Research Article

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Divine Immanence and Transcendent Love: Epistemological Insights from Sixteenth-Century Kurdish Theology

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Abstract: This article explores the epistemology of Melayê Cizîrî, a sixteenth-century Kurdish mystic and poet, through an intertextual hermeneutic lens. Through his Amorous Lyric poetry, he raises pivotal questions: Why prefer intellectual deductions of God's existence when the divine is palpably manifest in beauty, especially the human face? And once someone encounters the divine and is enraptured by its presence, how could any intellectual argument or doubt compete with the overwhelming reality of divine love? Drawing on his broader metaphysical convictions and narratives such as the iconoclastic Shaykh Ṣanʾān, Cizîrî contends that theophanies within the phenomenal realm are authentic and offer a higher form of knowledge and certainty. However, he warns that merely seeing God in the phenomenal is insufficient. The seeker must move beyond these manifestations toward a deeper union with the divine, where the ultimate realization is that the self dissolves into the divine "Thou." The journey culminates in the recognition that the lover and the beloved are one, as they once been before creation.

Keywords: Melayê Cizîrî, Sufism, Kurdish, epistemology, syllogism, criticism, love

1 Introduction

Studies and publications on Kurdish culture, including religion, have in the last few decades slowly increased. Kurdish publication houses, such as Nûbihar and Avesta, have steadily published in Turkey a wealth of books from and about Kurds. This development stands in stark contrast to the situation nearly half a century ago, when it was illegal and forbidden "to introduce or distribute within the country [of Turkey] any materials in the Kurdish language of foreign origin, whether published, recorded, taped, or in any similar form."[1] A far cry from the time when the Kurdish intellectual Mehmet Emin Bozarslan was imprisoned in 1967 for publishing a Kurdish elementary textbook and preparing the publication of Ehmedê Xanî's (d.1707) great Sufi epic, *Mem u Zin*.[2]

While Kurdish and Turkish readers are increasingly able to satisfy their intellectual curiosity regarding Kurdish theology, English readers remain largely underserved. Most studies related to the Kurds in Western academia tend to focus on political and historical topics. This focus is understandable, given that the issue of Kurds and Kurdistan often enters Western consciousness as an ongoing problem within a volatile geopolitical

1 McDowall, *A Modern History of the Kurds*, 408.
2 Ibid.

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region. Accordingly, it should come as no surprise that seminal studies of Kurdish culture, such as *The Cambridge History of the Kurds* and the *Routledge Handbook on Kurds*, even with chapters titled "Religion in Kurdistan" and "Islam and the Kurds," have more to say about Kurdish-Safavid relations, pan-Islamism amongst Kurds, or how Islam is used in modernity to assimilate the Kurds, and less about the actual theological themes and problems discussed by classical Kurdish Muslim intellectuals.[3]

The following article seeks to contribute to this underexplored area by analyzing the theological views of the classical Kurdish mystic and poet Aḥmad al-Jazarī (d. 1640), better known in the vernacular tradition as Melayê Cizîrî.[4] While Cizîrî might be unfamiliar to most students of Islamic studies in the West, amongst the Kurds he is besides Ahmad Khānī (d. 1707), the most celebrated classical Kurdish poet and thinker.[5] His *Dīwān* comprised of more than a hundred poems has been studied within the Kurdish madrasas from the past until the present.[6]

Particular attention is given in this article to a distinct commentary within Cizîrî's poetry, in which he challenges the preference for apprehending God through discursive reasoning, arguing that the Divine is already palpably manifest through beauty. Cizîrî further contends that the ultimate security from doubt – often promised by rational certainty – derives not from discursive reasoning but from a direct, experiential encounter with God. Consequently, while engaging with Cizîrî's theology more broadly, this study specifically analyzes how he problematizes aspects of discursive knowledge and instead elevates aesthetic and experiential modes as preferred pathways to the Divine.

As previously stated, the objective of this article is to explore the theology of the celebrated Kurdish poet Melayê Cizîrî. However, it is important to first define the term "theology" itself. There are two reasons for this. First, the term carries multiple meanings, making it unclear which specific definition this article refers to. Second, when we apply the English word "theology" to a Kurdish work – essentially transposing it into a different cultural and linguistic context – it inevitably introduces a certain interpretative imposition. This imposition needs to be clarified beforehand, as leaving it to assumptions could lead to a distorted understanding. For example, if we were to understand theology strictly in Christian terms – perhaps because that is the definition we are most familiar with – such as "a rational discourse on faith owned by the Church," we would be imposing a concept that is quite foreign to the works of Melayê Cizîrî, a celebrated Kurdish Muslim poet.[7] Accordingly, a more appropriate definition of theology, one I mainly borrow from Oden, would be to define theology as "discourse about God gained either by rational reflection or by response to God's self-disclosure in history."[8]

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3 Bozarslan et al., *The Cambridge History of the Kurds*; Gunter, *Routledge Handbook on the Kurds*.

4 Cizîrî was a Kurdish mystic poet belonging to the sixteenth and seventeenth century. Documented biographical information is scarce. His name is derived from the historical city Jazirat Ibn ʿUmar, currently known as Cizre (Turkey). Cizîrî, and by extension Kurdish poetry, came to thrive under the patronage ʿAzizan Chiefs. The ʿAzizan Chiefs had become independent from the Ottoman central government and financially supported Kurdish madras, including the "The Red Madrasa" where Cizîrî taught. Doru, "Schools of Islamic Philosophy in Melāyē Jizīrī's Dīwān," 21.

5 Vernacularly known as Ehmedê Xanî.

6 Since no critical scholarly edition of Cizîrî's *Dîwān* is currently available to my knowledge based on the oldest manuscript, I have chosen to rely on the edition prepared by Salman Dilovan and published by Nûbihar. An alternative would have been the edition compiled by Osman Tunç, based primarily on the version prepared by the German orientalist Martin von Hartmann (d. 1918) and issued by the Turkish Ministry of Culture and Tourism. However, there are two main reasons for not adopting this edition. First, Hartmann's text omits certain lines, including those alluding to Ibn Sīnā (e.g., *Nebiqanûn ku îşaret*...). Second, Dilovan's edition corresponds closely with the well-known commentary by Muḥammad Zivingî (1876–1970), enabling closer engagement with the established commentary tradition. For other Kurdish poets cited in this study, such as Ehmedê Xanî (d.1707) and Feqiyê Teyran (d. 1660), I have used the editions published by the Turkish Ministry of Culture and Tourism. Unless otherwise indicated, all translations are my own. For the Kurdish transliteration, I have adopted Dilovan's system, as I see no need to reinvent the wheel by introducing yet another transliteration scheme. Finally, since no standard verse numbering exists to my knowledge, all numerical references to the poetry collections refer to page numbers.

7 Zachhuber, "What is Theology?," 201.

8 Oden adds "reasoned," but I explicitly omit that in order to not exclude other means of communicating about God that are not necessarily build on logical arguments. An alternate definition would be to argue for "theology as thinking about questions raised by and about the religions." Ford's definition offers a level of generality that serves well across various religious traditions,

The aforementioned is no doubt an imported label. Indigenously speaking, Melayê Cizîrî's poetry would fall under different designations. To begin with, Cizîrî identifies himself as an *ʿārif*, meaning someone who possesses gnosis.[9] Islam has a rich history of "discourse about God" expressed in many disciplines, the chief of which are *kalām* and *falsafa*. However, as Nasr puts it,

> There is a body of knowledge in the Islamic tradition which, while highly intellectual in the original sense of this term, is neither theology (*kalām*) nor philosophy (*falsafah*) while dealing with many subjects of their concern although from another perspective.[10]

This body of knowledge is designated as *al-taṣawwuf al-ʿilmī* (doctrinal Sufism) or, in the Persian-speaking world, *irfān-i naẓarī* (theoretical gnosis).[11]

This broader characterization can be safely applied to Cizîrî's work, as it does not imply affiliation with a particular *ṭarīqa* (Sufi order) or specific doctrinal teaching. Other forms of description or designation, however, must be approached, as I will soon clarify, with more caution.

Scholarship on Cizîrî in English remains sparse. Nonetheless, a recent contribution has emerged in the form of a doctoral dissertation by Shakely, who completed his degree last year (2024). In his study, Shakely argues that Cizîrî was both a Naqshbandī Sufi and, drawing upon Hamid Algar's terminology, a *wujūdī* Sufi poet.[12] The first claim rests primarily on the historical presence of the Naqshbandī order in Cizîrî's milieu and on the assertion that Cizîrî references "silent remembrance" (*dhikr al-khafī*), "the only form of remembrance practiced by all the Naqšbandīs at the time of Jazīrī."[13] The second claim is based on the evident convergence between the ideas of Ibn ʿArabī (d. 1240) and those expressed in Cizîrî's poetry, particularly with respect to convictions commonly associated in the secondary literature with the doctrine of *waḥdat al-wujūd* (the Unity of Being).

Commendable as Shakely's method may be – for one could plausibly infer Cizîrî's affiliation with a particular *ṭarīqa* through references to distinctive ritual practices – the specific evidence he adduces for silent remembrance is rather tenuous. Shakely defines silent remembrance as concentrating on the thought of God within the heart "without being interrupted or bringing the mind back to the movements of the tongue and lips."[14] He locates evidence for this practice in a single line of Cizîrî's poetry, wherein the poet writes according to Shakely's translation: "The harp tells [secrets] without any tone, not the flute in a (loud) voice."[15] While I do not propose an alternative interpretation of the verse, I am likewise not persuaded that it necessarily refers to the practice of silent remembrance, given the verse's ambiguity and the difficulty of drawing such a specific conclusion from just this verse alone.

Concerning Ibn ʿArabī, most of the literature on Cizîrî does indeed associate elements of his thought closely with that of Ibn ʿArabī, particularly ideas referred to in secondary literature as *waḥdat al-wujūd* and the notion that creation results from God's desire for self-disclosure – an issue that will be explored in a later section.[16] Yet it is striking that Cizîrî does not refer to Ibn ʿArabī at all in his poetry. This absence is remarkable, given Ibn ʿArabī's stature as the "Greatest Shaykh" (*al-Shaykh al-Akbar*) and the often claimed indebtedness of Cizîrî's

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including Islam. However, it lacks an explicit reference to *theos*, which, in my view, broadens its scope to include discourse from religions that do not profess any concern for a deity. In that case, one might wonder whether theology would not be a misnomer. Oden, *Classic Christianity*, 5; Ford, *A Very Short Introduction to Theology*, 14.

9 As Cizîrî states, *ʿArifê weqt im* (I am the ʿĀrif of the moment). Zargar describes the ʿĀrif as a "person accomplished in esoteric knowledge of God." Coppens, conversely, describes the ʿĀrif as a "believer with experiential knowledge of God." Cizîrî, *Dîwan*, 84; Zargar, *Sufi Aesthetics*, 11; Coppens, *Seeing God in Sufi Qur'an Commentaries*, 49.

10 Nasr, "Theoretical Gnosis," 1.

11 Ibid., 1–2.

12 Shakely, "We Drank the Wine from His Hand," 161; Ibid., 171.

13 Ibid.

14 Ibid., 174.

15 Ibid.

16 As Chittick recounts, "The term self-disclosure (*tajallī*)-often translated as 'theophany'-plays such a central role in Ibn al-'Arabī's teachings that, before he was known as the great spokesman for *waḥdat al-wujūd*, he had been called one of the Companions of Self-Disclosure (*aṣḥāb al-tajallī*)." Chittick, *The Self-Disclosure of God,* 52.

thought to his ideas.[17] Equally absent is any reference to Ṣadr al-Dīn al-Qūnawī (d. 1274), who was instrumental in systematizing and disseminating Ibn ʿArabī's teachings in the Ottoman world. One might reasonably expect at least some allusion or reference to a key event that would clarify a link with Ibn ʿArabī, especially given that Cizîrî is known to employ such gestures with other Sufi figures. For example, he refers to Manṣūr al-Ḥallāj (d. 922) with the line, "Always pronouncing the inner meaning of 'I am the Truth,' believe the Manṣūr of the heart," and to Maʿrūf al-Karkhī (d. 815) when he writes, "I am the *ʿārif* of the times; let Maʿrūf come from Karkh."[18]

The connection to the Naqshbandī order, as well as to the thought of Ibn ʿArabī, might be intimated textually through Cizîrî's specific mention of ʿAbd al-Raḥmān Jāmī (d. 1492) in his poetry. While this does not necessarily imply formal affiliation with a particular *ṭarīqa*, it at least suggests a tangible familiarity with Naqshbandī thinkers and Ibn ʿArabī's thought. In one verse, Cizîrî remarks that he attained popularity among the common folk (*'amî*) comparable to that of Saʿdī al-Shīrāzī (d. 1292) and ʿAbd al-Raḥmān Jāmī (*ji rengê Se'dî û Camî*).[19] Jāmī, one of the greats of Persian poetry, was affiliated with the Naqshbandī order and was also a commentator and proponent of Ibn ʿArabī's thought.[20] Perhaps, most succinctly and quite familiar to Cizîrî's position, Jāmī articulates a fundamental Akbarian thesis concerning God's self-disclosure to Himself in the opening lines of his *al-Durra al-Fākhira*. This work, dedicated to Sultan Mehmed II (d. 1481), adjudicates between the positions of theologians, philosophers, and Sufis regarding the knowledge of God.[21] The relevant passage reads:

> Praise be to God who disclosed with His essence to His essence. Who reified inside his knowledge the manifestations of His essence and attributes. Afterwards the effects of these manifestations inverted from the inner to the outer. Thus, the one, as witnessed and seen, became the many.[22]

This passage is significant because, in a work explicitly intended to adjudicate among various views concerning the knowledge of God, it fuses the customary praise of God found in Islamic scholarly writings after the *basmala* with an explicit answer to the question of what kind of God is being praised.[23] In doing so, it demonstrates what Jāmī regards as the correct understanding of God, an understanding that aligns closely with the thought of Ibn ʿArabī and later of Cizîrî.

I would like to return to Nasr's observation that thinkers engaging in theoretical gnosis often address many of the same subjects as those treated in *kalām* and *falsafa*, "although from another perspective." This alternative perspective has historically been acknowledged by *ʿirfanī* authors in various ways. It suffices here to recall a few examples particularly relevant to the present discussion. Most famously, in his semi-autobiographical work *al-Munqidh min al-Ḍalāl* (Deliverance from Error), al-Ghazālī characterizes the practitioners of *kalām* as "exponents of thought and intellectual speculation," the philosophers as "exponents of logic and demonstration," and the Sufis as those who possess "vision and intuitive understanding."[24] This classification and its vocabulary (notably *ʿiyān* vis-à-vis *burhān*) are rooted in earlier thought and continue to reverberate well after al-Ghazālī's time. Before al-Ghazālī, for instance, al-Qushayrī (d. 1072) had already distinguished between the rationalists, who attain certainty (*ʿilm al-yaqīn*) through demonstrative proof (*burhān*), and the gnostics (*aṣḥāb al-maʿārif*), who achieve true certainty (*ḥaqq al-yaqīn*) through what is described as "vision" (*ʿiyān*).[25] Similarly, the aforementioned Jāmī notes that the Sufi's reliance (*mustanad*) is on intuition (*kashf*) and direct vision (*ʿiyān*), rather than on speculation (*naẓar*) or demonstrative proof (*burhān*).[26]

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17 "Reading Jazīrī's poems one can assume that he was an enthusiastic follower of Ibn ʿArabī's doctrine." Ibid., 183.

18 *Remza "enelheq" her digot bawer bikin Mensûr e dil. 'Arifê weqt im û Me'r û fi bila bête ji Kerx*. Cizîrî, *Dîwan*, 147; Cizîrî, *Dîwan*, 84.

19 *Ji rengê Se'dî û Camî ji şuhret pê hisîn 'amî*. Ibid., 18.

20 Algar, "Reflections of Ibn 'Arabi in Early Naqshbandî Tradition."

21 Ibid.

22 Jāmī, *al-Durra al-Fākhira*, 1.

23 *Basmala* refers to the customary formula "In the name of God the Entirely Merciful, the Especially Merciful." (*bi-smi allāhi al-raḥmān al-raḥīm*) with which most Islamic books incept.

24 al-Ghazālī, *Deliverance from Error*, 13.

25 al-Qushayrī, *al-Risalā*, 121.

26 Jāmī, *al-Durra al-Fākhira*, 5.

In line with these Sufi predecessors, Cizîrî employs a similar juxtaposition between direct perception and discursive reasoning, adopting its characteristic vocabulary. This is clearly illustrated in a poem where he contrasts vision with intellection, appealing directly to God as a way to question the philosophers' method. He deems people at fault who do not "see" God but instead approach Him through demonstrative reasoning: *wê nedî bejna te û dayî qiyas/hikmetê lew ç û ye burhanê xelet* ("Whoever does not see Your [i.e., God's] stature but beholds it with the syllogism [*qiyās*]; no wonder that person went about demonstrative proof [*burhān*] misconceived").[27] As subsequent sections will further elaborate, Cizîrî disputes the notion that *burhān* – often considered the most certain form of evidence – is primarily apprehended through syllogistic reasoning (*qiyās*). On the contrary, in subsequent and later verses, to which we shall return shortly, his poetry informs us that the experience of love and beauty affords more direct and compelling access to the Divine than any form of deductive reasoning can offer.[28]

2 Intertextual Hermeneutics

Studying Cizîrî presents certain limitations. First, unlike other major mystical contemporaries such as Mullā Ṣadrā (d. 1641), Cizîrî did not, as far as we know, compose any prosaic theological or philosophical treatises. The *Dīwān* remains the only extant work attributed to him, compelling us to read literature – in this case, poetry – as theology. Second, Cizîrî's text unfolds against a dense intertextual backdrop, composed of texts interwoven both diachronically and synchronically. His name has already appeared in relation to earlier figures like Ibn ʿArabī and Manṣūr al-Ḥallāj, as well as in connection to concepts such as *waḥdat al-wujūd*, *qiyās*, and *burhān*, all of which permeate the Islamic intellectual tradition. This makes clear that any meaningful understanding of Cizîrî requires intertextual hermeneutics – that is, at times an interpretive detour situating his poetry within the broader landscape of Islamic thought.

These limitations might lead one to assume that Cizîrî's theological views are somehow constrained by the poetic medium through which they are expressed. Yet, as Thomas Bauer has observed in his *Mentalitätsgeschichte* (history of mentalities) of Islamic thought up to the sixteenth century, there is a marked presence of "an equanimous acceptance of complexity and ambiguity, and often an exuberant pleasure in them."[29] From this perspective, it can be argued that *dīwān* poetry – with its inherent openness to ambiguity and multiplicity – emerges not as a limitation but as an ideal vehicle for a specific theological task. Put differently, this openness, actualized through poetry's concrete tools like metaphor, allusion, and symbolic language, makes it uniquely suited for articulating a theology grounded in God's self-disclosure through creation. Because such a theology demands a medium capable of conveying how one encounters God through an awe-inspiring beauty without conflating the significance of God with that person.

This discussion inevitably touches upon the problem of *ḥaqīqa* and *majāz*. To restrict these concepts to the context of Cizîrî's poetry, statements made in truth (*ḥaqīqa*), refer properly to God; all else is figurative (*majāz*). For example, existence, in its truest sense, can be predicated only of God, and only figuratively of created beings, since the latter as Cizîrî argues are "fancies of the mind and absolutely speaking nothing."[30] Or as Jāmī preceded Cizîrî, "Everything other than the 'Truth (may He be glorified and exalted) is subject to decay and annihilation. Its substance is a mental figment with no objective existence, and its form is a merely imaginary entity."[31]

Beyond its linguistic register, the distinction between *ḥaqīqa* and *majāz* also carries a further metaphysical significance. As a well-known Sufi adage puts it according to Browne's translation: "the phenomenal is a

27 Cizîrî, *Dîwan*, 123.

28 Cizîrî was preceded by Ibn ʿArabī in his critique of the method of the rationalist apprehension of God. In his letter to Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī (d. 1210), one of the eminent rationalist theologians of his time, he argues that reflection (*fikr*) leads to knowledge of God's existence and not knowledge of God, which is not the same. Rustom, "Ibn ʿArabī's Letter to Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī," 128.

29 Bauer, *A Culture of Ambiguity*, xi.

30 *Mewhûm û laşey' mutleq în*. Cizîrî, *Dîwan*, 280.

bridge to the real" (*al-majāzu qanṭaratu l-ḥaqīqa*).[32] For example, *majāzī* beauty and love serve as conduits to the experience of divine beauty and love. Jāmī clarifies this notion as follows:

> Do not turn away from love, even if it's metaphorical (*majāzīst*)
> For it leads toward the real (*ḥaqīqī*)
> Until you do not first learn to read the alphabet from the tablet,
> How could you possibly read the lessons of the Quran?[33]

Cizîrî also maintains that one must begin with an accessible point of entry into the Real – namely, the *majāz*: "Who has seen the *ḥaqīqa* without the *majāz*?"[34] In Cizîrî's poetry, as we shall see, this principle finds vivid expression in the figure of Shaykh Ṣanʿān – a distinguished scholar who, according to the tradition, fell hopelessly in love with a Christian maiden and lost his rational composure. Yet, as Cizîrî portrays it, the Shaykh was not truly at fault: he did not ultimately pursue the girl, but rather God who was experienced through the girl.

Methodologically, this article and its argument will be structured across the following sections. The first section will establish the necessary preliminary context. Since Cizîrî engages with, comments on, and ultimately responds to *qiyās* and *burhān* as they were championed by the philosophers, it is essential to clarify what *qiyās* and *burhān* entail and the intellectual tradition they represent. As al-Qushayrī, al-Ghazālī, and Jāmī all attest, the philosophers are the principal exponents of *burhān*. Elaborating on this tradition will thus provide the foundation for understanding precisely what Cizîrî is challenging. In this respect, I have chosen to focus on the ideas of al-Fārābī (d. 951) – not because Cizîrî explicitly addresses him (he does not), but because al-Fārābī's epistemological hierarchy, which privileges the philosopher above all others and centers *burhān* as its foundational method, provides a representative example of an intellectual attitude most plausibly targeted by Cizîrî's critique.[35] The second part will turn to Cizîrî's own epistemology, where we will explore the fundamental principle of his thinking: existence (*wujūd*) as God's self-disclosure (*tajallī*). This will be done in tandem with a discussion on how this theological cornerstone translates into Cizîrî's reworking of existing literary and religious narratives – including references to the Qur'anic figures of Moses and Abraham, as well as to the story of Shaykh Ṣanʿān. In other words, we will examine how God's self-disclosure is active within these narratives, and what implications this has for Cizîrî's critique of the discursive approach to knowing God. Ultimately, we will see how Cizîrî instead elevates in his poetry aesthetic and experiential modes as preferred pathways to the knowledge of the Divine.

3 The Highest form of Reasoning

To fully appreciate Cizîrî's subversive remarks concerning the syllogism, we need to first devote some attention to the epistemology of the philosophers. Existent translation and commentaries on Melayê Cizîrî's Dîwān

31 Both Cizîrî and Jāmī were inevitably preceded by Ibn ʿArabī: *"When the term wujūd refers to God, it must be understood as the true and actual reality of God. In contrast, when it refers to other than God, the word is being used conventionally or metaphorically. Strictly speaking, only God has wujūd and the OTHBRS do not exist* […]" Chittick, *The Self-Disclosure of God*, xix; Jāmī, *Lawā'ih*, 21.

32 Majāz is often translated as "figurative," yet there is merit to Browne's rendering of it as "phenomenal." The former risks an overly linguistic constriction, implying a purely rhetorical or semantic function. In contrast, within Sufi discourse, majāz extends beyond semantics; it is lived and perceived in the everyday – thus making "phenomenal" a translation that better captures its experiential and ontological dimensions. Browne, *A Year Amongst the Persians*, 501; al-Jazarī, *Sharḥ Dīwān al-Shaykh al-Jazarī*, vol. 1, 516.

33 متاب از عشق رو گر خود مجازیست
که آن بهر حقیقی کارسازیست
به لوح اول «الفبی» تا نخوانی
ز قرآن درس خواندن کی توانی
Jāmī, *Mathnawi-yi Haft Awrang*, 37.

34 *Kî dî heqîqet bê mecaz*. Cizîrî, *Dîwan*, 100.

35 Cizîrî's critique is not necessarily an indication of his wholesale rejection of reason or philosophy. Two things can be simultaneously true of Cizîrî's poetry: an appreciation of reason and a clear sense of its epistemological limits. This dual attitude toward reason and philosophy is already recognized in scholarship on Cizîrî's work, though not always with reference to the particular critique developed here. Gundogan, for example, argues that while Cizîrî values reason, he rejects any philosophical approach that elevates it as the sole and absolute source of knowledge. Gündoğan, "Melâyê Cizîrî Düşüncesinde Aşkın Doğası," 172.

omit this kind of analysis and contextualization, leading to inconsistencies and the translation or commentary to be incomplete. For example, in the second volume *Qasida poetry in Islamic Asia and Africa: Eulogy's bounty, meaning's abundance an anthology*, Shakely translates the *qaṣīda* containing the reference to Shaykh Ṣanʾān under the title *On Sufi Teachings*.[36] Unfortunately, he does not notice the enjambment in the third *bayt* and presents an interpretation that misses all the technical allusions to the discipline of philosophy. The third *bayt* states, *wê nedî bejna te û dayî qiyas/hikmetê lew ç û ye burhanê xelet*, which I translate as: "Whoever does not see your (i.e., God's) stature but beholds it with the syllogism; no wonder that person went about demonstrative proof misconceived."[37] In contrast, Shakely does not read the two hemistiches together and as a result translates *qiyas* in a bland and disjunctive fashion as analogy and *hikmet* as wisdom: "Anyone who has not seen Your appearance but uses analogy to understand it. Has lost his wisdom […]."[38] An alternative and more sensible reading would have been to read the hemistiches together to form a construct state (*iḍāfa*), namely as *qiyasê hikmetê* (qiyās *of* ḥikma).[39] This is the reading favored by Cizîrî's most famous commentator Muhammad Zivingî (1876–1970).[40] Adopting this reading by default raises the words qiyās (syllogism), *ḥikma* (philosophy), and *burhān* (apodeictic evidence) in Cizîrî's poetry to a technical level. Yet, paradoxically, Zivingî himself provides minimal historical or philosophical elaboration on these terms, despite suggesting the reading "the qiyās *of* ḥikma."[41] Other commentators such as Ebdusselamê Cizîrî (1878–1952) or Abdulbaki Turan (1937–present) do not fare any better with respect to these verses, since they also omit any thorough analyses of these concepts.[42]

This omission of a discursive analysis between Cizîrî's remarks and certain conceptions found in Islamic philosophy is surprising, especially given that Melayê Cizîrî's engagement with Islamic philosophy is evident in his *Dīwān*.[43] Nesim Doru has demonstrated this in his study of Cizîrî. In one of his poems, Cizîrî says the following according to Doru's translation,

> If she does not remark to healing with the canon
> In the way of love I would not change my perishing for salvation.[44]

The words remark (*îşaret*), healing (*şifa*), and canon (*qanûn*) as well as salvation (*necat*) are a play on words, and hence as Doru perceptively notes, references to Ibn Sīnā's works: *al-Qānūn fī al-Ṭibb*, *al-Shifāʾ*, *Kitāb al-Najāt*, and *al-Ishārāt wa al-Tanbīhāt*.[45] With this play on words, Cizîrî seems to remark that he would rather die in the way of gnostic love than be cured (*şifa*) and saved (*necat*) by Ibn Sīna's philosophy (suggesting yet again how the Sufi path trumps that of mere philosophy). Moreover, to add to Doru's discovery, there is a line in Cizîrî's Dīwān in which he speaks of *ʿulûmê felsefe*, i.e. the sciences/knowledge of philosophy, further illustrating Cizîrî's familiarity with Islamic philosophy.[46]

To recall, Cizîrî specifically speaks of *qiyasê hikmetê* (*qiyās* of *ḥikma*). There are two terms in the broader Islamic intellectual tradition that denote philosophy as a discipline, one is *falsafa* and the other is *ḥikma*. Falsafa is an Arabized form of the Greek word φιλοσοφία (philosophíā). On the other hand, ḥikma is more idiomatic to the Arabic language and is often translated as "wisdom." In philosophical discourse, *ḥikma* is

36 Shakely, "The Kurdish Qasida."
37 Cizîrî, *Dîwan*, 123.
38 Shakely, "The Kurdish Qasida."
39 Linguistically this would render the expression analgous to the Arabic *qiyās al-ḥikma* or the Persian *qiyās-i ḥikmat*.
40 Zivingî, *al-ʿIqd al-Jawharī*, 332.
41 Perhaps, this can be explained by the fact that the primary focus of Zivingî's commentary is to elucidate through the Arabic language some of the more difficult or archaic expressions of Kurdish. Given Zivingî's professional background as a seminary teacher, the purported audience of his commentary is maybe entrusted to already know the broader context.
42 Turan, *Melayê Cizîrî Divanı ve Şerhi*; al-Jazarī, *Sharḥ Dīwān al-Shaykh al-Jazarī*.
43 Ebdusselamê Cizîrî curiously interprets *hikmetê* not as philosophy, but as a synonym of *ʿaql* and *ʿilm*. al-Jazarī, *Sharḥ Dīwān al-Shaykh al-Jazarī*, vol. 2, 55.
44 *Ne bi qanûn ku îşaret bi şifaê bikirit. Ez hilakê xwe di ʿişqê bi necatê nadim*. Doru, "Schools of Islamic Philosophy in Melāyē Jizīrī's Dīwān," 24; Cizîrî, *Dîwan*, 150.
45 Doru, "Schools of Islamic Philosophy in Melāyē Jizīrī's Dīwān," 24.
46 *Feyza ʿulûmê felsefe pur kifş e lê sitr û xef e*. Cizîrî, *Dîwan*, 296.

frequently used interchangeably with *falsafa*. For example, a fourteenth-century anonymous dictionary of technical terms explains in the briefest of fashions that *falsafa* is merely ḥikma (*falsafa hiya al-ḥikma*).[47] Nevertheless, the term ḥikma does have certain characteristics and connotations that set it apart from *falsafa*. For starters, unlike *falsafa*, ḥikma appears in various contexts within the Qur'an.[48] Additionally, while *falsafa* and *faylasūf* (philosopher) are foreign concepts, and therefore less relatable, ḥikma and *ḥākim* (plural: *ḥukamāʾ*), because of their indigenous nature, were able to function as familiar and bridging terms. As a result, Islamic figures, such as the prophets Idrīs, Luqmān, and David, were associated with philosophers like Pythagoras, Aristotle, and Plato, because all were considered ḥukamāʾ as well as practitioners of ḥikma.[49]

The remaining terms referenced by Cizîrî such as *burhān* (apodeictic evidence) and *qiyās* (analogy) are also ambivalent and offer different meanings dependent on the Islamic discipline in which they are utilized. For example, *qiyās* is also an important concept in Islamic legal reasoning, because new judgments can be derived from an analogy with existing legal precedents. To illustrate, the consumption of wine is forbidden due to its intoxicating nature, likewise – by analogy – heroine is also forbidden since it also intoxicates. While we have evidence that Cizîrî is also quite familiar with the vocabulary of *fiqh*, this type of *qiyās* is not what Melayê Cizîrî is criticizing.[50] On the contrary, the fact that *ḥikma* is referenced together with *burhān* and *qiyās* is a stronger indication that the reference to *qiyās* is not in regard to the scientific domain of *fiqh*, i.e., jurisprudence, but rather philosophy.

It is evident, then, that Cizîrî's poetry incorporates references to the technical philosophical terms *qiyās* and *burhān* in close association with *ḥikma* (philosophy). To clarify these concepts within the domain of philosophy, this discussion will now turn to the works of al-Fārābī. Al-Fārābī's views are particularly pertinent here, not only on account of his stature as a philosopher or the fact that he influenced other great Muslim philosophers such as Ibn Sīnā, but also because his views contain an unambiguous epistemological hierarchy inverse to that proposed by figures such as al-Qushayrī, Jāmī, and Cizîrî himself. Specifically, al-Fārābī regards philosophical thought, distinguished by its reliance on demonstrative reasoning (*burhān*), as the supreme form of arriving at truth and certainty.

In the *Kitāb al-Ḥurūf* (Book of Letters), al-Fārābī delves into the development of human language and thought. He begins his exploration at the most basic level of human cognition: the initial act of producing sounds, which eventually leads to the formation of letters, words, and ultimately sentences. As language evolves, "articulation expands by the multiplication of expressions and their substitution for one another, as well as their arrangement, and enhancement. That is the point at which the rhetorical [capacity] first originates, followed gradually by the poetical."[51] Subsequently, these arts give rise to dialectical reasoning. However, it soon becomes apparent that the dialectical method falls short in achieving true certainty.[52] This is when demonstrative methods become developed and education becomes bifurcated, "select instruction proceeds by demonstrative methods only, whereas common instruction, which is public, proceeds by dialectical, rhetorical, or poetical methods."[53]

Al-Fārābī clarifies the distinctions between the aforementioned demonstrative, dialectical, rhetorical, and poetical methods of reasoning within his *Iḥṣā al-ʿUlūm*, also known in the Latin world as *De Sciintis*. Demonstrative (*burhānī*) assertions (*al-aqāwīl*) convey certain knowledge (*tufīdu al-ʿilma l-yaqīn*).[54] In it, one finds irrefutable truth that is indubitable.[55] Dialectical (*jadalī*) assertions are answers to problems based on

47 Dadkhah and Pourjavady, *Keys to the Sciences*, 158.

48 For example, in Q 38:20 where it describes David as being bestowed *ḥikma* (wisdom) or Q 16:25 where the Prophet Muhammad is being commanded to call people to the way of their Lord with *ḥikma* (wisdom). Hussain's dissertation *Wisdom in the Qur'an*.

49 Yaman, *Prophetic Niche in the Virtuous City*, 5.

50 For example, Cizîrî refers to the technical term *farḍ al-ʿayn* (obligation upon the individual) in his poetry. For more references to fiqh in Cizîrî's poetry, refer to Sevgili, "Têkiliya 'Tesewwuf' û 'Fiqh'ê Li Gorî Têgihîştina Melayê Cizîrî."

51 al-Fārābī, "The Book of Letters," 10.

52 Ibid., 18.

53 Ibid., 19.

54 al-Fārābī, *Iḥṣāʾ al-ʿUlūm*, 28.

55 Ibid.

popular (*mashūr*) premises. Moreover, an interlocutor might imagine the assertion to be certain, whilst in reality, it is not so.[56] Rhetorical (*khiṭabī*) expressions steer the mind (*dhihn*) of the interlocutor to assent to any kind of opinion one wishes the interlocutor to accept.[57] Finally, poetic expressions spur the imagination to reconsider things in terms of the higher and the lower, such as the beautiful or the ugly. Thus, it might make us detest something that is in reality not (*laysa fī l-ḥaqīqa*) detestable.[58]

This taxonomy of reasoning is by al-Fārābī's own admission, inherently an Aristotelian schema, and consequently, a Hellenic one.[59] The understanding of the demonstrative has its roots in Aristotle's *Posterior Analytics*, the dialectical in his *Topics*, the rhetorical in his *Rhetorics*, and finally, the poetical in his *Poetics*.[60] As students of the Greco-Arabic translation movement should remember, Aristotle's collection of logical works, known as the Organon, has been a foundational cornerstone in the peripatetic tradition of Islamic philosophy. The numerous commentaries on these texts, including those by al-Fārābī and Ibn Rushd, attest to their significance.

Two important implications ensue from this taxonomy for the status of religious discourse. First, "the multitude are taught, educated, and given all that is needed to attain happiness."[61] Since religion seeks to address the multitude, it cannot rely on methods shared only by the elect, such as demonstrative reasoning, but has to resort to methods that are also accessible to the masses, namely rhetorical methods.[62] Second, religious discourse is posterior to philosophical discourse, "religion originates only after philosophy, either certain philosophy, which is true philosophy, or uncertain philosophy, which is assumed to be philosophy though it is not in reality."[63] Religion makes difficult theoretical intelligibles accessible by resorting to the imaginary (*takhyīl*) and teaches through persuasion.[64] As Khalidi puts it, al-Fārābī "regards religion as couching philosophical truths in the form of similes for popular consumption."[65]

With this hierarchization, al-Fārābī invariably puts philosophy and its method of demonstrative reasoning on a proverbial high horse. Since religion is seen as derivative, its validity is contingent upon the underlying philosophy. In other words, philosophy stands independently of religion, whereas religion requires a philosophical foundation. Moreover, religion's method, by virtue of its desire to cater to the masses, is less exact, since the demonstrative method is the most exact method, and religion relies more on the dialectical and rhetorical, which are methods better suited for popular consumption.

We have now gained an understanding of the *burhān*, but the concept of *qiyās*, the other significant term to which Melayê Cizîrî refers, remains less clear. *Qiyās*, often translated as analogy in the context of fiqh and syllogism in the context of philosophy, facilitates knowledge acquisition by deducing what was previously unknown through a necessary conclusion.[66] More technically speaking, "a syllogism is a discourse in which more than one thing is posited, such that when [these things] are composed, something other than them follows from them, by themselves, and not by accident but necessarily."[67]

For example,

(a) Every human is an animal;
(b) No animal is a stone;
(c) [Hence, necessarily] no human is a stone.[68]

56 Ibid., 29.
57 Ibid., 41.
58 Ibid., 42.
59 Al-Fārābī notifies his readers of the original Greek title of Aristotle's works, even if Aristotle's works have become widespread and known under certain Arabic titles. For example, Aristotle's *Prior Analytics* is known in Arabic as *al-Qiyās*, but in Greek, as al-Fārābī explains, it is called "Analūtīqā al-Ūlā." Ibid., 45.
60 Ibid., 25–6.
61 al-Fārābī, "The Book of Letters," 19.
62 Ibid., 20.
63 Ibid., 21.
64 Ibid., 2; Ibid., 19.
65 Khalidi, "Introduction," xv.
66 al-Fārābī, *Kitāb al-Alfāẓ*, 100.
67 al-Fārābī, *Syllogism*, 124.
68 Ibid., 127.

Syllogism are esteemed according to their premises. The strongest type of syllogism, and hence the most befitting to the science of philosophy, is the *qiyās al-burhānī* (demonstrative syllogism; scientific syllogism). As al-Fārābī describes it, the demonstrative syllogism is a syllogism composed of premises that are true, universal, certain, and primary. Philosophy, as he boasts, "always uses in the elucidation of all its problems the scientific syllogisms."[69] However, lesser forms of syllogism can also be composed. For example, a syllogism that does not rely on a universal and certain premise, but rather an (culturally) accepted one. Al-Fārābī gives the following syllogism in this regard:

(a) The thief must have his hand cut off (accepted premise),
(b) Zayd is a thief,
(c) Ergo, Zayd's hand must be cut off.[70]

The first premise is not a universal fact, unlike the statement that the part is smaller than the whole. Instead, it depends on a culturally accepted belief that could vary in a different cultural context, particularly outside of a medieval framework. Therefore, while the conclusion of the syllogism might be necessary, the premise itself is not.

4 A Contested Epistemology

The metaphysical and epistemological convictions of al-Fārābī and other *falāsifa* – particularly their faith in syllogistic reasoning – were not universally accepted, even if their ideas enjoyed a certain degree of influence in their time.

In the eleventh century, al-Ghazālī had written the monumental *Tahafut al-Falasifa* (The Incoherence of the Philosophers). In it, he came to scrutinize the philosophers on account of three reasons considered by al-Ghazālī to be heretical: their denial of creation *ex nihilo*, their rejection of God's knowledge of particulars, and their denial of bodily resurrection. With this al-Ghazālī heralded a new literary current of "*tahafut* literature" that exposed the various faults of Aristotelian and Avicennian philosophical frameworks. This genre gained particular traction in the Ottoman world, largely due to Sultan Mehmed II (r. 1432–1481), who actively supported it by organizing a competition and commissioning a specific work of *tahafut*.[71]

Given that al-Ghazālī intertwines accusations of heresy with intellectual critiques, as seen in his *Tahāfut al-Falāsifa*, his attack on the philosophers might seem a purely religious issue. Reading Ibn Rushd's *Decisive Treatise* (*Faṣl al-Maqāl*) immediately afterward might appear to confirm this interpretation, as Ibn Rushd mounts a defense of philosophy precisely on religious grounds, partly countering al-Ghazālī. In this influential work exploring the Sharīʿa's stance on philosophy, Ibn Rushd argues from the outset that rational speculation is not merely permitted but obligated by religious Law. He identifies this obligatory inquiry directly with logical deduction: "such inquiry consists of nothing but the derivation and deduction of the unknown from what is already known – and this is what has been called syllogism [*qiyās*]." Furthermore, echoing the views of al-Fārābī, Ibn Rushd contends that the form of analysis encouraged by the Law represents "the most perfect kind of study linked with the most perfect kind of reasoning, that is what is called (apodictic) demonstration [*burhān*]."[72]

Considering this alongside Ibn Rushd's further defense of philosophical methods against objections to their Greek origins, one might conclude that the debate surrounding *qiyās* and *burhān* primarily centers on two issues: dogmatic resistance to apparent contradictions between philosophy and religion, and objections to imported Greek methodologies.[73] While I acknowledge the role of religious sensibilities regarding the critique

69 al-Fārābī, *Book of Dialectic*, 28.
70 al-Fārābī, *Syllogism*, 156.
71 Özervarlı, "Arbitrating between al-Ghazālī and the Philosophers," 382.
72 Ibn Rushd, *The Decisive Treatise*, 71–2.
73 Ibid., 74–5.

of the Hellenic legacy in Islamic thought, reading Islamic intellectual history and its appraisal of Greek thought myopically via the lens of dogmatic sensibilities, remains incomplete. It fails to account for a type of objection that goes beyond a dogmatic reflex and holds the method of the philosophers to be in parts contrived and impotent, an observation – as we shall detail in the next sections – shared by Cizîrî's poetry. For example, the grammarian al-Sirāfī (d. 979) in his heated debate with the Christian philosopher Abū Bishr Mattā (d. 940) argued that syllogistic reasoning was merely "trash, vanity, quibbling, trap-setting," and someone with sound reason, acute judgment, and keen wit, can dispense with all of this by the help of God and His favor.[74] Likewise, Ibn Taymiyya stated concerning the syllogism of the philosophers,

> Indeed, anything whose knowledge can be acquired by means of their syllogisms can also be acquired by other means. Nothing in their syllogisms is indispensable for knowing what is otherwise unknown, and therefore the syllogism is needless.[75]

Not everyone was thus persuaded by the promise of *qiyās*, and at least where its theological significance is concerned, we also find among the dissenters Melayê Cizîrî.[76] As Cizîrî puts it: "How dare (*hedd*) the intellect (*ʿeql*) deduce (*qiyas*) you (God)? The fact that you are in no need of apodictic evidence (*burhan*) is itself apodictic evidence (*burhan*)."[77]

5 God's Self-Disclosure

When Cizîrî argues, as the preceding lines of poetry suggest, that God has no need of *qiyās* to be made evident, it is because he already believes in the facticity of God through the experience of God's theophany.[78] For Cizîrî God is not a passive agent hidden and waiting to be discovered. Whose concealment can only be lifted through deduction, and only then, does one truly discover God for themselves. On the contrary, God is very much proactive in manifesting (*tajallī*) Himself. Various lines in his poetry make this demonstratively clear. For example,

> You I know, You I see, for You are the light of existence (*wucûd*)[79]

Or when Cizîrî states,

> None like You has ever been, nor shall be found,
> What need of proof (*delîl*) when the sun's light surrounds?[80]

This view of God, emphasizing divine self-disclosure, is widespread among Sufis and celebrated in various narratives, perhaps the most famous being the *kuntu kanzan* ("I was a hidden treasure") tradition. Cizîrî explicitly engages with this narration, challenging his readers,

> If you are aware of the secret of *kuntu kanzan*, listen!

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74 Margoliouth, "On the Merits of Logic and Grammar," 124–5.

75 Ibn Taymiyya, *Against the Greek Logicians*, 132.

76 Doru, *Melayê Cizîrî*, 46; Doru, "Schools of Islamic Philosophy in Melāyē Jizīrī's Dīwān," 33–4.

77 *Çi heddê ʿ eql e qiyasê te kirit ev e burhan ku tu bêburhan î.* There is a clear play on philosophical terms, starting with *hedd* referring in Kurdish to "dare" but simultaneously hinting at the Arabic *ḥadd*, a technical philosophical term denoting "definition," *burhan* standing for *burhān,* i.e., apodeictic evidence, and qiyas pointing towards deductive reasoning as exemplified by the syllogism. Cizîrî, *Dîwan*, 245.

78 A similar impression of *qiyās* can be discovered in the twelfth-century Andalusian Jewish poet Judah Halevi. Halevi makes a distinction between the God of Aristotle and the God of Abraham. While the first is "known through intellectual deduction, qiyas," the latter is "loved and experienced existentially in 'taste'." Jospe, *Encyclopedia of Medieval Philosophy*, 662.

79 *Te dizanim te dibînim ku tu wînû rê wucûd.* Cizîrî, Dîwan, 34.

80 *Mislê te ma bûne weya ma dibin. Roj ku tecella ye çi hacet delîl.* Cizîrî, *Dîwan*, 144.

As is customary in Islamic tradition, narrations often derive their titles from key phrases within the text itself. In this instance, *kuntu kanzan* refers to a well-known *ḥadīth qudsī*. This particular *ḥadīth* recounts God's response to David's query regarding the purpose of creation:

> I was a hidden treasure [*kuntu kanzan*], and I loved to be known. So I created the creatures and made Myself known to them, and thus they came to know Me.[81]

At the root of creation is God's desire to self-disclose, that much has become clear from the aforementioned "I was a treasure" account. However, this account also suggests that God was before the manifestation alone by Himself. In the poetic language of Cizîrî,

> The holy Essence was [alone]; the ocean of generosity had yet to overflow
>
> No property, relation, or specification had come to light.[82]

In the broader Akbarian tradition, we find various terms that characterize this state, such as *Lā-taʿayyun* (without entification), *iṭlāq* (absolute), and *dhāt al-baht* (pure essence).[83] In this state, God only knows Himself without the mediation of His names, attributes, or work. A similar view can be found in Cizîrî's poetry,

> The essence was manifest unto the essence without name, traces, or attribution[84]

It was God's love for Himself that moved Him from a state of hiddenness into the open. Indications in the *ḥadīth qudsī*, "I was a hidden treasure" combined with "I loved to be known (*fa aḥbabtu an uʿraf*)," illustrate the divine presence of love and beauty and their subsequent role in creation. As further commented upon by Cizîrî,

> Beauty and love were always there
> The Real was in love with His own Essence.[85]
> Beauty and love stir restless behind the veil.[86]

This restlessness could not persist indefinitely, leading God's self-love to illuminate the cosmos into appearance,

> At eternity's dawn, God kindled love's flame,
> And the light of timeless beauty revealed His Essence.[87]
> This light gave luminescence and a ray; the world became apparent [...][88]

The universe coming to be because of God's express will to self-disclosure carries several significant consequences. First, if God was once solitary, that means that the source of existence was one. Any kind of multiplicity, as the cosmos currently exhibits, is thus after-the-fact and derivative rather than original. Second, the derivative is inherently contingent in its existence. Its connection to existence is merely borrowed, and therefore, figurative. Only God possesses true existence. As Cizîrî recounts both points,

> We are ipseities (*hewiyyat*) in one, certainly a name derived from one *maṣdar*[89]
> Fancies of the mind and absolutely speaking nothing; we are [but a] reflection apparent in the mirror.[90]

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81 Murata, *The Tao of Islam*, 61.
82 *Zatê muqeddes bû wucûd coşiş nedabû behrê cûd. Wesf û îdafat û quyûd yek jî tecellayê neda.* Cizîrî, *Dîwan*, 278.
83 Ibn ʻArabî, *Fusûsu'l-Hikem*, vol. 1, 121.
84 *Zatê tecella bû li zat bêism û asar û sifat.* Cizîrî, *Dîwan*, 278.
85 *Husn û mehebbet her hebû Heq ʻ aşiqê zatê xwe bû,* Ibid.
86 *Husn û cemal û ʻişqe ye aram di perdê da neye*. Ibid., 282.
87 Ibid., 278.
88 Ibid.
89 This is a wonderful play on words, where *maṣdar* means customarily a source, and technically in linguistics, it is the gerund from which other forms are derived.

To reemphasize, as far as phenomena go things are different in Cizîrî's worldview. However, in reality, everything stems from one. This perspective unmistakably echoes the Akbarian doctrine of *waḥdat al-wujūd*, even though Cizîrî himself does not employ the term explicitly in his poetry.[91] Instead, he conveys this metaphysical vision through metaphorical language across various poems. For example, in one of his poems, Cizîrî likens existence to an ocean:

> Know well that the ocean is one vast whole,
> Waves and bubbles—all water, whether liquid or cold.[92]

And in another poem, he likens the diversity of existence to letters that all are drawn from one dot,

> Letters have been separated from one, if you were to bring them back to their origin
> Letters become one stroke, the stroke in turn derives from the dot.[93]

Finally, Cizîrî compares creation to a series of numbers beginning with a 1 followed by consecutive 0 s. As Turan has pointed out in his interpretation of this metaphor, the 0 s have no intrinsic value and derive their worth solely from the presence of the 1, symbolizing God. Without the 1, no matter how many 0 s there are, the series would amount to nothing:

> The One was an Aleph, added one dot, followed by subsequent others
> For every moment He added another zero, He exalted their ranks.[94]

Up to this point, the discussion on God's self-disclosure remains rather abstract. Nevertheless, it establishes the foundational principle that God's self-love gives rise to His self-disclosure within the cosmos. This theophany also includes, and here the abstract takes a turn for the concrete in Cizîrî's poetry, the realm of human relations. In other words, when we take heed of the Sufi poets, we see God becoming immanent in love stories, both the ones experienced historically and those torturing the mystical poets such as Melayê Cizîrî in the present. As another classical Kurdish poet, Ehmedê Xanî recounts this history of divine theophany revealed in popular love stories,

> It is you [God] that afflicts the hearts
> You made Shîrîn sweet for Parwîz
> [And] Farhād cry blood[95]
> Layla you made an affliction for Qays
> You flung Rāmîn unto Vîs[96]
> Why did you show Yusuf unto Zulaikha?[97]
>
> ...
>
> The mirrors [of the Divine] you created time and time again
> To depict your beauty in them.[98]

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90 *Em têk hewiyyat în yeqîn ism în ji mesder muşteq în. Mewhûm û laşey' mutleq în 'eks în di nêv ayîne da.* Cizîrî, *Dîwan*, 280.
91 Nor did Ibn ʿArabī for that matter. It is a term found in the secondary literature. Chittick, "Ibn 'Arabî."
92 *Yek e derya tu bizan qenci çi mewc û çi hebab. Di esil da ku hemî av e çi av û çi cemed.* Cizîrî, *Dîwan*, 85.
93 *Herfê ji yek bûne fesl ger bibirî wan bi esl. Herfi dibit yek xetek xet ku nema nuqte ma.* Ibid., 20.
94 *Yek bû elîf yek nuqte kir çend şiklê dî lê zêde kir. Her dem peyapey sifre kir bala bi bala rutbe da.* Ibid., 287; Turan, *Melayê Cizîrî Divanı ve Şerhi*, 712–5.
95 A tragic love story where Khosrow II is devoted to his wife Shîrîn, but she is in love with Farhād. Tricked into believing Shîrîn was dead, Farhād throws himself to death. al-Shīrāzī, *Poems from the Divan of Hafiz*, 142.
96 A Parthian love story. Silverstein, *Veiling Esther, Unveiling Her Story*, 119.
97 Referring to the famous story of Joseph son of Jacob told in Genesis and the twelfth chapter of the Qur'an. Whilst given no name in Genesis, or the Qur'an for that matter, later Islamic tradition names Potiphar's wife Zulaikha.
98 Xanî, *Mem û Zîn*, 7–8.

Both the love of others and one's own love become significant experiences of directly encountering God. Amorous Lyric poetry, in this case the Dīwān, documents and exhibits these encounters.[99] Melayê Cizîrî particularly defends one of these encounters, where the esteemed Shaykh Ṣanʾān witnessed the theophany of God manifest in the beauty of an Armenian Christian girl. Captivated by this divine revelation, the Shaykh lost his senses, followed her to Armenia, and even converted to Christianity. In the following sections, I will analyze Melayê Cizîrî's defense of Shaykh Ṣanʾān and explore Cizîrî's thesis that God is best known through his theophany and not through syllogistic reasoning.

6 The Christian Armenian Girl and the Shaykh

We now return to Cizîrî's remarks on the *qiyāsê hikmetê*, this time considering them within their full poetic context. The poem – astutely titled *On Sufi Teachings* by Shakely or his editors – does not begin with the critique itself. Rather, it opens with an apologia for Shaykh Ṣanʿān, who is presented as a model of one who truly perceived God. This stands in contrast to those who, as the context of the poem suggests, attempt to encounter the divine through syllogistic reasoning:

> Shaykh Ṣanʾān was not misconceived (*xelet*) when he drank the wine
> He was not misconceived when he went to Armenia
> Like Moses he saw your manifestation (*tecella*)
> Will you see then there is neither mistake nor misconception?
> Whoever does not see your stature (*bejn*) but beholds it with the syllogism (*qiyasê hikmetê*)
> No wonder that person went about demonstrative proof (*burhan*) misconceived
> The majesty of Layla no doubt (*yeqîn*) threw Majnūn into ruin
> Qays did not fall unto his face in the desert misconceived
> Like Nishānī they saw an inscription and a presentation (*nîşanek*) of Yours[100]
> Whoever saw a manifestation of yours, how could they be misconceived?[101]

Cizîrî appears eager to preempt potential misunderstandings regarding the figure of Shaykh Ṣanʿān. He clarifies that this person should not be judged or reproached for actions such as drinking wine or traveling to Armenia (to chase after a young lady), actions that might traditionally be considered transgressive in a religious or moral context. Instead, Cizîrî suggests that, like the prophet Moses, the Shaykh experienced a profound manifestation of God.

This poem is undoubtedly rich in references, starting with his allusion to the legend of Shaykh Ṣanʾān. Like all legends, there is a question as to how much of it can be traced to actual historical figures. For example, the figure of Romeo in Islamic culture, namely Majnūn, is a mythic retelling of a Bedouin poet belonging to an actual historical Arabic tribe named Banū ʿĀmir.[102] In the case of Shaykh Ṣanʾān, it is however more obscure. Hafiẓ's commentator, a near contemporary of Cizîrî, Aḥmad Sūdī (d. 1591), claims he was a Yemenite by the name of ʿAbd al-Razzāq.[103] No further biographical details are provided. The tale of Shaykh Ṣanʾān has nevertheless been retold numerous times in Sufi poetry, likely due to its rich allegorical treatment of core Sufi

99 "The phrase 'amorous lyric' aims to be an equivalent for certain versified genres used by both saints, lyrical forms concerned with love. Very often, mystics did not create new genres to convey their experiences, working instead within established genres. Such is the case, for example, in Sufi exegetical undertakings, where esoteric commentators employed an existing genre – the *tafsir* – as a medium for their insights. So too did the amorous poem, whether from the Arabic *nasib* or from the Persian *ghazal,* find itself a new medium for the expression of love enhanced by gnostic awareness." Zargar, *Sufi Aesthetics*, 120.

100 Nishānī is the pen name of Melaye Cizîrî.

101 *Mey nenoşî Şeyxê Sen'anê xelet. Ew neçû nêv Ermenistanê xelet. Mislê Mûsa wî tecellaya te dî. Ê tu dî kanî xeta hanê xelet. W'ê nedî bejna te û dayî qiyās. Hikmetê lew çûye burhanê xelet. Setweta Leylê yeqîn Mecnûn tepand. Wer ne Qeys naket beyabanê xelet. Wek Nîşanî neqş û nîşanek te dî. Ê ku nîşanek te dî kanê xelet.* Cizîrî, *Dîwan*, 123.

102 al-Yūsī, *The Discourses*, 457.

103 Sūdī, *Şerh-i Dîvân-ı Hâfız*, 1, 352.

themes – perceiving the Divine in everyday life, the transformative nature of love, and the challenge of maintaining unwavering loyalty to a Shaykh who may seem to defy conventional religious norms. However, its earliest elaborate retelling can be found in Farīd al-Dīn ʿAṭṭār's (d. 1220) celebrated *Manṭiq al-Ṭayr* (The Conference of the Birds). Moreover, the tale holds a special place in Kurdish culture, due to its retelling by Cizîrî's contemporary and friend Feqiyê Teyran (d. 1660).[104]

Since Cizîrî merely alludes to the tale of Shaykh Ṣanʾān, we must turn to Teyran's version, which presents the full story from which Cizîrî touches on only a few elements, including the Shaykh being above reproach and earnest in his experience of the Divine. To recount some highlights of Feqiyê Teyran's retelling, Shaykh Ṣanʾān was a pious mystic known for turning his face from the world and continuous worship.[105] Each of his gatherings would be visited by 500 students (*pansed murid tê*).[106] However, one day he saw in his dream a beautiful girl on a church roof who pours him wine.[107] This leads him to pursue her by going to Armenia followed by his many students. After meeting the girl, she begins to toy with the Shaykh, demanding that he wear the customary girdle (*zunnar*) of the Christians, burn the Qur'an, and drink wine.[108] The Shaykh complies with all her requests and even starts tending pigs.[109] His students, however, are devastated by the Shaykh's condition. Despite their repeated efforts to reason with him, they eventually abandon him in despair.[110] Later, the students encounter another saint, humorously named ʿAṭṭār, and plead for his assistance.[111] This leads the Prophet to appear in a dream and express his approval of the Shaykh's behavior:

> The condition of the Shaykh is from God (*rehmanî*)
> Do not say it is Satanic (*şeytanî*)
> He saw the One (*yek*) and knew the One.[112]

Shortly after, the Shaykh regains his senses and returns to his former position. However, the Christian girl experiences her own awakening and begins to pursue him this time. She eventually converts to Islam. Not long after they reunite, they both pass away together:

> Both circumambulated (*tewaf*) each other[113]
> Both [in the end] died from each other's distress[114]
> To eternal life they went
> As bride and groom of the hereafter.[115]

The moral of this story originally told by ʿAṭṭār has been interpreted in various ways by modern researchers. Having the Shaykh fall in love with a Christian woman who belongs to a "different religious universe," indicates for Nasr religious boundaries being crossed through esoterism, "Through the attraction of love – which here represents realized gnosis – the Sufi master is not only carried from the world of forms to that of Essence, but is also transported across religious frontiers."[116] Dabashi sees it as a story of destined

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104 Blau describes Teyran as "The enigmatic Muhammad of Mikis" as well as potentially the first Kurdish poet to write novels in rhymed couplets. She also considers Teyran to be the disciple of Cizîrî, but there is no solid evidence for this. As for the tale of Shaykh Ṣanʾān, this story recurrently appears in Kurdish literature. Not only in the works of Ciziri or his contemporary Teyran, but also Xanî's love epic: "You [God] made the Shaykh [of Ṣanʾān], known for completing the Hajj fifty times, go crazy for the daughter of the unbelievers (*keça kuffarî*)." Blau, "Written Kurdish Literature," 6. Xanî, *Mem û Zîn*, 8.
105 *Daîm di zikr û ta'etê*. Teyran, *Dîwan*, 166–7.
106 Ibid., 168.
107 Ibid., 170–1.
108 Ibid., 200–1.
109 Ibid., 204.
110 Ibid., 195.
111 Ibid., 207.
112 *Halê li Şêx rehmanî ye. Da hûn nebên şeytanî ye. Wî yek diye û yek zaniye.* Ibid., 210.
113 *Herdukan vêk ra tewaf kir*. Ibid., 218.
114 *Her du bi derdê hev mirîn*. Ibid., 219.
115 *Çûne heyata ebedî. Zava û bûkên axretê*. Ibid.
116 Nasr, *Islamic Art and Spirituality*, 106–7.

self-discovery.[117] As he recounts, "By the end of the story both the Muslim master and the Christian woman have seen identical lights in a tertiary space where their dreams led them."[118] De Bruijn, conversely, highlights the Shaykh's debasement. In his words, "This descent into a sinful life, however, rescued him from the self-esteem which was the last obstacle on his road toward the mystical goal."[119] Finally, Kermani discovers virtue in the Shaykh's extreme commitment to love. As he puts it, "Attar does not portray San'an as a saint who fell from faith. The Shaykh is holy virtue of falling from faith and going to the utmost limit in his love; he is revered in his disloyalty."[120]

Feqiyê Teyran's commentary provides insights that suggest a similar understanding of the story of Shaykh Ṣanʾān as reflected in the aforementioned interpretations. Anticipating De Bruijn's observations, Teyran also argues that the Shaykh's love had a purifying effect.[121] Furthermore, much like Dabashi, Teyran emphasizes that the Shaykh's condition was fated, and no amount of risk management (*tedbîr*) could have altered the outcome.[122] Finally, in agreement with the perspectives of Kermani and Nasr, Teyran asserts that the Shaykh should not be reproached as he ultimately recognized God behind all appearances. In Teyran's view, the girl was a *mezher* (locus of revelation), revealing the divine: "The beauty of the girl became a locus of revelation."[123] She served as a mirror (*'eks*) and manifestation (*nîşan*) of al-Samad.[124] Additionally, she was a key (*mifte*) to the oneness (*wehdanetê*) of God.[125]

It is clear that Teyran's constructive approach to interpreting the figure of the Shaykh goes beyond viewing him merely as a cautionary tale. This stands in stark contrast with how other Islamic scholars have presented similar stories. Ibn Al-Jawzī (d. 1116), reminiscent of the Shaykh's story, relates a cautionary tale of a man who madly fell in love with a Christian woman he saw passing by. His passions overcame his intellect (*ghalaba ʿalā ʿaqlihi*) and he had to be brought to a sanatorium (*māristān*). To meet her in the afterlife he converted to Christianity and passed, while she also became sick and unbeknownst to him converted to Islam.[126] Accordingly, the ironic moral of this story suggests that none of the mad and sick lovers will meet each other in the hereafter, as they are destined for two different places.[127]

Cizîrî, who also knows this legend, agrees with Teyran in absolving the Shaykh from reproach.[128] Furthermore, Cizîrî explicitly considers the Shaykh a model to follow. In one of his poems, Cizîrî declares, "In love, I am like Shaykh Ṣanʾān."[129] Additionally, referring back to the fifth line of the current poem, Cizîrî draws a parallel between the Shaykh and himself, using his pen name, Nishānī. He asserts that both have witnessed God's inscription and manifestation – the Shaykh on his beloved and Cizîrî on his own.

Besides likening the Shaykh unto himself, Cizîrî also draws similarity between the Shaykh and Moses. Moses, to recall Islamic tradition, has encountered God multiple times, both of which are referenced by Cizîrî in his Dīwān.[130] The first moment in which Moses encounters God is through a burning bush.[131] This is where

117 Dabashi, *An Iranian Childhood*, 172.
118 Ibid., 171.
119 De Bruijn, *Persian Sufi Poetry*, 80.
120 Kermani, *The Terror of God*, 157.
121 *'Işqê bire tuhriyyetê* (Love led to cleansing). Teyran, *Dîwan*, 210.
122 Ibid., 193.
123 Ibid., 178.
124 One of God's names, derived from the 112th chapter of the Qur'an. Ibid., 192.
125 *Lê 'eks û nîşana Semed. Lê mifteya wehdanetê*. Ibid.
126 Ibn al-Jawzī, *Dhamm al-Hawā*, 347.
127 This stands in great contrast with Teyran, whom as we witnessed, argues that the Shaykh and the girl reunited in the hereafter as bride and groom.
128 Cizîrî's acquaintance with the legend of Shaykh Ṣanʾān need not be limited to ʿAṭṭār, nor by extension his disciple Teyran. In Cizîrî's poetry, one can trace clear influences from the Dīwān of Ḥafīẓ al-Shīrāzī (d. 1390), whom he explicitly cites. Notably, Ḥafīẓ, centuries earlier, also offered absolution to Shaykh Ṣanʾān, writing, "If thou be a disciple of love's Path, defame not: pawned at the vintner's house, his religious garment Shaikh San'an (held)." al-Shīrāzī, *The Dīvān-i Ḥāfiẓ*, 169.
129 *Di 'işqê şeyxê Sanî me*. Literally Cizîrî argues to be the Second Shaykh, which Dilovan interprets as a reference to Shaykh Ṣanʾān, who is the First Shaykh. Cizîrî, *Dîwan*, 234.
130 Ibid., 98.
131 Qur'an 20:10–1.

Moses hears God's voice. Another instance is when Moses asks God to reveal Himself to him. God replies that He cannot be seen by him. However, God points him towards the direction of a mountain. There God manifests (*tajallā*), making it turn to dust and "Moses fell down in swoon."[132]

Cizîrî's comparison between Moses and Shaykh Ṣanʾān carries several implications. First, it suggests that God can be encountered "in the world." The burning bush incident exemplifies this, as does the Shaykh's experience of seeing God in the countenance of the Christian girl. Second, it highlights the overwhelming nature of God's manifestation. Just as Moses fell into a swoon, Shaykh Ṣanʾān completely lost his wits in the presence of the Divine. Finally, if Shaykh Ṣanʾān merely encountered and recognized God in His creation, we must ask as Cizîrî does, whether it is possible to blame the Shaykh?

> Like Nishānī they saw an inscription and a presentation (*nîşanek*) of Yours
> Whoever saw a manifestation of yours, how could they be misconceived? [133]

7 Beyond Vision

Cizîrî's metaphysics – both in its abstract theology and the lived example of Shaykh Ṣanʿān – ultimately circles back to his initial critique: the desire to apprehend God with certainty through discursive reasoning, rather than through the direct theophanies of God, constitutes a fundamental misconception (*xelet*). God is not a distant object of philosophical inference, but one who is actively manifesting Himself. As the story of Shaykh Ṣanʿān attests, God can be encountered through the experience of beauty. In the words of Cizîrî,

> From this human form look at the divine secret (*sirrê subhanî*)
> For this face is the most apparent of demonstrative proofs (*berahîn*) and signs (*ayat*) [of God][134]

Vision, for Cizîrî, brings with it a higher degree of certainty concerning God – one that surpasses any discursive apprehension of God. Yet his poetry does not stop there; it reaches further. We find a complementary line of thought suggesting that even certainty based on prior vision is ultimately insufficient. To understand this view of Cizîrî, we must give some attention to the Sufi parlance of *ʿilm al-yaqīn*, *ʿayn al-yaqīn*, and *ʿhaqq al-yaqīn*. A technical vocabulary was also discovered in Cizîrî's poetry.

There are various explanatory models that help make these technical concepts relatable. A well-known example, cited by Seyyed Hossein Nasr, involves the analogy of fire.[135] One may know of fire through the testimony of others – this is *ʿilm al-yaqīn*, the knowledge of certainty. A higher level is reached when one sees the fire directly, known as *ʿayn al-yaqīn*, the eye of certainty. But the highest degree, *ḥaqq al-yaqīn* – the truth of certainty – is attained only by being burned by the fire, when knowledge is no longer mediated but fully realized through direct experience.

Even though the terminology may seem esoteric, it is commonly traced to a Qur'anic reference to Abraham and his desire to witness the resurrection. Specifically, verse 2:260 recounts Abraham asking God to show him how He resurrects the dead. God, in response, asks if Abraham does not already believe. Abraham replies, "Of course I do, but I want it to appease my heart (*li yaṭmaʾinna qalbī*)." This verse illustrates that while Abraham already knew and believed that God resurrects, he sought a deeper level of certitude – one that comes not merely from being told, but from actually seeing it with his own eyes. In other words, he went from *ʿilm al-yaqīn*, knowing certainly the resurrection will come to be, to having a certain vision of the resurrection, a state the Sufis describe as *ʿayn al-yaqīn*. However, the highest level of certitude, *ʿhaqq al-yaqīn*, is absent in this story, since Abraham has yet to undergo resurrection himself.

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132 Qur'an 7:143

133 *Wek Nîşanî neqş û nîşanek te dî. Ê ku nîşanek te dî kanê xelet.* Cizîrî, *Dîwan*, 123.

134 *Ji vî teqwîmê insanî nezer da sirrê subhanî. Fehaze'l-wechu min ecla berahînin we ayatî.* Cizîrî, *Dîwan*, 232.

135 Nasr, *Knowledge and the Sacred*, 325.

Cizîrî is no stranger to these concepts, whether through subtle allusion or direct reference. To begin with the allusions, in one of his verses, Cizîrî refers to both *ʿilm al-yaqīn* and *ʿayn al-yaqīn*, suggesting – albeit briefly – that the vision of beauty draws the seeker from certainty grounded in knowledge to certainty grounded in direct sight. Given our previous discussion, the object of this certainty has to be God, since profane beauty leads to the apprehension of divine beauty. As Cizîrî puts it:

> Beauty and fairness dazzle until knowledge (*ilmê*) turns to vision (*'eyn*).
> Its kindling gave love, who saw the *ḥaqīqa* without *majāz*?[136]

Although Cizîrî does not name the concept of *ḥaqq al-yaqīn* (the truth of certainty), there is a simple argument to be made that it is already implicitly present in his reflections on Shaykh Ṣanʾān. Shaykh Ṣanʾān, who was entirely overwhelmed by love, can be seen as having attained a state of absolute certainty – a deep, unshakeable conviction, symbolized by his inability to be swayed by his students' logical arguments. Yet we must note the paradox here: the Shaykh, while utterly intoxicated with love, was simultaneously acutely aware and deeply certain of the meaning and truth of his experiences. This metaphorical state of intoxication stands in stark contrast to physical drunkenness, where ironically clarity and awareness dissolve. As Cizîrî states in his correspondence with Teyran, "Anyone certain of the One is burned by love."[137] Conversely, we might express the logical inverse: anyone who is burned by love is certain of the One. In conclusion, the Shaykh, through his all-consuming love, seems to allude to having reached the state of *ḥaqq al-yaqīn*.

In one instance of Cizîrî's poetry where *ʿayn al-yaqīn* is explicitly mentioned, there Doru infers another clue for a state beyond *ʿayn al-yaqīn*. Since Cizîrî uses a relatively peculiar formulation, namely *ʿayn al-ʿiyān* (literally "eye of vision") some interpretation is necessary. The verses in question are as follows:

> Confers me certitude through vision (*'eynulyeqîn*) to appease my heart (*li yaṭmaʾinna qalbī*)
> The eye of vision (*'eynul'eyan*) is necessary, knowledge (*dirayet*) is not sufficient.[138]

Doru understands this peculiar expression (*ʿayn al-ʿiyān*) as indicating a form of self-reflexive perception: rather than the subject perceiving an external object, perception is shared, such that the perceived becomes co-constitutive of perception itself.[139] In my view, this reading ultimately gestures toward a state of unification where God beholds Himself, which is very much in line with Akbarian thought. However, based on this interpretation, Doru argues that Cizîrî introduces an innovative concept. While this remains a plausible suggestion, it is important to note that the phrase occurs only once in Cizîrî's corpus, raising questions about whether there is sufficient evidence to support the claim of conceptual innovation.

Turan and Cizîrî's famous commentator Zivingî present a less esoteric understanding. Turan translates *ʿayn al-ʿiyān* more mundanely as "gözle görmek" (witnessing with the eye). Likewise, Zivingî understands *ʿayn al-ʿiyān* ultimately to mean *al-muʿāyana bi-l-baṣr* (beholding with sight). This reading understands the word *dîrayet* to be synonymous with *ʿilm al-yaqīn*, which leads Cizîrî to simply affirm what he does in other lines of poetry: that one needs to witness with their eyes rather than have certainty from knowledge alone (*kafî nehin dîrayet*).[140]

In any case, there is a compelling argument that, regardless of which interpretation one follows, Cizîrî's poetry consistently leads to the threshold of divine union – and with it, the conclusion of our inquiry. The allegory of certainty culminating not in knowing about fire or seeing it, but in being consumed by it, unmistakably gestures toward this aim. This threshold marks the very point at which the poem containing the reference to Shaykh Ṣanʾān ends. To recall, Cizîrî opens the poem with an apologia for Shaykh Ṣanʿān – and, by extension, for himself.

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136 *Lami'a husn û cemalê dê ji 'ilmê bête 'eyn. 'Işqi da jê hilbitin kî dî heqîqet bê mecaz.* Cizîrî, *Dîwan*, 100.
137 Ibid., 316.
138 *Li yetmeinne qelbî 'eynulyeqîn dibexşet. 'Eynul'eyan divêtin kafî nehin dîrayet*. Cizîrî, *Dîwan*, 55.
139 Doru, *Melayê Cizîrî*, 178.
140 Turan, *Melayê Cizîrî Divanı ve Şerhi*, 380–1; Zivingî, *al-ʿIqd al-Jawharī*, 141.

> Like Nishānī they saw an inscription and a presentation (*nîşanek*) of Yours
> Whoever saw a manifestation of yours, how could they be misconceived? [141]

However, at the end of the poem, he concludes with a self-reproach,

> In the pupils of the eyes, Mela saw his own reflection
> Like Nīshānī he remained in a presentation (*nîşanê*) misconceived.[142]

As ambiguous as these lines may seem when read alongside the preceding verses and our earlier interpretations, one can surmise that Cizîrî is reproaching himself for still perceiving his own reflection even while gazing upon God. As Manṣūr al-Ḥallāj, whom Cizîrî was familiar with, puts it: "He who arrives at the object of his vision is no longer concerned with the vision."[143] Cizîrî's self-awareness suggests a lingering in the state of duality – of self and Divine – when he ought to transcend it and seek union.

To achieve union with the Divine, Cizîrî is proposing self-annihilation. The last veil separating the lover from the beloved is the self,

> So that the lover and the beloved may become one without veil
> The lover annihilated the self, because it stood in the way of love as a curtain
> Hence became annihilated in love to persist with the friend (*dost*)
> The lover of the eternal (*baqî*) will not reach union until they become annihilated (*fanî*)[144]

Familiar readers with Sufi literature will recognize the concept of *fanāʿ fī-l-lāh* (self-annihilation in God). A detailed historical overview of this term is outside the scope of this article. Nevertheless, in the context of the work of Cizîrî, one intuits it is akin to what the Akbari poet Jāmī has more prosaically stated,

> Wherefore it behoves thee to strive and hide *thyself* from thy sight and occupy thyself with Very Being [sic], and concern thyself with the 'Truth.' For the various grades of created things are theatres of His revealed beauty, and all things that exist are mirrors of his perfections. And in this course thou must persevere until He mingles Himself with thy soul, and thine own individual existence passes out of thy sight. Then, if thou regardest thyself, it is He whom thou art regarding; if thou speakest of thyself, it is He of whom thou art speaking. The relative has become the Absolute, and 'I am the Truth' is equivalent to He is the Truth.[145]

Such a spiritual awakening, as described in Jāmī's final lines, is vividly portrayed in Cizîrî's poem on the Magian cupbearers. In this poem, Cizîrî outlines the spiritual journey from the phenomenal world toward union with the Absolute, beginning with the arrival of the Magian cupbearers at the meditation ceremony (*samā*). As the dance unfolds, their beauty captivates the participants, leading them into a state of bewilderment. It is at this moment of intense wonder that the Absolute exerts a magnetic pull (*jadhba*), drawing Cizîrî toward union with the Divine.[146] In this state, Cizîrî is made aware of the unity of existence,

> The beloved told me: I am from you and you are from me
> In reality (*heqiqet*) we are one; dissolving doubt from the matter.[147]

This realization, which the Absolute offers is subsequently accepted by Cizîrî, leading to his union with the Absolute,

> I drank the wine from the hand becoming intoxicated
> The drop arrived at the ocean, but the ocean remained the same.[148]

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141 Cizîrî, *Dîwan*, 123.
142 *Merdumên çehvên Melê 'eksa xwe dî. Wek Nîşanî ma li nîşanê xelet*. Ibid., 125.
143 al-Ḥallāj, *The Tawasin*, 25.
144 *'Aşiq û me'şûqi da wasil bi yek bin bê hîcab. Mehwi bû bi'zzati 'aşiq lew di 'işqê perde bû. Lew di 'işqê da fena bû da bibit baqî bi dost. 'Aşiqê baqî nebû wasil hetta fanî nebû.* Cizîrî, *Dîwan*, 212.
145 Jāmī, *Lawā'ih*, 23.
146 Cizîrî, *Dîwan*, 19–20.
147 *Gote me durdane yî em ji te û tu ji me yî. Lew bi heqîqet yek în mes'ele bê şubhe ma.* Ibid., 19.
148 *Bade mi noşî ji dest ç û me ji xwo mame mest. Qitre bi behrê giha behri bi 'eynî xwo ma*. Ibid., 20.

8 Conclusion

Is it not telling that Ibn al-Jawzī – whom we have discussed – relates a cautionary tale of a man who falls madly in love with a Christian woman he merely glimpses in passing, emphasizing how passion ultimately overcomes reason (*ghalaba ʿalā ʿaqlihi*)? The implication is clear: the intellect does not, in the end, reign supreme. Kurdish poets such as Melayê Cizîrî and Feqiyê Teyran both affirm this idea through the myth of Sheikh Ṣanʾān. In their subversive retelling, empathy replaces reproach, and the tale becomes a meditation not just on desire, but on divine encounter. Against the cold certainty of argument as symbolized by the promise of *qiyās*, Cizîrî places the immediacy of vision: to see God, not merely to deduce Him. Given our extended discussion of how, in Cizîrî's theology, God actively manifests Himself within the cosmos, should we not ask: what greater way is there to know God than to behold Him?

The answer to this question by Cizîrî brings us to a deeper level of his epistemology. Indeed, theophanies offer a higher level of certitude. Just as Abraham's intellectual understanding of resurrection was surpassed by a deeper certainty when God showed him a tangible demonstration, Cizîrî maintains that individuals can reach a higher level of certainty through witnessing divine manifestations in the physical world. In other words, they can move from the level of *ʿilm al-yaqīn*, certitude based on authority or deductive reasoning, *to ʿayn al-yaqīn*, that is certitude gained from direct experience.

Knowing or seeing the fire is not enough, one must be consumed by it in order to reach the most certain experience of fire. Hence, whilst theophanies are incredibly valuable and important, Cizîrî also warns against lingering in the manifestations of the Divine, urging the seeker to move beyond them. In his worldview, God is proactive, reaching out and inviting the soul into union. Once unified, one attains the true certainty of God. As Cizîrî expresses, "I am the *illā* [*in lā ilāha illā l-lāh*]."[149] In other words, to realize that even as an "I," I am ultimately a "Thou."

On a final note, a reflection that I too can only partially address after a hermeneutical journey through Cizîrî's work – and one that still requires further research – is Cizîrî's relationship to the broader process of vernacularization in the post-classical Ottoman world. Leezenberg, who has devoted considerable attention to this topic, identifies two distinct waves in the process of vernacularization. The first involves the use of local vernaculars for "new literate purposes," marking a shift where these languages begin to serve broader intellectual and literary functions. The second wave, which he terms the "governmentalization of language," sees vernaculars undergoing regimentation and standardization as their rules are formally codified in written grammars.[150] What is peculiar, however, is that Leezenberg connects both waves of vernacularization to Kurdish figures such as Ehmedê Xanî, who composed a renowned love story with rhyming couplets (*mathnawī*), and Elî Teremaxî (d. late seventeenth century), who authored the first recorded Kurdish grammar in Kurdish. These figures exemplify the process, as their works explicitly convey "linguistic ideologies" that present vernaculars as eloquent, expressive, and worthy of high literature. Yet, while Leezenberg, well-versed in Kurdish literature, omits Cizîrî as a contributor to this ideological shift, there is ample implicit evidence in Cizîrî's work to support the notion that he, too, held Kurdish to be "eloquent, expressive, and worthy of high literature."[151]

The most telling clue in this regard lies in Cizîrî's remark: "If you want to see scattered pearls organized, then look at the poetry of Mulla [Cizîrî]; what need for Shiraz?"[152] This comment clearly alludes to the renowned Persian poets Hafez and Saʿdī both from Shiraz, whom Cizîrî references by name in several of his poems. By positioning his own work alongside these revered giants of high literature, Cizîrî not only asserts the sufficiency of Kurdish as a literary language capable of competing with the established prestige of Persian, but also – albeit less overtly than Xanî in the preface to *Mem û Zîn* – reveals a similar conviction regarding the literary stature of Kurdish. And rather than arguing for its legitimacy, Cizîrî enacts it: by composing

149 *Ku "îlla" yim ez*. Ibid., 99.

150 Leezenberg, "The Vernacular Revolution," 252.

151 Ibid., 262.

152 *Ger lu'lu'ê mensûri ji nezmê tu dixwazî. Wer şi'rê Melê bîn te bi Şîrazi çi hacet.* Cizîrî, *Dîwan*, 51.

sophisticated poetry in Kurdish – despite his evident mastery of Arabic and Persian – he demonstrates, in practice, the capacity of Kurdish to serve as a vehicle for high literary expression.

What remains less clear, however, is whether Cizîrî's contributions to the vernacularization process were accompanied by a "vulgarization" of *taṣawwuf al-ʿirfanī* (gnostic Sufism). One might expect that presenting such ideas in the audience's mother tongue, rather than in Arabic or Persian, would naturally lead to a simplification or broader accessibility of *ʿirfanī* concepts. Barring the fact that Cizîrî's poems are occasionally performed as songs listened to by a broader Kurdish audience, the technical sophistication of Cizîrî's Sufi reflections – and the fact that a full appreciation of his work requires familiarity with Arabic, Persian, and Turkish – points to a more elitist orientation. The combination of Cizîrî's role as a teacher at the Medreseya Sor (The Red Madrasa) with the presence of panegyric poems in his *Dīwān* addressed to a ruler, as well as his references to Sufi gatherings, suggests that his poetry was primarily crafted for the court, the madrasa, and the Sufi lodge.

Historically, Cizîrî may not have aimed to popularize or simplify Sufi concepts, yet today he stands as a notable Kurdish exemplar and voice of the tradition of *irfān-i naẓarī* (theoretical gnosis). This perspective also sheds light on the broader question of originality in Cizîrî's contributions. As far as I can surmise, the present analysis of his *Dīwān* reveals no significant departures from ideas found among other naẓarī Sufis, such as Ibn ʿArabī or ʿAbd al-Raḥmān Jāmī. However, a more in-depth comparison in the future is warranted and might reveal further nuances and deepen our understanding of Cizîrî's influences. Nevertheless, one might argue that, in retrospect, the distinctiveness of Cizîrî's work lies in its role as a sixteenth-century Kurdish reflection of a Sufi ontology and epistemology previously articulated through the brilliance of figures like Ibn ʿArabī and Jāmī.

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