In the name of Allah, the compassionate the merciful



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# Mystical Contemplation or Rational Reflection? The Double Meaning of Tafakkur in Shabistarī's *Rose Garden of Mystery*

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## Abstract

This paper examines the following three questions: (1) In *The Rose Garden of Mystery* (*Golshan-e Rāz*), how does the prominent 7-8th-century Iranian Sufi, Maḥmūd Shabistarī, distinguish the mystical "contemplation" and rational "reflection" in pursuing divine knowledge? (2) Was Shabistarī an anti-rationalist (strict fideist)? (3) How does Shabistarī's position fit into the ancient Greek, Neoplatonist, and medieval Islamic and Christian metaphysics? This paper examines *Golshan-e Rāz* in the context of Shabistarī's other works, commentaries, secondary sources, and Islamic thought—Sufism and philosophy. Existing literature on *Golshan-e Rāz* primarily focuses on its *literary* aspects, neglecting its *philosophical* and *mystical* concepts. However, a thorough understanding requires examining these concepts in a broad context, which will inspire further research. The rationale behind this research is rooted in the religious obligation for believers to know God, with "thinking" as the means to acquire such knowledge. This is why the first question Herawī poses to Shabistarī pertains to the *nature of thought*—justifying this paper's focus. Contemporary opposition to religion often stems from its perceived incongruity with the rational frameworks offered by positivism, materialism, or scientific inquiry. By differentiating between mystical and rational modes of thought that Shabistarī presents, this study shows the contemporary person that intellectual inquiry extends beyond rationalism and encompasses mysticism. Consequently, rational and mystical perspectives should be pursued in the quest for the divine. Furthermore, this study contends that Shabistarī should not be regarded as a strict fideist; instead, his criticism is directed toward the constraints inherent in rational thinking.
**Keywords:** mystical experience, sufism, philosophy, Shabistarī

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## Introduction

Shaykh Sʿad al-Dīn Maḥmūd bin Amīn al-Dīn Abd al-Karīm bin Yaḥyā Shabistarī, known as Shaykh Maḥmūd Shabistarī (687/1288–720/1320 H/CE), was a prominent Medieval Iranian Sufi. Various historical developments in philosophy, theology, and spirituality shaped the intellectual atmosphere leading up to and during Maḥmūd Shabistarī. These developments can be traced to the Ancient Greeks' transition from mythos to logos and Medieval thought's shift from Logos to the Creator.

As Topaloğlu explains (2020, 83-89; 119-123), ancient Greek philosophy's initial shift from mythos to logos contributed to developing critical theistic ideas. Thinkers such as Thales, Anaximander, Xenophanes, Heraclitus, Empedocles, and Anaxagoras examined nature, cause, essence, and existence, laying the foundation for theistic thought. These early ideas encouraged contemplating the universe and existence, developing more sophisticated theistic conceptions. Medieval thought saw the establishment of *classical* or *traditional* theism, deeply influenced by Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. The intellectual climate of the Middle Ages was marked by theological inquiry, with discussions centered on the nature of existence, God-world relationship, essence-nature, will-destiny, soul-body dualism, and universals. The engagement of Muslim thinkers with ancient Greek philosophy, primarily through the translation of works by Plato, Aristotle, Philo, and Plotinus, led to the exploration of topics such as human beings, the universe, existence, God, soul, knowledge, and society within an Islamic context.

Shabistarī's thought evolved in this rich intellectual milieu, shaped by the legacy of ancient Greek and Neoplatonist philosophy and the Islamic metaphysics of his time, and the profound impact of thinkers like Ibn ʿArabī and Rūmī. Shabistarī's work, *Golshan-e Rāz*, emerged in this context and significantly contributed to the intellectual and spiritual landscape of the medieval Islamic world. Why did he write *Golshan-e Rāz*? In 717/1317 H/CE, Shabistarī was presented with a series of philosophical and mystical questions by Amīr Sayyid Husseinī Herawī, a Khurasani mystic. As a result, Shabistarī composed a poetic book in Farsi titled *Golshan-e Rāz*, or *The Rose Garden of Mystery*, to address these inquiries.

Despite its significance, existing literature on the *Golshan-e Rāz* has primarily focused on its literary aspects, leaving its philosophical and mystical concepts relatively unexplored. This paper aims to comprehensively examine one such concept—i.e., the nature of "thought," or *tafakkur*—within the context of Ancient and Medieval metaphysics to encourage further research and understanding of Shabistarī's masterpiece. Among the commentaries on *Golshan-e Rāz*, this paper relies on the works of Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad Lāhījī, Mawlānā Shāh

Maḥmūd Dāʿī Shīrāzī, Ibn Turka Iṣfahānī, and Mullā Muḥammad Ibrāhīm Sabziwārī.

Knowing God is a religious obligation for Muslims, and the means of acquiring it is *thinking*. This is why the first question Herawī asks Shabistarī concerns the nature of thought, or *tafakkur* (Lāhījī 2016, 70):[12] "First, in wonder of my own thoughts[3] I dwell / What is that which they call thinking?" Knowledge is acquired by *reason* or *divine unveiling* (disclosure, *kashf*), and both necessitate *thought*. "Reasoning" is seeking knowledge through rational thought and the rules of logic, but "unveiling" is acquiring knowledge through mystical experience—i.e., uncovering metaphysical truths and removing the veil of the created from the Creator's Face.

Shabistarī defines "thought" in two senses. One as understood by the *people of unveiling*—i.e., mystics—and the other as understood by *rational thinkers*—i.e., philosophers. To distinguish these perspectives, we can designate the mystic's understanding as "contemplation" while referring to the philosopher's viewpoint as "reflection." In *Golshan*, *contemplation* is not merely thinking; the word has an experiential-mystical sense. Contemplation, or *tafakkur* in a mystical sense, is a profound, *intuitive journey* transcending logic and reason, ultimately realizing that there is no real being other than the Real. It necessitates a focused and attentive consideration of spiritual and intelligible matters, often involving a state of mystical awareness of a higher power or God, achieved through steady meditation and private devotion. On the other hand, *reflection*, or *tafakkur* in a rational sense, is discursive thinking, operating on the rules of logic and philosophy.

The structure of this paper is organized as follows: The first section explores Shabistarī's concepts of reflection and contemplation in the *Golshan-e Rāz*. The next section discusses whether Shabistarī was an anti-rationalist. The following section delves into the historical and traditional background, focusing on the role of reason and spirituality in pursuing divine knowledge. The last section assesses Shabistarī's contextual fit and credibility, considering his position within the broader Islamic tradition and his alignment with other prominent Ancient and Medieval thinkers. Throughout these sections, the paper seeks to offer a comprehensive account of Shabistarī's understanding of "thought" and its implications in pursuing divine knowledge.

## 1. Reflection in *Golshan-e Rāz*

This section examines Shabistarī's understanding of *tafakkur* in a rational sense. Before discussing this matter, though, some terms should first be explained. In Islamic mystical literature, the "heart"—also called the "intellective soul" or "rational soul"—is the place where divine manifestations appear and where

knowledge is differentiated. This clarification lays the groundwork for discussing how individuals receive knowledge because, as an isthmus between spirit and soul, the heart manifests the perfections of both, receiving effusions from the spirit and transmitting them to the soul (Lāhījī, 46).

Shabistarī (73-77) explains that when one seeks an unknown,[4] they conceive related known concepts (known principles) in a particular order—principles that may have been previously neglected or forgotten. This "conception" (*taṣawwur*) is a mental *form* (*ṣūrat*) that manifests in the heart. When it initially appears and has *not* yet been examined, it is referred to as a "recollection" (recalling, *tadhakkur*) (Lāhījī, 46). Building on this foundation, Shabistarī argues that deciphering the unknown cannot be accomplished through recollection *alone* and that one must *leave behind* the apparent forms of the concepts—a process he calls *ʿebrat*[5] (75)—and carefully *deliberate* (*tadabbur*) them to arrive at the unknown. He (76) concludes that rationalists recognize this careful deliberation as *reflection* (*tafakkur*).[6]

Our poet then explores the necessity of reflection for spiritual journeying and its potential limitations, citing Herawī (111)[7][8] and addressing why reflection is sometimes praised and other times prohibited. Shabistarī's (112) response differentiates between reflecting on *divine blessings*, essential for spiritual progress, and reflecting on the *Real's Essence*, which is prohibited.[9] This answer, which rephrases a prophetic saying, emphasizes the importance of divine Names, Qualities, and Acts, collectively signified as "blessings." Through these divine aspects, the Real bestows the gift of existence upon things (Lāhījī 76). Lāhījī further elaborates that these divine aspects serve as mirrors, reflecting their Benefactor. By meditating upon them, individuals become aware of their relationship with the divine and are inspired to express gratitude to God. Such gratefulness is endorsed by the Quran (14:7),[10] which proclaims, "If you give thanks, I shall surely grant you an increase." Consequently, the Prophet Muḥammad and Shabistarī advocate for reflection and gratefulness as essential elements in one's spiritual journey.

Despite reflection's role in spiritual journeying, Shabistarī highlights the limitations of strict rationalism in several analogies. He highlights the philosopher's inability to comprehend the divine Essence without divine guidance (87-88). Furthermore, he illustrates the predicament of a philosopher who, by focusing solely on possible beings, becomes trapped in a vicious circle or infinite regress when attempting to prove the Necessary from the possible (89).[11] The possible beings are manifestations of the Real's Essence and are referred to as "signs," or *āyāt*, a term derived from the Quran: "We shall show them [, i.e., humans,] Our signs upon the horizons and within themselves ..." (41:53). Although these imperfect signs awaken humans to their Source and help maintain mindfulness, they cannot prove the Essentially Necessary philosophically. The philosopher, in

their attempt to reconcile the Necessary and possible aspects of existence, be-
comes entangled in "proving" their existence while neglecting the divine unity in
multiplicity (Shabistarī 103, 114-115; Lāhījī 68-69, 78-79). Consequently, they
fail to recognize that possible beings are merely imperfect images of the abso-
lute Essence, which can scarcely be known through them. This is why rationally
reflecting on the Essence is considered futile.[12] Shabistarī further presents an
analogy in which the search for the Essentially Necessary through possible be-
ings is likened to the fruitless effort of looking for the Sun in a brightly lit desert
using the light of a candle (Shabistarī, 94). This analogy emphasizes the over-
whelming presence of the Essentially Necessary compared to the limited scope
of possible beings, highlighting the inadequacy of human methods in compre-
hending the divine Essence.

Alas, the foolish one who yearns,
The radiant Sun, with candle's light discerns,
In boundless desert, seeking truth and sight,
With feeble flame against the Sun's own might.
(Shabistarī, 94)[13]

As the discussion in Shabistarī's work advances, he delves deeper into the con-
cept of the Essential Manifestation, emphasizing the Real's supreme power and
authority. He explains that during the unfolding of the Essential Manifestation,
all multiplicities and determinations (*taʿayyunāt*) dissolve into the Oneness of
the Real, ultimately allowing for no other presence. He poetically describes this
process:

The Light of Essence, boundless and Grand,
In forms of appearance, struggles to land;
Majestic display of His Might, Captivating,
Renders all else in their presence, Subjugating.
(Shabistarī, 116)[14]

To Shabistarī, the Quranic (7:143) narrative of Moses' encounter with God un-
derscores the intolerant Oneness of the divine Essence, illustrating the inherent
impossibility of directly perceiving the Essentially Necessary within the con-
fines of possible beings. The story recounts Moses' request for God to reveal
Himself. God responds, stating that a direct vision is unattainable for Moses, but
should the mountain withstand His manifestation, Moses' wish would be grant-
ed. However, as God unveils Himself, the mountain disintegrates, and Moses col-
lapses, overcome by the event. Upon awakening, Moses declares repentance and
belief, exalting God's Glory. This Quranic passage highlights Shabistarī's funda-

mental assumption that the Essentially Necessary possesses power and magnitude beyond understanding.

In Sufism, the Archangel Gabriel, as the source of knowledge, symbolizes reason (Lāhījī, 81-82). This symbolism is exemplified during the Night of Ascent, a prophetic event wherein Gabriel guides the Prophet Muḥammad on a spiritual journey toward God. However, Gabriel cannot continue accompanying the Prophet at a certain point, as venturing a further step would risk burning his wings. To Shabistarī, this moment underscores the limitations of reason in pursuing divine union. The concept of *annihilation in God*, as indicated by Shabistarī, entails the spiritual seeker's loss of knowledge, reason, perception, and awareness. This notion justifies Gabriel's inability to persist alongside the Prophet during the Night of Ascent. Shabistarī highlights this idea in his verse, asking, "In that realm where the Real's radiant Light guides the way / What space remains for Gabriel's words to sway?" (118).[15] The passage emphasizes that reason, as Gabriel represents, has limits in facilitating a deeper *connection* with God. Ultimately, this narrative encourages spiritual seekers to go beyond the boundaries of reason and logic, embracing spirituality.[16]

In *Saʿādat Nāme* (1993, 664-684), Shabistarī explains the origins of wisdom and its evolution through various stages of human history. He emphasizes that wisdom was initially bestowed upon the Prophets, starting with Seth and then Enoch (Idrīs), who taught people religious wisdom and various sciences. As this knowledge spread and evolved, it reached Greece, where it was adopted and modified. However, Shabistarī laments the unfortunate consequences of this dissemination, noting that the once-pure knowledge became mixed with ignorance, disbelief, and misguidance and was subjected to alteration and distortion. Furthermore, he underscores the divergence of ideas among the followers of Plato, whose philosophies became increasingly varied and misguided. Moreover, Shabistarī criticizes Aristotle and his followers; while he acknowledges the value of Aristotle's work in logic, he points out that it was ultimately misused and led to further confusion and error. Finally, Shabistarī argues that reliance on logic and reason alone cannot lead one to truth and divinity. Drawing attention to the intellectual achievements of prominent scholars like Avicenna, he nonetheless emphasizes that *a simple, pure heart is ultimately more valuable than intellectual prowess*. Throughout the passage, Shabistarī urges readers to recognize the limitations of logic and reason, advocating for a more spiritually-centered approach to wisdom and understanding.

In *Golshan*, although Shabistarī contends that knowing the Real's unlimited Essence through reason is impossible (117; 102), he asserts that the realization of this impossibility is a critical insight (125; Sabzevārī Khorāsānī 2008, 134), marking the station of *bewilderment* (Lāhījī, 85-86). This bewilderment can only be resolved when divine Light illuminates the journeyer's path, guiding them

further. According to Shabistarī, the traveler must embark on a transformative phase that transcends the limitations of logic. This pivotal step requires the individual to contemplate God, through which the traveler acquires direct knowledge, permitting a glimpse into metaphysical truths that surpass the boundaries of reason (Shabistarī, 80; Lāhījī, 45-50).[17]

Overall, the examined passages present a comprehensive exploration of rational *tafakkur*, highlighting the limitations of reason and emphasizing the need for divine guidance in the quest for the divine. However, the passages raise questions about whether Shabistarī was an anti-rationalist (strict fideist), which will be discussed in detail.

## 2. Contemplation in *Golshan-e Rāz*

Shabistarī's understanding of *tafakkur* encompasses both philosophical and mystical perspectives. Contemplation, for mystics, is described as a journey from the unreal to the real and involves seeing the absolute Whole in particulars (Shabistarī, 72).[18] This journey leads the individual from the exterior to the interior, shifting focus from form to meaning (Lāhījī, 44). It is an intuitive process that moves from multiplicity and determination, considered unreal, towards the Real. The goal of this journey is the *annihilation in God* (*fanāʾ fi-llāh*), which results in the union with the divine Essence (Lāhījī, 45). It is important to note that the term "annihilation" does not imply destruction; instead, it refers to a stage in the spiritual journey where the individual loses their *created* being and unites with the divine Essence while maintaining their fixed entity. In the latter part of line 72 ("seeing the absolute Whole in particulars"), Shabistarī alludes to the concept of "subsistence with God" (*baqāʾ bi-llāh*), a state where the journeyer realizes that there is no real being other than the Real. In this state, each entity is *perceived* as the Real, qualified (*muqayyad*) with a particular determination. The mystic unites with the divine Essence and contemplates the Real in everything (Lāhījī, 45-46). To achieve this, the journeyer must follow a hidden path that entails soul purification, ascetic practice, constant mindfulness of God, and spiritual journeying (430; Lāhījī, 309).

Drawing on the Islamic notion of humans as created through the divine Breath (Quran, 38:72) and being considered as God's image,[19] Shabistarī encourages *introspection* to understand one's true essence. He says, "You are the copy of the divine design / Seek everything you wish in yourself" (434).[20] Rūmī echoes this idea in *Dīwān-e Shams Tabrīzī* (Quatrains, 1756), where he refers to the human as "the copy of the divine letter" and "the mirror of the King's Beauty."

The notion of embarking on an *introspective* journey to discover one's true essence is a key theme in numerous mystical traditions. For instance, in his *En-*

*neads* (VI, 9, 7), Plotinus proposes that the soul revolves around an internal, non-spatial point, which he refers to as the "center of the soul." This point signifies the convergence of the soul and the One, where they unite. To reach this state, Plotinus suggests engaging in *contemplative* practices (V, 1, 12), which enables the individual to become absorbed into themselves. However, Plotinus acknowledges that a preoccupation with the material world can often obstruct the path to introspective exploration. Therefore, he posits that to overcome this hindrance, one must disengage from the distractions and complications associated with the external world (I, 6, 9). By doing so, an individual can shift their focus inward and better understand their true essence.

Shabistarī (85) emphasizes that philosophers and mystics must prepare themselves to arrive at the unknown. For philosophers, this involves the logical structuring of principles and general considerations such as *mindfulness* and *efficient use of time*. Mystics, on the other hand, must go further by undergoing external (material) *disengagement* (*tajrīd*) and inner *loneliness* (separation from people; *tafrīd*) (Lāhījī, 55). This requires disengaging with worldly matters and contemplating the Real in solitude. Nevertheless, Shabistarī (85) argues that this preparation alone is insufficient; divine Light must also approve of the mystic's endeavor. Without God's guidance, the journeyer cannot move beyond logic and will remain bewildered in the face of divine unity (86). This highlights the essential role of divine intervention in facilitating the journeyer's spiritual progress.

Interpreting Shabistarī's poem (84),[21] Lāhījī (52-54) classifies the contemplative into three categories: *Dhū al-ʿaql, dhū al-ʿayn*, and *dhū al-ʿaql wa dhū al-ʿayn*. These categories represent different levels of awareness and manifestations of the Real and the created. (1) *Dhū al-ʿaql*: Those for whom the created is apparent, and the Real is hidden; the Real is the created beings' mirror. (2) *Dhū al-ʿayn*: Those for whom the Real is apparent, and the created is hidden; the created is the Real's mirror. (3) *Dhū al-ʿaql wa dhū al-ʿayn*: Those for whom there is no distinction between the source and the locus of manifestation, the knower and known; they contemplate the Real in the created, and the created in the Real; for them, from one aspect, existence is the Real, and from another, it is created.

In conclusion, for Shabistarī, *tafakkur,* in a mystical sense, signifies a profound, intuitive journey transcending logic and reason. This journey leads from the unreal to the Real, where the individual experiences *annihilation in God* (*fanāʾ fi-llāh*) and unites with the divine Essence. Contemplation in this context is about moving from the exterior to the interior, from form to meaning, ultimately realizing that there is no real being other than the Real. To achieve this divine unveiling, the mystic must embark on a path of soul purification, ascetic practice, and constant mindfulness of God. The mystic's introspective journey is

a quest to discover their true essence, which is inherently divine, as reflected in Shabistarī's assertion that humans are the "copy of the divine design." This process of mystical contemplation allows the individual to see the Real in everything and achieve unity with the divine Essence.

## 3. Was Shabistarī an Anti-Rationalist (Strict Fideist)?

Shabistarī severely criticizes reason; however, a closer examination of the text suggests that he supports a combination of both reason and spirituality in pursuing divine knowledge.

According to the Quran (7:179), despite holding the highest rank within creation, humans can stray and descend below beings devoid of rational faculties. Shabistarī echoes this sentiment, emphasizing the potential pitfalls of solely relying on reason.

But if a light comes from the world of Spirit,
From the overflow of ecstasy or reflection of reasoning.

His heart becomes the confidant of the Real's Grace,
He returns through the path he had come.

From the ecstasy or real reasoning,
He finds [his] way to true belief.
(Shabistarī, 326-328)[22,23]

To comprehend the poem, it is essential to scrutinize its principal terms. A common interpretation among commentators is that the "light" mentioned in line 326 represents divine Grace, yet the exact nature of this light remains ambiguous. Sabziwārī Khorāsānī (2008, 312), on the other hand, contends that it signifies "knowledge" (*ʿilm*), an interpretation that aligns with different segments of *Golshan-e Rāz* and the Islamic tradition. Shabistarī (84) himself maintains that the heart acquires *light* and purity *from knowledge*. Most commentators interpret the "world of Spirit" (*ʿālam-e jān*) as the realm of "divine Names" (also referred to as the world of "Ideas" and "fixed entities").[24] In this context, "divine ecstasy or attraction" (*jadhbe*) is described as the journeyer's *nearing* and *attraction* to God, facilitated by divine Grace and achieved without effort, go-between, or discursive reasoning. While the term *burhān* generally denotes "reasoning,"[25] Ibn Turka Iṣfahānī (1996, 126) interprets it as the "purification of *stray thoughts* and *heart*." It is important to note that although this purification process is indispensable for experiencing divine ecstasy, it bears little relevance to the term *burhān* in this context. Shabistarī employs the term to emphasize the role of rationality in the poem.

Let us now analyze the poem. Dāʿī Shīrāzī (1998, 196) posits that through either ecstasy or reasoning, the *divine Light* illuminates the journeyer's heart, bestowing the gift of knowledge. This guidance enables the individual to develop an affinity for and engagement with the spiritual realm. Consequently, through prayers in solitude, they can turn away from the material world of multiplicity and towards the divine Unity from which they originated.[26]

In his alternative interpretation of the poem, Sabziwārī Khorāsānī (2008, 313-314) posits that the *light of knowledge* appears through either ecstasy or reason. He explains that when a journeyer experiences the ecstasy, they acquire intelligible forms from the Active Intellect. This process occurs as the "intellective soul" or "heart," which Khorāsānī likens to a mirror tarnished by worldly desires, is purified through ascetic practices derived from divine Law (*rīyāḍat-e sharʿī*)[27] and spiritual self-discipline (*mujāhidat*). As the heart becomes cleansed, the mystic can focus on a particular subject, and answers manifest within their heart without the need for deliberation or step-by-step discursive thought. This transformative process highlights the superiority of the spiritual way in Islamic mysticism when compared to reason as a means of acquiring knowledge (Sabziwārī Khorāsānī 2008, 316). While some Sufis might entirely dismiss reason in favor of relying solely on spirituality, others advocate for a more efficient approach that combines reason and spirituality. This synthesis allows for a smoother flow of knowledge and a more comprehensive understanding of complex subjects.

In conclusion, while Shabistarī may initially appear strict fideist, a closer examination of his work reveals that he acknowledges two means of attaining a deeper understanding of the divine. However, he deems reason inferior to ecstasy; he employs the term "reflection," which is an "*imperfect* copy of something," in line 326 to signify this *inadequacy*. Intriguingly, the dual pathways to achieving this understanding align with the double meaning of *tafakkur*, which encompasses both *contemplation* and *reflection*.[28] Thus, it can be inferred that Shabistarī believes that while reason allows for an imperfect *comprehension* of the divine, introspection facilitates a direct *experience* of the divine.

## 4. Historical Background

The relationship between reason and spirituality in pursuing divine knowledge has been a subject of inquiry for numerous philosophers and mystics throughout history. This paper aims to contextualize Shabistarī's account of reason and spirituality within the broader metaphysical discourse, examining the works of critical thinkers such as Plato, Plotinus, Saint Augustine, Meister Eckhart, Ibn Rushd (Averroes), and Ibn ʿArabī. Although Shabistarī acknowledges reason and spirituality as pathways to divine knowledge, his view leans more towards the latter and is radically critical of reason's limitations. By comparing Shabistarī's

stance with the perspectives of the aforementioned philosophers, this paper seeks to explore the nuances in their respective approaches, identify potential areas of improvement for Shabistarī's view, and understand the broader implications of these findings.

### 4.1. Plato

In Plato's *Phaedo*, the *affinity argument* contrasts the soul—associated with eternal, divine, and invisible aspects—with the body, linked to mortal, visible, and composite aspects (1997, 79a-80e). This distinction implies that the soul aligns more with spirituality and that philosophical contemplation is essential for reaching divine knowledge. The argument underlines the importance of rational reflection in *understanding* the soul's nature and its affinity with the spiritual realm. Building on the affinity argument, the *argument from purification* further emphasizes the spiritual significance of philosophy to attain divine knowledge (64d-67b). In the dialogue, Socrates argues that philosophy is a purification process involving the separation of the soul from the body and its desires, where the soul—not distracted by trivial things—*contemplates and ascends* to the divine realm and gains true knowledge. These arguments demonstrate the interconnectedness of spirituality and rationality in understanding the divine realm and the nature of the soul.[29],[30]

### 4.2. Plotinus

In Plotinus' (205–270 CE) *Enneads*, reason, exemplified by *dialectic*, is vital for understanding the nature of things and engaging in intellectual activities that lead to recognizing the Good, Beauty, and the intelligible world (2018, 1.3.4). However, reason alone is insufficient to access divine knowledge, as spiritual contemplation is crucial for not only gaining divine *knowledge* but also facilitating a transformative *encounter* with the One, transcending the limits of rational thought (1.3.1; 3.8.10-11). To Plotinus, the soul unites with the One through inward contemplation and self-transcendence (6.9.10). Detaching from the material world, the soul retreats inwardly, focusing on the One's *presence* rather than *knowledge*, because knowledge necessitates the duality of the knower and known, but the simple, undifferentiated One transcends such a duality. When the soul becomes devoid of distinctions, the undifferentiated One becomes present, and the soul unites with Him (6.9.8). Therefore, for Plotinus, reason and spiritual contemplation are complementary in pursuing the divine.

### 4.3. Saint Augustine

In *The Confessions*, "The Book of Platonists" (2006, 7. IV.13-27), Saint Augustine (354–430 CE) describes his journey to divine knowledge. He initially describes

moving away from his Manichean beliefs and embracing Neoplatonism to understand God and the nature of existence. Through his encounter with the books of the Platonists, Augustine realized that God is not subject to change and exists beyond the physical world. This new understanding of God's immutability and transcendence significantly shifts Augustine's perspective. However, Augustine's journey is not complete by adopting Neoplatonic ideas alone. Despite gaining insight into the immaterial nature of God and the truth, Augustine struggles to maintain a stable connection with God due to his weaknesses and distractions. His search for divine knowledge leads him to contemplate the nature of evil and the human condition. He recognizes the need for a mediator between God and humanity to reconcile these opposing forces, ultimately bringing him to embrace Jesus Christ as the bridge between the material and the immaterial. Augustine finds that the teachings of Christ provide a path to divine knowledge that transcends what he had learned from the Platonists. Through Scripture, he understands the importance of humility, faith's role, and the Incarnation's significance in accessing divine truth. Therefore, Augustine's journey reveals that while reason can provide valuable insights into God's immutable and transcendent nature, spirituality sets the ground for a higher knowledge of the divine.

## 4.4. Meister Eckhart

Meister Eckhart's (1260-1328 CE)[31] *Sermons*, particularly "Sermon 9," provide a profound insight into the relationship between reason and spirituality in pursuing divine knowledge.[32] Eckhart outlines three paths for the soul to unite with God, each highlighting the importance of balancing rationality and mystical contemplation in the spiritual journey. In the first path towards the divine, individuals actively engage with the world and its beings through various spiritual practices and exercises, fostering a fervent desire for the divine (Eckhart 2009, 86). This approach focuses on recognizing the divine presence within all aspects of creation by immersing oneself in life's many facets. Reason is integral to this pursuit, as it aids in discerning the divine in the world and guides the seeker's experience.[33] The second path, the "pathless way," reveals the necessity of transcending reason through mystical contemplation (Eckhart 2009, 86-87). Although reason is a vital starting point, the goal is to surpass the constraints of the rational mind and directly *experience* God. In this phase, the soul moves beyond the limits of reason and sensory perception, allowing itself to be carried away by the heavenly Father's power. The "pathless way" signifies a detachment from the physical world and its imagery, as the soul focuses on the spiritual realm, drawing nearer to God through a mystical encounter enveloped by divine grace and might.[34] The third and final path, a state of "being at home," repre-

sents a deeper spiritual connection with God (Eckhart 2009, 87). In this state, the soul perceives God directly in His being without intermediaries, transcending the need for external means or pathways. This intimate union with the divine signifies the completion of the soul's journey toward spiritual enlightenment and eternal happiness as it becomes entirely united with God's essence.

Later, in Sermon 16, Eckhart offers another compelling insight, asserting that "He who has abandoned self and all things, who seeks not his own in anything, and does all he does *without why* and *in love*, that man being dead to all the world is alive in God and God in him" (Eckhart 2009, 124-125, *emphasis added*). In this quotation, the term "why" signifies rationality, while "love" symbolizes mystical experience, implying that although Eckhart valued reason, he also believed in transcending it to embrace spirituality and attain a more profound understanding.[35]

## 4.5. Ibn Rushd (Averroes)

Ibn Rushd (1126–1198 CE), in his work *Taḥāfut al-Taḥāfut* (2008, 421–443), argues for the mutual reinforcement of reason and spirituality, suggesting that philosophical inquiry and religious teachings can harmoniously coexist in their pursuit of truth. Central to his perspective is the belief that philosophy is a tool for profoundly comprehending and interpreting divine knowledge embedded within Scripture, thus highlighting the intrinsic connection between these two realms of inquiry. One of the critical tenets of Ibn Rushd's argument is the recognition of the intellect as a gift from God. He posits that the human intellect should be employed to understand God's creations and intentions, thereby emphasizing the responsibility of individuals to engage in philosophical and religious exploration.

Ibn Rushd also addresses the potential, perceived contradictions between reason and faith, acknowledging that these apparent discrepancies can be reconciled through a proper grasp of both fields. He implies that a deep understanding of philosophy and religion can facilitate the resolution of tensions between these two domains, demonstrating that they can, in fact, complement and support one another. Furthermore, Ibn Rushd is careful to acknowledge the limitations of the human intellect, recognizing that some truths may be beyond our grasp. This humility underscores the necessity of recognizing the boundaries between human understanding and divine knowledge. It also reinforces the interdependence of reason and spirituality, as neither can alone completely understand existence.[36]

### 4.6. Ibn ʿArabī

In Ibn ʿArabī's (1165–1240 CE) *Seals of Wisdom* (2015, 18-25), the role of reason in pursuing divine knowledge is acknowledged, but spirituality is emphasized more prominently. The interplay between reason and spirituality is crucial in understanding the relationships between the created world, humanity, and the Divine. Reason is a tool for making sense of these complex connections, while spirituality offers a deeper insight into the divine presence within the cosmos and the Perfect Man. Ibn ʿArabī posits that spirituality facilitates the recognition of God through both the inward and outward dimensions of human existence. Furthermore, he emphasizes the importance of spirituality in comprehending divine messages prophets convey. This suggests that, for Ibn ʿArabī, spiritual awareness is essential in grasping the full scope of divine knowledge and wisdom. However, Ibn ʿArabī is also cognizant of the limitations inherent in human cognitive faculties, particularly when understanding the divine reality of the human being. Recognizing these limitations, he advocates for the role of divine unveiling to access such knowledge.

## 5. Quranic and Traditional Background

In the Quran, reason and spirituality are essential in the quest for divine wisdom, emphasizing the importance of a balanced approach. Furthermore, the Quran suggests that employing reason and spirituality equips believers to delve deeper into divine knowledge and strengthen their faith. The Quran highlights the importance of reason and intellect in understanding faith and the divine message. For example, *Sūrat* (i.e., "chapter") *Yūnus* (10:100) states: "He lays defilement upon those [souls] who understand not." This verse implies that not employing reason may result in spiritual defilement. Another passage, *Sūrat Āl ʿImrān* (3:190-191), encourages believers to use reason and intellect to reflect upon the creation of the universe:

Truly in the creation of the heavens and the earth and the variation of the night and the day are signs for the possessors of intellect, who … reflect upon the creation of the heavens and the earth, 'Our Lord, Thou hast not created this in vain. Glory be to Thee!'

Reflecting on nature's signs allows believers better to appreciate the divine knowledge and wisdom behind it. Furthermore, *Sūrat al-Zumar* (39:9) emphasizes the distinction between those who possess knowledge and understanding and those who do not: "Are those who know equal to those who do not know?"

While the Quran may not explicitly mention mystical knowledge as a separate category, it does suggest that believers should strive for a deeper, more profound understanding of God's nature, which can be considered a form of

mystical knowledge. *Sūrat Fuṣṣilat* (41:53) states: "We shall show them Our signs upon the horizons and within themselves till it becomes clear to them that it is the truth." The verse underlines that divine knowledge and truth can be discovered both in the external world and within individuals. It stresses the significance of seeking divine knowledge and truth by contemplating and reflecting on these signs. The reference to signs "upon the horizons" invites individuals to examine the natural world, utilize their intellect, and employ their reasoning capabilities to discern God's signs throughout the universe. This aspect is associated with the pursuit of divine knowledge via reason. The mention of signs "within themselves" implies that divine knowledge and truth can also be accessed through *introspection* and connecting with one's inner self. Such self-examination, self-awareness, and spiritual connection may be perceived as mystical knowledge.

*Sūrat al-Anʿam* (6:125) states: "Whomsoever God wishes to guide, He expands his breast for submission. And whomsoever He wishes to lead astray [because of their insistence on sin], He makes his breast narrow and constricted …." This verse implies that the receptiveness of one's heart to divine guidance is crucial for spiritual growth. An open heart allows for a deeper connection to God and the acquisition of divine knowledge, while a constricted heart hinders spiritual progress. In *Sūrat al-Kahf* (18:65-66), Moses seeks knowledge from a divinely inspired servant: "There they found a servant from among Our servants whom … We had taught knowledge from Our Presence. Moses said unto him, 'Shall I follow thee, that thou mightest teach me some of that which thou hast been taught of sound judgment?'" This passage emphasizes the importance of learning from spiritually enlightened individuals, suggesting that wisdom and divine knowledge can be attained through mystical and spiritual guidance.[37]

In conclusion, the Quran emphasizes the essential roles of reason and spirituality in the quest for divine wisdom. By employing both faculties, believers can delve deeper into divine knowledge, strengthen their faith, and foster a more profound understanding of God's nature. This balanced approach to reason and spirituality is integral to the Quran's teachings.

A similar theme emerges when examining *Ḥadīth*, or sayings—from both *Sunnī* and *Shīʿī* sources. For example, the Prophet Muḥammad (PBUH) states, "Let those of you who are most wise and possessing intellect be closest to me, then those who come after them … and beware of the tumult of the marketplace" (Alim 2023, 4:974). This *Ḥadīth* underscores the significance of both *wisdom* and *intellect*—which relate to *spirituality* and *reason*—in seeking proximity to the Prophet, who is the source of divine knowledge. Additionally, it cautions against the distractions of worldly affairs, referred to as the "tumult of the marketplace," which can obstruct spiritual development. Finally, this *Ḥadīth* advises people to prioritize a reflective and contemplative lifestyle to better understand

the divine instead of being absorbed by the diversions of the material world. According to a second *Ḥadīth*, Imām Muḥammad al-Bāqir (PBUH)—the fifth *Shī'ī* Imām—states, "A scholar who benefits from his knowledge is better than seventy thousand worshipers" (*Kulaynī* 2018, 1.2.8). This *Ḥadīth* emphasizes the value of reason in attaining divine knowledge, indicating that a scholar surpasses a devotee engaged solely in spiritual practices. Furthermore, it suggests that acquiring knowledge is a form of worship and, thus, can lead to spiritual growth and that utilizing that knowledge for the betterment of oneself (and others) is an even higher form of worship than mere devotion. Nonetheless, this *Ḥadīth* should not be interpreted solely through a rational lens; in Islamic tradition, it implies that a learned individual, possessing discernment, is better equipped to comprehend the divine Word. Consequently, it delicately underscores the importance of harmonizing reason and spirituality in pursuing divine wisdom. In conclusion, these *Ḥadīth*s illustrate the merit of integrating reason and spirituality for a more profound comprehension of divine knowledge.

## 6. Shabistarī's Contextual Fit and Credibility

How does Shabistarī's stance align with historical and traditional contexts, and to what degree can his position be considered credible? First, as depicted in the *Golshan*, Shabistarī emphasizes the primacy of spirituality and the limitations of reason, which reflects the broader Sufi perspective that values the direct experience of the divine over intellectual reasoning, as illustrated in Ibn 'Arabī's account. Therefore, given the personal and introspective nature of pursuing divine knowledge within this tradition, Shabistarī's position can be considered credible to a certain extent. Shabistarī's perspective shares similarities with other thinkers in acknowledging the importance of reason and spirituality in attaining divine knowledge. However, his extreme criticism of reason's limitations sets him apart from others who adopt a more moderate stance. His account could improve by adopting a more balanced and nuanced approach toward reason.

By examining the relationship between reason and spirituality in the works of these influential thinkers, we gain a deeper understanding of how rationality and mystical contemplation can be integrated to achieve a more profound comprehension of the divine. Ultimately, this comparative analysis highlights the richness of philosophical thought across various traditions and underscores the importance of continued dialogue and reflection in the ongoing quest for divine knowledge.

Additionally, Shabistarī's severe criticism of reason may not fully align with the Islamic tradition as represented in the Quran and *Ḥadīth*, highlighting the importance of seeking knowledge, engaging in intellectual inquiry, and maintaining spirituality to understand the divine. Shabistarī could have adopted a

more balanced approach to reason, recognizing its value in conjunction with spirituality, to better align with the broader Islamic tradition.

## Conclusion

This investigation into Maḥmūd Shabistarī's *Golshan-e Rāz* has provided a nuanced understanding of the interplay between contemplation and reflection in the search for divine knowledge. By examining the original text and various commentaries in the broader context of Medieval Islamic, Christian, Neoplatonist, and Ancient Greek metaphysics, the study has offered a critical assessment of Shabistarī's stance on the primacy of spirituality and the constraints of reason. This analysis reveals that while Shabistarī's perspective aligns with the broader Sufi tradition—which values the direct experience of the divine over intellectual reasoning—his harsh criticism of reason diverges from the more moderate positions of other prominent thinkers. Therefore, it is suggested that integrating a more balanced approach towards reason, as demonstrated by the aforementioned thinkers, could further refine Shabistarī's perspective on the relationship between reason and spirituality. Moreover, this study shows that Shabistarī's critical view of reason does not entirely correspond with the Islamic tradition presented in the Quran and *Ḥadīth*. By giving greater acknowledgment to the significance of reason alongside spirituality, the author's perspective could resonate more effectively with the broader Islamic tradition, thus enhancing its appeal and relevance.

Considering the historical context, pursuing divine knowledge necessitates a harmonious integration of reason and spirituality. In this context, philosophy serves as a purification process that facilitates the soul's contemplation and ascent to the divine realm. Philosophy is a tool for profoundly comprehending and interpreting divine knowledge embedded within religious texts. The role of reason, specifically as manifested through dialectical thinking, is crucial in understanding the nature of things. However, its limitations become evident when attempting to access divine knowledge and grasp the divine reality of the human being. Despite these limitations, reason remains invaluable in offering insights into the divine. Simultaneously, spirituality fosters a deeper connection with the divine, allowing individuals to transcend the rational mind's constraints and experience divinity directly.

This research underscores the importance of ongoing dialogue within traditions in the quest for divine knowledge. Future research could delve into the impact of influential Sufi masters such as Ibn ʿArabī and Rūmī on the development of Shabistarī's ideas, as his work reflects their teachings. Shabistarī's relevance today lies in his account of contemplation and reflection, providing contemporary individuals with valuable guidance in their quest for divine

knowledge and personal development. In an increasingly complex and material-driven world, achieving a harmonious equilibrium between rationality and spirituality is essential. Shabistarī's approach fosters introspection, self-awareness, and critical thinking, empowering individuals to forge deeper connections with their inner selves and the divine while addressing modern challenges with greater clarity and discernment. Moreover, his holistic approach to personal growth and the pursuit of divine knowledge demonstrates that intellectual inquiry can extend beyond rationalism and encompass mysticism, bridging the perceived incongruity between religion, on the one hand, and positivist materialism and scientific inquiry, on the other. By integrating philosophy and mysticism, Shabistarī's teachings remain highly relevant for those navigating the complexities of the modern world while remaining grounded in their spiritual and intellectual endeavors.

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## Notes

1. Unless otherwise indicated, all translations are ours. To assist scholars in accessing the original texts, the Farsi versions of the poems are also included in footnotes. The poem mentioned above can be found in Farsi as follows:

   نخست از فکر خویشم در تحیر / چه چیز است آن که خوانندش تفکر

   Shabistarī quotes Herawī's queries within the *Golshan-e Rāz*, allowing us to examine them despite the original letter's inaccessibility.

2. In this paper, references to Shabistarī's *Golshan* are cited using line numbers, while citations from Lāhījī's work are indicated by page numbers. Both citations are based on the edition of Lāhījī's (2016) work referenced in the bibliography. To maintain academic coherence and avoid redundancy, the year "2016" will not be included in the citations.

3. Literally, "thought."

4. Logic has two "unknown" types. A "conceptual unknown" is derived from *concepts*, but a "propositional unknown" is derived from *propositions*. For example, the reality of the human being is a conceptual unknown, which is known through the concepts of "animal" and "rational" (*nāṭiq*). "The human being is a rational animal" is a definition formed by con-

cepts *essential* to humans—a definition called *ta'rīf-e haddī* in Farsi. Its opposite is a defini-tion—*ta'rīf-e rasmī*—created by a thing's *essential* and *accidental* concepts.

5. In Farsi, *'ebrat* means "due consideration." However, Shabistarī does not use the term in this sense. He uses it merely to indicate that after bringing the concepts to mind, the person *passes by* them, *leaving behind* their appearance to understand their meaning and implications.

6. Poem in Farsi: تصور کان بود بهر تدبر / به نزد اهل عقل آمد تفکر

7. Literally, "sin," not "prohibited."

8. Farsi: کدامین فکر ما را شرط راه است / چرا گه طاعت و گاهی گناه است

9. Farsi: در آلا فکر کردن شرط راه است / ولی در ذات حق محض گناه است

10. This paper's references to the Quran are derived from Nasr (2015). To prevent repetition and maintain clarity, only the chapter and verse numbers are provided in the citations (for example, 14:7 refers to chapter 14, verse 7). The source, Nasr (2015), is not explicitly mentioned alongside each citation.

11. A "vicious circle" (*circus visiosa*; in Farsi: *dor-e bāṭel*) refers to a case where an entity, say, "a," depends on another, say, "b;" and reversely, "b" depends on "a." An "infinite regress" (*regression ad infinitum*; Farsi: *tasalsol*), on the other hand, is a case where "a" depends on "b," and "b" depends on "c," and this causal chain continues infinitely, leading to no "first cause" nor real certitude for the seeker.

12. Shabistarī (91-92) also highlights the limitations of human perception, asserting that we perceive possible things through likes and opposites, such as white and black, day and night, or evil and good. However, the divine Essence transcends these relationships, raising the question of how a philosopher can truly know the Real when such constraints bind their methods. As a result of these limitations, they cannot attain true knowledge of the Real and achieve certainty.

13. In Farsi: زهی نادان که او خورشید تابان / به نور شمع جوید در بیابان

14. In Farsi: نگنجد نور ذات اندر مظاهر / که سبحات جلالش هست قاهر

15. Farsi: در آن موضع که نور حق دلیل است / چه جای گفتگوی جبرئیل است

16. Building upon this idea, Shabistarī employs an analogy to underscore the inadequacy of reason when attempting to comprehend the Essence of the Real. He likens the endeavour to a bat trying to contemplate the Sun, suggesting that reason is similarly incapable of withstanding the Light of that Face (102, 117).

17. To emphasize the necessity for a transformative step in pursuing divine knowledge, Shabistarī draws upon the Quranic story of Prophet Moses (7:104-108). In this narrative, Moses declares himself a messenger and invites Pharaoh and his people to acknowledge and obey God (104-105). Initially, Pharaoh remains defiant and demands that Moses demonstrate miracles to substantiate his claim (106). Consequently, Moses casts his staff, which miraculously transforms into a serpent and devours the snakes conjured by Pharaoh's sorcerers (107, 117). Additionally, Moses presents another miracle when he draws forth his hand, revealing it as strikingly white to the onlookers (108). Within this context (Lāhījī, 50), Shabistarī utilizes the symbol of the "staff" to represent reason, arguing that, as demonstrated by the story of Moses, reason alone is insufficient for attaining complete divine knowledge and that the journeyer should relinquish their reliance on reason (Shabistarī, 81).

18. Farsi: تفکر رفتن از باطل سوی حق / به جزو اندر بدیدن کل مطلق

19. Supporting this perspective, Ibn 'Arabī (2015) frequently refers to the human as the image (132, 157, 174, 175). Having a divine soul, the human contains the realities of all divine Names and, thus, those of the world, which is the basis of the prophetic saying: "One who knows his self, knows his Lord."

20. In Farsi: تویی تو نسخهٔ نقش الهی / بجو از خویش هر چیزی که خواهی

21. "A heart that receives light and purity from knowledge / First sees God in everything" (Shabistarī, 84).

دلی کز معرفت نور و صفا دید / ز هر چیزی که دید اول خدا دید

22. Poem in Farsi:

و گر نوری رسد از عالم جان / ز فیض جذبه یا از عکس برهان
دلش با لطف حق همراز گردد / از آن راهی که آمد باز گردد
ز جذبه یا ز برهان حقیقی / رهی یابد به ایمان حقیق

23. He uses *īmān-e ḥaqīqī*, literally, "true faith" or "true belief."

24. Referring to *ʿālam-e jān*, Lāhījī (215) uses the terms "station of Divinity" (*ulūhīyyat*) and "stage of Names," Ibn Turka (1996, 126) uses the "world of Ideas" (*ʿālam-e maʿānī*); however, Sabziwārī Khorāsānī (2008, 312) uses the "Intellect" (*ʿālam-e ʿaql*). Lāhījī and Ibn Turka's interpretations fit the context better.

25. Lāhījī (215), Dāʿī Shīrāzī (1998, 196), and Sabziwārī Khorāsānī (2008, 314) also consider *burhān* as "reasoning."

26. Lāhījī interprets the poem from a different angle. To him (2016, 217), through reason the human can understand that excessive natural desires block his spiritual perfection; with this knowledge, he turns from such desires towards the spiritual world, where he finds absolute perfections and certainty.

27. The reference to "divine Law" underscores the *moderate* ascetic practices that this Law proposes, in contrast to more extreme spiritual traditions.

28. Also referred to as "bestowed knowledge" (*ʿilm-e mohebatī*) and "acquired knowledge" (*ʿilm-e kasbī*).

29. Additionally, in *Phaedo*, Plato presents multiple arguments to support the soul's immortality, including the "cyclical argument" (also called the "argument from opposites" or the "argument from reciprocity") and "recollection argument." The cyclical argument (Plato 1997, 70c-72e) contends that everything comes into existence from its opposite state, and since life and death are opposites, life must come from death, suggesting the soul exists before birth and continues to exist after death, making it immortal. Simultaneously, the recollection argument (Plato 1997, 72e-77a) posits that the soul possesses innate knowledge independent of experience, as evidenced by the familiarity of newly learned geometric concepts, which Socrates claims indicate recollection. These arguments form a coherent philosophical framework connecting spirituality—with the soul's immortality and pre-life experiences—to rational reflection through philosophical inquiry. Philosophical inquiry activates the recollection mechanism, ultimately enabling access to divine knowledge.

30. Plato's student, Aristotle, inclines towards rationalism much greater than his master. In *The Nicomachean Ethics* (Aristotle 2009, X.7-X.8), Aristotle investigates the essence of happiness and its intimate association with *contemplation* (*in a rational sense*). He proposes that contemplative pursuits are superior because reason is the highest quality in human beings (X.7, 1177a19-21). A life driven by reason results in ultimate happiness, mainly when something divine is present in a person (1177b24-32). Aristotle argues that gods' activity is contemplative, implying that human happiness is inherently linked to contemplation (X.8, 1178b22-24). His claim that the degree of happiness corresponds directly to contemplation (1178b28) further emphasizes this relationship, culminating in the assertion that happiness is, in essence, a form of contemplation (1178b31-32).

31. Born circa 1260, Meister Eckhart was a prominent German mystic, philosopher, and theologian. It is generally accepted that he died in 1328 CE, although the exact date of his passing is likewise uncertain.

32. There is ongoing debate about whether Eckhart should be considered a theologian and philosopher or a mystic. Nonetheless, as McGinn (2001, 21) astutely observes, those who argue against Eckhart's mystic status typically do so due to their *binary* mindset, which attempts to separate aspects that Eckhart himself endeavored to unite. In truth, Eckhart embodied both roles: a *lesemeister*—or learned philosopher and theologian—and a *lebemeister*, a master of the spiritual life. This duality is essential to understanding his comprehensive approach to spirituality and intellectual inquiry.

33. Interestingly, concerning the harmony of philosophy and scripture, McGinn writes (2001, 24), "Eckhart's notion of the perfect conformability of the Bible and philosophy did not make the Bible into a philosophical book (because its teaching is presented *parabolic* not *demonstrative*), but it did mean that commentary on scripture and preaching the word of God could be presented in philosophical form. For Eckhart philosophy is not the basis of belief, but its employment in exegesis is an important part of the preacher's calling."

34. Eckhart (2009, 84-86) further illustrates the importance of spirituality through the story of Martha and Mary. Mary symbolizes the contemplative life, demonstrating that transcending the rational comprehension of God through contemplation enables one to enter the realm of eternity. However, Eckhart also acknowledges the necessity of action and virtue, as exemplified by Martha's dedicated service.

35. The following quotation from Bernard McGinn (2001, 22) sheds further light on the matter:

    All scholastic theologians believed that there could be no conflict between faith and reason, between nature and scripture, because each has its source in the one Divine Truth. Eckhart went further. In a passage dealing with the necessity of the Incarnation from the Commentary on John Eckhart says: "Moses, Christ, and the Philosopher teach the same thing, differing only in the way they teach, namely as worthy of belief [Moses], as probable or likely [Aristotle], and as truth [Christ]." This suggests that there is no difference in the content of philosophy and theology, though there is a difference in the way in which philosophers and theologians grasp the truth of their respective disciplines. Thus, philosophy as a discipline is not limited to what Thomas Aquinas called natural truths about God, but includes teachings such as the Trinity and the Incarnation, which Eckhart saw as fully "rational" in the deepest sense because the philosopher could find evidence for them in the natural world.

36. In further illuminating the dichotomy between mystical contemplation and rational reflection, Arslan's paper (2017, in Turkish), titled "Sühreverdî'nin Heyâkilu'n-Nur'u Nasıl Anlaşılmalı?: Devvânî ve Deştekî Şerhleri Bağlamında Bir İçerik Analizi" provides valuable insight. This paper provides an in-depth analysis of the reconciliation attempts between Avicennian rational methodology and Suhriwardī's Illuminationist philosophy, using Dawwānī and Dashtakī's works as a basis. The insights from this source offer valuable perspectives on the interplay and convergence of rational and mystical methods of inquiry.

37. Additionally, *Sūrat al-Baqara* (2:2-3) highlights the importance of *belief* in the unseen: "This is the Book ... [which is] a guidance for the reverent, who believe in the Unseen ...." Faith in the unseen can be understood as recognizing and trusting in the divine, angels, and other metaphysical elements of existence that transcend human perception. This notion implies that embracing the unseen world is vital to spiritual development, potentially inspiring believers to pursue a more profound, mystical comprehension of the divine and the imperceptible domain. The quest for knowledge concerning the unseen constitutes mystical wisdom, as it surpasses the material realm and explores the spiritual sphere.