Ḥadīth as Common Discourse:
Reflections on the Intersectarian Dissemination of the Creation of the Intellect Tradition*

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Abstract

The ḥadīth *about the creation of the Intellect has enjoyed a high status in the Shīʿī tradition and opens one of the four books of the Shīʿī ḥadīth* canon, al-Kulaynī's (d. 329/940) *al-Kāfī. It appears also in many Sunnī works and has traveled among other Muslim groups, changing its meaning and form over time and generating several commentaries. Ḥadīths are usually studied in a jurisprudential context, as forming the basis for legal positions; in this article, I study the* ḥadīth *not as a legal text with a fixed meaning but as a literary text with a meaning that is changeable. First, I revisit previous scholarly views on the provenance of the* ḥadīth*. I argue that it first circulated in Basran society in the late second/eighth century as a popularized version of the Muʿtazilī tenet of obligation* (taklīf) *before being written down as a* ḥadīth*. I then follow its later journey among different groups in the medieval period as it changed forms and meanings and in the early modern period as it became the subject of commentaries by the Shīʿī philosopher Mullā Ṣadrā (d. 1050/1640) and by the Sunnī scholar Murtaḍā al-Zabīdī (d. 1205/1791). The translation of the two commentaries can be found in the Appendix. The* ḥadīth's *intersectarian dissemination and fluid nature make it an excellent case study for exploring the literary side of the* ḥadīth *genre, which served as common discourse for different Islamic sects and intellectual and social groups over the centuries.*

Introduction

Muslims have narrated ḥadīths, discussed them, and commented on them since the early days of Islam. As Jonathan Brown has noted, "[O]n controversial issues from jihad and martyrdom to women's rights under Islamic law, ḥadīths always provide key and often

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determinative evidence."[1] This is how *ḥadīth*s are usually seen: as the basis for Islamic law and the primary sources providing evidence for certain positions in Islam. This image carries with it the idea of unchangeability, connected to an immutable and atemporal legal tradition stretching from the early days of Islam until today.

In this article, I will highlight a different face of *ḥadīth*s—namely, their ability to adapt to new environments and change form and meaning. For this purpose, I will use the case study of a non-legal *ḥadīth* about the creation of the Intellect, which traveled over the course of more than a millennium from sect to sect, shifting in form, function, and meaning along the way. This *ḥadīth* offers an example of a tradition that functioned not as a basis of law but as a manifestation of ideas already circulating in society and as a vehicle of expression for new ideas when it traveled elsewhere.

Western *ḥadīth* scholarship has traditionally focused on issues of dating and authentication, but more recently scholars have explored the literary aspects of the *ḥadīth* genre. Sebastian Günther, for instance, has applied modern literary theory to these traditions and identified some of their fictional elements, such as their ability to reflect the sociocultural world in which they arose and the creativity of the transmitters who gave them their form by selecting, omitting, replacing, and adding material at their disposal.[2] The growing interest in the agency of later compilers who used *ḥadīth*s to participate in the discourses of their time has also driven scholars to look at *ḥadīth* more as a literary practice. Stephen R. Burge has observed the "tense relationship between the *ḥadīth* compilation that is rooted in the temporality of the real world, whilst simultaneously being rooted in the atemporal abstract '*ḥadīth* literature,'"[3] and he argues for reading *ḥadīth* collections as literary works.[4] Another way to understand how *ḥadīth*s participated in later discourses is to study *ḥadīth* commentaries, as Joel Blecher has done in his recent book. Blecher observes that "one set of questions has yet to be fully investigated: How did Muslims interpret and reinterpret the meanings of hadith and hadith collections?. . . When the needs of interpreters' social interests came into conflict with their fidelity to the apparent meanings of the hadith, how did commentators attempt to thread the needle, balancing both sets of concerns?"[5] In this article, I also explore the *ḥadīth* genre's literary possibilities and its participation in temporal debates, but I do so through the study of a single *ḥadīth*, taking a *longue durée* approach to it. In the first part of the article, I revisit previous scholarly views on the origins of the *ḥadīth,* which describes the divine creation

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1. J. A. C. Brown, *Hadith: Muhammad's Legacy in the Medieval and Modern World* (London: Oneworld, 2009), 267.

2. S. Günther, "Modern Literary Theory Applied to Classical Arabic Texts: *Ḥadīth* Revisited," in *The Hadith*, ed. M. Shah, 4:28–33 (London: Routledge, 2010). See also the other studies dealing with the literariness of the *ḥadīth* genre in this volume.

3. S. R. Burge, "The 'Ḥadīṯ Literature': What Is It and Where Is It?," *Arabica* 65, no. 1/2 (2018): 64–83, at 81.

4. S. R. Burge, "Myth, Meaning and the Order of Words: Reading Hadith Collections with Northrop Frye and the Development of Compilation Criticism," *Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations* 27, no. 2 (2016): 213–28, at 213.

5. J. Blecher, *Said the Prophet of God: Hadith Commentary across a Millennium* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2018), 2.

of the Intellect. I propose that it emerged as a popular reformulation of a Muʿtazilī tenet in the second/eighth-century Basra, from where it spread among Sunnī and Shīʿī circles.[6] The origin and early dissemination of the ḥadīth illustrate the porousness of the boundaries between these groups, which all dealt with the same material. In the second part of the article, I follow the ḥadīth's later journey. I choose three medieval variants that circulated in different Muʿtazilī and Shīʿī circles to illustrate the different types of treatment that the ḥadīth received. The ḥadīth's changing forms and meanings show that even after the *ahl al-ḥadīth* monopolized the ḥadīth enterprise, other groups were still using ḥadīth material to express and negotiate their ideas about the world. Finally, I discuss two examples of early medieval commentaries on the ḥadīth, one by the Shīʿī philosopher Mullā Ṣadrā (d. 1050/1640) and by the Sunnī scholar Murtaḍā al-Zabīdī (d. 1205/1791). These commentaries reveal that even after the ḥadīth (and its variants) could no longer be altered, it continued to spark ideas and to be reinterpreted in order to befit the two thinkers' worldviews. Thus, this case study seeks to highlight that ḥadīths functioned over centuries as a common, intersectarian discourse among different groups of the Islamic society. The existence of this common discourse opens a window onto a world in which the boundaries between sects and intellectual traditions were not set in stone.

At the end of the article, I include the translation of Mullā Ṣadrā's and al-Zabīdī's texts as a sample of the genre of ḥadīth commentary. From a different perspective, the Appendix could be seen as the core of the article, and the study of the Intellect ḥadīth as an extended introduction to it.

1. The Muʿtazilī Origins of the Ḥadīth

The ḥadīth under study talks about the creation of the Intellect (ʿaql) and about the Intellect's obedience to God. It opens one of the four books of the Shīʿī ḥadīth canon, *al-Kāfī* ("The sufficient book") by Shaykh al-Kulaynī:[7]

> **When God created the Intellect, He made it speak and then He told it: "Come forward!" And it came forward. Then He told it: "Go back!" And it went back. Then He said: "By My Might and by My Glory, I have not created a creature dearer to Me than you are. I perfected you only in those I love. It is you whom I order, it is you whom I forbid, it is you whom I punish, and it is you whom I reward."**[8]

Lammā khalaqa Allāhu al-ʿaqla istanṭaqahu. Thumma qāla lahu: "Aqbil!" fa-aqbala. Thumma qāla lahu: "Adbir!" fa-adbara. Thumma qāla lahu: "Wa-ʿizzatī wa-jalālī mā

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6. The use of the terms "Sunnī" and "Shīʿī" for this early period may be misleading because the groups' identities had not yet been fully formed. As a result, some scholars have opted for the terms "proto-Sunnī" and "proto-Shīʿī." For a nuanced discussion of the terminology see M. Dann, "Contested Boundaries: The Reception of Shīʿite Narrators in the Sunnī Ḥadīth Tradition," (PhD diss., Princeton University, 2015), 5–16.

7. A Hijri date usually spans two consecutive years in the Gregorian calendar. Since many death dates in the first centuries of Islam are not entirely certain anyway, I will give only one Gregorian equivalent for each, corresponding to the Hijri year in the month of Muḥarram.

8. Throughout the article, ḥadīth texts are written in bold.

khalaqtu khalqan huwa aḥabbu ilayya minka. Wa-lā ukammiluka illā fī-man uḥibbu.
Amā innī iyyāka āmuru wa-iyyāka anhī wa-iyyāka uʿāqibu wa-iyyāka uthību."[9]

The *ḥadīth*'s prominent position in al-Kulaynī's compilation mirrors the prominent place that it has held in the Shīʿī tradition. It is followed by thirty-three other reports united by the theme of ʿaql, which include some of the *ḥadīth*'s variants. The *ḥadīth* is recorded with almost[10] unblemished chains of transmission (*isnād*s) to the imams Muḥammad al-Bāqir (d. 114/732) and Jaʿfar al-Ṣādiq (d. 148/765). Sunnī critics have considered it weak, but it is nonetheless recorded in numerous Sunnī compilations with many different *isnād*s. Furthermore, the *ḥadīth* has also found its way to Ṣūfī circles. It constitutes, for instance, an important piece of evidence in Ibn ʿArabī's (d. 638/1240) theosophical Ṣūfism.[11] By contrast, the theologian Ibn Taymiyya (d. 728/1328) considered the *ḥadīth* the epitome of a broader conspiracy against Islam that in his eyes was led by the Shīʿīs, the Ṣūfīs, and the philosophers alike. In the early modern period, two prominent Islamic thinkers analyzed the *ḥadīth* closely in their commentaries: the Iranian Shīʿī philosopher and theologian Mullā Ṣadrā (d. 1050/1640) and the Indian Sunnī humanist and polymath Murtaḍā al-Zabīdī (d. 1205/1791). A translation of the two commentary texts, which display the authors' creative incorporation of their Ṣūfī and theosophical ideas, is presented in the appendix to this article.

In modern scholarship, Ignaz Goldziher observed the *ḥadīth*'s importance for esoteric Islamic thought and interpreted it as a Neoplatonic teaching about emanation in the form of a prophetic saying.[12] He noted that the *ḥadīth* reflects the belief that the Intellect is the first and immediate emanation from the primordial existence, a divine substance that links God's transcendence, from which all things emanate, with the corporeal reality of this world.[13]

Douglas S. Crow, in his 1996 dissertation, which centers on this *ḥadīth*, rejected Goldziher's interpretation in favor of a native Islamic context.[14] Having argued that Goldziher incorrectly based his interpretation on a later version of the *ḥadīth* that emphasizes the idea of the Intellect as the *first* creation,[15] Crow placed the origins of the *ḥadīth* in the context of

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9. Al-Kulaynī, *Uṣūl al-Kāfī* (Beirut: Manshūrāt al-Fajr, 2007), 1:5, no. 1. Al-Kulaynī took this tradition from al-Barqī, *al-Maḥāsin*, ed. M. al-Rajāʾī (Qum: Majmaʿ al-ʿĀlamī li-Ahl al-Bayt, 2011), 1: 306, no. 604. I transliterate Arabic texts on the basis of how they are written (including vowels), not how they are pronounced.

10. To my knowledge, there is one weak transmitter in the Shīʿī *isnād*s, Sahl b. Ziyād, and one *isnād* recorded by al-Ṣaddūq that is questionable. He includes this variant among the *nawādir* (rare variants), and many of the transmitters in the *isnād* are unknown. See nos. 16 and 17 in Shīʿī variants below.

11. Brown, *Hadith*, 194.

12. I. Goldziher, "Neuplatonische und gnostische Elemente im Ḥadīṯ," *Zeitschrift für Assyriologie und verwandte Gebiete* 22 (1908): 317–44, at 318–20.

13. Or better yet, intellects. For instance, the philosopher al-Fārābī (d. 339/950), following earlier Neoplatonic ideas, designed a complex scheme in which ten intellects emanate from the Necessary Being. The lowest of them connects with the sublunar realm.

14. D. S. Crow, "The Role of al-ʿAql in Early Islamic Wisdom with Reference to Imam Jaʿfar al-Ṣādiq" (PhD diss., McGill University, 1996).

15. The version of the *ḥadīth* that Goldziher considered primary differs from the version above. What

the first/seventh-century polemics between predestinarians (*jabriyya*) and the proponents of human free will (*qadariyya*).[16] He suggested that the *ḥadīth* echoed pre-Islamic wisdom material as well as Qurʾānic and Biblical elements.[17] This argument seems to be driven by the old debate over whether the Islamic intellectual tradition was formed through external influences or internal developments.

Differing with both Goldziher and Crow, I argue for a Muʿtazilī origin for the *ḥadīth*. More precisely, I argue that the *ḥadīth* emerged in the early second/eighth century in Basra as a popular saying communicating to broader audiences the doctrine of obligation (*taklīf*), which was essential to the Muʿtazilī belief system. This placing of the *ḥadīth* is most interesting because it brings us to the Basran beginnings of the Muʿtazila in the generation of its founders, such as Wāṣil b. ʿAṭāʾ (d. 131/748) and ʿAmr b. ʿUbayd (d. 144/761), who first formulated these core Muʿtazilī ideas in their public debates. The *ḥadīth* should be understood as an echo of these debates from a time long before the first systematic Muʿtazilī theologian Abū al-Hudhayl al-ʿAllāf (d. between 226/840 and 235/849) wrote his treatises; as part of a public oral culture, which existed alongside the traditionist circles and in which ideas were exchanged and shared by people from different sects and social groups, including Muʿtazilīs, Shīʿīs, Sunnīs, and Ṣūfīs.

Before I begin to furnish my claim with evidence, I should make my method and assumptions clear. I limited the texts studied in this part to the *ḥadīth*'s variants recorded in the early sources—up to the fourth/tenth century—and to those with *isnād*s.[18] This does not mean that I consider variants appearing only in later collections forged, but I needed to sift through the sources to produce a dataset of texts (*matn*s) and *isnād*s that we can

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concerns us here is the beginning, which reads "**The first thing that God created was the Intellect**" (*awwalu mā khalaqa Allāhu al-ʿaqlu*) instead of "**When God created the Intellect**" (*lammā khalaqa Allāhu al-ʿaqla*). See Goldziher, "Neuplatonische und gnostische Elemente," 318. Although a small difference, it prompted significant conclusions. In Goldziher's scenario, *ahl al-sunna* altered the beginning of the *ḥadīth* to express a more neutral position focused on the creation of the Intellect, not on the *first* creation of all. Crow has reversed Goldziher's periodization of the two main variants, arguing that the neutral *lammā* version is the original one because it is found in most of the early texts containing the *ḥadīth*. Crow, "Role of al-ʿAql," 3.

16. A classic study of the *qadar* debate is W. M. Watt, *Free Will and Predestination* (London: Luzac, 1948). Crow has also pointed to a connection with "the first-century views on the divine parceling out of the *ʿuqūl*," which hold that God has distributed *ʿaql* to humans in different measures (*tafāḍul*), and he quotes a saying ascribed to Muʿāwiya b. Qurra al-Muzanī (d. 113/731) to illustrate this belief: "People perform good [deeds]; however, they receive their recompense on Resurrection Day in proportion to the measure of their intelligence (*ʿaql*)." See Crow, "Role of al-ʿAql," 8–9. It is important, however, to distinguish between *ʿaql* as an autonomous entity that acts and speaks (the Intellect), as the *ḥadīth* conceives of it, and *ʿaql* as the human faculty of intelligence or reason, as it is treated in al-Muzanī's tradition.

17. Crow refers to a report by Wahb b. Munabbih that speaks of God's adorning his rule with *ʿaql*, on the theme of the rejection and vindication of God's wisdom in the Bible (Crow, "Role of al-ʿAql," xxiv, n. 11), and of "pre-creation Wisdom (*hokmah* & *sophia* & Iranian *xrad*)" (p. xxv). He also references (at 39, n. 7) other scholars who have considered the *ḥadīth* to be inspired by Biblical wisdom literature: I. Eisenberg, "Die Prophetenlegenden des Muḥammad b. ʿAbdallāh al-Kisāʾī" (PhD diss., University of Bern, 1898), xx f., and T. Fahd, "La naissance du monde selon l'Islam," *Sources Orientales* 1 (1959): 237–77, at 264.

18. I did not duplicate identical variants.

assume with some confidence to have circulated in the early period.[19] I then identified the regional affiliations of the transmitters. As Behnam Sadeghi has noted, regionalism is a prominent feature of early traditions and can be used for dating purposes, and this is also true in the case of this *ḥadīth*.[20] Three assumptions underpin my discussion. First, I consider the main intention of the *ḥadīth* to be an important signpost of its intellectual context. By main intention I mean the core message that the *ḥadīth* conveys in its most basic form.[21] Second, I assume that medieval *ḥadīth* criticism (the biographical *rijāl* works) contains some historical information about the transmitters. In other words, I do not believe that the critics inferred all their information retrospectively from the *ḥadīth*s. And third, I assume that like the *rijāl* works, the *isnād*s—even single strands[22]—were generated during the transmission process more often than they were forged. When tracing the *ḥadīth*'s *isnād*s, I have drawn on Crow's painstaking work, with the difference that I put less emphasis on the ascriptions to the earliest famous narrators and look with more confidence to the following two generations.[23]

Based on my first assumption, I do not find Crow's hypothesis that the *ḥadīth* emerged in debates about predestination (*qadar*) convincing. Let us examine the *ḥadīth*'s content more closely, this time in its simplest variant, which appears in ʿAbd Allāh b. Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal's (d. 290/903) *Zawāʾid* ("Additions") to his father's *Kitāb al-Zuhd:* "**When God created the Intellect, He told it: 'Come forward!' And it came forward. Then He told it: 'Go back!' And it went back. So He said: 'I have not created a creature dearer to Me than you are. Through you I take and through you I give.'**"[24]

A closer look at the text of the *ḥadīth* shows that the *qadarī* position cannot be the main intention of the *ḥadīth.* The *qadar* debate was among the first major controversies in Islamic

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19. Of course, we can never be entirely certain about that, for even the third/ninth- and fourth/tenth-century works have been generally preserved in later manuscripts.

20. B. Sadeghi, "The Traveling Tradition Test: A Method for Dating Traditions," *Der Islam* 85, no. 1 (2010): 203–42, at 204.

21. By most basic form, I mean the parts of the *ḥadīth* that can be found in most of its versions. Intention, which implies authorship, may seem incompatible with the oral aspects of the *ḥadīth*'s emergence; however, this is not necessarily the case. Umberto Eco, for instance, has theorized an intention of art that is public and not in the head of the author. D. Compagno, "Theories of Authorship and Intention in the Twentieth Century: An Overview," *Journal of Early Modern Studies* 1, no. 1 (2012): 37–53, at 49.

22. Single-strand *isnād*s are *isnād*s that do not cross others. According to Juynboll, such *isnād*s should be suspected of being fabrications. See H. Motzki, "Dating Muslim Traditions: A Survey," *Arabica* 52, no. 2 (2005): 204–53, at 224.

23. Crow takes the presence in the *isnād*s of first/seventh-century figures such as Kurayb (the *mawlā* of Ibn ʿAbbās) or al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī (d. ca. 110/729) as historical data and their *qadarī* loyalties as evidence of the *ḥadīth*'s *qadarī* origins. This is rather problematic, for these figures attained a semilegendary aura and appeal. See, for example, S. Mourad, *Early Islam between Myth and History: Al-Hasan al-Basri (d. 110 H/728 CE) and the Formation of His Legacy in Classical Islamic Scholarship* (Leiden: Brill, 2005), 243. The members of the generation of narrators after them, by contrast, are much more marginal figures, which inspires more confidence since later transmitters have little reason to ascribe the *ḥadīth* to them.

24. Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal, *Kitāb al-Zuhd*, with the *Zawāʾid* of his son ʿAbd Allāh b. Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal, ed. Ḥ. al-Basyūnī (Cairo: Dār al-Ḥadīth, 2004), 372, no. 1872. For the transliteration, see the section Sunnī *isnād*s and *matn*s below.

theology (*kalām*).[25] The proponents of free will (*qadarī*s) asked how God could reward and punish people in the afterlife for their deeds if those deeds had already been predestined, and they concluded that it was necessary for humans to have free will. Although the *ḥadīth* under study does imply that human acts have intrinsic value (good or evil), it does not present the Intellect as having free will. It can lead to asserting the necessity of free will, but that requires an external premise and a few more logical steps; see Figure 1.
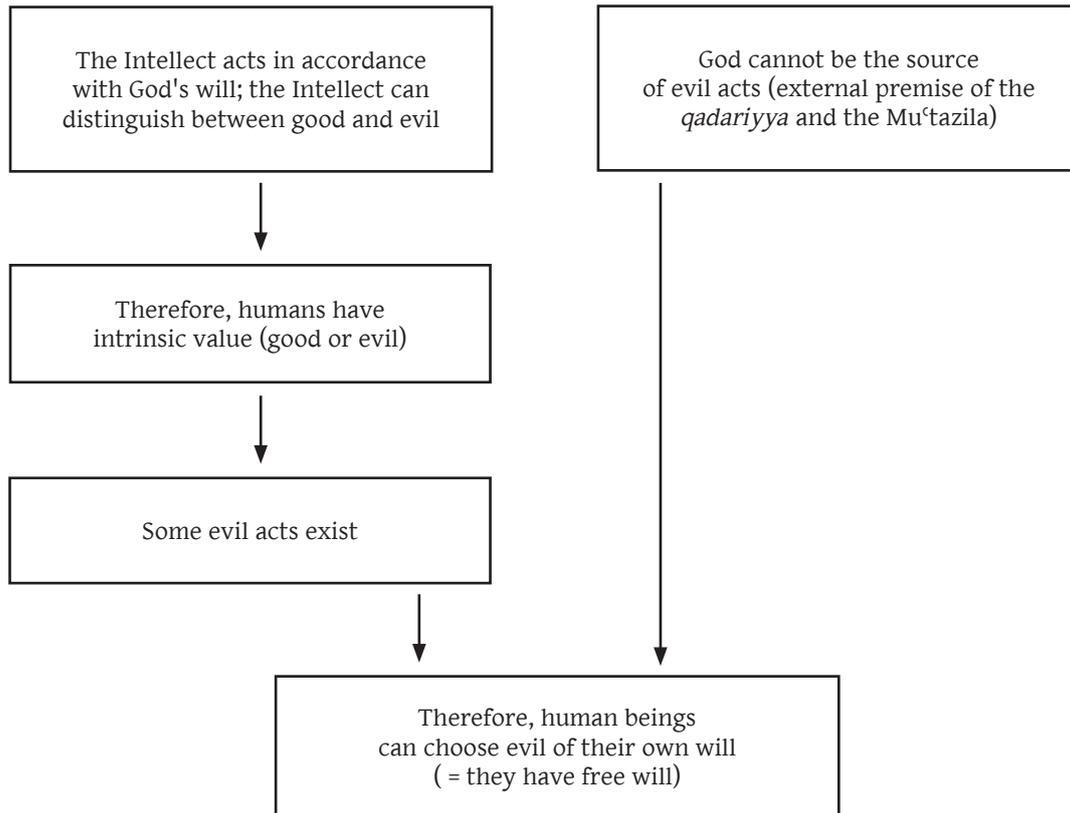
Figure 1. The connection between the *ḥadīth* and the argument for free will.

Since these steps are not self-evident in the text of the *ḥadīth*, free will could hardly be the *ḥadīth*'s primary intention. That being said, the *ḥadīth* circulated widely and different people appropriated it for their own purposes, and it undoubtedly also entered the *qadarī-jabrī* controversy in the course of its journey.[26] But because the *ḥadīth* is not primarily about free will, it is unlikely that this debate was the context in which it emerged.

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25. For a succinct discussion of the debate and the controversies that surround it in modern scholarship, see A. Treiger, "Origins of Kalām," in *The Oxford Handbook of Islamic Theology*, ed. Sabine Schmidtke, 27–43

(Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016). For a crucial scholarly work on the debate, see, for instance, M. A. Cook, *Early Muslim Dogma: A Source-Critical Study* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981).

26. Although Crow deems most versions of the *ḥadīth* to express *qadarī* views, he also identifies a few that expound the opposite predestinarian/*jabrī* position. See, for example, Crow, "Role of al-ʿAql," 12–13.

The ḥadīth is about ʿaql being a parameter for distinguishing between good and evil. The group most famously connected with ʿaql was the Muʿtazila, who emerged from qadarī circles. They were proponents of rationalistic ethics and moral objectivism and the first ones to articulate a coherent system of religious moral theology, which, I contend, is reflected in this ḥadīth. The Muʿtazila believed that human acts have intrinsic values that can be known through reason, a doctrine that came to be known as al-taḥsīn wa-l-taqbīḥ al-ʿaqliyyān ("establishing good and evil through reason"). Because God is necessarily good and just, human reason and divine revelation both guide humans toward the same goal. As such, they are in harmony and do not contradict each other. This doctrine is reflected in the first point made in the ḥadīth on the creation of the Intellect, which states that ʿaql is absolutely obedient, acts only in accordance with God's will, and reaches conclusions about good and evil that accord with God's justice. Therefore, it is the creation dearest to God.

Being able to distinguish good from evil through reason is one thing; being obliged to act on this knowledge is another. The latter thus needs to be stated separately, yielding the second point of the ḥadīth, expressed in the last sentence, "**Through you I take and through you I give.**" It means that reason is the locus of obligation (al-ʿaql manāṭ al-taklīf). The Muʿtazila conceived of a causal connection between one's conduct in this world and one's reward or punishment in the hereafter. They believed that God imposed obligation (taklīf) on human beings to benefit them by giving them the opportunity to attain reward.[27] One of the early Muʿtazilī theologians, Abū Hāshim al-Jubbāʾī (d. 303/915), defines the value of human acts according to whether they merit reward or punishment.[28] The doctrine of taklīf, with the prominent place it gives to ʿaql, lay at the heart of Muʿtazilī teachings for as long as we are aware. Already the first systematic Muʿtazilī philosopher whose teachings are known to us, Abū al-Hudhayl al-ʿAllāf, held that one is "under obligation due to reason (ʿaql) to know God beyond any doubt" even if one has not yet received revelation, and that one "is also duty bound to know the goodness of the good and the evil of the evil, with the consequent obligation of pursuing the good, such as truth and justice, and avoiding the evil, such as lying and injustice."[29] Reason (ʿaql) is therefore the tool of both knowledge and punishment, because it is by means of knowledge that the human subject is liable to punishment. The ḥadīth encapsulates these beliefs, albeit in a much more rudimentary form, and attests to their existence long before Abū al-Hudhayl wrote down his teachings in early second/eighth-century Basra.

Let us next move to the isnāds of the ḥadīth, which identify the time and place of its emergence and early circulation. The first thing that stands out when we look at the lists of Sunnī and Shīʿī isnāds and matns of the ḥadīth and at charts 1 and 2, which represent them graphically, is that the two charts do not show a single common transmitter between the

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27. S. Vasalou, *Moral Agents and Their Deserts: The Character of Muʿtazilite Ethics* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2008), 32. This obligation can be either rationally known (taklīf ʿaqlī) or known through revelation (taklīf samʿī). For the relationship between the two, see chapter 3 in Vasalou, *Moral Agents*, 38–66.

28. "The evil [act] is that for which, taken in isolation, one deserves blame." G. F. Hourani, *Islamic Rationalism: The Ethics of ʿAbd Al-Jabbār* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971), 49. Vasalou's book revolves around the Muʿtazilī conceptions of desert.

29. Al-Shahrastānī, *Muslim Sects and Divisions*, trans. A. K. Kazi and J. G. Flynn (London: Routledge, 1984), 47.

two traditions. In this case, then, what has *not* been recorded of its transmitters is almost as important as what has. The absence of shared transmitters begs for explanation, because it is not plausible that the ḥadīth emerged and developed completely independently in the two traditions. The Muʿtazilī scenario will provide the link.

The Sunnī variants speak to the earlier circulation of the ḥadīth, and I will therefore start with them and then move to the Shīʿī variants. The cities with which the transmitters were affiliated according to *rijāl* works are my guiding tool, along with the transmitters' approximate lifetimes. Therefore, in the list of Sunnī *isnād*s and *matn*s that follows, I include the places where narrators lived and, when known, their death dates (but I omit them on subsequent mentions of the same person). On the whole, these early variants closely resemble each other and the basic version quoted above, with some minor additions here and there.[30]

Sunnī variants (*isnād*s and *matn*s)

1. Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal (d. 290/903):[31]ʿAlī b. Muslim al-Ṭūsī (d. 253/867, Baghdad)—Sayyār b. Ḥātim al-ʿAnazī (d. 199 or 200/815, Basra)—Jaʿfar b. Sulaymān al-Ḍubaʿī (d. 178/794, Basra)—Mālik b. Dīnār (d. 127/745, Basra)—al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī (d. 110/728, Basra), *marfūʿ*[32]

   Lammā khalaqa Allāhu al-ʿaqla qāla lahu: "Aqbil!" fa-aqbala. Thumma qāla lahu: "Adbir!" fa-adbara. Fa-qāla "Mā khalaqtu khalqan aḥabba ilayya minka. Bika ākhudhu wa-bika uʿṭī."

2. Abū Jaʿfar al-ʿUqaylī (d. 322/933, Mecca):[33] Aḥmad b. Dāwūd al-Qūmsī (d. 295/907, Baghdad)—Abū Hammām (= al-Walīd b. Shujjāʿ, d. 243/857, Kufa, Baghdad)—Saʿīd b. al-Faḍl al-Qurashī (d. ca. 200/815, Basra, Damascus, *munkar al-ḥadīth*)—ʿUmar b. Abī Ṣāliḥ al-ʿAtakī (*majhūl*, *munkar al-ḥadīth*)—Abū Ghālib (Basra)—Abū Umāma (d. 81/700, Hijaz, Syria)—the Prophet

   Lammā khalaqa Allāhu al-ʿaqla qāla lahu: "Aqbil!" fa-aqbala. Thumma qāla lahu: "Adbir!" fa-adbara. Thumma qāla: "Wa-ʿizzatī mā khalaqtu khalqan huwa aʿjabu ilayya minka. Bika ākhudhu wa-bika uʿṭī wa-laka al-thawābu wa-ʿalayka al-ʿiqābu."

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30. I have organized the variants based on common traits that they show. Variants 1-5 all show the basic form of the ḥadīth (similar to the one recorded by Ibn Ḥanbal) on occasion with some minor additions; the rest include additional orders that God addresses to the Intellect. Variants 6 and 7, for example, both include the order "*qum!*" "stand up!" and variants 8 and 9 expand on the divine orders with "*uqʿud!*" "sit down!" "*unṭuq!*" "speak!" "*uṣmut!*" "be quiet!". Some of the variants also emphasize the warning in the last part of the ḥadīth by inserting the expression "*iyyāka*" "beware," similarly to the variant found in *al-Kāfī.*

31. Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal, *Kitāb al-Zuhd*, with the *Zawāʾid* of his son ʿAbd Allāh b. Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal, ed. Ḥ. al-Basyūnī (Cairo: Dār al-Ḥadīth, 2004), 372, no. 1872.

32. This is the one *isnād* that al-Zabīdī considers sound. See Appendix, n. 163.

33. Abū Jaʿfar al-ʿUqaylī, *Kitāb al-Ḍuʿafāʾ*, ed. ʿA. A. Qalʿajī (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyya, 1984), 3:175, no. 1169.

3. Al-Ṭabarānī (d. 360/971):[34] Muḥammad b. Yaḥyā b. Manda al-Iṣbahānī (d. 301/913, Isfahan, Basra, Kufa)—Abū Hammām al-Walīd b. Shujjāʿ (d. 243/857, Kufa, Baghdad)—Saʿīd b. al-Faḍl al-Qurashī (*munkar al-ḥadīth*)—ʿUmar b. Abī al-Ṣāliḥ al-ʿAtakī (*majhūl, munkar al-ḥadīth*)—Abū Ghālib—Abū Umāma—the Prophet

Lammā khalaqa Allāhu al-ʿaqla qāla la-hu: "Aqbil!" fa-aqbala. Thumma qāla lahu: "Adbir!" fa-adbara. Qāla: "Wa-ʿizzatī mā khalaqtu khalqan aʿjabu ilayya minka. Bika uṭī wa-bika al-thawābu wa-ʿalayka al-ʿiqābu."

4. Ibn Abī al-Dunyā (d. 281/894):[35] Muḥammad b. Bakkār (d. 238/852, Baghdad, Ruṣāfa)—ʿAbd al-Raḥmān b. Abī al-Zinād (d. 174/790, Medina, Baghdad)—Muḥammad b. ʿUqba (*mawlā* of Zubayr, Medina)—Kurayb (d. 98/716, *mawlā* of Ibn ʿAbbās, Hijaz, possibly Basra)

Lammā khalaqa Allāhu al-ʿaqla qāla lahu: "Aqbil!" fa-aqbala. Thumma qāla lahu: "Adbir!" fa-adbara. Qāla—wa-huwa aʿlamu bihi—"Wa-ʿizzatī wa-jalālī lā ajʿaluka illā fīman uḥibbu wa-mā khalaqtu shayʾan huwa aḥabbu ilayya minka."

5. Al-Ḥusayn b. Ziyād—Abū Ismāʿīl al-Azdī:[36] al-Ḥusayn b. Ziyād—Abū Ismāʿīl Muḥammad b. ʿAbd Allāh (= "author" of the book, Basra)—Abū Jahḍam al-Azdī (Syria, Basra)—Sufyān b. Sulaym (Syria, Wasit, overseeing police squads in Basra under al-Ḥajjāj in 93/711)—al-Ḥārith b. ʿAbd Allāh al-Azdī (appointed governor of Basra in 45/665)

[Qāla lanā nabiyyunā ṣallā Allāhu ʿalayhi anna] Allāha lammā khalaqa al-ʿaqla fa-qaddarahu wa-ʿawwarahu wa-faragha min khalqihi qāla lahu: "Aqbil!" fa-aqbala. Thumma qāla lahu: "Adbir!" fa-adbara. Thumma qāla: "Wa-ʿizzatī mā khalaqtu min khalqī shayʾan huwa aḥabbu ilayya minka. Bika uḥmadu wa-bika uʿbadu wa-bika uʿrafu wa-bika tanālu ṭāqatī wa-bika tudkhalu jannatī."

6. Ibn Abī al-Dunyā:[37] Muḥammad b. Bakkār—Ḥafṣ b. ʿUmar (*qāḍī* of Aleppo, *munkar al-ḥadīth*)—al-Faḍl b. ʿĪsā al-Raqāshī (d. 132/749, Basra, *wāʿiẓ, qadar, munkar al-ḥadīth*)—Abū ʿUthmān al-Nahdī (d. 95/713, lived 130 years)—Abū Hurayra (d. 59/678)—the Prophet

Lammā khalaqa Allāhu taʿālā al-ʿaqla qāla lahu: "Qum!" fa-qām. Thumma qāla lahu: "Adbir!" fa-adbara. Thumma qāla lahu: "Aqbil!" fa-aqbala. Thumma qāla lahu: "Uqʿud!" fa-qaʿada. Fa-qāla Allāhu ʿazza wa-jalla: "Mā khalaqtu khalqan khayran minka wa-lā akrama minka wa-lā-afḍala minka wa-lā aḥsana minka. Bika ākhudhu

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34. Al-Ṭabarānī, *al-Muʿjam al-kabīr*, ed. Ḥ. ʿA. al-Salafī (Cairo: Maktabat Ibn Taymiyya, 1983), 8:339–40, no. 8086.

35. Ibn Abī al-Dunyā, *al-ʿAql wa-faḍluhu*, ed. L. M. al-Ṣaghīr and N. ʿA. Khalaf (Riyadh: Dār al-Rāya, 1989), 40–41, no. 16.

36. Abū Ismāʿīl al-Azdī, *Kitāb Futūḥ al-Shām* (Calcutta: Baptiste Mission, 1854), 178.

37. Ibn Abī al-Dunyā, *al-ʿAql wa-faḍluhu*, 39–40, no. 15.

wa-bika uʿṭī wa-bika uʿazzu wa-bika uʿrafu wa-iyyāka uʿātibu wa-bika al-thawābu wa-ʿalayka al-ʿiqābu."[38]

7. Ibn Shāhīn (d. 385):[39] Yaḥyā b. Muḥammad b. Ṣāʿid—al-Ḥasan b. ʿArafa (d. 257/870, Baghdad)—Sayf b. Muḥammad b. Ukht Sufyān (Kufa, Baghdad, *kadhdhāb*)—Sufyān al-Thawrī (d. 161/778, Khurasan, Kufa, Basra)—al-Faḍl b. ʿĪsā al-Raqāshī—(*matrūk, munkar al-ḥadīth, qadarī, qāṣṣ*)Abū ʿUthmān al-Nahdī—Abū Hurayra—the Prophet

Lammā khalaqa Allāhu al-ʿaqla qāla lahu: "Qum!" fa-qām. Thummā qāla lahu: "Adbir!" fa-adbara. Thumma qāla lahu: "Aqbil!" fa-aqbala. Fa-qāla lahu: "Mā khalaqtu khalqan huwa khayrun minka wa-lā aḥsanu minka wa-lā akramu minka wa-lā aḥabbu ilayya minka. Bika ākhudhu wa-bika uʿṭī wa-bika uʿrafu wa-laka al-thawābu wa-ʿalayka al-ʿiqābu."

8. Al-Ḥakīm al-Tirmidhī (d. between 318/936 and 320/938):[40] ʿAbd al-Raḥīm b. Ḥabīb—Dāwūd b. Muḥabbir al-Baṣrī[41] (d. 206/821, Basra)—al-Ḥasan b. Dīnār (d. mid-second/eighth century)—al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī—several companions of the Prophet—the Prophet

[Addition in the beginning: "The Intellect is light. God the Almighty created it and divided it among His worshippers according to His will concerning them and knowledge of them. For it was narrated that the Prophet said:"] *Lammā khalaqa Allāhu taʿālā al-ʿaqla qāla lahu: "Aqbil!" fa-aqbala. Thumma qāla lahu: "Adbir!" fa-adbara. Thumma qāla lahu: "Uqʿud!" fa-qaʿada. Thumma qāla lahu: "Unṭuq!" fa-naṭaqa. Thumma qāla lahu: "Uṣmut!" fa-ṣamata. Fa-qāla: "Wa-ʿizzatī wa-jalālī wa-kibriyāʾī wa-sulṭānī wa-jabarūtī mā khalaqtu khalqan aḥabba ilayya minka wa-lā akrama ʿalayya minka. Bika uʿrafu wa-bika uḥmadu wa-bika uṭāʿu wa-bika ākhudhu wa-bika uʿṭī wa-iyyāka uʿātibu wa-laka al-thawābu wa-ʿalayka al-ʿiqābu.*"

9. Al-Ḥakīm al-Tirmidhī:[42] Hishām b. Khālid (d. 249/863, Syria)—Baqiyya b. al-Walīd (d. 197/812, Syria)—al-Awzāʿī (d. 158/774, Syria)—the Prophet

Lammā khalaqa Allāhu taʿālā al-ʿaqla qāla lahu: "Aqbil!" fa-aqbala. Thumma qāla lahu: "Adbir!" fa-adbara. Thumma qāla lahu: "Uqʿud!" fa-qaʿada. Thumma qāla lahu: "Unṭuq!" fa-naṭaqa. Thumma qāla lahu: "Uṣmut!" fa-ṣamata. Fa-qāla: "Wa-ʿizzatī wa-jalālī wa-kibriyāʾī wa-sulṭānī wa-jabarūtī mā khalaqtu khalqan aḥabba ilayya minka wa-lā akrama ʿalayya minka. Bika uʿrafu wa-bika uḥmadu wa-bika uṭāʿu wa-bika ākhudhu wa-bika uʿṭī wa-iyyāka uʿātibu wa-laka al-thawābu wa-ʿalayka al-ʿiqābu. Wa-mā akramtuka bi-shayʾin afḍala min al-ṣabri."

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38. The same *matn* and *isnād* appear in Ibn ʿAdī al-Jurjānī.

39. Ibn Shāhīn, *al-Targhīb fī faḍāʾil al-aʿmāl*, ed. M. Ḥ. M. Ḥ. Ismāʿīl (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyya, 2004), 84, no. 252.

40. Al-Ḥakīm al-Tirmidhī, *al-Nuskha al-musnada min Nawādir al-uṣūl fī maʿrifat maṣādir al-Rasūl*, ed. I. I. M. ʿAwaḍ (Cairo: Maktabat al-Imām al-Bukhārī, 2008), 2:764, no. 1035.

41. The edition gives his name incorrectly as Dāwūd b. Muḥammad b Muḥarrim al-Baṣrī.

42. Al-Ḥakīm al-Tirmidhī, *al-Nuskha al-musnada*, 2:764, no. 1036.

Chart 1: Sunnī *Isnāds*
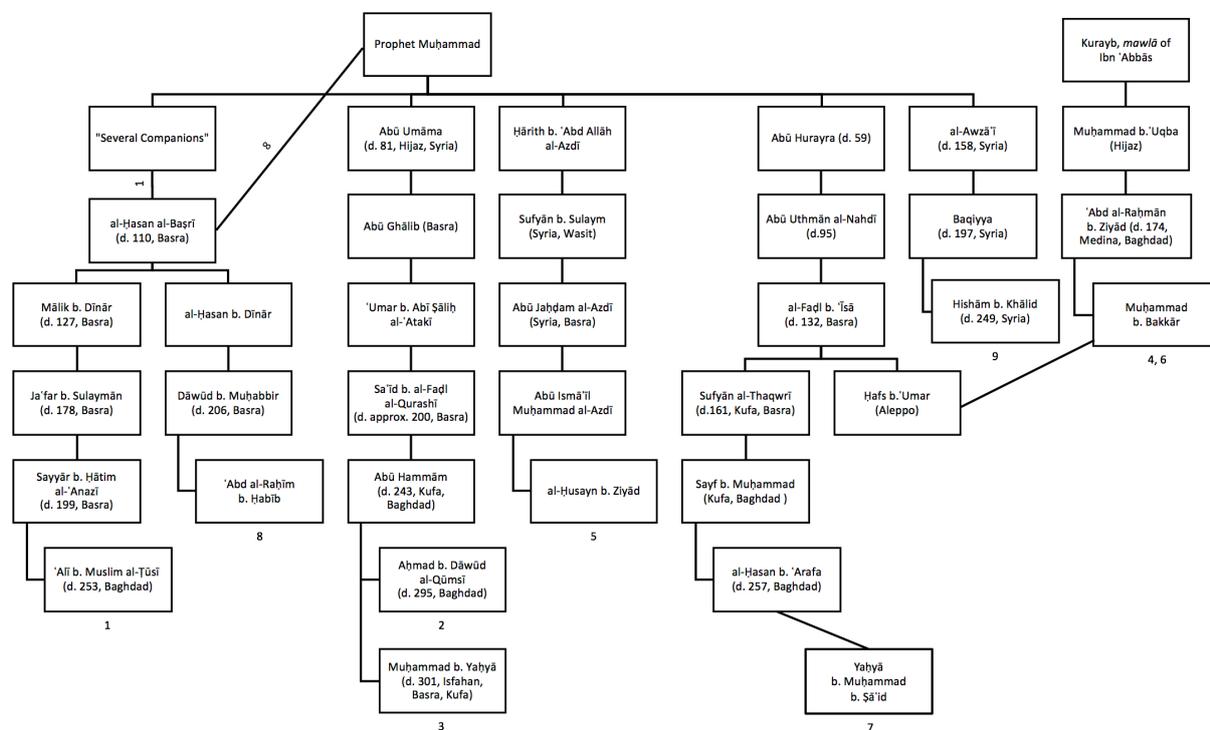
As mentioned earlier, medieval Sunnī critics considered the *ḥadīth* highly unreliable, largely because many of its transmitters are classified as unknown or untrustworthy. The criteria developed by some modern scholars also render it dubious, because its *isnād*s consist mainly of different single strands.[43] On the other hand, however, these two features may in fact provide a reason for greater confidence in the *isnād*s. The large number of transmitters deemed unreliable by the Sunnī tradition suggests that these transmitters had some historical connection with the *ḥadīth*, because if later transmitters had wanted to forge full *isnād*s, they would have probably chosen to name more reliable narrators to give their forgery greater authority.

The first thing that stands out when we look at the early Sunnī variants of the *ḥadīth* is that most of their *isnād*s are Basran; especially in the early second/eighth century, many people are reported to have narrated this *ḥadīth* in Basra. Variants 1, 6, 7, and 9 feature exclusively Basran transmitters in the second/eighth century. Variants 2 and 3 include an unknown transmitter, ʿUmar b. Abī Ṣāliḥ al-ʿAtakī, who connects two Basran transmitters, so these *isnād*s can also be safely considered Basran. The *isnād* of variant 4 is Medinan in its second/eighth-century portion, but it, too, shows connections with Basra.[44]

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43. See note 22.

44. The earliest transmitter named in the *isnād*, Kurayb, was a *mawlā* of Ibn ʿAbbās and served as the governor of Basra. Ibn ʿAbbās himself had a strong presence in Mecca and Basra. The second transmitter, Muḥammad b. ʿUqba, although Medinan, was a *mawlā* of al-Zubayr b. al-ʿAwwām. Basra had strong Zubayrid inclinations and connections.

Variant 5 is more complicated. It was recorded not in a *ḥadīth* compilation like the others but in a historical work, *Futūḥ Shām* ("Conquests of Syria"), attributed to Abū ʿIsmāʿīl al-Azdī al-Baṣrī, which some modern scholars believe was compiled in the late second/eighth century.[45] The *isnād* is composed exclusively of members of the tribe of Azd. I suspect that Abū Ismāʿīl attached the *ḥadīth* to the broader narrative, which touches on the theme of *ʿaql*, as a rhetorical embellishment.[46] This variant nonetheless constitutes an important piece of evidence to support the idea that by Abū ʿIsmāʿīl's time the *ḥadīth* was well known in Basra to the extent that it sprang to mind when the theme of *ʿaql* was broached. Variant 10 is Syrian, but if I am correct that the *ḥadīth* spread in early second/eighth-century Basra, the variant's earliest transmitter—the famous al-Awzāʿī—lived too late to interfere with the *ḥadīth*'s Basran provenance (if we wanted to give this variant some historical credit). Finally, variant 8 is Basran as well as Kufan; however, the *isnād*'s Kufan part is most probably forged. As al-Dāraquṭnī (d. 385/995) noted, the unique *isnād* implies that only one person heard the *ḥadīth* from Sufyān al-Thawrī, which would be odd in the case of such a famous *muḥaddith*.[47] If this part of the *isnād* is indeed forged, it is significant that it is attached to the name of a Basran figure, al-Faḍl b. ʿĪsā al-Raqāshī, who was not particularly highly regarded in *ḥadīth* circles—for if the *isnād* had been forged in its entirety, it would have been more logical to populate it with well-regarded transmitters. Al-Faḍl's very unreliability thus lends greater credibility to the *ḥadīth*'s historical connection with him. Even if we disregard al-Dāraquṭnī's argument and consider the *isnād* possibly sound, al-Faḍl b. ʿĪsā remains important, because he is then the closest to a common link we get. Either way, he is a noteworthy narrator whose interest in *ʿaql* and connections with the Muʿtazila suggest that he probably played some role in the historical transmission of the *ḥadīth*. He was a Basran Muʿtazilī preacher (*qāṣṣ*, *wāʿiẓ*) and a follower of Ghaylān al-Dimashqī (fl. ca. 100/719), who, according to Josef van Ess, emphasized the role of *ʿaql*.[48]

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45. See S. A. Mourad, "On Early Islamic Historiography: Abū Ismāʿīl al-Azdī and His Futūḥ al-Shām," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 120, no. 4 (2000): 577–93.

46. There are three reasons for my suspicion. First, the *ḥadīth* plays no role in the narrative; it is merely a digression on the theme of *ʿaql* mentioned in a story about an encounter between Khālid b. al-Walīd and a Byzantine general by the name of Bāhān. Second, if conciseness is any indicator of historicity, as some scholars have argued, this version, with all its additions, seems to be later. Cf. Motzki, "Dating Muslim Traditions," 212–13. Finally, the name of the third transmitter, Abū Jahḍam al-Azdī, provides an important clue: he also narrated other stories about Bāhān. See al-Azdī, *Futūḥ Shām*, 185, 192, 193. It seems likely, therefore, that Abū Ismāʿīl heard the narrative together with others and added the *ḥadīth* to it. It is also noteworthy that although Abū Jahḍam is usually described in *rijāl* works as a Syrian who narrated from Kufans such as Shurayḥ, Ibn Ḥibbān says that he is counted among the people of Basra (*ʿidāduhu fī ahl al-Baṣra*). Ibn Ḥibbān, *Kitāb al-Thiqāt* (Hyderabad: Majlis Dāʾirat al-Maʿārif al-ʿUthmāniyya, 1973), 7:144.

47. Al-Dāraquṭnī also notes that just as Sayf b. Muḥammad is the only person who narrated it from Sufyān, al-Ḥasan b. ʿArafa is the only person who narrated it from Sayf. Al-Dāraquṭnī and Abū al-Faḍl al-Maqdisī, *Aṭrāf al-gharāʾib wa-l-afrād min ḥadīth Rasūl Allāh li-l-imām al-Dāraquṭnī*, ed. M. M. M. Ḥ. Naṣṣār and S. Yūsif (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyya, 1998), 5:240.

48. J. van Ess, *Zwischen Ḥadīṯ und Theologie: Studien zum Entstehen prädestinatianischer Überlieferung* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1975), 121–22. Ibn Ḥajar says about al-Faḍl "*qāla Yaʿqūb b. Sufyān "muʿtazilī, ḍaʿīf al-ḥadīth.*" Ibn Ḥajar, *Tahdhīb al-Tahdhīb*, vol. 8, (Beirut: Dār al-Fikr, 1984), no. 521.

Finally, another Basran transmitter who looms over others in *rijāl* works as the culprit for "forging" the *ḥadīth* confirms the Muʿtazilī origin theory. Al-Dāraquṭnī and others agree almost unanimously that a certain Dāwūd b. Muḥabbir and a couple of men associated with him[49] forged the *ḥadīth*. This Dāwūd, according to the critics, spent too much time with the Muʿtazila, and they ruined his reputation.[50] Dāwūd b. Muḥabbir is the author of a work titled *Kitāb al-ʿAql*. This work, which was still available to *ḥadīth* scholars such as al-Ḥāfiẓ al-ʿIrāqī (d. 806/1404),[51] collected *ḥadīth*s that dealt with the theme of *ʿaql*, and it also included the *ḥadīth* under study. Dāwūd was probably responsible for the *ḥadīth*'s wide dissemination in Sunnī circles. His poor reputation probably accounts for the fact that he does not appear as the common link. It is possible that some later narrators indeed forged some of the *isnād*s, precisely because they wanted to cite the *ḥadīth* without mentioning the disgraced Dāwūd.

The Sunnī *isnād*s thus strongly suggest that the *ḥadīth* circulated in early second/eighth-century Basra, which was the hub of the forming Muʿtazila. The *rijāl* works also point overwhelmingly to a Muʿtazilī connection, though they do so inadvertently (since they claim that Dāwūd forged the *ḥadīth*, not simply disseminated it).

Let us now consider the *ḥadīth*'s circulation among early Shīʿī traditionists. In contrast to its dubious reputation among medieval Sunnī critics, the *ḥadīth* enjoys a canonical status in Shīʿī circles. The variants here are taken from three prestigious early *ḥadīth* collections: al-Barqī's *Maḥāsin*, al-Kulaynī's *Kāfī*, and al-Ṣaddūq's *Āmālī* and *Man lā yaḥḍuruhu al-faqīh*. A glance at the *isnād*s tells us that the *ḥadīth* circulated in Kufa, which is not surprising as Kufa was the center of Shīʿism in this time. The *isnād*s and *matn*s are listed chronologically according to the compilers' death dates. All variants closely resemble one another, with the exception of variants 15 and 17, which represent much-expanded versions that nonetheless still contain the basic *ḥadīth*.[52]

Shīʿī variants (isnāds *and* matns)

10. Al-Barqī (d. 274/887):[53] Muḥammad b. ʿAlī—Wuhayb b. Ḥafṣ (Kufa, wrote books)—Abū Baṣīr (d. 150/767, Kufa)—Imam al-Ṣādiq

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49. Four names are usually mentioned: Maysara b. ʿAbd Rabbihi, Dāwūd b. al-Muḥabbir, ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz b. Abī Rajāʾ, and Sulaymān b. ʿĪsā al-Sanjarī. See al-Zabīdī's commentary below for more detail. Dāwūd b. al-Muḥabbir is the only one of these four mentioned in the *isnād*s. It thus seems that he was the one responsible for the *ḥadīth*'s spread and circulation among Sunnī *muḥaddith*s. Many sources quote al-Dāraquṭnī as the author of the accusation that Dāwūd forged the *ḥadīth*. In the printed material available to me, I found al-Dāraquṭnī's denunciation of Dāwūd b. al-Muḥabbir, but not one made in the context of this *ḥadīth*. See, e.g., Abū al-Ḥasan al-Dāraquṭnī, *Sunan*, ed. A. A. ʿAbd al-Mawjūd and A. M. Muʿawwaḍ (Beirut: Dār al-Maʿrifa, 2001), 1:386–87; al-Dāraquṭnī, *al-Ḍuʿafāʾ wa-l-matrūkūn*, ed. M. b. ʿA. b. ʿAbd al-Qādir (Riyadh: Maktabat al-Maʿārif, 1984), 202.

50. See Appendix.

51. Al-Ḥāfiẓ al-ʿIrāqī was one of the leading Shāfiʿī scholars of his time. He wrote a commentary on al-Ghazālī's *Iḥyāʾ ʿulūm al-dīn*.

52. See below for a discussion of the "Armies" *ḥadīth*.

53. Al-Barqī, *al-Maḥāsin*, 1: 306, no. 602.

Inna Allāha khalaqa al-ʿaqla fa-qāla lahu: "Aqbil!" fa-aqbala. Thumma qāla lahu: "Adbir!" fa-adbara. Thumma qāla lahu: "Wa-ʿizzatī wa-jalālī mā khalaqtu shayʾan aḥabba ilayya minka. Laka al-thawābu wa-ʿalayka al-ʿiqābu."

11. Al-Barqī:[54] al-Sindī b. Muḥammad—al-ʿAlāʾ b. Razīn (Kufa)—Muḥammad b. Muslim (companion of Imams al-Bāqir, and al-Ṣādiq, Kufa)— Imam al-Bāqir and Imam al-Ṣādiq

Lammā khalaqa Allāhu al-ʿaqla qāla lahu: "Adbir!" fa-adbara. Thumma qāla lahu: "Aqbil!" fa-aqbala. Fa-qāla: "Wa-ʿizzatī wa-jalālī mā khalaqtu khalqan aḥsana minka. Iyyāka āmuru wa-iyyāka anhī wa-iyyāka uthību wa-iyyāka uʿāqibu."

12. Al-Barqī and al-Kulaynī:[55] Aḥmad b. Muḥammad b. ʿĪsā—al-Ḥasan b. Maḥbūb (= al-Sarrād, narrated from Imam al-Riḍā, "one of the four pillars of his era")— al-ʿAlāʾ b. Razīn—Muḥammad b. Muslim—Imam al-Bāqir

Lammā khalaqa Allāhu al-ʿaqla istanṭaqahu. Thumma qāla lahu: "Aqbil!" fa-aqbala. Thumma qāla lahu: "Adbir!" fa-adbara. Thumma qāla lahu: "Wa-ʿizzatī wa-jalālī mā khalaqtu khalqan huwa aḥabbu ilayya minka. Wa-lā ukammiluka illā fīman uḥibbu. Amā innī iyyāka āmuru wa-iyyāka anhī wa-iyyāka uʿāqibu wa-iyyāka uthību."

13. Al-Barqī:[56] ʿAlī b. al-Ḥakam (companion of Imam al-Jawwād, Baghdad)—Hishām b. al-Ḥakam (companion of Imams al-Ṣādiq and Musā al-Kāẓim, great *mutakallim*, Wasit, Baghdad)[57]— Imam al-Ṣādiq

Lammā khalaqa Allāhu al-ʿaqla qāla lahu: "Aqbil!" fa-aqbala. Thumma qāla lahu: "Adbir!" fa-adbara. Thumma qāla lahu: "Wa-ʿizzatī wa-jalālī mā khalaqtu khalqan huwa aḥabbu ilayya minka. Bika ākhudhu wa-bika uʿṭī wa-ʿalayka uthību."

14. Al-Barqī:[58] Muḥammad b. Khālid—ʿAbd Allāh b. al-Faḍl al-Nawfalī—the latter's father—Imam al-Ṣādiq—the Prophet

Khalaqa Allāhu al-ʿaqla qāla lahu: "Adbir!" fa-adbara. Thumma qāla lahu: "Aqbil!" fa-aqbala. Thumma qāla: "Mā khalaqtu khalqan aḥabba ilayya minka."

Qāla: Fa-aʿṭā Allāhu Muḥammadan ṣallā Allāhu ʿalayhi wa-ālihi wa-sallam tisʿata wa-tisʿīna juzʾan thumma qassama bayna al-ʿibādi juzʾan wāḥidan.

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54. Ibid., no. 603.

55. Ibid., no. 604; al-Kulaynī, *al-Kāfī*, 1:5, no. 1.

56. Al-Barqī, *al-Maḥāsin*, 1:307, no. 605.

57. The other possibility is Hishām b. Sālim. ʿAlī b. al-Ḥakam narrated *ḥadīth* from both Hishāms.

58. Ibid., no. 606.

15. The "Armies *ḥadīth*"; al-Barqī, al-Kulaynī, and al-Ṣaddūq:[59] ʿAlī b. Ḥadīd—Samāʿa b. Mihrān (companion of Imam al-Ṣādiq, Kufa)— Imam al-Ṣādiq

    God created the Intellect, which is the first creation among spiritual beings residing to the right of the Throne from His light, and . . .

    . . . qāla lahu: "Adbir!" fa-adbara. Thumma qāla lahu: "Aqbil" fa-aqbala. Fa-qāla Allāhu taʿālā lahu: "Khalaqtuka khalqan ʿaẓīman wa-karramtuka ʿalā jamīʿ khalqī."

    Then he created Ignorance . . . [a long narrative follows about Ignorance's disobedience and about the creation of seventy-five armies for both the Intellect and Ignorance]

16. Al-Kulaynī:[60] Muḥammad b. al-Ḥasan—Sahl b. Ziyād (Qum, Rayy, *ghalw*, weak *ḥadīth* narrator) Ibn Abī Najrān (Kufa, narrated from Imam Riḍā, d. 203/817)—al-ʿAlāʾ b. Razīn—Muḥammad b. Muslim—Imam al-Bāqir

    Lammā khalaqa Allāhu al-ʿaqla qāla lahu: "Aqbil!" fa-aqbala. Thumma qāla lahu: "Adbir!" fa-adbara. Fa-qāla: "Wa-ʿizzatī mā khalaqtu khalqan ahsana minka. Iyyāka āmuru wa-iyyāka anhī wa-iyyāka uthību wa-iyyāka uʿāqibu."

17. Al-Ṣaddūq:[61] Muḥammad b. ʿAlī al-Shāh—Abū Ḥāmid Aḥmad b. Muḥammad b. Aḥmad b. al-Ḥusayn—Abū Yazīd Aḥmad b. Khālid al-Khālidī—Muhammad b. Aḥmad b. Ṣāliḥ al-Tamīmī—the latter's father—Muḥammad b. Ḥātim al-Qaṭṭān[62]—Ḥammād b. ʿAmr—Imam Ṣādiq—Imam Bāqir—Zayn al-ʿĀbidīn (d. 95/712)—ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib (d.40/661)

    [part of a narrative several pages long about the Prophet's *waṣiyya* to ʿAlī] *Yā ʿAlī: inna awalla khalaqa khalqahu Allāhu ʿazza wa-jalla al-ʿaqlu fa-qāla lahu: "Aqbil!" fa-aqbala. Thumma qāla lahu: "Adbir!" fa-adbara. Fa-qāla: "Wa-ʿizzatī wa-jalālī mā khalaqtu khalqan huwa aḥabbu ilayya minka. Bika ākhudhu wa-bika uʿṭī wa-bika uthību wa-bika uʿāqibu."*

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59. Ibid., 1:311, no. 620; al-Kulaynī, *al-Kāfī*, 1:11, no. 14; al-Ṣaddūq, *Amālī al-Ṣaddūq* (Beirut: Muʾassasat al-Aʿlamī li-l-Maṭbūʿāt, 2009), 304.

60. Al-Kulaynī, *al-Kāfī*, 1:13, no. 26.

61. Al-Ṣaddūq, *Man lā yaḥḍuruhu al-faqīh*, ed. ʿA. A. al-Ghaffārī (Qum: Muʾassasat al-Nashr al-Islāmī, 1429H), 4:369, no. 5765, *isnāds* to Ḥammād and Anas on p. 536 (unreliable *isnād*).

62. Al-Ṣaddūq provides also an alternative *isnād*, which replaces Muḥammad b. Ḥātim al-Qattān and Ḥammād b. ʿAmr with Anas b. Muḥammad Abū Mālik and his father.

Chart 2 : Shīʿī *Isnāds.*
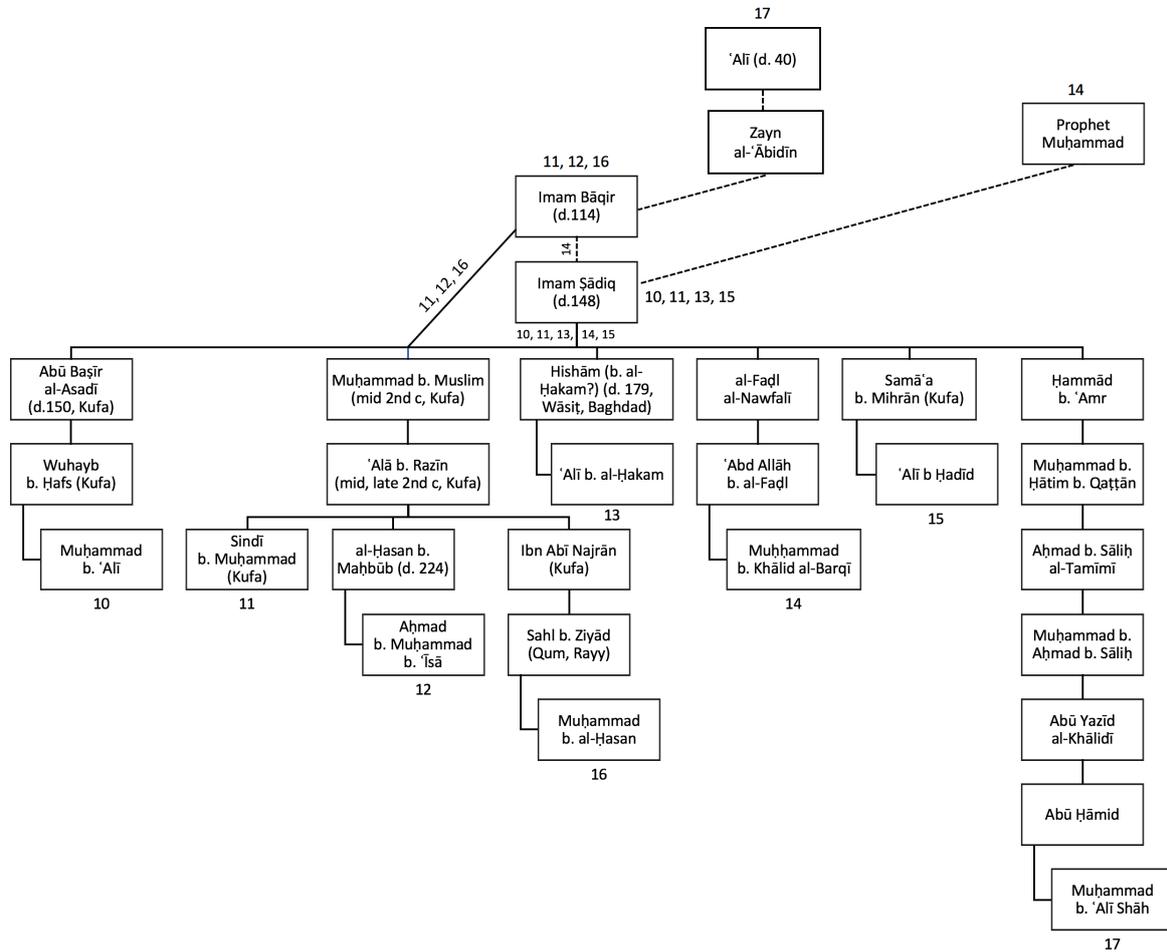
The Shīʿī variants document the spread of the ḥadīth in the middle of the second/eighth century in Kufa, around the same time that Dāwūd was disseminating it in Sunnī circles. Since we did not see many Kufan figures in the earlier Sunnī *isnād*s, the ḥadīth must have originated outside Kufa and traveled there from Basra. Al-ʿAlāʾ b. Razīn, who lived in the second half of the second/eighth century, seems to be the common link and the main candidate for the disseminator of the ḥadīth in Basra. In the Shīʿī tradition, he is considered a reliable transmitter who had books from which "everyone narrated ḥadīth."[63] Another interesting transmitter, given what we know of his life, is Hishām b. al-Ḥakam (d. 179/795), the famous Shīʿī theologian who debated the Muʿtazila—if it is indeed this Hishām who is meant here.[64] In any case, it is evident that the ḥadīth spread first in Basra and then in Kufa by the second half of the second/eighth century.

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63. *Lahu kutub yarwīhā jamāʿatun*; al-Khūʾī, *Muʿjam rijāl al-ḥadīth* (Najaf: Maktabat al-Imām al-Khūʾī, n.d.), 12:184.

64. ʿAlī b. al-Ḥakam narrated from two Hishāms, Hishām b. al-Ḥakam and Hishām b. Sālim. See al-Khūʾī, *Rijāl*, 12:411–25, esp. 414.

The real common link between the Sunnī and Shīʿī traditions is not a single person but the Muʿtazilī environment of Basra. In Basra, the ḥadīth emerged as a saying encapsulating a Muʿtazilī teaching about human responsibility conditioned by the Intellect's ability to tell good from evil. The early Muʿtazila were not a private group, quite the opposite; they sent out missionaries (duʿāt) to spread their doctrine and instructed them in public disputations.[65] The two founding fathers of the Muʿtazila, Wāsit b. ʿAṭāʾ and ʿAmr b. ʿUbayd, were both famed preachers. Early second/eighth-century Basra was thus infused with Muʿtazilī ideas.

It is important to emphasize that we are not dealing here with a quotation from a treatise by a great systematic Muʿtazilī theologian such as al-ʿAllāf or even Wāṣil himself;[66] rather, the ḥadīth is an echo of Muʿtazilī teachings among the broader Basran public. In this way, the ḥadīth's emergence highlights an important function of the genre as a means of communicating the intellectual debates of the day to the public. Therefore, we do not need to talk about direct influences or borrowings between different sects. Basra was a booming intellectual center in the early second/eighth century, where different people participated in lively debates and from which ideas spread to the wider world.

The transformation of a Muʿtazilī teaching into the form of a ḥadīth is what subsequently enabled it to spread among people and groups of different inclinations. The examination of the ḥadīth's variants shows that all kinds of later collectors recorded it, even those who can in no way be suspected of having sympathies for the Muʿtazila. This is the case, for example, with Ibn Abī al-Dunyā, a famous Sunnī scholar and a representative of the ascetic strand of ahl al-ḥadīth who not only recorded this ḥadīth but also compiled a book on ʿaql.[67] It is thanks to its ḥadīth form that this former Muʿtazilī teaching could be dissociated from its original setting and reinterpreted by various narrators, for ḥadīths were accepted by all and accessible to all, regardless of sect or socioeconomic status. Ibn Abī al-Dunyā, as his book suggests, did not understand the ḥadīth it in rationalistic terms but as a tradition about divine wisdom. The ḥadīth form turned any idea into a currency up for grabs for any group, which could then infuse its ideas into it.

The Muʿtazilī origin of the ḥadīth and its subsequent spread in the Sunnī and Shīʿī circles furthermore illustrates the porousness of the boundaries between these groups in the second/eighth century. Michael Dann has documented the important role that Shīʿī transmitters played in the transmission of ḥadīths in the proto-Sunnī milieu before 150/767.[68] It is worth emphasizing that none of these groups was yet a well-defined entity in this time. Early Muʿtazila was still "a tradition of socially and politically disembodied

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65. S. Stroumsa, "The Beginnings of the Muʿtazila Reconsidered," *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam* 13 (1990): 265–93, at 287–91.

66. If Wāṣil indeed wrote books. Van Ess suggested that the books attributed to him whose names have been preserved may have been written later by Ḍirār b. ʿAmr. Stroumsa, "Beginnings of the Muʿtazila," 291.

67. Ibn Abī al-Dunyā, *al-ʿAql wa-faḍluh*, 40.

68. M. Dann, "Contested Boundaries: The Reception of Shīʿite Narrators in the Sunnī Hadith Tradition" (PhD diss., Princeton University, 2015).

intellection," in Michael Cook's words,[69] and as for early Shīʿism, both medieval and modern scholars have struggled to categorize its various groups (for example, *tashayyuʿ* and *rafḍ*).[70] Regarding the Sunnīs, some scholars have objected to the use of the term prior to the fifth/ eleventh century.[71] In the second/eighth century, as Racha el-Omari observed, "seemingly everyone was engaged in reporting *ḥadīth* [...] including proto-Muʿtazilites"[72] and thus it is not surprising that these group would share some of the *ḥadīth* material.

The relationship between early Shīʿism and the Muʿtazila, in particular, has been hotly debated, because the two groups later on came to overlap on many points. Scholars have argued either that the Shīʿīs acquired Muʿtazilī positions early on or that they developed them independently.[73] By contrast, others, such as Mohammad Ali Amir-Moezzi, have painted early Shīʿism as an esoteric (not a rationalist) movement.[74] What is interesting is that in their efforts to present early Shīʿism as rationalistic or esoteric, respectively, both camps have used this *ḥadīth* and other *ʿaql* traditions to support their positions.[75] In a way, then, they continue the practice of reinterpreting and engaging with the *ḥadīth* in their modern scholarly practice.

By the end of the second/eighth century, however, the sectarian boundaries became much more defined. The *ahl al-ḥadīth* appropriated *ḥadīth* as their dominion, through the rising institution of *isnād* and excluded non-*ahl al-ḥadīth* transmitters from it,[76] while other groups, especially the Muʿtazila, criticized them for abusing *ḥadīth* as an ideological weapon.[77] However, as the next section shows, using the example of *ʿaql ḥadīth,* different groups continued to use, adapt, and interpret *ḥadīth*s for centuries. Especially non-legal *ḥadīth* (like the one under study) were under much less scrutiny. The genre's adaptability to new environments and intellectual frameworks is one of its important literary facets and *ḥadīth*s should be thus seen as an important vehicle for expressing ideas and creating memorable shortcuts.

69. M. Cook, *Commanding Right and Forbidding Wrong in Islamic Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 195. Sarah Stroumsa has also pointed out that there was no one political platform that united the Muʿtazila. Stroumsa, "Beginnings of the Muʿtazila."

70. Dann, "Contested Boundaries," 30–34.

71. Ibid., 8.

72. R. El-Omari, "Accommodation and Resistance: Classical Muʿtazilites on Ḥadīth," *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 71, no. 2 (2012): 231-256, at 232.

73. H. A. Abdulsater, *Shiʿi Doctrine, Muʿtazili Theology: Al-Sharīf al-Murtaḍā and Imami Discourse* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2017), 2–3.

74. M. A. Amir-Moezzi, *The Divine Guide in Early Shiʿism: The Sources of Esotericism in Islam* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1994).

75. Amir-Moezzi understands the Shīʿī *ʿaql* as a phenomenon he labels "hiero-intelligence," which has four dimensions—cosmogonic, ethical-epistemological, spiritual, and soteriological. In his view, the transformation of *ʿaql* into the logical *ʿaql* of the theologians began in the third/ninth century under the influence of Aristotelian texts. Amir-Moezzi, *Divine Guide*, 11. For his discussion of *ʿaql*, see 6–13. Cf. W. Madelung, "Early Imāmī Theology as Reflected in the *Kitāb al-Kāfī* of al-Kulaynī," in *The Study of Shiʿi Islam: History, Theology and Law*, ed. F. Daftary, 465–74 (London: I. B. Tauris, 2014), 467–68.

76. On the decline of Shīʿī narrators in the proto-Sunnī milieu see Dann, "Contested Boundaries," 1-28.

77. El-Omari, "Accommodation and Resistance," 234-236.

2. The Journey of the ʿAql Ḥadīth in the Middle Ages and the Early Modern Period

By the fourth/tenth century, the ʿaql ḥadīth had spread across the whole Islamic world in the works of authors with divergent interests, from the pious Sunnī ascetic Ibn Abī al-Dunyā in Baghdad to the adīb Ibn ʿAbd Rabbihi (d. 328/940) in Cordoba and the Ṣūfī master al-Ḥakīm al-Tirmidhī in Termez in modern-day Uzbekistan.[78] Throughout its long journey, the ḥadīth was reinterpreted and adapted to new contexts in a number of different ways. I have chosen five examples. The first three come from the medieval period and illustrate the diverse ways in which the text of the ḥadīth could be molded.

Three Medieval Variants

The first example presents the ḥadīth unchanged but set into a new intellectual framework and reinterpreted. This instance is associated with Aḥmad b. Khābiṭ (d. between 227/842 and 232/847), who had studied with the Muʿtazilī theologian al-Naẓẓām.[79] Ibn Khābiṭ was from a well-known Basran Muʿtazilī family, but the Muʿtazilīs denounced his teachings about the migration of souls as going too far, and as a result he was investigated under the caliph al-Wāthiq. He and his companion Faḍl al-Ḥadathī are reported to have taught the ḥadīth with a twist. According to the heresiologist ʿAbd al-Qāhir al-Baghdādī (d. 429/1037), they held that there were two lords of the universe, one eternal and one created, the latter being Jesus, who is identical with the ʿaql of the ḥadīth. Al-Baghdādī quotes Ibn Khābiṭ and al-Faḍl saying: "The Messiah armored himself with a body; before that he was ʿaql."[80]

The second example shows the ḥadīth combined with another, forming a new narrative. In this form it appears in Kitāb al-Aẓilla ("Book of Shadows"), a text written in the circles of Shīʿī Ghulāt ("Extremists") in the second/eighth and third/ninth centuries in Iraq and preserved as quotations in various Nuṣayrī texts.[81] (The Nuṣayrīs were a group of Ghulāt who left Iraq and settled in Syria.) The ḥadīth speaks about God first creating a name of four letters (MḤMD), then other names from it, then His throne on water, and only then the ʿaql. It continues:

> Then God spread His light, and from that light He created an image. Then from knowledge (ʿilm), power (qudra), light (nūr), and will (mashīʾa) He created by His command intelligence (ʿaql). He then commanded: "Turn toward me!" And intelligence turned toward Him. Then He commanded: "Turn away!" And it turned away. God then

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78. Ibn ʿAbd Rabbihi, al-ʿIqd al-farīd, ed. M. M. Qumayḥa (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyya, 1997), 2:107. Without isnād. For the other references, see chart 1.

79. On Aḥmad b. Khābiṭ, see J. van Ess, Theology and Society in the Second and Third Centuries of the Hijra, trans. G. Goldbloom (Leiden: Brill, 2018), 3:467–72.

80. Al-Baghdādī, al-Farq bayna al-firaq, ed. M. M. ʿAbd al-Ḥamīd (Cairo: Maṭbaʿat al-Madanī, 1964), 277.

81. M. Asatryan, "Shiite Underground Literature between Iraq and Syria: 'The Book of Shadows' and the History of Early Ghulat," in Texts in Transit in the Medieval Mediterranean, ed. Y. T. Langermann and R. G. Morrison, 128–61 (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2016), 131.

told it, "By you I reward and by you I punish," and made it live with water, possessed of knowledge, eternally in the realm.[82]

The part that comes from a different *ḥadīth* is the motif of knowledge, power, light, and will; this element has been recorded in the *Ikhtiṣāṣ*, attributed to Shaykh Mufīd (d. 413/1022).[83] Mushegh Asatryan places the teaching of the *Kitāb al-Aẓilla* in the Iraqi Ghulāt milieu of the second/eighth and third/ninth centuries, whose center was in Kufa. This is probably where the two *ḥadīth*s crossed trajectories.[84] In the context of Shīʿī Ghulāt, Asatryan and Dylan Burns connect the idea of the ʿaql moving back and forth over a primordial water to Jewish sapiential traditions about the presence of the divine Wisdom at the moment of first creation.[85]

The third example, which I call the "Armies *ḥadīth*," is the ʿaql *ḥadīth*'s much-extended variant. This tradition, also included in al-Kulaynī's *Kāfī* as no. 14, has not lost its appeal, as a modern commentary on it by Ruhollah Khomeini indicates.[86] It includes the motif of the Intellect's creation and obedience and expands on it by describing the creation of Ignorance, its failing the obedience test, and the divine allotment of seventy-five armies to the two opposing sides:

God, may He be glorified and exalted, created ʿaql first among the spiritual entities; He drew it forth from the right of His throne (ʿarsh), making it proceed from His own Light. Then He commanded it to retreat, and it retreated, to advance, and it advanced; then God proclaimed: "I created you glorious, and I gave you pre-eminence over all my creatures." Then Ignorance (al-jahl) was created; seeing its pride and its hesitation in approaching God, He damned it: "Then, from the briny ocean God created dark Ignorance; He ordered it to retreat and it retreated, to advance and it did not advance. Then God said to it "Certainly you have grown proud," and He damned it and chased it from His presence. [. . .] Then God endowed ʿaql with 75 armies; when Ignorance saw God's generosity toward ʿaql, it became ferociously hostile and said to God: "O Lord, here is a creature similar to me; you have privileged it and made it powerful. I am its adversary and I have no power. Give me troops like those of ʿaql." And God replied, "So be it, but if you revolt again, I shall banish you and your troops from my Mercy."[87]

Whereas the more basic version of the *ḥadīth* is about *taklīf*, this extended variation partakes in a wider Shīʿī dualistic discourse about the cosmic struggle between the powers

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82. M. Asatryan and D. Burns, "Is Ghulat Religion Islamic Gnosticism? Religious Transmissions in Late Antiquity," in *L'ésotérisme shi'ite, ses racines et ses prolongements*, ed. M. A. Amir-Moezzi, M. De Cillis, D. De Smet, and O. Mir-Kasimov, 55–86 (Turnhout: Brepols, 2016), 60. The translation is theirs, hence the differences in wording.

83. Asatryan, "Shiite Underground Literature," 141–42.

84. Ibid., 142.

85. Asatryan and Burns, "Is Ghulat Religion Islamic Gnosticism?," 82.

86. R. Khomeini, *Junūd al-ʿaql wa-l-jahl*, trans. into Arabic A. al-Fahrī (Beirut: Muʾassasat al-Aʿlamī li-l-Maṭbūʿāt, 2001).

87. Translation from Amir-Moezzi, *Divine Guide*, 8.

of good and evil, which likely built on and mixed with more ancient traditions in the region.[88] Amir-Moezzi has drawn parallels, for instance, between the "Armies ḥadīth" and the Mazdean teaching that the entities of Wisdom and Ignorance are engaged in perpetual combat.[89]

Variously expressing ideas about the identification of ʿaql with Jesus as the lesser creator, reflecting Jewish beliefs about the divine Wisdom, or echoing Mazdean dualistic teachings, the ḥadīth traveled from one community to another, with each adapting the text to reflect its world view. These changes should be seen not in terms of forgery, falsification, or plagiarism but rather as a more organic process. The exchange of formulas, the filling in of words, and the addition of short passages are all to be expected in a society whose members had immediate access to large databases of texts and traditions stored in their memory. Ḥadīths were the substance that traveled across sectarian boundaries and social classes and and that people molded consciously or unconsciously to communicate different ideas effectively.

Two Early Modern Commentaries

The ḥadīth's legacy extended well beyond the medieval period, as the ḥadīth continued to be narrated and reinterpreted. By the early modern period, the Sunnī and Shiʿī ḥadīth traditions were well established, and so we turn to ḥadīth commentaries to see how the ḥadīth was understood at this time. Ḥadīth commentaries are not "merely a derivative and rarified literary practice,"[90] as they were once perceived; rather, they constitute an arena in which commentators engaged with tradition creatively and in novel ways. The two commentaries analyzed here, by Murtaḍā al-Zabīdī and Mullā Ṣadrā, show how the authors use the ḥadīth as inspiration for intellectual contemplation. They approach it as a hermeneutical challenge. The two scholars, one known mainly as a ḥadīth scholar and the other as a philosopher, both grapple with the ḥadīth and creatively reinterpret it to fit their understanding of the world. Regarding Ṣadrā's commentary, Jari Kaukua asks: "Does Ṣadrā simply read his philosophical doctrine into the religious texts, or do the latter have a significant influence on his philosophy?"[91] Kaukua concludes that the philosopher's main motivation is "to maintain the integrity of the philosophical theory."[92] This may indeed have been his internal motivation, but it does not invalidate his earnest attempt to weave in the religious traditions. More than anything, the two scholars' treatment of the ḥadīth shows their efforts to harmonize different strands of Islamic thought and their creativity in expounding their ideas through this ḥadīth.

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88. On the early Shīʿī dualistic discourse, see M. A. Amir-Moezzi, *The Silent Qurʾan and the Speaking Qurʾan: Scriptural Sources of Islam between History and Fervour*, trans. E. Ormsby (New York: Columbia University Press, 2015), 92–96.

89. Amir-Moezzi, *Divine Guide*, 8, n. 13.

90. Blecher, *Said the Prophet of God*, 13.

91. J. Kaukua, "The Intellect in Mullā Ṣadrā's Commentary on the *Uṣūl al-Kāfī*," forthcoming.

92. Kaukua, "Intellect in Mullā Ṣadrā's Commentary."

The first commentary on the *ḥadīth* is taken from *Sharḥ Uṣūl al-Kāfī*, Mullā Ṣadrā's seventeenth-century commentary on the first part of al-Kulaynī's *al-Kāfī*.[93] Mullā Ṣadrā, "arguably the most significant Islamic philosopher after Avicenna,"[94] was an Iranian Shīʿī thinker who became famous for his attempt to synthesize philosophical methods with insights from theology and mysticism; he exerted a dominant influence on modern Shīʿī thought.[95] His interpretation of the *ḥadīth* shows influences from Avicennan philosophy, the *ishrāqī* ("illuminative") school associated with al-Suhrawardī, and the Ṣūfī metaphysics of being formulated by Ibn ʿArabī. The second text comes from *Itḥāf al-sāda al-muttaqīn* ("The gift of the God-fearing sayyids"), an eighteenth-century commentary by Murtaḍā al-Zabīdī on *Iḥyāʾ ʿulūm al-dīn* ("Revival of the religious sciences") by the famous Sunnī theologian Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī (d. 505/1111).[96] Al-Zabīdī, a prominent Sunnī scholar of *ḥadīth* and a Ṣūfī theologian, was a towering figure of his age. A man of universal erudition, he hosted visitors who came to meet him from near and far, and he had a vast scholarly network and excellent relations with the Ottoman court. He was born in Bilgrām in modern-day India, grew up in Zabīd in Yemen, and settled in Cairo. His fame rests mainly on his *Tāj al-ʿarūs* ("Bridal crown"), the largest Arabic lexicon ever written.

The two scholars' motivated engagement with the tradition is clear, in the first instance, in the close attention that they pay to the *ḥadīth*'s *isnād*s. Al-Zabīdī examines with particular care the Sunnī *isnād*s, whose reliability has been seriously contested, and argues against his major source of *isnād* criticism, al-Ḥāfiẓ al-ʿIrāqī,[97] that not *all* of the *ḥadīth*'s pathways (*ṭuruq*) are weak. He singles out the variant recorded by ʿAbd Allāh b. Aḥmad in his *Zawāʾid* to his father's *Kitāb al-Zuhd* (variant 1 above) as a having a sound *isnād*. In an effort to salvage some of the *ḥadīth*'s credibility, he concludes that "what can be said about it at most is that it is weak in some of its pathways (*ṭuruq*)."[98]

Both Mullā Ṣadrā and al-Zabīdī attempt to harmonize contradictory traditions and explain away any inconsistencies. I mentioned earlier that there were two versions of the *ḥadīth*.[99] The first—which is attested in the earlier versions—started with *lammā*, "when," whereas the second began with *awwalu mā*, "the first thing [that God created]." The *awwalu mā* formula was shared by a large number of other sayings that talk about the first creation but substitute some other entity, such as light, spirit, a cherub, or the pen, for *ʿaql*. Some

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93. Mullā Ṣadrā, *Sharḥ Uṣūl al-Kāfī*, ed. M. Khawājawī (Tehran: Muʾassasa-i Muṭālaʿāt wa Taḥqīqāt-i Farhangī, 1366H), 215–19.

94. S. Rizvi, "Mulla Sadra," in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, spring 2019 ed., ed. E. N. Zalta.

95. The studies on Mullā Ṣadrā are too numerous to be listed here. For an exhaustive bibliography, see Rizvi, "Mulla Sadra."

96. Al-Zabīdī, *Itḥāf al-sāda al-muttaqīn bi-sharḥ Iḥyāʾ ʿulūm al-dīn* (Cairo: Maṭbaʿat al-Bābī al-Ḥalabī, 1894), 452–56.

97. Al-ʿIrāqī, *Takhrīj aḥādīth Iḥyāʾ ʿulūm al-dīn*, ed. A. ʿA. M. b. M. al-Ḥaddād (Riyadh: Dār al-ʿĀṣima, 1987). The text thus usually consists of three main levels: the *Iḥyāʾ* of al-Ghazālī, the commentary of al-ʿIrāqī, and the commentary of al-Zabīdī. In the analytical part al-ʿIrāqī's text is substituted by the work of Shaykh Najm al-Dīn. See below.

98. See Appendix.

99. See note 15.

of these sayings contradict the *ʿaql ḥadīth* in spirit; for example, the version with the pen takes a predestinarian position by portraying God's first act as the creation the divine Pen, which then writes down all human destiny: "**The first thing God created was the Pen. Then He said to it, 'Write.' So [the Pen] wrote what came to pass and what will come to pass until the Day of Resurrection.**"[100] Mullā Ṣadrā makes clear, at the outset of his discussion of the *ḥadīth*, that these seemingly different and conflicting *ḥadīth*s all refer to the same reality:

> The Intellect is the first creation, the closest of the created things (*majʿūlāt*) to the First Truth, the greatest, the most perfect, and the second among the existents in existentiality (*mawjūdiyya*)—although the Almighty has no second in His reality (*fī ḥaqīqatihi*) because His oneness (*waḥdatuhu*) is not countable as others in the genus of countable things (*waḥdāt*) are. And this is what is meant in what has come to us in the *ḥadīth*s from him [the Prophet], may God bless him and his family, and in his sayings in the version, "**The first thing that God created was the Intellect**," and in the version, "**The first thing that God created was my light**," and in the version, "**The first thing that God created was my spirit**," and in the version, "**The first thing that God created was the pen**," and in the version, "**The first thing that God created was a cherub (*karūbī*)**." All of these are attributes and descriptions of one thing in different phrasings. It is called by a different name in reference to each attribute. The names are multiple, while the named (*musammā*) is one in essence and existence.

Later in the text, Mullā Ṣadrā explains that all of these entities are just different names for the Intellect. He argues, for example, that the Intellect "was referred to as the pen only because it is the tool [of God] to represent the truths (*al-ʿulūm wa-l-ḥaqāʾiq*) on the spiritual tablets of divine decree and of fate (*al-alwāḥ al-nafsāniyya al-qaḍāʾiyya wa-l-qadariyya*)."[101]

Al-Zabīdī, for his part, relies on an earlier text to harmonize these accounts through a linguistic argument. He quotes at length Shaykh Najm al-Dīn (d. 654/1256), an Iranian Ṣūfī intellectual who fled from the Mongol invasion to Anatolia, where he played an important role in the development of mysticism. In the quoted passage, Shaykh Najm al-Dīn explains that God referred to the Intellect as the pen synecdochally, using a part to stand for the whole (that is, the Intellect writing with the pen): "**When He [God] called it [the Intellect] the pen, He told it: 'Tell what will come to pass from now until the Day of Judgment.'** Calling it 'pen' is like calling the owner of a sword 'sword.'"[102] He also argues for the functional and semantic equivalence of the two terms a little later in the text, when he points out that "the pen is close in meaning to the Intellect" on the basis of Q 96:4, which states that God "taught

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100. This is the version found in ʿAlī b. Ibrāhīm al-Qummī, *Tafsīr*, ed. Ṭ. M. al-Jāzāʾirī (Najaf: Maktabat al-Hudā, 1966–68), 2:198, quoted in Crow, "Role of al-ʿAql," 126. Van Ess has located the emergence of the "pen" *ḥadīth* among the *jabrī* circles of first/seventh-century Kufa. It makes sense that a concrete entity such as a pen, which has a clear antecedent in Qurʾān Q 68:1, would spark the creation of a *ḥadīth* earlier than would the more abstract *ʿaql*, which lacks such clear Qurʾānic referents. The Qurʾān does not even contain the noun *ʿaql*, only the verbal forms *ʿaqala* and *yaʿqilu*. When it refers to the intellects of people it usually uses the terms *albāb* or *afʾida*.

101. See Appendix.

102. See Appendix.

by the pen." Similarly, "things are known through the Intellect." This example shows that Ṣadrā and al-Zabīdī spared no effort to bring the divergent traditions into harmony.

Finally, they use the *ḥadīth* as inspiration to show that these ideas do not contradict the *ḥadīth* but rather provide the intellectual framework for its full understanding. Both refer to the Ṣūfī teaching about the pre-eternal Muḥammadan reality (*ḥaqīqa muḥammadiyya*).[103] Many thinkers, such as Ibn ʿArabī, considered the Muḥammadan reality the first entity created by God and thus identified it with the Logos, the Intellect, and the Pen, which is also the context in which Ṣadrā and al-Zabīdī introduce it. For them, the Muḥammadan reality or spirit is the perfect equivalent of the immaterial Intellect. This equation allows further symbolic interpretation of the *ḥadīth* and the synthesis of different traditions. Commenting on the part of the *ḥadīth* that reads "**Then He told it: 'Go back!'**" Ṣadrā interprets it as referring to the night of Muḥammad's journey to the divine presence (*miʿrāj*) and to "his departure from the realm of the world."

Both commentaries are also imbued with philosophical concepts. Al-Zabīdī's discussion of the nature of the Intellect is a good example. It offers a response to al-Ghazālī, who presents the following conundrum: If the Intellect is an accident, how is it possible that it was created before everything else? And if it is a substance, "how could it exist on its own without occupying space (*lā yataḥayyazu*)?" Al-Zabīdī, in the tradition of scholastic Avicennan philosophy, provides a taxonomy of substances and identifies five types of substance—matter, form, body, soul, and intellect—to argue that some substances, such as the Intellect, are abstract and therefore do not occupy space. Here, philosophy helps to resolve a philosophical problem that the *ḥadīth* raises; the system is in harmony, and as a welcome corollary, the reader has been edified.

Ṣadrā discusses many of his own philosophical and theological theories, always proceeding from the *ḥadīth*. He takes up the argument that I quoted earlier, about all the first creations—the pen, the Intellect, and so on—referring to the same named thing (*musammā*), to launch his discussion about the notions of essence and existence.[104]

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103. The Muḥammadan reality guides the Prophet (and anyone who wants to follow him) during his ascent to the divine presence (*miʿrāj*), which the tradition links to Q 53:18 and which also appears in Ṣadrā's commentary. The tradition and the commentary also speak about the Muḥammadan light and the Muḥammadan spirit as equivalents of the Muḥammadan reality, but some authors have distinguished between the three; see W. Chittick, *Imaginal Worlds: Ibn al-ʿArabi and the Problem of Religious Diversity* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1994), chap. 2.

104. The distinction between essence and existence is already present in the work of Aristotle, but it assumes true significance only in the works of al-Fārābī and Avicenna. *Posterior Analytics* II B 92b10, *Metaphysics*, Δ V.5, 1015a20–b15; 7, 1017a7–b10; also E and Z, *De interpretatione* 11 21a25–28, referred to in O. Lizzini, "Ibn Sina's Metaphysics," in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Summer 2019 Edition), ed. E. N. Zalta. In particular, Avicenna developed the distinction between the existence of something and its "reality by virtue of which something is what it is," that is, its essence, quiddity, thingness. Scholarship on the issue is abundant; see for instance, R. Wisnovsky, *Avicenna's Metaphysics in Its Context* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2003). Mullā Ṣadrā's key contribution to the discussion is the doctrine of the ontological primacy of existence (*aṣālat al-wujūd*). Ṣadrā argued that existence must be ontologically prior because it applies to all things, whereas essence applies only to some things, such as genera or species. All things are composites of existence and essence except for God, who has no essence (God cannot be a composite, and further, essence implies multiplicity because it is shared by a multitude of subjects). Everything is therefore an instantiation of existence, including God's connection

He defines the Intellect as the highest of all created things in terms of its degree of existence, for it needs only God and nothing else. He also brings in the doctrine of simple reality (*basīṭ al-ḥaqīqa*), which draws on Neoplatonic ideas of emanation and the sequence of intellects and posits that all things flow from the Simple One. God is simple, pure existence devoid of quiddity[105] that would imply complexity and multiplicity (e.g., genera, composition, divisions). All things flow from this simple reality and are both in it and not in it.[106] In this context of emanation, Ṣadrā invokes the rule of the most noble contingency (*qāʿidat al-imkān al-ashraf*)—namely, that the nobler being must be prior to the less noble in grades of existence[107]—and identifies the Intellect as "the noblest possible and the most distinguished creation." Further, the theme of love, inspired by the part of the *ḥadīth* that says, "**I have not created a creature dearer to Me than you are**," takes up a significant portion of the discussion. Love, in Ṣadrā's view, is pure good connected with perfection of existence. On this point, he debates earlier theologians and specifically al-Zamakhsharī, who claimed love would make God deficient in His essence. Ṣadrā refutes this position: "They did not know that His, the Almighty's, love for His creation stems from His love for Himself." After Him there are the "rational substances, luminous spirits, and holy angels, [all of whom are] delighted with Him . . . for they are Divinely Lovers." In this case, the *ḥadīth* serves Ṣadrā as evidence for his philosophical views. Finally, Ṣadrā interprets the last part of the *ḥadīth*, "**It is you whom I order, it is you whom I forbid, it is you whom I punish, and it is you whom I reward**," as reflecting the Intellect's function as the condition for obligation (*taklīf*), although he problematizes the doctrine by distinguishing between obligation of this world and rewards in heaven. With Ṣadrā's discussion of *taklīf*, the journey of the *ḥadīth* has come full circle.

On this last stop, the *ḥadīth* has, once more, acquired new meanings and significations, this time not by modifying the *ḥadīth* itself but by collecting and harmonizing its variants and weaving it into other intellectual frameworks. For the commentators, the *ḥadīth* posed an occasion to espouse their ideas about the world and a challenge to formulate a harmonious system in which *ḥadīth*s, Ṣūfī ideas, and philosophy all had their place.

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to the world. This doctrine, which Mullā Ṣadrā used for his own proof of God's existence, was also informed by the Ṣūfī metaphysics of ontological monism (*waḥdat al-wujūd*) associated with Ibn ʿArabī. Ṣadrā's monism is expressed in the phrase *basīṭ al-ḥaqīqa kull al-ashyāʾ* ("The simple reality is all things"), which is based on Neoplatonic teachings of the simple One. God, as the simple One and pure Being, is the totality of existence. Rizvi, "Mulla Sadra"; I. Kalin, *Knowledge in Later Islamic Philosophy: Mullā Ṣadrā on Existence, Intellect, and Intuition* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 89–95.

105. See previous note.

106. This doctrine reconciles the tension between the unity of existence and its multiplicity as it appears in this world and provides a proof for the existence of God through an analysis of simplicity. The doctrine of *basīṭ al-ḥaqīqa* relates to Ṣadrā's doctrine of *aṣālat al-wujūd* (see note 108) as well as to his doctrine of the gradation of existence (*tashkīk al-wujūd*), which posits that all things in the world are different degrees of a single whole, in a chain and hierarchy of existence. S. H. Rizvi, *Mulla Sadra and Metaphysics: Modulation of Being* (London: Routledge, 2009), 104–5; Rizvi, "Mulla Sadra."

107. Mullā Ṣadrā, *al-Ḥikma al-mutaʿāliya fī al-asfār al-ʿaqliyya al-arbaʿa*, ed. R. Luṭfī, I. Amīnī, and F. A. Ummīd (Beirut: Dār Iḥyāʾ al-Turāth, 1981), 3:244. See also Rizvi, *Mulla Sadra and Metaphysics*, 108.

Conclusion

The *ḥadīth* about the creation of the Intellect originated in Basra in the first half of the second/eighth century. It reflected Muʿtazilī ideas about the Intellect's obedience to God's will and its ability to distinguish between good and evil—ability that makes it at the same time the locus of human obligation to choose good. Around the mid-second/eighth century or a little after, the *ḥadīth* was disseminated widely in Sunnī traditionist circles in Basra and among Shīʿī *ḥadīth* collectors in Kufa, and then spread across the whole Islamic world, changing meanings and audiences. In the early modern period, its journey continued in *ḥadīth* commentaries, in which the *ḥadīth* was, once more, reinterpreted to fit to a new intellectual context.

Genre matters. The saying gained currency the moment it acquired the form of a *ḥadīth*. Thanks to its *ḥadīthization*, it could travel across sectarian boundaries and be adapted and readapted for diverse contexts. Only as a *ḥadīth* could it become part of an intersectarian common discourse. The fluidity, openness to reinterpretation, and capacity for inspiration that the case study of the *ʿaql ḥadīth* has demonstrated make *ḥadīth*s an effective literary vehicle.

There are, clearly, other aspects of *ḥadīth*s that contribute to making them so compelling. One such aspect is the aura of reality that they carry. Stefan Leder observed that the apparent reality of the *akhbār* is achieved by the employment of *isnād*s and a narrative technique that leaves the narrator in the background.[108] Daniel Beaumont added that the *isnād*'s function is to "anchor the text to the actual instance of enunciation."[109] These effects are naturally magnified in the case of *ḥadīth*s. Stefan Sperl has underlined the *isnād*'s role of holding "the promise of a direct, authentic and virtually unmediated access to the past."[110] This past is not any past; it is the unmitigated prophetic authority speaking.

Mircea Eliade's ideas about two types of time, sacred and profane, further illuminates the emotional power of *ḥadīth*s. Religious rites and services mark a break in profane time, and by reenacting events that took place in sacred time, they take participants back to that time.[111] All narration of *ḥadīth*s is a similar practice, a ritual through which a community is transmitted to a different temporal sphere. Eliade notes that Christianity, with its insistence on the historicity of Christ, radically changed the conception of sacred time. Whereas people had—through their rites and myths—traditionally striven to return to a primordial cosmic time, Christianity sanctified a clearly defined historical time.[112] The same can be said

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108. S. Leder, "The Literary Use of the Khabar: A Basic Form of Historical Writing," in *The Byzantine and Early Islamic Near East*, vol. 1, *Problems in the Literary Source Material*, ed. A. Cameron and L. Conrad, 277–315 (Princeton, NJ: Darwin Press, 1992), 307–8.

109. D. Beaumont, "Hard-Boiled: Narrative Discourse in Early Muslim Traditions," *Studia Islamica* 83 (1996): 5–31, at 28.

110. S. Sperl, "Man's 'Hollow Core': Ethics and Aesthetics in *Ḥadīth* Literature and Classical Arabic *Adab*," *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 70, no. 3 (2007): 459–86, at 480.

111. M. Eliade, *The Sacred and the Profane: The Nature of Religion*, trans. W. R. Trask (New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, 1959), 68 ff.

112. Eliade, *Sacred and Profane*, 111.

about Islam and the time of the Prophet, and from this perspective, *isnād*s serve as a direct connection to this sanctified historical past, as a time machine that takes one back to the sacred time of the first Muslim generation. The act of *ḥadīth* narration transforms into an experience of encountering the Prophet. The case of the ʿ*aql ḥadīth* is different. The *ḥadīth* goes even a step further, for it takes the listeners to Eliade's primordial cosmic time, to the moment of first creation, in the beginning.

Appendix: Translation

First text: *Sharḥ Uṣūl al-Kāfī* by Mullā Ṣadrā (Ṣadr al-Dīn Muḥammad al-Shīrāzī)[113]

K[114]: Several of our companions[115] [i.e., Shīʿīs], including Muḥammad b. Yaḥyā al-ʿAṭṭār, narrated to me (*ḥaddathanī*):

Ṣ: [Muḥammad b. Yaḥyā al-ʿAṭṭār is] Abū Jaʿfar al-Qummī [fl. before 300/913], [about whom it is said] in *al-Khulāṣa* [by al-Ḥillī, d. 726/1325][116] and other works [that he is] the master among our companions in his time,

K: reliable (*thiqa*),

Ṣ: the source of many *ḥadīth*s (*ʿayn kathīr al-ḥadīth*),

K: on the authority of Aḥmad b. Muḥammad,

Ṣ: [who is] Ibn ʿĪsā b. ʿAbd Allāh b. Saʿd b. Mālik al-Aḥwaṣ, with *ḥāʾ* and *ṣād muhmalatān* [i.e., without diacritical points], whose *kunya* is Abū Jaʿfar al-Qummī, the shaykh of Qum. He was one of its prominent men and its *faqīh*. He met Abū al-Ḥasan al-Riḍā [d. 202/817, the eighth imam] and Abū Jaʿfar al-Thānī [d. 220/835, the ninth imam] and Abū al-Ḥasan al-ʿAskarī [d. 254/868, the tenth imam], peace be upon them. He was reliable (*thiqa*) and wrote books.

K: on the authority of al-Ḥasan b. Maḥbūb,

Ṣ: [who is] al-Sarrād, called al-Zarrād, whose *kunya* is Abū ʿAlī Kūfī, a reliable source, who narrated on the authority of al-Riḍā, peace be upon him. He [al-Ḥasan] was of noble standing, and is considered one of the four pillars of his era.[117] Al-Kashshī said: "Our companions agreed on approving what is narrated truly on their authority[118] and on assenting to them, and they [i.e., our companions] endorsed their legal opinions (*fiqh*) and their learning," and he mentioned al-Ḥasan b. Maḥbūb as one of this group. [Al-Kashshī added:] "Some mentioned in his place al-Ḥasan b. ʿAlī b. Faḍḍāl."

K: on the authority of al-ʿAlāʾ b. Razīn,

Ṣ: the first letter [in Razīn] being *rāʾ* and the following *zāʾ*; he was reliable (*thiqa*), of noble standing (*jalīl al-qadr*), and a prominent man (*wajh*),

K: on the authority of Muḥammad b. Muslim,

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113. Mullā Ṣadrā, *Sharḥ Uṣūl al-Kāfī*, 215–19.

114. Ṣ stands for Mullā Ṣadrā, K stands for al-Kulaynī. In the original text al-Kulaynī's words are distinguished by double parentheses.

115. Shīʿī *ḥadīth* scholars in general take the expression "several of our companions" used by al-Kulaynī to refer to five specific people (including Muḥammad b. Yaḥyā al-ʿAṭṭār) when narrating from Aḥmad b. Muḥammad b. ʿĪsā; see the introduction to al-Kulaynī, *al-Kāfī*, 48.

116. Cf. al-ʿAllāma al-Ḥillī, *Khulāṣat al-aqwāl fī maʿrifat al-rijāl*, ed. J. al-Qayyūmī (Qum: Muʾassasat al-Nashr al-Islāmī, 1417H), 61.

117. Cf. al-Ḥillī, *al-Khulāṣa*, 97.

118. "They" in al-Kashshī's text are not in fact the four pillars. Mullā Ṣadrā and his source, al-Ḥillī, somewhat misquote al-Kashshī here, because al-Kashshī is referring to the six most reliable members of the second generation in transmitting Imāmī traditions. Cf. al-Ḥillī, *al-Khulāṣa*, 97; Muḥammad al-Kashshī, *Rijāl al-Kashshī*, ed. A. al-Ḥusaynī (Karbala: Muʾassasat al-Aʿlamī li-l-Maṭbūʿāt, 1962), 556.

Ṣ: [Muḥammad b. Muslim] b. Ribāḥ Abū Jaʿfar, one of the prominent companions of Kūfa, a pious *faqīh*, a companion of Abū Jaʿfar [Imam al-Bāqir] and Abū ʿAbd Allāh [Imam al-Ṣādiq], peace be upon them. He narrated on their authority, and he was one of the most reliable people.

Al-Kashshī [d. ca. 350/961] narrated with an *isnād* reaching al-ʿAlāʾ b. Razīn from ʿAbd Allāh b. Abī Yaʿfūr that he said: "I said to Abū ʿAbd Allāh [Imam al-Ṣādiq], peace be upon him: 'I cannot meet you every time and [sometimes] coming is impossible, and [then] a man from among our companions comes and asks me, and I do not always have the answer to everything[119] that he is asking about.' He [Imam al-Ṣādiq] said: 'What prevents you from [going to] Muḥammad b. Muslim? For he has heard *ḥadīth* from my father [i.e., Imam al-Bāqir] and according to him, he [Muḥammad b. Muslim] was a prominent man.'"[120] And [al-Kashshī narrated also] on the authority of Abū Jaʿfar b. Qawlawayh, with the *isnād* reaching ʿAlī b. Asbāṭ on the authority of his father, Asbāṭ b. Sālim, that Abū al-Ḥasan Mūsā b. Jaʿfar, peace be upon them, said: "Muḥammad b. Muslim is one of the disciples (*ḥawāriyyūn*)[121] of Abū Jaʿfar Muḥammad b. ʿAlī [i.e., Imam al-Bāqir] and his son [Imam] Jaʿfar b. Muḥammad al-Ṣādiq, peace be upon them." Al-Kashshī said: "He [Muḥammad b. Muslim] is one of those on whose reliability the community (*ʿiṣāba*) agrees and whose knowledge/legal opinions (*fiqh*) it follows."[122]

K: that [Imam] Abū Jaʿfar, peace be upon him, said: "**When God created the Intellect, he made it speak and then He told it: 'Come forward!' And it came forward. Then He told it: 'Go back!' And it went back. Then He said: 'By My Might and by My Glory, I have not created a creature dearer to Me than you are. I perfected you only in those I love. It is you (*iyyāka*) whom I order, it is you whom I forbid, it is you whom I punish, and it is you whom I reward.'"**

Ṣ: <u>Commentary</u>

O my brothers, walking the path of God on the feet of gnosis (*ʿirfān*), know that this Intellect is the first creation, the closest of the created things (*majʿūlāt*) to the First Truth, the greatest, the most perfect, and the second among the existents in existentiality (*mawjūdiyya*)—although the Almighty has no second in His reality (*fī ḥaqīqatihi*) because His oneness (*waḥda*) is not countable (*ʿadadiyya*) as others in the genus of countable things (*waḥdāt*) are. And this is what is meant in what has come to us in the *ḥadīth*s from him [the Prophet], may God bless him and his family, and in his sayings in the version, "**The first thing that God created was the Intellect**," and in the version, "**The first thing that God created was my light**," and in the version, "**The first thing that God created was my spirit**," and in the version, "**The first thing that God created was the pen**," and in the version, "**The first thing that God created was a cherub (*karūbī*)**." All of these are attributes and descriptions of one thing in different phrasings. It is called by a different name in reference

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119. *Kulla mā* rather than *kullamā*, as in the published text.

120. Cf. Abū Jaʿfar al-Ṭūsī, *Ikhtiyār maʿrifat al-rijāl*, ed. M. al-Rajāʾī (Qum: Muʾassasat Āl al-Bayt, 1404H), 1:383.

121. *Ḥawāriyyūn* is also the term for the twelve Apostles of Jesus in Arabic.

122. Cf. al-Kashshī, *Rijāl*, 10.

to each attribute. The names are multiple, while the named (*musammā*) is one in essence (*dhāt*) [1] and existence (*wujūd*) [2].

[1] As for the quiddity (*māhiyya*) and essence [of the Intellect], it is a substance (*jawhar*) that has no relation of any kind to bodies (*ajsām*): not in terms of existence, like accidents, and not in terms of actions (*taṣarruf*), and not in terms of governance, like souls, and not in terms of particularity (*juzʾiyya*) or mixing (*imtizāj*), like matter and form.

In general: The substantial created things (*majʿūlāt jawhariyya*) fall into three groups, differentiated on the basis of their degrees of existence. The first and highest of them is one that needs only God and does not look to anything except God, and does not pay attention to anything but the Almighty.

The second is one that needs only the Almighty for its mere existence (*aṣl al-wujūd*). But in perfecting its existence (*fī istikmāl wujūdihi*) it does need what is other than God. The perfection of its existence [comes] after its mere existence, [but from another perspective] it [the perfection of its existence] comes before it.

And the third is one that needs what is other than the Almighty in both matters—that is, in the basis of existence and in its perfection.

The first one is the Intellect, the second one is the soul, and the third one is the body or its part.

[2] As for the existence (*wujūd*) and the reality (*ḥaqīqa*), their proof is the existence of the Almighty Reality. For since the One with the Simple Reality (*basīṭ al-ḥaqīqa*)[123] is knowing, powerful, magnanimous, and merciful; possessed of supreme virtue, great force, and boundless power; and encompassing all virtues, good qualities, and perfections, it is not possible for Him, given His noble nature, mercy, and compassion, to refrain from emanation (*fayḍ*) and mercy or to be sparing[124] of the good and generosity toward the worlds. So it is inevitable that beings emanate from Him in the best order and in the most perfect arrangement and [it is inevitable that] He begins with the noblest (*ashraf*) and proceeds to the next noblest, as the principle of most noble contingency (*qāʿidat al-imkān al-ashraf*) dictates.[125]

There is no doubt that the noblest possible being and the most distinguished creation is the Intellect, as you know. For it is the first of the emanations (*ṣawādir*) and the closest and dearest to the Truth. And that is why He said: "**I have not created a creature dearer to Me than you are.**" And we will repeat this saying in order to investigate God's love for his creation. This existent's reality (*ḥaqīqa*) is the same as the very reality of the Great Spirit, a matter that has been pointed out in the Almighty's saying: "Say: 'The spirit [cometh] by command of my Lord'" [Q 17:85][126] and his saying: "Is it not His to create and

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123. See my earlier discussion of Ṣadrā's doctrine of the simple reality, *basīṭ al-ḥaqīqa*"

124. Reading *yaḍinnu* for *yaẓunnu*.

125. For the principle of the most noble contingency, see Mullā Ṣadrā, *al-Ḥikma al-mutaʿāliya*, 3:244. See also Rizvi, *Mulla Sadra and Metaphysics,* 108.

126. Q 17:85 reads as follows: "They ask thee concerning the Spirit [of inspiration]. Say: 'The Spirit [cometh] by command of my Lord; of knowledge it is only a little that is communicated to you, [O men!]'"

to govern?" [Q 7: 54],[127] and it [the Intellect] was referred to as the pen only because it is the tool of Truth to represent the truths (*al-ʿulūm wa-l-ḥaqāʾiq*) on the spiritual tablets of divine decree and of fate (*al-alwāḥ al-nafsāniyya al-qaḍāʾiyya wa-l-qadariyya*).[128]

Indeed, the "pen" of God is neither cane nor iron nor a different body. Likewise, His tablet is not made of wood or papyrus. When He called it "pen," He said: "**Let come to pass what will come to pass until the Day of Judgment.**"

[Furthermore,] because it [the Intellect] is an existence free of the darkness of corporeality and concealment and of the darkness of shortcomings and inexistence, it is called "light" (*nūr*). For light is existence and darkness inexistence, and it is apparent to itself and makes other things apparent.

Because it [the Intellect] is the origin of life of high and low souls alike, it is called "spirit" (*rūḥ*). It [the Intellect] is also the Muḥammadan reality (*ḥaqīqa muḥammadiyya*) in the view of the greatest and the most accomplished (*muḥaqqiq*) Ṣūfīs because it is the perfection of his [*Muḥammad's*] existence, may God bless him and his family, which commences from Him and returns to Him, as shown in some *ḥadīth*s of the Imams, peace be upon them. On this topic [we have undertaken] a demonstrative investigation (*taḥqīq burhānī*) whose discussion would lengthen our discourse, and we will come back to it in the explanation of those *ḥadīth*s.

Whoever scrutinizes this point finds that how the First Intellect has been described and what has been narrated about it correspond to the characteristics of his [Muḥammad's] spirit, may God bless him and his family, and His peace be upon him. And [the Imam's] saying, peace be upon him, "**He [God] made it [the Intellect] speak (*istanṭaqahu*),**" means that He endowed it with speech/reason and discourse (*jaʿalahu dhā nuṭq wa-kalām*) appropriate to its status. As for his words, "**Then He told it: 'Come forward!' And it came forward. Then He told it: 'Go back!' And it went back,**" this was the case with the spirit [i.e., the Prophet], may God bless him and his family, when God told him: "Come to the world and descend on Earth as a mercy to the two worlds [of human beings and *jinn*s]!" And he came, and his light was concealed in each prophet, while in the person described [as Muḥammad] it was apparent, as in the statement reported from him, "**We are the last ones and the first ones,**" meaning the last ones to come out and appear, like a fruit, and the first ones in creation and existence, like a seed. So, he [Muḥammad] is the seed of the tree of the world.

"**Then He told him: 'Go back!'**" This meant: "Return to your Lord!" And he [Muḥammad] turned away from the world and returned to his Lord on the night of *miʿrāj* and on his departure from the realm of the world.

Then He said: "**By My power and by My glory, I have not created a creature dearer to Me than you are.**" And this was also his [Muḥammad's] case, may God bless him and his family, because he was God's beloved and the most beloved among His creatures.

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127. Q 7:54 reads as follows: "Your Guardian Lord is God, Who created the heavens and the earth in six Days; then He established Himself on the Throne [of authority]: He draweth the night as a veil over the day, each seeking the other in rapid succession; He created the sun, the moon, and the stars, [all] governed by laws under His command. Is it not His to create and to govern? Blessed be God, the cherisher and sustainer of the worlds!"

128. As Muḥammad Khawājawī, the editor of Ṣadrā's text, points out, by the two types of spiritual tablets Ṣadrā refers to universal souls and to the universe's faculty of imagination.

The rational aspect in this is that love belongs to the perception of existence (*idrāk al-wujūd*) because it is pure good.[129] And everything[130] with a more perfect existence is also greater in goodness, stronger in the perception of it, and more intensive in its delight in it. And the most sublime [thing] delighted by itself is the First Truth (*al-ḥaqq al-awwal*), because It/He perceives most intensely the greatest of what there is to be perceived. It/He has the most perfect virtue, the most shining light, and the most elevated sublimity, and it is pure good. After It/Him in goodness, existence, perception, and delight are the rational substances (*jawāhir ʿaqliyya*), luminous spirits (*arwāḥ nūriyya*), and holy angels (*malāʾik qudsiyya*), [all of whom are] delighted with Him, the Almighty, and with themselves through their being delighted with Him, for they are Divinely Lovers (*ʿushshāq ilāhiyyūn*). After their level there is the level of the souls yearning for Him (*nufūs mushtāqūn ilayhi*), the Almighty, [which varies] according to their attainment and perception of Him; they are the heavenly angels. And after those—in terms of passion for Him, the Almighty—there are human souls and the happy among the lords of right (*aṣḥāb al-yamīn*) possessing different degrees of faith in God, the Almighty.[131]

As for those close to God (*muqarrabūn*) among the human souls in the hereafter, who are the lords of spiritual ascent, their position in the afterlife will be like that of the angels, who are close to the Almighty in terms of love and delight in Him. If you know this, then [you know that] the love of God, the Almighty, for His servants stems from His love for Himself. For since it has been established that the thing dearest to Him, the Almighty, is Himself and that He is most delighted with Himself, [and since it has been established] that whoever loves something loves all of its actions, movements, and effects for the sake of the beloved and that what is closer to Him is [also] dearer to Him, and [since it has been established] that all contingents (*mumkināt*) of different levels are the effects of Truth and His actions, for God loves them for His own sake, and [it has been established that] the creation closest to Him is the Muḥammadan spirit, may God bless him and his family, here called the "Intellect"—[in view of all of the above, it follows that] it is true that he is the creature dearest to Him.

There are some theologians, such as al-Zamakhsharī and his contemporaries, who have denied God's love for His servants, claiming that it would necessarily imply that He is deficient in His essence. [But] they did not know that His, the Almighty's, love for His creation stems from His love for Himself.

[Consider] His saying in another version: "**Through you I know, through you I take, through you I give, and through you I reward.**" All of this applies to the Prophet, may God bless him and his family, for who does not know the Prophet, may God bless him and his family, in his prophecy and message does not know God as he should, even if he had a

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129. Love in Mullā Ṣadrā's thought is seen in cosmological terms as penetrating all beings. It is the innate natural tendency of all things to reach their natural perfection.

130. Reading *kullu mā* for *kullamā*.

131. There are two possible explanations for the term "lords of right" (*aṣḥāb al-yamīn*). The first is that they are those who are given the book in their right hand on the Day of Judgment; that is, they are in great standing before God. The other is that they are people bestowed with great blessings. See J. al-Subḥānī, *Mafāhīm al-Qurʾān* (Qum: Muʾassasat al-Imām al-Ṣādiq, 2000), 363–65.

thousand proofs for the ways of knowing God! The meaning [of these words] is: "I [God] am known through knowing you [Muḥammad]." That means, "Who knows you in your prophecy knows Me in my Lordship." "**Through you I take**" means, "I take the obedience of the one who took from you what you were given of religion and law." And "**Through you I give**" means, "I give, by way of your intercession, a level to the people of levels [i.e., I elevate them from their level to a higher one in heaven], as he [Muḥammad] said: "**[All] people, even Abraham, peace be upon him, need my intercession!**" and "**Through you I punish and through you I reward.**" And this is [the manifestation] of the words of the Almighty:

> Behold! God took the covenant of the Prophets, saying: "I give you a Book and Wisdom; then comes to you a Messenger, confirming what is with you; do ye believe him and render him help?" God said: "Do ye agree, and take this, My Covenant, as binding on you?" They said: "We agree." He said: "Then bear witness and I am with you among the witnesses." [Q 3:81]

This is because God, the Almighty, made a covenant with each prophet He sent to a group of people (*qawm*) so that they would believe in Muḥammad and his family, may God bless them, and to entrust his community (*umma*) with faith in him and with support for his religion. And whoever believed in him among the nations of the past before his mission and among the bygone nations belongs to the people of reward (*ahl al-thawāb*), whereas whoever did not believe in him among the ancient and the recent ones belongs to the people of punishment. So His words are true: "**Through you I punish and through you I reward.**"

As for his words in this version, "**It is you (*iyyāka*) whom I order, it is you whom I forbid, it is you whom I punish, and it is you whom I reward,**" it is probable that the word "you" here means "through you" (*bika*) and "for your sake" (*min ajlika*) by way of extension. If we took this expression literally, it would also be true and correct, because the reality of the Intellect is the condition for obligation (*malāk al-taklīf*) [and for] order, probation, reward, and punishment. However, its reality has [various] stations and levels, since the oneness of the Intellect is not a numerical oneness. Its [the Intellect's] being the thing dearest to Him, the Almighty, is with regard to its utmost perfection and closeness to the First, the Almighty; its being punished and tortured is with regard to its distance from Him, the Almighty; its being obligated (*mukallaf*), commissioned, and forbidden is with regard to its position in the house of obligation [i.e., this world]; and its being rewarded is with regard to its being in the hereafter in levels of heaven.[132]

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132. In this paragraph, Mullā Ṣadrā interprets the last sentence of the *ḥadīth*. He recognizes its reference to the notion of *taklīf*, discussed earlier. The complication that he tackles here lies in the fact that the *ḥadīth*, in this version, seems to treat the Intellect, not the human being, as the immediate *mukallaf*, the subject of divine reward and punishment. Ṣadrā proposes two possible explanations: what is meant is either that the Intellect is the tool of fulfilling obligations or that the Intellect is the immediate subject of obligation by way of being the condition for it. If the latter is the case, the question how the Intellect can be rewarded and punished is raised. Ṣadrā explains that reward and punishment consist of either closeness to or distance from God.

Second text: *Itḥāf al-sāda al-muttaqīn* by Muḥammad b. Muḥammad al-Ḥusaynī al-Zabīdī[133]

G[134]: [The Prophet] said, may God honor him and grant him peace: **"O people, reason (*aʿqilū ʿan*) through your Lord."**

Z: That is, learn and understand through Him, for it is said: "I have reasoned [i.e., understood] something through Him."

G: **And advise one another [to cherish] the Intellect!**

Z: That is, its perfection.

G: **Know through it what you were ordered and through it what you were forbidden, and know that it**

Z: that is, the Intellect

G: **is your savior before your Lord.**

Z: [It is found] in this way in al-ʿIrāqī's edition, but in others [it is found as] "aids you before God."

G: **And know that a rational person is one who obeys God even if he were of a misshapen**

Z: with *al-dāl al-muhmala* [the letter *dāl* without a diacritical point], that is, ugly

G: **appearance,**

Z: with regard to what is apparent in him

G: **of little importance,**

Z: that is, in standing and value

G: **of low rank,**

Z: that is, of miserable rank

G: **and of shabby exterior.**

Z: with regard to his clothes and how much toil and hardship he has had to endure, which has made him disheveled

G: **And verily the ignorant**

Z: he [al-Ghazālī] included the ignorant as the opposite of the rational because Knowledge and the Intellect come from one source, as we have pointed out above

G: **[is the one] who disobeys God, even if he is of a beautiful appearance, of great importance, of a noble rank, and of a handsome exterior,**

Z: These [features—misshapen appearance, little importance, low rank, and a shabby exterior] are four descriptions in opposition to four descriptions [namely, beautiful appearance, great importance, noble rank, and a handsome exterior]. For the first thing that thrills man is the beauty of his looks, and if, in addition, his importance is great, this is the highest position, and through it he will reach a noble rank and a handsome exterior. Then he [al-Ghazālī] adds another two descriptions, saying:

G: **eloquent and articulate.**

Z: And what a hideous man is one whose corporeal prison is—in comparison with the ugliness of his soul—a paradise in which an owl resides, a sacred place protected by a wolf, as a wise man [once] said to an ignorant with a graceful face: "The house is good, but its resident is wicked." And how hideous of him that he is concerned with the amount of his

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133. Al-Zabīdī, *Itḥāf al-sāda al-muttaqīn*, 452-455.

134. G stands for al-Ghazālī and Z for al-Zabīdī.

wealth and the excellence of his possessions (*athāth*). Verily, some wise people called the rich billy goats whose wool is pearls and donkeys whose excrement is silken shawls."

G: **Monkeys and pigs are more rational (*aʿqalu*) before God than is a person who disobeys Him.**

Z: For it is disgraceful (*qabīḥ*) for a rational man (*dhū al-ʿaql*) to be a beast when it is surely possible for him to be a human being, and [it is disgraceful for a rational man] to be a human being when he has the potential to become an angel.

For we have not seen among the flaws of people a failing
equal to the failing of those who are capable of perfection.[135]

G: **And do not be seduced by the glorification of you by the people of the world, for they are among the losers.**

Z: Al-ʿIrāqī said:

It was narrated to us in the *Kitāb al-ʿAql* by Dāwūd b. al-Muḥabbir[136] in the version (*riwāya*) of Abū al-Zanād [d. ca. 130/748] on the authority of al-Aʿraj [d. ca. 117/735] on the authority of Abū Hurayra on the authority of the Prophet, may God honor him and grant him peace, that he [too] said this, except that he said, "**indeed they were considered among the losers,**" and al-Ḥārith b. Abī Usāma narrated it in his *Musnad* on the authority of Dāwūd b. al-Muḥabbir.[137]

There was disagreement about Dāwūd b. al-Muḥabbir. ʿAbbās al-Dawrī narrated on the authority of Yaḥyā b. Maʿīn [d. 233/847], who said that he was a known transmitter, but then he left it [the practice of *ḥadīth* transmission] and became associated with a group of the Muʿtazila (*ṣaḥaba qawman min al-muʿtazila*). "They corrupted him, but he is reliable."

Abū Dāwūd [al-Sijistānī, d. 275/888] said: "He is reliable, though he appears weak" (*thiqa shibh ḍaʿīf*).

Aḥmad [b. Ḥanbal, d. 241/855] said: "He does not know what *ḥadīth* is" (*lā yadrī mā al-ḥadīth*).

Al-Dāraquṭnī [d. 385/995] said: "His *ḥadīth*s are to be abandoned" (*matrūk*).

ʿAbd al-Ghanī b. Saʿīd al-Azdī al-Miṣrī [d. 409/1019] narrated on the authority of al-Dāraquṭnī that he said: "Four men forged (*waḍaʿa*) *Kitāb al-ʿAql.* Maysara b. ʿAbd Rabbihi was the first of them, then Dāwūd b. al-Muḥabbir stole it and attached to it *isnād*s different from Maysara's, then ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz b. Abī Rajāʾ stole it and attached to it other *isnād*s, then Sulaymān b. ʿĪsā al-Sanjarī stole it and invented other *isnād*s," or as he [al-Dāraquṭnī] said.

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135. This a verse from a poem by Abū al-Ṭayyib al-Mutanabbī, which starts *Malūmukumā yajillu ʿan al-malāmī* See Abū al-Ṭayyib al-Mutanabbī, *Dīwān al-Mutanabbī* (Beirut: Dār Ṣādir, 1964), 483.

136. See my earlier discussion of Dāwūd b. al-Muḥabbir.

137. Cf. al-Ḥārith b. Abī Usāma, *Bughyat al-bāḥith ʿan zawāʾid Musnad al-Ḥārith*, ed. M. al-Saʿdānī (Cairo: Dār al-Ṭalāʾiʿ, n.d.), 257, no. 833.

According to what al-Dāraquṭnī said, ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz b. Abī Rajāʾ stole it from Dāwūd. He shortened it, created another *isnād* for it, and narrated it on the authority of Mālik, on the authority of Suhayl, on the authority of his father, on the authority of Abū Hurayra and Abū Saʿīd al-Khudrī [d. ca. 74/694] that they said: "The Messenger of God, may God honor him and grant him peace, said: **'Son of Adam, obey your Lord and you will be called rational; do not disobey Him, [otherwise] you will be called ignorant.**" Abū Nuʿaym [al-Iṣbahānī, d. 430/1038] narrated it in his *Ḥilya* and al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī [d. 463/1071] in [his] *Asmāʾ man rawā ʿan Mālik* ["Names of those who transmitted *ḥadīth* from Mālik"][138] through the narration (*riwāya*) of the abovementioned Ibn Abī Rajāʾ.[139] Al-Khaṭīb said: "This *ḥadīth* is to be rejected (*munkar*) from the corpus of Mālik [b. Anas]'s *ḥadīth*s."

Al-Dāraquṭnī said: "ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz b. Abī Rajāʾ's *ḥadīth*s are to be abandoned" (*matrūk*).

Al-Dhahabī [d. 748/1348] said in his *al-Mīzān*:[140] "It is falsely attributed to Mālik [b. Anas]" (*bāṭil ʿalā Mālik*).

Z: I say that the *kunya* of Dāwūd b. al-Muḥabbir b. Mukharram al-Bakrāwī was Abū Sulaymān al-Baṣrī. He was a resident of Baghdād, and he died in the year 206 [821]. Muḥabbir is [to be read] as *muḥaddith*. His father narrated on the authority Hishām b. ʿUrwa [d. 146/763], and his son Dāwūd narrated on the authority of Shuʿba [b. al-Ḥajjāj, d. 160/776] and Hammām and several others, and on the authority of Muqātil b. Sulaymān [d. 150/767]. Abū Umayya and al-Ḥārith b. Abī Usāma and several others narrated on his authority. Al-Dhahabī mentioned in his *Mīzān* through his [Dāwūd's] narration a *ḥadīth* about the virtue of Qazwīn, which Ibn Māja recorded (*akhrajahu*)[141] in his *Sunan*. Then he [al-Dhahabī] said: "Verily, Ibn Māja disgraced his *Sunan* by adding this forged *ḥadīth* to it." All *ḥadīth*s of Maysara and Ibn Abī Rajāʾ and Sulaymān b. ʿĪsā are to be abandoned.

G: **The Messenger of God, may God honor him and grant him peace, said: "The first thing that God created was the Intellect. He told it: 'Come forward.' And it came forward. Then He told it: 'Go back!' And it went back. Then God said: 'By My Might and by My Glory, I have not created a creature dearer to Me than you are. Through you I take, through you I give, through you I reward, and through you I punish.'"**

Z: Shaykh Najm al-Dīn [d. 654/1256],[142] the narrator of this *ḥadīth*, may God's mercy be upon him, said:

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138. This book has not come down to us. Ibn Rashīd al-ʿAṭṭār al-Qurashī produced an abridgment of it, removing the *isnād*s. Ibn Rashīd al-ʿAṭṭār al-Qurashī, *Mujarrad Asmāʾ al-ruwāt ʿan Mālik li-l-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī*, ed. M. S. b. A. al-Salafī (Medina: Maktabat al-Ghurabāʾ al-Athariyya, 1997).

139. Cf. Abū Nuʿaym al-Iṣfahānī, *Ḥilyat al-awliyāʾ wa-ṭabaqāt al-aṣfiyāʾ* (Cairo: Maktabat al-Khānjī, 1932–38), 7:318.

140. Al-Dhahabī, *Mīzān al-iʿtidāl fī naqd al-rijāl*, ed. ʿA. M. al-Bajāwī (Cairo: al-Bābī al-Ḥalabī, 1963), 2:628.

141. *Akhraja* means recording a report with the *isnād.*

142. This is Najm al-Dīn Abī Bakr ʿAbd Allāh b. Muḥammad b. Shāhawar al-Rāzī al-Azadī, d. 654/1256. See his *Manārāt al-sāʾirīn ilā ḥaḍrat Allāh wa-maqāmāt al-ṭāʾirīn* (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyya, 2004), 38; J. Curry, *The Transformation of Muslim Mystical Thought in the Ottoman Empire* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2010), 264, n. 61.

On the basis of this, it has been concluded that the Intellect is preparatory for receiving revelation and believing in it. Another version reads: "**And through you, I am worshipped.**" That is, it [the Intellect] was the first to whom God allotted revelation, speech (*khiṭāb*), love, knowledge, worship, veneration, and the prophecy of the messages of Almighty Truth, as He told it to know itself and its Lord. And if you saw in depth and relied on the light of God you would realize that knowledge [comes] through the Intellect and that the one that is described by the allotment of inspiration, speech, love, knowledge, worship, veneration, and prophecy is the spirit of God' beloved and His Prophet Muḥammad, may God honor him and grant him peace. For he is the one who said: "**The first thing that God created was my spirit**," and in a different version, "**my light.**" For his [Muḥammad's] spirit is luminous essence and his light is the Intellect and he is an accident in his substance (*ʿaraḍ qāʾim fī jawharihi*).[143] That is why [the Prophet], may God honor him and grant him peace, said: "**I was a prophet [already] while Adam was still between spirit and body.**"[144] That is, he was neither spirit nor body yet. That is why he [the Prophet] said: "**The one who knows his soul indeed knows his Lord.**" For it [the Intellect] knew its soul because God made it know it, when He said to it: "**I have not created a creature dearer to Me than you are.**" It also knew God through God's making himself knowable to it when He said: "**By My Might and by My Glory, I have not created a creature dearer to Me than you are.**" So, it [the Intellect] knew that He is God, whose attributes include might, glory, power of creation, and love, and that He is known to every gnostic (*ʿārif*), and that He has the power and authority to take, to give, to reward, and to punish, and that He is the One who deserves to be worshipped. It has reached us from the accounts of some great masters that the first creation was a cherub (*karūbī*), called the Intellect, and that he was the lord of the pen, as is demonstrated by the words: "'**Come forward!' And it came forward. Then He told it: 'Go back!' And it went back.**'" And when He called it [the Intellect] the pen, He told it: "**Tell what will come to pass [from now] until the Day of Judgment.**" Calling it "pen" is like calling the owner of a sword "sword." Also, it is not unlikely that the spirit of God's Prophet, may God honor him and grant him peace, is called "angel" because of the large quantity of his angelic attributes, in the same way as Gabriel, peace be upon him, is called "spirit" because of the predominance of his spirituality. As we say, one is a flame of fire because of the sharpness of his mind. Likewise, he [the Prophet] is called "Intellect" because of the abundance of his intellect and "pen" because he writes what is being created, and he is called "light" for his illumination. "The Intellect" may be understood in language as "the reasoning" (*ʿāqil*), so on the basis of this assessment and interpretation the Prophet's spirit, may God honor him and grant him peace, is the first creation. Understood as such, it is, however, also "angel," "Intellect," "light," and "pen." Pen is close in its meaning to the Intellect. For the Almighty God said: "He taught by the pen," as has come down to us in the exegesis of some; that is, by the Intellect,

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143. As in Mullā Ṣadrā's commentary, the Ṣūfī notion of the Muḥammadan spirit appears here.

144. Cf. John 8:58: "'Very truly I tell you,' Jesus answered, 'before Abraham was born, I am!'"

because things are known through the Intellect. In His saying: "**Come forward, and so on**" there is an allusion to the fact that the Intellect encompasses both "coming" and "going." The devoted inherited its "coming," and they are the predecessors close to God who were among the prophets and the saints, and they are the lords of right and the people of Paradise. The negligent inherited its "going," and they are the lords of left (*mashʾama*) and the people of Hell, to which the following words of the Almighty God allude: "And you became of three classes," and so on [Q 56:7].

Z: I transmitted his [Najm al-Dīn's] account in its entirety because of its logical interconnectedness and its usefulness. As for the recording (*takhrīj*) of the ḥadīth, al-ʿIrāqī said:

It was narrated on the authority of Abū Umāma, ʿĀʾisha, Abū Hurayra, Ibn ʿAbbās, and al-Ḥasan on the authority of several of the Companions. The ḥadīth of Abū Umāma, in turn, was narrated by al-Ṭabarānī in *al-Awsaṭ*[145] and by Abū al-Shaykh [b. Ḥibbān] in his *Kitāb Faḍāʾil al-aʿmāl* from the narration of Saʿīd b. al-Faḍl al-Qurashī, who said: "ʿUmar b. Abī Ṣāliḥ al-ʿAtakī related to us on the authority of Abū Ghālib on the authority of Abū Umāma that he said: 'The Messenger of God, may God honor him and grant him peace, said:"**When God created the Intellect,**" but [in this version] He [God] did not say, '**by My Glory,**' but rather said, '**[there is no creature] more wonderful (*aʿjabu*) to me than you are,**' and '**through you [there is] reward and punishment.**'" ʿUmar b. Abī Ṣāliḥ [al-ʿAtakī] was mentioned by al-ʿUqaylī in *al-Ḍuʿafāʾ*, and he recorded this ḥadīth as his (*awrada lahu hādhā al-ḥadīth*).[146]

Al-Dhahabī said in *al-Mīzān:* "He [ʿUmar] is not known" (*lā yuʿrafu*). And he then said that the narrator on the authority of ʿUmar b. Abī Ṣāliḥ [al-ʿAtakī] is among the unknown[147] and that the story [i.e., the ḥadīth] is false (*al-khabar bāṭil*).

Z: I say that al-ʿUqaylī's exact wording in *al-Ḍuʿafāʾ* is: "This ḥadīth is to be rejected (*munkar*)."[148] ʿUmar and Saʿīd, who narrated on his authority, are entirely unknown in the field of transmission (*fī al-naql*), and he [Saʿīd] has not been corroborated by anyone else [in narrating this ḥadīth], and it [the ḥadīth] is not sound (*lā yutābaʿu ʿalā ḥadīthihi wa-lā yuthbatu*).

Then al-ʿIrāqī said:

As for ʿĀʾisha's ḥadīth, Abū Nuʿaym narrated it in his *al-Ḥilya* and he said: "Abū Bakr ʿAbd Allāh b. Yaḥyā b. Muʿāwiya al-Ṭalḥī informed us that al-Dāraquṭnī told him (*bi-ifādat*) on the authority of Sahl b. al-Marzubān b. Muḥammad al-Tamīmī on the authority of ʿAbd Allāh b. al-Zubayr al-Ḥumaydī on the authority of Ibn ʿUyayna on the authority of Manṣūr on the authority of al-Zuhrī on the authority of ʿUrwa on the

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145. Cf. al-Ṭabarānī, *al-Muʿjam al-kabīr*, 8:190–91.

146. Cf. al-ʿUqaylī, *Kitāb al-Ḍuʿafāʾ*, 3:916, no. 1171: ʿUmar b. Abī Ṣāliḥ al-ʿAtakī.

147. The text says منكرات, but it is probably نكرات.

148. Cf. al-ʿUqaylī, *Kitāb al-Ḍuʿafāʾ*, 3:916, no. 1171: ʿUmar b. Abī Ṣāliḥ al-ʿAtakī.

authority of ʿĀʾisha, may God be pleased with her, that she said: 'The Messenger of God, may God honor him and grant him peace, said: **"The first thing that God created was the Intellect."**'[149] And he [Abū Nuʿaym] mentioned this *ḥadīth* in this way in his biographical entry on Sufyān b. ʿUyayna [d. 198/814]. I did not find in his *isnād* anyone who might be described as weak; nevertheless, there is no doubt that this [*ḥadīth*] is attached to this *isnād*, and I do not know who did it. The *ḥadīth* is to be rejected.

Z: I say that the exact wording of ʿĀʾisha's *ḥadīth*, according to what is written in the *Ḥilya*, is that ʿĀʾisha said: "The Messenger of God, may God honor him and grant him peace, narrated to me: **'The first thing that God created was the Intellect. He told it: "Come forward!" And it came forward. Then He told it: "Go back!" And it went back. Then He said: "I have not created a creature better than you are. Through you I take and though you I give."'"** Abū Nuʿaym said that this is a *gharīb* [i.e., a *ḥadīth* conveyed by only one narrator] among the *ḥadīth*s of Sufyān, Manṣūr, and al-Zuhrī.[150] I do not know of any narrator on the authority of al-Ḥumaydī other than Sahl, and [so] I consider him [Sahl] mistaken in it[s narration] (*wāhiyan*).

And then al-ʿIrāqī said:

As for Abū Hurayra's *ḥadīth*, al-Ḥakīm al-Tirmidhī narrated it in the 206th chapter *(aṣl)*,[151] where he said: "Al-Faḍl b. Muḥammad narrated to us that Hishām b. Khālid al-Dimashqī narrated to him that Yaḥyā"—by whom he meant, in my view, Yaḥyā al-Ghassānī— "narrated to him that Abū ʿAbd Allāh, the client (*mawlā*) of the Banū Umayya, narrated to him on the authority of Abū Ṣāliḥ on the authority on Abū Hurayra, may God be pleased with him, that he said: **'I heard the Messenger of God say: "The first thing that God created was the pen; then He created the *nūn*,"**[152] which is the inkwell, and so on. And it goes on: **"And then God created the Intellect and said: 'By My Might, I will perfect you only in those I love, and I will make you deficient in those I made deficient.'"'** As for Abū ʿAbd Allāh, I do not know who that is."

Z: I say that Ibn ʿAsākir [d. 571/1176] recorded (*akhraja*) in his *Tārīkh* [*madīnat Dimashq*] the following: "Abū al-ʿIzz Aḥmad b. ʿAbd Allāh informed us that Muḥammad b. Aḥmad b. Ḥasanūn informed him that Abū Ḥusayn al-Dāraquṭnī informed him that the *qāḍī* Abū Ṭāhir Muḥammad b. Aḥmad b. Naṣr narrated to him that Jaʿfar b. Muḥammad al-Faryānī narrated

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149. Cf. Abū Nuʿaym, *Ḥilyat al-awliyāʾ*, 7:318.

150. Cf. Abū Nuʿaym, *Ḥilyat al-awliyāʾ*, 7:318.

151. In the edition I used, the *ḥadīth* is found in the 208th chapter. See al-Ḥakīm al-Tirmidhī, *al-Nuskha al-musnada*, 1:765. However, in the available abridged version (which omits the *isnād*s) it indeed appears in the 206th chapter. See al-Ḥakīm al-Tirmidhī, *Nawādir al-uṣūl fī maʿrifat aḥādīth al-Rasūl*, ed. ʿA. ʿUmayra (Beirut: Dār al-Jīl, 1992), 2:254.

152. Al-Zabīdī's version contains "light" (*nūr*) instead of the word *nūn* (the name of the letter ن). However, I chose to use *nūn*, because *nūr* is likely to be the result of an oversight by the editor. Other versions of the *ḥadīth* in this edition mention *nūn* along with "pen," likely alluding to the Qurʾānic verse 68:1. Furthermore, it is the meaning of *nūn*, not of *nūr*, that is discussed later in the text. Finally, another edition of selections of commentaries on *Iḥyāʾ ʿulūm al-dīn* mentions *nūn* here. See al-ʿIrāqī, *Takhrīj aḥādīth Iḥyāʾ ʿulūm al-dīn*, 233.

to him that Abū Marwān Hishām b. Khālid al-Azraq narrated to him that al-Ḥusayn b. Yaḥyā al-Khushanī narrated to him on the authority of Abū ʿAbd Allāh, the client (*mawlā*) of the Banū Umayya, on the authority of Abū Ṣāliḥ on the authority of Abū Hurayra that he said: **'I heard the Messenger of God, may God honor him and grant him peace, say that the first thing that God created was the pen; then He created the *nūn*, which is the inkwell, and then He told it: "Write!" And it replied: "And what should I write?" He said: "Write what is and what will come to pass of actions or effects or allotments (*rizq*) and appointed times (*ajal*)." So it wrote what is and what will be until the Day of Judgment.'** And this is [what God meant in the Qurʾān by] saying: "*Nūn.* By the pen and by the [record] that [men] write" (Q 68:1). [The report continued:] **"Then he sealed the pen and it [the pen] did not speak. It will not speak until the Day of Judgment. Then He [God] created the Intellect and said: 'By My Might, I will perfect you in those I love and I will make you deficient in those I hate.'"** And this is a good corroboration (*mutābaʿa*) of what the shaykh of al-Ḥakīm al-Tirmidhī had narrated (the shaykh of al-Ḥakīm al-Tirmidhī is al-Faḍl b. Muḥammad), even though the shaykhs of Hishām differ in the two narrations, as you can see.

I say that Abū ʿAbd Allāh is the client of the Banū Umayya; his name is Nāṣiḥ, and he was mentioned by Ibn ʿAsākir. And Sumayy also narrated it on the authority of Abū Ṣāliḥ. Ibn ʿAdī[153] [al-Jurjānī, d. 365/976] said:

ʿĪsā b. Aḥmad, the Ṣūfī, narrated to us in Egypt, and al-Rabīʿ b. Sulaymān al-Jīzī narrated to him that Muḥammad b. Wahb al-Dimashqī narrated to him that al-Walīd b. Muslim narrated to him that Mālik b. Anas [d. 179/795] narrated to him on the authority of Sumayy, and he quoted it [the *ḥadīth*], except that it contains: **"actions or appointed times (*ajal*) or effects, and the pen pinned down (*jarā*) what will come to pass until the Day of Judgment."** And it also contains: **"And the Omnipotent said: 'I have not created a creature more wonderful to me than you are,' and so on."**

Ibn ʿAdī said:[154] "It [this *ḥadīth*] is false (*bāṭil*) and to be rejected (*munkar*), and its ruin (*āfa*) is Muḥammad b. Wahb. He has more than one rejected *ḥadīth*."

And [al-Dhahabī] said in *al-Mīzān*: "Ibn ʿAdī said the truth that this *ḥadīth* is false."[155] Al-Dāraquṭnī recorded (*akhraja*) it in *al-Gharāʾib*[156] on the authority of ʿAlī b. Aḥmad al-Azraq on the authority of Aḥmad b. Jaʿfar b. Aḥmad al-Fahrī on the authority of al-Rabīʿ b. Sulaymān al-Jīzī with this *isnād* [that continues with al-Dimashqī].

And he [al-Dāraquṭnī] said: This *ḥadīth* is not well-known either from Mālik or from Sumayy." And al-Walīd b. Muslim is reliable, and Muḥammad b. Wahb and the [transmitter] after him are unobjectionable (*laysa bihim baʾs*). And I am afraid that they may have mixed

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153. Ibn ʿAdī al-Jurjānī, *al-Kāmil fī ḍuʿafāʾ al-rijāl*, ed. M. b. M. al-Sarsāwī (Riyadh: Maktabat al-Rushd, 2013), 9:379–80.

154. Ibn ʿAdī, *al-Kāmil*, 9:380.

155. Al-Dhahabī, *al-Mīzān*, 4:61.

156. This book has been lost.

up the *ḥadīth*. Ibn ʿAdī[157] and al-Bayhaqī[158] recorded through the narration of Ḥafṣ b. ʿUmar that al-Faḍl b. Qays al-Raqāshī[159] narrated to him on the authority of Abū Uthmān al-Nahdī on the authority of Abū Hurayra, who raised it to the Prophet (*rafaʿahu*),[160] and he quoted it in the same way as Abū Umāma's *ḥadīth*, mentioned above. As for al-Faḍl, Yaḥyā said about him: "He is a bad man." As for Ḥafṣ b. ʿUmar, he was the *qāḍī* of Aleppo and Ibn Ḥabbān said about him: "He narrates forged *ḥadīth*s on the authority of reliable transmitters, and it is not permitted to use his *ḥadīth*s as legal proofs (*Lā yaḥillu al-iḥtijāj bihi*)." Al-Dāraquṭnī[161] recorded it from the narration of Ḥasan b. ʿArafa, [who said:] "Sayf b. Muḥammad narrated to us on the authority of Sufyān al-Thawrī on the authority of al-Fuḍayl b. ʿUthmān on the authority of Abū Hurayra," and so on, as mentioned earlier. It was agreed that Sayf was a liar (*Sayf kadhdhāb bi-l-ijmāʿ*).

Al-ʿIrāqī said:

The *ḥadīth* of al-Ḥasan [al-Baṣrī] on the authority of a number of transmitters (*ʿan ʿidda*) was also narrated by al-Ḥakīm al-Tirmidhī,[162] who said: ʿAbd al-Raḥīm b. Ḥabīb narrated to us that Dāwūd b. al-Muḥabbir narrated to him that al-Ḥasan b. Dīnār said: I heard al-Ḥasan say: **"I heard from a number of Companions of the Messenger of God, may God honor him and grant him peace, that the Messenger of God, may God honor him and grant him peace, said: 'When (*lammā*) God created the Intellect,'** and so on, and he added to it (*zāda fīhi*): **'Then He [God] told it: "Sit down!" And it sat down. Then He told it: "Depart!" (*inṭaliq*) And it departed. Then He told it: "Be quiet!" And it was quiet. Then He said: "By My Might and by My Glory and by My Greatness and by My Magnificence and by My Power and by My Omnipotence, I have not created a creature dearer to Me than you are or nobler to Me (*akram*) than you are. Through you I am known, through you I am praised, through you I am obeyed, through you I take, through you I give, it is you that I blame, and it is you that I reward, and to you belongs punishment."'"** All of its [this *ḥadīth*'s] narrators except for al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī are to be damned (*halkā*). ʿAbd al-Raḥīm b. Ḥabīb al-Faryābī is worthless, as Yaḥyā b. Maʿīn said. Ibn Ḥibbān said that he may have forged more than five hundred *ḥadīth*s. Dāwūd was already mentioned. Al-Ḥasan b. Dīnār is also weak. And Dāwūd b. al-Muḥabbir narrated it also in [*Kitāb*] *al-ʿAql* with an interrupted *isnād* (*mursalan*), saying, "Ṣāliḥ al-Murrī narrated to us on the authority of al-Ḥasan b. Abī Ḥusayn," and then he gave a shortened version. So, as a whole, all of its [this *ḥadīth*'s] pathways are weak.

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157. Ibn ʿAdī, *al-Kāmil*, 4:82.

158. Al-Bayhaqī, *al-Jāmiʿ li-shuʿab al-īmān*, ed. M. A. al-Nadawī (Riyadh: Maktabat al-Rushd, 2003), 6:349.

159. He is discussed earlier under the name al-Faḍl b. ʿĪsā al-Raqāshī; Qays is probably a scribal error.

160. This means that he directly attributed the *ḥadīth* to the Prophet, omitting some narrators in the *isnād*

161. Cf. Al-Suyūṭī, *al-Laʾālī al-maṣnūʿa fī al-aḥādīth al-mawḍūʿa* (Beirut: Dār al-Maʿrifa, n.d.), 1:129; Ibn al-Jawzī, *Kitāb al-Mawḍūʿāt*, ed. ʿA. M. ʿUthmān (Medina: al-Maktaba al-Salafiyya, 1966–68), 1:174.

162. Al-Ḥakīm al-Tirmidhī, *al-Nuskha al-musnada*, 764.

Z: I say that al-Ḥakīm al-Tirmidhī[163] said that al-Faḍl b. Muḥammad narrated to him that Hishām b. Khālid narrated to him on the authority of Baqiyya [b. Makhlad] on the authority of al-Awzāʿī the same *ḥadīth* from the Messenger of God, may God honor him and grant him peace. As for what he [al-ʿIrāqī] said—that Dāwūd b. al-Muḥabbir narrated it in [*Kitāb*] *al-ʿAql* with an interrupted *isnād* (*mursalan*), and so on—al-Bayhaqī recorded it (*akhrajahu*), and after quoting the *ḥadīth* from the narration of the previously mentioned Ḥafṣ b. ʿUmar, he said: "The *isnād* is not strong (*ghayr qawī*)." And it is famous from the statement of Ḥasan: "Abū Ṭāhir Muḥammad b. Maḥmish narrated to us that Abū Ṭāhir al-Muḥammad Ibādī narrated to him that al-Faḍl b. Muḥammad b. al-Musayyab narrated to him that ʿAbd Allāh b. Muḥammad al-ʿĀbisī narrated to him that Ṣāliḥ al-Murrī narrated to him on the authority of al-Ḥasan that he said: 'When Almighty God created the Intellect,' and he quoted it."

ʿAbd Allāh b. Aḥmad, in *Zawāʾid al-Zuhd*, said:

ʿAlī b. Muslim narrated to us that Sayyār narrated to him that Jaʿfar narrated to him that Mālik b. Dīnār narrated to him on the authority of al-Ḥasan, who raised it to the Prophet (*yarfaʿuhu*): **"When God created the Intellect, He told it: 'Come forward!' And it came. Then he told it: 'Go back!' And it went back. Then He told it: 'I have not created a creature better than you. Through you I take and through you I give.'"**

This is, as you see, a good chain [of transmitters], so al-Ḥāfiẓ al-ʿIrāqī's statement that "as a whole, all of the *ḥadīth*'s pathways are weak" deserves further investigation. And [the same applies to] what Ibn al-Jawzī said in *al-Mawḍūʿāt*, which was followed by Ibn Taymiyya as well as al-Zarkashī and others. What can be said about it at most is that it is weak in some of its pathways.[164] Indeed, the *ḥadīth* was also narrated on the authority of ʿAlī, may God be pleased with him. Al-Ḥāfiẓ al-Suyūṭī said in his *al-Laʾālī al-maṣnūʿa* that al-Khaṭīb said:[165]

ʿAlī b. Aḥmad al-Razzāz informed us (*akhbaranā*) that al-Faraj ʿAlī b. al-Ḥusayn al-Kātib informed him that the *qāḍī* Abū Jaʿfar Aḥmad b. Muḥammad b. Naṣr narrated to him that Muḥammad b. al-Ḥasan al-Raqqī narrated to him that Mūsā b. ʿAbd Allāh al-Ḥasan b. Ḥasan b. ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib narrated to him from Fāṭima bt. Saʿīd b. ʿUqba b. Shaddād b. Umayya al-Juhanī on the authority of her father on the authority of Zayd b. ʿAlī on the authority of his father and his grandfather on the authority of ʿAlī on the authority of the Prophet, may God honor him and grant him peace, that he said: **"The first thing that God created was the pen; then He created an inkwell, and he continued [the *ḥadīth*]. In it, He created the Intellect. Then He interrogated it and it answered Him. Then He told it: 'Go back (*idhab*)!' And it went back. Then He told it: 'Come forward!' And it came forward. Then He interrogated it and it answered Him. He [God] said: 'By My Might and by My Glory, I have not created anything dearer to Me than you are or and better than you are,'"** until the end of what he mentioned.

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163. Al-Ḥakīm al-Tirmidhī, *al-Nuskha al-musnada*, 764.

164. This is an important point: al-Zabīdī makes an effort to salvage the *ḥadīth*.

165. Cf. al-Suyūṭī, *al-Laʾālī al-maṣnūʿa*, 1:128–32.

G: And if you say: "Assuming that the Intellect was an accident, how was it created before bodies (*ajsām*)?"

Z: Because accidents cannot exist on their own.

G: "And assuming that it was a substance, how would it exist on its own without occupying space (*lā yataḥayyazu*)?" Then know that this belongs to

Z: the realm of

G: esoteric knowledge (*ᶜilm al-mukāshafa*) [i.e., Ṣūfism], and it should not be mentioned

Z: and another copy (*nuskha*) has "It is not appropriate that it be mentioned"

G: in the context of exoteric knowledge (*ilm al-muᶜāmala*), and our objective

Z: here and now

G: is exoteric knowledge.

Z: Al-Rāghib [al-Iṣfahānī, early fifth/eleventh century] conveyed this study in his *Dharīᶜa*[166] in a shortened version. He said:

> The Intellect is the first substance (*awwalu jawhar*) that the Almighty God created (*awjadahu*) and honored. This is proven by the *ḥadīth* whose *isnād* was raised to the Prophet (*marfūᶜ*): '**The first thing (*awwalu mā*) that God created was the Intellect**,' and so on. And were it an accident, as a group of people have imagined, it would not be correct to say that it is the first creation. For it is not possible for any accident to exist before the existence of a substance that could carry it.

Z: And the examination of this point [has shown] that the substance is quiddity (*māhiyya*), such that when it exists in the sensible world (*aᶜyān*) it would not exist in a substrate (*mawḍūᶜ*). It is confined to five [types]: matter (*hayūlā*), form (*ṣūra*), body (*jism*), soul (*nafs*), and intellect (*ᶜaql*).[167] Because it [i.e., the substance] is either abstract (*mujarrad*) or not. As for the first [kind, the abstract], it is either not connected to the body (*badan*) by way of governance or control, or it is so connected. The former is the Intellect and the latter the Soul. As for the non-abstract, it is either composite or noncompound (*basīṭ*). The former is the body and the latter is either something that inheres in a substratum (*ḥāl*) or a substratum (*maḥall*). The former is the form and the latter the matter, and it is called the reality (*ḥaqīqa*). The substance is divided into spiritual noncompounds, such as abstract intellects and souls, and bodily noncompounds, such as the elements, and into those that are composite in the intellect and not in the external world, such as the composite substantial essences of genus and differentiae, and those that are composite, such as the three generated classes (*muwalladāt thalātha*) [i.e., minerals, plants, and animals].

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166. Al-Rāghib al-Iṣfahānī, *al-Dharīᶜa ilā makārim al-sharīᶜa*, ed. A. Y. A. Z. al-ᶜAjamī (Cairo: Dār al-Salām, 2007), 1:133.

167. This division follows the tradition of scholastic Avicennian philosophy.

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