RŪMĪ AND WAḤDAT AL-WUJŪD–OBSERVATIONS AND INSIGHTS

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ABSTRACT

Rūmī has been received and interpreted in the intellectual and literary tradition of the Indian subcontinent as a proponent of *Waḥdat al-Wujūd* and as a figure who was greatly influenced by Ibn ʿArabī.[1] Writings of the Orientalists and the anti-Sufi polemics have also accepted this perception, though with negative implications. This paper would try to explore the issue of Ibn ʿArabī'sinfluence on Rūmī with rrefernce to *Waḥdat al-Wujūd* and examine the prevalent ideas in this regard. In order to situate the discussion, it takes its point of departure to a brief review of the history of the term *Waḥdat al-Wujūd* as presented by Dr. William C. Chittick which proposes seven different ways, including both the supporters and opponents, in which the term has been understood, without intending to be exhaustive. Then finally it turns to Rūmī and tries to look at the question that in what respect can the term *Waḥdat al-Wujūd* be applied to his teachings, to explore if any of the seven meanings apply to Rūmī's way of looking at things? In conclusion it would give reasons to believe that Ibn ʿArabī exercised no perceptible influence on Rūmī. In the end it argues for the position that the commonly held view of Ibn al-ʿArabī's "Influence" on the *Mathnawī* is highly speculative and lacks evidence both on the formal as well as a deeper, spiritual level.

Few technical terms of Sufism are as well known as *Waḥdat al-Wujūd*, "Oneness of Being" or "Unity of Existence." Though this expression has

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[1] As could be seen from the large number of Persian and Urdu commentaries on the *Mathnawī*, almost all of which interpret Rūmī with the presumption that Rūmī was a follower of Ibn al-ʿArabī and look at him through the lens of their particular understanding Ibn al-ʿArabī's teachings. i

historical connections with the school of Ibn ʿArabī, it is sometimes employed to refer to the views of other Sufis, including figures who lived long before Ibn ʿArabī.[2] It has also been said that Rūmī supported *Waḥdat al-Wujūd*, but if this statement is taken to mean that Rūmī derived the idea from Ibn ʿArabī or his students, serious historical and intellectual questions arise.

Passages which were later looked upon as statements of the doctrine of *Waḥdat al-Wujūd*, are numerous, and date back to the eary days of Islam. Already in the sayings of ʿAlī we come across a reference to four different meanings for the apparently simple statement, "God is One.[3] Many statements of the Sufis approximate it.[4] Maʿrūf al-Karkhī (d. 200/815-816) is said to have been the first to re-express the *shahādah* in the form often heard in later centuries, "There is nothing in *wujūd* but God."[5] Abū ʾl-ʿAbbās Qaṣṣāb (fl. 4th/10th century) used similar terms: "There is nothing in the two worlds except my Lord. The existent things (*mawjūdāt*)– all things except His *wujūd*– are nonexistent (*maʿdūm).*"[6] Khwaja ʿAbdallah Anṣārī (d. 481/1089) refers to the "*tawḥīd* of the elect" as the fact that "No one is other than He" (*laysa*

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[2] For example, N. Purjawadi ascribes a belief in *Waḥdat al-Wujūd* to Aḥmad Ghazālī, the brother of the more famous Ḥāmid Ghazālī. See his *Sulṭān-i ṭarīqat* (Tehran, 1358/1979), pp. 104 ff.

[3] Cf. W. C. Chittick, *A Shiite Anthology* (Albany, 1981), pp. 37-38.

[4] Abu Rayḥān al-Bīrūnī (d. ca 442/1051), the famous philosopher-scientist, summarizes a view that sounds very much like *Waḥdat al-Wujūd* while explaining the doctrines of the Greek philosophers; then he points out that this is also the position of the Sufis. Unless otherwise stated, all translations are my own. "Some of them held that only the First Cause possesses true *wujūd,* since the First Cause is independent in its *wujūd by* its very Essence, while everything else has need of it. Moreover, the *wujūd* of that which is utterly in need of something else in order to possess *wujūd* is like imagination (*khayāl*); it is not real (*ḥaqq*). The Real is only the One, the First. This is also the opinion of the Sufis. *Kitāb fī Taḥqīq mā li ʾl-Hind* (Hyderabad, 1958), p. 24; cf. E. C. Sachau, *Alberuni's India* (Delhi, 1964), p. 33. For a few examples of relevant statements by Sufis in the context of *tawḥīd*, cf. the short but rich study by R. Gramlich, "Mystical Dimensions of Islamic Monotheism," in A. Schimmel and A. Falaturi, eds., *We Believe in One God* (New York, 1979), pp. 136-148.

[5] Quoted by ʿAyn al-Quḍāt Hamadanī, *Tamhīdāt*, p. 256, in ʿA. ʿUsayran, ed., *Musannafāt-i ʿAyn al- Quḍāt Hamadanī*, (Tehran, 1341/1962); also by ʿAzīz al-Dīn Nasafī, *Maqṣad-i aqṣā*, appended to Jāmī, *AshiʿʿAt al-Lamaʿāt*, ed. H. Rabbani (Tehran, 1352/1973), p. 272.

[6] See ʿAyn al- Quḍāt, *Tamhīdāt*, pp. 256-257.

ghayrahu aḥad). "What is *tawḥīd?"* Anṣārī asks. "God, and nothing else. The rest is folly (*hawas*)."[7] Al-Ghazālī did not consider this kind of an understanding of *tawḥīd* a specifically Sufi teaching, appropriate only for his more esoteric works, since he makes the same point in his famous *Iḥyā' 'Ulūm al-Dīn*: "There is nothing in *wujūd* but God.... *Wujūd* belongs only to the Real One."[8]

Its first clear and detailed formulation is usually ascribed to the "Greatest Master," al-Shaykh al-Akbar, Muḥyi al-Dīn ibn al-ʿArabī (d. 638/1240). Despite the fact that relatively little research has been carried out on Ibn ʿArabī's teachings, his fame along with that of *Waḥdat al-Wujūd* has spread far outside academic circles. But Ibn ʿArabī himself, so far as is known, never employs the term *Waḥdat al-Wujūd* in his enormous corpus of writings,[9] even though he frequently discusses *wujūd* and the fact that it can be described as possessing the attribute of oneness or unity (employing such terms as *waḥda*, *waḥdāniyya*, and *aḥadiyya*).

If one makes a quick survey of the itinerary of the idea/expression of *Waḥdat al-Wujūd* from the times of Ibn ʿArabī down to the days of Rūmī, touching upon the works of the followrs or presumed followers of the "school of Ibn ʿArabī, the history of the term *Waḥdat al-Wujūd* can be summarized as follows: The term is not found in the writings of Ibn ʿArabī. For Ṣadr al-Dīn Qūnawī (d. 673/1274), it has no specific technical sense; where it does occur, it means simply that there is only one true *wujūd*, the *wujūd* of God. The relationship of this *wujūd* to the things of the world needs to be explained; it is not implied in the term *Waḥdat al-Wujūd* itself. Muʾayyid al-Dīn Jandī (d. 690/1291), though deeply concerned with explaining the nature of *wujūd* and

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[7] Anṣārī, *Tabaqāt al-Ṣūfiyya*, ed. ʿA. Habibi (Kabul, 1341/1962), pp. 180, 172, and 174; also quoted in J. Nurbakhsh, *Maʿārif-i Ṣūfiyya* (London, 1983), I, pp. 112, 113, and 118.

[8] Al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyāʾ ʿUlūm al-Dīn* (Cairo, 1326/1908), 1V, p. 230 (book IV, part 6, section 8).

[9] Cf. S. al-Ḥakīm, *Al-Muʿjam al-Īūfī* (Beirut, 1981), p. 1145; M. Chodkiewicz, *Epitre sur l'Unicite Absolue* (Paris, 1982), pp. 25-26; I. Madkūr in *Al-Kitab al-Tidhkārī: Muḥyi al-Dīn Ibn al-ʿArabī*, edited by idem (Cairo, 1969), p. 369. It is of course possible that the term will one day turn up in some newly discovered manuscript of one of Ibn ʿArabī's works, but even if that happens, it will most likely not have a technical significance in the context.

waḥda, does not appear to have employed the term *Waḥdat al-Wujūd* even in passing.[10] In Saʿīd al-Dīn Farghānī's writings *Waḥdat al-Wujūd* is well on its way to becoming a technical term, but it does not stand on its own, since it needs to be complemented by *kathrat al-ʿilm*, the manyness of knowledge. Off to the side of this main line of Ibn al-ʿArabī's followers, other figures like Ibn Sabʿīn (d. 669/1270), Awḥad al-Dīn Balyānī (d. 686/1288), Saʿd al-Dīn Hammūya (d. 649/1252), and ʿAziz al-Dīn Nasafī (d. before 700/1300) were employing the term as a kind of shorthand to allude to the fundamental nature of things. Ibn Taymiyya seized upon the expression as a synonym for the great heresies of unificationism and incarnationism. By the time of Jāmī, and perhaps much before, *Waḥdat al-Wujūd* became the designation for an expression of *tawḥīd* that was typified by the writings of Ibn ʿArabī and his followers.

Orientalists

Western studies of Ibn ʿArabī in modern times have greatly complicated the task of discerning what is meant by *Waḥdat al-Wujūd*. Many of the earlier orientalists, like historians of thought in general, felt that by putting a label on an idea, they had understood it and had no more need to think about it. Ibn ʿArabī in particular attracted labels, which is not surprising. One look at the difficulty and sheer volume of his writings convinced most people that it would be futile to spend a lifetime trying to decipher them. The easiest solution was to call Ibn ʿArabī a pantheist or to claim that he stood outside of "orthodox" Islam and to move on to greener pastures. This was far preferable to admitting that he was a spiritual teacher, sage, philosopher, theologian, Qurʾān commentator, and jurist of the first order, a figure whose elaborate synthesis of Islamic thought cannot be approached without long

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[10] The term is not mentioned in Jandī's 125 page explanation of Ibn al-ʿArabī's introduction to the Fuṣūṣ (*Sharḥ Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam*, ed. S. J. Āshtiyānī (Mashhad, 1361/1982), nor in his Persian *Nafḥāt al-rūḥ,* ed. N. Māyil Hirawī (Tehran, 1362/1983). Jandī's commentary was especially influential, even though it was preceded by at least two others, because it was the first to explain the whole text. The most important of the earlier commentaries are probably *al-Fukūk* by Qūnawī, which explains the meanings of the chapter headings, and one by ʿAfīf al-Dīn Tilimsānī, which, however, often ignores whole chapters and deals mainly with a few points on which the author disagrees with Ibn al-ʿArabī.

years of training. After all, what would be gained by admitting that the Orient had produced forms of knowledge that cannot be filed into neat cubbyholes?

More recently, a number of serious scholars have taken the trouble to study some of Ibn al-ʿArabī's works and to meditate upon his teachings in depth. The facile assumptions of an earlier generation have been largely discarded, but the old labels are still to be found in the secondary literature. Among specialists, it is now generally recognized that "the repeated use of alien and inappropriate interpretive categories– e.g., 'pantheist,' 'monist,' 'theology,' 'heterodox/orthodox,' etc.– ….can not but mislead those lacking a firsthand acquaintance with Ibn al-ʿArabī's works."[11]

To try to sort out the views of Ibn ʿArabī offered by various orientalists over the past one hundred years would entail a major study. Here I can only suggest that Western scholars have reflected the split concerning Ibn ʿArabī found in Islam itself. Hence they have been divided into two camps: those for and those against, even though the language of "objective" scholarship often conceals personal predilections. In the eyes of those who take a negative approach, *Waḥdat al-Wujūd* becomes an easily dismissed "ism," or perhaps a distortion of "authentic" and "orthodox" Islam brought about by a morbid preoccupation with imaginative speculation that was but a prelude to the decline of a civilization. Scholars who offer a positive evaluation have realized that the worldview of this figure who has dominated much of Islamic thought for the past six hundred years cannot be dismissed so easily. Some even maintain that *Waḥdat al-Wujūd* represents a providential reformulation of tawḥīd in a philosophical language that can provide practical solutions for the spiritual malaise of the modern world.

The Meanings of the Term Wahdat al-Wujūd

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[11] James Morris, remarking on Asin Palacios's study of Ibn ʿArabī, *L'Islam christianise,* in "Ibn ʿArabī and His Interpreters", Part I, p. 544. Cf. Corbin's eloquent appraisal of Ibn al-ʿArabī's importance and the dangers of various oversimplified interpretations in his *Creative Imagination.* Cf. also T. Burckhardt, *An Introduction to Sufi Doctrine* (Lahore, 1959), pp. 23-26; S. H. Nasr, *Three Muslim Sages* (Cambridge, 1964), pp. 104-106.

This brief review of the history of the term *Waḥdat al-Wujūd* allows me to propose seven different ways in which the term has been understood, without intending to be exhaustive. First, *Waḥdat al-Wujūd* denotes a school of thought that goes back to Ibn ʿArabī and makes certain statements about the nature of the relationship between God and the world. This meaning of the term came to be accepted by supporters and opponents of Ibn ʿArabī and was established by the time of Jāmī.

The remaining six definitions depend on whether the person who employs the term has evaluated this school of thought positively or negatively.

A. Supporters

(1) When Qūnawī and Farghānī employ the term *Waḥdat al-Wujūd*, it represents a statement about *wujūd* or reality itself, without any implication that a whole system of thought lies behind it; in their works the term is invariably complemented by an affirmation of the manyness and plurality of the Real's self-manifestation in the cosmos.

(2) For Ibn Sabʿīn, Nasafī, and the whole later tradition of Ibn ʿArabī's followers, the expression *Waḥdat al-Wujūd* itself represents a sufficient statement about the nature of things. Those who employed the term in this sense felt no need to point out, at least not in the immediate context, that multiplicity also possesses a certain reality, though most of them do not deny this fact, except perhaps in moments of rhetorical excess.

(3) In the later tradition of Sufism and Islamic philosophy, *Waḥdat al-Wujūd* is often employed as a virtual synonym for *tawḥīd*, with the understanding that it refers primarily to the Sufi approach to expressing tawḥīd. In this most general sense the term can be used to refer to the ideas of Sufis who flourished long before Ibn ʿArabī.

B. Opponents

(1) For Ibn Taymiyya, *Waḥdat al-Wujūd* is practically synonymous with incarnationism and unificationism, that is, the thesis that God and the world, or God and man, are identical. By a slight extension of this meaning, *Waḥdat al-Wujūd* becomes identical with broader negative categories, such as heresy, atheism, and unbelief (*ilḥād*, *zandaqa*, *taʿṭīl*, *shirk*, *kufr*). I would also place in this category those Western interpretations of *Waḥdat al-Wujūd* that place upon it labels such as pantheism, usually with the obvious intent of denigrating its supporters and convincing us that we need not take it seriously.

(2) Certain later Sufis in India, especially Aḥmad Sirhindī (d. 1624), employ the term *Waḥdat al-Wujūd* in a less negative sense. In general they acknowledge that it possesses a certain validity, but they maintain that "*waḥdat al-shuhūd*" represents a higher degree of spiritual attainment.[12] Though much research needs to be carried out before the sources and aims of this debate become completely clear, it seems that *waḥdat al-shuhūd* was proposed as a preferable position to *Waḥdat al-Wujūd* at least partly to foil the criticisms of Ibn Taymiyya and his followers. As Mole has pointed out, Sirhindī's way of expressing himself concerning *waḥdat al-shuhūd* "safeguarded the transcendence and absolute otherness of God."[13] If many Sufis continued to support *Waḥdat al-Wujūd* in opposition to *waḥdat al-shuhūd*, it was no doubt because in their eyes, *Waḥdat al-Wujūd* never posed any threat to God's transcendence and absolute otherness in the first place.

The Indian distinction between *Waḥdat al-Wujūd* and *waḥdat al-shuhūd* was

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[12] On Sirhindī and *waḥdat al-shuhūd*, see Y. Friedmann, *Shaykh Ahmad Sirhindi: An Outline of His Thought and a Study of His Image in the Eyes of Posterity* (Montreal, 1971). Friedmann's comparison of *waḥdat al-shuhūd* with *waḥdat al-wujūd* follows Sirhindī's own interpretation, so it has no validity in terms of what Ibn ʿArabī and his followers actually said. The debate between the supporters of *Waḥdat al-Wujūd* and *waḥdat al-shuhūd* is said to go back to ʿAlāʾ al-Dawlā Simnānī (d. 736/1336), who exchanged well-known letters with the *Fuṣūṣ* commentator ʿAbd al-Razzāq Kāshānī, but ʿAlāʾ al-Dawlā Simnānī himself does not employ the terms, nor is it known who first contrasted them. Cf. H. Landolt, "Der Briefwechsel zwischen Kasani and Simnani fiber *Waḥdat al-Wugud*," *Der Islam,* 50 (1973), pp. 29-81.

[13] Mole, *Les mystiques musulmans,* p. 109.

taken up by several orientalists, including Massignon, Anawati, and Gardet, who then read this distinction back into Islamic history on highly questionable grounds. Massignon had a well-known personal preference for the love mysticism of al-Ḥallāj and a deep aversion to Ibn al-ʿArabī's approach. For him and those who followed him, *Waḥdat al-Wujūd* became "static existential monism," while *waḥdat al-shuhūd* was "dynamic testimonial monism," the latter far to be preferred over the former, not least because it accorded with "orthodoxy." Massignon's attribution of a "static" mysticism to those who supported *Waḥdat al-Wujūd* illustrates the typical sort of oversimplification indulged in by those who place labels on Ibn ʿArabī, thus mutilating a highly complex doctrinal synthesis.[14] It is not my purpose to suggest all of the misunderstanding caused by reading such simplistically interpreted dichotomies back into Islamic history. I will only add that later Sufism came to distinguish between *Waḥdat al-Wujūd* and *waḥdat al-shuhūd* for internal reasons, to some of which I have already alluded. But to make this distinction normative for the whole history of Sufism is nearly as misleading as to employ categories such as pantheism. Though one cannot deny that Sufis illustrate deep differences of perspective, one can be certain that scholars who attempt to redefine terms such as *Waḥdat al-Wujūd* and *waḥdat al-shuhūd* in terms of Western philosophical and psychological categories only add to the confusion already present in our perception of Sufism's history.

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[14] This is not the place to attempt to show the error of this attribution, since to do so in the limited space available would force me to indulge in the same sort of oversimplifications that I am criticizing. Let me only remark that no one paints a more dynamic picture of creation and the human relationship to God than Ibn ʿArabī. For example, when he explains the similarity demanded by God's self-disclosure (*tajallī*), Ibn ʿArabī constantly quotes the axiom, "Self-disclosure never repeats itself" (*la takrār fi ʾl-tajallī*), which is the principle behind his well-known doctrine of the "renewal of creation at each instant" (tajdīd al-khalq maʿa ʾl-ānāt). One of the names that Ibn ʿArabī gives to the highest stage of spiritual realization, where the human receptacle becomes the full manifestation of the all-comprehensive divine name Allah, is "bewilderment" (*hayra*), since within this station the perfect human being constantly witnesses (*shuhūd*) the infinite expanse of the divine *wujūd* through never-repeating and ever-changing revelations of light and awareness. Thus, he writes in the *Fuṣūṣ,* "Guidance is to be led to bewilderment. Then you will know that the whole affair is bewilderment, that bewilderment is agitation and movement, and that movement is life. There is no rest, no death, only existence— nothing of nonexistence" (pp. 199-200; cf. Austin, *Ibn Al-ʿArabī,* p. 254).

These few remarks on the problems of understanding what is meant by the term *Waḥdat al-Wujūd* should at least warn us that we need to look carefully at how people who employ the term evaluate Ibn al-ʿArabī's teachings. In general, sympathizers see *Waḥdat al-Wujūd* as a restatement of *tawḥīd* in the language of the advanced and refined intellectuality of later Islamic history, while detractors consider it a deviation from the supposedly clear distinctions drawn between God and the cosmos by the early and relatively unsophisticated schools of theology. Nevertheless, the term *Waḥdat al-Wujūd* carries a good deal of baggage because of the long debate over its use. Thus all sorts of complications can arise that obscure what is at issue.

An interesting example of these complications is provided by the Festschrift prepared for the 800th anniversary of Ibn al-ʿArabī's birth, in which an Egyptian scholar, who is a fervent supporter of Ibn ʿArabī, writes that those who attribute *Waḥdat al-Wujūd* to Ibn ʿArabī commit a grievous error. Though this scholar never defines what he understands by *Waḥdat al-Wujūd*, it is clear that he has accepted the negative evaluation of the term offered by Ibn ʿArabī's opponents. In answer to this article, an Iranian scholar has written a strong rebuttal in which he demonstrates, in the light of the Iranian intellectual tradition, that *Waḥdat al-Wujūd* forms the backbone of Islamic thought.[15] It does not even occur to this critic to ask whether the Egyptian scholar has understood the term in the same way that he does. Careful reading of the two authors shows that they do not disagree as to what Ibn ʿArabī believed and wrote about; both accept him as one of the greatest intellectual and spiritual authorities of Islam. They have merely stumbled over divergent understandings of the term *Waḥdat al-Wujūd*.

Rūmī

Finally I turn to Rūmī. In what respect can the term *Waḥdat al-Wujūd* be applied to his teachings? In other words, do any of the seven meanings offered above apply to Rūmī's way of looking at things?

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[15] M. Ghallāb, "Al-Maʿrifa ʿinda Muḥyi al-Dīn Ibn ʿArabī," in Madkūr, *al-Kitāb al-tidhkārī,* pp. 202-206; Jahāngīrī, *Muḥyi al-Dīn Ibn al-ʿArabī,* p. 198.

Needless to say, Rūmī never employs the term *Waḥdat al-Wujūd*, so we can eliminate the two specific meanings that give to the term itself a technical significance (numbers A (l) and A(2) above). We can also eliminate the three negative definitions, since Rūmī is too grand a figure to need defense against accusations of pantheism or unbelief, and he flourished long before anyone had tried to distinguish between *Waḥdat al-Wujūd* and *waḥdat al-shuhūd*.

This leaves us with two definitions. When one says that *Waḥdat al-Wujūd* is simply *tawḥīd* expressed in the language of the Sufis and accepts that the words of Maʿrūf al-Karkhī in the second/eighth century, "There is nothing in *wujūd* but God," are a statement of *Waḥdat al-Wujūd*, then of course Rūmī was a spokesman for *Waḥdat al-Wujūd*, and innumerable passages from his works can be cited to support this contention.

This leaves the definition of *Waḥdat al-Wujūd* in the first sense, as denoting the perspective of the specific school of thought that goes back to Ibn ʿArabī. Many people have said that Rūmī believed in *Waḥdat al-Wujūd* because he was a follower or disciple of Ibn al-ʿArabī. R. A. Nicholson, the greatest Western authority on the *Mathnawī,* added weight to this approach by maintaining that Rūmī was influenced by him. Most recently the *Encyclopedia of Religion* calls Rūmī a member of "Ibn al-ʿArabī's school," though not in the article on Rūmī himself, written by Annemarie Schimmel.[16]

My own position is that Ibn ʿArabī exercised no perceptible influence on Rūmī. The reasons for this are many. First, however, out of respect for these two great masters, I waht to engage in a bit of introspection and ask why we are interested in such problems in the first place.

Scholars of an earlier generation seem to have felt that by saying "x influenced y", they had explained something of profound importance. Today, many people have come to understand that this sort of approach is deftly designed to turn their attention away from all that was considered important within the historical and cultural context in question. For Rūmī and Ibn

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[16] *Encyclopedia of Religion* (New York, 1987), VII, p. 315.

ʿArabī, historical influence was simply irrelevant to what they were saying. Like other Muslim sages, they considered the divine as primary and the human and historical as secondary. The spirit or meaning (*maʿnā*) is the root and the source, while the body or form (*sūra*) is the branch and the shadow. Whether metaphysically, cosmologically, or intellectually, the meaning of a doctrine takes precedence, while the forms it assumes are of secondary interest. Both Rūmī and Ibn ʿArabī repeatedly affirm that they have not taken the content of their teachings from any human being. Their "vision" is of primary importance, not the source from which they derived the various formal elements that go to express it. For them, the vision was all. Divine self-disclosures are central, not peripheral. The transformative power of a Rūmī or an Ibn ʿArabī derives from an intimate experience of God, and this power is not to be taken lightly, since it instilled a vibrant love and life into much of Islamic culture from the thirteenth century down to recent times, and it still possesses enough strength to attract "modern" men and women to esoteric conferences. One cannot read these authors without standing in awe of their incredibly deep and profound mastery not only of the "roots of the roots of the roots of religion", as Rūmī put it, but the roots of everything that allows for a full flowering of the human condition.

Rūmī speaks also for Ibn ʿArabī when he addresses his readers with the words, "Having seen the form, you are unaware of the meaning. If you are wise, pick out the pearl from the shell!"[17] But our business as scholars is to trade in shells, not pearls. By definition, we miss the point. Once we understand that our research, from the perspective of the teachings of those we are studying, is off the mark, we can turn to the shells with perhaps a small amount of humility, knowing that the pearls will never be found through our trade.

This does not mean that the shells should be denigrated. No matter how great was the spiritual vision of a Rūmī or an Ibn ʿArabī, it was expressed in shells, and on this level it is possible to speak about elements deriving from earlier sources and to draw certain conclusions about Rūmī's predecessors. Those who claim that Rūmī spoke for *Waḥdat al-Wujūd* in the specific sense

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[17] *Mathnawī,* II, 1022; cf. Chittick, *The Sufi Path of Love,* p. 20.

of the doctrine propounded by Ibn ʿArabī or his immediate followers will have to prove their contentions through these formal elements.

Henry Corbin remarks that "it would be quite superficial to dwell on the contrast between the two forms of spirituality cultivated by Mawlana and Ibn Arabi.[18] One agrees with Corbin that at the level of meaning, Rūmī and Ibn ʿArabī converge profoundly, since they both spoke on behalf of the Supreme Meaning. But one also agrees that Ibn ʿArabī and Rūmī represent "two forms of spirituality" which, as forms, are different. If one wahts to talk about influence, this can be perceived only on the superficial level where forms influence forms, the same level where similarities and differences are perceived. No one can reach inside the hearts of Rūmī and Ibn ʿArabī except through the forms and imagery that they use to express their inward states. At the inward level, there may indeed be deep and profound connections between Rūmī and Ibn al-ʿArabī since both lived and breathed *Waḥdat al-Wujūd* in the general sense of *tawḥīd*. But to speak of influence on the level of "meaning" or "spirit" is simply to indulge in speculation, since knowledge of influence can only be gained by means of the formal level. Once formal influence is found, there may be justification for concluding that there was a deeper, spiritual influence. Hence, one first has to look for borrowings of technical terms and poetical images.

In fact, at the level of linguistic forms, there is no concrete evidence that Ibn al-ʿArabī's doctrines, whether *Waḥdat al-Wujūd* or any other doctrine, influenced Rūmī's mode of expression. Rūmī employs few if any technical terms, poetical images, and concepts also employed by Ibn ʿArabī that are not found in earlier authors. Both Rūmī and Ibn ʿArabī were thoroughly familiar with all branches of religious knowledge, including Sufi classics such as al-Qushayrī's *Risāla* and al-Ghazali's *Iḥyāʾ ʿulūm al-Dīn,* so it is only natural that they share certain common terms and themes. But Ibn ʿArabī also employed many terms in a specific manner that was not to be found in earlier writers; it is these specific terms and ideas that cannot be found in Rūmī's works, though they can be found in the poetry of his contemporary Fakhr al-Dīn

[18] *Creative Imagination,* p. 70.

ʿIrāqī (d. 688/1289), a disciple of Qūnawī,[19] and in the verses of many poets of the next century, such as Shabistarī (d. 720/1320) and Maghribī (d. 809/1406-1407).

One might object that Rūmī was a greater poet than ʿIrāqī and therefore had no need to employ the terminology of Ibn ʿArabī, but that he was influenced nevertheless. This comes down to pure conjecture, since, once again, it only makes sense to speak of influence on the level of the formal elements involved. Moreover, there are many obvious influences upon Rūmī's poetry by such figures as the Sufi poets Sanaʾī (d. 525/1131) and ʿAṭṭār (d. 620/1218), or Rūmī's father Bahāʾ Walad and Shams-i Tabrizī.[20] One cannot claim that Rūmī was too great to show influence from Ibn ʿArabī, but not great enough to discard the influence of Sanaʾī and ʿAṭṭār. Nor can one object that it was a question of the difference between Arabic and Persian, since much of Rūmī's technical terminology is derived from Arabic and he himself was the author of several hundred Arabic verses. And rather than seeing in his Arabic poetry the influence of Ibn ʿArabī, one sees the imagery of an "ʿAṭṭār or a Sanaʾī carried over from Persian.

In a broad historical context, it is not difficult to discern two relatively independent currents within Sufism, without denying cross-fertilization. Ibn ʿArabī brings to fruition several centuries of spiritual ferment in Andalusia, North Africa, and Egypt. Rūmī brings to a climax a tradition of Persian Sufism going back to such figures as Ansari, Sanaʾī, and Aḥmad Ghazālī (d. 520/1126), author of the *Sawāḥīh,* surely the most seminal work on love in the Persian language. The influence of Ansari was especially widespread because of *Kashf al-asrār* (written in 520/1126), a lengthy Persian Qurʾān commentary by his disciple Rashīd al-Dīn Maybudī and a rich source of Sufi teachings. Rūmī may have been familiar with *Rawḥ al-arwāḥ,* a long Persian commentary on the divine names by Aḥmad Samʿānī (d. 534/1140) from Marw. This work, only recently brought to the attention of the scholarly

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[19] Cf. Chittick and Wilson, *Fakhr al-Dīn ʿIrāqī.*

[20] Cf. W. C. Chittick, "Rūmī and the Mawlawiyyah," in S. H. Nasr, ed., *Islamic Spirituality: Manifestations,* New York, 1991, pp. 105-126.

community, constantly reminds one of Rūmī's concerns and style. Its audacious approach to Islamic teachings, constant stress on the importance of love, and highly poetical use of language may well have been one of Rūmī's formal inspirations.[21] Moreover, no one was as close to Rūmī as his father Bahā᾽ Walad and Shams al-Dīn Tabrizī, both of whose writings have influenced his poetry profoundly.[22] Rūmī's father, who initiated Rūmī into Sufism, was a member of a Sufi order that went back to Aḥmad Ghazālī by way of ʿAyn al-Quḍāt Hamadānī (d. 525/1131), the author of important works on love and a major precursor of the type of theosophical Sufism that characterizes Ibn al-ʿArabī's school. The works of these authors provide more than enough material to account for any formal resemblances that might exist between Rūmī and earlier Sufism.

No one denies that earlier figures influenced Rūmī by providing him with imagery, symbols, technical terms, and doctrines. With this raw material Rūmī constructed a bodily form into which he breathed the spirit of his own vision of tawḥīd. But if the claim is to be made that a specific figure exercised influence, there must be concrete reasons for making the claim. Since the influence from certain directions is indeed obvious, there is no need to posit other sources without solid evidence. If certain images or technical terms are found in the writings of Rūmī's father or "ʿAṭṭār, no one has to look any further, even if the image or term in question was also employed by Ibn ʿArabī. Appendix I illustrates that in the specific instances where Nicholson claimed that Rūmī drew inspiration from Ibn ʿArabī, there were more likely sources in Rūmī's immediate environment.

It is not only the lack of any specific evidence that convinces one that

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[21] Aḥmad Samʿānī, *Rawḥ al-arwāḥ fī sharḥ asmāʾ al-malik al-fattāḥ,* edited by N. Māyil Hirawī, Tehran, 1368/1989. In reading quickly through this work, I noted down the following instances that could have provided the inspiration for some of Rūmī's lines, without any attempt to be exhaustive: Iblis and Adam (*Rawḥ*, p. 90; cf. Chittick, *Sufi Path of Love,* pp. 82-84); alchemy (p. 162; Chittick, index); Moses at Mt. Sinai (p. 201, Chittick, pp. 296-297); the boasting of the planets and the rising of the sun (p. 253; Chittick, p. 203); Jesus and his ass (p. 330, Chittick, index).

[22] See the introductions to their works: Bahāʾ Walad, *Maʿārif,* ed. B. Furuzānfar (Tehran, 1333/1954); *Maqālāt-i Shams-i Tabrīzī,* ed. M. ʿA. Muwaḥḥid (Tehran, 1356/1977).

Rūmī was free of Ibn al-ʿArabī's influence, it is also the deep difference between their perspectives, even if this lies only at what Corbin calls the "superficial" level of form. For example, Rūmī places love at the center of all things, much in the tradition of Aḥmad Ghazālī and Sam ani. He expresses the ultimate value of love through verses that constantly manifest the spiritual state of intoxication (*sukr*), though many lines of the *Mathnawī* in particular demonstrate an eminent sobriety (*ṣaḥw*). Ibn ʿArabī and his followers also place an extremely high value on love. Their discussions of the nature of the supreme spiritual realizations achieved by the knowers of God are almost inconceivable without their commentaries on the famous *hadīth qudsī,* "My servant keeps drawing near to Me through supererogatory works until I *love* him; then when I love him, I am his hearingwith which he hears, his sight with which he sees, his hand with which he grasps, and his foot with which he walks." Nevertheless, love does not permeate every line of their writings, as it does with Rūmī. One can imagine Ibn ʿArabī without love– in spite of Corbin– but one cannot imagine Rūmī without love.

Another point: Rūmī and Ibn ʿArabī directed their works at two completely different audiences. Ibn ʿArabī and his followers wrote for the ulama, those with thorough training not only in the Qurʾān, hadith, and jurisprudence, but also in kalam and philosophy. None but the highly learned need apply to study their works. In contrast, Rūmī composed poetry in order to stir up the fire of love in the hearts of his listeners, whoever they might be, whether learned scholars, practitioners of Sufism, or simply the common people. He aimed his poetry at anyone with an understanding of the Persian language and a modicum of spiritual taste (*dhawq*) or a sense of love and beauty. No one meeting these minimal requirements could help but be swept away by the intoxicating power of his lyrics. Rūmī spoke the language of the masses, and much of his "technical" terminology was derived from everyday discourse. No one needed any special educational or intellectual qualifications to appreciate his message.[23] As a result, Rūmī's language and teachings are far more universal than Ibn al-ʿArabī's, in the sense that only a small number of scholars with Sufi training could hope to understand the latter.

[23] For further clarifications of these points, see Chittick, "Rūmī and the Mawlawiyyah.

To sum up the difference of approach between Rūmī and Ibn ʿArabī, I can do no better than relate an anecdote told to me by one of the foremost traditional philosophers of Iran, Sayyid Jalāl al-Dīn Āshtiyānī, himself a devotee of both Ibn ʿArabī and Rūmī. One day Ṣadr al-Dīn Qūnawī went to see Rūmī and sat with him at the head of his audience chamber. One of Rūmī's disciples came forward and asked a question which, to Shaykh Ṣadr al-Dīn, seemed a very difficult one, but Rūmī was able to answer it instantaneously, employing his usual colloquial style. Qūnawī turned to Rūmī and asked, "How are you able to express such difficult and abstruse metaphysics in such simple language?" Rūmī replied, "How are you able to make such simple ideas sound so complicated?"

Like Rūmī, Ibn ʿArabī spent much of his time in the divine presence, but his mode of experiencing the divine took a relatively sober and intellectual form, while Rūmī expressed his relationship with his beloved in the intoxicating imagery of love and rapture.[24] In short, these two towering spiritual masters personify deeply divergent modes of spirituality that were providentially aimed at different human types, for, as the Sufi saying has it, "There are as many ways to God as there are human souls." If someone insists on naming the vision that inspired them *Waḥdat al-Wujūd*, I cannot protest, so long as he or she remembers that Rūmī experienced that vision directly, without historical intermediaries.

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APPENDIX– I

Ibn al-ʿArabī's "Influence" on the *Mathnawī*

In translating and explaining the *Mathnawī,* Nicholson seems to have paid a good deal of attention to Turkish commentaries (such as those of Ismāʿīl Anqirawī and Sārī ʿAbdallah) that explain the text in terms of the worldview

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[24] Again, one must not forget that Ibn ʿArabī himself was thoroughly versed in the mysteries of love, as Corbin frequently reminds us. Cf. Chittick, "Ibn ʿArabī as Lover", *Sufi,* 7 (1991), pp. 6-9.

of Ibn al-ʿArabī's school, a worldview that has dominated the intellectual expression of Sufism until recent times. Nicholson frequently quotes parallels to Rūmī's verses in Ibn al-ʿArabī's writings or explains Rūmī's concepts in terms of Ibn al-ʿArabī's teachings, and he claims that Rūmī derived some of his teachings from Ibn ʿArabī.

Though Nicholson was familiar with Ibn ʿArabī, he paid little or no attention to the great Sufis who wrote in the Persian language before Rūmī, such as Sanaʾī, ʿAṭṭār, Maybudī, and Samʿānī. Nor did he have at his disposal two of the most important sources for Rūmī's technical terms and imagery, the *Maʿārif* of Bahāʾ Walad and the *Maqālāt* of Shams-i Tabrīzī. The editors of these two works have indicated a few of the numerous instances where Rūmī was directly inspired by them, while pointing out that the influence is so pervasive that it would be impossible to describe it fully. The recent publication of Samʿānī's *Rawḥ al-arwāḥ,* a great treasury of Sufi teachings on love, suggests that many of Rūmī's teachings were already current among Persian Sufis a hundred years earlier, and it is the high quality of Rūmī's poetry rather than what he has to say that has made him the center of attention. No doubt other Persian works that demonstrate the intellectual content of Persian Sufism prior to Rūmī are still lying in libraries unread, or have simply disappeared.

On several occasions in his commentary on the *Mathnawī,* Nicholson asserts or suggests that Rūmī was influenced by Ibn ʿArabī, without providing any evidence other than a certain formal resemblance. In what follows I list the most important of these instances and propose other far more likely sources for Rūmī's formulations. The numbers refer to the book and verse of the *Mathnawī.*

> I, 606-10. "Thou didst show the delightfulness of Being unto not-being, (after) thou hadst caused not-being to fall in love with thee . . . . Commentary: "The leading ideas in this passage come from Ibnu ʾl-ʿArabī, though their provenance is disguised (as usual) by the poetical form in which they are presented.... Ibnu ʾl-ʿArabī, and Rūmī after him, frequently

make use of ... [the term 'not-being' (*ʿadam*, *nīstī*, *nīst*)] to denote things which, though non-existent in one sense, are existent in another."

Note Nicholson's attempt to show that Rūmī is full of borrowings from Ibn ʿArabī by employing the expression "as usual". One wants to know first of all why Rūmī should have felt it necessary to disguise the provenance of his ideas. Did he fear someone? He certainly could have employed Ibn al-ʿArabī's specific technical terms if he had wanted, just as his contemporary ʿIrāqī did. The editors of Bahāʾ Walad's *Maʿārif* and Shams-i Tabrīzī's *Maqālāt* list many instances where Rūmī employs expressions from the works of his predecessors without attempting to hide their provenance. Some of Shams's utterances are far more scandalous than anything Ibn ʿArabī ever said, but Rūmī does not conceal them; on the contrary, he sometimes tries to top them.

Rūmī constantly meditates upon the relationship between existence and nonexistence. How could it be otherwise, given the profundity of his thought? The basic idea of this whole passage can easily be taken back to the repeated Qurʾānic assertion that when God wants to bring a thing into existence, He says to it "Be!" and then it is. Where is the thing before God says to it "Be" if not "non-existent in one sense, . . . existent in another"? It is true that Ibn ʿArabī often employs the terms "being" and "not-being," but so do numerous other figures with whom Rūmī was familiar, such as Bahāʾ Walad, Shams, "ʿAṭṭār, and Abu Hamid Ghazali, as well as others whom he probably knew, like Aḥmad Ghazālī and ʿAyn al-Quḍāt Hamadānī.[25] Or take these typical passages from Sam ani: "Your existence is like nonexistence, and your nonexistence like existence" (*Rawḥ al-arwāḥ*, p. 32). "Consider all existent things nonexistent in themselves and count all nonexistent things existent through His power" (ibid., p. 304).

I, 1112. "Reason is hidden, and (only) a world (of phenomena) is visible: our forms are the waves or a spray of it (of that hidden ocean)."

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[25] Cf. Bahāʾ Walad, *Maʿārif,* pp. 73, 76, 77, 83, 128, 166, 169, 190, 281, 324; Shams, *Maqālāt*, p. 103, 203; ʿAyn al-Quḍāt Hamadānī, *Tamhīdāt,* pp. 50, 265.

Commentary: "Underlying all individualized forms of being is the Unconditioned Divine Essence. This verse states concisely the doctrine of pantheistic monism (*waḥdatu ʾl-wujūd*) in the form in which Rūmī may have heard it enunciated by Ṣadr ud Dīn of Qoniyah, a pupil of Ibnu ʾl-ʿArabī."

The verse expresses the relationship between the inward (*bāṭin*) and outward (*ẓāhir*), or the meaning (*maʿnā*) and the form (*sūra*), a doctrine that is fundamental to all Rūmī's teachings. It is prefigured in the Qurʾān and was perceived therein by spiritual teachers, Sufis, and philosophers from the earliest times. Neither Ibn ʿArabī nor Ṣadr al-Dīn Qūnawī– nor Rūmī, for that matter– ever identify Reason or Intellect (*ʿaql*) with the Divine Essence. Rūmī often refers to Intellect in the sense employed in this verse as *ʿaql-i kull*, the "Universal Intellect," whereas Ibn ʿArabī is far more likely to employ the term *al-ʿaql al-awwal*, the "First Intellect." Ibn ʿArabī sometimes considers the First Intellect as the source of the forms in this world, but the idea is not central to his teachings, since he most often identifies the forms of the universe with the self-disclosures or loci of manifestation of wujūd.

A century before Ibn Arabi, Sanaʾī devoted sections of *Hadiqat al-haqāʾiq* and *Sayr al ʿibād* to *ʿaql* (often employing the synonymous Persian term *khirad*), mentioning Intellect's cosmological function and employing the term *ʿaql-i kull* in the process. For example,

Every good and evil under the heavens picks fruit from the stock of Intellect ... .

The bench of the Universal Intellect stands beneath the All.[26]

The imagery of the ocean and the spray is common. Bahāʾ Walad writes, "The waves rose up from the Ocean of Nonexistence, throwing the foam,

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[26] Sanaʾī, *Hadiqat al-haqāʾiq*, ed. Mudarris-i Raḍawī (Tehran, 1339/1960), pp. 295-298. Cf. idem, *Sayr al-ʿibād ilā ʾl-maʿād,* in *Mathnawī-hayi Ḥakīm Sanaʾī,* ed. Mudarris-i Raḍawī (Tehran, 1348/1969), pp. 212-213.

the debris, and the shells– the forms– and the pearls– the meanings– upon the shore."[27]

> I, 1133. "Therefore thou knewest light by its opposite: opposite reveals opposite in (the process of) coming forth."

Commentary: "Characteristically the poet throughout this passage combines ideas derived from Plotinus with Ibnu ʾl-ʿArabī's view that God and the world are related to each other as the inward aspect (*bāṭin*) and the outward aspect (*ẓāhir*) of Being."

As I have noted elsewhere, the word Nicholson renders as "(in the process of) coming forth" (*ṣudūr*) should probably be understood not as a *maṣdar* but as the plural of *ṣadr,* "breast," which accords more with the colloquial language and Rūmī's point.[28] Nicholson read *ṣudūr*, a technical term in philosophy, so that he could point to an "influence" and bring in Neoplatonism. Even if we accept Nicholson's unlikely reading, it shows only that Rūmī was familiar with philosophical language, which no one doubts in any case.

The word "characteristically" in Nicholson's commentary plays the same role as the expression "as usual" in the first passage quoted above. In spite of the claim that this borrowing is "characteristic" and "usual," Nicholson provides no concrete evidence whatsoever that Ibn ʿArabī is the direct or indirect source of any of Rūmī's ideas. The relationship between the terms *bāṭin* and *ẓāhir* and their centrality for Sufi thought was mentioned above.

> I, 1736. "All kings are enslaved to their slaves, all people are dead (ready to die) for one who dies for them."

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[27] 82 *Maʿārif,* p. 281. Like Rūmī, Bahāʾ Walad frequently refers to the divine source of all things as "nonexistence", i.e., nonexistent in relation to us but existent in reality; it is we who confuse the illusory existence of this world, which is truly nonexistent, with existence. In the same context, Rūmī likes to refer to nonexistence as "God's workshop". Cf. Chittick, *Sufi Path of Love,* pp. 23-24, 175-178.

[28] Cf. Chittick, *Sufi Path of Love,* p. 362, note on 49, 1. 34.

> Commentary: "These verses give a poetical form to the doctrine, with which students of Ibnu ʾl-ʿArabī are familiar, that correlative terms . . . are merely names for different aspects of the same reality."

Here at least Nicholson does not claim explicitly that Rūmī has derived these ideas from Ibn ʿArabī. The importance of correlation and opposites for Islamic thought in general is obvious to anyone who has read the Qurʾān with care, and it reappears in all sorts of conne140.

Ctions throughout Islamic intellectual history.[29] Nicholson sees in these verses a kind of ontological statement, as is usually the case with similar statements in Ibn al-ʿArabī. However, as Nicholson implies in the remainder of his commentary on this verse, Rūmī makes such statements in the light of his own experiences of love -- and no one could claim that he did not know love in all its intricacies. Compare the underlying idea of this passage with Rūmī's statement,

> One cannot conceive of the sound of one hand clapping.... *He loves them* is never separate from *they love Him,* nor is *God is well-pleased with them* ever without *they are well-pleased with Him* [Qurʾān 5:119]."[30]

In two more passages, Nicholson suggests that Rūmī was influenced by Qūnawī. In commenting on the verse "'The Reality is Allah,' said the Shaykh of the Religion...." (I, 3338) Nicholson provides reasons why this shaykh may be Qūnawī (though he rejects his own reasoning in the appendix, suggesting instead that it is Abu ʾl-Ḥasan Kharaqānī). But in fact it is Shams-i Tabrīzī, as Shams's *Maqālāt* (pp. 125, 35) demonstrate clearly. In commenting on III, 41, Nicholson quotes a long passage from Qūnawī's *Ijāz al-bayān,* "which Rūmī may have had in mind". But Rūmī had no need of Qūnawī's elaborate commentary to come up with his simple meditation on the divine name Provider (*al-rāziq*), mentioned in the previous verse.

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[29] For a detailed study of correlatives in Islamic thought, see Sachiko Murata, *The Tao of Islam: A Sourcebook on Gender Relationships in Islamic Thought,* Albany, 1992.

[30] Ibid., p. 209; cf. the other passages quoted in the same section.

Diwān-i ʿAṭṭār, ed. T. Tafaḍḍulī (Tehran, 1967), pp. 817-820.

These few passages are the significant instances where Nicholson states or implies an influence from Ibn ʿArabī. They are scant evidence indeed for the oft-repeated statement that Rūmī was Ibn al-ʿArabī's student or follower.

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Appendix II

Ibn al-ʿArabī's Influence on ʿAṭṭār (!!)

In order to demonstrate the weakness of Nicholson's arguments to prove that Ibn ʿArabī influenced Rūmī, I would like to show how easy it is to draw the type of parallels that Nicholson provides as evidence. I hope thereby to "prove" that "ʿAṭṭār was influenced by Ibn ʿArabī, even though no one has ever suggested this, especially since "ʿAṭṭār had died long before Ibn ʿArabī wrote his influential works, the *Futuḥāt* and the *Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam*.

I quote a few verses from one of ʿAṭṭār's *Qaṣīdas*; similar verses are plentiful in his writings. In order to think that ʿAṭṭār was deeply influenced by Ibn ʿArabī, we only have to accept, as Nicholson does concerning Rūmī, that in each passage "The leading ideas . . . come from Ibnu ʾl-ʿArabī, though their provenance is disguised (as usual) by the poetical form in which they are presented."

Oh You who have veiled Your face

and come into the bazaar,

A whole creation has been seized

by this talisman!

Though nonmanifest and incomparable in Himself, God has become manifest and similar through creation. However, He is manifest as "other", so we do not perceive Him and remain ignorant of His presence. "People are

veiled from the Real through the Real, because the Real is so clearly visible" (*Futuḥāt*, II, p. 85.17). "This present world is the locus of the Veil, except in the case of the gnostics" (*ibid.*, II, p. 654.4). "Nothing exists but veils let down; the objects of perception are the veils" (*ibid.* III, p. 214.25).

Everything other than You

is a mirage and a display,

for neither little

nor much has come [into the "other"].

Everything other than the divine Essence is what Ibn ʿArabī calls "imagination" (note that Nasafī, in the passage quoted above, considers "imagination" [*khayāl*] synonymous with "display" [*namāyish*]). Nothing has "gone out" of God to enter into *wujūd*, since *wujūd* is God Himself and does not change. The appearances we perceive in *wujūd* are simply the properties of the entities, which remain forever nonexistent. "Everything other than the Essence of the Real is intervening imagination and vanishing shadow" (*ibid.* II, p. 313.17).

Here unificationism is unbelief,

and so also incarnationism,

for this is oneness,

but it has come in repetition (takrār)!

ʿAṭṭār first points out, as Ibn al-ʿArabī's followers often do, that *Waḥdat al-Wujūd* is totally different from the heresies *ittiḥād* and *ḥulūl*. The verse as a whole provides a concise statement of Ibn al-ʿArabī's doctrine of continuous creation, the fact that "Self-disclosure never repeats itself." "There is no repetition whatsoever in *wujūd*, because of the divine vastness" (*ibid.*, II, p. 302.18). The idea that the "One" produces manyness through repeating itself

is a common theme in Ibn al-ʿArabī's writings. The cosmos is nothing but a collection of "ones", since 1 X 1= 1. "There is nothing in *wujūd* except God. Though the Entity is many in witnessing (*shuhūd*), it is one in *wujūd*. To multiply one by one is to multiply a thing by itself, so it yields nothing but its own kind" (*ibid*., IV, p. 357.2).

There is one Maker, while His handiworks

are thousands of thousands!

Everything has come into manifestation

from the ready cash of knowledge.

The objects of the divine knowledge– the immutable entities– are like God's ready cash, since they are ever-present with Him. "God knows the cosmos in the state of its nonexistence, and He gives it existence according to its form in His knowledge" (*ibid*., I, p. 90.26).

The Ocean produced the "other"

with its own waves—

a cloud identical with the drop

has come into the bazaar.

Things are "other than God" only in respect of their appearance of independence, not in respect of *wujūd*. "In reality, there is no 'other', except the entities of the possible things in respect of their immutability, not in respect of their *wujūd*" (*ibid*., II, p. 10.13). "In reality the 'other' is immutable/not immutable, He/not He" (*ibid*., II, p. 501.4).

This has an exact analogy

in the sun: Its reflection

fills the two worlds

with light.

Like others, Ibn ʿArabī identifies *wujūd* and light, since each can be defined as that which is manifest in itself and makes others manifest. "There is nothing stronger than light, since it possesses manifestation and through it manifestation takes place, while all things are in utter need of manifestation, and without light no manifestation takes place" (*ibid.*, II, p. 466.20).

The one harmonious Entity,

other than whom not an atom exists,

became manifest; only then

did all these "others" come to be.

A reflection showed itself

from beneath the veil of Oneness,

entering into a hundred thousand

veils of imagination.

These lines repeat what was said earlier, employing different imagery. In short, the things of the universe are but the manifestation of real *wujūd* in a multiplicity of forms.

He manifested to Himself

the mystery of self-breathing—

eighteen thousand worlds of mystery

came into being.

Ibn ʿArabī also speaks of the "eighteen thousand" worlds created by God. The expression "self-breathing" (*khwud-dami*) alludes to what Ibn ʿArabī calls the "Breath of the All-merciful" (*nafas al-Raḥmān*), the Supreme Barzakh standing between God and the cosmos. The Breath is both identical to God ("manifested to Himself") and the locus within which the cosmos becomes manifest (the "eighteen thousand worlds"). The "mystery" has to do with the fact that the worlds are neither God nor other than God; they are "He/not He." "Through God's words 'Be!', . . . the entities become manifest within the Breath of the All-merciful, just as words become manifest within the human breath" (*ibid.*, II, p. 401.29).

He shone one ray of His light,

and the world was filled with lamps;

He planted one seed,

and all these fruits grew up

In the Garden of Love

the One Unity flashed forth:

Branches, trees, petals, thorns—

all began to bloom!

Both these lines provide images to illustrate the oneness of *wujūd* in itself and the manyness of its manifestations.

Disclosing Yourself to Yourself

is Your work,

in order that a hundred thousand works

may spring forth from one work!

By the word "disclosing" (*jilwa*) ʿAṭṭār alludes to the oft-quoted statement in Ibn al-ʿArabī's school, "He disclosed Himself to Himself in Himself" (*tajallā li-dhātihī fī dhātihi*).

O You whose manifest side is lover

and whose nonmanifest side is Beloved!

Who has ever seen the sought

become the seeker?

Those who love God are themselves nothing but loci of manifestation for His properties, so in effect God loves Himself. "There is no lover and no beloved except God, since there is nothing in *wujūd* except the Divine Presence, that is, His Essence, His attributes, and His acts" (ibid., II, p. 114.14). "He is the lover and the beloved, the seeker and the sought" (*ibid.*, II, p. 331.18).

Who is that, and from whence

has He displayed Himself?

What is that, and what is this,

that have come into manifestation?

At the highest stage of knowledge the gnostic is bewildered by both God and the cosmos. Is the cosmos God, or is it other than God? "You say, it is creation, but in itself it is neither the Real, nor other than the Real. . . . The elect . . . sometimes say, 'We are we and He is He,' sometimes, 'He is we and we are He,' and sometimes, 'We are not purely we and He is not purely

He.'... So knowledge of the Real is bewilderment, and knowledge of creation is bewilderment" (*ibid*., IV, p. 279.3).

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