

# Anatomy of the Commentary

## *A View from Above*

*Toute la suite des hommes,  
pendant le cours de tant de siècles,  
doit être considérée comme un même homme  
qui subsiste toujours  
et qui apprend continuellement.*

—PASCAL, PRÉFACE POUR UN TRAITÉ DU VIDE

Complementing the foregoing analysis, this chapter theorizes the commentary on the basis of the texts of the *Sullam* tradition. The first section presents some key self-reflections of the commentators on their exercise, bringing into relief their understanding that the hypotext of any order was both a partial unfolding of past texts and a gesture inviting its own completion in future hypertexts. Here, the literary allusions and rhetorical elements of the commentators' statements are quite instructive. In the second section, I focus on the instrument of textual allusion as a means to uncover the architectonics of the commentary. In following piecemeal the textual life of a technical conundrum presented in the *Sullam*, I demonstrate how the economy of gestures—in the hypotexts and hypertexts—sustained commentarial writing. In the final section of this chapter, I explore how the aforementioned features and frameworks of the commentary also curated textual excavations that, by forcing oscillations between the past, present, and future, ultimately complicated notions of authorship, authority, and originality. I conclude with some reflections on the vexed question of the dynamism of postclassical Muslim rationalist disciplines.

### WRITING THE TRADITION: SELF-REFLECTIONS IN THE COMMENTARIAL PROLEGOMENA

Strictly speaking, base texts and commentaries were not true items of readership; they were meant to be written and spoken, *along with* earlier textual layers. As

I have indicated above, in making this claim, I do not mean to assert that the base texts and commentaries were not actually read; such a position would be trivially false. Nor am I proposing that we should approach commentarial cycles as palimpsests that impose textual erasure and layering. Commentarial practice was characterized instead by accumulation—in the diachronically contracting and expanding lemmata—within one continuous authorial discourse. The initiating moment of the discourse, the hypotext, was itself a laden allusion to living philosophical debates; as a prompt, it invited its own expression and realization in the hypertext. It is in this manner that base texts, commentaries, and supercommentaries were *palimpsests of themselves*.

This defining feature of commentarial practice and production—the allusive prompt to future self-actualization—was both implicit and explicit. With a first gesture, for example, the *Sullam*'s early pages disclose the wishes of the author that it should be “among *mutūn* like the sun among the stars.” The commentator, Mullā Mubīn, writes:

A *matn* is what is hard and difficult and *in need* of a commentary/opening [*sharḥ*]. This is a supplicatory statement. Its meaning is, “Lord, make this *matn* among the ordered *mutūn*, with respect to its fame, ‘like the sun among stars.’” For when the sun rises, the stars become dim and are not seen, even when they exist. So God granted his prayer and the scholars . . . wrote commentaries on it, so that it came to be widely circulated among the students of the *madāris* . . . and other *mutūn* came to be obscured.<sup>1</sup>

Thus, a *matn* called to its future commentaries. It was realized through them and its institutional circulation—the practice of reading it—was a function of the written attention that it received. It was often repeated in the bio-bibliographical literature that students in the South Asian *Dars-i niẓāmī* method were expected to read only the most difficult parts of various technical texts, so that they may learn to resolve aporiae of any measure of obscurity in their written contributions.<sup>2</sup> Yet there was an irony in these expectations: when any *matn* was fully actualized in its commentarial incarnation, it became sterile. For the commentary itself to remain vibrant and to call to new commentaries, it needed to give voice to the *matn* in a manner that did not say everything. Indeed, it is for this reason that the aforementioned commentary of Mubīn, perhaps the most accessible and comprehensive realization of the *Sullam*, was one of the least popular among students of the *Dars*, receiving little written attention and leaving behind only a faint vestige of manuscript witnesses. There was an oft-repeated pun, meant to warn students of the crushing lucidity of the text: Do not look at Mubīn, the text, because it is *mubīn*—that is, clear (*Mubīnrā mabīn chūn mubīn!*).<sup>3</sup>

That Mubīn was conscious of the distinct nature of his enterprise becomes apparent when his introductory claims are juxtaposed with those of other commentators. He writes,

The *Sullam al-`ulūm* is among the most subtle [*adaqq*] and . . . precise of base texts [*mutūn*] written in [the field of] logic. It is utterly inaccessible [*mughlaqan ghāyat*

*al-ighlāq*]. The greatest scholars devoted themselves to it and wrote commentaries on it that contain novel verifications [*taḥqīqāt badī‘a*] and unusual penetrations [*tadqīqāt ‘ajība*]. And they did not turn to resolve [the *Sullam*’s] problemata, to reveal its objectives, to clarify its puzzles, and to explain its compressed [claims] [*bayān mujmalīhi*]. So [the book] is still hidden under veils . . . In the past, one of my revered friends and sincere comrades had asked me to write a commentary that would overcome its insolubles and facilitate the way to arriving [at solutions] to its subtle problemata, so that it may be beneficial for students and eminent [scholars]. So, despite the limits of my wares and the deficiencies of my merchandise in this discipline . . . I ventured [the effort] . . . and I wrote a commentary with a clear expression [*‘ibāra wāḍiḥa*] and renderings [of the issues] that make plain [the hidden points] [*taqrīrāt kāshifa*], such that it would facilitate for beginners, during their period of study, the acquisition of its aim and would prepare eminent [scholars] in seeking a way to opening up its difficult points. I avoided transmitting too many statements from the books of [other] men, fearing excess. And I dispensed with lamps by [availing myself] of daybreak. Thus, this commentary came to be without equal among commentaries in its [capacity] to reveal and explain [difficult points] . . . And since this commentary has the utmost clarity, I called it *The Mirror of Commentaries*. And this name is suitable for that which it names, because this commentary opens up other commentaries [*kāshif li-shurūḥ siwāhu*].<sup>4</sup>

Doubtless, Mubīn’s report about the pressing requests is a recognizable *topos*; although interesting as a rhetorical strategy in its own right, it is not directly relevant to the topic.<sup>5</sup> Instead, the following points ought to be highlighted. Mubīn considers the text of the *Sullam* to be subtle (*adaqq*) and inaccessible (*mughlaq*), so as to require commentarial investment. Yet the suitable commentarial exercise, he tells us, never materialized in the efforts of past scholars. Rather, these latter themselves introduced rare verifications (*taḥqīqāt badī‘a*) and unusual penetrations (*tadqīqāt ‘ajība*) into the commentarial task, failing to unveil the hypotext. In fact, these commentarial layers themselves became the subject of Mubīn’s commentary, which drew its hypotext into the lucidity of daylight. Others, by contrast, had resorted to the light of a lamp that partly illuminates its objects, while casting new shadows. Their commentaries on the *Sullam*, therefore, were effectively new hypotexts calling out to be unveiled by Mubīn’s commentary.

Mubīn’s claims about the method and purpose of his commentary were neither an exaggeration nor rhetorically hollow. Indeed, the significance of his statement can be brought into sharp relief when it is juxtaposed with introductory sections of other commentaries. Let me present the remarks by Qāḍī Mubārak as an example.

The discipline [of logic] is the most lucid of disciplines in terms of demonstration . . . The treatise that the adept Verifier [*al-muḥaqqiq*], the subtle investigator [*al-mudaqqiq*], the Perfect Shaykh, Muḥibballāh al-Bihārī composed, amongst its pages, is a heavenly book [*ṣaḥīfa malakūtiyya*], from which the rivers of the real disciplines flow [*tajrī minhā anḥār*] for those who are friends of rational [disciplines] . . . And I saw a large number of people seeking its solutions . . . And although I am unique [*mutafarridan*] . . . in [finding] solutions to its impenetrable [discourse]

[*‘uwayṣāt*] and in unveiling [*kashf*] its difficult points . . . I would hesitate, considering myself incapable of attaining this wish [to provide solutions to the treatise]; and I would remain cautious [in my attempt]. Then someone denying whom is not considered proper asked me [to proceed]. And so I rallied my energies to resolve the knots of its difficulties and to open the doors of its obscurities [*mughlaqāt*] . . . Thus [the commentary] became a book of middle size . . . that repairs [*taqwīm*] the deft examination [of the *Sullam*] . . . and includes subtle points and rare hints [*mutaḍammīnan li-d- daqā’iq wa-gharā’ib al-ishārāt*]; it gathers the literal [*ḥaqā’iq*] and unusual allusions [*‘ajā’ib al-rumūzāt*].<sup>6</sup>

Mubārak begins with the usual *topos* of being compelled to write the commentary owing to a request. Like the later commentator, Mubīn, he describes the hypotext as obscure and subtle; yet here the enormity of the challenge he faces is spelled out in rather interesting terms: the *Sullam* is an oracular text that guides its readers with rare hints and subtle points. As a heavenly book, it calls out to be unveiled (*kashf*) by the activity of the commentator, who must both emend it and render it meaningful to others. Indeed, the suggestion that the book is a grace for seekers of knowledge is inescapable—it is a source from which the rivers of true knowledge flow (*tajrī minhā anhār*). This is a direct quotation from the Qur’ān (4:122), which promises Elysian fields with subterranean flowing rivers (*jannāt tajrī min taḥtihā l-anhār*). The *Sullam* is, therefore, a heavenly reward that contains within it secret nourishment, the meanings of the real disciplines. It is the task of the commentator to render these esoteric meanings intelligible, much as an initiate would expose divine texts and signs.

Yet Mubārak does not consider his task to be mere exegesis. Commenting involves the introduction of that which is rare and unusual, inciting wonder and curiosity (*badī’*, *‘ajīb*), within the practice of unfolding another text. Mubārak’s commentary confirms Mubīn’s observations—his own book “includes subtle points . . . rare hints . . . and unusual allusions.” In other words, Mubārak’s commentary on the *Sullam* is precisely one of those hypotexts that Mubīn had set out to unveil (*kāshifli-shurūh*) in the context of commenting on the original hypotext. Mubārak, therefore, is not engaged in the two distinct tasks of opening up a first hypotext and setting up signposts. The two tasks are intimately intertwined, such that, in commenting on the *Sullam*, the later commentator, Mubīn, must also comment on the earlier commentaries that, like lamps, both illuminate and cast shadows of the self-same objects. As we observed above in the context of the Rampur Debate, the hypertext is potential in relation to *its* future commentary, even as it actualizes and becomes an incarnation of its own hypotext. The hierophant is also an oracle.<sup>7</sup>

Having prepared his own commentary in a manner that required future commenting, Mubārak also had recourse to his personal pedagogical glosses. ‘Abd al-Rasūl al-Sahāranpūrī, who collected them, explains as follows:

These are glosses . . . that remove obscurities, keys for insolubles . . . from the dawn of the suns of verification, the sun of the sky of penetration, belonging to his per-

fect eminence, the source of emanation . . . the third teacher—rather, the Eleventh Intellect—whose name is blessed [*Mubāarak*] . . . may God give him to reside in the gardens of paradise . . . He had appended [these glosses] to his commentary on the *Sullam al-'ulūm*, as a means of divulging the hidden secret[s] [*ifshā'an . . . sirrahu l-maktūm*] [of the commentary] to those who are limited [in their abilities]. I had requested of him, may God's mercy be upon him, to gather it together, but he did not have a chance to collect [it] and put [it] together. So now, little by little, I gathered it, fearing that it would be lost.<sup>8</sup>

Following these comments, al-Sahāranpūrī offers, in suitable order, the inventory of the interventions of the author on his own commentary. What is of interest here is al-Sahāranpūrī's confirmation that the commentary itself, written by the apotheosized Mubāarak, the Eleventh Intellect, contained secrets that needed to be divulged. Indeed, the expression "*al-sirr al-maktūm*" immediately brings to the reader's mind the celebrated work of Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī on the "occult" that was written to unfold mysteries. These rhetorical strategies imply that the commentary of Mubāarak contains knowledge that would be accessible to the adept, but that calls out to be opened up and actualized for others. His own appended notes provide some glimpses into the intentions of the text in some respects.<sup>9</sup>

#### A TECHNICAL CONUNDRUM: CURATING TEXTUALIZED ORALITY VIA HINTS

That the introductory statements examined above were not merely rhetorical can be demonstrated rather easily by means of a close investigation of the modes of technical arguments within the body of the *Sullam's* commentarial tradition. As noted above, the practice of commenting was sustained by ambiguity and allusions. Hypotexts, whether they were *mutūn* or *shurūh*, spoke with a clarity bounded by obscurity. As such, the hypotext was both a fulfillment of a past tradition—a hypertext in its own right—and a prompt for its own self-actualization and unraveling in some future hypertext.

This section details, on the basis of the extended analysis of a particular lemma of the *Sullam*, how commentarial allusions functioned as signposts for textual self-actualization. This will be accomplished by means of the extended analysis of a particular lemma of the *Sullam*.<sup>10</sup> As I mentioned above, these lemmata, insofar as they were deliberate sites of measured hints and prompts, also generated a large set of features that constituted the vibrancy of commentarial practice. These included textual excavation and hypothetical debates, which, in turn, complicated notions of authorship, originality, and authority. In the next section, therefore, I will also turn to some of these connected elements of commentarial allusions.

A number of explicit expressions in the hypotext served as hints (*ishārāt*) that guided the hand of the future commentator. The following imperatives, obviously imitative of the Qur'an, galvanized the commentarial field: *fa-ta'ammal*,

*fa-tadabbar*, *fa-tafakkar*, and *ifham*. Although the expressions are polysemic, in a rather large number of cases they compelled the future hypertext to fill and fulfill the hypotext.

The *Sullam* uses the expression “*fa-tadabbar*” nine times, and I will adopt one of its occurrences as the starting point of my extended analysis below. In each case where the expression occurs, the commentators take it as a cue not just to reflect on the solution offered by the *Sullam*—the command is often parsed as “Ponder! [*fa-ta ’ammall!*]”—but also to remedy its failures against projected opponents. Indeed, in certain cases, the *Sullam* provides a solution to a problem that is either left deliberately incomplete or that represents a weak rendering of its own position. The expression at hand, then, serves as a call to the future commentators to take up the charge of defending the hypotext against the anticipated challenge, which, owing to the feigned shortcoming of the argument, would prevail if the text were abandoned by the future author.

In its technical aspects, the example I have chosen—predication—goes to the very core of the *Sullam* as an organic text; as such, it is also representative of the broader orientation of the work. We might recall that, although the *Sullam* is a complete logic work that maps rather neatly onto the structure of earlier handbooks, the unity of its discursive engine is generated by the conundrums tied to certain types of propositional claims. In simple terms, these latter concern predication over supposed objects that have neither mental nor extramental existence. Yet the claims appear to be valid, thus violating the basic principle of affirmation that the subject term must have existential import. Examples include statements, such as “The Participant with the Creator is impossible” and “That which is absolutely unknown has no judgment passed of it.” As I showed in chapter 2, solutions to these types of problems could only be offered on the posit of certain mental determinations and this, in turn, produced the further tension with the programmatic conviction that logic was a tool of the sciences and was meant to facilitate the discovery of mind-independent reality. Echoes of these issues will pervade the discussion below.

Toward the end of the section on quantification and subject terms, al-Bihārī mentions four interconnected investigations that pertain to universal affirmative propositions.<sup>11</sup> The fourth of these, on predication, contains several subsections.<sup>12</sup> I will take up the second of these subsections as my point of departure. In order to situate the nature of the commentarial exercise in what follows, I present the *matn* in full.<sup>13</sup>

The absurd, insofar as it is absurd, has no form in the intellect. So it is nonexistent both mentally and extramentally. Given this, it is clear that the reality of everything existent in the mind exists with respect to the way things are given. Thus, no judgment is passed of it [i.e., of the absurd], whether it be, for example, an affirmative [judgment] that it is impossible or a negative [judgment] about its existence. [This is the case] except with respect to something universal, when its conceptualization is among things that are possible. Every object of judgment that has obtained [in the

mind] is a conceptualized nature. And everything that is conceptualized exists. So the judgment about it [i.e., the conceptualized nature] that it is impossible and similar [judgments] are not correct insofar as it is what it is. However, when [this thing about which the judgment is passed] is considered with a view to all or some of [its individual instances] that are the sources of its positive obtaining, then the judgment of impossibility, for example, is correct. So impossibility is affirmed of the [conceptualized] nature; and it is true because the [existence of the individual instances] that are the sources of its obtaining is denied. Thus, there is no issue with respect to propositions whose predicates oppose existence, such as “The Participant with the Creator is impossible” and “The joining of contradictories is absurd.”

The argument of the author may be explained in the following terms. A mental object, insofar as it is a mental object, has a form in the intellect; otherwise, it would not be a mental object. As such, then, it is not absurd, since the absurd has no form in the intellect; and, as a consequence, any mental object exists as a self-same given. Next, anything of which an affirmative or negative judgment is passed must have mental or extramental existence. Now, one runs into a conundrum once these principles are in place. One would concede, for example, that a proposition such as “The square circle is impossible” is true, even though there are no square circles either in mental or extramental existence. Al-Bihārī’s solution to this wrinkle in his system is to state that the proposition is not about square circles *insofar as* they are absurd. Rather, the proposition is parsed to mean that there are no underlying instances by virtue of which the square circle may come to have positive mental or extramental existence. But this is not the end of the issue, as he explains further:

As for those who said that the judgment applies in reality to the individual instances, well, among them is one who said that these are [actually] negative [propositions]. [Yet] there is no doubt that this is an arbitrary [solution]. And among them is one who said that, although these [propositions] are affirmative, they only require the conceptualization of the subject at the time of the judgment. [This is the same] as it is with negative [propositions], without any difference. [However,] it is obvious that this is something that clashes with an a priori [sense of what a proposition is]. And among them is one who said that the judgment applies to supposed individual instances that have been determined to exist. It is as if he states that everything that is conceptualized by means of the tag “Participant with the Creator” and the truth [of this tag] is supposed for it—[such a thing] is impossible with respect to the way things are given. [Yet] it is not hidden from you that this [position] entails that the existence of the description is more than the existence of that which is described. For the impossibility [said of the Partner with the Creator] obtains with respect to the way things are given, as opposed to the individual instances [which do not obtain in this way]. So reflect on this!<sup>14</sup>

Once he had laid out his own position in the briefest of terms, al-Bihārī turned to some competing views, each one of them meant to accommodate the conundrum produced by absurd subject terms. The common element among them is in fact

something he also shares—namely, that the judgment in a proposition relates to individual instances. However, the alternative authorities parse the proposition in distinct ways. The first one states that such problematic propositions are actually negative, a claim that the author considers to be arbitrary. The second authority aims to overcome the difficulty by asserting that, in such cases, the subject need only be conceptualized at the time of the judgment; however, al-Bihārī points out that this runs against our sense of what a proposition is. Finally, the third explanation offered is that the mind conceptualizes a nature and supposes it to apply to instances that it determines to exist. The predication applies to these instances, *via the tag of this nature*, with respect to the way things are given. Al-Bihārī rejects this solution by claiming that, in such a case, the predicate applies to its subject instances with respect to the way things are given, whereas the subject instances are merely supposed mentally. Following this refutation, he commands the reader to reflect with the expression, “*fa-tadabbar!*” No further explanation is offered by him.

The material difference in clarity between the first and second extended quotations is obvious. Whereas for the first quotation one can lay out, in specific steps, some of the critical analytical choices of the author, in the second, one gets the sense of being confronted with the fragment of each argument followed by an elusive and allusive refutation. This blind spot obscures from view a living dialectical space into which the closing expression, “*fa-tadabbar!*” now leads the commentator. And this latter expression is the starting point of our theoretical journey into the text.

The commentators inform us consistently that “*fa-tadabbar!*” contains a hint (*fīhi ishāra*). In pursuing it, they effectively supply a full arsenal of defense against the third alternative position that al-Bihārī wished to dismantle. Yet the task comprises more than a simple buttressing of al-Bihārī’s claim, in that the commentators point out that the latter’s argument is in fact flawed. The hint in the hypotext, therefore, is that it has supplied a poor argument that must be jettisoned in favor of a more robust one. Here is what Mubīn states in relation to this issue:

There is a hint in [“*fa-tadabbar!*”]. [The hint] points to the fact that what is intended by the impossibility with respect to the way things are given is *not* that the impossibility exists in it [i.e., with respect to the way things are given]. For this would entail that the description would be [ontologically] greater than that which is described. Rather, what is intended [by such impossibility] is the positive obtaining of existence with respect to the way things are given [*tahaqquq al-wujūd fī nafs al-amr*]. For impossibility is a denial. And denial obtains only when that which is denied does not exist. Thus, it does not follow [that the description] has a greater [ontological] status [than that which is described]. This is what is said in one/some of the commentaries. So reflect on this! [*fa-ta’ammal fīhi!*]<sup>15</sup>

According to Mubīn, therefore, the hypotext’s hint was meant to undo itself. Al-Bihārī’s explicit argument was that, if the predicate of impossibility applies with respect to the way things are given and if that to which it applies is a set of mentally determined instances of which a supposed tag is mentally posited to apply, then

the description of impossibility has an existence greater than the existence of the thing described. According to Mubīn, the hypotext is implicitly suggesting that this outcome would violate the principle that the thing described must be equal to or greater than the description in terms of existence. This argument is followed by the command “*fa-tadabbar!*” which, ironically, invites the commentator to the task of dismantling the refutation. Mubīn points out that the hint in the expression “*fa-tadabbar!*” is that impossibility is simply the denial that existence should obtain with respect to the way things are given; the predicate of impossibility is not meant to suggest that impossibility *exists* in that ontological space. Thus, the infelicitous consequence that constitutes the crux of the hypotext’s refutation—namely, that the description would be ontologically superior to the thing described—against the opposing position does not follow. The refutation was true on interpretive grounds that the *Sullam* grants, but grounds that Mubīn, as guided by the hint, dismisses. The hypotext, therefore, appears to be calling to its own redress.<sup>16</sup>

Yet this counterrefutation to which Mubīn is led does not constitute a closure; indeed, it would be strange if it did, given that this would mean that the hypotext is consciously presenting an indefensible position and is not merely participating in the game that guarantees its future actualization. Thus, the dialectical process continues. In the next breath, as presented at the end of the last quotation, the counterrefutation in Mubīn’s commentary invites further redress with the expression, “Reflect on this!” (*fa-ta ’ammāl fihi!*).<sup>17</sup> The command leads to a pithy statement in al-Bihārī’s self-commentary. It is reported by Mubīn as follows:

[The author] stated in his [self-] gloss that it is not hidden from the author that that to which the mind is led [*mā yansāqu ilayhi dh-dhihn*] by the statement, “The Participant with the Creator is impossible” is that the quiddity is impossible with respect to existence in an unqualified sense [*muṭlaqan*], not [that it is impossible with respect to existence] under this determination. So ponder [this!] [*fa-ta ’ammāl!*]<sup>18</sup>

Al-Bihārī’s position, therefore, appears to be that the predicate of impossibility should be parsed as an unconditioned denial of the possibility of the existence of the quiddity (namely, the Participant with the Creator), not just the quiddity insofar as it is taken to be true of supposed mental instances that are determined to exist and for which it is mentally supposed to serve as a tag. We are told in al-Bihārī’s words, as quoted by Mubīn, that this is because the mind is not led to the specific interpretation of the proposition that was offered by the third alternative above. This position is in concert with the rejection of the third position and, in Mubīn’s words, it is “a hint toward the author’s . . . foregoing response to the aporia [*hādhā ishāra ilā mā sabaqa mina l-muṣṣannif . . . fi jawābi l-ishkāl*].”<sup>19</sup>

Going forward, we will observe how the commentarial cycles disclose the nature of this further hint and the aporia and response to which it points. Before continuing, however, given that the labyrinth of hints and allusions has already led us down a dizzying path, both a summary and a few broader assessments are in order. The developments may be outlined as follows. The hypotext of

al-Bihārī posited the claim that the absurd *as such* cannot sustain predication and that a conceptualized nature *as such*, since it exists at least in the mind, can sustain predication. Thus, the meaning of a proposition such as “The Participant with the Creator is impossible” is that the quiddity cannot have any verifying instances, since of the impossible as such no judgment can be passed—it has no form in the mind.

He then sets off presenting and refuting opposing positions in the briefest fashion. Of these, the third position argues that in the proposition, “The Participant with the Creator is impossible,” the mind supposes instances that are determined to exist under the subject tag. The hypotext offers an argument against this third position—namely, that the reading would mean that the description would have greater ontological weight than the thing described. Yet on the heels of presenting this refutation, al-Bihārī himself hints at its weakness with the expression “*fa-tadabbar!*” He does not tell us anything more in the *matn*.

This hint then sets things in motion; the aforementioned expression is taken to be a call to offer a counterrefutation. This latter consists in pointing out that the principle, the violation of which constitutes al-Bihārī’s refutation, can only be granted on an interpretation of the proposition that is itself unsound. In effect, therefore, the refutation in the *matn* is invalid, since it must first grant a parsing that is unacceptable.<sup>20</sup> The intriguing element in this discursive space between the hypotext and hypertext is that the former is both aware of its shortcomings and guides the latter to redress with its expression “*fa-tadabbar!*”

Following the counterrefutation, one is commanded, “*fa-ta’ammal!*”—an expression that is practically identical in its meaning and import to “*fa-tadabbar!*” This now leads the hypertext back to the *mātin*, although to the self-commentary, not the hypotext itself. Moving forward, then, a more suitable counterproof to the third position is offered by the hypertext as it quotes this self-commentary. Yet the explanation is utterly obscure: we are told that the mind is not led to the interpretation of the proposition that was offered by the third position—that is, the one with which this story began. And we are then informed that this explanation is itself a hint (*ishāra*) at what al-Bihārī had stated earlier in relation to the aporia.

The lemma where the hypotext confronts alternative interpretations thus comprises highly compact, obscure, and even self-defeating claims. The exchange between the hypotext and the two hypertexts—Mubin’s commentary and the self-commentary—partly unfolds these claims and partly introduces new ones that need further explanation. The interstices between the former and the latter are punctuated by commands to reflect, which are hints whereby each hypotext curates the broader discursive growth of the lemma in a cycle that oscillates between it and the future hypertext. The details may be represented graphically in the following manner.

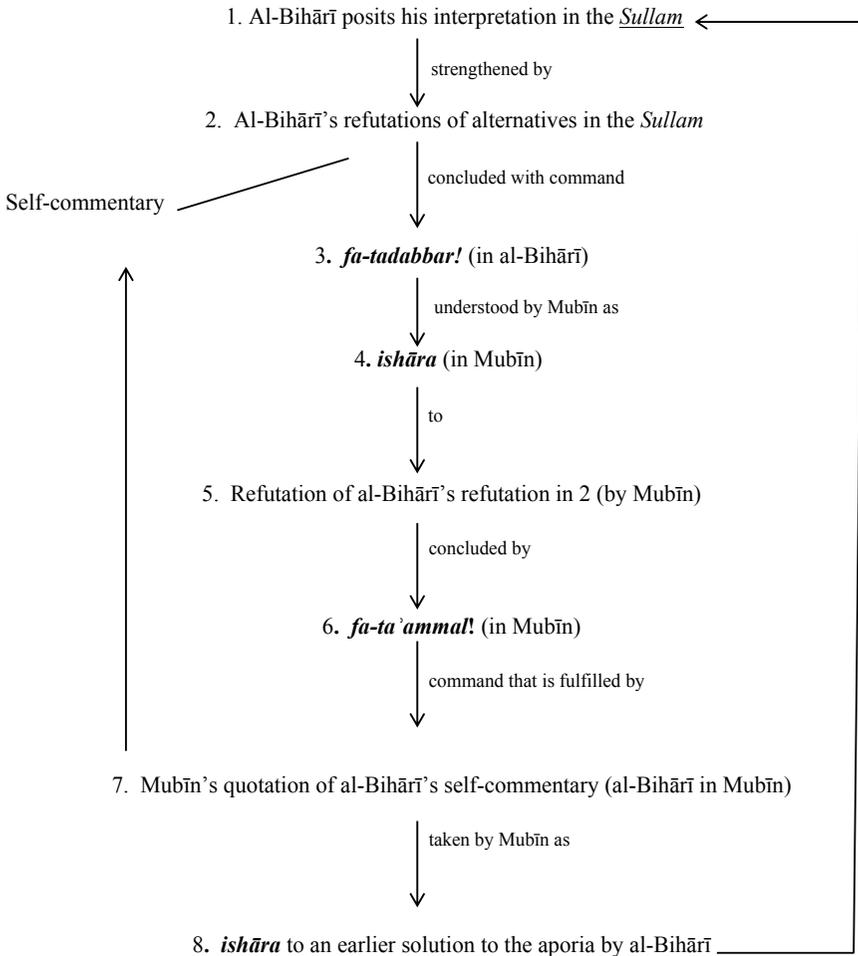


FIGURE 13.

The textual landscape evinces a curated motion that would be expected of an oral dialectical space. Interestingly, it is the hypotext that wrote itself in its hypertexts by means of the carefully determined economy of signposts. In other words, the living tradition retained its vibrancy insofar as it was written in and out of deliberately obscure and compressed passages, as guided by a bedrock of hints. The aim of the commentarial tradition, therefore—of the hypotexts and hypertexts—was to perpetuate the authorial voice by means of the types of prompts and hints mentioned in this case. The commands to reflect (*fa-tadabbar!* *fa-ta'ammal!*) were devices in the service of this purpose, and they sometimes operated in a paradoxical fashion. Standing at the end of a brief and cryptic disquisition, they

could call out to the future commentary to dismantle the textual proof by means of a refutation that could also serve the function of sustaining the principal claim of the hypotext. In other words, just as the hypotext's call to reflect propelled the hypertext to refute the former's *proof*, so the latter also strengthened the former's *claims* by redressing its weakness. Yet what is intriguing is that the shortcomings of the proof were already known to the author of the hypotext, who indeed provided further hints toward the corrective path in the self-commentary that was mobilized by the hypertext. It was the deliberate incompleteness and failure of the lemma that allowed it to grow and to actualize itself in the voice of future authors. Successful and successive commentaries engaged in the same play, although, as we will see below, the hypertext did not always speak the hypotext to the effect the latter wanted.

Self-actualization was a recurring feature of the commentary tradition. If one turns to the earlier commentarial engagements with the same lemma, one discovers that the general thrust was rather similar; the details in such cases also complicate notions of authorship, as we will observe below. The eighteenth-century commentator, Ḥamdallāh, for example, informs us that al-Dawānī was among the proponents of the third position, explaining al-Bihārī's objection in the following words:<sup>21</sup>

The gist is that the judgment passed on supposed instances is imagined in two ways. The first is that it is judged regarding them that the predicate exists on the determination that [the supposed instances] obtain [*'alā taqdīr taḥaqquqihā*] and [the determination that] the tag [of the subject term] is true of them. This is the considered position of the lot of the later scholars about *ḥaqīqī* proposition[s]. The second [understanding] is that the predicate exists with respect to the way things are given in actuality [*fī naḥs al-amr bi-l-fi'l*]; this is as it is understood from the discourse of one of the [later scholars]. If the first position is intended, then it is not hidden that it goes contrary to that to which the mind is led [*khilāf mā yansāqu ilayhi dh-dhihn*] with respect to these propositions. This is so, because the meaning of our statement, "The Participant with the Creator is impossible" is that this quiddity is described by the description of impossibility in actuality, with respect to the way things are given, not that it is so on the basis of [some] determination . . . If the second position is intended, then it follows that the description obtains with respect to the way things are given and that the existence of the thing described is [merely] supposed. Thus, the existence of the description would be more than the existence of the thing described. And this undermines the foundation of the premise that states that the existence of a thing for a thing is derivative of and follows from the existence of the thing described.<sup>22</sup>

Both of Ḥamdallāh's interpretations of the refutation were considered by his hypertexts to contain hints. In the first case, the idea that the mind is not led to parse such propositions in the manner suggested is taken by the author of *al-Intibāh*, a commentary on Ḥamdallāh, to be an allusion to the self-commentary of al-Bihārī,

as was noted above. And one might recall that the relevant fragment of the self-commentary itself ended with a call to reflect (*fa-ta'ammal*). Thus, led via this circuitous path—from Ḥamdallāh's allusion to al-Bihārī's self-commentary to the command therein to reflect—Ḥamdallāh's commentator now takes up the charge.

We are told by this second-order commentator that the command to reflect is a hint (*ishāra*) back to what al-Bihārī had previously stated—namely, that the impossibility applies simpliciter, not on the basis of any qualification. Yet al-Bihārī's position is undercut by an imagined defender of the counterrefutation, the familiar *mujib*, whom the second-order commentator introduces at this juncture. Indeed, it was precisely such a challenger to his position whom al-Bihārī had envisioned in his command, “*ta'ammal!*” in the self-commentary. The argument against al-Bihārī, as presented by *al-Intibāh*, is that the quiddity *must* be impossible on the mental determination of the existence of the instances, since al-Bihārī holds the position that judgment applies to instances; yet the Participant with the Creator has no instances that obtain.<sup>23</sup> In other words, in order for al-Bihārī to be consistent in his parsing of propositions, he must accommodate instances. However, the only instances that avail themselves in the case at hand are mentally determined ones; hence, impossibility does not apply simpliciter. Responding now in al-Bihārī's voice (*fa-qāla*), as a fulfillment of the command to reflect on this *projected* challenge, *al-Intibāh* explains that, although the judgment of impossibility applies to mentally determined instances, with respect to the way things are given, they are not impossible *owing to* the determination and supposition (*wa-laysat mumtani'a bi-ḥasabi t-taqdīr wa-l-farq*).<sup>24</sup>

Ḥamdallāh's second interpretation of the refutation is likewise taken to be a hint. A marginal note to his text elaborates,

Ḥamdallāh's statement, “[the description] obtains with respect to the way things are given,” hints that what is intended in the [position] that the description is more [than the thing described] is that this notion is an erroneous concession for the sake of advancing the argument. This is so, because existence is not receptive of modulation in intensity and weakness and in increase and decrease.<sup>25</sup>

Thus, although Ḥamdallāh's second interpretation is practically identical to the literal sense of al-Bihārī's *matn*, according to its hypertextual history, it actually hints at the opposite effect, since it is based on a hypothetical concession/error; and the future commentator is invited to unfold these details in following Ḥamdallāh's gestures. This was precisely the kind of motion that the hypotext's command “*tadabbar!*” was meant to initiate. For their part, the commentarial receptions of these hints displayed the same tactics in advancing the writerly dialog. In this manner, each layer advanced its hypotext and also maintained sufficient allusiveness to be actualized by its own hypertext. The details may now be summarized graphically in the following manner (the Arabic numbers reflect the order of the movement).

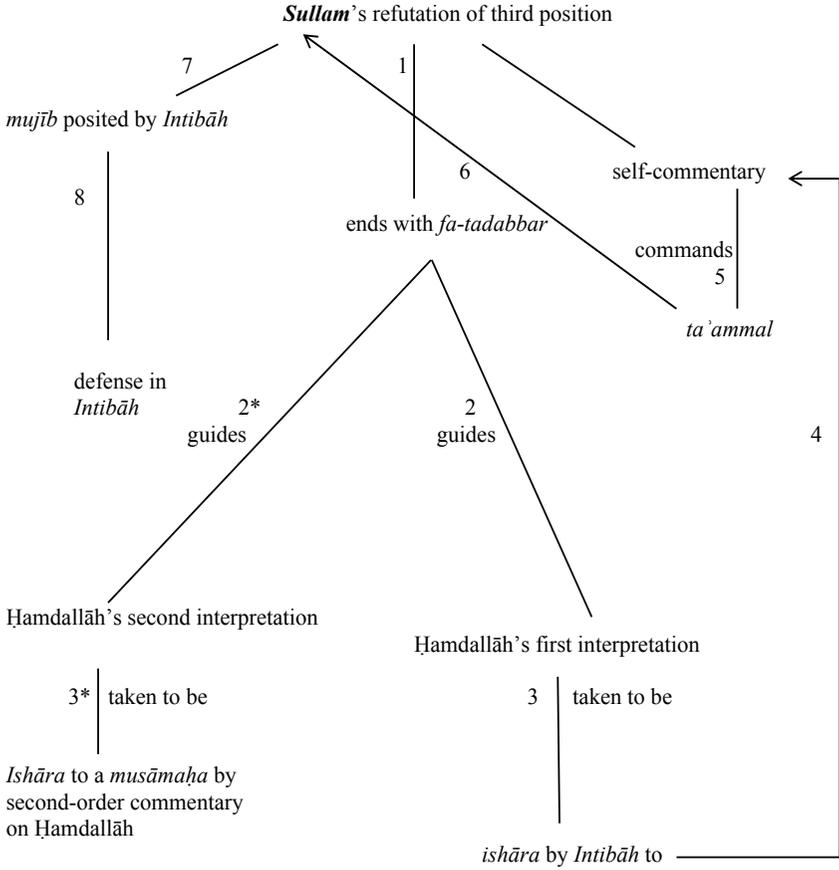


FIGURE 14.

WRITING AND EXCAVATION: AUTHORSHIP,  
AUTHORITY, AND ORIGINALITY

The ambiguity within the command to reflect also helped sustain a complex form of authorship. It encompassed the inner word of the hypotext that was spoken by the hypertext; in turn, future layers perpetuated the process. In many instances, this phenomenon produced partial and complete overlaps among individual authorial voices, often by means of textual excavations to which the hints compelled the latest authorial agent. However, as I have argued above, these features did not dissolve authorial independence and identity—each latest commentator embraced the cumulative commentarial tradition, *as his own voice*.

The lemma that we have been investigating can also serve as an excellent example for demonstrating these points. In perhaps the earliest first-order commentary written on the *Sullam*, al-Sā'inpūrī explains that the established position is that

the existence of that which is described must be more intense than the existence of the description, given that the latter follows on and is derivative of the existence of the former. This is of course an elaboration and justification of the *Sullam*'s refutation of the third position, and it was explicitly pointed out as a grounding principle by Ḥamdallāh.<sup>26</sup> Yet on the heels of this explanation, al-Sā'inpūrī insists that the author's ensuing call for *tadabbur* must be taken seriously, as the hypotext had made a subtle point that is deserving of reflection. And it is here that *without announcement* and, in order to advance the command to reflect (and redress), he absorbs the self-commentary of al-Bihārī, as presented above, into his own text; he interpolates only three words into the verbatim repetition (*bi-i'tibār mawārid muḥaqqiqa*):

It is not hidden from the author that what is led to the mind (*mā yansāqu ilā dh-dhihn*) from our statement, "The Participant with the Creator is impossible" is, for example, that this quiddity, with a consideration of the resources that cause it to obtain, is impossible with respect to existence simpliciter, not that it is [impossible] with respect to the [mental] determination. Reflect!<sup>27</sup>

We might recall that, in the commentary of Mubīn written several decades later, this same quotation from the self-commentary on the *Sullam* was given a proper authorial attribution. Generally, however, in its earliest appearances, the quotation above was not disambiguated from the voice of other authors. The significance of this phenomenon, which is rampant in the commentarial tradition, can be easy to miss if standard perceptions of authorial identity remain operative. There are indeed two ways in which such a casual insertion of the self-commentary within the space of the first-order commentary may be interpreted. On the one hand, one may understand al-Sā'inpūrī to have quoted the self-commentary negligently or plagiaristically or both—he both interpolates certain expressions within the reported text and quotes it without acknowledgment. On the other hand, one may take him to be engaged in a conscious and independent authorial effort whose main purpose was to oversee the suitable growth and pruning of lemmata, which, in the course of his effort, became his own. The latter appears to me to be the correct position, as we will see below.

Another early commentator, Mullā Firūz, explains that the expression, *fa-tadabbar*, alludes to the fact that the hypotext's foregoing explanation is not considered agreeable (*fīhi ishāra ilā anna hādihā ghayr mustahsan*). In this interpretation, Mullā Firūz is in the company of al-Sā'inpūrī and other later commentators. He states,

From our statement, "The Participant with the Creator is impossible," what is led to the mind is only, for example, that this quiddity is impossible with respect to existence simpliciter, not that it is so in view of the mental determination [of the instances]. Reflect! [*wa-inna mā yansāqu ilā dh-dhihn min qawlinā sharīk al-bārī mumtani'un*

*mathalan huwa anna hādhihi l-māhiyyata mumtani ‘atu l-wujūd muṭlaqan lā annahā ‘alā t-taqdīr kadhālika ta ‘ammal].<sup>28</sup>*

The statement is of course practically identical to the one we just encountered above. Yet, as in that case, so here the apparently negligible difference is significant—the expression, “It is not hidden from the author,” which was maintained from the self-commentary in al-Sā’inpūrī’s commentary, is missing. We have thus moved very quickly from an expression in the self-commentary—a cryptic statement that served as a guide to the hint in the expression, *fa-tadabbar*—to its absorption by al-Sā’inpūrī as his own commentarial voice to its full embrace by Fīrūz’s lemma, without any reference to another author or authority. Indeed, we might recall that in Ḥamdallāh the self-commentary was entirely subsumed within the sentence structure: “If the first position is intended, then it is not hidden that it goes contrary to that to which the mind is led [*khilāf mā yansāqu ilayhi dh-dhihn*] with respect to these propositions.”<sup>29</sup>

Thus, it is worth noting that where the earliest commentaries quote this fragment of the self-commentary, they generally do so without attribution, and that it is habilitated within the voice of each subsequent commentator in an increasingly organic fashion. On the other hand, for most cases after Mubīn, commentators do supply the authorial attribution. As we will observe below, this is the general manner in which the lemma developed in the process of contraction and expansion—the earliest hypertexts (including the *matn* as the hypertext to its own living tradition) are pithy, and they are allusive in the embrace of lemmata from other texts as their own lemmatic voices; later hypertexts set about the task of disambiguating authorship, thereby clearing the path for textual excavations at the commentarial sites. I will supply a detailed example of such textual excavation below.

The pruning and growth of the lemma along the course of its commentarial passages is rather typical. Indeed, at times, both the hypotextual and hypertextual lemmata were shaped as interactive patchworks, all the while advancing subtle notions and distinctions into the discourse. The lemma at hand may be mined further as a serviceable example—the expression “*bi-i ‘tibār mawārid muḥaqqiqā*” in al-Sā’inpūrī appears in the immediately preceding lemma of al-Bihārī’s *matn* as “*bi-i ‘tibār jamī ‘ mawārid taḥaqquqihī*.”<sup>30</sup> In other words, the commentarial lemma of al-Sā’inpūrī is generated by a combination of al-Bihārī’s *matn* and his self-commentary. And it was this self-commentary itself that, with the expression, *ta ‘ammal*, had led the commentator back to the earlier passage in the *matn* to complete the argument. The textual history was produced by means of such prompts.

The reverse was also true, since parts of hypertextual lemmata often reemerged as hypotextual ones in diachronically evolving witnesses. Indeed, one need not look far for examples, as various proximate lemmata that appear as the hypotext in the commentators—Baḥr al-‘Ulūm and Mubīn, for example—are not identified

as such in other commentaries.<sup>31</sup> In other words, the commentarial tradition as a whole was a historical collage where the authorship always belonged to the one wielding the pen. The hypotexts and hypertexts formed and transformed lemmata in a diachronic space that was accessible to and shaped synchronically by each latest author.

Collages may of course always be analyzed into their parts; indeed, late scholarship often engages in such archaeological endeavors. As we will see below, it is often with commentators of slightly more recent provenance that the various lemmatic fragments were resolved back to their original sources (indeed, the inchoate phase of the process is already familiar to us in Mubīn's identification of the self-commentary as the origin of the remarks that appeared above as the voices of al-Sā'inpūri, Fīrūz, and Ḥamdallāh). In cases of such resolution, the later commentaries continued both to cultivate the lemmata in their own appropriative voices and to excavate the sediments from which they originally sprang. The result was an ever-deeper and broader engagement with the entire history of the lemmatic prompt with each new commentarial effort; as we will observe below, at times, the textual archaeologies generated commentaries within commentaries and, in turn, the formation of new authorial collages that called for yet other commentaries. At other times, such textual excavations with respect to one commentarial tradition compelled commentators to devote their energies to commenting independently on those texts that had been absorbed into their hypotext.

With these points before us, we may now return to explore further the lemma that has been the subject of the last few pages. In another early commentary on the *Sullam*, Muḥammad al-Mubārakī explains that the third position refuted by al-Bihārī—namely, that the judgment applies to instances that are mentally supposed to exist—amounts to taking propositions to be nondefinitive. He writes, “Propositions like this are called nondefinitive [*ghayr battī*]<sup>32</sup> and these are those [propositions] in which one passes the judgment that the two extremes are unified in actuality on the determination that the nature of the subject tag [*‘unwān*] is applicable to the [underlying] instances [*wa-hiyā ‘llatī yuḥkamu fihā bi-l-ittiḥād bayna ṭaraf(ay)hā bi-l-fi ‘l ‘alā taqdir inṭibāq ṭabī ‘ati l- ‘unwān ‘alā l-afṛād*].”<sup>33</sup> To the best of my knowledge, this is the first instance in the commentaries on this lemma of the *Sullam* where the third position is identified with the “nondefinitive” parsing. Al-Mubārakī further states that the following part of the lemma by way of the example offered—namely, that those who hold the third position interpret “The Participant with the Creator is impossible” to be so on the basis of such mental determinations—is al-Bihārī's clarification (*kamā fassarahu bi-qawlihi*) of the nondefinitive proposition. Put simply, then, the commentary supplies the third interpretive position with an explicit identity and asserts that the hypotext is itself offering an exegetical commentary. As we will see, this was the beginning of an unannounced textual excavation that came into sharp relief only in the efforts of later commentaries.

Al-Mubārakī does not tell us more about the living tradition to which the hypothesis was implicitly responding, although he offers two more clues along the way. The first of these is found immediately preceding the part of the lemma where the *Sullam* offered its refutation of the third position. The commentator intimates that, since the nondefinitive proposition does not require the conceptualization of the thing about which the judgment is passed in reality, but *only on the condition of* the aforementioned mental determinations, the existence of the predicate for the subject does not necessitate existence of the latter in actuality either (*fa-lā yaqtaḍī dhālika th-thubūt al-muthbat lahu bi-l-fi 'l*). Rather, owing to the mental determinations, that for which something exists may itself be mentally determined; and since that which exists for the latter is dependent on it (*far ' muthbat lahu*), it may also be mentally determined.

The upshot is that the nondefinitive parsing of the proposition allows one to apply predicates to mentally determined instances, on the condition of the application of the quiddity of the mentally supposed subject tag to those instances, on the same ontological plane. And this predication, on this condition, as well as the principle that that which exists for a thing is dependent on that for which it exists, is valid with respect to the way things are given (*fī nafs al-amr*). This is so, since that which is given is precisely the mentally determined ontological locus, not that which is given simpliciter (*muṭlaqan*).

“It is for this reason,” writes al-Mubārakī, “that this [proposition] is called non-definitive. And so what [al-Bihārī] states as a refutation [of the third position] is rejected . . . [The reason] is that, if, by impossibility, he intends a simple negation of existence that is [merely] emphasized [by the assertion of impossibility], then, since the simple negation of existence does not obtain for the quiddity with respect to the way things are given simpliciter, then how can [the simple negation] that is emphasized [obtain]? And if he intends the negation of existence that is the predicate of the negative-predicate [proposition], then there is no doubt that, in this case, it also fails to obtain with respect to the way things are given simpliciter. Rather, [the negation and impossibility] obtain *with respect to the way things are given on the [condition of] the mental determination [bal mutahaqqaq fī nafsī l-amr 'alā t-taqḍīr]*.”<sup>34</sup>

In other words, impossibility applies, with respect to the way things are given, on the posit of the mental determinations; otherwise, it does not apply at all.<sup>35</sup> Therefore, for the proposition to have the validity that is clearly granted by all sides—for the Participant with the Creator is impossible in view of all parties—it must be parsed as nondefinitive; and this latter interpretation is a vindication of the third position against the *Sullam*'s claim. I will return to comment below on how this intervention of al-Mubārakī—especially with reference to the key principle *that the ontological locus of the thing that exists is dependent on the ontological locus of that for which it exists*—was a guiding clue for the later commentaries. As for

the nature of his philosophical contribution, I will address this matter only in the concluding remarks of this chapter.

The second implicit hint that drove commentarial choices and textual archaeology follows immediately after al-Bihārī's postured refutation of the third position. We are told by al-Mubārakī that the expression "*fa-tadabbar*," with which the commentarial itinerary began, points to (*ishāra*) the nondefinitive readings of the proposition. We witnessed just above precisely how this interpretation undermined the *mātin*'s own refutation and how, according to the commentator, the former's lemma was in fact an explication of and concession to this underlying sense of the proposition. We are now informed by al-Mubārakī that an appeal to any primary notions of what the proposition means as a way to overcome the challenge of the nondefinitive reading is not admissible in debate (*wa-da 'wā l-badiha lā yakfī fī maḥalli n-nizā'*);<sup>36</sup> this comment of course relates back to al-Bihārī's idea that the parsing offered by the third position is not "that to which the mind is led," and it constitutes a first reference to an underlying debate. Al-Mubārakī then offers the following, final, extended commentary on this lemma of the *Sullam*:

One must know that nondefinitive predicative [propositions]—although they may be equivalent to conditional [propositions]—do not reduce to them, as it is imagined. For the judgment in them about that which is taken up is on the basis of a certain determination—namely, that the determination is owing to the completion of the mental supposition of the subject. [This is] such that there was no nature that had obtained positively at all extramentally or mentally [before such supposition. The determination] was not such that there was a subject that had already been supposed, and then it was supposed with respect to itself, and then a judgment was passed on it with a view to the aforementioned determination. [In other words, it is not] that the subject [of the proposition] is the type that is temporally restricted or qualified [in some other way], such that the proposition would be conditional.<sup>37</sup>

It should be stressed that neither the expression *al-battī* (definitive) nor any of its derivatives in a technical sense appear anywhere in the *Sullam*. Nor, indeed, does the lemma of the *Sullam* justify the commentator's slippage into the concern of disambiguating the predicative nondefinitive propositions from conditional propositions. The entire discursive thrust of al-Mubārakī—from the parsing of the third position squarely in terms of nondefinitive propositions, to the connection of the ensuing proof with the principle that what exists is a derivative of that for which it exists, to attributing al-Bihārī's failed refutation to the nature of nondefinitive propositions, to the reference to a dispute at which the counterrefutation hints, to the extended discussion about the difference between the nondefinitive and conditional propositions—appears out of place. And this anomaly must have signaled something to the future commentators.

The indications in al-Mubārakī's commentary bore fruit rather quickly. As I will detail below, the reference to the principle that what exists is a derivative

of/dependent on that for which it exists as a way to explain the efficacy of the non-definitive reading of the proposition led future commentators back to the opening lines of the *Sullam*'s investigations into predication. One must be reminded here again that this recursive movement was also guided by the hypotext: al-Mubārakī's own critique of al-Bihārī's refutation began with the latter's self-undermining hint, "*fa-tadabbar!*" which, in turn, led to a different refutation in the self-commentary, followed by the command, "*fa-ta'ammal!*" This latter objection was also rejected by al-Mubārakī, although he took seriously this closing command, along with the clue that it was meant to direct the commentator back to what the hypotext had already discussed.

As I pointed out, the key phrase in al-Mubārakī's engagement with the lemma at hand was "*fa-inna [al-muthbat] far 'u l-muthbat lahu*" (That which exists for something is derivative of/depends on that for which it exists). This principle allowed him to claim that, on certain determinations of the existence of the subject, the predicate exists within the locus of those same determinations; and it does so with respect to the way things are given—that is, as posited on such mental determinations by virtue of their givenness. This vindicated the position that the hypotext had set out to undo. The principle al-Mubārakī invoked here was echoed in a challenge in an earlier lemma of the *Sullam*: *thubūt shay' in fī zarfin far 'u fī liyyat mā thabata lahu wa-mustalzīm li-thubūtihi fī dhālika z-zarf* (The existence of a thing [for a thing] in a locus is derivative of/dependent on the *actuality* of that for which it exists and it *entails* its existence in that locus).<sup>38</sup> Future commentaries, recognizing the crux of the matter, shifted the dialogic space of this lemma back to this earlier point of origin. And it is from this new locus, where the principle first makes its appearance, that the relevant issues began to unfold. Along the way, the significance of the various aforementioned and interconnected elements of the analysis that were introduced by al-Mubārakī—elements that were entirely sublimated in the hypotext—also began to come to light. Thus, following al-Mubārakī's lead, Mullā Firūz, in engaging this earlier lemma, wrote the following:

It is commonly held [*mashhūr*] that the existence of a thing for a thing in a locus is derivative of the existence of that for which it exists [*thubūt shay' li-shay' fī zarfin far 'u thubūt al-muthbat lahu*]. [This position] is refuted in two ways<sup>39</sup> . . . the second [way] is by means of "existence"; otherwise, it would follow that a single thing would have infinite existences, some [arranged] over others.<sup>40</sup>

In returning to this earlier lemma, then, we are sensitized to this fact: to cite the principle allowing for the efficacy of the nondefinitive reading would also be to commit to a commonly held position that is implicitly challenged by the hypotext in the course of articulating its own position. And it now appears that the initial refutation of the third position that was followed with the

command, *tadabbar*, was grounded in the counterfactual of granting this rejected principle. Indeed, we now understand that this is precisely what the commentaries had been calling the hypotext's erroneous concession. For al-Mubārakī, the defense of the position against al-Bihārī amounted to embracing this concession and then to demonstrating how it in fact entailed the position al-Bihārī had rejected.

But what is the philosophical position that the hypotext's lemma is replacing and how is the former refuted by an appeal to existence? The commonly held position is that the existence of that which is said of something is derivative of the existence of that of which it is said. The former, therefore, must exist in the same ontological locus as the latter. The problem with this position emerges when one is confronted with predicates such as "exists." For in this case, to say that "the sun exists" is first to grant that the sun exists in an ontological locus and that existence comes to inhere in it in that locus. However, this would entail the existence of the sun in a locus prior to the inherence of existence in it in that very locus. And for that other existence to inhere in the sun in that locus, yet another existence would be required. The process would go on ad infinitum.<sup>41</sup> Faced with this challenge, earlier authors had adopted different principles. Thus, channeling the self-commentary of al-Bihārī, Firūz writes:

Given this, 'Allāma al-Dawānī denied [the principle] of derivation [*al-far'īyya*] and accepted [the principle] of entailment [*al-istilzām*]. The truth, as the author [al-Bihārī] indicates [*kamā ashāra ilayhi al-muṣannif*], is that derivation is with a view to the actuality and establishment [*taqarrur*] [of the thing] and entailment is with a view to existence [*thubūt*]. For existence, insofar as it is an attribute, is posterior to the existent thing. This is so because the [ontological] order of that which comes to inhere—whichever inhering [thing] it might be—is posterior to the [ontological] order of the substrate, although the posteriority is nontemporal; rather it is [a posteriority] by virtue of the thing [itself]. So reflect! [*fa-tadabbar!*] This is on the level of the dissolution [*ḥulūl*] [of a thing with another]. As for the level of predication [*ḥaml*], well, the existence of a thing for a thing, in an unqualified sense, is posterior to the existence of that for which it exists. So there is no difficulty in this, because the predicate is posterior to its source.<sup>42</sup>

The self-commentary of al-Bihārī that is embedded within a number of early commentaries gave way to a first indication of the historical import behind the hypotextual lemma. As we know, the conundrum associated with predicates such as existence was grounded in the underlying principle that the *existence* of that which exists for something is derivative of the *existence* of that for which it exists. The solution offered by al-Dawānī, as understood by these commentators, was to deny altogether that such dependence existed. Rather, he modified the principle to claim that the existence of that which exists for something entails the existence of that for which it exists. In effect, then, al-Dawānī had tried to evade the

problem by parsing the problematic claim on the level of the proposition: insofar as predication takes place, the existence of that which is said of something is posterior to the existence of that of which it is said. And the fact of predication entails, therefore, the fact of the existence of that of which something is said. As we will observe below, this position is compatible with the nondefinitive reading that was discussed above.

The quotation above introduces us to yet another element of the debate—namely, that the ontological status of that which comes to inhere in a thing is posterior to the thing itself, even if this posteriority is nontemporal. This claim is an elaboration on the theme that the actuality and establishment of that of which something is said is prior to that which is said of it. A fuller exposition, along with additional clues, is found in the slightly earlier commentaries of al-Sā' inpūrī and al-Mubārakī. I take up the former commentator's remarks first.

An explanation [of the idea that dependence is with a view to actuality and entailment is with a view to existence] is [as follows]. When man comes to be, for example, he exists not by way of a compositional mode of being [*al-ṣayrūra al-ta'liḥiyya*] that is required for its sense . . .<sup>43</sup> but by way of a mode of being that is simple [*al-ṣayrūra al-basiṭa*] . . . that is, the substantiation and establishment of its very self [*tajawhur dhātihi wa-taqarrurihi*] . . . The intellect extracts being-existent from it [*intaza 'a 'l-'aql 'anhu l-mawjūdiyya*], because [being-existent] is the first of the accidentals that is extracted from the substantiated substrate that has been established. This is so, because, with regard to [being existent], one only reports about the very substrate that is actual, as something substantiated in the ontological locus of that existent thing. Thus, the level of being existent is a report about the level of actuality and establishment and the former is posterior to the latter.<sup>44</sup>

The commentator is pointing out in greater detail an argument that already appeared in the quotation from Firūz above. In its true ontological features, a substrate has a simple actuality, such that its basic sense is not composed of any parts. In other words, man, for example, is a simple substrate that is the verifying criterion of the sense of “man.” It does not comprise compositional parts that generate man as a composite and from which the sense of “man” is synthesized. This general principle of the simplicity of generation and being also applies to existence. An entity's actuality is simple, such that when one states, for example, that “man exists,” one is simply engaging in a mental act of extraction from this simple entity. The actuality of the entity is its very existence. This position yields the final point in the quotation above—namely, that existence is to be understood properly in its propositional locus as a mental predicate and that, *as such*, it is posterior to the actuality of the substrate. Otherwise, it is not distinct from its actuality. Given this, we may conclude, the predication of existence with respect to a locus entails the existence of that of which it is said in that locus. However, since existence does not come to supervene over a quiddity secondarily, given

the doctrine of simple generation, it is derivative of the *actuality* of the latter, not of its *existence*.

The features of the debate underlying the hypotextual lemma with which this chapter has been concerned now stand in sharp relief. We recall that it was al-Mubārakī who had induced the reversion of the later lemma to the first subsection on the problemata associated with predication. And he had done so, following the thread of hints, by linking the principles of derivation and of entailment—principles discussed just above—with nondefinitive propositions. It has now emerged, via the commentarial voicing of al-Bihārī’s self-commentary, that, owing to certain insurmountable infelicities with predicates such as “existent,” al-Dawānī had rejected the original principle of derivation and had modified it to the principle of entailment. Insofar as this latter operated entirely on the level of a report, the new principle was also compatible with the nondefinitive readings of propositions. This was so, since the predication in the nondefinitive readings was valid on the determination of the givenness of the subject tag by a mental act and of the mental posit of its application to instances. In other words, such nondefinitive propositions were effective within the ontological plane of the proposition; and they were valid with respect to the given as such (*fi nafs al-amr*). The principle of entailment functioned similarly: it did not claim that the existence of that which is said of something is derivative of the existence of that of which it is said. Rather, the predication itself entailed the existence of that of which the predication holds in the same ontological plane.

Al-Bihārī’s alternative was to combine a modified rule of derivation—that what is said is derivative of the actuality, not existence, of that of which it is said—with al-Dawānī’s rule of entailment. This move, which was also motivated by the conundrum of predicates such as “existent,” was itself grounded in the principle of the simple generation of quiddities. Further, al-Bihārī’s commitment to the idea that logical and philosophical rules ought to apply universally to their cases also played a role in his choice. Regarding this matter, al-Mubārakī states the following:

When the mass [of scholars] realized [the aforementioned] exacting point [*daqīqa*], they sometimes made the universal rule [*al-qā’ida al-kullīya*] specific to [the principle of] derivation, and sometimes they shifted away from the latter to [the principle] of entailment. Sometimes, they denied that existence has existence mentally and extramentally, saying instead that quiddity is one and the same as the sense of the existent and that [the latter] is a simple thing [*amr basīṭ*].<sup>45</sup>

In other words, different types of predicates had forced earlier authors to oscillate between different principles of propositional semantics. Al-Bihārī’s choice, therefore, was also conditioned by his desire to develop a single rule that would accommodate all cases; this was a programmatic thrust that I have already highlighted in chapter 2. This rule was facilitated by appeal to an ontology of simple being and

simple generation. Indeed, al-Mubārakī had explained the opening lines of the hypotextual lemma—“the existence of a thing in a locus is derivative of the actuality of that for which it exists”—with the expression, “this is the level of simple generation [*wa-huwa martabat al-jaʿl al-basīʿ*].” The final piece of the puzzle was now in place.

As the living, mediating engine of the text, the hints and allusions along the waystations of a commentarial tradition allowed the lemmatic prompts to be actualized as full arguments and voices. As we have seen in the foregoing details, this process embraced a return of the text both to itself and to its prehistory. The dynamic movement of the text was a function of its cyclical reversions. It was the return to origins that, as a paradox, propelled the debate forward on its discursive path. The arguments, therefore, were often familiar and the commentarial voice was *ostensibly* a reproduction. At the same time, each commentary comprised a representation of the known in the novel voice and locus of the most recent lemmatic growth. And this growth, as we have observed, was curated by the hypotext itself.

Once any hypotext had caused a hypertext to speak it fully, an open engagement with the prehistory that the former sublimated became possible in further hypertexts. Thus, we begin to witness the types of analyses that Qāḍī Mubārak supplies in his commentary on the lemma under discussion:

The Illustrious among the verifiers [al-Dawānī] denied [the principle of derivation] and held fast to the [principle] of entailment . . . And based on [the doctrine of] simple generation [*al-jaʿl al-basīʿ*], the first teacher of Yemeni Wisdom [Mīr Dāmād] said that the affirmative tie/copula [*al-rabṭ al-ijābī*] [between the subject and predicate] simpliciter, insofar as it is a tie/copula, is derivative of the establishment and actuality of the subject and it entails its existence.<sup>46</sup>

The hints found in the horizontal commentarial tradition had led Mubārak to the root of the controversy. In view of difficulties associated with certain kinds of predicates, al-Dawānī had embraced a distinct rule as a solution, and, dissatisfied with it—perhaps because it restricted truth conditions to the level of the proposition—Mīr Dāmād had posited yet another possibility by modifying the established rule of derivation from existence (*thubūt*) to actuality (*fiʿliyya*), and by combining it with al-Dawānī’s solution. Without identifying it, al-Bihārī had stepped into precisely this controversy and had decided to adopt Dāmād’s position, complete with the arsenal of its auxiliary principles, such as the doctrine of simple generation and the definitive reading of the proposition.

It was on this definitive (*battī*) reading of the proposition—which was grounded in the principle of simple generation (*jaʿl basīʿ*) and which, in turn, served as the scaffolding for Dāmād’s riposte to al-Dawānī—that al-Bihārī had offered his refutation of the third position. However, since this latter position itself only

recognized a nondefinitive semantics, the refutation was hollow. This is precisely what was meant to be indicated by the expression *fa-tadabbar*, which had set the commentarial machine in motion. Given that al-Bihārī's refutation was illusory, he had implicitly turned to the nondefinitive readings, offering as his refutation in the self-commentary nothing more than that "this is not that to which the mind is led." The command in the self-commentary, *ta'ammal*, eventually caused the commentarial reversion to an earlier lemma in al-Bihārī and to its rich historical background, as we saw above.

Al-Mubārakī's seemingly out of place and extended discussion of the nondefinitive semantics of propositions that had galvanized the commentarial field was also taken up by Mubārak. However, he transferred this discussion to the earlier textual locus to which the hints in his predecessor's work had guided him. Mubārak writes,

Next, in the predicative [proposition], if the judgment is that [the subject and predicate] are unified in actuality and definitely/simply, then it is called a definitive predicative [proposition]. If [the judgment] is on the determination [*'alā taqdīr*] that the [subject] tag applies to an instance—although [the instance] may be among those things that do not obtain positively except by means of the [mind's] establishing of the quiddity and existence of the subject—then it is called a nondefinitive predicative [proposition]. With respect to its truth [conditions], this latter is parallel to the conditional [proposition], but it does not reduce to it, as it is falsely imagined. The definitive [proposition] only requires the establishment and existence of the subject in actuality [*bi-l-fi 'l*]. The nondefinitive [proposition] requires it in accordance with that [mental] determination, not in actuality. So remember [this!].<sup>47</sup>

As we know from the foregoing discussion, the nondefinitive propositions simply allow for the mind to posit a quiddity and for the tag of this quiddity to apply to instances that may come to obtain positively only on the mental determination of the quiddity. Mubārak explains further in his self-commentary that it need not be the case with respect to these propositions either that, mind-independently, such instances should be possible or that it should be possible for the tag of the mentally established quiddity to apply to them. Rather, the quiddity may encompass impossible and possible instances.<sup>48</sup> This is the first instance at which the purpose of the nondefinitive semantics is explicitly and directly tied to the question of absurd subject terms.

Finally—and this is a fundamentally important point—the predicate in such propositions would apply to the instances with a view to the aforementioned mental determination. Put differently, in the proposition, "The Participant with the Creator is impossible," the predicate of impossibility applies with a view to the condition that the mind has determined the actuality of a certain quiddity (the Participant with the Creator) and the application of its tag to some posited instance. Mubārak contrasts these types of propositions with the explanation that

the definitive predicative proposition requires that the subject should be established and exist in actuality and that the nondefinitive requires it on the basis of mental determination.<sup>49</sup>

At this juncture, a rather interesting fact presents itself: Mubārak's statements on the definitive and nondefinitive distinction that he brings to bear on the principle of derivation and entailment and that he also neatly ties together with the question of absurd subject terms are in fact verbatim quotations from Mīr Dāmād's *Ufuq*. And, if we compare it with the quotation from al-Mubārakī on nondefinitive propositions, it becomes apparent that the latter was offering a looser quotation from the same source. In other words, both these commentaries on extended lemmata of the *Sullam* appropriated the voice of a scholar from the living prehistory of their *matn* for their commentarial purposes. In so doing, they were able to tie together disparate threads of the argument of their hypotext into a coherent whole via the intermediary of an earlier text.

From a broader perspective, we may say that al-Bihārī had penned his own lemmata as a way of staking his claim within the context of a living debate; and in consideration of the challenges posed by predicates such as "existent," he had thought that Dāmād's position offered the best solution. Once he had adopted the earlier scholar's principle, along with its supporting auxiliaries, such as simple generation, the demand for consistency compelled him, at a later juncture, to reject the third position regarding absurd subject terms and their predicate "impossible." For the adoption of the third position would have meant acquiescence to al-Dawānī's solution to propositions with predicates such as "existent."

Yet his refutation was based precisely on a concession to a principle he did not endorse; so he set up signposts for the future commentaries—including via his own self-commentary—to initiate the task of redress. Commentators, such as al-Mubārakī, following al-Bihārī's hints, began to revert to that part of the *Sullam* with which the story had first emerged. Taking the cue from yet further hints and identifications in al-Bihārī's self-commentary, they also recognized how the *mātin*'s claims were grounded in a broader system of commitments that participated in a prehistory. Then, without explicitly indicating their historical sources, these commentators absorbed these sources into their own lemmatic voices as commentaries on the hypotext, with sufficient clues for the next phase of commentaries to undertake a textual archaeology. It is at this stage of development that Mubārak's commentary was being written; and for the first time in the tradition of the lemma, he mentioned Dāmād explicitly and brought forth a full quotation from his *Ufuq* as a way to explain the *matn*. This quotation, which became part of the commentarial tradition of the *Sullam*, was further refined by Mubārak in the dynamic space of his own self-commentary.

It is in this rather tortuous and circuitous fashion that the economy of hints and allusions functioned to propel the *writing* of the tradition—the lemma of

each hypotext prompted its hypertext to oscillate between the past that was its inner word and the future that both fulfilled and transformed it as a new hypotext. Such curating tasks of the hypotexts—whether these were base texts or commentaries—were substitutes for an oral dialectical space. Each hypotext was akin to a deft scholarly master who spoke just enough for each hypertext, the keen student, to fill in the speech. Yet in following the hints and speaking fully the master's words, the student also diverged from the path, setting up along the way signposts that would curate the next phase of hypertexts, guiding the hand of the student. Each hypotext, whether a base text or a commentary, thus controlled future commentarial directions by bringing its *writing* back to its suitable loci and its living dialectical space. The cyclical return to these spaces enriched the import of the lemma and, in turn, compelled a dynamic movement forward.

With respect to the lemma at hand, various positions were in debate in a systematically and systematically connected manner. On these debates, the *Sullam* had taken up considered claims, defended against potential challenges, and led those commentators who voiced them via hints. Practically all the lemmata of the *Sullam* emerged out of a tradition of living dialectic, such that, even as it articulated its own stance on an issue, it often did so by arrogating the voices of past authorities to itself. The commentaries, insofar as they participated in the tradition in this manner, produced similar collages of voices.

On conundrums related to predication, the immediately relevant discursive space from which the lemmata of the *Sullam* emerged concerned the position of Dāmād, especially insofar as it was in dialogue with al-Dawānī. And although the reader would not know it in an encounter with the *Sullam*, the commentaries revealed with quickening pace that, on this issue, al-Bihārī had sided with Dāmād. When Mubārak came to participate in this dialectical space, he replaced the germ of the debate, the *Ufuq Mubīn*, squarely within the suitable landscape of the *Sullam*. The commentarial space, therefore, served as a medium whereby the past became a hypertext to its own future incarnation within the compressed hypotext of the *Sullam*. For in principle, Dāmād's very words also constituted a critical element in Mubārak's commentary on the *Sullam*; this latter text had itself embraced a contracted *Ufuq* within its own lemmata and hinted at how it should be unfolded with reference to its proper textual history. Yet Mubārak did not announce that he was quoting the *Ufuq*; rather, the words of the *Ufuq* constituted his own authorial voice. Mubārak's engagement with what was originally the text of the *Ufuq* within the space of his self-commentary was also an act of commenting on the prehistory of the *Sullam* within the confines of the tradition of the *Sullam*. This is a standard case of the diachronically unfolding tradition within the recurrent synchrony of the commentarial genre. The protracted analysis above may be represented graphically in figure 15 (again, the numbers indicate the order of the commentarial process).

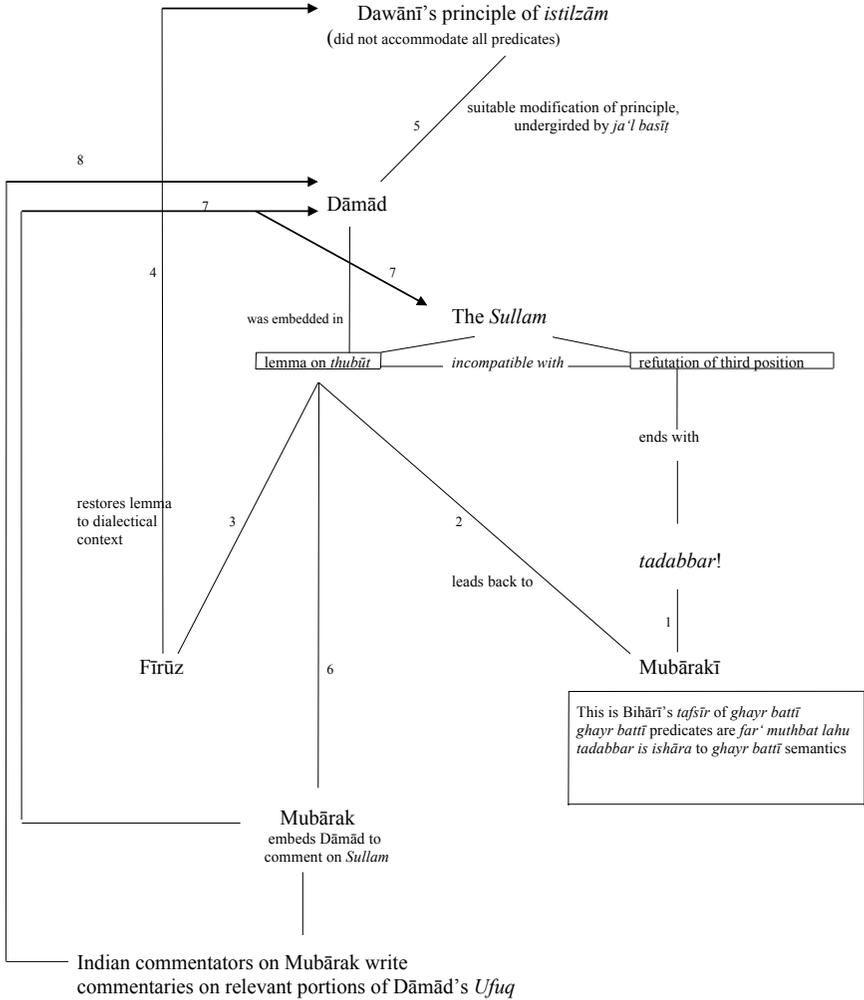


FIGURE 15.

The contributions of the commentarial genre were effected via the displacement and replacement of textual fragments into new lemmatic collages at suitable sites. As we observed above, the process was curated by the hypotexts at each phase. Within the curated space, the latest author’s agency lay in the act of producing a commentarial unit that combined existing textual fragments and arguments with his own interventions and in placing these units at receptive dialectical loci. With respect to the example studied above, one would note that the *Ufuq* deployed the definitive/nondefinitive dichotomy in order to overcome the conundrums associated with affirmative predication over impossible concepts (*mashhūmāt mumtani`āt*) in propositions such as “The joining of two contradictories

is impossible” and “The void is nonexistent.” Yet the discussion of predicates such as “existent,” the theory of simple generation, and the principle of derivation and entailment were part of earlier discussions in the *Ufūq*. It is in the commentarial tradition of the *Sullam*, which itself implicitly embedded the various threads of Dāmād’s contributions within its proximate lemmata on predication, that these disparate elements were systemically brought together, defended, and debated. In this fashion, the curated archaeology of the text continued to generate vibrant commentarial sites. Each new commentarial layer was the new cumulative hypotext on which the machinery of the next commentarial layer operated.

#### CONCLUDING REFLECTIONS: DYNAMISM

This book has been concerned with theorizing philosophical commentaries in post-classical Islam. The question of philosophical dynamism can only be posed as a function of this primary concern, and it is in this fashion that I now briefly take it up.

Our investigation has demonstrated that each hypotextual layer—both the *matn* and the *sharḥ*—created dialectical sites, wherein it staked its claims. The details of the claims were often left deliberately obscure by the hypotextual lemmata, thus setting the stage for the hypertextual layer to fulfill and actualize it. In other words, from its very inception, the hypotext called forward to its hypertext as an instrument to its full manifestation. The process was carried forward by an economy of hints and allusions that guided the diachronic hypertexts, each synchronically embracing the full authority of authorship, to relevant lemmata within the hypotext. A watershed in the process was the full unveiling of the living dialectical space that the lemmata of the hypotext implicitly embedded. This discovery led to deeper textual archaeology, such that the commentary on any given lemma both became a site for commenting on the latter in the voice of the historical dialectics that it embraced and for commenting on the historical texts themselves.

Throughout this process, the commentarial machine continued to produce original texts out of a combination of textual fragments and hypertextual interventions. This was done in a fashion that both fit philosophical demands and that endowed the later author with a full agency, authority, and ownership over his articulations. This is a different mode of conceiving authorship, textuality, and orality—here even the canonical logic textbook has emerged as possessing a living orality; the orality *writes* itself as new texts; the author of each new text is the latest agent. And this makes perfect sense, as the first hypotext had itself emerged as a crystallization of a pressing dialectic and had sought to be fulfilled by the cyclical speech of its hypertexts. Each hypertext, insofar as it was a hypotext to another layer, functioned in the same manner. But did the cycles of return and representation proffer anything that may be called dynamic? And if so, is there some distinct category of dynamism that one must acknowledge?

The dynamism of the tradition emerges in fuller view after Mubārak, who had generally sensitized the commentarial tradition to the *Sitz im Leben* of the *Sullam*. With reference to the lemma at hand, for example, a greater awareness of its underlying historical development and the structural intricacies of the argument are amply displayed by the commentator Baḥr al-‘Ulūm:

It is a commonly held view that the existence of a thing for a thing is derivative of the existence of that for which the thing exists; indeed, they claim necessity [for this doctrine]. Then a refutation [*naqḍ*] was leveled against them by means of examples such as “Zayd is existent.” So the Verifier al-Dawānī reverted from this [position] and held fast to [the doctrine] of entailment. The author [of the *Sullam*] changed this rule [*al-qā’ida*], following the author of the *Ufuq mubīn*, stating, “The existence of a thing for a thing in an ontological locus is derivative of the actuality of that for which it exists . . . and it entails its existence in that ontological locus.” When the author of the *Ufuq mubīn* [had] sensed [the refutation of the common view] by examples such as “Every man is an animal” and “Zayd is possible,” he stated, “The nature of the affirmative copula requires derivation/dependence [*al-far’iyya*] with a view to the establishment [*taqarrur*] of the subject and [it requires] entailment [with a view] to its existence, not with a consideration of the specificity of the two terms . . .” He then stated, “As for one who does not believe in [the doctrine of] simple generation, well, it is more fitting that he be content with [the doctrine of] entailment [i.e., that the existence of that which is said of something entails the existence of that of which it is said].”<sup>50</sup>

More than any author before him, Baḥr al-‘Ulūm cast the lemma back into its preexisting textual mold. At the center of the dialectic that the *Sullam*’s *matn* embraced as its own voice were the contributions of Dāmād to which the earlier commentaries had led this later author. Baḥr al-‘Ulūm fully fleshed out the dialectical space: we are informed, in a historical narrative, that al-Bihārī had changed a well-known rule in order to overcome conundrums that certain predicates posed, and that, in doing so, he had rejected the proposal of al-Dawānī in favor of that of Dāmād. We are also told explicitly that the former position is inconsistent with the doctrine of simple generation, whereas the latter is not. Then, regarding this rule that we have observed to govern predicates over impossible subject terms and regarding the doctrine of simple generation that undergirds it, Baḥr al-‘Ulūm goes on to offer some critical—yet allusive—remarks.

The doctrine of the *Ufuq* (and the *Sullam*) does not solve the issue: “The problem persists, as in the case where the predicate is existence and the concomitants of the quiddity.”<sup>51</sup> This hint is only parsed in the self-commentary, where he explains that the doctrine of simple generation asserts that existence is not other than the establishment of a quiddity. As such, the verifying criterion (*miṣḍāq wa-muṭābaq*) of existence is the very establishment and actuality of the quiddity. If this is so, then to affirm that a quiddity exists is nothing more than to assert the establishment of the quiddity. Yet if, according to the new rule, the predicate of existence is derivative of the establishment of the quiddity, then the establishment of the

quiddity is derivative of itself. And this is the same conundrum of infinite regress that one faced with the rule asserting that a thing is derivative of the existence of that of which it is asserted.

Baḥr al-‘Ulūm offers the further explanation that one may take a proposition such as “Zayd exists” either to be a report about a state of affairs that is actual or a report about the subsistence of a concept that is abstracted by the mind. In the former case, to say that Zayd exists is tantamount to admitting that the report is independent of any mental process; in the latter case, the report is about the fact of a concept that is extracted via a mental process. The latter type of report, we are told, is unproblematic with reference to the rule of derivation, since it in fact concedes a predicate by virtue of the fact of a derivation. Yet this kind of report remains on the level of mentally manipulated operations—much like the case with propositions with impossible subject terms—and is not subject to the refutation faced by the aforementioned commonly held rule. In such a case, the predicate is indeed derivative of the subject; for the latter must be actual in some sense for the mind to derive the predicate from it. The former type, on the other hand, is precisely the target of the counterexamples; but these apply equally in the case of the new rule, as was just explained. The upshot, Baḥr al-‘Ulūm indicates, is that the *Ufuq*’s contribution ought to be rejected, since it does not offer a completely satisfactory path out of the conundrum.<sup>52</sup>

Similarly, since the grounding principle on which al-Bihārī’s critique of the third position regarding propositions with impossible subject terms rested was dissolved, so was the critique itself. Instead, Baḥr al-‘Ulūm endorsed a solution that had received little attention in the sources—namely, that such problematic propositions may be reduced to negative ones; and this solution is attributed to al-Taḥṭānī. As I have argued above, in a significant number of cases, the method of verification was discharged within the constraints of positions available in the prehistory of a text. At this juncture, Baḥr al-‘Ulūm’s dynamism lay in supplying independent arguments against the validity of one position and, in the interest of consistency and systematization, in favor of another.<sup>53</sup>

Baḥr al-‘Ulūm’s commentary and self-commentary on the *Sullam* did not display the full critical arsenal at his disposal. The textual excavation to which the signposts of earlier commentaries had led compelled him also to pen a commentary on the *Ufuq mubīn* itself. The lemma of the *Sullam* effectively embraces the key parts of the first and especially the second section of this work.<sup>54</sup> And it is precisely with a key discussion in the first section that Baḥr al-‘Ulūm’s commentary begins: “As for the predication ‘existent,’ its verifying criterion is the very subject itself, not insofar as [the latter] is what it is, but with a consideration of the fact of the causal production associated with it.”<sup>55</sup> Freed from the constraints of the lemma of the *Sullam*, which embraced an entire prehistory of the issue, the commentator expends considerable energies in showing how Dāmād’s commitment to the principle of simple generation poses problems for his modified principle

of derivation and entailment. This he accomplishes by picking key lemmata from almost four hundred pages of the *Ufuq* in the span of his commentary of about fifty pages.<sup>56</sup>

Following Baḥr al-‘Ulūm, ‘Abd al-Ḥaqq al-Khayrābādī, who wrote both a supercommentary on the former and on Mubārak, also penned a commentary on the *Ufuq*. His father, the equally celebrated Faḍl-i Ḥaqq al-Khayrābādī, had also produced a supercommentary on Mubārak on the *Sullam*, where he took cues from his hypotext at key moments to explore the positions of Dāmād, often in a severely critical fashion. ‘Abd al-Ḥaqq al-Khayrābādī devoted his entire commentary of almost three hundred and seventy pages to the first section and part of the second section of the *Ufuq*, covering about twenty pages of the *matn*. The extended critique of the commentator is devoted to existence, predication, and the principle of simple generation; in other words, this commentary may be approached as an extended criticism of the one-page lemma of the *Sullam* in its excavated locus. Like his predecessor, al-Khayrābādī marshaled various arguments to demonstrate how these different parts of Dāmād’s argument do not fit together; in other words, they were systemically problematic.

It is in this fashion that the dialectical space constituting the inner life of the *Sullam* was opened up piecemeal via the hints and prompts found within this very text and within its accumulating commentarial voices. Thus led from one signpost to another, the commentarial tradition exposed the textual past with increasingly pointed focus, until the dialectic was fully engaged. And the dynamism and agency of the tradition, especially as mediated by the commentary, lay in the acute efforts of redress, refutation, and defense that a synchronous systemization required. The commentarial machine, therefore, not only led to lemmatic growth with each authorial voice that incorporated a synchronous tradition and that also effectively generated commentaries within commentaries; it also prompted independent commentaries on texts implicitly embraced by the hypotextual voice. In a certain manner, the first two sections of the *Ufuq*, covering an argument in the course of some fifty pages, were represented and reenacted in the *Sullam*’s compressed voice and within the logic of its own philosophical program. Over time, the latter text and its commentarial hypertexts led each new authorial voice back to the fullness of the *matn*’s inner word. In the process, the textual bedrock on which the lemma of the *Sullam* lay was increasingly exposed, such that the commentarial tradition spoke the *Sullam* through the voice of its own hypotext; this latter, the *Ufuq*, was itself engaged in hypertextual activity in relation to its past. The accumulation of arguments in the interim and the interstices of the commentarial exercises also meant that the return to origins was a new dialectical and dynamic endeavor.

We shall not cease from exploration  
And the end of all our exploring  
Will be to arrive where we started

And know the place for the first time.  
Through the unknown, remembered gate  
When the last of earth left to discover  
Is that which was the beginning;  
At the source of the longest river  
The voice of the hidden waterfall  
And the children in the apple-tree  
Not known, because not looked for  
But heard, half-heard, in the stillness  
Between two waves of the sea.

T. S. Eliot, "Little Gidding"