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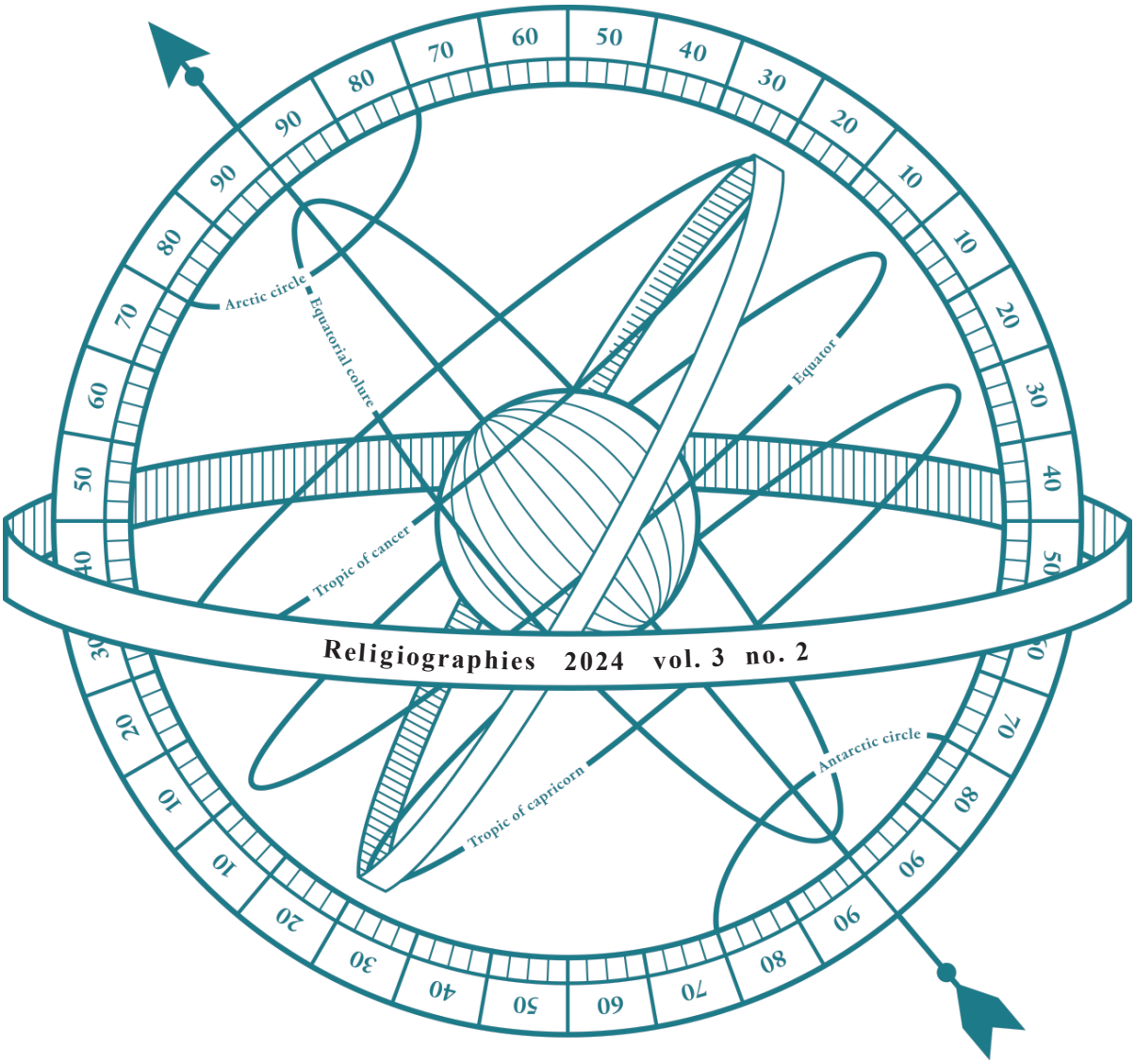

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The Place of Ibn ʿArabi in the Theologico-Political Thought of Ahmad Fardid

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Abstract
Ahmad Fardid (1904/10–1994), a prominent Iranian philosopher, is considered by his followers and detractors to be among the most influential twentieth-century Iranian thinkers and philosophical theoreticians of the post-revolutionary Islamic regime in Iran, which came to power in 1979. Fardid's intellectual and political legacy has been the subject of much controversy over the past several decades. His thought turns around a radical critique of modernity, humanism, modern science, and democracy, a critique in which Islamic mysticism, especially the thought of Muhyi al-Din Ibn ʿArabi (1165–1240) plays a prominent role. Synthesizing Heidegger's critique of metaphysics with Ibn ʿArabi's mystical system, Fardid developed a philosophy of history illustrating a gradual forgetfulness of Being. This paper aims to explore how Fardid made ideological and political use of Ibn ʿArabi's thought in his criticism and rejection of modern/Western thought and his defense of the Islamic Republic's ideology. We will demonstrate that Fardid's eclectic ideological undertakings significantly reflect his peculiar conception of the historical periods rooted in Ibn ʿArabi's school.

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One of the most intriguing aspects of studying the history of thought is to trace and explain the odyssey of ideas that are elaborated in a specific context in response to a specific set of questions and for a particular objective, and that are then transported, transplanted, and exploited in an entirely different context. If the originators of those ideas are introduced to the new formulations of their ideas (which does not happen often because such odysseys tend to occur posthumously, after the originators have died), the originators would perhaps look at their ideas as monsters, strange beings entirely alien to their original intentions. Wouldn't Rousseau look with horror at Robespierre? What would Aristotle think of Aquinas? The phenomenon can take even more radical shapes when ideas cross fundamentally different cultural boundaries; so different that one could describe them as entirely different worlds. We are dealing here with such a case: Ahmad Fardid, a prominent Iranian philosopher, stands as a key figure in the intellectual landscape of twentieth-century Iran. Revered by some and contested by many, Fardid's influence extends particularly to the post-revolutionary Islamic regime that assumed power in 1979. His philosophical stance revolves around a radical critique of modernity, humanism, modern science, and democracy, positioning him as a critic of prevailing Western ideologies. At the core of Fardid's thought is an amalgamation of Martin Heidegger's critique of metaphysics and the mystical teachings of Muhyi al-Din Ibn ʿArabi (1165–1240), with a primary focus on his *Fusus al-Hikam*.

In this study, we will concentrate on the role played by Ibn ʿArabi in Fardid's thought in the following order: we will begin by offering a concise overview of Fardid's biography. Next, we will summarize the key elements of Heidegger's philosophy that have left an imprint on Fardid's system. Following this section, we will examine the notion of "Westoxification" and the significance of "divine names" in Fardid's conceptual framework, setting the stage for a detailed exploration of Ibn ʿArabi's doctrine of divine names. Finally, we will offer an in-depth analysis of how Ibn ʿArabi's ideas contribute to Fardid's philosophy of history and ideology.

Life of Ahmad Fardid

Seyyed Ahmad Mahini Yazdi, who later changed his name to Seyyed Ahmad Fardid, was born in 1904 or 1910 in the city of Yazd to a well-off family.[1] He said he received some seminary education and tutoring in French and mathematics before leaving for Tehran at the age of 16, where he attended school and frequented the classes of several Shiʿi jurists. After receiving his high school diploma in 1928, he enrolled in Daneshsara-ye ʿAli, the Teacher Training College. In this period, he spent time in Yazd and Tehran, reportedly teaching French and self-studying. After graduating in 1935, Fardid started working as a high school teacher and did some editorial work until 1946, when he left for Paris on a state scholarship to pursue a doctorate at the Sorbonne. In 1955, Fardid returned to Iran without finishing his PhD and supposedly after studying for a time at Heidelberg University. Without a PhD, Fardid could not become a university professor but taught as an adjunct in different institutions, including Tehran University.

1 The biographical information about Fardid comes mainly from (1) a blog published by one of his devotees, Mohammad Reza Zad, complemented and organized by Ali Mirsepassi in his book mentioned below, (2) scattered remarks by Fardid in his interviews, and (3) interviews with figures who knew Fardid personally. See esp. Ali Mirsepassi, *Iran's Troubled Modernity: Debating Ahmad Fardid's Legacy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018).

He also worked in governmental cultural institutions on projects that did not amount to anything concrete. After 1968, Fardid was hired at Tehran University as a full-time faculty member; because of his lack of a PhD and publications, special permission was needed from the university. Fardid retired in 1972 but continued teaching as was customary for other retired professors, although reportedly these classes stopped when other faculty members objected to them. From 1975 to 1977, Fardid participated in some TV debates and gave interviews in newspapers. He became particularly active around the 1979 revolution by teaching and lecturing. After the revolution, Fardid stood for the constitutional assembly of the new regime and the parliament, but he was unsuccessful. He continued to hold weekly sessions, mainly at his home, and gave interviews to newspapers and journals. This period is marked by the gathering of a group of younger people around Fardid who published their notes from Fardid's meetings after his death. Fardid died in 1994.

As can be seen from the information above, Fardid did not have a particularly tumultuous life. Taking into account his life only until his retirement from Tehran University at the age of 62, it would be difficult to describe him as a particularly influential or even memorable figure. He is briefly mentioned by some of the major intellectuals of the pre-revolutionary period for coining the term *gharbzadigī*, often translated as "Westoxification," and translating some Western philosophical concepts that became accepted by others. As a person, he seems to have been disliked by many, if not all, of his contemporaries for his personal conduct, so much so that his request for teaching after retirement, which should have been a simple formality, was denied by faculty members. And it was not like Fardid's publications could have initiated a revival: when he died, he had published only three short, strictly introductory articles in his 30s and some scattered notes. Fardid began to exercise some influence when he started participating in radio and TV debates and giving interviews from 1975 to 1977. However, from what survives from these, it is difficult to identify what concrete impact could be attributed to them: in these interviews and public debates, one sees him expressing bewilderingly incoherent ideas in an unclear accent, jumping from one subject to another, and cutting off other participants. If Fardid attracted an audience, it seems it was because of a taste for the unusual, the eccentric, even the bizarre. With the 1979 revolution, things started to change. Fardid's discourse began to absorb some of the fundamental elements of the discourse of the revolution: it became highly political, anti-Western, anti-modern, religious, combative, and apocalyptic. This started a period in Fardid's life markedly different from his past obscurity, which continued until his death and still reverberates in the debates around the legacy of the 1979 revolution and its ideas. In this period, as before, Fardid, apart from some scattered notes, did not publish anything of substance. However, through his regular private meetings and public lectures, which were often highly polemical and political, he began forming a faithful circle of disciples. This enabled him to exercise an influence markedly different from his past obscurity. Fardid is today seen as one of the most important influences on the intellectual discourse of the time and, for many modernist intellectuals, a poisonous source to overcome.[2]

[2] See e.g., Dariush Ashouri, "Usturih-i Falsafi Miani Ma [The Myth of Philosophy Amongst Us]," *Baztāb Andīshi* 49 (Urdībihisht 1383 [April 2004]): 25–32; Ali Mirsepassi, *Transnationalism in Iranian Political Thought: The Life and Times of Ahmad Fardid* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017); Farhang Rajaee, *Islamism and Modernism: The Changing Discourse in Iran* (Austin: The University of Texas Press, 2007), 181–85.

Heidegger's Influence

The first step to understanding Fardid's thought is to understand that his whole intellectual system is a unique synthesis of two main elements: the philosophy of Martin Heidegger and the mysticism of Muhyi al-Din Ibn ʿArabi. Fardid's usage of these two intellectual sources is often selective and idiosyncratic. Therefore, one needs to explain which specific aspects were integrated into Fardid's thought and for which specific purpose. Therefore, we begin by delineating the place of Heidegger in Fardid's thought.

Fardid was highly dismissive of all the intellectual currents of his time and considered them simplistic and unworthy of serious attention. But there was one figure who reigned supreme in his mind: Heidegger. What did Fardid learn and borrow from Heidegger? Fardid found particularly fruitful what is often called "later Heidegger" for his intellectual project. This is the Heidegger who has often been criticized and rejected as unphilosophic, a Heidegger who, for some readers, has shed all the valuable philosophical characteristics of the scientific phenomenology found in the early Heidegger of *Being and Time*, and who has ventured into the realm of poetry and mysticism, where, to borrow from Bertrand Russel, "language is . . . running riot."[3] In later Heidegger and also in Fardid's system of thought, the central place is occupied by the History of Being (*Seinsgeschichte*). Heidegger examined how the understanding of "Being," as the fundamental aspect of human understanding, has changed throughout Western philosophy. He contended that each historical period reveals a unique interpretation of Being, influenced by culture and language. While early Heidegger was still engaged in bringing out the fundamental aspects of the human experience of Being in a transhistorical manner, in a sense continuing Kant's critical perspective, later Heidegger put forward the idea that humankind's understanding of Being is fundamentally historical and changeable throughout history. But this was not everything that fundamentally distinguished Heidegger from other historicists like Hegel: Heidegger also subscribed to the idea that Being reveals itself in different forms mysteriously and unpredictably beyond humankind's agency. Heidegger also denied the possibility of us ever going beyond these historical understandings of Being and having access to a full transhistorical understanding of it; Being reveals and hides itself. Every revelation of Being is also its concealment.[4] Central to Heidegger's history of Being is also a fundamental critique of the reigning understanding of Being as fundamentally flawed. In what he sometimes termed as metaphysics or forgetfulness of Being, Heidegger saw a flawed understanding of Being manifested in the modern technological understanding of it, leading to godlessness, the violence of technology, and the homelessness of humankind.[5] Heidegger was emphatic that although the forgetfulness of Being is concomitant with the disappearance of the divine, Being is not God. And although Heidegger is right in denying a relationship between his understanding of Being and the monotheistic understanding of God, one cannot deny that Being in his thought bears some resemblance to God—Being for Heidegger possesses some form of agency, just like God in Abrahamic religions, a being who mysteriously unveils itself. Furthermore, Heidegger's view of the modern illness leads to a deep dissatisfaction with mod-

3 See e.g., Bernd Magnus, *Heidegger's Metahistory of Philosophy: Amor Fati, Being and Truth* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1970), 141.

4 Martin Heidegger, *Pathmarks*, trans. William McNeil (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 148.

5 See Julian Young, *Heidegger's Later Philosophy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 32–33.

ern ideals of global culture and resembles the conservative critique of rootless cosmopolitanism of modern liberalism and Marxism. It also reminds one of the calls for a return to community and local tradition and denial of technological progressivism. These conservative ideas found a ready hearing in Fardid alongside three concomitant elements of Heidegger's thought: first, Heidegger's espousal of a style of thought that denied human agency and instead championed a passive openness to the unveiling of Being; second, Heidegger's interest in poetry as a way of approaching an understanding of Being; third, interest in language not as a simple neutral instrument of communication but as a repository of our understanding of Being whose etymological deconstruction provides us with access to the forgotten knowledge of Being: Heidegger subscribed to the idea that it is through language that we encounter the world; language is that which shapes how everything, i.e., Being, reveals itself to us, and it is through the study of language that we can access the knowledge of Being. These Heideggerian ideas occupied a prominent place in Fardid's thought.

One last point that clarifies Fardid's interest in Heidegger is a bridge he establishes between the philosophy of Being and Islamic mysticism and its theoretical elaboration in the philosophy of Illumination. In Islamic philosophy, two specific types of knowledge can be distinguished. The first type encompasses syllogistic and discursive knowledge, while the other can be referred to as mystical or esoteric knowledge. The latter category involves non-discursive and non-syllogistic knowledge communicated through divine inspiration, directly bestowed by God on select individuals. This second type of knowledge is considered superior to the first as it is God-given and more complete; it manifests itself as a form of revelation or inspiration, not reliant on meticulously constructed arguments or proofs, but rather emanating from God's immense mercy. In Fardid's terminology, borrowed from Shihab al-Din Suhrawardi (1154–1191) and other thinkers of the philosophy of Illumination, the first kind of knowledge is called "knowledge by acquisition" (*ʿilm ḥuṣūlī*) and the second kind is called "knowledge by presence" (*ʿilm ḥuḍūrī*).[6] While in Islamic philosophy, the source of the knowledge by presence is divine,[7] in Heidegger it is the semi-divine Being itself mysteriously unveiling itself to us and giving us access to itself. In this perspective, metaphysics is a type of knowledge by acquisition while Heidegger's philosophy through "releasement" (*Glassenheit*) is a type of knowledge by presence which opens us to Being unveiling itself. Consequently, Fardid's critique of knowledge by acquisition reflects not only his debt to Islamic tradition but also his affinity with Heidegger's critique of metaphysics and a philosophical approach close to Heideggerian "releasement." With these brief points in mind, let us now turn to Fardid.

Westoxification and Geschichte

Perhaps the best point of entry in Fardid's thought is the most influential concept that he coined: *gharbzadigī*, often translated as "Westoxification." Although there is a consensus that Fardid first introduced this term, it was another pre-revolutionary intellectual, Jalal Al-i Ahmad (1923–1969) who popularized it through his famous book of the

6 For knowledge by presence see Mehdi Haʾiri Yazdi, *The Principles of Epistemology in Islamic Philosophy: Knowledge by Presence* (New York: SUNY Press, 1992).

7 Using Ibn Arabi's terminology, Fardid defines knowledge by presence as the unmediated connection with the Names manifested by humankind and knowledge by acquisition as the mediated connection with those Names. See Ahmad Fardid, *Didari Farrahi va Futuhati Akhir al-Zaman* [Divine Encounter and the Apocalyptic Revelations, Lectures Delivered in 1979] (Tehran: Nazar, 1402 [2022]), 447.

same name. Al-i Ahmad made a very specific usage of this concept, integrating it into his nativist perspective for describing the phenomenon of Iranians coming under the influence of Western ways of thinking.[8] Al-i Ahmad championed a return to local roots, national values, and traditions as opposed to embracing modern, foreign, and Western values. For him, Westoxification was the disease that had afflicted Iranians since the nineteenth century, when they began to lose their national identity by accepting foreign values.[9] Fardid always complained that his famous concept was wrongly understood and he was right. In Fardid's view, Westoxification is, to employ here the central and most common term that Fardid uses in his lectures and writings, the "destined consignment" (*ḥavālat-i tārīkhī*) of the contemporary world everywhere. Destined consignment is Fardid's coined word for expressing what Heidegger expressed through terms such as fate (*Schicksal*), destiny (*Geschick*), and history (*Geschichte*), all stemming from *schicken*, meaning, among other things, "to send" or "to dispatch."[10] Heidegger claimed that Being sends itself, revealing itself to us in different ways at different times. Technology is, for instance, the truth of Being sent by Being itself, revealed to us in the shape of things as "standing-reserve" to be exploited by humanity.[11] In the same way, for Fardid, Westoxification is the domination of a specific truth of Being as revealed to Western civilization and Eastern people alike; it is universalized metaphysics taking over the whole world. For Fardid as distinguished from nativists like Al-i Ahmad, to reject the West and remedy Westoxification is not to rehabilitate national identity or older Eastern ways of thought, a meaningless exercise according to Fardid, because those are the truths of Being revealed to previous generations and are thereby expired. Nativism for Fardid is a meaningless enterprise, trying to rehabilitate what is already dead and definitively expired.

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See Mehrzad Boroujerdi, *Iranian Intellectuals and the West: The Tormented Triumph of Nativism* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1996).

9
On Al-i Ahmad's *gharbzadigī* see: Mohsen Mottaghi, "La question de l'Occident dans les débats intellectuels en Iran," *EurOrient* 33 (2011): 123–45; Urs Göskens, "Negotiating the Relationship Human – Non-Human as a Question of Meaning in 20th Century Iranian Authenticity Discourse: the Role of Ǧalāl Al-e Aḥmad's Essay 'West Infection,' " *Asiatische Studien / Études Asiatiques* 72, no. 3 (2018): 717–50; Franz Lenze, *Der Nativist Galāl-e Āl-e Ahmad und die Verwestlichung Irans im 20. Jahrhundert* (Berlin: Klaus Schwarz Verlag, 2008).

10
Mirsepassi refers to Fardid's *ḥavālat-i tārīkhī* in relation to Heidegger's *Dasein*. However, *ḥavālat-i tārīkhī* appears to be more closely aligned with Heidegger's later thought, which shifts focus away from Dasein, particularly after the famous "Turn" (*Kehre*). See Ali Mirsepassi, *Transnationalism in Iranian Political Thought*, 228. For a discussion of the term *Geschick* in Heidegger's later philosophy, see Mark Wrathall, ed., *The Cambridge Heidegger Lexicon* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020), 98.

11
Martin Heidegger, *The Question Concerning Technology and Other Essays*, trans. William Lovitt (New York: Harper, 1977), 24.

History of Being and Divine Names

Fardid translated "etymology" by *nām shināsī* (literally: "knowledge of name") and described his intellectual system as *ʿilm nām shināsī tārīkhī*, "the science of historical etymology." This was Fardid's way of describing how he had created an ingenious synthesis of Heidegger's interest in the etymology of words as a way of recovering different conceptions of Being and Ibn ʿArabi's interest in the divine names (*asmāʾ ilāhī*). This synthesis is best expressed in Fardid's conception of the history of Being in which five periods are distinguished from each other: *the day before yesterday*, *yesterday*, *today*, *tomorrow*, and the *day after tomorrow*. Fardid claimed that each of these periods is best understood as the manifestation of one of the divine names. Each divine name, in Heideggerian terms, is the reigning conception of Being that dominates a period; it is the truth of Being revealed by Being itself to people of that period. In Fardid's sense, God himself has a multiplicity of names corresponding to different aspects of his being, and each of those is reflected in one divine name and revealed by God to the people of a period. The periods, in Fardid's view, end when a new divine name replaces the dominant divine name. Fardid considered this change a "revolution" in the most profound sense of the term.

Fardid's five-period history begins with an epoch of original perfection (*the day before yesterday*), an epoch of decline (*yesterday, today, and tomorrow*), and an epoch of salvation (*the day after tomorrow*). Before going further with Fardid's historical perspective and to explain what Fardid means by the domination of names in historical periods, we must better understand the place of Ibn ʿArabi in his thought. We will therefore discuss the major lines of Ibn ʿArabi's thought and how they impacted Fardid's intellectual project.

Muhyi al-Din Ibn ʿArabi and Divine Names

The thought of Ibn ʿArabi has attracted considerable attention in Iran. Theological concepts of his tradition, such as *wilāya* (Guardianship), *waḥdat al-wujūd* (Oneness of Being), and *al-insān al-kāmil* (The Perfect Human), have received considerable attention among Persian philosophers, Sufis, and poets. Interestingly, while Ibn ʿArabi made some references hostile to Shiism, he remained influential among Shiite philosophers and mystics in Iran. According to some scholars, there is a deep connection between Ibn ʿArabi's mysticism and Iranian *Weltanschauung* represented in Shiite theology.[12] As Henry Corbin accurately observed, "Ibn al-ʿArabi's theosophy and the 'Oriental' (*ishrāq*) theosophy of al-Suhrawardi are related to each other. When both united with the Shiite theosophy deriving from the holy Imams, the result was the great flowering of Shiite metaphysics in Iran (with Haydar Amuli, Ibn Abi Jumhur, Mulla Sadra, etc.) whose potential even today is far from being exhausted."[13] Therefore, it would not be an exaggeration to claim that Ibn ʿArabi is one of the most influential thinkers shaping Iranian intellectual history from the thirteenth to the twentieth century.

Fusus al-Hikam (Bezels of Wisdom) is considered the most appreciated and commented-on treatise of Ibn ʿArabi in Iranian intellectual history. In Osman Yahya's estimation, there have been 150 commentaries on the *Fusus*, about 130 of which were written by Iranian sages.[14] In the short introduction to the treatise, Ibn ʿArabi claimed that its content and the title had been revealed to him through a vision of the prophet Muhammad. *Fusus* portrays the meaning of universal human spirituality in twenty-seven chapters (or bezels), each discussing a different prophetic figure and its distinctive features. According to Ibn ʿArabi, each of these figures, from Adam, Abraham, and Moses to Jesus and Muhammad, exemplified a pearl of particular wisdom available to humankind. This idea leads us to his doctrine of the divine names, which is one of the most significant contributions of Ibn ʿArabi to Islamic mysticism.

The primary teaching of Islam has been that God is one, but the main task in Islamic theology has been to make this divine unity compatible with the multiplicity present in the world, thereby explaining how multiplicity could have arisen from a reality that is one in every respect.[15] In Ibn ʿArabi's view, the whole of Existence is one and is the same as God's existence. God's Essence, attributes, and names, and the cosmos, including all its phenomena, are one existence—this doctrine was later called the Oneness of Being. However, Ibn ʿArabi distinguishes God's Essence, which cannot be known, from His names, which can be known. He considers the attributes to be relationships

12 Henry Corbin locates the "spiritual topography" of Ibn ʿArabi's thought "between Andalusia and Iran." See Henry Corbin, *Creative Imagination in the Sufism of Ibn ʿArabi*, trans. Ralph Manheim (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1969), 3–38.

13 Henry Corbin, *History of Islamic Philosophy*, trans. Liadain Sherrad (London: Kegan Paul, 2001), 292.

14 Corbin, *History of Islamic Philosophy*, 295.

15 William Chittick, *The Sufi Path of Knowledge* (New York: State University of New York Press, 1989), 31.

or states, and as such, they are not separate entities existing in God's Essence. Accordingly, God's Unity is absolute from the standpoint of His Essence, but it is many from the perspective of the cosmos.[16] God's Essence in itself remains forever unknown to His creatures, while "He is manifest inasmuch as the cosmos reveals something of his names and attributes."[17] Since this connection between God and the cosmos is vital in Islamic theology, scholars such as Corbin and Izutsu consider the idea of God's self-manifestation or theophany (*tajallī*) as fundamental to Ibn ʿArabi's worldview.[18]

According to Ibn ʿArabi, there is only one Reality, which receives all relations and attributes called the Divine Names. Reality grants to every name, which appears endlessly, an essence by which a name is distinguished from (all) others.[19] Divine names, thus, represent relationships between God and His self-manifestation. The cosmos is under the control of God's names. From this perspective, each name is called *rabb* (lord) and is responsible for certain acts and specific people. One name does not differ from another as they both indicate the Essence. Still, one name is distinct from another because of its characteristics; each name is a reality distinct from other names through its essence even though all the names are directed to show one Essence: each name has its own rule, which no other name possesses.[20]

Every divine name is designated and depicted by all the divine names. That is because every name indicates both the Essence and the unique aspect toward which it is directed. From the point of view of its indication of the Essence, each name possesses all the other names, while from the point of view of its indication of its unique aspect, it is distinguished from the others. Thus, from the perspective of the Essence, the name and the named are identical, while from the perspective of the meaning to which the name is directed, they are different.[21]

The relationships between Divine Names are complex: since the phenomena in the cosmos are infinite, God's names are infinite, but they can be reduced to some basic names. These seven names, which are the foundation of all other names, are the Living (*ḥayy*), the Omniscient (*ʿalīm*), the Willer (*murīd*), the omnipotent (*qādir*), the Speaker (*mutakallim*), the All-Seeing (*baṣīr*), and the All-Hearing (*samīʿ*). There is a hierarchy of Names, some enjoying priority over others.[22] Additionally, names sometimes oppose each other as they represent different aspects of the Essence of God.[23]

According to Ibn ʿArabi, not only does the cosmos as a whole express God's names, but also the perfect human being (*al-insān al-kāmil*), for instance Adam or other extraordinary figures such as the Prophet and the saints. These perfect human beings contain in their essences all the ingredients of the cosmos, that is, God's names.[24] Similarly, each prophet embodies a particular divine name, manifesting one of God's numerous attributes. Muhammad, the seal of prophets, thus manifests the most comprehensive name of God. But prophets and saints are not the only individuals who manifest God's names: according to Ibn ʿArabi's anthropology, each person manifests the divine names. For instance, in *Fusus*, he interpreted both Moses and Pharaoh as manifesting different divine names.[25] According to Ibn ʿArabi, the unfolding of the divine perfections in space and time was occasioned by God's primeval desire to contemplate himself in the mirror of the

16
Binyamin Abrahamov, *Ibn al-ʿArabī's Fuṣūṣ Al-Ḥikam: An Annotated Translation of the Bezels of Wisdom* (London: Routledge, 2015), 7.

17
Chittick, *The Sufi Path of Knowledge*, 16.

18
Toshihiko Izutsu, *Sufism and Taoism*: *A Comparative Study of Key Philosophical Concepts* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2016); Henry Corbin, *Creative imagination*, 184.

19
Abrahamov, *Ibn al-ʿArabī's Fuṣūṣ Al-Ḥikam*, 33.

20
Abrahamov, 141.

21
Abrahamov, 48.

22
Abrahamov, 16.

23
Abrahamov, 99.

24
Abrahamov, 7 (translator's introduction).

25
Abrahamov, 167.

cosmos—a notion that is intimately linked to the medieval analogy of the micro- and macro-cosm and the ancient motif of the *homo imago Dei*. Therefore, each divine attribute or perfection manifests itself in the universe in accord with each individual creature's primordial predisposition to receive it. This predisposition, or readiness, is predicated on the creature's primordial essence, which is part of God's knowledge of himself and the world prior to creation.[26]

Ibn ʿArabi's doctrine of the divine names has been influential in Iranian mysticism. Nur al-Din ʿAbd al-Rahman Jami (1441–1492), the prominent Persian poet and Sufi, was inspired by Ibn ʿArabi and wrote a remarkable commentary on *The Imprint of the Fusus*.[27] Jami's conception of the divine names emphasized its temporal aspect, i.e., the succession of names through time and history. Ibn ʿArabi himself implies this point by arranging the chapters of the *Fusus* in chronological order, from Adam to Muhammad, and suggests that each period manifesting a name is replaced by another period that embodies a different or even opposite name. According to Ibn ʿArabi, "God has effects manifest within the cosmos; they are the states within which the cosmos undergoes constant fluctuation (*taqallub*). This is a property of His name 'Time' (*dahr*)."[28] In a similar vein, Jami interprets the Sufi doctrine of the "recurrent creation" of the world using Ibn ʿArabi's doctrine of divine names.[29] In *Lawaʾiḥ*, he writes that the world is under God's will, expressed through His opposite names. One of God's names is revealed every period, whereas others are concealed. He maintains that:

> At the very moment that it is thus stripped this same substance is reclothed with another particular phenomenon, resembling the preceding one, through the operation of the mercy of the Merciful One. The next moment this latter phenomenon is annihilated by the operation of the terrible Omnipotence, and another phenomenon is formed by the mercy of the Merciful One, and so on for as long as God wills. Thus, it never happens that the Very Being is revealed for two successive moments under the guise of the same phenomenon. At every moment, one universe is annihilated and another similar to it takes its place.[30]

Following Ibn ʿArabi's doctrine of the divine names, Jami insists that the succession of historical cycles is based on this concealment/unveiling dynamic: God's essence is one, but it is expressed in each historical period through particular names and attributes. This theme can also be found in his literary writings and poems. In his well-known Persian allegorical romance, called *Joseph and Zuleikha*, Jami points to this sequel of names in history:

> In this palace of formalism
> Each, in turn, beats the drum of Being
> Truth has one manifestation in each turn
> Light is thrown on the world by a Name
> If the universe followed one command
> Many lights would remain concealed.[31]

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Alexander Knysh, *Ibn ʿArabi in the Later Islamic Tradition: The Making of a Polemical Image in Medieval Islam* (New York: SUNY Press, 1998), 13.

27
The *Imprint of the Fusus* (*Naqsh al-Fusus*), the last treatise written by Ibn ʿArabi, was a summary of the *Fusus*. Jami's commentary on this treatise (*Naqd al-Nusus fi Sharh Naqsh al-Fusus*) is considered one of the best. Regarding its importance see Chittick's introduction to the book. ʿAbd al-Rahman Jami, *Naqd al-Nusus: Selected Texts to Comment on the Imprint of the Fuṣūṣ*, ed. William Chittick (Tehran: Imperial Iranian Academy of Philosophy, 1977).

28
Chittick, *The Sufi Path of Knowledge*, 100.

29
For the doctrine of the Recurrent Creation (*al-khalq al-jadīd*) and its connection to the Divine names in Ibn ʿArabi's thought, see Corbin, *Creative Imagination*, 200–207; Chittick, *The Sufi Path of Knowledge*, 96–111.

30
Nur-ud-din Abd-ud-Rahman Jami, *Lawaʾiḥ: A Treatise on Sufism*, trans. E. H. Whinfield and Mirza Muhammad Kazvini (London: Royal Asiatic Society, 1906), 44–45.

31
This is our translation reflecting Fardid's interpretation. For a more literary translation see Jami, *Joseph and Zuleika*, trans. Charles F. Horne (Ames, IA: Omphaloskepsis, 2000), 21.

In Ibn ʿArabi's tradition, the Quranic verse, "Each day He is upon some task" (55:29), is interpreted through the idea of the manifestation of God through His names. As Chittick explains, these tasks are "divine states within engendered entities through names that are relationships specified by the changes within engendered existence. [God] discloses Himself as the One Entity within diverse entities in engendered existence."[32] Following the same tradition, Jami's poem implies that the Truth is manifested in every cyclic period (*dawr*) by taking a different shape and following a different divine name. Each epoch, therefore, can be understood as the manifestation of God's Essence through one of His names.

The perfect knowledge, according to Ibn ʿArabi's tradition, "remains only within the confines of divine self-manifestation and in the Real's removing of the veils covering the hearts and eyes so that they are able to perceive things, eternal and contingent, nonexistent and existent, impossible, necessary and possible, as they really are in their essences."[33] According to Ibn ʿArabi, this knowledge, which is called the "Science of the Divine Names" (*ʿilm al-asmāʾ*), is exclusive to the perfect human being (*al-insān al-kāmil*) who is the vicegerent of God.[34] It is worth mentioning here that Ibn ʿArabi's anthropology has a normative aspect, one which could be called the "Ethics of Divine Names." Human beings are created in the divine image, which implies that God gave humankind His names and attributes. However, some names and attributes have been actually given, while human beings have the potential to acquire the rest of them. The realization of these other divine character traits is the ethical agenda of human beings.[35] As William Chittick explains, through perceiving the divine names, people can grasp many of the characteristics that flow forth from *wujūd* (Being) and belong to *wujūd*.[36] Hence, while the perfect human mirrors all divine names and attributes, people can grasp and realize some of them to achieve human perfection.

32
Chittick, *The Sufi Path of Knowledge*, 104.

33
Abrahamov, *Ibn al-ʿArabī's Fuṣūṣ Al-Ḥikam*, 99.

34
Mahmud Muhammad Ghurab, *Al-Insan al-Kamil min Kalam al-Shaykh al-Akbar Muhyi al-Din Ibn ʿArabi* (Tehran: Mowla, 1386 [2007]), 100.

35
Qaisar Shahzad, "Ibn ʿArabi's Contribution to the Ethics of Divine Names," *Islamic Studies* 43, no. 1 (2004): 5–38.

36
William Chittick, *Imaginal Worlds: Ibn al-ʿArabi and the Problem of Religious Diversity* (New York: SUNY Press, 1994), 19. See also William Chittick, *The Sufi Path of Knowledge*, 23.

Fardid and Ibn ʿArabi

Iranian Sufism and Islamic mysticism were crucial elements in Fardid's thought, and he often used mystic terminology to explain his ideas and insights. Fardid's familiarity with Islamic philosophical, literary, and esoteric trends and schools came partly from his youth, when he was a student in traditional seminaries. His passion for Sufism and mystic vocabulary was also rooted in his Heideggerian approach. As mentioned above, the later Heidegger proposed poetry as a genuine way to approach Being, criticizing the history of Western philosophy as a metaphysical deviation from proper ontological questions. Similarly, Fardid had a negative view of Muslim classical philosophers like al-Farabi, Avicenna, and Mulla Sadra, labeling them Greek-infected metaphysicians.[37]

In contrast, Fardid embraced Persian literature, especially mystical terminology and the spiritual symbolism of Sufi poets such as Rumi, Jami, Sanaʾi, and Shabestari. Persian Sufis influenced Fardid in his esoteric scheme partly because the Islamic Sufi tradition criticized some aspects of Greek philosophy, specifically its rational-logical foundation, embracing intuition and spiritual imagination instead. The most

37
Among Muslim philosophers, Fardid was interested in Suhrawardī. This interest may be rooted in Suhrawardī's critique of Greek philosophy, his Oriental wisdom of light/darkness, his resuscitation of ancient Persian wisdom, and his focus on presential knowledge over conceptual thought, all of which were useful for Fardid's intellectual project. It should also be noted that the young Fardid co-translated a lecture by Henry Corbin about the Philosophy of Illumination (*ishrāq*), from French into Persian. Henry Corbin, *Les motifs zoroastriens dans la philosophie de Sohrawardi*, French text with the Persian translation by Ahmad Fardid and Abdolhamid Gloshan (Tehran: Iranian Institute of Philosophy, 1946).

important figure in this Persian tradition for Fardid was undoubtedly Hafiz, an Iranian lyric poet famous among Iranians as "the Tongue of the Unseen." Fardid referred to Hafiz's poems in almost all his lectures and writings, offering esoteric and idiosyncratic interpretations. In one of his interviews, he quoted from Jami that "Hafiz's poetry is something like a divine miracle."[38] One can say that in the same way that Hölderlin's poetry resonates deeply with Heidegger, Hafiz occupies a significant place in Fardid's thought.[39]

It seems that Fardid's interest in Persian poetry and the Heideggerian taste for mysticism contributed to Fardid's turn toward Ibn ʿArabi. Fardid mentions Ibn ʿArabi on several occasions in his lectures. It is worth mentioning that according to Nasrollah Pourjavady, a scholar of Sufism and a student of Fardid in the late 1960s at the University of Tehran, Fardid's interest in Ibn ʿArabi developed later, especially at the dawn of the Islamic Revolution.[40] On the other hand, in the last years of his life and among his disciples, Fardid claimed that he had overcome Ibn ʿArabi.[41] At any rate, his influence on Fardid's most important years of intellectual activity, i.e., the 1970s and '80s, cannot be overstated. Besides the doctrine of the divine names, Fardid adopted several other terms and symbols from Ibn ʿArabi and his tradition in general, albeit through his own ideological lenses.

Fardid was familiar with Ibn ʿArabi's metaphysical system, specifically the *Fusus al-Hikam* and its themes. His conception of what he called the "historical science of Names" (*ʿilm al-asmaʾ tārīkhī*) relied on the commentarial tradition of the *Fusus*. Fardid's interpretation of *Fusus* seems to be inspired especially by two commentaries: the Commentary of Dawud al-Qaysari[42] (c. 1260–1347) and the Commentary of Jami.[43] Fardid maintained that these two commentaries had paid attention to the historical aspects of the divine names, i.e., the manifestation of names through historical periods.[44] However, he explicitly said that he did not aim to iterate Ibn ʿArabi's teachings since our epoch is different from his, and consequently, our historical "destined consignment" (*ḥavālat-i tarīkhī*) is different from Ibn ʿArabi's. Fardid maintains that:

> Today, after 400 years of Westoxified history, I cannot return to Ibn ʿArabi's school and repeat it in the same way as it was discussed in the past. However, I have great respect for Muḥyiddīn's teachings. I have frequently read and reflected upon his works and his commentaries based on epoch, time, and the course of wisdom . . . But I believe that simply repeating them will not solve any problem in today's world.[45]

According to Fardid, Ibn ʿArabi's school is partially adequate since it takes its distance from metaphysical thinking.[46] To apply it to contemporary situations, however, Fardid attempted to interpret and complement Ibn ʿArabi's doctrine of divine names by emphasizing two crucial elements: historical thinking and etymology.

As for historical thinking, Fardid implied that Ibn ʿArabi did not pay much attention to history and historical epochs. Fardid interpreted or rather *reinterpreted* the succession of prophets and names in the *Fusus* chronologically, i.e., a divine name represented by a prophet is

38
Ahmad Fardid, *Darbari Mafhumi Zaman* [On the Concept of Time], ed. Ali Gheissari (Qom: Movarrekh, 1401 [2022]), 85.

39
Ahmad Ali Heydari, "Heidegger, Hölderlin-Fardid, Hafez," in *Heidegger in the Islamicate World*, ed. Kata Moser, Urs Göskens, and Josh Hayes (London: Rowman & Littlefield, 2019), 169–81. Continuing with this line of thought, one can add that Ibn ʿArabi occupies the same place that Parmenides does in Heidegger's philosophy.

40
"He (Fardid) sometimes criticized Ibn ʿArabi and considered his mysticism as metaphysics. I heard him saying that Ibn ʿArabi blinded one of Sufism's eyes and Mulla Sadra blinded the other. Years later, when I found that Fardid had been right to some extent, I was surprised that he was drawn to Ibn ʿArabi. What could be the reason except that Imam Khomeini once had taught *Fuṣuṣ al-Hikam* and had written books under the influence of Ibn ʿArabi? After the Revolution, Ibn ʿArabi's cult had grown in Iran, and Fardid's character was always to jump on the bandwagon." Nasrollah Pourjavady, "Fardidian Charlatanism," *Andishiyi Puya* 9 (1392 [2013]): 52. It should be noted that, even after the Islamic Revolution, Fardid, while embracing Ibn ʿArabi's mythology of divine names, believed that the Akbarian doctrine of the Oneness of Being had blinded Sufism in one eye. See Ahmad Fardid, *Divine Encounter*, 126.

41
Mohammad Reza Zad, ed., *Fardid Nama* [An Overview of Fardid's Life and Thought] (Tehran: Mowje No, 1394 [2015]), 542.

42
Dawud Qaysari, *Sharh-i Qaysari bar Fusus al-Hikam*, translation from Arabic into Persian by Mohammad Khajavi (Tehran: Mowla, 1387 [2008]).

43
Nur al-Din Jami, *Naqd al-Nusus*, 1977.

44
Ahmad Fardid, *Divine Encounter*, 16; Ahmad Fardid, *Gharb va Gharbzadigi* [West and Westoxification: Fardid's Lectures in 1985] (Tehran: Farno, 1395 [2016]), 56.

45
Fardid, *West and Westoxification*, 28 (our translation from Persian).

46
Fadid, *Divine Encounter*, 387.

replaced by a different name embodied by another.[47] In the same vein, he also used the commentaries of Qaysari and Jami as they supposedly had paid attention to the "historical epochs, periods, and the historical manifestation of divine names."[48] In fact, some passages in these commentaries are prone to historical interpretation. For instance, Qaysari writes that:

> Sometimes, a government that is mainly dominated by one name emerges, and another is concealed and covered. Since the Names have manifestations and managements, the power they gain over the states is subject to the change of religions and the stellar rotation of the Seven Stars, each with a thousand-year rotation period. Therefore, every religion (*sharīʿa*) has a name that must continue with the survival of its government, and after its decline, the reign of that name will also be abolished.[49]

Consequently, adopting some elements from Ibn ʿArabi's mysticism and its commentaries, especially those prone to historical reading, Fardid stated that:

> Names evolve in history. A name can disappear, and another name is revealed in a new historical time. Humanity becomes the manifestation of the name, representing the ultimate Truth, and is the supreme and authentic name to which all other names are subordinate. Then, humankind incarnates names, but man incarnates a name in every stage, which dominates other names.[50]

We shall see that the "historical" interpretation of Ibn ʿArabi constitutes the most crucial part of Fardid's ideological scheme.

As for etymology, Fardid attempted to complement Ibn ʿArabi's doctrine of divine names by connecting it to etymology. He explicitly claimed that while the doctrine of Names was rooted in Ibn ʿArabi's tradition, the "historical *ism shināsī*" (historical *knowledge of names*, i.e., historical *etymology*) is his own coinage. Ibn ʿArabi, Fardid adds, could not offer a comprehensive science of names as he was not familiar with etymology. In one of his last interviews, Fardid indicated that:

> I am an etymologist. But Heidegger is not an etymologist. This is why he falls into the trap of 'general metaphysics' and keeps talking about Parmenides. Of course, I used to pay attention to Ibn ʿArabi, as Parmenides was essential for Heidegger. But etymology opened a way for me to overcome all this. I have moved beyond general metaphysics, but Heidegger has not moved beyond it. I am an etymological thinker. Etymology is the science of Names, the meeting of names, and the language of names . . . I used to espouse the doctrine of Names based on Ibn ʿArabi because he had paid attention to this issue, but Ibn ʿArabi did not know what etymology was. My question is, what is the truth of Being? I answer that it is language, but Heidegger says it is time.[51]

47
Fardid, *Divine Encounter*, 22.

48
Fardid, *Divine Encounter*, 16.

49
Qaysari, *Sharh-i Fusus*, 36 (our translation).

50
Fardid, *Divine Encounter*, 20.

51
Mohammad Reza Zad, *Fardid Nama*, 541–42 (our translation).

Therefore, while Fardid took the structure of the doctrine of divine names from Ibn ʿArabi and his commentators, he attempted to complement it with Heidegger's philosophy on one hand, and etymology on the other. What he called *ʿilm al-asmāʾ tārīkhī* (historical science of names), *ism shināsī tārīkhī* (historical etymology), and *ḥikmat unsī* (gnostic wisdom) were based on his interpretation of Ibn ʿArabi combined with historical thought and his own understanding of etymology.

Historical Cycles and Divine Names

Fardid's historical science of names is an eclectic scheme composed of different philosophical, theological, and mystical sources. Fardid claims that his scheme is historical, i.e., it discusses historical periods and epochs through divine names. As mentioned, the two main pillars of Fardid's thought were Heidegger (especially his later thought) and Ibn ʿArabi (especially the doctrine of Divine Names). However, one can also see the influence of other schools and thinkers in Fardid's lectures and interviews. One of the most important influences is clearly Henry Corbin, whose lecture on Persian Oriental wisdom was translated by Fardid from French into Persian in 1946.[52] At that time, Corbin was a well-known translator of Heidegger in France, who later turned from German philosophy to Islamic theosophy. As some scholars have observed, Corbin's esoteric thought significantly inspired Fardid's attempt to interpret Islamic tradition in general and Ibn ʿArabi in particular through the lens of phenomenology and ontological hermeneutics.[53] Corbin is particularly significant in this respect because of his focus on the gnostic aspects of Heidegger's philosophy; the same theme underlies Corbin's own interpretation of the Islamic intellectual tradition.[54] In other words, Fardid's appropriation of Ibn ʿArabi and Heidegger can be understood as derivative of, or significantly influenced by, Corbin's gnostic interpretations.

One of Corbin's crucial contributions was his focus on the cyclical concept of time and history in Islamic/Iranian tradition. When it comes to Fardid's account of history, one must bear in mind that it is not always clear and consistent. Some have attempted to demonstrate similarities between Fardid's historical scheme and the Hegelian/Marxian account of history and its stages.[55] Following the well-known distinction between cyclical and rectilinear concepts of history,[56] one can say that Fardid's conception of history, what he called "historiosophy" (*ḥikmat-i tārīkh*),[57] was, in the final analysis, based on a cyclical worldview in line with Ibn ʿArabi's system, Corbin's interpretation of Iranian Islam, and the post-metaphysical thought of the later Heidegger. Fardid insisted that all ancient religions and mystical systems were grounded on a cyclical conception of history.[58] On several occasions in his lectures, essays, and interviews, he started by quoting and interpreting Jami's verses about the sequence of names in history and the various manifestations of the Truth in each historical period. Here he builds a bridge between the Heideggerian interpretation of *aletheia* as the unconcealment of Being and his own historical interpretation of Ibn ʿArabi's doctrine of divine names as the manifestation of God.[59] Moreover, Fardid interprets these doctrines in accord with the cyclical timeline of cosmic ages in Hinduism, i.e., the doctrine of four Yuga

52
Corbin, *Les motifs Zoroastriens dans la philosophie de Sohrawardi*.

53
"Chronologiquement le retour de Fardid vers la mystique spéculative de l'école d'Ibn ʿArabi est postérieur à sa connaissance de Heidegger. Dans ce retour vers les sources de la gnose (*erfan*) le rôle de Corbin semble déterminant." Ehsan Mazinani, "La réception de Heidegger en Iran: Le cas de Ahmad Fardid" (PhD diss., Université de Paris III Sorbonne Nouvelle, 2006–2007), 89.

54
Manuel de Diéguez, "Henry Corbin et Heidegger," *La Nouvelle Revue Française* 30 (1972): 32; Felix Herkert, "Heidegger und Corbin – Ansätze zu einer Verhältnisbestimmung" *Heidegger Studies / Heidegger Studien / Etudes Heideggeriennes / Studi Heideggeriani* 36, no. 1 (2020): 215–52.

55
For instance, Dariush Ashouri, a former disciple of his, notes that "if we leave aside dialectic as the logic of historical movement in Hegel's philosophy, the doctrine of the historical emergence of names in Ibn ʿArabi's theoretical mysticism and the historical development of the Idea in Hegel's philosophy seem similar, at least in appearance. Although Fardid is a disciple of Heidegger and has no devotion to Hegel, in any case, it was the influence of the modern philosophy of history that brought this theory of the emergence of names to the stage of world history and then mixed it with Heidegger's critiques of the history of Western thought as 'the history of metaphysics.' " Dariush Ashouri, "The Myth of Philosophy Amongst Us," 18.

56
Hannah Arendt, "The Concept of History: Ancient and Modern," *Between Past and Future, Eight Exercises in Political Thought* (New York: Viking Press, 1969), 42.

57
Fardid, *West and Westoxification*, 230.

58
Ahmad Fardid, *Divine Encounter*, 39.

59
Ahmad Fardid, 158.

Cycles (Satya Yuga, Treta Yuga, Dwapara Yuga, and Kali Yuga).[60]

Based on this cyclical timeline, Fardid distinguishes between five periods of human history as the main structure of his historical science of names.[61] As mentioned above, Fardid labeled these periods as *the day before yesterday*, *yesterday*, *today*, *tomorrow*, and *the day after tomorrow*. Each of these five historical periods represents a particular divine manifestation under a name. Fardid's historiosophy, therefore, is the study of events and situations of each period through the domination of some names and the concealment of others. It seems that, according to Fardid, divine names have assigned to each epoch a particular historical destiny that only a few of the wise could be conscious of. We will discuss these periods in more detail below.

The first period, *the day before yesterday*, is, according to Fardid, the primeval golden age of humanity, when the people had been One Nation (in Quranic terms, *umma wāḥida*) and had a single language. This period coincided with the pre-Socratic period in ancient Greece in which etymology (science of names) was the knowledge of the Truth. Following the Corbinian spiritual topography,[62] Fardid also applied the title of *the day before yesterday* to the East as the abode of the Truth.[63] Similarly, in ancient Hinduism, there was a time when etymology and theology had been the same knowledge with a single title.[64] Fardid insists that names (and nouns),[65] truth, and God were deeply connected in this period. Fardid's own interest in etymology was for him a remembrance of this forgotten past because he was convinced that today language and Truth have lost their connection.[66]

The second period, *yesterday*, begins with Greek philosophy; it was the age of philosophy and theology. In this period, the original names of *the day before yesterday* were concealed and replaced by the domination of the "Greek name" over the East. Using Ibn ʿArabi's terminology, Fardid sometimes explained this shift as the replacement of the names of God's beauty (*jamāl*) by the names of His majesty (*jalāl*).[67] Another expression in Fardid's scheme is the replacement of the one true God by multiple false gods; interestingly, according to Fardid, these false gods also represented some divine names and manifestations. While these false gods were worshiped as the one true God, they only impersonated the God of *the day before yesterday*.[68] The period of *yesterday*, coinciding with the Indian Kali Yuga, represents the introduction of nihilism into human history through the forgetfulness of Being and deviation from the proper understanding of time and language. Interestingly, the spirit of this period dominated the Christian Middle Ages too, and in turn inspired the theological traditions of Abrahamic religions, including Islam. What Fardid called "Wesotxification" began with the "Greek infection" of the East during the Medieval Islamic period. In this period, the intuitive and presential knowledge was replaced by acquired knowledge and conceptual thought of metaphysics. During this period, the influence of Western metaphysics alienated Eastern religious, cultural, and philosophical traditions from their authentic origins.[69] However, Fardid adds that while the destiny of the West was entirely metaphysical, the Islamic world was ambivalent as some Iranian and Muslim mystics and poets did not fall into the trap of Greek philosophy and insisted on the priority of presential knowledge over acquired knowledge.[70] At any rate, this period (*yester-*

60
For contemporary uses of the Hindu cyclical timeline, especially among Traditionalists, see Mark Sedgwick, *Traditionalism: A Radical Project for Restoring Sacred Order* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2023), 69–71.

61
Fardid specifies that he does not want to devote his historical scheme to the Hindu doctrine, but it could be a way to escape from modern historicism. Cf. Ahmad Fradid, *West and Westoxification*, 152.

62
For Corbin's spiritual and symbolic topography, see Henry Corbin, *Avicenne et le récit visionnaire* (Paris: Verdier, 1999).

63
"The concealment of the East was associated with the dawn of Ancient Greeks' thought; the West began with Greece." See Ahmad Fardid, "Chand Porsesh dar Babi Farhangi Sharq" [Some Questions concerning the Culture of the East], *Farhang va Zendegi* 7 (Dey 1350 [January 1972]).

64
Fardid, *Divine Encounter*, 215–17.

65
In Persian, the word *Esm* means both name and noun.

66
Fardid, *On The Concept of Time*, 59.

67
Fardid, *Divine Encounter*, 192.

68
Fardid claims that the one true God (or the Light), which had been worshiped in ancient Hinduism, was replaced by false gods under new names such as *Ahura* (in later Zoroastrianism) and *Zeus* in ancient Greek. Cf. Fardid, *West and Westoxification*, 29.

69
For Fardid's East/West split, which shows the impact of Corbin's sacred geography. See Mazinani, *Heidegger en Iran*, 95–97.

70
Mohammad Reza Zad, *Fardid Nama*, 552.

day) ended in Europe during the Renaissance, while in Iran, it ended in the early twentieth century with the Persian Constitutional Revolution.

The third period is *today*, i.e., the modern age. If *yesterday* was the age of transcendence and foundationalism, *today*'s destiny is immanence and subjectivity.[71] This age is dominated by subjective nihilism represented by the death of God (Nietzsche) and the loss of gods (Heidegger). According to Fardid, modernity is the culmination of Kali Yuga and the immanentization of false names in history, which paved the way for contemporary crises. The situation in the East is even worse. As mentioned above, Fardid insists that the East and the West were separated after *the day before yesterday*. Therefore, the destiny of the West has been nihilism, while the fate of the East was Westoxification, which is the nihilism of non-European nations. That is why Fardid always warned against following Western thought in Iran. For instance, he notes that "since Western nihilism has reached its peak in the thought of Nietzsche, we can definitely imagine what will be the end of *today*'s Westoxification."[72] Fardid thus can be considered the first modern Iranian thinker who insisted that there is a non-synchronicity between Iran and the modern West since Iranians and Europeans do not belong to the same historical course, although both are experiencing the same period of *today*.

The fourth period, according to Fardid's historiosophy, is *tomorrow*, coinciding with the postmodern age. This is when the foundations of Western thought will be completely destroyed. In this period, a horizon revealing the last cycle, the last period, will emerge. Human beings will be aware of their alienation and nihilism and will seek the Truth through "preparatory and anticipatory" thinking and intuitive remembrance (*dhikr*).[73] In this period, the modern values will completely lose their domination, but nothing replaces them before the *Ereignis* or the unfolding of Being in history.[74] This *Ereignis* has an apocalyptic character and waiting for the promised Messiah is one of its aspects (see below).

The final period is the *day after tomorrow* when the transcendental Truth reappears and is revealed. This period, symbolized by Mahdi's appearance, represents the manifestation of the Greatest Name (*al-ism al-aʿẓam*). Fardid describes this period as "the Greatest Manifestation," which means the "manifestation of the Name that through its appearance the true man is realized, and this is the name that will be manifested in the day after tomorrow. With the Greatest Manifestation, the human age will drastically change and will overcome religious and ideological combats. The transcendental essence of man, that which is eternal time, returns, and humankind recollects [or remembers] it."[75] This period will be the end of history.

Fardid assiduously insisted that his views and concepts belonged to the *day before yesterday* and the *day after tomorrow*. That is why he repeated that his language seemed strange to the people who were still stuck in the destiny of *yesterday* and *today* and were cursed by the names ruling over these periods. The five-period history, briefly sketched above, was an idiosyncratic mixture of Heideggerian philosophy and Ibn ʿArabi's mythology of Divine Names, with some inspirations from Marxism and Hinduism. The *day before yesterday* in Fardid's scheme can be compared with Heidegger's pre-Socratic era

71
Fardid, *On the Concept of Time*, 104.

72
Fardid, *West and Westoxification*, 102.

73
Fardid, *On the Concept of Time*, 93.

74
For the reception of the Heideggerian concept *Ereignis* in Fardid's thought, see Mazinani, *Heidegger en Iran*, 102 ff.

75
Fardid, *Divine Encounter*, 131.

(or the "first inception" in later Heidegger) and Marx's primitive communism. In addition, Fardid's view on the *day after tomorrow* is reminiscent of Marx's stateless communism at the end of history and its arrival reminds one of Heidegger's idea of *Ereignis* (or "other inception").[76] The eclectic nature of this historical scheme represents an attempt to build bridges among different traditions with entirely different foundations; because of its eclecticism, it is by no means a coherent or consistent system. For instance, as Mohammad M. Hashemi observes, Fardid's view about Islam seems incompatible with his periodization of history.[77] On the basis of Fardid's scheme, Islam emerged in the second period of *yesterday* (or Kali Yuga) when the names of God's wrath dominated, and the names of His mercy went into concealment. But then how can we accommodate Fardid's other claim that Islam is a religion of the *day before yesterday*, in which there was a proper identity of divinity, language, and truth? Or his claim that Allah is the Greatest Name of the one true God of the *day before yesterday* and the *day after tomorrow*?[78] Furthermore, the emergence of Islam in the period of *yesterday* would be incompatible with the claim that it epitomizes the true Divine Names.[79] Another difficulty stems from Fardid's indiscriminate use, or overuse, of the divine names so that he sometimes empties the mythology of names of their original value in theoretical mysticism. Although he explicitly claims that each historical period manifests a name, he does not specify which period manifests which name. Moreover, he coins, abruptly and it seems in a spontaneous manner, strange expressions such as the "name of nationality, internationalism, and cosmopolitanism,"[80] the "atheistic names" (*asmāʾ ilḥādī*),[81] and the name of the "impulsive soul" (*al-nafs al-ʾammāra*),[82] expressions that the doctrine of divine names can barely explain.

76
For the concept of "other inception" (Ereignis) in later Heidegger, especially see Martin Heidegger, *Contributions to Philosophy (of the Event)*, trans. Richard Rojcewicz and Daniela Vallega-Neu (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2017).

77
Mohammad M. Hashemi, *Huviat Andishan va Miraṣi Fikri Ahmad Fardid* [Identity Thinkers and the Intellectual Legacy of Ahmad Fardid] (Tehran: Kavir, 1385 [2007]), 103.

78
Fardid, *Divine Encounter*, 136.

79
"Muhammad the prophet wanted to banish *yesterday*'s god by Islam, and replace it with the *day before yesterday* and the *day after tomorrow*'s God." Fardid, *Divine Encounter*, 136.

80
Fardid, 49.

81
Fardid, *West and Westoxification*, 237.

82
Fardid, *Divine Encounter*, 42.

Fardid's Ideological Scheme

Although Fardid's scheme, as described above, was not inherently political, his theological and philosophical views had political and ideological implications. His career as an intellectual coincided with some of the most turbulent moments of contemporary Iranian history: World War II and the Allies' occupation of Iran, the 1953 Coup, and the 1979 Islamic Revolution. Before the Islamic revolution, Fardid was not a political figure but was known for coining the term Westoxification (*gharbzadigī*), whose ambiguity allowed it to be wielded as a political and ideological weapon by both supporters and critics of the Pahlavi regime.[83] This is also the case with Fardid's thought as a whole: before the Islamic revolution, he inspired both opposition thinkers and pro-regime intellectuals. After the Islamic revolution and in his post-revolutionary lectures and public courses, Fardid presented himself as a passionate supporter of the Revolution, its ideals, and its leadership. During this period, he began commenting directly on political subjects and politically implementing his previous thoughts on Heidegger and Ibn ʿArabi.

Fardid did not shy away from eclecticism, even when politics was concerned: for instance, while Marxian materialism was incompatible with his philosophical views, Fardid found Marx's theory of revolution at times helpful and that is why some aspects of his theory have a vague

83
Ali Mirsepassi and Mehdi Faraji, "Depoliticizing Westoxification: The Case of Bonyad Monthly," *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* 45, no. 3 (2016): 1–21.

Marxist aroma. But it was above all Fardid's five-period history that paved the way for a political ideology. Fardid's overall scheme here is similar to what is sometimes called "political gnosticism."[84] According to Mark Lilla, the three fundamental beliefs of gnosticism are "that the created world was the work of an evil lower deity or demiurge, and thus utterly corrupt; that direct access to a higher, spiritual divinity was possible for those with a secret knowledge (*gnosis*) developed from a divine spark within; and that redemption would come through a violent apocalypse, led, perhaps, by those possessing *gnosis*."[85] Political gnosticism thus is a political-theological system that uses gnostic themes for ideological and political purposes.[86] All three features of gnosticism can be found in Fardid's historical science of divine names. Fardid was emphatic that the worlds of *yesterday* and *today* are under the domination of false names. He insisted that the one true God had been replaced by false gods, or even evil forces impersonating gods. Moreover, he emphasized the direct or presential knowledge accessible to a few prophets, mystics, and poets. Finally, Fardid subscribed to the idea that redemption would be possible only on the *day after tomorrow* through apocalyptic revelations when the Greatest Name would be revealed.[87] It is therefore no accident that Fardid and his disciples have used the term *ḥikmat unsī* (*Unsī* Wisdom) to describe their intellectual project. The Persian/Arabic term *uns*, according to Fardid's etymology, has the same roots as the Greek *Gnosis*. Fardid maintains that true gnostic thinking is the knowledge of God's true names.[88]

Both revolutionary and conservative aspects are present in Fardid's political gnosticism; in this respect, he is similar to contemporary radical right thinkers.[89] Fardid's position on the Islamic Revolution must be understood within his conception of revolution, rooted in his gnostic views and the cyclical succession of divine names in history. As Arendt accurately observed, the modern concept of revolution became conceivable under the new concept of the rectilinear timeline, which introduced the entirely novel idea of a "new order" (novelty and uniqueness of events).[90] Fardid's view about the connection between history and revolution, however, completely differs from the one discussed in modern political thought. Fardid discussed the etymology of the Persian term *inghilāb* (revolution), originally meaning the rotating and ever-recurring movement of stars, similar to the Latin etymology of the term *revolution* in European languages.[91] According to Fardid, in each historical period, humanity is embodied in the image of a name; revolution occurs when a new name appears and another fades away. Hence, "the meaning of revolution emanates from the rise and fall of names."[92] That is why Fardid asserts that the true revolution of the Western world was the Renaissance, through which a fundamental change of names (i.e., a shift in the relationship between humankind and the cosmos) occurred. Other movements and occurrences (including the French Revolution) have been rebellions, Fardid claimed, not revolutions *stricto sensu*.[93]

The true revolution, hence, will be the manifestation of the Greatest Name on the *day after tomorrow*. Fardid's conception of revolution, the cyclic account of history, is complemented by an eschatological worldview: at the end of times, the promised messiah (or Mahdi according to Shiʿa beliefs) will appear:

84
According to Voegelin, "modern Gnosticism takes the form of speculating on the meaning of history construed as a closed process manipulated by the revolutionary elite—the few who understand the path, process, and goal of history as its moves from stage to stage toward some sort of final perfect realm." Eric Voegelin, *Science, Politics, and Gnosticism: Two Essays*, ed. Ellis Sandoz (Washington: Regnery Publishing, 2012), xii (editor's introduction).

85
Mark Lilla, *The Shipwrecked Mind: On Political Reaction* (New York: NYRB, 2016), 36.

86
For the concept of "political gnosticism," see Benedikt Korf and Rory Rowan, "Arcane Geopolitics: Heidegger, Schmitt, and the Political Theology of Gnosticism," *Political Geography* 80 (2020): 1–9.

87
It should be noted that some scholars have discussed significant gnostic themes in both Ibn ʿArabi's mysticism and Heidegger's philosophy. For a gnostic reading of Heidegger, see, for instance, Susan Taubes, "The Gnostic Foundations of Heidegger's Nihilism," *The Journal of Religion* 34, no. 3 (1954): 155–72.

88
See Fardid, *On the Concept of Time*, 97; *Divine Encounter*, 56.

89
Among the prominent thinkers of the Conservative Revolution, Fardid was inspired by Nietzsche, Heidegger, and some aspects of Oswald Spengler's thought. For the Conservative Revolution's impact on new right-wing ideologies, see for instance Mark Sedgwick, ed., *Key Thinkers of The Radical Right: Behind the New Threat to Liberal Democracy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2019).

90
Hannah Arendt, *On Revolution* (London: Penguin Books, 1990), 27.

91
"The word 'revolution' was originally an astronomical term which gained increasing importance in the natural sciences through Copernicus's *De revolutionibus orbium coelestium.* In this scientific usage, it retained its precise Latin meaning, designating the regular, lawfully revolving motion of the stars, which, since it was known to be beyond the influence of man and hence irresistible, was certainly characterized neither by newness nor by violence." Arendt, *On Revolution*, 42.

92
Fardid, *Divine Encounter*, 17.

93
Fardid, 70–71.

> The Russians will come[94] because they have the spirit of Messianism. Mahdi and Messiah are coming to the West, and the promised Imam that we are all waiting for is also coming. Waiting should be preparatory, and our thinking should be preparatory thinking for the promised Mahdi's *day after tomorrow*. But this promised Mahdi is not reserved for Muslims, Christians, or even Jews. He turns domination (*vilāya*) into affection (*valāya*). He is not Nietzsche's Übermensch; he is the dervish who reminds humans of their poverty.[95]

On several occasions, Fardid emphasizes that we live in the age of nihilism or Kali Yuga, waiting for the Eschaton or the end of time (*akhir al-zaman*) to arrive. This view is a stance of what Eric Voegelin called "the immanentization of the eschaton," which is the attempt to bring about the end of history, or the ultimate fulfillment of human existence, within the immanent world of human society and politics.[96] Here it is important to mention that there is a fundamental ambiguity inherent in Fardid's eschatology: on one hand, he embraces a theory of revolution that anticipates an immanent Eschaton in history, but on the other, he supports a cyclic narrative of time that would not allow any historical realization of apocalyptic revelations.

Fardid's views about the 1979 Islamic Revolution were contradictory and often confusing. On several occasions, he considered it a true revolution, a fundamental change of names, and the beginning of a new era. Referring to the opponents of the revolution, he condemned them as "anti-revolutionaries who are chanting in favor of *yesterday* and *today*'s god, not the *day before yesterday*'s and the *day after tomorrow*'s God."[97] But he sometimes called the Islamic Revolution a "mixed" movement: "It is potentially a revolution but actually a rebellion. It is a revolution as there is Imam Khomeini, and there are true believers."[98] In any case, he was strongly convinced that the Islamic Revolution would pave the way for the end of time and history.[99] Fardid's position towards the Islamic revolution is reminiscent of Heidegger's vindication of the regime of his time; both are examples of *Ereignis* that have been mysteriously "decreed" by Being, independent from human volition.[100]

It is difficult for any impartial reader who spends time on Fardid's writings to come away without mixed feelings. Here we have a thinker who never produced even a single book presenting his ideas and whose only intellectual activity was oral. His enthusiastic followers have tried to put a positive spin on this aspect of Fardid's activities by calling him "the Oral Philosopher." But in approaching the transcripts of Fardid's oral pronouncements in an attempt to systemize his ideas, one must confess that the oral character of Fardid's teaching was not entirely innocent: the constant conflict between different elements of Fardid's thought, lack of clarity in many of his core ideas, and sheer eclecticism seem to be the main culprits for him remaining an oral philosopher. But perhaps part of the attraction of his work comes precisely from this: in each of his surviving transcripts we can find some remark or random idea to combine with some other scattered remark to build a new system; Fardid thus becomes like a malleable clay that can be made to conform to many shapes and put to many uses.

94
According to Fardid, Russian people, like Shiʿa Muslims, used to subscribe to messianic beliefs until the reforms of Peter the Great, which westoxified Russia. See Fardid, *Divine Encounter*, 55; Fardid, *West and Westoxification*, 154.

95
Fardid, *On the Concept of Time*, 93 (our translation).

96
Eric Voegelin, *The New Science of Politics*: *An Introduction* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1987), 134.

97
Fardid, *Divine Encounter*, 101–02.

98
Fadid, 72.

99
"Islamic Revolution is the opening of the sacred realm." Fardid, 427.

100
For Heidegger's "ontological fatalism" and its political implications, see Richard Wolin, *Heidegger in Ruins, Between Philosophy and Ideology* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2022), 29.