Physics and Metaphysics in an Early Ottoman Madrasa: Dāwūd al-Qayšarī on the Nature of Time

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Abstract

Although overshadowed by his celebrated commentaries on Ibn ʿArabī and Ibn al-Fārid, Dāwūd al-Qayšarī’s (d. 750/1351) treatise on the philosophy of time – the Nihāyat al-bayān fī dirāyat al-zamān (The Utmost Elucidation Concerning Knowledge of Time) – is a notable milestone in the history of Islamic conceptions of temporality. Composed around the start of Qayšarī’s tenure as head of the first Ottoman madrasa, the Nihāyat al-bayān rejects the Aristotelian definition of time as the number of motion in favor of Abū l-Barakāt al-Baghdādī’s concept of zamān as the measure of being. Challenging, likewise, portrayals of time as a flux or succession of fleeting instants, Qayšarī propounds instead an absolutist vision of time as an integral, objectively existent whole. Qayšarī’s reassessment of dominant medieval theories of temporality – including kalām atomism and the Neoplatonic distinction between time, perpetuity, and eternity – is thus shown to be a key early example of what was to become an abiding Ottoman interest in time and timekeeping.

Keywords

Dāwūd al-Qayšarī – philosophy of time – Avicenna – Abū l-Barakāt al-Baghdādī – Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī – Ibn ʿArabī

1 Introduction

Debates regarding the nature of time are a notably recurrent feature of classical Islamic thought. Faced with a plethora of competing theories – some
rooted in Platonic or Aristotelian philosophy (with its concept of an eternal universe without temporal beginning or end), others in the creationist theology of the *mutakallimūn* – Muslim thinkers often grappled with the problem of how best to define time’s essence. Is time simply the measure or “number” of motion, as Aristotle – whose *Physics* (iv, 10–16) forms the bedrock of both Avicenna’s (d. 428/1037) and Averroes’s (d. 594/1198) treatment of this topic – proposes, or motion itself, as the Platonists seem to suggest? Or is it rather the measure of the act of being as Abū l-Barakāt al-Baghdādī (d. 559/1164) contends? Then there is the issue of time’s ontological status. Does time exist as a simultaneous whole or in fleeting, piecemeal fashion alone? Does time, for that matter, exist outside the mind or is it a purely imaginary construct as the Ikhwān al-Ṣafāʾ claim? Is there a first moment in time, as the early *mutakallimūn* argued, or is it without beginning or end as espoused by the Aristotelians? And how does the notion of time relate to the divine and angelic realms described in the scriptures?

A summary of these familiar aporias, and the different theories put forward in response to them, forms the starting point of a four-part treatise, the *Nihāyat al-bayān fī dirāyat al-zamān* (The Utmost Elucidation Concerning Knowledge of Time), by the Sufi thinker and head of the first Ottoman madrasa, Dāwūd ibn Maḥmūd al-Qaysārī (d. 750/1351). Although the object of little scholarly attention hitherto, the ideas set forth in the *Nihāyat al-bayān* constitute, as we

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1 Avicenna’s discussion of time in the *Shifāʾ* begins, likewise, with a review of the puzzles and conflicting theories surrounding time’s nature. See *Avicenna. The Physics of The Healing: A Parallel English-Arabic Text in Two Volumes*, trans. by Jon McGinnis (Provo, Utah: Brigham Young University Press, 2009), pp. 219–28.

2 On Qayṣarī’s life and works, see Mehmet Bayrakdar, *La philosophie mystique chez Dawud de Kayseri* (Ankara: Editions Ministère de la Culture, 1993), pp. 14–27; Mohammed Rustom, “Dāwūd Qaysārī: Notes on his Life, Influence, and Reflections on the Muḥammadan Reality,” *Journal of the Muhyyiddin Ibn ‘Arabi Society* 38 (2005): 51–57; Ali Hussain, “Dāwūd al-Qaysārī,” in *EI³*, ed. by Kate Fleet, Gudrun Krämer, Denis Matringe, John Nava and Everett Rowson (retrieved January 11, 2022, via http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/1573-3912_ei3_COM_25946); Caner Daglı, *Ibn al-‘Arabī and Islamic Intellectual Culture: From Mysticism to Philosophy* (London & New York: Routledge, 2016), pp. 119–23; Ihsan Fazlıoğlu, “What Happened in Iznik? The Shaping of Ottoman Intellectual Life and Dāwūd Kaysārī,” *Nazarîyat: Journal for the History of Islamic Philosophy and Sciences* 4.1 (2017): 13–22; Mukhtar H. Ali, *The Horizons of Being: The Metaphysics of Ibn al-‘Arabī in the Muqaddimat Al-Qaysārī* (Leiden [a.o.] Brill, 2020), pp. 4–8.

3 Where scholarship in European languages is concerned, such attention has typically been restricted to the odd mention in passing. See, for example, Bayrakdar, *La philosophie mystique*, p. 27; and Fazlıoğlu, “What Happened in Iznik?,” p. 37. In Persian, however, there is an engaging discussion of Qaysārī’s concept of time in Ṭūbā Kirmānī’s introduction to her Persian translation of the *Nihāyat al-bayān*. See Qaysārī, *Zamān az dū nigāh: tarjumah-i risālah-i Qaysārī az zamān va ta‘līqah-i mu‘ammā-yi zamān / ta‘līf-i Dāvūd ibn Maḥmūd ibn
shall see, an interesting juncture in the history of Islamic conceptions of temporality. Proposing an absolutist vision of time as an integral whole, Qayṣārī challenges philosophical and theological conceptions that picture time as a flux of fleeting instants bounded by a non-existent past and future.

Famed primarily for his lengthy commentary on Ibn ʿArabī’s (d. 638/1240) Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam,4 Qayṣārī wrote chiefly in the tradition of post-classical Sufi metaphysics associated with Ibn ʿArabī and his successors,5 notably al-Qūnawī (d. 673/1274),6 al-Jandi (d. 700/1300), and ‘Abd al-Razzāq al-Kāshānī (d. 730/1330), under whose tutelage Qayṣārī is known to have studied.7 His works – judging, at any rate, by all available evidence – are relatively few in number: scarcely more than half a dozen titles in all.8 These include, alongside his celebrated commentary on the Fuṣūṣ, two substantial and by all accounts widely-read commentaries on Sufi poems by Ibn al-Fārīḍ (a favorite with early members of Ibn ʿArabī’s school),9 and two original epistles of note: the Nihāyat

4 See Qayṣārī, Sharḥ-i Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam, ed. by Jalāl al-Dīn Āṣhtiyānī (Tehran: Sharikat-i intisharāt-i īlmi va farhangī, 1996). Historically more influential, in fact, than Qayṣārī’s actual commentary on the text of the Fuṣūṣ is the long introduction (muqaddima) preceding it, in which he sets forth his metaphysical system. Often treated as an independent work, this introduction circulated widely under the title Matla’ al-khūsūs. See Ḥājjī Khalīfā, Kashf al-ẓunūn ‘an asāmi l-kutub wa-l-funūn, ed. by Muḥammad Yāltaqāyā and Rif’āt al-Kilīsī (İstanbul: Wikālat al-ma‘ārif, 1941–43), vol. 2, p. 1720. For a comprehensive study of Qayṣārī’s introduction, see Ali, The Horizons of Being.

5 For a survey of the key metaphysical theories associated with Ibn ʿArabī and the major representatives of his school (Qayṣārī included), see Mukhtar H. Ali, Philosophical Sufism: an Introduction to the School of Ibn al-ʿArabī (London & New York: Routledge, 2021).

6 For a detailed study of Qayṣārī’s elaborations on one of Qūnawī’s signature metaphysical theories, see William Chittick, “The Five Divine Presences: From al-Qunawi to al-Qaysari,” Muslim World 72 (1982): 107–28. See also, Özgür Koca, Islam, Causality, and Freedom: From the Medieval to the Modern Era (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2020), pp. 35–38.

7 See Bayrakdar, La philosophie mystique, p. 14; Hussain, “Dāvūd al-Qayṣarī”; and Fazlıoğlu, “What Happened in Iznik?,” pp. 16–18. For a brief overview of Qayṣārī’s place in the development of Ibn ʿArabī’s school, see William Chittick, “The School of Ibn ʿArabī,” in History of Islamic Philosophy, ed. by Seyyed Hossein Nasr and Oliver Leaman (London & New York: Routledge, 2001), p. 518.

8 See Ḥājjī Khalīfā, Kashf al-ẓunūn, vol. 2, p. 1720. See also Carl Brockelmann, Geschichte der arabischen Litteratur (Supplementband II) (Leiden [a.o.]: Brill, 1938), p. 323; Mehmet Bayrakdar, “Dāvūd-i Kayseri,” in Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı İslâm Ansiklopedisi (İstanbul: Türkçe Diyanet Vakfı, 1995), vol. 1x, pp. 33–35; Fazlıoğlu, “What Happened in Iznik?,” pp. 36–37; and Ali, The Horizons of Being, pp. 4–5.

9 For a discussion of Qayṣārī’s commentary on Ibn al-Fārīḍ’s wine-song (šahrīyya), see Th. Emil Homerin, The Wine of Love and Life: ibn al-Fārīḍ’s al-Khamrīyah and al-Qayṣārī’s Quest for Meaning (Chicago: Middle East Documentation Center, 2005).
al-bayān on the philosophy of time and a treatise entitled Taḥqīq māʾ al-ḥayāt wa-kashf astār al-ẓulumāt on whether al-Khīḍr is a prophet or a saint.¹⁰

Although he is chiefly associated in Ottoman historical sources with the directorship of the madrasa that the Ottoman sultan Orhan Gazi founded in Iznik in 731/1331 (or according to some sources 735/1335),¹¹ Qayṣārī, who was of Persian lineage,¹² spent an important part of his earlier career in Tabriz under the patronage of the Ilkhanid vizier Ghīyāth al-Dīn Muhammad (d. 736/1336),¹³ the figure to whom he dedicated his commentary on the Fuṣūṣ.¹⁴ By the time, however, that he came to write the Nihāyat al-bayān, Qayṣārī, as Mehmet Bayrakdar has argued,¹⁵ had evidently switched patrons from Ghīyāth al-Dīn to Orhan – prompted, perhaps, by the increasing political instability of the Ilkhanate¹⁶ – since the alqāb or honorific titles (viz. al-mawla l-muʿāẓzam al-ṣāḥib al-ʿazam mālik azīmmat mawālī l-ʿālam) of the unnamed ruler to whom Qayṣārī dedicates the Nihāyat al-bayān¹⁷ are clearly variations on the signature alqāb of the Ottoman sultan, as preserved, for example, in the vakfiye or charter of a Sufi lodge (zāwiya) that Orhan endowed in Iznik in 761/1360¹⁸ as well as in the text of a treatise ascribed (with a good measure

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¹⁰ See Qayṣārī, Taḥqīq māʾ al-ḥayāt wa-kashf astār al-ẓulumāt (Princeton University Library, Princeton, ms Garrett 464H).

¹¹ See Halil Inalcık, The Ottoman Empire: The Classical Age 1300–1600 (London: Phoenix Press, 2000), p. 166; and Brockelmann, GAL, Suppl. II, p. 323. See also Bayrakdar, “Dâvûd-i Kayseri,” vol. IX, pp. 33–34.

¹² At the start of his works, Qayṣārī typically identifies himself as al-Rūmī (the Anatolian) al-Qaysāri mawlidan (from Kayseri by birth) al-Sāwāʾī maḥtidan (from Sāwā [in Iran] by lineage). See, for example, Sharḥ-i Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam, p. 4, and Nihāyat al-bayān fi dirāyat al-zamān (Süleymaniye Library, Istanbul, ms Hacı Mahmud Efendi 151), fol. 1r.

¹³ See Fazlıoğlu, “What Happened in Iznik?,” pp. 18, 36. On Ghīyāth al-Dīn, see Peter Jackson and Charles Melville, “Giāt al-Dīn,” in Encyclopædia Iranica, ed. by Ehsan Yarshater, vol. X. (London and New York: Routledge, 2001), pp. 598–9.

¹⁴ See Qayṣārī, Sharḥ-i Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam, pp. 6–7.

¹⁵ See Mehmet Bayrakdar, Dâvûd el-Kayserî (Istanbul: Kurtuba Kitap, 2009), p. 21.

¹⁶ On the demise of the Ilkhanate, see Jackson and Melville, “Giāt al-Dīn”; and Charles Melville, “The End of the Ilkhanate and After: Observations on the Collapse of the Mongol World Empire,” in The Mongols’ Middle East: Continuity and Transformation in Ilkhanid Iran, ed. by Bruno De Nicola and Charles Melville (Leiden [a.o.]: Brill, 2016), pp. 309–36.

¹⁷ See Qayṣārī, Nihāyat al-bayān fi dirāyat al-zamān (Kitābhānā-yi majlis-i shūrā-yi islāmī, Tehran, ms Majlis-i shūrā-yi islāmī, no. 3321), fol. 342.

¹⁸ For the text of Orhan’s vakfiye, see Ismail Uzunçarşı, “Orhan Gazi’i’in vefat eden oğlu Süleyman Paşa için tertip ettiği vakfiyenin asıl,” Belleten 27, no. 107 (1963): 438; and Heath Lowry, The Nature of the Early Ottoman State (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2003), p. 84. See also Appendix.
of plausibility)\textsuperscript{19} to Qaysari, entitled al-\textit{Ithāf al-Sulaymānī fī l-\textquoteright ahd al-Ūrkānī}, in which the author names his patrons as Orhan and his son Süleyman Paşa.\textsuperscript{20}

As for when exactly the \textit{Nihāyat al-bayān} was written,\textsuperscript{21} the extant manuscripts suggest that Qaysari may have produced two marginally different recensions within a few weeks or even a few days of one another. At any rate, the colophons of MS Tehran Majlis-i Shūrā 3321 (copied in 1081/1670–1 from Qaysari\texttextsuperscript{\textprime}s autograph) and MS Istanbul Hacı Mahmud Efendi 1511 (in which the text of the \textit{Nihāyat al-bayān} appears slightly more polished than in the Tehran manuscript) state that the treatise was completed in Dhū l-Ḥijja 735 (August 1335) and Muḥarram 736 (September 1335) respectively.\textsuperscript{22} All things considered, therefore, such documentary evidence allows us to place, with a high degree of confidence, the composition of the \textit{Nihāyat al-bayān} around the start of Qaysari\texttextsuperscript{\textprime}s tenure as the head of the Iznik madrasa, a position he held until his death in 750/1351. This may well account for its scholastic style, with its succession of points and counterpoints aimed at assessing the validity of diverse philosophical and theological opinions regarding a specific \textit{mas\texttextsuperscript{\textprime}ala} or disputed question.

As recent studies have demonstrated, the topics of time and timekeeping held a special place in Ottoman thought and culture.\textsuperscript{23} Admittedly, scholarship devoted to this subject thus far has tended to deal primarily with the Ottomans' interest in calendars and their adoption of modern methods of timekeeping.\textsuperscript{24}

\textsuperscript{19} Effectively intended to demonstrate its author's expertise across a wide range of traditional scholastic disciplines – from jurisprudence and theology to physics and prosody – the \textit{Ithāf} contains passages of critical engagement with Avicenna that are similar in style and approach to those in the \textit{Nihāyat al-bayān}. Likewise, the distinctive locutions used by Qaysari in his dedication to his patron in the \textit{Nihāyat al-bayān} closely resemble those used in the dedication of the \textit{Ithāf}. See the Arabic text of the \textit{Ithāf} in Fazl-ı Fazlolu, “What Happened in Iznik?,” pp. 43, 55–58. See also Appendix.

\textsuperscript{20} See the Arabic text of the \textit{Ithāf} in Fazlolu, “What Happened in Iznik?,” p. 43.

\textsuperscript{21} We know that the \textit{Nihāyat al-bayān} is one of Qaysari\texttextsuperscript{\textprime}s later works as it contains references to the \textit{Fuṣūṣ} commentary. See Qaysari, \textit{Nihāyat al-bayān fī dirāyat al-zamān}, in Rasā’il-i Qaysari bā ḥavâshi-i Muḥammad Riz̤ā Qumshāhī, ed. by Jalāl al-Dīn Asḥiyyānī (Mashhad: Mu’assasah-i chāp va intishārat va girāfī-i dānishgāh-i firdawsī, 1974), pp. 123, 130.

\textsuperscript{22} See MS Tehran, Majlis-i shūrā-yi islāmi, no. 3321, fol. 342; and MS Istanbul, Hacı Mahmud Efendi 1511, fol. 6v.

\textsuperscript{23} See, most notably, François Georgeon and Frédéric Hitzel (eds.), \textit{Les Ottomans et le temps} (Leiden [a.o.]: Brill, 2012).

\textsuperscript{24} See Frédéric Hitzel, “De la clepsydre à l’horloge. L’art de mesurer le temps dans l’Empire ottoman,” in \textit{Les Ottomans et le temps}, pp. 13–37; and Klaus Kreiser, “Les tours d’horloge ottomans: inventaire préliminaire et remarques générales,” in \textit{Les Ottomans et le temps}, pp. 61–74. See also Daniel Stoltz, “Positioning the Watch Hand: ‘ulama’ and the Practice of Mechanical Timekeeping in Cairo, 1737–1874,” \textit{International Journal of Middle East Studies} 47.3 (2015): 489–510.
whereas the philosophical treatment of time has received minimal attention. Both the existence, however, and provenance of the Nihāyat al-bayān suggest that philosophical discussions, too, had a part to play in the development of official Ottoman interest in chronology.

2 Qayṣarī’s Critique of the Aristotelian and Avicennan Definitions of Time

Qayṣarī’s treatise is motivated primarily by dissatisfaction with the theories of time proposed by Avicenna and his later commentator Naṣīr al-Dīn al-Ṭūsī (d. 673/1274). That said, it should be noted that the Nihāyat al-bayān is by no means anti-philosophical per se. In undertaking his critique of Avicenna’s ideas, our author draws chiefly, as we shall see, upon objections formulated, not by Avicenna’s opponents among the mutakallimūn, but by the philosopher Abū l-Barakāt al-Baghdādi. Since the Avicennan theories in question are based largely on Aristotle’s treatment of time in the Physics,25 Qayṣarī’s critique is also, like that of Abū l-Barakāt,26 implicitly an expression of dissatisfaction with the basic Aristotelian concept of time. When reconstructing Qayṣarī’s argument it seems appropriate, therefore, to begin with his paraphrasing (albeit somewhat loose in places) and criticism of Aristotle.

Aristotle and those who follow him, so Qayṣarī reminds us, conceive of time (zamān), not as a substance (jawhar) or entity in its own right, but as an accident (ʿaraḍ), namely the magnitude (miqdār) of the motion of the diurnal sphere (ḥarakat muʿaddil al-nahār).27 Made up as it is of equal or comparable parts, time must therefore be a quantity (kamm); and since each part of it is connected to the next, without break or separation, the quantity in question must be of the continuous (muttaṣil) kind and hence different as such from a discrete quantity (kamm munfaṣil) like arithmetical number (ʿadad).28

Now any quantity, so Qayṣarī’s summary continues, presupposes some matter

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25 On the impact of Aristotelian physics on medieval Arabic thought, see Paul Lettinck, Aristotle’s Physics and Its Reception in the Arabic World, with an Edition of the Unpublished Parts of Ibn Bājja’s Commentary of the Physics (Leiden [a.o.]: Brill, 1994).
26 See Abū l-Barakāt al-Baghdādi, Kitāb al-Muḥtar fi l-hikma, ed. by Muḥammad ʿUthmān (Cairo: Maktabat al-thaqāfa al-diniyya, 2015), vol. 2, pp. 298–301. See also, Shlomo Pines, Nouvelles Etudes sur Awhad al-zamān Abū l-Barakāt al-Baghdādi (Paris: Durlacher, 1955); and id., “Abūl-Barakāt,” in Ṣīr, ed. by Peri Bearman, Thierry Bianquis, Emeric van Donzel, Clifford Bosworth and Wolfradt Heinrichs (retrieved January 11, 2022, via http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/1573-3912_islam_SIM_0167).
27 Qayṣarī, Nihāyat al-bayān, p. 112. Cf. Aristotle, Physics IV. 223b 21.
28 Qayṣarī, Nihāyat al-bayān, p. 113.
(mādda) which it serves to measure. In the case of time, this matter cannot simply be the distance covered by a moving body nor can it be the speed or slowness with which a body moves, as two bodies that differ in terms of their distance or speed may well be alike in terms of their temporal duration. Time, for the Aristotelians, is therefore the measure of motion envisaged solely in respect of its anteriority and posteriority, not its distance or speed. Finally, although a continuous magnitude, time (unlike space) does not exist as a simultaneous whole lest past, present, and future coincide.

Our author, it should be noted, does not reject this definition outright. Qayṣarī agrees with Aristotle and the Peripatetic falāsifa generally in regarding time as an accident (ʿaraḍ) and as a continuous magnitude capable of indefinite division. He differs from them, however, on two fundamental counts. Firstly, like the anti-Avicennan philosopher Abū l-Barakāt al-Baghdādī and the celebrated Ashʿarī theologian Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī (d. 606/1209), he challenges the idea that temporal duration is a function of motion alone; and secondly, adopting an absolutist view of time, he refuses to accept the successive view advocated by Aristotle and Avicenna. In this latter respect, Qayṣarī focuses on the premise underpinning Aristotle’s successive conception of time, namely that past, present, and future would coincide if time were a single continuous “now.” It is true, Qayṣarī concedesthat individual events cannot all supervene at the same time, but this of itself does not mean that time exists only as a succession of transitory instants; after all, past, present, and future are merely relative concepts, meaningful solely from the limited perspective of the human observer, and not actually intrinsic as such to time’s objective reality.
Qayṣari’s absolutist theory appears to contain echoes – whether conscious or otherwise – of late antique antecedents, most notably the concept of time attributed to the late Neoplatonist, Damascius. Although the latter’s theories have come down to us solely through the intermediary of his student, Simplicius, it seems clear that Damascius was especially dissatisfied with the idea – inherent, as he saw it, in the successive view espoused by the Aristotelians – that time, quite unlike space, exists in a transitory fashion alone, as evanescent parts in a non-existent whole. Space, in other words, clearly exists as a totality, not just a succession of fleeting points. So why should the same not be true of time? It seemed absurd to suggest that only a given part of time may be said to exist, whereas the whole does not. Against this view, Damascius propounded the theory that just as there is a total place so is there a total time, i.e., time as a whole existing in abstraction of our piecemeal perception thereof.

To be sure, Aristotle himself, though opposed to the absolutist view, seems troubled by the logical repercussions of the successive theory, which apparently reduce time to nothing more than a flux of fleeting instants bounded by a non-existent past and future. Time, so the Stagirite observed, hardly seems to exist at all: the past no longer exists, and the future has not yet come into being. Only the fleeting “now” may be said to be, and even that is questionable.

For Qayṣari, this perceived evanescence has been brought to the fore in the Arabic Aristotelianism of Avicenna and his followers, becoming central...

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36 On Simplicius see Samuel Sambursky and Shlomo Pines, *The Concept of Time in Late Neoplatonism* (Jerusalem: Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities, 1971), pp. 18–21.

37 Here, however, it is worth noting that it is certainly possible to challenge such an interpretation of the Aristotelian (and for that matter Avicennan) view of time’s existence. Andreas Lammer, for example, has argued that, insofar as it is conceived of as the measure of motion, time’s existence for Avicenna and the Aristotelians is therefore tied to that of a concrete reality, namely the moving object. See Andreas Lammer, *The Elements of Avicenna’s Physics: Greek Sources and Arabic Innovations* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2018), p. 519.

38 On Damascius and his concept of a total time, see Sambursky and Pines, *The Concept of Time in Late Neoplatonism*, pp. 64–94. See also Carlos Steel, “The Neoplatonic Doctrine of Time and Eternity and Its Influence on Medieval Philosophy,” in *The Medieval Concept of Time: the Scholastic Debate and Its Reception in Early Modern Philosophy*, ed. by Pasquale Porro (Leiden: Brill, 2001), p. 13. For a discussion of the perceived relationship between space and time in medieval and early modern philosophy, see Geoffrey Gorham, “The Twin-Brother of Space: Spatial Analogy in the Emergence of Absolute Time,” *Intellectual History Review* 22.1 (2012): 23–39.

39 See Michael Inwood, “Aristotle on the Reality of Time,” in *Aristotle’s Physics: A Collection of Essays*, ed. by Lindsay Judson (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991), pp. 151–78. See also Coope, *Time for Aristotle*, pp. 18–19.
to their concept of time\textsuperscript{40} – a development our author feels especially bound to challenge. On this score, he focuses on two key passages in the *Kitāb al-Ishārāt wa-l-tanbihāt* in which Avicenna (to whom Qayṣarī refers nonetheless by the honorific title of *al-shaykh al-raʾīs*) elaborates upon the Aristotelian concept of time as the quantity of motion “not in respect of distance but in respect of anteriority and posteriority.” Since the prior and posterior of temporal progression can never co-exist – a premise, as we have seen, fundamental to the dynamic view of time – time’s existence, according to Qayṣarī’s reading of these passages, consists in nothing more than a ceaseless flux of “before” and “after.”\textsuperscript{41} Qayṣarī quotes Avicenna’s treatment of this point in extenso, and in view of their importance it is worth revisiting in detail the relevant passages from the *Ishārāt* (introduced by Qayṣarī’s preamble):

In the *Ishārāt* the *shaykh al-raʾīs* has alluded to time’s existence (wujūd al-zamān) in [two passages]. In the first he says: “In relation to the event which comes into being after not having existed, there is thus a before in which it did not exist. Now [the before in question] is not, therefore, like the anteriority of the number one over two, as this [logical] priority admits of that which is before [namely, one] and that which is after [namely, two] coexisting. On the contrary, [temporal] anteriority is that of a before which cannot coexist with an after. You could thus [conceive of the event which comes into being] as the coming into being of a posteriority after an anteriority that no longer exists. This, however, is not to equate such [evanescent] anteriority with non-existence per se since non-existence can equally come afterwards too. Nor is it the same as the efficient cause, since this can exist before, simultaneously, or after. It is therefore something else – something in which renewal (tajaddud) and extinction (taṣarrum) occur continuously (ʿalā l-ittiṣāl). [Given what we have already said about the continuous nature of bodies and motion] you will understand that a continuity such as this, whose measure matches

\textsuperscript{40} For a detailed analysis of Avicenna’s conception of time, see Lammer, *The Elements of Avicenna’s Physics*, pp. 429–524.

\textsuperscript{41} Qayṣarī is not alone in interpreting Avicenna’s conception of time’s reality as that of a constant flux. As Lammer has pointed out, modern scholars too (notably McGinnis) have tended to impute to Avicenna the idea that time is produced through the “flowing now.” Lammer, by contrast, as we have seen, argues that time’s existence, for Avicenna, is tied to that of the moving object (to be precise, the motion of the outermost heavenly sphere) such that, as Lammer puts it, “there is, then, no need to take recourse to the idea of the flowing now.” See Lammer, *The Elements of Avicenna’s Physics*, pp. 516–24.
that of motion, cannot be composed of indivisible parts.” Then, confirming time’s essence, he says in a pointer which follows these remarks: “Because renewal is not possible except through a change of state – and a change of state can occur only in that which has the capacity to change, namely a substrate – it follows that this continuum is inevitably linked to motion and the mobile, by which I mean change and that which changes, especially of the continuous, uninterrupted kind, namely circular motion. This continuum, moreover, is measurable (yaḥtamil al-qaḍīr), as one before may be further away and another may be nearer. Hence it is a quantity that measures change. This then is time. It is the quantity of motion, not in respect of distance, but in respect of a priority and posteriority which never coincide.”

What Qayṣarī finds especially troublesome about these passages is the inherent contradiction, as he sees it, between the Avicennan notions of time as a series of “renewals” (tajaddudāt) and “extinctions” (taṣarrumāt) on the one hand and time as an unbroken continuum on the other. In particular, he takes issue with Avicenna’s use of the phrase ‘alā l-ittiṣāl or “continuously.” A series of fleeting renewals and extinctions, so Qayṣarī argues, is not an actual continuum in the proper sense, indefinitely divisible as such, but rather a ta‘āqub or succession of transient instants. While purporting, therefore, to subscribe to the Aristotelian concept of time as a continuous quantity, consistent as such with the continuous nature of circular motion, what Avicenna is really proposing, according to Qayṣarī, is a form of temporal atomism. Qayṣarī writes:

To speak of a succession of renewals and evanescences amounts to saying that time (zamān) is made up of consecutive instants each following the other, which necessarily presupposes the existence of indivisible

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42 For a discussion of this passage from the Ishārāt, see Lammer, The Elements of Avicenna’s Physics, pp. 489–91.
43 Cf. Aristotle’s definition of time in Physics IV. 11; 219b1–2: “Time is a number of change with respect to before and after.”
44 Qayṣarī, Nihāyat al-bayān, p. 115; and Ibn Sinā, Kitāb al-Ishārāt wa-l-tanbihāt, ed. by Sulaymān Dunyā (Cairo: Dār al-ma’ārif, 1958), vol. 3, pp. 499–506.
45 On the key role played by the terms taṣarrum (extinction/elsaping) and tajaddud (renewal) in Avicenna’s concept of time as (to quote Lammer) a “constantly shifting” reality whose parts are “just as motion itself non-integral and unstable,” see Lammer, The Elements of Avicenna’s Physics, p. 484.
46 Qayṣarī, Nihāyat al-bayān, pp. 115–6. There is possibly an allusion here to Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī’s mature conception of time as a discrete quantity consisting of successive instants. See al-Rāżī, Maṭālib, pp. 69, 72.
parts (*al-juzʿ alladhī lā yatajazzaʾ*). This is because each of these renewals must occur perforce in a single moment (*ān*) of time, since they are each an originated event (*ḥādīth*) preceded by time.47  

Given what we know of Avicenna’s insistence on the idea that the continuum of time is indefinitely divisible (like that of spatial distance to which it is linked via motion), the accusation of implicit atomism is, at first sight, surprising. Indeed, as Andreas Lammer has observed, Avicenna repeatedly asserts that, insofar as it is conceived of as an indivisible division of time, the now has no objective existence outside the mind.48 Instead, it is merely mapped onto time’s indefinitely divisible continuum in the same way that a hypothetical point is mapped onto the continuum of space. In both cases, for Avicenna, it is the continuous magnitude that exists objectively, not its hypothetical divisions.49  

Yet it is also true – again as Lammer has shown – that Avicenna often portrays time as a reality which, though required in order to account for the “beforeness” and “afterness” of change or motion,50 is nonetheless in a constant state of coming-to-be and passing away; and as such, its parts, which can never co-exist, are each as transitory as those of motion, to which it is tied.51  

For Qaṣṣarī, then, the two recurrent images in Avicenna’s account – viz. time as an objectively real continuum on the one hand and as a succession of renewals on the other – are mutually exclusive. Rather than existing objectively, albeit with a “weak” form of existence as Avicenna admits,53 Avicenna’s temporal continuum cannot possibly exist as such, on Qaṣṣarī’s view, so long as it is conceived of as ghayr qārr or non-integral.54 Having dismissed it on these grounds, what remains in Avicenna’s portrayal of time, for Qaṣṣarī, is the succession of extinctions and renewals reminiscent of temporal atomism.  

Although Qaṣṣarī refrains, in the *Nihāyat al-bayān*, from referring explicitly to the *mutakallimūn* (echoing thereby the general tendency of later representatives of Ibn ‘Arabī’s school to engage with the *falāsifa* but marginalize the

47 Qaṣṣarī, *Nihāyat al-bayān*, pp. 115–6.  
48 See Lammer, *The Elements of Avicenna’s Physics*, p. 519.  
49 See Lammer, *The Elements of Avicenna’s Physics*, pp. 520–3.  
50 See Lammer, *The Elements of Avicenna’s Physics*, p. 488.  
51 See Lammer, *The Elements of Avicenna’s Physics*, pp. 439–40, 484, 511.  
52 See Lammer, *The Elements of Avicenna’s Physics*, pp. 484, 511.  
53 See Ibn Sinā, *Avicenna. The Physics of The Healing*, p. 249. See also Lammer, *The Elements of Avicenna’s Physics*, p. 524.  
54 As will become clearer later on, Qaṣṣarī takes the view that the concept of time as a continuum (a concept he seeks to uphold) can be preserved only by divorcing it from motion and conceiving of it instead as qārr al-dhāt or essentially integral/static.
views of the theologians) there are certainly instances, such as the remarks quoted above, where it seems possible to discern tacit references to the kalām treatment of time. Having invoked the notion of temporal atomism – a concept inevitably associated in Islam with Muḥtazilite and Ashʿarite theology – Qayṣarī then, in effect at any rate, indicates a key respect in which Avicenna's implicit atomism (as Qayṣarī construes it) differs from the explicit brand of the mutakallimūn. In the Avicenna successions of temporal renewals, so Qayṣarī observes, there can be no logical justification for asserting that a particular renewal will occur in a given instant as opposed to any other. “To assert,” says Qayṣarī, “that a given event will not occur in a particular instant while another will, can be no more than an arbitrary preference in the absence of any compelling reason otherwise.” In other words, unlike the atomistic occasionalism of the mutakallimūn – which is predicated precisely upon a divine agency recreating the world with each instant and thus producing the impression of temporal and ontological continuity – the implicit atomism of Avicenna simply assumes that the series of renewals will follow on from each other in an apparently continuous and natural fashion, without sudden breaks or changes of state.

55 A sympathetic attitude towards philosophy is – as Rosenthal has pointed out – often evident in the writings of Ibn ʿArabi. See Franz Rosenthal, “Ibn ʿArabi between Philosophy and Mysticism: Şûfism and Philosophy Are Neighbours and Visit Each Other,” Orien 31 (1988): 1–35. Though Ibn ʿArabi, admittedly, engages with kalām to a far greater extent than tends to be the case with subsequent members of his school, it is usually for the purpose of criticizing the Ashʿarites. The tendency to see falsafa as intellectually superior to kalām is even more pronounced in the works of Ibn ʿArabi's disciple Qūnawī, who speaks, for example, of the possibility of achieving harmony between the fruits of Sufi intuition and philosophical reasoning while confining his engagement with kalām to no more than the odd dismissive remark. See Richard Todd, The Sufi Doctrine of Man: Ṣadr al-Dīn al-Qūnawī's Metaphysical Anthropology (Leiden[a.o.]: Brill, 2014), pp. 36, 53.

56 On kalām atomism, see Gerhard Böwering, “The Concept of Time in Islam,” Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society Held at Philadelphia for Promoting Useful Knowledge 141.1 (1997): 59–60. See also Duncan B. MacDonald, “Continuous Re-Creation and Atomic Time in Muslim Scholastic Theology,” Isis 9 (1927): 326–44; Shlomo Pines, Beiträge zur islamischen Atomenlehre (Gräfenhainichen: Heine, 1956); Josef van Ess, 60 Years After: Shlomo Pines's Beiträge and Half a Century of Research on Atomism and Islamic Theology (Jerusalem: Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities, 2002); Ahmad Hasnaoui, “Certain Notions of Time in Arab-Muslim Philosophy,” in Time and the Philosophies (n.p.: UNESCO Press, 1977), pp. 49–79; Jon McGinnis, “The Topology of Time: an Analysis of Medieval Islamic Accounts of Discrete and Continuous Time,” The Modern Schoolman 80 (2003): 5–25; and Alnoor Dhanani, “Atomism,” in z1 (retrieved January 11, 2022, via http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/1573-3912_e13_COM_24249).

57 Qayṣarī, Nihāyat al-bayān, p. 116.

58 See Böwering, “The Concept of Time in Islam,” pp. 59–60.
But that is not all. If Avicenna's succession of temporal renewals is hard to square with the concept of a continuum then it must, by the same token, be equally hard to reconcile with the continuous nature of motion,\textsuperscript{59} of which – according to the Peripatetic definition of time to which Avicenna subscribed – it is nonetheless supposed to be the measure or quantity. Now some might argue, so Qayṣarī anticipates, that the Avicennan concept of time is in fact compatible with motion, since the latter, likewise, consists of a continuous process of extinction and renewal as a body progresses from one point in space to another.\textsuperscript{60} The problem, however, with this argument is that the image of motion thus described is nothing more in reality than a purely mental construct – a product of the human estimative faculty (\textit{wahm}) alone.\textsuperscript{61} It is only one's imagination, so Qayṣarī explains, that pictures movement as a sequence in which each successive part is annihilated, making way for the part immediately connected to it. But since annihilation equates to non-existence (\textit{inʿidām}), it cannot denote an actual reality existing outside the mind, and nor can it be \textit{connected} (\textit{yattaṣil}) to anything existing \textit{in re extra} (\textit{fī l-khārij}).\textsuperscript{62} The idea of a continuum of interconnected extinctions and renewals is therefore, so we are told, a figment of the human mind; and what this means for Qayṣarī is that time as conceived of by Avicenna is likewise nothing more than a mental construct with no basis in objective reality.

In his critique, then, of both Avicenna's and Ṭūsī's theories, our author touches on some of the broader vexed issues which frequently appear in medieval discussions of time. This topic's connection with the wider debate between the proponents of \textit{kalām} atomism, on the one hand, and Aristotelian causality on the other has already been indicated.\textsuperscript{63} Significant too is its bearing on another key controversy of medieval thought, that of nominalism versus realism.\textsuperscript{64} From his comments in the \textit{Nihāyat al-bayān} it is clear that Qayṣarī holds a strictly realist view of time. For him there can be no question of time's

\textsuperscript{59} Qayṣarī, \textit{Nihāyat al-bayān}, p. 116.

\textsuperscript{60} Qayṣarī, \textit{Nihāyat al-bayān}, p. 116.

\textsuperscript{61} Qayṣarī, \textit{Nihāyat al-bayān}, p. 116.

\textsuperscript{62} Qayṣarī, \textit{Nihāyat al-bayān}, p. 116.

\textsuperscript{63} For a study of the influence of Avicenna's critique of atomism on later theologians, see Alnoor Dhanani, “The Impact of Ibn Sīnā's Critique of Atomism on Subsequent \textit{Kalām} Discussions of Atomism,” \textit{Arabic Sciences and Philosophy} 25.1 (2015): 79–104.

\textsuperscript{64} For details of this debate in the context of the reception of Averroist physics among thirteenth-century Oxford scholars, see Cecilia Trifogli, \textit{Oxford Physics in the Thirteenth Century (ca. 1250–1270): Motion, Infinity, Place and Time} (Leiden [a.o.]: Brill, 2000), pp. 203–61.
existing in the mind alone as “advocated by some earlier thinkers.” On the contrary, time is “something real” (amr ḥaqīqī) “existing in re extra.” But as a real continuum existing independently of human cognition, time’s nature, on Qayṣari’s view, must clearly differ from the sequence of extinctions and renewals described by Avicenna, since for Qayṣari such a sequence can exist in the estimative faculty alone. Hence, so our author argues, instead of claiming that time exists objectively, Avicenna and Ṭūsī should at least, for the sake of consistency, have thrown in their lot with the subjectivist camp and defined zamān as a “continuous quantity imagined in the estimative faculty (wahm) and resulting from renewed and elapsed movements.” To do so, however, so we are told, would entail logical consequences which jar fundamentally with the Peripatetic premises to which Avicenna and his commentator still profess to adhere. Firstly, if time existed solely in the mind then time past and time future would not exist at all, such that the term “time,” when applied to them, 

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65 Qayṣari, Nihāyat al-bayān, p. 124. Significantly, these earlier thinkers include Ibn ‘Arabī. See infra, pp. 20–21.
66 Qayṣari, Nihāyat al-bayān, p. 116.
67 Qayṣari, Nihāyat al-bayān, p. 123.
68 See, for example, Naṣīr al-Dīn al-Ṭūsī, Sharḥ al-Ishārāt wa-l-tanbihāt, in Kitāb al-Ishārāt wa-l-tanbihāt, ed. by Sulaymān Dunyā (Cairo: Dār al-maʿārif, 1958), p. 501.
69 Qayṣari, Nihāyat al-bayān, p. 116. Not everyone who deemed extended time a product of wahm took a subjectivist view of time in general. Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī, for example, maintains that extended time is a product of the imagination but holds nonetheless that time per se is objectively real by dint of the flowing now. See Adamson, “The Existence of Time,” pp. 81–82. Illustrating the relationship between extended time and the now through an analogy with motion (as he conceives of it), Fakhr al-Dīn writes: “Motion (ḥaraka) is a term that can be used in two senses. The first is motion in the sense of the [overall] traversal [of a distance]. Now we have already shown that this has no objective existence (lā wujūd lahu fī l-aʿyān), and hence the time [that is conceived of as an extended reality (al-amr al-mumtadd), corresponding to motion in the sense of a traversal (bi-maʿnā l-qat’)], cannot possibly exist objectively either. The second is motion in the sense of actually being in the midst [of a traversal], which counts among those things that may indeed come into being in the now. It is a single, steadfast reality (amr wāḥid thābit) that continues from the beginning of the distance [traversed] to its end. We should therefore think of time in the same way. In other words, it should be said [of time] that what exists externally is something indivisible that corresponds to motion in the medial sense (al-ḥaraka bi-maʿnā l-kawn fī l-wasat). It will then [follow] that just as motion in the medial sense produces (tafʿal) motion in the sense of a traversal, so does that indivisible reality [which is the now] produce time through its flow (yaḥtul al-zamān bi-sayālanāhi); and just as motion in the sense of a traversal does not exist objectively, so does time which is [thought of as] something extended and divisible have no objective existence either. What exists of time, then, is that which is referred to as the flowing now (al-ān al-sayyāl).” Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī, al-Mabāḥith al-mashriqīyya fiʿilm il-ilāhīyya tawābīyyāt (Hyderabad: Dāʾirat al-maʿārif al-niẓāmiyya, 1924), pp. 649–50.
would be no more than a metaphor (majāz). Secondly, if time were actually identified, by contrast, with the renewals and extinctions of movement, this would amount to the equating of time with motion, which is the concept of time espoused by the Platonists. And finally, if, having reduced time to nothing but a fleeting present, Avicenna and Tusi were in fact equating time with the instant then – devoid of magnitude as the latter is – it could not possibly be deemed a quantity of any kind, which again would depart from Aristotle’s basic definition.

3 Qaṣṣārī and Abū l-Barakāt

In his attempt at reaching a satisfactory and consistent definition of time, Qaṣṣārī aims to avoid what he sees as the pitfalls of Avicenna’s approach by constructing an absolutist theory in which zamān is a fixed, universal reality existing outside the mind and forming the ambience or container (zarf) – a concept he probably adopted from Fakhr al-Din al-Rāzī – in which events supervene. With this end in view, Qaṣṣārī addresses his second major point of contention with the Peripatetic conception of time, namely the idea that time is a function of motion. Frustrated with what he sees as too restrictive a view of a fundamental condition of existence, Qaṣṣārī turns instead to a well-known critic of Avicenna, Abū l-Barakāt al-Baghdādī. For Abū l-Barakāt (as articulated in his Kitāb al-Mu’tabar fī l-ḥikma), all that exists, irrespective of whether it is at motion or rest, cannot continue to exist save in continuous time; hence zamān is the measure, not of motion, but of the act of being.

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70 Qaṣṣārī, Nihāyat al-bayān, p. 116.
71 Qaṣṣārī, Nihāyat al-bayān, pp. 116–9.
72 Qaṣṣārī, Nihāyat al-bayān, p. 119.
73 See Qaṣṣārī, Nihāyat al-bayān, p. 116. See also the text of the Haci Mahmud manuscript of the Nihāyat al-bayān (Ms Istanbul, Haci Mahmud Efendi 1511, fol. 3v), which contains an explanatory clause (indicated here in italics) that has been omitted from Ashīyānī’s published edition, viz. “time is something real because it is a vessel (zarf) for real things.” I am grateful to Rafael Taghiyev for providing me with a copy of the Haci Mahmud manuscript. For Abū l-Barakāt’s concept of time as a measure of being, see Adamson, “The Existence of Time,” pp. 67, 69, 89–91.
74 On Abū l-Barakāt’s criticism of Avicenna’s philosophy, see Jamāl Sīdī, Abū l-Barakāt al-Baghdādī wa-falsafatuhu l-ilāhīyya: dirāsa li-mawqīfīhī l-naqdī min falsafat Ibn Sīnā (Cairo: Maktabat wahba, 1996); and Ahmad al-Ṭayyib, al-fāni b al-naqdī fī falsafat Abī l-Barakāt al-Baghdādī (Cairo: Dar al-shuruq, 2004). See also Pines, “Abu’l-Barakāt.”
75 See Abū l-Barakāt, Kitāb al-Mu’tabar, vol. 2, p. 301.
76 Qaṣṣārī, Nihāyat al-bayān, p. 119.
77 Qaṣṣārī, Nihāyat al-bayān, p. 119. On Abū l-Barakāt’s concept of time as a measure of being, see Pines, “Abu’l-Barakāt”; and Dominique Mallet, “Zamān,” in EI² (retrieved January 11, 2022).
Although at ease with the core idea of an intrinsic link between time and existence, Qaṣṣārī finds Abū l-Barakāt’s definition of continuance in need of refinement. Being (wujūd), he argues, is not actually measurable or quantifiable, as measure applies only to that which has extension and parts, whether static or dynamic. Instead, one should say that time is the measure, not of being per se, but of its continuance (baqā’) and duration (dawām).\(^79\) If one were then to object that such a definition implies a logical circularity – since continuance presupposes time – the response would be that for everything else continuance is indeed an expression of its endurance (thubūt) from one time to another, but this is not the case with being, whose continuance is an expression of its endurance through its very nature.\(^80\)

Within the broad context of late medieval thought, Qaṣṣārī is not alone, therefore, in his sense of dissatisfaction with the Peripatetic link between time and motion. We have already noted the case of Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī; and similar sentiments are to be found in Jewish philosophy and Christian scholasticism too.\(^81\) In his explicit reliance upon Abū l-Barakāt there is, however, potential cause for surprise. By signing up to the idea of zamān as a concomitant aspect of being, our author is thus obliged to follow Abū l-Barakāt in making the scope of zamān co-extensive with that of wujūd,\(^82\) which means extending it beyond...
the lower world encompassed by the movements of the celestial spheres into the realms of the purely intelligible and the divine. This move naturally sets Qayṣārī apart from the classical Islamic consensus – broadly shared by the Peripatetic philosophers, mutakallimūn, and Sufis alike – which holds that God necessarily transcends time.\(^8^3\) More specifically, in terms of its bearing on philosophy, it amounts to a rejection of the basic Neoplatonic distinction between physical and metaphysical modes of duration.

This distinction – which underpins much of the philosophical treatment of duration in both the medieval Arabic tradition and Latin scholasticism\(^8^4\) – is especially prominent in the foundational texts of Arabic Neoplatonism. Both the \textit{Theologia} (\textit{Uthūlūjiyā}) and the \textit{Liber de Causis} (\textit{Kitāb al-Īḍāḥ fi l-khayr al-maḥḍ}) stress the atemporal character of the transcendent One, while also highlighting the difference between the modes of duration specific to the world of generation and corruption, on the one hand, and the everlasting celestial intellects and souls on the other. Hence, in the opening pages of the \textit{Theologia} we are told that the purpose of that work is to “treat and elucidate divine lordship, demonstrating that it is synonymous with the First Cause and that perpetuity (\textit{dahr}) and time (\textit{zamān}) are beneath it.”\(^8^5\) The \textit{De Causis},

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\item \(^8^3\) See Gerhard Böwering, “Ideas of Time in Persian Sufism,” \textit{Iran} 30.1 (1992): 80; and Lenn Goodman, “Time in Islam,” \textit{Asian Philosophy} 2.1 (1992): 17. Ibn ʿArabi, likewise, holds the view that God transcends time, as exemplified by the following quotation from the \textit{Futūḥāt}: “Time is necessarily a notional thing, not an existential one, which is why the Real has applied it to Himself when He says \textit{God was acquainted with everything and to \textit{God belongs the affair, before and after}; and this is why the Sunna of the Prophet confirms the validity of the question someone posed to him, namely ‘where was our Lord before He created His creation?’} If time, then, was something that existed in its own right, the Real’s transcendence with regard to all limitations would thereby be compromised as He would be constricted by the rule of time.” Muḥyī l-Din Ibn al-ʿArabi, \textit{al-Futūḥāt al-makkīyya}, ed. by Osman Yahia (Beirut: Dār iḥyāʾ al-turāth al-ʿarabī, 1998), vol. 1, ch. 59, p. 365.
\item \(^8^4\) See Steel, “The Neoplatonic Doctrine of Time and Eternity”; and Olivier Boulnois, “Du Temps Cosmique à la Durée Ontologique? Duns Scot, le Temps, l'Aevum et l'Éternité,” in \textit{The Medieval Concept of Time}.
\item \(^8^5\) Pseudo-Aristotle (Plotinus), \textit{Uthūlūjiyā}, in \textit{Aflūṭīn ʿinda l-ʿarab}, ed. by ‘Abd al-Rahmān al-Badawi (Cairo: Maktabat al-nahḍa al-miṣrīyya, 1955), p. 6. In similar vein, the \textit{De Causis} states that “every true [universal] entity is either: higher than perpetuity and prior to it, or is coextensive with it, or comes after perpetuity but still above time.” Pseudo-Aristotle (Proclus), \textit{Kitāb al-Īḍāḥ fi l-khayr al-maḥḍ}, in \textit{al-Aflāṭūniyya al-muhdatha ʿinda l-ʿarab}, ed. by ‘Abd al-Rahmān al-Badawi (Cairo: Maktabat al-nahḍa al-miṣrīyya, 1955), p. 4. In the \textit{Theologia}, the One’s timeless transcendence is likened – in an analogy that naturally evokes Aristotle’s concept of the Unmoved Mover – to the fixed point at the centre of a circle: “The First Cause is static and motionless in itself, and exists neither in perpetuity, nor time, nor space. On the contrary, time, perpetuity, space, and all other things exist and abide through it alone. For just as the centre [of a circle] is fixed and selfsubsistent,
for its part, elaborates upon the distinction between zamān and dahr (terms rendered as tempus and aevum respectively in medieval Latin translation), seeing the constant flux that characterizes time proper as consistent with the world of generation and corruption to which it belongs, whereas the everlasting intellects and souls are deemed to endure in a state of all-comprehending simultaneity (the tuta simul of the scholastic tradition):

From such proofs it is clear that duration (dawām) is of two kinds: one perpetual (dahrī), the other temporal (zamānī) – notwithstanding that the first kind of duration is static and at peace, whilst the other is in motion; and the first is a simultaneous whole whose acts exist all together without some preceding others, whilst the second flows and extends, such that some of its acts are before others.86

For Qayṣarī, by contrast, the notions of perpetuity (dahr) and eternity (sarmad) appear to be logically subsumed under the core concept of zamān, conceived of as an attribute of the divine being.87 Here again, it seems possible to detect the influence of Abū l-Barakāt who – anticipating Hobbes by several centuries88 – famously opines that such durational distinctions89 are, all told, mere sophistry, arguing instead that all things, however lofty, endure in time alone. Abū l-Barakāt writes:

The mind cannot in fact conceive of an existence that has no extension or time, regardless of whether it be the existence of a Creator or that of a created being. It matters little, then, what the tongues [of people] are accustomed to saying [regarding timeless existence] if the mind and reason have played no part therein! Those who have entertained such

whilst the radii issuing from it to the circumference exist and abide thereby, and the points or lines on the circumference or surface owe their existence to the centre likewise, so do intellectual and sensorial things [depend on the First Cause].” Pseudo-Aristotle (Plotinus), Uthulājiyā, p. 130.

86 Pseudo-Aristotle (Proclus), Kitāb al-Idāh fī l-khayr al-maḥḍ, p. 30.
87 See Qayṣarī, Nihāyat al-bayān, pp. 119–20.
88 On Hobbes’s dismissal of Scholastic notions of timeless eternity, see Geoffrey Gorham, “Hobbes on the Reality of Time,” Hobbes Studies 27.1 (2014): 80–103.
89 Abū l-Barakāt is no doubt thinking chiefly of Avicenna, who famously defines zamān, dahr, and sarmad as the relationship of the changeable to the changeable, that of the changeable to the fixed, and that of the fixed to the fixed, respectively. On the reception, in Avicenna’s philosophy, of the Neoplatonic distinction between time, perpetuity and eternity, see Mallet, “Zamān.” See also Adamson, “The Existence of Time,” p. 92; and Adamson and Lammer, “Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī’s Platonist Account,” pp. 111–2.
notions, namely that God exists outside of time, are the same people who hold that time is the measure of motion – and since the Creator does not move, He therefore does not exist in time. For our part, we have shown that the existence of every being [whether motionless or mobile] abides in an extension, which is time, and that an existence which is not in time is inconceivable. Those, however, who have stripped their Creator's existence of time, assert by contrast that He exists in perpetuity (dahr) and eternity (sarmad), nay that His very existence is synonymous with perpetuity and eternity, thus changing the term time (zamān) [for another] without actually changing the meaning [...] When they are asked what then is perpetuity and what is eternity they reply that it is motionless, enduring continuance (al-baqā al-dāʾim alladhī laysa maʿahu ḥaraka). But duration (dawām, from the same root as dāʾim) is an attribute of extension and time; hence it is merely the name that has changed whereas what it denotes remains the same, irrespective of whether it refers to that which moves or that which is motionless.90

4 Qayṣarī's Theory in Relation to Concepts of Time in Ibn ʿArabī's School

Qayṣarī's apparent empathy with Abū l-Barakāt in this regard is all the more significant as it serves to set him apart from other representatives of Ibn ʿArabī's school, who generally concur with the Avicennan philosophers in echoing the Neoplatonic distinctions between physical and metaphysical modes of duration. Thus, in the writings of Ibn ʿArabī and his student Qūnawī, zamān is peculiar to the physical world alone. As for the modes of continuance specific to the intelligible and spiritual domains beyond the world of nature, Qūnawī in particular is quite clear on this point, identifying a universal source of duration, denoted by the divine name al-dahr (Perpetuity), whose sway extends over all worlds, higher and lower alike. Accordingly, and in keeping with his conception of God's creation as a hierarchical chain of being in which intelligible realities and divine attributes are made manifest in a mode consistent with the degree of existence in question,91 Qūnawī conceives of al-dahr as having manifold modes (zamān being but one thereof) consistent with different

90 Abū l-Barakāt, Kitāb al-Muʿtabar, vol. 2, p. 302. See also Pines, “Abu'l-Barakāt”; and Mallet, “Zamān.”

91 See Śadr al-Dīn al-Qūnawī, Ijāz al-bayān fī ta'wil umm al-Qurʾān, ed. by M. Ahmed (Hyderabad: Matba’at jam‘iyyat dā‘irat al-ma‘ārif al-‘uthmāniyya, 1988), p. 203.
realms; and this being the case, the numerous applications in the scriptures of temporal terminology to the divine and the angelic – such as references in the Hadith to the idea that spirits were created two thousand years before bodies – are interpreted as metaphorical indications of higher modes of duration distinct from that of zamān.92

The differences, moreover, between Qayšarī’s treatment of time and those of his Akbarian predecessors do not end there. Closer inspection reveals radical disparities between Qayšarī’s and Ibn ‘Arabī’s basic concepts of zamān. In stark contrast to Qayšarī’s realist view of time as an objective continuum, Ibn ‘Arabī, as Böwering has shown,93 articulates throughout his magnum opus, al-Futūḥāt al-makkīyya, a subjectivist position whereby time has no more than a notional existence: “time (zamān),” says Ibn ‘Arabī, “is but a relationship (nisba) with no real existence in itself; yet at what length and for how long have people discussed its nature!”94 Elaborating upon the substance of such discussions, Ibn ‘Arabī writes:

People differ over what is understood and denoted by the term time. Thus, the philosophers (ḥukamāʾ) apply it to different things, though the majority agree that it is an imaginary extension numbered by the movements of the celestial spheres.95 The theologians, for their part, apply it to something else, namely the linking of one event (ḥādith) to another about which one asks the question “when?” (matā).96 As for the desert Arabs, they apply it to, and mean by it, the night-time and the daytime, which is the sense we are concerned with in this chapter. Accordingly, the

92 See Qunawi, I’jāz al-bayān, p. 323. For Qayšarī, by contrast, scriptural references to divine years may well have been seen as confirmation of the notion that time extends to the higher realms. In other respects, however, Qayšarī’s treatment of cosmic epicycles and the Qur’ānic concept of divine and lordly years is indebted to Ibn ‘Arabī and ‘Abd al-Razzāq al-Kāshānī, especially the latter’s Risāla fī bayān miqdār al-sana al-sarmadiyya wa-ta’yin al-ayyām al-ilāhiyya (Princeton University Library, Princeton, MS Garrett 3634Yq), fols. 125–6. This is true, notably, of the fourth and final section of the Nihāyat al-bayān, though an analysis of this topic, and of Kāshānī’s influence, would require a separate study.

93 See Gerhard Böwering, “Ibn al-‘Arabi’s Concept of Time,” in Gott ist schön und Er liebt die Schönheit (Festschrift für Annemarie Schimmel), ed. by Alma Giese and J. Christoph Bürgel, (Bern & New York: Peter Lang, 1994), pp. 71–91. For a comprehensive discussion of Ibn ‘Arabī’s treatment of temporality, see Mohamed Haj Yousef, Ibn ‘Arabī: Time and Cosmology (London & New York: Routledge, 2008).

94 Ibn ‘Arabī, Futūḥāt, vol. 3, ch. 393, p. 529.

95 This phrase corresponds to one of the definitions of time given by the Ikhwān al-Ṣafā’. This is, no doubt, a reference to the famous kalām theory of time ascribed to the Mu’tazilite theologian al-Jubbā’ī (d. 393/915). On al-Jubbā’ī’s theory, which was Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī’s favorite proof of time’s existence, see Adamson, “The Existence of Time,” pp. 88–89.
night-time and daytime are the two sections of the complete day; from sunrise to sunset being called a daytime (nahār), from sunset to sunrise a night-time (layl), and the complete ensemble being called a day (yawm).

Now although the day is made manifest by the existence of the great movement [of the diurnal sphere], the only thing [in this process] that actually exists [outside the mind] is the moving [celestial body], which is not the same as time – whence it follows, once again, that time is a notional thing with no real essence (lā ḥaqīqa lahu).

5 Qayṣarī’s Definition of Time

Although at odds with Ibn ʿArabī over the basic concept of zamān, Qayṣarī sets out nonetheless to graft Abū l-Barakāt’s theory onto the principles of Ibn ʿArabī’s ontology. Steeped as he was in the Akbarian vision of existence as a continual theophany or revelation of God’s being, Qayṣarī seems comfortable with the notion of zamān as an objective reality issuing, along with the effusion of existence, from the divine essence. Indeed, in his view, as we shall see, it is this perspective alone which elucidates the fundamental aporias surrounding time’s nature. For if knowledge of time’s essence has historically proven so problematic, this is consistent, so we are told, with its link with being – of which it has been said that nothing is more apparent to our mind and perception, and yet nothing is more difficult to define. For Qayṣarī, then, as for Abū l-Barakāt and Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī before him, the objective reality of time, like that of being, is self-evident, though its quiddity is elusive and obscure.

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97 Ibn ʿArabī, Futūḥāt, vol. 1, ch. 59, pp. 365–6. In recognition, however, of time’s conceptually elusive character, Ibn ʿArabī displays a generally tolerant attitude towards the different theories of time current in his day. He writes: “If you have grasped what we have said about time, you are then free to join those who say that time is the night-time, the daytime and days, or that time is an imaginary extension numbered by the celestial spheres, or that time is the linking of one event to another about which one asks the question ‘when?’; and so on. There is no harm in giving voice to any of these views, since they are all well established and correct to an extent in their treatment of temporal relations.” Ibn ʿArabī, Futūḥāt, vol. 3, ch. 390, p. 53–3.

98 See William Chittick, The Sufi Path of Knowledge: Ibn al-ʿArabi’s Metaphysics of Imagination (Albany, N.Y.: State University of New York Press, 1989), pp. 91–96. On Qayṣarī’s Akbarian ontology, see Dagli, Ibn al-ʿArabī and Islamic Intellectual Culture, pp. 121–40.

99 Qayṣarī, Nihāyat al-bayān, p. 121.

100 See Abū l-Barakāt, Kitāb al-Muʿtabar, vol. 2, pp. 391–2; and al-Rāzī, Maṭālib, p. 21. See also Adamson, “The Existence of Time,” pp. 66, 73–77.

101 Qayṣarī, Nihāyat al-bayān, p. 121. Naṣīr al-Dīn al-Ṭūsī, likewise, affirms that “time’s existence is obvious, though its quiddity is hidden.” See Ṭūsī, Sharḥ al-Ishārāt, p. 500.
Relying, however, on the premise that zamān is the measure of being’s continuance and duration, Qayṣarī offers the following definition:

Time (zamān) is an accidental reality (ḥaqīqa ʿaraḍiyya) attendant upon the divine essence (lāzima li-l-dhāt al-ilāhiyya) and issuing therefrom so that through it may be measured the duration of the being of all entities, whether non-generated (mubdaʿāt) or generated creatures (makhlūqāt). In terms of its existence, time is an abiding, continuous quantity (kamm) inhering objectively in concrete existence outside [the mind].

Conceived of as a concomitant (lāzim) of God’s essence, time, like all divine attributes and acts, is thus deemed by Qayṣarī to be logically anterior to God’s creation, the material and the spiritual alike; and as such, it is too lofty a reality to be identified either with a substance (jawhar) – a rebuttal, no doubt, on Qayṣarī’s part, of the views of the two Rāzīs, Abū Bakr (d. 313/925) and Fakhr al-Dīn, both of whom held that time was a spiritual jawhar – or with one of a corporeal substance’s concomitants (such as motion), as espoused by the Aristotelian falāsifa.

6 Time and the Eternity of the World

Like Abū l-Barakāt before him, Qayṣarī takes the view that just as wujūd endures perpetually, so must its measure endure likewise. Hence, though he rejects the Peripatetic definition of time as the measure of motion, Qayṣarī’s commitment to the concept of a fundamental link between time and being entails, nonetheless, a significant and potentially surprising point where he and Aristotle concur, namely their sharing the view that time endures without

\[\text{\textsuperscript{102}}\text{Āshtīyānī’s edition of the Nihāyat al-bayān gives haqīqatuhu ʿaraḍiyya (p. 121).}\]
\[\text{\textsuperscript{103}}\text{MS Tehran, Majlis-i shūrā-yi islāmī, no. 3321, fol. 348. The idea that time is somehow accidental to the divine essence seems odd. Interestingly, this phrase has been omitted from the Hacı Mahmud Efendi manuscript, giving “time is a reality through which are measured the duration of the being of all entities ... etc” (fol. 3v).}\]
\[\text{\textsuperscript{104}}\text{Qayṣarī, Nihāyat al-bayān, p. 120.}\]
\[\text{\textsuperscript{105}}\text{Qayṣarī, Nihāyat al-bayān, p. 120.}\]
\[\text{\textsuperscript{106}}\text{On Abū Bakr al-Rāzī’s treatment of time, see Mallet, “Zamān.” See also, Muhsin Mahdi, “Remarks on al-Rāzī’s Principles,” Bulletin d’études orientales 48 (1996): 145–53.}\]
\[\text{\textsuperscript{107}}\text{See al-Rāzī, Maṭālib, p. 87. See also Adamson, “The Existence of Time,” pp. 74, 92; and Adamson and Lammer, “Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī’s Platonist Account,” pp. 95–98, 109, 111.}\]
\[\text{\textsuperscript{108}}\text{Qayṣarī, Nihāyat al-bayān, p. 120.}\]
\[\text{\textsuperscript{109}}\text{See Abū l-Barakāt, Kitāb al-Muṭabar, vol. 2, p. 301.}\]
beginning or end.\textsuperscript{110} From this point of agreement alone, of course, it does not automatically follow that our author was also a supporter of the ancient Greek (and pre-eminently Aristotelian) doctrine of the eternity of the world in general\textsuperscript{111} – a proposition which Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī (d. 505/1111) famously condemned in his *Tahāfut al-falāsifa* – though there are, as we shall see shortly, persuasive grounds for assuming that this was in fact the case. What does follow clearly, however, from Qaqārī’s notion of beginningless time is that he rejects the *kalām* theory – driven by the tenets of creationist scripture – of there being a first temporal instant.\textsuperscript{112}

Initially voiced by John Philoponus (d. 579 CE) and later emulated by the *mutakallimūn* and the pioneering Muslim philosopher al-Kindī (d. ca. 260/873),\textsuperscript{113} the theory of a first instant marking the start of time – which was conceived of as a creationist counter-argument to Greek notions of the beginninglessness of both time and the cosmos – was founded, as is well known, on the assertion that an eternity *a parte ante* would mean that an infinite past would have to be traversed in order to reach the present, which, so the theologians argue, is impossible.\textsuperscript{114} While Qaqārī, admittedly, makes no explicit mention of this argument, it does seem possible to detect a tacit rebuttal of its underlying rationale in his remarks regarding the wholly relative nature of the concept of *azal* or eternity *a parte ante*. Just as the very notions – so he observes – of past and future are nothing more in truth than subjective, relative concepts, dependent on the human observer and divorced as such from the objective reality of time as a whole, so too is its notional division at any given point into *azal* or past without beginning and *abad* or future without end.\textsuperscript{115}

\textsuperscript{110} Qaqārī, *Nihāyat al-bayān*, pp. 125, 127.

\textsuperscript{111} On the controversy surrounding the eternity of the world in medieval Islamic and Jewish philosophy, see Ernst Behler, *Die Ewigkeit der Welt: problemgeschichtliche Untersuchungen zu den Kontroversen um Weltanfang und Weltunendlichkeit im Mittelalter, I: Die Problemstellung in der arabischen und jüdischen Philosophie des Mittelalters* (München: F. Schöningh, 1965). See also, Herbert Davidson, *Proofs for Eternity, Creation and the Existence of God in Medieval Islamic and Jewish Philosophy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987); and Rudolph Ulrich, “ʿAbd al-Raḥmān al-Jāmī (d. 898/1492) on the Eternity of the World,” *The Muslim World* 107.3 (2017): 537–48.

\textsuperscript{112} On this theory, see Böwering, “Ideas of Time in Persian Sufism,” p. 80; and Toby Mayer, “Avicenna against Time Beginning. The Debate between the Commentators on the *Ishārāt*,” in *Classical Arabic Philosophy: Sources and Reception*, ed. by Peter Adamson (London: Warburg Institute, 2007), pp. 125–49.

\textsuperscript{113} See Goodman, “Time in Islam,” p. 11; and Jean Jolivet, “Al-Kindī, vues sur le temps,” *Arabic Sciences and Philosophy* 3 (1993): 55–75.

\textsuperscript{114} See Böwering, “Ideas of Time in Persian Sufism,” p. 80.

\textsuperscript{115} Qaqārī, *Nihāyat al-bayān*, p. 127.
Among Islamic conceptions of time, the kalām theory outlined above was not the only creationist-inflected alternative to Aristotelian eternalism, for the Muslim Platonist, Abū Bakr al-Rāzī had famously challenged the Peripatetic mainstream by arguing that, whilst time may exist perpetually, the world for its part was created at a certain point in time’s indefinite span. Might Qayṣarī, then, have held a similar view? On balance, this is unlikely. True, one phrase in particular (taken at face value and in isolation from the rest of the Nihāyat al-bayān) may appear to suggest otherwise, namely an assertion that both non-generated entities (mubdaʿāt) – such as the universal intellects on the top rungs of the cosmological ladder – and generated creatures (makhlūqāt) alike are “preceded” (masbūq) by time. Immediately afterwards, however, our author – invoking Avicenna’s well-known distinction between priority in essence (bi-l-dhāt) and temporal anteriority – explains that in the case of the mubdaʿāt the anteriority in question is simply an expression of time’s essential priority (as a concomitant of the divine essence) over God’s creation, not a temporal priority as such. In terms, then, of their manifest existence – as distinct from their respective metaphysical ranks – time and the mubdaʿāt, so we are told, endure co-extensively. Hence, rather than coming into being in time, the universal intellects are deemed instead to abide along with time; and since time is everlasting, the mubdaʿāt must endure sempiternally without temporal beginning or end. Having explained this nuance, Qayṣarī then feels free to modify his earlier assertion about the non-generated entities, stating in a subsequent passage (quoted below) that the mubdaʿāt are not, in fact,
preceded by time; providing, that is, that one takes into account the distinction between temporal priority and priority in essence:

You should know that the continuous existential magnitude, which has no beginning or end, is divisible, as we have already seen, by dint of the events which supervene therein, into days, weeks, months and years – so that, through such [divisions], one may know the duration of transient beings [subject to generation and corruption]; and through [these divisions], likewise, the existential duration of transient creatures preceded by time may be distinguished from that of the non-generated entities which are not preceded by it, in terms of existence at least.\textsuperscript{122}

All told, such evidence suggests that Qayṣarī did in fact broadly share with the Avicennan \textit{falāsifa} the view that the cosmos, or at least its higher echelons, endured without temporal beginning or end. Like Avicenna, however, he is also keen to show that such a view is not incompatible in and of itself with the concept of a Creator who, “through His essence (\textit{dhāt}) and all His names and attributes, is prior to (\textit{muqaddam ʿalā}) all the beings (\textit{mawjūdāt}) that emanate from Him.”\textsuperscript{123}

7 Qayṣarī’s Synthesis

Qayṣarī’s concept of time is, therefore, an eclectic hybrid composed of elements selected from a range of divergent theories. Like Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī before him (though without al-Rāzī’s exhaustive rigor), he sifts through the competing temporal models of his day with the aim, not of discarding them altogether, but of identifying and combining their respective strengths and of filtering out their respective weaknesses. We have seen, for example, that in its stance towards the account of time elaborated by Avicenna and the Arabic Aristotelians, the \textit{Nihāyat al-bayān} is by no means wholly critical. Thus, whilst accusing Avicenna of implicit temporal atomism in the \textit{Ishārāt}, Qayṣarī still sides with him in rejecting the claim – supported by the \textit{mutakallimūn} in general – that time admits of a first instant. Likewise, though he joins Abū l-Barakāt al-Baghdādī and Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī in challenging the definition of time as the number of motion, our author remains attached nonetheless to the Peripatetic categorization of time as an accident (albeit of the divine

\textsuperscript{122} Qayṣarī, \textit{Nihāyat al-bayān}, p. 127.

\textsuperscript{123} Qayṣarī, \textit{Nihāyat al-bayān}, p. 129.
essence, in Qayṣarī's case, rather than the diurnal sphere) not a self-subsisting substance as Fakhr al-Dīn contends.

Where Qayṣarī differs appreciably, however, from the standard accounts of time in the Muslim world is in his assertion that, despite appearances to the contrary, time is in fact a static (qārr) and integral whole, rather than a dynamic (ghayr qārr) flux that exists only as a succession of elapsing parts or instants. Responding to the familiar Aristotelian objection that if time were static then past, present, and future would coincide, Qayṣarī writes:

If by saying that it is impossible for [time] to be essentially static (qārr al-dhāt), since today would be together with the past and the future, you mean that something happening today would – if [time] were static – coincide with something happening in the past and the future, then that much is granted. But if what you mean thereby is that the part [of time] in which the events of today occur would therefore exist along with the part in which occur the events of the past or future, we cannot accept that this is impossible. For the parts of this static thing [that is time] all exist together, and none of them is [intrinsically] past, future, or present, which is why it has been said that for God there is no morning or evening, no past or future. Rather, such things [as past and future] exist only in relation to us. The illusory impression (tawahhum) that there is a segment of parts called the past merely arises from the impression that [time] is not essentially static, or from the passing away of what happened therein. Hence time's threefold division [into past, present, and future] is through the events that occur therein, not through time as it is in itself.124

In this connection, it is to be noted, Qayṣarī even departs from his own previously-held view – evidenced by a brief remark in his commentary on IbnʿArabī's Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam – which endorsed the mainstream categorization of time as ghayr qārr or dynamic.125 What kinds of considerations, then, might

124 Qayṣarī, Ṣīḥāyat al-bayān, p. 114. Qayṣarī reiterates this point towards the end of his treatise: “Now just as the movement [of the sphere] makes time specific (yuʿayyinuhu) by making it a day, week, month, and year, so too is it determined by the existence or absence [therein] of events, which make it into something past, future or present; for the existential magnitude prior to this event then comes to be [perceived as] past. In and of itself, however, it is neither past, future, or present. Rather, such notions are merely projected onto it by [considering it] in relation to the existence or non-existence of a given event, as we explained in the first section.” Qayṣarī, Ṣīḥāyat al-bayān, p. 127.

125 See Qayṣarī, Sharḥ-i Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam, p. 15. On the notion of time as ghayr qārr, see, for example, al-Rāzī, Maṭālib, pp. 45, 66. See also Adamson, “The Existence of Time,” pp. 86–87.
have persuaded our author to revise his opinion? First and foremost – one may venture – there is the problem of how to square, on the one hand, the commonplace premise that time is a succession of elapsing instants with, on the other, his mature conviction that time is not only objectively real but is an extended ambience or vessel (ẓarf) in which events supervene – a concept, as we have seen, that he appears to have borrowed from Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī. Although Qaṣṣāri does not elaborate on the concept of the ẓarf at length, brief indications in the Nihāyat al-bayān (as preserved in the text of the Haci Mahmud Efendi manuscript) suggest nonetheless that he thought a static account of time’s nature suited this concept better than a dynamic one. The remarks in question come during Qaṣṣāri’s critique of the idea that time is a succession of extinctions and renewals. In what is possibly an allusion to the views of Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī – who, whilst deeming time a ẓarf, categorizes it nevertheless as non-static – Qaṣṣāri argues that “time is something real (amr ḥaqīqī) because it is a vessel for real things,”126 whereas if time were nothing but an indivisible instant between a non-existent past and future it “would not be a vessel for events.”127

8 Conclusion

Although Qaṣṣāri’s treatment of time is derivative to a large extent – reliant as it is on Abū l-Barakāt and Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī’s reactions to the Avicennan tradition – it is another telling example, nonetheless, of a late medieval tendency away from the Aristotelian view of time as the measure of motion, a tendency that gathered pace not only in the Muslim world but in Jewish philosophy and Christian scholasticism as well. This, however, is not to say that Qaṣṣāri’s treatise is devoid of originality. For one thing, we have noted how he modifies Abū l-Barakāt’s concept of time, whilst also melding it with features of Ibn ʿArabī’s ontology; and for another, he takes the unusual position of arguing that Avicenna’s account of time in the Ishārāt is a betrayal of the basic Aristotelian premise that time is a continuous quantity, a premise that Qaṣṣāri, for his part, is keen to defend despite his opposition to other aspects of Aristotle’s discussion of time’s nature.

The most original element, though, in Qaṣṣāri’s conception of zamān would also appear to be the most problematic, namely his bold claim that time is qārr al-dhāt or essentially static. Though he sees this categorization as better suited, than the conventional dynamic view, to the notion of time as both an

126 MS Istanbul, Haci Mahmud Efendi 1511, fol. 3v.
127 Qaṣṣāri, Nihāyat al-bayān, p. 116.
indefinitely divisible continuum and an objectively existent vessel for events, it jars fundamentally nonetheless with our basic experience of time as something that elapses.

Finally, for a figure who is associated primarily with the Akbarian school, it is noticeable that Qaṣṣārī’s staunchly realist account of time is at odds with the subjectivist stance adopted by Ibn ‘Arabī. It is possible that Qaṣṣārī’s critical independence on this score may have been encouraged by Ibn ‘Arabī’s expression of tolerance towards different traditional definitions of time, in recognition of its conceptually elusive character. Either way, it seems clear that, where this notoriously subtle topic was concerned, Qaṣṣārī felt at liberty to look elsewhere and draw on a wider array of philosophical sources.

Appendix

The Arabic text of Qaṣṣārī’s dedication to his patron: from an 11th/17th century manuscript of the Nihāyat al-bayān fī dirāyat al-zamān (ms Tehran, Majlis-i shūrā-yi islāmī, no. 3321, fol. 342), copied from Qaṣṣārī’s autograph, dated the end of Dhū l-Ḥijja 735 (August 1335).

ولما غرّبت من تحريرها شرّتتها بألقاب الموالي المعظم الصاحب الأعظمما لك أزامة موالى العالم
أعلم علاب العصر وثيد حكاى الدهر مرقى الضعناء والمساكين معين الفقراء الساكين مشير أرباب الدول
القاهرة نصره أصحاب الحلف الفاخرة ظهير الليلة والحلى ولدين129 أداما لعليه نجاح في العالمين
لا زال الحقّ نصيرًا للجناة عزة ودولته وظهره الأعوان ملكه ورفعة تلدوه ودماً إقباله وتسع بجمال

128 Cf. Orhan’s honorific titles as documented in the Iznik vakfiye:

مفخراء الأعظم والعموم المعظمما للقاب الأصوب ملك أمراء في العالم

Likewise, in the dedication to Orhan at the start of al-Itḥāf al-Sulaymānī fī l-ʿahd al-Ūrkhānī:

السلطان الأعظم الملك الأعدل الأعلمما للقاب الأصر

ظهر الإسلام

129 In the list of honorific titles in the Iznik vakfiye Orhan is described as:

ظهر الإسلام

130 A similar phrase appears in the dedication of the Itḥāf:

لا زال ظلال سلطته مسومة
“When I had finished composing it I ennobled it with the honorific titles (alqāb) of the august sovereign (al-mawlā l-muʿāẓẓam), the grand companion (al-ṣāḥib al-aʿẓam), holder of the reins of the sovereigns of the world (mālik azimmat mawālī l-ʿālam), most learned scholar of our age, the singular philosopher of all time, succour of the weak and destitute, helper of the poor wayfarers [on the Sufi path], commander of the patriarchs of victorious dynasties, patron of the wearers of splendid raiment, supporter of the faithful, of the truth, and of religion (ẓahīr al-milla wa-ḥaq wa-dīn), long may God preserve the shadow of his majesty over the worlds, and may God remain the protector of his renown and his dynasty and remain the supporter of the servants of his kingdom and high rank, that they might abide through His watchful care and achieve felicity [in the hereafter] through the beauty of His majesty [...] And may he correct any disturbance [that occurs] therein through his judgements made radiant with brilliant light, and may he set aright any lapses [that happen] therein with his insight that penetrates the most splendid pearls.”

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In the dedication of the Itḥāf the author says of Orhan and his son:
Qaṣṣārī, Sharaf al-Dīn Dāwūd ibn Maḥmūd al-Rūmī al-. *Nihāyat al-bayān fi dirāyat al-zamān*. Kitābkhanā-yi maḍlis-i shūrā-yi islāmī, Tehran, ms Maḍlis-i shūrā-yi islāmī, no. 3321.

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