

Dr Wahid M. Amin

Mullā Ṣadrā and His Commentators on Ibn Kammūna's Argument Against Divine Unity

This paper examines the doctrine of divine unity and its attendant problems in Islamic philosophical texts composed between the twelfth and twentieth centuries. In the first part of my paper I explain the philosophical challenges faced by post-classical Muslim philosophers and theologians in their attempts at proving divine unity after a so-called “doubt” (*shubha*) mistakenly attributed to Ibn Kammūna thwarted the most standard version of a proof that had been formulated by earlier *falāsifa* such as al-Farābī and Ibn Sīnā which they regarded as demonstrating God's unity. This so-called doubt appears to have first surfaced in the writings of the Illuminationist philosopher Shihāb al-Dīn al-Suhrawardī and was later popularised through the reception of the commentaries and philosophical writings of the Jewish scholar ʿIzz al-Dawla Ibn Kammūna (d. 683/1284). The severity of the challenge that the *shubhat al-tawḥīd* posed was so immense that influential Muslim figures such as Ibn Taymiyya relied on it to dismiss any proof of divine unity within the writings of the *falāsifa*. One late Safavid author even went so far as to argue that because of Ibn Kammūna there could never be a strictly rational proof of God's unity and that the only suitable recourse for the belief in *tawḥīd* was therefore revealed scripture and tradition.

In the second part of this presentation I show how two Shīʿī philosophers grappled with the problem of divine unity and the challenges that were raised because of *shubhat Ibn Kammūna*. Mullā Ṣadrā Shīrāzī and al-ʿAllāma al-Ṭabāṭabāʾī both agreed that Ibn Kammūna's argument against divine unity was a serious challenge to the Peripatetic *falāsifa*. However, because they each subscribed to an alternative philosophical school which prioritizes existence over essence, they believed that their philosophical foundations were immune to the threat of Ibn Kammūna's argument. I will briefly explain how these two philosophers articulate a form of perfect-being theology and how, through the inspiration of the Shīʿī Imams' traditions, they circumvented the main difficulties that Ibn Kammūna's argument raises. In doing so, I try to demonstrate how later Shīʿī philosophy is intricately woven with philosophical speculation on the traditions of the Imams, and that rather than there being a tension between philosophy and scripture, the two in fact come together for true *ḥikma*.



Dr Wahid M. Amin
Al-Mahdi Institute

Wahid M. Amin is Lecturer in Islamic Philosophy at the Al-Mahdi Institute and Head of Publications for AMI Press. He is an Associate Lecturer at the University of Birmingham and has held visiting lectureships at the University of Oxford. He holds a B.Sc. (hons) degree in Physics from Imperial College, London and obtained his Masters and DPhil degrees from the University of Oxford specializing in the historical reception of Avicenna's metaphysics in the post-classical period.