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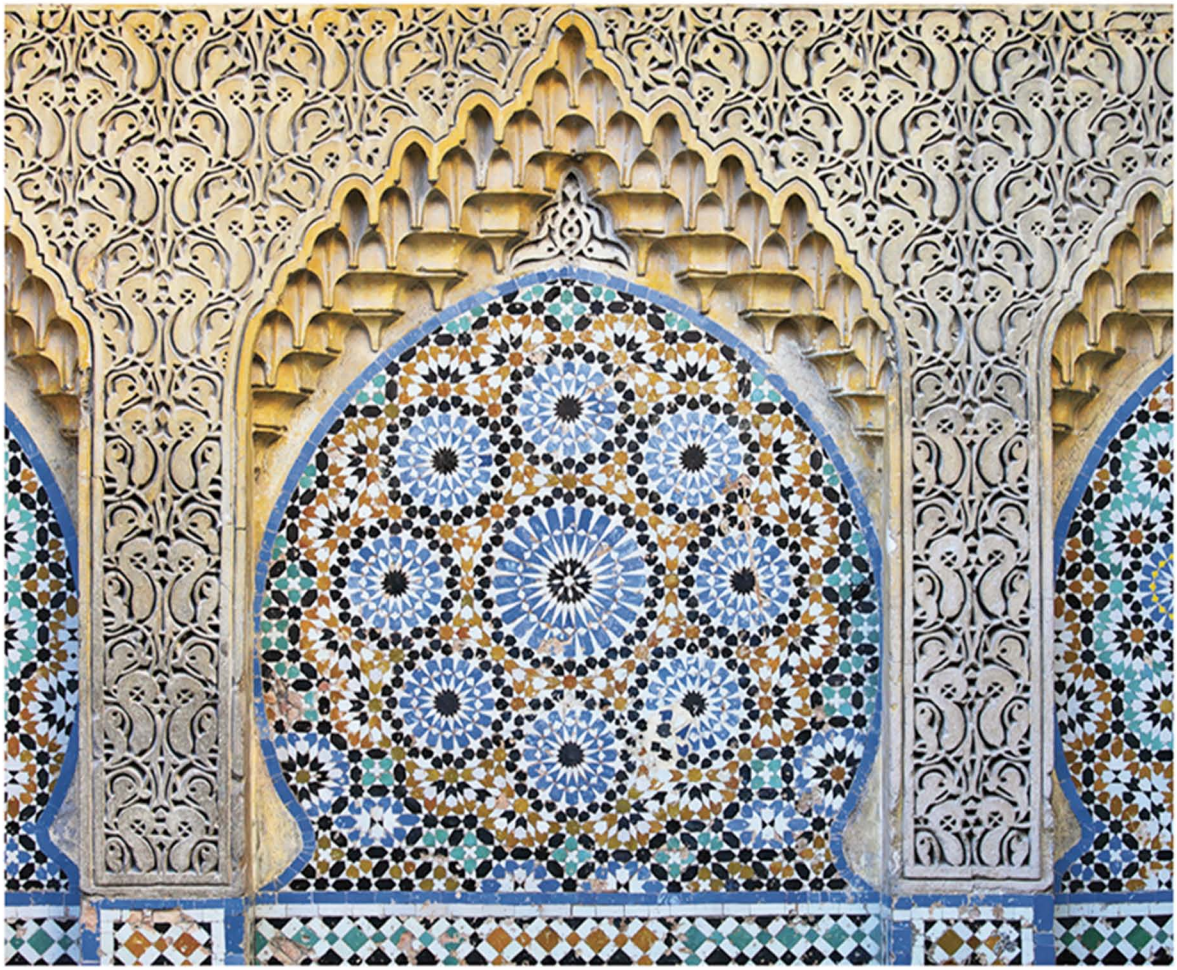
The Routledge Companion to Islamic Philosophy



Edited by Richard C. Taylor and Luis Xavier López-Farjeat

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Mohammed Rustom

Introduction

It is often assumed that "philosophy" and "mysticism" are mutually exclusive. Of course, this all depends on how we define our terms, which is not something I will attempt to do here. In medieval Islam, the philosophy/mysticism dichotomy becomes even more problematic, since these are not necessarily watertight categories to begin with. This is why such a philosophical giant as Ibn Sīná (d. 428/1037) wrote favorably about mysticism (Avicenna 1996), and why the influential philosopher and founder of the school of Illumination Shihāb al-Dīn Suhrawardī (d. 587/1191) openly espoused mysticism in both theory and practice (Aminrazavi 1997: 58–120). We even find a number of well-known figures in the Islamic mystical tradition (commonly referred to as "Sufism") whose approach to things was "philosophical," but who had little interest in the actual discipline of philosophy (Mayer 2008: 276–7). There are also Muslim mystics or Sufis who had a good grounding in philosophy proper, and some of whose works bear witness to a sort of wedding between philosophy and mysticism. The most eminent early examples of this tendency are to be found in the works of Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī (d. 505/1111) (al-Ghazālī 1998) and the pivotal figure 'Ayn al-Quḍāt Hamadānī (d. 525/1131) (Izutsu 1994: 98–140).

Given all of these possibilities, which are symptomatic of a variety of other permutations and tendencies, it is understandable that some may view the phrase "philosophical Sufism" as a vague term or concept (Akasoy 2011: 248). Since it is beyond the parameters of this article to present what makes for good "philosophical Sufism" by providing examples from a wide variety of Islamic texts, authors, and intellectual traditions, I shall focus my presentation on what in Persianate Islam has traditionally been referred to as "theoretical gnosis" (*'irfān-i naẓarī*). This term refers to a specific intellectual explication of Sufi doctrine and praxis that came to the fore in the seventh/thirteenth century by-and-large due to the influence of the Andalusian mystic Ibn 'Arabī (d. 638/1240), a figure whose medieval Christian counterpart is Meister Eckhart (d. 1328) (Dobie 2010). An increasingly systematic and more philosophical understanding of Ibn 'Arabī's teachings (some fundamental to his worldview and others not) eventually came to take centre stage in the writings of his followers. The term "school of Ibn 'Arabī" thus describes a particular approach—largely colored by the thought of Ibn 'Arabī himself—to the major philosophical and religious issues which confronted medieval Islamic thought.

There are specifically two reasons why limiting our discussion of philosophical Sufism to the school of Ibn ʿArabī particularly recommends itself. First, the writings of this school, represented by a plethora of figures, has shaped the intellectual contours of Islamic civilization from North Africa to Malaysia for well over five centuries (Nasr 2005). This stands in stark contrast to the writings of those Sufi figures who incorporated philosophy into their works but whose sphere of influence was ultimately confined to a particular textual tradition, region, or historical period.

Second, the central concern of the school of Ibn ʿArabī is with being or *wujūd*, which is also the central concern of Islamic philosophy. Members of the school of Ibn ʿArabī did not invent an entirely new philosophical vocabulary to explain their teachings. Many of the technical terms and concepts with which they were working had been bequeathed from the well-developed traditions of Islamic philosophy and theology. Owing to the manner in which the main concerns of Islamic philosophy would take centre stage in Muslim theological texts from Ibn Sīnā onward (Wisnovsky 2004), Ibn ʿArabī himself became conversant in philosophical arguments not by way of the Islamic philosophical tradition, but through his educational background in general (Rosenthal 1988: 21) and the discipline of "philosophical theology" in particular (see Addas 1993: 102–10).

At the same time, some of the key "members" of the school of Ibn ʿArabī, such as his foremost disciple and step-son Ṣadr al-Dīn al-Qūnawī (d. 673/1274), were well-versed in the discipline of philosophy. Qūnawī initiated a correspondence with the polymath Naṣīr al-Dīn Ṭūsī (d. 672/1274) after having read Ibn Sīnā's *Remarks and Admonitions* (*al-Ishārāt wa-l-tanbīhāt*) along with Ṭūsī's commentary (Chittick 1981; Schubert 1995). We also have, in Qūnawī's own handwriting, his personal copy of Suhrawardī's *Philosophy of Illumination* (*Ḥikmat al-ishrāq*), as well as a set of glosses on Ibn Sīnā's *Remarks and Admonitions* by the Ashʿarite theologian/philosopher Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī (d. 606/1210) (Chittick 1978: 51). All of this tells us that Qūnawī took the Peripatetic and Illuminationist strands of Islamic philosophy, which were the mainstream philosophical traditions current in his day, very seriously.

A phrase commonly used as a convenient label to "explain" the teachings of the school of Ibn ʿArabī is the term *waḥdat al-wujūd*, or the "Oneness of Being" (see Chittick 2012: Chapter 8 and Landolt 2005: 119–25, 245–300). The Oneness of Being has often been blithely characterized as some form of pantheism (rejected in Rustom 2006: 64–7). And not a few scholars have also sought to explain it as a type of "monism," a reductive and vague term that does not come close to conveying the stress the school of Ibn ʿArabī places upon "multiplicity," "otherness," and "relationality." From this perspective, the term "Oneness of Being" is itself problematic (Morris 1986: 544–5, n. 21), which is perhaps one reason why Ibn ʿArabī's own students and their followers did not employ it in any clearly discernible technical sense as a blanket expression to explain their worldview. In fact, it is well-known that Ibn ʿArabī did not use this expression himself. When it does become a technical term some three decades after his death, it is likely introduced by Ibn Sabʿīn (d. 669/1270) (Chittick 2012: 81; Cornell 2007: 34ff.), a figure who may have been influenced by Ibn ʿArabī, but who cannot strictly speaking be called a "member" of his school. Yet in very broad outlines, we can say that the Oneness of Being generally summarizes the philosophical outlook of the school of Ibn ʿArabī.

In what follows, I present the writings of the school of Ibn ʿArabī in a unified perspective, despite a wide range of opinions amongst its adherents and a somewhat fluid technical lexicon from author to author. This makes it possible to paint a picture of the main features of this school in fairly broad strokes. In order to do justice to the worldview of the school of Ibn ʿArabī, I weave into this presentation two of the main vehicles through which it tackles the central problems of philosophy: the philosophical and the mythic. By the former I mean that approach which is colored by the mainstream and largely abstract discourse of Islamic philosophy and philosophical theology. By the latter I mean the concrete portrayal of the same philosophical concepts, but in the language of myth, dogma, and religious symbolism.

Ontology

It was already mentioned that many of the philosophical and theological expressions used by Ibn ʿArabī were stock phrases in his day. One term he often employs when speaking of God is the "Necessary Being" (*wājib al-wujūd*) (Ibn ʿArabī 1968: 1:291), a technical term that became standard fare in texts of Islamic thought from the time of Ibn Sīnā onwards. Unlike God, whose being cannot not be, that which exists and whose existence depends upon Him is referred to as "contingent being" (*mumkin al-wujūd*), another well-known term bequeathed by Ibn Sīnā. Thus, all that we can inquire into is either Necessary Being—namely, God—or contingent being—namely, everything in existence apart from God. Since God is the source of all things that exist, His being is the most apparent and pervasive. This is because all other instantiations of being, all other existents, must necessarily be subsumed under the wider category of His being, which itself escapes all definition, since the moment we attempt to explain it, we can only do so with reference to one of its particular modes and instances.

Being, therefore, cannot be defined, nor can its "reality" be grasped in any fashion whatsoever. This explains why one of the principal members of the school of Ibn ʿArabī, Dāwūd al-Qayṣarī (d. 751/1350), speaks of being as the most general of things and the most apparent of them as well, as it is a self-evident reality, while at the same time remaining the "most hidden of all things in its quiddity and reality" (al-Qayṣarī 2002: 1:14), a "description" echoed by the famous philosopher Mullā Ṣadrā (d. 1050/1640) some three centuries later. At the same time, being "becomes absolute and delimited, universal and particular, general and specific, one and many without acquiring change in its essence and reality" (al-Qayṣarī 2002: 1:13).

Yet Ibn ʿArabī and his followers are not content to analyze the nature of being in purely philosophical terms. They want to explain the nature of things with reference to God as a concrete reality, which is why they normally take the usual philosophical categories of necessary and contingent being and graft them onto the plane of theology or religion proper. Thus, to call God the Necessary Being in philosophical terms is to speak of what is known in Islamic theology as the Divine Essence (*dhāt*). Another common name for the Divine Essence in the writings of the school of Ibn ʿArabī is the "Essence of Exclusive Oneness" (*al-dhāt al-aḥadiyya*) (Ibn ʿArabī 1946: 90–4). ʿAbd al-Razzāq al-Kāshānī (d. 730/1330), another key figure in the school of Ibn ʿArabī, puts it this way: "The Reality called the Essence of Exclusive Oneness in its

true nature is nothing other than being, pure and simple, insofar as it is being" (cited in Izutsu 1984: 25, tr. mod.). Like the Necessary Being, the Divine Essence also does not have a quiddity (*māhiyya*) (Chittick 1989: 80–1), and is completely indeterminate in every respect. Since it is completely simple, unqualified, and unqualifiable, it contains no multiplicity in its reality. This is why Maḥmūd Shabistarī (d. 740/1339) says the following in his famous Persian poem on Sufi metaphysics, the *Rosegarden of Mystery* (*Gulshan-i rāz*):

> In God's Presence there is no duality—
> in that Presence there is no "I," "we," or "you."
> "I," "we," "you," and "it," are one thing,
> for in Oneness, there are no distinctions at all.
>
> (Shabistarī 1976: lines 116–17)

Now, if the Divine Essence is pure simplicity, how does multiplicity emerge from It without introducing change into Its nature? In other words, how do instantiations of being emerge from being without any alteration taking place in the fundamental reality of being itself? Ibn 'Arabī points out that "contingent being" is what stands between being as such and nonexistence as such. For Ibn 'Arabī, contingent being is colored by non-being on account of its contingency. It does possess a type of existence, but an existence which is purely relational (Ibn 'Arabī 1968: 3:193). That is to say, contingent things stand in an intermediate position between being and non-being. With respect to being, they are nothing. But with respect to non-being, they are real. Their intermediate status thus guarantees that contingent things have existence, but only in a relative manner. In order to understand how contingent things take on a relative type of existence (but also remain relatively nonexistent), we must turn to a concept which lies at the heart of the metaphysics of the school of Ibn 'Arabī, namely the "immutable entities" (*al-a'yān al-thābita*).

According to Ibn 'Arabī's own testimony, he borrows the term "immutable entities" from the Mu'tazilites (Afifi 1969; Chittick 1989: 204), an important early Islamic theological school which fell into obscurity by the sixth/twelfth century only to be resuscitated in the wake of the modernist movement in Egypt in the late thirteenth/nineteenth century. The "immutable entities" are the latent possibilities which inhere in the very structure of being itself. Or, to use the language of the school of Ibn 'Arabī, they are nothing but the objects of knowledge forever fixed in God's "mind."

Upon close inspection, the immutable entities turn out to be nothing more than the quiddities (*mahiyyāt*) of Islamic theology and philosophy, a point that is made explicit by a number of Ibn 'Arabī's followers (see, for example, al-Qayṣarī 2002: 1: 45, reproduced in Jāmī 1977: 42; see also Mullā Ṣadrā 1964: 35). A quiddity is defined as that by virtue of which a thing is what it is, or its "what-it-is-ness." In other words, the quiddity of horse is horseness, the quiddity of book is bookness, etc. When we look at a particular horse shorn of its accidents, it is still characterized by the quiddity of horseness, but by virtue of being a particular horse, it is not any other horse, and thus is unique in terms of its particular "what-it-is-ness." An immutable entity, likewise, when brought into existence, is a particular instantiated

object of God's knowledge which is completely unique in its "what-it-is-ness" apart from anything else. Since "existentiation" (*ījād*) refers to the manner in which things come to "be" in concrete existence, I will henceforth refer to the instantiations of the immutable entities by this technical philosophical term.

What does not change in the "what-it-is-ness" of an immutable entity, whether or not God brings it into concrete "existence," is its status of "immutability" as a contingent, and, hence, relatively nonexistent thing, despite the fact that it has a relative reality when it is brought into actual existence (Rustom 2006: 58–9). Members of the school of Ibn 'Arabī were therefore concerned with the immutable entities because they provided them with a way of accounting for the relative non-reality of everything other than God on the one hand, and their relative reality on the other.

Theology

It has already been said that the immutable entities, as quiddities, are (1) objects of God's knowledge and (2) relatively "nonexistent" in their reality even if they have a relative reality when brought into concrete existence. But the immutable entities have another important function which is related to (2): they also act as particularized loci through which being can become manifest. Thus, when God existentiates an immutable entity, it acts as a receptacle for the "reception" of being. When infused with being, an immutable entity is only capable of receiving a particular mode of it, since its reception of being is conditioned by its own particular "what-it-is-ness."

A more concrete way of expressing this point is to say that the immutable entities are the means through which God contemplates the objects of His knowledge—which form a part of His self-knowledge—in a purely externalized manner. When an immutable entity is existentiated, it acts as a locus of God's manifestation (*maẓhar*). This is on account of the fact that externalized existence is only possible by virtue of God's manifestation in the forms of the immutable entities (Ibn 'Arabī 1946: 81). And, although all objects of God's knowledge, all quiddities, are "immutable entities," it is only those that are existentiated which can act as receptacles through which God contemplates Himself. Each immutable entity that is brought into existence is unique unto itself on account of its particular ability to receive God's manifestation, which the school of Ibn 'Arabī refers to as its "preparedness" (*isti'dād*). Thus, because the immutable entities are specific objects of God's knowledge, His knowledge of them is His knowledge of Himself, but in a particular, delimited fashion (I will return to the concept of God's self-knowledge below).

Members of the school of Ibn 'Arabī maintain that the immutable entities, in their state as existentialized loci of God's manifestation, can only provide them with a means to explain how the cosmos is nothing other than an unfolding of God's self-knowledge when the role of God's names are brought into the discussion. Strictly speaking, the divine names do not have a direct philosophical equivalent, rooted as they are in the discipline of Islamic theology (Rustom 2012: Chapter 3).

For medieval Jewish, Christian, and Islamic thought, the nature of God's names is a common and vexing problem. How can we say, as Scripture does, that God has

names which assign a type of "personality" to Him, although He is entirely unlike anything we can know? One common way of speaking of the divine names in classical Islamic theology was to say that they inhered somehow in God's Essence (*qā'ima bi-dhātihi*), but not in a way that gave them independent ontological status such that they could be said to be superadded to It. For many medieval Muslim theologians, the objective ontological status of the divine names was therefore a given, even if their modality could not be easily understood or explained. Ibn 'Arabī rejects this common type of picture of the divine names. He says that the divine names do not "inhere" in God's Essence in any fashion since they are not actually ontological entities. Rather, they are, technically speaking, relationships (*nisab*) (Ibn 'Arabī 1968: 4:294) between what we can call the manifest face of the Essence of Exclusive Oneness and the loci of manifestation, that is, the existentiated immutable entities which "receive" particular modes of being or God's manifestation. In the writings of the school of Ibn 'Arabī, that face of the Essence of Exclusive Oneness that becomes manifest and thus reveals It is often referred to as the "Essence of Inclusive Oneness" (*al-dhāt al-wāḥidiyya*).

We speak of the Divine Essence or the Essence of Exclusive Oneness as having a manifest face in juxtaposition to Its non-manifest face, which always remains utterly unknown and hidden to everything other than It. Thus, the manifest face of the Essence of Exclusive Oneness is that aspect of the Divinity that enters into the realm of relativity. This means that what we normally call "God" is not, for the school of Ibn 'Arabī, God *qua* God at the level of the Essence of Exclusive Oneness. Rather, the term "God" as commonly understood in religion and philosophy is that face of the Essence of Exclusive Oneness that is turned to the cosmos, namely the Essence of Inclusive Oneness.

When the Essence of Exclusive Oneness existentiates the immutable entities, It manifests Itself to them in accordance with their own natures, as has already been mentioned. What come about through the concretization of the immutable entities are the divine names; that is, the relationships that obtain on account of the Essence of Exclusive Oneness's manifestation to the immutable entities, thereby bringing them out of a state of non-externalized contingency into a state of externalized contingency, or, put differently, from a state of relative nonexistence into a state of relative existence. Indeed, if it were not for these relationships, God as apprehensible would not be "God" (Ibn 'Arabī 1946: 81). Notice also how carefully the terms are cast, such that neither the names nor the immutable entities are given absolute ontological status. At the same time, their relative reality assumes that they do take on some mode of existence.

By virtue of the fact that the divine names come about as a result of the Essence of Exclusive Oneness's manifestation, they are singularly responsible for making Its relationship to the cosmos known. Since the entire cosmos is nothing other than a conglomeration of the divine names as displayed through the existentiated immutable entities, each thing in the cosmic order points to the divine names, and, by extension, the divine qualities to which the names refer. One way to frame this picture is to say that the Essence of Exclusive Oneness is made manifest in the garment of the divine names and qualities (al-Qayṣarī 2002: 1:17; Chittick 1989: 85). Thus, all things in the cosmos reveal an aspect of the Essence of Exclusive Oneness by "naming" or

pointing to aspects of Its manifest face, that is, the Essence of Inclusive Oneness. At the same time, the multiplicity of the Essence of Exclusive Oneness's manifestations does not imply any plurality in Its nature (al-Qayṣarī 2002: 1:16).

Because the names are nonexistent entities, we cannot speak of any kind of multiplicity. Thus, the Essence of Exclusive Oneness is made manifest by that which is paradoxically nonexistent on the one hand, but which has existence in a relative sense on the other. This explains why Fakhr al-Dīn 'Iráqī (d. 688/1289) says that the divine names do not compromise God's Unity (at the level of the Essence of Exclusive Oneness) in any fashion, just as the waves of the sea do not make the sea a multiplicity. Rather, the waves, insofar as they are waves, are real, but since they belong to the sea and will inevitably ebb back into it, they do not have their own independent and abiding ontological status: "Many and disparate waves do not make the sea a multiplicity; no more do the names make the Named more than one" ('Iráqī 1982: 78, tr. mod.).

Cosmology and Anthropology

We have thus far been using the term "manifestation" (*ẓuhūr*) to denote the manner in which the Essence of Exclusive Oneness turns to the cosmos; that is, how God *qua* Divine Essence reveals Itself. This term has a number of technical equivalents in the writings of the school of Ibn 'Arabī, one of which is the less common word *fayḍ* or "emanation" (al-Qayṣarī 2002: 1:45), an expression that was particularly common in earlier Islamic Neoplatonism. However, two other expressions that become key in the writings of the school of Ibn 'Arabī, and which denote the same idea as "manifestation" and "emanation," are "entification" and "self-disclosure." The word "entification" (*ta'ayyun*) is to be found in Ibn 'Arabī's writings, but assumes no technical significance in them (Chittick 1989: 83). It likely becomes a key term from Qūnawī onwards. For our purposes here, we will leave the words "manifestation" and "entification" aside and focus on the term "self-disclosure," since the structurally mythic ideas associated with the cosmology and anthropology of the school of Ibn 'Arabī are best presented with reference to it.

The term "self-disclosure" (*tajallī*, derived from 7:148 of the Qur'ān) is etymologically related to the idea of "illumination." Since God is identified with light in the Qur'ān (24:35) and in the sayings of the Prophet Muḥammad, it became commonplace to speak of Him as being light, a fundamental insight out of which Suhrawardī develops his philosophy. Thus, "self-disclosure" is a reflexive verbal noun which conveys the sense of God (*qua* Essence of Exclusive Oneness) disclosing Himself to Himself by displaying the intensity of His being/light to the "dark" and "contingent" immutable entities, that is, the objects of His knowledge. This bears some striking resemblances to the treatment of God's theophany that we find in John Scotus Eriugena (d. 877), who translated and was influenced by the Neoplatonist works of pseudo-Dionysius (Carabine 2000: Chapter 4; Sells 1994: Chapter 2).

The common imagery of the sun and its rays is particularly apt here, which is why it is often used to explain the relationship between God and the cosmos: although the sun is one, it has many rays which reveal aspects of the sun but which do not

detract from its nature in any manner whatsoever, and which cannot be said to exist independent of it. Just as the rays of the sun illuminate the earth, so too do God's self-disclosures illuminate the cosmic order, revealing the presence of the divine Sun in each thing.

The significance of the term "self-disclosure" is made clear when we look to one of the Prophetic sayings which the school of Ibn 'Arabī commonly draws upon in order to explain why and how God brought about the cosmos, thus addressing the metaphysical problem, "Why is there something rather than nothing?" This report, referred to as a sacred tradition (*ḥadīth qudsī*), says that God was a Hidden Treasure who loved to be known, and, as a result of this desire to be known, He created the cosmos and all that is in it (*khalq*). We are told by Sa'īd al-Dīn Farghānī (d. 699/1300) (Farghānī 2007: 1:18–19) that this desire on God's part to want to be known was a "fundamental inclination," deeply rooted in His nature to gain a type of objectivized knowledge of Himself, since before creating the cosmos He only had a subjective knowledge of Himself. The cosmos thus becomes an objectivized reflection of God's self-knowledge in which God *qua* Essence of Exclusive Oneness can witness Himself *qua* Essence of Inclusive Oneness (Farghānī 2007: 1:21). The jewels contained in this Hidden Treasure are nothing other than the immutable entities. The existentiation of these entities would thus present to God an externalized aspect of His self-knowledge, which would not have been a possibility had He not existentiated them.

This desire for self-knowledge on the part of God is described as a type of "distress" on account of the immutable entities, though in other contexts Ibn 'Arabī also attributes this distress to the divine names. The immutable entities, as latent and non-existent objects of God's knowledge, "sought" their own existentation in the realm of relativity since they did not have existence in their state of fixity and non-existentiation. It is important to note in this context that the Arabic word *wujūd* (from the same root as existentiation, *ījād*) does not only mean "being," but also "finding." The account of the Hidden Treasure thus means that God *qua* being sought objectivized knowledge of Himself through the very objects of His own self-knowledge, and thus brought some of the objects of His knowledge into a relative state of "being" so that He could "find" Himself in them.

One of the key cosmological themes which punctuates the thought of the school of Ibn 'Arabī is a concept which also derives from a Prophetic saying, namely the Breath of the All-Merciful (*nafas al-raḥmān*) (Chittick 1989: 127–34; Corbin 1969: 115–16 et passim). In order to grant relief to the distress of the immutable entities, we are told, God "breathed out" or "exhaled" (Ibn 'Arabī 1946: 112), thereby granting relief and hence mercy to the constriction within His self. This means that the underlying stuff of the cosmos is mercy, since it is the result of the Breath of the All-Merciful. From another perspective, the constriction within the divine self is, as we have seen, the result of a desire on the part of the Divine (*qua* Essence of Exclusive Oneness) to see Himself (*qua* Essence of Inclusive Oneness), which is tantamount to God objectivizing His love for Himself. It is for this reason that Ibn 'Arabī describes the Breath of the All-Merciful as that which allows for God's self-love to come about: "The Breath of the All-Merciful made the cosmos manifest in order to release the property of love and relieve what the Lover found in Himself" (cited in Chittick

1989: 131). The love that motivated the All-Merciful to release His breath is, in the final analysis, the Hidden Treasure's desire to be "known," which is motivated by a fundamental self-love. We can speak of "desire" on the part of God *qua* Essence of Exclusive Oneness because of Its all-possibility, one mode of which is desire, and hence "self-negation."

In more philosophical terms, we can say that the breath is nothing other than the very externalization of the quiddities, which emerge within and by virtue of being. This explains why the school of Ibn 'Arabī explicitly identifies the Breath of the All-Merciful with what is known as "expansive being" (*al-wujūd al-munbasiṭ*) (al-Qūnawī 1969: 193). And since the "Breath of the All-Merciful" is to religious language what "being" is to philosophical language, the root of existence is nothing but mercy. Thus, since all things have come about through mercy, are engulfed in mercy, and are themselves instantiations of mercy, they experience nothing but mercy. Just as the breath marks the beginning in which the cosmos and its contents came about, so too is the end marked by the All-Merciful "inhaling" the objects of His self-knowledge; that is, when the quiddities return from their mode of relative existence to their original state of relative nonexistence. One of the implications of this position is that in their posthumous state, all people will eventually end up in mercy. Ibn 'Arabī defends this soteriological position on these grounds, as does Mullá Ṣadrá, who in many ways is a "member" of the school of Ibn 'Arabī (Rustom 2012: Chapters 6 and 7).

The question of God's originating the cosmos as a result of His seeking self-knowledge finds its perfect analogue in the human quest to seek self-knowledge. The school of Ibn 'Arabī's treatment of the idea of self-knowledge is informed by a well-known Prophetic saying, "He who knows himself, knows his Lord." Since human existence is nothing other than a delimited mode of God's being—that is, since the very substance of the human state is nothing but the self-disclosure of God—the act of gaining self-knowledge on the part of the human subject results in coming to know God in a more concrete and real way. From another perspective, it is God who comes to know Himself through the knowing human self. Mullá Ṣadrá thus identifies the human need to gain self-knowledge as being configured in the very nature of being. The key to gaining access to self-knowledge, which lies at the heart of Sufi praxis, is the remembrance of God (*dhikr*). By remembering God, one comes to know one's true self, since one returns to what one has always been:

> Since forgetfulness of God is the cause of forgetfulness of self, remembering the self will necessitate God's remembering the self, and God's remembering the self will itself necessitate the self's remembering itself: *Remember Me and I will remember you* [Qur'án 2:152]. God's remembering the self is identical with the self's existence (*wujūd*), since God's knowledge is presential (*ḥuḍūrī*) with all things. Thus, he who does not have knowledge of self, his self does not have existence, since the self's existence is identical with light (*nūr*), presence (*ḥuḍūr*), and perception (*shu'ūr*).
>
> (Mullá Ṣadrá 1961: 14)

By virtue of the fact that one becomes more real and characterized by being, presence, and light the more one remembers God, and thus increases in self-knowledge, he

who knows his self most will also come to know God most, since it is through him that God will come to know His objectivized self. This type of self-knowledge is actualized by the "Perfect Human" (*al-insān al-kāmil*), a term Ibn 'Arabī and others use to refer to anyone who has achieved self-realization.

In the school of Ibn 'Arabī there is an important cosmological doctrine that seems to have first been introduced by Qūnawī, referred to as the "Five Divine Presences" (*al-ḥaḍrāt al-ilāhiyya al-khams*). According to this teaching, God's Presence, which accounts for all that there "is," is "there" in five different modes. The first of these is uncreated (the divine Presence); the next three are created (the spiritual, imaginal, and the sensory); and the last (the human) takes in the previous four Presences (Chittick 1982: 124). Earlier members of the school of Ibn 'Arabī do not usually associate the first Presence with God *qua* Essence of Exclusive Oneness (Chittick 1982: 122; cf. the poem cited by Shabistarī above). Thus, above and beyond the first Presence we have God as He is to Himself, which corresponds to the Essence of Exclusive Oneness or what Mu'ayyid al-Dīn Jandī (d. ca. 700/1300) calls the "Non-Entified Essence" (Jandī 1982: 707). The first Presence corresponds to the level of the first delimitation of God, namely the Essence of Inclusive Oneness or what is known as the "First Entification," which corresponds to what we normally refer to as "God," i.e. the divinity that can be known. In general, other names for the second Presence, the spiritual world, can be the "Muḥammadan Spirit," "Highest Pen," "First Intellect," and "Divine Spirit" (Jīlī 2000: 153). The third Presence corresponds to a plane of existence that stands between the spiritual and the corporeal worlds, what is technically known as the "world of imagination" (*'ālam al-khayāl*) (Chittick 1989: 115–18). The fourth Presence is the corporeal world, or the world of matter. And the fifth Presence is the Perfect Human. The Perfect Human takes in all the other Presences because his Presence brings together all of the divine names in which God reveals Himself.

In the first Presence, God *qua* Essence of Inclusive Oneness contains all of the other Presences below it but in undifferentiated fashion (*mujmal*). As being becomes individuated within each Presence, it begins to become more differentiated (*mufaṣṣal*) and hence the relationships that begin to emerge between the Essence of Exclusive Oneness and the loci of God's self-disclosure begin to multiply. The multiplicity of relationships therefore means that the divine names become more widespread within each Presence. By the time we reach the fifth Presence, the Perfect Human, we have what was there in all of the Presences before it, but in completely differentiated form. This is why the Perfect Human is said to be a transcript (*nuskha*) of the cosmos (al-Qūnawī 1969: 106) and the locus for the disclosure of the divine name "Allāh" (Chittick 2012: 144–7). Unlike all of the other divine names which denote specific aspects of the Essence of Inclusive Oneness, the name Allāh is technically known as an all-gathering name (*ism jāmi'*), since it brings together all of the other divine names present in the cosmos. Since the Perfect Human embodies the all-gathering name "Allāh," his Presence is the most all-gathering Presence. The Perfect Human is therefore the mirror image of God (*qua* Essence of Inclusive Oneness), and is described as being a Presence unto himself since he manifests, in being's deployed and differentiated state, the fullness of being, and, hence, the fullness of God's objectivized self-knowledge.

If being in its undifferentiated state contains every perfection, goodness, and beauty in potentiality, then the same holds true for its differentiated state, the Perfect Human, who contains every perfection, goodness, and beauty in actuality. It is for this reason that the Chinese Sufi figure Liu Zhi (b. ca. 1081/1670) describes the Perfect Human, who in Chinese is called "The Human Ultimate," as "the great completion equipped with every beauty" (cited in Murata et al. 2009: 135). In accordance with the well-known Prophetic saying, "God is beautiful, and He loves beauty," the school of Ibn 'Arabī, much like Plotinus (d. 270) (Hadot 1993: 64–73), maintains that the full actualization of the human state is nothing other than to live a life of virtue and beauty. Since the Perfect Human best embodies the differentiated nature of being, thus acting as a mirror in which God *qua* Essence of Exclusive Oneness can witness Himself *qua* Essence of Inclusive Oneness, He looks upon the Perfect Human and sees a crystalline reflection of the objects of His love: the beautiful jewels contained within the Hidden Treasure.

Conclusion

Analyzing the teachings of the school of Ibn 'Arabī in a unified perspective, it becomes clear that their emphasis upon mythic formulations is largely a means by which they can present well-known philosophical concepts in an accessible and concrete fashion. This is not, however, an endorsement of the simplistic view which maintains that religious symbolism or mysticism is merely philosophy "clothed up" and made accessible to non-philosophers. In fact, through an engagement with both mysticism and philosophy, Ibn 'Arabī and his followers would also like to suggest that philosophical language is, in so many ways, itself a symbolic representation of religious or mystical truths. Nevertheless, their perspective forms a unique hybrid of both philosophy and mysticism in a particular technical language, largely informed by the view that, from one vantage point, philosophy and mysticism are two sides of the same coin.

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