

Philosophical Concepts and Terminology in Attar's *Mosibatnameh* and *Mantiq al-Tayr*

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ABSTRACT

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The relationship between philosophy and literature connects thought (rationality) and speech (articulation). Literature encompasses the breadth of all human questions, from love to philosophical issues, power relations, economic matters, personal suffering, and human relationships. Therefore, literature is full of philosophy. It often addresses issues that are also raised in philosophy. The main question in this research is to what extent philosophical concepts are reflected in Attar's poetry and how Attar's perspective on philosophy is shaped. Attar's works have deep philosophical, theological, and mystical concepts. His language and discourse carry profound meanings in these areas. In addition to his familiarity with various sciences such as mysticism, astronomy, psychology, history, and more, Attar is also a philosopher, albeit of an anti-philosophical type. This article, relying on two of Attar's works, namely "Mosibatnameh" and "Manteq al-Tayr," edited by Professor Mohammad Reza Shafiei Kadkani, has been compiled and edited using a descriptive-analytical method based on library resources.

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Introduction

The relationship between philosophy and literature is an intrinsic bond between thought (*quwwat al-natiqah*) and speech (*kalam*). Literature, encompassing the vast spectrum of human inquiry—from love and social relations to political power and existential suffering—cannot escape the influence of philosophy. This research addresses a central question: how are philosophical concepts reflected in the poetry of Attar Nishapuri, and what is the nature of his stance toward philosophy? Attar's works are saturated with profound philosophical, theological (*kalamic*), and mystical (*irfani*) meanings. While Attar was deeply acquainted with various sciences, including astronomy, psychology, and history, he is characterized as a “philosopher of opposition”—one who mastered the tools of philosophy only to challenge its foundations.

Method

This study employs a descriptive-analytical methodology, utilizing library-based research. The analysis focuses on two of Attar's seminal works, *Mosiabat-nameh* and *Mantiq al-Tayr* (as edited by Professor Mohammad Reza Shafiei Kadkani). The research examines the deployment of specific philosophical and theological terminologies within these texts to discern how Attar repurposes intellectual language to serve mystical ends and to articulate his critique of Aristotelian and Greek rationalism.

Results

The analysis reveals that Attar's mastery of philosophical terminology is extensive, yet he employs these terms to reinforce a mystical worldview that often stands in direct opposition to pure rationalism. The study identifies and analyzes several key conceptual clusters:

1. **Ontological and Temporal Concepts:** Attar utilizes terms such as *Abad* (Eternity/Infinity

in the future) and *Azal* (Pre-eternity) to articulate the nature of time and the fixity of human destiny. He frames *Abad* not merely as an infinite temporal

span, but as the perpetual manifestation of the Divine Essence, while *Azal* is used to emphasize the inevitability of one's spiritual lot.

- **Epistemological and Psychological Concepts:** Attar engages extensively with terms like '*Aql* (Reason), '*Ilm* (Knowledge), and '*Fikr* (Thought). He consistently contrasts the limits of rational '*Aql*—which he labels as “smoke” compared to the “fire” of Love—with '*Fikr-e Qalbi* (Heart-centered thought). He argues that while rational knowledge is a necessary tool, it becomes a “veil” when sought as the ultimate path to Divine Truth.
- **Ethical and Mystical States:** Concepts such as '*Ikhtiyar* (Free Will), '*Tajrid* (Abstraction/Asceticism), and '*Hal* (Mystical State) are repurposed within his Sufi framework. '*Ikhtiyar*, for instance, is not presented as absolute autonomy, but as the active surrender of the self to the Divine. Similarly, '*Tajrid* is elevated from a mere philosophical categorization of substance to a necessary stage of spiritual detachment from worldly attributes.
- **Philosophical Polemics:** Terms like '*Hulul* (Incarnation) and '*Maskh* (Metamorphosis) are skillfully utilized to illustrate the annihilation of the self (*Fana*) and the spiritual transformation of the seeker. He notably critiques Greek rationalism and Aristotelian logic, viewing them as barriers to the intuitive illumination that transcends formal syllogistic thought.

Conclusion

The abundance of philosophical and theological terminology in *Mosibat-nameh* and *Mantiq al-Tayr* serves as a testament to Attar's profound intellectual depth and mastery of the discourse prevalent in his time. However, his deployment of this vocabulary is consistently subordinated to his mystical project. Attar does not adopt philosophical concepts for the sake of rational systematization; rather, he subverts them to delineate the boundaries of human reason and to elevate the status of experiential, heart-centered knowledge. By juxtaposing scholastic jargon with the language of the *Tariqat* (the mystical path), Attar effectively demonstrates his “learned opposition”—an epistemological stance that recognizes the utility of philosophical tools while ultimately rejecting their sufficiency in capturing the Divine. His work acts as a profound bridge between the



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intellectual traditions of his era and the intuitive, poetic expressions of the Sufi tradition.