immaterial, was created. This means that God is the Originator (mubdi’) and the Fashioner (ṣāni’). In contrast, Aristotle and his followers (according to Mīr Dāmād) believed that the intelligible part of the world, including time, is co-eternal with God and not created.80 This means that God

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79 Mīr Dāmād had high respect for Plato, referring to him as divine, or ilāhī. See Mīr Dāmād, al-Īmādāt, 28. Mīr Dāmād refers to Platonians as his predecessor brethren, and as firmly established sages, previous partners and divine philosophers. See Mīr Dāmād, Jadhwāt wa Mawāqīt, 43.
80 Mīr Dāmād also admired Aristotle and his Uthologia (or The Theology), which was a book attributed to him. See Mīr Dāmād, al-Ufiq al-Mubīn, 510, 530; Mīr Dāmād, Kitāb al-Qabasāt, 28, 399. In the latter, Mīr Dāmād refers to Aristotle as the “teacher of the Peripatetics and their instructor.”
is the Originator of that part of the cosmos, but not its Fashioner. The difference between \textit{ṣun’} and \textit{ibdā‘} will be detailed later in this thesis. In brief, philosophers use these terms to refer to different levels of coming-into-existence; if something that comes into existence is preceded by privation (’\textit{adam}’), it is called \textit{ṣun’}, and if it is not preceded by privation, it is called \textit{ibdā‘}. Each opposes the other. If the creation is related to the material, then it is called \textit{takwīn}. Finally, something that is close to being brought into createdness is called \textit{ṣun’} and \textit{ibdā‘}. Each opposes the other.

Seyyed Hussain Nasr briefly describes this relation in his article ‘The School of Ispahān’, explaining the trifold concept of \textit{sarmad}, \textit{dahr} and \textit{zamān} as presented by Mīr Dāmād:

\begin{quote}
Since this world was brought into being through the intermediate world of the archetypes, its creation is \textit{dahrī} not \textit{zamānī}, i.e., the world was not created in a tile which existed before the world came into being but with respect to a \textit{dahr} which stands above the world. The creation of this world is, therefore, \textit{ḥudūth-i dahrī}, \textit{ibdā‘}, and \textit{ikhtirā‘}, and not \textit{ḥudūth-i zamānī}, \textit{wadī‘} and \textit{takwīn}. Time has its own plane of being, but in the world of \textit{dahr}, the world of the archetypes, time does not even exist.\end{quote}

The terms of \textit{ṣun’} (bringing into createdness) and \textit{ibdā‘} (immediate creation) are core concepts in Avicennian philosophy as they reveal the different modes of contingent existence, along with the topic of generation and corruption (\textit{kawn wa fasād}). Per Avicenna:

\begin{quote}
Immediate creation (\textit{al-ibdā‘}) is a thing’s giving existence to another that depends on nothing other than it—without the mediation of matter, instrument, or time. That which is preceded by temporal nonexistence, on the other hand, cannot dispense with an intermediary. Immediate creation
\end{quote}

\footnotesize
\begin{flushright}


\end{flushright}
is in a nobler rank than material production (al-takwīn) and temporal production (al-iḥdāth).\textsuperscript{84}

According to Avicenna, iḥdāth means the bringing-into-existence of something from matter and time, whereas for ibdā‘, there is no matter or time. Avicenna argues that establishing the origination of the world proves that God is able to bring about what He decrees, and without any matter prior to it.\textsuperscript{85} Avicenna also confirms that the appropriation of origination of the world is acknowledged by the foundations of religion, which also shows the devotional aspect of Avicenna.\textsuperscript{86} In general, those who adhere to a religion and believe in a God aim to understand and explain the origin of the world in a way that does not clash with their religious beliefs.

With Abrahamic (Judaic, Christian and Islamic) religions gaining ground (roughly during the medieval era), an amalgamation of various sciences with religious precepts developed, where medieval philosophical ideas and theories were moulded into religious beliefs. One view promoted during this broad medieval era was that God had created the entire world without recourse to pre-existing matter from the beginning of time, which was itself a creation. This became known as ‘creation ex nihilo’, and was clearly opposed to the Platonic dogma of creation out of eternal formless matter and the Aristotelian theory of the universe’s eternity.\textsuperscript{87}

The notion of creation ex nihilo (from nothing) embedded in philosophical and theological discussions raises the question of whether ‘something can come from nothing’. This can also be phrased as ‘from nothing, nothing comes’; if the world has a temporal beginning, it is in need of a divine outside agency.\textsuperscript{88}

In his introduction to Creation and the God of Abraham, Carlo Cogliati writes:

\textit{Creation ex nihilo} was the product of the confluence of Biblical teaching and Hellenistic Judaism, and was the means by which theologians of the early

\textsuperscript{86} Ibid., 152.
\textsuperscript{88} Fatoorchi, “Four Conceptions,” 90–97, and the introduction by Carlo Cogliati, 7.
Church defended the God they saw to be revealed in Scripture: loving, living and active.\textsuperscript{89}

Medieval thinkers of the Abrahamic faiths embraced this doctrine in different ways, refined it and elaborated on it.\textsuperscript{90} However, over time, engagement with this subject declined until recent debates such as those around the Big Bang theory or 'Kalam cosmological argument'\textsuperscript{91} surfaced in academic circles:

The doctrine was largely taken for granted until the early modern period, when it became simply ignored or misunderstood by both scientists and philosophers, as theologians shied away from metaphysics in order to align themselves with empirical science.\textsuperscript{92}

This topic is important as all Abrahamic religions discuss creation, in that God created the universe. Across the vast array of scholars from these religions, from all eras, no argument has existed regarding the provability of God's existence. However, opinions have been divided on whether the world is eternal or had a beginning. This contentious question has created difficulties for theologians and philosophers when comparing theories with religious scripture. For example, in the Judeo-Christian tradition, the scriptural account of the existence of the world is clearly mentioned in the opening words of the Book of Genesis: ‘In the Beginning God created the heaven and the earth’.

In the Biblical account of creation, the Judeo-Christian understanding of God is that He created the world 'out of nothing’\textsuperscript{93}—God did this without compulsion or necessity, and without pre-existing matter, space or time.\textsuperscript{94} This view (that the universe had a beginning) has been challenged, even by Aristotle, who said that if there had been a time when nothing existed, then there would be nothing now.\textsuperscript{95} Did

\textsuperscript{89} Ibid., 7–8.

\textsuperscript{90} Regarding how Muslim scholars dealt with \textit{creation ex nihilo}, there is no consensus as to whether the Qur’an accepts or rejects it. For a detailed explanation, see Salman H. Bashier, \textit{Ibn al-’Arabi’s Barzakh: The Concept of the Limit and the Relationship between God and the World} (New York: State University of New York Press, 2004), ch. 2 and 3 (especially the section “Creation ex nihilo, Creation in time, and eternal Creation: Ibn Sinā versus the theologians,” 29–59).

\textsuperscript{91} William L. Craig, \textit{The Kalam Cosmological Argument} (US: Wipf & Stock, 2000).

\textsuperscript{92} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{93} Genesis’ 1 and 2. Other accounts are mentioned, such as Job 38: “God lays the foundation of the earth.” The Psalms also make numerous references to this. See McMullin, “Creation Ex-nihilo,” 11–13.

\textsuperscript{94} For a brief explanation of creation in the Old Testament, see McMullin, “Creation Ex-nihilo,” 11.

\textsuperscript{95} Ibid., 25.
God create this world from nothing, or from pre-existing matter? Regarding these two origins, and whether a universe with a beginning should be literal or allegorical, Davidson says:

The issue of eternity and creation [the world coming-into-existence after not having existed] provided an arena for determining the relationship of God to the universe, for determining, specifically, whether God is a necessary or voluntary cause. If the world should be eternal, and a deity is recognised, the deity’s relationship to the universe would likewise be eternal.96

Naturally, diverse opinions exist regarding how creation can occur from nothing, and how this fits with alternative accounts of the physical world’s origins. Did creation occur from nothing or did it require something to sustain it?

The followers of the Abrahamic tradition inherited the Greek and Hellenistic ideas about creation and the universe’s origins. Per Rahim Acar:

The Greek and Hellenistic philosophical heritage provided at least three major ways of relating the universe to God. The universe owes to God (i) its order, (ii) its movement or (iii) simply its existence. The first two alternatives may be traced back to Plato and Aristotle respectively. The third alternative may be associated with Platonists, especially with Plotinus, and it seems to emerge as an interpretation of Plato’s position. A fourth alternative must be added to the triplet. It is that the universe owes to God not simply its existence but its existence after non-existence. This is the conception of creation which was favoured by the majority of medieval philosophers and theologians in the Western and Islamic worlds.97

In the Hellenistic era, Galen defended the notion of creation and eternity being a dialectic issue with two contrary positions (jadali al-ταράφαν), and he might have been the first to believe so.98 Proclus, despite being a Platonian (the Platonians

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97 Ibid., 77.
believed in ḥudūth), took the view of qidam and presented 18 arguments for this. A third personality representing this particular period is Yahyā al-Nahwī, or Johannes Grammaticus (490–575 CE), who, according to Ibn al-Nadim in his al-Fihrist, was among the high-ranking leaders of the Egyptian Christian church and had met with ‘Amr ibn al-‘Āṣ while the latter was the governor of Egypt, appointed by the Second Caliph. Yahyā believed in ḥudūth and refuted Proclus, writing a treatise on this. Galen, Proclus and Grammaticus represented three views during the Hellenistic era.

This debate continued throughout the Middle Ages, spanning various philosophical schools and religions, evident in the way in which the issue was intertwined with the enterprise to prove God’s existence. Johannes Thijssen, writing on the topic of medieval views concerning the concepts of eternity and creation, observes:

> From the fourth century onwards, however, Christian thinkers had to take into consideration accounts from antiquity, transmitted by authors such as Augustine and Boethius, according to which the existence of the material universe (mundus) was ‘from eternity’ (ab aeterno), that is, beginningless.

In its early stages, the medieval discussion of the eternity of the world was preoccupied with two types of questions, one asking whether the world had existed from eternity and the other examining the concept of eternity and its relation with time. In general, ‘time’ (tempus) was understood to imply having both a beginning and an end, and perpetuity (aevum) involved a beginning but not an end, whereas ‘eternity’ (aeternitas) had neither beginning nor end. ‘Eternity’ in this sense was understood as a temporal notion, meaning ‘infinite temporal extension’. However as Boethius pointed out in De consolatione philosophiae (The Consolation of Philosophy), ‘eternity’ could also be taken as atemporal. This conception of eternity, sometimes called ‘eternity proper’ by later authors, introduced the notion

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99 This was mentioned by al-Shahrastānī. See Abū al-Faţh al-Shahrastānī, Mawsū‘a al-Milal wa al-Nihal (Beirut, Mu’assasat Naṣer li al-Thaqāfa, 1981), 193–95. He also concluded that these arguments are fallacious.


101 Ibid., 613.

102 Ibid.
of timelessness within the notions of ‘all at once’ (tota simul) and of ‘life’, and referred to God’s mode of existence.\footnote{103}

The present research focuses primarily on the philosophical debates about creation and avoids delving too deeply into the religious and Islamic Qur’an/hadith aspects of the argument. Where issues relating to the exegesis of the Qur’an or hadith are relevant, an explanation is offered (in the main text or a footnote), but the Chapter 5 will offer a more detailed explanation of the role of the Qur’an and hadith in understanding creation and eternity.\footnote{104} Note here though, even a cursory review of Islamic sources reveals many verses and narrations that explicitly speak about creation, using words such as ja’l, faṭr, khalq and bad.\footnote{105}

Rational discussion of metaphysics commonly covers three primary issues. The first is proving God’s existence, and some believe this is self-evident and does not need proving. The second is God’s attributes, and trying to keep these attributes as transcendent (tanzih) as possible. The third is causality, although this is more within discussions of philosophy as most theologians do not refer to God as the ‘cause’.

For a believer, there needs to be a relation between these rational and metaphysical theories and religious and scriptural teachings, and, ideally, a combination of them so as to avoid rejecting the nature of either. The topic of creation and eternity makes this task very difficult because of the topic’s complexity. In religion, especially from a theological perspective, the topic of creation and eternity become the boundary of faith and disbelief, because the criteria of the need of the material realm is creation. When the theory of creation is rejected, you reject the need of the origin, and this


\footnote{104} As will be discussed in Chapter 5, Shi‘i hadith compilations do make various references to this topic, citing sermons and statements from the Shi‘i Imāms. The first sermon in Nahj al-Balāgha, delivered by Imām ‘Alī, speaks about creation and origination (inshā’ al-khalq). In al-Kulainī’s al-Kāfī, there is a chapter on creation. In Sheikh al-Ṣadūq’s famous ‘Uyūn Akhkhār al-Ridā, there is a section on traditions narrated by Imām ‘Alī al-Ridā that mentions origination of the world. See Muḥammad ibn ‘Alī ibn Bābawayh, ‘Uyūn Akhkhār al-Ridā, ed. Mehdi Lājvardī (Tehran: Jahān, 1378 SY), 1: 133–34. There is a comprehensive mention of ḥudūth al-ʿālam in the first chapter of volume 54 of al-Majlī’s encyclopaedic Biḥār al-Anwār, where he also critiques al-ḥudūth al-dahrī. See Muḥammad Bāqir al-Majlī, Biḥār al-Anwār, vol. 54 (Beirut: Dār Iḥyā’ al-‘Arabī, 1983), 5 onwards.

\footnote{105} As in the Qur’an, 6:1, 42:11, 39:38.
means you reject the origin, and this is disbelief. Therefore, it is purely related to *kufr* and *imān*. A Qur’anic verse refers to God being with you wherever you are, and that His grace is continuous over His creation.\(^{106}\) In philosophy, creation and eternity is underpinned by the chosen ontological and worldview outlook and definition, and the topic’s complexity is due to how paradoxical it is. From one side, you acknowledge change and creation and the precedence of nothingness, and from the other side you establish that the Creator is fixed and has everlasting effulgence (*dā‘īm al-fayd*).

The *badīḥiyāt* of reason cannot be rejected, and the accepted notions (*musallamāt*) of religion can also not be abandoned. This necessitates finding a way to combine these apparently opposed positions, and this is why Mīr Dāmād became so engaged with this topic. The issue is that there is something—other than *ḥudūth* and beyond the seemingly irresolvable conflict between Qur’anic verses, narrations and reason—that can be solved.\(^{107}\) The Islamic tradition (philosophical and theological) exhibits a strong focus on this topic.\(^{108}\) Muslim philosophers considered the temporal creation or eternity of the world to be a fundamental issue, and discussions on this occur in the oldest Islamic philosophical and theological sources.

As previously mentioned, ancient Greek theories (in particular, those of Aristotle and Proclus) influenced the formation of these arguments among Muslim scholars. The first Muslim philosophers influenced by the Aristotelian school, classified as Peripatetics, include al-Kindī (185/801–256/873 AH/CE),\(^{109}\) Zakariya Rāzī (251/854–313/932 AH/CE), al-Farābī (259/872–339/950 AH/CE) and Avicenna

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\(^{106}\) Qur’an, 57:4.

\(^{107}\) Meaning that it is not *jadali al-ṭarafayn*, as some philosophers have concluded, and this point will be further discussed in this chapter.

\(^{108}\) The references and ongoing discourse between Islamic philosophers and theologians testify to this. For an interesting insight into how Islamic theologians and philosophers incorporated their arguments on creation as a primary topic in the area of arguing for God’s existence, see Hannah C. Erlwein, *Arguments for God’s Existence in Classical Islamic Thought: A Reappraisal of the Discourse* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2019).

\(^{109}\) In a broader understanding, al-Kindī would not be completely classified as Peripatetic, but rather an 'Islamic philosopher', as he always took the Islamic side of things when comparing to the philosophical views that existed at his time. Averroes, on the other hand, would be Peripatetic, in the sense of adhering to the tradition of Aristotle. As for Zakariya Rāzī, he was inclined towards the Platonic tradition, which can be seen in his emphasis on the works of Plato.
(Ibn Sīnā) (370/980–428/1037 AH/CE). They taught that the universe was eternal, in accordance with both Aristotle and the Neoplatonists.\textsuperscript{110}

As previously mentioned, Muslim philosophers and theologians do not dispute the existence of God.\textsuperscript{111} The fundamental controversy between them relates to the possibility of a world without beginning, yet one that was created. The arguments on this centre on the relationship of God to creation, proving God's existence and the nature of creation and eternity. This issue has resulted in a significant and long-lasting division between philosophers and theologians due to the contrasts in their understandings of the God–world relationship. Abū al-Barakāt Hibatullah ibn Malkā al-Baghdādī (465/1074–560/1165 AH/CE) wrote about this tension in his most important book \textit{Kitāb al-Mu'tabar fī al-Ḥikmah} (\textit{The Book of what has been Established in Philosophy}):

Each side defamed the other. Those who believed in creation named the other group who believed in eternity as atheists (\textit{dahriyah}), and those who believed in eternity accused those who took the view of creation to be among those who negate God's attributes (\textit{mu'āttilah}). This is because they believed in God's absence of attributes for a period of infinite time in the beginning.\textsuperscript{112}

Al-Baghdādī's account of the tense debate during that time between those who believed in eternity and the supporters of the theory of creation clearly shows how engaged people were with this topic.

Theologians clearly distinguished between the Creator and the created world, arguing that creation was spontaneous and simply God's choice as He could have abstained from this act. Being significantly influenced by religion, they could not ignore the Qur'anic verses that refer to everything being annihilated except for God's face\textsuperscript{113} as this meant that prior to creation, God was alone.\textsuperscript{114}

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{111} This can also be said to include other religions. For a detailed comparative study on the topic of creation, see Davidson, \textit{Proofs for Eternity}.
  \item \textsuperscript{112} Abū al-Barakāt al-Baghdādī, \textit{Kitāb al-Mu'tabar fī al-Ḥikmah} (Hyderabad: Dā'irat al-Ma'ārif al-ʿUthmāniya, 1930), 3: 43.
  \item \textsuperscript{113} Qur’an, 28:88.
  \item \textsuperscript{114} Fackenheim, “The Possibility of the Universe,” 313–14.
\end{itemize}
This longstanding division over such a complex and important topic is what gives Mīr Dāmād his special place in the history of Islamic philosophy and the evolution of this important topic of ḥudūth versus qidam. This topic is not only an ontological issue but also extends to a deeper matter of faith in religion. In the scientific battle between Muslim philosophers and theologians, each side took either the pure rational approach, like al-Kindī, or the devotional religious approach, like al-Ghazālī. (The respective involvement and contributions of scholars in this area will be explained in the following section and throughout this thesis.) After al-Ghazālī’s vehement attack against philosophy, the effects of which are still evident today, some philosophers tried to mend the situation by proving that there is harmony between reason and tradition, or philosophy and religion. Avicenna was firmly of the philosophical view and did not implement religion in his philosophical school beyond the small amount that he deemed necessary. Averroes aimed to refute al-Ghazālī and prove that reason and religion could be brought together. Similarly, Nāṣer Khusruw (394/1004–481/1088 AH/CE) attempted to harmonise philosophy and religion. However, neither were able to create such a complete rational system of thought that gave cohesion to both philosophy and religion as Mīr

115 Kausar Parveen, “al-Ghazālī’s Attack on the Philosophers and Ibn-i Rush’s Response,” Pakistan Journal of History and Culture 20, no. 1 (1999): 77–91. The view that al-Ghazālī’s attack on philosophy had such an impact that the Sunni world was unable to recover has been contested by certain contemporary scholars like Robert Wisnovsky. Wisnovsky cites the numerous manuscripts undertaking philosophical inquiry after al-Ghazālī’s attack as demonstrating the incorrectness of the view that al-Ghazālī led to the marginalising of philosophy and was responsible for half of the Islamic sciences. See Robert Wisnovsky, “The Nature and Scope of Arabic Philosophical Commentary in Post-Classical (CA. 1100–1900 AD) Islamic Intellectual History: Some Preliminary Observations,” Bulletin – Institute of Classical Studies 47, no. 83, part 2 (2004): 149–91. Other scholars consider that the decline in philosophical output did not occur due to opposition, but rather due to acceptance and adaptation. See, e.g., F. Jamil Ragep, Sally P. Ragep and Steven Livesey, eds., Tradition, Transmission, Transformation: Proceedings of Two Conferences on Pre-modern Science held at the University of Oklahoma (Leiden: Brill, 1996). Another important source in this area that also gives a summary of the intellectual debates between al-Ghazālī and other Islamic thinkers is Kenneth Garden, The First Islamic Reviver; Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī and his Revival of the Religious Sciences (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014).

116 Full name, Abū Muʿīn Nāṣer ibn Khusruw ibn Hārēth Qābādiyānī. He was born in Balkh, Greater Iran, and was a famous polymath who mastered many sciences of the time, including philosophy, astronomy and poetry. His influence was very strong in the Fatimid Dynasty and he is highly revered and heavily mentioned within Ismaili studies.

Dāmād did throughout the course of his works. As will be explained, further attempts at this were made by Khwāja Naṣīr al-Dīn al-Ṭūsī and Mīr Dāmād’s student Mullā Ṣadrā, but as valuable as their contributions were, they did not amount to Mīr Dāmād’s comprehensive system of thought in this regard.

There were three main points philosophers in general believed which led al-Ghazālī to condemn them: belief in physical resurrection (maʿād jismānī), belief in the (temporal) creation of the world and the belief that God’s knowledge cannot encompass the particular (nāfīʿīlm al-bārī bi al-juzʿiyāt). As will soon be explained, al-Ghazālī’s criticisms centred on these three topics were refuted, and these topics became the central points of the arguments of many philosophers, in particular, Shihāb al-Dīn Yaḥyā Suhrawārdī, Mīr Dāmād and Mullā Ṣadrā. The most important topic Suhrawārdī discussed was knowledge, saying that light (nūr) was the criterion of knowledge and everything returned back to knowledge. Suhrawārdī’s detailed arguments in this area focused on establishing God’s knowledge of particulars. Mīr Dāmād’s fundamental topic (and a recurring theme in all his works) was explaining the topic of the origination of the world and eternity, and introducing a new way of understanding hudūth. He sought to explain and justify his theory and position, and thereby refute any accusation of Islamic philosophers being disbelievers. Mullā Ṣadrā developed a philosophical system based on topics such as substantial motion, principality of existence, knowledge of the self (al-nafs), the isthmus realm (barzakh) and the subtle body (jism mithālī),118 and all this served towards proving his belief in physical resurrection.119

Each of these three great philosophers—Suhrawārdī, Mīr Dāmād and Mullā Ṣadrā—endeavoured to refute al-Ghazālī’s three main points of criticism. This was another reason for Mīr Dāmād’s deep interest in the topic of creation, as well as the

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importance of his contributions in combining the philosophical and theological perspectives. Note that in this thesis, I will aim to answer the important question of whether the topic of ḥudūth and qidam was primarily philosophical or theological. Further, if it was philosophical, did it originate from ancient Greek times as far as the terminology and concepts are concerned. Or, if it was theological, did it originate from the Ash'arites or Mutazilites.

The following sections provide a brief account of the theories presented by the major early Islamic philosophers and theologians (in rough chronological order), along with an overall picture of the dispute between these two groups. This furnishes the reader with an understanding of the developments preceding Mīr Dāmād.

**Views of Early Islamic Philosophers**

**Al-Kindī**

Abū Ya'qūb al-Kindī, also known as the ‘The Philosopher of the Arabs’, is considered the first Muslim philosopher.\(^{120}\) Al-Kindī wrote about the createdness and eternity of the world, but it is not clear if he believed in essential (dhātī) or temporal (zamānī) creation and eternity. Essential origination or coming-into-being means the existence of a thing is preceded by an essential non-existence, or by a cohabiting non-existence.\(^{121}\) Temporal creation means that the world was brought into being in time from nothingness.\(^{122}\) The uncertainty over al-Kindī’s views is largely due to the fact that most of his works have not survived. However, we can assume that al-Kindī believed in the world being created in time based on the following account in his Rasā’il al-Kindī al-Falsafiya (*The Philosophical Treatises of al-Kindī*):

> The evidence our philosopher has regarding the creation of the world is the evidence that relies on the origin of finiteness in everything that actually

\(^{120}\) Nasr, *Islamic Philosophy*, 109.


\(^{122}\) Ibid.
exists, or had actually existed, and this is the famous evidence adopted by the Mu’tazilites\textsuperscript{123} during the era of al-Kindī.\textsuperscript{124}

In one treatise in this book, al-Kindī concentrated on finiteness and time, explaining that time—which he considered to be the amount of motion that is based on priority and posteriority (\textit{taqaddum/ta’akhur})—is finite, meaning that time is limited. If time was limited, he says, then it is created, brought into existence by God through formation from nothing, having a beginning and an end.\textsuperscript{125}

Even though al-Kindī is classified as a rationalist and within the perimeters of Peripatetic philosophy, Aristotle believed that time is eternal, whereas al-Kindī believed it is created. Al-Kindī’s view means that the world is also created, because time cannot be separated from this world.\textsuperscript{126} Al-Kindī says one cannot experience a certain amount of time and suppose that the rest of time is infinite and eternal.\textsuperscript{127} From this, we can assume that he believed in the world’s temporal creation.

Felix Klein-Franke summarises al-Kindī’s views as follows:

Al-Kindī’s arguments go ultimately back to the late School of Alexandria. John Philoponus (aka Johannes Grammaticus, or Yahyā al-Nahwī) used them in his refutation \textit{On the Eternity of the world against Proclus}. He wrote his book in the year 529 against the Neoplatonic philosopher Proclus. Philoponus’ refutation \textit{On the Eternity of the world against Proclus} was translated into Arabic and furnished al-Kindī with some philosophical arguments which were current among Christian philosophers in late Hellenistic Alexandria.\textsuperscript{128}

\textsuperscript{123} Also translated as ‘Mu’tazilites’ (literal translation: “those who withdraw themselves”), were a Sunni theological sect in opposition to the Ash’arītes, founded by Wāsīl ibn ‘Ata’ in the second century AH. This sect believed it was necessary to give a rationally coherent account of Islamic beliefs. The Ash’arītes, named after its founding thinker al-Ash’ārī, originated in its strong objection to the excessive rationalism of the Mu’tazilah, and al-Ash’ārī argued that reason should be subordinate to revelation. For a detailed account of the origins of the Mu’tazilites and how they are distinct from the Ash’arītes, see Wolfson, \textit{The Philosophy of the Kalam}, 17–41.


\textsuperscript{125} Ibid., 113–22. This treatise is called \textit{al-Kindī’s book to al-Mu’tasam Billah}.

\textsuperscript{126} Ibid., 73.


\textsuperscript{128} Ibid. For a detailed account of the views on creation related to those such as Philoponus, see Feldman, “Philoponus on the Metaphysics of Creation,” 74–85.

It is not possible for a body (*jurm*) to be without time, because the essence of a body is not something infinite, and the essence of a body is finite. This means it is impossible for a body to be eternal, making it created by necessity.\(^\text{129}\)

He goes on to explain the difference between the singular and the compound, relating it to multiplicity and change, which is something restricted to the realm of finity, that is, the world.

Therefore, although al-Kindī was strongly influenced by Aristotle, he opposed Aristotle on this topic and reasoned that the world is created. The basis of al-Kindī’s position was that it was not possible for time to be eternal because prior motion ends with current or actual motion, and prior time ends with current time, which means that time and motion are finite. As time and motion are finite, and in material, the result is that material is also going to be finite. This leads to the world being finite, and hence created. This creates the context for understanding al-Kindī’s famous statement regarding God, where he said that God is the Maker of somethings from nothing (*muʿayyis al-ʿaysāt ʿan lays*),\(^\text{130}\) meaning God created existence from nothing.\(^\text{131}\)

**Al-Farābī**

Abū Naṣr al-Farābī is one of the greatest Islamic philosophers, so much so that he was given the title ‘The Second Master’ (*al-muʿallim al-thānî*)\(^\text{132}\) (after Aristotle, who

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\(^{130}\) Ibid., 134.


\(^{132}\) Aristotle is known as ‘The First Master’ and Mīr Dāmād as ‘The Third Master’. Al-Farābī being dubbed ‘The Second Master’ can be seen in writings as early as those of the polymath al-Bayhaqī (d. 565/1169–70 AH/CE). See ‘Alī ibn Abī al-Qāsim Zaid al-Bayhaqī, *Kitāb Tatimmat ammad Șiwān al-Hikma* (Lahore, 1935), 16.
was the First Master). Al-Farābī dedicates the whole of chapter 11 of his book133 al-Jam‘ Bayna Ra‘yay al-Ḥakīmayn (Harmony in the Doctrines of the Two Philosophers)134 to discussing the views of Aristotle and Plato regarding the world’s creation and eternity. In the introduction, he says:

Another thing is the issue of the world and its creation. Does it have a Creator who is its Active Cause, or not. It has been assumed that Aristotle believes that the world is eternal, and that Plato views the world as created.135

Al-Farābī then emphatically rejects the idea that Aristotle believed in the eternity of the world, stating that Aristotle denied this in Topics.136 Al-Farābī’s book al-Siyāsat al-Madaniya (The Policies of the City) contains other references to creation and eternity; he presents his theory of 'Divine Emanation' (al-faid al-ilāhī) and his view of creation and eternity. Based on the theory of Divine Emanation, God’s creation of existents is evidence of His independence. Further, the existence (wujūd) of existents (mawjūdāt) comes after the existence of God, but this posterior existence is not present in time.137 Clearly, al-Farābī rejects the view of the world’s temporal creation.

Abū al-Ḥasan al-ʿAmīrī

Abū al-Ḥasan Muḥammad ibn Yūsef al-ʿAmīrī (d. 381/992 AH/CE)138 was born in Nishābūr and became a great philosopher and a second-generation student of al-Kindī. Despite being the most outstanding figure between Farabi and Avicenna in Islamic philosophy, he is not widely known and is rarely mentioned. He holds an

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133 There is a view questioning the attribution of this book to al-Farābī. See Marwan Rashed, “On the Authorship of the Treatise on the Harmonisation of the Opinions of the Two Sages Attributed to al-Farābī,” Arabic Sciences and Philosophy 19 (2009): 43–82. This view was also challenged. See Damien Janos, “Al-Farabi, Creation Ex Nihilo, and the Cosmological Doctrine of K. al-Jam‘ and Jawabat,” The Journal of the American Oriental Society 129, no. 1 (2009): 1–17. In any case, even supposing that this book was not written by al-Farābī, we can still see in his works how he tried to combine creation and eternity. Important to note is that Mir Dāmād considered al-Jam‘ to have belonged to al-Farābī; to understand Mir Dāmād and his thought process, we must understand the way he saw things.


135 Ibid., 100.

136 Ibid.


important position in carrying on the legacy of al-Kindī in reconciling philosophy and religion. Al-ʿAmirī’s focus was on interpreting ancient Greek philosophy and sharing his findings with the Muslim public, explaining that there is no conflict between the Greek heritage of philosophy and Islam as a religion. In one of his surviving books, titled al-Amad ilā al-Abād (On the Afterlife), he delved into the topic of creation of the world and explained the viewpoints of Plato and Aristotle. Al-ʿAmirī expanded on what Plato discussed in Timaeus regarding creation and compared this with Aristotle’s understanding of this issue. He concluded that both their views are acceptable, depending on one’s perspective.

**Avicenna and His Followers and Detractors**

Abū ʿAlī al-Husain ibn ʿAbdullah Ibn Sīnā (370/980–429/1037 AH/CE), known in the West as Avicenna, is another great philosopher in the history of Islam and the world. At certain places in his work, he mentions his views about the creation and eternity of the world. Avicenna adopted the theory of the world’s temporal eternity, which contributed to al-Ghazālī branding him as a disbeliever. However, although Mīr Dāmād criticised temporal eternity of the world and critiqued Avicenna’s view on this, he also extolled Avicenna and mentioned him in the highest respect, and this contributed to the enduring positive and dignified view on Avicenna.

Avicenna discusses his view on the origination of the world in numerous places in his works, and as his works were more encyclopaedic, he was more systematic in his explanation of his theories and views. Additionally (and fortunately for the present study), Avicenna’s works are mostly complete in their authorship, unlike

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the works of Mīr Dāmād. Avicenna’s main works on metaphysics were *al-Shifā’* (*The Healing*), *al-Ishārāt wa al-tanbihāt* (*Remarks and Admonitions*), *al-Najāt* (*The Deliverance*) and the Persian book *Dāneshnāme-yā ‘Alā’ī* (*The Book of Knowledge for ‘Alā’ al-Dawla*). In the metaphysics of his book *al-Shifā’* (*The Healing*), while dealing with the subject of the active cause (*al-‘illat al-fā‘iliya*), Avicenna explains that the essential cause of everything must be with, and not precedent to, it:

If we judge—in connection with our discussion—the causes to be finite, we refer only to these [above mentioned] causes. We do not disallow that there are assisting and preparatory causes that are infinite, one [temporally] preceding the other. Indeed, this must necessarily be the case, because every originated thing becomes necessary after not having been necessary by reason of its cause becoming necessary at that moment, as we have shown, its cause being that which had also been necessary.144

The entirety of Chapter 2 in Part Six of *Ilāhiyāt al-Shifā’* discusses existence, non-existence and the cause of origination. This was after Avicenna established his position on the prior and the posterior; that with the posterior being divided into essential and temporal, the essential posteriority is in fact essential origination, which means posteriority in creation as far as its level of existence is concerned.145

Avicenna believes that if the essential cause has a continuous effect, then that effect must also have a continuous cause.146 This means that such a cause has precedence, as it is the complete cause of the effect; it has prevented the effect from becoming ‘absolute nothingness’ (*al-adam al-muṭlaq*). Therefore, the cause has an essential precedence (*taqaddum dhātī*) over the effect, not a temporal precedence (*taqaddum zamānī*).

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143 The efficient cause is one that gives existence to the effect. See Ṭabāṭabāʾī, *The Elements of Islamic Metaphysics*, 73.


145 Ibid., 125.

In another of Avicenna’s popular works, *al-Ishārāt wa al-tanbīhāt*, in *Namaṭ* (part) 5, he refutes the theologians, calling them commoners, and then discusses existence being dependent on a creator essentially and in creation.\(^{147}\) This part deals with creation from nothing, and also the important topics of *sunʿ* (origination) and *ibdāʾ* (immediate creation).\(^{148}\) The first few chapters talk about the effect’s need for a cause, and about origination (*hudūth*) contingency and non-existence, where origination returns back to contingency. The topic of every originated (created) phenomena needing a substance (*mādah*) and measurement (*muddah*) is then discussed, expanding on time, movement and the movable. Avicenna says that everything created is preceded with *mādah* and *muddah*.\(^{149}\) He then continues to discuss another type of *hudūth*, using the example of a hand and a key, presenting his view of essential creation (*hudūth dhātī*) and the concept of *ibdāʾ* (immediate creation). In the subsequent elaboration on this explanation, it can clearly be seen how Avicenna emphasises on the necessary relation between cause and effect, and the unification in the act, based on the principle of unity.\(^{150}\)

In the metaphysics section of *al-Najāt* (*The Deliverance*), Avicenna devotes a chapter to the eternal and the created. The uniqueness of this text is its conciseness in his presenting of an argument in favour of eternity, concluding that anything created is preceded by material (*al-māddah*),\(^{151}\) meaning that the material must come before the created.

Fakhr al-Dīn al-Isfarāyīnī al-Neisābūrī, a physicist and philosopher in the sixth century AH (760/1359 AH/CE), wrote a commentary on the metaphysics of Avicenna’s *al-Najāt*. In rephrasing what Avicenna presents in *al-Najāt* regarding creation, al-Neisābūrī comments:

Avicenna – may God protect him – is saying that according to philosophers, temporal creation is conditional to the precedence of time and material. The Sheikh has proven these two issues right here, presenting the first and demonstrating arguments. The summary of this argument is: The temporal


\(^{148}\) Ibid., 139.

\(^{149}\) Ibid., 136.

\(^{150}\) Discussed in chapter 11 of this *namaṭ* (Ibid., 140).

created must be non-existent before its existence, or else it would not be created. It must either be [1] something non-existence, or [2] something existent. And it is impossible for it to be non-existent, or else it would not have a prior that in it was non-existent.\footnote{Fakhr al-Dīn al-Isfarāyēnī al-Neisābūrī, Sharḥ Kitāb al-Najāt li Ibn Sīnā (qism al-ilāhiyāt), ed. Dr Ḥāmed Nājī Esfahānī (Tehran: Anjuman Athār wa Mafākhir-e Farhangi, 2004), 124.}

In Dāneshnāme-ye ‘Alāʾī, Avicenna strongly maintains his view of God being the final and efficient Cause, being distinctively different to the universe. One is the Cause (God), who is the Necessary Existence, and the other is the effect and created (the universe). He concludes that everything emanates from God. Avicenna then provides the example of a sun, stating that it is a subject matter. This differs from God, who is a Necessary Existence and is not in a subject, but rather subsistent in Himself.\footnote{Ibn Sīnā, Ilāhiyāt Dāneshnāme-ye ‘Alāʾī, edited, annotated and introduced by Dr Mohammad Mo’in (Hamadan: Anjuman Athār wa Mafākhir-e Farhangi, 2004), 83. This section of Dāneshnāme-ye ‘Alāʾī has also been translated into English. See Avicenna, The Metaphysica of Avicenna: A Critical Translation—Commentary and Analysis of the Fundamental Arguments in Avicenna’s Metaphysica in the Danish Nama-i ‘Alāʾī, trans. Peter Morewedge (New York: Colombia University Press, 1973).} A sun would be apparent in itself and by itself if it manifests and gives light to others. Avicenna then qualifies this example by saying that it would only be correct if the radiance of a sun was from itself. However, the light is not the very sun itself; rather, a sun is a subject matter for the resulting light—the sun itself being an effect and created. This is different to God, who is a Necessary Existence and the Cause of all.

In Risālat al-Ḥukuma fi Ibţāl Ḥujaj al-Muthbitin ilī Māḍī Mabdaʾ Zamānan (A Treatise of Government (governing) in Refuting the Arguments of Those Who Prove that the Past had a Temporal Origin), Avicenna analyses the arguments of those who believe in the world’s temporal creation and refutes them in detail.\footnote{There is a copy of this treatise in Ibn Ghailan al-Damashqi’s Hudūth al-ʿAlam, ed. Mehdi Mohaghegh (Tehran: Daneshgah, 1988), 131–52.} This and other arguments by Avicenna were detailed by his student Abū ʿAlāʾī Bahmanyār ibn Marzbān (d. 468/1067 AH/CE)\footnote{Originally a Zoroastrian. An interesting paper that discusses Bahmanyār and other philosophers loyal to Avicenna during this era is Ahmad Haitham al-Rahim, “Avicenna’s Immediate Disciples: Their Lives and Works,” in Avicenna and his Legacy: A Golden Age of Science and Philosophy, ed. Yitzhak Tzvi Langermann (Turnhout: Brepols, 2009), 1–25.} in al-Taḥṣīl (The Reckoning). Bahmanyār discusses the types of causes and the criterion of the need for a cause, making a
Scholars after Avicenna had different reactions to his theory of the world’s eternity. Some, such as Abū al-Barakāt al-Baghdādī (480/1087–560/1165 AH/CE), strongly supported it. Others, such as Abū Ḥāmid Muḥammad al-Ghazālī (448/1057–505/1111 AH/CE), attacked Avicenna, with this being one of the main themes of al-Ghazālī’s *Tahāfut al-Falāsifah* (*Incoherence of the Philosophers*). Al-Ghazālī compiled this book to refute the beliefs and arguments of philosophers. The book was divided into 20 main points, with the topic of creation being the most detailed. He extensively criticised the idea of the world’s eternity, this being the principal belief of the philosophers.

Ibn Rushd (520/1126–595/1198 AH/CE), known in the West as Averroes, wrote a detailed response to Ghazālī’s *Tahāfut al-Falāsifah* titled *Tahāfut al-Tahāfut* (*The Incoherence of the Incoherence*). In this work, Averroes defends Aristotelian philosophy, refuting al-Ghazālī claims regarding the world’s eternity. It is important to note that Averroes believed in the creation of the world but not in the temporal creation of the theologians. In *The Incoherence of the Incoherence*, Averroes states:

> But if the meaning of ‘eternal’ is that it is in everlasting production and that this production has neither beginning nor end, certainly the term ‘production’ is more truly applied to him who brings about an everlasting

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157. The comprehensive views of Hibatullāh ibn ʿAlī Abū al-Barakāt al-Baghdādī can be found in his *Kitāb al-Muʿtabar fī al-Ḥikmah* (*That Which has been Established in Philosophy*). His explanation of Avicenna’s theory is given in pp. 39–41.

158. This thesis will only present brief accounts of the noticeable figures in Islamic theological and philosophical history related to the development of the topics of qidam and ḥudūth.

159. There are two translations of this text. The new English translation of *tahfut al-falasifa* includes the Arabic text: Michael E. Marmura, trans., *Al-Ghazālī’s The Incoherence of the Philosophers*, 2nd ed. (Brigham Young University Press, 2002). The older translation is Šābīh Ahmad Kamālī, trans., *Al-Ghazālī’s Tahafut al-Falasifah* (Pakistan: Philosophical Congress, 1963).


production than him who procures a limited production. In this way the world is God’s product and the name ‘production’ [hudūth, i.e., creation] is even more suitable for it than the word ‘eternity’, and the philosophers only call the world eternal to safeguard themselves against the word ‘product’ in the sense of ‘a thing produced after a state of non-existence, from something, and in time’.  

Averroes later wrote another book called Faṣl al-Maqāl (Decisive Treatise), in which he passionately argued for the harmonious conciliation of religion and philosophy. His main focus was criticisms directed at theologians for their accusations of philosophers’ heresy, and he explains that the differences can be reconciled:

The class of being which is between these two extremes is that which is not made from anything and not preceded by time, but which is brought into existence by something, i.e., by an agent.

This is the world as a whole. Now they all agree on the presence of these three characters in the world. For the theologians admit that time does not precede it, or rather this is a necessary consequence for them since time according to them is something which accompanies motion and bodies. They also agree with the ancients in the view that future time is infinite and likewise future being. They only disagree about past time and past being: the theologians hold that it is finite (this is the doctrine of Plato and his followers), while Aristotle and his school hold that it is infinite, as is the case with future time.

Thus it is clear that this last being bears a resemblance both to the being which is really generated and to the pre-eternal Being. So those who are more impressed with its resemblance to the pre-eternal than its resemblance to the originated name it ‘pre-eternal’, while those who are more impressed with its resemblance to the originated name it ‘originated’. But in truth it is neither really originated nor really pre-eternal, since the really originated is necessarily perishable and the really pre-eternal has no

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cause. Some, Plato and his followers, name it ‘originated and coeval with time’, because time according to them is finite in the past.

Thus the doctrines about the world are not so very far apart from each other that some of them should be called irreligious and others not. For this to happen, opinions must be divergent in the extreme, i.e. contraries such as the theologians suppose to exist on this question; i.e., [they hold] that the names ‘pre-eternity’ and ‘coming into existence’ as applied to the world as a whole are contraries. But it is now clear from what we have said that this is not the case.\(^{164}\)

In attempting to solve the contended issue—philosophers’ belief in the world being eternal versus the opposition put forward by the theologians—Averroes concludes by saying that the difference is in terms and not in essence. This gives Averroes a distinctive position in being able to argue both sides and give a moderate outlook that would satisfy both sides. He also further expands by giving definitions to God’s attributes that would cohesively justify what philosophers believe in ‘eternity of the world’.\(^{165}\)

Detractors who specifically targeted Avicenna did so either on the basis of their theologian mindset, fundamentally opposing the philosopher’s approach to creation and eternity (e.g., Al-Ghazālī),\(^{166}\) or based on their Sunni or Salafi\(^{167}\) background.\(^{168}\)

Muḥammad ibn Abdul-Karīm al-Shahrastānī (479 [or 469]/1086–548/1153 AH/CE)\(^{169}\) also criticised Avicenna in his book *Musara'at al-Falasifa* (*Wrestling the

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\(^{166}\) It must be mentioned that the main reason Al-Ghazālī concluded with excommunicating Avicenna was Avicenna’s position regarding the creation of the world. This has been explained in detail by Sayyid Ḥalāl al-Dīn Ashṭiyānī in his critique of *Tahāfut al-Falāṣifah*. See Sayyid Ḥalāl al-Dīn Ashṭiyānī, *Nadqi bar Tahāfut al-Falāṣifeh ye Ghazālī* (Qom: Markaz-e Intishārāt-e Daftar-e Tablighāt-e Islāmī, 1999), 525–51.


\(^{168}\) This will be discussed in the ‘Views of Early Islamic Theologians: Sunni Commentators’ section in this chapter.

\(^{169}\) There is a view that al-Shahrastānī was an Ismāʿīlī, or even a crypto-Ismāʿīlī. See Diane Steigerwald, “The Divine Word (Kalima) in Shahrastānī’s Majlis,” in *Studies in Religion/Sciences Religieuses*, 25, no. 3 (1996): 335–52; Leonard Lewisohn, “From the ‘Moses of Reason’ to the ‘Khidr
Philosophers). This was countered in a refutation by Naṣīr al-Dīn al-Ṭūsī (597/1201–672/1274 AH/CE) in Maṣāʾīr al-Muṣārī' (The Flooring of the Wrestler). Al-Ṭūsī replies to all of Shahristānī’s misconceptions, but also explains that Shahristānī’s arguments against Avicenna are speculative and appropriate only for poets or orators.

Afḍal al-Dīn 'Umar ibn ‘Alī ibn Ghaylān al-Balkhī was a prominent Sunni theologian of the sixth century AH and one of the most important figures who criticised Avicenna regarding the topic of creation. He studied Avicennian philosophy in depth and was the first to write refutations against Avicenna in different areas after the era of al-Ghazālī. Ibn Ghaylān wrote his famous book Ḥudūth al-ʿAlam (Creation of the World) with the sole intention of refuting Avicenna's treatise al-Ḥukūmah fī Ḥbṭāl Ḥujaj al-Muthbitīn li al-Mādī Mabda’ Zamānī (The Authority in Refuting the Arguments of those who Prove that the Past has a Temporal Origin).

Another example of a theologian specifically targeting Avicenna is Rukn al-Dīn Maḥmūd ibn Muḥammad al-Malāḥemī al-Khwarazmī (d. 536/1141 AH/CE), who is regarded as the last of the Mu'tazilite theologians. He wrote two books, al-Mu'tamad fī Uṣūl al-Dīn (The Reliable in the Principles of Religion) and Tuḥfat al-Mutakallimin fī al-Radd ‘ala al-Falāsifah (Gift for the Theologians in Refutation of the Philosophers). Ibn al-Malāḥemī produced his works after al-Ghazālī’s (an Ash‘arite) passing, after recognising that philosophy was still influencing Muslim


theologians despite al-Ghazālī’s aforementioned attack on philosophy. He intended to refute philosophers, al-Fārābī and Avicenna in particular. Ibn al-Malāhēmī was more comprehensive than al-Ghazālī in his explanations and criticisms of Avicenna and his school, often quoting Avicenna directly.\(^{177}\)

Sharaf al-Dīn al-Masʿūdī (d. late sixth/twelfth century AH/CE) was another critic of Avicenna, especially in his Al-Mabāḥīth wa al-shukūk ʿalā al-Ishārāt (Investigations and Objections on the Pointers).\(^{178}\) Al-Masʿūdī’s refutations are notable in that they became a focus for Fakhr al-Rāzī and the famous Avicennian commentator Khwāja Naṣīr al-Dīn al-Ṭūsī to refute.\(^{179}\)

Mir Dāmād’s strong relation with Avicenna and his philosophical tradition is demonstrated at numerous points throughout this thesis. It is clear that the theory Mir Dāmād presented as meta-temporal origination has its roots in Avicennian thought, and the commencing pages of al-Qabasāt testify as to how Mir Dāmād nurtured his idea of al-dahr through the eyes of Avicenna. Janis Esots, a scholar and translator in the field of Mullā Ṣadrā, indicates this:

Mir Dāmād’s theory of ḥudūth dahrī seems to be developed from the above discussed seminal ideas of Proclus and Ibn Sīnā, with this difference that, in his system, the most important objects of the meta-temporal origination are the intelligible substances, i.e., the vertical and horizontal intellects.\(^{180}\)

As for whether al-ḥudūth al-dahrī can be traced back to Avicenna or scholars prior to Mir Dāmād, there are two approaches to this. The first is attributing the theory of al-ḥudūth al-dahrī to scholars before Mir Dāmād, but not that they themselves affirmed their belief in it. Examples of this are Mullā Muḥammad Mahdī Narāqī’s (1128/1715–1209/1795 AH/CE) book that includes a strong defence of al-ḥudūth al-dahrī and claims that Naṣīr al-Dīn al-Ṭūsī believed in meta-temporal origination,\(^{181}\) and Mullā Muḥammad Ismāʿīl Khwājūsī saying that al-Dawānī held:

\(^{177}\) Ibid., introduction, iv.

\(^{178}\) This book has recently been published for the first time as a critical edition with an accompanying extensive study on it: Ayman Shihadeh, Doubts on Avicenna: A Study and Edition of Sharaf al-Dīn al-Masʿūdī’s Commentary on the Ishārāt (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2016).

\(^{179}\) Ibid., 2.

\(^{180}\) Janis Esots, “Mullā Ṣadrā’s Teaching on Wujūd: A Synthesis of Mysticism and Philosophy” (PhD thesis, Tallinn University, 2007), 64.

the opinion of meta-temporal creation. 182 Regarding al-Dawānī, although he discusses estimative temporality in detail in Unmādḥaj al-‘ulūm, supporting this view and relating it to creation, he makes no mentioning of al-ḥudūth al-dahrī. Note that these were merely attributions, and whether these persons really believed in these theories is unconfirmed.183 The second approach is the allocating of al-ḥudūth al-dahrī as an independent term, formulated in such a way that it can be seen in the method presented by Mīr Dāmād. I contest both approaches as it is absolutely clear that it was Mīr Dāmād who innovatively introduced this theory. Such an elucidated and intricately detailed explanation of al-ḥudūth al-dahrī cannot be found in the works of any prior Islamic philosopher. Only in Mīr Dāmād’s works is al-ḥudūth al-dahrī dealt with in a systematic way, including its foundations, arguments, rebuttals to counter-arguments, outcomes and so on. Indeed, while scholars prior to Mīr Dāmād may have discussed or believed in meta-temporal origination or similar ideas, there are no substantive arguments or explanations for al-ḥudūth al-dahrī prior to Mīr Dāmād.

**Suhravardī**

Shihāb al-Dīn Yaḥyā Suhravardī (549/1155–587/1191 AH/CE)184 is the founder of the philosophical school of Ḥikmat al-Ishrāq (The Theosophy185 of Illumination). He was well versed in philosophy, but also had a deep knowledge of mysticism and Sufism. He was also known as an ascetic and was highly spiritual. Suhravardī distanced himself from the Peripatetics, being more influenced by Plato and other ancient traditions, along with Islamic mysticism and Sufism.186

Ḥikmat al-Ishrāq was different to Peripatetic philosophy in various ways. Epistemologically, because al-Ishrāq relied heavily on intuitive witnessing (shuhūd);

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183 Al-Dawānī believing in meta-temporal origination is refuted by Ḥāmed Nājī Esfahānī and Ḥūsain Najafī, “Ta’ammuli dar Intisāb Naẓariyeye ‘ḥudūth dahrī’ be Jalāl al-Dīn Dawānī.” This paper explains the core differences between how al-Dawānī expanded on estimative temporality and Mīr Dāmād’s theory of meta-temporal creation.
184 Distinction must be made between this Suhravardi and another Shihāb al-Dīn ‘Umar Suhravardi (539/1145–632/1234 AH/CE), the famous Sufi and author of ‘Awārif al-Ma‘ārif.
185 This is the chosen English-language equivalent for hikmah, as used by Nasr and Aminrazavi, who have written extensively on Suhravardi. In The Essential Seyyed Hossein Nasr edited by William C. Chittick, the word ‘theosophy’ is preferred, as understood in its original sense and as used by Jakob Boehme, as a combination of the training of theoretical intellect and purification of the heart: Seyyed Hossein Nasr, The Essential Seyyed Hossein Nasr, ed. William C. Chittick (Bloomington: World Wisdom, 2007), 111.
ontologically, because its worldview was the realm of *muthul*; and terminologically, using non-philosophical words like ‘light’, ‘darkness’, ‘barzakh’ and so on. Suhrawardi is a key figure in Islamic philosophy, and it could be said that *Hikmat al-Ishrāq* was the biggest philosophical movement after Avicenna. Without doubt, Suhrawardi and his commentators played an important role in the development and maturing of the topic of origination of the world, and influenced Mīr Dāmād (discussed in Chapter 1).

While Suhrawardi created his own philosophical system, he was inclined towards the Peripatetic view regarding the creation and eternity of the world and accepted the theory of the world’s eternity. In his most celebrated book, *Hikmat al-Ishrāq*, he states:

> Any temporal (*ḥādith*) that comes to be depends in part upon a temporal, since a temporal cannot necessitate its own existence. This is because every contingent must have a sufficient reason. If everything having a part in the sufficient reason is perpetual, then the thing would be perpetual and would not be temporal. Since it is temporal, something of that upon which it is dependent must be temporal. The same argument applies as well to that thing. Therefore, there is a series; and an infinite series whose parts exist together is absurd.\(^{187}\)

Suhrawardi calls this permanent temporal creation (*al-ḥādith al-dā’imī*) or ‘motion’ (*al-ḥaraka*).\(^{188}\) Therefore, according to Suhrawardi, even though motion is created and needs a cause, it is an essential creation as it is permanent.\(^{189}\) This aligns with the theory of the eternity of the world. In his treatise *Hayākil al-Nūr (The Shapes of Light)*, Suhrawardi has a chapter ‘On the Eternity of the World’, in which he explains this through arguments similar to those in *Hikmat al-Ishrāq*, but in a rephrased and more concise fashion.\(^{190}\)

An important (and the first) commentator on the book *Hikmat al-Ishrāq* was Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad Shahrazūrī (d. 687/1288? AH/CE). Shahrazūrī gives a detailed

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\(^{188}\) Ibid.

\(^{189}\) This is because Suhrawardi had his own view on motion, believing it to be a *maqūlah*.

explanation of the Ishrāqī point of view regarding the eternity of the world, and, in Rasā'il al-Shajarat al-Ilāhiya fi 'Ullūm al-Ḥaqā'iq al-Rabānīya, he dedicates a whole chapter to dividing existence into ḥādīth and qadīm, elaborating on the meanings of these terms and concluding with support for Suhrawardī's view on eternity of the world. An important point that will be discussed at various points throughout this research is Mir Dāmād's relationship with Ḥikmat al-Ishrāq and some of the commonalities they shared, from usage of terms to certain theories. In any case, Suhrawardī played a pivotal role in the history of Islamic philosophy and the topic of creation.

The debate on creation and eternity continued, and other scholars who wrote on 'ḥudūth wa qidām al-ʿālam' included Ibn Ghaylān (discussed above, especially critical of Avicenna) and Abū al-ʿAbbās al-Lawkārī (d. 517 AH). Al-Lawkārī was Abū ʿHasan Bahmanyar's (d. 458/1067 AH/CE) outstanding student and wrote ḥudūth al-ʿālam as a refutation of Avicenna's (d. 428 AH/1037) treatise al-Ḥukumah fī ḥujaj al-muthbitīn lil mādī mabda' zamānī. In another book, Bayān al-Ḥaq bi Zamān al-Sharḥ al-Sīdīq, al-Lawkārī expands on the topic of causality and its types, also mentioning eternity and creation. Another scholar, Jalāl al-Dīn al-Dawānī (d. 908/1502 AH/CE), wrote a treatise called Unmūdḥaj al-ʿulūm, in which he discusses ten issues from a variety of sciences. Almost half of the section on Uṣūl al-Dīn is dedicated to ḥudūth al-ʿālam. Mullā Ṣadrā also wrote an independent treatise titled Risāla fī al-Ḥudūth explaining his own view on this issue, based on his methodology of transcendental philosophy.

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Having covered the views of early Islamic philosophers, the following sections cover the positions of early Islamic theologians (Sunni and Shi'a).

**Views of Early Islamic Theologians: Sunni Commentators**

Islamic theologians participated heavily in discussions about the concept of creation. This is mainly due to the relevance of the topic in establishing the fundamental attributes of God. Theology is the science of belief, and the primary objective is to prove the effect (existence) is in need of a cause (God). For Islamic theologians, rejecting the origination of the world equates to rejecting the need for an originator. There were certain Islamic theologians who were strongly influenced by ḥadīth, like Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal (164/780–241/855 AH/CE) and Aḥmad ibn Taymiyah (661/1263–728/1328 AH/CE). Their main arguments were derived from Prophetic narrations that allude to there originally being God and nothing else with Him or before Him.199 As a result, not only did their theological traditionalist structure align more with ḥudūth, where creation did not exist, and God ‘brought’ it into existence, their views were also more appealing for the general masses. It was easier for the common Muslim and the simple mind to accept this and understand the material coming-into-existence than to delve into complex philosophical matters that required intensive musings, readings and rational thought.

In general, Islamic theologians accepted the theory of the temporal creation of the world (al-ḥudūth al-zamānī). This acceptance was influenced mainly by religious precepts derived from the Qur'an and Islamic traditions. Theologians viewed the philosophers' position on the eternity of the world as a form of heresy and disbelief.200 Superficially, all philosophers were placed into one category despite their varying approaches. As previously touched on, philosophers argued that their views aligned with theistic beliefs and religion.

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197 Meaning that such (Sunni) scholars were traditionists and applied strict standards in matters of ḥadīth.
198 As previously mentioned (in fn. 167), Ibn Taymiya has a book on the topic of creation called Mas'āl al Ḥudūth al-ʿĀlam. Putting aside Ibn Taymiya’s hostility towards philosophers and his harsh takfīrī approach in the topic of ḥudūth al-ʿālam, this book is important because it comprises much referencing of Qur'anic verses and Prophetic traditions on the topic, which are useful for understanding the (Sunni) Qur’anic/Ḥadīth take on creation via their framework of ideology.
199 There is a Prophetic tradition that says, “There was God, and nothing else was with/before Him.” See Muhammad ibn Ismā'īl al-Bukhārī, Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī (Cairo: Lujnāt Iḥyā’ Kuttub al-Sunnah, 1990), 5: 260.
Theologians believed that the world and creation we know has a beginning and was brought into existence at a certain time through the will of God. They said that an eternal act cannot have an agent (fā‘il) that brings it into existence, so if the world was not created, then it would not have a creator, because an eternal creation would not need a creator. This argument clarifies that the problem was not just philosophical but very relevant to religious belief due to its relation to God and His attributes of eternity and creation.

Temporal creation is different from essential origination (al-hudūth al-dhātī) in that essential origination has a non-existence by essence, but if the precedence to creation were time, then it would be a temporal creation. Essential origination is more general than temporal creation, which means that every temporal creation is an essential origination, but not every essential origination is a temporal creation.

The most important and prominent Muslim theologians and philosophers who involved themselves in the ongoing discourse on hudūth and qidam (contributing books, treatises and theories) are covered below. Only general reference is made to them and their major works, and I will not go into detail about their outlooks on the topic.

**Al-Ghazālī**

Without doubt, Abū Ḥāmed al-Ghazālī spearheaded the campaign against philosophers, especially in his widely celebrated book *Incoherence of the Philosophers*. In this book, al-Ghazālī presents four arguments given by the philosophers in favour of the eternity of the world and his comprehensive rebuttal to each one, as well as explaining his stance on this as an Ash‘arite.

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201 A detailed account of the chronological history and viewpoints of creation versus eternity in Islamic theology can be found in Muḥammad Ḥusain Fāryāb, “Tahillīl bar Mas‘ale-ye Ḥudūth wa Qidam Zamānī ‘Alam dar Tārikh Kalām Islāmī” (“An Analysis of the Issue of Temporal Creation and Eternity of the World in the History of Islamic Theology”), Faṣlānī-pejāhesh hāye Itiqādī-Kalāmī, no. 10 (Summer 2013): 71–92.

202 Ibid., 75.


204 For a study on how al-Ghazālī was influenced by his Ash‘arism and how that also relatively contradicted what he was at conflict with in philosophy, see Richard M. Frank, *Creation and the Cosmic System: al-Ghazālī and Avicenna* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1994); Richard M. Frank, *Ghazzali and the Ash‘arite School* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1994). Some studies have criticised some of Richard Frank’s views regarding al-Ghazālī. See Frank
In *Ihya’ Ulum al-Din* (*Revival of Religious Knowledge*), al-Ghazālī explains the origin of the world based on the topic of motion and stationary, saying that bodies in this world cannot be beyond movement or stagnation. Based on this simple fact, he argues that creation cannot form from an infinite chain of created bodies, which means that the world must have an origin and a beginning. The main point he and other Islamic theologians make is that the view of the eternality of the world means that God would not have any involvement or choice in creation and that it would be by force (*fā’il mūjab*)—thus depicting philosophers as contesting the very divinity of God and His involvement in the creation of the universe.205

Numerous rebuttals of al-Ghazālī have highlighted the weakness of his arguments and his misunderstanding of the topic of creation versus eternity, which needed to be further crystalised for it to be correctly conceptualised.206

**Muḥammad ibn ʿAbdul-karīm al-Shahrastānī**

Al-Shahrastānī was another famous Ashʿarite theologian and the author of *Kitāb al-Milal wa al-Nihal*, a comprehensive survey of religions, sects and philosophical schools.207 In this encyclopaedia, al-Shahrastānī gives a detailed report of creation from the viewpoints of Plato, Aristotle and other Greek philosophers.208

He also wrote a harsh criticism of philosophers, *Muṣāraʿat al-Falāsifā* (*Wrestling with the Philosophers*), in which he discusses and criticises the theory of the world’s eternity. A whole chapter at the end of this book contains a detailed summary of different views regarding the incipience of the world and al-Shahrastānī’s rebuttal, focusing primarily on refuting Avicenna.209 In his other celebrated book, *Nihāyat al-

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Aqdām fi ‘Ilm al-Kalām (The End of Steps in the Science ofTheology), al-Shahrastānī affirms his support of the world’s temporal creation.\textsuperscript{210}

Naṣīr al-Dīn al-Ṭūsī refuted al-Shahrastānī’s Wrestling with the Philosophers with his Maṣārī‘ al-Muṣārī‘ (The Flooring of the Wrestler),\textsuperscript{211} highlighting and correcting al-Shahrastānī’s misconceptions and identifying the largely speculative nature of al-Shahrastānī’s arguments.\textsuperscript{212}

**Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī**

Al-Rāzī (543/1149–606/1209 AH/CE)\textsuperscript{213} dealt with the topic of the God–world relationship in detail, as he was involved in both philosophical and theological circles. He wrote on this topic frequently and was a strong adversary of Peripatetic philosophy and of Avicenna.\textsuperscript{214} He was an Ash’arite theologian,\textsuperscript{215} but was well versed in philosophy and wrote a detailed commentary on Avicenna’s Al-Ishārāt wa al-tanbihāt (Remarks and Admonitions), in which he condemns the philosophers. A strict theologian who believed in the createdness of the world, he explains his position in relation to creation and eternity in Al-Mabāḥīth Al-Mashriqiyya fi ‘Ilm al-Ilāhiyyāt wa al-Ṭabi‘īyāt (Eastern Studies in Metaphysics and Physics). He comments further on the subject in other books, such as Al-Muḥaṣṣal and Al-Maṭāli‘ī‘ al-‘Alīyah min al-‘Ilm al-Ilāhī (Sublime Matters from Divine Science), in which he analyses certain verses from the Qur’an and uses them as evidence for the temporal creation of the world.\textsuperscript{216} This book is one of the lengthiest of al-Rāzī’s philosophical and theological works, and he explains the difficulty of the topic:


\textsuperscript{211} Al-Ṭūsī, Maṣārī‘, ed. with an introduction, Wilferd Madelung (Teheran: The Institute of Islamic Studies, 2003). The specific and detailed rebuttals al-Ṭūsī gave on al-Shahrastānī’s views regarding the incipience of the world are in pp. 164–207.

\textsuperscript{212} Ibid., 4.

\textsuperscript{213} To be distinguished from Muhammad ibn Zakariya al-Razi (250/864–313/925 AH/CE) with the Latin name ‘Rhazes’.

\textsuperscript{214} Nasr, Islamic Philosophy from its Origin to the Present, 113.

\textsuperscript{215} As was al-Ghazālī (see fn. 206). Ash’arism was the foremost theological school in Sunni Islam, founded by Abū al-Ḥasan al-Ash’arī (d. 324/935 AH/CE). It originated as a reaction to the extreme rationalism of the other major Sunni theological school, Mu’tazilism. For a brief history of Ash’arism and Mu’tazilism, see Muṭḥahharī, Understanding Islamic Sciences, 57–74.

It is narrated that Galen said to some of his students on his deathbed: ‘Write on my behalf: I am yet to know if the world is created or eternal’... Some people have used this to attack him, saying: ‘He has left this world the same way he entered it, not knowing these things.’ However, we say: This is one of the clearest evidences that this man was fair, and was a seeker of truth. Discussions of this issue have reached a level of difficulty and hardship to such a level that it has confused most intellects. And God knows best.217

In this same book, al-Rāzī states that there is no specific view regarding temporal creation in Divine Scripture, 218 but then proceeds to discuss its arguments theologically.219 Similarly, in his exegesis on the Qur’an, al-Tafsīr al-Kabīr (The Great Exegesis), 220 when commenting on certain Qur’anic verses, he makes numerous references to temporal creation and reiterates his stance on this issue.221

Sayf al-Dīn al-ʿAmidī

Another well-known Ash’arite theologian was Abū al-Ḥasan ‘Alī ibn Abī ‘Alī al-Taghlubī, known as Sayf al-Dīn al-ʿAmidī 222 (551/1156–631/1233 AH/CE). He started as a Ḥanbalī jurist and then became a Shāfīʿī. Similar to al-Fākhr al-Rāzī, he wrote on the creation and eternity of the world extensively. In Abkār al-Afkār fī ʿUṣūl a-Dīn (The First of Thoughts in the Fundamentals of Religion), he presents eight methods of arguing in favour of the creation of the world.223 His other famous work, which became a textbook for seminary studies, is called Ghāyat al-Marām fī ʿIlm al-Kalām (The Peak of the Goal in Theology) and critically discusses the philosophers’ views of eternity.224

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217 Ibid., 27.
219 Ibid., 41.
220 Also known as Mafātih al-Ghayb (Keys of the Unseen).
221 Al-Fākhr al-Rāzī, al-Tafsīr al-Kabīr (Egypt: al-Bahīyat al-Maṣriyya, 1938), 17:9. In this reference, he is commenting on the verse: “Indeed, your Lord s Allāh, who created the heavens and the earth...” (Qur’an, 10:3). Another example of where he discusses creation and eternity is 19:179.
222 Attributed to Ṭamīm, a large city in the south of modern-day Turkey now known as Diyarbakır.
‘Aḍud al-Dīn al-Ījī and Masʿūd ibn ‘Umar al-Taftazānī

It is also important to mention, albeit briefly, two highly revered Sunni theologians, ‘Aḍud al-Dīn al-Ījī (680/1281–756/1356 AH/CE) and his famous student Masʿūd ibn ‘Umar al-Taftazānī (722/1322–793/1390 AH/CE). The importance of these two scholars is due to their influence and the status of their books in the Sunni Islamic studies curriculum, reflected in the large number of commentaries, glosses and super-glosses on their writings throughout the history of Sunni theology. In al-Ījī’s al-Mawāqif fi ‘Ilm al-Kalām (Stations in Theology), he clearly states his belief in temporal creation.225 Al-Taftazānī followed him in this view in Sharḥ al-Maqāṣid, which dissects and refutes the philosophers’ viewpoints.226

Views of Early Islamic Theologians: Shi‘i Commentators

After the preceding account of the main Sunni theologians with primary roles in the discussion of creation and eternity, the following section will provide an overview of Shi‘i theologians and their contributions. The Shi‘i sources contain detailed explanations regarding God’s attributes and His relation to creation. Shi‘i Imāms often replied to misconceptions arising from questions related to these topics, and there are numerous citations that can support either eternity or temporal creation, though the details of this are beyond the scope of the present research.227

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227 These traditions transmitted from Shi‘i Imams make reference to ḫudāth and qidam and have also been frequently used by Shi‘i theologians and Shi‘i philosophers. Examples that in their apparent wording can support temporal creation include al-Sharīf al-Radī, Nahj al-Balīgha, Sermon 152, where Imām ‘Alī begins his sermon with, “Praise be to Allah who is proof of His existence through His creation, of His being eternal through the newness of His creation.” Sermon 163; and Sermon 185. In al-Kulainī’s al-Kāfī, there is a chapter dedicated to the creation of the world and proving the ‘Creator’ (al-muḥdith). See Muḥammad ibn Abū Ya’qūb ibn Iṣḥāq al-Kulainī al-Rāzī, al-‘Usūl min al-Kāfī, ed. ‘Alī Akbar Ghaffārī (Tehran: Dār al-Kutub al-Islāmiya, 1984), 1: 72–82. Sheikh al-Ṣādiq narrates some traditions in ‘Uyūn Akhbār al-Ridā (Qom: Intishārāt al-Sharīf al-Radī, 1999), 1: 122–23. This work has been translated into English by Ali Peiravi (Qom: Ansariyan, 2006). In al-Tawḥīd, al-Ṣādiq dedicates a chapter to proving creation of the world according to the narrations transmitted by the Imāms. See al-Ṣādiq, al-Tawḥīd, ed. Sayyid Hāshem al-Ḥusaynī al-Tehrānī (Beirut: Dār al-Ma‘rifah, 1967), 293–304. Certain traditions and supplications statements made by the Imāms can be understood to refer to non-temporal creation. See Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥasan al-Ṭūsī, Miṣbāḥ al-Muṭahājjid, ed. Ḥusayn al-ʿAlamī (Beirut: Mu’assasat al-ʿAlamī, 1998), 42–43.
With the beginning of the Minor Occultation of the twelfth Imam al-Mahdi, a large amount of scholarly work appeared. In his encyclopaedia that includes hadith-narrator biographers and an index of Shi‘i authors, Ahmad ibn ‘Ali al-Najashi (372/982–450/1058 AH/CE) (known as Rijal al-Najashi)\(^\text{229}\) refers to two books that were among the first compiled and dedicated to this issue. The first is Naq\(d\) Mas‘alah Abi ‘Isa al-Warraq fi qidam al-Ajsam (Refuting the views of Abi ‘Isa al-Warraq relating to the Eternity of Bodies), written by Isma‘il ibn ‘Ali ibn Ishq al-Nawbakhti (237/851–311/923 AH/CE).\(^\text{230}\) The second, by the same author, is Ḥuduth al-‘Alam (The Creation of the World),\(^\text{231}\) Sheikh Abū Ja‘far, Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥasan al-Ṭūsī’s (385/995–460/1067 AH/CE) also mentions this book in his al-Fihrist, a bibliography of Shi‘i works and authors.\(^\text{232}\)

Another famous Shi‘i scholar, Muḥammad ibn ‘Alī ibn Shahrāshub (488/1095–588/1192 AH/CE), wrote a thematic exegesis of the Qur’an titled Mutashābih al-Qurān wa Mukhtalafih. In this book, he mentions a debate having occurred between the sixth Imam, Ja‘far al-Ṣādiq, and Ibn Abī al-‘Awjā’ on the topic of Ḥudūth al-‘ālam.\(^\text{233}\) The following sections introduce a few of the better-known Shi‘i scholars who made important contributions to the debates on this topic. Further details on their perspectives will be given in Chapters 3 and 4.

**Sheikh al-Mufid**

Muḥammad ibn Muḥammad ibn al-Nūmān al-‘Ukbarī al-Baghdādī (336/948–413/1022 AH/CE), famously known as Sheikh al-Mufid, is the most prominent of Shi‘i scholars of the Theological School of Baghdad.\(^\text{234}\) He briefly discusses creation

\(^{228}\) According to Shi‘i belief, al-Mahdi was the twelfth appointed Imam and successor. He was born in the year 255/869 AH/CE, and, five years after his birth, went into a 72-year period of occultation (ghaibah ṣuḥrā). After that, he commenced his Major Occultation (ghaibah kubrā). It is said that he is still alive and will reappear at God’s command: Bāqir Sharīf al-Qarashi, The Life of Imam al-Mahdi (Qom: Ansariyan Publications, 2006).


\(^{230}\) Ibid., 32. He is known as Abū Sahl al-Nawbakhti, and lived during the time of the tenth Shi‘i Imam, ‘Alī al-Hādī, up to the twelfth Imam, al-Mahdi.

\(^{231}\) Ibid., 32.


\(^{233}\) Muḥammad ibn ‘Alī ibn Shahrāshub, Mutashābih al-Qurān wa Mukhtalafih (Qom: Intishārat-e Bidār, 1369 AH), 45.

\(^{234}\) Three outstanding figures represent this school: Sheikh al-Mufid, Sayyid al-Murtada and Sheikh al-Ṭūsī. Of course, the Theological School of Qom preceded this era, represented by ‘Alī ibn Bābawālī al-Qommi (d. 329/939 AH/CE) and his son Sheikh al-Ṣadūq.

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and time in his book *al-Masāʾil al-ʿUkbāriyah (al-ʿUkbari Issues)*, superficially touching on *dahr* and replying to misconceptions about eternity and the creation of time.\(^{235}\) In another of his books, *al-Nukat al-Iʾtiqādiyyah (Theological Points)*, in a question and answer dialogue, he discusses substance and accident, arguing that everything contingent is 'created'.\(^{236}\)

One of al-Mufīd’s students, Abū al-Faṭḥ Muḥammad ibn ‘Alī al-Karājūkī al-Ṭarābulṣī (d. 449/1057 AH/CE), wrote an important book called *Kanz al-Fawāʾid*, which is considered a major source in Shiʿi theology.\(^{237}\) In this book, al-Karājūkī has a sub-topic called ‘Evidence for the Origination of this World’, where he presents a rational argument to prove the cause of the creation of bodies and origination of the world.\(^{238}\) As short as it may be, his argument is valuable in showing how theological discussions evolved and how early Islamic theologians perceived the topic of creation and its expansion and changes. Such arguments and topics had an impact on how philosophy came to be mixed with theology, after Avicenna of course.

**Sayyid al-Murtaḍā ʿAlam al-Hudā**

Abū al-Qāsim ʿAlī ibn Ḥusain al-Sharīf al-Murtaḍā (355/965–436/1044 AH/CE) (also called Sayyid al-Murtaḍā, and given the epithet ‘Alam al-Hudā [Banner of Guidance]) was a student of Sheikh al-Mufīd, and was regarded by al-Najāshī as the greatest scholar of his time.\(^{239}\) Al-Murtaḍā’s treatise *Jumal al-ʾIlm wa al-ʾAmal (Parts of Knowledge and Action)* was divided into two parts (theology and jurisprudence) and later expanded with a commentary, called *Sharḥ Jumal al-ʾIlm wa al-ʾAmal (A Commentary on Parts of Knowledge and Action)*.\(^{240}\) In the first chapter of this work, Al-Murtaḍā argues in favour of the creation of bodies:


\(^{236}\) Ibid., 17–20.


\(^{239}\) Ibid., 270.

\(^{240}\) This was independently edited and published by Yaʿqūb Ḥafīẓ Marāghī (Tehran: Dār al-Uswah, 1414 AH).
Bodies are created, because they had no event before it [i.e., before they are brought into existence after having a prior non-existence], and this same rule is applied to creation.\(^{241}\)

This means that bodies (\textit{ajsām}) have a beginning and this beginning is in time. Before their beginning, bodies did not exist, which means that they cannot be eternal. These simple sentences became the primary reference point for future discussions on the topic.

**Sheikh Abū Ja’far al-Ṭūsī**

Abū Ja’far Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥasan al-Ṭūsī\(^{242}\) (385/995–460/1067 AH/CE), known as \textit{Sheikh al-Ṭā‘ifah} (the Master of the Creed), was a student of al-Mufid and al-Murtada and an important figure in the Theological School of Baghdad. Sheikh al-Ṭūsī is famous for authoring two of the Four Hadith Books (al-Kutub al-Arba’ah), \textit{al-Istibsār} and \textit{al-Tahdhīb}. In a compilation of treatises by him called \textit{al-Rasā’il al-‘Ashr} (Ten Treatises), al-Ṭūsī provides an explanation of God’s eternal nature and how everything else originates from Him.\(^{243}\)

**Khwāja Naṣīr al-Dīn al-Ṭūsī**

Muḥammad ibn Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥasan al-Ṭūsī, better known as Naṣīr al-Dīn al-Ṭūsī (597/1201–672/1274 AH/CE), has already been mentioned as he played a major role in both philosophy and theology. He was a master scholar with multiple talents and wrote numerous books in many fields. Regarding his perspective on creation and eternity, it is not easy to determine if he stands with the theologians or philosophers. As most of his writings are either commentaries or rebuttals, it is difficult to conclude what al-Ṭūsī himself believes.

Al-Ṭūsī explains \textit{ḥudūth} and \textit{qidam} in numerous books. In his commentary on Avicenna’s \textit{al-Ishārāt}, he mentions his view on essential origination.\(^{244}\) In his famous treatise \textit{Qawā‘id al-‘Aqāʾīd} (\textit{Foundations of Theology}), when dealing with arguments concerning the Creator of the world (\textit{mūjid al-ʿālam}), he begins by explaining the


\(^{242}\) Not to be confused with Naṣīr al-Dīn al-Ṭūsī.


ways in which theologians have proved the creation of the world, presenting three arguments they have made for the world’s temporal creation.245 He then outlines the argument philosophers use to prove the existence of the Maker (al-šā`īr).246 The important point here is that al-Ṭūsī concurs with what both philosophers and theologians agree on—namely, that God necessarily exists (He is essentially necessary) and is the cause and Creator of contingent existences. Each side has its own perspective on the details, and Al-Ṭūsī provides criticisms—and responses to criticisms—of each perspective in his more extensive books.247 The following quotation provides one example of al-Ṭūsī’s lack of clarity regarding his own position:

In his book Maṣā’rī’ al-Muṣārī’, which he wrote in refutation to al-Shahristānī’s al-Muṣārī’, he replies in detail to the criticisms theologians directed at Avicenna.248 In one place, he describes al-Shahristānī’s arguments as being allegorical, fancy, and of no use.249

Al-Ṭūsī was also very critical of al-Rāzī and dedicated much effort to refuting him. One book devoted to this was Ajwibat al-Masā’il al-Naṣīriyāh (Answers to the Nasirian Questions). Yet even though he criticises al-Rāzī’s arguments against the eternity of the world, at times al-Ṭūsī does favour the creation of the world as evidenced by his clear refutation of the philosophers’ proof for eternity.250

A famous theological work of al-Rāzī is Muḥaṣṣal Afkār al-Mutaqqaddimin wa al-Muta’akhirin min al-‘Ulamā’ wa al-Ḥukamā’ wa al-Mutakallimīn (The Harvest of Thoughts of the Predecessors and the Contemporaries from the Scholars, the Philosophers and the Theologians).251 Al-Ṭūsī strongly criticised this work in his commentary Talkhīṣ al-Muḥaṣṣal (Abridgment of the Harvest), which was intended to refute all arguments in al-Muḥaṣṣal.252 Al-Ṭūsī criticises al-Muḥaṣṣal harshly,

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246 Ibid., 46.
247 Ibid., 47.
stating that the title of this work conveys nothing about its content, thus indicating that the author had not acquired the requisite knowledge.253

Al-Ṭūsī’s most outstanding work in explaining Shi’i Imāmī beliefs, and which has been a major theological textbook for centuries, is Tajrīd al-I’tiqād (Abstracts of Theology).254 Here, he presents numerous useful arguments and clearly states that everything written in this book is what he believes.255 Yet, even this work does not provide a clear picture of his beliefs regarding eternity and creation.

ʿAllāmah al-Ḥilli

Jamāl al-Dīn al-Ḥasan ibn Yūṣuf ibn ʿAlī ibn Muṭahhar al-Ḥillī (648/1250–726/1326 AH/CE) wrote the first and best-known commentary on al-Ṭūsī’s Tajrīd al-I’tiqād, titled al-Murād fī Sharḥ Tajrīd al-I’tiqād (Disclosing the Intention in the Commentary on Abstracts of Theology).256 In Kashf al-Murād, al-Ḥillī explains how al-Ṭūsī’s position in Tajrīd al-I’tiqād is rather broad, and al-Ḥillī elaborates on creation being specific to its time and not to a time before it.257

In al-Ḥillī’s next important and detailed theological work, Nihāhat al-Marām fī ‘Ilm al-Kalām (The Peak of Aspiration in Theology), he thoroughly explains both sides of the argument.258 Al-Ḥillī strongly condemned belief in the eternity of the world. When he was asked about the juristic ruling of someone who believed in God’s Oneness and His Justness, prophecy and imāmīsm, but who also believed in the eternity of the world, he replied, ‘Whosoever believes in the eternity of the world is without dispute a disbeliever (kāfir), and this is the difference between a Muslim and a disbeliever’.259 Al-Ḥillī concluded that the world is created in the meaning that God existed in the eternity of reality without any restriction of time, and with the

253 Ibid., 2.
257 Ibid., 173. See also pp. 217, 281. Muḥammad Mahdī Narāqī in ḽāmī’ al-Afkār wa Nāqīd al-Anzār comments on this passage of al-Ṭūsī and says that this is a type or form of ḥudūth dahrī. See Muḥammad Mahdī Narāqī, ḽāmī’ al-Afkār wa Nāqīd al-Anzār, ed. Majīd Ḥādizāde (Tehran: Intishārāt-e Ḥikmat, 2002), 1: 241.
259 ‘Allāmah al-Ḥillī, Ajwībat, 88–89.
creation and extension of time from nothingness, He created it by origination (ibdā’).\textsuperscript{260}

His statement that those who believed in the temporal eternity of the world were disbelievers was adopted by Muslim theologians and was a strong blow to philosophers, resulting in this topic’s stagnation until Mir Dāmād. Mir Dāmād dealt with the problem delicately, patiently clarifying any misconceptions and extracting his all-inclusive theory based on both philosophical reasoning and religious precepts.

Other important philosophers and theologians also played major roles in debates on the beginning of the cosmos. For example, after a brief pause, the debate was revived by a philosopher from the School of Shiraz,\textsuperscript{261} Jalāl al-Dīn Dawānī (d. 908/1502 AH/CE), in Unmūdhaj al-ʻUlūm (Exemplars of the Sciences).\textsuperscript{262} There is a strong correlation between the School of Shiraz and the School of Esfahan, which will be mentioned throughout this research; however, it is difficult to ascertain the precise standpoint the School of Shiraz had regarding creation and eternity. Jalāl al-Dīn Dawānī, the most outstanding figure in this era, at times supports the views of al-Shahrastānī and al-Ghazālī, criticising the philosophers.\textsuperscript{263} For this reason, Dawānī is seen as more of a theologian with Ashʿarite tendencies than a philosopher. In Dawānī’s Sharḥ al-ʻAqā’ed al-ʻAḍudiyyah, he clearly states his belief in temporal creation.\textsuperscript{264} The Safavid scholars and the School of Esfahan responded to this, with Mir Dāmād being the first to do so.\textsuperscript{265}


\textsuperscript{261} For a detailed insight into the School of Shiraz, see Seyyed Hossein Nasr and Mehdī Aminrazavi, eds., An Anthology of Philosophy in Persia, vol. 5, From the School of Shirazi to the Twentieth Century (London: I.B. Taurus, 2015).


\textsuperscript{265} Important to note here is the similarities between the philosophical trends of Shiraz and Esfahan. An interesting and detailed analysis of this relation is provided in Sajjad H. Rizvi, Mullā Ṣadrā Shirazi: His Life and Works and the Sources for Safavid Philosophy, 138–43.
Creation and Time

Islamic scholarship has a customary method of treating a topic: organise and categorise the logical process of entering a discussion and argue about it through a systematic and gradual introduction. I take this approach in this thesis. Understanding time and its relevance within this framework is necessary as it precedes everything else. In the sequence of topics and theories, the first concept that must be covered when studying creation and eternity relates to the two dimensions within which creation and time supposedly exist. For example, into what dimension does time fall? One must establish the origin and existence of something before one can investigate its essence. This is necessary as the existence of something is different from its essence.

The existence of time in general and in itself has never been subject to debate—time’s existence is self-evident. What must be discussed is the essence and reality of time; this has usually been preferred over other topics in philosophy. As an example, in Avicenna’s Remarks and Admonitions, a ‘remark’ was the fundamental and main topic, while an ‘admonition’ was an addendum to provide further explanation or comment. In this book, the chapter on proving the existence of time was an ‘admonition’ (tanbih), but the chapter on the essence of time was a ‘remark’ (isharah), demonstrating the significance of the essence of time.

The same can be said about ‘place’ as the sensual perception of bodies is sufficient to prove the existence of something as being in this or that place. An important aspect of time is the nature of its essence, which is defined as a ‘dimension apprehended by the estimative faculty’ (bu’d mawhūm), or ‘that which essentially has a before and an after’.

Scholars who study ‘time’ have said that it is as self-evident as the existence of God. Proving that time and God exist is easy, with the difference being that one is incapable of truly comprehending the essence of God. In other words, if we can conceptualise (taṣawwur) the concept of God, this will lead to assent (taṣdiq) regarding His existence. However, if one does not have a correct conceptualisation

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of God, proving His existence will be extremely difficult. Proving that something exists is dependent on conceptualising the subject correctly.

Time carries this same notion. We can assume that time is a phenomenon opposite to material things and correspondent (muṭābiq) to material things (similar to the existence of a material object, such as when we say that a chair, tree or mountain exists) and that something else prior to those things exists, which is ‘time’. In this case, proving it would mean it was another phenomenon that exists correspondent to this, and is called ‘time’. If this were the case, proving time would be very problematic and difficult. However, if one views time as an existential dimension of particular material things, and not as something correspondent to them, proving time’s existence would be simple. In any case, time and movement must be analysed and related to the Divine (i.e., God); this is what philosophers and theologians have done. They also distinguished between the different forms of time and movement.

Some philosophers, such as the Peripatetics, believed that time was the measurement of the definite movement of the planets. Other philosophers, such the proponents of Transcendent philosophy (al-Hikmat al-Muta‘āliya) (e.g., Mullā Ṣadrā), state that the measurement of the renewal of the planets’ spherical nature is called time.267 That being said, a significant analytical and comparative gap exists when studying the views of the great scholars from the East and West in this regard.

If we could slow down time and watch everything we encounter more slowly, especially the hardships and difficulties we endure, how would we view time? Every instance of time would be important, especially the positive and negative experiences. This could prompt examination into the reality of time to discover its secrets. Time coincides with the subject of God, the creation of the world and humanity, which is why it has been addressed by all religions268 and philosophies. In most religions, the concepts of creation and the eternity of God have always been connected to the nature of time. Contemporary science has also shown much interest in focusing on different theories about time.269 However, from a

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267 Chapter 4 of this thesis is dedicated to explaining Mullā Ṣadrā’s view on creation.
268 Some Qur’anic verses that can be taken as indicating the importance of time and knowing it include 2:164, 3:190 and 5:6.
269 This study will deal with time from a philosophical perspective, and a theological perspective when this relates to the subject being discussed. This study will not deal with time from a religious or scientific perspective.
philosophical perspective, time is one of the oldest and most difficult topics. Philosophers before the time of Socrates paid attention to it, with this tradition followed through his time and after. The works of Plato, Aristotle and Plotinus are full of theories, explanations and studies regarding time.

Time is studied not only in metaphysics (or philosophy) but in other disciplines, such as physics and psychology. The relevance of time is the connection between God and creation being timelessly eternal or having a beginning. The philosopher and phenomenologist Anna-Teresa Tymieniecka has written eloquently on this:

In sum our inmost human concern with the timing of life and with life’s temporal nature is an axis upon which turns our vision of existence, our worldview, into an embrace of the universe, reality, nature-life, and transcendent realms, and that in life’s practice, in personal experience, and so in human destiny.²⁷⁰

It is for this reason that Islamic philosophers have attempted to solve the puzzle of creation and time, and how they relate to God and eternity. Each philosopher and theologian had to deal with and discuss this in detail. The discussion of creation and eternity became an ongoing controversial debate between theologians and philosophers. The question asked and argued over is, was the universe created or is it eternal? This is discussed in the following sections.

**The Different Views of Creation**

Three primary views have been presented by Islamic philosophers and theologians regarding the world’s eternity or creation:

1. the world is created;
2. the world is eternal;
3. the world is neither created nor eternal.

As previously mentioned, some philosophers have considered time as restricted to the material realm and that immaterial existents were beyond its scope. These

existents are based on essential origination (ḥudūth dhātī) and are therefore not subject to temporal creation (ḥudūth zamānī).

Theologians in general considered that God alone (who is the Necessary Existence) was immaterial and everything else was material; this material world was also preceded by temporal non-existence. Philosophers and theologians entered an ongoing scientific quarrel of opinions between these two interpretations of the eternity or the createdness of the world. Philosophers saw that it was important to distinguish the many attributes of God, and so they elaborately categorised and defined God’s qualities, clarifying their view on the eternity of the world.

In detailing and explaining Mīr Dāmād’s solution to this problem, this thesis will critically analyse each of the theories and propose a resolution that will avoid the criticism of theologians and remain safe from any accusation of blasphemy or disbelief. Examine the view presented by Mīr Dāmād’s student Mullā Ṣadrā and comparing their theories allows for a truly complete study on this matter.

**Mīr Dāmād and His Theory of Creation**

Mīr Dāmād was one of the most prominent figures during the Safavid period (sixteenth century CE). He was a theosophical sage and multi-talented scholar, unanimously recognised as an authority in all traditional sciences. In the contemporary world of Islamic philosophy, he is known more through the prodigy he mentored, his student Mullā Ṣadrā, who stated that he owes his

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271 A brief account of this can be found in Camilla Adang, Hassan Ansari, Maribel Fierro, Consego Superior and Sabine Schmidtke, eds., Accusations of Unbelief in Islam: A Diachronic Perspective on Takfīr (Brill, 2016), 262–63.

272 As previously explained (see fn. 185), the term ‘theosophy’ is used here in its origin meaning of ta’alluh, and Mīr Dāmād being a Ḥakīm Muta’allih, which means a theosophical sage. The term used here has nothing to do with the teachings of Madame Blavatsky and her occultist doctrine. See Corbin, History of Islamic Philosophy, xv.


274 Full name, Muḥammad ibn Ibrāhīm Ṣadr al-Dīn al-Shirāzī (980/1572–1050/1640 AH/CE). For a detailed biography of his life, see Seyyed Hossein Nasr, Ṣadr al-Dīn Shirāzī and his Transcendent Theosophy, Background, Life and Works, 2nd ed. (Tehran: Institute for Humanities and Cultural Studies, 1997).
accomplishments to his teacher. Mullā Śadrā refers to his teacher Mīr Dāmād as ‘our noble teacher’ and ‘the master of the greatest of scholars’.

Even though Mīr Dāmād was influenced strongly by Avicenna’s scholarly work and philosophy, he considers himself Avicenna’s equal in philosophy. With his great self-confidence, born from his rich knowledge and expertise in many sciences, he devoted much of his work to ending the fundamental dispute regarding eternity and creation, which was (according to theologians) the boundary between belief and disbelief.

The full title of Mīr Dāmād’s magnum opus, written exclusively to explain his theory of creation and eternity, is Qabasāt ḥaqq al-yaqīn fī ḥudūth al-ʿālam (The Blazing Brands of True Certainty on the Creation of the World). Mīr Dāmād brought new dimensions to this argument and introduced a solution to both sides (philosophy and theology), developing the theory of perpetual creation, al-ḥudūth al-dahrī. He was infatuated by this topic and posed his solution to the problem of the incipience of the cosmos by introducing a domain of perpetual or meta-temporal origination.

One of Mīr Dāmād’s outstanding students (also his son-in-law) was Mīr Sayyid Aḥmad al-ʿAlawī (d. 1054/1644–1060/1650 AH/CE), who is especially exceptional due to his commitment to the philosophical school of his teacher and extensive

276 Al-Shirāzī, al-Shawāhid, 1: 74. Mīr Dāmād refers to his student Mullā Śadrā as “the dearest of my spiritual children” (aʿz al-awlād al-rūḥāniya) and other highly praising titles. This can be seen in a compilation of draft notes gathered by Mullā Śadrā himself. The manuscript is called Be Rasm Yādegār, held at the Iranian National Library (manuscript no. 1/19146).
277 See Mehdi Mohaghegh, “Taʾthīr-i Ibn Sinā bar Mīr Dāmād,” in Mīr Dāmād, Kitāb al-Qabasāt, front matter, 144.
278 Ibid., 155.
280 This will be detailed in Chapter 3.
281 Gilānī, Incipience, 16.
commentaries on Mir Dəmād’s books (in particular, Kitāb al-Qabasāt, Taqwīm al-Imān and al-Imāḍāt). In describing al-Qabasāt, al-ʿAlawī praises it as follows:

It is based on sacred inspiration, which has solved problems and secrets of sublime wisdom, and it has angelic indications and is transcendental philosophy.

The primary texts used in the present study are the main philosophical and theological works of Mir Dəmād, which have been published in Arabic. The state of these books varies as far as the quality of the edition goes, and throughout the research I will share relevant information on the published works of Mir Dəmād. Along with the works of Mir Dəmād, I also seek assistance from secondary references, like commentaries and books that deal with the topic of creation. I frequently refer to the main writings of Mullā Șadrā, which have fortunately been published and also translated into Persian and English.

Regarding the state of Mir Dəmād’s published books, I will briefly remark here as to the quality of these, using the example of the previously mentioned magnum opus of Mir Dəmād, Kitāb al-Qabasāt. The first printed edition of Kitāb al-Qabasāt was edited by Mehdi Mohaghegh, along with contributions by a variety of scholars. Even though it was published over four decades ago, it was exceptional in scholarly quality for the time, including a 150 page–long analytical introduction. This edition has been reprinted numerous times and is still the only authoritative version of Mir Dəmād’s core text in Arabic available to researchers. That being said, in view of the modern critical research standards, this text was not reviewed in comparison with

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282 Mir Sayyid Aḥmad al-ʿAlawī, Sharḥ al-Qabasāt, ed. Ḥamed Nāʾī Esfahānī (Tehran: Institute of Islamic Studies, University of Tehran, 1997). Apparently, it was Mir Dəmād himself who instructed al-ʿAlawī to write a commentary on Kitāb al-Qabasāt. Al-ʿAlawī is quoted as saying, “while he [Mir Dəmād] was alive time after time he commanded me to write a commentary on this noble book,” in Mehdi Mohaghegh’s Arabic introduction, p. 17.


285 Ibid., 88.
other surviving manuscripts of Kitāb al-Qabasāt. Further, it lacks explanatory footnotes or glosses and does not have references.

Kitāb al-Qabasāt has been translated into Persian and English. Regarding the English translation, the translator, Keven Brown, was proficient in conveying such a difficult text into the English language, including the selection of adequate English equivalent terms. In addition, Brown added a selection of explanatory footnotes from Sayyid Aḥmad al-‘Alawi’s commentary on Kitāb al-Qabasāt, further aiding understanding of the complex text.

It is important to note that the published works related to Mir Dāmād and Mullā Ṣadrā were adequate for the purpose of this study and, thus, in general there was no need to refer to hand-written manuscripts. There are numerous commentaries and glosses on Kitāb al-Qabasāt, but unfortunately only Sayyid Aḥmad al-‘Alawi’s commentary has been published. Among the important glosses (ḥāshiyah) on Kitāb al-Qabasāt is that of al-‘Alawi’s grandson Mir Sayyid Muḥammad Ashraf (d. 1133/1720 or 1145/1732 AH/CE), Miqbās al-Qabasāt. Al-‘Alawi, his son ʿAbd al-Ḥasib and his son Muḥammad Ashraf all stayed loyal to the Yamānī philosophy (al-hikmat al-yamāniya) and devoted numerous works to further explaining Mir Dāmād’s fundamental theory of meta-temporal origination.

Then there is the most extensive and also critical commentary on Kitāb al-Qabasāt written by one of Mullā Ṣadrā’s students, Muḥammad ibn ʿAlī Riḍā ibn Aqājānī (d. 1071 AH/1660–1 CE), who, like Mir Dāmād, was originally from Astarābād but resided in Qom. His commentary has also not been published.

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286 See Mir Dāmād, Akhgarhā (Qabasāt), trans. Jahānshāh Nāser, edited with an introduction by Tāḥā Ḥejāzī (Tehran: Intishārāt-e Absār, 1394 SY/2015 CE). The quality of this translation was relatively poor and criticised by different specialists in this field, mainly due to the translator not having a philosophy background and other flaws in the translation itself. For a detailed critique of this Persian edition of Kitāb al-Qabasāt, see Hassain Najafī, “Akhgarhā ye bī Șāmānī dar Khīrman Ḥikmat Yamānī (naqd tarjumeyi nā istwār az al-Qabasāt-e Mir Dāmād),” Kitāb Guzār 4, no. 5 (Winter 1395 & Summer 1396): 253–84. The author of this article is also the owner of an internet blog exclusively dedicated to Mir Dāmād: www.mirdamad.info.

287 See Mir Dāmād, The Book of Blazing Brands.

288 For a brief list of these commentaries and glosses, see Mir Sayyid Ahmad al-ʿAlawī, Sharḥ al-Qabasāt (A Commentary on al-Qabasāt), ed. Ḥāmid Nāʾī Esfahānī (Tehran: Institute of Islamic Studies, University of Tehran, 1997), editor’s introduction, 27.

289 Ibid.

290 More than five times longer than Kitāb al-Qabasāt.

291 See Muhammad Taqī Dānesh Pejūh, “Sharḥ al-Qabasāt,” Majjale-ye Dāneshkhade-ye Adabiyyāt va ʿUlām-e Insānī 5 (Spring 1360 SY): 63–68. This author also mentions (p. 68) that Ibn Aqājānī has a treatise on perpetual creation, called Risāla fi al-Ḥudūth al-Dahrī.
Fortunately, Sayyid Jalâl al-Dîn Ashtiyânî (1925–2005 CE) researched the manuscripts of Ibn Aqâjâni’s commentary and presented detailed excerpts from them in his book *Muntakhabî az Athâr-e Ḥukamâ-ye Ilâhi-ye Irân,*292 I refer to this book in detail in Chapter 3. As extensive as Ibn Aqâjâni’s commentary is, however, he was a strong supporter of the Ṣadrian philosophical school, and this is reflected in how he read, understood and refuted Mîr Dâmâd’s theory on creation.

Other than Mullâ Şadrâ, most (if not all) Shi‘i philosophers have made reference to meta-temporal origination, even though the majority of these mentions are very brief. A typical example is Mullâ Ḣâdî Sabzawârî (1212/1797–1289/1873 AH/CE),293 who sums up Mîr Dâmâd’s solution to the problem of time and creation as follows:

The conclusion is that the ‘existence’ of the world, in his view, is preceded by ‘actual non-existence’ at the level of ‘perpetual duration’, and not preceded by ‘estimated [flowing, extended] non-existence’ at the level of ‘time’—as the Theologians assert—nor preceded by ‘parallel [cohabiting] non-existence’ which is in the stage of ‘quiddity’ only, as some Philosophers are related to have asserted.294

Mîr Dâmâd wanted to solve an ongoing dispute and prove that the concept of the origination of the world is not only solvable within purely rational principles, but also in accordance with religion. He was a devoted Muslim who strictly adhered to his Shi‘i heritage, hence his founding of the Yamânî philosophy, which is based on *aḥâdîth.* These traditions mainly point to *ḥudûth,* so he took it upon himself to explain this. Mîr Dâmâd understood this origination or creation to be external, and

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293 Involving Sabzawârî in this discourse is crucial because of his influence in spreading the thoughts of Mullâ Şadrâ and his book becoming a textbook for over two centuries. For further information, see Rîzvî, “Hikma muta‘alîya in Qajar Iran: Locating the Life and Work of Mulla Hadi Sabzawari (d. 1289/1873).”

294 Mehdi Mohaghegh and Toshihiko Izutsu, trans., *The Metaphysics of Sabzawârî* (Tehran: University Press, 1983), 125. This is a translation of the metaphysics part of Sabzawârî’s famous work *Sharḥ al-Manzûma (Commentary on a Poem),* which is his own commentary on a poem he wrote on the rational sciences. This became a very popular textbook and is still read and studied today.
states as such in the first page of his book *al-Īmāḍāt* (*Flickerings*): ‘Creation (*al-hudūth*) means that existence is preceded by non-existence externally’. Here, Mir Dāmād is referring to creation as a whole, beyond time and anything else, and he explains this with temporality (*tazammun*) as one application of *ḥudūth*. Mir Dāmād wanted to prove that there is *ḥudūth*—but not temporal, because then it would be conflict with the *tanzihī* 296 attributes of God and be against the self-evident arguments of reason and *burhān*.

From Mir Dāmād’s perspective, this non-existence, or ‘*adam*, is of variable kinds; one is in concrete reality (*fi matn al-wāqi‘*), another is real non-existence (*al-**adam al-ṣariḥ*) and a third is pure non-existence (*ḥāq a’yān*). Mir Dāmād was not satisfied with the theory of essential origination (*al-ḥudūth al-dhātī*). He did not reject Avicenna’s view on essential origination, but he believed it was insufficient because he saw that the theory of essential origination cannot be religiously justified unless it is correctly explained. In explaining how important it is to understand what type of *ḥudūth* or ‘*adam* is involved in developing a satisfying answer, Mir Dāmād states:

> For just as non-existence in the stage of the substance of the quiddity, insofar as it is itself, does not require non-existence in the actual thing itself, and does not conflict with existence in the realm of the real world – even though that stage is one of the modes of the thing itself, not a fabricated aspect, because the thing itself is more encompassing and more universal than that stage and than the stage of actuality.298

He shortly after returns to this point and also refers to essential origination:

> Therefore, it is understood from the followers of Aristotle that the First Maker (exalted be His praise) only essentially precedes one part of the cosmos, namely, the originated existents (*mubda’āt*), with respect to the


296 *Tanzihī* refers to the transcendent attributes of God, where there is nothing comparable to God, keeping Him pure and elevated above all existence. God is unique and in no way like anything created. The opposite of this is *tashbih*, which refers to a form of similarity and resemblance.

297 This will be elaborated on in Chapter 3.

intelligible order only, but He does not precede them separately in existence with respect to the positively real world.\textsuperscript{299}

Mir Dāmād wanted to explain that what the theologians meant regarding ḥudūth zamānī in real time, or zamān mawhum or mutawahham, went against reason and burhān. On the other side, what the philosophers presented also did not satisfy the boundaries of shar‘ and religion.

Mir Dāmād wanted to fill this gap and solve the problem as a whole, and he dedicated much of his works to dealing with this topic. Although the ḥudūth/qidam of the world was an old topic, during the era of the early Safavid dynasty it was a very heated topic. As previously mentioned, all the outstanding philosophers of that time (from the School of Esfahan and from different trends and schools) wrote independent treatises on ḥudūth al-ʿālam. Placing Mir Dāmād’s work and position within this field is of utmost importance due to his scientific status and influence at that time. This is further necessitated by the near-complete neglect and overlooking of Mir Dāmād in present-day scholarship (philosophical and theological). Not only has his comprehensive philosophical school been overlooked, but his theory of al-ḥudūth al-dahrī has not been comprehensively examined based on his and his successors’ complete works. This thesis will include a running commentary on the importance of Mir Dāmād as it details his philosophical discourse regarding the incipience of the world.

The Role of the Qur’an and Ḥadīth in Understanding Creation

Ultimately, the devotional aspect of a Muslim, whether a theologian or a philosopher, demands that they submit to the word of God and acknowledge the validity of authentic narrations. For a Twelver Shi’a, this stretches beyond statements from the Prophet Muhammad to include the Imāms. With Mir Dāmād being a recognised authority on both religion and Peripatetic philosophy in his time, he had the confidence to address creation while maintaining conformity with a devotional

\textsuperscript{299} Ibid., 32.
Islamic outlook. This is one reason for Muslims scholars’ interest in this topic, some even to the point of obsession:

As for the whole question of ‘newness’ or ‘eternity’ of the world, or *hudūth* and *qidam*, which has occupied Islamic thinkers for the past twelve centuries and which is related to the question of the contingency of the world *vis-à-vis* the Divine Principle, it is inconceivable without the teachings of the Qur’ān and *ḥadīth*. It is of course a fact that before the rise of Islam Christian theologians and philosophers such as John Philoponus had written on this issue and that Muslims had known some of these writings, especially the treatise of Philoponus against the thesis of the eternity of the world. But had it not been for the Qur’ānic teachings concerning creation, such Christian writings would have played an altogether different role in Islamic thought. Muslims were interested in the arguments of a Philoponus precisely because of their own concern with the question of *hudūth* and *qidam*, created by the tension between the teachings of the Qur’ān and the *Ḥadīth*, on the one hand, and the Greek notion of the non-temporal relation between the world and its Divine Origin, on the other.\(^{300}\)

The systematic separation of a trilateral stipulation that Mīr Dāmād presents, effectively preserved the hierarchy of God’s position in the God–world relationship, keeping Him in eternity, the universe in temporality and its creation in meta-temporality. This combined the views of philosophers and theologians, and aligned with what the *ḥadīth* implied.\(^{301}\)

What Mīr Dāmād tried to achieve with his School of Yamānī philosophy was to initiate a broader outlook on the relationship between the Creator and creation, not limiting it to conceptual articulation but introducing the role of spiritual exercise and enlightenment of the heart. The goal of the theoretical sciences is to achieve a


correct worldview, and the goal of the practical sciences and moral behaviour is to achieve the power of moral justness. In this regard, Avicenna stated in *al-Shifā*:

> You would have known that all sciences share in one benefit—namely: The attainment of the human soul’s perfection in act, preparing it for happiness in the hereafter.\footnote{Avicenna, *The Metaphysics of the Healing*, Book 1, ch. 3, 13.}

This is in relation to both levels of theoretical and practical perfection, as Mīr Dāmād states:

> Rather, its goal (i.e. the human self) is the perfection that is settled in it as long as it resides in the land of the foreign and it staying in the realm of the body and attached to the horizon of being and renewal, in that it acquires a complete disposition in connecting to the true intellects. Here it will take from the intellect that is simple and from it the forms that are elaborate in its self by way of thought will spring and emanate from it.\footnote{Mīr Dāmād, *Taqwām al-Īmān*, ed. ‘Ali Awjābī (Tehran: Muṭāle‘at Islāmī, Tehran University, 1997), 377.}

This means that perfection of the self is theoretically achieved through thought and contemplation, achieved through connecting to the active intellect and benefitting from it. In Mīr Dāmād’s understanding, moral behaviour is achieved by purifying the self from any sensual and imaginary fallacious flaws; this is done to gain epistemic and scientific perfection and to achieve truth and validity by acquiring solid arguments and sound proofs.

In addition to Mīr Dāmād being a *faqīh* and a *muḥaddith*, his works in various fields reflect his vast and comprehensive understanding of transmitted sciences and rational sciences. This can be seen in his glosses on al-Ṭūṣī’s\footnote{This is not the famous philosopher and theologian Khwāja Naṣīr al-Dīn al-Ṭūsī, but rather Sheikh Abū Ja‘far Muḥammad al-Ṭūsī (385/995–460/1067 AH/CE), the famous Shīʿa jurist who was given the title Sheikh al-Ṭā‘īfah (The Master of the Creed). He wrote this book on the science of the biography of narrators of ḥadīth (*ʿIlm al-Riḍāl*) as a complementary extension of Sheikh Muḥammad ibn ‘Umar al-Kashshi’s (d. approx. 350/961 AH/CE) Riḍāl book called *Ma‘rifat al-Nāqīlīn*. Mīr Dāmād was the first scholar to write marginal glosses on *Ikhtiyār Ma‘rifat al-Riḍāl*, and many of his distinctive views in this field can be seen here. See Sheikh Abū Ja‘far al-Ṭūsī, *Ikhtiyār Ma‘rifat al-Riḍāl al-Ma‘rāf bi Riḍāl al-Kashshi*, with glosses by Mīr Dāmād al-Astarābādī, ed. Sayyīd Mehdī al-Rajā‘ī (Qom: Mu‘assase Al al-Bayt ‘Ala‘īhim al-Salām, 1404 AH).} *Ikhtiyār Ma‘rifat al-Riḍāl*, on the topic of the biography of narrators. Mīr Dāmād was the first to edit and write glosses on this book. He also has a commentary on a selection of traditions.
from al-Kulaini’s Kitāb al-Kāfī, called al-Rawāshīḥ al-Samāwiyyah fi Sharḥ al-Aḥādīth al-Imāmiyyah (Heavenly Percolations in a Commentary on Imāmī Traditions). Like many of his books, this is work incomplete, as he was only successful in commenting on the first two chapters of al-Kāfī (Kitāb al-‘Aql wa al-Jahl and Kitāb al-Tawḥīd). His main focus in his commentary was solving the problematic issues in the traditions, insofar as meaning, terms, chain of narrators and other issues exclusively unique to this book. In ḥadīth sciences, Mīr Dāmād presented innovative ideas and introduced different understandings, specifically in the area of ḥadīth-related terminologies. Mīr Dāmād wrote a few other works in transmitted sciences, including al-Ḥāshiyah ‘alā al-Istībšār, a commentary on Sheikh al-Ṭūsī’s ḥadīth collection al-Sab’ al-Shīdād (The Seven Strong) in the principles of jurisprudence; Shir’at al-Tasmiyah (The Legitimacy of Naming); and other books and treatises.

Mīr Dāmād (who adopted the ‘Uṣūlī methodology) also made valuable contributions in the area of jurisprudence, such as Dawābīṭ al-Riḍā’ (Principles of Breastfeeding).
Another important contribution is his book titled al-Ta’liqah ‘alá Kitāb al-Kāfī (Glosses on Kitāb al-Kāfī), in which he discusses the chain of narrators, biography of narrators, grading of traditions and other points related to hadith contexts. In this book, when commenting on the traditions of creation of the world, Mīr Dāmād refers to al-ḥudūth al-dahrī. In a long tradition, al-Kulainī narrates Ja’far al-Ṣādiq’s discussion on the qualities of monotheism and the God–creation relationship. When he mentions the creation of humankind, Mīr Dāmād comments on this, saying:

This means creating His creation by essential origination and by perpetual creation based on His essential pre-eternity (azal) and His sempiternal pre-eternity (azalihi al-sarmadī), as the essentially created is an effect to the essentially eternal and the cause that is needy of it as far as the nature of essential origination. The perpetually created is an effect of the sempiternal eternal and the cause that is needy of it as far as the nature of the perpetually created. Furthermore, the essentially contingent is an effect of the essentially Necessary and the cause that is needy of it as far as the nature of contingency.

Throughout his writings, Mīr Dāmād continued to stress how the Qur’ān and hadith worked in correspondence with his philosophical foundations. He did not see them as conflicting but, rather, complementing one another; this is deeply rooted in the ontological structure of Mīr Dāmād’s philosophy.

The precision Mīr Dāmād had in his referencing of Shi‘i narrations that show not only his strong Shi‘i affiliation and encompassment of its heritage but also his philosophical perspective is important and can be seen in Qabas 4 of Kitāb al-

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313 Although they have been added to the manuscript offset in Ithnay Ashar Risāla.
314 Note, this is different to al-Rawāshiḥ al-Samāwīya.
315 See Mīr Dāmād, al-Ta’liqah ‘alá Kitāb al-Kāfī, ed. Sayyid Meḥdī Rājā’ī (Qom: Maṭba’ā al-Khayām, 1403 AH), 275. Here, Mīr Dāmād makes clear reference to the three realms of sarmad, dahr and zamān, and applies this to his understanding of the tradition narrated from the Imām Ja’far al-Ṣādiq. See also pp. 320, 339, 347.
316 Ibid., 339.
317 One example of how Mīr Dāmād implements hadith in his philosophical structure can be seen in Mīr Dāmād, The Book of Blazing Brands, 349.
Here, he not only uses narrations but also grades them, as far as rijāli verification is concerned. The epistemic process in Mīr Dāmād’s methodology is that he 1) grades the authenticity of the narration, giving him certainty of its originality; 2) gives it a logical explanation; and 3) formulates his theory based on this. Importantly, Mīr Dāmād did not contort the narrations to suit his view or base his arguments on personal speculation (tafsīr bi al-raʿī); rather, as previously mentioned, he positioned Shiʿi traditions as his objective goal and created his philosophical system based on these.

This introductory chapter aimed to provide a brief overview of the context of Mīr Dāmād’s valuable contribution to the contentious debate on the origination of the world. In addition to explaining the problem of time and creation in the classical, Judeo-Christian and Muslim traditions, the chapter presented and summarised the views of outstanding Islamic philosophers and theologians (Sunni and Shiʿa) prior to Mīr Dāmād on the topic of eternity and creation. This highlighted the main trends of thoughts and theories in this topic, and the primary works exclusively dedicated to origination of the world. Another important area discussed was the polemical debates that came about in the writings of Islamic philosophers and theologians, from Tahāfut al-Falāsifa to Musaraʻat al-Falasifa and their rebuttals. The role of the Qur’an and narrations of the Prophet Muḥammad and Shiʿi Imāms were touched upon in noting that Mīr Dāmād synthesised the Islamic transmitted sciences into his philosophical system. These discussions also served to emphasise the significance of what Mīr Dāmād proposed in his theory of meta-temporal origination. Mīr Dāmād’s thought, theories and works were touched on in this chapter and will be extensively detailed in Chapter 3.

The next chapter will give a detailed account of Mīr Dāmād’s life, focusing on the overall philosophical atmosphere of his era, his scholarly work and his valuable contributions to the discussion on creation and eternity.

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318 This chapter is full of verses and narrations from different Shiʿī Imāms. See Mīr Dāmād, The Book of Blazing Brands, 135–55. See also al-ʿAlawī’s commentary on Mīr Dāmād’s usage of these narrations in favour of meta-temporal origination. See, in particular, the discussion of min shaiʿ, min lā shaiʿ and lā min shaiʿ: al-ʿAlawī, Sharh al-Qabasāt, 326–27.

319 ʿIlm al-Rijāl is the ʿAlawī’s commentary on Mīr Dāmād’s usage of these narrations in favour of meta-temporal origination. See, in particular, the discussion of min shaiʿ, min lā shaiʿ and lā min shaiʿ: al-ʿAlawī, Sharh al-Qabasāt, 326–27.

320 Qabas 4 of Kitāb al-Qabasāt is also full of such examples.
Chapter 1: Dimensions of the Life and Works of Mīr Dāmād

1.1 Mīr Dāmād: Famous yet Forgotten?

Mīr Dāmād’s high status in multiple fields of Shi‘i Islamic studies and Islamic philosophy in particular is undisputed. He made an enormous contribution not only to Islamic philosophy but also to an array of sciences and disciplines. He was a polymath, jurist, theologian, architect, occultist, scientist and even a poet. However, despite such contributions and status, there is little detailed analysis of him in either the Western or the Muslim world; his name is rarely mentioned and there are only superficial explanations of his views and theories. This results in Mīr Dāmād’s somewhat odd status of being famous yet largely disregarded in most major Islamic philosophical works. Per ‘Ali Awjabī, a distinguished expert on Mīr Dāmād:

When we look at books written in the field of the history of philosophy, we come across personalities like Farabi, Avicenna, Suhrawardī, Mullā Ṣadrā, etc. However, it is unbelievably surprising that the name of Mīr Dāmād is rarely mentioned.2

Many know of Mīr Dāmād, especially through his student Mullā Ṣadrā, but very little research has been undertaken on his works, especially in the West and English-speaking world.3 He was given the title of the Third Master (al-mu‘allim al-thālīth) by the Safavid Court and his students, after Aristotle (the First Master) and Farabi (the Second Master).4 Yet, Mīr Dāmād’s student Mullā Ṣadrā took over the scholarly

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1 Ali Awjabī has edited numerous philosophical manuscripts and written extensively on Mīr Dāmād; cf. ‘Ali Awjabī, Mīr Dāmād; Būyanguzār-e Ḥikmat Yamānī (Mīr Dāmād, Founder of the Yamānī Philosophy) (Tehran: Intishārāt-e Sāhāt, 2003).
platform and the philosophical arena with his School of Transcendent Theosophy or al-Ḥikmah al-Mutaʿāliyah. Hamid Dabashi says in this regard:

Had it not been for Ṣadr al-Din’s eclipsing prominence, Mir Dāmād might have been remembered more than he currently is for his collection and revisions of the complete textual corpus of Islamic philosophy.\(^5\)

Further, and as will be touched on in later chapters, another reason for Mir Dāmād’s relative neglect is his difficult-to-read and complex writing style. The depth of his thought, the complexity of his sentences and his self-professed unique writing style render his philosophical and theological system difficult to interpret. Accordingly, this thesis introduces Mir Dāmād and highlights the valuable contributions he made to numerous disciplines, while emphasising his theory of the world’s creation and the God–world relationship that this entails. This thesis does so in a manner that renders Mir Dāmād’s theories and works accessible to the English-language readership.

Mir Dāmād was the greatest and most influential intellectual figure of the Persian Safavid dynasty\(^6\) and the founder of the philosophical School of Esfahan,\(^7\) which will


\(^6\) Various examples can be provided to support this claim that, for a period of time, Mir Dāmād was the most revered scholar, even in the Safavid court; one particularly illustrative example is Mir Dāmād being requested by the Safavid ruler of the time to recite the sermon while seated—this was considered to officially affirm him as being the greatest scholar of that time. See Rasūl Ja’fariyān, *Maqālāt wa Risālāt-e Tārīkhī* (Tehran: Nashr ‘Ālam, 1395 SY), 3: 272–73. This source also refers to Mir Dāmād as the ‘Seal of Mujtahids’ (khātam al-mujtahidīn). Another primary source (written during the same era as Mir Dāmād) refers to this title: Muḥammad Maʿṣūm ibn Khwājājī Esfahānī, *Khubāsat al-Siyar: Tārīkh Rūezgār Shāh Ṣafavī*, ed. Iraj Afšār (Tehran: Intishārāt-e ‘Ilmi, 1989), 38.

\(^7\) The broader understanding of this title is in its reference to a new Islamic philosophical stage in the formation of Shi’i rational thought. It served as a milestone in the philosophical evolution of Shi’i Islam led by Mir Dāmād. One scholar who criticised this usage, explaining that the word ‘school’ would entail the grouping together of a number of philosophers who share commonalities in their theories and views. See Reza Pourjavadi, *Philosophy in Early Safavid Iran: Nājīm al-Dīn Maḥmūd al-Nayrīzī and His Writings* (Leiden: Brill, 2011), 74–75. However, I argue that using the term ‘school’ does not necessarily mean that all the key figures of the era had similar views. Since the initial usage of the term by Corbin, it has become commonly accepted in scholarly circles to refer to this Islamic philosophical era as the ‘School of Ifṣāḥān’, in particular, in Iran. Of course, not every Shi’i thinker carried the same philosophical views under this ‘school’. Mullā Ṣadrā differed significantly in his views from those of his teacher Mir Dāmād. That being said, in contemporary writings, both of these philosophers and others whose views are not necessarily congruent but who actively engaged in the pertinent intellectual debate are still mentioned under the category of the School of Ifṣāḥān. See, e.g., Muhammad Ridā Zādūshī, *Maktab-e Falsafi-ye Ifṣāḥān* (Tehran: Mu’assase-ye Pejūheshī-ye  Ḥikmat wa  Falsafe-ye Iran, 2012). For a recent paper analysing the philosophical School of Esfahan with an emphasis on Mir Dāmād, see Abū al-Faḍl Kākū’ī and Murād Kayānī Pûr, “Vākāvī Maktab-e Falsafi-ye Esfahān (Bā Ta’kūd Bar Jāīgāh-e Mir Dāmād),” *Tārīkhnāme-ye...*
be explored in detail later in this chapter. His political and social status facilitated his scientific studies and added to his significant influence in the Twelver Shi‘i tradition. Regarding Mīr Dāmād’s high status, he was a Sayyid, from the descendants of the revered Ahlul-Bayt, which itself granted him a revered status in society, and the Safavids also fashioned themselves as Sayyids.\(^8\) He was the grandson of ‘Alī al-Karākī, famously known as al-Muḥaqqiq al-Karākī (1464–1533 CE), who was the highest ranking among the first generation of Shi‘i ‘ulamā’ migrating to Iran during this era. The significance of al-Muḥaqqiq al-Karākī will be further discussed later in this chapter. Mīr Dāmād was a student of his maternal uncle, al-Karākī’s son, ‘Abd al-‘Alī ibn ‘Alī al-Karākī al-ʿAmīlī (1520–1585 CE), and also a student of Sheikh al-Bahāʾī’s father Ḥusayn ibn ‘Abd al-Ṣamād al-ʿAmīlī (1512–1576 CE). These were outstanding figures of the primary era of Safavid dynasty and gave Mīr Dāmād high significance, with Mīr Dāmād inheriting the legacy of the ‘ulamā’ of Jabal ‘Amil, in particular, the influence of his grandfather in Uṣūlī juridical authority and social and political status.\(^9\)

Mīr Dāmād added to the richness of this heritage through his studies and contributions in various fields. It must be said that no other scholar in history has reached such a level of scientific and social power and influence simultaneously. Mīr Dāmād was a revered jurist, the founder of the philosophical School of Esfahan, the Imām of the central mosque and, for a time after Sheikh al-Bahāʾī, the prime judge

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\(^8\) For an account on the status of Sayyids in Safavid Iran, see Andrew Newman, “The Role of the Sādāt in Safavid Iran: Confrontation or Accommodation?” *Oriente Moderno* 18, no. 2 (1999): 577–96.

(Sheikh al-Islām) in the Safavid Court. The comprehensiveness of Mīr Dāmād is beyond compare to any other scholar during his time, combining at the most authoritative level the rational and transmitted sciences. Sayyid ʿAlī Khān al-Madani’s (1052/1642–1119/1707 AH/CE) biographical dictionary lists Mīr Dāmād with the highest of praise, stating that it is far from exaggeration to say that time is incapable of bearing someone like Mīr Dāmād and that it is not possible to conceive his virtues and merits. Mīr Dāmād is further described as the commander of politics and the venerable leader respected by the Sultan.

The following sections provide a brief description of the Safavid era and how Mīr Dāmād influenced it.

1.1.1 A Brief Glance at the Political Situation in the Safavid Era during Its Early Formative Period

Persian civilisation has an immensely rich culture and history. It influenced other nations and societies to a great degree, and played a major role in the evolution of religions and sects. The era most relevant to this study is the Safavid dynasty, which was an important turning point in Persia’s history. The Safavid Empire began with the ruling of Shāh Ismā’īl I (1501–1524 CE) in the year 1501 CE and ended with the last Safavid king Shāh Sultan Ḥusain (ruled 1694–1722 CE) in 1722 CE.

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10 To understand the highly prestigious status of Sheikh al-Islām and what it meant to be the chief jurist, holding the highest position of religious authority in the Safavid era, see Devin J. Stewart, “The First Shaykh al-Islām of the Safavid Capital Qazvin,” Journal of the American Oriental Society 116, no. 3 (July–September 1996): 387–405. For evidence indicating that Mīr Dāmād became Sheikh al-Islām, see Ja’far al-Muhājir, al-Hijrat al-ʿĀmilīya, 193. This is because Sheikh al-Bahāʾī was Sheikh al-Islām from 1030 AH until early 1040 AH, after which Mīr Dāmād very likely became Sheikh al-Islām.

11 An example for this is Shah Abbas I and people referring to him for important verdicts (istiftāʾ). See Rasūl Jaʿfariyān, Maqālāt-e Tārīkhī, 11:240–41; Mīr Dāmād, Shirʿat al-Tasmiya, ed. Riḍā U斯塔dhi (Esfahān: Mehdiyeh Mīr Dāmād, 1409 AH), 22–23.


13 Ibid.

14 The title 'Safavi' was adopted from the name of a notable Sufi saint, Saʿīf al-Dīn al-Ardabīlī (1252–1334), who had claimed to be a descendent of the seventh Shiʿī Imām and had converted to Shiʿī Islam. See Edward G. Browne, A Literary History of Persia, vol. 4 (London: Cambridge University Press, 1959), 19.
Eminent historian and Iranologist Edward Granville Browne’s (1862–1926 CE) extensive encyclopaedia stresses the importance of the Safavid dynasty in the general course of Iranian history, stating:

It marks not only the restoration of the Persian Empire and the re-creation of the Persian nationality after an eclipse of more than eight centuries and a half, but the entrance of Persia into the comity of nations.

After the conquest of the Persian Sāssānian Empire (224–651 CE) by Arab Muslims, Islamic culture became mixed with Persian, heralding a new era of Islamic civilisation. Islam became a universal religion and culture open to all people. Much turmoil ensued, but Persia finally united under the rulership of Shah Ismā’īl I (1501–1524 CE).

Shah Ismā’īl I had a strong Sufi background and was believed to enjoy divine support due to the series of victories he achieved. With the help of Turkman military forces, known as the Qizilbash, Shah Ismā’īl I achieved his goal of establishing a divinely guided Shi’i kingdom on earth. The Qizilbash believed in, and were convinced of, Shah Ismā’īl I’s divine status and venerated him as such.

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17 Ibid.
20 His father, Haydar Ṣafawi (1459–1488 CE), was a Sufi master, as were his forefathers; although this still would not mean that Shah Ismā’īl I himself had Sufi tendencies. See Heinz Halm, *Shi’a Islam: From Religion to Revolution*, trans. Allison Brown (Princeton: Markus Wiener Publishers, 1994), 107.
22 The Qizilbash or Qizilbāsh (Turkish for ‘red heads’) were so called because of their distinct red headgear. They wore crimson, cone-shaped, twelve-gored hats, with each gore (or fold) representing one of the twelve Shi’i Imāms: Rula J. Abisaab, *Converting Persia; Religion and Power in the Safavid Empire* (London: I.B. Taurus, 2004), 8. While contentious discussions could be undertaken regarding the position and influence of the Qizilbash, it is beyond the scope of the present thesis. For such an account, see Kathryn Babayan, “The Safavid Synthesis: From Qizilbash Islam to Imamite Shi’ism,” *Iranian Studies* 27, no. 1–4 (1994): 135–61.
The Twelver Shi‘i ideology influenced Shah Ismā‘īl I and he instituted the Twelver Shi‘i doctrine in all parts of greater Persia.25 He also enforced the cursing upon the early Caliphs who were revered by Sunni Muslims.26 As Hans Robert Roemer, an expert on the Safavid dynasty, explains:

The precise nature of Ismā‘īl’s commitment to the Shi‘i faith—to what extent he was familiar with and himself observed the precepts of the Shi‘ah—remains to be seen ... He desired to abolish the Sunna with its veneration of the Orthodox Caliphs and to replace it with the belief in ‘Alī and the Twelve Imāms.27

Shah Ismā‘īl I loathed the Sunni sect and was most intolerant of its rulers. He implemented strict segregation and forced mass conversion to Twelver Shi‘ism. Colin Mitchell, who has written extensively on this topic, states:

The decision by Shah Ismā‘īl to propagate Twelver Shi‘ism was an endorsement of both the Qur’anic—biblical cycle of prophecy, beginning with Adam and ending with Muḥammad, as well as the sanctity of the Imāmate, or ‘Alī (son-in-law of the Prophet) and his descendants. This young ruler, however, emerged in a milieu defined by millenarian anxieties, which he manipulated by claiming divine sanction and support for a string of victories in his first ten years of power.28

A fundamental aspect of the Safavid era is that it aimed to establish a powerful hierarchy of Shi‘i scholars.29 Shah Ismā‘īl I and his eldest son Shah Tahmāsp (1524–1576 CE) invited scholars from Arabic-speaking countries to achieve this goal.30 Many of these scholars originated from Bahrain or Jabal ‘Amil in southern Lebanon.31 These migrating scholars and theologians were responsible for the major renaissance of Shi‘i religious learning during the Safavid dynasty and included

26 Ibid.
29 Ibid., 354.
30 Abisaab, Converting Persia, 8.
31 Ibid., 9.
Sheikh ʿAlī al-Karākī (d. 1533 CE), Sheikh Bahāʾ al-Dīn al-ʿAmīlī (1547–1621 CE), his father Sheikh Ḥusain (d. 1576 CE), and Niʿmat-Allah al-Jazāʾirī (d. 1701).32

Rula Abisaab, an expert on Safavid Iran, explains how the ʿAmīlī ʿulamaʾ assisted the Shahs of that time in forming this dynasty:

By the later sixteenth century CE, Safavid society, deeply shamed by Twelver Shiʿism, exhibited several integrated themes: the Shahs had focused their political and dynastic aspirations; the initially resistant elites had begun to incorporate clerical Shiʿism, and the ʿulama of ʿAmīlī origin would appropriate elements of Persia’s heterodox milieu to empower themselves and inculcate popular conformity to clerical rulings across ethnic and class divisions. The Safavids, with the ʿAmīlīs as their agents, decisively imprinted Persia’s doctrinal precepts and juridical practices and brought about political changes in Persian society that are subject to debate even today.33

With this involvement of Shiʿi scholars in the kingdom’s higher ranks, and with Shiʿism becoming the official religion, major educational establishments were formed and numerous sciences developed during this era. Philosophy and theology especially flourished. Shah Tahmāsp was only ten years old when he succeeded his father.34 After him came Shah ʿAbbās I (1571–1629 CE), considered the greatest of the Safavid monarchs. Prior to his time in power, numerous wars and invasions, particularly by the Ottomans, had occurred.35

Shah ʿAbbās I, or ʿAbbās the Great, was only 16 years old when he ascended the throne in 1588 CE. He reigned for 41 years, dying in the forty-second year of his reign in Mazanderan. Browne describes his contribution to Persian society as follows:

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33 Abisaab, Converting Persia, 9–10.

34 Browne, A Literary History of Persia, vol. 4, 84.

By general agreement, Persia reached the highest degree of power, prosperity and splendour ever attained by her in modern times. His [Shah ʿAbbās I] position at first was, however, fraught with dangers and difficulties. Not only was his kingdom threatened, as usual, by Ottoman Turks on the west and Uzbeks on the east, but also many of the provinces were in revolt.36

Shah ʿAbbās I’s reign was an opportunity for orthodox Shiʿi theologians to contribute and share what doctrine they deemed necessary to define the parameters of a Shiʿi ruler’s authority.37

Shah ʿAbbās I reinstalled and reconstructed the Qizilbash military force, while eliminating the seditions that plagued Shah Tahmāsp’s reign. Shah ʿAbbās I adjusted the ideological beliefs of the Qizilbash. This made them more powerful and in turn fortified the kingdom and authority of Shah ʿAbbās I. In a biography of Shah ʿAbbās I, David Blow writes:

However, there was to be continuing tension between these two forms of Shiʿism, the heterodox Shiʿism of the Qizilbash which was mixed up with their Sufi mysticism as followers of the Safavid Sufi order, and the orthodox Imāmī Shiʿism of a new clerical establishment. It was a tension that was to be finally resolved by Shah ʿAbbās in favour of Imāmī Shiʿism.38

Christian Georgian, Caucasian, Circassian and Armenian slaves (ghilmān, sing. ghulām) were captured during military campaigns and brought forcibly to the court in Qazwin.39 Shah ʿAbbās I recruited them into the army and gave them important positions.40 This process had been started during Shah Tahmāsp’s reign but became a more systematic and conscious practice in the time of Shah ʿAbbās I.41 Shah ʿAbbās I also made a strategic decision to transfer the Safavid ruling capital from Qazwin to Esfahan in 1598.42 These drastic changes and the increasing acceptance of Shiʿi

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36 Browne, A Literary History of Persia, vol. 4, 103.
37 Mitchell, The Practice of Politics in Safavid Iran, 69.
39 Babaie, Baghdiantz-McCabe and Farhad, Slaves of the Shah, 6.
41 Iskandar Baig Munshi, Tārīkh ‘Alam Araye Ṭubbāsī (History of ‘Alam Araye ’Abbāsī), ed. Muḥammad Ismāʿīl Rūdāwānī (Tehran: Dunyāye Kitāb, 1988), 1: 139–40. There are numerous editions of this book, which was first published in 1628.
42 Babaie, Baghdiantz-McCabe and Farhad, Slaves of the Shah, 8.
Islam facilitated the rise of prominent scholars, including Mīr Dāmād. Shi‘i scholars could only have flourished in the way they did due to Safavid rulers’ treatment and embrace of these scholars.

Another important factor, besides the Shi‘i-influenced Safavid legitimacy, was the positive and free environment Shi‘i scholars (‘ulamā’) experienced, which enabled them to establish themselves in the traditional seminaries and be part of the elite socio-political structure of the government.\(^{43}\) This differed from prior periods in that the Safavid rulers were introducing reputable Arab ‘ulamā’ and giving them a high and notable status in society.\(^{44}\)

### 1.1.2 The ‘Ulamā’ and the Restructuring of the State

Twelver Shi‘i educational institutes predominantly thrived in three regions before and during the Safavid dynasty. The first region was Iraq. Here, the capital of the traditional seminary (hawzah) changed its location throughout its history; the most important locations were Ḥillah, Karbalā’ and Najaf. The second region was Bahrain, and the third region was Jabal ‘Amil, the southern region of Lebanon.\(^{45}\) The second Safavid ruler, Shah Tahmāsp, was mainly interested in attracting ‘Amīlī clerics as they were more knowledgeable in areas that would be of assistance to the monarchy.\(^{46}\) Shi‘i scholars migrating to Persia at that time were either fleeing persecution, in particular by the Ottoman Empire, or arriving by invitation. The Safavid rulers had their own motives to keep these ‘ulamā’ close: to gain authoritative legitimacy.\(^{47}\)

Arab Twelver Shi‘i migrants integrated into Persian society. The first major scholar who was extremely influential in the early years of this period was ‘Alī al-Karakī

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\(^{43}\) Abisaab, *Converting Persia*, 10.

\(^{44}\) Ibid., 11.


\(^{47}\) These are the generally accepted motives for this migration among academics. For an article that challenges this general view, see Andrew J. Newman, “The Myth of the Clerical Migration to Safavid Iran: Arab Shiite Opposition to ‘Ali al-Karakī and Safavid Shi‘ism,” *Die Welt des Islams Journal* 33 (1993): 66–112.
(1464–1533 CE). 48 famously known as al-Muḥaqiq al-Thānī (The Second Investigator). 49 Shah Tahmāsp held al-Karakī in high regard, bestowing him with the honorific title Sheikh al-Islām, the highest position in theological and jurisprudential circles. 50 Another reason for the Safavids posting foreigners to high religious ranks was the consideration that these newcomers had had no local political affiliation and would pose little threat despite holding positions of high rank. 51 Nevertheless, as Albert Hourani explains:

Immigrant scholars, however, were appointed to the office of Shaykh al-Islām in major cities, and as preachers in mosques and teachers in schools.

They were therefore in a position to play an important part in the spread of moderate and responsible Shi‘i doctrine and practice among the Persian population. 52

After al-Karakī passed away, Shah Tahmāsp refused to give the Sheikh al-Islām title to anyone unless the person was a mujtahid 53 and from Jabal ‘Amil. 54 This may have been due to the influential status the ‘ulamāʾ of Jabal ‘Amil had always held. They were highly revered and proficient in the sciences (‘ulūm) that would assist the monarchy in both educating and gaining support from the populace. 55 All of these

48 Full name, ‘Ali ibn al-Ḥusain ibn ‘Ali ibn Muḥammad ibn ‘Abd al-ʿAl al-Karakī. He is known as al-Muḥaqiq al-Karakī, or al-Muḥaqiq al-Thānī, born in 868 AH in a small city next to Baʿalbak called Karak Nūḥ, in the Jabal ‘Amil region, Lebanon. His education started in his hometown, after which he pursued his religious education in Egypt to study the four Sunni jurisprudential sects, then to Syria and other cities until he resided in Najaf, Iraq. He was the first jurist from Jabal ‘Amil to accept the invitation of the Safavids. The invitation came from Shah Ismāʿīl, where he was active among the monarchy in teaching and issuing edicts. However, al-Karakī relocated back to Najaf for up to six years, until Shah Tahmāsp requested his return and gave him the position of Shaikh al-Islām. See Albert Hourani, “From Jabal ‘Amil to Persia,” Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies 49, no. 1 (February 1986): 137. See also Abisaab, “The Ulama of Jabal ‘Amil in Safavid Iran,” 103–22. For more recent research on al-Karakī by Rula Jurdi Abisaab, see Rula Jurdi Abisaab, Karaki, http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/karaki.

49 In connection to the renowned jurist Jaʿfar ibn Ḥasan ibn Yahyā ibn Saʿīd al-Hudhali al-Ḥilli (1205–1277), who was known as al-Muḥaqiq, al-Muḥaqiq al-Awwal (The First Investigator) or al-Muḥaqiq al-Ḥilli.

50 The letter written by Shah Tahmāsp appointing al-Karakī as the first Sheikh al-Islām in the Safavid era and granting him religious leadership can be found in ‘Abbās al-Qomī, al-Fawāʾid al-Raḍawiyya fi Aḥwāʾ ‘Ulamāʾ al-Madhhab al-Jaʿfariya, ed. Nāṣir Bāqirī Bīhindī (Qom: Bustān Kitāb, 2007), 305. See also Abisaab, Converting Persia, 8. Shah Tahmāsp even said that al-Karakī was more worthy and befitting to be the leader as he saw al-Karakī as the ‘representative’ of the (Shi‘ī) Imām. See Mirzā Muḥammad Bāqir al-Mūsawī al-Khwānsārī, Rawdāt al-Jannāt (Qom: Intishārāt-e Ismāʿīlīyān, 1970), 4:361.


53 An authority in Islamic jurisprudence competent in deducting Islamic rulings.


55 For an in-depth understanding of the relations between the jurists and the Safavid state, see Rula Jurdi Abisaab, “Moral Authority in the Safavid State,” in The Shi‘i World: Pathways in Tradition and
personalities were directly involved with either Mir Dāmād or his father as teachers, mentors or associates.

Al-Karākī was a well-known Shi‘i jurist whose influence is still felt in jurisprudential studies in Shi‘i seminaries. He formed strong alliances with the Persian nobility. His son, Tāj al-Dīn ‘Abd al-‘Alī (1520–1585 CE), also became a jurist and was well respected by Shah Tahmāsp. ‘Abd al-‘Alī was called the ‘Mujtahid of the Age’ and was less hostile than his father was towards Sunnism, engaging in dialogue and debate with Sunni scholars. Very little is known about al-Karākī’s other son, Ḥasan; we do not know the dates of his birth or death, or even if he was younger or older than ‘Abd al-‘Alī. However, it is known that Ḥasan was a jurist and revered scholar who authored a few books.

To understand why Mir Dāmād became known by the name ‘Dāmād’ (‘son-in-law’), it is necessary to highlight the origin of this honorific title. For various reasons, as explained above, the Safavid dynasty imposed Twelver Shi‘i Islam on Persia. This resulted in a number of distinguished Shi‘i scholars gaining important clerical positions that were also socially and politically significant. Mir Dāmād was the grandson of the most eminent of these scholars, al-Muḥaqiq al-Karākī.

Al-Muḥaqiq al-Karākī had four daughters. The first daughter was married in Lebanon to Sayyid Dīyā’ al-Dīn Abū Turāb Ḥasan ibn Sayyid Shams al-Dīn al-Mūsawī al-Karākī (d. 933 AH), who lived in Qazvin and Ardabil during the Safavid era. Their son was Sayyid Ḥusain (d. 1526 CE), known as Ḥusain al-Mujtahid and Ḥusain al-Muftī.

The second daughter was married to Sayyid Zain al-’Abidīn al-Mūsawī al-Ḥusainī al-ʿAlawī al-Karākī al-Isfahānī, about whom we know little besides his name and status
as a renowned scholar. The same applies to their son Mir Sayyid Aḥmad al-ʿAlawī al-ʿAmili, who was Mir Dāmād’s maternal cousin, his loyal student and son-in-law, devoting numerous works and commentaries to Mir Dāmād’s books and theories.

The third daughter was married to Sayyid Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad al-Ḥusainī al-Astarābādī but passed away shortly after the wedding. Sayyid Muḥammad al-Astarābādī then married al-Karākī’s fourth daughter, who later gave birth to Muḥammad Bāqir (Mir Dāmād).

There are a few important issues related to the above account. The first is that the names and biographies of al-Karākī’s daughters are not mentioned anywhere, except for Mir Dāmād’s mother, whose name is given as Fāṭimah Baygum. A common and incorrect attribution is that her name was Um al-Baqāʾ, who is in fact Mir Dāmād’s daughter and the wife of Sayyid Aḥmad al-ʿAlawī. Further, while most writers affirm that al-Karākī had four daughters, and that the sequence of marriage was as given above, contemporary historian Râṣūl Jaʿfariyān asserts that there were five daughters.

62 Mir Sayyid Aḥmad al-ʿAlawī, Sharḥ al-Qabasāt (A Commentary on al-Qabasāt), ed. Ḥāmid Nājī Esfahānī (Tehran: Institute of Islamic Studies, University of Tehran, 1997), 60.
64 There is a famous narrated story about this marriage, in which al-Muḥaqiq al-Karākī has a dream about the first Shiʿī Imām, ʿAlī. In the dream, the Imām ʿAlī says to him, ‘Marry your daughter to Mir Shams al-Dīn, and she will bear a child who will become the heir of the prophets and their successors’. Al-Karākī did according to this request and married his daughter to Sayyid Muḥammad al-Astarābādī, but she passed away shortly after and did not have any children. Al-Karākī was surprised that the dream was not fulfilled, but later he had another dream in which the Imām ʿAlī mentioned him by name and told him that he had been referring to al-Karākī’s other daughter. So al-Karākī gave his fourth and last daughter in marriage to Sayyid Muḥammad al-Astarābādī, and she bore a child whose name was Muḥammad Bāqir al-Astarābādī, otherwise known as Mir Dāmād (Muḥammad al-Kashmirī, Suʿūd al-Samāʾ fī Tarājīm al-ʿUlamāʾ [Stars of the Sky in the Biographies of Scholars], ed. Hāshim Muḥaddith (Tehran: Sherkat Chāp wa Nashr Bayān al-Mīlāh, 2008), 49–50). See also Sayyid Muḥammad Khamenei, Mir Dāmād (Tehran: The Ṣadra Islamic Philosophy Institute, 2005), 4.
66 Mīrzā ʿAbdullāh al-ʿAfdānī al-Esfahānī, Riʿyād al-ʿUlamāʾ wa Ḥiyād al-Fudūlāʾ, 5: 42. See also Jūyā Jahānbaḵsh, Muʿāllim Thālith (The Third Master) (Tehran: Intishārāt-e Asāʿīr, 2010), 19.
67 This reference was made by Rāʿūf Ṣabhānī in al-Fikr al-Faṣaṣīʿ ʿinda al-Mīr Dāmād al-Astarābādī, 85. I traced the quoted reference and did not find any mention of the name in the original sources. However, in volume 1 of Muṣannafāt Mir Dāmād, Mir Dāmād wrote a testament leaving an inheritance for Um al-Baqāʾ, in which he referred to her as his daughter. See Mir Dāmād, Muṣannafāt Mir Dāmād, ed. ʿAbdullāh Nūrānī (Tehran: University of Tehran, 2003), 1: 638.
69 Rāṣūl Jaʿfariyān, “Dar Amadi bar Mushārakat ʿUlamāʾ dar Sākhtār-e Dawlat-e Ṣafawī: Taʿāmul Khāndān-e Karākī wa Dawlat-e Ṣafavī” (“An Introduction to the Contribution of Scholars to the...
Sayyid Muḥammad al-Astarābādī thus married into a very distinguished family; his bride was the daughter of al-Karakī, the highest-ranking scholar of the time. For this reason, he was given the honorific title Dāmād, Persian for ‘son-in-law’. His son, Mīr Muḥammad Bāqīr, inherited this title after him, thus becoming known as Mīr Dāmād. (Note that the view that Mīr Muḥammad Bāqīr was called Mīr Dāmād because he was the direct son-in-law of al-Karakī or Shah Abbas I is incorrect.)

1.2 The Early Years of Mīr Dāmād

1.2.1 His Name and Honorific Titles

This section details Mīr Dāmād’s early life and important points relevant to this study, using the primary sources of historiographies and biographical encyclopaedias written during or close to the era of Mīr Dāmād:

- **Khulāsah al-Siyar: Tāriḵ Rūzegār Shāh Šafī Șafa’vī** by Muḥammad Ma’sūm Khwājaḡi Esfahānī, completed in 1052 AH.


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70 ‘Mīr’ is an honorific title that is used as a synonym for ‘Sayyid’, which means ‘descendant of the Prophet Muḥammad’. It is also said to be derived from the Arabic title ‘Amīr’, which means prince, master, or commander. One of Mīr Dāmād’s students, who wrote an extensive biography about him, is Muḥammad ibn ‘Alī ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhāb Ishkuvari, known as Qutb al-Dīn, about whom we have no information regarding his date of birth or death, other than that he lived in the eleventh century AH. He is the author of the famous book *Maḥbūb al-Qulūb* (The Beloved by the Hearts), which can be considered a book on the history of philosophy. (The first parts of it have been published by Mīrāth-e Maktūb, edited by Ḥāmid Șīdqi and Ibrāhīm Dālbsī [Tehran, 1378–1382 SY].) The portion about Mīr Dāmād has been published in the introduction of Mehdi Mohaghegh’s edition of *Kitāb al-Qabasāt*. Here, Qutb al-Dīn gives Mīr Dāmād’s name as “Amīr Muḥammad Bāqīr al-Dāmād” (Introduction, 31).

71 This was the view taken by Seyyed Hossein Nasr in *Ṣadr al-Dīn Shirāzī and His Transcendent Theosophy, Background, Life and Works*, 2nd ed. (Tehran: Institute for Humanities and Cultural Studies, 1997), 26. It has also been mentioned in other works, for example, Jean Calmard, “Popular Literature Under the Safavids,” in *Society and Culture in the Early Modern Middle East: Studies on Iran in the Safavid Period*, ed. Andrew J. Newman (Leiden: Brill, 2003), 334.

72 This view is explained and refuted by ‘Alī Awjābi, *Mīr Dāmād; Bunyānguzār Ḥikmat Yamānī (Mīr Dāmād; Founder of the Yamānī Philosophy)* (Tehran: Sāḥat Publications, 2003), 33, fn. 1. Hamid Dabashi also considers these two views to be incorrect: Dabashi, “Mīr Dāmād and the Founding of the ‘School of Șīfahān’,” 603.
• *Tārikh ‘Alam Araye ‘Abbāsī* by Iskandar Baig Munshi Turkamān (968/1560-1043/1634 AH/CE), regarded as a comprehensive source for early Safavi Iran, with detailed accounts of religious scholars (including Mīr Dāmād).

• *Khulāṣat al-Ash’ār wa Zubdah al-Afkār* by Mīr Taqī al-Dīn Ḥusainī Kāshānī (alive in 1016 AH), an important reference and considered to be the most extensive Persian biographical dictionary (*tadhkira*).

• *Maḥbūb al-Qulūb* by Qutb al-Dīn al-Isḥuwarī (d. 1090/1679 AH/CE), a very important biographical dictionary by one of Mīr Dāmād’s students.

His birth name was Muḥammad Bāqir al-Ḥusainī. Later, he was also known as Mīr Dāmād,73 al-Sayyid al-Dāmād,74 Burhān al-Dīn (The Evidence of Religion),75 al-Ishrāq,76 Uṣūd al-Bashar (The Teacher of Mankind),77 Sayyid al-Afādīl (The Master of Eminent Scholars)78 and al-Mu’allim al-Thālith (The Third Master, after Aristotle [the First Master] and al-Farābī [the Second Master]). It is worth noting that Mīr Dāmād himself referred to Aristotle as the First Master79 and to al-Farābī as his partner-in-teaching or the Partner Master [al-sharīk al-mu’allim].80 At times, Sayyid Aḥmad al-‘Alawī referred to Mīr Dāmād as the First Master.81

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76 This is the pen name he was known in Safavid times (see Keven Brown’s introduction to his translation of *Kitāb al-Qabāsāt*, xiii). Hamid Dabashi also mentions this in his article “Mīr Dāmād and the Founding of the ‘School of Iṣfahān,’” 602. It is also the name of his Divan, *Diwān Iṣhrāq* (Mīr Dāmād, *Diwān Iṣhrāq*, ed. Samīrā Pustīndūz, with an introduction by Jūyā Jahānbakhsh [Tehran: Mīrāth-e Maktūb, 2006]).


78 There are numerous examples of this throughout *Kitāb al-Qabāsāt*. Mīr Dāmād also refers to him as ‘The Teacher of Peripatetics’, ‘The Teacher of Greek Peripatetics’, ‘The Teacher of the Discipline (of philosophy)’ and so forth.

79 Examples for this can be seen in *Kitāb al-Qabāsāt*, 27, 30, 72, 77, 191. He also refers to Avicenna as ‘My Companion in Leadership’.

1.2.2 The Date and Place of Mir Dāmād’s Birth

Most historical and biographical works do not mention Mir Dāmād’s date of birth; ‘Alī Behbahānī states that no accurate information exists for this.82 Most primary references state that he was born in the Lunar year 969 (1561 or 1562 CE).83 Another view mentioned in Ṭabaqāt A’lām al-Shi‘a (Categories of Shi‘a Scholars) is that he was born in the year 970 AH.84 Other dates have been given without citing the origins of this information.85

Similarly, there is no accurate information regarding Mir Dāmād’s place of birth and early childhood. His father was born in Astarābād,86 now the city of Gorgān in modern-day Iran,87 hence his father’s title ‘al-Astarābādī’ (Sayyid Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad al-Ḥusainī al-Astarābādī).88 Though Mir Dāmād never referred to himself by the title al-Astarābādī,89 he has been referred to as such by biographers and later authors.90 This could be due to his ancestors originating from Astarābād. He has also been referred to as al-Astarābādī, though there is no evidence that he was born in Astarābād. Sayyid Muḥammad Dāmād (Mir Dāmād’s father) was the son-in-law of al-Karākī and held an important political position, and so where he lived should have been recorded, but no documentation exists of him being in Astarābād (either during his holding of this position or the time of his son’s birth). Astarābād was significant in producing numerous prominent Shi‘a scholars, like Mullā Muḥammad Amīn al-Astarābādī (d. 1036/1626–7 AH/CE), the founder of the jurisprudential Akhbārī School, and the great esoteric thinker Fadhlullah Astarābādī.

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84 Ḥāghā Buzurg al-Ṭehrānī, Ṭabaqāt A’lām al-Shi‘ih, 8: 67.
85 Hamid Dabashi quotes Mir Dāmād’s date of birth as the year 950/1543 AH/CE. See Dabashi, “Mir Dāmād and the Founding of the School of Ṣaḥafī,” 597.
86 Astarābād, or Estarābād, lies at the south-eastern corner of the Caspian Sea.
87 Gorgān is the capital city of the province of Golestān, which is approximately 400 km northeast of Tehran.
88 Mīr Taqi al-Dīn Ḥusainī Kāshānī, Khalūsāt al-Asḥār, 246.
89 Sayyid Muḥammad Khamenei, Mīr Dāmād, 3, fn. 1.
90 An example of this is Behbahānī’s book Ḥakīm Astarābād, which is the most famous book written about Mir Dāmād.
91 Muḥammad Riḍā Dūstī Dāyalāmī, a researcher local to the region of Gorgān, has argued that Mir Dāmād’s birthplace is Astarābād, citing that in Mir Dāmād’s Sharḥ al-Ṣaḥīḥat al-Sajjādiya, 13, reference is made to Mir Dāmād as ‘Sayyid Ḥusainī by lineage, Astarābādī by origin, Esfahānī by residence’. However, this reference was stated by the researcher of the book, not Mir Dāmād himself. See Muhammad Riḍā Dūstī Dāyalāmī, Do Ḥakīm Astarābād, Mīr Fīndirīkī wa Mīr Dāmād (Two Philosophers of Astarābād, Mīr Fīndirīkī wa Mīr Dāmād) (Two Philosophers of Astarābād, Mīr Fīndirīkī wa Mīr Dāmād), 2nd ed. (Gorgān: Nashr Payk Rayḥān Gorgān, 2012), 40.
It is likely that scholars added the title ‘al-Astarābādī’ to Mīr Dāmād’s name due to the significance of this city. Mirzā ‘Abdullah al-Afandī al-Esfahānī (1656–1718 CE) states the following in his famous hagiography on Mīr Dāmād:

It is apparent in some places that his (may his soul be sanctified) entered Mashhad al-Riḍā, upon whom be peace, was before the early stages of his adulthood (bulūgh), and he himself has also specifically mentioned this in some of his books.

Therefore, Mīr Dāmād’s birthplace cannot be verified, but his early childhood and the commencement of his journey in the traditional Islamic seminary both occurred in Mashhad.

1.2.3 The Early Stages of Mīr Dāmād’s Studies: Mashhad, Qazwin and Kashan

The city of Mashhad is the capital of Khorasan province, in Iran’s northeast, close to the borders of Afghanistan and Turkmenistan. It is also an important city for Shi‘i Muslims, being home to the shrine of the Eighth Shi‘i Imām, ‘Alī al-Riḍā (148/765–203/818 AH/CE). It was also a centre for the Islamic sciences, where students from surrounding cities would attend seminary studies. Mīr Dāmād received his initial education in Mashhad. There was social and family pressure from both sides of his family; both his mother and father came from scholarly families and expected Mīr Dāmād to pursue a strict program in religious studies.

Mīr Dāmād engaged in a traditional classical education. After finishing his preliminary studies in Arabic literature and logic, he began studying the numerous sciences common at that time, such as the Qur’an, hadith, jurisprudence, principles of jurisprudence and philosophy. He also studied mathematics, astronomy and other sciences under the guidance of great scholars and experts of his time.

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92 On Faḍlullāh Astarābādī, especially his important role in synthesising the ancient stock of cosmogonical, cosmological and anthropological ideas with gnostic and hermetic elements in Islamic philosophy, see Orkhan Mīr-Kasimov, “Esoteric Messianic Currents of Islamic East Between Sufism and Shi‘ism (7th/13th–9th/15th Centuries),” in L’Esoterisme Shi‘ite, Ses Racines Et Ses Prolongements: Shi‘i Esoterism: Its Roots and Developments, ed. Mohammad Ali Amir-Moezzi, Maria De Cillis, Daniel De Smet and Orkhan Mir-Casimov (Tumhout: Brepols Publishers, 2016), 643–64.


94 Dabashi, “Mīr Dāmād and the Founding of the ‘School of Isfahān’,” 603.

95 Behbahānī, Ḥakīm Astarābād: Mīr Dāmād, 46.

96 Sayyid Muḥammad Khārnī, Mīr Dāmād (Tehran: Bunyād Ḥekmat Islāmī Șadrā, 2005), 7.
Mīr Dāmād commenced his learning of philosophy at a relatively young age, studying the main philosophical works of Avicenna, such as *al-Ishārāt* (Remarks) and *al-Shifāʾ* (The Healing),⁹⁷ along with the commentaries related to them.⁹⁸ He also wrote some of his own works during this time.⁹⁹ Only brief accounts exist of this stage in Mīr Dāmād’s life, but he is noted as having an acute intelligence and excelling in his studies.¹⁰⁰ One of Mīr Dāmād’s contemporaries, Mīr Taqī al-Dīn Ḥusainī Kāshānī (1549–1607 CE), details this stage in Mīr Dāmād’s life:

He lived for years in the sacred city of Mashhad al-Raḍawiyah (peace be upon him who is buried there), where he was busy studying science. He studied most of the rational and traditional [transmitted] sciences that were expected, and in a short period of time he entered the arena of researching *al-Ishārāt* and *al-Shifāʾ*. He excelled over those in his level in explaining the problems in the treatises, and in mathematical and philosophical concepts. Even though he was young, the mastery he attained in different sciences in philosophy and mathematics reached such a level that he wrote treatises and glossaries in these fields.¹⁰¹

Similarly, Iskandar Baig, another of Mīr Dāmād’s contemporaries, states:

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⁹⁷ As can be seen in Mīr Dāmād’s works, he was very familiar with Avicenna’s books and makes frequent references to them, even in his non-philosophical books like his commentary on *al-Ṣahifat al-Sajjādiya*. See, e.g., Mīr Dāmād, *Sharḥ al-Ṣahifat al-Sajjādiya*, 340. There are also numerous examples that show how books like *al-Shifāʾ* were a central focus of his study circles and that he taught Avicenna’s books. For example, in Mīr Dāmād’s *ijāzah* to his student and son-in-law Sayyid Aḥmad al-ʿAlawi, he mentions the books al-ʿAlawi had studied under him, including parts of *al-Shifāʾ* and *al-Ishārāt*. See Mīr Dāmād, *Muṣannafat Mīr Dāmād*, 1:582. There is also a mention of Mīr Dāmād having a *ḥāshiya* on the physics of *al-Shifāʾ*, which he used to as a text to teach. See Mirza ʿAbdullāh Afandi al-Eṣfahānī, *Riyāḍ al-Ulamāʾ*, 5:44. See also Ḥusain Najafi, *Awraq Parākande az Muṣannafat Mīr Dāmād*, 42. In addition to having taught *al-Shifāʾ*, Mīr Dāmād is also known to have taught his own philosophical textbooks such as *al-Ufuq al-Mubīn* and others. See Mīr Dāmād, *Nibrās al-Diyāʾ wa Tiswāʾ al-Sawāʾ fi Sharḥ Bāb al-Bidāʾ wa Ithbāt Jadwā al-Duʿāʾ*, with commentaries of Mullā ʿAlī al-Nūrī, ed. Ḥāmid Nājī Eṣfahānī (Tehran: Mīrāth-e Maktūb, 1995), introduction, 93. In two of Mīr Dāmād’s *ijāzahs* to his student Sayyid Aḥmad al-ʿAlawi, he mentions that al-ʿAlawi attended Mīr Dāmād’s lessons on the books of Avicenna and mastered them. See Muḥammad Bāqir al-Majlisī, *Bihār al-Anwār* (Beirut: Dār ʿIlyāʾ al-Turāth al-ʿArabī, 1983), 106: 152–56.


⁹⁹ Awjābī, *Mīr Dāmād; Bunyanguzār Ḥikmat Yamānī*, 34.


At a young age he [Mir Dəməd] was in the sacred city of Mashhad, in the service of teachers and notable scholars, where he learned sciences from their works, and in a short time he made great progress.102

After finishing his studies in Mashhad, Mir Dəməd travelled to Qazvin,103 where he joined the circle of Shah Abbas I, then head of the Safavid monarchy. Here, Mir Dəməd continued his studies, research and teaching. He moved to Kashan in 1016 AH, remaining in that city for some time.104 The numerous character references or religious consent letters (ijāzāt, sing. ijāzah)105 written by his teachers—the equivalent of graduation certificates—indicate that before the age of 25,106 Mir Dəməd had become an expert in Ijtihād.107 Mir Dəməd then moved to Esfahan, where he lived for the rest of his life, engaged in writing, teaching and conducting his religious and social responsibilities.

1.2.4 Mir Dəməd’s Migration to Esfahan

Prior to Shah Abbas I coming to power, there were frequent upheavals and prolonged political instability. The first Safavid ruler was Shah Ismail I, followed by Shah Tahmāsp (reigned 1524–1576 CE).108 His son, Shah Ismail II (1537–1577 CE), reigned for only one year (1576–1577 CE) before his passing away and was succeeded by Shah Tahmāsp’s other son, Shah or Sultan Mohammad Khodâbanda (1532–1596 CE), who reigned from 1578 to 1587 CE. Shah Abbas the Great or Shah Abbas I (1571–1629 CE) was the fifth Safavid Shah. He came to power at the age of 16 and his reign was relatively lengthy (1588–1629 CE).109 As previously

104 Ibid.
105 Muḥammad Riḍā Dūstī Dāylamī, Do Ḥakīm Astarābādī, Mir Findiriski wa Mir Dəməd, 45. These ijāzāt were very important for students of the seminary, as it was evidence of being endorsed by the teacher and specifying their scientific degree. As will be mentioned, some of these ijāzāt given to Mir Dəməd were added by al-Majlisi in the chapter of ijāzāt in Bihār al-Anwār. See al-Majlisi, Bihār al-Anwār, 106: 84–87. Khāmene‘t has quoted most of these ijāzāt in his book Mir Dəməd.106
107 A Muḥtahid is a scholar who has arrived at the stage of being able to deduce Islamic laws and verdicts independently. This was a notable achievement for a Persian during this era of the Safavid dynasty (Babaie, Baghdiantz and Farhad, Slaves of the Shah, 47).
mentioned, among his many significant reforms was the moving of the Safavid capital from Qazwin to Esfahan in 1598 CE.\(^{110}\) David Blow, an expert in Persian history, succinctly describes the distinguished status of Shah Abbas I:

Abbas’s achievements fully justify the epithet of ‘the Great’, which has been popularly attached to his name in Iran. He is indeed the only ruler from the Islamic period in Iran to have been so designated. It puts him in the company of Cyrus the Great, the founder of the first Iranian Empire in the sixth Century BCE, which is a reminder that Iran existed as a major civilisation for some twelve hundred years before it was conquered and converted to Islam by the invading Arabs in the mid-seventh century AD. Other great rulers were Abbas’s contemporaries: the Moghul Emperor Akbar, Queen Elizabeth I of England, Henry IV of France and Philip II of Spain. Abbas more than measures up to all of them.\(^ {111}\)

Esfahan reached its peak during the reign of Shah Abbas I, being the capital and the most revered destination for Islamic studies. Numerous seminaries and schools were built or revived in Esfahan during the reigns of Shah Tahmāsp and Shah Abbas I.\(^ {112}\) Shah Abbas I was in power when Mir Dāmād migrated to Esfahan,\(^ {113}\) and Mir Dāmād enjoyed a strong and close relationship with the Shah and his administration.\(^ {114}\) This encouraged other scholars to move to Esfahan, in particular, Mir Dāmād’s\(^ {115}\) contemporaries Sheikh al-Bahā’ī (1546–1621 CE)\(^ {116}\) and Mir

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\(^ {111}\) Blow, *Shah Abbas*, xi.


\(^ {113}\) Sayyid Muhammad Khāmene’ī recounts that Mir Dāmād moved to Esfahan in the year 1597 (1006 AH), which was close to when the Safavid capital was relocated to this city (Sayyid Muhammad Khāmene’ī, *Mīr Dāmād*, 12, including fn. 1).


\(^ {115}\) An interesting story relating the three can be found in Dabashi, “Mīr Dāmād and the Founding of the ‘School of Iṣfahān’,” 605–6.

\(^ {116}\) Full name, Bahā’-al-Dīn Muḥammad ibn Ḥusain al-ʿAmīlī, famously known as Sheikh al-Bahā’ī. He was born in Baʿalbak, Lebanon, and, while very young, migrated to Persia with his father Sheikh ʿIz al-Dīn Ḥusain ibn ʿAbd al-Ṣamad al-ʿAmīlī (d. 1576). Sheikh Ḥusain al-ʿAmīlī was among the greatest of scholars who migrated from Lebanon and one of Mir Dāmād’s most influential teachers. Sheikh al-Bahā’ī was an expert in many sciences, including Islamic law, mathematics and astronomy. Shah Abbas appointed him as Sheikh al-Islām in 1597, and he resigned in 1606 (Blow, *Shah Abbas*, 189–90). For a detailed account of Sheikh al-Bahā’ī and his ideas and works, see Muhammad Kazem Rahmati, ed. *At the Nexus of Traditions in Safavid Iran: The Career and Thought of Sheikh Bahā’-al-Dīn*
Findireskî (1562–1640 CE).\textsuperscript{117} A famous anecdote describes the status of Mir Dâmâd and his relationship with Sheikh al-Bahâ‘î when they were part of Shah Abbas I’s entourage:

In order to test them, the Shah points out to each the clumsy riding of the other, caused by the tremendous weight of Mir Dâmâd on the one hand and the slight frame of Sheikh al-Bahâ‘î on the other. Rather than chiming in with the mean-spirited criticisms, each scholar defends his peer to the Shah, Sheikh al-Bahâ‘î claiming that the plodding of Mir Dâmâd’s horse was due to his tremendous learning, and Mir Dâmâd suggesting that the flightiness of Sheikh al-Bahâ‘î’s mount was due to its joy at carrying such a distinguished rider. The reaction of the two is surprising, and Shah Abbas was particularly pleased, taking time to thank the Lord for blessing his realm with such unusually wise and pleasant learned men.\textsuperscript{118}

In this environment, energised by the presence of Mir Dâmâd, a new era for Islamic rational sciences (‘ulûm ‘aqliyah)—as opposed to transmitted sciences (‘ulûm naqîliyah, including hadîth studies)—blossomed. These rational sciences became known as the School of Esfahan,\textsuperscript{119} which will be discussed later in this chapter. Mir Dâmâd attained a high status in the scholarly circles of Esfahan and excelled in many sciences. He was extremely intelligent and endowed with a strong memory.\textsuperscript{120} With the spread of Mir Dâmâd’s philosophical ideas, students from many places\textsuperscript{121}

\textsuperscript{117} Full name, Sayyid Mir Abû al-Qâsim Astarâbâdî. He was a renowned philosopher, poet and mystic who was close to Mir Dâmâd and influential in the formation of the School of Esfahan. His life and works are detailed in Husain Kalbâsî Ashtari, Mir Hikmat (Tehran: Intishârât-e Farhangistân-e Honar, 2008); Muhammad Riđâ Dûstâ Daylamî, Do Ḥakîm Astarâbâdî, Mir Fîndiriskî wa Mir Dâmâd; Muhammad Ra’dâ Zâdûsh, Ahwâl wa Athâr-e Mir Fîndiriskî (Qom: Mu’assas-e Kitâbsenâsî Shi’îh, 2012). He is also briefly covered in Henry Corbin, History of Islamic Philosophy, trans. Liadain Sherrard (London: Kegan Paul International, 1993), 340–42.


\textsuperscript{119} Dabashi, "Mir Dâmâd and the Founding of the 'School of Isfahân'," 597.

\textsuperscript{120} Iskandar Baig Munshi, Ṭârîkh 'Alam Araye 'Abbâsî, 1: 233.

\textsuperscript{121} One example is Mir Dâmâd’s outstanding student Mullâ Şadrâ, who left his hometown of Shiraz to pursue his education in rational sciences, especially in philosophy. See Nasr, Şadr al-Dîn Shirâzî and His Transcendent Theosophy, Background, Life and Works, 32.
gathered around him to benefit from the wealth of his knowledge in different sciences, but especially in Islamic philosophy.\(^{122}\)

1.2.5 The Teachers, Students and Colleagues of Mir Dāmād

Numerous distinguished scholars lived during the time of Mir Dāmād, and many were associated with him as his teachers, colleagues or students. His notable teachers include 'Abd al-'Alī ibn 'Ali ibn 'Abd al-'Alī al-Karāki al-'Amīlī (1520–1585 CE),\(^{123}\) Izz al-Dīn Ḥusain ibn 'Abd al-Ṣamad al-'Amīlī (1512–1576 CE)\(^{124}\) and Sayyid Nūr al-Dīn 'Alī al-Mūsawī al-'Amīlī.\(^{125}\) These scholars of Jabal 'Amil strongly influenced Mir Dāmād's jurisprudential work, to the point that some described him as the heir of Lebanon's jurisprudential school.\(^{126}\) Mir Dāmād's studies progressed quickly under the auspices of such jurists and scholars; he soon assumed the status of a judge and became the official Imām for Friday prayers.\(^{127}\)

Mir Fakhr al-Dīn Muḥammad al-Ḥusainī al-Sammākī\(^{128}\) al-Astarabādī (d. 984 AH) is reported to have mentored Mir Dāmād in the rational sciences,\(^{129}\) though the lack of information regarding certain details of his life has led some authors to question whether he was Mir Dāmād teacher (although all accept that he heavily influenced Mir Dāmād).\(^{130}\) Mir Fakhr al-Dīn al-Sammākī was a student of Amīr Ghiyāth al-Dīn

\(^{122}\) Awjābi, Mīr Dāmād; Bunyanguzūr Hikmat Yamānī, 37. Mīr Dāmād and his contemporaries chose the word hikmah (rather than philosophy), which can be translated as 'wisdom' or 'theosophy'.

\(^{123}\) Sheikh 'Abd al-'Alī was al-Karāki's son, which means he was Mir Dāmād's maternal uncle. He was known as Mir Dāmād's teacher in transmitted sciences ('ulūm manqūl) and gave Mir Dāmād a letter of authority to narrate traditions on his behalf (jāzat al-riwaya). This can be found in Muhammad Bāqīr al-Majlisī, Biḥār al-Anwār li ādur Akhbar al-A'īmāh al-Aṯār (Oceans of Lights in the Pearls of the Narrations of the Pure Imams), 2nd ed. (Betūr: Mu' assasat Mu' assasat al-Wafā', 1983), 106: 84–86.

\(^{124}\) Sheikh Bāḥā'ī's father, and the student of Sheikh Zayn al-Dīn al-'Amīlī (1506–1559) who was famously known as al-Shahīd al-Thānī (The Second Martyr). A copy of his ijāzah (an authorisation letter to narrate traditions within a chain tracing back to the Imāms) can be found in al-Majlisī, Biḥār al-Anwār, 106: 87. Ḥusain ibn 'Abd al-Ṣamad al-'Amīlī was one of the main teachers of Mir Dāmād in naqīl sciences, especially jurisprudence. For an in-depth exploration of Ḥusain ibn 'Abd al-Ṣamad al-'Amīlī's life and the background of his migration from Jabal 'Amil to Safavid Persia, see Devin J. Stewart. "An Episode in the 'Amili Migration to Safavid Iran: Husayn b. 'Abd al-Ṣamad al-'Amilī's Travel Account," in Iranian Studies 39, no. 4 (December 2006): 481–508.

\(^{125}\) Sayyid Nūr al-Dīn was alive until around the year 1591. He was also a student of al-Shahīd al-Thānī.

\(^{126}\) Sayyid Muḥammad Khāmene'i, Mīr Dāmād, 12.

\(^{127}\) Ibid.

\(^{128}\) Sammākī was the name of an area in the city of Astarabād.

\(^{129}\) Ishkandar Baig Munshi, Tārikh 'Alam Araya 'Abbāsī, 1: 146. See also Ḥusain Najafī, Avrāq Parākande az Musanfīfāt Mīr Dāmād, 215–16. Here, Najafī gives details of Mir Dāmād referencing his "teacher" al-Sammākī while Mir Dāmād was studying al-Shīfā' under him.

\(^{130}\) See Behbahānī, Ḥakim Astarabād: Mīr Dāmād, 49. Unfortunately, little has been written on al-Sammākī except for a detailed paper on the social status and philosophical importance of al-Sammākī: Tāhirah Sādāt Mūsawī, Mehdi Najafī Afrā and Maqṣūd Muḥammadī, "Jaāgāh wa Zamān-e
Maṃṣūr al-Dashtakī al-Shirāzī (1461–1542 CE), from the School of Shiraz. This fact is significant, connecting Mir Dāmād to al-Dashtakī and the philosophical ideas of the School of Shiraz. It is said that the Shah of that time would attend al-Sammākī’s study circles, and he also wrote a hāshiyah (unpublished) on the metaphysics section of al-Tajrīd, dedicating this to Shah Tamhāsp. Note, as highlighted by Ashtiyānī, Mir Dāmād studied under Mir Fakhr al-Dīn al-Sammākī for only a short time as Mir Dāmād had already become a philosopher and mastered all the existing sciences at a very young age. Besides Mir Fakhr al-Dīn al-Sammākī, no reference has been made to who else taught Mir Dāmād about the rational sciences and, in particular, philosophy. Tracing the development of ideas back to one’s teacher is very important in the traditional methodology of learning and the paucity of information in this regard is an enduring hurdle for research into the scholarly life and ideas of Mir Dāmād. The most important personalities among his contemporaries—Sheikh Bahāʾī and Mir Findireskī—have already been mentioned.

Mir Dāmād devoted much time to teaching not only the traditional texts in circulation in the seminars of that time but also to teaching from his own books. He had many students, the most famous being Muḥammad ibn Ibrāhīm Ẓadr al-Dīn al-Shirāzī, known as Mullā Ẓadrā (1571–1640/41 CE), and Sayyid Ahmad al-ʿAlawī. Mir Dāmād was renowned for the intellectual nurturing of his students,

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131 Iskandar Baig Munshī, Tāriḵ ‘Alam Araye ‘Abbāsī, 1: 146. See also John Cooper, “From al-Tūsī to the School of Isfahān,” in History of Islamic Philosophy, vol. 1, ed. Seyyed Hossein Nasr and Oliver Leaman (Tehran: Mu’assasa-ye Farhangī-ye Arāye, 2001), 593.


133 Iskandar Baig Munshī, Tāriḵ ‘Alam Araye ‘Abbāsī, 1: 146.


136 Jūyā Jahānbakhsh, Muʾālim Thālith, 38 (particularly fn. 2).

137 Dabashi, “Mir Dāmād and the Founding of the ‘School of Isfahān’,” 606. See fn. 116 and 117 in this thesis chapter.

138 Mir Dāmād, Nibrās al-ˇDiyāʾ wa Tiswāʾ al-Sawāʾ fi Sharḥ Bāb al-Bidāʾ wa Ithbāt Jadwāʾ al-Duʿāʾ, introduction, 93.

139 Seyyed Hossein Nasr has written extensively on Mullā Ẓadrā, the most important of his works being Ẓadr al-Dīn Shirāzī and his Transcendent Theosophy, Background, Life and Works. See also Fazlur Rahman, The Philosophy of Mullā Shārīzi (New York: State University of New York Press, 1975).

140 ‘Alī Behbahānī lists 20 renowned students (Behbahānī, Ḥakīm Astarābād: Mir Dāmād, 53–54). Jūyā Jahānbakhsh lists 24 students and gives more detail about most of them and their scientific contributions (Jūyā Jahānbakhsh, Muʾālim Thālith, 45–49). Of course, Mir Dāmād had a special relationship with his student and son-in-law Sayyid Ahmad al-ʿAlawī, respecting him highly and
and they saw him as not only a teacher but also a mentor and spiritual master. Aghā ‘Alī Mudarris Țehrānī (1234/1819–1307/1890 AH/CE), an important Islamic philosopher of a later era, mentions that Mīr Dāmād was responsible for producing up to 300 students who had reached the level of ījtihād.141 Other distinguished students of Mīr Dāmād include Qutb al-Dīn al-Ishkuwārī (d. 1090/1679 AH/CE), the author of the biographical dictionary Maḥbūb al-Qulūb;142 Mullā ʿAbdul-ghaﬀār Gilānī (?); 143 Mullā Shamsā Gilānī (d. 1041/1654 CE); ‘Alī Naqī Kamareh’ī (953/1546–1030/1621 AH/CE);144 ʿAdel ibn Murād Ardestānī (alive in the year 1010 AH), who dictated some of Mīr Dāmād’s books (including al-Rawāshiḥ al-Samāwiyyah);145 and Sayyid ʿUsain ibn Muḥammad ʿUsainī Amuli (d. 1064 AH),146 among others.147 Of course, many were strongly influenced by Mīr Dāmād despite not being his immediate students. The more enduring effects of Mīr Dāmād’s work, including his influence on Islamic philosophical discourse in India,148 will be discussed in Chapter 5.

141 See Aghā ʿAlī Mudarris Țehrānī, “Tabaqât Ḥukamā’ Muta’khirīn,” ed. Sayyid Ibrāhīm Ashk-shirīn, in jashn name-ye Doctor Muḥsin Jahāngīrī, ed. Muḥammad Ra’iszāde, Fāṭimah Mīnāt and Sayyid Ahmad Ḥāshemi (Tehran: Hermes, 1386 SY), 44. See also Jūyā Jahānbakhsh, Mu’āllim Thālīth, 45. The term ījtihād in the Shi‘ī jurisprudential context is when a scholar reaches a level of knowledge in religious sources where they become qualified to independently deduce jurisprudential laws and verdicts.


143 Not to be confused with Mullā ʿAbdul-ghaﬀār Kashānī (born 1005 AH), the younger brother of Mullā Muḥsin Fayd Kashānī. It has been mentioned that ʿAbdul-ghaﬀār was a student of Mīr Dāmād; see, e.g., Jūyā Jahānbakhsh in Mu’āllim Thālīth, 48, which gives the reference of Muṣṭafā Faydī Kashānī, Fā’izeh Faydī Kashānī and Firuzeh Faydī Kashānī, eds., Kulliyāt ‘Allāme Mullā Muḥammad Muḥsin Fayd Kashānī (Tehran: Usweh, 1381 SY), 1:16. However, this cannot be accurately confirmed in the majority of sources.

144 Not much is known about ʿAlī Naqī Kamareh’ī. He was a poet, a judge in Shiraz and also had the position of Sheikh al-Islām in Esfahan. For an account of his life and works, see Rasūl Ja’fariyān, “Andīsīhēyā yeḵ ‘Alīm Shīr dar Dawlāt-e Ṣafawī: Ayatullah ‘Alī Naqī Kamareh’ī,” Ḩukūmat-e Islāmī 2, no. 3 (Autumn 1997): 108–40. As for his dates of birth and death, these would mean that he lived for over 100 years. See Rasūl Ja’fariyān, ed., Mīrāṯ-e Islāmī Iran (Qom: Ayatullah Mar’ashi Najafi Library, 1373 SY), 6: 399. Towards the end of this section (p. 429), Ja’fariyān quotes the ījāzah of Mīr Dāmād granted to Kamareh’ī.

145 See Behbahānī, Ḥakīm Astarābād: Mīr Dāmād, 53.

146 He was given the title and was known as Soltān al-ʿUlamā’, and was also the son-in-law of Shah Abbas I. See Jūyā Jahānbakhsh, Mu’āllim Thālīth, 45.

147 For a list of Mīr Dāmād’s known students, see Behbahānī, Ḥakīm Astarābād: Mīr Dāmād, 53–56.

148 See Akbar Thubūt, Faylasūf Shirāz dar Hind, 279, 329. See also Jūyā Jahānbakhsh, Mu’āllim Thālīth, 49.
1.2.6 The Passing Away of Mir Dâmad

Mir Dâmad became Sheikh al-Islâm in Esfahan and conducted the coronation of the new Safavid ruler, Shah Sāfī,149 in 1629 CE.150 He later made a pilgrimage with the entourage of Shah Sāfī to the shrines of Shi‘i Imāms in Iraq. Shah Sāfī was ahead of Mir Dâmad and had already reached this destination. Mir Dâmad, however, became increasingly ill during the journey and passed away before he could reach the shrines.151 He had not yet reached Najaf, and according to one view, died close to a town called Dhul-Kifl, between Ḥillah152 and Najaf, on Monday, the 24th of Sha‘bān, 1040 AH (1630 CE).153 It is said that following his will and request, Mir Dâmad’s body was taken to Najaf and buried in the proximity of the shrine of Imām ‘Ali ibn Abī Ṭālib. However, the exact location of his grave is unknown today,154 though numerous contemporary scholars mention it being located in a suburb outside of Najaf called Khân al-Niṣf/Yūsef.155 In the course of my personal visits to these locations and following further investigation, I sighted documents presented by the Diwān al-Waqf al-Shī‘ī156 that claim that this site outside of Najaf is not the burial site of Mir Dâmad. According to the view of their researchers and the word of mouth transmitted down through generations, as Mir Dâmad was heading towards the holy shrine of Imām ‘Alī with the royal entourage, he fell ill and later passed away in Khān al-Niṣf. He was washed and shrouded where he died, and then taken to Najaf and

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149 Sāfī, whose name at birth was Sam Mīrzā, was the son of Muhammad Bāqīr Mīrzā, Shah Abbas’s elder son whom Shah Abbas had killed himself. Shah Abbas died in 1629, and Shah Sāfī I succeeded him, making him the sixth ruler of the Safavid Dynasty. He was born around the year 1610, and ruled from 1629 until his death in 1642.


151 Jūyā Jahānbakhsh, Ma’allim Thālith, 116.

152 Babylon.

153 See Muhammad Ma’sūm ibn Khwājaī Esfahānī, Khulāsat al-Siyar, 112. Other dates for the year of his passing away have been mentioned: 1041 AH in Sayyid ʿAlī Khân al-Madani, Sulāfāt al-ʿAṣr, 2:775; Mīrza ʿAbdulrah Afandi al-Esfahānī, Riyaḍ al-ʿUlamāʾ, 5:42; Sayyid Muḥṣin al-ʿAmin, Aʿyān al-Shi‘ī, 44:189; 1040 AH in Aghā Buzurg al-Ṭehrānī, al-Dhariʿāh ilā Taṣānīf al-Shi‘ī (Beirut: Dār al-ʿĀdwaʾ, 1403 AH), 1:159, 202, 407 (though he also mentions 1041 AH at 1:31); and 1042 AH in Sayyid Husain al-Burūjīrī, Nukḥbat al-Maqālī ʿīlm al-Rijāl, 98.

154 This is contrary to Seyyed Hossein Nasr’s claim that Mir Dâmad’s tomb is venerated to this day (Seyyed Hossein Nasr, “Spiritual Movements, Philosophy and Theology in the Safavid Period,” The Cambridge History of Iran: The Timurid and Safavid Periods, vol. 6, ed. Peter Jackson and Lawrence Lockhart [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986], 670).

155 Muḥammad Riḍā Zādūsh, Dīdār bā Fawlasūjān-Sepāhān, 103. Khān al-Niṣf is so called because it is situated precisely halfway (niṣf) between Najaf and Karbala, and was used as a resting place for those visiting any of the two shrines.

156 The Diwān al-Waqf al-Shī‘ī, or the Shī‘ī Endowment Office, is an official government body in Iraq responsible for religious Shī‘ī shrines, mosques, monuments, cemeteries and graves, including the graves of Shī‘ī scholars. Their research board aims to investigate mausoleums and graves and verify the identity/authenticity of those buried therein.
buried in Wadi al-Salam Cemetery, with his grandfather al-Karakī in the al-Karakī tomb. In support of this view—that Mir Dāmād was not buried in Khān al-Niṣf but, rather, passed away there and was then taken to Najaf—is that Mir Dāmād’s high status means it is unlikely that Shah Safi could have left him behind and continued the journey to Najaf without him. Shah Safi must have stayed with Mir Dāmād’s body throughout the funeral procession, including during the preliminary burial rites (washing and shrouding) performed in Khān al-Niṣf. After this, they would have proceeded to the holy city of Najaf and buried Mir Dāmād there. It is highly unlikely that Mir Dāmād, the Sheikh al-Islām, would be buried in a non-descript place. Hopefully, the Diwān al-Waqf al-Shīʿī will soon publicly announce their findings regarding this matter.

1.3 Mir Dāmād’s Contributions and the School of Esfahan’s Formation

Mir Dāmād enjoyed a highly respected status under the rulership of the Safavids and had a positive relationship with them. Nonetheless, he preserved his clerical autonomy and was strict in outlining the boundaries of this relationship. Along with his social and political involvement, he held the highest of religious ranks as a jurist and mujtahid. He was a unique scholar who combined and excelled in all the known sciences of his time, elevating his reputation to equal that of Farabi and Avicenna. Islamic scholars unanimously accept Mir Dāmād’s expertise in all known sciences of that time, and all biographies hold him in extremely high regard. He is considered to represent the first generation of Shi’i philosophers born and raised in Persia during the Safavid period. Numerous descriptions also refer to

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157 Abisaab, Converting Persia, 72. There is a view that Shah Abbas I made an attempt on Mir Dāmād’s life. For example, Ian Richard Netton quotes from Henry Corbin (in French): “Shah Abbas may even have tried to kill Mir Dāmād, such was the awe in which the former held the latter” (Ian Richard Netton, “Suhrāwārī’s Heir? The Ishrāqi Philosophy of Mir Dāmād,” in The Heritage of Sufism, vol. 3, ed. Lewisohn Leonard and David Morgan [Oxford: Oneworld Publications, 1999], fn. 38). Further, Sayyid Ṣadr al-Dīn al-Madānī, also known as Sayyid ‘Ali Khān al-Madānī (1052–1119 AH), notes in his biography of Mir Dāmād that Shah Abbas persecuted Mir Dāmād and, on numerous occasions, showed malicious intent towards him: Sulāfat al-‘Asr fī Mahāsin al-Shu’arā’ bi kullī Maṣr (Egypt: al-Khānājī, 1324 AH). This is also mentioned in al-Qabasāt’s introduction, 54.

158 Sayyid Muḥammad Khamenei, Mir Dāmād, 26.

159 Dabashi, “Mir Dāmād and the Founding of the ‘School of Iṣfahān’,” 599.
Mir Dāmād as a devout person known for rigorous worship, asceticism and spiritual purity.¹⁶⁰

Mir Dāmād led a fruitful scientific life, writing most of his books between 1606 and 1616 CE.¹⁶¹ He wrote prolifically¹⁶² in numerous disciplines, including jurisprudence, philosophy, theology, poetry, the occult sciences (‘ulūm gharībah)¹⁶³ and even bees and their habits.¹⁶⁴ Mir Dāmād’s works can be divided into books, glosses, treatises and letters, the most important of which are now listed (in the order of their date of writing). Among the first of his books is al-Širāṭ al-Mustaqīm fi Rabt al-Ḥādīth bi al-Qadīm,¹⁶⁵ which was on al-ḥudūth al-dahri and correcting Avicenna’s views on motion (ḥarakāt). In Khulsat al-Malakūt,¹⁶⁶ Mir Dāmād aims to refute critiques of al-ḥudūth al-dahri. The largest of his books is al-Ufuq al-Mubīn,¹⁶⁷ which deals with general philosophical matters, or general metaphysics. Taqwīm al-Īmān¹⁶⁸ is another of his books on specific metaphysics. Al-l’dālāt al-ʿAwīṣah¹⁶⁹ is a treatise on solving 20 complex misconceptions in various sciences. The book al-Iḥāqāt¹⁷⁰ discusses al-ḥudūth al-dahri and its relation with actions, and that one of

¹⁶⁰ Sayyid Muhammad Khamenei, Mir Dāmād, 145–52.
¹⁶¹ Behbahānī, Ḥakīm Astarābād: Mir Dāmād, 58.
¹⁶² ‘Ali Behbahānī lists 136 books, treatises, commentaries, glosses and letters attributed to Mir Dāmād (based on different indexes and hagiographies, and including both manuscripts and published works) and provides a detailed account of these works (Behbahānī, Ḥakīm Astarābād: Mir Dāmād, 107–75). A more accurate list of Mir Dāmād’s works has recently been published: Husain Najafi, Awrāq Parākande az Muṣannafīt Mir Dāmād, 27–48.
¹⁶³ The book Mir Dāmād Kabīr, which is on occult sciences and magic, is attributed to Mir Dāmād, but there is no evidence to support this. However, in Mir Dāmād’s al-Jadhwāt wa Nibrās al-Diyā, there is a section on occult sciences. There is also a known series of invocations and supplications written by Mir Dāmād. See Husain Najafi, Awrāq Parākande az Muṣannafīt Mir Dāmād (Scattered Letters from the Works of Mir Dāmād) (Tehran: Mu’assase-ye Pejūheshi-ye Ḥekmat wa Falsafe, 2017), 339–83. Matthew Melvin-Koushki has written numerous papers on the topic of occult sciences during the Safavid dynasty and Mir Dāmād’s influence in this area, and refers to Mir Dāmād as being regarded as an occult scientist. See Matthew Melvin-Koushki, “World as (Arabic) Text: Mir Dāmād and the Neopythagoreanization of Philosophy in Safavid Iran,” Studia Islamica 115, no. 1 (2019): 378–431.
¹⁶⁵ Committed writing in the year 1003/1594 AH/CE. See Mir Dāmād, Muṣannafat Mir Dāmād, 1: 329.
¹⁶⁶ Committed writing in the year 1014/1605 AH/CE. See Mir Dāmād, Muṣannafat Mir Dāmād, 1: 283. Khulsah, with a dammah short vowel, is correct (not ‘khilsah’ or ‘khalsah’).
¹⁶⁸ I have been unable to find a specific date for this book, but Sayyid Aḥmad al-Alawī, who wrote a commentary on Taqwīm al-Īmān called Kashf al-Haqā’iq, mentions that he finished the commentary in the year 1023/1614 AH/CE. Naturally, Mir Dāmād would have finished writing this book before this date. See Mir Dāmād, Taqwīm al-Īmān wa Sharḥahā Kashf al-Haqā’iq, 771.
¹⁶⁹ Finished writing in the year 1022/1614 AH/CE. See Mir Dāmād, Muṣannafat Mir Dāmād, 1: 280. This book is also known as Ḥall al-l’dālāt al-ʿAwīṣah and al-l’dālāt al-ʿIshrīnīya.
¹⁷⁰ Committed writing in the year 1025/1616 AH/CE. See Mir Dāmād, Muṣannafat Mir Dāmād, 1: 207.
the incipiences (ḥawādīth) is the actions of human beings. Jadhawāt wa Mawāqīt,171 written in Persian, is on the topic of God’s self-manifestation or theophany (tajallī) for the ‘Ulamā’ of India.172 In the book al-Īmādāt,173 he mentions that in a spiritual unveiling he saw the realm of dahr and defends his theory of al-ḥudūth al-dahrī. His treatise Ḥudūth al-ʿAlam174 discusses arguments not mentioned in his other works. Mir Dāmād then wrote Kitāb al-Qabasāt175 at the request of someone (without specifying whom).176 This book complements al-Ufuq al-Mubīn and is on specific metaphysics (bi al-maʿnā al-akhaṣ). As previously mentioned, al-Qabasāt specifically deals with al-ḥudūth al-dahrī and its arguments, methods of proving it, answering the misconceptions regarding it, and other related matters. Nibrās al-Ḍiyā’ (date of writing unknown) writes on the topic of badā’ (alteration in the divine will) and also discusses al-ḥudūth al-dahrī. Al-Taqdisāt (date of writing unknown) refutes the sophistry (shubhah) of Ibn Kammūnah.177

There are also historical documents that prove that Mir Dāmād was an expert in medicine,178 and he is known to have sent medical prescriptions to Qub Shah, then

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171 The precise date of when this book was commenced or finished is unknown, but it was published in Mumbai in 1032/1623 AH/CE. See Ali Mūsawi Mudarris Behbahānī, Ḩakīm Astarābādā: Mir Dāmād, 128. As Mir Dāmād makes references to most of his other main works, it seems that this book was written in a later stage in his life, and may be among his last.

172 It is said that scholars of India travelled to Esfahan, which was the cradle of knowledge at that time, seeking the answer to a question troubling them. The question was, “When Almighty God manifested to the mountain of Tūr, trembled, but when He manifested to Prophet Moses (a.s.), nothing happened to him?” This was in reference to the Qur’anic verse, “And when His Lord revealed (His) glory to the mountain He sent it crashing down. And Moses fell down senseless” [Qur’an, 7:143]. Shah Abbas delegated Mir Dāmād to write a book in answer to this misconception, and Mir Dāmād wrote the book in Persian, giving it the title Jadhawāt wa Mawāqīt (Particles of Fire and Stated Places). See Mir Dāmād, Jadhawāt wa Mawāqīt, glosses by Mullā ʿAlī ibn Jamshīd Nūrī, ed. ʿAlī Awjābī (Tehran: Markaz-e Pejūhesī-ye Mirāth-e Maktūb, 2002), 32. This is an important philosophical book by Mir Dāmād, dealing with a variety of philosophical and theological issues, and even has a discussion on numerology. As he makes references to most of his other main works, it seems that this book was written in a later stage in his life, and may be among his last.

173 Written in the year 1025/1616 AH/CE. See Ali Mūsawi Mudarris Behbahānī, Ḩakīm Astarābādā: Mir Dāmād, 123.


175 Commenced writing on 17th Rabī’ al-Awwal 1034 AH (23 December 1624 CE), and finished writing in the same Hijri year, 6th Sha’bān 1034 AH (13 May 1625 CE). See Mīr Dāmād, The Book of Blazing Brands, 494.

176 Mīr Dāmād, The Book of Blazing Brands, 1.

177 Full name, ‘Īzz al-Dawlah Saʿd bīn Mānsūr al-Baghḍādī (d. 683/1284 AH/CE). He was a Jewish physician and philosopher. For a detailed study on his life and writings, see Reza Pourjavady and Sabine Schmidtké, A Jewish Philosopher of Baghdad: ‘Īzz Al-dawla Ibn Kammūna (D. 683/1284) and His Writings (Leiden: Brill, 2006).

178 Ibid., 89.
King of Hyderabad. Mir Dâmâd’s influence in India and on Indian Islamic scholars was also enhanced by his students; notably, Niẓâm al-Dîn Âhmâd al-Gilânî, who travelled to India and taught philosophy there (and may have even passed away there), and Mir Muhammad Mu’îmin Astarabâdî (1553–1626 CE), who transported Mir Dâmâd’s philosophy to India and practised there as a respected physician and politician. Further, in addition to Jadhwât wa Mawâqît, which, as previously discussed, was written as an extended answer to questions from scholars from India, the treatise al-I’dâlât was written for Muḥammad ibn Khâtûn al-‘Amîlî (?), who was Sheikh al-Bâhâ’î’s nephew and student, and later migrated to Hyderabad and became a vizier of the ruler Muḥammad Qulî Qâṭî Shâh (1565–1612 CE).

Mir Dâmâd’s influence and impact on intellectual and religious thought during the Safavid era and his contributions to the scientific and theological knowledge of the

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179 For details of these prescriptions, see Hasan Tâjbakhsh, “Pezeshki: Janbe’ti Nâshenâkhâte az Zendegi Mir Dâmâd,” in Justâri dar ‘Arâ va Aftâr Mir Dâmâd wa Mir Findiriski (A Search in the Views and Opinions of Mir Dâmâd and Mir Findiriski) (Tehran: Farhangistân-e ‘Ulûm-e Jumhûri-yê Islâmî-yê Iran, 2006), 431–33. See also Husain Najafi, Awrâq Parâkande az Muṣannîfât Mir Dâmâd, 46–47.


181 For a detailed account of Mir Dâmâd’s philosophical influence on Indian Islamic scholars, both Sunni and Shi’a, see Sajjad Rizvi, “Mir Dâmâd and the Debate on Ḥudûth-I dahrî in India,” in Muslim Cultures in the Indo-Iranian World: During the Early-Modern and Modern Periods, ed. Fabrizio Speziale and Denis Hermann (Berlin: Klaus Schgwairz Verlag, 2010), 449–73. Rizvi mentions that the debate on perpetual creation after Mir Dâmâd was more significant in India than in Iran. For a list of Indian Islamic scholars who have engaged with Mir Dâmâd and his theories, see “Ali Awjâbî, Ḥekmat Yamânî dar Hind,” Ayîne-ye Mîrâth, New Series 4, no. 1 (32) (Spring 2006): 78–92. Jahânbakhsh also mentions different avenues of Mir Dâmâd’s influence reaching India. See Jâyya Jahânbaḵsh, Mu’âllim Thâlîth, 49–52.

182 For a study on the Gilânî scholars who migrated to India during this era, see Jalâl Ja’far-pûr and Sâsân Ţâhmâbî, “Mu’arriﬁ wa Shenâsâ’i Muhâjarân Gilânî Hind, bâ Tekye dar Deken (1400–1700 CE),” Journal of Subcontinent Researches 9, no. 31 (Summer 2017): 45–62.

183 Mir Muhammad Mu’îmin was the newpewh of al-Sammâkî. For a detailed account of his political involvement in India, see Shaikh Musak Rajak, “Mir Mohammad Momîn Astarabâdî’s Contribution to Qutb Shâhi Deccan History,” Journal of the Research Society of Pakistan 52, no. 2 (July–December 2015): 203–9.

184 Iskandar Baig Munshi, Ṭârikh ‘Alam Araye ‘Abbâsî, 1: 146. Mir Dâmâd wrote an important letter to him in this regard. See Mir Dâmâd, Muṣannîfât Mir Dâmâd, 1: 594.


187 Sheikh al-Bâhâ’î’s sister’s son. Mir Dâmâd mentions Ibn Khâtûn in high regard, along with dedicating this treatise to him. See Husain Najafi, Awrâq Parâkande az Muṣannîfât Mir Dâmâd, 335–36.

188 The dates of his birth and death are unknown, but it appears that he died during the era of ‘Abdullah Qutb Shah (d. 1672) and was buried at Hyderabad. There is a miniature drawing dated to this era, depicting Ibn Khâtûn in the court of the ruler ‘Abdullah Qutb Shah, preserved in the British Museum. See https://www.bl.uk/museumofbritishart/collection/object/W_1974-0617-0-6-1 (accessed August 2020).
Islamic world are clear and unrivalled. Indeed, such was his influence that any discussion of the intellectual history of this era must feature Mīr Dāmād at the forefront. Mīr Dāmād's contemporaries considered him to possess an outstanding aptitude and an innovative and skilful command of language and literature. He was highly regarded for his expertise in philology and grammar, as well as his unique writing ability. The famous biographer Mirzā Muḥammad Bāqir al- Müsawī al-Khwānsārī (1811–1895 CE) states:

He [Mīr Dāmād]—the mercy of Almighty God be upon him—was a leader (imām) in the arts of reason (ḥikmah) and literature. He was well versed in the principles of Arabic lexicography, and he was an unparalleled orator in his eloquence and fluency. He was a master in literature, an acute jurist, a brilliant mystic, as if he was the eye of mankind and exemplar of humanity (insān al-ʿain wa ʿain al-insān).

However, Mīr Dāmād's works are extremely difficult to read due to his complex writing style and idiosyncratic use of terminology. They are known for their abstruseness and are almost entirely unedited. Numerous explanations have been given for his writing style. Nasr relates the most common explanation, that Mīr Dāmād's resort to arcane terminology was mainly a kind of literacy contrivance to disguise the esoteric nature of his teachings.

The difficult and cryptic style of Mīr Dāmād's writing is one reason that his theories and works have not been investigated and discussed in detail. This has resulted in most researchers having no interest in, or even neglecting, these works. Although, as previously mentioned, this lack of interest in Mīr Dāmād relates to his books and scientific works, and not to him as an important personality in the history and

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190 al-Khwānsārī, Rowdāt al-Jannāt, 2: 62. The expression insān al-ʿain wa ʿain al-insān is an alluring amphibology. insān al-ʿain, which means the eye's pupil, is a metonymy for the respect and honour for Mīr Dāmād.
191 Some researchers think that Mīr Dāmād has his own unique style of writing. This view is not completely accepted, but it is certainly the case that there are elements that distinguish Mīr Dāmād’s writing style from that of others (Awjābi, Mīr Dāmād; Bunyanguzār Ḥikmat Yamānī, 139).
192 Corbin, History of Islamic Philosophy, 339.
heritage of Islamic society and thought. However, awareness of him generally goes no further than his position as Mullā Ṣadrā’s teacher. Mullā Ṣadrā’s philosophical methodology is the dominant focus in Shi‘i seminaries, which have wholly adopted the Ṣadrian School.¹⁹⁴

In explaining how Mīr Dāmād and his writings have been overshadowed by the popularity of his student, Nasr says:

The difficulty of Mīr Dāmād’s writings has become proverbial in direct contrast to the lucid and clear writings of his student, Mullā Ṣadrā. It is said in fact that before going on one of his journeys, Mīr Dāmād asked his students to write a treatise in his absence. When he returned and read what Mullā Ṣadrā had written he wept, saying that he was both joyous to have such a student and sad in that he knew that Mullā Ṣadrā’s writing would some day overshadow and replace his own. This was in fact a correct prediction. Soon, the clear expositions of the student nearly completely replaced those of the master to whom he owed so much.¹⁹⁵

The main obstacle in reading Mīr Dāmād’s texts is his word choice and sentence structure. Many of the words he uses are unfamiliar, archaic or even invented, and his sentence structure is unduly lengthy and complicated, making his works difficult for most readers to follow.¹⁹⁶ In an overview examining Mīr Dāmād’s theory of what he calls the doctrine of the perpetual incipience of the cosmos, Rizvi describes Mīr Dāmād’s method of writing as ‘prone to an opaque and rather baroque style of writing’ and ‘notoriously obscure in some of its formulations’.¹⁹⁷ This seems an accurate appraisal of Mīr Dāmād’s style of terms, distinguished by his treatment of specific words; although Mīr Dāmād is very precise with any term he uses (usually words that had fallen into disuse or obscurity), he redefines, refines or creates words as he sees fit.¹⁹⁸ Mīr Dāmād frequently delves into the etymologies of words (e.g., distinguishing between тіbā’ and таbī’ah, or explaining al-ṣarīḥ and ghayr

¹⁹⁴ Jūyā Jahānbakhsh, Mu‘āllim Thālith, 129.
¹⁹⁵ Nasr, Ṣadr al-Din Shirazi, 33.
¹⁹⁶ Awjābī, Mīr Dāmād; Bunyanguzār Ḥikmat Yamānī, 140.
¹⁹⁷ Sajjad Rizvi, Mīr Dāmād and the Debate on Ḥudūth-I dahrī in India, 452.

[Through Mīr Dāmād’s al-Ṣirāt al-Mustaqīm, a Muslim does not listen, and a disbeliever does not see.]
and often starts his arguments by asking a question (istifhami), commencing with ‘alaisa’ or ‘alam’. Such a style necessitates much elaboration and comprehension, making the text difficult to digest.

However, Mīr Dāmād’s style of writing on naqli topics is clearly different to his style of writing on ‘aqli topics. ’Alī Awjabī affirms that Mīr Dāmād could write in a simpler style that was easy to understand as this is evident in some of his works. Mīr Dāmād’s writing style was certainly not a result of misunderstanding the subject matter of his theories—he himself attests to this, being profound and rich in scientific and philosophical concepts and strong in comprehension. Notably, in his works on transmitted sciences, Mīr Dāmād’s writing style is simpler and more understandable; examples of this easier style of writing in his works in the areas of manqūl sciences include Shir‘at al-Tasmiyah, Ḍawābiṭ al-Riḍā’, Sharḥ Taqdimah Taqwīm al-Īmān and Shāre’ al-Najāt. This is likely because Mīr Dāmād intended for these texts to be read by the general public. Thus, it seems that he deliberately chose to write with a difficult style in his philosophical books.

‘Alī Awjabī gives a reason for this difficult writing style:

The reason for this issue can be easily found when considering the era he lived in. The era he was in was an era where jurists were dominant. It was a time when transmitted (naqli) sciences prevailed, along with Akhbarism and an anti-philosophy movement. It is natural that in such a fearful environment and in order to stay safe from sharp radicalism, distorted understandings and takfīrism—which would certainly lead to punishment, banishing and death—there was no way other than to conceal his deep theories and views behind the veils of complex sentences. This is so that only those well trained to understand complex philosophical concepts will be able to remove these veils and witness the hidden beauties in these contents.

\[199\] Ibid., 142.

\[200\] This is Mīr Dāmād’s own commentary on his introduction to his book Taqwīm al-Īmān, in praise of the merits of Imām ‘Alī. It is in simple Arabic, but also carries philosophical concepts. See Mīr Dāmād, Sharḥ Taqdimah Taqwīm al-Īmān, ed. Ghulām ‘Alī Najāfī and Hāmed Nājī Esfahānī, with an introduction by Maḥmūd Mīr Dāmādī (Esfahan: Mahdiyye Mīr Dāmād, 1412 AH).

\[201\] Ibid., 142–43.
Some scholars—including Mir Dāmād himself—claim that understanding Mir Dāmād’s works is an art in itself.202 Mir Dāmād said in a letter, ‘It should be known that understanding my words is an art, not nagging and considering it an argument’.203 In this same letter, he mentions that he is writing lofty things and that understanding his style is itself an art.204

Mir Dāmād was aware that his style of writing made his works difficult to comprehend, and, as touched on above, he had reasons for doing so. Concealing his philosophical and mystical theories and ideas in complex writing enabled Mir Dāmād to avoid criticism by the literalists who were against such sciences.205 This was not the case for his student Mullā Ṣadrā, who was compelled to leave Esfahan and live in exile in Kahak.206 A famous story frequently narrated to explain this persecution is recounted by Hamid Dabashi:207

Mullā Ṣadrā once saw Mir Dāmād in a dream and asked him why people condemned him as a blasphemer while he had just repeated what Mir Dāmād had already said. ‘The reason is,’ Mir Dāmād is believed to have answered, ‘that I wrote philosophical matters in such a way that the religious authorities [‘ulamā’] could not understand them, and that nobody other than philosophers would comprehend them. But you have popularized the philosophical issues and said them in such a way that if a teacher of any elementary religious school reads them, he can understand them. That is why they have called you a blasphemer and not me.’208

The Akhbārī scholars were very influential—both politically and socially—leading to Mullā Ṣadrā’s exile. A crucial difference is that Mir Dāmād was a well-established jurist, a Sayyid, related to al-Karakī and Sheikh al-Islām—qualities that made it difficult for any opposers of philosophy to be outwardly hostile to Mir Dāmād. Indeed, Mir Dāmād had an official class in philosophy and taught it openly.

203 Mir Dāmād mentions this in a letter to Mullā ‘Abdullah Shūshtarī, who was not fond of philosophy. See Mir Dāmād, Musannafát Mir Dāmād, 1: 604.
204 Ibid.
205 Dabashi, “Mir Dāmād and the Founding of the ‘School of Isfahān’,” 619.
206 A small village close to Qom, Iran.
207 Quoted from Qiṣṣa al-ʿUlamāʾ (Stories of Scholars), written by Mirzā Muḥammad Tunkābūnī (1819–1884).
208 Dabashi, “Mir Dāmād and the Founding of the ‘School of Isfahān’,” 618–19.
The obscurity of Mir Dəməd’s writing style is generally considered to be the primary reason for the neglect of his works, though I argue that a combination of factors (including his eloquent but complex writing style) led to this. The proliferation of Mir Dəməd’s works and theories could only have continued if his students and their students had continued to pursue his objectives; instead, Mullā Şadrā’s new philosophical system and methodology came to dominate. (Though, as previously stated, Mir Dəməd maintained his high status.)

Worth nothing, a distinctive attribute of Mir Dəməd’s writing is the accuracy of his quotations and his loyalty and respect in giving precise references in his books, unlike his student Mullā Şadrā.209 (Of course, there could be valid reasons for Mullā Şadrā’s omissions, especially with the rise of Othmani power and the political strife between them and the Safavid rulers.210) Mir Dəməd was exceptional in this, with his uncensored referencing enabled by both his intellect and his virtually unassailable religious, social and political positions.211) Another point worth mentioning here is that Mir Dəməd’s method of writing was scattered because he was thought and issue driven, and did not utilise an encyclopaedic method (as opposed to Avicenna).212 Mir Dəməd did not produce any substantial works on astronomy, music, geometry and so on. His rational works were purely metaphysical. Further, Mir Dəməd’s style of chaptering and his sequence of writing differed to the encyclopaedic method of Avicenna. Although Mir Dəməd highly respected the Avicennian tradition, he saw himself as Avicenna’s equal, not as a follower of Avicenna or a commentator on his books. Hence when Mir Dəməd quotes from Avicenna, he refers to him as ‘my

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210 Due to the Safavids being hostile towards Sunni figures, if Mullā Şadrā had mentioned certain scholars, such as Fakhr Rāzī, he might have had to curse them. For example, there are instances where he cites al-Ufuq al-Mubīn but does not mention it.

211 For example, in al-Ṣirāt al-Mustaṣaqim, Mir Dəməd makes reference to Avicenna’s Mi’rāj-nāme, which was written in Persian, and quotes from it, saying that it is his translation. See Mir Dəməd, al-Ṣirāt al-Mustaṣaqim, 8. In al-Qabasāt, there are numerous examples of Mir Dəməd quoting a paragraph from somewhere, then placing a gap between the quoted text and his writing, and then saying, ‘Then he said’ (thumma qāl) before beginning a new quotation. This demonstrates his accuracy in referencing.

212 Húsain Najafi, Avrəq Parəkənde az Muṣannifât Mir Dəməd, 14.
partner in leadership’ (sharīkuna fi al-ri‘āsah),213 ‘my predecessor partner’, or ‘the master of Islamic peripatetics’.214

1.3.1 The School of Esfahan

A vital aspect of any study on Mīr Dāmād’s scientific contributions is exploring his role in forming a particular milestone in the history of Islamic philosophy, the School of Esfahan. ‘The School of Esfahan’ (in Persian, Maktab-e Isfahān) refers to a new era in the development of Muslim rational disciplines, in Shi‘i circles in particular. The first person to employ this phrase was Henry Corbin in his article L’Ecole d’Ispahan.215 It is, as Dabashi explains, ‘A generic term identifying the syncretic discourse that emerged in the Isfahān of Mīr Dāmād’s period. Mīr Dāmād himself is credited with having established this school’.216

The Safavid dynasty is this era’s starting point, and the school was principally founded and moulded by Mīr Dāmād and his contemporaries Mīr Findireskī and al-Bahā‘ī.217 Indeed, its direct foundations can be traced back to the School of Shiraz, which was recognised for its strong Shi‘i philosophical trends.218 Sayyid Hossain Nasr explains what led to the school’s founding:

The School of Iṣfahān did not, so to speak, mushroom up out of nowhere; its historical roots can in fact be traced back some two centuries before the Safavid period to intellectual activities and currents prevalent in the city of Shīrāz, south of Iṣfahān, currents which may be said to have themselves constituted an independent philosophical ‘School of Shīrāz’.219

In the chronological sequence of philosophical development, the School of Shiraz (which preceded the School of Esfahan) was particularly influential due to one outstanding feature: it preserved the legacy of the rational sciences within the

213 See Mīr Dāmād, The Book of Blazing Brands, 32. The term ri‘āsah is used because Avicenna became known as Sheikh al-Ra‘īs, or the master leader. See also Ibid., 52. Here, Mīr Dāmād refers to Avicenna as ‘my partner, the Chief’.

214 Mīr Dāmād, Hudūth al-‘Alam, 33.

215 Henry Corbin, En Islam Iranien, Aspects Spirituels Et Philosophiques, vol. 4 (Paris: Gallimard, 1972), 9–53. Seyyed Hossein Nasr was part of the decision to jointly ‘launch’ this phrase with Henry Corbin (Nasr, "The Place of the School of Iṣfahān," 3–4).

216 Dabashi, "Mīr Dāmād and the Founding of the 'School of Iṣfahān'," 621.

217 Ibid., 606.

218 For a detailed coverage of this, see John Cooper, "From al-Ṭūsī to the School of Iṣfahān," 583–96.

219 Nasr, “The Place of the School of Iṣfahān,” 5.
doctrinal framework of Shi’i Islam. This period catered to the merging of philosophy and mysticism, producing philosophical–mystical scholars including Qubt al-Din al-Shirāzī (1236–1311 CE) and Ibn Turka Esfahānī (1362–1433 CE). Therefore, there were various factors involved in the forming of the School of Esfahan, including the enduring influence of Avicennian philosophy in this city.

The Safavids’ selection of Esfahan as their capital and Dār al-Saltanate was mainly due to its beneficial geographical status and economic centrality, being Iran’s main cultural and trading hub at this time. Other reasons included its pleasant weather and the abundant population of skilled workers, artisans and scientists.

The School of Esfahan’s distinctive characteristic is its amalgamation of traditional Greek philosophy, Islamic Peripateticism, Suhrawardi’s Illuminationism (Ḥikmat al-Ishrāq), theology and Sufism. The synthesis of these traditions, under the teachings of Shi‘ah, gave the school its unique quality. Mīr Dāmād’s areas of interest can be better understood in light of the issues debated during this era, particularly the strong divide between Uṣūlism and Akhbārism, where the latter condemned and opposed both the rational and mystical sciences. The period was further distinguished by the numerous ongoing—at times heated—debates between various schools and factions. Nasr explains:

The main philosophical issue confronting the thinkers of the school of Ḳoṭb al-Din al-Shirāzī (1155–1191) was how to create concord between the three great ways which lie parallel to each other.

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222 The founder of this school is Shihāb al-Dīn Suhrawardī (1155–1191). He was strongly influenced by Neoplatonism and other ancient traditions, and added a mystical and spiritual dimension to Peripatetic philosophy. He became known as Sheikh al-Ishrāq, or the Master of Illumination, and his innovative philosophical school was named Ḩikmat al-Ishrāq, after the title of his most outstanding work. He was also given the title of Sheikh al-Shahīd (the Martyr) after his execution. See Shihab al-Din Suhrawardi, The Philosophy of Illumination, trans. John Walbridge and Hossein Ziaey (Provo: Brigham Young University Press, 2000); Mehdi Amin Razavi, Suhrawardi and the School of Illumination (Surrey: Curzon Press, 1997).
223 Nasr, “The Place of the School of Isfahān,” 4.
225 For an account of the extreme opposition certain jurists had to philosophy, see Dabashi, “Mīr Dāmād and the Founding of the ‘School of Isfahān’,” 600–1.
open to man for the attainment of knowledge and spiritual guidance. These paths are respectively that of (1) the divine law (shariʿa), which connotes the exoteric and legal aspect of religion; (2) kashf, intuitive unveiling and illumination; and finally (3) 'aql, which may be translated as either ‘intellect’ or ‘reason’ depending on the context. Almost all the great thinkers of the Safavid period were involved in the endeavour to reconcile and integrate these three distinct approaches to the problem of knowledge.226

The School of Esfahan was not only interested in understanding the rational sciences within the boundaries of Islam but also in understanding the doctrines of other religions in depth and from a philosophical perspective. This is evident in the works of Mīr Fīndireskī, one of the pillars of this school.227 He had diverse interests encompassing philosophy, alchemy, comparative religion and mysticism. Mīr Fīndireskī travelled extensively, particularly to India due to his interest in Indian mysticism.228 He also translated and summarised the Yoga Vasistha into Arabic.229 However, the primary reasons for the School of Esfahan’s ascendancy were Mīr Dāmād’s renown as an authoritative jurist and traditionist (muḥaddith),230 and his introduction of various insights and ideas that worked within the framework of the Shiʿi creed and were harmonised with the teachings of the Qur’an and Shiʿi Imāms. Both were crucial. The reverence held in various learned circles for Mīr Dāmād as a Shiʿi philosopher, jurist, mystic and poet231 afforded him immunity from the vehement condemnation and attacks suffered by other scholars at that time. Simultaneously, his innovative approach in synthesising theology and philosophy uniquely contributed to Shiʿi thought, expanding the boundaries of philosophy to include theology and even Shiʿi hadith, thereby rationalising them and giving the latter a clear Shiʿi identity.232 As Nasr states, ‘He [Mīr Dāmād] harmonised

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226 Nasr, “The Place of the School of Iṣfahān,” 6–8.
227 Ibid., 14.
228 Details and stories of his trips to India can be found in Ḥusain Kahlābī Ashtarī, Mīr Ḥikmat; Muḥammad Riḍā Dūstī Daylānī, Do Ḥakīm Astarābād, Mīr Fīndiriskī wa Mīr Dāmād; Muḥammad Reżā Zādhūsh, Ahwāl wa Athār-e Mīr Fīndiriskī. Ḥusain Kahlābī Ashtarī, Mīr Ḥikmat; Muḥammad Riḍā Dūstī Daylānī, Do Ḥakīm Astarābād, Mīr Fīndiriskī wa Mīr Dāmād; Muḥammad Reżā Zādhūsh, Ahwāl wa Athār-e Mīr Fīndiriskī.
230 Traditionist (muḥaddith) refers to a scholar of tradition and narrations (ḥadith), as distinguished from traditionalist referring to a group of thinkers who emphasised the importance of traditional, ancient and spiritual ways, like Frithjof Schuon and Rene Guenon.
231 Dabashi, “Mīr Dāmād and the Founding of the ‘School of Iṣfahān’,” 622.
232 This can be seen in his theory of perpetual creation, his discussion on the topic of badāʾ (as previously explained) and his treatise al-Taqdīsāt. An interesting paper on Mīr Dāmād’s contributions to Shiʿi is Sayyid Mujtabā Mīr Dāmādī, "Nawādir Ḥakīm Mīr Dāmād dar ‘Ilm al-
Avicennian cosmology with Shi’ite imamology and made the “fourteen pure ones” (chahārdah maʿṣūm) of Shi’ism the ontological principles of cosmic existence.²³³

It was not only Mir Dāmād’s overarching knowledge of philosophical and theological discourse that formed the basis of this new era in Islamic rational sciences but also his unique approach to the sciences in general. He built a bridge between jurisprudence and philosophy, theology and mysticism. Other philosophers focused on related sciences, such as physics and mathematics; Mir Dāmād went beyond that by understanding jurisprudence more deeply than any prior philosopher.²³⁴

It is important to note that Muslim philosophers tried to use ‘ḥikmah’ (wisdom) to describe their studies, rather than ‘philosophy’. ‘Philosophy’ represented the ancient Greek tradition, with no origins in Islamic culture. In contrast, ḥikma is used frequently in the Qur’an and in the narratives of the Prophet Muḥammad and the Imāms. Philosophy has a broader, non-religious connotation, whereas ḥikma has a divinely sanctioned and religious connotation. Ḥikmah is one of God’s attributes, equivalent to the Greek word sophia, the Indian vedā and the Zoroastrian spenta mainyu, all of which refer to self-awareness and knowledge of existence.²³⁶ Ḥikmah fundamentally differs from philosophy, having the dual meaning of bliss (saʿādah) and knowledge (‘ilm). Philosophy is based purely on reason, while Ḥikmah also believes in spiritual enlightenment and divine guidance. A Ḥakīm will beseech God to show him the truth, and his faith in God and loyalty to moral and divine orders will affect their perception of the world.

The word ‘theosophy’—referring to a deeper understanding of the physical and metaphysical realm than can be gained through rational methods alone—has been

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²³³ Nasr, Ṣadr al-Dīn Shirāzī and His Transcendent Theosophy, Background, Life and Works, 32–33.
²³⁴ Further:

The philosophical school founded in the tenth/sixteenth century in Isfahan by Mir Dāmād is of exceptional importance in being both a synthesis of nearly a millennium of Islamic thought and the last major school of traditional philosophy in Islamic civilization, one that has cast its influence on Persia, Iraq, and the Muslim parts of the Indian subcontinent for the past four centuries (Seyyed Hossein Nasr, Islamic Philosophy from its Origin to the Present: Philosophy in the Land of Prophecy, New York: State University of New York Press, 2006, 212).

²³⁵ This term appears in 20 places in the Qur’an (e.g., 2:269, 31:12 and 4:77).
used as a translation for ḥikma by Seyyed Hossein Nasr and others. Ḥikmah must be understood within the context of its use. It cannot be identified purely with philosophy (as that word is commonly understood in the West), nor with the theosophy that refers to a pseudo-spiritual cult. The Abbasid Caliph Harun al-Rashid (763 or 766–809 CE)—who began translating Greek texts into Arabic—named the institute he founded Bayt al-Ḥikmah (House of Wisdom). (His son and successor al-Ma’mūn [786–833 CE] expanded this translation of Greek and other ancient texts into Arabic.)

Philosophy was disliked and opposed by jurists and theologians, and ḥikma was consciously chosen by Islamic philosophers as 'Muslim friendly' as seen in the works of Avicenna, Suhrwardi, Mīr Dāmād and Mulla Ṣadrā. The importance of ḥikma will be seen later in this chapter in the discussion of Mīr Dāmād’s philosophical school. Mīr Dāmād uses the term falsafa to refer to Greek philosophers, using al-falsafat al-yūnāniya, al-falsafat al-mashā’iyya or even al-falsafat al-ʿāmiyya, and distinguishes between the terms al-ḥikmat al-yamāniya and al-falsafat al-yūnāniya. He also emphasises using the word ḥikma for post-Islamic philosophical trends, especially his method of philosophy.

As previously mentioned, the Safavid era saw Persia politically united under one Shi‘i sect, which enabled the entry of Shi‘i ideology into mainstream scholarly circles. The various Shahs established and strengthened numerous seminaries and introduced Shi‘i culture into wider society. This became another aspect of the formation of the School of Esfahan, where Shi‘i hadith compilations were written and extra attention given to valuable Shi‘i texts, such as al-Raḍī’s Nahj al-Balāgha

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238 For a detailed account of the House of Wisdom and the translation revolution it started, see John Freely, Aladdin’s Lamp—How Greek Science Came to Europe Through the Islamic World (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2009), in particular, ch. 5.

239 Ibid., 92.

240 An extensive explanation of this can be found in Nasr, Islamic Philosophy from its Origin to the Present, 31–47.


242 See, e.g., ibid., 343.
Different trends dominated the intellectual arena at that time, and all are relevant to the formation of Mīr Dāmād’s unique philosophical structure. These trends, including Ṣūfism, mysticism (‘irfān), Peripatetic philosophy, Ishrāqism and the study of Shi‘i ḥadīth, all had independent structures but were synthesised in the School of Esfahan. This accomplishment was unprecedented and is vital to understanding the formation of Mīr Dāmād’s scientific personality. Leonard Lewisohn summarises the four distinctive points that defined the collective views of the School of Esfahan:

1. Sufism. While all its members exhibited a profound respect for the ethical, intellectual and spiritual ideals of classical Persian Sufism, few seemed to have openly accepted the necessity of following the ṭariqa discipline involving obedience to a living master (pīr, murshid). Most of these teosophers also wrote mystical poetry of varying quality, indicative of their devotion to Sufi literature.

2. Shi‘ism. Their writings are permeated with Shi‘ite piety, imāmology and theology. Where an ecumenical side of their theosophy does exist, the specificity of the Shi‘ite social milieu wherein their works are situated tends to obscure this.

3. Islamic Platonism. The philosophy of the school often tended to stress what was ‘humanistically universal’. Their teachings stemmed from the revival of the Illuminationist (Ishrāqī) theosophy of Shaykh Shihāb al-Dīn Yahyā Suhrawardī (d. 587/1191), who claimed his theosophy to be an Islamic synthesis of several ancient wisdom traditions: ‘the religion of the ancients adhered to by the Babylonians, the [Persian] Khusrawaniyyūn sages, the Indians, and all the ancients from Greece’, as well as others.


4. Islamic Rationalism. Philosophers in this school combined Peripatetic rationalism with Islamic Platonism. For the Iṣfahānī Safavid philosophers, 'the term "Peripatetic" does not have the same connotation which it has for us [modern-day scholars], if only because of no other reason than the fact that they cherished the Theology attributed to Aristotle.' It is quite exceptional to find a philosopher among the school who is purely and solely Peripatetic, not thoroughly absorbed in neo-Platonism and not eo ipso somewhat of an Ishrāqī.246

Undeniably, Sufism played a role in the Shi‘i tradition, but it was not a major constituent.247 Instead, a thriving culture of ‘irfān existed, to which Lewisohn also refers.248 This does not deny the status of Sufism in this era, which was part of the very fabric of the personality of the early Safavid rulers who came from a lineage of Sufi tradition and had a close interlinked relationship with ‘Irifān.249 Interestingly, each ruler during this era took varying positions on the Sufi phenomenon, ranging from supportive policies to complete intolerance and opposition. The latter can be clearly seen in the second half of Shah ‘Abbas II’s reign.250 This complex relationship

247 More recent research has been presented by Ata Anzali on the presence and influence of Sufism in Shi‘i contexts; see Ata Anzali, “Mysticism” in Iran: The Safavid Roots of a Modern Concept (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2017). He has also conducted research on the opposition some scholars had towards Sufism in the Safavid era; see Ata Anzali and S.M. Hadi Gerami, eds., Opposition to Philosophy in Safavid Iran. Mulla Muḥammad-Ṭahir Qummi’s Ḥikmat al-ʿArifīn (Leiden: Brill, 2018). Rasūl Ja‘fariyān, a researcher in Shi‘i history, has also written on the Sufi involvement in this particular era, with an emphasis on the arguments that erupted between Shi‘i scholars in defence of or against Sufism. See, e.g., Rasūl Ja‘fariyān, “Shi‘ī-shenāsī dar rūzegār-e Șafa‘ī; murūrī bar yek Arba‘īn Ḥadīth bā ārzesh,” Ayīne-ye Pejūhesh 29, no. 173 (Summer 2018): 91–106.
248 Lewisohn, “Sufism and the School of Iṣfahān,” 87. He also states that Mīr Dāmād, in particular, had opposed Sufism (fn. 93, fn. 114).
250 Anzali, “Mysticism” in Iran, 44. This whole chapter of Anzali’s work deals with the Safavid opposition to Sufism. Another recent study on the opposition of some Safavid rulers to Sufism, focusing on the issues of influence and politics, is Sholeh A. Quinn, Shah ‘Abbas: The King who Refashioned Iran (London: OneWorld, 2015).
contributed to a divergence of groups and factions, the details of which are beyond the present thesis.251

The School of Esfahan represented a renaissance in Islamic philosophy, and Mīr Dāmād was its most distinctive figure and founder.252 This era instigated a new stage of intellectual development in the rational sciences of the Islamic tradition, particularly in Shi‘ism. An outstanding feature of the School of Esfahan is the Twelver Shi‘ites and their introduction, reforming and moulding of theories and ideas based on and influenced by their creed and beliefs. Further, while the School of Esfahan was developed by Mīr Dāmād, it encompassed other philosophers and thinkers, in particular, Mullā Šadrā, Mīr Findireskī and Sheikh al-Bahā’ī. The uniqueness of this era lies in the prevalence of these eminent scholars—all Shi‘i scholars, residing in Esfahan, acting as both philosophers and jurists, with an interest in poetry and other sciences (even the occult), with clear connections to great teachers, and authoring (and not only commentating on) strong books with spiritual and mystical elements.253 In describing the very important but unappreciated era of Safavid Esfahan and philosophy, Ashtiyānī says:

It is possible to prove with strong evidence that the Safavid era was a time of the spreading, or rather the reviving of philosophical and mystical School (maktab). The works that came about during this era is equal to all the works that were written throughout all the stages of philosophy.254

Important to reiterate here is that although such scholars (who leaned strongly towards the rational sciences) were highly regarded, they were not spared from criticism. As previously mentioned, more traditional scholars condemned

251 An outstanding historian specialising in Shi‘i history, with a focus on Safavid Iran, is Rasūl Ja‘fariyān. Numerous works by Rasūl Ja‘fariyān have been cited in this thesis, but specifically on the topic of the religious and geopolitical status of Sufism during this era, see Rasūl Ja‘fariyān, Šafaviye dar‘arse-ye Din, Farhang wa Siyāsat (Qom: Pejūheshgāh-e Ḩawze wa Dāneshgāh, 2001), in particular, volume 2.


253 Matthew Melvin-Koushki describes Mīr Dāmād as an occult scientist responsible for the applying of Neoplatonic and Neopythagorean tradition in the Safavid era. He also examines how Mīr Dāmād’s students carried on his legacy of occultism. See Melvin-Koushki, “World as (Arabic) Text.”

philosophers and Sufis, though Mīr Dāmād’s revered status and complex writing style in his philosophical works meant he was rarely targeted.\textsuperscript{255}

The usage of the term ‘School of Esfahan’ has been challenged, especially due to the fact that ‘school’ denotes some kind of harmony between the scientific trends of that time, which is not the case. As stated at the beginning of this section, however, the ‘School of Esfahan’ is a term introduced by Corbin and Nasr and then adopted by Ashtiyānī and others that is commonly used to refer to a particular era, specifically the era of Mīr Dāmād, Mīr Finderiskī, Mullā Šadrā and Sheikh al-Bahā’ī. These philosophers did not refer to their time as a ‘School of Esfahan’; rather, this term is a modern-day concept and current outlook related to that era and particular phase of rational and philosophical development.\textsuperscript{256} The philosophical School of Esfahan is interpreted via the scientific, cultural and artistic changes and developments that occurred in Esfahan from the year 1000 AH onwards. Esfahan is a special city with a long history. Even Avicenna is said to have lived in Esfahan for a while, where he wrote \textit{Dāneshāme-ye ‘Alā’ī}.\textsuperscript{257} During the Safavid era, Islamic seminaries were established in Esfahan and authoritative personalities were invited or otherwise drawn to the city. These figures were highly influential on the people of Esfahan and the Safavid monarchy. Some of the pivotal figures in the School of Esfahan are summarised below.

Sheikh al-Bahā’ī was a polymath who combined religious sciences, architectural engineering, mathematics and astronomy in his writings. He was also \textit{Sheikh al-Islām} and so had high political and social standing. However, we have no information about him having a study circle in teaching rational sciences (such as teaching Avicenna’s \textit{al-Shifā’}) or authoring an extensive book on philosophy. Mīr Finderiskī was also prominent in this time,\textsuperscript{258} and his student Aqā Ḫusain Khwānşārī

\textsuperscript{255} Rizvi presents an accurate account of the harsh opposition to philosophers and Sufis during the Safavid era. See Sajjad Rizvi, “The takfīr of the Philosophers (and Sufis) in Safavid Iran,” in \textit{Accusations of Unbelief in Islam: A Diachronic Perspective on Takfīr}, ed. Camilla Adang, Hassan Ansari, Maribel Fierro and Sabine Schmidtke (Leiden: Brill, 2016), 244–69.

\textsuperscript{256} This can be seen throughout the works of Nasr and Aminrazavi. See Nasr and Aminrazavi, \textit{An Anthology of Philosophy in Persia}, vol. 5.

\textsuperscript{257} See Soheil F. Afnan, \textit{Avicenna: His Life and Works} (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1958), 71. For an interesting study on Avicenna’s influence, by which he can be seen to create the blueprints for the formation of the philosophical school of Esfahan, see Mehdi Imāmī Jum’eh, \textit{Sayr Tahawwulī Maktab-e Esfahan az Ibn Šinā tā Mullā Šadrā}, 25–38.

\textsuperscript{258} For a detailed biography of Mīr Finderiskī, see Ḫusain Kalbāsī Ashtari, \textit{Mīr Ḥekmat: dar bayā ḥwālī, āthār wa ārā’-ye Ḥakīm Abū al-Qāsim Mīr Finderiskī}. 

\textsuperscript{255} Rizvi presents an accurate account of the harsh opposition to philosophers and Sufis during the Safavid era. See Sajjad Rizvi, “The takfīr of the Philosophers (and Sufis) in Safavid Iran,” in \textit{Accusations of Unbelief in Islam: A Diachronic Perspective on Takfīr}, ed. Camilla Adang, Hassan Ansari, Maribel Fierro and Sabine Schmidtke (Leiden: Brill, 2016), 244–69.

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(1016/1608–1099/1688 AH/CE) mentions that he taught *al-Shifā*.

Mir Finderiskī was considered a Peripatetic philosopher, adhering purely to the Avicennian philosophical tradition and clearly nowhere as innovative as Mir Dāmād. He was not profoundly knowledgeable in religious sciences, nor was he a master jurist. This appears to leave Mir Dāmād as the sole expert in the rational sciences during this era of the school. Regarding the relationship between Mir Dāmād and Mir Finderiskī, we know that both were in Esfahan during this time, but nothing has yet been uncovered about the extent of their relationship. The claim that Mir Finderiskī studied under Mir Dāmād (notably mentioned in an important Safavid *tadhkira* [biographical dictionary]) requires further investigation.

Of course, there were also influential scholars outside of the School of Esfahan during this time; for example, Muḥammad Taqī al-Majlīsī and his student Mullā ʿAbdullah Shūshṭarī (d. 1021/1612 AH/CE), both of whom were against philosophy. Another eminent figure was Sheikh Lutfullāh al-Maisī al-ʿAmelī (d. 1032/1623 AH/CE), a great jurist and very close friend of Mir Dāmād, who migrated from Qazwin to Esfahan after his daughter was married to Shah Abbas I. Younger

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259 See Mirza ʿAbdulāh Afandī al-Esfahānī, *Riyād al-ʿUlāmāʾ*, 5: 499. Jūyā Jāhānbakhsh, in *Muʿallīm Thālīth*, makes reference to an interesting figure by the name of Sayyid ʿAlī ibn Muhammad Imāmī ʿUraḍī Esfahānī who lived in the twelfth century AH and was a student of ʿAllāmā al-Majlīsī, Mir Finderiskī and Mir Dāmād. He translated Avicenna’s *al-Shifāʾ* and *al-Ishārāt* to Persian, and he mentions in his glosses of these translated books that he attended lessons of these books with Mir Finderiskī and Mir Dāmād. See Jūyā Jāhānbakhsh, *Muʿallīm Thālīth*, 95. For details of ʿUraḍī’s translations, see Abū al-Faḍl Ḥāfezīyān Bābūlī, “Nuskheh-ye Aḵsī,” *Mīrāṭ-e Shahāb* 52 (Summer 1387 SY): 91–92.

260 Note that this prevailing view has been challenged by Husain Kalbāšī Ashṭarī in his book *Mīr Hekmat* and his paper “Mir Finderiskī, a Peripatetic, or Illuminationist Philosopher?,” *Hekmat va Falsafe 5*, no. 2 (August 2009): 79–96. Ashṭarī argues that the available evidence does not allow us to pinpoint exactly what trend of rational thought Mir Finderiskī was affiliated with.

261 This has been explained by Ashtiyānī in his introduction to a commentary on one of Mir Finderiskī’s poems. See ʿAbās Sharīf Dārābī, *Tuhfat al-Murād: Sharḥ Qāṣīda-ye Mīr Finderiskī*, introduction, 1–2.


264 See Mehdi Imāmī Junʿeh, *Sayr Taḥawwuli Maktab-e Esfahān az Ibn Sinā tā Mullā Ṣadrā*, 180–85. Mir Dāmād presented serious opposition to Shūshṭarī, not personally, but in his scientific approach and ḥadith outlook. An example of Mir Dāmād attempting to resolve this tension and visiting Shūshṭarī while the latter was sick can be seen in Iskandar Baig Munshi, *Ṭārikh ʿAlam Arāyeh Abbāsī*, 2: 233.

265 The famous mosque and *madrasah* in Esfahan, Lutfullāh Mosque, is named after him. This masterpiece of architecture was built by Shah Abbas I and dedicated to his father-in-law, Sheikh Lutfullāh.

philosophers included Mullā Rajab ʿAli Tabrīzī (d. 1080/1669 AH/CE), a student of Mir Finderiskī, thereby making him Mir Dāmād’s student’s student, and Rajab ʿAli Tabrīzī, a student and vehement critic of Mullā Ṣadrā267 (e.g., rejecting his theory of substantial motion268).269

In general, although the philosophical figures of Safavid Esfahan were not in complete agreement and did not share the same philosophical system, there were numerous distinctive commonalities—this being a likely reason for the endurance of the ‘School of Esfahan’ term. The Safavid philosophers combined the rational and transmitted sciences (jāmiʿ al-maʿālūt wa al-manqūl), being both jurists and philosophers. They emphasised the challenge and concern of relating philosophy to religion, using the Qurʾān and hadith as a fundamental source. Their collective thought (and the era in general) was distinguished by scientific innovation and creativity, as well as the ascendancy of Twelver Shi’a. They were all also politically active, and most held high political offices, such as Sheik Khalīṣ.270 The prolific and innovative output of philosophical thought and accompanying cultural, religious and social developments of this time distinguished this era—and, thus, the term ‘School of Esfahan’ may still be justifiably used, while noting its etymology and chronological and geographical restrictions. Of course, as stressed throughout this thesis, Mir Dāmād stood out above all others as the most influential personality and scholar of this era. His philosophical system, al-Ḥikmat al-Yamāniya, is detailed in the next section.

1.3.2 Mir Dāmād’s Philosophical System

Of the many intellectual disciplines in which Mir Dāmād specialised, he is most distinguished by his excellence in the rational sciences (al-ʿulūm al-ʿaqliyah). Prior


268 This, along with other important information about Rajab ʿAli Tabrīzī, is mentioned in a biography titled Qisas al-Khaghānī, written by Waliqulī Baig Shamlū (1035–1085 AH), who was considered the historian of Shah Abbas II. See Waliqulī ibn Dāwūdqulī Shamlū, Qisas al-Khaghānī, ed. Sayyid Ḥasan Ṣādāt Naṣerī (Tehran: Sazmān Chār wa Intishārāt-e Wezārat Farhang wa Irshād Islāmī, 1992), 2: 47.

269 Despite such criticism and his being in the next generation of philosophers, Rajab ʿAli Tabrīzī is commonly considered to be in the School of Esfahan. For a recent work on this topic, see Jābbar Amīnī, Mullā Rajab ʿAli Tabrīzī wa Maktāb-e Falsafiye Esfahān (Mullā Rajab ʿAli Tabrīzī and the Philosophical School of Esfahan) (Tehran: Intishārāt-e Mawlā, 1398 SY).

270 These points and more are detailed in Mehdi Imanī Jum’eh, Sayr Tahawwulī Maktāb-e Esfahān az Ibn Sinā tā Mullā Ṣadrā.
to the Safavid era, a primary focus of philosophy was to integrate religion and philosophy. Substantial progress was made in this area by Farabi and Avicenna until theologians challenged their efforts. The introduction of other forms of philosophy, especially those presented by Suhrawardī and his School of Illumination, gave fresh impetus to these efforts.

Mīr Dāmād initiated a new milestone in Islamic philosophy and prepared the ground for his student Mullā Ṣadrā’s school. What Mīr Dāmād achieved in his philosophical framework was not a simple imitation or criticism of former philosophical schools; he created an entirely independent and unique philosophical system. His approach to philosophy was based on al-Ḥikmat al-Yamānīya, ‘Yemeni wisdom’. This can be interpreted as philosophy guided by the revelation of the Prophets and divine inspiration. In other words, it is a faith-based philosophy inspired by revelation and the Prophets. According to Corbin, Yemen symbolises the right, or Oriental, side of the valley in which Moses heard the call of God; therefore, it represents divine illumination. The left side, the Occident, represents the opaqueness of rationalism unguided by revelation.⁷¹

This is the title Mīr Dāmād chose for his philosophical discipline. It is based on a Prophetic tradition, ‘Faith is Yamānī, and Wisdom is Yamānī’ (al-Īmān yamānī wa al-ḥikma yamānīya).⁷² In other words, faith and wisdom originate from the Prophets. The word yamānī has been interpreted to mean numerous things, from Yemen the country to yamīn (‘right’), but the relevant meaning here is from the word yumm (یَمْن), which means blessings or blessed. Therefore, an accurate translation of the expression ḥikma yamānī is ‘Prophetic wisdom’. In a similar vein, Muḥammad Bāqir al-Majlisī (1616–1698 CE)—a traditionalist who lived during the Safavid dynasty, contemporary to Mīr Dāmād, and author of the largest hadīth encyclopaedia Bihār al-Anwār (Oceans of Lights)—refers to the source of Shiʿa Imām sayings as the ‘gardens of yamānī wisdom’.⁷³ Major Shiʿa philosophers, from the commencement of the School of Esfahan onwards, believed that philosophy and divine religion (or revelation) were aligned, which is why philosophers in this era were also mujtahids. They regarded the accurate formulation of sharīʿah and philosophy as both

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⁷² Muḥammad ibn Yaʿqūb al-Kulainī, al-Kūfī (Tehran: Dār al-Kutub al-Islāmiya, 1986), 8: 70. The Arabic text for this is: الإِیمَانُ يَمَانُ وَالْحِكْمَةُ يَمَانِیَة
dependent on divine wisdom, or theosophy.\textsuperscript{274} An individual endowed with \textit{ḥikma} had a divine and Prophetic attribute, which meant he could know the secrets of existence and creation.

Mir Dāmād focused on designing philosophical issues according to the Qur’an and \textit{ḥadīth}. He would use a specific topic from a verse or a tradition, seeing it as a source of pure knowledge, import it as a philosophical problem and then discuss it. He was the first to use such a methodology and place it within the formula of a philosophical issue.\textsuperscript{275} This is where being a \textit{mujtahid} and having familiarity with the Qur’an and \textit{ḥadīth} carries more importance for Mir Dāmād, which is why he and his students in the School of Esfahan emphasised the transmitted sciences.

‘The firmly grounded philosophers’ (\textit{al-hukamā’ al-rèsikhīn}), according to Mir Dāmād, were guided by Prophetic wisdom and so were their sound arguments.\textsuperscript{276} He stood firm in this while also promoting reason and rationality as the most powerful instrument for finding the truth. The famous Sufi poet Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī (1207–1273 CE) criticised the philosophers on this basis:

\begin{quote}
The leg of the syllogists is a wooden one,

A wooden leg is very infirm.\textsuperscript{277}
\end{quote}

He also said:

\begin{quote}
If the intellect could discern the (true) way in this question,

Fakhr Rāzī would be an adept in religious mysteries.\textsuperscript{278}
\end{quote}

Mir Dāmād, who considered reason an essential foundation of his philosophical system, wrote a poem refuting the above:

\begin{quote}
O thou who hast said that reasoning is like a wooden leg
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{274} Muḥammad Riḍā Zādhūsh, \textit{Ḍidār bā Faylasūfān Sepāhān}, 93.
\textsuperscript{275} Examples for this can be seen in \textit{al-Qabasāt}, 469–70, 476–77.
\textsuperscript{276} \textit{al-Qabasāt}, 174. Mir Dāmād often uses the term \textit{rāṣīkh} (‘firmly grounded’) to refer to those philosophers, mystics and thinkers whose arguments and positions he sees as confirmed by prophetic wisdom. He states that “their station in knowledge is that of the highest station of the knowers” (\textit{al-Qabasāt}, 255). For additional examples, see \textit{al-Qabasat}, 40, 59, 118, 202, 332, 436.
- Otherwise Fakhr al-Dīn Rāzī would have no peer -
Thou hast not distinguished between intellect and fantasy,
Do not reproach demonstration, O thou who hast not understood correctly.279

The importance of this is that although Mīr Dāmād does not dismiss mystical witnessing and shuhūd, he differentiates between this and rational arguments.

Under the common classification Islamic philosophers used for philosophical schools, Mīr Dāmād was considered a Peripatetic philosopher, and probably the last of them. He did have Ishrāqī inclinations, as some scholars have noted,280 but not in his philosophical methodology which was purely rational. Important to point out is that Mīr Dāmād was not an Ishrāqī in the Suhrwardian tradition but, rather, was influenced by the illumination of Plato. Mīr Dāmād considered his theoretical views to be completely different and unique, but on the practical side, he highly honoured and respected some of the early philosophers. He saw the likes of Plato as divine (ilāhī),281 and his search was for Shi‘ī Ishrāqī shuhūd.282 This is because Mīr Dāmād believed that previous philosophies were incomplete and not matured enough, and certainly not in accordance with the Shi‘ī tradition.283 He saw the Greek philosophy as having been abrogated and his Yamānī philosophy as the abrogator.284

Mīr Dāmād’s most significant work, Kitāb Qabāsāt Ḥaqq al-Yaqīn fi Hudūth al-‘Alam (The Book of Blazing Brands285 of True Certainty on the Creation of the World), is better known by its short title Kitāb al-Qabāsāt (The Book of Blazing Brands). His other well-known book (in Persian) is al-Jadhawāt (Particles of Fire). These titles and sub-titles in his other books and treatises clarify that Mīr Dāmād favoured

279 Mīr Dāmād, Diwān Ishrāq, 77. Also quoted in Nasr, Islamic Philosophy from its Origin to the Present, 40.
281 Mīr Dāmād refers to Plato as the divine (al-ilāhī) in many of his books. See, e.g., Mīr Dāmād, The Book of Blazing Brands, 491. In Jadhawāt, he refers to Plato as the leader of Greeks, and also divine. See Mīr Dāmād, Jadhawāt wa Mawāqīt, wa Mawāqīt, 119.
282 This can be clearly seen in his book al-Jadhawāt.
283 For examples of Mīr Dāmād highlighting the incompleteness of Greek philosophy, see Mīr Dāmād, al-Šīrāt al-Mustaqīm, 118; Mīr Dāmād, Muṣannafāt Mīr Dāmād, 1: 10. A clear message of how his philosophy was more complete than Greek philosophy can be found in Mīr Dāmād, al-Ufuq al-Mubīn, 156.
284 See Mīr Dāmād, Muṣannafāt Mīr Dāmād, 1: 189. See also 332, 454 (here he says the Yamānī philosophy is the true philosophy).
285 Also translated as Glowing Embers, Sparkles of Fire and Live Coals. See Netton, “Suhrawari’s Heir?,” 229.
images of light, adopted from Ishrāqi philosophy. However, this favourable portrayal does not extend to Ishrāqi beliefs; Mir Dāmād’s writings in philosophy have their own unique style that stems from reason and rational arguments alone.

Mir Dāmād believed the previous philosophical trends were insufficient and incomplete. They did not realise a comprehensive and correct worldview that, he felt, must necessarily consider not only intellectual foundations but also divinely inspired religious teachings. He proposed a new philosophical system, a rational system that could fulfil the purpose of explaining existence using the methods of Peripatetic philosophy while also conforming to religion and the Twelver Shi’i tradition in its respect for Prophetic wisdom.286

Nevertheless, Mir Dāmād greatly benefited from all the ancient philosophical schools.287 He admired Aristotle and Plato,288 and his criticisms of their views were accompanied by long discussions/acknowledgements of their contributions. He similarly quoted and discussed other philosophers who had influenced him, such as al-Fārābī, Avicenna289 and al-Ghazālī, navigating and dissecting their theories and principles.290 He also frequently mentions and harshly critiques Fakhr Rāzī. Mir Dāmād sought to benefit from all existing philosophies, as conflicting as they were. Nasr explains:

And so with such figures as Mir Dāmād and Šadr al-Dīn Shīrāzī, usually known as Mullā Šādra, an intellectual edifice which has its basis in the

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287 Ancient Persia also richly contributed to philosophical thought, and Muslim philosophers (including Suhrawardi, Mir Dāmād and Mullā Šādra) benefitted from this heritage. On the topic of eternity and the createdness of the world, see Seyyed Hossein Nasr and Mehdi Aminrazavi, eds. An Anthology of Philosophy in Persia, vol. 1, From Zoroaster to ‘Umar Khayyām (London: I.B. Taurus, 2008), 53–87 (which shares a dialogue between a learned Zoroastrian philosopher and Muslim jurists regarding philosophical matters, including creation).

288 He referred to Aristotle as ‘The Master of Peripatetics’, and to Plato as ‘Plato the Noble’ or ‘Plato the Divine Theosopher’.

289 Referring to Farabi as ‘the partner in leadership’, ‘the partner in teaching’ (e.g., al-Qabasāt, 30, 163, 193) and referring to Avicenna as ‘the partner in leadership’ and ‘the leader of the philosophers of Islam’ (e.g., al-Qabasāt, 77, 164, 176).

290 This was at a time when the hostility towards philosophy still existed after what al-Ghazali had introduced in his book Incoherence of the Philosophers. Numerous books were written attempting to discredit philosophy and Avicenna in particular, so much so that his famous book al-Shiqa’ (The Healing) was derisively called al-Shiqa’ (The Wretched). For further information, see Mehdi Mohaghegh’s introduction in ‘Abdullah Nūrānī, ed., Musanifīt Mir Dāmād (Works of Mir Dāmād) (Tehran: International Colloquium on Cordoba and Isfahan, University of Tehran, 2003), 14.
teachings of Ibn Sīna, Suhravardī and Ibn ‘Arabī and also upon the specific tenets of Shi‘ism as found in the Qur‘an and the traditions of the Prophet and Imams reached its completion. A synthesis is created which reflects a millennium of Islamic intellectual life.291

The solutions that Mīr Dāmād presented in response to the challenging and seemingly irreconcilable arguments of philosophers and theologians reveal his innovative and creative mind. He went beyond the status quo of traditional Islamic sciences and built a new system that reintroduced the necessity of reason and philosophy cohering with religion and faith. He brought harmony between the rational sciences and religion. Within philosophy itself, he combined elements of Peripateticism, Platonism, Suhrawardi’s Illuminationism and Shi‘i Islamic teachings in a new synthesis under his Yamānī-inspired philosophy. Through his critical analysis of these schools and clarification of the message of faith and prophecy, Mīr Dāmād was able to reconcile these diverse ideologies.

This rendered the rational sciences more acceptable to religious scholars and the general populace, removing taboos. Mīr Dāmād wanted people to become familiar with these topics, as difficult and complex as they were. His synthesis removed many misconceptions people held. In addition, his being both a mujtahid and a traditionalist (muḥaddith) enabled him to be acknowledged and accepted in multiple circles, and his encompassing and mastering of the ma‘qūl and the manqūl meant he was highly revered by philosophers and theologians. Mīr Dāmād’s Yamānī philosophy and the School of Esfahan had a central focus on Qur‘anic verses and the narrations of the Prophet and the Imāms. They believed these sources to be fundamental and that objective information must thus be obtained through these means. For Mīr Dāmād, the importance of his ījtihādī side is in it defining the comprehensive method of his epistemological approach.

In his own words, Mīr Dāmād described his philosophical system as a God-given sign and a divine blessing, favouring him over all other philosophers before him. In his treatise al-Taqdisat (Sanctifications), scribed by Mullā Ṣadrā, he says that his superiority over his predecessors in philosophy is because of his maturing of the origins of wisdom (ḥikma), the assembling of the disorder of knowledge and the

strengthening of the glorious faith-based Yamāni wisdom. 292 His motive for establishing a philosophical school was to formalise and spread a God-centred, faith-based, Prophetic-inspired, Shi‘i-influenced method of rational thought and wisdom.

Rizvi comments:

Mir Damad’s conception of philosophy is thus heavily influenced not only by the Theologia Aristotelis, but by a Prophetic approach to the nature of reasoning. The boundaries between philosophy and theology are deliberately blurred; he weaves together precedent from forebears such as Avicenna and al-Suhrawardi as well as from scripture alongside his own philosophical arguments.293

Mir Dāmād sought to eliminate any deficiencies and remove any misconceptions in the area of rational sciences, conforming these to religion.294 He believed al-Ḥikmat al-Yamāniya to be a system of wisdom produced by Islam and inclusive of various trends that required dilution and completion, which he claimed to have done.295 The Yamāni-based philosophical system of Mir Dāmād is composed of three main elements derived from former schools and developed and merged in an unprecedented way. These are described in the following sections.

1.3.2.1 Peripatetic Philosophy

The Peripatetic school was founded by Aristotle in the fourth century BC and was based on rational methods and demonstrative arguments discovering what is true. Its adherents believed this was the only way to obtain absolute certainty about the essences of things and understand the relations that connected them and the forms of their existence.

This school progressed in the hands of Islamic philosophers, who commentated on and added new dimensions to it. The first among these were Farabi and Avicenna, who complemented this school’s teachings with many philosophical principles and

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294 See Mehdi Imāmī Jum‘eh, Sayr Tahawwuli Maktab-e Eṣfahān az Ibn Sīnā tā Mullā Ṣadrā, 120.
295 Ibid., 121.
innovations. They focused on rendering Aristotelian philosophy in such a way that it would conform to Islamic precepts.296

The progress of this school reached its high point in the hands of Mīr Dāmād, who refined its principles in the best of ways. He spent years studying, researching and teaching Avicennian texts and grasped all their concepts fully. He understood their strengths and weaknesses, and solved the problems he saw in Peripatetic philosophy. Some of these problems arose from the school’s use of rational methodology, lacking any application of Illuminative methodology. It was incomplete in its application of philosophical principles to religious texts and did not seek conformity between them. Mīr Dāmād’s most crucial criticisms (which led to his reform of the Peripatetic tradition) related to creation and eternity, and these are detailed in Chapter 3. Nonetheless, Mīr Dāmād remained loyal in his adherence to fundamental Peripatetic principles and his belief in the superiority of reason over other elements of ideological thought. His contributions and enduring influence arguably rank him as the greatest of the Peripatetic philosophers.

One of Mīr Dāmād’s primary goals was to exonerate the pillars of Islamic Peripatetic philosophy—Farabi and Avicenna—from takfīr. Mīr Dāmād praised these philosophers, referenced their works and used their books as textbooks for teaching. Prior to Mīr Dāmād, the main philosophical texts were heavily influenced by theology, focusing on theological texts and the commentaries of ‘Alī al-Qūshajī (d. 879/1474 AH/CE). Mīr Dāmād and the School of Esfahan returned the philosophers’ focus to the works of Avicenna, primarily al-Shīfā’. While Mīr Dāmād simultaneously criticised and praised Avicennian philosophy, he certainly did not distance himself from it; rather, his efforts were directed towards expanding and reforming it.297

The result was an increasingly positive scholarly atmosphere and portrayal of Farabi and Avicenna. For example, ‘Alī ibn Faḍlullah al-Jīlānī (d. 1070/1659? AH/CE), who was a student of either Mīr Dāmād or Mullah Ṣadrā, taught Mīr Dāmād’s

296 Awjābī, Mīr Dāmād; Bunyanguzār Ḥikmat Yamānī, 99.
philosophical works, but his magnum opus *Tawfiq al-Taṭbiq* (*The Success of Proving*) focused on strongly defending Avicenna and proving that he was a Twelver Shi’a.\(^{298}\)

### 1.3.2.2 Illuminative Philosophy

The Illuminative philosophical system was founded by Shihāb al-Dīn al-Suhrawardī. Although Suhrawardī had been trained in Peripatetic philosophy and used its methodology, his system depends primarily on esoteric inner knowledge and theophanic visions acquired through spiritual exercises.\(^{299}\) Illuminationism was a progression from pure Peripatetic philosophy in that it accommodated a wider spectrum of ways of knowing to understand cosmological principles, integrating these with revelation and intuitive knowledge.

Even though Mīr Dāmād directed many criticisms at this school and refuted many of its criticisms of the Peripatetic school, he was influenced by Illuminative terminology.\(^{300}\) This influence is also seen in the works of many Sufi writers, whose ideas were popular at that time. Mīr Dāmād used the pseudonym *Ishrāq* (Illumination) when writing poetry, which may also indicate the influence of the Suhrawardian school.\(^{301}\) However, it must be emphasised that his excessive use of *Ishrāqi*-related terms did not impede his philosophical style, and he preserved his Peripatetic essence and rational demonstrative methodology.

### 1.3.2.3 Shi’i Islamic Teachings

Mīr Dāmād was influenced by orthodox Shi’i doctrines, as reflected in his theories and writings. Besides excelling in the rational sciences, he was also revered as a


\(^{299}\) For a detailed account of Suhrawardi and his philosophy of Illumination, see John Walbridge and Hossein Ziai’s introduction to their translation of Suhrawardi’s most celebrated book *Ḥikmat al-Ishrāq*: Suhrawardi, *Ḥikmat al-Ishrāq, The Philosophy of Illumination*, trans. with introduction, commentary and notes by John Walbridge and Hossein Ziai (Utah: Brigham Young University Press, 1999).

\(^{300}\) This has been previously mentioned, and we can see such influence reflected in the titles Mīr Dāmād selected for his books. Aside from than *al-Qabasāt*, there are *al-Ufuq al-Mubīn* (*The Clear Horizon*), *al-Jadhawāt* (*Particles of Fire*), *al-Imādāt* (*Flickerings*), *Taqwīm al-Imān* (*The Strengthening of Faith*), *Mashrīq al-Anwār* (*Lights of the East*) and more. Henry Corbin notes that despite the lofty-sounding titles, they are serious philosophical textbooks (*Corbin, History of Islamic Philosophy*, 339).

\(^{301}\) Corbin, *History of Islamic Philosophy*, 339.
scholar in numerous traditional (naqli) sciences. He was a great jurist, an exegete (mufassir) of the Qur’an and a traditionalist (muḥaddith). He exceeded the ability of all around him, even prevailing over the strong Akhbari influences of the time, such as that of Allamah Majlisi (who was also based in Esfahan and a contemporary of the School of Esfahan).

Mir Dāmād found support for his ideas by using the truths about existence and the world elaborately discussed in the Qur’an, Prophetic traditions and teachings of the Shi’i Imāms. He tried to align reason and religion to the greatest extent possible and applied philosophical principles to religious texts, more so than any other prior Islamic philosopher. He embraced the traditional Islamic belief that the intellect is the inner prophet and the prophet sent by God is the outer intellect, perceiving religion and reason as two sides of the same coin. Worth mentioning here is that in contrast to Sunnism, mainstream Shi’i religious teachings in general extol the status of the intellect and invite people to use reason and intellect.302

Just as Mir Dāmād was influenced by Ishrāqism but did not allow it to change his philosophical system, his strong adherence to religious teachings and their influence on him did not turn him into a theologian whose sole aim was to demonstrate and argue for religious doctrines or dispute evidence against them. Mir Dāmād depended primarily on rational demonstrative arguments (burhān) to discover reality intellectually and then applied the outcome to religious texts. This methodology is clear in most of his philosophical works. The influence of religious teachings is seen in the way he used his intellect to examine religious texts and his not depending on pure intellectual reflection on sensible things (in contrast to Aristotle and the Peripatetics). He examined theoretical information regarding existence and creation, and from this emerged new insights.303

Mir Dāmād’s own Shi’i background certainly influenced his philosophical system, which sought to apply philosophy to Shi’i religious teachings. For example, in numerous theological discussions on badā‘ or between ta’til and tashbih of God’s attributes, he selects the midway of amr bayn al-amrayn. Interestingly, Mir Dāmād


would quote the chain of narrators of a narration, often in the middle of a philosophical book, like in the Fourth Qbas in *al-Qabasāt*. There was no precedent for this style that allowed for religious texts to be positioned and engaged within a philosophical discussion.

### 1.3.3 Mir Dāmād Contributions

Mir Dāmād’s development of an independent philosophical system entailed and built on many contributions in logic, philosophy and theology. The theories he presented were fundamentally important to the structure of his Yamānī philosophy. Some of these were Mir Dāmād’s innovations, while others were either uncommon theories distinctive to him or solutions to certain problems in the rational sciences. The following sections list some of his contributions, separated into his contributions to logic, philosophy and theology.

#### 1.3.3.1 Contributions to Logic

Mir Dāmād was precise in explaining the issues related to logic and narrating what previous logicians had mentioned. Most of Mir Dāmād’s unique views on certain logical concepts are provided in his book *al-Ufuq al-Mubīn*. These include:

1. The subject of logic and distinguishing between secondary logical and philosophical intelligibles (*al-maʿqūlāt*). Mir Dāmād believed that secondary logical intelligibles were attributable to primary intelligibles based on their mental existence, whereas their attribution to secondary philosophical intelligibles was in external existence or more general than that. Mir Dāmād claims that prior to him, nobody had made this special distinction and it is one of his innovative ideas.

2. Dividing the simple whetherness (*haliyah basitah*) into real (*haqiqī*) and common (*mashhūr*). The simple whetherness asks about the very existence of something, and compound whetherness (*haliyah murakkabah*)

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304 There are two editions of *al-Ufuq al-Mubīn*. The first was edited by 'Abdullah Nūrānī (Tehran: University of Tehran + International Colloquium on Cordoba and Isfahan, vol. 2, 2006). The second, which is more recent and extensive, was edited by Hāmid Nājī Esfahānī (Tehran: Mīrāth-e Maktūb, 2013).


pries into proving something for something else. In both cases, existence is looked at as far as being a link (rābit) and not a predicate. Mir Dāmād divided hal first into simple and compound, and then divided simple hal into real and common, believing that the real simple whetherness is asking about something in its reality in its essence and the determination (taqarrur) of its quiddity (māhiyah). This mental level has no medium. The common hal is asking about something either in its existential level, or in its nafs al-amr, or externally. This view of Mir Dāmād is of course dependent on his believe in the principality of quiddity.

3. Discussing in detail the subject of position (wad') and prediction in propositions.

4. Researching the concept of nafs al-amr and the levels of the mind in an innovative way. In explicating the concept, Mir Dāmād uses the same three metaphysical terms of sarmad, dahr and zamān in relation to nafs al-amr, referring to the most encompassing level of reality. Mir Dāmād also explains that this reality of existence exists in the dahr realm as well, in the broader sense. He says that although there is a passing of time and change, but in the core of reality and nafs al-amr it in actuality and simultaneously exists in dahr.

5. The term ‘connective existence’ (wujūd rābit) being defined in two ways: one as a predicate, and the other as a link between the subject and predicate in a proposition. Mir Dāmād gave his own explanation on the difference between the rābit and the rābīṭ, and saw them to be separate. He saw that connective existence was opposite existence in itself, and the other connecting (rābīṭ) existence meant existence in something else, which was between the subject and the predicate of a proposition.

Mir Dāmād presented other interesting logical discussions intertwined with logic and philosophy. When Mir Dāmād discussed logical precepts, he did so for the

308 Mir Dāmād, al-Ufuq al-Mubīn, 106.
309 Ibid., 52.
311 Mir Dāmād, The Book of Blazing Brands, 10.
312 Ibid. 428.
313 Mir Dāmād, al-Taqdisāt, 82.
314 Sa’id Ahmadi, Barkhi az Mulābāzāt-e Mantiqi-ye Mir Dāmād, 7.
316 Ibid., 113.
purpose of connecting them to his objectives of proving God’s existence and strengthening his theory of meta-temporal origination. An example for this is the unique angle Mir Dāmād used in discussing the arguments of deduction (burhān limmī) and induction (burhān innī). He believed that God’s existence is among the most self-evident of things, and recognising the Origin of existence is also clear, certain and obvious.\footnote{Mir Dāmād, al-Taqdisāt, 148.}

1.3.3.2 Contributions to Philosophy

Mir Dāmād made many important contributions to philosophy, the most notable of which are detailed below.

1.3.3.2.1 The Principality of Quiddity (āšālat al-māhiya)

Quiddity is the topic of an ongoing dispute among philosophers, theologians and mystics: is existence principal (āṣīl) or is it quiddity (māhiya)?\footnote{Mir Dāmād, al-Ufūq al-Mubīn, 293. See also Mir Dāmād, al-Taqdisāt, 147. For an interesting and detailed study on this, see Sayyid Muhammad Manāfiyān and Naṣrullah Ḥekmat, “ Shenāḵht Yaqūnī Mabda’ Hastī; Bāzkhwānī Didgāh Mir Dāmād,” Peyjūeshnāme-ye Falsafe-ye Din (Nāme-ye Ḥekmat) 12, no. 1 (23) (Spring/Summer 2014): 71–102.} Mir Dāmād was the first to deal with the topic exclusively and comprehensively.\footnote{Ibid., 65.} Mir Dāmād developed and elaborated on this topic, making it one of the foundations of his metaphysics. It also became the basis of a fundamental difference between his core view of āšālat al-māhiya and the opposing view of āšālat al-wujūd later adopted by Mullā Ṣadrā.\footnote{For details of Mullā Ṣadrā’s adoption of this view in contrast to the view held by his teacher Mir Dāmād, see Jari Kaukua, Self-Awareness in Islamic Philosophy: Avicenna and Beyond (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 162. Whether Mir Dāmād believed in the principality of quiddity or not has been an area of dispute. One view is that Mir Dāmād’s unique understanding of existence and taqarrur became the framework for Mullā Ṣadrā’s strong and clear view on principality of existence. Mūsawī Behbahānī is of the opinion that Mir Dāmād had a unique definition and specific explanation for the meaning of existence, and that he did not explicitly allude to āšālat al-māhiya. See: Sayyid ‘Alī Mūsawī Mudarris Behbahānī, Ḥakīm Astarābād: Mir Dāmād, 215–215. Also see: Sayyid Muhammad Khamenei, Mir Dāmād, 16. In contrast to this, among the contemporary scholars who strongly believe that Mir Dāmād explicitly adopted the view of principality of quiddity is my teacher Ayman Abdul-Khaleq who wrote his PhD dissertation and demonstrated how Mir Dāmād extensively supported and argued for āšālat al-māhiya. Abdul-Khaleq asserts that Mir Dāmād’s theory on existence was new and without precedent. See: Ayman Abdul-Khaleq, The fundamentality of existence or quiddity between Seyyid Mir Dāmād and his student Mullā Ṣadrā, translated into English by Zaid Alsalamı [The American University of London, 2007 (unpublished)].} Most Islamic philosophers believed that quiddity was fundamental and so self-evident that it did not need proof; thus, they did not present detailed or
accurate arguments on the topic. Mir Dəməd, however, discusses the topic at length in most of his philosophical works. He took the side of the principality of quiddity and argued for it strongly, refuting all the misconceptions surrounding it. Mir Dəməd’s ongoing discussion of the topic was likely prompted by his student Mullə Şərdə’s renunciation of the principality of quiddity in favour of the principality of existence. Mullə Şərdə went to great efforts to explain his position on the principality of existence, which Corbin has called the basis of a ‘revolution in Islamic thought’.

In his treatise al-Mukhtəsərət, Mir Dəməd gives elaborate detail on how he distinguishes between the concepts of existence and quiddity in the mind and in concrete reality. Mir Dəməd established the principality of quiddity or existence as a primary topic in Islamic philosophy, with these expanded on by later Islamic philosophers. This thesis will not examine the theory of the principality of quiddity any further, though the theory will be referred to as needed.

Important to mention here is that Mir Dəməd had an exceptionally unique view on wujūd and mawjūd, extending from his philosophical system of al-Hikmat al-Yəmənīya. Certain philosophical elements transpired from how Mir Dəməd understood existence, with emphasis on terms such as taqarrur, ja’l and məhiyə.  

1.3.3.2.2 Meta-Temporal Origination (al-ḥudūth al-dahrī)

Meta-temporal origination is the most famous of Mir Dəməd’s theories, referring to the coming-into-existence of the whole world after its absolute non-existence in perpetuity (dahr) and its perpetual (dahr) posteriority to the Creator in the real world. This is one of the most delicate and advanced philosophical subjects. Mir Dəməd wrote extensively on this issue, mainly in Kitāb al-Qəbəsət but also refers to it frequently in his other writings. Toshihiko Ituztə (1914–1993 CE) was among the

322 Contemporary Islamic philosopher Murtađə Muṭahharī believes that Mir Dəməd was the first to present this topic in such a way. See Sayyid Muḥammad Khamenei, Mir Dəməd, 160.
323 Ibid., 176.
324 Nasr, Şərd al-Dīn Shīrāzī and His Transcendent Theosophy, Background, Life and Works, 44.
325 Nasr, Islamic Philosophy from its Origin to the Present, 78.
326 Ibid.; Nasr, Şərd al-Dīn Shīrāzī and His Transcendent Theosophy, Background, Life and Works, 90.
327 Mir Dəməd, Muṣannfət Mir Dəməd, 1: 507.
first to write about Mîr Dâmad in English. He also wrote an introduction to Mehdi Mohaghegh’s edition of *al-Qabasat*. In this introduction, he briefly explains Mîr Dâmad’s conception of the world’s metaphysical structure in terms of the concept of time.\(^3\)\(^2\)\(^9\) *Dahr* is the meta-time that is the metaphysical dimension of all non-material things. It is where immaterial things exist and is an intermediary between the eternal existence of God and the temporal existence of material creation.\(^3\)\(^3\)\(^0\) Meta-temporal origination is the core subject of this thesis and will be extensively detailed in Chapter 3.

1.3.3.2.3 The Ten Peripatetic Categories

Mîr Dâmad, backed by his self-belief in his divinely-blessed ability to mature Islamic philosophy,\(^3\)\(^3\)\(^1\) reduced the famous ten Peripatetic categories (al-*ma’qūlât al-’ashr*) to two: substance (*jawhar*) and accident (*’araḍ*).\(^3\)\(^2\) Most philosophers, including Avicenna, believed in and espoused ten categories. In *al-Qabasât*, Mîr Dâmad discusses these two terms having two particular meanings,\(^3\)\(^3\)\(^3\) and in *Taqwîm al-Īmân*, he talks about the genus of the *’araḍ*.\(^3\)\(^3\)\(^4\) Of course, limiting the categories to two is considered a very rare view, opposite to what is commonly accepted, as Mîr Dâmad subsumed the bulk of Aristotelian categories under the rubric of *’araḍ*.\(^3\)\(^3\)\(^5\) Whether this topic is related to logic or metaphysics, Mîr Dâmad does not specify, and more importantly it does not have a direct impact upon the realm of *dahr*.

1.3.3.2.4 Motion and Time

Mîr Dâmad researched the subject of motion and time in a new way, most notably in *al-Ṣirāt al-Mustaqîm fi Rabt al-Hādith bi al-Qadîm* (*The Straight Path on Connecting the Created to the Eternal*). This book deals with the topic of meta-temporal

\(^2\) Ibid., 5.
\(^3\) Mîr Dâmad, *Jadhawāt wa Mawâqît*, 160.
\(^4\) Mîr Dâmad, *Jadhawāt wa Mawâqît*, 160. See also Awjabî, *Mîr Dâmad; Bûnyanguzûr Hîkmat Yamânî*, 127.
\(^6\) Mîr Dâmad, *Taqwîm al-Īmân*, 205.
\(^7\) Ibid.
origination, presenting arguments not mentioned in Kitāb al-Qabasāt, and discusses complex matters about the essence, quality and divisions of time.\textsuperscript{336}

1.3.3.2.5 A New Theory of the Knowledge of God

Mīr Dāmād presented a new theory that considered God to have comprehensive knowledge (i.e., be omniscient) before and after creation due to Him having knowledge through the presence of all particulars without delay and in equal measure.\textsuperscript{337} While Mīr Dāmād’s view was similar to that of Avicenna, his method was in accordance with the vessel (\textit{wiʿā}) of al-dahr, which is \textit{nafs al-amr}. In Mīr Dāmād’s philosophical system, God in His sempiternal realm encompasses the perpetual realm, all levels of perfection and existents in the perpetual realm and \textit{sarmad} realm. Thus, God, who perceives dahr, has access to all particulars without them changing or affecting Him because the process of His knowing is immediate (i.e., not sequential or succedent). This was Mīr Dāmād’s solution to the philosophical problem of God’s knowledge of particulars.\textsuperscript{338}

1.3.3.2.6 A Unique Understanding of Platonic Ideas

Mīr Dāmād believes that although the imaginal realm (\textit{‘alam al-mithil}) might be appealing to believe in, it is difficult to accept.\textsuperscript{339} He states that such a realm between the immaterial and the material cannot be proven by evidence.\textsuperscript{340} He criticises the concept of the imaginal realm, which then leads to him identifying four special interpretations for Platonic ideas.\textsuperscript{341} His elaboration on this shows the shortcomings of previous philosophers’ (incorrect) understandings of Platonic ideas and produces his own result (which accepts only the fourth interpretation). This is also where Mīr Dāmād engages with and refutes the thoughts of Suhrāwardī.\textsuperscript{342}

Other innovative metaphysical ideas presented by Mīr Dāmād include the threefold division of al-ḥudūth al-zamānī and the fourfold division of \textit{i’tibārāt} al-māhiyyah.\textsuperscript{343}


\textsuperscript{337} Sayyīd Muḥammad Khāmene’ī, Mīr Dāmād (Tehran: Bunyād Ḥekmat Islāmī Šadrā, 2000), 153.

\textsuperscript{338} Mīr Dāmād, \textit{Muṣannoḵāt Mīr Dāmād}, 1: 172.

\textsuperscript{339} Mīr Dāmād, \textit{Jadhawāt wa Mawāqīt}, 65–66.

\textsuperscript{340} Mīr Dāmād, \textit{The Book of Blazing Brands}, 174.

\textsuperscript{341} Ibid. Mīr Dāmād refutes three of the four interpretations.

\textsuperscript{342} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{343} See Mīr Dāmād, \textit{Muṣannoḵāt Mīr Dāmād}, 1: 583–84.
1.3.3.3 Contributions to Theology

Mīr Dāmād made numerous theological contributions. Besides his pure philosophical contributions, he also introduced philosophical precepts that can be used within theology. Some of his theological ideas and views are particularly important, especially considering the innovative angle from which Mīr Dāmād discussed them, where he delved into contextual analysis and correlated this with theological precepts advocated by the Shi‘a Imāms. Mīr Dāmād expressed his strong affiliation with Twelver Shi‘ism, and this can be seen in many of his writings (e.g., Muqaddimah Shā‘rī al-Najāt). He wrote numerous books and treatises on important theological topics that were both relevant and controversial during his time. One of these topics was al-badā‘, or revision of the Divine will, a fundamental belief in Shi‘i Islam. Mīr Dāmād wrote an extensive book on this titled Nibrās al-Diyā’ wa Tīswā‘ al-Sawā‘ fī Sharḥ Bāb al-Badā‘ wa Ithbāt Jadwā‘ al-Du‘ā’. He also had unique views on miracles. He believed that a miracle is a type of intervention or modifying in the senses or perception of an individual perceiver, and not in the natural realm. This shared perception is of course a part of the nafs, and therefore loftier and more noble than the natural realm, making the miracle even more special. The main theological topics to which Mīr Dāmād has contributed are:

- new interpretations of the problem of determinism and free will

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344 Mīr Dāmād himself wrote a commentary on this introduction, which was published independently in Sayyid Muhammad Bāqīr Mīr Dāmād, “Shā‘rī al-Najāt fi Abwāb al-Ibādat,” ed. Sayyid Muhammad Jawād Jalā’ī in Risālahay Khāṭi Fiqhī, ed. a group of scholars under the supervision of Sayyid Maḥmūd Hāshemī Shāhrūdī (Qom: Mu‘assasatul-Ma‘ārif Fiqh Islāmī bar Madhhab Aḥl al-Bayt, 1386 SY), 239–384.


347 See Mīr Dāmād, The Book of Blazing Brands, 492. See also Mīr Dāmād, Taqwim al-Imān, 201. For a further explanation by al-ʿAlawi, see al-ʿAlawi, Sharḥ al-Qabāsāt, 653.

348 A treatise written by Mīr Dāmād on this topic of Jabr and Tafwīd and his unique view on it has been edited and critiqued by Riḍā Bahīnjār and published in Nusūṣ Muʿāṣirah Journal 2, no. 8 (Autumn 2006): 273–88. Mīr Dāmād’s approach was that every action has an agent until it reaches the perfect and complete agent or cause, which is God. He believed that contingent beings not only need God for coming into existence, but also for their actions. The details of this discussions are also in his treatise Khalq al-A‘māl and in al-Iqādāt.


- the structure and meaning of the imaginary world (‘ālam al-khayāl)\(^{349}\)
- a new view on the concept of change in the divine will (badā’).\(^{350}\)

1.3.4 Mir Dāmād the Mystic

Mir Dāmād was highly devotional, living a very ascetic and spiritual life. This aspect of Mir Dāmād is not as apparent as it is in the life and works of his student Mullā Ṣadrā, mainly due to the fact that Mir Dāmād does not have a book exclusively in the field of ‘irfān. Further, each scholar adheres to a different methodology, and Mir Dāmād’s does not accord as easily with modern sensibilities.

It must be stated that Mir Dāmād does have ‘irfānī works, but his approach in these works is not the ‘irfānī style of writing—then in vogue and strongly influenced by the mystical school of Muḥyī al-Dīn Ibn ‘Arabī (558/1165–638/1240 AH/CE), and utilised by Mullā Ṣadrā. Mir Dāmād had his own unique style in his mystical works, based more on the Peripatetic and Illuminationist rational approach and moulded within the Twelver Shi‘ī tradition. The very titles of his books and their chapters demonstrate Mir Dāmād’s mystical leanings.\(^{351}\) At first glance, one would say that Mir Dāmād was influenced by Suhrawardī’s Illuminationist school of Ḥikmat al-Ishrāq, even choosing the pen name Ishrāq (Illumination) when writing poetry. However, as previously discussed, this influence does not appear to go beyond usage of similar terms that were also common in the works of many popular Sufi writers at that time.\(^{352}\)

One of Mir Dāmād’s works now considered as mystical is Jadhwāt wa Mawāqīt, on the topic of God’s self-manifestation or theophany (tajallī). In this book, Mir Dāmād discusses the variable levels of ontological existence—the microcosm and macrocosm—and other philosophical and theological issues. He also deals with numerology/lettrism (‘ilm al-ḥurūf) in this book as they pertain to theological matters.\(^{353}\) In Jadhwāt wa Mawāqīt, Mir Dāmād relates lettrism in particular to

\(^{349}\) Nasr, Islamic Philosophy from its Origin to the Present, 214. Although, arguably, this can be classified as a metaphysical issue.

\(^{350}\) Ibid., 214.

\(^{351}\) See fn. 300 of this chapter.

\(^{352}\) Mir Dāmād was critical of Suhrawardī and refuted him in al-Ufuq al-Mubīn by showing how weak his arguments were and the consequent fallacies. See Mir Dāmād, al-Ufuq al-Mubīn, 139, under the title of “Ḥikmah Ishrāqiya Mizāniyya.”

\(^{353}\) See Melvin-Koushki, “World as (Arabic) Text.” This paper elaborately discusses Mir Dāmād’s relationship with occultism and letterism. I have referred to Mir Dāmād and the occult in this chapter’s discussion and in other parts of this thesis as well. Another important point I have
cosmologically contextualising religious duties (*takālīf shar‘īyya*); so performed, these duties bear you away from the material world and into the metaphysical world—hence his focus on spiritual exercises, based on *dhikr*, a discipline presented in lettrist, that is to say occult-scientific, terms. As a lived example, one of Mīr Dāmād’s students and biographers, Quṭb al-Dīn al-Ishkawārī, reports on one of Mīr Dāmād’s secluded *dhikr* sessions, where he recited the invocations *yā ghani* (O All-sufficient) and *yā mughni* (O Enricher) and then experienced a spiritual unveiling (*kashf*).\(^{355}\)

Another of Mīr Dāmād’s philosophical–mystical works is *Khulsat al-Malakūt* (*The Trance of the Sovereign Realm*), in which he uses the mystical word ‘seizing’ (*khulsah*) to refer to a state of mystical trance in-between sleeping and being awake, where the physical body enters into deep inner calmness and spiritually ascends to connect to higher realms. In the beginning of *Khulsat al-Malakūt*, Mīr Dāmād explains a dream he had in which he was blessed with receiving arguments in support of his theory of meta-temporal origination (*al-ḥudūth al-dahrī*). He then details these arguments.\(^{356}\) In ‘*irfānī* terms, this would fall under the category of ‘unveiling and witnessing’ (*kashf wa shuhūd*).\(^{357}\)

In addition to this book, Mīr Dāmād wrote a short treatise titled *al-Khulsah* in which he describes a unique spiritual experience he had in the holy city of Qom. He says that in the year 1011 AH, he entered into a spiritual trance while facing the *qiblah* after his afternoon prayers and saw a powerfully illuminating light. He then saw a person, who something told him was Imām ʿAlī, behind who was the Prophet Muḥammad and the rest of the Imāms.\(^{358}\)

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\(^{354}\) Muḥammad ibn ʿAlī ibn ʿAbd al-Waḥḥāb Ishkuwarī, known as Quṭb al-Dīn, about whom we have no information regarding his date of birth or death, other than that he lived in the eleventh century AH. He is the author of the famous book *Mabhūb al-Qulūb* (*The Beloved by the Hearts*), which can be considered a book on the history of philosophy. (The first parts of it have been published by Mirāth-e Maktūb, edited by Ḥāmid ʿṢiddīqī and Ibrāhīm Daibājī [Tehran, 1378–1382 SY].) The portion about Mīr Dāmād has been published in the introduction of Mehdi Mohaghegh’s edition of *Kitāb al-Qabasāt*. Here, Quṭb al-Dīn gives Mīr Dāmād’s name as “Amīr Muḥammad Bāqīr al-Dāmād” (Introduction, 31).


\(^{357}\) The complete story is given in ʿAlī Khān al-Madānī, *Sulāfāt al-ʿAṣr*, ُ† Và.

their hands on his head and taught him a protective amulet (ḥirz) to recite.\textsuperscript{359} This and similar experiences recalled by Mīr Dāmād leave no doubt as to his mystical pursuits, which is to say nothing of his accompanying interest and expertise in talismans and amulets.\textsuperscript{360}

A standard topic in ‘īrľān is the arc of ascent and descent (qaws suʿūd/nuzūl), with the microcosm (al-ʿālam al-saghir) existing within the macrocosm (al-ʿālam al-kabir). Mīr Dāmād describes this mystical concept in this works using symbolism, with the intellect (al-ʿaqīl) being the sun, the self (al-nafs) being the moon, and the body being earth. The essence of the human nafs is able to benefit from both the microcosm and macrocosm, and, in the same way as planets have eclipses, a human can have an intellectual eclipse, where the material body can obstruct the radiance of the sun (the intellect) radiating onto the moon (the nafs).

There are many examples of such spiritual messages throughout Mīr Dāmād’s writings, even in the most philosophical of them. For example, in al-Ṣirāt al-Mustaqīm,\textsuperscript{361} when discussing how the self (al-nafs) is perceived, he quotes a hadīth qudsī, in which God told the Prophet Muḥammad, ‘Your most hostile enemy is your very self that is within you’. Mīr Dāmād then comments on this tradition.\textsuperscript{362} This book showcases Mīr Dāmād Yamānī wisdom approach—Mīr Dāmād makes reference to a Qur’ānic verse, a tradition from the Prophet, or the teachings of one of the Shi’ī Imāms, then elaborates on it, relating it to the philosophical or theological topic at hand. This allows deep philosophical concepts to be integrated with Shi’ī religious doctrine and spiritual discipline.\textsuperscript{363}

\textsuperscript{359} Muḥammad Bāqir Mīr Dāmād, al-Īmādāt, 632–33.
\textsuperscript{360} The book Mīr Dāmād Kabīr, which is on occult sciences and magic, is attributed to Mīr Dāmād, but there is no evidence to support this. For information related to this book, see Alireza Doostdar, “Impossible Occultists: Practice and Participation in an Islamic Tradition,” American Ethnologist 46, no. 2 (2019): 176–89.
\textsuperscript{361} This book, al-Ṣirāt al-Mustaqīm fi Rabḥ al-Ḥadīth bi al-Qadīm, deals not only with the topic of meta-temporal creation, where Mīr Dāmād presents arguments he had not mentioned in Kitāb al-Qabasāt, but also discusses complex matters about the essence, quality and divisions of time.
\textsuperscript{362} Mīr Dāmād, al-Ṣirāt al-Mustaqīm, 337.
\textsuperscript{363} Major Shi’ī philosophers, from the commencement of the School of Esfahan onwards, believed that philosophy and divine religion (or revelation) were aligned, which is why philosophers in this era were also mujāhīds. They regarded the accurate formulation of sharʿīh and philosophy as both dependent on divine wisdom, or theosophy (Muḥammad Riḍā Zādhūsh, Didār bā Faylasūfān Sepāhān, 93). An individual endowed with ḥikma had a divine and Prophetic attribute, which meant he could know the secrets of existence and creation. Another important issue that Mīr Dāmād focused on was to design philosophical issues according to the Qur’ān and hadīth. He would use a specific topic from a verse or a tradition, seeing it as a source of pure knowledge, and then import it as a philosophical problem and discuss it. He was the first to use such a methodology and place it
As previously mentioned, Mīr Dāmād was also well versed in the occult sciences (‘ulūm gharībah). While a number of later popular works on the magical arts are attributed to him, compiled under the title Mīr Dāmād-e Kabīr, these are almost certainly pseudepigraphal. The Mīr Dāmād-e Kabīr compilation became the grimoire for occult purposes as it claimed to be a self-learning textbook, and some publishers and opportunists in Iranian bazaars marketed it as such. Nevertheless, the attribution testifies to Mīr Dāmād’s fame and renown across the dearth of known sciences at the time. Further, both Jadhawāt wa Mawāqīt and Nibrās al-Ḍiyā have special sections on lettrism, and at least one other collection of invocations and supplications was authored by Mīr Dāmād.

Although ‘irfānī aspects can be seen in Mīr Dāmād’s writings, more important are the moral, devotional and spiritual aspects of his life, like the examples mentioned above. While these aspects may be somewhat difficult to directly discern in Mīr Dāmād’s works (being subsumed into the wider philosophical discussion), they are far more apparent in the life and works of his students (e.g., Mullā Šadrā, Mullā Muḥsin Fayḍ Kāshānī, Mullā Shamsā Gīlānī and Sayyid Aḥmad al-ʿAlawi). It should be noted here that Mīr Dāmād was highly selective when choosing students, who had to have both strong intellectual comprehension and exceptional moral, religious and spiritual dedication. Lessons were taught in and outside of formal classes. In this way, Mīr Dāmād relationship with his students leaned more towards that of shaykh and disciple, rather than teacher and student.

Regardless of their divergence or agreement with Mīr Dāmād’s views, all of Mīr Dāmād’s students lauded him as an authority on matters philosophical and spiritual. For example, in a letter, Mullā Šadrā refers to Mīr Dāmād as the ‘teacher

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367 On the topic of the student–teacher spiritual relationship, it is clearly not that of a Sufi characteristic, and Henry Corbin expanded on this, distinguishing between the characteristic type of spiritual Shi‘ite mysticism and Sufi tariqahs. See Henry Corbin, History of Islamic Philosophy, 90.

368 On the subject of Mīr Dāmād’s scientific superiority, one of his students by the name of ‘Adil Ardestānī saw Mīr Dāmād not as the Third Master, but rather the First Master. Ardestānī copied
of mankind’ (*ustādī al-bashar*) (and many other praiseworthy qualities and titles) and refers to himself as his teacher’s servant and slave (*ʿabduhū wa mamlūkīhū*). In numerous biographical dictionaries, Mir Dâmâd is referred to as a ‘holy man’ (*muqaddas*) as he surpassed the rational and traditional sciences to live a holy and spiritual life.

Mir Dâmâd was an exceptional religious scholar (*ʿālīm*) in the purest sense, combining the rank of the highest scholarly position and publicly demonstrated righteousness, extreme piety and asceticism. He believed that the theory of ḥikma must be interwoven with moral discipline, and that the former without the latter would be morally dangerous. Mir Dâmâd insisted on strict adherence to religious obligations and rituals and argued for them as the true method of spiritual wayfaring (*sayr wa sulûk*).

In one of Mir Dâmâd’s jurisprudential works, on the topic of the rulings of wet nursing, he clearly states that one cannot be counted among the philosophers if they have not gone through spiritual purification:

One is not considered among the ḥukamā as long as they have not acquired the skill of detaching from their dark body (*al-badan al-ūlmānī*) and ascended to the realm of Divine Light (*al-nūr al-ilāhī*), so that his body to him is like a shirt, where he is able at times to wear it, and at other times to take it off.

Mir Dâmâd frequently speaks about detachment from the body (*khalʿ al-badan*) in various works, signifying that this is not merely theoretic but something he himself had achieved through self-purification and spiritual wayfaring. Towards the end of *al-Qabasât*, Mir Dâmâd discusses death as the ‘second birth’ (*al-wilādah al-thāniyah*). He then describes the delight of ‘leaving the body’ and says that those

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some of Mir Dâmâd’s books and wrote such a testimony to Mir Dâmâd at the beginning of Mir Dâmâd’s jurisprudence book *‘Uyun al-Masāʾil*. See Mehdi Imâmî Jum’eh, *Sayr Taḥawwulī Maktab-e Eṣfahān az Ibn Sinā tā Mullā Sadrâ*, 181–82.


with a penetrating perception and encompassing vision who relinquish the material world will achieve spiritual states:

Indeed, they disdain the world of sensation and pay no heed to the perceptions of the senses. They regard as unclean the pleasures of the inane and brutish and consider base the delights of the animal senses. They bathe at the shore of the clear intellect and immerse themselves in the Euphrates of pure knowledge, whereupon they scoop up with their clean and sanctified hands handfuls from the bubbling spring of intelligible life and quaff its water. They will subsist through the subsistence of God within the treasure-house of glory, and they will endure through His permanence in the realm of mercy.374

Mir Dāmād continues to delve into the topic of voluntary death (al-mawt al-irādī) and preparing oneself for a greater world above this material realm. This is where one fully appreciates the ‘irfānī side of Mir Dāmād as these discussions are purely mystical in tenor. In his commentary on al-Ṣahīfah al-Sajjādiyah, also on the topic of achieving familiarity with death, he says:

So, O you who have been preoccupied with this false bodily life from the real intellectual life, do not fear death, because the only bitterness of death is in fearing it.375

As noted, numerous historians and Islamic hagiographers (contemporary or close to the era of Mir Dāmād) wrote various testimonies about him, giving us an indication of his spiritual and religious devotion. Some of these testimonies were orally transmitted, and it is therefore difficult to verify their origin or authenticity, and some seem very doubtful. For example, ‘Abbās al-Qommī (1294/1877–1359/1940 Ah/CE), in his al-Fawā‘id al-Raḍawiyyah, describes the exceptional spiritual qualities of Mir Dāmād, mentioning that it has been said that for a 40-year period Mir Dāmād would rarely sleep, and if he did, he would only raise his knees to rest his head on them and never slept with his legs stretched out.376 This same book

374 Mir Dāmād, The Book of Blazing Brands, 491.
375 Mir Dāmād, Sharh al-Ṣahīfat al-Sajjādiya, 323.
376 This was mentioned in Tankabūnī’s (d. 1302/1885 AH/CE) Tadhkira al-‘Ulamā. See Muḥammad ibn Sulaymān Tankabūnī, Tadhkira al-‘Ulamā, 2nd ed., ed. Muḥammad Riḍā ʿAzharī and Ghulāmridā Parandeh (Mashhad: Bunyad Pejuheshhāye Islāmī, 1393 SY), 179. A footnote by Sayyid Mahdī Lājavardī (1305/1887–1392/1972 AH/CE), an editor of one of the editions of this book, comments
also quotes that Mir Dāmād had never committed a mubāḥ act, let alone a makrūḥ or ḥarām act.  

377 Another biographer contemporary to Mir Dāmād was Malik Shāh Ḥusain Sīstānī (fl. 1036/1626 AH/CE), a prince, who wrote a still-unpublished biographical dictionary titled Tadhkiratkhayr al-bayān. Sīstānī begins his account of Mir Dāmād with:

Although he [Mir Dāmād] was very much occupied with reading philosophical books, his worship and his spiritual exercises (riyāḍah) were of such a level as to exceed the capability of a human being. His feeble body and his strong spirit both reached the level of perfection.  

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While this level of praise still seems lofty, Sīstānī's status and being one of Mir Dāmād’s contemporaries lends credibility to his portrayal of the exceptional spiritual status of Mir Dāmād. Combined with Mir Dāmād’s own oeuvre and other commentaries, testimonies like Sīstānī’s seem to reflect historical reality.

Among Mir Dāmād’s spiritual pursuits, it is reported that he was very fond of reciting the Qur’an, to the point that he would sometimes recite up to half of the Qur’an each night.  

379 It is also reported that Mir Dāmād strictly prayed all the daily supererogatory prayers (nawāfīl) from the age of religious maturity (taklīf) until his death.  

380 Mullā ‘Abdullāh ibn Ḥusain Bābā Simnānī (fl. 11th/17th century AH/CE), one of Mir Dāmād’s earlier students who had accompanied him in the city of Mashhad, included various accounts of Mir Dāmād’s exceptional spirituality alongside his instructions in the devotional manual Tuhfah al-ʿAbidin (The Gift of Worshippers).  

381 While describing the prayer of Jaʿfar al-Ṭayyār, Simnānī says:

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377 ‘Abbās al-Qommi, al-Fawā'id al-Rādawīya, 2: 682. See also Jūyā Jahānbaksh, Mu'allim Thālith, 126.
378 It is fortunate that this part of Tadhkira-ye Khayr al-Bayān on Mir Dāmād has been edited and published. See Malik Shāh Ḥusain Sīstānī, ‘Tadhkira-ye Khayr al-Bayān dar Sharḥ Ahwāl wa Athār-e ‘Ulamā’ wa Shu‘arā‘ ‘Aṣr-e ʿṢafavī,’ ed. ‘Arif Nūshāhī, Ma‘ārif 14, no. 2 (November 1977): 42.
379 This testimony was written by Mir Muḥammad Šāleḥ Khāṭūnābādī (1058–1126 AH), who lived close to the era of Mir Dāmād, and he mentions that he heard this from a reliable and trustworthy person. See Mir Muḥammad Šāleḥ ibn ‘Abd al-Wāsī’ Ḥusainī Khāṭūnābādī, Ḥadīq-e al-Muqarrabīn (ḥadīq-e ye panjam wa bāb shishom wa haftom az ḥadīq-e chahārom), ed. Mir Ḥāshim Muḥaddith (Tehran: Sherkat Chāp wa Nashr Bayn al-Milal, 1389 SY), 245.
381 Unpublished. A copy of this book is in the Majlis Shura Islami Library (MS 15908).
This mentioned prayer is the most practiced prayer by my most holy teacher, the master of scholars and the seal of jurists – may his lofty life be prolonged. He would also recite the supplication narrated from Imām ʿAlī, the Duʿā’ Kumayl, while in prostration after the prayer.382

Mir Dāmād’s reputation for holiness strengthened his relationship with the Safavid rulers, who came to depend on him in affairs of religion and had complete confidence in his high spiritual status. As such, Mir Dāmād would be a member of the shah’s entourage when travelling to Iraq to visit the shrines of the Imāms, where he would lead the pilgrimage rituals (ziyārāt).383 In one written account, when Shah Ṣafī was visiting the shrine of Imām Ḥusain, in Karbala, Mir Dāmād recited a visitation supplication and also instructed Shah Ṣafī and the others present as to the rituals and etiquette of the pilgrimage.384 (As previously stated [in Section 1.2.6], Mir Dāmād passed away during one of these trips.) Rulers themselves would attend Mir Dāmād at his place of residence.385 Most notably, just one year before Mir Dāmād died, Shah Ṣafī visited him, desperately imploring him for a special invocation to win a war; the invocation Mir Dāmād supplied reportedly led to victory.386

Through his school of Yamānī philosophy, Mir Dāmād tried to initiate a broader, practical outlook on the relationship between the Creator and creation, not limiting it to conceptual articulation but insisting on the role of spiritual exercise and enlightenment of the heart. He saw the goal of the philosopher as achieving a correct worldview and considered expertise in the practical and moral sciences as necessary for this. As such, the philosopher’s goal must be seen in relation to theoretical and practical perfection:

Rather, its goal (i.e., the human self) is the perfection that is settled in it as long as it resides in the land of exile, which is to say the realm of the body, and attached to the horizon of being and renewal, in that it acquires a complete disposition in connecting to the true intellects. Here it will take

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382 Ibid., folio 38. See also Ḥusain Najafi, Awrāq Parākande az Mušannifāt Mir Dāmād, 345.
384 Abū al-Mafākhar Tafreshī, Tārikh Shāh Ṣafī, 52–53.
385 Ḥusain Najafi, Awrāq Parākande az Mušannifāt Mir Dāmād, 347, fn. 1.
386 Ibid., 347.
from the intellect that is simple and from it the forms that are elaborate in itself by way of thought will spring and emanate from it.\footnote{387 Mir Dāmād, Taqwīm al-Īmān, 377.}

According to Mir Dāmād (and many of his contemporaries and heirs), philosophical perfection of the self can only be achieved through thought and contemplation, which connects to the active intellect, and must manifest in moral behaviour, which must include the purification of the self from sensual and imaginal concerns. This allows one to attain epistemic and scientific perfection and truth and validity by acquiring solid arguments and sound proofs.

Reasoning and spirituality worked hand in hand in Mir Dāmād's Yamānī wisdom, whereby he asserted the cohesion between reason, religion and spirituality. Mir Dāmād's approach to mysticism and spirituality was not the ʿirfānī framework modern scholars are accustomed to, like that of Ibn ‘Arabī; rather, it was a synchronised effort between philosophy, the occult sciences and the devotional religious teachings of the Shi'i tradition.\footnote{388 See Anzali, "Mysticism" in Iran.}

1.3.5 Mir Dāmād the Poet

Worth noting, albeit briefly, is another of Mir Dāmād's many achievements, his poetry. While the preceding sections have expended great effort in highlighting and understanding Mir Dāmād's complex philosophical writing style, as well as the spiritual and mystical influences on his writing, no such effort is needed regarding his poetic style. Contrary to his philosophical writing method, Mir Dāmād's poetry is clear and eloquent, and the spiritual and mystical influences are readily apparent.\footnote{389 Dabashi, "Mir Dāmād and the Founding of the 'School of Iṣfahān'," 620.} Mir Dāmād composed poems in Arabic and Persian and they were collected in the book Divān Ishrāq (The Divan of Illumination)\footnote{390 Mir Dāmād, Divān Ishrāq, ed. Samīrā Pustīndūz, 17, 21, 28, etc.} under his pen name Ishrāq (Illumination).\footnote{391 Mir Dāmād, Kitāb al-Qabasat, Mohaghegh's introduction, 6, fn. 3.}

Mir Dāmād went against the norm of philosophers and jurists who believed it beneath their status to engage in poetry.\footnote{392 Dabashi, "Mir Dāmād and the Founding of the 'School of Iṣfahān'," 620. See also Jūyā Jahānbakhsh, Mu'allim Thālith, 203.} He openly spoke about his poetic ability
and praised himself in numerous poems. Numerous scholars, biographers and poets have praised his poetry as he was able to write about complicated philosophical and mystical concepts simply in verse. He had a beautiful rhythm in his verse style (nathr) and in the way he wrote couplets (ghazal), which are frequently referred to by other writers.

### 1.4 Conclusion

This chapter has shed light on the much-neglected early life, education, subsequent contributions and influences of Mīr Dāmād. In addition to filling these gaps in the literature, exploring the life and contributions of Mīr Dāmād allows for contextualisation and greater understanding of his scientific and scholarly uniqueness, position and influence, and philosophical system (in the English-speaking world especially). The School of Esfahan and its founder Mīr Dāmād played a pivotal role in the tradition of Islamic philosophy and rational discourse. The Shi‘i tradition to which Mīr Dāmād adhered allowed him to use reason and intellect in their complete form as Twelver 'Uṣūlī Shi‘ism was amenable to intellectual rigour and rationality. He is a source of pride in Shi‘i Islam's heritage, and his scholarly efforts and contributions in many disciplines continue to be discussed.

Mīr Dāmād's multi-dimensional qualities are a defining aspect of his personality—as the last of the Peripatetic philosophers, the most outstanding of Shi‘i philosophers, the developer of his own philosophical system and a highly spiritual mystic. His worldview stemmed from a strong theosophical outlook, with God and His attributes being the basis of his discussions and works. As much as he was a rational scholar, he was also extremely devoted to the traditional religious and transmitted sciences, from the Qur‘ān to hadith.

A strong animosity towards philosophy and mysticism existed in Mīr Dāmād’s era, mainly in the harsh Akhbārī criticisms of these sciences. However, Mīr Dāmād, being an exceptionally prolific jurist (faqīh) and religious authority—indeed, eventually

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393 Dabashi, "Mīr Dāmād and the Founding of the ‘School of Iṣfahān’,” 620.
394 Jūyā Jahānbakhsh, Mu‘allim Thālīth, 192.
395 Ibid., 206–7.
the highest religious authority in the Safavid era, *Sheikh al-Islām*—was able to reinstate philosophy as a fundamental science and largely remove the taboo surrounding it. Unfortunately, Mullā Ṣadrā’s lack of such status (and relatively straightforward and simple writing style) resulted in him being attacked and having to seclude himself in a village for many years.

A major objective of the School of Esfahan was to join various philosophical trends and amalgamate the rational sciences with religious texts and spiritual discipline, all within the framework of Twelver Shi‘ism. Mīr Dāmād was successful in this and in establishing himself as a revered authority, exercising scientific and authoritative influence in Shi‘a scholarly circles. Mīr Dāmād made numerous innovative contributions in the fields of Islamic philosophy and Islamic theology, having no equal in his era, and his influence extended throughout Safavid Persia and into India.

Along with establishing the School of Esfahan, Mīr Dāmād also founded his own philosophical method based on a profound respect for Yamānī wisdom (*al-ḥikmat al-yamāniya*)—Yamān symbolising the spiritual truths revealed by the Prophets in contrast with the Greek rational tradition (*yunān*). His proudest and greatest achievement was his theory of the perpetual incipience of the world, which became his central focus in nearly all of his writings. In explaining Mīr Dāmād’s primary focus on the inception of the world, Nasr and Aminrazavi state:

> In light of their general metaphysical and ontological teachings, many philosophers of this School were also concerned with cosmology, particularly the status of the world of imagination (‘ālam al-khayāl or ‘ālam al-mithāl) and its role not only is cosmology, but also in eschatology, psychology and philosophical anthropology. These concerns led naturally to questions pertaining to the existentiation of the world (*ḥudūth*) in relation to eternity (*qidam* in this context) and the meaning of the elusive

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399 Ibid., 121.
domain of time (zamān) in relation to both aeviternity (dahr) and eternity (sarmad).400

The next chapter will discuss in detail the terminology and theories related to the topic of the incipience of the world, especially the theory of meta-temporal origination.

400 Ibid., 123–24.
Chapter 2: Terms and Theories Related to the Origination and the Eternity of the World

2.1 Introduction

Prior to examining Mīr Dāmād’s theory of al-hudūth al-dahrī (in Chapter 3), it is imperative to clarify and explain in detail the main terms and concepts relevant to this topic. A key problem in this is that the semantic denotations of the terms used have changed over time, as well as being used in different contexts within different disciplines.

Therefore, this chapter will engage in an etymological investigation of the relevant terms (pre- and post Mīr Dāmād), complementing the historical discussion undertaken in the introductory chapter and Chapter 1. Correct understanding of Mīr Dāmād’s theories is vital to determining their validity. Developing a detailed knowledge of the relevant terms will also highlight how various sides in the argument about creation and eternity accused the others of misuse of terms or incomplete understanding. Both the introductory chapter and Chapter 1 (especially Section 1.3) noted the complexity of Mīr Dāmād’s philosophical writings, the precision of his word use (he almost always presents an accompanying explanation of the etymology of key words and terms), and his tendency to redefine and create words. This chapter thus necessarily explains the relevant terms for Mīr Dāmād’s theory (as defined by Mīr Dāmād), allowing for a correct and in-depth understanding of the theory (detailed in Chapter 3). The discussion in this chapter is restricted to what is relevant to Mīr Dāmād’s theory.¹

¹ This thesis cites or refers to numerous studies that outline Mīr Dāmād’s important contribution to this discourse of origination versus eternity and studies that offer informative explanations on his theory of meta-temporal origination. Recently, and in the English language, Sajjad Rizvi has produced numerous papers that are of benefit in this regard. One of Rizvi’s papers focuses on locating the contribution Safavid philosophers made to this discourse, with emphasis on Mīr Dāmād, Mullā Şadrā and Qādī Sa’ī Qummi. See Sajjad H. Rizvi, “Time and Creation: The Contribution of Some Safavid Philosophies,” Revista Portuguesa de Filosofia 62, no. 2/4 (2006): 713–37.
As previously discussed in Chapter 1, Mīr Dāmād was generally but not completely within the tradition of Avicennian Peripatetic philosophy. From the time of Avicenna onwards there have been many Peripatetic philosophers, like Bahmanyār, his student al-Lawkari, then later Naṣīr al-Dīn al-Ṭūsī, and even later Mīr Finderiskī and his student Agha Ḥūsain Khwāṣārī. The latter were Peripatetic philosophers in Esfahan. Later Peripatetic philosophers left Esfahan for Tehran, largely under the auspices of Mīrzā Abū al-Ḥasan Ṭabāṭabāʾī (1238/1822–1316/1898 AH/CE). 2 Another important post-Mīr Dāmād Islamic Peripatetic philosopher was Muḥammad Ṣāleḥ Ḥāʾerī Māzandarānī, known as ʿAllāmah Ḥāʾerī Māzandarānī (or Semnānī) (1297[8]/1880[1]–1391/1971 AH/CE).

These abovementioned philosophers in a manner of speaking represented the Avicennian tradition completely and accepted his concepts and theories. Yet, Mīr Dāmād was the only philosopher who spoke of and supported al-ḥudūth al-dahri and creation after real non-existence (al-ʿadam al-ṣariḥ). Thus, the question arises, if this theory was the natural and logical outcome of Avicennian teachings, why did no other Avicennian scholars accept it? As will be seen in this chapter and Chapter 3, Mīr Dāmād’s al-ḥudūth al-dahri was an innovative, remarkable and sophisticated theory that was based on his revised conceptualisation of al-ʿadam al-ṣariḥ and numerous other redefined or expanded concepts from within the Avicennian and Peripatetic philosophies, as well as his own additions from his philosophical system of al-Ḥikmat al-Yamānīa. Thus, while being within the Avicennian and Peripatetic traditions, Mīr Dāmād was also outside of them in many ways. Further, as previously stated (and further explored in Chapter 4), Mīr Dāmād and his works were soon eclipsed in fame and renown by Mullā Ṣadrā. Both of these factors led to the general neglect and lack of discussion on Mīr Dāmād’s al-ḥudūth al-dahri by Avicennian philosophers.

As previously emphasised, terminology and etymology were among the cornerstones of Mīr Dāmād’s theory. To understand the terminology Mīr Dāmād...

2 Known as Ḥākim Jalwah, he was born in Hyderabad and moved to Esfahan at a young age. He is credited as moving the philosophical School of Esfahan to Tehran. He taught Peripatetic philosophy for over 40 years and was a harsh critic of Mullā Ṣadrā. See Abū al-Ḥasan Jalwah, Majmūʿah Athār-e Ḥākim Jalwah; Mīrzā Abū al-Ḥasan Tabāṭabāʾī, ed. Ḥasan Ridāzāde (Tehran: Intishārāt-e Hekmat, 2006), introduction, 1: 24–31. Interestingly, Ḥākim Jalwah has a short treatise on connecting the created to the eternal (rabṭ al-ḥādīth bi al-qadīm) in which he also discusses Mīr Dāmād’s theory on this (pp. 477–82).
used, we must investigate the approach he took in understanding the terms taqaddum, ta’akhur, ḥudūth, qidam, zamām, dahr and sarmad. Clarification of Mīr Dāmād’s understanding of these terms will reveal what led to his view on al-ḥudūth al-dahrī and how this differed from Avicenna’s view.

2.2 The Antecedent and Consequent

Among the important terms relevant to ḥudūth and qidam are the terms ‘priority’ (sabq) and ‘posteriority’ (luḥūq), ‘antecedent’ (taqaddum) and ‘consequent’ (ta’akhur).3 These terms are related to the definition of qadīm, something not preceded by anything else, or by nothingness. Muḥdith is the opposite, being something preceded by something else or by nothingness.4

The human mind assumes things to have priority or posteriority. There is something before and something after, and this relation depends on what kind of before and after is being considered. Prior to discussing the view of Mīr Dāmād, the following is a brief explanation of these concepts in contemporary language. Ṭabāṭabāʾī5 defines ‘priority’ and ‘posteriority’ as follows:

Priority (sabq) and posteriority (luḥūq) are among the characteristics of existence qua existents. That is because two entities often share, as existents, a relation to a source of existence that is not the same for each of them. An example of it is the relation of ‘two’ and ‘three’ to ‘one’; ‘two’ being closer to ‘one’ than ‘three’ is called prior and antecedent, and ‘three’ is called posterior and subsequent. At times, the common relation is the same

3 I will alternatingly refer to taqaddum and ta’akhur as ‘antecedent’ and ‘consequent’, ‘priority’ and ‘posteriority’, or ‘precedence’ and ‘posterior’.
5 I believe it is important to acknowledge modern commentators on Islamic philosophy, especially someone like Seyid Muḥammad Ḥusayn Ṭabāṭabāʾī who is regarded as the most influential thinker in the contemporary Sadrī tradition. His writings are standard textbooks in Shīʿī seminaries. In addition to this, Ṭabāṭabāʾī’s explanations are written in a modern and accessible manner and contain excellent definitions and disambiguation of arcane and complex terminology from the medieval period.

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for both the things, in which case they are called ‘coexistent’ and their condition is called ‘coexistence’ (ma‘iyah).^6

He then quotes several kinds of priority and posteriority mentioned by metaphysicians (philosophers): temporal priority, priority by nature, priority in causality, priority in quiddity, meta-temporal priority,^7 priority in rank, and priority in nobility. After briefly explaining each of these forms of priority, Ṭabāṭabā’i gives the following criterion for priority:

It is something that is common to the prior and the posterior and by virtue of which priority exists. The criterion in temporal priority is the relation to time, regardless of whether what is prior is time itself or something existing in it. The criterion in priority by nature is the relation to existence. In priority in causality, it is necessity. In priority in quiddity, it is the constitution of the quiddity. In priority in literality, it is realisation in general, including the literal and the metaphorical. In meta-temporal priority, it depends on an entity’s situation in the existential context. In priority in rank, it depends on the point of reference, such as the niche or the mosque entrance in the example pertaining to a sensible hierarchy,^9 and the highest genus or the ultimate species in a conceptual hierarchy. In priority in nobility, it is merit and advantage.\footnote{Ṭabāṭabā’i, The Elements of Islamic Metaphysics, 94.}

The terms sabq and luḥūq are connected to the topic of ḥudūth and qidam as they were considered when defining the relation of eternity and creation. Creation refers to something being preceded by a prior nothingness before it came to be, whereas eternity refers to something that does not have a prior nothingness. This is why in philosophical tracts when the topic of ḥudūth and qidam is discussed, so are the terms sabq and luḥūq, or taqaddum and ta’akhur. Islamic philosophers have regarded them as strongly related to each other as the definition of ḥudūth entails

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^7 This was added by Mīr Dāmūd, based on his concept of the meta-temporal ḥudūth and qidam.
^8 Ṭabāṭabā’i, The Elements of Islamic Metaphysics, 92–94.
^9 This means that the imām and those praying behind him in the mosque are close to the niche, but the imām is closer by rank to it.
^10 Ṭabāṭabā’i, The Elements of Islamic Metaphysics, 94.
precedence or priority. Therefore, temporal and essential origination and temporal and essential eternity are a form of priority or non-priority.\textsuperscript{11}

The particular priorities involved with creation and eternity are:

- Temporal priority, the priority or precedence of something to something else that came after it in time.
- Causal priority, the precedence of the cause to the effect. This would be used to argue that the cause always precedes the effect.
- Meta-temporal (\textit{dahri}) priority, similar to causal priority, with the difference being that in meta-temporal priority, the existence of the cause is acknowledged as being separate from the existence of the effect, as with the intelligible immaterial realm preceding the material realm.
- Real (literal) priority, when the prior (primarily and essentially) has one meaning and the posterior (metaphorically and accidentally) has the same meaning. An example of this is water flowing in a river; it is water that in reality and literally possesses the flow and this flow is ascribed accidentally to the river in which it flows.\textsuperscript{12}

Mīr Dāmād researched these same concepts of priority and posteriority as articulated by Ṭabāṭabā’ī centuries later. Mīr Dāmād followed Avicenna’s view that the concepts of priority and posteriority are gradational (\textit{tashkīk}) and not similar. Here we will delve into the views of Avicenna and Mīr Dāmād on \textit{taqaddum} and \textit{ta’akhur}.

Avicenna states:

For a thing in itself is only prior in terms of something existing with [i.e., in relation to] it. This type of priority and posteriority exists for both terms [of the relation] in the mind. For, when the form of what is prior and the form of what is posterior are presented in the mind, the soul apprehends this comparison as existing between existents within it, since this comparison obtains between two existents in the mind. Before this,
however, a thing in itself cannot be prior; for how could it be prior to nothing existing? Hence, whatever among related things is of this order, their relation to each other is in the mind only, having no subsisting idea in existence with respect to this priority and posteriority. Indeed, this priority and posteriority is, in reality, one of the intellectual ideas, one of the relationships imposed by the mind, and one of the aspects that occurs to things when the mind compares them and refers to them.\footnote{Avicenna, The Metaphysics of the Healing, trans. Michael E. Marmura (Utah: Brigham Young University Press, 2005), 123.}

Accordingly, the meaning would not have the same position in each concept but would have an intense or a weaker meaning in its reference. When Avicenna commences his chapter on the prior, posterior and origination, he explains his understanding of \textit{taqaddum} and \textit{taʾakhur}:

Although priority and posteriority are predicated in many ways, these, in an ambiguous manner,\footnote{The translator used this expression as a translation of the term \textit{tashkīk}. In my reading, I see \textit{tashkīk} as referring to it having different grades, hence my use of the term ‘gradation’ in subsequent discussion.} almost unite in one thing—namely, [in the fact] that to the prior inasmuch as it is prior belongs something not possessed by the posterior, and that nothing belongs to the posterior unless it [also] exists for the prior.\footnote{Avicenna, The Metaphysics of the Healing, 124.}

This means that the predicate (\textit{al-ḥaml}) is not univocity (\textit{mutawāṭiʿ})\footnote{In logic, the universal is divided into \textit{mutawāṭiʿ} and \textit{mushakkik}. \textit{Tawāṭuʿ} means one word being applicable to multiple individuals, which means that the predicate of something is the same as itself. Tashkīk is a single reality, but manifested in different levels of intensities.} but, rather, gradational (\textit{mushakkik}), which means that although it uses the same word, it is of different grades. The prior and the posterior has a gradational predication, and not univocal. This is why Avicenna says that the prior, inasmuch as it is prior, has something that is not in the posterior. In \textit{al-Najāt}, Avicenna discusses \textit{taqaddum} and \textit{taʾakhur} and says that for the ‘before’ (\textit{al-qabl}), it refers to five things—the antecedence is in nature, time, order, perfection and causality.\footnote{Ibn ʿInān, \textit{al-Najāt min al-Gharq fi Bahr al-Zalālāt}, ed. Muḥammad Taqī Dāneshpējū (Tehran: Intishārāt-e Dāneshgāh-e Tehrān, 2008), 140–41.}
Mīr Dāmād accepts Avicenna’s theory of taqaddum and ta’akhur being gradational. However, Mīr Dāmād divides priority and posteriority into seven types, two more than Avicenna uses, explains this in al-Ufuq al-Mubīn. Following Avicenna, he says in Kitāb al-Qabasāt:

Have you not heard them say that the nature of the concept of priority and posteriority, which unites all the kinds in a common predicate, not in a univocal way, but equivocally, is that a particular concept or a particular state (sha’n) has two things which are united together within it? It is not a product of one of the two unless it is also realised through the other and is a product of that other. It is not a product of this one [alone]. Consequently, this common factor is general to the seven kinds [of priority] in an equivocal way (tashkīk).

According to Mīr Dāmād, the essential connection between priority and posteriority lies either in external reality (four) or in the intellect (three). The priorities based on external reality are 1) rank and order, 2) nobility (bi al-sharaf) (such as the precedence of a knowledgeable person over an illiterate person, or a courageous person over a cowardly person), 3) time and 4) eternity and meta-time (sarmād and dahr). If the essential connection between the prior and posterior exists only in intellectual analysis and not in the outside world, then it is referring to the essence of something being before or after in 5) nature, 6) quiddity, or 7) causality.

This differs from the way Avicenna and his followers categorised these, as Mīr Dāmād himself notes:

our companion in leadership frequently favoured a different convention in the application of these terms, for he made what concerns existence and what concerns the quiddity two types of what is [prior] by nature.

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21 Ibid., 70–75.
23 Mīr Dāmād, The Book of Blazing Brands, 73–76.
Mīr Dāmād added *taqaddum dahrī* and *sarmādī*, and also said that the essential priority (*taqaddum dhātī*) is in three types, which differs to Avicenna who had said that *taqaddum* is only in nature (*ṭab*’) and in causality (*‘illiyah*). Mīr Dāmād states in *Kitāb al-Qabasāt*:

It may be that our companion in leadership favoured another usage in the application of names, and he made what concerns existence and what concerns the quiddity two kinds of what is [prior] by nature. The term ‘prior by nature’ then is the common factor between the two kinds and is a partner to that which is [prior] in causality.24

He goes on to say, ‘There is yet a third usage, which our companion adopts in the *Categories of al-Shifā*, which restricts essential priority to priority in causality’.25

Both these comments are in reference to Avicenna and clearly show that Mīr Dāmād added two other types. Mīr Dāmād’s criterion for the division, of being *either* external or mental, is also another important contribution. It is not possible, according to Mīr Dāmād, that in the divisions the mental determination (*taqarrur*) be shared with the external determination. Mīr Dāmād made this clear due to him perceiving that Suhrawardī and his followers had confused them. In *Kitāb al-Qabasāt*, he says:

I am astounded by the author of the *Muṭārahāt*26 and his followers, how they were able to bring it upon themselves to reduce temporal priority to priority by nature, holding to the idea that a prior time is the cause of a latter time.27

According to Mīr Dāmād, temporal *taqaddum* and *ta’akhur* is different to perpetual *taqaddum* and *ta’akhur*. There is a *taqaddum* that is separable (*infikākī*), and this condition of being separate separates *taqaddum dahrī* from *taqaddum bi al-‘illiyah*. The shared component here is the horizontal relation between them, as will be explained in Chapter 3. With *taqaddum dahrī*, the existence of the posterior is separate from the existence of the prior. This is opposite to prior by cause, where the existence of the prior and the posterior in determination is in its coexistence

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24 Ibid., 74.
25 Ibid., 75.
26 Suhrawardī.
An important feature of Mīr Dāmād’s Yamānī-inspired philosophy is the extensive elaboration on the creation of the world in relation to its separable precedence and posteriority (al-taqaddum wa al-ta’akhur al-infikākī) in time, meta-time and sarmad.29

The separable posteriority, which is the deviating of the existence of the posterior from the existence of the prior in concrete reality, can be supposed to have two types: temporal or perpetual. The meaning of temporal priority is that the prior in its temporal existence is separate from the posterior. It is the intellect that supposes there being an extension (intidād) for both, and through this extension there is a (measurable) gap between the two.

As for perpetual priority, both are separable, but this separation does not happen as far as the horzion of renewal and time, but the separation is in the very core of the reality.30 This is in such a way that the essence of the prior has a determining existence in actuality, and the essence of the posterior is preceded with pure and certain priority. This is why it is not possible to conceptualise an extension (or measurable gap) between them.31

Therefore, temporal and perpetual priority are similar in existential separation but sometimes it is in time and sometimes in the core (or the heart of reality, ḥāq) in the vessel of perpetuity. It is for this reason that such a prior is called contradictory non-existence (‘adam muqābil) because the existence of something and non-existence cannot simultaneously occur.32

28 Ibid., 71–72.
29 See Mulla Ḥādī Sabzawārī, Metaphysics of Haji Mulla Ḥādī Sabzawārī, trans. Mehdi Mohaghegh and Toshihiko Izutsu (New York: Caravan Books, 1977), 123. Sabzawārī comments: ‘Coming-into-being through-perpetual-duration’ proposed by the Lord of the eminent Scholars, i.e., the Authority Mir-e Dāmād who is so outstanding in true Wisdom that he has been called the Third Teacher, has maintained the ‘coming-into-being’ of the world by way of ‘coming-into-being-through-perpetual-duration,’ and he elaborated the thesis in the most perfect manner—is like the former, i.e., ‘the temporal coming-into-being’. It is the precedence of ‘preceding non-existence’ to the ‘existence’ of a thing by way of ‘separable precedence’ of it, i.e., of the ‘non-existence’. However, it, i.e., the precedence of ‘non-existence’ and its ‘separable’ priority is in the ‘longitudinal hierarchy’, contrary to their state in the ‘temporal coming-into-being’; because in the latter case they are in the ‘latitudinal’ hierarchy (Metaphysics of Haji Mulla Ḥādī Sabzawārī, 123–24).
30 Ibid., 87.
31 See Mīr Dāmād, al-Imādāt, 9.
32 Mīr Dāmād, The Book of Blazing Brands, 100, 127.
As a result, there are a few differences between *taqaddum* and *ta’akhur zamānī* and *taqaddum* and *ta’akhur dahrī*. One difference is that the temporal priority through the temporal posteriority and subjects accepts multiplicity (*takathur*), whereas in the vessel of perpetuity, it does not accept it because there is no extension and no division. Another difference is that temporal priority is accidental (*ʿāriḍ*) to existence and accidental to non-existence, but for perpetual priority, its *ʿurūḍ* on existence is not possible. This is because the non-existence of something temporal might be possible in the realm of existence and temporality, and this prior existence also exists.\(^33\) It is not the case that every perpetual posterior (*mutaʾakhir dahrī*) is temporal, if there is temporal posteriority then its perpetual posteriority.

In this complex discussion, Mīr Dāmād insists that perpetual creation is different to essential origination and temporal creation. This can be understood only when recognising that temporal priority is different to perpetual priority, and that perpetual priority is different to priority in nature, causality and essence. In this division, *taqaddum* and *ta’akhur* is mental, separating the *dahr*. As for *taqaddum* and *ta’akhur* in the external, the *dahr* is very different in temporality. Ultimately, Mīr Dāmād developed and expanded Avicenna’s viewpoint of *taqaddum* and *ta’akhur* and added further divisions in *al-ḥudūth al-dahrī*.

### 2.3 The Eternal and Originated

As discussed in the introductory chapter, there is a longstanding debate between philosophers and theologians on the world and eternity versus creation. Ultimately, this issue may be settled by identifying the cause of existence or determining whether everything needs a cause. Muslim philosophers in general believe that contingency is what decides the need for a cause. Conversely, theologians support coming-into-being or creation. To the philosophers, the temporal eternity of creation has no effect on whether a cause is required; what is relevant is whether something is essentially contingent. In analysing this distinction, philosophers divided the eternal into the essential and the temporal. Creation was also divided in the same way. Both terms are explained in detail in this section.

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The material world was considered by the philosophers as temporally eternal due to its essential contingency. As far back as we can go in time, there will be a time before that, and time has never existed on its own without something else existing alongside it—a concept seemingly diametrically opposed to the theologians’ view of creation. Hence the significance of Mīr Dāmād’s theory of meta-temporal origination (al-ḥudūth al-dahrī), which harmonises both eternity and creation.

The Arabic term qadīm refers to something that is old or belongs to a previous time. Its opposite is ḥādīth, something that is new and has not existed previously. According to philosophers, ḥudūth is the acquisition of something after it had not existed in a prior time, with its opposite being qidam. Qadīm remains in one state and does not change or cease to exist. Farabi and Avicenna departed from the traditional understanding of Aristotelian ontology and delved into the topic of the ‘eternity’ or ‘newness’ of the world. In doing so, they changed the meaning of the word qadīm from ‘beforeness’ (or ‘that which comes before in existence’, implying creation) to ‘uncausedness’ (or ‘that whose existence has no beginning’, implying eternity).

In classical Sunni theology, the theologians discussed their outlook on creation and contingent existence, distinguishing between two types of eternal existence: eternal ‘in itself’ (bi dhātihi) and eternal ‘through another’ (bi ghayrihi). For theologians, the change of the meaning of qadīm fomented a drastic shift in thought.

Avicenna contributed extensively to this field, elaborating on the terms and clarifying the philosophical position of al-qadīm in contrast to the Islamic theological position of al-ḥādīth. Avicenna states that qadīm has two meanings—one based on time and one based on essence. Based on time, it is something that had existed in a previous finite time. Based on essence, it is something whose existence does not

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35 Qadīm is eternal and qidam is eternality.
36 Ḥādīth or ḥudūth.
38 Ibid., 280.
40 Robert Wisnovsky, Avicenna’s Metaphysics in Context (Great Britain: Cornell University Press, 2003), 228.
41 Ibid., 227.
have a cause that necessitated it. Avicenna’s attempt to establish essential origination was based on God’s essential precedence to the world by His nature, status and nobility. The qadim in time is something with no temporal origin, and the qadim in essence is something with no origin attached to it—that is, the Almighty Truth (i.e., God).

This means that qadim is divided into two types—by time (zamānī) and by essence (dhātī). Something that is qadim by time means that it is not preceded (masbūq) by non-existence in the temporal past. An example of temporal qadim is time itself. Something that is qadim by essence does not have a beginning (mabda’) or a cause, and this is something exclusive to God. Based on this explanation, the appropriate English equivalent for the Arabic term qadim would be ‘eternal’.

The related term taqaddum can be confused with qadim. Taqaddum means ‘antecedence’ or ‘precedence’, and it is similarly divided into temporal and essential (see Section 2.2). Temporal precedence would be the precedence of a father’s existence in relation to the existence of his son. Essential precedence would be similar to the precedence of the movement of a hand moving a key when opening a door. The movement of the hand and key are related by connection. However, the hand has precedence due to it being the cause of the key’s movement, even though the movement of the hand and key occur simultaneously.

Regarding hudūth, this term has been translated into numerous lexemes (including ‘origination’, ‘temporality’, ‘coming-into-existence’, ‘createdness’ and ‘creation’) and simply means the existence of something after it has not previously existed. It refers to its contingency, or its possibility in itself, and to the need for something else in order for it to exist.

These terms must be explained because they are fundamental to the argument of the eternity of the world adopted by the philosophers. They argued that it is

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42 Avicenna, al-Ḥudūd, 44 as in Group of scholars, Sharḥ al-Muṣṭalaḥāt al-Falsafiya Dictionary, 280.
43 Ibid.
44 Mir Dāmād says the opposite about time: ‘But that which is not temporal—like time itself, its substrate, the bearer of its substrate, and the incorporeal substances, for example—cannot be either temporally eternal or temporally created at all, for its existence is not in time; otherwise it would be possible to say that its existence is in the whole of time or in a particular time’ (al-Qabasat, 18).
45 ‘Pre-eternal’ has also been used. See Nasr and Leaman, History of Islamic Philosophy, vol. 1, 33.
47 Ibid., 95.
impossible to conceive a temporal beginning to the world when time itself did not yet exist—there cannot be a moment of time in which it was created, where there was a vacuum, or where empty time preceded creation. Philosophers had always discussed causality and the need for a cause, which is why creation and its temporality were automatically connected to this subject. Explaining whether the world is eternal in its form and matter or whether it needs a cause were fundamental questions also dealt with by pre-Islamic philosophers.

To introduce the terms in easier and contemporary language, we can refer to Sayyid Muḥammad Ḥusain Ṭabāṭabāʾī’s (1892–1981 CE) Biddāyat al-Ḥikmah (The Elements of Islamic Metaphysics or The Beginning of Philosophy).48 This is presently the main textbook studied and taught in Islamic seminaries across the Shiʿi world. Ṭabāṭabāʾī states:

In common usage the words qadīm (lit. old) and ḥādīth (lit. new or recent) were originally applied to two contemporaneous things. When the period of existence of one of them was greater than that of the other, the one which had existed for a longer period was called qadīm and the one which had existed for a shorter period was called ḥādīth or hadīth. Hence, they were relative attributes, in the sense that a single thing could be hadīth in relation to one thing and qadīm in relation to another. That which was implied in the concept of ḥudūth was the prior non-existence of a thing in a certain period of time, and qidam implied that a thing was not preceded by non-existence in a given period of time.49

In Ṭabāṭabāʾī’s second volume to this textbook, titled Nihāyat al-Ḥikma (The End of Philosophy), which is more extensive and elaborate than the first volume, he states:

If there is a past in the time of the existence of something which is more than what has passed in the existence of something else, for example, Zayd who is fifty years of age, and ‘Amr who is forty years of age, the one who is temporally older is called by the masses as ‘qadīm’ and the temporally lesser is called ‘ḥādīth’. Therefore, the qadīm is what existed in a time that the ḥādīth did not yet exist in, meaning that the ḥādīth was preceded in

48 Ṭabāṭabāʾī, The Elements of Islamic Metaphysics, 94.
49 Ibid., 94.
existence by non-existence (‘adam) in a time when the qadīm already existed, and this is opposite to the qadīm.

If these two terms are generalised and taken in their real meaning, they would be among the essential accidents of an existent inasmuch as it exists. As a result, the absolute existent (al-mawjūd al-muṭlaq) would be divided into these two types and hence become a topic to be philosophically discussed.

Therefore, the existent is divided into qadīm and ḥādith. The qadīm is something that is not preceded in existence by non-existence, and the ḥādith is what is preceded in existence by non-existence.⁵⁰

Ṭabāṭabā’ī explains that both qadīm and ḥādith have further divisions that correspond to four kinds of precedence:

The concept of precedence (sabq) and its four mentioned types: temporal, causal, meta-temporal, and by truth can be derived from the definition of ḥudūth and qidam. Therefore, there are four types of qidam and ḥudūth: temporal qidam and ḥudūth, causal qidam and ḥudūth – also known as essential – qidam and ḥudūth by truth, and meta-temporal qidam and ḥudūth.⁵¹

He elaborates on each of these terms, and these will be explained individually here.

Qidam and ḥudūth were also divided into real (ḥaqiqi) and relative (iḍāfi). Real qidam refers to something whose existence has passed in time more than the passing in time of something else. Relative ḥudūth is something who existence has passed in less than the passing in time of something else. Ṭabāṭabā’ī’s distinguished student Murtaḍā Muṭahhari (1919–1979 CE) rejected the division of qidam and ḥudūth into real and relative, believing it more appropriate to say philosophical (falsafi) and conventional (‘urfī).⁵² Put simply, ‘created’ conventionally means something new and ‘eternal’ means something old. Relating one thing to something newer than it means the newer thing is considered ḥādith. Muṭahhari elaborates on

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⁵¹ Ibid., 287.
this by explaining that when philosophers and theologians deal with the topic of *qadīm* and *ḥādīth*, they do not examine the specific nothingness preceding the created in a particular time. This is something nominal. In contrast, philosophers give the obverse of the absolute concept and not the relative concept. Therefore, if there is something that comes into existence after having not existed, it is called *ḥādīth*. As for *qadīm*, it refers to the existence of something that is not preceded by non-existence, which means it has always existed in some form.

Another way of looking at these two terms is by replacing the phrase ‘preceded by non-existence’ (*ʿadam*) with the phrase ‘preceded by another’ (*al-ghayr*), where ‘another’ means that which gives something existence from outside itself. Thus, the meaning for *qadīm* is the existence of something not preceded by ‘another’ that gives it existence. Conversely, the meaning for *ḥādīth* is the existence of something preceded by ‘another’ that gives it existence.

Different forms of *ʿadam* (non-existence) are evident as well. For this reason, the *ʿadam* mentioned in temporal *ḥudūth* is different from the *ʿadam* in essential *ḥudūth*. The *ʿadam* in temporal *ḥudūth* is called contradictory non-existence (*ʿadam muqābil*) by Mullā Ṣadrā, whereas the *ʿadam* in essential *ḥudūth* is simultaneous, or cohabiting, non-existence (*ʿadam mujāmiʿ*). In regard to what constitutes ‘contradictory non-existence’ (*ʿadam muqābil*), Mīr Dāmād believed real non-existence that is contradictory to existence is in meta-time (*dahr*), whereas Mullā Ṣadrā believed it is in time (*zamān*).

Ṭabāṭabāʾī defines these as follows, after explaining *ḥudūth* and *qidam*:

> Then a more general meaning was given to these two words [*ḥudūth* and *qidam*] by giving ‘non-existence’ (*ʿadam*) a more general sense that included non-existence contradictory to existence—that is non-existence in time that does not cohabit with existence—as well as the non-existence that cohabits with existence. The latter kind of non-existence is a thing’s

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53 An example of negative equivalence in logic is ‘like someone who says: “Zayd is non-seeing”’, where ‘non-seeing’ is equivalent to the positive term ‘blind’ (Ibn Sīnā as quoted in A.M. Goichon, *Lexique de la Langue Philosophique d’Ibn Sīnā* [Paris: Desclée de Brouwer, 1938], 212). Also called an obverse proposition (*maʿdula*), this type of proposition is derived from another one by denying the opposite of whatever the given proposition affirms. Thus, the obverse of ‘all A is B’ is ‘no A is not B’, and the obverse of ‘no S is P’ is ‘all S is non-P’.

54 Murtadā Muṭahhari, *Durūs Falsafiya fi Sharḥ al-Manẓūma*, vol. 4, 8.

55 Ibid., 6.
essential non-being that accompanies its existence after it has been
brought into existence by the cause.\textsuperscript{56}

Here, Ṭabāṭabāʾī refers to the state of logical non-being in relation to its
existentiating cause. Even though it exists (relatively speaking), it is considered non-
existent in relation to its absolute cause. This state of logical, or purely conceptual,
non-being can coexist with existence.

The temporally prior non-existence of something, according to Mullā Ṣadrā, cannot
be combined with its temporally posterior existence as they are contradictor of each
other. Their boundaries meet but do not overlap. A cohabiting non-existence, on the
other hand, can ‘coexist’ with something’s existence.\textsuperscript{57} For example, if we were to
say that John is created, this means that his existence is preceded by his non-
existence. Suppose that John was born 20 years ago; this means that he did not exist
before that, and so his non-existence (or nothingness before his birth) is a
contradictory non-existence (‘\(\text{\textasciitilde} \text{adam muqābīl}\)), also called temporal non-existence
(‘\(\text{\textasciitilde} \text{adam zamānī}\)).\textsuperscript{58}

Muṭahhari says that at the same time, this human named John has another form of
non-existence that would explain the possibility of John existing or not existing. His
existence is contingent, by essence, and so his essential contingency makes his being
or not being equally possible. There is an essential contingency logically prior to
John’s existence as it is possible for him to exist or not exist.\textsuperscript{59} Note, though, that
Section 2.2 of this chapter explored a broader and more general way of analysing
priority and posteriority.

Even though the concepts of eternity and creation can be related to time or physics,
in being related to existence they are also a topic of metaphysics. This follows from
defining the subject matter of metaphysics as, according to Avicenna, ‘the existent

\textsuperscript{56} Ṭabāṭabāʾī, \textit{The Elements of Islamic Metaphysics}, 95.
\textsuperscript{57} ʿAlī Karaji, \textit{Iṣṭīlāḥāt-e Falsafi wa Tafāwute-e ʿānhā bā Yekki Digār (Philosophical Terms and the
Difference Between Them)} (Qom: The Centre of Publication of the Office of Islamic Propagation of the
\textsuperscript{58} Muṭadā Muṭahhari, \textit{Durūs Falsafiya fi Sharh al-Manzūma}, vol. 4, 9. Keven Brown argues:
To Mir Dāmād, on the other hand, the temporally prior non-existence of something does
not actually contradict its temporally posterior existence, because the time of its non-
existence and the time of its existence occupy two different intervals of the extension of
time. Since the boundaries of these two time spans meet but do not overlap, they do not
cancel each other out, and therefore, they are not contradictory (Email communication
with the author, 19 February 2017).
inasmuch as it is an existent (َُٖل-مَوْجَدَةُ بِيمَآ حُوَآ مَوْجَدَهُ). ْتَبَأتَبَأَّی emphasised this point:

Thus the meaning of ḥudūth became ‘existence posterior to non-existence’ and the meaning of qidam ‘non-precedence of existence by non-existence’. These two concepts are essential (َِذٰت) characteristics of existence in general, for an existent qua existent is either preceded by non-existence or it is not. Thereupon these concepts became fit for metaphysical discourse.٦٠

٦٠ْتَبَأتَبَأَّی means that, as stated by Avicenna in Metaphysics of the Shifa, the primary subject matter of metaphysics is ‘the existent qua existent’. Therefore, as ḥudūth and qidam can only be understood in relation to the concept of existence, they can be discussed under metaphysics in this regard. When these terms are not examined in relation to existence but in relation to motion or time, they would be dealt with under physics.

In general, theologians did not approve of dividing both ḥudūth and qidam into essential and temporal; for them, the only qadîm is God and everything else (i.e., the world) is ḥādîth. The problem here is how to connect the created with the eternal. This is something Mir Dâmad dealt with exclusively in al-Širāṭ al-Mustaqîm fi Rabţ al-Ḥādîth bi al-Qadîm (The Straight Path on Connecting the Created to the Eternal). Mir Dâmad’s solution to this issue will be detailed in Chapter 3. However, key aspects are mentioned below to allow for the clarification of relevant terms.

Mir Dâmad chose a third option in relation to ḥudūth—to remove the difficulty of connecting the created to the eternal (rabţ al-ḥādîth bi al-qadîm), or the changing to the unchanging, or explaining the relationship between two seemingly irreconcilable states of existence. To achieve this, he presented the theory of meta-temporal origination, or al-ḥudūth al-dahîrî, which holds that the realm of al-dahr (perpetuity) is an intermediary realm positioned between time and eternity.٦١ In other words, the material world is the realm of change, renewal and motion. It is governed by time; hence, Mir Dâmad’s reference to it as the ‘container of time’ (wi‘ā’ al-zamān). A second realm related to the Creator is called the ‘container of eternity’

٦٠ْتَبَأتَبَأَّی, The Elements of Islamic Metaphysics, 95.
٦١Sayyid Muḥammad Khâmene‘î, Mîr Dâmad, 118–19.
(wi‘ā’ al-sarmad), which has neither a beginning nor an end, and belongs exclusively to the uncaused first cause (or prime cause, al-‘illah al-ūlā).62

Under this theory, every temporally created thing is essentially created, but not every essentially created thing is necessarily created temporally. M. Saeed Sheikh gives the following definition:

Sarmad: Absolute eternity, i.e. eternity without a beginning (azal) and also without end (abad); sometimes considered time as absolutely fixed and unchanging. Sarmad is distinguished from dahr by maintaining that whereas dahr encompasses zaman, sarmad encompasses dahr. Sarmad is used with reference to the relation between two eternals (as, for example, between the essence of God and His attributes); dahr with reference to the relation between the eternal and the changing (as, for example, between God and the world); and zaman with reference to the relation between the two changing series (as, for example, between the movement of the heavenly spheres and the phenomenal changes on earth).63

In the realm of dahr, there is no change. Its opposite is the realm beneath it, the temporal realm, which is the realm of change and renewal. The changeable material world is founded on unchanging substances (jawāhir) located in al-dahr,64 because this is the realm that makes a connection between the eternal and the temporal possible.

Avicenna mentions the definition of ḥudūth in general as being existent (ays) after non-existence (lays).65 More specifically, on the term of ḥādith, Avicenna believed that there were two types of created: that which necessitates or requires time and

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64 As explained by Mir Dāmād scholar Keven Brown:
There is no actual motion in dahr. Although time, the motion that carries it, motion’s substrate, and prime matter all exist in dahr, in fact all temporal things, exist there, but in a fixed, frozen state all simultaneously present to God. It is only within time itself that the contents of dahr unfold in a temporal order, like the pictures in a movie, one frame at a time. So Zayd and all his temporal states, from birth to childhood, middle age, old age, and death—all exist simultaneously in dahr, only unfolding one moment after another in time. This view of Mir Dāmād on time is very similar to Einstein’s understanding of relative time (Email communication with the author, 9 February 2017).
that which does not require time.\textsuperscript{66} However, Mīr Dāmād comments on this and then clearly mentions there being a third: something created (\textit{al-muḥdath}) that is preceded in its existence by a real non-existence in externality (\textit{fi al-a’yān}). Mīr Dāmād then says:

This means that its existence comes about after its sempiternal absolute non-existence, and not according to its essence only in the consideration of the intellect, but rather in concrete reality external to the mind. This afterness is also distinctive to the beforeness, not temporally, but sempiternally. This means that every effect is also created (\textit{muḥdath}) in this type, as it is created according to essence and according to him. In all three types.\textsuperscript{67}

2.4 The World

The word \textit{al-‘ālam}, or ‘the world’, is used frequently in the context of the creation and eternity of the world. In Arabic, \textit{al-‘ālam} (pl. \textit{al-‘ālamin}/\textit{awālim}) literally means everything created (as defined by the famous lexicographer Ibn Manẓūr [1233–1312 CE]).\textsuperscript{68} Farīd Jabr, Rafiq al-‘Ajam, Samīḥ Daghīm and Jīrār Jāhāmī’s encyclopaedia of logical terms gives the literal meaning of ‘the world’ as the complete set of simple natural bodies.\textsuperscript{69} This means that all material existents at the level of their fundamental components belong to the genus ‘simple body’.

When Islamic theologians and philosophers use ‘world’ (\textit{al-‘ālam}), it refers to every existent other than God.\textsuperscript{70} This is its technical meaning. They then divide what exists in the world into two types: substance (\textit{jawhar}) and accident (‘\textit{ard}).\textsuperscript{71} Substance signifies everything that exists in reality, such as bodies, the sky, the earth, water,


\textsuperscript{67} Mīr Dāmād, \textit{al-Šīrat al-Mustaqīm}, 214. See also 152. See also Mīr Dāmād, \textit{al-Imādāt}, 3.


plants, animals and whatever else is in the visible world. A substance is something that takes up a locality independently. An accident has no independent existence and only exists in a being, substance or another accident (e.g., colour or scent).

As seen from the above, the literal and technical definitions of the word al-ʿālam are similar. The root of al-ʿālam is ʿalam, meaning ‘sign’, a possible reference to contingent existence (that is, everything other than God being a sign of the Creator).

Different categories of al-ʿālam have been mentioned, with each denoting a particular perspective of the world, referring to the universe or other realms. A few divisions have been made by philosophers in relation to the world. Prior to explaining this, it is necessary to note that the meaning of ‘world’ here does not include God, only the levels of contingent existence. The word al-ʿālam has been claimed to denote divisions of the worlds—something more easily conceptualised in English as ‘realm’ instead of ‘world’. When the contemporary philosopher Ṭabāṭabāʾī says that existence, as far as its connection or disconnection from materiality is concerned, is divided into three universal realms (ʿawālim), he refers to them as the realm of intelligences (ʿālam al-ʿuqūl), the realm of ideas (ʿālam al-mithāl) and the natural or material realm (ʿālam al-māddah). Ghulāmridā Fayāḍī (1950–CE) notes the following important point in his gloss on Ṭabāṭabāʾī’s Nihāyah al-Ḥikmah:

With existence, even though it is divided into three divisions: 1. Intelligible immaterial, 2. Ideal immaterial, 3. Material, however it is not divided into three worlds. A world is the name of an instrument, and it means that which is known (yuʿlam) through it. It refers to everything other than God because they are signs for His Almighty existence. He the Almighty is outside the three worlds.

Ṭabāṭabāʾī also elaborates on these three main worlds in Bidāyah al-Ḥikmah:

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72 Sheikh, A Dictionary of Muslim Philosophy, 40.
73 Ibid., 73.
75 Or the imaginal realm. See Ṭabāṭabāʾī, The Elements of Islamic Metaphysics, 148.
76 Ibid., 954, fn. 29.
Existence is divisible into three realms with respect to freedom from matter and its absence. One of them is the world of matter and potentiality. The second realm is the one in which matter is absent, though not some of its properties such as shape, quantity, position, etc. It contains physical forms and their accidents and features of perfection without the presence of any matter possessing potentiality and passivity. It is called the ‘imaginal’ or the ‘intermediate’ world (ʿālam al-mithāl or ʿālam al-barzakh), which lies between the world of the Intellect (ʿālam al-ʿaql) and the world of matter (ʿālam al-māddah). The third is the immaterial world (ʿālam al-tajjarud), which is absolutely free from matter and its properties. It is called the world of the Intellect (ʿālam al-ʿaql).

The metaphysicians have further divided the imaginal world into the ‘macrocosmic’ (or objective) imaginal world (ʿal-mithāl al-aʿzam), which is a self-subsisting realm by itself, and the ‘microcosmic’ (or subjective) imaginal world (ʿal-mithāl al-āṣghar), which subsists through the soul and governs it in any manner it wishes according to its motives, rightful or extravagant, producing at times real and healthy forms and at other times fantastic forms, which the soul creates for the sake of diversion.

These three worlds constitute a hierarchy. Amongst them the highest of them in rank, and existentially the strongest and the prior-most, as well as nearest to the First Source, is the world of the immaterial Intellects (ʿālam al-ʿuqūl al-mujarradah), due to the completeness of their actuality and freedom of their essences from all traces of matter and potentiality. Below it lies the (macrocosmic or objective) imaginal world, which is free from matter, though not some of its properties. Further below is the world of matter, the abode of all deficiency and evil. Knowledge does not pertain to that which is in it except through what corresponds to it in the imaginal world and the world of the Intellect.77

This means that the first realm is the material realm and also the potential (quwwah) realm. The second realm is free of materiality, but not absolutely free as it has corporeal forms and accidents. It is however free of shape (shikl), size (miqdār) and

position (\textit{wad‘}).\textsuperscript{78} It has the accidental potentiality and ability to take material form. Accidental potentiality is the ability to exist, and this differs from substantial potentiality (\textit{al-quwwah al-jawhariyyah}) which is matter (\textit{al-maddah}).\textsuperscript{79} It is called the ideal realm, the imaginal realm or the isthmus realm (\textit{al-barzakh}), which means it operates as an intermediary between the two other realms. This realm is further divided into two realms: the macrocosmic realm which stands on its own and is self-subsisting, and the microcosmic realm which subsists through the soul (\textit{al-nafs}). This means that it forms new concepts and composes them.\textsuperscript{80} Therefore, the ideal realm is free from materiality but does have the effects of materiality, as with a picture reflected in a mirror—the picture is not material but does have a form.

The third is the realm of the intellect, which is free from materiality and its effects. It is the highest realm and the cause of the other two realms. Below it is the ideal realm and below that is the material realm.\textsuperscript{81} The highest realm encompasses that which is below it. Ṭabātabā’ī refers to this realm being closest to the First Source, meaning God, emphasising that God is not included in these worlds. God, as defined by Islamic philosophers, is absolute immateriality, and so the intellectual realm is closer to God as it is also immaterial. It exists in absolute actuality and is immaterial in essence and action.

The relevance of the term ‘realm’ or ‘world’ and its relation to the creation of the world is due to the frequent use of this term throughout discussions of \textit{hudūth} and \textit{qidam} and what it denotes in the Islamic philosophical context.\textsuperscript{82}

\section*{2.5 Meta-Temporal Origination}

Meta-temporal origination is a fundamental philosophical belief held by Mīr Dāmād and presented in most of his books. The issue of the creation versus the eternity of the world was a longstanding source of dispute between philosophers and theologians. Religious texts referred to the phenomena of the world and all existents

\textsuperscript{79} Ibid., 251. See also Ṭabātabā’ī, \textit{The Elements of Islamic Metaphysics}, 97–98.  
\textsuperscript{80} Ṭabātabā’ī, \textit{Nihāyat al-Hikma}, 4: 956.  
\textsuperscript{81} Ibid. This is of course the view of Peripatetic philosophy, that the realms are vertically lined. However, in Transcendent philosophy it is looked at in the form of preparedness (\textit{i’dādī}) (Ibid., footnote 36).  
\textsuperscript{82} For a brief outlook on worlds and realms according to Mīr Dāmād, see Seyyed Hossein Nasr, \textit{The Islamic Intellectual Tradition in Persia}, ed. Mehdi Amin Razavi (Oxfordshire: Routledge, 2014), 252–53.}
having appeared and therefore being created, which meant nothing existed before them. Religions agreed that God had created the world, or bestowed existence upon it. Philosophers did not view the world as being created in time, which led them to believe that the world was eternal. Mir Dāmād dedicated immense effort to explaining and solving this problem, particularly in his magnum opus Kitāb al-Qabasāt.83

The word dahr has various uses84 in Arabic.85 Some literal meanings include ‘time’, ‘a long time’, ‘a long duration’, ‘aeon’, or ‘the innermost essence or part of time’.86 Other dictionaries include ‘century’, ‘age’, ‘period’, ‘eternity’ and ‘millennium’.87 Al-Rāghib al-Isfahānī (d. 1108 CE) writes in his literary anthology al-Mufradāt fi Gharīb al-Qur’ān that dahr refers to the worldly life and the extended time related to it that stretches from beginning to end, with Chapter 76 and its first verse referring to this.88

Qur’anic references to the term dahr exist, along with some mentions in Prophetic traditions.89 The particular traditions that condemn the abusing or cursing of dahr mainly refer to those who reject God’s involvement in human life. These people came to be known as Dahris, generally comparable to atheists.90 Dahrism (al-dahriyah) was a materialist sect whose adherents believed that the world was eternal and did

83 Mir Dāmād, The Book of Blazing Brands, 1.
84 Some of these meanings are presented and briefly explained by Behbahānī in Sayyid ‘Ali Mūsawī Mudārris Behbahānī, Ḥakīm Estarābād Mir Dāmād, 2nd ed. (Tehran: Intishārāt-e Dānishgāh, 1998), 190–91.
85 The Persian equivalent given for this word is dīrānd, and it is said that it shares the origin with the French term ‘Durée’. See Sa’īd Nazārī Tawakullī, Nazariye-ye Paydāysh Jahān dar Ḥikmat Yamānī wa Ḥikmat Mutā’alīye (The Theory of the Creation of the World in Yamānī Philosophy and Transcendent Philosophy) (Masḥhad: Islamic Research Foundation, Astān Quds Raḍawī, 2009), 162.
86 Sheikh, A Dictionary of Muslim Philosophy, 53.
88 al-Rāghib al-Isfahānī, al-Mufradāt fi Gharīb al-Qur’ān (Mecca: Maktabat Nazār Muṣṭafā al-Bāz, 2009), 230. He also says that the term dahr is different to the term zamān (time) because time refers to duration that is a little or a lot.
89 As with the tradition narrated in Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim (Book of Words from Good Manners, no. 2246), which says, ‘Do not curse dahr, for indeed God is al-Dahr’.
90 A verse in the Qur’an refers to this sect. It says in chapter 45 (The Crouching) verse 24, ‘And they say, “There is not but our worldly life; we die and live, and nothing destroys us except time.” And they have of that no knowledge; they are only assuming.’
not have a creator. Their central doctrine was the perenniality of the world. Atheist materialists were referred to as dahrists due to the ways in which the Qur’an and certain traditions used this term, but in a theological or philosophical context it referred to something different.

The relation between dahr materialism and the philosophical context of dahr results from dahr’s connection to an ongoing duration of aeons; however, theologians and philosophers have clarified that a distinction exists here. Regarding the technical meaning of dahr, theologians did not believe it signified an external existence as it was considered to signify the relation of one created event to another created event. The philosophers’ general definition of dahr (prior to Mir Dāmād) was the measurement of the planet’s movements. Dahr was distinct from both time and sarmad, or eternity.

No unanimously agreed on English translation of dahr exists for Mir Dāmād’s use of the term. Brown translates dahr into English as ‘perpetuity’ and defines it as having an atemporal beginning but no end, where all things in relation to God are present and together without the flow of time. Fazlur Rahman also chose this equivalent. Other experts in Mir Dāmād’s philosophy have used the term ‘meta-time’ or ‘meta-temporality’. The expression ‘atemporal pre-eternity’ has also been used. Mehdi Aminrazavi defines dahr as the relation between the archetypes that are unchangeable. I will continue to explore this term, which is fundamental to Mir Dāmād’s theory of creation and eternity, in Chapter 3.

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94 Muhammad ’Alī al-Tahānawi, Mawsū‘āh Kāshāf Iṣṭilāhāt al-Funūn wa al-‘Ulūm, 1: 800.
95 Sa’īd Naẓariye Ye Paydāysh Jahān Dar Ḥikmat Yamānī Wa Ḥikmat Mutā’ālyeh, 162.
97 Mir Dāmād, Kitāb al-Qabasat, Fazlur Rahman’s introduction, 140.
98 See, e.g., Mir Dāmād, Kitāb al-Qabasat, Toshihiko Izutsu’s introduction, 4.
2.6 Conclusion: Final Discussion of Mīr Dāmād’s Terminology

Insofar as the aforementioned terms are used in relation to the topic of creation and eternity, it is apparent that their definitions and use have changed and evolved.\textsuperscript{101} In philosophical discourse, the changes are limited to their definitions. This could be why Aristotle and Avicenna have said that the dispute between philosophers and theologians may only be due to semantics.

Mīr Dāmād emphasised defining terms and explaining theories, particularly those related to \textit{dafr}. His extensive books on this topic contain numerous accounts of how technical words should be used, stressing his consideration of their importance in the conceptualisation of his theory of meta-temporal origination.

Mīr Dāmād's reasoning leads to the revelation that the world is an effect essentially posterior to the level of God as first cause. In addition, there is a separate atemporal posteriority from His existence in external reality. As such, God is prior in causation at the level of essence. At the level of real concrete existence, He is separately prior to the world as well. Mīr Dāmād says:

Consequently, essential posteriority to the true first Creator (glorified be He), whether this be posteriority in being an effect, in quiddity, or by nature, returns without reservation to perpetual separate posteriority (\textit{ta'akhur infikākī dafrī}). And His essential priority, whether this be causal, by quiddity, or by nature, returns without reservation to eternal separate priority (\textit{taqaddum infirādī sarmādī}). It is not correct that this state of affairs can be compared to the sun and its rays and the essential priority and posteriority which exists between them with respect to the intelligible order, and simultaneity in existence with respect to the real world, as the tongues of some contend and the mouths of others exclaim. For you know that the intelligible stage belonging to the sun itself as such is not the same as its existence in the real world, as it is the way of the matter in the divine world. The same applies to the motion of the hand and the ring, for

\textsuperscript{101} See Wisnovsky, \textit{Avicenna’s Metaphysics in Context}, 228–29.
example. Open the wings of your intellect to the truth, and be not of those who are uninformed.\textsuperscript{102}

Mir Dāmād reasons that comparing God to the sun and the world to its rays is thus incorrect because:

1. There is a difference between the sun’s existence and its quiddity. At the level of its quiddity, the sun is different from its existence in external reality. Conversely, God’s quiddity is the very existence of His external reality.

2. The sun and its rays are simultaneous in time, whereas the relation between God and the world is not a temporal relation.

This is why the world cannot have a coexistence (\textit{ma‘iyah}) with God. In Mir Dāmād’s view, all priorities and posteriorities in relation to God refer to eternal separate priority (\textit{taqaddum infirādī sarmādī}) and atemporal separate posteriority (\textit{ta‘akhkhur infirādī dahri}).

It is for this reason that Mir Dāmād persisted in clarifying that the priority existing between God and the world is an eternal separate priority. This stance removed any confusion about the possibility of coexistence between the two realms. Mir Dāmād believed that nothing exists within \textit{sarmād} except for God:

In defining the area of dispute between the teacher of Yamānī (prophetic) philosophy and the leaders of Greek philosophy, note that sarmādī priority, according to them, is one of the two types of temporal priority referred to in the discussion of priority, even though in their view it is used differently in other areas of knowledge and parts of sciences. They assume that all primary emanations (\textit{mubdi‘āt}) are similar to their emanator, the Almighty Truth, in coexisting in sarmādī priority.

One who regards the divine teachings of Yamānī philosophy extols sarmādī priority by freeing it from being included under temporal priority, even by name.\textsuperscript{103}

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{102} Mir Dāmād, \textit{The Book of Blazing Brands}, 87–88.
\textsuperscript{103} Mir Dāmād, \textit{al-Ufuq al-Mubīn}, 500.
\end{flushright}
On whether Mir Dāmād believes in ḥudūth or qidam, it is clear that he believes in ḥudūth, but what kind of ḥudūth? Although Mir Dāmād’s examination of the philosophers’ prior works identified various foundational problems with the views presented on the incipience of the world, he nonetheless believes in and strongly advocates for the incipience of the world. In his own theological commentary on the introduction to his treatise Shārīʿ al-Najāt, he says:

There is absolutely nothing that is partnered with the Eminent Divine in sempiternity. Almighty God exists in sempiternity, and there is nothing else that exists there except Him. Therefore, by the grace, the will, the wisdom and the power of Almighty God, the whole world comes into existence in perpetuity after its real non-existence (al-ʿadam al-ṣarīḥ).104

Mir Dāmād considers the view of ḥudūth to be a belief of the Shiʿi creed. In Kitāb al-Qabasāt, after explaining the crux of the arguments on creation and briefly presenting perpetual meta-temporal origination, he says:

This is the clear path upon which the law-giving Messengers among the infallible Prophets and Chosen Ones agree, and the ranks of the Near Ones, who are assisted by Revelation and infallibility among both the earlier and the later generations. By them it is established that ‘God was alone and nothing was with Him.’ Other clear verses in the Noble Book, the Sacred Law, and the traditions of the pure and holy Family support this theme.105

Mir Dāmād clearly advocated that all Prophets and Shiʿi Imāms believed in ḥudūth. Conversely, he saw the view of qidam as being a view of ignorance and a type of polytheism:

Thus His emanation could not be by virtue of relation to each thing according to an everlasting relation and a changeless mode. Granting this is indeed persistence in error, turning aside from wisdom, affirming eternity to the possible, caused essence, making partners with God and association with the Maker.106

104 Mir Dāmād, Shārīʿ al-Najāt fi Ḥawāb al-ʾibādāt, 249.
105 Mir Dāmād, The Book of Blazing Brands, 32–33.
106 Ibid., 124.
This was reiterated by his contemporaries, for example, ‘Allāmah al-Majlisi in Biḥār al-Anwār; ‘Al-Sayyid al-Dāmād has said in al-Qabusā: This [view of everything other than God being created] is the consensus of all Prophets and Successors’.107

As for what type of ḥudūth Mīr Dāmād supported, the two main views are temporal creation (ḥudūth zamānī) and essential origination (ḥudūth dhātī). Temporal creation is further divided into real time (zamān ḥaqiqī), hypothetical time (zamān mawhūm) or supposed time (zamān mutawahham).

As previously explained, Mīr Dāmād explained the term ḥudūth as mentally divided into two concepts: incipience (ḥudūth) and temporality (tazammun). He says, ‘Incipience is that the existence is preceded by non-existence in reality, and temporality is that the existence is specialized in occurring in something in a time’.108 Of course, the topic of time is itself a very vast topic and can be discussed from various angles. Here, we will mention only that relevant to understanding Mīr Dāmād’s theory.

There are two approaches to understanding time: asking if time exists or not in the simple form of question (ḥal basīṭah) or the compound form of question (ḥal murakkabah). Mīr Dāmād believes that asking such a question in simple form is wrong, reasoning that when one asks about something, prior to its existence one must be ignorant of it, but for time it is self-evident.109 Mīr Dāmād discussed in detail the reality of time in al-Širāṭ al-Mustaqīm.110 He defined zamān as something that is subjected to having a prior (qabliyah) and a posterior (ba’diyah) in essence.111 Mīr Dāmād believed time was a measurement, unfixed and continuous, through mental analysis of time.112

107 Muḥammad Bāqir al-Majlīsī, Biḥār al-Anwār (Beirut: Dār Iḥyā’ al-Turāth al-ʿArabī, 1983), 54: 238. See also fn. 2. On p. 239, al-Majlisi quotes Mīr Dāmād saying that believing in eternity of the world is a type of polytheism (shirk) and a type of disbelief (ʾilhād).
108 Mīr Dāmād, al-ʾImādat, 30. See also Mīr Dāmād, al-Širāṭ al-Mustaqīm, 195.
112 He also explains how something can be unfixed and also continuous at once. See Mīr Dāmād, al-Širāṭ al-Mustaqīm, 96.
As previously mentioned, time was defined as being the measurement of motion. Mir Damād’s regular mentioning of time being the relation between the changeable and another changeable is not his definition of time but, rather, an analysis of the feature of time. This is because the relation (nisbah) between any changeable to any other changeable is not time. With a material, it comes before motion, and motion is leaving from potentiality to actuality, and this precedes time. In general, Mir Damād agreed with Peripatetic philosophers in regard to time.

Seeing that Mir Damād believes in the incipience of the world and rejects the eternity of the world, what type of incipience does he accept? It has been mentioned that there are different views for what time is, and one of these is that time is ‘real’. Real time is time that exists and has an effect, and if temporal creation was to be understood by this—where God had commenced His creation in this specific time, and prior to this time existed but nothing existed with it—then it is something that Mir Damād completely rejects. He believes that this view would lead to the cause of causes being the effect of its own effects:

The estimation of extension upon assuming the non-existence of time, and the qualification of the Holy Creator by a quantifiable, extensional priority or a flowing temporal simultaneity, is something which no possessor of learning considers correct and no possessor of insight advocates at all, neither in pre-Islamic philosophy nor in the Islam of wisdom. But only those who meddle with what does not concern them, by reason of their idle conjectures, take this as their mount, thus going astray in the wilderness of impotence, the abyss of error, and the desert of deviation.114

Such a clear rejection of real temporal creation is due to the fact that it would entail God being material, or that temporal laws would be applicable to God.115 Mir Damād also opines that Aristotle had said that whoever believes in temporal incipience is in fact believing in its eternity without them knowing.116 Mir Damād sees this view

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113 There are up to 15 different views regarding time. See Muḥammad Ibrāhīm Ayātī, Maqālāt wa Arā’ Marbūṭ be An (Tehran: Intishārāt-e Daneshgāh-e Tehran, 1371 SY), 208–9.
114 Mir Damād, The Book of Blazing Brands, 267. See also Mir Damād, al-Ṣīrāt al-Mustaqīm, 159.
of incipience in real time to be irrational. Mir Damâd also rejected the view of temporal incipience of the world in mawhûm or mutawahham time.

In general, Islamic theologians believed that everything other than God is preceded with a separable (infikâki) non-existence within the sequence of time. For them, there was a time where nothing existed and then a creator created them. To avoid the problems of believing in real time prior to creation (e.g., there being a measurement), theologians said that their definition of time is not the common understanding of time; rather, it is a hypothetical time and does not really exist but can be a source of abstraction (intizâ’).118

Islamic philosophers critiqued this, saying that if it was the case that we extract something from the essence of God and call it ‘time’, then is it possible to extract priority and posteriority from this? Rationally, if abstracting something is possible, then priority and posteriority must also be possible. The major problem with believing in an estimated time is the change in the essence of God—that He did not have something and then suddenly had it within Himself.

Supposed time, or mutawahham,119 is different to mawhûm in that it does not have a source of abstraction and is not individualised; it is just assumed and supposed.120 Something that has no abstraction and no individualisation is what brings about existence.121 Mir Damâd rejected these two meanings of time (mawhûm and mutawahham) and the theory of creation of the world within these types of time. He defines time as follows:

Since it is clear that the substance of the reality of time is only the measure of a continuous unfixed state, then it is an entity which is elapsing and being renewed in its own reality. It has no quiddity except for the continuity of elapsing and renewal, no being other than the quantity of falling behind

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117 Mir Damâd, The Book of Blazing Brands, 32.
118 See Masûd ibn ’Umar-al-Taftâzâni, Sharh al-Maqâsid, 3: 125, fn. 1. The view of zaman mawhûm was not necessarily a view of Sunni or early theologians, because there are later and Shi’i theologians who defend zaman mawhûm. See Muḥammad Zamân Kâshânî, Mir’ât al-Azmân.
119 Another term used for this is zaman taqdirî, or ‘estimated time’.
120 This is discussed in detail in al-Majlîsî, Biḥûr al-Anwâr, 54: 236–38; Muḥammad Taqi Amuli, Durar al-Fawâ'id (Qom: Mu’assasat Dâr al-Tafsîr, 1995), 1: 261–65.
121 Islamic theologians dealt with time in this particular way due to their very common, non-technical understanding of time.
and overtaking, and no essence besides the measure of the flow of change. Therefore, it is in its very reality a continuous unfixed quantity.\(^{122}\)

Mir Dämād also raises the before and after of time, mentioning that this does not add anything in actuality of the reality of time as it is the very aspect of time.\(^{123}\) Further, such a conception would mean that the part of the prior cannot be combined with the part of the posterior in time,\(^{124}\) meaning the prior and posterior cannot be possible in time in reality.\(^{125}\) Conceptualising time without conceptualising matter and motion is like conceptualise an effect without a cause—such an imaginative thing cannot bring about reality or a real existence (i.e., the world). Thus, Mir Dämād ultimately rejected the defining of mawhūm and mutawahham time in the determination of creation because this is based on wahm, which epistemically has no basis.\(^{126}\)

Mir Dämād considers the term hudūth to hold a compound meaning comprised of four concepts/parts: existence (wujūd), non-existence (‘adam), antecedence or precedence (sabq)\(^{127}\) and the criterion of antecedence (mā bihi al-masbūqiyyah).\(^{128}\) He believes that these must all be real, whereas mawhūm and mutawahham are both hypothetical and cannot be the origin of creation.\(^{129}\) This is Mir Dämād’s stance on temporal creation.

Regarding essential origination, Mir Dämād took a different position on this compared to temporal creation. He did not completely reject essential origination, saying that it was rationally acceptable, but he believed it was insufficient to satisfy the religious meaning of creation. As previously stated, Mir Dämād defined hudūth as being an existence preceded with non-existence in reality,\(^{130}\) with hudūth and qidam involving four factors (existence, non-existence, antecedence or precedence

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\(^{125}\) Ibid., 23.


\(^{127}\) Meaning the antecedence of existence with non-existence.


\(^{130}\) Mir Dämād, *al-Īmādāt*, 30.
and the criterion of antecedence)—all of which were real and necessary to correctly understand ḥudūth. ¹³¹ In al-Ufuq al-Mubīn, Mir Dāmād mentions essential origination as being something posited mentally, a view attributed to Avicenna, but affirms that it should be in reality.¹³² This is why Mir Dāmād has a strong emphasis on meta-temporal existence being in concrete reality (fi matn al-wāqi’/ḥāq al-wāqi’) and describes it as such.¹³³ The philosophical terms ḥudūth and qidam—as defined by Mir Dāmād—are concepts of the existent inasmuch as it is existent, and without the condition of any other category of physics, nature or anything else.

Mir Dāmād’s rejection of previous theories of temporal creation and dissatisfaction with essential origination precipitated his theory of perpetual or meta-temporal origination.¹³⁴ A large part of Mir Dāmād’s significance and importance is how he was able to weave these concepts together and expand on them as necessary. He connects time, perpetuity, sempiternity, eternity and the created to be understood as one topic. There is no such connection in Avicenna’s works.

In an ijāzah letter Mir Dāmād wrote to Sayyid Aḥmad al-ʿAlawī, he mentions what he is conveying to al-ʿAlawī the principles of his core philosophical teachings and foundations of lofty intellectual wisdom:

Like the topics of perpetuity and sempiternity, the incipience of the world as a whole from real non-existence in perpetuity, the sevenfold of the types of priority and posteriority, the fourfold of the types of conventionality (iʿtibārāt) of quiddity, the threefold of the types of incipience, and the threefold of the divisions of the third type, which is temporal incipience.¹³⁵

This chapter has explained how Mir Dāmād expanded and changed the meanings of dahr and sarmad, showing in detail how he introduced a new understanding of the term dahr and its relationship to the three realms of zamān, dahr and sarmad. It also elaborated on the divisions of taqaddum and taʾakhur and the types of ḥudūth, revealing Mir Dāmād’s interpretation of this in relation to nafs al-amr. With the

¹³¹ Mir Dāmād, al-Ufuq al-Mubīn, 424.
¹³² Ibid.
¹³³ See Mir Dāmād, al-Īmādāt, 3.
¹³⁴ See Mir Dāmād, The Book of Blazing Brands, 10. He subsequently explains his problem with these theories of temporal and essential creation, and how his alternative to them is different and real (p. 22).
¹³⁵ Mir Dāmād, Muṣannafāt Mir Dāmād, 1: 584.
explanation of the three realms given here, this chapter discussed that whatever is closer to the other higher realm has less real non-existence. Temporal non-existence is preceded by two non-existences: its own non-existence and its dahrī non-existence. Dahr is preceded by its own non-existence, but in the realm of sarmad. Sarmad is not preceded by any form of non-existence. This is the ontological result Mīr Dāmād aimed for and achieved in his philosophical system.

In Mīr Dāmād’s view, with all the essential contingent existents, the forming of the perpetual realm occurred with the simultaneous creation of all realms of creation, amr immateriality, and so on. The knowledge of the perpetual realm is knowledge of all contingent existents, which solves problems such as God’s knowledge of particulars, creation and badā’. Most importantly, Mīr Dāmād saw dahr as an existence, being a specific entity that exists, and its creation as spontaneous and occurring in amr and khalq. Mīr Dāmād’s contextualisation of al-ḥudūth al-dahrī was a refined and expanded Avicennian worldview and ontology. While remaining loyal to Peripateticism and Avicennism, Mīr Dāmād formulated his philosophical system of al-Ḥikmat al-Yamānya and created a context for believing in the real and separable posteriority of the world. 136 This chapter clarified how Mīr Dāmād differed from Avicenna in his epistemic approach to the term dahr and how this term fit into his theory of al-ḥudūth al-dahrī—a distinction absent in other research works on Mīr Dāmād. Mīr Dāmād’s changes to the structure of Peripatetic philosophy regarding terms and concepts 137 were precise, unique and a great achievement, laying the foundation for his theory of meta-temporal origination. This theory is detailed in the next chapter.

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136 For his own emphasis on his innovative achievement in this, see Mīr Dāmād, al-Ufuq al-Mubīn, 645.
137 As previously stated, Mīr Dāmād believed that previous philosophers had not adequately analysed various terms, thus leading to misconceptions and confusion between their theories (Mīr Dāmād, al-Ufuq al-Mubīn, 498). He states this, for example, when explaining the incoherence philosophers had regarding al-sabq al-sarmadī, saying, ‘In general, their principles are congested and their explanations are conflicting, even though they felt sarmadī priority is in front of meta-temporal coexistence. However, when it is said to them: Come to the path of wisdom, you see them reject the truth even though they know it’ (al-Ufuq al-Mubīn, 498).
Chapter 3: Mīr Dāmād’s Theory of Meta-Temporal Origination

3.1 Introduction

Meta-temporal origination, or al-ḥudūth al-dahīrī, is the foundation of Mīr Dāmād’s philosophical system and present in most of his writings. He dealt with meta-temporal origination in different books and offered various expressions and explanations of the idea. The crux of the theory is contained in his most famous book, Kitāb al-Qabasāt, which he dedicated exclusively to the subject.

The theory of al-ḥudūth al-dahīrī did exist prior to Mīr Dāmād. It is found in the writings of Avicenna and Suhrawardī, but not in the sophisticated form developed by Mīr Dāmād. Mīr Dāmād was the first to introduce this concept as a core philosophical principle, based on demonstrative arguments and in line with the Peripatetic tradition, aspects of Avicennism and Twelver Shi‘i tradition.¹

Avicenna’s approach, which dominated the Islamic philosophical perspective prior to Mīr Dāmād, considered that anything that existed in the empirical world was properly and essentially non-existent, and if it did exist then it existed by its cause, not by itself. Anything that does exist that is possible in itself (as opposed to necessary in itself), according to Avicenna, is preceded ‘essentially’ by non-existence, which is called al-ḥudūth al-dhātī or essential origination.²

Mīr Dāmād objected to this widely accepted view and replaced it with a completely new perspective on the ontological God–world relationship. The famous orientalist Toshihiko Izutsu (who was among the first contemporary scholars to show an interest in Mīr Dāmād) explains how Mīr Dāmād’s thesis of al-ḥudūth al-dahīrī is unique in its approach to solving the contentious debate of creation versus eternity:

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The empirical world, he asserts, is contingent not simply because of its existence being preceded by this kind of ‘essential non-existence’ which is posited by human reason in terms of the conceptual structure of all ‘caused’ things, but because it is preceded by an entirely different kind of non-existence, ‘real non-existence’ (‘adam ṣariḥ). The existence of every thing in the empirical world is ontologically preceded by a ‘real’—as distinguished from ‘essential’ or merely conceptual—non-existence, not in the dimension of time (zamān) in which it actually exists, but in that of Meta-Time (dahr). The non-existence here in question is neither ‘essential’ nor ‘temporal’; it is ‘metatemporal’.

According to Mīr Dāmād, in a philosophy where the world is essentially created (ḥudūth dhātī) from pre-eternity, that world differs from the one in a theology where the world is preceded by an estimated, flowing, extended non-existence (‘adam mawhūm sayyāl mumtadd). The essential origination of the world in philosophy has no kind of existential vacuum (khala’) as it extends from the present back to pre-eternity (azal).

The theologians disagreed with this. They believed that with temporal creation the world had a point of creation. Prior to that point was an existential vacuum, one with the characteristics of extension and flow for the world (but not for the Creator)—what they called non-existence (‘adam). This is further detailed later in this chapter.

Mīr Dāmād wished to resolve this dispute rather than enter it. He wanted to show that the absolute (or logical) non-existence (‘adam muṭlaq)—also referred to as parallel non-existence (‘adam mujāmi’), which is the basis of the philosophers’ view of essential origination—must, in fact, be replaced by real non-existence (‘adam ṣariḥ). He also wanted to refute the theologians’ belief in estimated, flowing, extended non-existence.

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3 Ibid., 8–9.
4 This term was discussed in Chapter 2.
Instead of absolute (or logical) non-existence that stems from essential origination, Mīr Dāmād presents real non-existence as the requisite of creation. However, this real non-existence did not solve the theologians’ problem. What he dealt with (in the theologians’ view) is the precedence of non-existence in the horizontal time dimension. However, beyond this, he presented a complicated view of the precedence of non-existence in the vertical atemporal sequence. Per Keven A. Brown:

His (Mīr Dāmād’s) theory is not that the universe and time have a beginning in time, but rather both have a beginning with their Creator. This view, then, differs from that of al-Farābī, Ibn Sinā, and Ibn Rushd by the critical premise that the universe and time are finite in the direction of the past and do have a beginning; and it differs from the view of the Mutakallimūn (theologians) by the equally important premise that the beginning of the universe is not temporal.°

Therefore, it is necessary to distinguish between the concept of ‘beginning’ and the concept of ‘time’. The world was not created in time; rather, time was created simultaneously with the universe.

According to Mīr Dāmād, the realm of dahr is atemporal and the source of the world’s origin; the world did not originate in time or eternity, but in dahr. By devising this concept, he bridged the chasm between theologians and philosophers (or, in other words, between religion and reason) and built on both sides’ theories. Sajjad Rizvi’s explanation of the significance of this division is particularly astute:

The traditional debate between theologians and philosophers had pitted temporal incipience (hudūth zamānī; the idea that God had created the world in time) against the notion of essential incipience (hudūth dhātī; the idea that reduced the world’s posteriority of God to a logical consequence of contingency following necessity. Mīr Dāmād argued that both positions are inadequate. Temporal incipience begs the question of the world being created in a time after a time (the lapse between God’s time and the world’s

time). Essential incipience is reductionist and seems to rob God of the agency to create volitionally. He felt that the best solution was to locate creation outside of both time and eternity in the intermediate ontological plane of perpetuity (dahr) that describes the relationship between an immutable and timeless God and a mutable and timed world.⁷

These three terms (ḥudūth zamānī, ḥudūth dhātī and dahr) were defined and discussed in detail in Chapter 2. Dahr transcends time and exists perpetually, containing all the changeless realities. It is through dahr that time and its contents exist, and it is only conceived through deep meditation and a mystical mode of knowledge.⁸ From this flows Mīr Dāmād’s theory of ḥudūth dahrī.

As discussed in Chapter 2, Mīr Dāmād conceives of ḥudūth as composed of four concepts—existence (wujūd), non-existence (ʾadam), antecedence (sabq)⁹ and the criterion of antecedence (mā bihi al-masbūqiyah)¹⁰—all of which are real. Mīr Dāmād’s proposed ḥudūth dahrī thus solved the controversy surrounding the createdness or uncreatedness of the world in time. The other two divisions of creation are ḥudūth dhātī (essential createdness) and ḥudūth zamānī (temporal createdness). Mīr Dāmād does not refute essential incipience but says it is inadequate for the divine meaning of creation. He states there is a creation outside of time and eternity that occurs in the vessel of perpetuity (dahr). This domain describes the relationship between the unchangeable and timeless God and the changeable and temporal creation or world. Mīr Dāmād divides reality into three wiʿāʾ (‘containers’) or realms: the realm of time (zamān), the realm of perpetuity (dahr) and the realm of eternity (sarmād), all of which were previously detailed in Chapter 2.

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⁹ Meaning the antecedence of existence with non-existence.
¹⁰ Mīr Dāmād, al-Īmādāt, 30.
3.2 History and Background of the Theory of Meta-Temporal Origination

The discussion between philosophers and theologians (in Islam and other Abrahamic religions) on the issue of the world’s creation is ongoing. Religious texts hold the primary concept that the world and everything that exists (other than God) is created. Religious scriptures say that God created everything,11 in the sense that He granted existence to everything—this is something all Abrahamic religions agree on. Most theologians explain this in the sense that prior to the world’s existence there was nothing, and this non-existence (ʿadam) preceding the existence of the world is something in time, which is what led to the belief that there must be a time in which the world did not exist. Theologians found this challenging as particular time (as opposed to universal time)12 is itself a part of the world, so how can time exist before the existence of the world? As discussed in Chapter 2, the theologians partially solved this problem by adopting the idea of an estimated, or hypothetical, time (mawhûm) before the creation of the world.13 Avicenna expressed this as al-zamān al-mawhûm (virtual, hypothetical, or imaginary time).

In al-Qabasât, Mîr Dâmâd explains Avicenna’s view (expressed in his al-Ta’liqât):

If we suppose a beginning for the creation of the world in the manner the Muʿtazila hold, an impossibility necessarily follows, for they hypothesize something before this event. In that thing which they hypothesize, they assume the possibility of different motions. But the different motions can only be true with the possibility of measuring them, and the possibility of measuring them must coincide with the existence of time. Consequently, the postulation of the possibility of the existence of different motions [in that thing before creation] presupposes the existence of time. Hence, another time would exist before time.14

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11 As in the Bible: Genesis 1:1, 26; Psalm 33:6; Colossians 1:16. Also, the Qur’an, 2:117, 6:73.
12 Which means a certain piece of time, and not time as a universal concept.
The theologians (mutakallimin), who believed in temporal creation, or temporal origination, said that this assumed ‘time’ existed before time even had its own mental abstraction. In this hypothetical ‘time’ before time, only God existed as eternal and permanent. Theologians vehemently attacked philosophers over this issue, saying that the philosophers’ beliefs went against the fundamental beliefs of religion. Everything other than God, according to these theologians, is created, so God must also be created. Only one Eternal exists—God. For theologians, saying something is eternal means that something else is equal to God, or that a divine attribute is ascribed to the eternal entity—a heretical suggestion. For theologians, the world had to have been temporally created, and whatever is created is contingent. Conversely, accepting the creation of the world in the realm of time would assume an eternal time, but they believed that the only temporal eternal is God. This is what led them to propose a hypothetical time as time is extracted from the Necessary Existence (God); from Him, time is nominally created, so it cannot be described as temporally eternal.

The philosophers, from Aristotle to al-Fārābī and Avicenna, presented rational arguments in support of the world’s eternity and maintained that this stance does not conflict with God’s essence or attributes. For them, creation is an active attribute of God and there can never be a time assumed when God is not a creator. God’s attributes are not additional to His essence, like a human who may or may not be a parent. The philosophers believed that the world is created essentially; that creation does not necessarily mean that it must occur in a time after God. God is eternal and everlasting, with no beginning and no end, and so are His attributes, which cannot be detached from Him. Mir Dāmād rejected the possibility of time existing before the creation of the world, as did other philosophers. They claimed the precedence of time to the creation of the world did not go beyond it being something imaginary and that it was not possible to present a rational interpretation of creation based on something ‘imaginary’. Muslim scholars were influenced by the overall ideas in the

prevailing philosophical systems prior to Mir Dāmād’s time. In particular, they favoured theories of the world and creation propounded by ancient Greek thinkers, such as in Ptolemy’s astronomy.\(^\text{18}\)

Even though Mir Dāmād conceived his particular theory of *al-ḥudūth al-dahrī*, the origins of usage of the term *dahr* can be traced back to Avicenna (although not with the same meaning or usage as in the framework of Mir Dāmād’s theory). For example, Mir Dāmād refers to an earlier iteration of *dahr* in *al-Ṣirāṭ al-Mustaqīm*:

The expert theosophists (*al-ḥukamā’ al-muḥāsilūn*) refer to these meanings by saying: the relation of the changing to the changing is temporality, the relation of the fixed to the changing is meta-temporality, and the relation of the fixed to the fixed is *sarmad*, where it entails absolute continuity, and meta-temporality is the vessel of temporality.\(^\text{19}\)

Avicenna stated, ‘The relation of the eternals to the eternals is called *al-sarmad* … and the relation of the eternals to temporality is called *al-dahr*’.\(^\text{20}\) Nāder el-Bızrī elaborates on Avicenna’s definition of time:

In *Kitāb al-Ḥudūd*, Avicenna defined time (*al-zaman*) as that which resembles the created being and acts as the measure of motion in terms of the anterior and the posterior. He also noted that supra temporal duration (*al-dahr*) resembles the creator insofar as it is stable throughout the entirety of time.\(^\text{21}\)

In *Kitāb al-Qabasāt*, Mir Dāmād uses the contentions of previous philosophers to support his conception of *al-ḥudūth al-dahrī*. In the first paragraph of the *First Qabas*, he presents Avicenna’s understanding of creation:

In Book Six, Chapter Two of the Metaphysics of the *Shifā’,* he [Ibn Sinā] tries to define the concept of creation (*ḥudūth*) and to make threefold its primary classification, which is comprehensive in accordance with the

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comprehensiveness of its three primary divisions. Thus he [Avicenna] tells us:

The meaning of that which is called ‘primary origination’ (ibdā’) by the philosophers is causing something to exist ‘after’ an absolute non-existence (lays muṭlaq), for it belongs to the effect through itself (fi nafsihi) that it is non-existent, while [at the same time] it belongs to it through its cause that it is existent. That which belongs to something by virtue of itself is more prior for the mind, essentially (ʿinda al-dhihn biʾl-dhāt), not temporally, than that which belongs to it from something else [for example, the heavens, which are considered eternal and unchanging, have an essential but not temporal posteriority to their cause]. Therefore, every effect is existent after being non-existent, where ‘after’ means essentially (or: logically) [and not temporally] posterior.

If the term ‘created’ (al-hadath) is applied [in this manner] to everything which possesses existence after non-existence, then every effect is created (muḥdath). If, however, the term is not applied in this way, but rather the condition of a created thing is that a time precedes it which ceases with temporal priority, but rather is distinct from it in existence, then not every effect is created, but only those which are preceded by time and, without doubt, movement and change. This you know, and we will not dispute the terms.

Now, a created being in the sense which does not necessitate time is such that its existence must either come after an absolute non-existence or after a non-absolute non-existence (lays ghayrmuṭlaq), that is to say, after a contrary, specific privation (ʿadam) in an existing matter, as you know. If its existence comes after an absolute non-existence, its emanation from its cause is called ‘primary origination’ (ibdā’). This is the most excellent form of giving existence, because privation is categorically excluded and existence is imposed upon it. For if privation were allowed to precede [its] existence, its coming-into-being (takwin) would be impossible except
through matter, and the power of giving existence would be weak and
deficient from the beginning.\textsuperscript{22}

Avicenna was not attempting to prove \textit{al-ḥudūth al-dahrī} but Mīr Dāmād quoted him
in such a way as to extract this concept. Mīr Dāmād’s theory is based on this division,
where the vessel of \textit{sarmad} has no form of non-existence (‘\textit{adam}) as it has no
creation. Regarding the creation and non-existence of the world, that exists in the
vessel or realm of \textit{dahr} and time. As all contingent existents are created, they need a
cause to come into existence. Philosophers call this creation of contingent existence
‘essential origination’, with its counterpart being \textit{al-‘adam al-mujāmi}, or ‘cohabiting
non-existence’.\textsuperscript{23} After this is the creation of material existence, which falls into the
realm of time and is what the philosophers call ‘temporal creation’.\textsuperscript{24}

For Mīr Dāmād, only \textit{dahrī} or real non-existence is the opposite of existence.\textsuperscript{25} He
states that the other two types of non-existence (essential and temporal) can coexist
or cohabit with something’s existence. What Mīr Dāmād means is the ontological
difference within the concept of non-existence. He aims to outline the scope of \textit{al-
‘adam al-muqābil} and \textit{al-‘adam al-infikākī}, and his use of ‘\textit{adam} here is to highlight
its contradiction, wherewith the occurrence of the posterior existence the prior non-
existence is automatically negated.\textsuperscript{26} In the realm of \textit{dahr}, when non-existence is
mentioned, it is a \textit{dahrī} non-existence, which is different to a temporal non-existence
that has a prior and posterior non-existence.

\begin{flushleft}
\textsuperscript{22} Mīr Dāmād, \textit{The Book of Blazing Brands}, 3–5. The original text can be seen in Avicenna, \textit{The
202–3.
\textsuperscript{23} This ‘\textit{adam} that cohabits with existence is opposite to contradictory non-existence (‘\textit{adam
muqābil}) which is absolute non-existence. There are two kinds of non-existence (‘\textit{adam): 1)
contradictory non-existence (‘\textit{adam muqābil}) and 2) cohabiting or parallel non-existence (‘\textit{adam
mujāmi}). The first is non-existence in terms of time, which does not correspond to the existence of a
thing in time. The second is the non-requisite of a contingent for either existence or non-
existence. This non-requisite is a negative attribute of a contingent itself (Akbariān, “Temporal
Origination of the Material World,” 91, fn. 4). See also Muḥammad Ḥusayn Ṭabarṭābāī, \textit{The Elements
of Islamic Metaphysics (Bidāyat al-Hikmah),} trans. and annotated by Sayyid ‘Alī Qālī Qarāī (London:
ICAS Press, 2003), 95.
\textsuperscript{24} Ra’ūf Sabhānī, \textit{al-Fikr al-Falsafī ‘inda al-Mīr Dāmād al-Astarābādī}, 372.
\textsuperscript{25} Mīr Dāmād distinguished between ‘\textit{adam al-iqlīdā}’ and \textit{iqlīdā} ‘al-‘\textit{adam}, which was briefly
explained in Chapter 2 of this thesis.
\textsuperscript{26} See Mīr Dāmād, \textit{al-Īmādāt}, 45. See also Mīr Dāmād, \textit{The Book of Blazing Brands}, 18.
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Mīr Dāmād explains this further:

It is not that a created existence is preceded by a non-existence contradictory to it in the extension of time, for the priority of the prior non-existence is distinct from the posteriority of the subsequent existence on account of the separateness of their times in existence, for they belong to two different times.27

He also states, ‘Temporal non-existence in a prior time is not contrary to existence created in time or the now following afterwards due to the difference of the two distinct boundaries’. 28 His student and commentator on al-Qabasāt, al-ʿAlawī explains this concept as:

Neither prior temporal non-existence, to which something being a temporal creation corresponds, nor essential absolute non-existence, to which an existent being an essential creation corresponds, is nullified in the real world by the occurrence of actual existence.

As for the first, there is no incompatibility between temporal non-existence temporally preceding in a prior time and subsequent existence created in a later time due to the non-simultaneity of time.29

What Mīr Dāmād added to these two types of creation was a third type of creation not related to time or essence. This third type is related to the specific state of a particular thing in relation to its real non-existence (al-ʿadam al-ṣarīḥ) that is non-temporal.

Mīr Dāmād also clarified that the argument was not just semantic but deeper, explaining his stance and how he differed from Avicenna and other philosophers. Of this, Aminrazavi says:

Mīr Dāmād begins by opposing the traditional view of the philosophers in general and Ibn Sīnā in particular who has argued that the problem of eternity on both ends is insoluble and can be equally proven and refuted

27 Mīr Dāmād, The Book of Blazing Brands, 17.
28 Ibid., 225.
29 Seyyed Ahmad al-ʿAlawī, Sharḥ al-Qabasāt (A Commentary on al-Qabasāt), ed. Ḥāmid Nājī Esfahānī (Tehran: Institute of Islamic Studies, University of Tehran, 1997), 475.
(jadalat al-tarafayin). Ibn Sinā’s concept of essential createdness, Mīr Dāmād argues, is eventually reduced to a mere linguistic difference between God and the incorporeal substances since the latter’s existence is not created in the real sense of the word. In order to preserve the transcendental nature of God, Mīr Dāmād maintains, a real ḥudūh is required (he calls this ḥudūth fi matn al-a’yān).30

Mīr Dāmād’s focus is to advance his theory of al-ḥudūth al-dahri, giving different explanations of and arguments for it. He wanted to refute the hypothetical temporal non-existence extending infinitely in the direction of pre-eternity, which most theologians postulated to prove temporal creation. He also put considerable effort into disproving the notion Avicenna proposed, that this issue is a ‘dialectic issue having two contrary positions (jadali al-tarafayn), in the sense that neither side’s contention can be proven by rational demonstrative arguments.31

Mīr Dāmād aimed to combine religion and philosophy—something prior philosophers had not considered a primary goal (instead considering that reason would trump religion). Mīr Dāmād (and later his student Mullā Ṣadrā) aligned philosophy and religion, at least from an esoteric aspect. Mīr Dāmād was the first to analyse ideas found in the Islamic traditions (ḥadīth) on this topic from a philosophical and theological perspective. In Kitāb al-Qabasāt, he explains the views of theologians and philosophers and presents his own distinctive theory. In this work, Mīr Dāmād explains that the created, or hādith, must be something preceded by temporal non-existence (al-‘adam al-zamānī), absolute non-existence (al-‘adam al-muṭlaq) and specific non-existence (al-‘adam al-khāṣ). The last is the relative

30 Aminrazavi, “Mīr Dāmād on Time and Temporality,” 160.
31 Mīr Dāmād, The Book of Blazing Brands, 2. This means that both arguments are insufficient in negating or refuting the other. It is supposed that the world had a temporal beginning and is finite, but the opposing view is that the world does not have a temporal beginning and is unlimited as both its time and place is infinite. One side argues that if the world did not have a beginning, it would mean that a series of infinite events would have occurred and completed by now, but the case is that the infinite never finishes, and therefore the world must have a beginning. The world must also be limited as far as place because we cannot assume that there is place with nothing. Contrary to this is the view that if the world did have a temporal beginning, then it must be assumed that there was a temporal time free of the commencing of the world, but there is no meaning for there to be time and nothing in it. Therefore, the world does not have a temporal beginning. As for the place of the world being infinite, it also has the same argument. This shows that both sides of the argument have their own evidence to give, which is why Avicenna considered it jadali al-tarafayn. Mīr Dāmād also refers to Aristotle having said this in The Book of Blazing Brands, 31, 33–34.
(muḍāf) real non-existence, which is opposite to a specific existence.\textsuperscript{32} Mir Dāmād argued that God exists by essential necessity and is exclusively in the realm of sarmad, not in time or dahr. Fixed substances (al-jawāhir al-thābitah), inasmuch as they have attributes and accidents, exist in dahr and not in sarmad or time. However, changeable things that are subject to change and annihilation exist in time, not in dahr or sarmad.

Noting that most theologians adopted the view of an imaginary time (al-zamān al-mawthur) that preceded the creation of the world to prove ḥudūth, Mir Dāmād refuted this and established his theory of meta-temporality. He did this through demonstrative arguments (burhān), in contrast to Avicenna’s statement that this debate about qidam and ḥudūth is a dialectic argument (jadali al-ṭarafayn). Mir Dāmād argues:

Therefore, it is only reasonable that the area of dispute and an example of a dialectic question having two sides, with respect to what Aristotle and his followers asserted, concerns the third meaning, in other words, perpetual creation (ḥudūth dahrī), and its dependence upon the Originator, the Fashioner, who has extracted the system of the world in its entirety from real non-existence, and brought it into existence in the realm of perpetuity (dahr), through the cancellation of non-existence and the origination of existence all at once perpetually (dufatan wāḥidatan dahriyyatan), not in a period of time or through matter, not through a tool or instrument, and not through exertion or motion. This is a proposition for which no demonstration has yet been composed by rational methods down to our own time and age.\textsuperscript{33}

Prior to this, Mir Dāmād explained the first two meanings or theories of the incipience of the world as essential origination and temporal creation. He then claims that a third exists: al-ḥudūth al-dahrī. He says this can be demonstrated through burhān and is far from being jadali al-ṭarafayn. As Brown comments in his footnote to this passage:

\textsuperscript{33} Mir Dāmād, \textit{The Book of Blazing Brands}, 35–36.
Mîr Dâmâd has clearly stated here the thesis which he wishes to prove in *al-Qabasât*: namely, that the Creator extracted the system of the world in its entirety from real non-existence all at once, perpetually, not in time, and not through matter, instrument, or motion. Aristotle and his followers did not posit its extraction from real non-existence, but only submitted that the world as a whole is essentially posterior to God, not actually so. It is to Dâmâd’s credit as an independent thinker that he questions the judgment of Al-Fârâbî in holding that Aristotle and Plato agreed in their views on the subject of creation.\(^{34}\)

In this way, Mîr Dâmâd presents his theory of *dahrî* creation while reminding his readers that the argument he proposes is not dialectic, nor is the evidence that supports it.

In the first Qabas of *al-Qabasât*, Mîr Dâmâd explains various views and quotes some Qur’anic verses and Islamic traditions (*ḥadîth*) supportive of his theory. He then explains his view, beginning by referring to Avicenna’s explanation of the types of creation:

> If the term ‘created’ (*al-ḥadath*) is applied [in this manner] to everything which possesses existence after non-existence, then every effect is created (*muḥdath*). If however the term is not applied in this way, but rather the condition of a created thing is that a time precedes it which ceases with its coming-into-existence, since temporal posteriority cannot coexist with temporal priority, but rather is distinct from it in existence, then not every effect is created, but only those which are preceded by time and, without doubt, movement and change.\(^{35}\)

This means that three divisions of the created exist:

1. something preceded by temporal non-existence;
2. something preceded by absolute non-existence;
3. something preceded by relative non-existence (*ʿadam muḏāf*) or a specific non-existence that is opposite to the specific existence of the created itself.

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\(^{34}\) Ibid., 36, fn. 48.

\(^{35}\) Ibid., 4.
In the same passage, Mir Dāmād continues Avicenna’s explanation of creation that is non-temporal (the second and third points above). The first of these concerns something preceded by absolute non-existence, or essential nothingness, while the other is something preceded by real (ṣarīḥ) non-existence, which is opposite to the specific existence of something that was created. This third type cannot be combined with the actual existence of the thing created.36

It is impossible to combine actual non-existence and actual existence. In contrast, it is possible to combine the actual existence of something created and its absolute (i.e., logical) non-existence, which refers to the state of its quiddity as such when disregarding its actualising cause. This is because ‘it belongs to the effect through itself that it does not exist (lays), while it belongs to it through its agent (al-fā’īl) that it exists (ays)’.37

All created things (without exception, according to Mir Dāmād) are preceded by real contradictory non-existence at the level of meta-time (dahr). The type of the created preceded by real non-existence, but not preceded by temporal non-existence, is what Mir Dāmād regards as the meta-temporally created things not created in time. These include the intelligences of the spheres, matter, time and motion, and the world itself. However, the category of meta-temporally created things that are also created in time, which includes all things generated in time, is preceded by both real non-existence and temporal non-existence.

In explaining the foundations of his theory of meta-temporal origination, Mir Dāmād quotes those who support his view, such as Abū al-Barakāt al-Baghdādi:38

Among the noteworthy arguments 39 for establishing meta-temporal origination (al-hudūth al-dahrī) with respect to the priority of real non-existence in the empirical world, without consideration of extension and

36 Behbahānī, Ḥakīm Astarābād: Mīr Dāmād, 196.
37 Ibid.
38 Of course, Mīr Dāmād also had serious differences with Abū al-Barakāt due to him believing in time being the estimation of existence. Mir Dāmād refutes Abū al-Barakāt’s views in Mīr Dāmād, al-Ufuq al-Mubīn, 509–10; Mīr Dāmād, al-Ṣirāt al-Mustaqīm, 28.
39 Although I am using Keven Brown’s translation, there are certain places where I believe Brown’s translation to be inaccurate. Here, Mīr Dāmād uses the expression bayānāt, which is not an ‘argument’ but simply a clarifying explanation or a istīshhād, far from burhān. This means that Mīr Dāmād referring to Abū al-Barakāt here does not necessarily mean he completely agrees with him (due to the foundational differences he had with Abū al-Barakāt).
non-extension, is what the master, Abū al-Barakāt, recounted from the philosophers in his [book] *Muʿtabar*. He says:

They said to one who required a period of non-existence (*ʿadam*) preceding the existence of a creature, as a way of instruction and admonition: ‘Is this period limited and determined, as a day, a month, or a year is determined, or does any period of time suffice it?’ The questioner responded: ‘Indeed, any period of non-existence preceding existence is sufficient to create any creature.’ They asked: ‘Is one year of non-existence preceding its existence a reasonable conception?’ ‘Yes,’ he answered. They continued: ‘If the year was changed into one month, would this still be sufficient or not?’ ‘A month would certainly suffice just as a year suffices.’ Then the question was transferred to a day, an hour, part of an hour, and a minute. The result of this chain of questions was to show that time has no causative influence upon creation, because a large amount of the causation of a cause is not like a small amount of it. Rather, all of the cause is necessary for all of the effect. Therefore, if some of the time hypothesized for creation is removed, and a thing is not removed from its status of being ‘created,’ then removing the whole of time will not alter the fact of creation. It is only influential in a weak sense, such that the progression of time certainly actualizes creation, but if it is removed, creation is not removed.40

This means that the amount or quantity of time when something is non-existent does not affect creation itself.41 Therefore, temporal non-existence as such does not affect the outcome of something being created. This results in quantity not being influential on creation.42

### 3.3 Essential Origination

As previously explained, Mīr Dāmād was not convinced that Avicenna’s theory of essential origination (*al-hudūth al-dhātī*) was complete, hence his attempts to prove another type of creation of the world.43 Fazlur Rahman, a pioneer in research on Mir

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42 Ibid., 197.
Dāmād in the English world, describes how Mīr Dāmād separates himself from Avicenna and Suhrawardī in his understanding of the God–world relationship:

[Mīr] Dāmād’s whole effort is concentrated on proving that the ‘essential origination (ḥudūth dhātī)’ of Ibn Sīnā which, as we have seen above, threatened to evaporate into a purely nominal distinction between God and the Intelligences, did involve a ‘real origination (ḥudūth fi matn al-a’yān)’ at the level of dahr or perpetuity, a concept which Professor Corbin has so excellently rendered as ‘événement eternal’.44

As Mīr Dāmād clarified the characteristics of his theory, he also noted how it differed from other theories:

Perchance you recognise, therefore, that the priority of non-existence with respect to essential creation (al-ḥudūth al-dhātī) is an essential priority. It is not that existence has been preceded by a non-existence contradictory to it, for the negation of existence in the station of the quiddity itself, insofar as it is itself, is not contradictory to the existence acquired in the real world from the efficient cause; indeed, it coexists with it.45

This refers to establishing the precedence of non-existence to contingent existence as real, contradictory non-existence (‘adam muqābil) and not logical, cohabiting non-existence (‘adam mujāmi’).46 Essential origination does not establish the precedence of real non-existence to existence, as non-existence in the stage of essential origination coexists with existence and there is no contradiction between them. Non-existence in the stage of quiddity as itself cohabits with existence in the stage of its existence through an active cause (al-‘illah al-fā’ilah), and is coexistent and in agreement, and is not contradictory.

44 Ibid., 141.
45 Mīr Dāmād, The Book of Blazing Brands, 22.
46 There are two kinds of non-existence (‘adam): 1) contradictory non-existence (‘adam muqābil) and 2) cohabiting non-existence (‘adam mujāmi’). See fn. 23 of this chapter.
3.4 Temporal Origination

Mīr Dāmād objected to both essential existence and temporal existence:

In the same way, the priority of non-existence with respect to temporal creation (ḥudūth zamān) is a temporal priority. It is not that a created existence is preceded by a non-existence contradictory to it in the extension of time, for the priority of the prior non-existence is distinct from the posteriority of the subsequent existence on account of the separateness of their times in existence, for they belong to two different times, and the boundary of prior non-existence is other than the boundary of posterior existence, and these two boundaries cannot come together in the extension of unfixed time. Rather, they can only coexist in the domain of perpetuity, with a perpetual, unquantifiable coexistence. Among the kinds of oneness inferred from the opposition between temporal affirmation and temporal negation is the oneness of time. Consequently, for this type of creation [similar to essential creation] there is no opposition between priority and posteriority at all.47

This means that as the prior temporal non-existence of something and its subsequent temporal existence are not in the same time, they do not conflict with each other and do not cancel each other out. One condition of conflict and being contradiction is that both things must be together in the same time.

Mīr Dāmād’s objections to essential and temporal creation led him to conceptualise another type of coming-into-being of the world, which he called dahrī creation. As previously detailed, each level exists within its own realm, and the higher

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47 Mīr Dāmād, The Book of Blazing Brands, 22. Note that I have made slight alterations to this Keven Brown translation.
The realm or vessel (\(\text{wi‘ā} \)) of the material is temporality (\(\text{zamān} \)), the vessel of the immaterial is meta-temporality (\(\text{dahr} \)) and the vessel of the necessary existence is \(\text{sarmad} \). These three realms must be understood to grasp Mīr Dāmād’s theory of \(\text{dahrī} \) creation.

As previously explained, these realms should be viewed from a vertical perspective, where the higher encompasses the lower. It is for this reason that the three realms are defined in relation to each other. With time, it is the relation between the changeable (i.e., the material existents) and the changeable; with \(\text{dahr} \), it is the relation between the fixed (i.e., the immaterial existents) and the changeable (the material existents); with \(\text{sarmad} \), it is the relation between the fixed (the necessary existence) and the fixed (divine names and attributes).

Anything material in the realm of \(\text{zamān} \) was preceded by a time when it did not exist (the time of its temporal non-existence) and it then came to exist. In each realm of \(\text{sarmad} \), \(\text{dahr} \) and \(\text{zamān} \), the existents at each level are preceded by a non-existence in the level above it and not the opposite. To explain this further, what exists in time is preceded by the \(\text{dahrī} \) and \(\text{sarmadī} \) non-existence that is above it. For example, insofar as a temporal thing is in motion, it is in time, but insofar as it exists, it is in meta-time; insofar as it is known by God, it is in eternity. However, it has no actual existence in eternity, just as it has no state of change or motion in meta-time. Something that is material might not have a temporal beginning, but it does have a meta-temporal beginning, which is what Mīr Dāmād refers to as \(\text{dahr} \). This claim was based on the view adopted by philosophers who believed that the material world was temporally eternal. Mīr Dāmād adds to this, saying that the

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\(^{48}\) As illustrated in the following diagram:

\(^{49}\) The term ‘vessel’ or \(\text{wi‘ā} \) here is not a metaphor for water being in a container or similar; rather, its use here refers to the vessel and what exists in it (i.e., \(\text{al-żarf}/\text{al-magrūf} \)) as being one.
world is meta-temporally created. He introduced *dahr* to ḥudūth and added *dahri* and *sarmadi* ‘precedence’ (*taqaddum*).\(^{50}\)

Miร Dâmād explains the difference between the temporally created, the essentially created and the meta-temporally created. He says there are three types of temporally created existents, whose own existence is preceded by temporal non-existence:

One type of the temporal created exists from the cause spontaneously in one particular instant (ʾān), and the existence of this created or its coming to being corresponds to that very ‘instant’.

One type of the temporal created exists from the cause in the collective parts of a particular time corresponding to it in a way that for every part of time a part of the created is supposed. In other words, every part of the parts of something created is acquired in a particular part of time [like traversing motion (*al-ḥaraka al-qatʿiya*)].

One type of the temporally created exists in the collective set of all parts of an unspecified time not coinciding with it, but the parts of the created exist in every part of the supposed time [like mediating motion (*al-ḥaraka al-tawasuṭiya*)].

As for the meta-temporally created, it emanates as a whole from the cause all at once, but not in a time and not in an instant. The meta-temporally created shares with the essentially created in this meaning, but varies from it in that its existence [the meta-temporally created] is preceded by its non-existence externally, and it comes into existence as a whole from the cause all at once. It occurs in the meta-temporal domain, which has no extension (*imtidād*) or opposite (*muqābil*). As for the essentially created, if it was not meta-temporally created, as those who believed in eternity had said, it exists continually meta-temporally and not continually essentially. It receives its emanation and existence from the cause continuously.\(^{51}\)

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\(^{50}\) ‘Alī Awjābī, Miร Dâmād; Bunyanguzār-e Ḥikmat Yamānī (Miร Dâmād; Founder of the Yamānī Philosophy) (Tehran: Intishārāt-e Sāhat, 2003), 110–11.

In *al-Qabasāt*, he describes the three kinds of temporal creation:

Temporal creation (*ḥudūth zamānī*), on the other hand, is of three kinds: (1) Gradual (*tadrījī*), which is the occurrence of one thing, like terminal motion, in the extension of a particular time, such that that thing coincides with it and is divisible by its divisibility. (2) Instantaneous (*dufī*), which is the occurrence of an existent thing in its entirety not in the extension of time but rather in an indivisible now among the nows that are the boundaries and dividers [of time]. (3) Temporal (*zamānī*), which is the occurrence of one thing, like medial motion, in a particular time bordered by a beginning and an end, not by coinciding with it or being divisible by its divisibility, but rather in such a manner that it occurs in its entirety in each of its parts and each of its nows, except for the bounding now (*ān țaraf*), that is to say, the instant of the beginning and the instant of the end. Its occurrence does not have a first now or a last now.  

### 3.5 The Temporal Realm

Anything that exists does so within a particular realm (or vessel) specific to it, and things that flow (*sayyālah*) and have motion (*mutaḥarrikah*) exist within the realm of time and temporality. Mīr Dāmād’s definition considers that time is the container of measurable, flowing existence and the changeable. Things in time have a beginning and an end, and each thing’s beginning is different from its end; they are always in a constant state of flux, changing from one state to another. Mullā Ḥādī Sabzawārī comments on this first type of coming-into-being, ‘Every “existent” has for its “existence” a “container” or something comparable to it. Thus the “container” of the “mobiles” like movement and moving things, is “time”’. Something comparable to this, as Muḥammad Taqī Amuli explains in his famous commentary

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54 Mulla Ḥādī Sabzawārī, *Metaphysics of Haji Mulla Ḥādī Sabzawārī*, trans. Mehdi Mohaghegh and Toshihiko Izutsu (New York: Caravan Books, 1977), 124. Sabzawārī and his book *Sharḥ al-Manzūma* are important in the discussion of *al-ḥudūth al-dahrī* as this book was a textbook in the Islamic seminary and became a reference for becoming acquainted with Mīr Dāmād’s theory. It can be said that Sabzawārī accepted the view of *dahr* and *sarmad*, and also tried to combine it and the philosophy of Mullā Ṣadrā, to which he was loyal. However, because so many used Sabzawārī’s explanations of Mīr Dāmād’s theory, Sabzawārī’s incomplete comprehension of *al-ḥudūth al-dahrī* was transferred to others.
on Sabzawārī’s *al-Manzūmah*, refers to that which is associated with the vessel of time.\(^{55}\)

### 3.6 The *Dahr*, or Meta-Temporal, Realm

The category of aeviternity, or meta-time, which encompasses the immaterial,\(^ {56}\) also includes the intelligibles (*al-ʿuqūl*). These are free of materiality and its associations, such as connection and flux. The relation of *dahr* to *zamān* is similar to the relation of the soul to a body, as the realm of time is subject to change, whereas the realm of *dahr* does not change. Whatever exists in *dahr* is a foundation for the existence of what exists in time, such as the cause (of something) being the perfect level of the effect, while the effect is a weaker level of the cause. On this, Mir Dāmād quotes Avicenna, ‘Perpetuity (*al-dahr*) is the container of time, because it encompasses it. Time is a weak mode of existence due to its being unfixed and flowing’.\(^ {57}\)

Mir Dāmād’s arguments here help to establish the characteristics of the three realms of *zamān*, *dahr* and *sarmad*.*\(^ {58}\) Dahr* encompasses time, and that time is weak in its existence due to its changeable nature. In other words, in time, things are separated from each other, occurring in earlier or later times; however, in *dahr*, all temporals exist simultaneously in an unchanging state. Time in *dahr* is like a frozen river.

### 3.7 The *Sarmad* Realm

*Sarmad* has been translated as ‘transcendent’, \(^ {59}\) ‘eternity’, \(^ {60}\) ‘no time’, \(^ {61}\) ‘the everlasting’\(^ {62}\) and ‘sempiternity’.\(^ {63}\) Correctly translated, *Sarmad* means continuous

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\(^ {56}\) Mir Dāmād uses the expression ‘illuminative separable substances’ (*al-mufāraqāt al-nāriya*). The *mufāraqāt*, or the separables, are not different to *dahr* itself, but another expression of it, similar to the relation time has to flux (*al-sayyālat*). Therefore, in reality, *dahr* is the separables and the universal intelligibles, and they are in the level of cause for what exists beneath them in the material realm.


\(^ {58}\) Ibid., 10, fn. 15.

\(^ {59}\) Ibid.


\(^ {61}\) Izutsu, “Mir Dāmād and his Philosophy,” 4. This translation is inadequate because *dahr* is also translated as ‘no time’.


\(^ {63}\) Akbarīān, “Temporal Origination of the Material World,” 87. This translation is incorrect because it implies eternity into the future but not in the past.
and ongoing, and it refers to an existence that has no beginning and no end, or is both pre-eternal (azali) and post-eternal (abadi). Muslim philosophers have defined it as the relation of a non-changeable fixed existence to another fixed entity, negating any change, motion or time from this realm. Sarmad is the exclusive realm of the Divine.

3.8 Arguments for Meta-Temporal Origination

Mir Dâmâd presented several arguments for meta-temporal origination. These are detailed below.

3.8.1 First Argument

The first argument is based on creation not being temporally created as time has no influence on the created whether a timeframe prior to its existence is specified or not. This is because whether time is extended or not does not influence the act of creation. If part of a time is removed, it does not have any impact on the created.65

Mîr Dâmâd states:

Among the noteworthy arguments for establishing perpetual creation (ḥudûth dahrî), with respect to the priority of real non-existence in the empirical world, without consideration of extension and non-extension, is what the master, Abu’l-Barakât, recounted from the philosophers in his Mu’tabar.66

Negating the necessity of time with respect to the act of creation will result in there being something else. This is dahr, because without temporal extension in the creation of the world, the creation system has no existential tie to the past, the present or the future. This is the meaning of dahr. The realm of dahr is fixed, without the motion or time that apply to matter and bodies, but not to existence or non-existence. Existents occur in the realm of time, which is the container of the measurable, flowing existence, inasmuch as they are changeable; however, insofar

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65 Mîr Dâmâd, Book of Blazing Brands, 9.
66 Ibid.
as they exist, they occur in *dahr*, which is the container of the unchanging.\(^{67}\) As creation has no relation to time as the container (*wiʿā*) of the changeable, it is therefore related to a kind of existence and non-existence that is above this. As Mīr Dāmād says, it is beyond the horizon of quantification and non-quantification, belonging to changeless things insofar as they are changeless.\(^{68}\)

This means that the whole world is created through meta-temporal origination as creation is essentially above and beyond time.

Sayyid Aḥmad al-ʿAlawī explains time not having an effect in his commentary on *al-Qabasât*:

As time has no influence in the creating of creations (*al-hawādīth*), its existence or non-existence have no involvement in it in any way. The philosophers, in their questions directed at the theologians, pointed out the invalidity of a duration of nothingness [prior to creation]. That which is recognised in it is nothingness without precedence of time or instance (*ʿān*). What is this but meta-temporal nothingness (*al-ʿadam al-dhārī*)!? The Seal of Scholars [al-Ṭūsī] referred to this in *al-Tajrīd*, saying: ‘And the specification of the created is to its time, because there is no time before it.’ \(^{69}\) This means that the occurrence of something created does not necessitate that its non-existence precedes it in time prior to its existence. Rather, there is an objective, atemporal non-existence which is neither in time nor in eternity, because non-existence (*ʿadam ʿainī*) in the real world has two instances, and negating one does not necessitate negating the other, so as to require eternity.

Since the reluctant theologians did not reflect upon it and failed to perceive aright, they posited the restriction of time and its serried nature. So they proposed that pre-eternity (*azal*) refers to a definite time wherein the non-existence of creatures occurs, but they did not realize that this requires of them that they be positively preceded by a particular time, which requires eternity, and the eternity of its bearer, and [the eternity of] the bearer of its

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\(^{67}\) Ibid., 10.

\(^{68}\) Ibid.

bearer with respect to the body of the outermost sphere. With that the proofs are invalidated by circular reasoning.\textsuperscript{70}

3.8.2 Second Argument

Mir Dāmād’s second argument is based on the concept of ‘before and after’, or priority and posteriority. God has eternal absolute precedence over that which is temporally created. With this eternal precedence, that which is created is posterior to God in a real (ṣariḥ) and meta-temporal (dahrī) way. This is because it is not possible for a gap to exist between the created and God in time, nor an instant or imaginary extension or anything else, as this would necessitate that God exists within material time (zamān hayūlā), encompassed by physical attributes and accidents.

Based on this, anything created and generated comes into existence by the agency of the Active Originator (al-mubdi‘ al-fa‘āl), following the precedence of real non-existence (al-‘adam al-ṣariḥ) in meta-time (dahr) without the estimation of any extension at all. If this were not the case, it would necessitate assuming extension in dahr, and this would change dahr to time, the fixed to the changeable, the immobile (al-qārr) to the flowing (sayyāl), and the relation of eternity to something restricted by time. All of these are impossible with respect to meta-temporal origination.

Mir Dāmād explains this argument as follows:

If it is clear that the Agent Maker (magnified be His sovereignty) is absolutely and eternally prior to this temporal creature (ḥādith yawmī), for example, and that this creature is really and perpetually posterior to Him, it would be impossible to interpose between it and the true Creator a time, now, hypothetic extension, or extended hypothetical boundary. Otherwise, it would be necessary for the Real, the Most Holy, to be temporal, material, and encompassed by the attachments of matter and the accidents of nature. Immeasurably exalted is He from that!\textsuperscript{71}

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\textsuperscript{70} al-‘Alawī, \textit{Sharḥ al-Qabasāt}, 100.  \\
\textsuperscript{71} Mir Dāmād, \textit{Book of Blazing Brands}, 123.
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3.8.3 Third Argument

The third argument is based on analysing the concept of dispositional possibility (al-imkān al-isti’dādī). Philosophers have distinguished four types of possibility:72

1. Essential possibility (al-imkān al-dhātī), the possibility of the quiddity (māhiyyah) of something in itself as such, while disregarding its cause. Possibility is the characteristic of the quiddity in itself inasmuch as it is itself, regardless of anything else.

2. Dispositional possibility (al-imkān al-isti’dādī), when the possibility of something is looked at with respect to its closeness to or distance from existence, in its disposition and potential for perfection. The completion or change occurs with the occurrence of its conditions and the lack of hindrances, making this type of possibility weak or strong, increasing or decreasing.


Dispositional possibility is like the disposition of human spermatozoa to become human, which is weaker and farther from its disposition to be a mass, which is closer to its disposition to be a foetus, and so on. Dispositional possibility changes as something loses its previous form and adopts a new form of existence.73 However, essential possibility stays the same, whether or not it comes into existence.74

Ibrahim Kalin explains the difference between essential possibility and dispositional possibility as follows:

Things are essentially contingent [i.e., possible] in regard to existence and non-existence, not in regard to certain attributes and qualities. The second is the order of relative contingency or contingency as capacity (isti’dād) and potency (quwwah) where things, by virtue of their existing as a certain substance or entity, have certain properties and possibilities. A seed has the capacity to become a tree, a cold object has the capacity to become hot,

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72 Ṭabāṭabā’ī, The Elements of Islamic Metaphysics, 39.
73 Muḥammad Taqi Miṣbāḥ Yazdi, Philosophical Instructions, trans. Muhammad Legenhausen and Azim Sarvdalir (Binghampton: Binghampton University, 1999), 394.
a baby has the capacity to walk and so on. This second contingency is further divided into two: proximate contingency (al-imkān al-qarīb) is called ‘capacity’ (isti’dād) and ‘distant contingency’ (al-imkān al-ba’īd) is called ‘potency’ (quwwah). While potency is more generic, capacity is specific and applies to a limited range of possibilities.\footnote{Ibrahim Kalin, “Monistic Theophany in the Islamic Tradition,” in \textit{Creation and the God of Abrahim}, ed. David B. Burrell, Carlo Cogliati, Janet M. Soskic and William R. Stoeger (Cambridge University Press, 2010), 120–21.}

Essential possibility is conceptual (i’tibārī), where something is intellectualised when its quiddity is associated with existence, and they are mentally inseparable, but possess no distinction regarding potentiality, actuality, weakness, closeness or farness. With dispositional possibility, this is a qualitative category and it exists. As a result, if it is sufficient for the possible to be issued from the necessary (i.e., God), it will continue along with the necessary as necessary existence is complete and has no condition opposing its effect or actuality. However, if it were insufficient for its essential possibility to come from God, it would need a condition whereby its existence could emanate from the necessary.

If this condition is eternal (qadīm), it will continue to exist with the continuation of the necessary, and its condition is eternity. If it is created, the possible dependent on it would also be created by necessity, but the condition would need the condition of another created entity, and so on. This would lead to each created entity being dependent on another created entity, which would generate an infinite regression.\footnote{Muhammad ‘Alī al-Tahānawī, \textit{Kashāf Iṣṭilāḥat al-funūn wa al-‘ulām}, vol. 1, ed. Rafiq al-‘Ajam and ‘Alī Daḥrūj (Beirut: Maktabat Lubnān, 1996).}

Miḥr Dāmād uses this argument to claim that among possible existences, the essential possible has the ability to accept the Divine Emanation (al-ijādah al-ilāhiyah) directly. In contrast, other possibles (mumkināt) would not be able to receive the emanation except through the intermediary of dispositional possibility. Whatever falls under dispositional possibility cannot be eternal in the realm of meta-temporality as it exists only after being non-existent. The intellect then classifies it as having had previous non-existence, posterior existence and a necessary attribute for this existence; that is, that it does not occur except after non-existence. A created existence comes from the creation (ṣūn) of an active agent (al-fā‘il), along with its prior non-existence, which will then carry the attribute of coming-into-existence. By
coming-into-existence, this will mean that its opposite is non-existent in reality, and, therefore, it will not be eternal in meta-temporality.

It is for this reason that when something essentially created through dispositional possibility comes into existence, its opposite is invalidated. Therefore, it exists in creation accompanied by the negation of its non-existence. This means that anything essentially created is in reality existent after a real non-existence in meta-temporality, thus leading to the theory of meta-temporal origination.

Mīr Dāmād’s explanation for this in al-Qabasāt is as follows:

Is not that which has been established upon its seat settled for you, namely, that among possible things is (1) that whose basis of suitability for receiving the outpouring [of creation] is the characteristic of its essential possibility, and (2) that whose basis of worth for emanation is no other than dispositional possibility. That which is subject to dispositional possibility is not receptive of entification for pre-eternal existence in perpetuity [dahr]; rather it is necessary for it, with respect to the root of its essence, to be such that it does not enter into existence at all except after privation. Therefore, if it enters into existence, three things apply to it in mental consideration: (1) a prior privation, (2) a subsequent existence, and (3) a concomitant attribute belonging to this existence, which is its only being actual after privation. This generated existence (al-wujūd al-hādith) is through the fashioning (sun') of the Agent. The prior privation is due to the lack of coming together of the preconditions of the fashioning and the absence of any of the conditions anticipated for being made. The attribute of this existence, which is its being definitively after the privation, belongs to the very reality of this existent and the root of its essence, since the nature of its substance only has the capacity to merit entering into existence after privation and through the fashioning of its agent. Within the boundary of itself, it is subject to dispositional possibility. The disposition is contained within it, not the actual occurrence of that for which the disposition exists, but certainly the potential for it.

It is consequently evident that what is subject to dispositional possibility is its actual existence through the definite nullification of its non-existence
contrary to its existence in the domain of the real world. It is certainly not admissible, by necessity, then, for it to have a pre-eternal existence in perpetuity. In short, it is clear to the mind that if an existent generated through dispositional possibility enters into existence, its non-existence contrary to its existence is nullified. Thus its entrance into being is in fact through the negation of its non-being. There is no doubt, however, that its prior temporal non-existence is not negated by its existence posterior to it in time due to the necessary lack of opposition between these two. It is therefore established that the existence of whatever is temporally generated (ḥādīth al-dhāt) in the real world has its beginning after real non-existence in perpetuity. Thus its meta-temporal origination is certainly confirmed.77

As explained by Keven Brown, Mīr Dāmād maintains that:

The temporal non-existence of something is not contradictory to its temporal existence, because these two occur in different spans of time’s extension. Understanding this is essential to understanding what Mīr Dāmād means by perpetual, or atemporal, creation. Since creation, by definition, requires the removal of something’s non-existence and since its temporal non-existence in time cannot be removed from time, it is only by the removal of its real non-existence outside time (i.e., in meta-time) that its existence can be realised. This is the meaning of meta-temporal, or perpetual, creation.78

The temporal non-existence that occurs in a preceding time is not contradictory to the existing being that is created in the posterior time as a thing’s prior non-existence is not in the same span of time as its posterior existence. Therefore, temporal non-existence and temporal existence do not cancel each other out. The only solution is to say that when something comes into existence, the non-existence that is negated by that existence is meta-temporal (perpetual) real non-existence (al-‘adam al-ṣarīḥ al-dahrī), and not temporal non-existence. As a result, the

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77 Mīr Dāmād, *Book of Blazing Brands*, 241–42. Note that I have revised Keven Brown’s translation here.
78 Email communication with the author, 15 February 2017.
negation of meta-temporal real non-existence means that there is a meta-temporal origination.

Those existing things that depend on the dispositional possibility of matter (i.e., on the replacement of privation with possession) for their creation in reality must also be created in meta-time (dahr). This explains Mīr Dāmād’s approach regarding meta-temporality regarding its being similar to an absolute time, or an immaterial frozen time, encompassing the whole of time itself, and not related to temporal things insofar as they are changing but only insofar as they exist. It is the meta-temporal dimension of unchanging things and, therefore, is free of extension in time.79

Mīr Dāmād is clear that no prior or after exists in dahr but, rather, all times are simultaneous, just as all places there are one place. Dahr is, after all, the container of time. He explains this in al-Qabasāt to develop the proposition that all temporal things are simultaneously changeless and incorporeal in one respect and changing and material in another. They are changeless and incorporeal regarding their existence and creation in relation to God, which occurs in perpetuity, while they are changing and material regarding their motion and appearance in time. Mīr Dāmād says:

> It is not possible for body, insofar as it is body, to occur in time, nor insofar as it is existent, since only the unfixed state occurs in time, and this is motion. Thus body, insofar as it is body, is in place; insofar as it is existent, it occurs in perpetuity; and insofar as it changes and moves, it occurs in time. Motion with respect to itself occurs in time essentially, and insofar as it is existent, it is in perpetuity, as with time itself.80

The conclusion drawn is that if something created requires being preceded by its non-existence, that non-existence is a cause of the formation of that being, and with its negation, the thing’s existence occurs. But since its temporal non-existence and existence are not contradictory in time and do not cancel each other, then it cannot occur unless its real non-existence is negated in meta-time, where there is no type

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80 Ibid., 105.
of temporal extension—this is *dahr*. Of course, temporal non-existence and temporal existence are not contradictory and they do not cancel each other out.

### 3.8.4 Fourth Argument

The fourth argument is based on the relation between the active cause (*al-ʿillah al-fāʿilah*) and its effect as far as its precedence is concerned. Mīr Dāmād agrees that the cause itself, and the active cause in particular, precedes the essence of the effect by essential precedence (*taqaddum bi al-dhāt*). This refers to the logical ordering of things in the mind. Avicenna had also concurred that the necessary existence (in its essence) precedes the world through essential precedence. For him, the effect does not exist at the level of the essence of the active cause because existence does not come to the essence of the effect until after the cause. This is despite that when looking at the essence of the effect in external reality, a synchronisation is apparent between the cause and the effect in existence. This is not true, however, for the essence of the cause. Mīr Dāmād’s approach was to say that the world as a whole is actually, not just essentially, posterior to the level of the active Creator’s essence.

Seeing that the world is posterior in effect to the ontological level exclusive to God, it is also posterior to Him by actual separation (*taʾakhur infikākī*) from His eternal (*sarmadī*) existence in the real world. Mīr Dāmād says:

> This Great World with all the parts of its total system is definitely posterior to the level of the essence of the Agent Maker (exalted be His remembrance). Since it is clear that real existence (*wujūd aṣīl*) in the actual world is the same as the quiddity of the True Creator and His very reality, and the intelligible stage and real concrete existence, in this case, are one and the same, and His existence (glorified be He) in the core of concrete reality and the heart of the extra-mental world is the same in every respect as the intelligible stage belonging to His real essence, therefore, principal existence in the heart of the actual reality in the divine world is in the position of the stage of the essence of man or the quiddity of the intellect, as such, in the world of contingency.\(^{83}\)

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81 Rahman, "Mīr Dāmād’s Concept of Ḫudūṭ Dahrī," 143.
82 Another type of *taqaddum* and *taʾakhur* is in separation.
God precedes the world, according to Mīr Dāmād, at the level of His essence, which is the same as His existence, and this type of precedence is an actual separate precedence (taqaddum infirādī) in concrete existence. The world is posterior to God, whether in being an effect, in quiddity, or by nature. Each of these types of essential posteriority depend on meta-temporally separate posteriority (ta’akhur infikādikī dahrī). As Mīr Dāmād notes:

Therefore, the posteriority in being an effect of the world to the intelligible stage belonging to His real essence (exalted be His sovereignty) is itself a separate posteriority to Him with respect to His existence (lauded be He) in the heart of the real world. And His causal priority to the world with respect to the essential order is also itself a separate priority (taqaddum infirādī) in the real world. The same applies to the doctrine concerning priority in quiddity, indeed, essential priority in general.

Consequently, essential posteriority to the true first Creator (glorified be He), whether this be posteriority in being an effect, in quiddity, or by nature, returns without reservation to perpetual separate posteriority (ta’akhur infirādī dahrī). And His essential priority, whether this be causal, by quiddity, or by nature, returns without reservation to eternal separate priority (taqaddum infirādī sarmādī). It is not correct that this state of affairs can be compared to the sun and its rays and the essential priority and posteriority which is between them with respect to the intelligible order, and simultaneously in existence with respect to the real world, as the tongues of some contend and the mouths of others explain. For you know that the intelligible stage belonging to the sun itself as such is not the same as its existence in the real world, as it is the way of the matter in the divine world. The same applies to the motion of the hand and the ring, for example. Open the wings of your intellect to the truth, and be not of those who are uninformed.84

Contemporary Islamic philosopher Ḥasan Ḥasanzade ‘Amulī explains this in his commentary on Sabzawārī’s Sharḥ al-Manẓūma when discussing Mīr Dāmād’s view:

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84 Ibid., 87–88.
This precedence does not go back to a cause, as the cause returns back to the Truth in eternal precedence, because He has no quiddity, except for the real existence that is concrete reality. Precedence by cause is proven by judgment of the intellect, where the intelligible level of the quiddity of the cause precedes the level of the quiddity of the effect, even though they both exist together, like the movement of the hand and the movement of the key [at the same time]. Precedence here does not mean anything other than a gap by rule of the intellect between the two quiddities, but as for existence their combination is necessary, like most other precedence, as philosophers have proclaimed. Among the other views of the necessity of combination, some have rejected the precedence of the complete cause to the effect. In the precedence of the universal intellect to the universal soul (al-nafs al-kulliyya), the precedence of the former quiddity to the latter quiddity is by, essential priority in causality. This itself would not rule out the combination in existence within one realm. However, its meta-temporal precedence and posteriority demands separation. It exists in the sublime right meta-temporality and quiddity exists in the sublime left meta-temporality, but delayed after it by a thousand years. As the narration has said: ‘Souls were created before bodies by two thousand years.’ As for the Almighty Truth, as far as His eternal precedence, the world is posterior to Him by a separate precedence that cannot be compared. He has no boundaries. ‘One who binds Him has numbered Him’.85 Therefore, His real existence in concrete reality precedes the existence of the posterior world by separate meta-temporal posteriority, and not according to what has been said in other places where the precedence is by causality. This is because precedence and posteriority can be combined, based on existence and not on the intellectual level.86

The realm of this world is not related to the eternal realm that is reserved exclusively for the Divine, as explained by the argument given above. The separate precedence (al-taqaddum al-infikākī) is not a type of precedence related to the essential relation and the required connection between an effect and its cause;

85 A statement made by Imām Ali in the first sermon of Nahj al-Balāgha.
rather, it is the posterior coming after the existence of the prior in reality, and not just essentially (i.e., in the intelligible order).

With precedence and posteriority in temporal existence, the intellect either conceptualises an extension (imtidād) between the two, so there would be an essential extension, or an alternative extension. This is precedence by time, by a quantifiable (mukammam) precedence or by a flowing (sayyāl) precedence. Another instance is when it is so according to separation between the before and the after, not in the realm of renewing time, but in concrete reality and in the realm external to the mind, based on the precedence of real non-existence to the essence of the posterior. The essence of the preceding non-existence is established in actuality, and not in time or an instance, nor in a dimension or a place. It applies to concrete reality and to the thing itself (nafs al-amr).

Extension does not unfold between real non-existence and existence as it is an absolute precedence and the precedence is real and non-quantifiable (ghayr mukammam). It is an eternal, separate and non-flowing precedence. This is in relation to the posterior, which is an absolute, real, meta-temporal posteriority. The preceded is eternal and the posterior is meta-temporally created.87

The result is that Mîr Dâmád's proof of creation's meta-temporality is based on a unique type of non-existence ('adam) that is more essential in priority than others. The non-existence that philosophers believed in is not contradictory to existence because if creation (ḥudāth) is the precedence of something's non-existence to its existence, then its non-existence must be the non-existence of that very thing. The possibility of something is different from its non-existence, as possibility (imkān) refers to the non-necessity ('adam iqtīdā') of the essence of something to have either existence or non-existence. This is different from the non-existence of something.

Mîr Dâmád explains that the precedence of non-existence to existence articulated by previous philosophers is not a real precedence (taqaddum wâqi‘). Even though the essential (i.e., logical) precedence of conceptual absolute non-existence and the temporal precedence of temporal non-existence are necessary for philosophical discourse, true creation is the precedence of the real non-existence of something to its existence in the real world. This non-existence must be the real non-existence of

87 Mîr Dâmád, Book of Blazing Brands, 88.
something preceding its existence to say that there is also precedence in rank, by nature, in quiddity, or in causality.

Hence Mīr Dāmād's proposed real precedence of the eternal Creator to His creation in his arguments demonstrating meta-temporal origination. This real precedence is different from the logical precedence of something’s non-existence to its existence. As the real precedence of the Creator to His creation cannot be in time, it must therefore be outside time; that is to say, it is in eternity (sarmad) in relation to creation in meta-time, or perpetuity (dahr). In other words, it is in the vertical chain of existence that is exclusive to the immaterial realm. Mīr Dāmād reiterated this on numerous occasions, particularly in relation to the different realms of creation and their not being limited to time only. Real non-existence is not describable by temporal qualifications. As Mīr Dāmād says:

Since what we have established is established for you, then it follows that separate priority does not apply to essential relation or dependent connection, but is only with respect to the posterior following the existence of the prior in the real world, nor in the intelligible order. This separate priority is of two kinds. The first kind concerns the separation of the prior and the posterior in temporal existence, in such a manner that it is possible for the intellect to conceive of an extension running between these two, because of which there will certainly be something essentially extended interposed between them, or an essentially extended boundary (ṭaraf). This kind of separate priority is ‘quantifiable priority’, ‘flowing priority’, and ‘temporal priority’, and its object of relation is called ‘quantifiable posteriority’, ‘flowing posteriority’, and ‘temporal posteriority’, on account of the subject of this priority and posteriority, which are essential and real, not accidental or figurative, being the entities (huwwiyāt, sing. huwwiyah) of the parts of time within the boundary of themselves, and no other. Corresponding to this mode of priority and posteriority is extended simultaneously, which is called ‘quantifiable simultaneity’, ‘flowing simultaneity’, and ‘temporal simultaneity’. It is necessarily related to time or the now by ‘in-ness’.

The other kind concerns the separation of the prior and the posterior, not within the horizon of lapsing and renewal, but in the heart (hāqq) of the
real world and the inner dimension (matn) of the extra-mental domain, with respect to the priority of definite real non-existence to the essence of the posterior along with the actual determination (taqarrur) of the essence of the prior, not in a particular time and now, and not in a physical dimension and place, but in the core (kabid) of the actual world and the centre of the thing itself.

Murtaţā Muţahharī expands on this:

After explaining that there are different dimensions to the world, and that ‘time’ is only one of these dimensions, as a result real non-existence (al-‘adam al-wāqi‘ī) is not restricted to temporal non-existence.

When we observe a specific temporal event, this temporal event has a chain connection to temporal things, where it exists in this point and does not exist in other points prior to it. Its non-existence is therefore prior to its existence, but the world (al-‘ālam) is not only temporal things, as temporal things form a horizontal chain in the world. There is another chain in it, and it is the vertical chain (al-silsilat al-ṭūliyya).

The vertical chain is the existential system that encompasses the world, and it exists in every time and place.

Those temporal events that existed in a specific temporal point do not exist in relation to a previous temporal point, and in the same way they do not exist in relation to the realities that surround them in existentiality. In other words: As they do not exist in the temporal point prior to it, they also do not exist in the existential levels posterior to it, and therefore its existence is preceded by its nothingness in the prior levels.

This explains that the non-existence that is referred to in this theory is the non-existence of a thing itself, and also that the precedence is a concrete and actual precedence. This is because our world is the natural world and it is posterior to another realm, which is the realm of simultaneity and the meta-temporal realm. The natural world exists in this level, but does not

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88 Ibid., 99–100.
exist in the level prior to it, which is the meta-temporal realm, because the level of the meta-temporal realm precedes the level of the natural realm. Therefore, the natural realm is preceded by its real non-existence at that level.89

Non-existence in Mīr Dāmād’s theory of meta-temporal origination is the non-existence of a thing itself (‘adam al-shay’ nafsahu), along with concrete and real posteriority (taqaddum ‘ainī/wāqī’ī). The world we are in is the natural world, and it comes after another realm, the meta-temporal world. The natural realm exists in this level but does not exist in the previous level, which is the meta-temporal realm. This is because its level is preceded by a separation precedence (infikākī) from the natural realm. Of course, there is a connection in causality between all three realms, otherwise creation would not occur. Temporal things, insofar as they are unchanging and existing, are in dahr and, insofar as they are changing, are in time.

As a result, the realm of nature is preceded by its real nothingness at the level of meta-time, or in other words, by meta-temporal concrete nothingness (al-‘adam al-šarīḥ al-dahrī). In al-Īmādāt, Mīr Dāmād explains how temporal creation is preceded by real non-existence based on concrete reality:

Temporal creation (al-ḥudūth al-zamānī) inasmuch as it is a temporal creation does not in any way necessitate the delaying and temporal posteriority of its temporal object (mawṣūf) except for what encompasses it in the horizon of time ... So, nothing comes after it based on it being temporarily created, unless it is specified in existence with a specific time. All times are united in relation to His Sovereignty and are in one place. A creation inasmuch as it is temporarily created is not delayed from [proceeding from] the essentially necessary everlasting (al-qayyūm al-wājib bi al-dhāt), may His name be exalted, but what necessitates posteriority to it in existence is nothing other than meta-temporal origination ... Therefore, if temporal creation was not also meta-temporal

origination then the existent would not be posterior to the Almighty ... This establishes the proof of meta-temporal origination.90

This clarifies Mīr Dāmād's stance on creation (ḥudūth) having no relation with the temporal nature of generated things (ḥawādith). Creation in its real definition—which is meta-temporal origination—relates to the nature of these created things insofar as they are contingent existences, which makes creation contingent and possible. Moving from the traditional usage of contingency (or possibility), Mīr Dāmād states:

It is manifestly known that dispositional possibility as such is a necessary accompaniment of motion and time. Its only requisite is the actual non-occurrence of that for which the disposition exists during the time of the occurrence of the disposition. The precedence of the potential to the actual, accordingly, is a quantifiable precedence in time. However, this alone does not render it impossible that the disposition, the matter that bears it, and that for which the disposition exists, all may exist together in perpetuity (dahr) with a perpetual simultaneity. The priority of matter and its disposition to that for which it is disposed, with respect to the occurrence in perpetuity, is a natural priority [like the priority of the number two over three, for example], not a perpetual real priority [like that of a cause over its effect, for example].

Hence, dispositional possibility as such, in relation to the existence of that for which it is a disposition, is neither contrary to its perpetual creation nor does it require it. Therefore, we say: but for the fact that the nature of essential possibility itself precludes pre-eternal existence in perpetuity, nothing would remain to that for which the disposition exists except essential creation, by virtue of the nature of possibility, and temporal creation, due to dispositional possibility, and no more than these two. In that case, the thing generated via dispositional possibility would combine within itself temporal creation and perpetual pre-eternity.91

91 Mīr Dāmād, The Book of Blazing Brands, 244.
Sayyid Aḥmad al-ʿAlawī explains this part of his teacher’s text as follows:

It is clear, as already established and agreed upon by the philosophers, that through the negation of the non-existence contrary to the existence of the generated, which is its perpetual non-existence, it is a perpetual creation as well, and that which it requires is nothing but essential possibility. It is evident, then, that this precludes pre-eternity of existence in perpetuity. If not for this it would be possible to say that the generated is pre-eternal (azali) despite its temporal creation, that essential possibility requires pre-eternal existence, while its dispositional possibility requires its temporal creation. This is contrary to how it is.\(^92\)

Al-ʿAlawī then gives a concise outline of the theory of al-ḥudūth al-dahrī that includes a summary of Mīr Dāmād’s demonstration of meta-temporal origination:

The gist of the argument demonstrating being and non-being in the creation of the world in all of its aspects, whether material or incorporeal, is that it may be said with certainty that no temporal creatures, whose existence is subject to dispositional possibilities, can exist in the real world except by the removal of their non-being, implying that the realization of one of the two contradictories in the real world definitely necessitates the nullification of the other. Neither prior temporal non-existence, to which something being a temporal creation corresponds, nor essential absolute non-existence, to which an existent being an essential creation corresponds, is nullified in the real world by the occurrence of actual existence.

As for the first, there is no incompatibility between temporal non-existence temporally preceding in a prior time and subsequent existence created in a later time due to the non-simultaneity of time. Therefore, each of these is realized together in the real world, each in its time. As for the second, absolute non-existence applicable to the stage of the essence itself as such is not contrary to the existence actually occurring in the real world via the efficient cause. Indeed, it is definitely untied with it. Consequently, the only non-being which is cancelled in the real world through the occurrence of

actual being is real non-existence in perpetuity, not in a time nor in a place. This is the meaning of perpetual creation posited for every temporal creature by the decree of the clear intellect.

We say then that it is not possible for this proven idea, which is perpetual creation, to arise from dispositional possibility, because only the particularization of the existence of a creature to a specific boundary among the boundaries of the extension of time and a specific duration among successive durations is able to proceed from dispositional possibility, due to its relation to the accidents of matter particularized by motion, time, flow and change. This is the meaning of temporal creation.

It is only proper, therefore, for temporal creation, and no other, to proceed from dispositional possibility. By the decree of the intellect and the consensus of the learned, nothing whatsoever besides essential possibility and dispositional possibility are the prerequisites of creation. Since dispositional possibility is not suited for perpetual creation to arise from it, while essential possibility, by its nature, is certainly appointed to this, it is therefore established that essential possibility is the source from which perpetual creation proceeds, for it does not have the capacity to merit receiving eternity (sarmādiyya). Just as essential creation springs and arises from it, and essential possibility is general to all possible things in their entirety, in the same way, the two types of creation, the essential and the perpetual, arising from it are general to all of them.93

Everything created, according to Mir Dāmād, is preceded with a potential and a material that carries that potentiality. This is because something created in a specific time—which means it did not exist and then began to exist—cannot exist instantaneously, nor would it exist unless it previously had a disposition (isti’dād) to exist. An existent must have a disposition for its existence before it exists, but that disposition does not exist on its own as there is nothing that exists on its own that is properly called a disposition. If a disposition cannot exist independently and on its own, then it must be carried in something, and that is material, or matter (al-māddah). Mir Dāmād takes this further, saying that the disposition (and what carries

it) is also accompanied in meta-temporality. Other philosophers saw that meta-temporality in its reality is time without motion, as time sometimes exists with motion. At other times, it exists free of it. This is called meta-temporality. Some philosophers had said that meta-temporality is the duration of immobility, or time that is not limited to motion. However, Mīr Dāmād moved away from this view as it saw time as an eternal substance and exclusive to the necessary existence. The notions of before and after are limited to time, which also comes from time and its imaginative (wahmi) separation into parts of time that are before and after, or outside the parts. In this case, things in time are encompassed by before and after. Mīr Dāmād explains this distinction in detail in al-Ṣirāt al-Mustaqīm.\(^\text{94}\)

The accompaniment, or simultaneity (al-ma’iyah), is not in time but in dahr and sarmad, and this notion is of course something abstracted in the intellect.\(^\text{95}\) Mīr Dāmād aims to distinguish all gradual matters into two aspects: existence as far as time and existence in the realm of meta-temporality.\(^\text{96}\) For him, things that gradually exist in the horizon of time change, while in the realm of meta-temporality they are united (or simultaneous), continuous and fixed. In Khulsat al-Malakūt (Heavenly Mystical States),\(^\text{97}\) he says:

> You now know the correct relation of the changeable unfixed (ghayr qārr) to the fixed static, and the correspondence of the temporal creation with circular motion, mediating circular continuous motion between the True Eternal and the temporal creations. Motion has two aspects: fixation and continuity in meta-temporality and renewal in the realm of progressive occurrence and renewal. Through its fixed and continuous meta-temporal state and its continuous united identity it is related to the True Sempiternal endower, who extracts it from the level of real non-existence into concrete reality in one instant.\(^\text{98}\)

\(^{94}\) Mīr Dāmād, al-Ṣirāt al-Mustaqīm, 112–18.

\(^{95}\) Ibid., 114.


\(^{97}\) This work of Mīr Dāmād has a strong mystical angle to it, and throughout its introduction Mīr Dāmād refers to the spiritual and divinely inspired blessings he received in further support of his theory of perpetual creation. See Mīr Dāmād, “Khulsat al-Malakūt,” in Musannafāt Mīr Dāmād, ed. ‘Abdullah Nūrānī (Tehran: University of Tehran, 2003), 283.

\(^{98}\) Mīr Dāmād, “Khulsat al-Malakūt,” 1: 34.
The temporal realm (or the world of matter, ‘ālam al-mulk) is preceded in its existence by a meta-temporal non-existence, meaning it is preceded by the existence of the immaterial realm, or the realm of intelligences. This is also known as the dominion realm, ‘ālam al-malakūt, whose vessel is the meta-temporal realm.

When we discuss each part of the horizontal chain of temporal nothingness, we can also see that the vertical chain of existents, or what defines non-existence, is in another level. This would mean that because the superior realm precedes the realm of matter, and the vessel or container (al-wi‘ā) of the dominion realm is meta-temporality, these two realms differ. As a result, the creation of the world is a meta-temporal origination as non-existence is real in the horizontal and the vertical level.

Each container of existence is also the container of the non-existence of the level after it. As such, dahr is the container of the real non-existence of things in the domain of time. For example, the first intellect mentally defines the second intellect after it, which means that the second intellect does not exist at the level of the first intellect.99

Mīr Dāmād continued to emphasise the difference between meta-temporal origination and temporal origination. The eternity of the world or the coming-into-being of the world both had a prior that could not be combined with the posterior. However, the first point of difference is that the inability to combine in temporal eternity or creation is a horizontal separation (infıkāk ‘araḍī), which means the existential level of the created or the eternal in time is one and horizontal to each other. However, with meta-temporal eternity and creation, the separation is vertical (tūlī). The created existent and the eternal existent are related to each other existentially and vertically, but one is more intense or stronger than the other.100

In al-Širāṭ al-Mustaqīm, Mīr Dāmād says there are three types of the temporally created:

1. a created that is spontaneously created in an instant from the cause;
2. a created that through the cause comes into being through a specified set of parts in time, where each of the parts corresponds to it individually and specifically;

3. a created where, through its cause, all parts created can be seen in each of its temporal parts as each of the created parts can be found in each assumed part.

However, meta-temporal origination is different from these three types of temporal origination as all its parts come into being simultaneously from the emanation of the cause, and this coming-into-being is not in time.\textsuperscript{101}

Mir Dâmâd’s argument comes from three angles to prove how meta-temporality solves the ongoing dispute between theologians and philosophers. He explains how he rejects the theologians’ arguments for the world being temporally created. For him, creation, which means coming-into-being after non-existence, does not require being preceded by time.\textsuperscript{102}

The topic of creation and its negation carries importance with Mir Dâmâd and his theory, and he elaborates on what the opposite of the created is:

It is correct, then, that God has brought things into existence and created them not from something (\textit{lā min shay’}), not that He has brought them into existence and created them from nothing (\textit{min lā shay’}) or from something (\textit{min shay’}). Therefore, if it is asked ‘did the Creator create things from something or from nothing?’ This does not merit an answer. The truth, instead, is the negation of both sides of the question and the choice of a third category. It is that He created them not from something. There should be no doubt that ‘non-existence’ and ‘nothingness’ only mean pure non-being and absolute negation. That is to say, there is no thing at all [from which God creates]. It is not that there is some ‘thing’ which is characterized by negation and nothingness [from which He creates]. Consequently, their words ‘from nothing’ is an incoherent, contradictory statement. Only ‘not from something’ is correct.

\textsuperscript{101} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{102} Mir Dâmâd, “al-Ṣîrāṭ al-Mustaqîm,” 114.
It is necessary to know that this judgment, which encompasses every creature, can only be settled through perpetual creation. God (glorified be He) has brought things into existence and created them in their entirety in perpetuity, not from matter and not from anything at all, as we have previously stated decisively on this. As for temporal creation, it is nothing but the particularization of the existence of a temporal thing to the time which it is in, not its existence after its real non-existence in the center of the real world. Its temporal creation, without a doubt, is only through God bringing it into existence in its particular time from a matter existent in a prior time and a dispositional possibility subsisting in the prior temporal matter. The Creator (exalted be He) has invented both matter and what possesses matter in perpetuity, not from another matter and not from anything, but after real non-existence, not in any time or place at all.\textsuperscript{103}

Here, Mīr Dāmād emphasises his disagreement with theologians, who believed that temporal origination necessitated the existence of a prior time. For him, ḥudūṭh, which means the beginning, does not need time before it.

Temporal origination, as seen by Mīr Dāmād, comes from a horizontal chain of time that was preceded by non-existence and then came into existence. This time had a real non-existence and, in its vertical chain of the three realms where each realm encompasses the realm below it, the lower realm did not exist in comparison to the one above it. This means that the real existence of the above realm reflects the real non-existence of the realm below it as the latter is a weaker and deficient realm.

The existence of the realm of sarmad is in itself a level of the non-existence of the realm of dahr and immateriality, and so is the realm of dahr a level of the non-existence of the realm of temporality. Therefore, along with essential non-existence of the realms, there is also a real non-existence that precedes each realm. Of course, in the level of sarmad, which is the realm of the innermost reality and concrete ipseity, there is no supposing of any kind of non-existence that precedes it as it is the exclusive realm of Divine Names and Attributes.

Mīr Dāmād believed that besides the Names and Attributes, all realms and existents are preceded by real and nafs al-amr non-existence. This differed to the views of

\textsuperscript{103} Mīr Dāmād, \textit{The Book of Blazing Brands}, 147.
Islamic Peripatetics and Ishrāqism, who, as previously discussed, generally viewed the non-existence of the immaterial as conventionally supposed by the intellect. It was also different to what most Muslim theologians believed (all worlds being preceded by temporal non-existence). Therefore, the temporal realm as a whole is perpetually created, and the perpetual realm as a whole is created in *sarmad*. But the *sarmad* realm is the sempiternal realm of the Names and Attributes of God and does not precede with any non-existence.

### 3.8.5 Fifth Argument

Mīr Dāmād gives another important argument supporting *al-ḥudūth al-dahrī* in *Taqwīm al-Īmān (Strengthening the Faith)*, a philosophical textbook he taught his students. Mīr Dāmād presents this as follows:

If you have previously done your researched in that among the specifications of something that is essentially contingent is that in the substance of its essence it is in need of the will of the essentially Necessary to essentialise its essence and make it what it is (*yushayyi’ shay’iyatuhū*), its very level of essence will be itself the level of existence that is fundamental in concrete. You also now know that whenever the case is as such the essential priority (*al-masbūqiyah bi al-dhāt*) will itself be perpetual priority (*al-masbūqiyah al-dahrīya*). Therefore, it is clarified that the nature of the essentially contingent is that which lags and incapacitates the essence from accepting sempiternity.

As a result, perpetual creation – which is that the essence does not enter into existence until after its real non-existence in perpetuity – is among the necessities of quiddity in relation to contingency in general as far as the nature of shared essential contingency. Also, essential creation – which is the essential priority of its simple nothingness as far as its substance when it becomes something in actuality from the very producer that is essentially preceded from the aspect of reason – is the same in relation to all of it.

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104 I have previously listed the different editions and commentaries on this book (see Introduction chapter, fn. 285). I refer to both editions in this chapter, with the edition specified in the respective footnotes.
As for temporal creation—which is that the temporal essence does not enter into existence until after its temporal non-existence that is continuous in times that is vacated of having temporal afterness—it is among the necessities of quiddity in relation to essences that are corrupt in their generation as far as the shared essential nature between their peaks, which means the material (al-hayūlāniya).105

Mir Dāmād then says that this argument is unique to Taqwīm al-Īmān and has not been mentioned in any of his other books:

This is another argument more than what, by the will of Almighty God, we have established in the Heavenly Books (al-ṣaḥīfāt al-malakūṭiya)106 and in our other philosophical books.

So, for whoever107 has preceded me in time in this field from among those who were educated in inner-knowledge (al-maʿrīfa) and were experts in philosophy. I have been given knowledge that has not been given to you, so follow and it will guide you to the straight path.108

Mir Dāmād’s main point here—distinguishing what he mentions here from other references—is his explanation that meta-temporal origination exists within the

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106 Mir Dāmād’s footnote here reads: ‘I.e. al-ʿImādāt and al-Tashrīfāt.’ These are two other books of Mir Dāmād. See Mir Dāmād, Taqwīm al-Īmān wa Sharḥāhū Kashf al-Ḥaqāʾiq, 324, fn. 1.

107 In fn. 2, a gloss attributed to Mir Dāmād states that here he is referring to Avicenna. See Mir Dāmād, Taqwīm al-Īmān wa Sharḥāhū Kashf al-Ḥaqāʾiq, 324, fn. 2. This is one of the instances in which Mir Dāmād distinctively separates himself from mainstream Islamic Peripatetic philosophy, which is represented in Farabi and especially in Avicenna. A main objection Mir Dāmād presents against them regarding their stance on creation can be seen in Kitāb al-Qabasāt, where he says:

O people! I am supremely amazed by our two companions in leadership and instruction, and by the teacher of the Greek Peripatetics who gave them this science, how with their high degree of skill and excellence and the superiority of their consciousness and brilliant intellect, they advanced far in establishing this demonstrative proof and verifying its certain premises, with respect to sanctifying the First Creator (glorified be His remembrance) from a universal quiddity and from the possibility that His reality should have a mental existence in any mind whatsoever, but they then neglected to apply it to [the question of] the creation of the world and the priority of the True Creator to it, a priority which is existentially separate in the centre of the real world.

Moreover, I am utterly dumbfounded that our companion, the Chief, and the teacher of the Greeks, should have made a definite judgment on the question of the creation of the world and its eternity, saying that it is a dialectic question having two sides due to lack of demonstrative proof on either sides (Mir Dāmād, The Book of Blazing Brands, 89).

108 Mir Dāmād, Taqwīm al-Īmān wa Sharḥāhū Kashf al-Ḥaqāʾiq, 324.
contingent realm (*al-jāʾizāt*) and that temporal origination is by necessity a corrupted generation (*al-kāʾinat al-fāsida*), which is a term that refers to finite bodies. If meta-temporal origination is from the necessities of the quiddity of the contingent, then it would categorically be different from temporal origination. If this existence has precedence, then such precedence is within perpetuity as well. Further, this is the nature of contingency—it being deficient, so in no way is it compared to the realm of pre-eternity, which is exclusive to God.

According to Mīr Dāmād here, meta-temporal origination does not enter into the essence of existence until after its real non-existence in perpetuity, and that is the nature of such a being. The criterion in which Islamic Peripatetic philosophers generally believed was that the quiddity of the contingent essence is in need of a cause, and Mīr Dāmād adds here that the criterion is that contingency is also in need of perpetuity. God, Mīr Dāmād says, is the True Producer and He exists in pre-eternity to all productions (*al-majʿūlat*), and absolutely everything else comes after God in the form of perpetual afterness (*baʿdiyat dahrīya*).

In an explanation only a few lines prior to this argument, Mīr Dāmād emphasises the determination (*taqarrur*) of contingent existence being different to the determination and existence of God. He then mentions the Prophetic tradition, ‘there was God, and there was nothing else with Him’. The argument here is based on explaining the role of *taqarrur*, in the precedence of the cause over the effect, in the level rationally, and not just in concept. This means that the effect in the intellectual level of the cause does not exist. But in the level of *taqarrur*, the cause (which externally exists) does exist. When Mīr Dāmād distinguishes between the contingency and the realm of the Necessary, God's precedence in concrete reality is ipseity to Himself, and the posteriority of the contingent is such in relation to the very existence of the necessary. Therefore, the level of *taqarrur* in the contingent will be posterior in reality, separate (*infikāki*) and above temporality, and this is the meaning of meta-temporal origination.

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110 This point is clearly explained in *Kitāb al-Qabāsāt*. See Mīr Dāmād, *The Book of Blazing Brands*, 87.

111 Ibid.
Sayyid Aḥmad al-ʿAlawī mentions in *Kashf al-Ḥaqāʾiq* (which is his commentary on *Taqwīm al-Īmān*) that comprehending the connection and true meaning of meta-temporal origination and its occurrence with relation to the Originator and Creator can only be done through divine endowment and purification of the heart.\(^{112}\)

### 3.8.6 Arguments against Meta-Temporal Origination and Replies to Them

As previously stated, Mīr Dāmād discussed his theory of *al-ḥudūth al-dahīrî* in most of his works,\(^{113}\) even those that were not philosophical.\(^{114}\)

One of Mīr Dāmād’s primary goals was to render objective the topic of creation. He emphasised the principality of quiddity and explained how essential creation could only be understood mentally but must be interpreted on the basis of its reality.\(^{115}\) Mīr Dāmād substantiated his theory from every angle and refuted arguments against meta-temporal origination.

He believed that other philosophers and theologians did not completely understand the views of early sages like Plato and Aristotle on the topic of creation—a view he expressed in many of his philosophical works. In a short treatise\(^ {116}\) on the creation of the world, his main focus is showing how Aristotle’s view on creation is close to his view.\(^ {117}\) This work also references possible critiques of his theory and refutes them.\(^ {118}\)

Mīr Dāmād mentions arguments against *al-ḥudūth al-dahīrî* and replies to these in many of his works. In *Kitāb al-Qabasāt*, he supposes an argument that says if we were to accept meta-temporal origination we must also accept that there is a perpetual non-existence of the world that precedes its existences. If in that level the preceding non-existence is necessary, its ruling cannot be negated or rebutted. And

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\(^{112}\) See, e.g., Mīr Dāmād, *Taqwīm al-Īmān wa Sharḥahū Kashf al-Ḥaqāʾiq*, 453.


\(^{114}\) Details of this will be given in Chapters 4 and 5, but to cite one example here from Mīr Dāmād’s references to perpetual creation in a few places in his commentary on the famous Shiʿī Ḥadīth book *Uṣul al-Kīfī*, see Mīr Dāmād, *al-Rawāshīh al-Samāwīya*, ed. Ghulām Ḥusain Qaṣṣaryeh-hā and Nīmatullāh al-Khaliṣī (Qom: Dār al-Ḥadīth, 1422/2011 AH/CE), 37, 150.

\(^{115}\) Ibid., 22.

\(^{116}\) This treatise did not originally have a name, but the researcher who edited it gave it the title of *Ḥudūth al-ʿĀlam*. See Mīr Dāmād, *Ḥudūth al-ʿĀlam*, 2nd ed., edited by Hādī Raṣṭgar Muqaddam Gawhari (Qom: Markaz-e Bayn al-Milālī Ţarjume wa Nashr al-Muṣṭafā, 2017).

\(^{117}\) Mīr Dāmād, *Ḥudūth al-ʿĀlam*, 42.

\(^{118}\) Ibid., 17–18.
if the preceding non-existence is essentially impossible (*mumti‘ bi al-dhāt*), then the world will evidently be eternal. If it is said that it is possible, then it must have a cause, and in this case the cause of the non-existence is not a part of the non-existence of the cause of existence.\(^{119}\) Mīr Dāmād replies to this as follows:

It is clear that the cause of the existence of the world is the true, self-subsisting Creator, whose existence is essentially necessary, and no other. The way, then, to solve this dilemma is through what we have instructed you already, namely that the essentially impossible with respect to the world is pre-eternal, eternal existence. And there is no doubt that what is necessary for the essence of the world is the contradictory of that existence, which is its negation (*raf*) and the negation of pre-eternal existence, either by the negation of absolute existence, which is absolute non-existence from pre--eternity to post-eternity, or by the negation of pre-eternity so that it can be realized by existence after real non-existence. Therefore, that which is required with respect to the essence of the world itself is absolute real non-existence, whether it be a sheer annihilation from pre-eternity to post-eternity or a perpetual real non-existence dispelled by perpetual real existence after it.\(^{120}\)

In the view of Mīr Dāmād’s *al-Ḥikmat al-Yamāniya*, the world is not eternal, so its opposite—negation (*raf*) of its existence—is possible. This negation can either be absolute (*mutlaq*) negation of existence, or negation of eternity, in which case the world would come into existence via existence after real (*ṣariḥ*) non-existence. This would mean that the non-existence of the world in *dahr* is the negating of its sempiternity as a cause. Therefore, the cause of the world, as Mīr Dāmād believes, is the coming-into-existence of the world from pure perpetual non-existence.

In *Khulsat al-Malakūt*, Mīr Dāmād says that some misconceptions of meta-temporal origination have been presented by confused people who are ignorant of philosophy. He identifies and addresses three main arguments.


\(^{120}\) Ibid.
The first argument: The world not being eternal necessitates the delaying of the effect from the complete cause, because if God is the absolute cause because His production was eternally complete, then its effect must also be eternal as well.¹²¹

Mir Dāmād articulates the questions posed by this argument:

Are these sequenced existences so that it would necessitate an impossible infinite regress when coming out (al-khurūj), or are they non-existences that are planned and created together and hence necessitate infinite regress before its coming out. Or are they intertwined, which would necessitate an impossible infinite regress either when coming out or before it.¹²²

He then explains that it is not possible to have a sequenced chain in the forms and essence in the creation of something,¹²³ replying to this argument as follows:

The True Creator is essentially the complete Producer (al-jāʿil al-tām) of the contingent world in its general system. And as the nature of contingency is incapable of correctly accepting sempiternity (al-tasarmud), the produced (al-majūl) in the determination (taqarrur) and existence of the world after its real non-existence and its pure nothingness and its sheer negation from the aspect of the substance of the subject, the incompleteness of its essence and the deficiency of its nature to accept.¹²⁴

Mir Dāmād also mentions this in Kitāb al-Qabasāt:

Whatever unavoidably belongs to the existence of the First Emanated, which is the most excellent of the parts of the system of existence in the chain of beginning, certainly occurs actually in pre-eternity, since its complete agent is the essence of the agent Creator himself in His real oneness and His absolute simplicity, and it is only posterior to Him with a real, unquantifiable, non-flowing perpetual posteriority, since eternal simultaneity is essentially impossible for it.¹²⁵

¹²¹ Mir Dāmād, Khulsat al-Malakūt, 288.
¹²² Ibid., 289.
¹²³ Ibid.
¹²⁴ Ibid., 292.
¹²⁵ Mir Dāmād, The Book of Blazing Brands, 272.
The second argument: Believing in the eternality of God and the creation of all His productions (maj'ūlāt) necessitates the ceasing and negation (taʿṭīl) of God's grace and generosity, and this is impossible. God's emanation is necessary from every aspect.

Mir Dāmād states that this misconception originates from the Ancient Greek philosopher Proclus (d. 485 CE) and replies:

Negation can only be rationalised if an extension was assumed and the producer (al-jāʿil) had delayed the production and emanation in it. Or that the two sides are united between them; of producing and non-producing, and the side of non-producing is distinguished from the side of producing. Or that the producing of the produced is not in the sempiternity, but after its real concrete non-existence within its very boundary of existence.

In this reply, Mir Dāmād explains that the taʿṭīl of divine emanation or ceasing of divine generosity (al-jūd) can only occur if the potential was complete, but if it does have the capacity and has not occurred, then there is no place for negation or ceasing. He then goes on to criticise those who presented this argument, saying that they have pursued illusions (i.e., misconstrued or misunderstood his theory) and are weak in their intellect.

The third argument: If time was created, it would be finite in its quantity (al-kammiyah) from the aspect of pre-eternity (al-ʾazal) and it would not be impossible to create something older than it. In other words, the non-eternity of the effect would equal the non-eternity of time. If time was from the category of quantity and is quantifiable, then it would be possible for there to be time before the creation of a created. Also, it would not be impossible in relation to God's power to create motion that comes into being. Therefore, the bearing of time would be eternal in its existence.

Mir Dāmād states that this misconception can be traced back to Avicenna's books al-Shifāʾ, al-Najāt and al-Taʿliqāt. He then commences his reply to this argument by

126 Mir Dāmād, Khulsat al-Malakūt, 289.
127 Ibid., 294.
128 Ibid.
129 Ibid., 289–90.
saying that in his book *al-Ufuq al-Mubin*, he had dealt in detail with distinguishing between quantity that is unfixed (*ghayr qārr*) and quantity that is connected and fixed, which fluctuates and increases and decreases.\(^{130}\) In his view, the place where it manifests is in the body of the utmost sphere (*al-falak al-aqsā*), and the utmost sphere is situated in a vertical chain where everything ends up.\(^{131}\) This means that the very basis of this argument is invalid.

Mir Dāmād further explains that the non-eternity of the temporal world does not equate to God being powerless because the deficiency is from the nature of contingency and not from the side of God. He then says:

> Therefore, creating the world after its real non-existence is not from the Creator moving from powerless to power, or from moving the world from impossibility to contingency, or from inability to ability. Rather, it is from the incapacity (*qāṣiriyah*) of the nature of essential possibility from the correction of sempiternity and the impossibility of the eternity of determination (*taqarrur*) in relation to the essence of contingencies.\(^{132}\)

Further, Mir Dāmād’s prior works had clearly explained that this depends on how existence and non-existence is perceived and whether this ‘*‘adam* is contradictory non-existence (*‘adam muqābil*) or cohabiting, non-existence (*‘adam mujāmi*’). Regarding the non-existence that precedes the temporally created, Mir Dāmād says:

> You have ascertained more than once that it cannot be said of the temporal non-existence temporally preceding the existence of the generated thing that by its removal the existence of the generated thing will exist, for it is definitely not removed within its own boundary and from its particular time. Otherwise the two contradictories would coexist.\(^{133}\)

Mir Dāmād elaborates on this point while cross-referencing Avicenna’s works, reasoning that the only way temporal origination can have a meaning is if it is preceded by meta-temporal origination.\(^{134}\) (Comments and critiques from other

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\(^{130}\) Ibid., 295.
\(^{131}\) Ibid., 296.
\(^{132}\) Ibid., 296–97.
\(^{134}\) Ibid., 244.
Shi’i philosophers regarding meta-temporal origination will be discussed in Chapter 4.)

Beyond purely theoretical critique, Ibn Aqajani levied the criticism that Mir Damaad excessively referenced Avicenna’s works and, based on his contextual reading, deduced only what he saw to be aligned with his proposal of creation. He also alleged that Mir Damaad’s motives extended beyond presenting a new philosophical system. Mir Damaad lived during a time when Esfahan was considered a stronghold of Akhbarism (those opposed to philosophy). Ibn Aqajani argued that Mir Damaad exploited his authoritative religious background/position and referenced and praised Avicenna and the ancient Greek philosophers simply to resurrect their reputations, gain the approval of Islamic scholars, and improve the palatability of philosophy for the masses and the religiously-influenced elite. Addressing this criticism succinctly, the discussion presented in the introductory chapter and Chapter 1 of this thesis shows that there were many complex and intersecting factors at play in this regard—of which the role of the Safavid dynasty cannot be overstated. That Mir Damaad had the goal of advancing and improving the acceptability of philosophy is undeniable, but so too is his acknowledged expertise in every known rational and transmitted science of the era, his religious and spiritual adherence and devotion, and his commitment to improving the knowledge of the general populace. All of these underpinned Mir Damaad’s desire to see (accurate and correct) philosophy and knowledge spread and prosper. Ibn Aqajani’s other key criticisms will be explored in Chapter 5.

135 This was later a cause of Mullā Ṣadrā’s exile. It was the likes of al-Majlisi, an Akhbari, who made it clear that they were not happy with the teaching of philosophy as it was increasingly abandoning the Qur’an and Sunnah and was encouraging deviant thoughts and misconceptions. See al-Majlisi, Bihār al-Anwār, 54: 234. In another reference, there is a discussion of how certain schools refused to accommodate the teaching of rational studies. This was mentioned on a board sign in the entry door of Madrasah Mariam Baygum (building completed in 1115/1703 AH/CE), named after the daughter of Shah Safi. See Akbar Hādī Ḥusainābādī, Sharḥ Hāl Mir Damaad wa Mir Finderiskī (Esfahan: Intishārāt-e Maytham Tammār, 1984), 17. For details on the banning of the teaching of philosophy in the Safavid era, see Musa Alreza Bakhshi, “The Effect of Thought Streams on Teaching Philosophy in the Madrasahs of Safavid Era,” European Online Journal of Natural and Social Sciences 2, no. 3 (2013): 394–98. Further, Mullā’Abdullah Shūshṭārī, who was influential in the Safavid court at that time, was also very hostile towards the teaching of philosophy, as previously discussed (see Section 1.3.1 in Chapter 1).
3.9 Conclusion

Mīr Dāmād desired to prove God’s concrete separation (*al-*infikāk al-‘ainī) from creation, such that his theory would conform to the Qur’an. Temporal concrete separation was, according to him, impossible—that the world was temporally posterior to God (the theologians’ view) would mean that God was also precedent in time, which would place God in time, and time being the amount of motion, and motion needing a mover, which is a body, and the body being creation, or the world, which would mean that there was a world before a world, and that would be impossible. Mīr Dāmād’s theory of *al-*ḥudūth al-dahrī proved there was God and that nothing existed with Him; God then generated creation while remaining separate from it. Mīr Dāmād refuted temporal creation, arguing that it was impossible to relate God to temporal creation as time has priority and posteriority while God does not. God created the whole world in one meta-temporal instant, and it has no temporal renewal.

In this, Mīr Dāmād revised and expanded on Avicenna’s ideas about the relationship between God, creation and the world, with additional influence from ancient Greek philosophers (chiefly Plato and Aristotle), Suhrawardī and Ishraqism. Zailan Moris explains:

Mīr Dāmād transformed the ‘abstract metaphysical system of Ibn Sina into a concrete spiritual reality which becomes the object of spiritual vision and realisation.’ Mīr Dāmād continued further Suhrawardī’s conception of philosophy as the perfect combination of discursive thought and spiritual illumination and brought together a greater rapprochement between the Mashsha’i school of Ibn Sina and the Ishraqi school of Suhrwardī.136

Notwithstanding any influences however, Mīr Dāmād independently deduced his theory of *al-*ḥudūth al-dahrī based on the approach of his Yamānī philosophical school.

The harmonisation of philosophy and philosophical methods (i.e., reason) with religion—arguably Mīr Dāmād’s greatest achievement—alone makes him one of

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humanity’s greatest philosophers, notwithstanding his many other achievements and contributions in numerous disciplines. And yet he is neglected, under-researched, relatively unknown and, at worst, misunderstood, especially in the English-speaking world and English-language literature. Per Sajjad Rizvi:

Mir Dāmād’s theory of time appears to be rather satisfactory because he deploys it to useful effect to deal with two key problems: the creation of the world (how did we come to be here?) and divine theodicy (why does the unfolding of events in this world seem so arbitrary?). It also exhibits a higher level of internal consistency across his work.

Yet Mir Dāmād’s position, while respected, has usually been neglected by students of later Islamic thought. Even though his major philosophical works are now available, only two articles in almost thirty years have unsuccessfully attempted to explain his theory of time and creation.137

Exploring Mir Dāmād’s understanding of the God–world relationship sheds light on this individual and his important contributions to Islamic philosophy, as well as allowing for a greater understanding of his works. This chapter has examined al-ḥudūth al-dahri, detailing what it entails and how it solved an ongoing dilemma among philosophers and between philosophers and theologians. Nasr summarises the outcome of Mir Dāmād’s theory acceptable for both philosophers and theologians:

Since this world was brought into being through the intermediate world of the archetypes, its creation is dahrī not zamānī, i.e. the world was not created in a time which existed before the world came into being but with respect to a dahr which stands above the world. The creation of this world is, therefore, ḥudūth-i dahrī, ibdā’, and ikhtirā’ and not ḥudūth-i zamānī, wad’ and takwīn. Time has a reality in its own plane of being, but in the world of dahr, the world of the archetypes, time does not even exist. Moreover, the changing physical world (‘ālam jismānī) depends for its existence upon non-existence (‘adam) in the world of the archetypes.138

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This chapter detailed the history and background of the theory of meta-temporal origination, discussing how Mîr Dâmâd rejected the three types of temporal origination and saw essential creation to be inadequate. The chapter delved into the ontological threefold realms of existence as understood by Mîr Dâmâd and presented the arguments advanced by Mîr Dâmâd in favour of meta-temporal origination. As discussed, Mîr Dâmâd not only innovatively argued for al-ḥudūth al-dahrī but also refuted critiques of this theory in his philosophical, theological and religious works.

Despite the comprehensive and revolutionary nature of Mîr Dâmâd’s theory of meta-temporal origination, Islamic philosophers remained divided on the theory. Some, like Mîr Dâmâd’s student Sayyid Aḥmad al-ʿAlawī, continued to expand on the theory, while his most famous student Mullâ Šadrâ came to oppose the theory and proposed his own theory of the origination of the world. The next chapter will discuss Mullâ Šadrâ and how his transcendental theosophy dealt with the topic of creation, and compare this to Mîr Dâmâd’s theory.
Chapter 4: The Theory of the Origination of the World After Mīr Dāmād—The Views Espoused by His Student Mullā Ṣadrā and His Followers

Mīr Dāmād permanently affected how Islamic philosophy was defined in the early Safavid era, particularly its cohesion with Twelver Shi‘īsm and conformity with the Qur‘ān. He successfully combined various disciplines into a united worldview that conformed to both rational Aristotelian precepts and traditional Islamic Shi‘ī teachings. While this buttressed the School of Esfahan, it also lay the foundations for other philosophical schools. One such school, the School of Transcendent Philosophy (al-ḥikmat al-muta‘āliya), started by Mīr Dāmād’s student, Mullā Ṣadrā, later superseded Mīr Dāmād’s efforts. Mullā Ṣadrā’s scholarship surpassed Mīr Dāmād’s, to the point that Mīr Dāmād’s contributions go largely unmentioned in contemporary literature. While Mīr Dāmād’s fame and achievements were unrivalled in his time,¹ Mullā Ṣadrā came to retain an enduring noticeable status in both the average Persian household ² and Islamic and Western philosophical circles—far more so than his teacher.

Our understanding of Mīr Dāmād’s philosophical contributions to the creation versus eternity debate (including his innovative theory of meta-temporality) is aided by contrasting this with Mullā Ṣadrā’s theory of creation. Exploring Mullā Ṣadrā’s approach to creation allows us to identify whether it truly surpasses that of

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¹ The famous orientalist Carl Brockelmann wrote:

During his (Shāh `Abbās) long reign the intellectual life of Persia burgeoned again. Among the scholars at his court, Muḥammad Bāqir ibn-Muḥammad Dāmād was especially famous, inspiring the Shah himself with reverence; he carried on studies in philosophy and natural history in addition to theology, even making his own observation on bees. There was also the many-sided Baha‘-ad-Din al-‘Amili, who attempted to encompass the totality of contemporary knowledge. The great philosopher Ṣadr-ad-Din ash-Shirazi, on the other hand, whose metaphysics has exercised an influence down to our times as an element in the formation of the new religion of the Bab, preferred a life of contemplation in the holy city of Qom (History of the Islamic People, trans. Joel Carmichael and Moshe Permann [New York: Capricorn Book Edition, 1960], 325–26).

Mīr Dāmād. Worth noting here is that critically assessing any aspect of Mullā Ṣadrā’s philosophy is very difficult in contemporary Shi‘i seminaries and academic philosophy departments due to his philosophical school prevailing over all others. Criticising his ideas risks negative backlash, as to do so ‘almost borders on heresy’. However, critically engaging with Mullā Ṣadrā’s ideas is necessary for an honest and comprehensive evaluation. In the culture of Muslim learning, one is expected to show the utmost reverence towards the ‘ulamā’; however, this does not mean that their theories and views cannot be refuted. In all sciences, including theology and jurisprudence, an array of theories and an ongoing discourse of critical analysis of prior scholars exists—Islamic philosophy is certainly not exempt from this.

Mīr Dāmād and Mullā Ṣadrā are frequently conjoined in discussions on Islamic philosophy, though Mīr Dāmād is the lesser known of the two. Were a Shi‘a asked who Mīr Dāmād was, the typical response would be, ‘he was the teacher of Mullā Ṣadrā’. When the topic of creation is discussed within the Shi‘i tradition, the relationship between these two thinkers is the main area of focus, but preference is given to Mullā Ṣadrā.

Chapter 1 detailed Mīr Dāmād’s philosophical system, which we refer to as Yamānī philosophy (al-Ḥikmat al-Yamāniya). His intellectual approach relies on Aristotle’s demonstrative method, and this was the intellectual approach of most Peripatetic philosophers before him. The philosophy of Illumination propounded by Suhrawardī also strongly influenced Mīr Dāmād’s use of Ishrāqi terminology and his practical mystical behaviour. Mīr Dāmād was also significantly influenced by his reverence for Shi‘a Islamic teachings, Qur’anic texts and the traditions narrated by Shi‘a Imāms. His efforts to interpret these according to his philosophical views prepared the way for Mullā Ṣadrā’s School of Transcendent Philosophy. This school is based on three pillars: demonstrative argumentation (burhān), the Qur’an and mysticism (‘irfān).

Keven Brown notes:

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3 Ibid.
Mīr Dāmād combined at least two of these three pillars in his philosophical approach in *al-Qabasāt:* demonstrative argumentation and the Qur’ān and Shi‘i Imām traditions. Mīr Dāmād also relied on direct divine inspiration and intuition when forming his philosophical ideas. Suhrawardi’s philosophy of Illumination combined Peripatetic philosophy with the epistemological method of intuition and unveiling (*dhawq* and *kashf*) and a reverence for the Persian sages.⁵

Certain syncretic approaches existed before Mullā Ṣadrā; however, Mullā Ṣadrā took his syncretic approach beyond these earlier traditions. Mullā Ṣadrā’s approach was to use the syncretic (*talfīqī*) method in philosophical investigation as he believed that absolute truth could not be attained without relying on these three pillars.⁶ He named his philosophy ‘Transcendent’ as he saw it as rising above (transcending) purely intellectual reasoning in discovering reality. This is similar to Peripatetic philosophy, but the Transcendent approach also focuses on religious teachings (as these originate from the Almighty Creator) and the Sūfī intuitions that disclose realities by direct connection to them without the medium of the intellect.⁷ These are the foundations of Mullā Ṣadrā’s School of Transcendent Philosophy.

This school had a strong impact in Islamic philosophical circles and remains very influential today, marginalising Mīr Dāmād’s important contributions to Shi‘a rational discourse (particularly his work on the topic of creation). The syncretic or eclectic (*talfīqī*) method of Mullā Ṣadrā was, in my opinion, more appealing to researchers and students in general as it mixed philosophy, theology, Qur’ān studies, *hadith* and mysticism. For those more interested in the history of philosophy rather than philosophical reasoning, this approach was attractive. Further, the lucidity and straightforwardness of Mullā Ṣadrā’s writing ensured his works were more accessible than Mīr Dāmād’s.

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⁵ Email communication with the author, 19 February 2017. That Mīr Dāmād was a highly revered spiritual person is beyond doubt, but whether *kashf* and *dhawq* were used in his philosophical methodology is uncertain. My research has hitherto found that Mīr Dāmād did not allow his purely rational approach to be influenced by anything else. As for his references to illumination or intuition, these should be understood within his own Peripatetic philosophical methodology.


⁷ For more detail on this, see Muḥammad Kamāl, *Mullā Ṣadrā’s Transcendent Philosophy* (New York: Routledge, 2016), 42.
Recent years have seen an increase in the study of Mullā Ṣadrā and his works, mainly due to the establishment of the Ṣadrā Islamic Philosophy Research Institute (SIPRIn), directed by Sayyid Muḥammad Khāmene‘ī. This institute has published numerous works of Mullā Ṣadrā and compiled volumes of articles collected from the many international conferences the body has organised. However, I contend that the only way to fully and correctly understand the complex ideas of Mullā Ṣadrā is by gaining a comprehensive and comparative understanding of the ideas of his teacher Mīr Dāmād. Sajjad Rizvi has likewise emphasised this:

Yet although the popularity of Mullā Ṣadrā in Iran quite often prevents a critical engagement with his thought, Mīr Dāmād is respected as a difficult thinker whose thought is never analysed. A full and nuanced analysis of Dāmād's work remains to be undertaken. We can only assess the contributions of the school of Isfahan, even appreciate whether it is useful to apply such a label, once we have critically understood the work of its principal members.

Accordingly, this chapter will review Mullā Ṣadrā and his theory of creation as an example of the continuity of the contentious discussion on creation. It will be shown that Mullā Ṣadrā showed the utmost respect for his teacher Mīr Dāmād, yet failed to mention the theory of meta-temporal origination. Mīr Dāmād's thought and legacy was instead continued and expanded through his other students such as Sayyid Aḥmad al-ʿAlawī and Mullā Shamsā Gīlānī. Important to note here is that even though Mullā Ṣadrā's ideas and theories dominated the post-Mīr Dāmād philosophical arena, some scholars continued to support Mīr Dāmād's theory of meta-temporal origination. For example, Mullā

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8 See the Ṣadrā Islamic Philosophy Research Institute’s website: http://www.mullaṣadrā.org/
Muḥammad Mahdī Narāḡī (1128/1715–1209/1795 AH/CE)\textsuperscript{11} refers to the domain of meta-time and defends it in Jāmīʾ al-Afkār\textsuperscript{12} and al-Lamaʾāt al-ʿArshīya.\textsuperscript{13}

Mīr Dāmād formulated a philosophical system, and his subsequent theory of meta-temporal origination became the foundation for his ontological and metaphysical understanding of the world. Mullā ʿṢadrā formulated another philosophical system based on substantial motion. Mullā ʿṢadrā did not reject or accept meta-temporal origination and he considered that he had no need to do so. Yet Mullā ʿṢadrā’s theory of creation overtly supplanted and replaced Mīr Dāmād’s theory regardless. Thus, the fundamental question arises: which of these two philosophers were able to present a comprehensive solution to the ongoing problem of ḥudūth versus qidam, and whose solution was more aligned with Shiʿi tradition?

Mullā ʿṢadrā’s amalgamated methodology became the foundation for his perspective on the question of creation, as well as his use of Qur’anic verses and Shiʿi tradition within his philosophical approach. The latter was, of course, a result of Mīr Dāmād’s influence but Mullā ʿṢadrā went further in his understanding of motion and time and, being strongly influenced by ʿIrfān theories like tajaddud amthāl\textsuperscript{14} and khalq jadīd,\textsuperscript{15} formulated the view of al-ḥudūth al-ṭabʿī. Mullā ʿṢadrā refers to his solution to the problem of explaining creation as ‘temporal renewal origination’ (ḥudūthan zamān ʿal-tajaddudiyan).\textsuperscript{16}

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\textsuperscript{11} Rizvi presents an insightful narrative of Mīr Dāmād’s influence on those around him and after him, including Mullā ʿṢadrā. He also discusses Narāḡī’s support of ‘perpetual creation’. See Sajjad Rizvi, “An Avicennian Engagement with and Appropriation of Mullā Ṣadrā Shīrāẓī (d. 1045/1636): The Case of Mahdī Narāḡī (d. 1209/1795),” Orīens 48 (2020): 243.

\textsuperscript{12} See Muḥammad Mahdī Narāḡī, Jāmīʾ al-Afkār wa Nāqid al-Anṣār, ed. Majīd Hādīzāde (Tehran: Intishārāt-e Ḥikmat, 2002).

\textsuperscript{13} This has been edited by ‘Alī Avjābī, who has also edited numerous books and written extensively on Mīr Dāmād. See Muḥammad Mahdī Narāḡī, al-Lamaʾāt al-ʿArshīya, ed. ‘Alī Avjābī (Qom: Muʿassas-e ʿArshiya, 2008).

\textsuperscript{14} Tajaddud amthāl, or ‘the renewal of likes’, is a term used in Islamic mysticism that means the eradication of something and it being replaced by something similar to it. This was a substitute theory for the different views regarding changing existence, similar to generation and corruption, or essential creation. See ‘Abdullāh Jawābī Amālī, “Tajaddud Amthāl,” Ḥekmat Isrāʾ, no. 2 (2014): 5–25.

\textsuperscript{15} This term, which means ‘new creation’, refers to the perishing of things (fanāʾ) and the renewal of creation—that is, a state of constant change. See Ali Abidi Shahrudi, “Substantial Motion and Perpetual Creation,” in Substance and Attribute; Western and Islamic Traditions in Dialogue, ed. Christian Kanzian and Muḥammad Legenhausen (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2007), 193–214.

\textsuperscript{16} Mullā ʿṢadrā, Risālā fi al-Ḥudūth, ed. Dr Seyyid Ḥusain Musawiyn (Tehran: Bunyad Ḥikmat Ṣadrā, 1378 SY/1999), 110. See also Mullā Ḥādī Sabzawārī, Metaphysics of Haji Mullā Ḥādī Sabzavārī, trans. Mehdi Mohagheghe and Toshihiko Izutsu (New York: Caravan Books, 1977), 123. Here, Sabzawārī says, ‘And ceasing is called “temporal,” like “nature,” i.e., the “coming-into-being” of
Regarding Mulla Šadrā’s moving away from the Peripatetic and Avicennian traditions, Rizvi discusses three overall areas of Mulla Šadrā’s disagreement with Avicenna: 1) the nature of the structure of existence and its modulation; 2) the nature of the soul and its rational faculty, as Mulla Šadrā believes the Avicennian tradition failed to understand this; and 3) the nature of motion, where Mulla Šadrā emphasised motion in substance.¹⁷

Mulla Šadrā presented a theory for creation wherein all natural existents instantly and spontaneously (ʿān) come into being (as opposed to all being suddenly created at once). Creation, according to him, is preceded in its instance by a non-existing substantial form in actuality. This means that the renewal is ongoing and continuous, and not created at once as theologians believe. With this outlook and explanation for the incipience of the world, it would seem that Mulla Šadrā had no need for his teacher’s theory of meta-temporal origination. Hence the question, if Mulla Šadrā did not need or agree with Mīr Dāmād’s theory, why did he not reject or even critique it?

Here, the present thesis points out the fundamental difference of opinion between Mīr Dāmād and Mulla Šadrā, not just on the incipience of the world but also in their respective methodologies. As meta-temporal origination was aligned with Mīr Dāmād’s belief in the principality of quiddity, Mulla Šadrā’s belief in the principality of existence means that, based on his philosophical system, he could in no way accept the theory of meta-temporal origination.¹⁸

It is helpful to compare the metaphysical frameworks of Mīr Dāmād and Mulla Šadrā to identify the cause of their differing theories on the incipience of the world. Mīr Dāmād and Mulla Šadrā did have common suppositions regarding the incipience of the world. One common supposition is that both rejected the view of temporal origination in the meaning of time being hypothetical or estimative (mawhūm/mutawahham).¹⁹ Both also accepted (in principle) essential creation but

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¹⁸ Later, there were Šadrian philosophers who did find cohesion between their philosophical loyalty to Mulla Šadrā and the theory of meta-temporal creation (e.g., Mullā Sabzawārī). This means that al-hudāth al-dahrī can be understood within the system of al-Ḥikmat al-Muta‘āliya and that they are not really in complete conflict. This topic has yet to be critically researched.
did not believe it to be sufficient or complete in answering the question of creation. Mīr Dāmād’s view on this was explained in detail in the previous chapter. Mullā Ṣadrā’s view was that certain Qur’anic verses and narrations explicitly point to some type of temporal origination, which influenced his theory of natural renewal in creation.\(^{20}\) Going beyond ontological similarities, their methodologies were also similar in combining the rational and transmitted sciences. Both philosophers acknowledged the complexity of the topic of the incipience of the world\(^{21}\) and the necessity of resolving this debate.

The two philosophers differed in their understanding and positioning of existence, between fundamentality and conventionality of existence and quiddity. Second, Mīr Dāmād rejected substantial motion, whereas Mullā Ṣadrā found it to be fundamentally important in his philosophical system. Third, they had completely different understandings of the definitions and apparent indications of Qur’anic verses and narrations regarding the topic of creation. Mīr Dāmād believed these to indicate a separable posteriority (\(ta’akhur\) infikākī) of the world, whereas Mullā Ṣadrā saw them to mean temporal origination and creation by renewal of existents. Fourth, they differed in their definitions of non-cohabiting or non-parallel non-existence (‘\(ādam\) ghayr mujāmi’) in creation. Mullā Ṣadrā believed that non-parallel non-existence (‘\(ādam\) fakki’) is limited to temporal origination,\(^{22}\) whereas Mīr Dāmād believed that it can also be used in meta-temporal origination.

Previous chapters in this thesis have explained the political, religious and social milieu surrounding Mīr Dāmād and the necessity of doing so in order to fully comprehend his works. Prior to engaging in a comparative analysis of Mīr Dāmād’s and Mullā Ṣadrā’s respective theories of creation, it is imperative that we similarly familiarise ourselves with Mullā Ṣadrā.

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\(^{21}\) Mullā Ṣadrā, Risāla fi Ḥudūth al-‘Alam, ed. and annotated by Dr Seyyed Hussein Mousaviān (Tehran: Šadrā Islamic Philosophy Research Institute, 1999), 8.

\(^{22}\) Mullā Ṣadrā, al-Asfār, 3: 149–50.
4.1 Political, Social and Cultural Conditions During the Time of Mīr Dāmād and Mullā Ṣadrā

Mullā Ṣadrā and Mīr Dāmād, for the most part, experienced the same political, social and cultural conditions, and these were previously detailed in Chapter 1. As previously discussed, the Safavids came to power under the rulership of Shah Ismail in 907 AH (1135 CE), uniting Persia under Islamic leadership. During the reign of Shah Abbas I, the intellectual milieu was calmer and mostly encouraging of intellectual and scholarly freedom. Mīr Dāmād was the first philosopher to comprehensively harmonise philosophy, theology, mysticism and Shiʿi teachings. This was at a time when exoteric scholars prevailed in the scholarly arena and were explicitly against the rational and esoteric sciences, believing these to conflict with religious teachings. This view was represented in the Akhbārī trend of this era and created barriers for those inclined towards the rational sciences. The Akhbārī scholars’ influence and accusations of disbelief (kufr) later led to Mullā Ṣadrā’s exile.

As previously discussed, Mīr Dāmād had intentionally written his philosophical works in dense and difficult prose as a safeguard against formal (or exoteric) jurists being able to understand them. Mullā Ṣadrā, likely with good

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23 Edward Browne, in A Literary History of Persia (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1959), states the most prominent features of this age as:
1. Political stability, security and national unity.
2. The governing of the Shiʿa Imāmi school of thought in opposition to the Sunni governing of the neighbouring Ottoman country.
3. Extreme respect accorded to religious scholars, who were also put in charge of most political and social affairs.
4. A vast spread of religious teachings all over the country.
5. The emergence of the Akhbārī trend that relied solely on the narration of traditions and attacking intellectual sciences, to the extent that Mīr Dāmād was forced to hide his devotion to these sciences and the fact that he had mastered them. He had gained respect and reverence from this, as opposed to his student Mullā Ṣadrā, who was banished and exiled to the desert because of his fame in philosophy.
6. There were two main seminaries during the Safavid era, one in Shiraz and the other in Esfahan. Theological and Sufi inclinations were dominant in these two places, and this had a great effect on the philosophy of Mīr Dāmād and his student Mullā Ṣadrā.


25 Akhbārīsm is a jurisprudential trend in the Twelver Shiʿi School that started in the seventeenth century and went against the traditional interpretation, rejected reasoning in deriving verdicts and had a different outlook on the authenticity of hadiths. For more information, see Robert Gleave, Scripturalist Islam: The History and Doctrines of the Akhbārī Shiʿi School (Leiden: Brill, 2007).

26 Hamid Dabashi’s account of Mullā Ṣadrā’s dream, in which he saw Mīr Dāmād and asked him why he (Mullā Ṣadrā) was condemned while Mīr Dāmād was not, is quoted in full in Section 1.3 (in Chapter 1) of this thesis. This section also presents the reasons why Mīr Dāmād was virtually spared from criticism and harassment while Mullā Ṣadrā was not.
intentions, wrote in such a clear and straightforward manner that even the simplest of teachers could understand and teach his works.  

4.2 A Brief History of the Life of Mullā Ṣadrā

Mullā Ṣadrā’s full name was Muhammad son of Ibrahim son of Yaḥya al-Qawwāmī al-Shirāẓī, titled Ṣadr al-Dīn. He was popularly known as Mullā Ṣadrā and was renowned by his followers as Ṣadr al-Muta’allihīn (Master of the Theosophists). He was most likely born in the year 979/1572 AH/CE in the Iranian city of Shiraz. He finished his preliminary studies there and then moved to Esfahan, a renowned city of knowledge and the empire’s capital. He studied under the elite of scholars of his time, such as Sheikh al-Bahā’ī, Mīr Dāmād and Mīr Findireskī, learning the intellectual and religious (naqli) sciences. His outstanding abilities meant he soon excelled and achieved fame among his peers.

4.2.1 Mullā Ṣadrā’s Philosophical School

The philosophical school of Mullā Ṣadrā, named Transcendent (or Theosophical) (al-Ḥikmah al-muta’āliyah), is based on three pillars: demonstrative argumentation (burhān), the Qur’an and mysticism (‘irfān). Mullā Ṣadrā believed that complete knowledge could not be achieved without combining these; pure intellectual speculation (istidlāl) and thought alone were insufficient to discover reality, and knowledge must be pursued in the light of religion (shar‘) and mysticism. This amalgamated method is considered unique, as prior epistemological schools were either purely intellectual and speculative (e.g., the Peripatetics), purely intuitive and mystical (e.g., the Sūfis), or purely based on religious traditions (e.g., the Ahl al-
Mullā Ṣadrā distinguished himself from other scholars by being thoroughly acquainted with these three paths and combining them in his eclectic school. He had a deep knowledge of speculative intellectual sciences and wrote commentaries and notes on works in this area, such as his commentary on *al-Hidāya al-Athīriya* (*Book of Guidance*) by Athīr al-Dīn Abhārī and his vast notes on Avicenna’s *Ilāhiyāt al-Shifā’* (*Metaphysics of the Healing*). He was also well versed in narrative sciences. He wrote an exegesis on the Qur’an and a commentary on *Uṣūl al-Kāfī*, a compilation of Shi’a traditions. He trained in Illuminationist philosophy and wrote an illustrious work on Suhrawardi’s *Hikmat al-Ishrāq*. He undertook practical mystical disciplining and lengthy Sūfī exercises during his exile, which lasted more than 15 years. During this time, he perceived that the intellect, revelation and intuition all represented one reality. The remainder of this section will provide a detailed outline of this amalgamated path, enabling both an in-depth understanding of Mullā Ṣadrā’s method and how he set himself apart from not only Mīr Dāmād but also Islamic philosophy in general.

Mentioning in *Mafāṭīḥ al-Ghayb* (*Keys of the Unseen*) that the Sūfī path should be preferred to the intellectual path, Mullā Ṣadrā says:

> Many of those who associate themselves with knowledge deny the unseen inspirational knowledge that wayfarers and mystics depend on, and it is stronger and more perfect than any other science.

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33. Here, I have joined *Ahl al-Ḥadīth* (which is in the Sunni tradition) and the Akhbārī (in the Shi’ī tradition) under one category in a very broad sense, as not only did each tradition have its own methodology and theory but scholars adhering to each trend had diverse views. In Akhbārī, there was the extreme literalist tendency and the moderate tendency. For a detailed explanation, see Rula Jurdi Abisaab, “Shi’ī Jurisprudence, Sunnism, and the Traditionist Thought (Akhbārī) of Muhammad Amin Astarahadi (d. 1626-27),” *International Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* 47, no. 1 (2015): 5–23. See also Rula Jurdi Abisaab, “Was Muḥammad Amin al-Astarabādī (d. 1036/1626-7) a Mujtahid?,” *Shi’ī Studies Review* 2 (2018): 38–61.

34. Interestingly though, Mīr Dāmād was critical of Suhrawardi and refuted him in *al-Ufūq al-Mubīn*, showing how weak his arguments were and the consequent fallacies. See Mīr Dāmād, *al-Ufūq al-Mubīn*, 139, under the title of “Ḥikma Iṣhrāqiya Mizāniya.”


Here, Mullā Ṣadrā is referring to inspiration (ilḥām) and revelation. He then says:

And they are intuitive sciences which the intellect cannot comprehend other than through intuition (lit. taste dhawq) and conscience, like having knowledge of how sweet honey is, since it cannot be described, but he who has tasted it knows it.\(^{38}\)

His eclectic method can be clearly seen in most of his philosophical writings to the extent that no philosophical argument is presented without it being connected to a Qur’anic verse, tradition, poem or mystical vision (mukashafa). Importantly, this method has dominated the seminaries and universities in Iran and Iraq for over four centuries up to the present day, to such an extent that all other philosophy schools have been abrogated (including Mīr Dāmād’s al-Ḥikmat al-Yamāniya).

Mullā Ṣadrā introduced dry and clear-cut intellectual philosophical issues in a framework that included religious texts, mystical poems and Sūfī intuitive insight. This ensured his philosophy was relatively attractive compared to that of Mīr Dāmād, whose philosophical writings were primarily ratiocinative. Mullā Ṣadrā’s school reconciled rational thought with religious teachings and mysticism. Al-Kutubi observes:

His writings represent a substantial transformation of Muslim Peripatetic philosophy, which was started in the seventh century CE by the translators of Aristotle’s works from Greek into Arabic and continued in the tenth century; culminating in the works of al-Farabi and Avicenna. Although his philosophy is to a certain extent a development of the thought of Avicenna, Suhrawardi and Ibn ’Arabi, he departs from them in three respects: Firstly, he developed a number of cardinal inter-connected philosophical theories such as the primacy of existence, substantial motion and the principle of individuation. He formulated the conclusions of these theories and presented them as principles (uṣūl). These principles became the backbone of his philosophy through which he presented a new and original philosophical view concerning the metaphysical understanding of reality and the nature of the human being. Secondly, he was able to employ these inter-connected principles to resolve certain philosophical and theological

\(^{38}\) Ibid., 145.
issues that had occupied Muslim philosophers for centuries, central among which is the belief in the afterlife. These principles have been either partially presented or misunderstood in most of the existing secondary literature. Thirdly, he was able to integrate the Qur’an, the Hadith and the assertions of the mystics, especially those of Ibn ‘Arabi, into philosophical discussions, giving his philosophy a unique flavor and showing his originality by transforming philosophical investigations from mere abstract thinking into a living reality.\textsuperscript{39}

Islamic philosophers before Mullā Šadrā were influenced by religious texts and mystical states. This is one of the features of eastern Islamic philosophy (as explained in previous chapters) and can be seen in the works of Abū Naṣr al-Farābī, Avicenna, Nāṣir al-Dīn al-Ṭusī and Mīr Dāmād. A fundamental difference between these philosophers and the school of Mullā Šadrā is that all the former believed that the intellectual philosophical method was the sole epistemic method that could achieve knowledge of reality, and hence they strove to apply their philosophical intellectual principles to religious texts to create harmony between reason and religion. Philosophers tried to draw religion towards philosophy, based on philosophical principles. This contrasted with the theologians’ approach, whose starting point was religious texts, which they then tried to defend using intellectual arguments. This is why the majority of the proofs given by theologians were dialectic (\textit{jadali}) and not demonstrative (\textit{burhāni}) arguments.

Mullā Šadrā opposed the majority of the Peripatetic philosophers in many of their famous doctrines, such as his principality of existence and its unity, substantial motion,\textsuperscript{40} the illuminative addition between the cause and the effect, the unity of the knower and the known, and the soul (\textit{nafs}) being of material emergence (\textit{hudūth}). He was distinct from philosophers before him regarding his arguments for the soul in its unity possessing all faculties, proving Platonic ideas and physical resurrection.

Most Peripatetic philosophers did not regard mystical states as a legitimate epistemic way of discovering reality. However, they benefited from Sufi exercises in


purifying their intellects from illusions and sensual imaginations to achieve reality through intellectual definition and argument. Mullā Ṣadrā took a different approach; he believed, like Suhrawardī, that revelation (wahi/ilhăm) and mystical insight (kashf) were two justifiable epistemological sources that could be used in acquiring knowledge parallel to intellectual arguments. In fact, it could be argued that he saw them as superior to rational arguments. He strove to establish intellectual arguments to prove this after he had acquired knowledge and certainty by means of revelation and mystical experience, as seen in many of his writings.41

Given the above, Mullā Ṣadrā should be considered a theologian mystic who drew on philosophy and used it to correct mystical principles, rather than a philosopher. Many examples could be given, but this is beyond the scope of the present work. Suffices to say that when Mullā Ṣadrā adopted the principality of existence, he diverged from the view of all other Peripatetic philosophers (including Mīr Dāmād). By comparison, even Mīr Dāmād’s criticisms of preceding Peripatetic philosophers had not amounted to complete divergence from their views; rather, as previously discussed, he revised and expanded on these. Several of Mīr Dāmād’s theories that form the basis of his philosophical outlook are reviewed below.

4.2.1.1 The Fundamentality or Principality of Existence (aṣālah al-wujūd)

The fundamentality of existence means that contingent existence has an external reality, while the quiddities (māhiyāt) of things are derivatives abstracted from its external existence. While mystics prior to Mullā Ṣadrā had stated this, he was the first philosopher to believe this42 and the first to offer multiple arguments to refute the fundamentality of quiddity.43 However, on closer examination, it is evident that the mystics did not believe in the fundamentality of contingent existence but, rather, in the principality of necessary existence. To them, existence is confined to God, who is the necessary existence according to their belief in the individual unity of existence. This is one area in which Mullā Ṣadrā clearly stated his disagreement with

42 Christian Jambet, one of Henry Corbin’s students, has written an extensive study in this area and on the topic of fundamentality (alternatives to the term aṣālah are ‘primacy’ and ‘principality’). See Christian Jambet, The Act of Being: The Philosophy of Revelation in Mulla Ṣadra, trans. Jeff Fort (New York: Zone Books, 2006).
his teacher Mīr Dāmād; Mullā Ṣadrā states that he initially adopted the view of his teacher (without mentioning his name) but then later came to completely oppose it and formed his own view.44

Keven Brown45 observes the following regarding Mīr Dāmād's views on existence:

Like Ibn Sinā, Mīr Dāmād is clear that the 'existence' of something in the real world is identical to the Creator's actualisation of the quiddity. It is not something 'added' to the quiddity in external reality. Adding existence to the quiddity is something that only occurs in mental analysis, which Mīr Dāmād calls 'predicated existentness' (majūdiyya maṣdariyya). Mīr Dāmād states:

Existence in the real world is the very becoming (ṣayrūra) of something in the real world, not that which by qualifying it becomes something in the real world.46

Like the mystics, Mīr Dāmād holds that the ground upon which the existence of all contingent things depends is the necessary existence of God. With a one-to-one correspondence between God and each thing, He states:

The cause of the individuality of the mode of existence [of something] is strictly its dependence on the real Existent, who is individual by reason of himself, and its relation to Him distinct from other existences. The individuality of things, therefore, comes from their essentially individual Originator, just as their existence and their necessity is through Him.47

The principality of necessary existence is clearly implied by Mīr Dāmād. This is even clearer in the following passage:

Therefore, if the mind considers things spread out and separated from each other and separated from the First Principle, it is correct that some are dependent on others, as a result of which it may be stated in

44 Mullā Ṣadrā, al-Asfār, 1: 49.
45 Email communication with the author, 19 February 2017.
47 Ibid., 215.
clear terms: This is from that, and because of that, with respect to beginning without an intermediary, even though dependency in the vertical series ultimately ends in Him (exalted be He) by demonstrative necessity.

But if all of the things are considered with respect to the whole solitary, harmonious system, there is only one existent—one in system, multiple in composition, dependent with all of its parts in the horizontal series on the emanating Maker (lauded be He) all at once, and individualized by Him all at once. For He is the agent and the goal in an absolute sense. He is real existence and self-subsisting individuation. For every existent besides Him, He is the correspondent (mutābiq) of the abstraction (intizā’) of existence from it; and for every individualized thing besides Him, He is the correspondent of the abstraction of individuation from it. There is no existence and no individuation, no power and no might, save in God, the Exalted, the Great. This is a noble principle, whose rule is the mother of all demonstrative principles.48

As stated, Mullā Ṣadrā came to oppose this view of existence.

4.2.1.2 The Unity and Gradation of Existence

The unity and gradation of existence in the external world refers to one reality of multiple levels, differing in intensity and weakness; what is distinct between them returns to what they share, and this is the reality of real single (wāhid) existence.49 This is contrary to Muslim philosophers’ belief in the multiplicity of existence, with their acknowledgement of the unity of order or the connective unity between the existents, especially in its vertical hierarchy. The fundamentality of existence and its gradational unity are the two main pillars of Mullā Ṣadrā’s philosophical views and theories and where he opposed the majority of philosophers.

Conversely, Mīr Dāmād sees the cosmos as one existent:

48 Ibid., 216.
49 Rizvi, Mullā Ṣadrā and Metaphysics, 38–39.
Since it is established that continuity and discontinuity are the singleness of existence and its multiplicity, the multiplying of existence is no other than the multiplying of existent individuals, and its singleness is the singleness of an individual thing. It is established, therefore, that continuous unity without a doubt necessarily accompanies individual numerical unity, and that discontinuous multiplicity necessarily accompanies individual multiplicity. Therefore, the division of the continuous, without exception, is the transformation of individual unity into individual multiplicity. The quantitative parts are posterior to the whole in existence.\textsuperscript{50}

Keven Brown further explains:

The clear implication of this part of \textit{al-Qabasāt} is that external existence is one continuous thing that is multiplied or divided by the creation of individual essences. What makes this division of the continuous possible is prime matter, as prime matter retains its essential continuity even when receiving the discontinuity of form. Mīr Dāmād refers to the analogical gradation of existence (\textit{tashkīk}) at this level when he says:

\begin{quote}
Let it be known that dispositional possibility, which requires matter before creation, is a thing which varies in strength and weakness. But none of the kinds of analogical gradation (\textit{tashkīk}) apply to essential possibility.\textsuperscript{51}
\end{quote}

He denies \textit{tashkīk} here for the essences of things themselves. He says substances, as substances, are not more or less than other substances.\textsuperscript{52} Mullā Ṣadrā owes much to Mīr Dāmād for his ideas, and with careful examination, these differences can be discovered.\textsuperscript{53}

This is another matter in which Mullā Ṣadrā came to oppose the view of his teacher.

\textsuperscript{50} Mīr Dāmād, \textit{The Book of Blazing Brands}, 216–17.
\textsuperscript{51} Ibid., 290.
\textsuperscript{52} Ibid., 78.
\textsuperscript{53} Email communication with the author, 19 February 2017.
4.2.1.3 Substantial Motion

Substantial motion means that all substances (jawhar) experience ongoing movement in their specific forms. The majority of philosophers prior to Mullā Śadrā believed this was impossible as they confined movement to the four accidental categories (quantity [kamm], quality [kaif], position [wad‘] and place [ʿain]). Mullā Śadrā developed different philosophical theories based on this doctrine, such as the essential changing (tabadul), vertical and horizontal intensity of motion, the temporality (the coming-into-existence in time) of all parts of the natural realm, and physical resurrection.

Islamic philosophers would discuss motion (al-ḥarakat) in their chapters on natural physics (ṭabīʿīyāt), due to the fact that they considered motion to be one of the accidents (ʿawārid) of a body (jism). Mullā Śadrā saw motion as accidental to existence inasmuch as it is existence. He further divided existence into flowing (sayyāl) and contingent (mumkin), and believed that motion was an essential component and part of the sayyāl or fixed (thābit). In this, Mullā Śadrā took the topic of motion from natural physics and added it to metaphysics.

Conversely, Mīr Dāmād, like prior Islamic philosophers, believed that motion was limited to four categories and was not in substance—another fundamental difference between him and Mullā Śadrā. Substantial motion can only fit within the belief of the principality of existence—as intensity and gradation, or change—and has no position in quiddity. This theory very much suited Mullā Śadrā’s mystical tendency within his philosophical system. The relation between substantial motion and the topic of creation is how Mullā Śadrā presents his theory of renewal in creation.

4.2.2 Mullā Śadrā’s Theory of Creation

The appearance of Transcendent philosophy foreshadowed a shift in the dominant theory of the creation of the world, from Mīr Dāmād’s meta-temporal origination to Mullā Śadrā’s ‘natural creation’ (al-ḥudūth al-ṭab‘i) or ‘renewal creation’ (al-ḥudūth

54 For his explanation on al-ḥarakat al-jawhariya and its results and outcomes, see Mullā Śadrā, al-Asfār, 3: 327–35. Some of these sections have been translated and commentated on in Mahdi Dehbashi, Transubstantial Motion and the Natural World: With a Translation of Volume III, Stage 7, Chapters 18–32 of the Asfār of Mullā Śadrā (London: ICAS Press, 2010).
al-tajaddudī) based on his theory of substantial motion (al-ḥaraka al-jawhariya). According to the idea of substantial motion, the essences and substances of everything that exists in the natural realm are in constant movement and change. Every existent in every instant takes on a new form that did not exist in the instant before it. The substance of every existent was in a previous state and then became a new substance and a new state, which means everything experiences ongoing change. This means that for any existent in the natural realm, the instant of time at which it is viewed is preceded by temporal nothingness.

Mullā Šadrā defines this as temporal createdness, but not in the sense of the world being temporally created (ḥādith zamānan). When the parts of the world are looked at individually, each part is observed to have been created in a time that has passed. However, the world and creation as a whole is only temporarily created if there is a previous world assumed to exist before it. Ṭabāṭabāʾī explains this delicate difference:

As for the creation of the world—meaning everything other than the Necessary—as being created in time, the meaning of the creation of the world in time is that it was preceded by a time without a world and there was nothing except for the [Almighty] Necessary, and there was no information about the world yet. However, the fact is that the nature of time is quantitative and contingent, and it exists as an effect of the [Almighty] Necessary through His act of creating the world. Therefore, to say that the world—including time—was temporally created and preceded by temporal non-existence or was a temporal before external to time is meaningless.

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56 Nasr, "Mullā Šadrā: His Teachings," 648–49. Nasr provides a very clear and concise explanation of the relation between substantial motion and creation of the world as viewed by Mullā Šadrā.
57 A detailed analysis of Mullā Šadrā’s view on creation can be found in ‘Alī Rabbānī Golpaygānī, "Mullā Šadrā and the Origination (ḥudāth) of the World," in Mullā Šadrā and Transcendent Philosophy, vol. 2 (Tehran: Šadrā Islamic Philosophy Research Institute, 1999), 199–224.
59 Šadrā, Kitāb al-Mashāʿir, 64.
This alludes to Transcendent philosophy’s assertion that there is no commencing or beginning. Should there be a temporal beginning assumed for the world separate from the natural world, and the whole world in this particular part of time was formed in this beginning and occurred, we would have to assume an eternal time extending infinitely into the past before the creation of the world. However, time is a part of the world and it cannot be assumed that it existed before the world. This in itself would seem to solve the problem of temporal origination, but Mullā Śadrā referred to essential creation, which differs from Mîr Dâmâd’s view.

As previously discussed, when Mîr Dâmâd wanted to resolve the issue of creation, he proposed meta-temporal coming-into-being, where all existents (insofar as they change and move) are temporal and reside in the container of time (zamān). However, insofar as they exist as a whole, they are one simultaneous, unchanging existent residing in the container of meta-time (dahr), which transcends time and encompasses it. There is a third container called eternity (sarmād), which is free from any aspect of multiplicity and the necessary cause of the existence of everything else.

Mullā Śadrā believed in the essential creation of the world (ḥudūth dhāti) and saw the material world as temporally created. He supported this through establishing motion in the substance of matter and considering time as the quantity of substantial motion in which a material existent is always in change and renewal.\(^{61}\) It may be said that Mullā Śadrā disregarded his teacher’s theory to develop another outlook on creation that would suit his worldview and align with his philosophical and religious convictions.\(^{62}\) Mullā Śadrā’s adherence to the exoteric meaning of

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\(^{61}\) As explained, Mullā Śadrā was like Mîr Dâmâd in that neither completely rejected essential creation; rather, they both considered it as insufficient and in need of refinement and further completion for it to hold any rational and religious weight. Mullā Śadrā did not see a conflict between essential creation and temporal creation. Of course, the temporal creation that Mullā Śadrā believed in was his own form of temporal creation, based on what can be referred to as temporal origination of the material world (ḥudūth tab‘) or origination by renewal (ḥudūth tajaddud). See Rezā Akbārīān, “Temporal Origination of the Material World,” in Timing and Temporality in Islamic Philosophy and Phenomenology of Life, ed. Anna-Teresa Tymieniecka (Netherlands: Springer, 2007), 73–92. Another detailed reference for this is Janis Esots, “Mullā Śadrā’s Teaching on Wujūd: A Synthesis of Mysticism and Philosophy” (PhD thesis, Tallinn University, 2007), 77.

\(^{62}\) In a footnote in al-Asfār, Sabzawārī comments on this as follows: And meta-temporal creation which was the view adopted by his teacher (may his soul be sanctified) was a mature belief, a correct view that combines both sides, better than both of them, but the methodology of the author (Mullā Śadrā) (temporal creation) is closer to what has been brought by the divine religions (Mullā Śadrā, al-Ḥikmat al-Muṭā’āliya fi al-Asfār al-‘Aqliya al-‘Arba’a [Beirut: Dār Iḥyā’ al-‘Arabī, 1990], 327, fn. 2).
religious texts and belief in substantial motion distanced his theory of creation from that of his teacher.

Mullā Șadrā wrote a detailed treatise specifically about creation of the world, *Risālah fi Ḥudūth al-ʿAlam*. He authored this before his philosophical encyclopaedia *al-Ḥikmat al-Mutaʿāliya fi al-ʿAsfār al-ʿAqliyah al-Arbaʿah*, which mentions:

> We have a written treatise on the creation of the world and everything in it being temporally created, so whoever wishes to know about this should refer to the treatise.

Regarding what philosophers had previously said about *dahr*, Mullā Șadrā says in his treatise:

> In the words of the experts among the philosophers: the relation of the fixed to the fixed is *sarmad*, the relation of the fixed to the changeable is *dahr*, and the relation of the changeable to the changeable is *zamān*.

This is an accurate summary of what philosophers—including Mīr Dāmād—had said. Mullā Șadrā goes on to define these elements as follows:

> By the first they mean the relation of the Creator to His attributes, names, and knowledge. The second is the relation of His fixed knowledge to His renewing information, which are the existents of this world, through existential coextension (*maʿiyah*). The third is the relation of His renewing information, each to one another, through temporal coextension, which is temporal precedence and posteriority itself.

Mullā Șadrā’s definition of *dahr* consists of the relation of the fixed divine knowledge to the renewing existents, implying a coextension of existence between God and His creation. This is very different from Mīr Dāmād’s definition. As previously discussed, Mīr Dāmād teaches that *dahr* is the relation of the created unchanging realities to the existents that change. *Dahr* can then act as an intermediary connecting the two

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63 Mullā Șadrā, *Risāla fi Ḥudūth al-ʿAlam*.
66 Ibid.
otherwise irreconcilable domains of eternity and time. The difference between the two definitions stems from the mystical influence deeply rooted in Mullà Šadrà’s philosophical school, where he emphasises God’s extended being (al-wujūd al-munbasit) encompassing His creatures. In contrast, Mir Dâmâd, by adhering strictly to philosophical principles, emphasises the radical disjuncture between the Creator and His creation.

As previously explained (see Chapter 3), Mir Dâmâd spoke in detail about metatemporal existence in three of his major books—al-Șirāṭ al-Mustaqīm, al-Ufuq al-Mubīn and al-Qabasāt. The latter book in particular solved many philosophical problems, such as that regarding the essential or temporal eternity and the creation of the world, connecting the created to the eternal and so forth. Mir Dâmâd believed (as did philosophers) that the world in both its material and immaterial form was not temporally eternal, nor was it temporally created as most theologians believed. Instead, Mir Dâmâd reasoned that the whole world was meta-temporally created.

The profound level of respect and reverence Mullà Šadrà had for Mir Dâmâd is evident in the many statements Mullà Šadrà made about him. In a letter, Mullà Šadrà describes Mir Dâmâd as:

the appointer of grace to the hearts of the wise, the eleventh intellect,67 he who masters both the theory and practices of the sciences, the sayyid and leader, the lord of the philosophers and master of the jurists, teacher of teachers and of scholars, the most noble of scholars and the civiliser of Islamdom.68

Yet, as previously stated, Mullà Šadrà did not at any time refer to Mir Dâmâd’s theory of meta-temporal origination or meta-temporality—Mir Dâmâd’s self-proessed greatest achievement. While it may be concluded that the main reason for this is that meta-temporality simply did not fit in Mullà Šadrà’s Transcendental philosophical structure, this does not explain why Mullà Šadrà made no overt effort to summarise, refute or even critique Mir Dâmâd’s theory. This is especially strange when considering that common scholarly custom at that time was for a student to refer to

67 al-’aql al-hādi ’ashar, which could refer to him being placed after the ‘ten intelligibles’ or the ‘ten intellects’—a familiar concept in medieval Islamic philosophy.
68 Rizvi, Mullà Šadrà Shirazi: His Life and Works, 12. The original Arabic can be found in Mullà Šadrà, Sharḥ Usūl al-Kāfī, 1: 214.
the scientific views of their teacher and then either agree with or criticise them. The three most commonly given reasons for this notable absence of Mīr Dāmād’s theory in Mullā Ṣadrā’s works are outlined below.

First, it is possible that Mullā Ṣadrā did not understand his teacher’s theory of the meta-temporal origination of the world and therefore avoided it. As previously discussed, Mīr Dāmād’s philosophical writings and theories are widely acknowledged as very difficult to understand. Sayyid Abū al-Ḥasan al-Rafi’ī al-Qazwīnī (1897–1975 CE)⁶⁹ states:

Know—may Almighty God guide you—that the author of this noble book, Sayyid al-Muḥaqiq al-Dāmād (may God elevate his rank), proved meta-temporal origination in this book in a way to which nothing further can be added. However, the scholars who came after him, even the great commentators among them, were not able to understand the exact meaning of what he says, like ‘Allāmah al-Kāshānī (1598–1680 CE), ‘Allāmah Khwānsārī (1607–1687 CE), and al-Muḥaqiq al-Lāhījī (d. 1662 CE). Al-Fāḍil al-Sabzawārī (1797–1873 CE) was among the later scholars who exerted his mind in revising the theory in the way he mentioned in his Sharḥ al-Manẓūmah,⁷⁰ but careful investigation leads to believe that what al-Sayyid [al-Dāmād] wanted was different to that mentioned by al-Fāḍil [al-Sabzawārī].⁷¹

Of course, al-Qazwīnī’s understanding of Mīr Dāmād’s theory was based on Sabzawārī’s explanation. Aghā Jamāl Khwansārī (d. 1125/1713 AH/CE), an important Islamic philosopher of the later Safavid era, says:

He [Mīr Dāmād] claims that the creation of the world that is disputed is meta-temporal origination and not essential or temporal, and the summary of his view is ... In general, what he refers to is something that my understanding cannot comprehend and something my imagination cannot

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⁶⁹ Highly respected in Islamic philosophy and mysticism, he is also known to be one of the teachers of Ayatullah Khomeini.
⁷⁰ The metaphysics part of this book has been translated by Mehdi Mohaghegh and Toshihiko Izutsu. See Sabzavārī, Metaphysics of Haji Mulla Ḥādi Sabzavārī.
⁷¹ This is mentioned in al-Rafi’ī al-Qazwīnī’s notes in the introduction to Mīr Dāmād, al-Qabasāt, 159.
encompass, but we have quoted it here so that maybe a learned researcher might be guided to it. Success is with God and He is the aid.\footnote{72 Jalāl al-Dīn Muḥammad al-Dawwānī, Thalāṯ Rasā’īl (Three Treatises), ed. Tuwisrkanī, Ahmad (Mashhad: Būyād pejuheshhaye Islami Astān Quds Razavi, 1411 AH), 229. Note that Aghā Jamāl Khwānsārī states only that his understanding cannot comprehend it, not that it is not understandable.}

However, given Mullā Šadrā’s exceptional aptitude and skill, as well as his studying under Mīr Dāmād, it is improbable that he failed to understand Mīr Dāmād’s theory.

Second, it is possible that Mullā Šadrā understood Mīr Dāmād’s theory but intentionally overlooked it.\footnote{73 Khāmene’ī has written a paper asserting that a connection can be made between Mullā Šadrā’s theory of substantial motion and Mīr Dāmād’s theory of meta-temporal creation. See Sayyid Muhammād Khāmene’ī, “Ḥudūth Dahrī wa Ḥekmat Mutāʿalīye Mullā Šadrā,” Khiradnāme-ye Šadrā 39 (Spring 1384 SY): 5–12.} This is also unlikely as he frequently quoted the statements and views of earlier and contemporary scholars and then proceeded to explain, debate or refute them. For example, Mullā Šadrā refers to the views of most philosophers on the topic of creation in his treatise Risālah fi Ḥudūth al-ʿAlam, yet there is not one mention of Mīr Dāmād. Given the influence and importance of Mīr Dāmād’s works and Mullā Šadrā’s scholarly ability, this cannot be attributed to poor scholarship or an inability of Mullā Šadrā to engage with the works, but is almost certainly intentional.

Third, and most likely, it is possible that Mullā Šadrā understood Mīr Dāmād’s theory and rejected it,\footnote{74 Mullā Šadrā uses the term dahr very rarely. In one case, in al-Asfārī (7: 268), he mentions the realm of dahr but not prove or disprove it. He also mentions dahr and how time is related to the vessel of dahr. See Ibn Sinā, al-Īlāhiyāt min al-Shifāʾ, maʿa Taʿliqat Šadr al-Mutaʿalihin wa Taʿliq Ulkar, 153.} but did not refute or criticise the theory explicitly out of respect for his teacher.\footnote{75 This view—that Mullā Šadrā did not believe in meta-temporal creation and did not discuss or criticise it out of respect for his teacher—was also articulated in Murtadā Muṭahhari, Maqālāt-e Falsafi (Qom: Intishārāt-e Šadrā, 1389 SY), 1: 224.} As previously mentioned, Mullā Šadrā’s articulated views on the subject of creation and his overtly stating that he initially adopted the view of his teacher (without mentioning said teacher’s name) but then later came to completely oppose it both demonstrate that Mullā Šadrā did indeed reject Mīr Dāmād’s theory of meta-temporal origination. Their opposing views on existence and quiddity—Mīr Dāmād believing in the principality of quiddity and subjectivity of existence (ašālah al-māhiyyah—i’tibāriya al-wujūd) and Mullā Šadrā believing in the principality of
existence and subjectivity of quiddity—alone ensured that their theories on creation would differ greatly. This was noted and discussed in detail by Mullā Ṣadrā, yet unfortunately he again neglects to mention anything that Mīr Dāmād had said.

On this, Ibrahim Dibājī says:

this theory [Mīr Dāmād’s theory of meta-temporal creation] became a cause of study, dispute, and clash among philosophers and educated people, even during his time. Some of his students, like Ṣadr al-Dīn al-Shirāzī, known as Mullā Ṣadrā, and Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad ibn ʿīn matulla al-Jilānī, famous as Mullā Shamsā (d. 1041/1654 CE), who were the greatest of his students both wrote books on proving the creation of the world. They objected to the views of their teacher on his famous theory of meta-temporal creation and refuted it.

Given Mullā Ṣadrā’s integrity and deep spirituality, his omission of Mīr Dāmād’s theory of meta-temporal origination was likely due to his unwavering respect and reverence for his teacher. However, it must be stated here that this ‘courtesy’ appears to have extended only to Mīr Dāmād’s theory of meta-temporal origination; there are numerous instances of Mullā Ṣadrā writing extensively on his strong opposition/disagreement with Mīr Dāmād in other areas of philosophy and theology.

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77 Dīnānī mentions how important of a point this is. Despite the enthusiasm Mīr Dāmād had for meta-temporal creation, Mullā Ṣadrā, who was considered his loyal student, dealt with this with cold silence. See Ghulām Husain ʿīn Dīnānī, Mājārāye Fikr Falsafi dar Jahān-e Islām (Tehran: Intishārāt-e Šarḥ Naw, 1998), 2: 312.


4.2.3 Mulla Ṣadrā’s View on the Creation of the Universe

Mulla Ṣadrā’s writings on the creation of the universe demonstrate that he agrees with the theologians that the world was created through temporal origination. According to him, everything in the universe is preceded by temporal nothingness. He clearly explains his stance on this issue in numerous works, especially in his treatise Risālah fi Ḥudūth al-ʿAlam, devoted to the topic of the creation of the world. In al-Mashāʾir (Penetrations), he says:

The universe and everything in it is temporally created, because everything in it is preceded in existence by temporal nothingness. This means that there is no individual entity unless its non-existence has temporally preceded its existence and its existence its [subsequent] non-existence.80

As previously discussed, Mīr Dāmād refuted these two types of temporal non-existence (the prior and the subsequent) on the two sides of temporal existence:

Do you remember, from what you have learned and stored away, that among the principles and rules is that supervening non-existence (ʿadam ṭārī) is impossible with respect to the essence of time, and similarly prior non-existence followed by existence? Only entirely pre-eternal and post-eternal non-existence is possible for the essence of time, without either of the two [temporal] non-existences on the two sides of existence. This is something on which the preeminent philosophers, the wise, and the learned agree. The doubt, therefore, that it is necessary for time to be necessarily existent is removed.81

As previously explained, Mullā Ṣadrā believed in substantial motion (al-ḥaraka al-jawhariyya) and, based on this, believed that the material world was preceded in

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81 Mīr Dāmād, The Book of Blazing Brands, 259.
existence by temporal nothingness. His conceptualisation of substantial motion underpins his theory of temporal origination and its characteristics.

Conversely, Mīr Dāmād (and Avicenna) argues against the doctrine of an infinite temporal non-existence prior to the creation of the world. His and Avicenna’s arguments are presented in detail in al-Qabasāt, in wamāṣ 1.7.5 to 1.7.6 and wamāṣ 7.3.13 to 7.3.16. For example, Mīr Dāmād states:

The path of the doctrine concerning existence-after-non-existence is in accord with this way, whichever kind of posteriority it may be, with respect to the essence of the essentially necessary Self-Subsisting Being (exalted be His sovereignty). It [existence-after-non-existence] is impossible, in this case, with the impossibility of all the modes of non-existence. It is realized by real eternal existence, which is prior to all existences, and it [real eternal existence] is not after a non-existence in any respect at all.

In Mafāṭīḥ al-Ghayb (Keys to the Unseen), Mullā Ṣadrā discusses the origination of the world and proudly boasts that he—by the will and grace of God—has solved this riddle of creation:

Know that this issue is among the greatest issues of faith and mysticism that the religions of all the prophets have agreed on establishing. The intellects of all the philosophers are bewildered in understanding it, and God, due to His bounties, has inspired us to understanding and He has preferred us over many of His creation.

In al-Ḥikmah al-ʿArshiyah (The Wisdom of the Throne), he states:

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82 The view adopted by the theologians was that the world is temporally created, and the non-existence that preceded the existence of the world was given temporal qualities, because they believed that the container of this non-existence was like an empty stage having dimensions in which the creation of motion was possible, and thus bodies as well. Because of their inability to remove time from the estimative faculty, they ascribed a hypothetical time (al-zamān al-mawhūm) to the non-existence preceding the creation of the world, leading to the implication of an infinite time extending in the direction of pre-eternity.


84 Mīr Dāmād, The Book of Blazing Brands, 261. See also 37–40, 277–86. Mīr Dāmād presented six primary points in his arguments against what the theologians have said in favour of temporal creation. See al-Qabasāt, 31–32.

85 Mullā Ṣadrā, Mafāṭīḥ al-Ghayb (Tehran: Anjuman Ḥikmat wa Falsafe Iran, Muʿasase Muṭālāt wa Tabqiqāt Farhangī, 1984), 387.
The whole world originates in time, since everything in it is preceded in its being by nonexistence in time. And everything in it is constantly renewed (in its being), in the sense that there is absolutely no entity (huwiya) or individual—be it celestial or elemental, simple or composite, substance or accident—but that its nonexistence precedes its being in time, and its being likewise precedes its nonexistence in time.\textsuperscript{86}

In his most important book, al-Asfār, he says:

All corporeal material entities that are in this world—whether simple or compound, form or matter, celestial or elemental, souls or natures—are all preceded by temporal non-existence. Each specific existence is preceded by a temporal non-existence that does not cease in the direction of pre-eternity (al-azal) ... They are all temporally created, and not one of them has a continuous existence or a reality whose entity is unchanging.\textsuperscript{87}

To explain this further, based on time, if we were to dissect the nature of the one extended, flowing world into hypothetical fragments, each would be equal to its previous non-existence in the time prior to it, but what about the first part? Was the very first part that proceeded from God also preceded by its non-existence in a time before it, and how could there be a time prior to it if time is the estimation of movement produced from it? Mullā Ṣadrā holds that there is no motion or time before the existence of the first part of the world.\textsuperscript{88}

By comparison, as previously discussed (see Chapter 3), Mīr Dāmād connected the originated to the eternal (rabṭ al-hādīth bi al-qadīm). The created or the originated in the realm of time is connected to the eternal, and Mīr Dāmād did not believe that it must be preceded by an eternal motion or time, nor did he accept what theologians introduced (referred to by the philosophers as hypothetical time, al-zamān al-mawhūm) to solve this issue. The world, according to Mīr Dāmād, cannot be eternal as that is exclusive to the realm of divinity. In addressing this, Mīr Dāmād states:

\textsuperscript{86} Mullā Ṣadrā, The Wisdom of the Throne, 119.
\textsuperscript{87} Mullā Ṣadrā, al-Asfār, 7: 285.
it is only due to the perpetual deficiency of the substance of the possible, caused essence and by reason of the incapacity of the nature of the essentially possible to receive eternity.\(^89\)

In other words, what needs something else to be realised (i.e., essentially possible) cannot also be uncaused and independent (i.e., essentially necessary or eternal [sarmadi]). Therefore, it is not possible for the world, which is only possible in itself, to exist before its origination and for its prior pre-eternal non-existence to have temporal properties. However, as the effect (the created universe) cannot be disjoined from its complete cause (the Eternal Creator), it is connected to the eternal not in time but in meta-time (\(dahr\)). Both its prior non-existence and its creation are atemporal (\(dahri\)). As Mîr Dâmâd states:

As for the prior in causality, it is nothing other than the complete efficient cause, which brings together the things expected by the act of agency and the conditions of the emanation, since it is necessary for the effect to be together with it in the real world, a simultaneity which the substance of the effect itself implies. It has priority over the essence of the effect in terms of the necessity of existence obtained in the real world, but this is with respect to the intelligible order corresponding to its essence and the essence of the effect. This is the reality of the nature of priority in causality.\(^90\)

Note that Mullâ Şadrâ’s arguments establishing his theory of origination are also fundamentally different to the views of Islamic theologians due to his foundational system. He classified time and temporality as having an existential dimension, and for him, origination is proven instant by instant, where any substantial form is preceded by its own non-existence in the prior instant.

4.2.4 The World According to Mullâ Şadrâ

The world (\(al-\text{'}alam\)) according to Mullâ Şadrâ is the natural world with all its parts, bodies and corporeal entities, celestial (\textit{falaki}) or elemental (\textit{unşurî}) souls or physical bodies. Regarding the immaterial intelligible realm (\('\text{alam } al-\text{'}uqûl al-	ext{mujarradah}\)), he has a different view:


\(^{90}\) Ibid., 74.
We have explained with evidence that the world in all its sensual substance—heavenly or earthly—is created, gradual, generated, finite and will not last in time. We have also explained that the divine realm is very vast and it includes all forms of what exists in this realm, but at a higher and more noble level. This realm is sustained with the subsistence (baqāʾ) from God, and not by its simply persisting, as there is a difference between something subsisting because it is sustained by God and its being subsistent as a consequence of His wanting it to be.91 If it is said that the divine forms that are with God have a quiddity but that they do not have a concrete entity or an existential identity, then it is correct that they are subsistent by Him keeping them subsistent. However, if it is established that they are pure existences related to the essence through the complete agent (al-jāʾil al-tām), being divine admirers and faces looking at the Lord and eyes seeing His face, different in intensity and weakness, proximity and distance, then it cannot be conceptualised that they are subsistent without His subsistence.92

In further explaining his view concerning what relates to the universe and what exists in each of the multiple realms, he says the following in al-Ḥikmat al-ʿArshiya:

And as for the absolutely separate (Intellect) and the immaterial Forms, we must say something else (than the usual theories of the philosophers) (namely), what is perceived by the inner knowing of the true ‘Unitarians’ [monotheists] who unveil (the inner reality and transcendent Unity of Being). It is that these (intelligible Forms) do not have any being in themselves and that their essences are submerged and obliterated in the sea of Unicity (of the divine Essence or Being). They are the Forms of what is in God’s Knowledge—may He be exalted—and the veils of Godhood and the pavilions of His Grandeur. ‘Were it not for these luminous veils, the splendours of His Countenance would have completely consumed in flame everything in the heavens and the earth’, as it is reported in the (prophetic)

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91 Fazlur Rahman explains this concept as follows: ‘This is because they are, in a sense, part of God and flow from His pure being directly. They exist not because God causes them to exist (bi ibqāʾ Allah iyyāhū) but because He exists (bi baqāʾ Allah) as Ṣadrā often puts it’ (Fazlur Rahman, The Philosophy of Mullā  Ṣadrā [Albany: State University of New York Press, 1975], 63).

92 Mullā  Ṣadrā, Risāla fī al-Ḥudūth, 194–95.
tradition. He—Glory be to Him—has divine Modes and luminous Ranks that are not among the particular things of (this material) world and are not included in what is ‘other than God’—may He be exalted!—since they are Forms in the divine Decree and in the world of divine Lordship.93

Mullā Ṣadrā states his belief that intelligibles are not established in philosophical meaning (i.e., in their substance having complete immateriality) and being at the level of essence and actuality. Instead, for him, there are ideas and pure existential forms that have no contingent quiddities and are eternal with the subsistence (baqāʾ) of God Himself. This is similar to Platonic ideas.

For Mīr Dāmad, the world is preceded in its existence by real meta-temporal nothingness, and not by the theologians’ hypothetical time, nor the nothingness that is not contradictory to existence in the stage of quiddity. Prior to the material world was a real nothingness in the realm of meta-temporality. It did not exist through meta-temporality; rather, it is related to dahr, which in turn is related to sarmad. In contrast to Mullā Ṣadrā’s view, Mīr Dāmad sees the reality of external things as quiddity and existence as something abstract (intizāʾī). Keven Brown elaborates on this:

Existence is only something added to the essence (or abstracted from it); this is purely in the mind when determining logical priority. This is not so in actuality. Mīr Dāmad is clear (along with Avicenna) that real contingent existence is the same as the actualisation of the quiddity in the external world by its agent. The quiddity, which in itself is merely possible, has no existence before God actualises it, and before that, it is non-existent. Its priority is a logical, or essential, priority in mental analysis, but not a separate priority in the real world. In the real world, something’s quiddity or possibility and its existence are simultaneously actualised. What are prior to the actualised quiddities of things in reality are only the causes and the ultimate cause, which is real essentially necessary existence (i.e., God). Both Mīr Dāmad and Avicenna recognised real essentially necessary existence as the first cause of things. However, logically, the possibility of

something must come before its existence, otherwise it would be an eternal existent.94

Mīr Dāmād dwells on this pivotal concept in his philosophical system, using any opportunity to clarify the obscure topics of quiddity and existence:

The abstraction of existence from the quiddities is only possible due to their dependency on that real existence which is the True Existent by virtue of himself. The reality of existence, in this case, is the actualization itself, not the actualization of some thing. Between the abstracted from and the correspondent of the abstraction there is an obvious difference. Therefore, that which corresponds to general existence is the very essence of the True Existent, and it is dependent on Him, no other. Thus, He (exalted be His glory) is the existence of every existent in the sense of being the real correspondent of the abstraction. Every existent other than Him is existent through Him and non-existent through itself.95

Mullā Ṣadrā delved into the discussion of the creation of the world with a new and unique outlook. He believed that Qur’anic verses and narrations not only indicate temporal origination of the world but clearly state it.96 Through his theory of substation motion and understanding of time, Mullā Ṣadrā entered into the discussion of hudūth al-ʿālam and deduced a theory of creation different to any previously presented.

4.3 Definitions of Origination, Creation and Eternity

Mullā Ṣadrā referred to his definitions of creation and eternity on numerous occasions while explaining his views about the universe’s creation. According to him, creation and eternity are understood in two ways. First, in relation (bi al-qiyaṣ), meaning when the term hudūth is used, it refers, for example, to the duration of the existence of Zaid being less than the duration of ‘Amr’s existence. With qidam, it is the opposite; this refers to the duration of the existence of something being more than the duration of the existence of something else. This is the common

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94 Email communication with the author, 19 February 2017.
95 Mīr Dāmād, The Book of Blazing Brands, 85.
96 See Mullā Ṣadrā, The Book of Metaphysical Penetrations, 68.
understanding. Second, not in relation, which is divided into two aspects: temporal origination and eternity, and essential creation and eternity.

The first aspect, temporal origination, means the occurrence of something after it had not existed; this posterior existence is not coextensive (mujāmi’) with the prior non-existence, which means they cannot coexist in the same span of time. According to this, there would be no meaning for creation to be in time as its creation cannot be conceived or established unless time continued and with it was the non-existence of that time. This is obviously contradictory as it assumes that time exists when it was assumed not to exist.

Further, time itself is described by Mullā Ṣadrā as being prior or posterior as these are essential features of time and its existence. Each part of time is before in relation to what will come and after in relation to what has passed. Therefore, it cannot be described as creation in relation to nothingness, even though creation and renewal are the very essence of time and motion. Time, according to Mullā Ṣadrā, is not additional to motion in existence but is additional mentally. This is because time is one of the analytical accidents of the essence of motion. The meaning of temporal eternity is that something’s existence has no temporal beginning, and time in this sense is not eternal as time has no other time in which it exists.

The second aspect is that creation and eternity are not in time and are called ‘essential creation’ and 'eternal creation'. Essential creation means that something is not dependent in its essence on itself but on something else, whether this dependency is in a specific time or is continuous in all time, or is above the horizon of time and motion.98

For Mullā Ṣadrā, the temporal origination of the world means its ongoing renewal throughout time, and it has an essential renewal. This is based on his arguments regarding the substantial motion of physical existents:99

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97 As previously stated, according to Mullā Ṣadrā, there are two kinds of non-existence (‘adam): 1) contradictory non-existence (‘adam muqābil), which is non-existence in terms of time, which does not correspond to the existence of a thing in time; and 2) non-contradictory non-existence (‘adam mujāmi’), which is the non-requirement of a contingent for either existence or non-existence. This non-requirement is a negative attribute of a possible in itself. See Akbariān, "Temporal Origination of the Material World," 91, fn. 4.
98 Mullā Ṣadrā, al-Asfār, 3: 246.
99 Nasr, Ṣadr al-Dīn Shīrāzī and His Transcendent Theosophy, Background, Life and Works, 65.
as it will be explained in establishing the creation of the universe in all its parts with respect to proving the essentially renewing substance, which is a requisite of the continuous entity that is like motion. This is the pervasive nature that is in bodies, because its reality persists with the attribute of renewal that joins multiple contiguous parts in the faculty of estimation. The existence of each necessitates the non-existence of the previous part, and its non-existence necessitates a subsequent existence. This state is established in it by its essence without the action of an agent.\textsuperscript{100}

He also states:

We have informed you and guided you to the heavenly path that nobody among the famous scholars has reached in this theoretic discipline in proving the physical creation of the world—and all that is in it in the heavens and the earth and everything between them—with respect to temporal and renewing creation ... I came to know through argument that the pervading nature in bodies—that makes up its material and the form of its essence—is something that has individual changes in essence and is gradual in its generation. Its individual existence does not stay in time, let alone remain eternally in its entity.\textsuperscript{101}

Mullā Șadrā, like Mir Dāmād, does not accept Avicenna’s view of ‘essential creation’ in the origination of the world and believes that essential coming-into-being in its strict sense refers to only the dependence of the possible existent on something other than itself.\textsuperscript{102} Avicenna believed that the world is temporally eternal and essentially created. It is temporally eternal in that an effect cannot be disjoined (\textit{infikāk}) from its complete cause, and essentially created as it needs a cause. Mullā Șadrā believed that the world is temporally created and argues this on the basis of his theory of substantial motion.

As previously discussed, the theologians’ view that everything other than God is temporally created was not accepted by philosophers as it would not work for created entities beyond time, such as the intelligences (\textit{al-ʿuqūl}) and angels. The only

\textsuperscript{100} Mullā Șadrā, \textit{al-Asfār}, 2: 198.
\textsuperscript{101} Mullā Șadrā, \textit{Risāla fī al-Ḥudūth}, 100, 111. See also Akbarîān, “Temporal Origination of the Material World,” 77–78.
\textsuperscript{102} Akbarîān, “Temporal Origination of the Material World,” 77.
way to resolve this would be to say that everything other than God is essentially created. According to Mullā Ṣadrā, the world of nature is renewed and recreated at every instant and no aspect of a natural creature is eternal. In other words, ‘every moment a new individual of substances, accidents and natural things is created and no corporeal entity and perpetual existence can be found in this world’.\textsuperscript{103} Of course, this view can only be held if one believes in substantial motion, which Mīr Dāmād and other philosophers did not.

### 4.4 Consensus on the Temporal Origination of the World

Mullā Ṣadrā states that his view on the origination of the universe—temporal origination (\textit{al-hudūth al-zamānī})—is agreed on by all divine religions, monotheists and mystics. He also says—in a manner somewhat cautioning—that whoever opposes this is not following the religion of the prophets and not ‘among the philosophers (\textit{al-ḥukamā})’:

Know that everything that we have previously explained and will be explaining about the creation of the world as a whole, including the heavens and what is in it and the earth and what is with it, is the very creed of the people of the truth in every group of any true religion or sect, and all divine wayfarers of the past and future. All the people of the truth and all monotheists in every aeon and every time have one religion and one method in the foundations of theology, the fundamentals of religion, the states of the origin and the end, and also believe that everyone returns back to Him, the Almighty.

Do you not see that the religions of all the prophets and the saints, praises and mercy of God be with them, and their followers are one. There is no difference mentioned from them about anything in the principles of teachings and the states of the origin and the end (\textit{al-mabda’—al-ma’ād}).

Whoever’s religion is not that of the prophets, peace be upon them, then they have no philosophy and are not regarded as being among the philosophers. They will not have a firm foundation in knowing reality;

\textsuperscript{103} Ibid., 78.
‘philosophy’ is one of the greatest divine gifts and endowments. It is the most noble of treasures and the best of human happiness.\textsuperscript{104}

In the above passage, Mullā Ṣadrā states that belief in the temporal origination of the universe aligns with what all true religions, prophets and sages have propagated. This consensus ensures his confidence that his perspective conforms to what ḥikma (wisdom/philosophy) truly represents.

In contrast, Mir Dāmād explains the discrepancies and difficulties of belief in temporal origination. This belief was adopted by the theologians, and even though Mullā Ṣadrā claims to have refined this position within his philosophical structure, Mir Dāmād’s criticisms remain valid. Mir Dāmād argues against the temporal origination of the world; for example, in an early part of \textit{al-Qabasāt} he gives six points for this, starting his argument by saying:

They [the theologians] believed that between the true Creator and the beginning of the world there was a hypothetical, pre-eternal, flowing, extended non-existence, whose hypothetical continuation extended in the direction of pre-eternity (azal) without any end, but which ended in the direction of everlastingness (abad) with the creation of the beginning of the world. They do not realise that this is a delusion and deception of a clouded mind and an idle fancy and imagination of a confused intellect.\textsuperscript{105}

With his view of meta-temporality, Mir Dāmād harmonised religious demands and beliefs with philosophical precepts and reason and successfully presented a cosmological worldview compatible with both. Mir Dāmād believed that Avicenna’s view of essential creation was incomplete and that the theologians’ understanding of temporal origination was insufficient.

This placed Mir Dāmād in a category of his own. According to him, the creation of the universe cannot be adequately explained by essential creation alone. Thus, he refined this and distinguished between sarmad and those of dahr and time:

It has been made clear to you that essential creation is proven by demonstration to belong to the possibilities of things in their entirety. The

\textsuperscript{104} Mullā Ṣadrā, \textit{al-Asfār}, 5: 205–6.
\textsuperscript{105} Mir Dāmād, \textit{The Book of Blazing Brands}, 37–38. See also pp. 277–86.
philosophers have agreed that it is established for every possible thing ... It is therefore clear that the area of dispute concerns perpetual creation (ḥudūth dahrī) and no other. In our view, every essential creation is a perpetual creation as well, and the two types of creation, the essential and the perpetual, though differing conceptually are inseparable in reality. As for temporal origination, it is restricted to things connected to dispositional possibilities belonging to material existents.  

This means that essential creation refers to the logical need of anything possible in itself for a cause to bring it into existence, which is what the philosophers had accepted. Mīr Dāmād saw this as insufficient. He believed that real creation requires the precedence of real non-existence, and since this creation cannot be in time it must be outside time (i.e., in meta-time). As a result, Mīr Dāmād states that all essential creations, if they are to be real, are meta-temporal origins. 

4.5 Evidence for the Temporal Origination of the World

Mullā Ṣadrā summarises all of his philosophical views in his Kitāb al-Mashā’ir. In this work, he presents two arguments for the temporal origination of the world within his philosophical framework. One argument relies on establishing motion in the category of substance, which he calls ‘substantial motion’ (al-ḥaraka al-jawhariya). As this is based on motion in the existence of the substance, establishing this depends first on the theory of the principality of existence and the mental derivation of quiddity (ašālah al-wujūd—i’tibāriyah al-māhiyah). This is grounded in existence being external and not quiddity.

In clarifying his stance on creation being dependent on these two principles (principality of existence and substantial motion), Mullā Ṣadrā says in Risālah al-Ḥudūth:

This is based on what you have come to know through evidence that the nature that pervades in bodies—which constitutes its matter and the form

106 Ibid., 31–32.
107 Email communication with Keven Brown, 19 February 2017.
of its essence—is something whose individual essence changes gradually in creation. Its individual existence does not stay in time, let alone it being individually eternal. There is no body—celestial (falaki) or elemental (unṣuri)—unless it has a natural form that constitutes it, which is the origin of its necessary features and its special effects.

It is also established that the reality of the matter of every body is potentiality and contingency, and it is not one in number. Its oneness and unity is indeterminate, as the unity of the acquired nature of any body is a numerical unity that repeats based on the description of the connection.

It is proven that the existent of everything that exists is its existence and not at all what they call quiddities, or what the Sufis call the fixed entities (a’yân thâbitah)\(^\text{109}\)—neither in concrete reality nor in the mind, where the existence becomes an attribute for it and concrete in it -. Rather its state is like that of a spirit or a shadow that is seen in mirrors. It is similar to what the Almighty has said: *like a mirage in a lowland which a thirsty one thinks is water until, when he comes to it, he finds it is nothing but finds Allah before Him*\(^\text{110,111}\)

This means that proving the temporal origination of the world—or knowledge of the nature in all its parts, whether celestial or elemental—depends, according to Mullā Ṣadrā, on two premises.

The first premise is that existence is principal and quiddity follows it in its occurrence and is derivative. This is where Mullā Ṣadrā contradicts the position common among the philosophers—in particular, his teacher Mīr Dāmād, who had discussed the principality of quiddity and was the first philosopher to devote extensive explanations and detailed arguments on this issue.\(^\text{112}\) This is necessary for proving the temporal origination of the world because to establish substantial motion (and, as a result, the temporal origination of the world and its ongoing renewal) depends on the reality of concrete occurrence being existence and not

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\(^{109}\) Also referred to as immutable archetypes or eternal essences.
\(^{110}\) Qur’an, 24:39.
\(^{111}\) Mullā Ṣadrā, *Risāla al-Hudūth*, 111.
\(^{112}\) For a detailed explanation on the importance of this topic of existence and quiddity, and its history in Islamic philosophy, see Nasr, *Islamic Philosophy from its Origin to the Present*, 63–84.
quiddity. Quiddity for Mullā Ṣadrā is fixed and unchangeable, does not experience continuous renewal and, therefore, substantial motion cannot occur in it.

The second premise is that the whole world and all its parts shift and change constantly without a gap or a break—the principle of substantial motion. This is necessary for proving the temporal origination of the world because it means there is a continuous renewal in the substance of existing bodies. As a result, every part of time is different from another part of time, and, therefore, the nature of a body will always be preceded by its non-existence in a prior time as it was something else in its previous time. Mullā Ṣadrā explains:

in establishing the creation of the world in all its parts with respect to proving the essentially renewing substance, which is a requisite of the continuous entity that is like motion. This is the pervasive nature in bodies, because its reality persists with the attribute of renewal that joins multiple contiguous parts in the faculty of estimation. The existence of each one of them necessitates the non-existence of the previous part, and its non-existence necessitates the existence of the subsequent. This state is established in it by its essence without the action of an agent.113

Mullā Ṣadrā’s view of temporal origination can only be understood in light of the two principles of asālah al-wujūd (the principality of existence)114 and al-ḥaraka al-jawhariya (substantial motion).115 There has been a noticeable increase in scholarly interest in Mullā Ṣadrā in recent decades, resulting in much scholarship about him and his theories and translations of his works.

In contrast to the above views of Mullā Ṣadrā, and as previously discussed (see Chapters 2 and 3), Mir Dāmād believed in a vertical hierarchy of existence—the highest being the ontological realm of the Sublime Being (sarmad) and the lowest being the temporal realm. In the highest level, God exists on His own and nothing can be equal to Him. Whatever else exists is posterior to the realm of God. This posteriority of the world is completely separate to God’s being, and the existence of

113 Mullā Ṣadrā, al-Asfār, 2: 198.
the universe supervenes upon an objective, but not temporal, form of non-existence.\textsuperscript{116} For Mīr Dāmād, the best way of understanding creation is by considering hudūth as being preceded by a sheer, categorical sense of non-existence, where this nothingness means an objective privation whose precedence is not essential or temporal but real (\textit{sariḥ}).\textsuperscript{117} It is in the realm of dahr, which is beyond the temporal but below the divine.

### 4.6 Arguments for the Temporal Origination of the World

The previous sections have detailed the principles that form the basis for Mullā Ṣadrā’s view of temporal origination. This section summarises his two arguments—presented in \textit{al-Mashā‘ir}\textsuperscript{118}—for the temporal origination of the world. Mullā Ṣadrā acknowledges this is a complicated and difficult topic that he understands only because God inspired his comprehension:

> Know that this issue is among the greatest issues of faith and gnosis (\textit{al-‘īrfān}) that the religions of all the prophets have agreed upon. The minds of the majority of the philosophers were also bewildered in understanding it, and God by virtue of His bounty has inspired me to understand it and has favoured me over many of His creation. I have explained the arguments for it in an independent treatise.\textsuperscript{119}

#### 4.6.1 First Argument

The first argument can be called the argument of the ‘renewal of nature’ (\textit{tajaddud al-ṭabī‘ah}), being based on substantial motion and the constant renewal of nature. It contends that the whole world in all its parts changes and is renewed due to the world’s substantial motion. This changing and renewal is essential due to nature being created. It is renewed by essence, which will not allow something to stay in one state in two different times. Therefore, if any part of this world is taken in any part of time, it will be preceded by its nothingness in a previous time, which is the

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{117} Ibid.
  \item \textsuperscript{118} Mullā Ṣadrā, \textit{The Book of Metaphysical Penetrations}, 68.
  \item \textsuperscript{119} Mullā Ṣadrā, \textit{Mafāṭīḥ al-Ghayb}, 390.
\end{itemize}
meaning of temporal origination. Muḥammad Ḥusain Ṭabāṭabāʾī, who represents the contemporary Transcendent philosophy school, elegantly explains this argument in his philosophical textbook (currently studied by all students in Shiʿi Islamic seminaries):

The material and natural world has another creation related to it and it is temporal creation. As discussed in the topic of actuality and potentiality, the material world is in motion in its substance and all other accidents that are related to it ... Taking each of the parts of this general extended motion we find that they are preceded by temporal nothingness, because they are actuality and preceded by potentiality, which means they are created by temporal creation. The sum of these parts (or pieces—qaṭāʾāt) is nothing other than the parts and pieces themselves, and its ruling is as they are. It is created in time through their creation in time. Therefore, the material and natural world is temporally created.

4.6.2 Second Argument

The second argument can be called the ‘final end’ (al-ghāyah) argument, being primarily dependent on accepting the existence of an objective or a goal behind created existents, such as the material nature of the world. Mullā Ṣadrā explains this in al-Mashʿir:

Sometimes it [establishing temporal creation] comes from establishing final ends for the elemental natures. They require, from the point of view of their essential perfectings and their substantial motions, that this wujūd (existence) should be exchanged and this generation cease; that tilling and production be terminated, that everything on the earth and heaven come to an end, that this present abode be destroyed, and that the matter be transferred to the One, the Victorious.

This argument contends that creation’s purpose and ending results in everything deficient reaching the perfection suitable for it. This can only occur if there is a constant change in the existence to reach the desired perfection. This implies the

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120 Ibid.
121 Ṭabāṭabāʾī, Nihāyat al-Ḥikma, 390–91.
122 Mullā Ṣadrā, The Book of Metaphysical Penetrations, 70.
necessity of substantial motion, with constant renewal and every part being non-existent in its previous time—in other words, temporal origination. As a result, the world with all of its parts is temporally created.123

To further support this argument, Mullā Šadrā quotes a tradition from Imām ʿAlī, the first of the Twelver Shiʿa Imāms, narrated in Nahj al-Balāgha (The Path of Eloquence):

All things are humbled before Him, and all things subsist by Him. He is the richness of all the poor, the glory of all the lonely, the power of all the weak, and the shelter of all the pitiable. Whosoever speaks, He hears his speech; and whosoever keeps silent, He knows his secret. Whosoever lives, his livelihood depends upon Him; and whosoever dies, to Him is his return.124

In this sermon, Imām ʿAlī is referring to the evanescence of the world and its perishing as an argument concerning its end and return to the beginning. This is another example of Mullā Šadrā’s use of religious texts in his philosophical discourse—something Mīr Dāmād and other prior philosophers avoided. Of course, as previously discussed, Mīr Dāmād did support his theory of al-ḥudūth al-dahrī with Qur’anic verses and Shi’i traditions (such as the Fourth Qabas in al-Qabasāt), but he does not mix these into his philosophical discourses, which are generally free of references to religious verses or traditions.

Surveying the writings and ideas of that time allows us to understand how contentious this topic was, and how much criticism Mullā Šadrā received due to his separation from what was seen to be the dominating Avicennian tradition. Conversely, while Mīr Dāmād did extensively criticise Avicenna (see Chapters 2 and 3), he was unceasing in his praise of Avicenna and revised and expanded on Avicenna’s ideas, rather than departing from them entirely. An example of the criticism Mullā Šadrā faced is Mullā Shamsā’s explicit refutation of Mullā Šadrā’s position on the origination of the world in his detailed treatise.125 Worth noting is

124 Imām ʿAlī, Nahj al-Balāgha, Sermon 108. See also Mullā Šadrā, The Book of Metaphysical Penetrations, 70.
125 See fn. 10 of this chapter. Besides the treatise itself, Rizvi’s article on Mullā Shamsā is very useful, especially regarding the history and important points related to Mullā Shamsā’s treatise Hudūth al-ʿālam. See Rizvi, "Mullā Shamsā Gīlānī and his Treatise on the Incipience of the Cosmos (ḥudūth al-ʿālam)," 65–66. As previously mentioned, Mullā Shamsā was an associate of Mullā Šadrā.
that there are ongoing attempts to trace Mullā Šadrā’s ideas back to Mir Dāmād, seemingly to justify the views espoused by Mullā Šadrā by proving that they have their origins in preceding philosophical traditions.126

4.7 Conclusion

This thesis has now detailed Mir Dāmād’s meta-temporal origination and critically analysed Mullā Šadrā’s theory of creation by renewal. As seen in the comparative analysis in this chapter, the respective ontological and metaphysical frameworks of Mir Dāmād and Mullā Šadrā are distinctively different. Thus, assessing their respective theories of creation on the basis of which has greater explanatory power devoid of internal contradictions is impossible. What can be done—and what has been undertaken in this chapter—is to identify which of the two theories is sounder and more comprehensive.

I have aimed at covering the fundamental differences between Mir Dāmād and his student Mullā Šadrā in how they interpret Avicennian philosophy, and how it’s not just a mere divergence in accents, but a completely different structural outlook and worldview. The preliminaries and foundation of ḥudūth are more complex and more detailed in the case of Mir Dāmād, and more central to his theory. Although both Mir Dāmād and Mullā Šadrā upheld religious Shi’i precepts in their philosophical work, Mir Dāmād stayed away from an eclectic or mystical approach and kept his discourse within the perimeter of Peripatetic philosophy. This is why we are able to see how Mullā Šadrā’s position on creation does not carry the philosophical strength and extensiveness of that of Mir Dāmād.127

There are two primary differences between al-ḥudūth al-dahrī and al-ḥudūth al-ṭab’ī:

1. Mir Dāmād believes in the three vessels (wiʿāʾ/ẓarf) of creation (zamān, dahr and sarmad), whereas Mullā Šadrā believes in two vessels (dahr and sarmad),

126 For example, Esots believes that Mullā Šadrā borrowed the concept of the wiʿāʾ of dahr and zamān from Mir Dāmād, although it was radically changed and reinterpreted by Mullā Šadrā. See Janis Esots, “Mullā Šadrā’s Teaching on Corporeal Resurrection,” Ishraq 6 (2015): 184.

127 Reza Akbariān’s paper is useful in critically understanding this point. See: Akbariān, “Temporal Origination of the Material World,”
and does not consider time to be a vessel (instead seeing it as an accident of natural entities).

2. Regarding the range and scope of the theories, Mīr Dāmād’s theory of *al-hudūth al-dahrī* incorporates all contingent existents, with everything other than God being originated via meta-temporal origination and posterior via separable posteriority. Mullā Ṣadrā’s *al-hudūth al-ṭabī‘ī* includes only temporal and material beings.

This chapter explained the innovative philosophical ideas introduced by Mullā Ṣadrā that became the basis of his theory of origination by renewal. Mullā Ṣadrā’s theory of substantial motion in particular influenced how he dealt with the topic of creation and underpinned his subsequent theory of creation. This chapter also compared Mullā Ṣadrā’s arguments and reasoning to those of Mīr Dāmād; in this, I have invariably supported the latter’s positions and arguments, having identified them as sounder and more comprehensive.

The next chapter will discuss the reception of Mīr Dāmād’s theory of meta-temporal origination and his legacy.
Chapter 5: The Enduring Legacy of Mīr Dāmād and His Theory of Meta-Temporal Origination

5.1 Introduction

Mīr Dāmād’s contributions to the philosophical and theological debate regarding eternity and creation, especially his theory of meta-temporal origination, brought about a new milestone in Islamic thought, particularly from a Shi‘i perspective. The present thesis has focused on detailing Mīr Dāmād’s solution to the eternity versus creation problem and comparatively analysing Mullā Ṣadrā’s subsequently presented alternative. Not only is the issue of creation and eternity far from being jadalī al-ṭarafāyn, there are also substantial differences between the respective philosophical systems of these two great thinkers. It is commonly assumed that the only core difference between Mīr Dāmād’s and Mullā Ṣadrā’s beliefs is the former believing in the fundamentality of quiddity and the latter taking the view of the fundamentality of existence. However, as demonstrated in this thesis, the differences are far more extensive.

Mīr Dāmād’s works were the seminaries’ main textbooks for over two centuries, evidenced by the abundant number of commentaries and glosses (ḥāshiya and ta‘liqāt) on his books (though most have not yet been published). Per Newman, the scholarly status of Mīr Dāmād and his associates and students testifies to the philosophical vitality of that period, ‘even if, sadly, the distinctly Twelver Shi‘i dimension of their scholarly contributions is usually paid less attention that in deserves in the Western-language secondary sources’.¹

It is here that one can see the overall conflation of the outstanding figures of the School of Esfahan, in particular, Mīr Dāmād, Sheikh al-Bahā‘ī and Mullā Ṣadrā. Although the Akhbārī movement was strong during that era, these figures outranked

them. Indeed, Mīr Dāmād, Sheikh al-Bahā’ī and Mullā Ṣadrā taught some of the best-known figures of Akhbarīsm, including Muḥammad Taqī al-Majlisī and Mullū Muḥsin Fayd al-Kāshānī.2 The efforts of the philosophers that represented the School of Esfahan must be recognised, including their opposition to the Akhbarīs.

It is commonly believed that Mīr Dāmād’s ideas and books ceased to be of central focus with the rise of Mullā Ṣadrā. This is incorrect, and an easy refutation of this is to point to the enduring and flourishing study of Mīr Dāmād’s books in Shi’a and Sunni seminaries in India. As previously touched on, Islamic scholars migrated or relocated to India and took with them the legacy of Mīr Dāmād and his books, which became textbooks in philosophy, jurisprudence and medicine. This said to have taken place during the life of Mīr Dāmād. Numerous commentaries on his books have been found in various libraries in India, some by Sunni scholars. Hamid Naseem comments on Mīr Dāmād’s intellectual influence in India:

Mīr Dāmād’s *Sirat-i-Mustaqim* in Kalam and *Al-Ufuq al-Mubeen* in philosophy exerted great influence on Indian intellectuals and scholars. Moreover, many Indian scholars went to Iran to study under Mīr Dāmād. Mīr Dāmād and his philosophy was well received by Indian scholars. For example, a very renowned Indian philosopher Mullah Mahmood Janupuri3 has praised Mīr Dāmād and called him “a prudent and capable erudite scholar of philosophical subjects....”4

An example of Mīr Dāmād’s intellectual legacy in India is Sayyid Dīldār ‘Alī Naqī (1166/1753–1235/1820 AH/CE),5 a Shi‘i scholar best known for writing *‘Īmād al-Islām fi ‘Ilm al-Kalām*, a polemic book refuting Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī’s anti-Shi‘a arguments. Dīldār ‘Alī taught both Avicennian philosophy and the works of Mīr Dāmād in India.6

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2 Ibid., 588.
5 He was a student of the famous Usūlī scholar al-Wahīd al-Bebihānī (1118/1706–1205/1791 AH/CE).
In his paper on Mîr Dâmîd’s influence in India, Sajjad Rizvi highlights that Mîr Dâmîd dominated the intellectual curriculum during the late Mughal period (1707–1858 CE). Rizvi also gives details on the heritage of Mîr Dâmîd’s books and commentaries in India. Mîr Dâmîd’s scholarly presence in India created a thriving intellectual environment in which scholars (for or against him) were engaging with his works, maybe even more so than in Iran. Indian scholars took Mîr Dâmîd very seriously, and this field is yet to be elaborately studied, with many manuscripts not yet published.

I observe that scholarly studies on Mîr Dâmîd continued for over two centuries, though these discussions, references and debates were increasingly sidelined due to the popularity of Mullâ Šadrâ. Rizvi similarly states, ‘The dominance of Mullâ Šadrâ in contemporary Iranian intellectual circles and the perception of the notorious difficulty of Mîr Dâmîd make the teacher neglected’. Mullâ Šadrâ’s works became textbooks in the seminaries, leading to his overshadowing Mîr Dâmîd. Per Rizvi:

In later generations, the critiques of Mullâ Šadrâ were broadly ignored by the mainstream of the seminarian study of philosophy and even in the philosophy departments of the Iranian universities.

Any serious engagement with Mîr Dâmîd became very scarce, and even today, critiquing Mullâ Šadrâ or presenting alternative views is usually shunned and seen as unorthodox. Transcendental theosophy’s dominance meant there was little interest in Iran in publishing works related to Yamâni philosophy. Scholars

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7 Rizvi, “Mîr Dâmîd in India,” 11.
8 This is a whole field on its own, tracing the enduring impact of the Yamâni philosophy in India as transformed by the works of Indian philosophers and their teaching of Mîr Dâmîd’s books. Another noticeable example would be Qâdî Mubârak Gûpâmâwî (flourished between 1707 and 1749), who had great respect for Mîr Dâmîd and followed him throughout his life. Unfortunately, most of these commentaries and glosses are yet to be published. See Muhammad Umâr Fâruqî, “The Labyrinth of Subjectivity: Constructions of the Self from Mullâ Šadrâ to Muhammad Iqîbâl” (PhD thesis, University of California, 2018), 121. See also Akbar Thubût, Fâyâlâfi Shîrâzî dar Hind, 50. For further information on Gûpâmâwî, see Khaled El-Rouyheb, The Development of Arabic Logic (1200–1800) (Basel: Schwabe Verlag, 2019), 188.
9 Rizvi, “Mîr Dâmîd in India,” 23.
10 Sajjad Rizvi, “An Avicennian Engagement with and Appropriation of Mullâ Šadrâ Shîrâzî (d. 1045/1636): The Case of Mahdî Nârâqî (d. 1209/1795),” Oriens 48 (2020): 244. Rizvi has written extensively on both Mullâ Šadrâ and Mîr Dâmîd, and his evaluation on this issue is of value. It would not be exaggeration to say that critiquing Mullâ Šadrâ in Iranian seminaries has been seen as near heresy and unorthodox. One risks their scholarly reputation if they completely oppose Mullâ Šadrâ’s views. This is one of the reasons behind the endeavour of this research thesis, which will hopefully contribute to reclaiming the heritage of Peripateticism and the Avicennian tradition as represented by the lofty status of Mîr Dâmîd and synthesised with the Twelver Shî‘î tradition.
continued to present valuable contributions, but most have not yet seen the light of day and are still in manuscript form.\textsuperscript{11}

5.2 The Legacy of Mīr Dāmād

An important aspect of the present study is the examination of the strong impact Mīr Dāmād had on the scholarly environment of his time and after his passing. This is another dimension of Mīr Dāmād that has unfortunately been ignored in most studies on the history of Islamic philosophy. The scholarly legacy bequeathed by Mīr Dāmād, especially his theory of meta-temporal origination, is rich and detailed. As previously touched on, it was also contentious among his supporters and critics alike.

The primary legacy of Mīr Dāmād and his Yamāni philosophy was his immediate students, including:

- Mullā Ṣadrā himself, whose key arguments, works and theories have been previously discussed in this thesis.
- Sayyid Aḥmad al-ʿAlawi and some of his books (e.g., \textit{Sharḥ al-Qabasāt} and \textit{Kashf al-Ḥaqāʾiq}).\textsuperscript{12}
- Sayyid Aḥmad al-ʿAlawi and some of his unpublished works that refer to \textit{al-ḥudāth al-dahri}, like \textit{Kuhl al-Abṣār} (a marginal gloss on \textit{al-Ishārāt}) and \textit{ʿUrwh al-Wuthqā wa Miftāḥ al-Šifā} (a commentary on Avicenna’s \textit{al-Šifā}).\textsuperscript{13}
- Mullā Shamsā Gilānī,\textsuperscript{14} who wrote a book in defence of Mīr Dāmād titled \textit{Masālik al-Yaqqīn fi Bayān ʿUmdat ʿUṣūl al-Dīn}.\textsuperscript{15}

\textsuperscript{11} Some of the main books have been published in the last two decades, but, as an example, for the amount of commentaries and glosses only on \textit{Kitāb al-Qabasāt} that have not yet been published, see Ḥāmid Nājj Esfahānī’s introduction to Mīr Sayyid Aḥmad al-ʿAlawi, \textit{Sharḥ al-Qabasāt (A Commentary on al-Qabasāt)}, ed. Ḥāmid Nājj Esfahānī (Tehran: Institute of Islamic Studies, University of Tehran, 1997), editor’s introduction, 26–28.


\textsuperscript{13} This is either one book or two books (called \textit{al-ʿUrwh al-Wuthqā}, and \textit{Miftāḥ al-Šifā}), but both are glosses on Avicenna’s \textit{al-Šifā}. See Sayyid Aḥmad al-ʿAlawi al-ʿAmīlī, \textit{al-Ḥāshiyyah ʿalā ʿUṣūl al-Kāfi}, ed. Sayyid Šādiq al-Ḥusainī al-Iṣkawwārī (Qom: Dār al-Ḥadīth, 2007), 30, 34, 36.

\textsuperscript{14} As previously mentioned, Rizvī is a specialist on Mullā Shamsā, has written extensively on him and also edited his treatise on the incipience of the world.

• Niẓām al-Dīn Aḥmad al-Gilānī, who has a commentary on Mīr Dāmād’s *al-Ufuq al-Mubīn* and a book (unpublished manuscript) on *al-ḥudūth al-dahrī*.

• ‘Alī Naqi Kamarehī (953/1546–1030/1621 AH/CE), who wrote a treatise on *ḥudūth al-ʾalam*.

Mīr Dāmād also left the legacy of his family and offspring, like the children of Sayyid Aḥmad al-ʿAlawī, who was Mīr Dāmād’s nephew and son-in-law. Al-ʿAlawī’s son Mīr ʿAbdul-Ḥasib al-ʿAlawī wrote two books supporting *al-ḥudūth al-dahrī* (*ʿArsh al-Īqān* and *Sidratul Muntahā*). Mīr ʿAbdul-Ḥasib had a son by the name of Mīr Muḥammad Ashraf al-ʿAlawī al-ʿAmili who wrote a Persian commentary on *al-Qabasāt* titled *Miqbās al-Qabasāt*, wherein he professes to answer all the questions (and misconceptions) related to *al-ḥudūth al-dahrī*. It is clear that during this period there were still scholars who objected to or critiqued the theory of *al-ḥudūth al-dahrī*, and Mīr Dāmād’s grandchildren (themselves highly achieved scholars) took it upon themselves to defend this theory.

Another channel by which Mīr Dāmād’s legacy was progressed was the second or third generation of philosophers of Esfahan who supported, defended, or positively explained *al-ḥudūth al-dahrī*. For example, Ḥusain ibn Ibrāhīm al-Tunkabunī (d. 1104/1692? AH/CE) was among the outstanding students of Mullā Ṣadrā and loyal to the Šadrian *al-Ḥikmat al-Mutaʿāliya* school. However, in his book *Ḥudūth al-ʿAlam* on the incipience of the world, he positively explains Mīr Dāmād’s theory on *al-ḥudūth al-dahrī* within the Šadrian philosophical framework. Similarly, the philosopher ʿAli-Quli ibn Qarachaghḵāy Khān, a staunch critic of Mullā Ṣadrā, defends *al-ḥudūth al-dahrī* in his *Iḥyāʾe Ḩikmat*. Mullā Muḥammad Ismāʿīl Khwājūʾī...
Ešfahāni’s (d. 1173/1760 AH/CE) treatise on refuting imaginary time (al-zamān al-mawhūm) defends Mīr Dāmād against the critiques directed at him by Aqā Jamāl Khwānsarī (d. 1122/1710 AH/CE).25 Khwānjī’s student Mullā Muḥammad Mahdī Narāqī wrote Jāmi’-al-Afkār wa Nāqid al-Anzār, in which he strongly defends the theory of al-ḥudūth al-dahrī.26

Another example is an extensive critical commentary on Mīr Dāmād’s Kitāb al-Qabasāt27 by Muḥammad ibn ‘Ali Riḍā ibn Aqājānī (d. 1071 AH/1660–1 CE).28 This book is yet to be published;29 however, Sayyid Jalāl al-Dīn Ashtiyānī (1925–2005 CE) researched the manuscripts and presented detailed excerpts from them in his book

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27 The third commentary on Kitāb al-Qabasāt. The first was by Mīr Dāmād’s student Mullā Shamsā Gīlānī, who has been previously discussed. His commentary has not been published. The second was by Mīr Dāmād’s student and son-in-law Sayyid Aḥmad al-ʿAlawī, whose commentary has been published with the title Sharḥ al-Qabasāt. Ibn Aqājānī’s commentary is by far the most detailed, but has not published. See Muhammad Taqī Dānesh Pējūh, “Sharḥ al-Qabasāt,” Majjale ye Dāneshkade-ye Adabiyyāt va ’Ullām-e Insānī 5 (Spring 1360 SY): 63–68. This article also mentions (p. 68) that Ibn Aqājānī has a treatise on perpetual creation, called Risāla fi al-Ḥudūth al-Dahrī.
Muntakhabi az Athār-e Ḥukamā-ye Ilāhī-ye Irān, a student of Mullā Sadrā, took the Ṣadrān stance on creation and was influenced by the foundations of al-Ḥikmat al-Muta’alīya; hence, he did not accept Mīr Dāmād’s views and wrote his commentary on Kitāb al-Qabasat with the intention of clarifying the complex book and refuting its theories (particularly al-Ḥikmat al-Yamāniya):

Even though I have many preoccupations, but for the purpose of explaining to the stubborn and obstinate people who were attacking this book out of their ignorance, I dedicated myself to explain the difficulties and solve the complexities of this heavenly (malakūti) book.

In general, he quite articulately explains Mīr Dāmād’s terms and theories before proceeding to critique them.

Beyond the validity or invalidity of the above philosophers’ arguments regarding Mīr Dāmād’s theory of meta-temporal origination, the arguments in themselves are demonstrative of an important point: even after al-Ghazālī’s devastating attack on philosophy (previously discussed in the introductory chapter), Avicenna’s books and theories were still being studied. There were many interpretations among Muslim theologians and philosophers as to Avicenna’s meanings in his writings, evidenced by the many commentaries and glosses on his books.

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31 In some writings, he is referred to as Aqājānī. Henry Corbin confirms his name as being Ibn Aqājānī, and my review of the manuscript identified that he referred to himself as Ibn Aqājānī.

32 However, it is claimed in some places that Ibn Aqājānī preferred the views of Peripatetic philosophers, like Avicenna, over that of his teacher Mullā Ṣadrā. See Ashtiyānī, Muntakhabi az Athār-e Ḥukamā-ye Ilāhī-ye Irān, 302.

33 Ashtiyānī, Muntakhabi az Athār-e Ḥukamā-ye Ilāhī-ye Irān, 281.

34 One of the main points Ibn Aqājānī presents in his commentary on Kitāb al-Qabasat is that Mīr Dāmād incorrectly interpreted Avicenna’s view on creation and, in fact, Avicenna did not believe in meta-temporal origination but, rather, in essential creation.

What he [Avicenna] means when he says: “the effect in itself is non-existence and from its cause it becomes existent,” refers to the argument of essential creation that encompasses all contingent existents, and not meta-temporal origination. This is because when he [Avicenna] mentions that origination (al-ʾibādā’) is existence (ʿays) after non-existence (layās) and not from material, he wanted to explain the form of this afterness (al-baʾdiyyah) that is referred to as essential creation (Ibid., 314, introduction, 37):

> What he [Avicenna] means when he says: “the effect in itself is non-existence and from its cause it becomes existent,” refers to the argument of essential creation that encompasses all contingent existents, and not meta-temporal origination. This is because when he [Avicenna] mentions that origination (al-ʾibādā’) is existence (ʿays) after non-existence (layās) and not from material, he wanted to explain the form of this afterness (al-baʾdiyyah) that is referred to as essential creation (Ibid., 315).
Mir Damad was no exception and (as previously discussed) extensively reviewed and critiqued Avicenna’s ideas in commentaries, glosses and his own works. In numerous places throughout the present research, I have explained how Mir Damad went beyond and outside the Avicennian tradition but his philosophical outlook and method of argument generally remained within the Avicennian tradition (unlike Mullâ Shadrâ, who, as previously discussed, departed entirely from this tradition and framework). While Mir Damad perceived shortcomings in Avicenna’s works, he saw no need to demolish or disregard this thought and instead revised and expanded on Avicenna’s philosophical tradition. Although traces of mysticism can be seen in Avicenna’s works, whether Avicenna had mystical insight himself or was a mystic has not yet been proven. Conversely, Mir Damad was a spiritual master and not only involved Shi’i spiritual concepts in his works but submitted his rational philosophical methodology to Shi’i tradition. This was innovative, fundamentally important and a watershed in Islamic thought. Prior to Mir Damad, the view of creation held by most Muslims was essential creation, whereas more devotional Muslims held the Qur’anic-Hadith stance (wâqe’î/nafs al’amrî)—Mir Damad was able to harmonise these seemingly divergent beliefs.

Interestingly, of the aforementioned philosophers of the later post-Mir Damad generations, two Şadrian philosophers (al-Tunkâbuni and Sabzawârî) tried to reconcile al-ḥudûth al-dahri, Şadrian philosophy and the principality of existence.35 This was one of the numerous trends influenced by Mir Damad. Another was seen in the Sheikhi school, whose founder, Sheikh Aḥmad al-Aḥsâ’î (1166/1753–1241/1826 AH/CE), discussed Mir Damad’s meta-temporal origination in his writings on ḥudûth and had a unique understanding of Mir Damad’s theory.36

Further evidence of Mir Damad’s influence can be seen in an endowment letter (waqfîname) written by Mahd ‘Ulyâ (Malek Jahân Khânom) (1220/1805–1290/1873 AH/CE),37 the mother of the Qajari ruler Nâşer al-Dîn Shah. In this letter, she

35 A fundamental question that can be posed here, and one that seems yet to be researched: can the theory of al-ḥudûth al-dahri conform with Şadrian philosophy or not? Noting, as previously discussed, that Mullâ Shadrâ did not mention the theory at all.


37 She wrote this letter for a religious school she had established in Tehran named Madrasah Mir Qâsem Khân (her father’s name).
stipulates conditions for who is able to teach in this Madrasah, including mastery of and ability to teach Mīr Dāmād’s books *al-Ufuq al-Mubīn* and *al-Qabasāt*. All of this shows that Mīr Dāmād’s books and ideas continued to receive serious attention in Iran at least until the Qajari era (1789 CE onwards). Of course, as previously discussed, there is also an extensive and ongoing branch of Indian commentary and critique of Mīr Dāmād.

Mīr Dāmād exercised an enduring influence in the development of Islamic philosophical thought, richly flavouring it with Shi’i traditions and concepts, Qur’anic verses and teachings, and *hadith*. By detailing Mīr Dāmād’s life and contributions, with a focus on his crowning theory of meta-temporal origination, this thesis aims to revive arguably the most important Shi’i Islamic philosopher in history and make him accessible to the English-speaking audience. Secondary to this was demonstrating the weakness of Mullā Ṣadrā’s theory of creation, despite its current dominance in Islamic seminaries. Mullā Ṣadrā’s omission of his teacher’s theory of creation in his writings is notable considering the importance of the topic and Mullā Ṣadrā’s self-professed pride in his solving (by the blessing of God) of the problem of the world’s incipience. Had Mullā Ṣadrā even briefly referred to Mīr Dāmād’s theory and contributions, Mīr Dāmād’s ideas would likely still hold significant traction and repute in modern-day Iranian Islamic seminaries, as opposed to the current reality of Mullā Ṣadrā’s dominance. As it stands, attention to Mīr Dāmād and his philosophical system has diminished to the point that there is no noticeable presence of Yamānī wisdom in current Shi’i philosophical circles.

### 5.3 After Mullā Ṣadrā

Mullā Ṣadrā supplanted Mīr Dāmād’s meta-temporal origination (*al-ḥudūth al-dahrī*) with his creation by renewal (*al-ḥudūth al-tajaddudī*). Numerous other students of Mīr Dāmād remained loyal to the School of Yamānī philosophy and continued its legacy. These include Mīr Dāmād’s maternal cousin Seyyed Aḩmad al-ʿAlawī, who wrote a commentary on *Kitāb al-Qabasāt*, and Mullā Shamsā Gīlānī.

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39 The possible reasons for this omission were previously discussed in Section 4.2.2 in Chapter 4.
40 al-ʿAlawī, *Sharḥ al-Qabasāt*.
who authored a book in defence of his teacher’s theory on creation. There was also a very rarely mentioned Safavid scholar by the name of ‘Ali-Quli ibn Qarachaghay Khân Turkamâni Qommi (1020/1611–1091/1680 AH/CE). He was a student of Mullâ Shamsâ Gilânî and Mullâ Rajab ‘Alî Tabrizî (d. 1080/1669 AH/CE), the latter being a staunch critic of Mullâ Şadrâ.41 ‘Ali-Quli Khân’s father was very close to Shah Abbas, and ‘Ali-Quli Khân himself later became the governor of Qom and custodian of the holy shrine of Fatimah.42 He wrote a very extensive book in Persian, titled *Ihyaâye Ḥikmat* (*Revising Philosophy*), 43 which included both physics and metaphysics. ‘Ali-Quli Khân was an advocate of Peripatetic philosophy and very much influenced by the teachings of Mîr Dâmâd. He also opposed Mullâ Şadrâ’s theory of substantial motion. His book *Ihyaâye Ḥikmat* is strongly influenced by Shi‘î teachings, relating philosophical concepts to Qur’anic verses and traditions from the Shi‘î Imâms. ‘Ali-Quli Khân strongly supports Mîr Dâmâd’s theory of meta-temporal origination but also says that his presentation of the theory is more complete.44

Overall, however, proponents of Mîr Dâmâd’s theory declined and criticism mounted. Al-Muḥaqiq al-Lâhijjî, a contemporary of Mullâ Şadrâ, wrote a treatise called *Risâlah Ḥudûth al-ʿAlam*, which gave a brief but critical evaluation of Mîr Dâmâd’s theory. Aqâ Jamâl Khwansârî (d. 1122/1710 AH/CE) refuted meta-temporality in detail,45 and Muhammad Zamân Kâshânî (d. 1172/1759 AH/CE) (in support of Khwansârî) wrote *Mir’ât al-Azmân*, refuting Mîr Dâmâd’s theory of dâhri creation.46

Mîr Dâmâd preserved his religious Shi‘î identity in the way he presented his theory of meta-temporality. However, both Mîr Dâmâd’s writings and the theory were difficult to grasp, leading to confusion among subsequent Islamic philosophers. Sayyid Abû al-Ḥasan al-Raﬁ‘î al-Qazwînî (1897–1975 CE), who taught many

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42 Fâṭima al-Ma‘ṣûma (173/790–201/816 AH/CE) was the daughter of the seventh Shi‘î Imâm Mûsâ al-Kâzîm (128/745–183/799 AH/CE). She has a very large mausoleum that is venerated and visited by Shi‘î Muslims from around the world. Her shrine is the second-most important shrine in Iran, after her elder brother Imâm ‘Alî al-Riđâ’s shrine in Mashhad.
43 Khân, *Ihyaâye Ḥikmat*.
44 Ibid., 532.
contemporary Shi’i philosophers (such as Khomaini, Ḥasanzade Amuli and others), wrote a short preface to Kitāb al-Qabasāt in which he states:

Know, may Almighty God guide you, that the author of this noble book, who is al-Sayyid al-Muḥaqqiq al-Dāmād, may God elevate his status, has proven in this book meta-temporal origination in such a way nothing else can be added to it. However, some scholars who came after him, even the great and best of them did not understand what he meant, like al-‘Allāmah al-Kāshānī, al-‘Allāmah al-Khwansārī, al-Muḥaqqiq al-Lāḥijī. Even though al-Fāḍil al-Sabzawārī, who among the later of them, put strenuous effort on his mind to correct the theory, as is mentioned in his book Sharḥ al-Manzūmah, but the stronger speculation is that the reply Sabzawārī mentions against al-Sayyid al-Dāmād is invalid.47

During this time, another noticeable theory on creation—‘creation by name’ (al-ḥudūth al-ismī)—was proposed by Mullā Hādī Sabzawārī (1797–1878 CE), a Shi’i philosopher.48 Alternatively referred to as ‘nominal origination’ or ‘originated-as-a-name’49 by Izutsu,50 the theory considers that everything other than God is contingent and any contingent made up of existence and quiddity does not have the attributes of the necessary existence, enabling distinction between these two elements.51 Sabzawārī formulated the theory under the influence of Ibn Arabi and his mysticism and the traditions narrated from Imām ‘Alī.52 According to Sabzawārī’s theory, all creation other than God is names and attributes, and these are newly originated because there is nothing that was with God.53 This theory has been refuted as it does not align with the overall perspective of Transcendent philosophy.54 Immediately relevant to the present research, however, is that

47 Mir Dāmād, Kitāb al-Qabasāt, introduction (Sayyid al-Rašīdi al-Qazwīnī’s preface), 159.
48 See Mullā Hādī Sabzawārī, Metaphysics of Haji Mulla Hādī Sabzawārī, trans. Mehdi Mohaghegh and Toshihiko Izutsu (New York: Caravan Books, 1977), 125. Although Sabzawārī has been mentioned a few time in this thesis, it is imperative to mention him here as someone who offered an alternative theory to origination of the world, other than Mir Dāmād and Mullā Šadrā.
49 Ibid., 125.
50 The famous orientalist Izutsu has dedicated extensive studies to Mir Dāmād.
53 Ibid.
54 The details of this refutation are beyond the scope of this thesis. For an elaborate explanation and refutation of Sabzawārī’s viewpoint, see Jawādī, Hudūth wa Qidam, 175–80.
Sabzawārī’s inaccurate explanation of *al-ḥudūth al-dahrī* in his textbook *Sharḥ al-Manzūmah* unfortunately became the main reference for understanding Mīr Dāmād’s theory. Muḥammad Khwājāvī, for example, dwells on this point in the introduction to his translation of Mullā Ṣadrā’s book *Mafāṭīḥ al-Ghayb*. Consequently, many scholars completely misunderstood the theory of metatemporality. The lack of extensive research in the modern era on Mīr Dāmād has only compounded such misunderstanding; for example, some hold the view that his theory of *al-ḥudūth al-dahrī* was not further developed by his successors—a view definitively disproven by this thesis.

The era of Mīr Dāmād and Mullā Ṣadrā and their valuable contributions to Islamic rational thought must be acknowledged as fundamentally important within the history of Islamic philosophy and scholarship. Even the present research could not, by dint of time and word constraints, explore the full extent of their vast contributions and heritage. This thesis focused on Mīr Dāmād’s and Mullā Ṣadrā’s philosophical contributions to the topic of creation and eternity. Yet both also amassed a vast heritage of information stemming from the Qur’ān and, more specifically, the traditions of the Prophet Muḥammad and the Shi’ī Imāms. This was only partially discussed in this thesis and is deserving of further research. Rizvi describes the richness of this heritage and legacy of Mīr Dāmād and Mullā Ṣadrā as follows:

> The ‘school of Isfahan’, which never had been a unified set of doctrines or methods, fractured in the period in which there were not strong school affiliations. What did, however, emerge was that the two major Safavid thinkers Mir Damad and Mulla Šadra entered the canon of the philosophical tradition to be read alongside Avicenna, Sohrawardi, and Ibn ‘Arabi in the cultural milieu of the Persianate world. The Avicennian tradition remained the prime signifier of a philosophical training through the study of the *Shifa’* and *al-Isharat*—alongside the influential *Shawāriq al-ilhām* of ‘Abd al-

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Razzaq Lahiji in philosophical theology—albeit supplemented in the margins by the texts of Mir Damad on the question of time.\textsuperscript{57}

Presently, the Şadrian School of Transcendent philosophy dominates the Islamic seminaries of Najaf and Qom, and all other philosophical trends are comparatively neglected. Several distinguished philosophers of Qom, such as Sayyid Rūḥullāh Khomeini (1902–1989 CE), Sayyid Muḥammad Ḥusain Ṭabāṭabā’ī (1904–1981 CE), ‘Abdullah Jawādī Amulī (1933– ) and Muḥammad Taqī Miṣḥāb Yazdī (1934– CE), have in general adopted the views of Transcendent philosophy.\textsuperscript{59} A notable exception is Miṣḥāb Yazdī, who concludes that the issue stands to be \textit{jadali al-ṭarafayn}.\textsuperscript{60}

#### 5.4 Conclusion

There is an overwhelming need to understand the depth of Mir Dāmād’s multidimensional philosophical discourse. He is yet to be fully understood, and detailed research on him and his theories is scarce. Such obscureness and neglect is certainly not warranted given the sheer number and diversity of Mir Dāmād’s contributions, which earned him the title of Third Teacher (after Aristotle and Farabi). Despite many of his works being incomplete, Mir Dāmād surpassed his predecessors and created a comprehensive philosophical system—\textit{al-Ḥikmat al-Yamāniya}—centred on the incipience of the world in meta-temporality, further elaborated on this system and its core concepts, and responded to and refuted criticisms.\textsuperscript{61} He actualised the theories of various thinkers and created a synchronised approach in philosophy compatible with Twelver Shi’i faith and ideology. Despite his

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{57} Sajjad Rizvi, “Whatever Happened to the School of Isfahan?: Philosophy in 18th-Century Iran,” in Crisis, Collapse, Militarism and Civil War: The History and Historiography of 18th Century Iran, ed. Michael Axworthy (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), 94.
  \item \textsuperscript{58} His philosophical views have been compiled in a three-volume book. See Sayyid ‘Abdul-ghanī Ardabīlī, \textit{Taqrīrāt Falsafe-ye Imām Khomeini} (Qom: Mu’assase Nashr Athar-e Imām Khomeini, 2002), 1: 66–135.
  \item \textsuperscript{59} Muḥammad Ḥusain Fāryāb and Ridā Bringkār, “Sayrī dar Mas’a’le-ye Ḩudūth wa Qidam Zamānī ‘Alam dar Tāriḵh Falsafe,” \textit{Ma’rifat Falsafī} 9, no. 1 (Autumn 2011), 93–97.
  \item \textsuperscript{60} Ibid., 98–99. Miṣḥāb Yazdī mentions his position on this in his glosses on Ṭabāṭabā’ī’s philosophy textbook \textit{Nihāyat al-Ḥikma}. See Muhammad Taqī Miṣḥāb Yazdī, \textit{Tā’līqāt ‘alā Nihāyat al-Ḥikma} (Qom: Mu’assase Dar Rāḥ Haq, 1985), 492–93.
\end{itemize}
achievements, Mīr Dāmād has been marginalised and neglected in Islamic philosophy. This thesis seeks to overturn this and render Mīr Dāmād both known and accessible to a modern audience, especially those in the English-speaking world. To this end, this thesis has detailed the life and contributions of Mīr Dāmād, outlined the status Mīr Dāmād held within the canon of classical Peripatetic and Islamic philosophy and theology, and examined many of his important concepts pertinent to time and creation. This thesis began by introducing the focus of Mīr Dāmād’s philosophy—creation and eternity—and outlining the history of this contentious topic and the surrounding debate. This was followed by an examination in Chapter 1 of Mīr Dāmād’s life and contributions, including his scholarly growth and his involvement and authority in the early Safavid monarchy. This chapter expanded on the milieu surrounding Mīr Dāmād, which influenced his growth as a jurist and philosopher. Chapter 2 defined the terminologies relevant to understanding his theory of meta-temporal origination. Chapter 3 presented and discussed Mīr Dāmād’s theory of meta-temporary origination in detail and how this interlocked with the rest of his intellectual framework, as well as his refutation of previous theories and criticisms of his theory. Chapter 4 undertook a comparative analysis of Mīr Dāmād’s meta-temporality and Mullā Şadrā’s theory of creation. This analysis demonstrated that Mullā Şadrā’s framework falls short in many ways in solving the problem of time, creation and eternity.

Mīr Dāmād took a common term—dahr—used by Islamic philosophers since Avicenna and concentrated all his efforts to create a theory that solved the ongoing and contentious debate over the eternity or creation of the world.62 His innovative take on dahr established his fundamental belief that the world came into existence in the vessel (wi’ā) of dahr and the whole world—material and immaterial—was created within this vessel. This thesis has presented how Mīr Dāmād did not use the dialectic Khiṭābī approach for this subject, as regularly used by previous Islamic philosophers and theologians; rather, he focused on solving the problem of connecting the created to the eternal (rabṭ al-ḥadīth bi al-qadīm) through rational demonstrative arguments, based on Peripatetic philosophy and supported by the Qur’an and Shi’i hadīth. Along with preserving the Peripatetic tradition in his

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62 Jawādī, Ḥudūth wa Qidām, 172.
approach to Islamic philosophy, Mîr Dâmâd expanded on this by supplementing it with the Qur’an and Shi‘i hadith—something unprecedented.

This thesis delved into how Mîr Dâmâd redefined and expanded on various logical, theological and philosophical terminologies used by his predecessors, bringing about a more comprehensive understanding of these terms. This research uncovered Mîr Dâmâd’s deepening and refinement of existing concepts alongside his new and innovative contributions. His intellectual depth and scholarly influence extended across an array of disciplines in both the rational and transmitted sciences. In this vein, this thesis also touched on a largely unexplored aspect of Mîr Dâmâd, his spiritual and mystical side. Much more could be said on how his spiritual disciplining and esoteric methodology influenced his scientific work, and in various places he alludes to how divine invocations, spiritual disclosures and out-of-body experiences guided him to solutions in his scientific theories.63

Mîr Dâmâd represented and established the foundations of the School of Esfahan through his comprehensive system of combining Shi‘i transmitted (naqîl) sciences and pure intellectual philosophical reasoning without compromising either. Both aspects of thought were independent, but through his framework they were harmonised. At a time when Akhbârism was strong in Esfahan, Mîr Dâmâd held such influence, respect and position that he was virtually immune from condemnation and able to soften the Shi‘i scholars’ hostility towards philosophy. Mîr Dâmâd resurrected the reputation of the rational studies and laid the foundation for its acceptance within the seminary.

This thesis also outlined the rise of the Yamānī School, which, while marginalised, continues to be important among Shi‘i scholars today. The thesis detailed the philosophical system of Yamānī wisdom put forward by Mîr Dâmâd and how important the School of Esfahan was in fermenting a new era in the field of Islamic philosophy and Shi‘i tradition. The very basis and foundation of Yamānī wisdom is the theory of meta-temporality, and this theory became the crux for everything subsequently presented by Mîr Dâmâd regarding creation. To understand Mîr Dâmâd, one must understand meta-temporality. Mîr Dâmâd possessed

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63 An example of this is in al-Ishkuwarī’s Mahbûb al-Qulûb in the biography on Mîr Dâmâd, which has been printed among the numerous introductions to Kitâb al-Qabasât. See Mîr Dâmâd, Kitâb al-Qabasât, introduction, 35–36.
acknowledged expertise in every known rational and transmitted science of his era, near-supreme and uncontested religious authority (as *Sheikh al-Islām*), and significant Ṣūlī juridical authority and social and political status (inheriting the legacy of the ‘ulama’ of Jabal ‘Amil from his grandfather al-Karakī); on this basis, he came forward with absolute confidence and challenged those prior to him who were considered pillars of Islamic intellectual thought. His renowned knowledge and poise prompted one student to refer to him as the First Master,64 rather than the Third Master.

Arguably chief among Mīr Dāmād’s achievements was refuting the philosophical view of essential creation and the theological understanding of temporal origination, and replacing these with a theory acceptable for both camps—his theory of meta-temporal origination. Mīr Dāmād argued that meta-temporal origination reflects the existence of existents eternally (in contrast to real non-existence), comes after the pre-eternal existence of God and is in need of a cause. Essential creation does not reflect an existence posterior to non-existence and temporal origination cannot be infinite; accordingly, Mīr Dāmād rejected both views. The importance of this lies in Mīr Dāmād presenting an intellectual and religious understanding of creation of the world as a whole. The concept of *al-hudūth al-dahrī* suggests the world as a whole being created together within one conformed system. Creation emanated all at once from God, in the realm of perpetual creation, without priority or posteriority in time. This reflected Mīr Dāmād’s distinctive take on many theories, including God’s knowledge, fate and destiny, and the problem of evil.

Mīr Dāmād formulated a sophisticated, well-reasoned and robust theory that remains viable and notable despite all challenges and criticisms. This study of Mīr Dāmād has shown the superiority of his conceptualisation of creation, including in comparison to that of his esteemed student Mullā Ṣadrā. Mīr Dāmād’s breadth of coverage; absence of internal contradictions; logical, systematic methods used; and engagement with classical philosophers and Shi’i traditions is unprecedented and, thus far, unequalled. Although the influence of Yamānī philosophy has diminished

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64 The student who had said this was ‘Adil Arestānī, and he wrote this in beginning of Mīr Dāmād’s jurisprudence book *ʿUyūn al-Masāʿīl*. See Mehdi Imāmī Jum’eh, *Sayr Tahāwwuli Maktab-e Esfahān az Ibn Sinā tā Mullā Ṣadrā*, 3rd ed. (Tehran: Mu’assase-ye Pejūheshti-ye Ḥikmat wa Falsafe-ye Iran, 1397/2018 SY/CE), 181–82.
throughout the years, I hope that this work will contribute to reviving interest and prompting further studies on Mīr Dāmād and his important position in Islamic history and the Shi‘i tradition.

5.5 Final Note

Prior to this thesis, the research on Mīr Dāmād was very limited, especially in the English language. Further research on Mīr Dāmād and his theories promises to uncover more of his valuable contributions to various fields.

On a larger scale, I am hopeful that this study will contribute to expanding the horizons of Islamic rational studies and encourage further objective philosophical research and investigation, in both traditional seminaries and in academia in the East and West. Comparative studies of great scholars from different civilisations will enable a better understanding of scholars who have contributed positively to humanity and, ultimately, a true worldview of existence and complete ideological system in ethics, rights, society and politics, in shā’Allah.
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