

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

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

1 Hāfez, *Dīvān*, edited by S.A. Enjavī, Second Edition (Tehran, 1984), (hereafter cited as Enjavī), p. 88. (For a translation of the poem see below, n. 15) I consider Enjavī's edition to be one of the few reliable ones in print. I have carefully checked every line that I quote from Hāfez against also the edition by Ghanī and Qazvīnī (Tehran, 1988), (hereafter cited as Ghanī). All translations of the poems are mine.

become the identifying nature of the Iranian worldview. The complexity and the diversity, however, of the wisdom of tens of thousands of Persian poets of the past one thousand years whose poetry has been recorded in their own *divāns* (collected works), in anthologies, and histories, or otherwise copied and circulated,² merges into a single archetype. This “unity” is seen in almost every Persian *divān* and combines the epic heroes of Ferdowsī’s *Shāhnāmeḥ*; the sceptic, “nihilist” soul of Khayyām’s quatrains; the ecstatic “lover” of Rūmī’s *Masnavī* and the *Divān-e Shams*; the sober practical sage of Sa’dī’s *Gulestān* and *Būstān*; the chivalrous lovers of Nezāmī’s *Khamseh*; and the “intoxicated” wayfaring *rend* of Hāfez’s *Divān*.

In such a distinctly “poetic” civilization Shams al-Dīn Muhammad Shīrāzi, commonly referred to as Hāfez,³ or Khājeḥ Hāfez, stands out for the unsurpassed beauty of his word and for the penetrating depths of his meaning. He is the proven master of Persian lyrical poetry and any one of his odes stands out as an *exemplum* that indicates the collectivity of the tradition defined above. During his lifetime and since his death six centuries ago, Persian speaking men and women, old and young, kings and paupers, illiterates as well as learned scholars,⁴ have turned to him for wisdom and inspiration. Moments of extreme sorrow as well as heights of felicity are shared with Hāfez by the

2 There are no standard, exhaustive biographies nor registers of Persian poets. But, in a compilation of names and works of Persian poets based on 159 biographical sources by A. Khayyām-Pūr, *Farhang-e Sukhanvarān* (Tabriz, 1961), we find a listing of more than 13,000 poets. The work, as noted by the author, is incomplete due to a lack of access to many unpublished materials. The author also is very selective in listing contemporary poets, and usually omits the “modernist.” Therefore, the actual number of Persian poets may well be considerably more than the partial list we have.

3 The poetic name (*takhallus*) “Hāfez” was chosen by the poet himself, and is commonly believed to refer to his ability to recite the Koran by heart, according to himself “in fourteen versions”: *Qur’ān ze-bar be-khānī bā chār-dah revāyat*. See Enjavī, p. 32.

4 In a recently published collection of essays by B. Khorramshahi on Hāfez, the author has documented “illiterates” who can recite the *Divān* by heart, but cannot read from the printed text. See B. Khorramshahi, *Dhehn va Zabān-e Hāfez* [The Mind and Language of Hāfez], (Tehran: Nashr-e Now, 1988), pp. 18-19.

common practice of using his *Divān* for divination (*fāl-e Hāfez*).⁵ His collected works, testimony of his unmatched genius, consisting of some 500 *ghazals*, a few *qit’as*, *masnavīs*, and *qaṣīdas*, has had a major impact in shaping attitudes concerning every facet of life in the Iranian world.⁶ In almost all Persian speaking homes one will find at least one edition, or an abridgement, or a quire or two of his poems.

Since his death, Hāfez was given a number of titles and epithets such as: *Bulbul-e Shiraz* (Nightingale of Shiraz), *Khājeḥ-ye Shiraz* (“Sir” of Shiraz), *Khājeḥ-ye ‘Irfan* (Master of Gnosis), *Tarjumān al-Ḥaqīqa* (Interpreter of Truth), *Kāshif al-Ḥaqīqa* (Revealer of Truth), *Tarjumān al-Asrār* (Interpreter of Secrets), and most prevalently, *Lisān al-Ghayb* (a term meaning “Tongue of the Unseen”) – exclusively bestowed on Hāfez.⁷ The following analysis of the sources and usage of this term will argue that beyond a mere honorific and poetic designation, it is a signifier of Hāfez’s status as a source of divine inspiration and of prophetic vision.⁸ It is, in addition, an indicator of a more inclusive

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

6 See, for example, A.A. Dehkhodā *Lughatnāmeḥ*, entry “Hāfez-e Shīrāzi,” vol. 8, pp. 112-130.

7 See Dehkhodā, “Hāfez,” *ibid.*, p. 116; see also, ‘Abd al-Nabī Fakhr al-Zamānī Qazvīnī, *Tadhkareh-ye Maykhāneh*, edited by A. Golchīn Ma’ānī (Tehran: Eqbal, 1961), pp. 84-85.

8 Poets in many civilizations have been considered to be divinely inspired “prophets” whose poetry informs man through the metalanguage of metaphor and myth. In a recently published volume ten scholars write on the association of poetry and prophecy in classical and medieval cultures, and discuss the “intimate” relationship between the two. See James L. Kugel, ed. *Poetry and Prophecy: The Beginnings of a Literary Tradition* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1990). In the Islamic civilization, however, because of the position “end of prophets” (*khātam al-anbiyā*) given to Muḥammad poets are never actually called “prophet” (*nabī*). In the one instance of the famous Arab poet al-Mutanabbī, whose name does intimate prophetic claim, many medieval Muslim scholars, as shown by Professor

truth, namely, that Iranian civilization as a whole inclines to seek enlightenment in the context of poetic wisdom.

The earliest written evidence of the epithet *Lisān al-Ghayb* is given in the "Introduction" (*Dībācheh*) to a *Divān* of Hāfez compiled by Abu'l-Fath Fereydūn "Hasan Mīrzā" son of Sultān Husayn Bāygarā written by the famous calligrapher and court secretary (*dabīr*) Shihāb al-Dīn Murvārīd known as "Bayānī" (d. 922/1516).⁹ The compiler indicates in the "Introduction" that since Hāfez's *Divān* has a "miraculous" language it has been given the epithet *Lisān al-Ghayb*, and the poet is so known. The "Introduction" includes the following quatrain in which the *Divān* is further said to be well-known as "Manifestation of the Holy Spirit."¹⁰

این گنج معانی که تهی از عیب است
نقش بست که از صحیفه «لا ریب» است
مشهور جهان به فیض روح القدس است
مذکور زبانها به لسان الغیب است

Wolfhart Heinrichs, felt compelled to devise elaborate arguments to reject the notion that he was claimant to prophethood. See Wolfhart Heinrichs, "The Meaning of Mutanabbī," in *Poetry and Prophecy*, *ibid.*, pp. 130-133. But in some instances prophetic qualities have been attributed to poets, as best exemplified in the well-known statement said of the Persian poet Mawlānā Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī: *nīst payghambar valī dārd ketāb* ("He is not a prophet, but does have a book.").

- 9 See Qazvīnī, *ibid.*, n. 1, pp. 84-86. Jan Rypka refers to this fact, however his reference to *Tadhkareh-ye Maykhāneh* is taken from a review of the work by M. Moqarrebī in *Rāhnāmāyeh Ketāb* (vol. 4, no. 2, [1961], pp. 158-163), and he does not indicate the significance of the passage nor of the poem in praise of Hāfez. See Jan Rypka, *History of Iranian Literature* (Dordrecht-Holland: D. Reidel Publishing Company, 1968), pp. 269; 276, n. 78; 277, n. 115.
- 10 There is a two-fold attribution of *Lisān al-Ghayb* in the *Dībācheh*, once to Hāfez, and once to the *Divān* itself: *tasmīyeh-ye īn divān-e mu'jez bayān be-lisān al-ghayb ettifāq uftād* ("the name of this *Divān* with miraculous language was agreed upon as *Lisān al-ghayb*). See Qazvīnī, *op. cit.*, pp. 84-85, n. 1. The identity between the poet and his poems collected in the *Divān* is clear, and the epithet is commonly associated with Hāfez himself.

This treasure house of truths, devoid of fault,
Is a reflection of the scripture of "no doubt." (Koran, II.2)
It is well known as the manifestation of the Holy Spirit,
And all men remember it as *Lisān al-Ghayb*.

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

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

- 11 See Dehkhodā, *op. cit.*, p. 112, n 3, who quotes from "recent" manuscripts (no dates are given, but the manuscripts in question are believed to be from the early Safavid period in the 16th c.) of the "Introduction" to the *Divān* written by Muḥammad Golandām, wherein not only Hāfez is associated with inspiration given by the Holy Spirit, but the following rather bold statement is said of him as well: *va sedā-ye fahvā-ye 'wa mā yantiq' 'an al-hawā in huwa illā wahy' yūhā* (Koran, LII.3-4) *dar āfāq va anfus andākht* ("He [Hāfez] spread the true and joyous sound of 'Nor does he speak of [his own] desire. It is naught save a revelation that is revealed (Koran, LIII.3-4) in heavens and on the earth." A statement indicative of the attribution of prophetic qualities to the poet.
- 12 See Fazlur Rahman, *Avicenna's De Anima* (London: Oxford University Press, 1959), pp. 18-22, 25, 34, 278; *idem*, *Avicenna's Psychology* (London: Oxford University Press, 1952), pp. 38-40.
- 13 Rypka, *op. cit.* p. 269.
- 14 Other brief references are found in the following articles: E. Sepahbodi, "Hāfez Mufasser-e 'Ālam-e Ghayb" [Hāfez Interpreter of the Unseen Realm], *Majaleh-ye Dāneshkadeh-ye Adabiyāt va 'Ulūm-e Insānī*, vol. 18 (1971), no. 2, pp. 35-49; M.A. Islami-Nadoushan, "Hāfez Shā'er-e Dānandeh-ye Rāz"

such explanations and the vague notion of an “alleged mysticism” do not add to our understanding of the phenomenon of a prophetic-like “tongue of the unseen.” That the *Divān* is consulted to “interpret the future” does confirm, however, the view that Hāfez is considered to have received emanation from the “Holy Spirit.”¹⁵ But the epistemology of the phenomenon must be analyzed in order to understand how “tongue of the unseen” can “interpret the future,” as well as its other miracle-like implications. It has to be emphasized that medieval Arabic and Persian philosophical and mystical texts commonly equate the Holy Spirit (*Rūh al-Qudus*) with the Archangel Gabriel and with the Active Intellect, and being “related” to it does imply “miraculous” powers.¹⁶ The epithet, therefore, would give Hāfez the elevated rank of a “prophet-like” figure, and *Lisān al-Ghayb* would thus carry the weight of the sage-poet who, inspired by the

[Hāfez, the Poet Who Knows the Secrets], *Jām-e Jahān-Bīn* (Tehran, 1970), pp. 261-280.

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

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

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

divine, acts as recipient of God’s emanation, and then relates the divine message to man.

To be the “Tongue of the Unseen” is to possess knowledge of the “Unseen” (*ghayb*), a property which in the Koran, as we shall examine now, is said to be God’s alone. The term *ghayb* occurs in the Koran in 49 *āyas*, with its plural *ghuyūb* occurring an additional 5 times. The Koranic term is usually translated “unseen” or “invisible.”¹⁷ In the Koran it is contrasted with the term *shahāda*, translated “visible” or “seen.”¹⁸ A most prevalent theme is that God is the “Knower of the Unseen and the seen” (VI.73; XXIII.92; XXXIX.46; LIX.22). Further, God alone knows the *ghayb* (V.109, 116; IX.78; X.20), and man can only know, or obtain, what he “sees”, that is the world of *shāhāda* (XII.81). Even the Prophet Muḥammad does not possess knowledge of the *ghayb* (VI.50; XI.31). In fact no human can obtain the *ghayb*, for if so they would “see” things “unseen” and would write about them (LIII.35; LIII.41; LXVIII.47) which is God’s own issue. Not even the jinn know the *ghayb* (XXXIV.14).

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

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

- 18 See also D.B. Macdonald-[L. Gardet], “al-Ghayb,” in EI.²

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

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

A sampling of four Koranic commentaries: the "mystical" *Kashf al-Asrār* of Khājeḥ 'Abdullāh Anṣārī,¹⁹ and the "juridical"

19 This Koranic commentary, while well known as *Tafsīr-e Khājeḥ 'Abd 'Allah Anṣārī*, was written by Abu'l-Fadl Rashīd al-Dīn al-Maybudī in 520. A.H. based partially on Anṣārī's work. See Maybudī, *Kashf al-Asrār wa 'Uddat al-Abrār: Ma'nūf be-Tafsīr-e Khājeḥ 'Abd Allah Anṣārī* (Tehran: Majles, 1952). I, pp. 45-47.

Tafsīr al-Qur'ān al-Karīm, Known as *Tafsīr al-Minār*,²⁰ and *Tafsīr al-Qur'ān al-Karīm* by Ibn Kathīr,²¹ and the contemporary "philosophical" *al-Mizān fī Tafsīr al-Qur'ān* by al-'Allāma Muḥammad Husayn al-Ṭabāṭabā'ī,²² on the concept *ghayb* reflects a general agreement among them all. In all four *ghayb* is equated with the foundation of belief. This is because belief in the *ghayb* is identified with belief in God and His unity, the angels, the scriptures, prophets, the day of judgement, paradise, and hell. All four emphasize that revelation and the *ghayb* are connected, for they stipulate that it is only through revelation that the latter may be known.²³ None of them indicate a possibility of an individual and personal connection with the *ghayb*, emphasizing the significance of faith (Arabic *īmān wa huwa taṣdīq*, Persian *geravīdan*) in relation to it. Thus we can underline the significance of the *ghayb* for the Muslim, as expressed in Koranic commentaries, by repeating famous sayings quoted in them: *al-ghayb al-Qur'ān*, "the *ghayb* is the Koran"; and, *man āmana bi-Allāh fa-qad āmana bi'l-ghayb*, "he who believes in God believes also in the *ghayb*."²⁴

20 See *Tafsīr al-Qur'ān al-Karīm* (Cairo: Dār al-Minār, 1367 A.H.), I, pp. 126-128.

21 See Abu'l-Fidā' Ismā'īl Ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr al-Qur'ān al-'Azīm* (Beirut: Dār al-Andalus, 1966), I, pp. 69-74.

22 See al-'Allāma Muḥammad Husayn al-Ṭabāṭabā'ī, *al-Mizān fī Tafsīr al-Qur'ān* (Tehran, 1965), I, pp. 45-46.

23 The "connection" may be through the faculty of imagination (*al-quwwa al-mutakhayyila*), as discussed by philosophers and Mutakallims. Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī, for example, discusses three qualities of prophets (*khawāss al-nabī*), the second one concerns the relation between the *ghayb* and the prophet: "The second quality of the prophet is in the strength of his faculty of imagination, which [enables] him to see, in his state of wakefulness, the angels of God, to hear the Word of God, and to tell of the present, the past and future unseen things." See Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī, *al-Mabāḥiṭh al-Mashriqiyya* (Tehran, 1966), vol. II, p. 523.

24 See Ibn Kathīr, *op. cit.*, p. 73. The Shī'a position on the *ghayb* is essentially the same, but they add that the hidden Imām dwells in the *ghayb* and possesses its knowledge. So that for them belief in the *ghayb* means belief also in the occultation of the Imām and in his powers. See Ṭabāṭabā'ī, *op. cit.*, p. 46, who relates a tradition from Ja'far al-Sādiq (the 6th Shī'a Imam) explaining the Koranic verse "[Those] who believe in the Unseen" (II. 3) as those "who believe in the resurrection of the 12th Imām."

There are 19 verses in the *Dīvān* of Hāfez, where the term *ghayb* occurs. In three of them the position stipulated is an agreement with the Koranic principle we have outlined above:

ز سر غیب کس آگاه نیست قصه مخوان

کدام محرم دل ره در این حرم دارد

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

ساقیا جام میم ده که نگارنده غیب

نیست معلوم که در پرده ی اسرار چه کرد²⁶

O cup bearer, pour me a cup of wine! For it is not known
What the maker of the unseen did mold beyond the veil.

هان مشو نومید چون واقف نه ای از سر غیب

باشد اندر پرده بازی های پنهان غم مخور²⁷

Do not despair! You do not know the mysteries of the unseen,
Many a secret game unfolds behind the veil, grieve no more.

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

درونها تیره شد، باشد که از غیب

چراغی بر کند خلوت نشینی²⁸

The inner being has become dark. Let the vigilant one
Bring out a light from the unseen.

25 Enjavī, p. 75.

26 Ibid., p. 81.

27 Ibid., p. 133.

28 Ibid., p. 257.

دردم نهفته به ز طبیبان مدعی

باشد که از خزانگی غیبش دوا کنند²⁹

Best that my pain remain, than to go to imposter physicians.
Let medicine from "storehouse of the unseen" cure it.

As we turn to mystical texts we find that in agreement with the Koranic dictum, belief in the *ghayb* is also equated with faith.³⁰ But while in many instances God is said to be unique in His knowledge of the *ghayb*, there are equally many instances where Sūfis are said to have a "way into the *ghayb*."³¹ For Persian mystics *ghayb* is the supra-sensory realm, beyond discursive knowledge whose existence is attested by every manner of the attributes of divine manifestation such as "true dreams" (*ru'yā ṣādiqa*) divine inspiration (*ilhām*), and by the mystics' "inner" experience of a spiritual journey (*sayr va sulūk-e bātin*). In many mystical texts *ghayb* is considered a realm beyond time and space: "there is no yesterday, today and tomorrow in the realm of *ghayb* ... there is no extension of time there. Whatever is and whatever will be are all there," writes the celebrated Persian mystic 'Azīz al-Dīn Nasafī.³² In the same type of mystical texts

29 Ibid., p. 46. A clear reference to the Koranic *āyas* VI.50, and XI.31: *qul lā aqūlu la-kum 'indī khazā'in Allāh wa lā a'tamu al-ghayb ... (al-āya)*.

30 See for example, *Tarjumeḥ-ye Risāleh-ye Qushayriyyeh*, ed. B. Forouzanfar (Tehran, 1961), p. 16: *īmān bāvar dāshtan ast be-del be-dāncheh haqq ū rā beyāghānād az ghayb-hā* ("faith is belief in what God reveals to him [the sūfi] from the *ghayb* in the heart."). A statement typical of early Sufism where the "heart" is the locus of inspiration given by God, Equally typical is that God reveals the *ghayb*, and the mystic does not obtain it by himself. In contrast, typical of sūfi esoteric terminology, we find such concepts introduced by the mystics as "unseen of the unseen" (*ghayb-e ghayb*) and "unseen of the unseen of the unseen" (*ghayb-e ghayb-e ghayb*), to which the sūfi have access. See, for example Nūr al-Dīn Isfārāyēnī, *Kashf al-Asrār*, edited and translated by H. Landolt (Paris: Verdier, 1986), pp. 10, 150.

31 See, for example, *Tarjumeḥ-ye Risāleh-ye Qushayriyyeh*, p. 18: *Sūfiyān be-'ālam-e ghayb rāh dārand*. But, again God is unique in his knowledge of the *ghayb*: *Ḥaqq yegāneh ast be-'elm-e ghayb, dānest āncheh būd va āncheh khāst būd, va āncheh na-khāst būd v agar būdī che-gūneh būdī* ("God is unique in His knowledge of the *ghayb*. He knows what has been, and what will be, and [even] what will not be, and were it to be how it will be.", *ibid.*, p. 21.

32 See 'Azīz al-Dīn Nasafī, *Kitāb al-Insān al-Kāmil*, ed. M. Molé (Tehran: Insti-

ghayb is made known to humans by the intervention of angels who imprint "unseen" forms in the heart of man.³³ In sum, knowledge of "unseen" divine mystery, may be obtained according to the mystics by a) intervention of angels; by b) the "experience" of gnosis (*ma'rifa*); or by c) divine inspiration and personal revelation (*mukāshafa, mushāhada wa ilhām*).³⁴

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

بیار باده که دوشم سروش عالم غیب

نوید داد که عام است فیض رحمت او³⁵

Bring me some wine! Last night, Surūsh angel of the unseen world,
Brought me splendid news: His Grace does emanate upon us all.

سروش عالم غیبم بشارتی خوش داد

که بر در کرمش کس دژم نخواهد ماند³⁶

Surūsh, angel of the unseen world, brought me good tidings:
No one will remain untouched by His Grace.

tut Français d'Iranologie, 1962), p. 242. The same type of an idea of a space beyond the Euclidean is found also in Hāfez. For example (Enjavī, p. 14):

در راه عشق مرحله ی قرب و بعد نیست

می بینمت عیان و دعا می فرستمت

There is no nearness nor farness on the path of love
I see you clearly [from here] and send you prayers.

33 Nasafī, *op. cit.*

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

35 Enjavī, p. 221.

36 Ibid., p. 82.

چه گویمت که به میخانه دوش مست و خراب

سروش عالم غیبم چه مژده ها داداست³⁷

What can I tell you: Last night, when drunk in the tavern,
Such good tidings did Surūsh, angel of the unseen, bring me.

On many other occasions Hāfez refers to the angel simply as "messenger of the unseen":

ساقی بیا که هاتف غیبم به مژده گفت

با درد صبر کن که دوا می فرستمت³⁸

Come, o cup bearer! Messenger of the unseen gave me good tidings:
"Remain patient with pain! I will send you the potion."

سحر ز هاتف غیبم رسید مژده به گوش

که دور شاه شجاع است می دلیر بنوش³⁹

At dawn, messenger of the unseen world gave me good tidings:
"Now is the reign of Shāh-Shujā' drink boldly of wine."

دوش گفتم: «بکند لعل لبش چاره ی دل؟»

هاتف غیب ندا داد که: «آری بکنند»⁴⁰

Last night I asked: "Will the beauty of her lips cure my afflicted heart?"
Messenger of the unseen cried out: "Yes, it will."

The *Divān* of Hāfez is fraught with the idea of an "experience" of the divine, characteristic of the second "access" to the *ghayb*, which serves as the foundation for the poet's knowledge and awareness. For example:

37 Ibid., p. 19.

38 Ibid., p. 51.

39 Ibid., p. 148.

40 Ibid., p. 98.

در خرابات مغان نور خدا می بینم
این عجب بین که چه نوری ز کجا می بینم⁴¹

I see the light of God in the Magi tavern.
What wonder! From where do I see this light!

دوش وقت سحر از قصه نجاتم دادند
وندر آن ظلمت شب آب حیاتم دادند⁴²

Last night at the crack of dawn I was delivered from despair.
In the midst of darkness I was sustained from the water of life.

Inspiration (*ilhām*) is characteristic of the third “access” to the *ghayb*, which along with “vision and illumination” (*mushāhada wa ishrāq*) of mystical and philosophical texts, is considered to be the “personal” counterpart to prophetic revelation (*wahy*). Typical also of this view – that divine inspiration does *not* cease even when revelation ceases – we find the following poem:

ای ملهمی که در صف کروبیان قدس
فیضی رسد به خاطر پاکت زمان زمان
ای آشکار پیش دلت، هر چه کردگار
دارد همی به پرده ی غیب اندرون نهان⁴³

41 Ibid., p. 178. “light of God” is among the prevalent Persian poetic metaphors for mystical knowledge (*ma'rifa*).

42 Ibid., p. 78. Qazvīnī relates that this poem was a direct result of a dream-vision of Hāfez in which “a royal mounted man” (*shāhsavār*), from whose mount’s hoofs all the way up to the heavens light was emanating, appeared to him, spoke to him, and while feeding him a morsel of light he had taken out of his mouth, told him “Rise Hāfez! We have granted your wish. Knowledge shall be revealed to you.” See Qazvīnī, *Tadhkareh-ye Maykhāneh*, op. cit., p. 87. People of Shiraz mark the very place where Hāfez is considered to have had his “visionary” experience. See Dehkhodā, op. cit., p. 120, n.5.

43 Enjavā, p. 286. From the *qaṣīdeh* in praise of Shāh Shujā’.

O inspired one! You who dwell amongst ranks of sacred Cherubim,
And receive continuous divine emanation in your mind.
Everything God possesses in the unseen realm,
Are all revealed openly to your heart.

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

خرد که ملهم غیب است بهر کسب شرف
ز بام عرش صدش بوسه بر جناب زده⁴⁴

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

This type of experience of the divine “unseen” realm is considered the basis for knowledge, and is incorporated in the reconstruction of philosophy by the Illuminationist philosophers of the post Avicennan period. Notably by Suhrawardī and his immediate followers such as Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad Shahrazūrī, Sa’d b. Mansūr Ibn Kammūna, and Quṭb al-Dīn Shirāzī, who objectify the “unseen” realm as a real, separate realm of existence designed *mundus imaginalis* (*‘ālam al-mithāl*).⁴⁵ Existence of this “unseen” realm is “proven” by illuminationist knowledge, which is obtained in durationless moments (*ānāt*) of experience, called vision (*mushāhada* and also *mukāshafa*) and illumination (*ishrāq*), or by even strong intuition (*hads qawī*, *hads sarīh*).⁴⁶ Hāfez, like the mystics and the Illuminationist philoso-

44 Qazvīnī, *Dīvān*, p. 421.

45 See Hossein Ziai, “Beyond Philosophy: Suhrawardī’s Illuminationist Path to Wisdom,” in *Myth and Philosophy*, edited by Frank E. Reynolds and David Tracy (New York: SUNY, 1990), especially pp. 223-229. The term *mundus imaginalis* was first used by H. Corbin who discusses the “spiritual” implications of the realm. See H. Corbin, *En Islam iranien* (Paris: Gallimard), vol. 2, pp. 188-195.

46 Elsewhere I have discussed the epistemological structure of “intuition” and “vision” (which covers *ilhām*, *mushāhada*, and *mukāshafa*, as well). See Ziai, *Knowledge and Illumination*, pp. 155-166.

phers, accepts the objective validity of the unseen.⁴⁷ The real and its “secrets” are *real*. Only pretenders deny them:

مرا به رندی و عشق آن فضول عیب کند

که اعتراض بر اسرار علم غیب کند⁴⁸

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

مدعی خواست که آید به تماشاگه راز

دست غیب آمد و بر سینه ی نا محرم زد⁴⁹

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

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

صبح امید که بد معتکف پرده ی غیب

گو برون آی که کار شب تار آخر شد⁵⁰

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

47 Hāfez was well acquainted with the tradition of Islamic philosophy, which by the 14th century was heavily influenced by the Illuminationist tradition. This is well attested by his biographers, who mention the texts he had studied, among them Baydāwī's *Matāli' al-Anzār fi Tawāli' al-Anwār* (on philosophy, which by that time was commonly designated *hikmat*); Qutb al-Dīn Rāzī's *Sharh al-Matāli'* (on logic); Sakkākī's *Miftāh al-'Ulūm*, as well as many others on Koranic commentary and on the poetic arts. See, Dehkhodā, *op. cit.*, p. 117, nn. 6-11. See also Khorramshahi, *op. cit.*, p. xii, who states that Hāfez was proficient in philosophy; and R. Moazzami, “*Did-e Falsafi-ye Hāfez*” [*Hāfez's Philosophical Views*], *Jahān-e Now*, vol. 9, pp. 17-21.

48 Enjavī, p. 108.

49 *Ibid.*, p. 69.

50 *Ibid.*, p. 83.

برق غیرت چو چنین می جهد از مکن غیب

تو بفرما که من سوخته خرمن چه کنم⁵¹

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

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

دلی که غیب نمایست و جام جم دارد

ز خاتمی که دمی گم شود چه غم دارد⁵²

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

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

گرت هواست که چون جم به سر غیب رسی

بیا و همدم جام جهان نما می باش⁵³

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

51 *Ibid.*, p. 171.

52 *Ibid.*, p. 75.

53 *Ibid.*, p. 145.

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

میان عاشق و معشوق هیچ حایل نیست
 تو خود حجاب خودی حافظ از میان بر خیز⁵⁴

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

The subject (here the “lover”) comes to know the object (here the “Beloved”) at the moment of encounter between the two barring obstacles of vision.⁵⁵ The poet obtains knowledge –

54 Ibid., p. 137.

55 The epistemological principle at work here, which in my view is evident in the quoted poem, is called “knowledge by presence” (*al-ilm al-hudūrī*). This principle posits that knowledge of primary things cannot be obtained by the Aristotelian essentialist definition (*horos* and *horismos* in the Greek, and *al-hadd al-tāmm* in the Arabic), but is obtained when a knowing subject “sees” (*yushāhid*) the manifest, evident (*zāhir*, or *mustanir*, similar to Husserl's notion of *Evidenz*) object in a durationless instant, which results in an “illuminationist relation” (*al-idāfa al-ishrāqiyya*) between the two. I have elsewhere analyzed this principle in detail. See Ziai, *Knowledge and Illumination*, pp. 137-143.

translated to “wisdom” in the metalanguage of metaphor – and thus continues to serve as the “link” between the human and the divine, and so keeps open, as it were, the doors of revelation. The “unseen world” continues to “manifest” itself to him until which time he attains such a degree of sagacity that he is designated *Lisān al-Ghayb*.

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

The personal experience of truth which underlies the notion of inspiration is a process explained fully in illuminationist philosophy.⁵⁶ This process can be used to explain both the poetic experience of Hāfez as well as the epithet *Lisān al-Ghayb*. It comprises four stages: 1- Praxis: asceticism and other forms of practice including the “poetic” way of life,⁵⁷ which serve as preparation for: 2- Visionary experience: this is when the poet becomes existentially “acquainted” with the whole of reality,⁵⁸ which leads to: 3- Analysis: discussion, contemplation, and examination of the experience,⁵⁹ which in turn finally leads to: 4- Expression: setting to writing results of the first stages through the use of language employing philosophical construction, myth, and poetry.⁶⁰ In the last stage, metaphors, signs

56 The epistemological characteristic of knowledge based on inspiration is that it is “knowledge by presence,” when as stated by Suhrawardī: *yu'ayyad ibn al-bashar bi-rūh qudsī yurih al-shay' kamā huwa*. See Ziai, *ibid.*, p. 137.

57 Hāfez is known to have undergone *sūfi* practices. See Qazvīnī, *op. cit.*, p. 87; H. Amīnī, “*Marāḥel Tassavuf va 'Avālem-e 'Irfānī-ye Hāfez*” [Sūfi stages, and Gnostic Sentiments of Hāfez], *Nashriye-ye Farhang-e Khurāsān*, vol. 4, no. 3, pp. 35-37; and A. Gulchīn Ma'ānī, “*Ustād va Murād-e Khājah Hāfez*” [Hāfez's Master and Spiritual Guide], *Keshvar-e Iran*, vol. 19, pp. 23-26. But the point concerning undergoing hardship and pain, akin to a “dark night of the soul,” before visionary experience can best be surmised from his own poems where the metaphor “den of woes” (*kulbeh-ye ahzān*) is used. This metaphor is used in three poems, and in each one we observe the view that time spent in the “den of woes” leads to a revelatory experience. See Enjavī, *op. cit.*, pp. 133, 186, 237.

58 See above n. 41.

59 As exemplified by the use of metaphors such as “study” (*dars*), “prayer” (*du'ā*), “nightly vigil” (*verd*), etc. throughout the *Dīvān*.

60 As exemplified by Hāfez's own metaphor “Hāfez-poems” (*she'r-e Hāfez*),

and symbols are incorporated in a new mode of expression, which thus form, and so define a special language beyond simple, everyday discourse. Here poetry is considered the highest means by which one may “speak” of the experience, and this is where poetic wisdom reigns. In the technical terminology of illuminationist philosophy such a “poetic” metalanguage is designated *Lisān al-Ishrāq*, said to be metaphorical (*marmūza*) and the highest means for the expression of experiential knowledge.⁶¹ The poet is therefore considered the “tongue,” *lisān*, (i.e. messenger) through which the essence of the unseen, *ghayb*, is revealed.

The process of the experience of the wisdom of the unseen and of the subsequent communication in poetic form may be further elaborated in the simplified paradigm of a subject, conscious of self and related to the manifest object. The transition from the subject, to the knowing subject, to the knowing, *creating* subject, marks the transformation of man as man, to man as poet, whose creative wisdom transcends simple cognizance. This is when the knowing subject enters the realms of power, *jabarūt*, and the divine, *lāhut* – equated with the “unseen realm” (*‘ālam al-ghayb*) – and obtains the reality of things and is thus transformed into the knowing, *creating* subject. What are created are finally poems, and as poems they incorporate metaphors for all future individuals to contemplate, from within which they may then, by themselves and in their own eras, unravel the wisdom that will guide them on their own quest for truth and happiness. This is the final distinguishing character of Persian poetry taken as a whole. It is an existential perspective that regards the end

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

شعر حافظ در زمان آدم اندر باغ خلد

دفتر نسرین و گل را زینت اوراق بود

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

61 See Suhrawardī, *Kitāb al-Mashārī‘ wa al-Muṭārahāt*, edited by H. Corbin in *Opera Metaphisica et Mystica I* (Istanbul: Maarif Matbaasi, 1954), p. 494.

of philosophy to be poetry. From this vista, wisdom of the unseen can only be communicated through the poetic medium, and the congenital poetic wisdom thus informs man of his response to his total environment, of the corporeal and of the spiritual, of the ethical and of the political, of the religious and of the mundane. The ensuing perception of reality and of historical process is “constructed” (the Persian *she’r sākhtan*) in a form, in an art-form, at times of a metaphysics, that *consciously* employs metaphor, symbol, myth, lore and legend.

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

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

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