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Recasting al-Bayḍāwī's Eschatological Concept of Bodily Resurrection: Shams al-Dīn al-Iṣfahānī and Aḥmad al-Ījī in Comparative Perspective

Introduction

In “Islamicate”¹ intellectual history, Muslim theologians have engaged in intense debate about the nature and the form that the human body will take in the afterlife. The debate centered on whether the soul or the body—or both—will be restored, a doctrine crucial in Islam that represents the fifth cornerstone of the faith (*arkān al-īmān*).² In Ash‘arite theological texts, the belief in the resurrection is associated with an understanding of punishment and reward for one’s actions.³ To explain the process of punishment and reward, Muslim philosophers and Ash‘arite theologians developed different ontological theories of the human body and its material constituents. The topic of resurrection is one of three main subjects that were debated among philosophers and theologians.⁴

The present article explores resurrection according to the “post-classical Ash‘arite” anthropology which was based from the twelfth century onwards on a corporeal theory of “man”⁵ and inspired to a certain extent by the Avicennan understanding of the relationship between essence (*māhīyah*) and existence (*wujūd*).⁶

I would like to express my deep gratitude to Professor Dr. Robert Moore for reading and commenting on the present article. All remaining errors are my own.

¹In this work, I am borrowing the term “Islamicate” from Marshall Hodgson. Idem, *The Venture of Islam*, vol. 1: *The Classical Age of Islam* (Chicago, 1974), 59.

²Faith in Islam is based on six key principles: belief in God (*al-īmān billāh*), belief in the angels (*wa-malā’ikatihi*), belief in the revealed books (*wa-kutubihi*), belief in resurrection and the last day (*wa-al-yawm al-ākhir*), and belief in predestination, both good and bad (*wa-al-qaḍā’ khayrih wa-sharrih*).

³For the Islamic tradition concerning punishment and reward, see, for instance, Jon Hoover, “Islamic Universalism: Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya’s Salafī Deliberation on the Duration of Hell-Fire,” *The Muslim World* 99 (2009): 181–201; Christian Lange, *Justice, Punishment and the Medieval Muslim Imagination* (Cambridge, 2008); idem, *The Discovery of Paradise in Islam* (Utrecht, 2012); idem, *Locating Hell in Islamic Tradition* (Leiden, 2016); idem, *Paradise and Hell in Islamic Tradition* (Cambridge, 2016).

⁴Thomas Würtz, *Islamische Theologie im 14. Jahrhundert: Auferstehungslehre, Handlungstheorie und Schöpfungsvorstellungen im Werk von Sa’d al-Dīn al-Taftazānī* (Berlin, 2016), 87.

⁵For a definition of “man” (*al-insān*), see Ayman Shihadeh, “Classical Ash‘ari Anthropology: Body, Life and Spirit,” *The Muslim World* 102, nos. 3–4 (2012): 433–77.

⁶For the relationship between essence and existence, see for instance Heidrun Eichner, “Essence and Existence: Thirteenth-Century Perspectives in Arabic-Islamic Philosophy and Theology,” in



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In this article, “post-classical Ash‘arism” refers to the period that succeeded the earlier phase of Baṣran Mu‘tazilism and early school of Ash‘arism.⁷ The transition from “classical” to “post-classical” Ash‘arite anthropology was initiated by the Sunni theologian al-Ghazālī (d. 1111), who integrated Hellenistic philosophy into his *kalām*. As a case study in post-classical Ash‘arite anthropology, the following article examines how two Sunni-Ash‘arite theologians recast the eschatological concept of resurrection in two different cultural loci of the Islamicate world, Ilkhanid Tabriz and Mamluk Cairo, by the beginning of the fourteenth century. ‘Abd Allāh al-Bayḍāwī’s (d. 1316)⁸ concept of resurrection is described in his work *Ṭawālī‘ al-anwār min maṭālī‘ al-anzār* (The Rising light from far horizons, hereafter *Ṭawālī‘*),⁹ composed in Tabriz between the years 681/1282 and 704/1303–4.¹⁰ In this article, I will focus on two commentaries: (1) Shams al-Dīn Maḥmūd Ibn ‘Abd al-Raḥmān al-İṣfahānī (d. 1348), and (2) Aḥmad al-Ījī (d. early fourteenth century).¹¹

Academic Context of the Present Article

Until the end of the twentieth century, both Arab and Western scholars of Arabic philosophy held that the Sunni Muslim philosopher Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī effectively ended Arabic philosophy through his condemnation of it in his work *Tahāfut al-falāsifah* (The Incoherence of the philosophers).¹² One of the first to make this

The Arabic, Hebrew and Latin Reception of Avicenna’s “Metaphysics” (Berlin, 2012), 123–51.

⁷See Shihadeh, “Classical Ash‘ari Anthropology,” 434.

⁸Unfortunately, there is no evidence concerning the date of al-Bayḍāwī’s birth. There is only a minor reference explaining that he was born in a village called al-Bayḍā’ before his family moved permanently to nearby Shiraz. Like van Ess, W. Montgomery Watt concludes that al-Bayḍāwī died probably in 1308 or 1316. See Josef van Ess, “Das Todesdatum des Baidawi,” *Die Welt des Orients* 9 (1978): 261–70; W. Montgomery Watt, *Islamic Philosophy and Theology* (Edinburgh, 1962), 137.

⁹Al-Bayḍāwī, *Ṭawālī‘ al-anwār min maṭālī‘ al-anzār*, ed. ‘Abbās Sulaymān (Cairo, 1991).

¹⁰This imprecise timeframe is due to the fact that bio-bibliographical dictionaries do not provide us with a detailed survey of his works. From these sources, we know that al-Bayḍāwī’s scholarly activities began after his trip to Tabriz in 1282. Since the first commentary on his *Ṭawālī‘* appeared in 704/1304, he must have finished it between 1282 and 1303–4.

¹¹To the best of my knowledge, there is no biographical evidence concerning Aḥmad al-Ījī’s life. The only evidence available indicates that he was a contemporary of al-Bayḍāwī and that he was connected to a Tabrizian network of scholars, as he states in the introduction of his commentary. Al-Ījī, “Al-Maṭālī‘ fī sharḥ al-ṭawālī‘,” Chester Beatty Library MS 5198, fol. 2.

¹²See Frank Griffel, *Al-Ghazali’s Philosophical Theology* (New York, 2009), 3–17. In contemporary scholarship, the claim that Islamic intellectual history entered into a phase of “intellectual stagnancy” after the death of al-Ghazālī is considered outdated. See, for instance, Dimitri Gutas, “The Heritage of Avicenna: The Golden Age of Arabic Philosophy, 1000-ca. 1350,” in *Avicenna and his Heritage: Acts of the International Colloquium*, ed. Jules Janssens and Daniel De Smet (Leuven,



claim was Ernest Renan, who argued in his book *Averroes et l'Averroïsme*¹³ that the Islamic world adopted al-Ghazālī's "anti-philosophical" attitude and in turn rejected Averroes' (d. 1198) fascination with philosophy. Ignaz Goldziher, another pioneer in Islamic studies, claimed that al-Ghazālī's *Tahāfut al-falāsifah*¹⁴ marked the beginning of the end of Arabic philosophy in the Islamicate world.¹⁵ William W. Montgomery claimed that after the *Tahāfut* "there was no further philosopher of note in the eastern Islamic world."¹⁶ As a consequence, Islamicate intellectual history from the twelfth century onwards was associated with an ever-growing trend towards hadith studies and speculative theology (*kalām*), on the one hand, and a widespread and growing "hostility" towards philosophy, on the other. However, during the last two decades, many innovative and critical studies have challenged the assertion that Arabic philosophy continued with "little originality" in post-Ghazālīan times.¹⁷ Dimitri Gutas, for instance, questioned the assumed disappearance of Arabic philosophy in his article entitled "The Heritage of Avicenna: The Golden Age of Arabic Philosophy, 1000–ca. 1350."¹⁸ This was one of the first critical studies that challenged the assumption that al-Ghazālī's critique of the philosophers was the "death blow" to the Avicennan philosophical heritage in both the eastern and western halves of the Islamicate world. Frank Griffel asserts:

2002), 81–97; idem, "The Study of Arabic Philosophy in the Twentieth Century: An Essay on the Historiography of Arabic Philosophy," *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* 29 (2002): 5–25; Robert Wisnovsky, "The Nature and Scope of Arabic Philosophical Commentary in Post-classical (ca. 1100–1900 AD) Islamic Intellectual History: Some Preliminary Observations," in *Philosophy, Science and Exegesis in Greek, Arabic and Latin Commentaries*, ed. Peter Adamson, Han Baltussen, and Martin W. F. Stone (London, 2004), 2:149–91; Ayman Shihadeh, "From al-Ghazālī to al-Rāzī," *Muslim Philosophical Theology, Arabic Sciences and Philosophy* 15 (2005): 141–79; Frank Griffel, "... and the killing of someone who upholds these convictions is obligatory!" Religious Law and the Assumed Disappearance of Philosophy in Islam," in *Das Gesetz-The Law-La Loi*, ed. Andreas Speer and Guy Guldentops (Berlin, 2014), 226.

¹³Ernest Renan, *Averroès et l'Averroïsme: Essai historique* (Paris, 1852).

¹⁴Abū Hāmid al-Ghazālī, *Tahāfut al-falāsifah*, ed. Sulaymān Dunyā (Cairo, 1980).

¹⁵Ignaz Goldziher, "Stellung der alten islamischen Orthodoxie zu den antiken Wissenschaften," *Abhandlung der Königlich-Preussischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, Philosophisch-Historische Klasse* 8 (1915): 3–46.

¹⁶For a detailed description of prominent figures who have spread the idea of the alleged disappearance of Arabic philosophy after the death of al-Ghazālī see Griffel, *Al-Ghazali's Philosophical Theology*, 3–17.

¹⁷See for instance Heidrun Eichner, "The Post-Avicennian Philosophical Tradition and Islamic Orthodoxy: Philosophical and Theological Summae in Context" (habilitation thesis, Halle, 2009), 285.

¹⁸Gutas, "The Heritage of Avicenna," 84.



There is clear evidence that even after al-Ghazālī there were enough of the latter circles [circles that favored and encouraged philosophers to write books] to safeguard that philosophy in Islam did not appear after 1100.... If my field of study, that is Islamic studies, has given a wrong impression about this in the past one-hundred and sixty years since the appearance of Ernest Renan's *Averroes et l'Averroïsme* it is now high time to rectify this mistake.¹⁹

Unlike Dimitri Gutas, who characterizes the period between 1100 and 1350 as the "Golden Age of Arabic Philosophy," George Saliba, who has written many works on "kalām atomism"²⁰ between the thirteenth and fifteenth centuries, considers this period the "Golden Age of Arabic Astronomy."²¹ Generally speaking, recent scholarship on the reception of Avicenna's (d. 1037) philosophy after the death of al-Ghazālī has broken with the European scholarly tradition of the twentieth century. The present article is part of this revisionist approach that attempts to reconsider the mainstream opinion of the alleged "hostility" of Muslim scholars toward philosophy after al-Ghazālī's death, as well as to re-read Islamicate intellectual history on its own terms. It fits into the aforementioned narratives because it tries to show the scholarly dynamic and the interest of Muslim scholars in philosophy in the late Middle Period.

The Sources

Al-BayḌāwī's *Al-Ṭawālī*⁶

After acting as a chief judge (*qāḍī al-quḍāh*) in Shiraz, al-BayḌāwī moved to Tabriz in 1282, where he began his scholarly activities and composed the largest corpus of his writings, including *Minhāj al-wuṣūl ilā 'ilm al-uṣūl*, *Al-Tanzīl wa-asrār al-ta'wīl*, *Nidhām al-tawārīkh*, and the *Ṭawālī*⁶. He also wrote a few commentaries, such as *Sharḥ al-maḥṣūl min 'ilm al-uṣūl*,²² *Sharḥ al-tanbīh*,²³ and *Sharḥ al-fuṣūl*.²⁴

¹⁹Frank Griffel, "... and the killing of someone who upholds these convictions is obligatory!" 226.

²⁰Concerning the notion of "kalām atomism," see for instance Salomon Pines, *Beiträge zur Islamischen Atomlehre* (Berlin, 1936); Abdelhamid Sabra, "The Simple Ontology of Kalām Atomism: An Outline," *Early Science and Medicine* 14 (2009): 68–78; Alnoor Dhanani, *The Physical Theory of Kalam: Atoms, Space, and Void in Basrian Mu'tazili Cosmology* (Leiden, 1994); idem, "The Impact of Ibn Sīnā's Critique of Atomism on Subsequent Kalām Discussion of Atomism," *Arabic Sciences and Philosophy* 25 (2015): 79–104.

²¹George Saliba, *A History of Arabic Astronomy: Planetary Theories during the Golden Age of Islam* (New York, 1994).

²²This is a commentary upon al-Rāzī's *Al-Maḥṣūl*.

²³This is a commentary upon Abī Ishāq al-Shīrāzī's *Al-Tanbīh*.

²⁴This is a commentary upon al-Ṭūsī's work *Al-Fuṣūl*.



Many copies of the *Ṭawālī'* have survived: a copy at Princeton University Library (Garrett no. 283B) consists of about 67 folios, and a copy in the Universitätsbibliothek Leipzig (Vollers 0132) consists of 90 folios. In the *Ṭawālī'*, al-Bayḍāwī develops his eschatological concept of resurrection. The structure of the *Ṭawālī'* is to a certain degree inspired by Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī's *kalām* work *Al-Mulakhkhaṣ*.²⁵ Concerning this influence, Heidrun Eichner states:

We might describe the arguments of al-Bayḍāwī's *Ṭawālī' al-anwār* as primarily based on that of the *al-Mulakhkhaṣ fī al-ḥikma*. Al-Bayḍāwī gives an epitomized version of important arguments of the *al-Mulakhkhaṣ fī al-ḥikma*, and he supplements this by doxographical details. Partly, his reorganization of the argument is guided by a dichotomy between 'philosophers' and 'theologians'.

The *Ṭawālī'* is divided into an introduction (*muqaddimah*) and three parts (*thalāth kutub*):²⁶

Introduction: Studies in logical reasoning

Book 1: Possible Realities:

Section 1: Universals

Section 2: Accidents

Ch. 1. General

Ch. 2. Quantity

Section 3: Substances

Book 2: Divine Realities

Book 3: Prophetic Realities (prophecy, imamate, practical theology, the last day)

Al-Bayḍāwī praises *'ilm al-kalām* as the noblest science that God recommends in the holy Quran for the following reasons: the greatness of its subject-matter, the straightness of its components, the strength of its arguments, and the obviousness of its methods.²⁷ His lines of reasoning are very concise. This style of argumentation can be explained by the length of the *Ṭawālī'*, which al-Bayḍāwī conceptualizes as a brief theological treatise used only by advanced scholars.²⁸

²⁵Eichner, "The Post-Avicennian Philosophical Tradition and Islamic Orthodoxy," 394.

²⁶*Nature, Man and God in Medieval Islam: 'Abd Allah Baydawi's Text, Ṭawālī' Al-anwar Min Matalī' Al-anzar, Along with Mahmud Isfahani's Commentary, Matalī' Al-anzar, Sharh Ṭawālī' Al-anwar*, ed. and trans. Edwin E. Calverley and James W. Pollock (Leiden, 2002).

²⁷*Nature, Man and God in Medieval Islam*, 1:5. Cf. Eichner, "The Post-Avicennian Philosophical Tradition and Islamic Orthodoxy," 285.

²⁸Eichner argues that al-Bayḍāwī did not elaborate his arguments because of "the very shortness of the text, and possibly also due to its character as a textbook." "The Post-Avicennian Philo-



In the introduction, al-BayḌāwī argues that rational reasoning is necessary for the acquisition (*kasb*) of knowledge about God, the creation of the world, and human acts. In the third book of the *Ṭawāli*^c, al-BayḌāwī devotes an entire subsection to the resurrection of the vanished non-existent. As Heidrun Eichner states, al-BayḌāwī refers in the *Ṭawāli*^c to theoretical approaches that are based on a synthesis of astronomy and theology. This can be explained by the fact that al-BayḌāwī belonged in Tabriz to a scholarly network of Muslim astronomers and physicians who worked in the Marāgha observatory.²⁹ The many commentaries written on his *Ṭawāli*^c in different parts of the Islamicate world over the course of three centuries (from the fourteenth through sixteenth centuries) bear witness to its continued importance, as Table 1 shows.³⁰

Al-Iṣfahānī's commentary on the *Maṭāli*^c

The Ash'arite theologian Shams al-Dīn Maḥmūd Ibn 'Abd al-Raḥmān al-Iṣfahānī (d. 1348) composed a commentary upon al-BayḌāwī's work titled *Maṭāli*^c *al-anzār*: *Sharḥ ṭawāli*^c *al-anwār* (Insider's lights: A Commentary on the work *The Rising Light*, hereafter *Maṭāli*^c) in Mamluk Cairo. Like al-BayḌāwī, al-Iṣfahānī started his career in Tabriz.³¹ Though there is no historical evidence available that demonstrates a direct relationship between 'Abd Allāh al-BayḌāwī, al-Iṣfahānī, and Aḥmad al-Ījī, they belonged to Rashīd al-Dīn's (d. 718/1318) scholarly network in Tabriz until the execution of the latter in 1318.³² It should be mentioned that al-BayḌāwī and al-Iṣfahānī were trained in astronomy (*ilm al-hay'ah*) and natural philosophy because they belonged to the Marāgha scientific tradition.³³ This also explains why al-Iṣfahānī's commentary, the *Maṭāli*^c, shows sympathy to astronomy, while other scholars of his time in Cairo would not have included it. After

sophical Tradition and Islamic Orthodoxy," 395.

²⁹Ibid., 285.

³⁰For a detailed survey of the commentaries on the *Ṭawāli*^c see Wisnovsky, "The Nature and Scope of Arabic Philosophical Commentary in Post-classical (ca. 1100–1900 AD) Islamic Intellectual History," 2:177. Wisnovsky's survey is a translation of Carl Brockelmann's survey of commentaries on al-BayḌāwī's *Ṭawāli*^c in *Geschichte der arabischen Literatur*, 1:533. I added Aḥmad al-Ījī's commentary *Al-Maṭāli*^c *fī sharḥ al-ṭawāli*^c. I further deleted the commentary of Quṭb al-Dīn al-Taḥṭānī entitled *Maṭāli*^c *al-anwār*, because the latter is a commentary upon a work on logic and philosophy written by the judge Sirāj al-Dīn Maḥmūd ibn Abī Bakr al-Urmawī.

³¹Al Ghouz, "Brokers of Islamic Philosophy in Mamlūk Egypt: Shams ad-Dīn Maḥmūd Ibn 'Abdelraḥmān al-Iṣfahānī as a Case Study in the Transmission of Philosophical Knowledge through Commentary Writing," *Studies of the Annemarie Schimmel Institute for Advanced Study II* (Bonn, 2016), 154.

³²Ibid., 169.

³³Ibid., 153–54. See also Josef van Ess, *Der Wesir und seine Gelehrten: Zu Inhalt und Entstehungsgeschichte der theologischen Schriften des Raṣīdudḏn Faḏlullāh (718/1318)* (Wiesbaden, 1981), 24.



**Table 1. Commentaries on ‘Abd Allāh al-Bayḍāwī’s
*Tawālī‘ al-anwār min maṭālī‘ al-anzār***

1.	Aḥmad al-Ījī: <i>Al-Maṭālī‘ fī sharḥ al-ṭawālī‘</i> (completed in Tabrīz, 704/1304). One copy is available at the Chester Beatty Library and Gallery of Oriental Art.
2.	Shams al-Dīn Maḥmūd ibn ‘Abd al-Raḥmān al-Iṣfahānī: <i>Maṭālī‘ al-anzār: sharḥ ṭawālī‘ al-anzār</i>
3.	Ḥājji Bāshā al-Aydīnī (d. ?): <i>Masālik al-kalām fī masā‘il al-kalām</i> . Composed for ‘Īsā ibn Muḥammad ibn Āydīn (d. 816/1413)
4.	Al-Burhān ‘Ubayd Allāh ibn Muḥammad al-‘Ubaydalī al-Sharīf al-Farghānī, known as al-‘Ibarī (d. 743/1342). Al-‘Ibarī was a judge in Tabriz, and he composed this <i>sharḥ</i> for Shihāb al-Dīn Mubārak Shāh.
5.	Yūsuf Ḥallāj. Completed in 772/1370.
6.	Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad al-Baṣṭāmī (d. 843/1439)
7.	Khawājah Zādah (d. 893/1487)
8.	Zakarīyā’ ibn Muḥammad al-Anṣārī (d. 926/1520)
9.	‘Iṣām al-Dīn al-Isfarāyīnī (d. 943/1536)
10.	Muṣliḥ al-Dīn al-Lārī (d. 979/1571)
11.	Aḥmad ibn Yūsuf al-Sanadī al-Ḥaṣnakīfī (d. ?)
12.	Jalāl al-Dīn al-Dawānī (d. 907/1501): <i>Sharḥ awā‘il dībājāt al-ṭawālī‘</i>
13.	Aḥmad ibn Muṣṭafā al-Ṭāshakbirī (d. 969/1561)
14.	Sāṣaqlizāde (1150/1737): <i>Nashr ṭawālī‘ al-anwār</i>
15.	Humām al-Dīn al-Kilnārī (d. ?)
16.	Ghiyāth al-Dīn Muḥammad ibn Yūsuf Baḥrābādhī (d. ?)
17.	Mu‘īn al-Dīn Ḥasan ibn Muḥammad al-Tūnī (d. ?)
18.	Humām al-Dīn al-Kilnārī (d. ?)
19.	Rukn al-Dīn Abū al-Ḥasan (d. ?), known as Ibn Shaykh al-‘Arabīyah al-Mūṣilī
20.	Shams al-Dīn al-Āmīlī (d. ?): <i>Tanqīḥ al-afkār</i>
21.	Mīr Ghayāt al-Dīn Manṣūr (d. ?). Completed in 807/1014.



Table 2. Commentaries and glosses on Shams al-Dīn Maḥmūd ibn 'Abd al-Raḥmān al-Iṣfahānī's *Maṭālī' al-anzār: sharḥ ṭawālī' al-anzār*
(Here, SH2; Sharḥ 2 in Table 1, above.)

H: <i>Hāshiyah</i> (gloss)	T: <i>Ta'liq</i> (super-gloss)
	T1 on H1 by Mu'īn Ibn Ḥasan al-Tūnī al-Iṣfahānī
	T2 on H1 by al-Dawwānī (d. 907/1501)
H1 on SH2 by al-Sayyid al-Sharīf al-Jurjānī (d. 816/1413)	T3 on H1 by Ghiyāth al-Dīn Maṣṣūr Ibn Muḥammad al-Ḥusaynī al-Dashtāqī al-Shirāzī (d. 949/1542)
	T4 on H1 by Dā'ūd al-Shirwānī (d. ?)
H2 on SH2 by Abū al-Qāsim al-Laythī al-Samarqandī (d. 888/1483)	
H3 on SH2 by Muḥyī al-Dīn Muḥammad, known as Ṭibl Bāz (d. 906/1500)	
H4 on SH2 by Ḥamīd al-Dīn ibn Afḍal al-Dīn al-Ḥussaynī, known as Ibn Afḍal (d. 908/1502), with a special focus on substance	
H5 on SH2 by Afḍal Zādah (d. ?)	
H6 on SH2 by al-Ṣārūṣīdī (d. ?)	
H7 on SH2 by Maḥmūd Ibn Ni'mat Allāh al-Nukhārī (fl. ca. 909–37/1503–30)	
H8 on SH2 by Nūr al-Dīn ibn Yūsuf, known as Ṣārī Karismāt (d. ?), completed in 934/1527	



the execution of Rashīd al-Dīn and his eldest son in 1318, al-İṣfahānī made the pilgrimage to Mecca in 1324. He then travelled to Mamluk Damascus, attracting the attention of Sultan al-Nāṣir Muḥammad.³⁴ Therefore, in 1332 al-Nāṣir Muḥammad sent him an official letter of invitation, through the *khānqāh* office³⁵ of Majd al-Dīn al-Aqṣurāʾī (d. 1340), to come to Cairo.³⁶ Al-İṣfahānī accepted the invitation and moved to Cairo in the same year.³⁷ In the dedication of the *Maṭāliʿ*, al-İṣfahānī explains why he wrote his commentary:

A man—whom I would not contradict, and with whom I only agree—commissioned me to compose for him this commentary [on *Ṭawālīʿ*]. My task is to explain it in a way that clarifies its doctrines; confirms its fundamentals; discloses its purposes; strengthens its benefits; particularizes its generals; completes its details, solves its problems, and unravels its mysteries. I completely accepted the request he set to me. Hence, I exposed its unclear expressions and explained its meaning and structures (*mabānīh*). I gave this [commentary] the name *Maṭāliʿ al-anzār: Sharḥ Ṭawālīʿ al-anwār*. ... I have dedicated it to the one who is free of bad properties and has noble characters; a man who is generous, believes in good deeds, and is rightly guided by the merciful lord.³⁸

³⁴Ibn Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalānī, *Al-Durar al-kāminah fī aʿyān al-miʿah al-thāminah* (Beirut, 1993), 4:327; Abū al-Fidāʾ Ibn Kathīr, *Al-Bidāyah wa-al-Nihāyah*, 2nd ed., ed. ʿAbd al-Qādir al-Arnāʾūṭī et al. (Damascus, 2010), 16:181.

³⁵For the history of the *khānqāh* in Mamluk Egypt see, for instance, Donald Little, “The Nature of Khānqāhs, Ribāṭs, and Zāwiyyas under the Mamlūks,” in *Islamic Studies Presented to Charles J. Adams*, ed. Wael Hallaq and Donald Little (Leiden, 1991), 91–105; Leonor Fernandes, *The Evolution of a Sufi Institution in Mamluk Egypt: The Khanqah* (Berlin, 1988); idem, “Between Qadis and Muftis: To Whom Does the Mamluk Sultan Listen?” *Mamlūk Studies Review* 6 (2002): 95–108; idem, “The Foundation of Baybars al-Jashankir: Its Waqf, History and Architecture,” *Muqarnas* 4 (1987): 21–42; idem, “Mamluk Politics and Education: The Evidence from Two Fourteenth Century Waqfiyya,” *Annales Islamologiques* 23 (1987): 87–98; idem, “Three Ṣūfī Foundations in a 15th century Waqfiyya,” *Annales Islamologiques* 25 (1981): 141–56; Nathan Hofer, *The Popularisation of Sufism in Ayyubid and Mamluk Egypt, 1173–1325* (Edinburgh, 2015), 1–102.

³⁶Al-Nāṣir Muḥammad appointed Majd al-Dīn al-Aqṣurāʾī at the beginning of Jumādā I 725/1325 as the Chief *Shaykh al-Shuyūkh* at the Nāṣiriyyah Khānqāh in Siryāqūs. See, for instance, Ibn Kathīr, *Al-Bidāyah wa-al-nihāyah*, 16:182.

³⁷See Al Ghouz, “Brokers of Islamic Philosophy in Mamlūk Egypt,” 149, n 3.

³⁸Shams al-Dīn Maḥmūd ibn ʿAbd al-Raḥmān al-İṣfahānī, “Maṭāliʿ al-anzār,” University of Leiden MS Or 933, fol. 3. There is a slight difference between my own translation and that of Calverley and Pollock. The difference consists in the equivalence of some notions and terms. Cf. *Nature, Man and God in Medieval Islam*, ed. Calverley and Pollock, 7. My translation appears also in Al Ghouz, “Brokers of Islamic Philosophy in Mamlūk Egypt,” 161.



This quote demonstrates the close patronage relationship between al-Iṣfahānī and al-Nāṣir Muḥammad during the latter's third reign (r. 709–41/1310–41). As the survey in Table 2 shows, al-Iṣfahānī's *Maṭāli'* attracted the attention of many scholars.³⁹

Aḥmad al-Ījī's Commentary *Al-Maṭāli' fī sharḥ al-ṭawāli'*

Aḥmad al-Ījī (d. early fourteenth century) composed his commentary on the *Ṭawāli'* at the beginning of the fourteenth century, calling it *Al-Maṭāli' fī sharḥ al-ṭawāli'*. His only reference concerning the genesis of *Al-Maṭāli' fī sharḥ al-ṭawāli'* explains that he had first written only few commentary fragments on the *Ṭawāli'*, but that some friends asked him to write a complete commentary:

After having commented on most parts of it [*Ṭawāli' al-anwār*] some friends asked me to complete my commentary on the *Ṭawāli' al-anwār* and I named it *Al-Maṭāli' fī sharḥ al-ṭawāli'*.⁴⁰

The colophon of the manuscript available at the Chester Beatty Library and Gallery of Oriental Art (MS 5198) indicates that the name of the copyist is Zakariyā' ibn 'Alī ibn Aḥmad al-Khalkhālī (d. ?), who finished this copy at Tabriz in Ṣafar 704/September 1304. This date corresponds to the reign of the seventh ruler of the Ilkhanid dynasty, Ghāzān (r. 1295–1304). The copyist did not quote the entire *matn*-text passage of the *Ṭawāli'*. His quotation pattern is as follows:

Qāla (he said) + the first few words of the *matn*-text passage to be commented upon + *ilā qawlihi* (till he said) + the last few words of the *matn*-text passage to be commented upon + *aqūlu* (I say).

Because this style of quotation eliminated much of the source text, the copyist could keep the number of the folios of *Al-Maṭāli' fī sharḥ al-ṭawāli'* to a minimum. Zakariyā' al-Khalkhālī may have used this abbreviated pattern rather than the entire *matn*-text because the *Ṭawāli'* was readily available at the Marāgha observatory or because the *Ṭawāli'* was well known among theologians. Another explanation could be that the copyist was asked to keep the costs of copying the *Ṭawāli'* down because the production of a "book"⁴¹ as a physical object entailed high costs in pre-modern times.

³⁹This table is based on Wisnovsky's translation of Carl Brockelmann's survey of commentaries on al-Bayḏāwī's *Ṭawāli'* in *Geschichte der arabischen Literatur*, 1:533. Wisnovsky, "The Nature and Scope of Arabic Philosophical Commentary in Post-classical (ca. 1100–1900 AD) Islamic Intellectual History," 177.

⁴⁰Al-Ījī, "Al-Maṭāli' fī sharḥ al-ṭawāli'," fol. 2. My own translation.

⁴¹Concerning the discussion about the understanding of what a book is, see Konrad Hirschler, "Catching the feel'—Documentary evidence of the Arabic book in the Middle period," *Journal of Arabic and Islamic Studies* 12 (2012): 224–34.



Recasting al-Bayḍāwī's Concept of Bodily Resurrection: Shams al-Dīn al-Iṣfahānī and Aḥmad al-Ījī in Comparative Perspective

The following analysis focuses on the contentious debate over God's restoration of the human body. In general, one can identify four scholarly trends in the discussion on the resurrection:

1. The body is the essence of the human being; the soul does not exist as an independent entity. It is perceived as a condition for other accidents of life. According to this classical Ash'arite doctrine, all mental activities such as smell, speaking, thinking, feeling, etc., are animate components that God inheres in the atomic constituents of the human body right after he forms (*taṣwīr*) the fetus in the womb.
2. Resurrection pertains to both the body and the soul alike because they are two constituents of the human being. According to this post-classical Ash'arite concept of resurrection, God re-creates the atoms of the original body and inheres life in it. Post-classical *mutakallimūn* talked only of bodily resurrection, but they also meant the resurrection of the soul.
3. The body and the soul are two constituents of the human being. God resurrects the soul and incorporates it not in the original body, but in any body that he will create out of non-existence. The difference between trend 2 and trend 3 is that the latter described creation of a new human body in the afterlife out of non-existence, while the former talked of creation of the body out of its original atoms.
4. The constitutive element of the human being is its soul, and God will only resurrect the soul. According to this Avicennan view, the resurrection of the original body is inconceivable since the physical elements of the human body are changeable from its birth until its death and annihilation.⁴²

In the section about the ontology of the resurrection of the body, al-Bayḍāwī's aim is twofold. First, he confirms bodily resurrection; second, he denies the Avicennan rejection of the bodily resurrection. Al-Bayḍāwī's eschatological concept of resurrection is mainly based on the restoration of the body's atomic particles. In contrast to the Avicennan ontological approach to the body,⁴³ that "the soul

⁴²For Avicenna's understanding of the soul, see, for instance, Dimitri Gutas, "Avicenna: The Metaphysics of the Rational Soul," *The Muslim World* 102, nos. 3–4 (2012): 417–25.

⁴³For Avicenna's approach to body and soul, see Richard Wisnovsky, "Avicenna and the Avicennan Tradition," in *The Cambridge Companion to Arabic Philosophy*, ed. Peter Adamson and Richard C. Taylor (Cambridge, 2005), 93–136.



does not need the body to subsist,"⁴⁴ al-Bayḍāwī's concept of resurrection confirms that God will restore the body out of its original atoms (*ajzā' aṣliyah*), then he will inhere life (*ḥayāh*) in it. This means in turn that there is a material continuity between the original atoms of a human being and the atoms out of which God will restore the body of the same human being in the afterlife. Al-Bayḍāwī explains this position by referring to Avicenna's concept of essence (*māhīyah*, literally "whatness") and its relationship with "existence" (*wujūd*). In this regard, it should be mentioned that Avicenna employs other terminologies as synonymous for the *māhīyah*, e.g., "thingness" (*shay'iyah*), "self" (*dhāt*), "inner reality" (*ḥaqīqah*), "form" (*ṣūrah*), "nature" (*ṭab'*).⁴⁵ As Wisnovsky states, Avicenna highlighted three types of relationships between the *māhīyah* and the *wujūd*:

By now it will have become clear that Avicenna's discussions of the relationship between essence and existence are quite underdetermined. In fact three different Avicennian positions have been articulated: (I) thing and existent, and by implication essence and existence, are extensionally identical and intensionally distinct, with neither enjoying any kind of priority over the other; (II) essence and existence are extensionally identical and intensionally distinct, but essence enjoys a logical priority over existence; and (III) essence is extensionally broader than existence and each is intentionally distinct from the other.⁴⁶

Al-Iṣfahānī, who consistently refers to Avicenna in the *Maṭālī'*, describes the latter as "Shaykh" and praises him. The fact that al-Iṣfahānī uses the epithet "Shaykh" to characterize Avicenna reflects his respect for him and for his philosophical positions. Al-Iṣfahānī argues that the concept that "existence is an addition to the quiddities in the cases of both the necessary existent and possible realities" is originally an Ash'arite concept that goes back to al-Ash'arī (d. 941), whom al-Iṣfahānī calls "Shaykh Abū al-Ḥasan."⁴⁷ Indeed, the theory that essence and existence are intentionally identical was widespread among the classical Sunni-Ash'arite *mutakallimūn*. However, by the beginning of the thirteenth century, an epistemological turn marked the *falsafah-kalām* debate on essence and existence. In the post-classical age, *mutakallimūn* called into question the theory

⁴⁴Dimitri Gutas, *Avicenna and the Aristotelian Tradition: Introduction to Reading Avicenna's Philosophical Works*. Second, revised and enlarged edition, including an inventory of Avicenna's authentic works (Leiden, 2004), 103.

⁴⁵Wisnovsky, "Avicenna and the Avicennian Tradition," 110.

⁴⁶Ibid., 110.

⁴⁷*Nature, Man and God in Medieval Islam*, ed. Calverley and Pollock, 1:191. See also Wisnovsky, "Avicenna and the Avicennian Tradition," 112.



that essence and existence are similar, as they realized that distinguishing essence from existence could serve them as a theoretical basis in proving the existence of God.⁴⁸ As for the position concerning the distinction between existence and essence (compositeness), one can argue that there is no distinction between al-Bayḍāwī's and al-Iṣfahānī's positions. Both point out that al-Ash'arī was the first scholar to show that existence is additional to essence.⁴⁹

Like most *mutakallimūn* of post-classical Ash'arism, e.g., the Sunni-Ash'arite *mutakallimūn* Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī (d. 1210), 'Aḍḍ al-Dīn al-Ījī (d. 1355), and the Sunni-Mātūrīdī *mutakallim* Sa'd al-Dīn al-Taftazānī (d. 1390), al-Bayḍāwī believed in the restoration of the human body in the afterlife out of non-existence. However, this does not mean that they rejected belief in the restoration of the human body out its original atoms.⁵⁰ They use the notion of “gathering the original parts” (*jam' aḍḍā'ihī al-aṣlīyah*) as an alternative to resurrection out of non-existence.⁵¹

Al-Bayḍāwī uses the following argument that he borrows from the Qur'an: “destruction means also annihilation” (*al-tafrīqu ayḍan halākun*).⁵² In this way, al-Bayḍāwī presents a second option that the original parts of a dead human body could be turned to vanished non-existence (*halāk*). This option would mean that God could also restore a human body—whose original particles have been turned to vanished non-existence—out of new atoms that God creates again out of non-existence.

According to al-Bayḍāwī, there are two arguments that this act of bodily resurrection is conceivable: (1) the act of resurrecting a human body and inhering life in it is conceivable “by means of demonstrative analogy” (*'aqlan*), and (2) the above-mentioned possibility (*imkān*) is “confirmed through transmitted narratives (*thubita bi-al-tawātur*).”⁵³ In the following, I will refer to the first type of argument

⁴⁸Wisnovsky characterizes this distinction between essence and existence as “compositeness” in this fashion: “every being is a composite of essence and existence; every composite requires a composer to bring its composite parts together; therefore every composite is caused; and in order to avoid an infinite regress of composites and composers, and hence of effects and causes, we will need to terminate at some being which is not composed; this being is God.” Wisnovsky, “Avicenna and the Avicennian Tradition,” 112.

⁴⁹*Nature, Man and God in Medieval Islam*, ed. Calverley and Pollock, 1:192–97. Cf. Wisnovsky, “Avicenna and the Avicennian Tradition,” 112–13.

⁵⁰Würtz, *Islamische Theologie im 14. Jahrhundert*, 114–15.

⁵¹Ibid.

⁵²The Qur'anic verse is: “everything is destructible except His countenance” [*kullu shay' hālik illā wajhuh*] [Q 28:88].” Translated by Calverley and Pollock, *Nature, Man and God in Medieval Islam*, 2:1042.

⁵³Ibid., 1040.



as *ʿaql*-argument, and to the second type of argument as *tawātur*-argument. The *ʿaql*-argument is based on two premises:

- Premise 1: Since God created the human being out of atomic particles and endowed them with life
- Premise 2: and since he knows everything related to the human being's original atoms
- Conclusion: He is able to restore new atoms of the human body, and to inhere life in them once again.

The adjective “new” is crucial in al-BayḌāwī's understanding of eschatology. It indicates that God restores the human body not out of its original atoms that were turned to vanished non-existence after death, but rather out of new atoms (once again).

In contrast to al-BayḌāwī's two-step process, al-Iṣfahānī adopts a three-step process in his commentary:

1. Distinguishing the Islamic model of resurrection from the Christian and Jewish models of resurrection.
2. Confirming both spiritual and bodily resurrection in Islam.
3. Denying Avicenna's rejection of bodily resurrection.

First, al-Iṣfahānī provides his audience with a comparative study on resurrection in Christianity and Judaism. His aim is to point out that Islam, Christianity, and Judaism believe in resurrection. In a second step, he distinguishes the meaning of resurrection as attested in Islam from the meaning of resurrection in Judaism and Christianity.⁵⁴ By means of this comparative approach, al-Iṣfahānī presents the Islamic concept of bodily resurrection as a concept that combines both the Jewish and the Christian concept of resurrection. Al-Iṣfahānī's commentary on al-BayḌāwī's concept of bodily resurrection is not a response to criticism written by Christian or Jewish scholars. However, al-Iṣfahānī's commentary demonstrates consistent concern with Christianity and Judaism in different parts of the *Maṭāliʿ*. For instance, in his commentary on the qualities that cannot be attributed to God, he explicitly highlights, once again, the difference between Islamic, Christian, and Jewish understandings of God's attributes. He pays much more attention to the Christian understanding of the three hypostases, the nature of man, and the divine nature of the Messiah. There are many other examples of his comparative approach. However, it should be noted that I am not claiming that al-Iṣfahānī composed his commentary in order to defend Islam against Judaism and Christianity. There is no evidence that he stirred popular antagonism against

⁵⁴Ibid., 1038.



Christian Copts or Jews holding public offices and political influence in Cairo. He appears to be much more concerned with Muslim-Christian and Muslim-Jewish theological polemics across the Mediterranean that characterized the literary and the politico-religious climate of fourteenth-century Egypt.⁵⁵ In contrast to these, al-Bayḍāwī shows no interest in defending Muslim beliefs against Jewish and Christian doctrine.

As for the second step, al-Iṣfahānī draws on al-Bayḍāwī's two types of arguments (*ʿaql*-argument and *tawātur*-argument), and confirms first the "restoration of the spirit" (*maʿād rūḥānī*) and the "restoration of the body" (*maʿād jismānī*).⁵⁶ As for the *ʿaql*-argument, al-Iṣfahānī's statement indicates that he was a proponent of the ontological approach of *kalām*-atomism that was conceptualized as an alternative to the Hellenising *falsafah* tradition.

In contrast to al-Iṣfahānī, who focused on the difference between Islamic, Jewish, and Christian concepts of resurrection, Aḥmad al-Ījī highlights the difference between the following trends:⁵⁷

1. Those who believe in bodily resurrection. This was the case of the early *mutakallimūn*. He means prominent figures of classical Ashʿarism, like al-Ashʿarī and al-Bāqillānī (d. 1013).
2. Those who believe in the resurrection of the soul. This was the case of the *falāsifah*. Aḥmad al-Ījī is referring here to Avicenna.
3. Those who believe in both (*li-kilayhimā*). This was the case of his contemporary *mutakallimūn*. Here he alludes to the prominent figures of post-classical Ashʿarism, such as Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī.
4. Those who do not believe in resurrection. This was the case of the physicians.
5. Those who held that the possibility of resurrection can be neither confirmed nor denied (*al-ḥukm ʿalayhi mawqūf*). This was the case of Galen because of his theory that "everything is possible" (*li-iḥtimāli al-kulli*).

Aḥmad al-Ījī then turns to the question of why the resurrection of the body and the soul are attested in scriptural evidence. The chain of his argument shows that he accepts both the restoration of the body out of its original atoms and also

⁵⁵ See, for instance, Sarrio Cucarella, *Muslim-Christian Polemics across the Mediterranean: 684-1285: The Splendid Replies of Shihāb al-Dīn al-Qarāfī (d. 684/1285)* (Leiden, 2015); Nimrod Luz, *The Mamluk City in the Middle East: History, Culture, and the Urban Landscape* (New York, 2014).

⁵⁶ As for his arguments, he cites plentiful scriptural evidence for the resurrection of both body and soul, e.g., Q 32:17; Q 10:26; Q 9:72; Q 36:78–79; Q 36:51; Q 17:51; Q 75:3–4; Q 79:11; Q 41:21; Q 4:56; Q 50:44; Q 100:9–10; Q 56:49–50. *Nature, Man and God in Medieval Islam*, ed. Calverley and Pollock, 2:1038–39.

⁵⁷ Al-Ījī, "Al-Maṭālīʿ fi sharḥ al-ṭawālīʿ," fol. 119.



out of non-existence. Aḥmad al-Ījī's concept of bodily resurrection corresponds to al-Ghazālī's eschatological concept of bodily resurrection as described in his *kalām* work *Al-Iqtisād fī al-i'tiqād*. This stance occupies a position between that of Qāḍī 'Abd al-Jabbār (d. 1025), who holds that everything except God will become vanished non-existence, and that of al-Bayḍāwī, who argues that the individual atoms will disintegrate and will not vanish to non-existence (*wa-laysa i'dāmuhā*).

Conclusions

In this article, we have seen that al-Iṣfahānī's recasting of al-Bayḍāwī's concept of resurrection aspired to establish the necessity of revealed knowledge for rational *kalām* arguments. His critique targeted not only Avicenna's anti-*kalām* arguments, but even Christian and Jewish models of eschatology. Unlike al-Iṣfahānī, Aḥmad al-Ījī's recasting of al-Bayḍāwī's eschatological concept of bodily resurrection centered neither on Muslim-Christian nor on Muslim-Jewish theological polemics. Furthermore, al-Iṣfahānī did not criticize the Sufi understanding of eschatology. His silence on some Sufi understandings of the bodily resurrection—like al-Suhrawardī's (d. 1168) theory of "individuation"⁵⁸ or Ibn al-'Arabī's (d. 1240) theory of "creative imagination"⁵⁹—can be explained by his patronage relationships. The Mamluk autocracy that supported al-Iṣfahānī also provided many Sufi orders with endowments, including the followers of Ibn al-'Arabī. Additionally, al-Iṣfahānī served as *shaykh al-shuyūkh*, the chief Sufi shaykh, in the *khānqāh* of the Mamluk amir Qawsūn al-Nāṣirī (d. 1341).⁶⁰

⁵⁸Eiyad S. Al-Kutub, *Mulla Sadra and Eschatology: Evolution of Being* (London and New York, 2015), 42–49.

⁵⁹Ibid., 96–99.

⁶⁰Al Ghouz, "Brokers of Islamic Philosophy in Mamlūk Egypt," 159.

