

Rethinking Ibn ‘Arabī: Ibn Turka’s Commentary on the *Fuṣūṣ al-Ḥikam*

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ABSTRACT

Sā’in al-Dīn Ibn Turka is one of the lesser known thinkers of the post-Mongolian era, active, especially, under Timurid rule in Iran with some posthumous fame. Nevertheless, he has been one of the most influential thinkers of his time. The first question addressed is to position in the field of Islamic knowledge in Timurid Iran. This means being a representative with a lettrist and occult approach to Islamic knowledge and his approach can be read as an early modern Islamic perspective using a mathematical understanding of reality. This understanding marks a genuine difference in the development of Islamic knowledge.

Understanding Islamic as a set of contested fields allows to situate Ibn Turka as part of the field of *wahdat al-wujūd* and a sub-field of the commentary tradition on one of the most important works of Ibn ‘Arabī, the *Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam*. The commentary of Ibn Turka has not been studied yet. Thus, this article is the first deeper study of this commentary and closes a gap in *wahdat al-wujūd studies*. The study of the development of the school of Oneness of Being is often focused on the founding father and need the study of later developments after his time.

Furthermore, using an analytical approach based on the field theory of Pierre Bourdieu the article presents a reading of the field of *wahdat al-wujūd* as a field of multiple contestations overcoming the limits of genealogical studies who are not depicting this field as an area of contestation and advancing this field on a level enabling a conversation with other fields.

Keywords: *Ibn Turka, Fuṣūṣ al-Ḥikam, Ibn ‘Arabī, Pierre Bourdieu, Wahdat al-Wujūd*

Introduction

The first part of this article has to situate the author in the field of Islamic discussions in Timurid times for a proper understanding of his project and the commentary discussed here. Since Ibn Turka is a lesser known author in Islamic history of ideas a detailed presentation is needed to understand the field Ibn Turka is active in.

Sā’in al-Dīn ‘Alī ibn Muhammad Turka Isfahānī Khujandī (d. 1432 CE), known as Ibn Turka, was an occultist and philosopher who lived under Timurid rule; he resided for some time in Mamluk Cairo but returned to Timurid Isfahan and became Shāfi’ī chief judge in Isfahan and Yazd. He is regarded as a prime representative of the Akbarian-Avicennian-Suhrawardian synthesis characteristic of post-Mongolian Islamic thought in Central Asia and Iran. Among his works are *Tamhīd al-Qawā’id*, a commentary on his grandfather’s *Qawā’id al-tawḥīd*. The *Tamhīd* (cf. Nakanishi, 2017) includes many references to the *Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam*, demonstrating the important

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role of the *Fuṣūṣ* for Ibn Turka. In the *Tamhīd*, Ibn Turka discusses critically Ibn Sīnā's (d. 1037 CE) *Shifā'*, the post-Avicennian views of Nāṣir al-Dīn Ṭūsī (d. 1274 CE), and Shihāb al-Dīn Suhrawardī's illuminationist philosophy (d. 1191 CE). Thus, he situates himself in the history of post-Avicennian philosophy *cum* Akbarian Sufism beyond his lettrist-occultist views. In the Akbarian field Ibn Turka refers to the *Futūḥāt al-makkiyya*, the commentary on the *Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam* by al-Qayṣarī (d. 1350 CE), the *Miṣbāḥ al-uns* by al-Fanārī (d. 1431 CE), a commentary on al-Qūnawī's commentary on the *Fuṣūṣ*, Ibn Turka is also referring to. Other references to the works of Ibn 'Arabī include the *Inshā' al-dawā'ir*, which also underscores the importance of diagrammatic works in post-classical times. Ibn Turka quotes (We are intentionally not referring to the current editions because the reading of Ibn 'Arabī by Ibn Ibn Turka is important for our discussion.) the *Inshā' al-dawā'ir*:

"For us it is stipulated that the human being (*insān*) consists of the two copies (*nuskha*), perceptible and non-perceptible. The perceptible copy is similar to the world entirely, the non-perceptive copy is similar to the divine majesty." (Ibn Turka, 1381, p. 173)

Other important works include the *Kitāb al-Mafāḥiṣ*, a systematic work that can be considered the revivification of the neo-pythagorean encyclopedia of the *Ikhwān al-ṣafā'* in lettrist and Akbarian terms, and the *Munāẓara-yi bazm-o rasm*, an offspring of the venerable sword vs. pen trope and an outline of the theory of Islamic imperial thought of post-Mongolian times in Akbarian and lettrist terms (Melvin-Koushki, 2025a).

Several other works of Sā'in al-Dīn Ibn Turka discuss the ideas of Ibn 'Arabī and the school of the people of realization (*madhhab al-muḥaqqiqīn*) (Ibn Turka, 1381, p. 34). Among these works is the *Sharḥ Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam* mentioned in the dissertation of Mathew S. Melvin-Koushki (Melvin-Koushki, 2012, pp. 269, 390, 427) but not studied in detail. In the literature on the commentaries of the *Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam*, Ibn Turka's commentary is rarely mentioned; some remarks from Ottoman times are known (Lohlker, 2026). A thorough study of a larger number of commentaries on the *Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam*, historical and contemporary, is needed to understand the influence of the *Fuṣūṣ* in the history of Islamic thought.

Since Ibn Turka was rediscovered through the works of Melvin-Koushki, further studies are needed to understand his ideas in the context of Islamic thought of the post-Mongolian era. He is a paradigmatic thinker of the transformation of the Islamic world and Islamic thought in early modernity.

This article is dedicated to his commentary on the *Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam* of Ibn 'Arabī. Thus, he inscribes himself (as shown above) in the discourses around Ibn 'Arabī and, esp., the tradition of commentaries on the *Fuṣūṣ*. A structural point of view puts him in the

- 1) field of Sufism
- 2) field of Ibn 'Arabī studies
- 3) field of *waḥdat al-wujūd* studies
- 4) field of *Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam* studies
- 5) field of post-Mongolian studies
- 6) field of lettrism studies
- 7) and the field of Ibn Turka studies.

This multiperspective look at this author and his work allows for a better understanding of the work discussed here. Looking at the individual author will allow for a precise assessment of his contributions to several fields, thus, contributing to a better understanding of the respective fields. Esp., we will consider the diverse forms of capital at play following Bourdieu's field and (symbolic) capital theory (Bourdieu, 2020).

Bourdieu writes that there presuppositions to be considered when situating an author – in the social structures of the fields of Islamic thought in our case: "there are those that are constitutive of the *doxa* specific to each of the different fields (religious, artistic, philosophical,

sociological, etc.) and, more precisely, those that each particular thinker owes to his position in a field.” (Bourdieu, 2000, p. 10) The general field of Islamic conversations has been described before.

In the field of Sufism the works of Ibn Turka may be classified as a paradigmatic example for a less Sunni mainstream form of Sufism.

During his lifetime he is part of a specific subfield focused on the ideas of Ibn ‘Arabī and the tendency of *wahdat al-wujūd* after him, a field of ideas dominant at that time and beyond. One of the works of Ibn ‘Arabī very often commented upon is the *Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam*. The commentary of Ibn Turka is less quoted than other commentaries, nevertheless, at least in Ottoman times some references to this commentary are to be found (Lohlker, 2026). Ibn Turka was an influential scholar in his time. As such, he can be regarded as the most influential figure of another special subfield of the Islamic history of ideas: the post-Mongolian Islamic discourses. These discourses will be described later on. Methodologically speaking, he follows a lettrist approach that is on the one hand deeply influenced by similar ideas of Ibn ‘Arabī, on the other hand by other ideas circulating in Southwestasia and North Africa. Ibn Turka says: “The distinction between the divine knowledge (*‘ilm ilāhī*) and the divine knowledge called metaphysical (*mā ba’d al-tabī’a*) like the distinction between the absolute (*mutlaq*) and the conditional (*muqayyad*).” (Ibn Turka, 1420, p. 6) This bold claim situates the knowledge of Ibn Turka at the highest level of Islamic knowledge, esp., Lettrism (Melvin-Koushki, 2023). Thus, the article will contribute to both the field of lettrism and Ibn Turka studies, the most prominent scholar in this field is indubitably Matthew Melvin-Koushki with his field-building work.

Methods

This study uses a documentary and deep reading text study method (Bowen, 2009), thus; allowing for an exploration into the content of this commentary. Taking into account that Ibn Turka is one of the lesser known authors of Timurid times and the commentary discussed here has never been studied before extensive quotations from the text of Ibn Turka are needed. All the translations are done by the author. (Quotations from the *Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam* have been checked with the authoritative translation of Abrahamov, sometimes adopted to the quotations used by Ibn Turka bearing in mind that pre-modern texts do not use standardized text.) The quotations are selected to illustrate the different fields of the scholarly practice of Ibn Turka. The *faṣṣ* on *raḥ ma* is chosen because it covers a central aspect of Islamic thought.

As said before, for properly situating Ibn Turka in the fields mentioned above he was participating and to overcome the limitations of genealogical approaches the field theory of Bourdieu allows for an understanding of the dynamic nature of these fields and the contestation happening in them. Analyzing the contributions of Ibn Turka this way will make a structural view possible.

The text, thus, will be analyzed in the framework of the field theory of Pierre Bourdieu. It is part of an ongoing research process on the commentaries on the *Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam* of Ibn ‘Arabī, demonstrating the diversity of this corpus of literature.

Structure of the Commentary

To get a preliminary impression of this commentary, we will look into an edition from 1420 AH with the gloss of al-Mawlā ‘Alī b. Jamshīd al-Nūrī (Ibn Turka, 1420). This two-volume edition starts with a lengthy introduction by the editor, then turns to a very interesting introduction by Ibn Turka.

Ibn Turka then starts his commentary with some considerations on the *muqaddima* of the *Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam* of Ibn ‘Arabī (Lohlker, 2026, for a list of commentaries). The commentary continues

in accordance with the structure of the *Fuṣūṣ*, chapterwise, starting with the chapter (*faṣṣ*) on Adam and moving until the chapter of ‘Uzayr. The second volume begins with the chapter on ‘Isā until it finally reaches the chapter on the Prophet Muhammad.

The following paragraphs will analyze the introduction, the chapter on Zakariyya, and some other selected parts.

At first, we will look at Ibn Turka’s discussion of the letters to get an idea of his position in the field of lettrism.

“You should know that the letters have two forms (*ṣūratayn*) to realize the meanings: One of them is [the category of] the directions flowing appropriately for the wind because it is emitted to the outside. This is called speech (*kalām*). The other ones are the numerical forms (*hay’ āt raqamiyya*) that appear through the lights according to the way they are written on the pages in the appropriate manner. This is called writing (*kitāb*).

The first of these two [forms] concerning its character as an isthmus (*barzakhiyya*) between the second (the writing) and the meanings (*ma’ānī*) and its comprehensiveness (*jāmi’iyya*) (cf. Mansouri, 2020), the connection of the state of prophethood (*nubuwwa*) comprehending sainthood (*walāya*) as if the second is because of secrecy, the connection to the sainthood in its purity. Therefore, the seal of prophethood has not at all any inclination towards it (the second form) and he – God bless him and grant him peace – comes to know from it the secret of taking the book that let understand with a numerical (*raqamī*) that the letter *kāf* (of *kitāb*: *ki...*) indicates the form (*yā’*) of the Arabic letter *yā’* ‘O, my servants’ (addressing the believers), written and with the numerical value (‘*adad*) k: 20. (The numerical value of the letter in the abjad system.) The first is the vocative *yā’* indicating the servant (‘*abd*), the second (my servants) indicates the Truth (*ḥaqq*). The [written form] comprehends both. It is the totality (*kull*).” (Ibn Turka, 2020, pp. 54-55)

We read a succinct demonstration of oneness that encompasses everything and implies the argument for the *waḥdat al-wujūd*. Thus, it is situated in the field of Ibn ‘Arabī studies and the field of *waḥdat al-wujūd* studies. The argument is purely lettrist, referring to the letters *kāf*, *yā’*, and their numerical value. Earlier, Ibn Turka states:

“The letters (*ḥurūf*) and the numerical values (*ruqūm*), indeed, differ from each other, resembling each other. Their original forms (*ashkhās*) resemble each other, differ by the points. (Evidently, referring to the similarity of Arabic letters without the points below or above.) It is the starting point of written trace (*khaṭṭ*) [of the letters] that is the potentiality (*hayūlī*) of the letters and the materiality (*māddā*) of the points. (Without the lines of the Arabic letters points cannot be understood as being assigned to an alphabetic value and, thus, a numerical value,) The same holds for the [fixed] entities (*a’yān*) and the truths (*ḥaqā’iq*); however, they differ [caused] by the One (*waḥda*) that is the prime source of everything (*kull*). As also the point (*nuqṭa*) is the primary starting point of things capable of differentiation and specification, [The point] is finally the differentiator and the specifier. Similarly, the One(ness) – by its essence – is the root of the disposition (*isti’dād*) and the source of the faculties and materialities.” (Ibn Turka, 2020, p. 20)

We understand the way letters, numbers, cosmology and the ultimate unity are intertwined. The letters are also related to numbers. The points of the Arabic letters are the productive force generating the differentiation of existence. Ibn Turka tells us concerning that the letters (*ḥurūf*) as a means of realization of the meanings depend on three forms (Ibn Turka, 2020, pp. 30-31):

- “1) the phonetical (*nutqī*) sounds differing according to the articulations of the verbal form (*lafẓ*) and the acoustic (*sam’i*) units. This is based on the ruler of the encompassing (*kamālī*) form [...] over it, i. e., the *wāw*.
- 2) the numeral (*raqmī*) forms vary according to the lines and the points [...] The complete form for this is the *hā’* [...] (*hā’* + *wāw* = *huwa*)
- 3) the numerical (‘*adadī*) levels (*marātib*), including both forms: the articulation-receptional and the numerical-visual.” (Ibn Turka, 2020, p. 31)

Ibn Turka underscores the twofold character of enunciation: via the tongue (speaking and hearing, in the process of producing and receiving) and via the eye (reading). The latter includes an understanding of the numerical values of the letters read. This means writing is at the same epistemological level as speaking/hearing. For post-Mongolian times, this upgrading of writing and the written text is a characteristic of the transformation of the epistemological structure of Islamic knowledge.

This lettrist approach is evident throughout the introduction (and the rest of the text). One further example may illustrate this:

“The *hā*’ of the reality (*ḥaqīqa*) of the All-True (*ḥaqq*) if it is clothed with the form (*ṣūra*) of the *dāl* indicating the change of manifestation and the transformation of the rules, but the composite form (Referring to the Arab plural forms *milal* and *umam* (I, p. 42) with double consonants.) indicates the utmost parts and the end of the form – i. e., the boundary (*ḥadd*). If manifests to it [the *hā*’] the *wāw* of the essence (The being him, the counterpart of the knowing subject.) and the *hā*’ relating to it, it amounts to Oneness (*waḥdah*) (*ḥā*’ + *dāl* + *wāw* + *hā*’ (*ṭā*’ *marbūta*) = *waḥdah*) revealing the ultimate stage of achieving existence (*wujūd*) and the utmost degree of the inner meanings of it.” (Ibn Turka, 2020, pp. 43-44)

Realizing the reality of God as the ‘All-True’ is achieved by the creation of Oneness as both, the inner meanings of the ultimate truth in the form of being. We may call this a lettrist construction of the meaning, the form of the concept of Oneness of Being (*waḥdat al-wujūd*). Ibn Turka, hence, becomes a paradigm for lettrist argumentation in the field of *waḥdat al-wujūd* studies and the field of *Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam* studies in post-Mongolian times. Let us look at the notion of lettrism!

Lettrism has been described as “magico-mystical discourse on the relationship between divine speech and manifest existence that flourished vigorously in mature Islamic thought” (Gardiner, 2021, p. 230; cf. Acevedo, 2020) and as an “implicit philosophy” present in many forms of knowledge (Sartell, 2024). The flourishing of lettrism has been explained as the expression of a turn away from the primacy of oral communication to written communication – as we have seen above, the priority of *kitāb*. In the words of Melvin-Koushki, we read:

“Muslim scholars came to valorize writing over speech to a greater degree than many of their counterparts to the west, such that by the 9th Islamic century (15th century CE) a formalized neoplatonic-neopythagorean *metaphysics of writing* had become hegemonic from Anatolia to India— precisely as printing was emerging in Renaissance Europe. Like Derrida, these thinkers inverted the semiotic hierarchy; unlike Derrida, they asserted written language to be superior to spoken, both epistemologically and ontologically, universal in its reliance on the comprehensive faculty of vision: written letters as forms of light fully descended from the all-emanating One.” (Melvin-Koushki, 2016, p. 44)

Lettrism has a long history in the Islamic world. For Akbarian studies the ideas of Ibn ‘Arabi are of special interest (Gril, 2021; Rašić, 2021). But later on these ideas developed in a more occultist and magical framework, e. g. in the early Ottoman Empire. As Marinos Sariyannis wrote:

“, with the ‘occultist turn’ of Akbarian and Bunian philosophy, the ‘supernaturalization’ of the supralunary sphere went hand in hand with a ‘denaturalization’ of its influence upon the sublunary one, now explained as an effect of mystic, supernatural forces. The main development in this turn was the elaboration and predominance of lettrism, which (itself actually a highly mystical reworking of the ‘science of balances’, part of early medieval Islamic alchemy) became an integral part of the Islamic world view after the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. This meant that the Arabic alphabet, being part of God’s uncreated properties and co eternal with Him (as the prototype of the Qur’an, *umm al-kitāb*, was written in the heavens – a firm belief after the ninth century debate with the Mu’tazilites was solved), was considered to be fully incorporated in the universe. The letters and their respective numbers corresponded with angels, with sūras of the Qur’an, with divine properties, and with material and spiritual entities; in al Būnī’s words:

'[T]he secrets of God and the objects of His science... the realities of the upper (*al-'ulwiyyāt*), the lower (*al-suflīyyāt*), and the intermediary angelic worlds (*al-malakūtiyyāt*) are of two categories: numbers and letters... The numbers, being the realities of the upper world, correspond to the spiritual entities (*al-rūḥāniyyāt*), whereas the letters show the material and intermediate realities.'

The spirit of the letter corresponds to the spiritual world (*'ālam al-jabarūt*), the pronounced letter to the world of subtle entities (*'ālam al-malakūt*), and the written letter to the world of dense bodies (matter). Thus, according to the principles of this doctrine, every entity (every one of angels, heavens, planets, zodiac signs, days of the week, hours of the day, natural elements, etc.) has one or more letters ascribed to it.

These attributions follow the various polarities of the Arabic alphabet: there are fourteen luminary letters (*al-ḥurūf al-nūrāniyya*, also called openers of sūras or *fawātiḥ al-suwār*) and isolated letters (*muqatta'āt*, i.e. the mysterious letters preceding certain Qur'anic sūras), and fourteen 'tenebrous' letters (the rest), as there are fourteen solar and fourteen lunar letters in Arabic grammar (*al-shamsiyya*, *al-qamariyya*; the distinction is based on whether the consonant causes assimilation with the definite article). The total of twenty eight letters, being the product of seven and four, was prone to divisions according to the seven planets, heavens, or days, the four cardinal points, elements, or virtues, the twenty eight lunar mansions, and so forth. Furthermore, the science of letters (*'ilm al-ḥurūf*) made extensive use of *abjad*, the system attributing letters to numbers: the main practical ways were the decomposition of words and letters by alternating alphanumeric values (*bast*, *taksīr*), on the one hand, and the use of magic squares (*wafk*), which reached high levels of mathematization and elaboration, on the other.

Of course, this also meant that the forces of nature could in their turn be manipulated by those who knew the secrets of letters, through elaborate talismans mainly based on magic squares." (Sariyannis, 2025, pp. 42-43)

This lengthy quotation may be allowed since it provides a succinct summary of many aspects of lettrism in Islamic intellectual history, an aspect of this history less known in contemporary research. Especially, we have to refer to the mathematical turn via using lettrist and magical interpretations.

The historical context of these developments has been described as the outcome of the transformations of Southwest Asian, South Asian, and North African societies in post-Mongolian times and the emergence of quasi-messianic movements challenging the established structure of the Islamic world (High, 2026; Mir-Kasimov, 2014; Moin, 2012). Leaving aside other explanations referring to a variety of factors Sufism and its social and religious milieu for the spread of the messianic movements (DeWeese, 2014, p. 197). Another aspect is the presence of occult or magical thought among members of the elite of the early modern Islamic world.

A factor of utmost interest in the context of studying Ibn Turka is this dominance of occultist and magic Islam, so-called popular Islam, often criticized by normative scholarly authorities, that affected even the practice of rulership (Lohlker, 2024, pp. 100-102), helping to create a way of thinking about rulership described by Melvin-Koushki as "state-magical" (Melvin-Koushki, 2025a). The "state-magical" turn is embedded in a broader epistemological framework of lettrism, occultism, and critical philosophy.

A central term for Ibn Turka's thinking is *taḥqīq* – he uses the term in a slightly different way than Ibn 'Arabī (see above) –, defined by Melvin-Koushki as "tantamount to experiential realization or experimentalist verification, and informing every discipline from natural philosophy to mystical ascent. Its root noun is *ḥaqq*, which in the definite form is a core divine name: the Real." (Melvin-Koushki, 2020b, p. 60; cf. Melvin-Koushki, 2018) This term is at the core of Ibn Turka's project of 'scientific humanism.' (A term coined by Melvin-Koushki (2020a).)

This project had to be defended by Ibn Turka against 'religious humanism', a much more Sufi-centered set of concepts in his treatise *Anjām aw taṣavvuf va ḥurūf* (The Conclusion: or, Sufism versus lettrism) in which he claims the superiority of lettrism over Sufism. This marks a tipping point into a new Islamic understand in early modernity:

“In *The Conclusion*, Ibn Turka offers his concisest definition of the objective of lettrism, as the ultimate form of philosophical *taḥqīq*: it is the ‘investigation into everything in the cosmos, both universals and particulars, and their categorization by means of this science’ And that investigation, he elsewhere emphasizes as a card-carrying Pythagorean, must be mathematical if it is to penetrate the structure of reality.” (Melvin-Koushki, 2020b, p. 61)

Several Fuṣūṣ

In the *faṣṣ zakarīyāwī* Ibn Turka writes:

(The brackets mark the quotations from the Fuṣūṣ-translation of Abrahamov.)

“(You should know that mercy (*raḥma*) comprehends everything: being (*wuṣūḍ*)), i. e. the emergence of its essence (*dāt*) and substance (*‘ayn*) on the levels (*marātib*) of being (and the dominant principle (*ḥukm*)), i. e., its emergence and its reflection in the sphere of occultation (*ghayb*) (not in the Shiite sense but the sphere of not-realized creation) through the perceptible revelation of God, emanating from the essence of the created things in God into being (*faid aqdas*) before [the dominant principle] emerges in the being (*wujūd*) and also afterwards when the principles of being (*aḥkām kawniyya*). The universal (*kull*) is part of (*dākhil*) of the mercy of God, He is the most-high. Mercy, thus, is encompassing; no thing is separate from it.” (Ibn Turka, 2020, p. 733)

Ibn Turka explains the essential, primeval role of mercy in creation – and before. For the field of Ibn ‘Arabī studies and of *waḥdat al-wujūd* studies, mercy is a central concept of the understanding of Islam upon which these studies are based. Later on, we read:

“When it is mentioned that mercy precedes [means], indeed, this [is emanating] from its nearness to the All-True. This holds because it comprehends and encompasses it and its total range [of encompassing]. It starts to realize (*yuhāqqiq*) the levels of [the meaning] of mercy.” (Ibn Turka, 2020, p. 735)

Mercy, thus, is defined as an essential element of the process of realization (*taḥqīq*), an idea of utmost importance for Ibn Turka (Casale, 2023). Let us mention another thought from the *faṣṣ ilyāsī*:

“(Each is connected to each other) the connection of the universal (*kull*) with the particular – and this the universal – the universal [emerging through] the particular is the universal. One is interdependent from the other. [...] (so that transcendence cannot be free of immanence, and immanence not free from transcendence) (Abrahamov, 2016, p. 142)

What refers to the first one (He, He is the most exalted: ‘There is nothing like him.’) (42, *ash-shūra*, 11), this is the appearance (*zāhir*) of the transcendence (*tanzīh*) when he denies that is anything like him [...] Therefore he says (He declared himself above (*nazzaha*)).

Hence, the negation of the similar of the similar – that is what the *kāf* of comparison hints at – the similar (*mithl*) has a fixed meaning in the indication of the Qur’anic verse, (He makes himself immanent (*shabbaha*)) is an indicator to Him.

Know that the transcendence and the Qur’anic verses hinting at the transcendence are not free from immanence as the immanence and the verses hinting at the immanence are not free from the transcendence.” (Ibn Turka, 2020, pp. 766-767)

Ibn Turka here makes a clear and bold statement against dualism. Following the commentary, we find in the *faṣṣ mūsawī* the following paragraphs:

“(Him, He is the most-exalted, knowledge of himself in the respect not needing the inhabitants of the world. He is) the perfect appearance (for him) due to his essence (*dāt*). That is what is called the perfection of the essence (*kamāl dhātī*). Evidently, the godly perfection is more encompassing than the essential (*dhātī*) and the nominals [referring to the names of God] (*asmā’ī*). Hence, it has absolute perfection. (*kamāl ‘alā al-īṭlāq*).” (Ibn Turka, 2020, p. 884) [...]

The perfection of God is understood as going beyond philosophical concepts of essence and the level of the names of God.

“Being (*wujūd*), then, is the root of everything (*kull*). The level (*martaba*) of everything is then the level of Being. [...] (As to Being, there are the eternal (*azālī*) and the non-eternal (*ghayr azālī*). This is incidentally happening and the eternal is the Being of the All-True for himself.) On it applies the perfection of existence. It necessarily is absolutely free with regard to His knowledge of Himself. He has no need for the world.

(The non-eternal is the Being of the All-True in the forms of the world of the [fixed] entities]) at the levels of the divine emanations, pre-existent (*qadīm*) in this respect.” (Ibn Turka, 2020, p. 885)

A highly differentiated discourse that brings eternity, non-eternity, and pre-eternity together. The field of *Fuṣūṣ* studies merges with fields of philosophy and theology.

“For the explanation of the truths (*ḥaqā’iq*) there are two methods: one of them is the method (*maslak*) of certain knowledge (*iqān*). (attained by inspiration and mystical experience) This is the disclosure of the truths through their forms revealing their truths in them in a perfect form. I mean the forms of Being revealed to the people of disclosure (*ahl al-kashf*) and Being (the advanced Sufis of the school of *waḥdat al-wuḥūd*) [...] The other is the method of reason (*‘aql*). This is the disclosure of the truths through the forms becoming intelligible through them by reason and its faculties.” (Ibn Turka, 2020, p. 906)

Thus, Ibn Turka clarifies the people capable of attaining true knowledge: those using the experiential way of Sufism and those using reason to understand creation. For Ibn Turka both methods are to be used.

In the *faṣṣ muḥammadi*, the last bezel of the *Fuṣūṣ* we read a chapter on “Who recognizes himself recognizes his Lord (*rabb*)”. The chapter reads:

“(The human being’s knowledge (*ma’rifā*) of himself (Assuming that a pre-modern author like Ibn Turka refers to the male gender,) precedes his knowledge of his Lord because his knowledge of his Lord results from his knowledge of himself. (I am slightly adapting this translation.)) (Abrahamov, 2015, p. 172) A human knowing himself is a proof (*dalīl*) of his knowledge of his Lord. The soul (*nafs*) (Evidently, Ibn Turka is playing with the different aspects of Arabic *nafs*: soul and self.) of the human being is because of its inclusive character (*ishtimāl*) the first of the forms (*ashkāl*) the most obvious (*abyan*) and encompassing (*ajma’*) because of its opposite (*mutaqābil*) and contradictory (*mutanāqid*) aspects. The aspects that is possible to deduce from it the total knowledge enfolding both preceding aspects, the exemption [of God] (*tanzīh*) and the assimilation (*tashbīh*). (For this reason he – may be the blessings and peace be upon him – said: ‘Whoever knows his himself knows his Lord (*rabb*).’)

(If you wish, you may hold in this tradition the impossibility of knowing [God] and the inability to reach this knowledge) This is the revealing premise regarding the exemption. (and if you wish, you may hold the provability of this knowledge.) This is the revealing promise regarding the assimilation. These two premises the knowledge is completed in both respects. Through these two he (The human being that becomes a perfect human,) knows the totality (*itlāq*) of its truth (*ḥaqīqa*) and the essential unity (*waḥda dhātiyya*) through its purity.

(According to the first [interpretation of the tradition], you cannot know yourself, hence, you cannot know your Lord.) He is the creator of reason and the locus of its perception. It is said about this: ‘The failure to attain the perception [of God] is [a way of] comprehension.’ (This verse is ascribed to ‘Alī ibn abī Ṭālib.)” (Ibn Turka, 2020, pp. 940-941)

This verse is interpreted as saying that if a human being knows that God is the One, not like other unique elements, he understands that he cannot imagine him and grasp his truth. He has to avoid assimilation. That is true understanding, according to Ibn Turka:

“(According to the second, you can know yourself, hence you can know your Lord.) He is the locus of experiencing the savouring (*dhawq*) and the locus of realizing it.” (Ibn Turka,

2020, Vol. II, p. 942)

Another crucial question is discussed in this *faṣṣ*. After elaboration on the good (*ṭayyib*) and the evil (*khābiṭh*), we read:

“(Is it possible to imagine that in the world there is a disposition (*mizāj*) only for the good in everything and not the evil?) in respect of the disposition and nature [of the world], not in respect of the divine inclination (or not?).

(We say: That’s not true: We do not find it in the root from which the world emerges, i. e., the All-True. We find what is detested and what is loved.) through its absolute essence encompassing the opposites and including [all] aspects. (the evil is that which is abhorred, and the good is that which is loved. The world was created in God’s image, and the human was created in two images) (Abrahamov, 2015, p. 179): the image of the world and the image of the All-True. (Hence,) the human and all of his world ([there is no human] temperament perceives only one of the two aspects [good and evil]). (Abrahamov, 2015, p. 179)” (Ibn Turka, 2020, p. 943)

Evil, thus, is part of good, and good is part of evil, and the encompassing aspect is the mercy of God.

The commentary, indeed, would justify a complete translation. As to the aspect of unity, we will cite another part of the commentary on *faṣṣ muḥammadiyya* saying:

“Prayer is the form of worship uniting two phenomena (*zuhūrayn*), producing two perfect manifestations (*iẓhār*). I mean the manifestation of the servant and the All-True (*ḥaqq*) at the level of verbal uttering and remembering [God] because it ends the ascension through the levels and completes it. This holds because it is (worship which is divided between God and His servant into two parts: half of it belongs to God, half of it belongs to the servant). The manifestation, indeed, realizes this. Necessarily, it is the element manifested (*muzḥar*) and the element manifesting (*zāhir*). Prayer – is the perfect call for the All-True and the perfect form of His manifestation – necessarily must be divided into two parts.” (Ibn Turka, 2020, p. 977)

Ibn Turka exemplifies the all-encompassing oneness in his analysis of the prayer (*ṣalāt*):

“The prayer (*ṣalāt*) is the act of worship (*‘ibāda*) of two manifestations following from two complete manifestations, i. e., the manifestation of the servant (*‘abd*) and the All-True (*ḥaqq*) at the level of enunciation (*kalāmiyya*) and reminding (*dhikriyya*) that is the final stage of manifestation and its perfection because (it is an act of worship divided in two parts, one of God, one of His servant. Part of it refers to God, part of it refers to His servant).” (Ibn Turka, 2020, p. 976)

Recently, it has been noted that Ibn Turka has to be regarded as the foremost proponent of a new Pythagorean school (mentioned before) of his time, i. e., a scholarly network reaching from Cairo north to Anatolia, eastward to Iran, Central Asia, and finally South Asia that worked on mathematizing occult sciences. (Melvin-Koushki, 2025a, 2025c; cf. Binbaş, 2016). (As the “first summa of Islamic Pythagoreanism” (Melvin-Koushki) cf. Ibn Turka, 2024.) This neo-pythagorean school of mathematized thinking allow to compare Islamic thought with Renaissance European thought showing similar trait of combining occult, lettrist, and mathematized thought often neglected in purely evolutionist narratives.

Conclusion

Ibn Turka can be regarded as a pivotal figure in the early modern transformation of the Islamic world, esp. the Turco-Mongolian part, with a deep influence on the Persophonetic world. At the same time, he is creating a new sub-field in Ibn ‘Arabī studies, the field of *waḥdat al-wujūd* studies, and in our case, in the field of *Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam* studies; the con-text (Ahmed, 2016) of Ibn ‘Arabī studies creates another sub-field to be situated in Ibn Turka studies. Thus, he also

transforms Sufism studies and is an important voice in lettrism and occultism studies and beyond. Ibn Turka is part of an intellectual field stretching from Egypt to South Asia, a field emerging in post-Mongolian times, and a counterpart to developments in Western Europe. (Possible East Asian perspectives are not known, yet.)

Analyzing Ibn Turka this way we are able to recognize the voice of Ibn Turka articulating in his commentary a distinct position in different fields relevant for an understanding of early modern Islam. Reading Ibn Turka as part of Akbarian traditions of commenting an important text of Ibn 'Arabī integrates him into the broader conversations of the Akbarian school and links him – regarding Akbarian thought as an important strand of Sufism – to Sufism as a dominant aspect of the pre-modern Islamic world. Stressing his lettrist and occult views allows for a view into other aspects of pre-modern Islam often neglected today.

The post-Mongolian period should be regarded as a period of Islamic thought in its own right, a preparatory set of fields affecting the modernizing Islamic world.

Although this is an introductory study with a limited scope introducing a less-studied work of a less-studied author it opens new perspectives for many fields of the Islamic history of ideas. Arguing in the framework of field theory a structural history of Islamic view of the history of ideas becomes possible.

The commentary on the *Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam* by Ibn Turka is a treasure trove for an understanding of post-Mongolian Islamic ideas and the many fields and sub-fields of Islamic knowledge it touches and creates. The commentary of Ibn Turka (The edition used in this article will have to be improved by other manuscripts preparing a new reliable edition. As usual) should be researched in Persophonic and Ottoman manuscripts, Arabic manuscripts are even less researched and deserve further research. This means overcoming the limitations of the current focus on Ibn Turka himself enlarging the field of Ibn Turka studies. Other languages of the Islamic world have to follow.

Another venue for research would be a thorough comparison of earlier commentaries on the *Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam* helping to delineate more precisely the field. Authors to be considered are al-Qūnawī, al-Ġandī, al-Qāṣanī, al-Tilimsānī, al-Qaiṣarī, Bālīzāde, and Sajjīd Haidar Amolī (Interesting for his use of diagrams in his commentary.) to name just a few.

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