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Devil's Advocate: 'Ayn al-Quḍāt's Defence of Iblis in Context

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Abstract

The writings of 'Ayn al-Quḍāt Hamadānī (d. 525/1131) anticipate some of the major trends that characterize the post-Avicennan *ḥikmat* tradition. But modern scholarship has as of yet not completely come to grips with the far-reaching implications of 'Ayn al-Quḍāt's teachings, many of which are framed in terms of the symbolic language and imagery of the Persian Sufi school of passionate love (*madhhab-i 'ishq*) and the defence of the devil's monotheism (*tawḥīd-i Iblīs*). The focus in this article will be upon this latter aspect of 'Ayn al-Quḍāt's Sufi doctrine. Upon closer inspection, his "Satanology" (for lack of a better term) turns out to not only be concerned with a defence of the devil as a tragic, fallen lover of God; it is also intimately related to our author's robust theodicy, as well as his theory of human freedom and constraint. At the same time, 'Ayn al-Quḍāt's defence of Iblis demonstrates his understanding of philosophical and theological discourse as themselves symbolic representations of another, higher form of being and knowing.

Keywords

'Ayn al-Quḍāt – Persian Sufism – Iblis – metaphysics – theodicy – agency – love – myth

Résumé

Les écrits de 'Ayn al-Quḍāt Hamadānī (m. 525/1131) anticipent certaines des grandes tendances qui caractérisent la tradition de la *ḥikma* post-avicennienne. L'érudition moderne n'a cependant pas encore pris complètement la mesure des implications profondes des enseignements de 'Ayn al-Quḍāt – dont nombre d'entre elles sont appréhendées en termes de langage symbolique et d'imagerie de l'école soufie persane

de l'amour-passion (*madhhab-i 'ishq*) – et de la défense du monothéisme du Diable (*tawhīd-i Iblīs*). Dans cet article, l'accent sera mis sur ce dernier aspect de la doctrine soufie de 'Ayn al-Quḍāt. Sa « satanologie » (faute d'un meilleur vocable), à y regarder de près, s'avère non seulement préoccupée de la défense du Diable en tant qu'amant tragique et déchu de Dieu, mais également liée de façon intime à la vigoureuse théodicée de notre auteur ainsi qu'à sa théorie de la liberté et des contraintes humaines. En même temps, la défense d'Iblīs par 'Ayn al-Quḍāt atteste sa compréhension du discours philosophique et théologique en tant que représentation symbolique d'une autre forme plus élevée d'être et de connaître.

Mots-clés

'Ayn al-Quḍāt – Soufisme persan – Iblīs – métaphysique – théodicée – amour – mythe

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He threw him into the ocean with his hands tied behind his back.
Then He said, 'Watch out! Don't get wet!'

'Ayn al-Quḍāt¹

•••

Whoever does not learn God's unity from the devil is an unbeliever.

Aḥmad al-Ghazālī²

•••

By some pre-temporal assignment, which I have never been able to figure out, I am appointed 'to negate,' whereas I am sincerely kind and totally unable to negate.

The devil in Dostoevsky's *The Brothers Karamazov*³

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1 'Ayn al-Quḍāt, *Nāma-hā*, ed. 'Alī Naqī Munzawī and 'Afif 'Usayrān (Tehran: Intishārāt-i Asāṭir, 1998), 2:412, § 650.

2 Translation taken, with modifications, from Annemarie Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1975), 195.

3 Fyodor Dostoevsky, *The Brothers Karamazov*, trans. Richard Pevear and Larissa Volokhonsky (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1992), 638.

Introduction

In the *Mathnawī* Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī (d. 672/1273) recounts a story involving Iblis and the first Umayyad Caliph Mu'āwiya (d. 60/680). Mu'āwiya is suddenly awoken by Iblis to hasten to perform his morning prayers, the time for which was soon coming to an end. The devil assures the Caliph, who was quite naturally skeptical of his true intentions, that he is a well-wisher. Rūmī then offers a moving soliloquy on the tongue of Iblis wherein he explains to Mu'āwiya that, having been such an intimate of God before being cast out of Paradise, he has never really changed. He is still a lover of God, and, by implication, a lover of the “things” of God.

Iblis said, “First I was an Angel.

With all my soul did I tread the path of obedience.

I was a confidant to the wayfarers on the path
and an intimate of those residing near the Throne.

How can one's first vocation leave his heart?

How can his first love escape his heart?

If you were to see Rum or Khotan on a journey,
how would the love for your homeland depart your heart?

I too was amongst those drunk from this wine.

I was one of the lovers at God's court.

My belly was severed for God's love,
which was sewn into my soul.

I have seen good days from destiny –

I have drunk the water of mercy in springtime.

Was it not the hand of God's generosity that sowed me?

Was it not God who drew me out of nonexistence?

O! Many a caress have I received from God,
as I strolled in the rose garden of His good-pleasure.

He would place the hand of mercy upon my head,
loosening upon me the wellsprings of divine bounty.”⁴

After hearing these words, Mu'āwiya – characteristically known for his shrewdness – intensifies his interrogation while Iblis continues to insist on the

4 Rūmī, *Mathnawī-yi ma'nawī*, ed. and trans. R. A. Nicholson as *The Mathnawī of Jalāl'uddīn Rūmī* (London: Luzac 1925-1940), book 2, lines 2617-2626 (Persian text). The translation is my own. For a detailed study this narrative from the *Mathnawī*, see Claude Kappler, “Le dialogue d'Iblis et de Mo'āwiye dans le daftar 11 du *Masnawī* de Mowlavi, beyts 2604-2792,” *Studia Iranica* 16, no. 1 (1987): 45-99.

sincerity of his intentions. Seeing that Mu'āwiya could not be convinced, by the end of the tale Iblis confesses that he was, as usual, up to no-good. The reason he wanted Mu'āwiya to wake up for his prayers is because of his fear that, were he to miss them, Mu'āwiya would repent to God for his negligence and would consequently draw himself closer to Him.

The argument that Rūmī places on the lips of Iblis in support of his being a primordial lover of God ranks as one of the clearest and most beautiful explanations of Iblis' monotheism (*tawḥīd-i Iblīs*) and tragic state in all of Sufi literature. But as is clear from the tale, Rūmī is by no means an adherent of the *tawḥīd-i Iblīs* doctrine and even sees this position as itself being one of the snares of the devil. We cannot thus but help read the story of Iblis and Mu'āwiya as Rūmī's own response to what was by his time a well-known trope in Persian Sufi literature.

The background to the *tawḥīd-i Iblīs* position is rather straight-forward and has its roots in the Quran.⁵ Iblis, who according to Q 18:50 was a jinn, was asked by God to bow down to Adam. But he refused, saying, "I am better than him. You created me from fire, while You created him from clay" (7:12).⁶ Iblis was consequently banished from Paradise and given respite by God until the Final Day. While cast away from God's Presence, Iblis would attempt to misguide human beings by any means necessary with the hope that he would lead as many of them as he could to Hell.

As is well-known, the famous Sufi martyr al-Ḥallāj (d. 309/922) and a number of major figures such as Aḥmad al-Ghazālī (d. 520/1126), Sanā'ī (d. 525/1131), Farīd al-Dīn 'Aṭṭār (d. 618/1221),⁷ and to an extent some important modern

5 For the longest Quranic account of the story of Iblis, see Maria Dakake's commentary upon Q 7:11-25 in Seyyed Hossein Nasr, Caner Dagli, Maria Dakake, Joseph Lumbard, and Mohammed Rustom (eds.), *The Study Quran: A New Translation and Commentary* (New York: HarperOne, 2015), 409-415. An inquiry into the emergent image of Iblis through the Quran's own narratology can be found in Whitney Bodman, *The Poetics of Iblis: Narrative Theology in the Qur'an* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2011). See also Pierre Lory, *La dignité de l'homme face aux anges, aux animaux et aux djinns* (Paris: Albin Michel, 2018), part 2.

6 Hence the Arabic proverb commonly attributed to Ja'far al-Ṣādiq (d. 148/765), *awwal man qāsa al-shayṭān*: "The first to reason by analogy was the devil." See Shafiqe Virani, *The Ismailis in the Middle Ages: A History of Survival, a Search for Salvation* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 158. Translations from the Quran are taken, with modifications, from Nasr et al. (eds.), *Study Quran*.

7 See Peter Awn, *Satan's Tragedy and Redemption: Iblis in Sufi Psychology* (Leiden: Brill, 1983), passim. See also Louis Massignon, *The Passion of al-Ḥallāj: Mystic and Martyr of Islam*, trans. Herbert Mason (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1982), 3:270-327 and Michael Sells, *Early Islamic Mysticism* (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1996), 266-280 (Ḥallāj); Joseph Lumbard, *Aḥmad al-Ghazālī, Remembrance, and the Metaphysics of Love* (Albany: SUNY Press, 2016), 109-112 (Aḥmad al-Ghazālī); Hellmut Ritter, *The Ocean of the Soul: Man, the World and God*

Muslim thinkers like Muhammad Iqbal (d. 1357/1938),⁸ have seen the Quranic story of the fall of Iblis as a testimony to Iblis' sincerity and unwavering love for God. From their perspective, Iblis refused to bow to Adam because he could not bow to anyone other than his Maker and his First Love. God asked him to devote himself to another, and Iblis could never go against his nature, that of primordial monotheism. Accused by God of pride,⁹ Iblis patiently accepted his Beloved's insults and his attendant fate as an outcast from Paradise.

More than any other figure in the Islamic tradition, the most detailed and sustained attention given to the *tawhīd-i Iblīs* doctrine was undertaken by 'Ayn al-Quḍāt Hamadānī (d. 525/1131), the great Sufi metaphysician, martyr, and disciple of Aḥmad al-Ghazālī.¹⁰ His defence of Iblis was first studied by the late Peter Awn in his seminal monograph on the image of Iblis in Sufism entitled *Satan's Tragedy and Redemption*.¹¹ Although a number of other inquiries into 'Ayn al-Quḍāt's "Satanology" have appeared since then,¹² only Nicholas Boylston's recent study has rivalled Awn's detailed treatment of the subject.¹³

For Awn's part, on one level he clearly understood what 'Ayn al-Quḍāt was trying to do that was so unique. Most importantly, he showed how, for 'Ayn al-Quḍāt, any discussion of Iblis necessarily involves the person of the

in the Stories of Farīd al-Dīn 'Aṭṭār, trans. John O'Kane with the editorial assistance of Bernd Radtke (Leiden: Brill, 2003), Index, s.v. "Satan, devil" ('Aṭṭār).

8 See Alessandro Bausani, "Satan in Iqbal's Philosophical and Poetic Works," trans. R. A. Butler, *Iqbal Review* 9, no. 2 (1963): 68-118.

9 See Q 38:74.

10 For his life, writings, and teachings see Mohammed Rustom, *Inrushes of the Heart: The Mystical Theology of 'Ayn al-Quḍāt* (Albany: SUNY Press, in press). Surveys of scholarship on 'Ayn al-Quḍāt can be found in Muḥsin Muḥammadī Fishārakī and Su'ād Sādāt Mūsawī, "Kitābshināsi-yi 'Ayn al-Quḍāt Hamadānī dar Īrān," *Āyina-yi pizhūhish* 26, no. 6 (2016): 107-121 and Rustom, "Ayn al-Quḍāt between Divine Jealousy and Political Intrigue," *Journal of Sufi Studies* 7, no. 1-2 (2018): 47-73 (at pp. 47-49). For an extensive listing of studies on 'Ayn al-Quḍāt, including some critical reviews of books written about him, see the bibliography in Rustom, *Inrushes of the Heart*, s.v. "Works on 'Ayn al-Quḍāt Cited or Consulted."

11 Awn, *Satan's Tragedy and Redemption*, 134-150.

12 Recent examples include Nargis Ḥasanī, "Simā-yi Iblīs dar āthār-i 'Ayn al-Quḍāt Hamadānī," *Muṭāla'āt-i 'irfānī* 6 (2007): 5-34; Ghulām Riḍā Musta'li Pārsā, *Naẓar-i 'Ayn al-Quḍāt Hamadānī dar mawrid-i Iblīs wa-irtibāṭ-i ān bā niẓām-i aḥsan* (Tehran: Nashr-i 'Ilm, 2010); Firoozeh Papan-Matin, *Beyond Death: Mystical Teachings of 'Ayn al-Quḍāt Hamadānī* (Leiden: Brill, 2010), passim; Ali Asghar Seyed-Gohrab, "Satan as the Lover of God in Islamic Mystical Writings," in *The Beloved in Middle East Literature*, edited by Alireza Korangy, Hanadi Al-Samman, and Michael Beard (London: I. B. Tauris, 2017), 85-101 (at pp. 94-98).

13 Nicholas Boylston, "Writing the Kaleidoscope of Reality, the Significance of Diversity in 6th/12th Century Persian Metaphysical Literature: Sanā'ī, 'Ayn al-Quḍāt and 'Aṭṭār" (PhD diss., Georgetown University, 2017), 305-335.

Prophet: although in “radical tension”¹⁴ with one another, both Muhammad and Iblis embody different “responses to the creative will of God.”¹⁵ However, on another level, Awn’s presentation is lacking. Apart from missing a number of important texts on Iblis in ‘Ayn al-Quḍāt’s oeuvre,¹⁶ Awn paid little attention to ‘Ayn al-Quḍāt’s own philosophical and theological doctrines which are connected to his Satanology.¹⁷

Boylston’s study of ‘Ayn al-Quḍāt’s Satanology is framed against the backdrop of a methodological perspective which has an eye on demonstrating how ‘Ayn al-Quḍāt integrates various positions and symbols into a unified and dynamic vision of reality. This unique perspectival reading allows Boylston to see interconnected perspectival shifts in ‘Ayn al-Quḍāt’s defence of Iblis where others have only seen disparate parts.

My approach to ‘Ayn al-Quḍāt in this article seeks to engage his ideas which are often cast in the mold of the Persian Sufi school of passionate love (*madhhab-i ‘ishq*) against the backdrop of his theoretical teachings on the one hand, and the authors and traditions that influenced him on the other. At minimum, this can help yield the insight that ‘Ayn al-Quḍāt in many ways anticipates some of the major trends which characterize the post-Avicennan *ḥikmat* tradition, or what is commonly referred to as “philosophical Sufism.”¹⁸

As will be shown with respect to ‘Ayn al-Quḍāt’s Satanology, this manner of approach reveals our author’s defence of Iblis as being intimately related to his theodicy, as well as his teachings on freedom and determinism. At the same time, ‘Ayn al-Quḍāt uses his Satanology to take us to a position which problematizes theoretical discourse itself.

Being and Light

‘Ayn al-Quḍāt adheres to a view familiar to readers of Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī (d. 505/1111) and very much in line with the worldview of Ibn ‘Arabī (d. 638/1240)

14 Awn, *Satan’s Tragedy and Redemption*, 136.

15 Awn, *Satan’s Tragedy and Redemption*, 138.

16 These are presented in translation in Rustom, *Inrushes of the Heart*, chapter 9.

17 See also the observations in Salimeh Maghsoudlou, “La pensée de ‘Ayn al-Quḍāt al-Hamadānī (m. 525/1131), entre avicennisme et héritage ḡazālīen” (PhD diss., École Pratique des Hautes Études, 2016), 24 and 288, n. 733.

18 A working definition of this term can be found in Rustom, “Philosophical Sufism,” in *The Routledge Companion to Islamic Philosophy*, edited by Richard Taylor and Luis Xavier López-Farjeat (New York: Routledge, 2016), 399-411. See also Muhammad Faruque, “Sufi Metaphysical Literature,” in *Brill Handbook of Sufi Literature*, edited by Alexander Knysch and Bilal Orfali (Leiden: Brill, forthcoming).

and his followers, namely *waḥdat al-wujūd* or the “Oneness of Being.”¹⁹ He discusses this position in all but name in many places throughout his oeuvre. Two particularly noteworthy texts are from his Arabic *Zubdat al-ḥaqāʾiq* (*The Quintessence of Reality*) and Persian *Nāma-hā* (*Letters*) respectively:

The truth is that God was existent and there was nothing with Him. And now, He is existent and there is nothing with Him. And He will be existent, and nothing will be with Him. His Beginninglessness is present with His Endlessness with no difference between them.... [T]here is no existence apart from Him, nor can the existence of that other thing be conceived.²⁰

We have just said that, alongside His being, there is nothing apart from His being. Such is definitely the case: apart from His being, there is nothing with being such that it is an absolute unity [*waḥdāniyyat-i mutlaq*]. Since there is no doubt at all about absolute unity, it necessarily follows that being is one, and that it belongs to Him.²¹

In other words, the only existent is God, who is absolute being. Now if there is nothing apart from God's being, what can be said about the ontological status of all things other than God, which seem to have some share of existence? The answer lies in ‘Ayn al-Quḍāt’s statement to the effect that God’s being is an “absolute unity.” Those things that exist do so by virtue of God’s unity. Yet God’s unity never becomes a multiplicity by virtue of the various existent things that emerge from it, nor do these existent things have a share in it. Rather, in and of themselves, they are nonexistent:

There cannot be existence in itself apart from the eternal. Whatever is other than He can only be nonexistent [*ma’dūm*] in itself: when you

19 For a diachronic analysis of *waḥdat al-wujūd*, see William Chittick, *In Search of the Lost Heart: Explorations in Islamic Thought*, ed. Mohammed Rustom, Atif Khalil, and Kazuyo Murata (Albany: SUNY Press, 2012), chapter 8.

20 ‘Ayn al-Quḍāt, *Zubdat al-ḥaqāʾiq*, in part I of *Muṣannafāt-i ‘Ayn al-Quḍāt* [also *Zubdat al-ḥaqāʾiq*], ed. ‘Afif ‘Usayrān (Tehran: Intishārāt-i Dānīshgāh-i Tīhrān, 1962), 57. A new translation and edition of this work is forthcoming: *The Quintessence of Reality: Stages Beyond Reason*, ed. and trans. Mohammed Rustom (Library of Arabic Literature; New York: New York University Press). Toshihiko Izutsu wrote two penetrating studies on this text: “Creation and the Timeless Order of Things: A Study in the Mystical Philosophy of ‘Ayn al-Quḍāt,” *Philosophical Forum* 4, no. 1 (1972): 124-140 and “Mysticism and the Linguistic Problem of Equivocation in the Thought of ‘Ayn al-Quḍāt Hamadānī,” *Studia Islamica* 31 (1970): 153-170.

21 ‘Ayn al-Quḍāt, *Nāma-hā*, 3:397, § 219.

think of something apart from the eternal, it can only be enclosed by nonexistence.²²

‘Ayn al-Quḍāt draws on the notion of the fundamental nonexistence of all things in a number of different contexts and for a variety of purposes throughout his writings. Most importantly, it allows him to maintain a robust ontology of God’s oneness in which God can be said to “be” all things, but not by way of essential identification; this in turn relates to his unique understanding of divine self-reflexive perception on the one hand, and his theory of aesthetics on the other.²³

At the same time, our author approaches his ontology from a variety of angles and often qualifies his statements in a manner that defies any kind of neat and tidy explanation.²⁴ In one place, he states that God, the only real existent, causes all things to exist in such a way that His very presence with them entails their existence. Although God is coextensive (*musāwīq*) with them, they are in nowise coextensive with Him, and this because they are coloured by essential nonexistence and nothingness:

There is no existent thing in existence whose existence is coextensive with the existence of the Necessary, nor can it be conceived to be the case. Thus, there is no first existent thing, or something other than it, whose existence is coextensive with the existence of the Necessary. But, the Necessary is coextensive in existence [*musāwīq al-wujūd*] with the existence of each thing. And His coextensiveness with what is to be brought into existence is like His coextensiveness with the first existent thing, without any difference between them.²⁵

On the one hand, God’s coextensiveness with every existent thing entails an infinite, logical priority (*qabliyya*) on His part. On the other hand, all existent things are not in any way coextensive with Him. What is needed to be able to understand this teaching, ‘Ayn al-Quḍāt tells us, is something other than our normal discursive methods. One must come to “see” it for himself, and this can only be done by means of “the eye of recognition [*‘irfān*].”²⁶ It should here

22 ‘Ayn al-Quḍāt, *Nāma-hā*, 1:133-134, §§ 190-191.

23 See Rustom, *Inrushes of the Heart*, chapters 7 and 10 respectively.

24 A very fine attempt to present his formal philosophical and theological ideas alongside the historical influences upon them can be found in Maghsoudlou, “La pensée de ‘Ayn al-Quḍāt al-Hamadānī,” parts 1 and 2.

25 ‘Ayn al-Quḍāt, *Zubdat*, 79.

26 ‘Ayn al-Quḍāt, *Zubdat*, 79.

suffice to note that 'Ayn al-Quḍāt's ontology and epistemology are hierarchical and graded: what may be logically demonstrable in the domain of theology or philosophy on a lower epistemic level need not necessarily apply at higher levels, or at least not in the same way and with reference to the same epistemic faculties.

'Ayn al-Quḍāt commonly discusses the multileveled nature of reality and the various means by which it can be understood with reference to light. As he states in his Persian magnum opus *Tamhīdāt* (*Paving the Path*), "Existent things and created beings are adorned and made eminent in levels of light [*nūr-hā*]."²⁷ Since existence and light are synonymous for 'Ayn al-Quḍāt, God, the Necessary Existent (*wājib al-wujūd*), is also "the Illuminator [*munawwir*] of all other lights"²⁸ and "the Source of lights [*maṣḍar al-anwār*]."²⁹ Just as all existent things come about by way of God's existence, so too are they situated along the continuum of lights that emanate from God, the supreme light.

Given that God is the only real existent, He is also the only real light. And just as all things that come into existence are nonexistent in and of themselves, so too are all things that are qualified by God's light mired in darkness, in and of themselves. But when they are qualified by God's light, we can speak of them as being lights, but only metaphorically:

The ascription of real light [*nūr-i ḥaqīqī*] belongs to God, and applies to other lights metaphorically.³⁰ Each existent thing in the cosmos was nonexistent. Then, with His light, power, and will they became existent things. Since the existence of the heavens and the earth is from His power and will, *God is the light of the heavens and the earth* [24:35] only applies to Him. Can you see any rays of light in darkness? No, the manifestation and unveiling of the sun's rays are on account of the existence of sunrise. If there were no sunrise, the rays could not be seen and would appear as nonexistent.³¹

27 'Ayn al-Quḍāt, *Tamhīdāt*, ed. 'Afif 'Usayrān (Tehran: Intishārāt-i Manūchihri, 1994), 122, § 170.

28 'Ayn al-Quḍāt, *Tamhīdāt*, 255, § 335.

29 'Ayn al-Quḍāt, *Tamhīdāt*, 257, § 338.

30 Among texts written before 'Ayn al-Quḍāt's time, an obvious precursor to this idea is to be found in Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī, *The Niche of Lights*, trans. David Buchman (Islamic Translation Series; Provo: Brigham Young University Press, 1998), 20.

31 'Ayn al-Quḍāt, *Tamhīdāt*, 256, § 336. See also *Tamhīdāt*, 324, § 424: "In real Light, all metaphorical lights take on reality."

A Fissureless World

A natural corollary to ‘Ayn al-Quḍāt’s metaphysics of light and darkness is his emphasis on the nonexistence of the reality of evil. Since God qua light is sheer goodness, all other existent things qua metaphorical lights are enveloped in divine goodness. If we can nevertheless speak of evil in the cosmos, it is not by virtue of itself, since absolute evil is the counter opposite of absolute good, and is therefore nonexistent.

As with so many of the other theological and philosophical topics that ‘Ayn al-Quḍāt tackles in his writings, he approaches the question of the unreality of evil in the cosmos from several different angles. One of these occurs in the context of his refutation of Zoroastrian dualism, which he approaches with three points in mind:

- (1) The Zoroastrians are dualists since they affirm two gods, one who is responsible for good and the other for evil. Therefore, alongside God there is another god “who causes evil to exist [*mūjid-i sharr*].”³²
- (2) Following a long-established theological trend based on a Hadith,³³ the Zoroastrians are to be identified with the Mu‘tazila since, on the moral plane, they attribute actions and situations that are good to God and actions and situations that are bad to man; and, on the plane of action, they insist on absolute human freedom as opposed to divine destiny.³⁴
- (3) The errors committed by the Zoroastrians and the Mu‘tazila are the result of the corruption of originally true doctrines by none other than “bad transmitters” (*nāqilān-i bad*).³⁵

‘Ayn al-Quḍāt’s disagreement with Zoroastrian dualism, which is very much reminiscent of St. Augustine’s (d. 430) response to Manichean dualism, is informed by the fact that the Zoroastrians adhere to a theology of light/good and darkness/evil, each of which have a different god as their source:

The Zoroastrians say, “God is two: One is Yazdan (who is light) and the other is Ahriman (who is darkness). Light commands obedience, and

32 ‘Ayn al-Quḍāt, *Nāma-hā* 2:309, § 466. See also *Nāma-hā* 2:281, § 422 and 2:309-311, §§ 468-469; *Tamhīdāt*, 305, § 401.

33 For the Hadith in question, see Rustom, *Inrushes of the Heart*, chapter 4.

34 See *Nāma-hā* 2:270, § 405ff. A study of the ethics of agency in Mu‘tazili thought can be found in Sophia Vasalou, *Moral Agents and Their Deserts: The Character of Mu‘tazilite Ethics* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2008).

35 We will here focus on (1). For (2) and (3), see Rustom, *Inrushes of the Heart*, chapter 4.

darkness evil. Light is the day's appointed time, and darkness the night's place of return. Infidelity comes from one, and faith from the other."³⁶

Such a position is untenable for 'Ayn al-Quḍāt because there is only one order of reality, and that is God's being and light. Since God is absolute goodness, He only intends the good. Thus, all that comes about in the cosmic order is good. This does not leave room for absolute evil in the cosmos, much less a separate source of evil as the Zoroastrians claim. This explains why, contra the Zoroastrian position, 'Ayn al-Quḍāt goes so far as to say that the evil we do perceive in the world does not come from a source outside of God.³⁷ What is implied here is that evil is of a relational kind and is nonexistent per se. In the clearest expression of this position in his writings, 'Ayn al-Quḍāt explains it in this way:

In general, one must say that, in itself, evil is nonexistent. That is the truth, however farfetched it is for human understanding. The Messenger's statement and the scholarly consensus must be interpreted – namely why they affirmed the existence of evil. This is just like when the father and mother of a child call cupping “evil” with reference to what is apparent and in relation to the child's perception, since he can only perceive pain. But, the parents know the reality: cupping is not evil; rather, it is good!

Likewise, it is certainly known to the Prophets and Friends of God that nothing but the good comes into existence from God and that all of His actions are good. However, it might be that not everyone will know that whatever exists is good and is not evil. The bad is relational [*nisbatī*], but in itself it is nonexistent. Thus, the name “evil” exists and is affirmed. Although from the perspective of reality evil is nonexistent, it is merely affirmed as such in accordance with the understanding of people. Yet the existence of the reality of evil, in relation to God's mercy, generosity, and bounty is known to be impossible.³⁸

36 'Ayn al-Quḍāt, *Tamhīdāt*, 305, § 401.

37 'Ayn al-Quḍāt, *Nāma-hā*, 2:270-271, § 405.

38 'Ayn al-Quḍāt, *Nāma-hā*, 2:294, § 444. See also the related points in *Nāma-hā*, 2:272-276, §§ 409-416. In this context, 'Ayn al-Quḍāt draws on the example of parents disciplining their child. Their disciplinary actions may look like “evil” to the outside observer, but they are motivated by love and a desire for the overall improvement of the child. See also *Nāma-hā*, 2:292-293, § 44.

The view that evil is pure privation goes back to Plotinus' (d. 270) *Enneads* 1.8, "On What Evils Are and Where They Come From."³⁹ Plotinus' account of evil was influential on a variety of thinkers, such as Avicenna (d. 428/1037). As Ayman Shihadeh observes, Avicenna's theodicy had its fair share of supporters and detractors, chief among the latter being Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī (d. 606/1210).⁴⁰ 'Ayn al-Quḍāt's thinking is in some sense also indebted to Avicenna's theodicy.⁴¹ Indeed, what 'Ayn al-Quḍāt refers to as "relational" evil accounts for what Avicenna calls "accidental evil" (*al-sharr al-'aradī*). This kind of evil exists, without a doubt, and it is a necessary feature of the sub-lunary realm. In *Ilāhīyyāt* 1x.6, "On Providence and an Explanation of How Evil Enters into the Divine Decree," Avicenna explains the point with reference to fire:

It is impossible that the purpose for which fire is intended be created but that the fire not burn. Moreover, since the whole is only perfect when it includes that which is burned and warmed and that which burns and warms, it inescapably follows that the beneficial purpose in the existence of these things has, as its consequences, harmful things that occur accidentally from the very act of burning and of being burnt – as, for example, when fire burns a limb of a pious person.⁴²

39 Plotinus, *The Enneads*, ed. Lloyd Gerson; trans. George Boys-Stones, John Dillon, Lloyd Gerson, R. A. H. King, Andrew Smith, and James Wilberding (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), 1.8 (pp. 110-123).

40 Ayman Shihadeh, "Avicenna's Theodicy and al-Rāzī's Anti-Theodicy," *Intellectual History of the Islamicate World* 7, no. 1 (2019): 61-84. For another aspect of Rāzī's treatment of theodicy, see Faruque, "Does God Create Evil? A Study of Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī's Exegesis of *Sūrat al-Falaq*," *Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations* 28, no. 3 (2017): 271-291.

41 See Avicenna, *The Metaphysics of the Healing*, trans. Michael Marmura (Islamic Translation Series; Provo: Brigham Young University Press, 2005), 1x.6 (pp. 339-347). Discussions of 'Ayn al-Quḍāt's understanding of theodicy can be found in Boylston, "Writing the Kaleidoscope of Reality," 306-314; Maghsoudlou, "La pensée de 'Ayn al-Quḍāt al-Hamadānī," 277-289; Rustom, *Inrushes of the Heart*, chapter 4. For inquiries into Avicenna's theodicy, see Shams Inati, *The Problem of Evil: Ibn Sina's Theodicy* (2nd ed.; Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias Press, 2017) and Olga Lizzini, "Matter and Nature – On the Foundations of Avicenna's Theodicy: An Overview," *Intellectual History of the Islamicate World* 7, no. 1 (2019): 7-34.

42 Cited, with modifications, from Avicenna, *Metaphysics of the Healing*, 1x.6, § 16 (pp. 344-345). See also the discussions in Catarina Belo, *Chance and Determinism in Avicenna and Averroes* (Leiden: Brill, 2007), 45-51; Maria De Cillis, *Free Will and Predestination in Islamic Thought: Theoretical Compromises in the Works of Avicenna, Ghazālī and Ibn 'Arabī* (London: Routledge, 2014), 49-51; Jonathan Dubé, "Ḥayy ibn Yaqzān's Parable of the Two Generous Men in Avicenna's *Decree and Determination* (*R. fī l-Qaḍā' wa-l-qadr*)," *Intellectual History of the Islamicate World* 7, no. 1 (2019): 35-60 (at p. 47ff.)

'Ayn al-Quḍāt is silent on the other kind of evil identified by Avicenna, namely "essential evil" (*al-sharr al-dhātī*).⁴³ This refers to the ultimate end of a thing not being realized in a particular substrate which, by nature, tends towards that end (i.e. evil is privative).⁴⁴ Assuming that 'Ayn al-Quḍāt does accept essential evil, it can be said that, with respect to the good qua light, when its ultimate end is not realized in the world, we can speak of a privation of light and hence "darkness." And, just as we can speak of relational evil as emergent by way of a necessary consequence of the order of the good, so too can we speak of darkness as emergent as a necessary consequence of the graded order of light.⁴⁵

With this latter point in mind, 'Ayn al-Quḍāt demonstrates his indebtedness to Avicenna's theory of providence (*ināya*) and Ghazālī's "best of possible worlds" thesis.⁴⁶ As Avicenna states, divine providence "is in the First's knowing in Himself the existence of the order of the good [*nizām al-khayr*], and in His being a cause in Himself of the good and the perfect in accordance with what is possible."⁴⁷ Viewing the particular configuration of the world as the most optimal of worlds, the good obtains vis-à-vis the very nature of the cosmic order; but this also entails the necessary presence of evils:

Whatever has come and will come into existence from God, all of it is of the utmost beauty and perfection. Yet this is in relation to the cosmic order [*nizām-i 'ālam*], not in relation to the order of those particulars which are suitable to you and me. In general, it is known to people that fire, water, the sun, and the moon are necessary in relation to the cosmic order. But, rain destroys the home of a poor man, fire burns a child, someone becomes sick because of the moon, and particular harms occur to a person on account of the sun.⁴⁸

43 See the point raised in Maghsoudlou, "La pensée de 'Ayn al-Quḍāt al-Hamadānī," 287.

44 Avicenna gives the example of blindness in the eye, which is a case of the inability of sight to be realized in the ocular faculty, which, by nature, ought to have sight. See Avicenna, *Metaphysics of the Healing*, IX.6, § 3 (p. 340). See also Dubé, "Ḥayy ibn Yaqzān's Parable of the Two Generous Men," 47.

45 Cf. 'Ayn al-Quḍāt, *Nāma-hā*, 2:267, § 400.

46 For Ghazālī's treatment of this problem, see Eric Ormsby, *Theodicy in Islamic Thought: The Dispute Over al-Ghazālī's "Best of all Possible Worlds"* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1984). See also Taneli Kukkonen, "Possible Worlds in the *Tahâfut al-Falâsifa*: Al-Ghazâlî on Creation and Contingency," *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 38, no. 4 (2000): 479-502.

47 Cited, with modifications, from Avicenna, *Metaphysics of the Healing*, IX.6, § 1 (p. 339).

48 'Ayn al-Quḍāt, *Nāma-hā*, 1:401, § 667. Cf. *Nāma-hā* 1:401, § 668 and 2:292-293, § 441, where emphasis is placed on our inability to know the reality of the problem of evil and the

Indeed, if things could have been made otherwise but were not made so, it would imply a deficiency on the part of God, who is the All-Wise:

Whatever is in existence, something better than it is inconceivable. For He is “*the most just of judges*” [11:45], “*the most merciful of the merciful,*” [7:151], the most knowing of the knowing, and the most powerful of the powerful. If something from Him came into existence but for which there could be something better, of all of these statements, one of them would be an error. O dear friend! It is a grave mistake for you not to know, and for you not to know that you do not know!⁴⁹

If you do not believe, then hear it from God: *Praise be to God, Who created the heavens and the earth, and made darknesses and light* [6:1]. Alas! How can blackness without whiteness and whiteness without blackness have perfection? Neither would have perfection. The divine wisdom decreed it like this. By virtue of His own wisdom, the All-Wise knows it must be like this and should be like this. In this court, all are at work. If a mote of deficiency is found in His creation, it would entail a deficiency in the All-Wise and in wisdom itself.⁵⁰

It is important to note the emphasis ‘Ayn al-Quḍāt places on complementarity: the white can only be known as white in relation to the black and vice versa. We shall discuss this point when we turn to ‘Ayn al-Quḍāt’s Satanology proper. One of the implications of the kind of view presented by our author is that absolute evil would imply fissures in the cosmos. Since there is no absolute evil, and whatever evils exist are rather miniscule in relation to the abundance of goodness,⁵¹ everything is where it is supposed to be. Each thing is perfectly positioned in accordance with the overall well-being (*ṣalāḥ*) of the cosmos and all that it contains.⁵²

In describing how our limited human understanding gives rise to all manner of unclarity precisely on the problem of evil, ‘Ayn al-Quḍāt presents us with

secret of destiny by virtue of our limited intellectual perspective. See also the helpful discussion in Belo, *Chance and Determinism in Avicenna and Averroes*, 50-51.

49 See also ‘Ayn al-Quḍāt, *Nāma-hā*, 1:345, § 576.

50 ‘Ayn al-Quḍāt, *Tamhīdāt*, 122, § 170. Cf. this position with the Māturīdī emphasis on the essential necessity of God’s *ḥikma* informing all things. See the discussion in Sherman Jackson, *Islam and the Problem of Black Suffering* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 109-113.

51 On this point, see the observations in Avicenna, *Metaphysics of the Healing*, 1x.6, §§ 7-9 (pp. 341-342) and Frithjof Schuon, “The Problem of Theodicies,” *Studies in Comparative Religion* 8, no. 1 (1974): 5-14 (at pp. 10-11).

52 ‘Ayn al-Quḍāt, *Nāma-hā*, 1:343, § 573.

an example of a great scholar who writes a treatise.⁵³ His son asks him questions about this particular treatise: why are parts of the treatise's paper black while its margins remain white? If the paper's well-being is in being white, the son avers, then his father should make all of the paper white; and if the paper's perfection lies in its being black, then it should all become black. The father will be unable to respond to his son's objections, and this because his son is deficient in understanding what the father's profession entails. What is needed to see the world in its pristine perfection, as an ocean of goodness and light even amidst the waves of evil and darkness, are what 'Ayn al-Quḍāt calls "Muhammadan eyes." This special mode of sight and knowing results from being able to see things, like the Prophet, through "the light of divinity."⁵⁴

For 'Ayn al-Quḍāt then, there are no fissures in the order of the good – it all comes from God, and since God is pure goodness, it is all good. And, since there are disparities in the form of relational evils in the order of the good, there will naturally be instances where the good is not as manifest as in other instances. Through the right lens, even these cases can be seen in their bare goodness.

With our treatment of 'Ayn al-Quḍāt's theodicy in place, the question of the status of human freedom in his cosmic vision naturally arises.⁵⁵ After all, it is precisely in the actions of people that we notice a great degree of good and a significant amount of evil. We therefore now turn to 'Ayn al-Quḍāt's theory of human action.

Constrained Freedom

With great skill and erudition, Salimeh Maghsoudlou has convincingly shown how 'Ayn al-Quḍāt heavily relies on Ghazālī in developing his theory to the effect that secondary causes act out of a kind of divine compulsion.⁵⁶ This results in 'Ayn al-Quḍāt's adherence to a rather complicated understanding of secondary causation. On the one hand, he appears to be an occasionalist, reserving any and all real causal efficacy to God. On the other hand, he affirms some kind of secondary causation proceeding from the very natures

53 'Ayn al-Quḍāt, *Nāma-hā*, 1:346, § 577.

54 'Ayn al-Quḍāt, *Nāma-hā*, 1:402, § 670.

55 Cf. Maghsoudlou, "La pensée de 'Ayn al-Quḍāt al-Hamadānī," 277, where the author states that her treatment of 'Ayn al-Quḍāt's theory of human action is a prelude to her exposition of his theodicy.

56 Maghsoudlou, "La pensée de 'Ayn al-Quḍāt al-Hamadānī," 262-264. For Ghazālī's influence upon 'Ayn al-Quḍāt, see Rustom, *Inrushes of the Heart*, chapter 1 and the references therein (at n. 1 in particular).

of things.⁵⁷ Consequently, our author sees secondary causes as resultant from God's custom or habit (*sunna*), but with this habit itself being identified with the order of nature (*ṭabīʿa*).⁵⁸

For 'Ayn al-Quḍāt it is clear that God compels the natural order to act in certain ways. Yet when it comes to man, can we say that he is free, or is he somehow also compelled? Let us first consider this passage from *Paving the Path*:

Through the medium of man's choice [*ikhṭiyār*], various actions arise in existence. If he wants, he can move to the left, and if he wants, he can move to the right. If he wants, he can rest, and if he wants, he can move.⁵⁹

There is no reason to believe that 'Ayn al-Quḍāt, in Ash'arī fashion, would not want to identify free choice with "will" (*irāda*). The above passage seems to say that man can make real choices, that is, have a real will to do certain acts and not do others. But for 'Ayn al-Quḍāt the kind of freedom in question is not what is today referred to as "libertarianism."⁶⁰ Rather, his is a free will that takes man not in the direction of constraint by virtue of a divine determinism, but into a kind of constrained freedom of agency.⁶¹ Put differently, man must act, but within the confines of the rules set down by the One who truly acts.

'Ayn al-Quḍāt states that, "Through his choice [*ikhṭiyār*], man is compelled [*muḍṭarr*], overpowered [*maqhūr*], and subjugated [*musakhkhar*]."⁶² This statement appears in the context of a response to the Mu'tazila on precisely the question of human agency. Summarizing their position, he says the following:

They say, "Choice is not compelled – man is free to choose, not compelled to choose." They do not know this much, namely that whoever is

57 See the helpful discussion in Maghsoudlou, "La pensée de 'Ayn al-Quḍāt al-Hamadānī," 245-265.

58 Maghsoudlou, "La pensée de 'Ayn al-Quḍāt al-Hamadānī," 264.

59 'Ayn al-Quḍāt, *Tamhīdāt*, 190, § 247. This passage also appears in slightly different form in *Nāma-hā* 1:337, § 563. Cf. *Nāma-hā* 3:335-336, § 94.

60 For an outline of the different kinds of libertarianism in contemporary philosophy, see Robert Kane, "Introduction: The Contours of Contemporary Free-Will Debates (Part 2)," in *The Oxford Handbook of Free Will*, ed. Robert Kane (2nd ed.; New York: Oxford University Press, 2011) 3-35 (at pp. 19-24).

61 My account below draws on, but also in some parts differs from, the analysis in Maghsoudlou, "La pensée de 'Ayn al-Quḍāt al-Hamadānī," 265-277.

62 'Ayn al-Quḍāt, *Nāma-hā*, 3:338, § 100. See also *Nāma-hā*, 2:268, § 401.

compelled and subjugated is so by means of a specific quality that is in him. Thus man, by means of his own choice, is compelled.⁶³

‘Ayn al-Quḍāt drives home the same point elsewhere in the *Letters*: the “specific quality” in man is nothing other than the quality (*ṣifa*) of choice or will. Man must choose, just as fire, by virtue of the quality of burning inherent in it, must burn.⁶⁴ Such a position would nevertheless not satisfy the Mu‘tazilī radical understanding of human freedom. But for ‘Ayn al-Quḍāt, this notion of constrained choice on the plane of human action nicely dovetails with his cosmology of constrained causation on the plane of nature.⁶⁵

As is well-known, the notion of compelled freedom goes back to Avicenna.⁶⁶ He explains the problem in this way:

It is said that “Man is compelled in the form of a freely-choosing agent [*al-insān muḍṭarr fi sūrat mukhtār*].” It means that, in his choosing, the freely-choosing agent in our midst is not free from an impelling factor which impels him to perform that act.⁶⁷

Avicenna goes on to tell us that the “impelling factor” (*dā‘*) in question is either intrinsic (*dhātī*) to the freely-choosing agent, or it is extrinsic to him (*ghayruhu*).⁶⁸ This account fits in perfectly well with Avicenna’s worldview, which is sometimes mischaracterized as being “necessitarian”⁶⁹ when in actuality it is a form of causal determinism. Avicenna’s account of compelled human agency is known to have been influential upon the likes of Rāzī, who cites the

63 ‘Ayn al-Quḍāt, *Nāma-hā*, 3:338, § 100.

64 ‘Ayn al-Quḍāt, *Nāma-hā*, 1:337, § 563.

65 See also the insights in Maghsoudlou, “La pensée de ‘Ayn al-Quḍāt al-Hamadānī,” 276-277.

66 In citing the *Ta‘liqāt*, I will be using the critical edition established by Sayyid Ḥusayn Mūsawiyyān (Tehran: Mu‘assasa-yi Pizhūhishī-yi Ḥikmat wa-Falsafa-yi Irān, 2013). However, since it is not as widely available as the earlier edition by ‘Abd al-Raḥmān Badawī (Cairo: al-Hay‘a al-Miṣriyya al-‘Āmma li’l-Kitāb, 1973), reference will also be made to the corresponding pages in Badawī’s edition. Mūsawiyyān’s edition will be cited as *Ta‘liqāt* (1) and Badawī’s as *Ta‘liqāt* (2).

67 Avicenna, *Ta‘liqāt* (1), 124, § 161; *Ta‘liqāt* (2), 51.

68 Avicenna, *Ta‘liqāt* (1), 124-125, § 161; *Ta‘liqāt* (2), 51-52.

69 Cf. Tim Winter, “Islam and the Problem of Evil,” in *The Cambridge Companion to the Problem of Evil*, ed. Chad Meister and Paul Moser (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 230-248 (at p. 243).

exact same phrase from Avicenna – *al-insān muḍṭarr fī sūrat mukhtār* – in one of his writings.⁷⁰

The extent to which Avicenna was influential upon ‘Ayn al-Quḍāt in this regard remains an open question.⁷¹ It is most likely the case that ‘Ayn al-Quḍāt’s understanding of constrained choice came by way of Ghazālī’s *Iḥyā’ ulūm al-dīn* (*Revival of the Religious Sciences*). In response to the hypothetical question, “How can man be under compulsion [*majbūr*] and be a freely-choosing agent?” Ghazālī says,

When the veil is lifted, you will come to know that the essence of choice is compulsion. One is, then, under compulsion in freely choosing. But how can one who does not understand “choice” understand this?⁷²

Elsewhere in the *Revival*, Ghazālī explains how humans have the quality of “choice,” but how even that is created by God:

Everything is created by God and His action: “*God creates you and what you do*” [37:96]. For those endowed with insight, this is the truth. And what is other than this is error. If you say, “Does the servant have a choice to act or not to act?” we will say, “Yes, but that does not detract from our statement, ‘Everything is created by God and His action.’” Indeed, choice is also created by God, for the servant is compelled [*muḍṭarr*] in the choices he makes.⁷³

Incidentally, Ibn ‘Arabī often draws on this doctrine, saying that man is “under compulsion in his choosing.”⁷⁴ But perhaps unlike Ibn ‘Arabī, ‘Ayn al-Quḍāt is particularly concerned with illustrating how actions are subjugated by virtue of a thing’s inherent quality. In one example, he explains that the qualities inherent in the utensils used for writing are subjugated by man in order to carry out the act of writing.

Now, listen: knife, pen, inkpot, and ink – all four are subjugated by man, and each one is put to work by the other. The subjugation of each of these four is by means of a quality that is in it, and which is not in the other

70 See Shihadeh, *The Teleological Ethics of Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī* (Leiden: Brill, 2006), 37, n. 105.

71 Cf. Maghsoudlou, “La pensée de ‘Ayn al-Quḍāt al-Hamadānī,” 272-274.

72 Ghazālī, *Iḥyā’ ulūm al-dīn* (Jeddah: Dār al-Minhāj, 2011), 8:229.

73 Ghazālī, *Iḥyā’*, 7:22. Cf. Shihadeh, *Teleological Ethics of Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī*, 37, n. 105.

74 See Ibn ‘Arabī, *al-Futūḥāt al-Makkīyya* (Beirut: Dār Ṣādir, 1968), 1:458, 2:444, 3:204, etc.

three things. When man wants to make a pen, he does so with a knife, for in the knife there is a quality through which the pen is prepared to be cut. This quality is neither in the inkpot, the ink, nor the pen. Likewise, in the pen is a quality through which comes a tool for writing such that the pen becomes subjugated by man for the purpose of writing. And in the inkpot there is a quality through which it becomes a lodging place and repository for ink.⁷⁵

What this example is meant to do is highlight the manner in which human actions are constrained and ultimately implicated in a determinative network of causation that goes back to God as the only real Cause.⁷⁶ But the example does not adequately explain how human choice factors into this determinative network.

For this, we need to turn to another example from the *Letters* wherein the situation is likened to a rider and his horse. When not ridden, the horse's freedom to move about is natural (*tabīrī*); but when ridden, the horse's freedom is still effective, but under the control and domination of the rider.⁷⁷

It would be correct to say that, for 'Ayn al-Quḍāt, man is "forced" to have a choice by his very nature. The kind of choice in question is not an open-ended form of choice, as alluded to earlier; nor is it a choice among several possibilities. Rather, the type of choice 'Ayn al-Quḍāt has in mind is limited to two distinct possibilities: doing a certain thing and not doing that thing.⁷⁸

Before moving on to 'Ayn al-Quḍāt's Satanology, let us see how his theory of constrained freedom features in another example from the *Letters*. In the text in question, 'Ayn al-Quḍāt takes his own situation as a potential writer of a particular letter as a case in point. In both writing and not writing, he is compelled to act, and since this act proceeds from his will, it is based on his limited freedom of choice:

If I write and if I do not write – in both of these, I am overpowered and compelled. This is because, when I write, although I do so with

75 'Ayn al-Quḍāt, *Nāma-hā*, 3:336, § 295. This example is also used in *Nāma-hā* 2:268, § 401. Cf. *Nāma-hā*, 3:337-338, § 99.

76 See also the discussion in Maghsoudlou, "La pensée de 'Ayn al-Quḍāt al-Hamadāni," 276. A study of many major Muslim thinkers' perspectives on causation and its relationship to free choice can be found in Özgür Koca, *Islam, Causality, and Freedom: From the Medieval to the Modern Era* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2020).

77 'Ayn al-Quḍāt, *Nāma-hā*, 2:344-345, § 529.

78 A very useful treatment of this problem can be found in Maghsoudlou, "La pensée de 'Ayn al-Quḍāt al-Hamadāni," 274-277.

choice [*ikhṭiyār*], in writing with choice, I am compelled. And when I do not write, although I do not do so with choice, in not writing, I am compelled.⁷⁹

Complementarity and Compulsion

We will now switch gears and examine how ‘Ayn al-Qudāt’s Satanology relates to his theodicy and doctrine of human agency.⁸⁰ Key to this discussion is his repeated emphasis on cosmic complementarity, which is best personified by the persons of Muhammad and Iblis. Typically, they each embody two forms of light, as well as two different aspects of God’s self-disclosure. With respect to the former, it will be recalled that ‘Ayn al-Qudāt insists on referring to God as “light” as well as the “Source of lights.” At the same time, he also implies that God is light qua substance.⁸¹ But, qua manifestation, His light emits rays, which are akin to the accidents of a substance:

Substance is an expression of the source of existence, whereas an accident has the sense of subsisting in a substance. I am not referring to the substance and accident of the sensible world. I am speaking about the real [*ḥaqīqī*] substance and accident. You cannot understand? Alas! God is existent. Thus, He is a substance. But a substance cannot be without accident. Thus, God’s existence is a substance, and light is an accident of that substance.⁸²

Such an understanding allows ‘Ayn al-Qudāt to speak of God as a substance, qua unmanifest light, and light itself as an accident, qua God’s self-disclosure. Like the rays which emerge from the sun, these rays take us back to the sun and also point to their own nature as necessarily accidental to the sun’s effulgent nature. ‘Ayn al-Qudāt hence sees the origin of the cosmic order as

79 ‘Ayn al-Qudāt, *Nāma-hā*, 1:338, § 564.

80 The connection, albeit in a concise and unnuanced way, between ‘Ayn al-Qudāt’s Satanology and these two doctrines is also noted in Maghsoudlou, “La pensée de ‘Ayn al-Qudāt al-Hamadānī,” 288-289. Cf. Boylston, “Writing the Kaleidoscope of Reality,” 325-329. Despite the promising title of his book, Mustafī Pārsā’s *Nazar-i ‘Ayn al-Qudāt Hamadānī dar mawrid-i Iblīs wa-irtibāt-i ān bā nizām-i aḥsan* has nothing to do with ‘Ayn al-Qudāt’s theodicy.

81 For the manner in which ‘Ayn al-Qudāt applies the term “substance” to God, see Rustom, *Inrushes of the Heart*, chapter 3.

82 ‘Ayn al-Qudāt, *Tamhīdāt*, 257, § 339.

rooted in God's manifest light. Personified, these lights account for the light of Muhammad and the light of Iblis:

The upshot of this discussion is that God is a substance, light an accident, and that substance was never without accident and will never be. Thus I have spoken about the heavens and the earth through symbols [*ramz*], namely that of His lights two are the root of the heavens and the earth – their reality is these two lights. One is the light of Muhammad, and the other the light of Iblis.⁸³

Although a light proper, in relation to God's light Iblis can be called "darkness."⁸⁴ And, in relation to Muhammad's light, who symbolizes the sun, Iblis is "black light" (*nūr-i siyāh*), and symbolizes the moon.⁸⁵ What is important to note here is how the light of Muhammad and the (black) light of Iblis function as complementaries. Since both lights are rays of the divine sun, they have different functions in relation to the substrates which contain them. But, just as the various existent things do not make God – who is an absolute unity – more than one, so too do the two differing lights which come from the divine sun not make it more than one:

The sun makes the washer's clothes white and his face dark. These two effects differ, but their effectuator is one. This is because the same thing that made the washer's face dark is what made his clothes white. Now, if, by virtue of these two differing effects the sun were to be given two names ..., fools would think that that which causes whiteness is other than that which causes darkness, which is an error.⁸⁶

As we have seen with his theodicy, for 'Ayn al-Quḍāt all things are in their proper place and cannot deviate from the order of the good. This means that whatever seems out of place in the cosmos is not really so. Each thing is to be understood in relation to its opposite; this will allow one to see the wisdom inherent in creation, which is, by nature, a relational affair. Without

83 'Ayn al-Quḍāt, *Tamhīdāt*, 258, § 340.

84 'Ayn al-Quḍāt, *Tamhīdāt*, 118-119, § 166. See also Rustom, *Inrushes of the Heart*, chapter 9.

85 'Ayn al-Quḍāt, *Tamhīdāt*, 126-127, § 175. In another context, 'Ayn al-Quḍāt tells us that the cosmic order is nothing other than the shadow of the primordial Muhammadan light (*nūr-i Muḥammad*). See 'Ayn al-Quḍāt, *Tamhīdāt*, 249, § 326. A discussion of black light and the Muhammadan light in 'Ayn al-Quḍāt can be found in Rustom, *Inrushes of the Heart*, chapter 9.

86 'Ayn al-Quḍāt, *Nāma-hā*, 1180, § 279.

the exaltedness of heaven one cannot understand the lowliness of earth, and without the lowliness of earth one cannot know the exaltedness of heaven. Without darkness one cannot understand light, and without light one cannot understand darkness:

O dear friend! This is wisdom: Whatever is, was, and will be must not and cannot be otherwise. Whiteness could never be without blackness. Heaven cannot be without earth. Substance is inconceivable without accident. Muhammad could never be without Iblis. Obedience without disobedience and unbelief without faith are inconceivable. So too is it the case with every opposite. This is the meaning of, “Things are distinguished through their opposites.”⁸⁷

‘Ayn al-Quḍāt’s Satanology relates in complex ways to his sustained exposition of the nature of faith and unbelief.⁸⁸ Without venturing too far into that territory, which will take us to other important but at present unrelated aspects of his teachings, consider this passage from the *Paving the Path*:

O dear friend! Water is the means for a fish’s life and nourishment, but it is the means for the death of others. Here, *the Word of your Lord is fulfilled in truth and justice* [6:115] becomes known to you, namely what it is. Here, you will know why the sun of God’s light – the substance of Muṣṭafā – is a means of luminosity and light, and the substance of Iblis is a means of misguidance, murkiness, and darkness such that from the light of Muhammad faith arises and from the “light” of Iblis unbelief and humiliation arise.⁸⁹

It will be recalled that ‘Ayn al-Quḍāt sees the existence of accidental evils, such as fire and water, as relational. In the passage above, we are told that water sustains fish, but it can harm others. Likewise, the light of the Prophet is meant to guide some, but the light of Iblis misguides others. Both the light of the Prophet and the light of Iblis are from the same source of light and take on different functions in the created order.⁹⁰ In ‘Ayn al-Quḍāt’s theodicy, evils are accidents that necessarily arise in the order of the good. The parallels with the lights of Muhammad and Iblis are obvious, since they are both accidents that

87 ‘Ayn al-Quḍāt, *Tamhīdāt*, 186, § 245.

88 See Boylston, “Writing the Kaleidoscope of Reality,” 332-334 and Rustom, *Inrushes of the Heart*, chapters 4 and 9-10.

89 ‘Ayn al-Quḍāt, *Tamhīdāt*, 186, § 244.

90 See also the discussion in Boylston, “Writing the Kaleidoscope of Reality,” 327-328.

necessarily arise as a result of the manifestation of the divine sun, which as we have seen 'Ayn al-Quḍāt refers to as a "substance."

The question that naturally arises is how does this parallel relate to 'Ayn al-Quḍāt's Satanology proper? It should be kept in mind that for 'Ayn al-Quḍāt and indeed all of Islamic thought, the devil is not a principle of evil as such. After all, the word "evil" (*sharr*) is never attributed to him in the Quran. Since in Islam the devil's primary occupation is to misguide people and incite them to wrongdoing, 'Ayn al-Quḍāt's Satanology is to be understood vis-à-vis this negative function. And this negative function can only be seen as a "relational evil" when we bring in the function of the Prophet as the guide to the good, just as we can only view Iblis as darkness when seen in relation to the light of the Prophet.⁹¹

'Ayn al-Quḍāt here anticipates a major teaching to be associated with Ibn 'Arabī and his followers, namely the manner in which Iblis is a locus of God's wrath and misguidance and the Prophet is a locus of God's mercy and guidance.⁹² As guide, Muhammad embodies the divine names of beauty (*jamāl*); as misguider, Iblis embodies the divine names of majesty (*jalāl*). Both must work together for the upkeep of the cosmic order and both are mutually dependent upon one another:

Have you ever heard that God has two names? One is *the All-Merciful, the Compassionate* [59:22] and the other is *the Compeller, the Proud* [59:23]. From the attribute of Compulsion [*jabbāriyya*] He brought Iblis into existence, and from the attribute of mercifulness [*rahmāniyya*] He brought Muhammad into existence. Thus the attribute of mercy is Muhammad's nourishment, and the attribute of severity and wrath Iblis' nourishment.⁹³

Turning to the relationship between 'Ayn al-Quḍāt's Satanology and his theory of human action, we find him unsurprisingly state that "Iblis is also one of His acts."⁹⁴ Then, in *waḥdat al-wujūd* fashion, our author goes so far as to say that

91 Cf. the claim in Maghsoudlou, "La pensée de 'Ayn al-Quḍāt al-Hamadānī," 288.

92 For the role of Iblis as misguider in Ibn 'Arabī, see Chittick, "Iblis and the Jinn in *al-Futūḥāt al-Makkiyya*," in *Classical Arabic Humanities in Their Own Terms: Festschrift for Wolfhart Heinrichs on His 65th Birthday Presented by His Students and Colleagues*, edited by Beatrice Gruendler with the assistance of Michael Cooperson (Leiden: Brill, 2008) 99-126 (at pp. 116-123).

93 'Ayn al-Quḍāt, *Tamhīdāt*, 227, § 294. As a logical extension of God's wrath, 'Ayn al-Quḍāt explains that curses are Iblis' "nourishment." See *Nāma-hā*, 1:97, § 134 and *Tamhīdāt*, 30, § 43, as well as the discussion in Rustom, *Inrushes of the Heart*, chapter 9.

94 'Ayn al-Quḍāt, *Nāma-hā*, 2:232, § 4. Cf. Pavel Basharin's treatment of a related issue, but which inexplicably ignores 'Ayn al-Quḍāt: "The Problem of Free Will and Predestination

since there is no true doer other than God, Muhammad and Iblis are no more than metaphors for God's own actions:

O dear friend! Every act that you see ascribed to someone other than God is metaphor, not reality. God is the true doer [*fā'il*]. Where He says, *Say, "The angel of death ... will take you"* [32:11], it is metaphor. The reality of it is that *God takes souls at the moment of their death* [39:42]. Muhammad's guidance [*rāh namūdan*] is metaphor and, likewise, Iblis' misguidance [*gumrāh kardan*] is metaphor. The reality is *He leads astray whomsoever He wills and guides whomsoever He wills* [14:4]. Granted that Iblis misguides people – this is why He created Iblis. However, concerning this, Moses says, *"It is nothing but Your trial whereby You lead astray whomsoever You will, and guide whomsoever You will."* [7:155]. Alas for the sin! Since it is all from Him, what sin is there for anyone else?⁹⁵

In *Paving the Path* and an almost identical passage in the *Letters*, 'Ayn al-Quḍāt revisits the guidance of Muhammad and misguidance of Iblis theme, but this time with reference to his understanding of constrained freedom:

The guidance of people is turned over to Aḥmad and their misguidance to Iblis.... O dear friend! Whatever is in the Kingdom and the Dominion – every single thing – is subjugated to do a specific task. But a human being is not subjugated to do a specific task. Rather, he is subjugated to choose.⁹⁶

The implication is clear: the Prophet (here referred to by his name in Paradise Aḥmad) and Iblis are "subjugated to do a specific task," but the same does not apply to human beings. Rather, they are forced into freedom and are "subjugated" to make choices between live and real possibilities. In a sense, just as human beings have the inherent quality of choice, by which they must act freely, so too do Muhammad and Iblis have their respective inherent qualities of guidance and misguidance, by which they must act. Consequently, Iblis' nature is to misguide and man's nature is to choose.

in the Light of Satan's Justification in Early Sufism," *English Language Notes* 56, no. 1 (2018): 119-138.

95 'Ayn al-Quḍāt, *Tamhīdāt*, 188-189, § 246. *Nāma-hā*, 2:6, § 9 is virtually the same as this passage. Cf. *Tamhīdāt*, 217, § 277 and *Nāma-hā* 2:7, § 9.

96 'Ayn al-Quḍāt, *Tamhīdāt*, 189, § 247 and *Nāma-hā*, 1:337, § 563.

Now, to what extent is the bidding of one's own nature a form of real freedom? 'Ayn al-Quḍāt does not answer this question directly. But unlike his presentation of man's constrained freedom, in many texts he tends to present Iblis less as a constrained free actor on the cosmic stage than what we can call a pawn in the hands of the Divine Chess Player with very little real freedom of choice or individual volition. This is best demonstrated in two related texts wherein 'Ayn al-Quḍāt explains that God's command to Iblis that he should bow down to Adam was preceded by a contrary command: never bow down to Adam. These commands respectively correspond to what are known in Islamic thought as the "prescriptive command" (*al-amr al-taklīfī*) – which one has a choice to disobey – and the "engendering command" (*al-amr al-takwīnī*) – which one does not have a choice to disobey.⁹⁷ By not bowing down to Adam, Iblis was simply fulfilling God's will as per the engendering command. He thereby earned God's wrath; but he was perfectly content with his divine allotment:

Openly, God said to him, "*Prostrate before Adam*" [2:34].⁹⁸ But in secret, He said to him, "O Iblis! Say, '*Shall I prostrate before one whom You have created from clay?*'" [17:61]⁹⁹

Outwardly, He said, "Prostrate!"¹⁰⁰ But acting in accordance with what he was ordered to do in secret, this poor wretch said, "I shall not prostrate before one whom You have created from clay!"¹⁰¹ So He said, "*Surely My curse shall be upon you*" [38:78].¹⁰² Iblis said, "Since this robe of honour is from You, who cares if it comes with curses or mercy?"¹⁰³

Fallen in Love

We have so far outlined 'Ayn al-Quḍāt's ontology, which then helped us segue into an exposition of his theodicy and theory of human action and an inquiry into how they relate to his Satanology. It was shown that our author's

97 For a discussion of these two important terms, see Chittick, *The Sufi Path of Knowledge: Ibn al-'Arabī's Metaphysics of Imagination* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1989), 291-294.

98 The wording is also in Q 7:11, 17:61, 18:50, and 20:116.

99 'Ayn al-Quḍāt, *Tamhīdāt*, 227, § 293. This passage is also to be found, with some adjustments, in *Nāma-hā*, 2:187, § 280.

100 Cf. Q 2:34, 7:11, 17:61, 18:50, and 20:116.

101 Cf. Q 17:61.

102 Cf. Q 15:35.

103 'Ayn al-Quḍāt, *Nāma-hā*, 2:187, § 280.

theodicy nicely mirrors his treatment of cosmic complementarity via the persons and cosmic functions of Muhammad and Iblis. As for ‘Ayn al-Quḍāt’s theory of constrained freedom, we also saw that it in some way fits in with his portrayal of Iblis as a compelled actor and an agent who personifies the divine attributes of majesty, particularly that of misguidance.

But the foregoing only accounts for one aspect of ‘Ayn al-Quḍāt’s Satanology. Other dimensions of it reveal its close association to a number of his other major doctrines. He ties it in, for example, to his understanding of the Quran,¹⁰⁴ his theory of imaginalization (*tamaththul*),¹⁰⁵ and his doctrine of beauty with its attendant poetic imagery of the Beloved’s face, mole, cheeks, and tresses.¹⁰⁶ Treating all of these topics is of course beyond the scope of the present study.¹⁰⁷ We will thus focus on the manner in which ‘Ayn al-Quḍāt’s Satanology takes his theory of human agency to a whole new level, thereby confirming and problematizing our earlier, bare-bones sketch of this issue.

Readers of ‘Ayn al-Quḍāt are well aware of the various contexts in which he composed his writings. This is best evidenced by his *Letters*. The letters which make up this collection were addressed to different scholars, students, and seekers: many of them are intricately theological in nature, and a number of them are politically oriented; some are concerned with the inner meanings of the rites of Islam, while others are written in full-blown *madhhab-i ‘ishq* style.¹⁰⁸ Given his vast knowledge of the Quran, the Hadith, the Islamic rational sciences, Islamic law, Sufism, and *adab* in general, and his deep interest in communicating his knowledge to diverse audiences,¹⁰⁹ it is quite natural that ‘Ayn al-Quḍāt would have worn different hats in his written correspondences. In short, we can say that he was writing for different *types* of scholars and students throughout the course of his short life and career.

104 See Rustom, “‘Ayn al-Quḍāt’s Qur’anic Vision: From Black Words to White Parchment,” in *Routledge Handbook on Sufism*, edited by Lloyd Ridgeon (London: Routledge, 2020), 75–88.

105 Inquiries into his original teachings on imaginalization can be found in Leonard Lewisohn, “In Quest of Annihilation: Imaginalization and Mystical Death in the *Tamhīdāt* of ‘Ayn al-Quḍāt Hamadhānī,” in *The Heritage of Sufism, Volume 1: Classical Persian Sufism from its Origins to Rumi (700–1300)*, edited by Leonard Lewisohn (Oxford: Oneworld, 1999), 285–336 and Rustom, *Inrushes of the Heart*, chapter 5.

106 For which, see Rustom, *Inrushes of the Heart*, chapter 10.

107 The necessary connections are made in Rustom, *Inrushes of the Heart*, chapters 8–10.

108 For the nature and content of ‘Ayn al-Quḍāt’s *Letters*, see the introduction in Rustom, *Inrushes of the Heart*.

109 In *Nāma-hā*, 3:407, § 236 ‘Ayn al-Quḍāt tells us that he would give upwards of seven to eight lessons in the Islamic sciences daily.

The immediate bearing this insight has on our presentation of the theological and philosophical underpinnings of 'Ayn al-Quḍāt's Satanology is the very real consideration that not all aspects of his engagement with the rational sciences will neatly map onto all aspects of his engagement with Sufism. In other words, while features of 'Ayn al-Quḍāt's doctrine of human action have resonances with his Sufi reading of Iblis, much of it does not.

Indeed, 'Ayn al-Quḍāt's Sufi teachings stand far above and beyond his teachings in the rational sciences. From this perspective, we can say that his Sufi doctrine is informed by his discussions in the rational sciences at lower levels but does away with them at higher levels. 'Ayn al-Quḍāt in other words has a definite Sufi worldview which, at its highest reaches, reduces any of its philosophical and theological underpinnings to rubble. This is not to say that 'Ayn al-Quḍāt's Sufism negates his theoretical ideas; rather, these ideas emerge as quite insufficient for explaining, living, and experiencing what is at stake the further one moves along the path of self-realization:

O friend! A group of the philosophers and theologians call themselves "recognizers." *That is the extent of their knowledge* [53:30]. They think that, from the path of nonsense, a person arrives at recognition [*ma'rifa*]. No, never! O friend! What do I have to do with this? How can those who worship their fleeting desires talk like the people of God's Path [*rāh-i khudā*]?¹¹⁰

With respect to his Satanology, it would be quite incorrect to say that (1) some of 'Ayn al-Quḍāt's philosophical and theological ideas find their perfect analogue in his Satanology and/or that (2) his Satanology is simply a symbolic and mythic re-presentation of these abstract philosophical ideas. The danger the latter consideration poses is that it lends itself all too easily to the simplistic thesis that sees religion and mysticism as nothing more than symbolic expressions of philosophy.

When we come to Sufi metaphysics, there is no doubt that a degree of complementarity exists between philosophy and mysticism or *logos* and *mythos*. But this complementarity only pertains to one level. At a higher level, it is Sufism and its symbology that win the day, as many Sufi metaphysicians have historically seen philosophical discourse and our usual analytic and discursive methods as themselves rational articulations and re-presentations of another, higher form of knowing and being.¹¹¹ This point is best demonstrated by 'Ayn

110 'Ayn al-Quḍāt, *Nāma-hā*, 1:113, § 163.

111 See Rustom, "Philosophical Sufism."

al-Qudāt's Satanology precisely because it is cast in the form of a story and through the lens of myth. Myth, as Wendy Doniger aptly remarks, forces even philosophers to "come to terms with the darker, flesh-and-blood aspects of their abstract inquiries."¹¹²

As we shall see below, the various "flesh-and-blood" angles from which 'Ayn al-Qudāt approaches the story of Iblis accounts for a variety of possibilities in our human and lived experience – this is accounted for, but by no means exhausted by, our author's philosophical expositions of the problems of theodicy and human agency. With this consideration in mind, it is apt to cite an observation made by Oliver Leaman in a different context:

Complex religious issues have aspects which are capable of being analysed philosophically, although there are also, no doubt, aspects of religion which are not so amenable to philosophical attention. After all, a religion satisfies many human demands and not all of these are usefully explored by the techniques of the philosopher. The philosopher is primarily concerned with the rational aspects of religion, and the rest of the form of life can be better explored using other more appropriate methods.¹¹³

For our purposes, we are not concerned with philosophy's relationship to religion so much as its relationship to myth-making, symbolism, and storytelling. For 'Ayn al-Qudāt, the story of Iblis must precisely be told as a story since, qua story, it allows us to see a dramatized version of our own aspirations and tendencies. As Cyrus Zargar puts it, "[N]arratives seem distinctively able to reveal values, situations, decisions, character, and the relationship between them all."¹¹⁴ Seen through this lens, 'Ayn al-Qudāt's telling of the story of Iblis is akin to a mirror which displays to its readers and listeners the story of their own lives. Nowhere in the Iblis narrative is this more evident than in the manner in which Iblis is cast as an ideal lover of God who had fallen in his love precisely because he had fallen in love. Yet,

¹¹² Wendy Doniger O'Flaherty, *The Origins of Evil in Hindu Mythology* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1976), 9.

¹¹³ Oliver Leaman, *Evil and Suffering in Jewish Philosophy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 7.

¹¹⁴ Cyrus Zargar, *The Polished Mirror: Storytelling and the Pursuit of Virtue in Islamic Philosophy and Sufism* (London: Oneworld, 2017), 20.

who would ever dare to tell this tale, and who would ever dare to hear it?! For, how are commoners to understand the tale of a person whose foot-dust the elect of the elect have not even caught a whiff of?¹¹⁵

‘Ayn al-Qudāt, for one, did dare to tell the story of Iblis. But his theodicy and doctrine of human agency can tell us nothing about its far-reaching implications vis-à-vis love. In fact, no abstract philosophical exposition of love can do the trick.

Since human beings love and are lovers, the tale of one of the greatest of all lovers (and certainly the most tragic of them), Iblis, is best told on its own terms. If listened to properly, Iblis’s story will come to mean something entirely different to those hearing it, and this precisely because they will see the story of their own, tragic fallen state in it: “If anyone in existence knew how to listen to the tale of Iblis, especially its mysteries, his tale would become extremely dear to him.”¹¹⁶

We have already seen how ‘Ayn al-Qudāt frames Iblis as having been compelled by God to *not* prostrate to Adam, despite the outward command for him to do so. Iblis was indeed “compelled” to act, and in a very specific manner. ‘Ayn al-Qudāt introduces love as the ultimate variable into the equation as that which compels Iblis to act. Iblis, the teacher of the angels, had such foresight and love of God that he could see right through the “command” to bow down to Adam. Iblis’ students could not see this, being as they were raw and “uncooked” in their love:

O friend! Have you ever seen someone who, by the very will of his friend and beloved – conforming to his will – opposed his command? What do you hear? Iblis knew God’s will, namely that He did not want him to prostrate when He said, “*Prostrate before Adam.*” It was a test – who, by His command, would prostrate to someone else? All prostrated, except the teacher of the angels.¹¹⁷ It was undoubtedly like this: the teacher must be more ripe than the student!... Iblis chose separation from the Beloved over prostration to someone else. How excellent was his perfection of love! *The gaze swerved not, nor did it transgress* [53:17].¹¹⁸

115 ‘Ayn al-Qudāt, *Nāma-hā*, 2:417, § 658.

116 ‘Ayn al-Qudāt, *Nāma-hā*, 2:416, § 657.

117 For Iblis as the “teacher of the angels,” see ‘Ayn al-Qudāt, *Nāma-hā*, 1:314, § 525 and *Nāma-hā* 2:417, § 658.

118 ‘Ayn al-Qudāt, *Nāma-hā* 1:96, § 132.

It was not only due to God's will that Iblis did not bow down to other than Him; it was also due to Iblis' love for God. Rather than attempt to engage in philosophical hair-splitting over the precise relationship between God's will and Iblis' "will" (as love), 'Ayn al-Quḍāt cuts to the chase, citing Iblis' "disobedience" as a worthwhile lesson for all of those aspiring to walk the path of divine love:

One must be an aspirant of the quality of Iblis so that something comes from him. In the command to him the motive [*tākhtan*] was one thing, but in the Beloved's will for him the motive was something else. Knowing the command of the Beloved is one thing, but knowing the will of the Beloved is something else. O chevalier! The command is outside, and will inside.¹¹⁹

By Way of a Conclusion

In addition to being a personification of his doctrine of theodicy and understanding of human agency, 'Ayn al-Quḍāt's Iblis figures as a teacher – not only of the angels, but also of human beings. This is why Abū'l Qāsim Gurgānī (d. 465/1073) used to refer to him as the "Master of masters" (*khwāja-yi khwājagān*).¹²⁰

Now what, exactly, does Iblis teach? For starters, he has the perfect quality of aspiration (*himma*), without which the spiritual life is an impossibility. Given his high aspiration for God, Iblis was naturally quite happy with the will of his Beloved even if it meant suffering at His hands: "Being blamed by You is better than the good-pleasure of others;¹²¹ "How fine was his aspiration! He said, 'I'm ready for endless pain, so give me the eternal mercilessness that's my due!'"¹²² In fact, for Iblis, the "pain" in question is no pain at all. Rather, 'Ayn

119 'Ayn al-Quḍāt, *Nāma-hā*, 1:75, § 98. The passage continues with a telling example: "If, for example, a father says to his child, 'Do not praise me too much, for I am embarrassed by that,' and that child goes on to honour his father even more, the child would not be opposing him. By my life, he would be opposing his command, but he would not be opposing his will. If Sultan Maḥmūd were to tell Ayaz, 'Go serve someone else,' and Ayāz were to go, he will have erred. The person who would obey the command in such a situation is unripe."

120 'Ayn al-Quḍāt, *Nāma-hā*, 2:416, § 657. For this teacher, see Rustom, *Inrushes of the Heart*, chapter 9, n136.

121 'Ayn al-Quḍāt, *Tamhīdāt*, 221-222, § 284.

122 'Ayn al-Quḍāt, *Nāma-hā*, 2:187, § 281. Cf. Ḥallāj's statement in Sells, *Early Islamic Mysticism*, 276.

al-Quḍāt has him explain that it is an honour and a joy, coming as it does from the king Himself:

“Do as You wish. Whatever You do, I am content with that. If others flee from Your curse, Your curse for me is an embroidered robe [*tarāz-i āstīn*] and a crown upon my head.”¹²³

That chevalier [*jawānmard*] Iblis says, “If others flee from Your assault [*sayl*], I will take it with my neck!”¹²⁴

Iblis is therefore a *jawānmard* or a perfect embodiment of what it means to be a lover of God: whatever the Beloved chooses is what the lover chooses.¹²⁵ The question is not so much the status of the freely-choosing human agent's choice as much as it is his ability to conform to the Divine Agent's choice. Like Iblis, the lover has no real choice since his very existence is implicated in the cycle of love: “The lover is choice-less [*bī ikhtiyār*]. Whatever the lover does comes into existence without his will and issues forth without his choice.”¹²⁶

Taken to its logical end, the story of Iblis is one of love and loverhood. For ‘Ayn al-Quḍāt, nothing is higher than the life of love, which entails pain, separation, tribulation, suffering, yearning, and burning.¹²⁷ These are all natural corollaries to being a servant and lover of God. Furthermore, for those who claim love, God will certainly put them through hardship so that they may come to know the worth of nearness to God. The trick is to be able to see this suffering as nothing but God's kindness wrapped up in a different garb, as did that fallen hero Iblis:

Whoever does not suffer from the cruelty of the Beloved does not know the worth of His kindness; whoever has not tasted separation from the Beloved will not find the delight of union with Him; whoever does not

123 ‘Ayn al-Quḍāt, *Nāma-hā*, 2:187, § 281.

124 ‘Ayn al-Quḍāt, *Tamhidāt*, 224, § 289.

125 A study of ‘Ayn al-Quḍāt's understanding of chivalry can be found in Rustom, “‘Ayn al-Quḍāt on Chivalry,” *Journal of Islamic Ethics* 4, no. 1-2 (2020): forthcoming. For the image of the chevalier in Persian Sufi literature, see Lloyd Ridgeon, *Morals and Mysticism in Persian Sufism* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2010).

126 ‘Ayn al-Quḍāt, *Tamhidāt* 238, § 308.

127 On this and related points, see Chittick, *Divine Love: Islamic Literature and the Path to God* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2013), chapter 8. For ‘Ayn al-Quḍāt's teachings on the pains and trials of love, see Rustom, “*Theo-Fānī*: ‘Ayn al-Quḍāt and the Fire of Love,” in *Mysticism and Ethics in Islam*, ed. Bilal Orfali, Atif Khalil, and Mohammed Rustom (Beirut: American University of Beirut Press, in press).

know the name-calling of the Beloved as gentleness is far from the Beloved.¹²⁸

Just as there is no “good” and “evil” with respect to God as such,¹²⁹ from the perspective of the Beloved there is no pleasure and pain, no joy and grief. The lover must in the final analysis be able to see all that comes from the Beloved as the Beloved sees it Himself. Then the lover will no longer be a lover of gentleness and severity. Like Iblis, the lover will simply be a lover of what the Beloved wants and loves:

If a carpet is black and white, both of these are one. Whoever sees this as difference, with respect to love, he is still raw. From the hand of the Friend, what honey is there and what poison? What sugar and what colocynt? What gentleness and what severity? The person who is a lover of gentleness or a lover of severity is a self-lover, not a lover of the Beloved.

Alas! When the Sultan gives a robe and special crown to a person, that is enough – in the reckoning of the lovers, nothing remains. Alas! They said to Iblis, “Why do you not cast aside the black carpet of “*My curse*” [15:35] from your shoulder?” He said:

I will never sell the carpet away – never!
Were I to sell it, my shoulder would be exposed.¹³⁰

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128 'Ayn al-Quḍāt, *Tamhīdāt*, 244-245, § 318.

129 See 'Ayn al-Quḍāt, *Nāma-hā*, 3:277, § 1 where he states that “good” and “evil” are “pure relations” (*iḍāfat-i maḥḍ*) with respect to God. See also the analysis in Boylston, “Writing the Kaleidoscope of Reality,” 306-308.

130 'Ayn al-Quḍāt, *Tamhīdāt*, 224, § 289. Cf. *Nāma-hā*, 2:410, § 647.

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