The Term *Huwiyya* in Muḥyī al-Dīn ibn ʻArabī and ʻAbd al-Razzāq al-Qāshānī's Sufi Thought: Analysis of Ideas and Methods

D.Phil Thesis

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Abstract

Huwiyya is a term that essentially denotes the non-manifest aspect of God, His essence. But in the works of Ibn ʻArabī and al-Qāshānī, this term has many different applications corresponding to the many different facets of God and the many different modalities of His interaction with the Cosmos. God is fundamentally non-manifest, unfathomable to a creation that is ontologically and epistemologically incapable of comprehending Him—upon this primary signification both Sufis agree. However, al-Qāshānī discreetly breaks ranks with his master when he emphasises God's connection to His creation more than His dissociation from it in the context of this term, and though this aspect is also present in Ibn ʻArabī's usage of the term, in al-Qāshānī it is far more prominent. Moreoever, his scientific style and analytic approach stand in stark contrast to that of his predecessor. Both are the result of a pedagogical concern that supercedes commentative fidelity. However, though it is undeniable that al-Qāshānī's style is far more didactic, it more than just that, it is the forging of a new worldview—one that is completely congruent with, but still subtly different from, that of Ibn ʻArabī. But in order to elucidate this, it is necessary to analyse relevant aspects of Ibn ʻArabī's thought.

In attempting to excavate these and other nuances of difference, I have been influenced by the method of Toshihiko Izutsu in using a term, *huwiyya*, as a window in to the thought and cosmology of Ibn ʻArabī and al-Qāshānī. I have also been influenced by Ronald Nettler's approach in *Sufi Metaphysics and Qur'ānic Prophets*, where Ibn ʻArabī's thought is rigorously pursued to expose underlying assumptions and arguments. I have used these approaches in my own way, and towards my own interpretative analysis which compares the works of Ibn ʻArabī and al-Qāshānī. Furthermore, I have supplemented this type of analysis, which is primary source based (and appears as such in the works of both Izutsu and Nettler) with secondary material to provide a broader context of the rationale behind the differences in style and content between the master and his disciple.

Transliteration Guide

Consonants

ء	’
ب	B
ت	T
ث	Th
ج	J
ح	ḥ
خ	Kh
د	D
ذ	Dh
ر	R
ز	Z
س	S
ش	Sh
ص	ṣ
ض	ḍ
ط	ṭ
ظ	ẓ
ع	‘
غ	Gh
ف	F
ق	Q
ك	K
ل	L
م	M
ن	N
و	W
ه	H
ي	Y

Short vowels

َ– a

ُ– u

ِ– i

Long vowels

ا ā

و ū

ي ī

1.0. Introduction

1.1. Aims and Objectives

This study analyses the term *huwiyya* in ʻAbd al-Razzāq al-Qāshānīʼs[1] (d. 736/1335?) *Taʼwīlāt al-Qurʼān*[2] in relation to how it is employed by Muḥyī al-Dīn ibn ʻArabī (d. 634/1240) in his two works of Qurʼanic interpretation: *Fuṣūs al-ḥikam* and *Al-Futūḥāt al-makkiyya.* Al-Qāshānī and Ibn ʻArabīʼs technical use of this term will serve as a vehicle to understanding their respective worldviews.[3] The differences between the two gnostics in their usage of *huwiyya* will then be scutinised, not only to uncover nuanced variances in each's understanding of the term, but what this means and why it is significant.

The Qurʼan-rootedness of both mystics'[4] worldview will be demonstrated as this affects and influences the analysis of *huwiyya*. This is because too often are Ibn

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[1] Citation of sources and general formatting in this thesis is in accordance with *The Chicago Manual of Style*.

[2] Ibn ʻArabī, *Tafsīr Ibn ʻArabī*. This work has been misattributed to Ibn ʻArabī. Muḥammad Ḥusayn al-Dhahabī gives three reasons why Ibn ʻArabī could not have authored this work: (1) all handwritten copies of the text have al-Qashānī's name on them, (2) in *Kashf al-Ẓunūn* it is attributed to al-Qāshānī, and (3) "al-Qāshānī quotes Nūr al-Dīn al-Naṭanzī (d. 699/1300) in his interpretation of *surat al-Qaṣaṣ*, writing, 'And indeed I heard my *shaykh*, Nūr al-Dīn ʻAbd al-Ṣamad, may God sanctify his soul, say…' and Nūr al-Dīn al-Naṭanzī was known to be one of the principle teachers of al-Qāshānī. Whereas it is inconceivable that Ibn ʻArabī could have cited someone who died almost a hundred years after him." Muḥammad Ḥusayn al-Dhahabī, *Al-Tafsīr wa'l-mufassirūn*, 2:295-56. This work will henceforth be referred to by its published title.

[3] My approach, therefore, in answering the all-important question: "What are the appropriate procedures to adopt in the attempt to arrive at an understanding of the work?" is to rely on the *texts* themselves. However, I will also look at the *context* in order to decipher why the authors wrote what they did and whom they meant to address. (Quentin Skinner, "Meaning and Understanding in the History of Ideas," 3.)

[4] I use the terms "mystic", "Sufi" and "Gnostic" almost synonymously in this work. The first two terms are generally used interchangeably in other works, as evidenced by Reynold Nicholson's recurrent vacillation between one term and the other. (See Nicholson, *The Mystics of* Islam, 1.) This is because Sufism emphasises the inner aspect of religion, its mystical truth, in contradistinction to its ostensible façade. The equivalence between the terms, then, I see as being largely unproblematic. The synonymy between these terms and "gnostic", nevertheless, is less clear. For, even though the theory of gnosis occupied "a conspicuous place" in early Sufi speculation (Ibid., 14.), there is still a difference between a Sufi (or mystic) and a gnostic. Gnostics are Sufi adepts, which means that "not all Sufis are Gnostics" (Ibid., 95.), as Nicholson apprises us. It is therefore in this sense that I employ gnostic in this work, that is, to denote Sufi adepts.

‘Arabī’s writings seen as works of philosophy that are separate from the Qur’an,[5] even though they are inextricably intertwined, as a faithful textual reading will reveal. Al-Qāshānī is viewed with even more suspicion since he is accused of turning Ibn ‘Arabī’s *Weltanschauung* into a philosophical thought.[6] The effect this has on the investigation of *huwiyya* may not be immediately apparent as this study will be of a predominantly synchronic, that is, ahistorical nature.[7] However, it is impossible to partition a synchronic analysis—one that analyses the term alone, from a diachronic one, namely, one that traces its semantic trajectory through time, as diachronicity will have some bearing on the term as it appears in the texts, even if that is not the main focus of the study. This means a study that approaches *huwiyya* as a term that is part of the allied lexicon of Ibn ‘Arabī based on the Qur’ān would be very different to one that views it as something else, even if both were mainly synchronic in nature.

Abū’l-‘Alā’ ‘Afīfī, for instance, believes Ibn ‘Arabī was a philosopher who employed mystical language and Qur’anic citations to widen his appeal.[8] If this is true, then it would significantly alter our approach to the text, for although we would still be looking at how Ibn ‘Arabī employed *huwiyya* in his exegetical works, the underlying assumption would be that he adapted the term from the *falsafa* tradition. Therefore, our point of departure would be Ibn ‘Arabī’s philosophy and not the Qur’an, as the latter would be nothing more than an attractive veil to conceal his true metaphysics. The net effect of this would be scrutiny of the term only in its philosophical sense (and perhaps, in the larger framework of the *falsafa* tradition, as

[5] For examples of this, see Henry Corbin, *Alone with the Alone: Creative Imagination in the Sūfism of Ibn ‘Arabī* and Abū’l-‘Alā’ ‘Afīfī’s introduction to Ibn ‘Arabī’s *Fuṣūṣ al-Ḥikam*.
[6] James Morris, “*Ibn Arabī and His Interpreters*,” part II-B, 5-6.
[7] See the section on Izutsu for definitions of synchronic and diachronic.
[8] See below for more details.

some context must be supplied) whilst largely disregarding the Qur'anic verse which gave rise to it. Conversely, if it is believed that Ibn 'Arabī's outlook is Qur'anic and his exegesis is only his understanding of the Qur'an, our analysis would proceed from the verse of the Qur'an and follow Ibn 'Arabī's logic to decipher how he interpreted any given verse and how his metaphysics came to be applied to it.[9] In the latter version, the Qur'anic text takes pride of place, whereas in the former, it is generally ignored. Both approaches are predominantly synchronic, but the execution is very different. The same naturally applies to al-Qāshānī.

The present study concentrates on the technical term of *huwiyya* as the specialised language used by both Sufis not only expresses but determines their metaphysics. Nor is this surprising as "beliefs and ideas ride on the back of terms, and whenever there is a transmission of a belief or idea … there is always a transmission of the fundamental terminology."[10] The definitions of *huwiyya* proffered by both mystics will be analysed and it will be seen to what extent they are faithful to their own categorisations. The texts will be closely scrutinised to monitor which connotations of the term remain constant and which ones change, what the synonyms and antonyms of each term are, and what they tell us, not only about *huwiyya*, but also about the authors' overall thought. Subsequent to this, a broader assessment of why al-Qāshānī differs from Ibn 'Arabī will be carried out and how his methodology is conducive to achieving his aims. This is the first time such a close textual comparative analysis has been undertaken between the Ibn 'Arabī and al-

[9] For an example of how Ronald Nettler does this, see below.
[10] Harry Austryn Wolfson, *The Philosophy of the Kalam,* 71. Josef van Ess makes the same point when he remarks, "There are always realities behind language, however—the context, the social structures or institutions (if they exist), and the founding doctrines." Josef van Ess, *The Flowering of Muslim Theology*, 10-11.

Qāshānī, analysing if, and why, the latter chooses to depart from the worldview of his Sufi master.

This study does not purport to supply a comprehensive metaphysical outlook for both mystics,[11] it merely gives an exemplar of their worldviews through the sundry manifestations of this (and other, related) terms in the aforementioned texts. The two models for this analysis will be the work of Toshihiko Izutsu in *God and Man and the Koran*. The author, in this work, conducts a semantic analysis of key terms in the Qur'an and aims to construct a Qur'anic *Weltanschauung* from them, and the work of Ronald Nettler in *Sufi Metaphysics and Qur'ānic Prophets*, in which an attempt is made to chart Ibn 'Arabī's own thought and method. Nettler's work is an extremely close reading of Ibn 'Arabī's *Fuṣūṣ*. However, it goes beyond that to outline the Sufi's ideas and methods. Each turn of Ibn 'Arabī's method is rigorously pursued to excavate underlying suppositions and arguments.

Izutsu's semantic or terminological method will be used as a means of mapping out the territory vis-à-vis the terms for analysis. Nettler's approach will then be employed to attempt to follow Ibn 'Arabī and al-Qāshānī's own logic in investigating their thought with an emphasis on ideas and intellectual methods. In this way, underlying assumptions deeply rooted in the texts will be brought to the surface and their significance scrutinised. Once this microanalysis is completed, the general style of al-Qāshānī and Ibn 'Arabī will be evaluated to decipher what changes are perceptible between the two. Through this, issues of al-Qāshānī's perceived fidelity to Ibn 'Arabī, his purported status as just a commentator of his

[11] It is a fact well-documented that there is no universally accepted definition of mysticism; indeed, William Ralph Inge proffers around 26 definitions of the term. (See Inge, *Definitions of Mysticism.*) Gershom Scholem's excellent introduction on mysticism also makes the same argument. (Gershom Scholem, *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism*, 23-32.) Nevertheless, there are two common features in the works of mystics: all seem to emphasise the experiential aspect of faith, and they adopt a non-literal or esoteric interpretation of scripture. The works of Ibn 'Arabī and al-Qāshānī under consideration satisfy this general definition.

master, and his alleged lack of originality will be investigated. Before we proceed further, it behoves us to acquaint ourselves with the two authors who form the subject of this study.

1.2. Muḥyī al-Dīn ibn ʻArabī

Muḥammad ibn ʻAlī ibn Muḥammad ibn ʻArabī al-Ṭāʾī al-Ḥātimī was born on the 27th of Ramadan in 560/1165 in Murcia, Spain. His early life was typical of a boy from a well-to-do family: he was well-educated, married and worked as a secretary for the governor of Seville. At the age of twenty, however, Ibn ʻArabī was formally initiated into the Sufi path. Subsequently, he travelled extensively in Tunisia, Egypt, Mecca, Anatolia, Iraq and Syria teaching, writing and enjoying the patronage of various rulers. Ibn ʻArabī finally settled in Damascus in the year 620/1223? and remained there till his death in November 634/1240.[12] He authored hundreds of works, from brief treatises to the multi-volume *Futūḥāt,* his *magnum opus,* and is widely regarded as one of the most influential Sufi thinkers of all time.[13]

Ibn ʻArabī combines the traditional Islamic disciplines of Qur'anic commentary (*tafsīr*), Ḥadīth and jurisprudence (*fiqh*) with the more rationalistic fields of cosmology, theology (*kalām*) and philosophy (especially neoplatonism) to devise his own highly evolved thought.[14] It is due to his unique blend of all these disciplines that his work is *sui generis.* This makes contextualising him in the Sufi tradition especially problematic. On the other hand, the latter did exert a profound influence

[12]R.W.J. Austin, *Ibn al-ʻArabī: The Bezels of Wisdom*, 1-14.
[13] The work of Osman Yahya in which he provides a list of over 900 books (1395 titles) remains the authoritative study on this subject. He shows, however, that many of these are misattributions and repetitions. (Osman Yahya, *Histoire et classification de l'oeuvre d'Ibn ʿArabī: étude critique*.) For an excellent and detailed biography of Ibn ʻArabī, see Claude Addas, *Quest for the Red Sulphur.* The introduction of Ibn ʻArabī's *Al-ʻAbādila* by ʻAbd al-Qādir Aḥmad ʻAṭā also provides useful biographical information on the family of Ibn ʻArabī. See Ibn ʻArabī, *Al-ʻAbādila*, 4-5.
[14] Michael A. Sells, *Mystical Languages of Unsaying*, 63.

on him.[15] To uncover these influences we must first take a brief survey of Sufism up to his time.[16] It must be emphasised that the focus in this work is not to explore the historical influences on Ibn ʻArabī or al-Qāshānī, nor is it to place them in the history of Islamic thought. Rather, the aim is to simply look at the works of both Sufis to determine their thought using their respective terms as a vehicle for this. Though it would no doubt be beneficial to have a historical dimension to the analysis, given the nature and complexity of the texts, I believe attempting both would achieve neither. I thus confine myself to the latter in the knowledge that others will pursue the former. Nonetheless, it is useful to have an overview, however brief, to set the scene for this present work.

Schimmel notes that "Sufism traces its origin back to the Prophet himself."[17] All sufis most likely saw the tendencies in the prophetic example of Muḥammad as the basis for their entire outlook, but tracing Sufism, as a defined movement, to the Prophet or his Companions is fraught with difficulties. This is observed by Christopher Melchert when he writes, "classical Sufism crystallized in Baghdad in the last quarter of the ninth century C.E. Biographers of the early eleventh century worked out a spiritual lineage for Sufism going back to the Companions of the Prophet."[18] The antecedents to the Sufis are thought to be the ascetics who promulgated none of "the theosophy which developed later."[19]

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[15] Claude Addas has the following to say on this topic, "We should not allow ourselves to be deceived by the profound originality characterising various aspects of the Shaykh al-Akbar's writings; this originality did, it is true, spring essentially from solitary meditation, yet his work was also steeped in the teachings of generations of earlier exemplars of Muslim spirituality. … Particularly instructive in this respect are the *Futūḥāt Makkiya:* the allusions to past masters with which the work is strewn are conclusive testimony … that he did not disdain to listen to them." (Addas, "Andalusī Mysticism and the Rise of Ibn ʻArabī," 2:911.)

[16] For a useful survey of mysticism, see Michael A. Sells, trans., *Early Islamic Mysticism.*

[17] Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions*, 26. Hamid Algar explores briefly the different theories regarding the origin of Sufism. See Algar, "The Naqshbandī Order," 123-25.

[18] Christopher Melchert, "Early Renunciants as Ḥadīth Transmitters," 407.

[19] A. J. Arberry, *Sufism: An Account of the Mystics of Islam*, 33.

Al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī (d. 110/728) has commonly been seen as a major proponent of this movement, which responded to a perceived inclination towards worldly gain and away from religion.[20] However, recent work done by Suleiman A. Mourad casts doubt on such a simplistic view of al-Ḥasan, for he comments that when one analyses medieval literature, it emerges that there were two al-Ḥasans: "The highly pious al-Ḥasan who renounced this world and lived in constant sorrow, and the highly sociable al-Ḥasan who loved the delicacies of this world and the company of people."[21] In light of the contradictory evidence, Mourad concludes that "one cannot verify beyond reasonable doubt any authentic part of the literary corpus attributed to him or any real aspects of his character."[22]

It has been questioned whether the ascetics were really the precursors to the mystics. Nile Green, for example, argues that it would be more accurate to see the early ascetics as "competitors" of the mystics rather than their forerunners. [23] Nevertheless, most scholars affirm this was the case. Indeed, Melchert comments that "modern research has largely confirmed that Sufism grew out of this earlier, ascetic tradition."[24] How exactly the term "Sufi" came to be applied to these ascetics of the early tenth century remains to be seen, especially as "the early ascetics who were expressly called "Sufis" were seldom characterized by mysticism."[25]

The Sufis, regardless of how they came to be known as such or from which tradition they emerged, were constantly being accused of "overplaying the

[20] For a detailed analysis of this, see Hellmut Ritter, "Ḥasan al-Baṣrī, Studien zur Geschichte der Islamischen Frömmigkeit." See also *Encyclopaedia of Islam,* 2nd ed., s.v. "Ḥasan al-Baṣrī," which mentions al-Ḥasan's various stances against unjust rulers (though he did not advocate rebelling against them) as well as references to his numerous exhortations on forsaking the pleasures and extravagances of this world.
[21] Suleiman A. Mourad, *Early Islam between Myth and History: al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī*, 93.
[22] Ibid., 94.
[23] Nile Green, *Sufism: A Global History*, 20-21.
[24] Melchert, "Early Renunciants," 407.
[25] Ibid., 415, f. 4.

allegorical aspects of the Qur'an, claiming privileged, esoteric understanding of its contents and distorting its literal meaning."[26] This charge was most vociferously leveled against the so-called "intoxicated Sufis" among whom Abū Yazīd al-Bisṭāmī (d. 234/848 or 261/875) was the first.[27] Abū Yazīd was illiterate, a fact that was at once the source of his lasting fame and the root of his censure. This self-styled *ummī* emphasised the emotional aspect of a relationship with God, a relationship of such profound love that it was not to be sullied with knowledge.[28] In one of his ecstatic states, he exclaimed, "My Lord! Do not make me a scholar (*'ālim*), nor an ascetic, nor a close associate [of Yours] (*muqtarib*). But if You welcome me, welcome me as one of Your things (*shay' min ashyā'ik*)."[29] Such behaviour scandalised the orthodoxy and paved the way for more 'sober' Sufis to justify and temper the language of the ecstatics. The stalwart of Sufi orthodoxy, the man justly anointed, "the acknowledged representative of the orthodox Sufī path,"[30] Abū'l-Qāsim al-Junayd (d. 298/910), sought to do just that by composing detailed explanations for the ecstatic utterances (*shaṭaḥāt*) of people like Abū Yazīd.[31]

Due to the various perceived transgressions of the ecstatics, Sufism was increasingly viewed with the eye of suspicion. The efforts of al-Junayd

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[26] *Encyclopedia of the Qur'an*, 2001-06 ed., 137-59, s.v. "Ṣūfism and the Qur'an." William Chittick adds that the "Sufis did not deny the legitimacy of these [exoteric] sciences, merely the exaggerated claims for authority made by many of their practitioners." See Chittick, trans., *Faith and Practice of Islam: Three Thirteenth Century Sufi Texts*, xii-xiii.

[27] Arberry, *Sufism: An Account of the Mystics,* 54. It is interesting to note that al-Bisṭāmī became the standard against which a Sufi adept would guage his own spirituality. Ibn 'Arabī, for example, concedes that al-Bisṭāmī's ecstatic utterances (*shaṭaḥāt*) displayed an advanced mystical state, but "also criticized the boasting (*fakhr*) that is inherent in ecstatic expressions (*shaṭaḥāt*), in this way putting himself in a position superior to that of al-Basṭāmī." (Carl W. Ernst, "The Indian Subcontinent," 432.)

[28] Ahmet T. Karamustafa, *Sufism: the Formative Period*, 5.

[29] Abū Yazīd al-Bisṭāmī, *Abū Yazīd al-Bisṭāmī:al-majmu'āt al-ṣūfiyya al-kāmila*, 46. All translations from Arabic texts in this work are my own.

[30] Jamil M. Abun-Nasr, *Muslim Communities of Grace: The Sufi Brotherhoods in Islamic Religious Life*, 37.

[31] Abū Bakr Muḥammad ibn Ibrāhīm al-Kalābādhī, *Kitāb al-ta'arruf li-madhhab ahl al-taṣawwuf (The Doctrine of the Sufis),* trans. A. J. Arberry, 54.

notwithstanding, Sufism was still attracting the ire of the orthodoxy with its Islamic moorings under ever intense scrutiny. This skepticism and suspicion culminated in the execution of al-Ḥusayn ibn Manṣūr al-Ḥallāj (d. 309/922).[32] In the aftermath of such a seismic event, misrepresentation and marginalisation of Sufism was rife. It is this hostile environment that Abū Bakr Muḥammad ibn Ibrāhīm al-Kalābādhī (d. 380/990?) entered, and, with his seminal *Kitāb al-ta'arruf li-madhhab ahl al-taṣawwuf*, aimed to effect a religious reconciliation. His approach seems to be a powerful mélange of an academic style with deft expurgation of more divisive Sufi statements to expose, or rather, establish the essential orthodoxy of the Sufi movement. One is struck by the volume of Qur'anic verses and traditions of the Prophet al-Kalābādhī cites, insinuating, of course, that Sufi practices are not a form of *bid'a* (innovation), but rather a healthy and longstanding expression of *īmān* (faith).[33]

Another work which also deserves mention is 'Alī ibn 'Uthmān al-Jullābī al-Hujwīrī's (d. 465/1072?) *Kashf al-maḥjūb,* which is a meticulous classification of Sufi denominations. Al-Ḥujwīrī divides the Sufis into twelve sects (*firaq*), each with their own kind (*ṣinf*) of Sufism and following their own spiritual master (*shaykh*). He considers two of these to be outside the pale of Islam due to their advocacy of incarnationism (*ḥulūl*). Al-Ḥallāj, significantly, is exonerated of such blasphemy,

[32]Louis Massignon's study remains the most authoritative work on this issue. See Louis Massignon, *The Passion of al-Ḥallāj: Mystic and Martyr of Islam*. However, the study conducted by Ahmet Karamustafa reveals that the execution of al-Ḥallāj had little, if at anything, to do with his statement "ana'l-Ḥaqq" (I am the Truth), and thus, his purported promulgation of incarnationism, and more to do with his political activism and challenges to the highest eschelons of power. (See Karamustafa, *Sufism: The Formative Period*, 25-26.)

[33] Al-Kalābādhī, *Kitāb al-ta'arruf li-madhhab ahl al-taṣawwuf*. It is noteworthy that al-Qāshānī uses the same tools in his defence of Ibn 'Arabī's thought. However, Karamustafa questions the legitimacy of this view as Sufis did not, he argues, suffer an immediate blacklash for their association with al-Ḥallāj following the latter's execution. Instead, they were regarded, for the most part, as a branch of the mainstream. Al-Kalabādhī's work was thus more an exercise of signposting a hitherto unknown faction of the religious community rather than an exercise in apologetics. (Karamustafa, *Sufism: The Formative Period*, 69-71.)

instead al-Hujwīrī qualifies his *shaṭaḥāt,* attributing them to his union with the divine. This work served the dual purpose of disentangling the various strands of Sufism for the orthodoxy and setting boundaries which could not be transgressed, and had the dual effect of informing and placating critics.[34]

Although al-Junayd was the most influential of the early Sufi theorists, it is Muḥammad ibn ʻAbd al-Jabbār al-Niffarī (d. 350/961) who seems to be the most direct antecedent to Ibn ʻArabī. For not only does he display a marked penchant for paradoxes,[35] much like Ibn ʻArabī who revels in the ambiguity brimming under the façade of his metaphysical musings, he also alleges that his *Mawāqif* and *Mukhāṭabāt* were the products of divine illumination,[36] just as Ibn ʻArabī claims the *Futūḥāt* was dictated to him "by God through the angel of inspiration, whereas the *Fuṣūṣ* … [was] inspired by the Prophet."[37] More specifically, one observes clear parallels between Ibn ʻArabī's *Mashāhid al-asrār al-qudsiyya wa maṭāliʻ al-anwār al-ilāhiyya*,[38] in which an instructive dialogue takes place between God and a worshipper (presumably, Ibn ʻArabī himself) and al-Niffarī's *Mawāqif* which has the same format.[39]

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[34] ʻAlī ibn ʻUthmān al-Jullābī al-Hujwīrī, *Kashf al-maḥjūb*.
[35] Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions,* 81.
[36] See Muḥammad ibn ʻAbd al-Jabbār al-Niffarī, *The "Mawāqif" and "Mukhāṭabāt" of Muḥammad ibn ʻAbd al-Jabbār al-Niffarī*.
[37] Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions,* 265. It must be mentioned, however, that the concept of divine inspiration yielding a higher and deeper knowledge of scripture and, ultimately, God is something which was introduced, according to Wolfson, by Philo (d. 50 CE) who maintained that the inner meaning of scripture, what he termed, "the Unwritten Law," could not be attained without divine aid. Thus, he advocated "a new kind of revelation, a progressive revelation." He believed that divine inspiration and the work of the Holy Spirit continued to provide true knowledge about God even as he professed the cessation of prophecy. This betrays remarkable parallels with Ibn ʻArabī who claimed that though prophethood had ended with Muḥammad, the seal of the Prophets (*khātam al-anbiyāʼ*), the door to sainthood (*wilāya*) remained open. See Wolfson, "The Philonic God of Revelation and His Latter-Day Deniers," 5.
[38] See Ibn ʻArabī, *Mashāhid al-asrār al-qudsiyya wa maṭāliʻ al-anwār al-ilāhiyya*, 211-31.
[39] Al-Niffarī, *Kitāb al-mawāqif wa yalīhī kitāb al-mukhāṭabāt*. See also Muḥammad ʻAfīfī Maṭar, *Quartet of Joy*, 70. In this work, the author acknowledges the affinities between al-Niffarī and Ibn ʻArabī and the former's influence on the latter. There is somewhat of a concensus in recent scholarship that al-Niffarī exerted at least some influence on Ibn ʻArabī. (See Birgit Krawietz and Georges Tamer, *Islamic Theology, Philosophy and Law,* 99, ft. 16.) It is also worthy of mention that

Al-Niffarī, influential though he may have been to Ibn ʻArabī's thought, could not have been alone in this regard, for one perceives in Ibn ʻArabī's metaphysics mystical notes of a number of his predecessors. The Andalusian's ascension (*miʻrāj*), for instance, which he describes as having taken place while he was in Fez in 594/1198,[40] may be based on Abū Yazīd's own ascension,[41] or the concept of the "Seal of the Saints," which was first coined by al-Ḥakīm al-Tirmidhī (d. 320/932).[42] Abū Madyan, too, was an important influence.[43] Indeed, he is one of the few mystics whom Ibn ʻArabī reverentially cites and whose spiritual journey he assiduously charts.[44] However, it can hardly be denied that Ibn ʻArabī's most "immediate model was [Abū Ḥāmid] al-Ghazālī (d. 505/1111)."[45] Franz Rosenthal even argues that the *Futūḥāt* was designed by its author to supplant the *Iḥyāʼ* as evidenced by its overall

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al-Niffarī's impact was significant on many disciples of Ibn ʻArabī. Indeed, ʻAfīf al-Dīn al-Tilimsānī (d. 690/1291) even wrote a commentary on the *Mawāqif*. (See al-Tilimsānī, *Sharḥ mawāqif al-Niffarī*).

[40] Addas, *The Quest for the Red Sulphur,* 153-54.

[41] Karamustafa, *Sufism,* 4.

[42] Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions,* 57. For a detailed comparison between the central concepts in the works of Ḥakīm al-Tirmidhī and Ibn ʻArabī, with a special emphasis on sainthood, see Masataka Takeshita, *Ibn ʻArabī's Theory of the Perfect Man and its Place in the History of Islamic Thought*, 131-170. For a more in-depth account of the concept of "Seal of the Saints," see the aptly titled *Seal of the Saints* (especially 128-47) by Michel Chodkiewicz.

[43] One may add Muḥammad ibn ʻAbd Allāh ibn Masarra to this list. (See Wael Hallaq, *Ibn Taymiyya Against the Greek Logicians*, xiii; Peter Schäfer, ed., *Wege mystischer Gotteserfahrung/ Mystical Approaches to God*, 111; Denis E. McAuley, *Ibn ʻArabī's Mystical Poetics,* 16; Salma Khadra Jayyusi, *The Legacy of Muslim Spain*, 918.) However, ʻAfīfī has shown that the influence of Ibn Masarra was far less pronounced than first alleged by Asín Palacios. (ʻAfīfī, *The Mystical Philosophy of Muḥyīd'Dīn Ibnul-ʻArabī,* 179.)

[44] Claude Addas, "Abu Madyan and Ibn ʻArabi," 170. Martin Lings goes as far as to say that Ibn ʻArabī "may be considered as an heir of Abū Madyan." (Lings, *What is Sufism?*, 113.) For a detailed account of the life and career of Abū Madyan, see Vincent J. Cornell, *The Way of Abū Madyan*. Cornell admits that Ibn ʻArabī was indeed influenced by Abū Madyan, as he cites him more than any other Sufi, but advises caution in hyperbolising that influence given that the two never met and it took Ibn ʻArabī over four years to visit Abū Madyan's grave after his death, something that would be inconceivable for a devout *murīd*. (Cornell, *Abū Madyan*, 16, f. 35.)

[45] Franz Rosenthal, "Ibn ʻArabī between 'Philosophy' and 'Mysticism'," 35. It has been suggested that al-Ghazālī and Ibn ʻArabī sought to achieve the same thing: a détente between orthodoxy and Sufism, that Ibn ʻArabī, in a way simply continued the irenic endeavours of al-Ghazālī. See Diané Collinson, Kathryn Plant, and Robert Wilkinson, *Fifty Eastern Thinkers*, 53, where it states that a century after al-Ghazālī "Ibn Arabi set himself the task of making Sufist thought even more explicit and acceptable to those who were suspicious and disapproving of it." Indeed, we see amongst the sober statements of al-Ghazālī, comments that would have profoundly influenced Ibn ʻArabī, such as his remark that the 'divine presence' (*al-ḥaḍra al-ilāhīya*) "is an expression for the totality of existents, all of them being part of the divine presence; for nothing exists other than the Exalted God and His actions." (A.I.Sabra, "*Kalām* Atomism as an Alternative Philosophy to Hellenizing *Falsafa*," 221).

format, "which starts out with a thorough discussion of the meaning of the principal Muslim ritual obligations,"[46] in much the same way as its forerunner.[47] What this assertion, and that of Schimmel, who maintains that Ibn 'Arabī intellectualised Sufism and "was more a genius of systemization than an enraptured mystic,"[48] fails to acknowledge is that Ibn 'Arabī himself declared he did not "write" the *Futūḥāt* at all.

There is, of course, no way of proving whether these works were written by Ibn 'Arabī or given to him through revelation, nor does it matter. The only thing that does is that Ibn 'Arabī *believes* they were given to him. Moreover, we see that Ibn 'Arabī at times attributes knowledge to his spiritual state, which affords him the opportunity to be privy to some divine secrets whenever he wills, and, at others, to an unexpected spiritual unveiling that discloses to him previously unknown information. An example of the latter is the command to raise one's hands (*rafʿ al-yadayn*) during prayer, which, Ibn 'Arabī claims, was given to him by the Prophet himself in a dream.[49] It is worthy of mention, also, that there is no contradiction between Ibn 'Arabī proclaiming his works are from a divine source and the product being highly rationalistic (perhaps more so than any such work before him, or since). What is questionable, however, is the implication of premeditation associated with the pronouncement that the *Futūḥāt* was meticulously designed or that one is either a "genius of systemization" or "an enraptured mystic." The two are not mutually exclusive, nor is such a "rough-and-ready" categorisation conducive to an accurate

[46] Franz Rosenthal, "Ibn 'Arabī between 'Philosophy' and 'Mysticism'," 35.
[47] More pertinent to this study is al-Ghazālī's conception of God, which has many parallels with that of Ibn 'Arabī. For al-Ghazālī, like Ibn 'Arabī, emphasised both the unknowability and knowability of God. Moreover, "The very nature of Ghazali's views on the comparability and knowability of God cannot be fully understood without an understanding of his conception of the uniqueness and unknowability of God," much in the same way as in the works of Ibn 'Arabī. (Fadlou A. Shehadi, *Ghazali's Unique Unknowable God*, 3-4.)
[48] Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions*, 263.
[49] See James Morris, "Ibn 'Arabī's "Esotericism": The Problem of Spiritual Authority," 37-64.

portrayal of any Sufi, let alone one as complex as Ibn ʻArabī. Furthermore, the compartmentalisation of any given Sufi in this manner assumes a criterion against which each may be measured, which, of course, does not exist.

Whether its composition was carefully considered or divinely inspired, the *Futūḥāt* does have many parallels with the *Iḥyā',* as does Ibn ʻArabī with al-Ghazālī. One key difference between the two masters, however, is that, though both emphasise the boundaries of reason,[50] Ibn ʻArabī is far more willing to employ language and all forms of conceptualisation to express divine secrets than his Sufi counterpart. This is because even though Ibn ʻArabī asserts that "wherever the intellect claims to attain knowledge, unveiling can claim to know much more,"[51] he still uses all the rationalistic and linguistic tools at his disposal to describe divine realities.[52] Moreover, "he avoids the aphoristic style of so many of his predecessors and in fact goes to the other extreme by elaborating his ideas in great detail."[53] But through all these detailed metaphysical reflections, "always there is an implicit appeal to the intellect, even though he disclaims its authority,"[54] as it is only through reason that man can comprehend the profundity of divine opacity,[55] or as Ibn ʻArabī

[50]Mohammed Rustom correctly observes that, according to Ibn ʻArabī, "Human reason can, by its very nature, never capture the entire message of revelation since revelation is supra-rational." See Mohammed Rustom, review of *An Ocean without Shore*, by Michel Chodkiewicz, 2.

[51] Chittick, "Mysticism versus Philosophy in Earlier Islamic History," 96. See also Mahmud Kiliç, "Mysticism," 949, 956, where Kiliç he makes the same point.

[52] One reason for this, as Van Ess puts it, is that "For Muslims, reason, *ʻaql*, has always been the chief faculty granted human beings by God. … That divine gift was accepted and appreciated everywhere, even among ascetics and mystics." (Van Ess, *The Flowering of Muslim Theology*, 154). Ibn ʻArabī is a prime example of this.

[53] Chittick, "Mysticism versus Philosophy in Earlier Islamic History," 96.

[54] Rustom, review of *An Ocean without Shore*, 2. Ibn ʻArabī, at times, even refers to 'intelligent individuals and logical thinkers' (*al-ʻuqalā' wa ahl al-qiyās*) as his colleagues (*aṣḥāb*), as noted by Franz Rosenthal. (Maria De Cillis, *Free Will and Predestination in Islamic Thought*, 169.)

[55] It is noteworthy that the intellectual dimension of a mystical experience is one of five aspects in to which the experience may be divided, according to A. Geels, who writes, "Mysticism is divided into: 1. The experiential: the experience itself. 2. The ritual dimension, that is, trying to "reach beyond the world of multiplicity." 3. The intellectual, which is the "cognitive processing of the mystic," in other words, the articulation of the essentially ineffable. 4. The ideological i.e. the tradition of the mystic. "These traditions not only influence the experiences itself, but they also colour the descriptions

puts it, "Through reason one knows but does not see, while through unveiling one sees but does not know."[56] This is because "the divine reveals itself through language and we know it through language, [but] it is also hidden by what it says, and hence Ibn 'Arabi also maintains, like many other mystics, the ineffability of the divine, paradoxically, through language itself,"[57] and by extension, through reason itself.[58]

Ibn 'Arabī did not share al-Ghazālī's reservations about philosophy,[59] he even went as far as asseverating its utility whilst maintaining that those who rely on reason alone are ultimately doomed to "stray from the road, because they think that the only mentor they can accept to guide them is their own thinking."[60] The assertion that some things are inherently beyond the ken of speculative thought is a recurrent theme in Ibn 'Arabī's works, which constantly aver that "the power of thought (*al-quwwa al-mufakkira*) does not suffice to achieve a perception of the essence of God."[61] This is because, says Ibn 'Arabī, reason only takes one to a point, after that point is reached, the paradox inherent in the nature of the divine, which necessitates the harmony between opposites, or the redundance of *principium tertii exclusi*, leads to confusion and miguidance. How can these paradoxes be understood and be articulated? These are at once the challenges of and the reasons for Ibn

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presented by the mystics." 5. The consequential, which is "the different ways in which the mystic is influenced by the experience." (A. Geels, "Mystical experience and interpretation," 213-14.)

[56] Chittick, *Imaginal Worlds,* 162-63.
[57] Rustom, review of *An Ocean without Shore*, 4. On the issue of the role of language in attempting to describe notions or experiences that are "supra-rational" in nature, see Izutsu, "Mysticism and the Linguistic Problem of Equivocation."
[58] Ibn 'Arabī, we may thus say, represents the half-way house between those who believed that reason had no authority at all, and those, such as Avicenna (d. 428/1037), who put sole emphasis on reason. See Peter Heath, *Allegory and Philosophy in Avicenna,* 186-67.
[59] Michael A. Sells, *Early Islamic Mysticism*, 24. For a detailed engagement of al-Ghazālī's position on philosophy, see Frank Griffel, *Al-Ghazālī's Philosophical Theology*, 97-105.
[60] Rosenthal, "Ibn 'Arabī," 8.
[61] Ibid., 9.

‘Arabī’s convoluted, abstruse language. Gershom Scholem touches on this issue when he asks,

> What kind of direct relation can there be between the Creator and His creature, between the finite and the infinite; and how can words express an experience for which there is no adequate simile in this finite world of man? Yet it would be wrong and superficial to conclude that the contradiction implied by the nature of mystical experience betokens an inherent absurdity. It will be wiser to assume … that the religious world of the mystic can be expressed in terms applicable to rational knowledge only with the help of paradox.[62]

Ibn ‘Arabī makes full use of ostensibly paradoxical language in his quest to express the inexpressible.

It is significant that the cool ratiocination or pantheistic philosophisation of which he is accused sit in stark contrast to his own proclamation of divine inspiration, for ‘Afīfī writes,

> Interpretation within reasonable limits is justifiable, but with ibn ‘Arabi it is a dangerous means of converting Islam into pantheism or *vice versa*. This is most apparent in the *Fuṣūṣ*, and to a certain extent in the *Futūḥāt*, where the Qur’anic text and traditions of the Prophet are explained mystically or rather pantheistically.[63]

‘Afīfī vehemently asserts that the Qur’an and traditions of the Prophet are not the sources of Ibn ‘Arabī’s inspiration. Rather, they are a cloak in which he conceals his own pantheistic notions.[64] He sees Ibn ‘Arabī’s thought as Neoplatonism conceived through the eyes of al-Ikhwān al-Ṣafā, remarking, “On the philosophic side ibnul ‘Arabi is chiefly Neoplatonic … it was Neoplatonism *as understood* by the Ikhwanus-Safa that he knew.”[65] The *Fuṣūṣ* and *Futūḥāt* are, for him, the most flagrant examples of this.[66]

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[62] Scholem, *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism*, 25.
[63] Abū’l-‘Alā’ ‘Afīfī, “Ibn ‘Arabi,” 402.
[64] This opinion of Ibn ‘Arabī’s work has been seriously questioned by modern scholars, See Meena Sharify-Funk and William Rory-Dickson, “Traces of Pantheism in Islam,” 157-58.
[65] ‘Afifi, *The Mystical Philosophy of Muhyid Din Ibnul Arabi*, 184.
[66] For how Ibn ‘Arabī differs from Neoplatonism, especially Plotinus, with the philosophy of whom his meatphysics is most closely identified, see Rom Landau, *The Philosophy of Ibn ‘Arabī*, 32.

It is not my contention that Ibn ʻArabī's works do not contain philosophical elements, as it is "unavoidable to associate Ibn ʻArabī with some vague mystic neoplatonism."[67] This is because his intellectual milieu was one of "multi-religious interaction" and had "a common language (Arabic), the common philosophical and scientific curriculum and the shared libraries," that "facilitated a close association of Jewish and Muslim intellectuals."[68] It is this intellectual-religious *mise en scene* that became the cradle for Andalusian mysticism;[69] what seemingly began with Ibn Masarra found its apogee in Ibn ʻArabī.[70]

However, one should also not write off Ibn ʻArabī's outlook as "philosophical mysticism" (*taṣawwuf al-falāsifa*), as ʻAfīfī does,[71] and by which he means that Ibn ʻArabī combines philosophy and mysticism by couching his personal philosophy in mystical jargon.[72] Indeed, ʻAfīfī portrays Ibn ʻArabī as somewhat of a failed philosopher who clothed his faulty philosophy in mystical parlance to gain wider acceptance. He writes in his introduction of the *Fuṣūṣ*,

> Ibn ʻArabī, even though he was given skill (*basṭa*) in cogitation and reflection, and profundity (*ʻumq*) in spiritual discernment (*al-ḥiss al-rūḥī*), was still in need (*yaʻūz*) of precise philosophical methods (*al-manhaj al-*

[67] Rosenthal, "Ibn ʻArabī," 5.
[68] Sarah Stroumsa, Sara Sviri, "The Beginnings of Mystical Philosophy in al-Andalus," 215. One cannot, of course, discount the effect of the Christian tradition, though Asín Palacios attributes too much influence to it. (Denis E. McAuley, *Ibn ʻArabī's Mystical Poetics,* 4.)
[69] For more details on the conditions and factors that allowed a particular brand of Sufism to flourish in Andalus, see Michael Ebstein, *Mysticsm and Philosophy in al-Andalus*, 1-8. However, the author seems to attribute too much influence on Ibn ʻArabī to Fāṭimī-Ismāʻīlī activity in this region. (See below).
[70] Sarah Stroumsa and Sara Sviri, "The Beginnings of Mystical Philosophy in al-Andalus," 215. It is worth pointing out that one sees in Ibn Masarra's *Risālat al-iʻtibār* many tendencies which became commonplace in Andalusian mysticism. The foremost of these is Ibn Masarra's fusion of neoplatonism and Qur'anic language. However, one must be careful in discriminating between possible influences and deliberate assimilation (See below).
[71] It is noteworthy that many modern scholars still view Ibn ʻArabī's exegesis of the Qur'an as entirely philosophical. See, for instance, Naṣr Ḥāmid Abū Zayd, *Falsafat al-ta'wīl*, 18.
[72] It is more appropriate to classify Ibn ʻArabī's thought as "speculative Sufism," that is, *Sufism* infused with philosophy. Indeed, we see in Ibn ʻArabī's terminology that he does not spurn philosophical nomenclature, though in his thought the denotations are different. (Tobey Mayer, "Theology and Sufism," 276-77.) It is therefore not personal philosophy in mystical jargon that the Andalusian employs, but quite the reverse. If this is true for Ibn ʻArabī's terminology, then it is even more so for al-Qāshānī, as we shall see.

> *falsafī al-daqīq*). … So he was, without doubt, a philosopher and a founder of an ideology (*ṣāḥib al-madhhab*). … However, he was a philosopher who preferred to overlook intellectual methods (*manhaj al-'aql*) … and adopted methods of emotional depiction (*al-taṣwīr al-'āṭifī*), allegory (*ramz*), and allusion (*ishāra*); and he relied upon ideational methodologies (*asālīb al-khayāl*) in his interpretations (*ta'bīr*). … So Ibn 'Arabī is, without doubt, a philosopher in terms of having a doctrine on the nature of existence (*ṭabī'at al-wujūd*) like all philosophers, but he is a mystical philosopher (*faylasūf ṣūfī*) who has fabricated (*iṣṭana'a*) Sufi methodologies and allegories (*rumūz*) in order to interpret his own philosophy. This is one of the reasons for the complexity (*ta'qīd*) that we perceive in every one of the lines in his books.[73]

This, of course, is antithetical to the contention of Schimmel, Chittick, Mayer and others that it is actually mysticism framed in largely philosophical language. Even if we consider the matter to be unsettled, it is difficult to see how 'Afīfī can justify this position whilst simultaneously maintaining that Ibn 'Arabī's writings were the harvest of divine unveiling, for he writes shortly after the aforementioned passage,

> Ibn 'Arabī wrote his books under "the influence" (*ta'thīr*), which is a type of revelation (*waḥy*) or [divine] inspiration (*ilhām*). So in his lines is manifest that which was revealed to him, not what was determined by the faculty of reason (*manṭiq al-'aql*). This is why we have to look at his ideology (*madhhab*) holistically (*fī jumlatih*) and not just its details (*tafāṣīlih*). … So it [i.e. his ideology] is both philosophical and mystical; he has combined in it uniqueness of thought (*waḥdat al-tafkīr*) with the power of [spiritual] ecstasy (*wijdān*), and has tried to reconcile intellectual matters (*qaḍāyā al-'aql*) with the states of spiritual 'tasting' and unveiling (*aḥwāl al-dhawq wa'l-kashf*).[74]

The contradiction between this passage, which avers that the source of Ibn 'Arabī's knowledge was experiential and its articulation philosophical, with the one quoted above, which argues the converse, is patently clear because the former implies wilful deceit to achieve acceptance and the latter, a lack of any such insincerity.

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[73] Ibn 'Arabī, *Fuṣūṣ,* ed. 'Afīfī, 1: 9-10. The complexity and inconsistency of Ibn 'Arabī's writing is a constant complaint of 'Afīfī who says, somewhat hyperbolically, "This book [i.e. the *Fuṣūṣ*] is impossible to understand in its [original] language, despite its many commentaries." (Abū Zayd, *Hākadhā Takallama Ibn 'Arabī*, 135.) He explains his many failed endeavours to comprehend the *Fuṣūṣ*, writing, "I have read it [i.e. the *Fuṣūṣ*] with the commentary of al-Qāshānī many times, but God did not disclose any [of its meaning] to me! For the book of Ibn 'Arabī [i.e. the *Fuṣūṣ*] is clear, and every word in it—if I take them on their own—is comprehensible, but the overall meaning of each sentence [or, rather, of] many of the sentences are conundrums … which the commentaries simply complicate." (Ibid.)

[74] Ibid., 10-11.

It would then appear that ʻAfīfī is himself unsure as to whether Ibn ʻArabī is a philosophical mystic or a mystical philosopher. What is certain is that one cannot concurrently allege the Andalusian master was experientially driven and surreptitiously percolated his personal philosophy through mystical terminology. True, all human experiences are shaped by our conceptual apparatus,[75] which could include their role in mystical unveilings, but the question here is not whether Ibn ʻArabī's conceptual apparatus informed his mystical unveilings, it is whether he deliberately sought to disguise his philosophical reflections in mystical language to make them more palatable.

There are other modern scholars who seem to suggest that Ibn ʻArabī was both divinely inspired and working of his own volition, that the *Futūḥāt* and *Fuṣūṣ* were both uncontrollable spiritual unveilings and premeditated. Naṣr Ḥāmid Abū Zayd, for instance, comments,

> At times Ibn ʻArabī did this [i.e. write in a convoluted manner] deliberately and intentionally in order to justify this outlook with the ambiguity of his thought, and, at other times, because he was not under the control of himself.[76]

Ibn ʻArabī himself announces that the *Futūḥāt* is not "concerned with results of proofs derived from thought, but having as its subject the results of divine revelation (*kashf*)."[77] The Andalusian, it would seem, is a curious amalgamation of

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[75] See Skinner, "Meaning and Understanding in the History of Ideas," 6.
[76] Abū Zayd, *Falsafat al-Ta'wīl*, 257.
[77] Ibn ʻArabī, *Fuṣūṣ,* 9. It is interesting to note that Shihāb al-Dīn al-Suhrawardī (d. 597/ 1191) claimed to have received knowledge from the divine through revelation, and subsequently, formulated rational proofs for them. (Mehdi Amin Razavi, *Suhrawardi and the School of Illumination*, xviii-xix.) Therefore, one may say that, generally speaking, the following evolution occurred in Islamic philosophy:

(1) Peripatetic philosophers, like Avicenna, largely based their doctrines on demonstrative proof alone and did not claim they were divinely inspired. Although, Avicenna, it must be conceded, was also interested in 'intuition' (*ḥads*).
(2) Al-Suhrawardī claimed he was divinely inspired, but, nevertheless, could adduce rational arguments and proofs for the knowledge he received.

neoplatonic philosophy with Bisṭāmī-esqe ecstacy and Ghazālian uniformity. He has both the emotive volatility of Abū Yazīd and the discursive ingenuity of Abū Ḥāmid. He is "both extraordinarily original and totally traditional."[78] The same, however, cannot be said about our second author whose style is scrupulously scientific.

1.3. 'Abd al-Razzāq al-Qāshānī

Many of the details of 'Abd al-Razzāq al-Qāshānī's life remain elusive. In this section, I shall attempt to sketch a biography of his life from the few sources that mention him, and provide a list of his teachers and notable students, as well as enumerate his works, and discernible influences present therein.

Name

Al-Qāshānī seems to be a geographical designation, based on the city of Qāshān in the province of Isfahān, modern-day Iran. There are four other versions of this name predicated on different vocalisations of the city. These are: al-Qāshī, al-Qāsānī, al-Kāshī, and al-Kāshānī.[79] Ḥājī Khalīfa (d. 1067/ 1657), nevertheless, also refers to him as 'Abd al-Razzāq al-Samarqandī, which has been the cause of much confusion.[80]

There are also different opinions as to what al-Qāshānī's name was. It has been recorded as being Aḥmad in *Mu'jam al-mu'allifīn*,[81] whereas others argue that this was his father's name.[82] Other candidates for the name of his father include:

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(3) Al-Ghazālī and Ibn 'Arabī ostensibly dispense with the arguments (whilst maintaining their legitimacy and having an implicit recourse to them) and, thus, are not philosophers *per se* as adduction of rational proofs is integral to being a philosopher.

[78] Ibn 'Arabī, *Fuṣūṣ*, 35. His style, too, as a result of this, is full of "ambiguity and explanatory dialectics; or [of] exposition and obscurantism, and [of] allusion and candour together." (Abū Zayd, *Hākadhā Takallama Ibn 'Arabī*, 138.)

[79] Majīd Hādīzāda, *Majmu'āt-i-rasā'il va muṣannafāt 'Abd al-Razzāq Kāshānī*, 26-27.

[80] Ibid., 27.

[81] Ibid., 26.

[82] Abdurrahim Alkiş, "Aburrezāk Kāşānī ve 'Şehru Fusūs'l-hikem' Adli Eserinin Tahkīk ve Tahlīli," 36.

Muḥammad[83] and Isḥāq.[84] Dāwūd al-Qayṣarī (d. 751/1350) and Ḥājī Khalīfa believe that his father was also called Jamāl al-Dīn.[85] The agnomen (*kunya*) of his father is said to be either Abu'l-Faḍā'il[86] or Abu'l-Ghanā'im.[87]

Full names that have been recorded for al-Qāshānī are: 1. 'Abd al-Razzāq ibn Abu'l-Ghanā'im ibn Aḥmad Abu'l-Faḍā'il ibn Muḥammad al-Qāshānī, 2. Kamāl al-Dīn Abu'l-Faḍl 'Abd al-Razzāq ibn Jamāl al-Dīn al-Qāshānī, 3. Kamāl al-Dīn Abu'l-Faḍl ibn Aḥmad, among others.[88] Notwithstanding all the discrepancies of vocalisation and differing opinions, the name that emerges as being most likely from the majority of sources is the following: Kamāl al-Dīn Abū'l-Faḍl 'Abd al-Razzāq ibn Jamāl al-Dīn Abū'l-Ghanā'im al-Qāshānī.[89]

Birth

We do not know the exact date of al-Qāshānī's birth.[90] It is known that he was born in, what is now, Iran during the Ilkhanid period.[91] The date of his birth is believed to be between 650 AH/1252 CE and 660 AH/1262 CE, with his age, at the time of his death, being approximately 85 years.[92] The exact location of his birth is also unknown, though it is believed that he was born in Qāshān.[93]

Education

[83] Ibid. This has also been cited as the name of his grandfather. (Ibid.)
[84] Hādīzāda, *Majmu'āt*, 26.
[85] Alkiş, "Aburrezāk Kāşānī," 35.
[86] Ibid., 36. It is also claimed that this was the agnomen of al-Qāshānī's grandfather. (Ibid.)
[87] Hādīzāda, *Majmu'āt*, 25.
[88] Alkiş, "Aburrezāk Kāşānī," 34-35.
[89] Hādīzāda, *Majmu'āt*, 28.
[90] Ibid.
[91] Pierre Lory, *Les commentaires ésotériques du Coran d'après 'Abd al-Razzāq al-Qāshānī*, 20.
[92] Hādīzāda, *Majmu'āt*, 28.
[93] Ibid., 27.

Al-Qāshānī began memorising the Qur'an and contemplating its meanings at a very young age,[94] and was spurred on to further study by his mentor 'Abd al-Ṣamad al-Naṭanzī (d. 699/1300?) who was a member of the Suhrawardiyya order and received his mantle from Najīb al-Dīn Buzghush (d. 678/1279) in Shiraz. Buzghush was one of the principal disciples of Shihāb al-Dīn Abū Ḥafs 'Umar al-Suhrawardī, nephew of the founding father of the order, Ḍiyā' al-Dīn Abū'l-Najīb al-Suhrawardī (d. 563/1168).[95]

The trajectory of al-Qāshānī's studies is a familiar one. Chittick elucidates in the following way:

> Like all scholars, Kāshānī began by studying basic sciences such as grammar and jurisprudence. From there he went on to the principles of jurisprudence (*uṣūl al-fiqh*) and *kalām*, but he found no way to verify his understanding. Then he thought that investigating the rational sciences (*ma'qūlāt*) and metaphysics (*ilm al-ilāhī*) would provide him with true knowledge and deliver him from wavering and doubt. For a time he pursued this investigation. He writes, "My mastery of it reached a point that cannot be surpassed, but so much alienation, agitation and veiling appeared that I could find no rest. It became obvious that the true knowledge I sought was found in a stage beyond reason."[96]

That al-Qāshānī began with the propaedeutic sciences of Arabic language, physics (*ṭab'īyyāt*) and logic (*manṭiq*) before progressing to metaphysics and, finally, Sufism, is evident from his letters to 'Alā' al-Dawla al-Simnānī (d. 736/1336).[97] It appears from his *oeuvre* that he was also quite knowledgeable in matters of medicine, though one can draw no concrete conclusions from the scant medical allusions with which his works are peppered.[98] Of his many treatises, *Al-Madba' wa'l-ma'ād* stands out for its dazzling panoply of Ḥadīth erudition, as well as an

[94] 'Abd al-Razzāq al-Qāshānī, "Ḥaqā'iq al-ta'wīl fī daqā'iq al-tanzīl, 866," 4-5.
[95] *Muqarnas: An Annual on Islamic Art and Architecture,* 40.
[96] Chittick, "The School of Ibn 'Arabī," 518.
[97] Nūr al-Dīn'Abd al-Raḥmān al-Jāmī provides a detailed account of this correspondence. See Nūr al-Dīn 'Abd al-Raḥmān al-Jāmī, *Nafaḥāt al-Uns min Ḥaḍarāt al-Quds*, 306-312.
[98] Hādīzāda, *Majmu'āt*, 39.

acute comprehension of the finer points of Arabic eloquence (*balāgha*).[99] Learned though he was in many sciences, it, nevertheless, seems that he did not pursue the disciplines of: principles of jurisprudence (*uṣūl al-fiqh*) and principles of theology (*uṣūl al-kalām*) to any great degree.[100]

It has been posited that al-Qāshānī was between 25 and 35 years of age when he completed his formal study and turned to Sufism.[101] His erudition was renowned with his student, al-Qayṣarī, referring to him as "*al-Imām al-'Alāma*" and the historian, Ibn al-Fuwaṭī (d. 723/1323), waxing lyrical about his deep learning. Indeed, the Shi'ite Sufi and philosopher, Sayyid Haydar Āmūlī (d. 787/1385), regarded him as being on a par with such luminaries as Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī (d. 312/925?), Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī, and Ibn Sīnā (d. 429/1037), among others.[102]

Teachers

Nūr al-Dīn 'Abd al-Ṣamad al-Naṭanzī

Al-Qāshānī's principal *shaykh*, al-Naṭanzī, encouraged him to seek out other teachers as well. Indeed, he is known to have had other teachers while he was taught by al-Naṭanzī.[103] It is estimated that al-Qāshānī spent almost two decades in Shirāz (from approximately 680 AH/ 1281 CE to 699 AH/ 1300 CE) studying with al-Naṭanzī until the latter's death.[104]

Shams al-Dīn al-Kīshī (d. 695/1296)

[99] Ibid., 40.
[100] Ibid., 42.
[101] Ibid.
[102] Ibid., 40-41.
[103] Ibid., 72.
[104] Ibid., 85.

Al-Kīshī seems to have been one of al-Qāshānī's main teachers of the exoteric sciences, in particular, the disciplines of Qur'anic commentary (*tafsīr*) and Ḥadīth.[105]

Ẓahīr al-Dīn 'Abd al-Raḥmān ibn 'Alī Buzghush (d. 716/ 1317)

Zahīr al-Dīn was another prominent member of the Suhrawardiyya order.[106]

Aṣīl al-Dīn'Abd Allah ibn 'Alī ibn Abu'l-Muḥāsin ibn Sa'd ibn Mahdī al-'Alawī al-Muḥammadī (d. 685/1286)

Aṣīl al-Dīn was a descendent of Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥanafiyya (d. 81/700), the third of 'Alī's (d. 40/661) sons.[107] Al-Qāshānī studied with Aṣīl al-Dīn till his death in 685 AH/1286.[108]

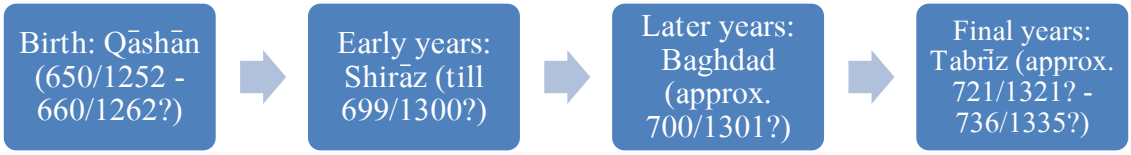
All these teachers, and others besides, from whom al-Qāshānī benefitted greatly, resided in Shirāz. It is therefore believed that for around two decades (from 680 AH/ 1281 CE to 699 AH/ 1300 CE) he remained in Shirāz, after which he spent seven months in the desert due to the deep shock of the death of his dearest teacher, al-Naṭanzī.[109] The next we hear, al-Qāshānī was in Baghdad at the time of al-Simnānī's teacher, Nūr al-Dīn 'Abd al-Raḥmān al-Isferayinī's (d. 717/1317?), death and even met him before the latter passed away. It is thus believed that he moved to Baghdad in the early years of the 8th/14th century.[110]

Travels

Based on the geographical location of al-Qāshānī's teachers and his scholarly output, we can trace a rough outline of the places in which he lived during different stages of

[105] Necmettin Ergül, "Kāşānī ve Hakāiku't-te'vīl fī dekāik't-tenzīl Adli Eserinin,"37.
[106] Trimingham, *The Sufi Orders in Islam*, Appendix C. For more details, see Hādīzāda, *Majmu'āt*, 74.
[107] For more details on Aṣīl al-Dīn, see Hādīzāda, *Majmu'āt*, 74-76.
[108] Ibid., 85.
[109] Ibid., 77.
[110] Ibid., 86; Alkiş, "Aburrezāk Kāşānī," 46; Ergül, "Kāşānī," 36.

his life. It is believed that he was born in Qāshān, spent much of his early adult life in Shirāz learning at the feet of the eminent scholars of that city, then moved to Baghdad and, finally, spent his last years working in Rab'-i-Rashīdī in Tabrīz, under the patronage of Rashīd al-Dīn (d. 718/1318) and then his son, Ghiyāth al-Dīn (d. 736/1336).[111] He is also purported to have travelled to Konya and Egypt, though details about these journeys are scarce.[112] The following tentative timeline can thus be constructed about al-Qāshānī's life:



Political Life

It is known that al-Qāshānī also held a number of important governmental posts in his life and was one of the leading Sufis in his day. He was even Sufi laureate to Sultan Muḥammad Khudābanda Öljeytü (d.716/1316) and, as such, was one of the four royal escorts on military campaigns.[113] In addition, al-Qāshānī was a regular attendee of the major Sufi circles of his era, circles in which he came in to contact with such personages as Naṣīr al-Dīn al-Ṭūsī (d. 672/1274), Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad al-Kashshī (d. 694/1295), 'Izz al-Dīn Maḥmūd al-Qāshānī (d. 735/1335) Quṭb al-Dīn al-Shīrāzī (d. 710/1311), among others.[114] His association with Ṣadr al-Dīn Muḥammad ibn Isḥāq al-Qūnawī (d. 673/1274), the foremost of Ibn 'Arabī's disciples and his spiritual heir,[115] seems to be somewhat ambiguous, with some claiming he became al-Qāshānī's *shaykh* after al-Naṭanzī's death while others

[111] Hādīzāda, *Majmu'āt*, 90-92; Alkiş, "Aburrezāk Kāşānī," 54; Ergül, "Kāşānī," 27.
[112] Hādīzāda, *Majmu'āt*, 86.
[113] Ergül, "Kāşānī," 26.
[114] Ibid., 23, 35.
[115] Gerald Elmore, "Ṣadr al-Dīn al-Qūnawī's Personal Study-List of Books by Ibn al-ʿArabī," 161-181.

assert that he may have taught him Ḥadīth as he is known to have educated al-Shirāzī in this field and the two were in close contact, as mentioned previously.[116]

Such was al-Qāshānī's closeness to the ruling elite that it made him the target of opprobrium; his association with the powerful vizier, Ghiyāth al-Dīn, was a source of particular concern for some of his contemporaries.[117]

Personal Life

Consonant with all other facets of al-Qāshānī's life, we do not know much about his personal life. It is believed that al-Qāshānī married and had at least one son; his son, called Muḥammad ibn 'Abd al-Razzāq al-Qāshānī (d. 764/1363), lived in Shirāz and wrote an addendum to his father's *Al-Iṣṭilaḥāt al-Ṣūfiyya*.[118]

Legal and Theological Affiliation

It is not known to which legal or theological school al-Qāshānī belonged, or even if he was Sunni or Shi'ite. Certainly, he had a deep attachment to the *ahl al-bayt*, and made a pilgrimage to the tombs of the caliph,'Alī, and his son, Ḥusayn (d. 61/680), in Najaf and Karbala, respectively.[119] However, such reverence is *de rigeur* for Sunnis also; hence, we cannot draw any definite conclusions from this. Both Sunnis and Shi'ite scholars claim he belonged to their respective camps and adduce evidence to support their declaration. The Sunnis cite the entry on "*Al-Ṣiddīq*" in the *Iṣṭilāḥāt*, where he writes,

> [It is] the one who takes sincerity to its highest level; he who had absolute belief in everything the Messenger of God, peace and blessings be upon him, brought, whether it be something he taught, said, or did, due to his inner purity and proximity to the innerness of the Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him. This is because of the strength of his connection with him. It is for this reason that there is not, in the Book of God, a rank which comes between them as evidenced by His saying, "*They are those upon whom God has shown*

[116] Ergül, "Kāşānī," 37-38.
[117] Hādīzāda, *Majmu'āt*, 86.
[118] Ibid., 97-98.
[119] Ibid., 86.

> *favour, among the Prophets, the sincere (ṣiddīqīn), the martyrs, and the righteous."*[120] And he [Muḥammad], upon him be peace, said, "Abū Bakr and I are like two racehorses: if he had overtaken me, I would have believed in him, but I overtook him so he believes in me."[121]

The Shi'ites, in defence of their claim, state that in *Tuḥfat al-Ikhwān,* al-Qāshānī confers the honorific "*'alayhi 'l-salām*" (upon him be peace) on 'Alī but not the other three caliphs.[122] In his treatise, *al-Madba' wa'l-ma'ād*, too, we receive no clarification as, though he cites a great many ḥadīths, many of which are on the authority of sources unpalatable to the Shi'ites, he, nevertheless, quotes from 'Alī as well as the twelve imams.[123]

The jury seems to be out among his principal students as well, since Dāwūd al-Qayṣarī (d. 751/1350) is Sunni while Qāḍī Sa'īd al-Qūnawī (d. unknown) is Shi'ite.[124] Also, he is known to have exerted a great influence on the Shi'ite Sufi, Sayyid Haydar Āmūlī, who writes a fervent panegyric on al-Qāshānī.[125] Nor can one derive any concrete details from the favour he gained with Öljeytü as, though at the time al-Qāshānī was at court, Öljeytü had converted from Sunnism to Twelver Shi'ism,[126] he was not very vigorous in enforcing it.[127] Indeed, two of his most powerful *amirs,* Sa'īd Chūpān (d. 727/1327) and Isen Qutlugh (d. 718/1318), did not

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[120] Qur'an 4:69. It is worth noting that the Qur'an had been misquoted in this edition. The word "*ma'*" (with) has been omitted. The translation of the correct text is: "*They will be with those upon whom God has shown favour, among the Prophets, the sincere (ṣiddīqīn), the matyrs, and the righteous.*" "They," in this verse, refers to all who obey God and His Messenger, as is apparent from the verse in its entirety.
[121] Al-Qāshānī, *Iṣṭilāhāt*, 139. It is noteworthy that this tradition is largely regarded as being fabricated (*mawḍū'*) as is clear from al-'Ajlūnī's *Kashf al-khafā'.* See al-Qāshānī, *Iṣṭilāhāt,* 139, f. 8.
[122] Süleyman Uludağ, '"Abd al-Razzāq al- Kāşānī," *İslâm Ansiklopedisi*, 25:5. Oliver Leaman and Sajjad Rizvi also seem to be of this opinion as they believe that al-Qāshānī endeavoured to reconcile twelver theology with Ibn 'Arabī's concept of *waḥdat al-wujūd.* (Oliver Leaman and Sajjad Rizvi, "The Developed *Kalām* Tradition," 95.)
[123] Hādīzāda, *Majmu'āt*, 40.
[124] Uludağ, '"Abd al-Razzāq," 25:5.
[125] Hādīzāda, *Majmu'āt*, 115.
[126] Öljeytü's conversion is said to have occurred in late 708/1308, or early 709/1309. See Judith Pfeiffer, "Conversion Versions: Sultan Öljeytü's Conversion to Shi'ism," 41.
[127] Ibid., 47.

convert with their sultan.[128] Then there is also the purported reversion to Sunnism,[129] which is said to have occurred toward the end of his life.[130] More significantly, though, al-Qāshānī remained a favourite of Öljeytü's son and successor, Abū Saʿīd (d. 736/1335), who also did not convert to Shiʿism with his father and reversed many of the royal decrees issued by his late father[131] upon assuming the throne.[132]

It is significant that in his all-encompassing *tafsīr, Ḥaqā'iq al-ta'wīl fī daqā'iq al-tanzīl,* al-Qāshānī cites the opinions of all four Sunni imams, as well as the two principal students of Imam Abū Ḥanīfa (d. 150/767): Imam Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥasan al-Shaybānī (d. 189/805) and Abū Yūsuf (d. 182/798), numerous times. He also quotes favourite Sunni authorities such as Saʿīd ibn al-Musayyab (d. 94/713), al-Shaʿbī (d. 109/727), Ibrāhīm al-Nakhaʿī (d. 96/714), Qatāda (d. 118/736), Sufyān al-Thawrī (161/778), Sufyān ibn 'Uyayna (d. 198/814), 'Ikrima (105/724), Abū 'Ubayda ibn al-Jarrāḥ (d. 18/639), 'Urwa ibn al-Zubayr (d. 93/712), among others.[133] This would seem to provide a strong indication that he was Sunni.[134] After having cited these sources, however, he offers his preferred opinion from among them,[135] which would intimate that he was a completely independent evaluator (*mujtahid muṭlaq*). This means he did not follow a school of thought but rather analysed the Qur'an and Ḥadīth and followed that which he thought was most appropriate.[136]

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[128] Ibid., 41.
[129] There is controversy surrounding the authenticity of this conversion, as Pfeiffer points out. (Ibid.)
[130] Ibid., 43.
[131] These included coins to be manufactured in the image of the Twelve Imams and Friday sermons to be delivered in the Shi'ite fashion. See Pfeiffer, "Conversion Versions," 47.
[132] Ibid.
[133] Ergül, "Kāşānī," 45.
[134] It is also worth mentioning that the area of modern-day Iran, during this period, was mainly Sunni. See Pfeiffer, "Conversions Versions," 47.
[135] Ibid.
[136] For more details on what constitutes a *mujtahid* and the different classes of *mujtahids,* see Ibn 'Ābidīn al-Shāmī, *'Uqūd rasm al-muftī.*

Details on al-Qāshānī's allegiance to a particular Sufi order are equally scant. It is known that his most influential *shaykh,* al-Naṭanzī, was a prominent member of the Suhrawardiyya, however, we do not know if al-Qāshānī followed him. There is even the insinuation by 'Abd al-Raḥīm al-Tabrīzī (d. 1170/1757), in his commentary of the *Iṣṭilāḥāt,* that he was Shādhilī.[137] Nor can we deduce anything conclusive from the Sufi authorities he cites in his works, which range from Ja'far al-Ṣādiq (d. 148/765) and al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī to al-Junayd and al-Bisṭāmī, and from Fuḍayl ibn 'Iyāḍ (d. 187/803) to al-Ḥallāj (d. 309/922).[138] What we do know is that he was a defender of Ibn 'Arabī's thought, and most particularly, of the concept of "oneness of being" (*waḥdat al-wujūd*).[139] This we know from his well-documented correspondence with 'Alā' al-Dawla al-Simnānī (d. 736/1336).[140] The correspondence between these Sufis also imparts, crucially, that Ibn 'Arabī's worldview was not always readily accepted, even in Sufi circles, and it was al-Qāshānī who assumed the pedestal of his metaphysical protector.[141] Moreover, we know al-Qāshānī taught the *Fuṣūṣ*, as al-Qayṣarī explicitly states he took classes on it from him.[142]

Works

Al-Qāshānī was a prolific writer and penned many works during his life. The following is a list of his most well-known works in Arabic and Persian.

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[137] 'Abd al-Raḥīm al-Tabrīzī, "Ḥāshiya 'alā iṣṭilāḥāt al-ṣūfiyya li'l-Qāshānī, n.d.," 5-6.
[138] Ergül, "Kāşānī," 52.
[139] It is noteworthy that the term "*waḥdat al-wujūd*" was never coined by Ibn 'Arabī himself. The most probable originator of it seems to be Muḥammad ibn 'Abd al-Ḥaqq ibn Sab'īn, according to Chittick who writes, "Among the authors who may have used the term *waḥdat al-wujūd* in a technical sense are such disciples of Ibn al-'Arabī as Ibn Sawdakīn (d. 646/1248) and al-Tilimsānī. However, the most likely source of the term is Qūnawī's contemporary Ibn Sab'īn (d. 669/1270?)." See Chittick, *In Search of the Lost Heart: Explorations in Islamic Thought,* 81.
[140] Nūr al-Dīn'Abd al-Raḥmān al-Jāmī provides a detailed account of this correspondence. See Nūr al-Dīn 'Abd al-Raḥmān al-Jāmī, *Nafaḥāt al-Uns min Ḥaḍarāt al-Quds*, 306-312.
[141] Uludağ, "'Abd al-Razzāq al- Kāşānī," 5; Lory, *Les commentaires,* 20; James Morris, "*Ibn Arabī and His Interpreters*," part II-B, 7.
[142] Abdurrahim Alkiş, "Aburrezāk Kāşānī ve 'Şehru Fusūs'l-hikem' Adli Eserinin Tahkīk ve Tahlīli," 71.

Arabic

1. *Al-Iṣṭilāḥāt al-ṣūfiyya*
2. *Ḥaqā'iq al-ta'wīl fī daqā'iq al-tanzīl*
3. *Tā'wīlāt al-Qur'ān*
4. *Al-Tabṣira fī bayān iṣṭlāḥāt al-ṣūfiyya*
5. *Tuḥfat al-ikhwān fī khaṣā'iṣ al-fityān*
6. *Taḥqīq fī ma'nā al-alif wa'l-lām*
7. *Tadhkirat al-fawā'id*
8. *Tafsīr āyat al-kursī*
9. *Tafsīr sūrat al-jumu'a*
10. *Ḥilyat al-abdāl*
11. *Khulāṣat al-tadbīr*
12. *Al-Durra al-farīda*
13. *Al-Risāla al-asmā'iyya*
14. *Risāla fī ta'wīl al-basmala*
15. *Risāla fī 'ilm al-akhlāq*
16. *Risāla 'irfāniyya*
17. *Risāla fī bidāyat khalq al-insān*
18. *Rashḥ al-zulāl fī sharḥ al-alfāẓ al-mutadāwila bayn arbāb al-adhwāq wa'l-aḥwāl*
19. *Al-Sirāj al-wahhāj*
20. *Al-Sunna al-sarmadiyya wa ta'yīn miqdār ayyām al-rubūbiyya*
21. *Al-Sawāniḥ al-ghaybiyya wa'l-mawāhib al-'ayniyya*
22. *Sharḥ Fusūṣ al-ḥikam*
23. *Sharḥ Qaṣīda Ibn Fāriḍ*

24. *Sharḥ Manāzil al-Sā'irīn*

25. *Sharḥ Mawāqi' al-nujūm*

26. *Al-Fawā'id*

27. *Fī taḥqīq ḥaqīqat al-dhāt al-aḥadiyya*

28. *Al-Qaḍā' wa'l-qadar*

29. *Kashf al-wujūh al-ghurr li-ma'ānī naẓm al-durr*

30. *Al-Kumayliyya*

31. *Laṭā'if al-a'lām fī ishārāt ahl al-ilhām*

32. *Al-Mabda' wa'l-ma'ād*

33. *Al-Ma'ādiyya*

34. *Nuṣūṣ*

Persian

1. *A'īn-i rahravān*

2. *Iṣṭilāḥāt-i ṣūfiyān*

3. *Pāsokh bih pursushī darbār-i yakī āz buzurghān*

4. *Tuḥfat-i ikhvān*

5. *Tashrīqāt*

6. *Ta'līqa bih Sharḥ-i Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam*

7. *Futuvvat nāmah*

8. *Fu'ād-i Fārisī*

9. *Mabda' va ma'ād*

10. *Nāmah bih 'Alā' al-Dawla Simnānī*[143]

Influences

[143] Hādīzāda, *Majmu'āt*, 129-30.

The following is a list of discernible influences and explicit citations in the major works of al-Qāshānī.

1. *Laṭā'if al-a'lām*

   Influences: *Al-Ishārāt wa'l-tanbīhāt* (Ibn Sīnā); *Khal' al-na'layn* (Abu'l-Qāsim Aḥmad ibn Qissī al-Andalūsī, d. 545/1150?); *Sharḥ Khal' al-na'layn* (Ibn 'Arabī); *Al-'Abādila* (Ibn 'Arabī); *'Awārif al-ma'ārif* (Shihāb al-Dīn al-Suhrawardī); *Al-Futūḥāt al-makkiyya* (Ibn 'Arabī); *Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam* (Ibn 'Arabī); *Qūt al-qulūb* (Abū Ṭālib al-Makkī, d. 386/996); *Kitāb al-bā'* (Ibn 'Arabī); *Kitāb al-baḥth wa'l-taḥqīq 'an al-sirr al-muwaqqar fī ṣadr Abū Bakr al-Ṣiddīq* (Ibn 'Arabī); *Kitāb al-bayāḍ wa'l-sawād* (Ibn 'Arabī); *Kitāb al-jalāl wa'l-jamāl* (Ibn 'Arabī); *Kitāb al-'ilm al-ladunnī* (Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī); *Kitāb al-mubashsharāt* (Ibn 'Arabī); *Kitāb al-malābis* (Ibn 'Arabī); *Mishkāt al-anwār* (Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī); *Al-Malāmatiyya wa'l-ṣūfiyya* (Abū 'Abd al-Raḥmān al-Sulamī, d. 412/1021); *Al-Manāzil al-insāniyya* (Ibn 'Arabī); *Manāzil al-sā'irīn* (Abū Ismā'īl al-Anṣārī, d. 481/ 1089); *Mawāqi' al-nujūm wa maṭāli' ahillat al-asrār wa'l-'ulūm* (Ibn 'Arabī); *Al-Mawāqif al-Niffariyya* (Muḥammad ibn 'Abd al-Jabbār al-Niffarī); *Nuskhat al-Ḥaqq* (Ibn 'Arabī); *Naẓm al-sulūk* (Ibn al-Fāriḍ, d. 632/1235); *Naqsh al-Fuṣūṣ* (Ibn 'Arabī); *Al-Nikāḥ al-sārī fī jamī' al-dharārī* (Ibn 'Arabī).

2. *Al-Iṣṭilāḥāt al-ṣufiyya*

   Influences: *Al-Futūḥāt al-makkiyya* (Ibn 'Arabī); *Qūt al-qulūb* (Abū Ṭālib al-Makkī); *Nuskhat al-Ḥaqq* (Ibn 'Arabī).

3. *Sharḥ Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam*

Influences: *Sharḥ Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam* (Mu'ayyid al-Dīn al-Jandī, d. 700/1300?)[144]

The foregoing clearly demonstrates how profoundly the works of Ibn 'Arabī impacted al-Qāshānī. Indeed, of the 29 influences listed, 17 (almost 60%) are works of the Andalusian. Moreover, such a crude analysis takes no account of the number of citations, which, if examined, would reveal an ever greater dependence on Ibn 'Arabī as many of the works here mentioned are completely bestrewn with his quotations.

Death

The date of al-Qāshānī's death, in line with almost all other concrete details of his life, is unknown. There are six opinions as to what the possible date could be: 720 AH/ 1320 CE?, 727 AH/ 1327 CE?, 730 AH/ 1330 CE?, 735 AH/ 1335 CE?, 736 AH/ 1336 CE? or, rather outrageously, 887 AH/ 1482 CE.[145] The first three dates we may dismiss as erroneous since there are some manuscripts, written in al-Qāshānī's own hand, which have the date of completion as being 735/1335?.[146] The final date (887 AH/1482 CE?), is a flagrant mistake by Hājī Khalīfa and requires no refutation.[147] This leaves us with two possible candidates: 735 AH/ 1335 CE? and 736 AH/ 1336 CE?. Of the two, I believe the latter is the most likely as Dr. 'Abd al-Khāliq Maḥmūd has researched the matter thoroughly and proposed that the exact date of al-Qāshānī's death was 3rd Muḥarram, 736 (23rd August 1335).[148]

Al-Qāshānī, Terminology and Ibn 'Arabī

[144] Ibid., 121-23.
[145] Alkiş, "Aburrezāk Kāşānī," 77; Hādīzāda, *Majmu'āt*, 125-26.
[146] 'Alī al-Qāsimī, "'Abd al-Razzāq al-Kāshānī," 718.
[147] Hādīzāda, *Majmu'āt*, 126.
[148] Al-Qāshānī, *Rashḥ al-Zulāl*, 13.

Al-Qāshānī serves as a candidate of particular importance for a study focussing on terminology, not only because of his eminence in this field, but also as *Fuṣūs al-ḥikam*, Ibn 'Arabī's terse summation of his entire thought, has long been studied through the lens of al-Qāshānī's commentary.[149] Al-Qāshānī's formalisation of Ibn 'Arabī's formidably erudite metaphysics, as expressed in the *Fuṣūṣ*,[150] ensures his status as commentator *par excellence*.[151]

1.4. Why *Huwiyya*?

The selection of the term that is at the centre of this thesis must, of necessity, be somewhat arbitrary, as all terms used by Ibn 'Arabī and al-Qāshānī are significant and betray their worldview to some extent. However, *huwiyya* plays a central role in these Sufis' semantic *Weltanschauung* and often incorporates other terms within it (such as *anāniyya* , whose existence is implied by *huwiyya* as the latter is a third person pronoun-derived abstract noun and the former, a first person pronoun-derived one). Fundamentally, though, it is because *huwiyya* plays a key role in the two mystics' account of God and is the basis and goal of everything in their outlooks that it has been selected, for ultimately, every facet of Ibn 'Arabī (and al-Qāshānī's) worldview returns to God.[152]

But it is not just for God as a general concept that *huwiyya* functions. Being derived from the "pronoun of absence"[153] (*huwa*), it represents the non-manifest aspect of God.[154] This conforms to both mystics' definition of the term.[155] However,

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[149] Al-Qāshānī, *Sharḥ 'Abd al-Razzāq al-Qāshānī 'alā Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam.*
[150] Michael Sells examines Ibn 'Arabī's highly sophisticated and polyvalent literary style in the *Fuṣūṣ*—a work he describes as one of "bewildering complexity." Sells, "Ibn 'Arabī's Polished Mirror," 122.
[151] *Encyclopedia of Arabic Literature*, 1998 ed., 19, s.v. "'Abd al-Razzāq al-Qāshānī."
[152] Nettler, *Sufi Metaphysics,* 7.
[153] This, according to William Chittick, is a third-person pronoun. See Chittick, *The Self-Disclosure of God*, 211.
[154] Chittick, *The Sufi Path of Knowledge*, 394, n. 15.

it is only Ibn ʻArabī who most often uses the term to denote God's absolute unknowability—a state in which He is truly non-manifest. Al-Qāshānī, on the other hand, though in agreement with the Andalusian in his definition of the term, deploys it principally to connote the second emanatory stage in which there is a prefiguring of creation within the divine consciousness. So it transpires that though both believe *huwiyya* is the non-manifest aspect of God, Ibn ʻArabī uses it to accentuate God's absolute incomprehensibility and remoteness from His creation whereas his disciple employs it to underscore the fundamental way in which He is connected to it.

1.5. Style and Approach of Ibn ʻArabī and al-Qāshānī

Although the denotation of *huwiyya* constitutes the major difference between al-Qāshānī and Ibn ʻArabī's treatment of *huwiyya*, it is not the only significant difference. There is also a divergence in overall style and approach which is equally important, a divergence that derives from differing objectives and readership. For though it is patently clear that technical terminology plays a central role in the writings of both Ibn ʻArabī and al-Qāshānī, with Annemarie Schimmel going as far as to allege that Ibn ʻArabī's primary influence on Sufis who came after him was that of a lexical systemizer,[156] and al-Qāshānī widely regarded as Ibn ʻArabī's terminological formaliser.[157] Nevertheless, there is a difference between the two since Ibn ʻArabī is not as fastidious about explaining his terms as his disciple.

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[155] See below for Ibn ʻArabī and al-Qāshānī's definitions of *huwiyya*.
[156] Annemarie Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam*, 273. Julian Baldick, in apparent agreement with this assessment, calls Ibn ʻArabī "Sufism's greatest systematizer." Baldick, *Mystical Islam*, 82. I must remark that I find this categorisation to be a little unfair, not least because it constrains Ibn ʻArabī's pervasive influence to the sphere of philology. However, one can see how Schimmel and others may argue such a case given the importance of terms in Ibn ʻArabī's metaphysics.
[157] *Encyclopedia of Arabic Literature*, 1998 ed., 19, s.v. "ʻAbd al-Razzāq al-Qāshānī."

Indeed, Muḥammad ibn ʻĀbidīn al-Shāmī (d. 1252/1836), in *Radd al-muḥtār,* writes that one of the chief reasons for Ibn ʻArabī's being misunderstood is a lack of familiarity with his technical nomenclature.[158] He comments,

> The Sufis work within a technical framework and mean by their terms things which are not known to the jurists (*fuqahāʾ*), so whoever attributes to them meanings which are known [among jurists] will consider them to be unbelievers.[159]

But if he is not scrupulous about explaining his terms, it is only because it is not his purpose. This is precisely the reason al-Qāshānī undertakes the elucidative endeavours he does: to clarify these terms for those not well-versed in them and in order to mollify jurists who would seek to condemn Ibn ʻArabī and his ideas, or as Ronald Nettler puts it, "Al-Qashānī employs a literary method of stylization and formalization of Ibn ʻArabī's technical terms and concepts."[160] His appeasement, nevertheless, seems to be as much about style as it is about content.[161]

An inquiry into the approach and composition of al-Qāshānī's *tafsīr* and lexicons will reveal that his pacification of the orthodoxy is not limited to legitimisation with Qur'an and Ḥadīth. Rather, it is supplemented by placation through use of familiar language and manner, chief among which is his "guide-book" style approach for autodidacts who wanted to learn about Ibn ʻArabī's thought, as

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[158] Shāh Walī Allāh (d. 1176/1762) agrees that Ibn ʻArabī's lack of clarification of some terms has led to confusion about the concept of oneness of being (*waḥdat al-wujūd*). See Abdul Haq Ansari, "Shah Wali Allah Attempts to Revise '*Waḥdat al-wujūd*,'" 205.

[159] Muḥammad ibn ʻĀbidīn al-Shāmī, *Radd al-muḥtār* 6: 379. This is a thinly veiled attack on Ibn Taymiyya (d. 728/1328) who famously classified Ibn ʻArabī as an unbeliever. (See Alexander Knysh, *Ibn 'Arabī in the Later Islamic Tradition*.) Ibn ʻĀbidīn cites Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūṭī's (d. 911/1505) *Tanbīh al-ghabī bi-tabri'at Ibn 'Arabī* in which is stated that, though Ibn ʻArabī was a saint, his works should not be read. (See Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūṭī, *Tanbīh al-ghabī*, 4.) Al-Dhahabī, too, mentions that this was al-Suyūṭī's position. (Al-Dhahabī, *Al-Tafsīr*, 2: 302.)

[160] *Encyclopedia of Arabic Literature*, 1998 ed., 19, s.v. "'Abd al-Razzāq al-Qāshānī."

[161] Al-Qashānī seems to have been influenced much by Sadr al-Dīn al-Qūnawī (d. 673/1274) in this regard, for al-Qūnawī is "the model of logical consistency and point-by-point reasoning," something that al-Qāshānī's works too reflect. Chittick, "The Perfect Man as the Prototype of the Self in the Sufism of Jāmī," 141. See also Chittick, *The Sufi Path of Knowledge*, xviii. For a detailed account of al-Qūnawī's life and thought, see Richard Todd, *The Sufi Doctrine of Man*.

these works were excluded from law colleges and *madrasas*.[162] The format of al-Qāshānī's works also seem singularly tailored for use in public debates that were enduringly popular at the royal Mongol court, and which were known to be powerful sources of promulgation of one's ideas and thought, if the correct patronage was secured.[163]

This, then, represents one of the fundamental differences between the authors: it is a difference in the style and language due to a variance of purpose. Whereas Ibn 'Arabī is vibrant and assimilates in his works all the methods and modes of articulation at his disposal, al-Qāshānī is comparatively dull, reserved and conservative in both his expression and approach. His works look and feel much more like scholarly studies of Sufism or step-by-step manuals for Sufi neophytes on the path, and much less like extemporaneous enunciations of the experiential. This is because ultimately, the texts are what readers can use to access, through intellect, something of the experiential; in as far as it is possible to go through language.

Al-Qāshānī intentionally structures his works, not only to educate and instruct Sufi neophytes in Ibn 'Arabī's thought by guiding them through the stages of spiritual development until they reach the heights of the people of tasting (*ahl al-dhawq*), who are the Andalusian's sole audience, but also to mollify Ibn 'Arabī's detractors who do not comprehend what he means and level charges of heresy against him as a result. In order to achieve these goals, al-Qāshānī is far more rigid and consistent in his use of terms and their denotations. He does not share his master's penchant for loose characterisations and ambiguous meanings as this detracts from his purpose of clarity and conciliation. However, we would be unjust if

[162] Makdisi, *The Rise of Humanism*, 2.
[163] Colin Turner, *Islam Without Allah?*, 51; Louise Marlow, *Hierachy and Egalitarianism in Islamic Thought*, 172.

we limited al-Qāshānī's contribution to mere education and pacification, depriving him, in the process, of all creativity and originality.

Al-Qāshānī, for all his propitiative and instructive labours, is still a Sufi adept of remarkable standing, and what he achieves in his lexicons and the *Ta'wīlāt,* though informed by these motives, is no less remarkable. In his interpretation, a nuanced difference here and a slight change there have the cumulative effect of forging a different worldview from the one his master conceived.[164] Most importantly, he achieves this without compromising or diverging significantly from the conceptual outlook of his predecessor. It is still Ibn 'Arabī's *Weltanschauung*, but facets of it (such as God's connectedness to His creation and the didactive imperative) have been emphasised more than others. In doing this, if al-Qāshānī quietly breaks ranks with Ibn 'Arabī when it comes to diction, and, to a lesser extent, content and ideas, he is fiercely faithful to him in terms of the Qur'an being central to his outlook.

1.6. Ibn 'Arabī's Reliance on the Qur'an

1.6.1. *Fuṣūṣ al-Ḥikam*

This study scrutinises the Sufi thought of al-Qāshānī through his analysis of the Qur'an in relation to Ibn 'Arabī's thought in the *Fuṣūṣ* and *Futūḥāt.* The *Fuṣūṣ* is not a "*tafsīr*" in its formal sense.[165] Nevertheless, it is still Ibn 'Arabī's understanding of

[164] It may be argued that al-Qāshānī cannot simultaneously carve out a new worldview and remain faithful to that of Ibn 'Arabī, especially since, it is Ibn 'Arabī's worldview that is the basis of his own. This is true to an extent, and depends on what one means by the term, "worldview". If it denotes an entirely new and original outlook, then, no, al-Qāshānī does not achieve (or indeed aspire to achieve) this. However, if it is used to mean a complete outlook that is substantively different from other such worldviews, then, yes, al-Qāshānī does manage this, and it is in this sense that the term is employed here.

[165] It must remarked that none of the works here considered (including the *Ta'wīlāt*) conform to the criteria delineated by Norman Calder in his seminal work on this genre. (See Calder, "Tafsīr from Ṭabarī to Ibn Kathīr: Problems in the Description of the Genre.") However, I am assuming a much looser definition of *tafsīr* as outlined above. It is worthy of note that, according to Maḥmūd Ghurāb,

certain verses of the Qur'an,[166] which a close textual examination reveals.[167] We take Ibn 'Arabī's very first passage as a case in point when he introduces the reason for the creation of Ādam,

> Verily, *al-Ḥaqq*, be He praised, created the entire cosmos in an existence that was an indistinct, unprepared thing, without a spirit, so it was like an unpolished mirror.[168] And it is the nature of divine decree that it does not prepare a locus except so that it may receive a divine spirit, which is expressed as "breathing in it." So it is naught save the attainment of preparedness of this undifferentiated form for the acceptance of the outpouring: manifest and perpetual (*al-fayḍ: al-mutajallī al-dā'im*), which has always been and shall always be. So nothing is left but the receptacle, and the receptacle cannot be without His holiest outpouring. So the matter is from Him entirely: its beginning and its end, *to Him the matter in its entirety shall be returned,*[169] as it began from Him.[170]

In this section, we note that Ibn 'Arabī's entire metaphysics is borne out: his qualified monism[171] and even his emanationism (though this is merely alluded to by

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Ibn 'Arabī did pen a formal commentary. He claims that it is referred to in the handwritten copies of Ibn 'Arabī's works and covered the first half of the Qur'an. It was incredibly detailed and called *al-Jam' wa'l-tafṣīl*. (Ibn 'Arabī, *Raḥma min al-Raḥmān*, iii.)

[166] Nettler believes that the *Fuṣūṣ* is nothing but Ibn 'Arabī's interpretation of the Qur'an. He writes, "For him [i.e. Ibn 'Arabī] the metaphysics clearly *is* the meaning of the Qur'an and of some later religious textual traditions." (Nettler, *Sufi Metaphysics,* 14.) However, he maintains that there is an element that is not traditionally Qur'anic, the extra-Qur'anic language is merely a consequence of this. There are therefore two facets that co-exist: a Qur'anic one and an extra-Qur'anic one, but the extra-Qur'anic conceptual outlook still constitutes the meaning of the Qur'an, even if its terminology, ideas and language are not, as it is how Ibn 'Arabī understands the Qur'an.

[167] It is worth mentioning that both of the works of Qur'anic interpretation authored by Ibn 'Arabī analysed here vary starkly in their style and presentation. Abū Zayd comments that "The language of the *Futūḥāt* is distinguished by its simplicity and prolixity, whereas the language of the *Fuṣūṣ al-Ḥikam* is distinguished by how concentrated and condensed it is, which takes it close to the borders of obscurity. (Abū Zayd, *Hākadhā takallama Ibn 'Arabī*, 135.) This is because the *Fuṣūṣ* is a "concentrated précis of the main meanings of the *Futūḥāt* and other books." (Ibid., 136.)

[168] For an analysis of the concept of the mirror in Ibn 'Arabī's metaphysics, see Sells, "Ibn 'Arabī's Polished Mirror."

[169] Qur'an 11:123.

[170] Ibn 'Arabī, *Fuṣūṣ* 1:49.

[171] I use the term "qualified monism" as opposed to "monism" because I believe reducing Ibn Arabī's metaphysics to an unmitigated monism is fundamentally misrepresenting his worldview. For the Andalusian fastidiously underscores the difference between the One who has absolute existence (*wujūd muṭlaq*) and a reflection of that whose existence is contingent (*muqayyad*) on Him. He writes in the bezel of Ādam, "And even if we describe ourselves, in every way (*jamī' wujūh*), as He describes Himself, there is still a difference (*fāriq*) [between us and Him]: it is nothing but our being in need of Him (*iftaqārunā ilayh*) for existence (*wujūd*) and our existence being dependent on Him (*tawaqquf wujūdinā 'alayh*) in order for us to be possible, and His independence (*ghinā*) of the like of which we are in need of Him." (Ibn 'Arabī, *Fuṣūs* 1: 54.) At another juncture, he warns, "Do not fall in the blasphemous error of the sect called *Ḥulūliyya*, who believe that another soul, even another being,

the phrase "*al-mutajallī al-dā'im*"). All of this is linked to one verse of the Qur'an, or even part of a verse: *to Him the matter in its entirety shall be returned,* which serves as the basis of Ibn 'Arabī's entire metaphysical outlook and is one of his favourite Qur'anic citations. Indeed, he mentions it around eight times in the *Fuṣūṣ* and a staggering 68 times in the *Futūḥāt.*[172] The numbers, of course, do not in and of themselves signify Ibn 'Arabī's reliance on the Qur'an. However, we observe in this passage that the verse is integral to Ibn 'Arabī's metaphysics, and not simply a convenient slogan he adopts to feign Qur'an-rootedness. The frequent repetition of the part-verse merely serves to reinforce this assertion. There can be little doubt, then, that Ibn 'Arabī believed himself to be propounding the true meaning of the Qur'an.

We see how Ibn 'Arabī's ontological vision, for him, constitutes the meaning of the Qur'an; it is not simply a means to bolster his viewpoint. Everything Ibn 'Arabī writes about *al-insān al-kāmil,* about absolute existence (*wujūd muṭlaq*) and contingent existence (*wujūd muqayyad*), about divine manifestation (*tajallī*), about preparedness (*isti'dād*) to accept this *tajallī,* about almost everything, is therefore presented by him to be a commentary of this part-verse. This is not to suggest that it is a formal commentary, of course, which is another matter entirely.

Though it is true that this is only how Ibn 'Arabī understands the part-verse but, given that we have only his insistence that everything was imparted to him by mystical unveiling, coupled with a lack of any concrete forerunners whose ideas he

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can be infused into them. Know that He is never in anything, nor is anything in Him." (Ibn 'Arabī, *The One Alone,* trans. Tosun Bayrak al-Jerrahi al-Halveti, 234.)

[172] This may not be as many as it initially appears, given the length of the *Futūḥāt.* However, it does show that this verse is fundamental to Ibn 'Arabī's thought.

may have assimilated,[173] we have recourse only to what he has written so there is an emerging scholarly consensus about the centrality of the Qur'an for Ibn 'Arabī.[174]

Ibn 'Arabī relies heavily on the Qur'an because in his quest to articulate ineffable realities, particularly with regards to the unfathomable divine essence, he often has need to go beyond linguistic boundaries, and this he does with the aid of the Qur'an which is not of human authorship. Josef van Ess articulates this phenonemenon thus:

> If God is the Other *par excellence*, he is beyond our reason just as he is beyond our senses. The world can be analyzed through phenomena, but God is accessible only through revelation.[175]

Thus, his outlook and the Qur'an become a complex lattice which is so tightly interwoven that it is impossible to disengage the Qur'an from his Sufi metaphysics. This is because though his metaphysics is extra-Qur'anic in the sense that it has concepts and ideas, nomenclature and notions that are not ostensibly present in the Qur'an, it is still his comprehension of the Qur'an. Furthermore, this is entwined with a parallel interpretation that is Qur'anic, with seamless cohesion between the two. So he acknowledges the Qur'an bespeaks a reality that cannot be expressed, one which transcends linguistic boundaries. Yet he also makes full use of linguistic tools and is immersed in language; he is a man of language, thus the ineffable, experiential reality and its detailed articulation coexist in him.

It is this very feature of the mystic's works that prompts Abū Zayd to write, "It is difficult, in many cases, for someone to separate the Qur'anic text and the words of Ibn 'Arabī,"[176] especially since, for him, the two are the same, his writings

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[173] Although there are some that are thought to have influenced him, and whose imprints some of Ibn 'Arabī's work bear. (See above).
[174] See, for instance, Maria De Cillis, *Free Will and Predestination in Islamic Thought*, 172.
[175] Van Ess, *The Flowering of Muslim Theology*, 88-89.
[176] Abū Zayd, *Falsafat al-ta'wīl*, 258.

being the only real meaning of the Qur'an—a claim he allows himself due to the certitude of *kashf*-derived knowledge.[177] Indeed, one is struck by the manner in which Ibn 'Arabī often cites a verse without even deeming any commentary necessary, so axiomatic does he believe the explanation to be in the sphere of his mysticism. Abū Zayd, elaborating on this issue, comments,

> It is curious how Ibn 'Arabī strikes a balance between his style of writing and the Qur'an, for the Qur'anic verses may appear explicitly without any connection to monistic thought, even if in their reality and inner meaning there is a connection, such are the works of Ibn 'Arabī.[178]

It is my task to attempt to disengage the Qur'an from Ibn 'Arabī's thought and expound on that which he considers to be evident in order to map the path Ibn 'Arabī traverses from the Qur'anic narrative to the frontiers of his metaphysical thought. In so doing, the way in which Ibn 'Arabī understands the Qur'an, and how it not only informs his worldview, but is the very basis of it, will be laid bare.

1.6.2. *Al-Futūḥāt al-Makkiyya*

The *Futūḥāt*, too, it may be argued, is primarily Ibn 'Arabī's comprehension of selected passages of the Qur'an. The absolutely central position that the Qur'an occupies in the *Futūḥāt* is something which cannot escape the watchful gaze of the discerning reader. Michel Chodkiewicz argues vehemently that Ibn 'Arabī's writings in general, and the *Futūḥāt* in particular, are nothing but commentaries of the Qur'an.[179] This becomes apparent when we approach the work holistically, for even

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[177] This reliance on the Qur'an and Ḥadīth is a trait shared by many of Ibn 'Arabī's followers. 'Abd al-Karīm al-Jīlī, for instance, declares that all knowledge comes from the Qur'an and *sunna*, and if we do not see it, then it is only because our meagre preparedness veils us from this reality. He also remarks that knowledge may be categorised into three types: the first is what he calls "[divine] conversation (*mukālama*)." This is what Ibn 'Arabī calls "spiritual unveiling" (*kashf*), and it is that with which the gnostic is inspired. Next is the type of knowledge that is transmitted from the Prophet which one would only abide by if there are proofs of its authenticity and true meaning. Otherwise, one would neither confirm nor deny them. The final type is that which is transmitted from those who are overtly unreligious—this is to be rejected. (Al-Jīlī, *Al-Insān al-kāmil*, 11-12.)

[178] Abū Zayd, *Falsafat al-ta'wīl*, 258.

[179] Chodkiewicz makes this point throughout his work: *An Ocean without Shore*.

concepts which on first glance appear entirely alien to the content of the Qur'an may easily be understood from Ibn 'Arabī's point of view as being plausible explanations of certain verses upon scrupulous inspection.

We cite, by way of example, the Andalusian's theory of divine emanation and its relationship to the preparedness (*isti'dād*) of things that appear in the phenomenal world. The fundamental dichotomy with which Ibn 'Arabī grapples here is that of the infiniteness of the divine Names and the finiteness of the phenomenal world, when the latter is nothing but an expression of the former. Ibn 'Arabī states that though there is no limit to the divine outpouring which imbues everything with existence in the material realm, only certain things have the capacity to accept it, which is why sensible reality is finite.[180] This means only entitites that have a preparedness that allows them to have phenomenal existence are manifestations of the Names in the sensible world. Those that do not, have a form of existence which is pre-phenomenal, but they too are manifestations of the Names. Thus, the Names that are represented on the sensible plane are only a portion of all the Names.

Ibn 'Arabī confronts the controversy as to why some things are given this *isti'dād* that allows them to be while others are not in the following statement,

> Preparednesses of the receptacles are among the 'keys of the unseen.' This is because there is naught there save absolute and all-encompassing giving (*wahab muṭlaq 'āmm*), and outpouring of bounteousness (*fayḍ jūd*); there is nothing there, in the matter itself, which is unseen but there are no witnesses. Rather, it is information (*ma'lūmāt*) which has no limit. From this [information], there are those who have existence and those who do not, those who have causality and those who do not, those who have the aptitude to accept existence and those who do not. ... Preparedness is not something

[180] This concept was a favourite of both mystics and poets as Chittick observes when he cites two of the most prominent proponents of each class. He writes, "As the famous ninth-century Sufi Junayd put it, "The water takes on the color of the cup." Rūmī asks, "If you pour the ocean into a jug, how much will it hold?" Chittick, *Imaginal Worlds*, 162-3.

> that is earned. Rather, it is a divine benefaction, which is why no one knows it but God.[181]

Ibn ‘Arabī remarks that *isti‘dād* is something which is simply bestowed by God and is a phenomenon about which man has no knolwedge. We also learn from this passage that divine knowledge is like DNA which contains the information for existence, and is continually pouring forth from the divine, but only some receptacles have the capacity to accept it.

What is interesting is Ibn ‘Arabī offers the foregoing as an extended commentary of the verses, *He sends it down in due measure as He wills*[182] and *And We do not send it down save in an appointed measure,*[183] both of which refer to the provision of sustenance. Ibn ‘Arabī takes this apparent meaning of both verses and stretches it to include existence, which is also bestowed according to divine benevolence and in its wisdom. Nor does it appear he strays too far from the manifest meaning as the provision of sustenance and bequeathal of existence are not entirely dissociated: the former simply continues what the latter begins. This also shows that whenever verses of sustenance are mentioned, Ibn ‘Arabī immediately turns his attention to the provision of *isti‘dād* or knowledge, in other words, to “spiritual sustenance,” which, in his opinion, is far closer to the true meaning of such verses.[184]

What we also observe here is the resolution of a contradiction created by Ibn ‘Arabī’s understanding of the various verses of the Qur’an: on the one hand, he asserts that God is “overflowing with bounteousness,” (*fayyāḍ bi’l-jūd*),[185] which he

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[181] Ibn ‘Arabī, *Futūḥāt* 6:359.
[182] Qur’an 42:27.
[183] Ibid., 15:21.
[184] See Ibn ‘Arabī’s commentary of verses 4:133 and 23:18 in Ibn ‘Arabī, *Futūḥāt*, 6:107.
[185] Izutsu, *Sufism,* 116.

derives from such verses as, "*And My mercy envelops all things,*"[186] and about which he comments, "The [Divine] mercy pervades all existent things."[187] We then have the manner in which he identifies this mercy: with the bestowal of phenomenal existence.[188] This is based on verses like, *He gave everything its form (khalq).*[189] Ibn ʻArabī understands this verse to mean God imbued everything with sensible existence.[190]

Together, these two verses, for him, mean God is All-Merciful, which is why He gives existence to everything, and there is no limit to this mercy. On the other hand, however, there are verses (like the ones above) which appear to restrict God's mercy.[191] Ibn ʻArabī thus attempts to reconcile this paradox by stating that though the divine mercy is limitless, the preparedness (also bestowed by God) curtails it so that only certain entities make the leap from pre-phenomenality to sensible reality. This means God is simultaneously overflowing with mercy and restricting it to those whom He has given the preparedness to accept it. The *Futūḥāt*, being a veritable encyclopaedia of Ibn ʻArabī's ideas, allows the reader to delve much deeper than the *Fuṣūṣ* into the thoughts of its author, and it is this that inspired ʻAbd al-Karīm al-Jīlī (d. 812/1408?) to write that it is,

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[186] Qur'an 7:156.
[187] Ibn ʻArabī, *Futūḥāt* 2:239.
[188] For an insightful piece on how Ibn ʻArabī subverts the conventional notion of mercy and perpetuates an entirely new type of mercy couched in traditional nomenclature, see Nettler, "Ibn ʻArabī's Notion of Allah's Mercy." See also Gustav Stern, *Meaning and Change of Meaning*, 163, where Stern defines a change of meaning as: "the habitual modification … of the traditional semantic range of the word (1) to denote one of more referents which it has not previously denoted, or (2) to express a novel manner of apprehending one or more of its referents." It seems that Ibn ʻArabī's change in the meaning of "mercy" (*raḥma*) satisfies both of Stern's criteria.
[189] Qur'an 20:50.
[190] Ibn ʻArabī, *Futūḥāt* 2:239.
[191] On the two types of God's mercy (or love), see also Ibn ʻArabī's *Al-Ḥubb wa'l-maḥabba al-ilāhiyya* and *raḥma min al-Raḥmān,* 5-6.

> The greatest book written in this field in terms of benefit, with the most number of arcane and abstruse terms, and it is the loftiest in extensiveness and comprehensiveness. He [Ibn ʻArabī] spoke in it in many tongues.[192]

The above examples illustrate how central the Qur'an is to the thought of Ibn ʻArabī and how the tapestry of Ibn ʻArabī's thoughts are woven into the Qur'anic text. Abū Zayd comments on this very thing when he writes,

> The truth is that scarcely a page from the works of Ibn ʻArabī are free from presenting a verse, or a collection of verses, from the Qur'an in order to corroborate, explain or resolve [an issue].[193]

Al-Qāshānī is in full accord with his master when it comes to basing his mystical insights on the Qur'an and canonical texts of Ḥadīth. This is as apparent in his lexicons as it is in his *Ta'wīlāt*.

1.7. Al-Qāshānī's Reliance on the Qur'an

1.7.1. The Lexicons

Al-Qāshānī has written three increasingly complex and detailed Sufi dictionaries and is justly hailed as a major formaliser of Sufi terminology. However, his purpose in composing these lexicons is to prepare and train defenders of Ibn ʻArabī's brand of Sufism specifically. His works are far more term-centred than those of his predecessor and he is patently more self-conscious of nomenclature. If this makes him a good commentator of Ibn ʻArabī, it makes him an even better educator and promulgator of his teachings.

1.7.1.1. *Iṣṭilāḥāt al-Ṣūfiyya*

[192] Al-Jīlī, *Sharḥ mushkilāt al-futūḥāt,* 60. Abū Zayd concurs with this assessment, remarking, "The truth is that the *Futūḥāt* … contains almost every branch of Islamic culture [and] explains it in many ambiguous ways, [something] we perceive in the books of Ibn ʻArabī." (Abū Zayd, *Hākadhā takallama Ibn ʻArabī*, 136.) ʻAfīfī comments that the *Futūḥāt* is the key to understanding the *Fuṣūṣ* as there is more candour than periphrasis in it, and concepts are actually explained in depth. (Ibid.)
[193] Abū Zayd, *Falsafat al-ta'wīl*, 257.

The most concise of his dictionaries is the *Iṣṭilāḥāt al-ṣūfiyya.* He mentions his major impetus for writing this work in his introduction of it, wherein he states:

> When I finished my rough draft (*taswīd*) of a commentary of *Manāzil al-sā'irīn* and what was said in it,[194] and [what was said in my] commentary of *Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam* and *Ta'wīlāt al-Qur'ān,* based on Sufi technical terms (*al-iṣṭilāḥāt al-ṣūfiyya*], the scholars of transmitted [i.e. Qur'an and Ḥadīth] and intellectual knowledge (*ahl al-'ulūm al-manqūla wa'l-ma'qūla*) did not know them [i.e. the terms], nor were they well-known (*tashtahir*) among them.[195] So they asked me to explicate them for them. … I thus busied myself (*taṣaddaytu*) in complying with their request.[196]

Here the *Iṣṭilāḥāt* is referred to by its author as a supplement to the *Ta'wīlāt* (as well as *Manāzil* and *Sharḥ fuṣūṣ*). Hence, its importance for our purpose in understanding his terminology in the context of the *Ta'wīlāt* can hardly be overstated. In this work, al-Qāshānī expounds a little on Ibn 'Arabī's definitions (if one is mentioned by Ibn 'Arabī in his *Iṣṭilāḥāt*),[197] followed by verses from the Qur'an, Ḥadīths, or snippets of Arabic poetry to bolster his definition.[198]

That al-Qāshānī understands the terms in the Qur'anic perspective and his attention never veers too far from this, is amply exhibited by his persistent recourse to the Qur'an in his explanations.[199] It is true, of course, that abundant scriptural

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[194] Al-Qāshānī's commentary of this work also displays his propensity to defend Sufi concepts and ideas against attacks by exoteric scholars. In this specific case, al-Qāshānī defends 'Abd Allāh ibn Muḥammad al-Harawī al-Anṣārī's notion of oneness of God (*tawḥīd*) against a contemporary, Ibn Taymiyya, who berates it in his work on this topic. (See Ibn Taymiyya, *Kitāb al-tawḥīd*, 102.)

[195] This binary distinction between the so-called intellectual (*ma'qūla*) and transmitted (*manqūla*) sciences is most famously documented by Abū Zayd ibn Khaldūn (d. 808/1406) in his renowned *Muqaddima,* where he writes, "Know that the sciences ('*ulūm*) which human beings study, and which are circulated in cities by learning or teaching, are of two types: a kind which is innate (*ṭabī'ī*) to man, to which he is guided by his thought; and a transmitted (*naqlī*) type, which he takes from him who compiles it. The first are the rationalistic [and] philosophical sciences, which it is possible for man to be acquainted with by his innate reason …. The second are transmitted, compiled sciences, which are all dependent on the reports of the Religious Establisher (*al-Wāḍi' al-shar'ī*)." (See Ibn Khaldūn, *Muqaddima*, 435.)

[196] Al-Qāshānī, *Iṣṭilāḥāt al-ṣūfiyya,* 21.

[197] Ibn 'Arabī, *Rasā'il Ibn 'Arabī.*

[198] 'Alī al-Qāsimī, "'Abd al-Razzāq al-Kāshānī," 728.

[199] Seyyed Hossein Nasr notes that "The very reality of the Qur'an, and the revelation which made it accessible to a human community, had to be central to the concerns of anyone who sought to philosophize in the Islamic world and led to a type of philosophy in which a revealed book is accepted as the supreme source of knowledge not only of religious law but of the very nature of existence and beyond existence of the very source of existence." (Seyyed Hossein Nasr, "The Qur'an and Ḥadīth as

quotations are a matter of common literary etiquette for many Muslim (and indeed Christian and Jewish) authors. However, it is not just the quantity of the citations, but the manner in which al-Qāshānī (and Ibn ʻArabī) use them that displays their Qur'an-rootedness. For both these mystics use the Qur'an as the basis of their mystical outlook and their citations are not merely incidental or enumerative. If this is clear in the works of Ibn ʻArabī, the distinction is even more lucid in those of al-Qāshānī, especially his *Ta'wīlāt* in which al-Qāshānī's mystical outlook is subordinated to the scriptural text. Indeed, the very fact that al-Qāshānī, a resolute adherent and defender of his Sufi master, wrote a mystical commentary of the Qur'an itself is testament to the pervasive influence of the Qur'an in Ibn ʻArabī's works.

A suitable example of al-Qāshānī's significant reliance on the Qur'an in his *Iṣṭilāḥāt* is the entry on "the Greatest Name" (*al-ism al-aʻẓam*), about which he writes,

> According to us, it is the name of the Divine Essence in terms of what it simply is, that is, the Absolute (*al-Muṭlaqa*), the True (*al-Ṣādiqa*), whether it occurs with all of them [i.e. the Names], like when He, be He Exalted, says, *To God belong all the Beautiful Names*,[200] or some of them, like when He, be He Exalted, says, *And God is the Forgiving, the Merciful*,[201] or with none of them, like when He, be He Exalted, says, *Say! He is God, the One*.[202]

Here al-Qāshānī uses verses of the Qur'an to corroborate each assertion he makes; indeed, it is the basis of each assertion. Al-Qāshānī has compiled the first part of the work alphabetically and the second part according to subject (*mawḍūʻī*), as stated in his preface.[203]

1.7.1.2. *Rashḥ al-Zulāl*

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a Source of Inspiration of Islamic Philosophy," 28.) We see, in the commentary of al-Qāshānī, proof of this assertion.

[200] Qur'an 7:180.

[201] Ibid. 4:96.

[202] Ibid. 112:1; al-Qāshānī, *Iṣṭilāḥāt,* 30.

[203] Ibid., 21.

The second dictionary, and the one intermediate in length, is *Rashḥ al-zulāl fī sharḥ al-alfāẓ al-mutadāwila bayna arbāb al-adhwāq wa'l-aḥwāl.* This work does not differ from its forerunner in approach, but it is "more comprehensive and has some definitions which the other does not. The converse, however, is also true. So it turns out that both books have one purpose, with one completing the other and neither being independent (*yastaghnī*) of the other."[204] Al-Qāshānī's reason for compiling this second lexicon may be gleaned from the following statement found in his prologue: "I have responded to you, O persistent petitioner (*al-sā'il al-laḥūḥ*)! And have presented you, in keeping with your particular nature (*takhṣīṣ*), this privileged [knowledge] (*masmūḥ*)."[205] It emerges from this that there was a need (either expressed by people or in al-Qāshānī's own judgement) for more terms to be explained and for more detail to be given on some terms that were already explained, which is why he wrote this book.[206]

The scope of *Rashḥ al-zulāl* is larger than that of its precursor. Whereas the *Iṣṭilāḥāt* is an addendum to three specific works, this book is meant to be used in conjunction with all of Ibn 'Arabī's writings. His *modus operandi* in this work is to "mention a line or two from what Ibn 'Arabī says at the beginning of the definition [and] then [to] complete the rest himself until it reaches a page or two or more!"[207] Significantly, he does not structure *Rashḥ* in the same way as the *Iṣṭilāḥāt,* rather it is configured conceptually (*tartīb mafhūmī*), such that all correlated terms are listed together.[208] In this work, too, his chief emphasis is on the Qur'an, as attested by it forming the basis of his definitions and the fact that he turns to verses of the Qur'an

[204] 'Alī al-Qāsimī, "'Abd al-Razzāq al-Kāshānī," 730.
[205] Al-Qāshānī, *Rashḥ al-zulāl,* 34.
[206] I have been unable to identify whether the "persistent petitioner" is one of al-Qāshānī's students or companions, or whether he is simply employing a standard topos.
[207] 'Alī al-Qāsimī, "'Abd al-Razzāq al-Kāshānī," 731.
[208] Ibid., 730.

almost twice as many times as the Ḥadīth, and many times more than poetry.[209] The reason for this is that the Qur'an is viewed by al-Qāshānī as correspondence *par excellence* between God and His most perfect creation. He writes under the entry of "the correspondence" (*al-musāmara*):

> [It is] *al-Ḥaqq*[210] speaking with the gnostics from the realm of secrets and concealment (*'ālam al-asrār wa'l-ghuyūb*). The Exalted said, *The Trustworthy Spirit* (*al-Rūḥ al-amīn*) *has brought it down upon your heart*,[211] for it is, in reality, *al-Ḥaqq* speaking to you behind the veil of the Trustworthy Spirit, the cosmos and whatever is in it.[212]

One observes that for al-Qāshānī (as for many mystics) though the revelation received by Muḥammad was the last formal revelation given to a prophet, it does not preclude the possibility of an informal, personal revelation being received by the elect gnostics. This is their unveiling (*kashf*), and it is of this that the Qur'an is the most powerful and perfect model. Gershom Scholem highlights this concept when he remarks,

> Revelation, for instance, is to the mystic not only a definite historical occurrence which, at a given moment in history, puts an end to any further direct relation between mankind and God. With no thought of denying Revelation as a fact of history, the mystic still conceives the source of religious knowledge and experience which bursts forth from his own heart as being of equal importance for the conception of religious truth. In other words, instead of the one act of Revelation, there is a constant repetition of this act. This new Revelation, to himself or to his spiritual master, the mystic tries to link up with the sacred texts of the old; hence the new interpretation given to the canonical texts and sacred books of the great religions.[213]

It is little wonder, then, that al-Qāshānī relies so profoundly on the Qur'an, for the Qur'an is nothing but the *kashf* of the Prophet, and the *kashf* of all the gnostics who

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[209] Al-Qāshānī, *Rashḥ al-zulāl,* 161-166.
[210] This term literally means "the Truth" and is used by many mystics to refer to God, as He is the only One with true, absolute existence, the only Truth. I have chosen to leave it untranslated as, linguistically, it means simply something "that is proven, which it is not permissible to deny," which does not encompass or convey what the term denotes here. ('Alī ibn Muḥammad al-Jurjānī, *Kitāb al-ta'rīfāt*, 96.)
[211] Qur'an, 26:193-94.
[212] Al-Qāshānī, *Rashḥ al-zulāl,* 105-06.
[213] Scholem, *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism*, 28.

follow in his wake must be congruent with it. In explaining Ibn ‘Arabī’s terms with the aid of Qur’anic references, al-Qāshānī implicitly acknowledges this.

1.7.1.3. *Laṭā’if al-I‘lām*

The final lexicon composed by al-Qāshānī was *Laṭā’if al-i‘lām fī ishārāt ahl al-ilhām.* In fact, it is the final work he authored in his life.[214] Al-Qāshānī adopts the title from one of Ibn ‘Arabī’s works as a mark of respect. This lexicon, however, in a way transcends Ibn ‘Arabī since “it does not draw (*yastaqī*) its material from any specific works, as is the case of the first one, [i.e. *Iṣṭilāḥāt*] nor does it derive (*yastamiddu*) its technical terms from any specific Sufis, as is the case with the second dictionary [i.e. *Rashḥ*], rather it includes all the technical terms which the prominent Sufis use in their various works.”[215] Such is the vastness of mystical erudition on display in this work that Ḥājī Khalīfa classifies it as “unparalleled” (*lā naẓīr lahū*) in *Kashf al-ẓunūn.*[216] Indeed, ‘Alī al-Qāsimī writes that this work is more than just definitions of technical terms, rather it is “an encyclopaedic lexicon (*mu‘jam mawsū‘ī*) of Islamic Sufism.”[217]

In this work, too, do we perceive al-Qāshānī’s steadfast dependence on the Qur’an. He even classifies the Qur’an as the path through which a believer may be admitted in to the highest echelons of gnosis wherein the essential equivalency between multiplicity in God’s creation and divine unity become apparent. He defines it as:

> the vision of differentiation (*tafriqa*) with the eye of unity (‘*ayn al-jam‘*) … as this vision is the most perfect (*akmal*) of the stations (*maqāmāt*) of gnosis and of the gnostics …. This is because the vision of differentiation without the eye of unity is a state of the veiled ones (*maḥjūbīn*) from *al-Ḥaqq* in truth,

[214] ‘Alī al-Qāsimī, “‘Abd al-Razzāq al-Kāshānī,” 733.
[215] Ibid., 733-4.
[216] Ibid., 733.
[217] Ibid., 736.

> as is the case with the lay folk (‘*awāmm*) among the unbelievers and believers. … And [as for] those from among the *awliyā*’[218] who inherit (*wārith*) their [i.e. the prophets’] station and emulate their ethical behaviour (*akhlāq*), they are the people of the Qur’an (*ahl al-Qur’ān*) … which is why it behoves them to be the medium (*wāsiṭa*) [to transmit] that which they have taken from *al-Ḥaqq*, through [His] help (*imdād*) and outpouring (*fayḍ*), to those who are not of their rank among the creation, and this is the highest rank, though there are different levels [in this], as He, be He Exalted, said, *And surely We have preferred some prophets over others.*[219]

Al-Qāshānī is unequivocal that the Qur’an is the basis and means of true gnosis, it is the *ahl al-Qur’ān* who are the absolute receptacles of divine *fayḍ* and charged with its transmission to the creation. Hence it is no surprise that he leans so heavily upon it in his definitions.[220]

In this work one sees the culmination of al-Qāshānī’s Sufi training course; it is the most comprehensive and complex of his lexicons and requires the student of mysticism to have graduated from the previous two works. But it is also the most rigorous in defence of Sufism, as a whole, and Ibn ‘Arabī, in particular. In his prolegomenon of the work the author elucidates his motivation for compiling it, he comments,

> When I saw numerous exoteric[221] scholars (‘*ulamā’ al-rusūm*) opposing them [i.e. the Sufis or esoteric scholars] on multiple occasions as they did not comprehend our books, or books of those other than us [i.e. of other *ṭarīqas*], in terms of the points (*nukat*) and secrets (*asrār*) alluded to by the gnostics of God from among the great sheikhs of Sufism, the inheritors (*wārithīn*) of the knowledge of the Reality (‘*ilm al-ḥaqīqa*) and gnoses of the sacred secret (*ma‘ārif al-khufya al-qudsiyya*), those who combined the comprehensive speech of wisdom (*jawāmi‘ al-kalim al-ḥikmiyya*) and Divine secrets (*al-asrār al-ilāhiyya*), I wanted to compose this book which contains an exposition of

[218] This term has many denotations: (1) the friend of God, (2) the constant obeyer of God, (3) the favourite of God, (4) the object of the constant beneficence and favours of God. (Lane, *Arabic Lexicon* 8:3060.) Al-Qāshānī includes in his usage all these meanings. It for this reason that I choose not to translate it, as a term such as “saint” (oft used as a translation of *walī*) does not incoporate all the meanings here listed.
[219] Qur’an 17:55; al-Qāshānī, *Laṭā’if al-i‘lām* 2:580-82.
[220] We note that in his definition of *al-Qur’ān* alone he cites six different verses of the Qur’an. See al-Qāshānī, *Laṭā’if* 2:580-82.
[221] On the difference between “exoteric” and “esoteric” forms of knowledge and what exactly they denote, see “Paul J. Bagley, “On the Practice of Esotericism.” On how these forms are employed and affect the works of Ibn ‘Arabī, see Frithjof Schuon, *Logic and Transcendence*, 123-25.

> that which is important among their technical terms (*iṣṭilāḥāt*), words (*alfāẓ*) and titles (*alqāb*), and which go hand in hand with them, and interpret that which is passed among them of Divine knowledge and secrets (*al-'ulūm al-ilāhiyya wa-asrārihā al-rabbāniyya*).[222]

It may be discerned from this that al-Qāshānī's reason for writing the *Laṭā'if* was not only to explain Sufi terms but to prove their essential Sunni orthodoxy and defend them against an exoteric scholastic onslaught.

The arrangement of this work also contrasts with the other works in the sense that it follows a strictly alphabetical format.[223] It is noteworthy that though this work, by al-Qāshānī's own admission, is about more than just Ibn 'Arabī's Sufi lexicon, the terms analysed will still be looked at in relation to Ibn 'Arabī as al-Qāshānī derives much of his mystical insight from the Andalusian's works. Indeed, it may be stated without fear of contradiction that, had there been no Ibn 'Arabī, there would be no al-Qāshānī.

Al-Qāshānī, then, in all his works is unerringly dependent on the Qur'an, Ḥadīth and poetry (in that order); his style is scientific and clinical, all of which reduces the "shock factor" of Ibn 'Arabī's thought. Suddenly, ideas that seemed unorthodox in the obscurity of nuance and density seem conventional and sober in the cold light of familiarity; a familiarity not only in expression, but also in format. This staunch dependence on the Qur'an and Ḥadīth may imbue al-Qāshānī's works with an apologetic hue, but it is one borne out of a conviction that these texts are the source of gnosis. If this seems more apparent in al-Qāshānī's works, even though both mystics hold to this maxim, it is only because he has chosen to highlight it more.

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[222] Al-Qāshānī, *Laṭā'if* 1:13-14.
[223] 'Alī al-Qāsimī, "'Abd al-Razzāq al-Kāshānī," 734.

If the compilation of three progressively elaborate dictionaries, each with a different format which were to become standard layouts of lexicography,[224] was not enough to galvanize al-Qāshānī's standing as a peerless Sufi etymologist, we find large sections of his other works devoted to Sufi terms. The most notable of these is *Tuḥfat al-ikhwān fī khaṣā'iṣ al-fityān.* [225] He is thus justly lauded as being "one of the great linguists and lexicographers,"[226] whose passion for nomenclature permeates the entire corpus of his scholarly output. Despite this, however, his reputation in the West remains chiefly as an expositor of Ibn 'Arabī due to the incontestable significance of this illustrious Sufi master in whose shadow al-Qāshānī resides. The fact that *Ta'wīlāt al-Qur'ān* is still marketed as *Tafsīr Ibn 'Arabī*, though it has been proven that al-Qāshānī authored it, bears ample testimony to this.[227]

1.7. 2. *Ta'wīlāt al-Qur'ān*

The *Ta'wīlāt* was chosen from the works of al-Qāshānī as it is simply his only extant exegetical work of a mystical nature. It also conforms to the widely-accepted *tafsīr* formulation of a verse-by-verse commentary from the beginning of the Qur'an to the end, a work which subordinates itself to the text of the Qur'an and explains it. Given al-Qāshānī's stated objective in many of his works is to defend Ibn 'Arabī's doctrine[228]—something that is apparent in his letter to al-Simnānī in which he defends *waḥdat al-wujūd*—[229] a Qur'anic commentary would seem the ideal format to display the essential orthodoxy and Qur'an-rootedness of his Sufi master and deflect any accusations of heresy from exotericists. Indeed, it is precisely because of

[224] Ibid.
[225] See al-Qāshānī, *Tuḥfat al-ikhwān*, 114-217.
[226] 'Alī al-Qāsimī, "'Abd al-Razzāq al-Kāshānī," 719.
[227] See note above.
[228] See above.
[229] See Nūr al-Dīn 'Abd al-Raḥmān al-Jāmī, *Nafaḥāt al-uns min ḥaḍarāt al-quds*, 306-312; Hermann Landolt, "Simnānī on *waḥdat al-wujūd*," Landolt, "Der briefwechsel zwischen Kāshānī and Simnānī über waḥdat al-wuǧūd," 29-81.

the pervasive presence of the Qur'an in the works of Ibn 'Arabī that al-Qāshanī has written a commentary. The *Ta'wīlāt* thus assumes the role of a dual-commentary: a commentary of the Qur'an primarily, and then a commentary of Ibn 'Arabī's thought. This study investigates the interplay between both these functions, and the relationship of the *Ta'wīlāt* with al-Qāshānī's lexicons, which are more overtly commentaries on Ibn 'Arabī's thought.

Al-Qāshānī's *tafsīr* and technical terminology will be analysed, showing how he mediates the content of the Qur'an through Sufi nomenclature, whilst acknowledging that it is deeply intertwined with Ibn 'Arabī's semantic framework. The Qur'an, as with Ibn 'Arabī in the *Fuṣūṣ* and *Futūḥāt*, remains central throughout this endeavour. One observes particularly how al-Qāshānī draws his language from the Qur'an while complementing it with Sufi terminology to not only expose the essential compatibility of both, but to accentuate that the mystical explanation proffered is very much subsidiary and has no designs on intruding upon the Qur'anic narrative.

An illustration of al-Qāshānī's subordination to the text of the Qur'an is when he writes about the ascension of 'Īsā in chapter 3. In this section, God discloses to 'Īsā how He plans to save him from the machinations of his enemies, and reveals what the consequences will be for those who refuse to believe. He says,

> *O 'Īsā! Surely I will take you and raise you unto Me, and purify you of those who do not believe until the Day of Resurrection. … As for those who do not believe, I shall punish them with a terrible chastisement in this world and the hereafter, and they will not have anyone to help them.*[230]

Al-Qāshānī writes,

> The corporeal form of he who [attempted to] assassinate 'Īsā, which was the manifestation of 'Īsā, the spirit of God, upon him be peace, was made to resemble the actual form of 'Īsā, so they thought he was 'Īsā and slew him

[230] Qur'an 3:55-56.

> and crucified him, while God caused ʿĪsā, upon him be peace, to ascend (*rafaʿa*) to the fourth heaven[231] so that his spirit would receive the outpouring from the spirituality of the Sun.[232] And they did not know, due to their ignorance, that the spirit of God cannot be killed. So when he [i.e. ʿĪsā] became certain of his fate just before the ascension (*rafʿ*), he said to his companions, "I am going to my and your heavenly Father,"[233] meaning, "I am purifying (*uṭahhiru*) myself of the realm of filth (*ʿālam al-rijs*) and joining the Holy Spirit bestowing forms, the Outpourer (*Mufīḍ*) of souls and perfection, the One worshipped by people through spiritual inspiration, and I will aid you from His outpouring."[234]

This passage shows how al-Qāshānī's work has the Qur'an as its central focal point and how he merely seeks to explicate the verses with the benefit of mystical insight. His subservience to the Qur'anic text is underscored by his fastidious attention to the language of it, which he emulates. This proclivity manifests itself through his rigid conformance to the two central concepts in the above verses: the ascension (*rafʿ*) of ʿĪsā and the cause of it, which was his purification (*taṭhīr*) from those who did not believe.

Al-Qāshānī, it may be seen, maintains the terms as they are in the Qur'an, and only furnishes the reader with the backdrop to the ascension. His narrative, in other words, simply augments the text of the Qur'an. Nor is his *tafsīr* a laboured mystical reading of the Qur'an as is apparent from his commentary of the following verse of chapter 45, in which the argument of Muḥammad's enemies is countered.

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[231] This may be a reference to the ascension of Muḥammad during which he met with various prophets in the seven heavens. Generally, the meeting with ʿĪsā and Yaḥyā is deemed to be on the second heaven with the meeting with Idrīs being on the fourth, though there is some discrepancy on who was on which heaven. (Al-Bukhārī, 59:6; Muḥammad ibn Isḥāq ibn Yaḥyā ibn Manda, *Al-Imān li-'bn Manda*, 2:707.) Nevertheless, I have been unable to locate any tradition that places ʿĪsā on the fourth heaven. It may, therefore, be an allusion to Ibn ʿArabī's cosmology (see below).

[232] In Ibn ʿArabī's cosmological conception of the universe, the Sun is placed on the fourth heaven, it is the centre of the universe with three heavens on either side of it. For a detailed engagement with this issue, as well as a diagrammatical representation, see Titus Burkhardt, *Mystical Astrology according to Ibn ʿArabī,* 13. See also: Seyyed Hossein Nasr, *An Introduction to Islamic Cosmological Doctrines*, which is an indispensable guide to Islamic cosmology in general.

[233] It is noteworthy that a contemporary of al-Qāshānī, Niẓām al-Dīn al-Ḥasan ibn Muḥammad al-Nīsābūrī (d. 728/ 1328?), also attributes an almost identical quote to ʿĪsā: "I am going to my and your Father." (Al-Nīsābūrī, *Gharā'ib al-Qur'ān* 2:570.) The early Ḥanafī scholar, Abū Bakr Aḥmad ibn ʿAlī al-Jaṣṣāṣ (d. 370/ 980?), mentions in his commentary that this statement of ʿĪsā is in the Old Testament (*Injīl*). (Al-Jaṣṣāṣ, *Aḥkām al-Qur'ān* 2:295, 4:41.)

[234] Ibn ʿArabī, *Tafsīr Ibn ʿArabī*, 1:92.

Those who repudiated the final Messenger's call asserted that there was nothing beyond the life of the world. The Qur'an repeats their logic in order to refute it:

> *And they say, "There is naught save our life of the world,* that is, sensible [existence], *we die,* by a natural, physical death, *and we live,* the physical, sensory life, there being no death or life besides them. And they do not attribute this [death] except to time due to their being veiled[235] from the true Executor, the One who seizes souls, the Outpourer (*Mufīḍ*) of life upon bodies.[236]

The blatant exotericism of this commentary cannot escape the attention of the keen reader. Indeed, this passage would not seem out of place in the *tafsīrs* of Ibn Kathīr (d. 774/1373) or al-Qurṭubī (d. 671/1273) (notwithstanding the reference to God as the Outpourer of life). Al-Qāshānī, thus, does not feel the need to ascribe an esoteric meaning to every verse of the Qur'an.[237] It is only when *baṣīra* (mystical insight) endows particulars which a literal reading glosses over that he engages in such a commentary. The mystical aspect, then, is something which for him emanates organically from the text, but where such a meaning may be coupled with his Sufi outlook, al-Qāshānī is quick to avail himself of the opportunity.

As the manner in which al-Qāshānī employs *huwiyya* to negotiate the winding byways of the Qur'an is investigated, so too will the similarities and differences with Ibn 'Arabī's usage of this term, as contextualising them in Ibn 'Arabī's metaphysical outlook is unavoidable. It will be shown, also, if *huwiyya* assumes a categorically theocentric hue as it does in Ibn 'Arabī's writings. For if every existent thing in the phenomenal and pre-phenomenal realms is a manifestation of the Divine Attributes, then all terms ascribed to them will

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[235] Al-Qāshānī does not use this term in the mystical sense here. The people to whom he refers attribute death to visible factors without acknowledging the true agent: God. They are thus veiled from the truth, which is unseen, through their stubborn insistence on the apparent alone. This citation shows how al-Qāshānī's commentary is not overtly mystical, not that it is not mystical. It must be remembered that al-Qāshānī had no intention of the *Ta'wīlāt* being an exoteric commentary as this aim he achieved with his *Ḥaqā'iq al-ta'wīl.*

[236] Ibn 'Arabī, *Tafsīr Ibn 'Arabī*, 2:547.

[237] He himself declares this in his introduction to the work. See conclusion for details.

necessarily need to refer back to God. Language itself, then, in Ibn ‘Arabī’s worldview, is merely an allusion to, and an articulation of, His ubiquity in every plane of existence. This is why *huwiyya*, which is particularly expressive of the non-manifest aspect of God has been chosen for this study, as it is the most efficient way of pinning down what can be a very convoluted and nebulous theological outlook.

Huwiyya acts as a symbol for God’s multitudinous manifestations in the numerous planes of existence, all of which are unseen, notwithstanding the final one—the phenomenal world. The prototype for exploring the points of congruence and those of departure between these two mystics will be the important work by Toshihiko Izutsu on Qur’anic semantics and Ronald Nettler in *Sufi Metaphysics.*

1.8. Toshihiko Izutsu

In conducting a semantic analysis of the terms employed by al-Qāshānī and Ibn ‘Arabī, I shall use the methodology delineated by Toshihiko Izutsu cursorily in *Ethico-Religious Concepts in the Qur’an*[238] and, at length, in *God and Man and the Koran.*[239] Izutsu’s approach to the Qur’an, as he himself describes it, is semantic. By “semantic” he means “an analytic study of the key-terms of a language with a view to arriving at a conceptual grasp of the *Weltanschauung* or world-view of the people who use that language as a tool not only of speaking and thinking, but, more importantly still, of conceptualizing and interpreting the world that surrounds them.”[240] It is Izutsu’s contention, therefore, that the world-view the Qur’an creates and perpetuates is the product of an intricate lattice of key-terms, which generate linguistic microcosms with a nominal nucleus, or focal-word. These semantic fields, with the focal-word at their centre and key-terms orbiting them, are bound to other

[238] Toshihiko Izutsu, *Ethico-Religious Concepts in the Qur’an*, 119-78.
[239] Izutsu, *God and Man*, 19.
[240] Ibid., 3.

semantic fields by polyvalent key-terms which act as connective tissue fastening these fields together to form an entire conceptual outlook.

The focus-word, God (which Izutsu correctly identifies as the highest focus-word) may then be the core of a semantic field containing key-terms such as *waḥy* (revelation), *tanzīl* (sending down of Divine words), *nabī* (prophet) *ahl* (people, as in *ahl al-kitāb,* the people of the scripture) etc.[241] These terms could then be admitted into other semantic fields, such as one in which the focus-word is *kitāb*. Furthermore, these key-words could become focus-words of semantic fields of their own. The whole network, then, is made up of connections, intra-connections and inter-connections between key-words, focus-words and semantic fields.

This occurs at the level of the word's interaction with other words. There is also, however, the microanalysis of the word itself as it appears in its sundry manifestations. At this level, Izutsu posits that a word has a "basic" meaning, one which is inextricably linked to it, and a "relational" meaning that is acquired due to the particular semantic context. A word such as *kitāb,* thus, has the basic meaning of a "book" and a relational meaning of "divine revelation" in the context of the Qur'anic world-view.[242]

The issue of "basic" and "relational" meanings is one that is far more complex than Izutsu allows for in his work. Indeed, one of the fundamental weaknesses in his argument is that "the basic meaning of a word inheres in the word itself and can be independent of its cultural context. … It may, in fact, have been understood as a technical term even before entering into Qur'anic usage. If that is so, the word *kitāb* would have brought into Qur'anic discourse not only what Izutsu

[241] Ibid., 19.
[242] Ibid., 18-26. For an overview of Izutsu's methodology see Syamsuddin Arif, "Preserving the Semantic Structure of Islamic Key Terms and Concepts: Izutsu, Al-Attas, and Al-Raghib Al-Isfahani."

thinks of as the inherently basic meaning of 'book', but also something more complex because of the relational meanings it had already acquired in other contexts."[243] Daniel Madigan observes that the term "*kitāb,"* as used in the Qur'an, functions "primarily as a symbol, rather than a concrete entity. As a symbol it is multivalent and able to operate on several levels at the same time—something that has always frustrated those who have sought to specify it."[244] This, he argues, includes Izutsu.

The present work circumvents the pitfall of insufficient diachronic analysis as it confines itself to 'basic' meanings as construed by Ibn 'Arabī and al-Qāshānī themselves. This relieves us of the semantic baggage acquired from other contexts, though it is true al-Qāshānī is operating in a system defined very much by Ibn 'Arabī, which is why this study takes such pains to delineate that system and identify Ibn 'Arabi's approach to the term before embarking on al-Qāshānī's. This means the study is unashamedly synchronic (static, ahistorical) in its outlook, as I do not believe one work would be able to successfully carry out an historical survey of the various manifestations of *huwiyya* and then perform an analysis of how it operates within the semantic frameworks of these two authors.[245]

The 'basic' or 'relational' connotative meaning may also be further scrutinised to determine whether it is or is not "correlational," that is, whether it alludes to the existence of something else, for example, *al-ākhira* (the Hereafter) which necessarily affirms the presence of this world, or *al-dunyā,* and vice versa.[246] Izutsu then investigates the synchronic and diachronic (historical) meanings of the

[243] Daniel A. Madigan, *The Qur'an's Self-Image: Writing and Authority in Islām's Scripture*, 82.
[244] Ibid., 76.
[245] This is not to suggest, of course, that such a study would not be beneficial as "a word is equivalent to a personality … for a word like a person experiences changes, that is, both are influenced by the external cultural environment of other persons." It would therefore be extremely fruitful to explore these influences. (Philip p. Wiener, "Some Problems and Methods in the History of Ideas," 534.)
[246] Izutsu, *God and Man*, 91-96.

words to decipher how their use has evolved and informed the Qur'anic perspective. He identifies three distinct semantic "surfaces" or synchronic points in time, which could be analysed to decipher the vocabulary of the Arabic language: the pre-Qur'anic (*Jāhilī*), Qur'anic, and post-Qur'anic (by which he means 'Abbāsid) periods.[247]

Armed with these methodological tools, Izutsu sets out to present a semantic world-view of the Qur'an. His approach has been viewed positively, on the whole, by Muslim and Western scholars alike. Indeed, Eisa al-Akoub writes that most Arab scholars deem it to be a seminal work and of huge scholarly import, those who criticise it do so as they are suspicious of the tradition from which Izutsu comes and thus impute meanings to Izutsu's statements which are wholly incongruous with his general arguments.[248] Ismail Albayrak comments that Izutsu's semantic methodology, which seemingly allows the Qur'an to speak for itself, became so influential that this work came to be regarded as one of the most influential commentaries of the Qur'an in Turkey.[249] Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn al-Zarāl, after scrupulously going through Izutsu's semantic methodology, remarks admiringly,

> The study of language is conducted on various levels (*mustawayāt*), which include phonetics (*ṣawt*), morphology (*ṣarf*), grammar (*naḥw*), and semantics (*dalāla*); and perhaps, semantics is among the most important and difficult of these levels because the true nature (*al-ṭabī'a al-ḥaqīqiyya*) of language may only be understood through comprehension of meanings.[250]

There are, nevertheless, shortcomings to Izutsu's methodology which I believe a study of this kind generally bypasses. Firstly, Izutsu's method seems to ignore the social strata of any given society, portraying it as mainly homogeneous,

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[247] Ibid., 32.
[248] Eisa al-Akoub, "Izutsu's Study of the Qur'an from an Arab Perspective," 122-24.
[249] Ismail Albayrak, "The Reception of Toshihiko Izutsu's Qur'anic Studies in the Muslim World," 77-78.
[250] Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn al-Zarāl, "Applied Semantics and the Qur'an: Izutsu's Methodology as a Case Study," 200.

which, of course, no society is.[251] Applying his approach to a metaphysical worldview of two Sufi individuals means this is no longer an issue; for where Izutsu applied his methodology to compare *Jāhilī* and Qur'anic key-terms, I will use it to view al-Qāshānī's terms in relation to Ibn 'Arabī. Harry B. Partin, on a more general note, remarks that the "*comparison* of words and concepts among different cultural and religious traditions is at best problematic."[252] This has the result of severely inhibiting what Izutsu can, and does, achieve through his analysis. A study which focusses on the same tradition and where cultural aspects are not as dominant is liberated from such strictures.

One of the major concerns highlighted by most analysts of Izutsu's mode of scrutiny is its lack of Qur'anic semantic history. Izutsu seems to treat key-terms used in the Qur'an as monolithic entities, not attributing to them the evolution that revelation over a 23-year period would inevitably impose.[253] An inquiry into the terms used in texts written over a much shorter period would sidestep such a difficulty. Moreover, the terms scrutinised are, by and large, defined by the authors themselves, which means one does not have to ascribe meanings to terms which the author may not have intended. More importantly, though, it betrays that the writers were confident enough in the semantic maturation and crystallisation of the key-terms to circumscribe them in a fixed definition.

It is true that the manner in which the authors themselves may have used certain terms could have evolved over a long and prolific career. However, the key-terms of both authors seem not to be affected by this in any substantive way as attested by their own demarcation of the terms. Also, the works here addressed

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[251] Albayrak, "The Reception," 84. See also Madigan, *The Qur'an's Self-Image,* 82.
[252] Harry B. Partin, "Semantics of the Qur'an: A Consideration of Izutsu's Studies," 360.
[253] Ibid.; Albayrak, "The Reception," 85, 91. See also Fazlur Rahman's review of *God and Man in the Koran* at the beginning of the Malaysian edition entitled: *God and Man in the Qur'an*, x.

pertain chiefly to both authors' later period when their thought had reached peak maturity. Izutsu has also been charged with not relating his work to Islamic history which moulds and fashions key-terms.[254] Again, this study, which makes no pretentions to diachronic analysis, avoids the various hazards of a deficient historical review.

Finally, Izutsu, while acknowledging that the key-terms he has selected are somewhat arbitrary, has been accused of cherry-picking terms which have been determined by his semantic system. It is thus less a matter of the Qur'an speaking for itself, and more of what the system allows the Qur'an to say. The system, therefore, is the primary determinant in the selection of the key-terms and the subsequent projection of the Qur'anic *Weltanschauung*.[255] While a study of this kind cannot but be arbitrary to some extent, it is the particular use of a farrago of artificial binary oppositions, not explicitly stated in the Qur'an, which has stoked the ire of most critics. Albayrak writes, "Izutsu's basic argument relies on forming the semantic world of the Qur'an on the basis of a complicated system of oppositions."[256] The usage of "two polar conceptual frames of the Qur'anic worldview" is, however, "problematic and an alien tradition in Islam."[257] One may quite legitimately ask, asserts Albayrak, what the opposite of *al-kitāb,* one of the highest focus-words in the Qur'an, would be.

It is in this sense that Izutsu's semantic schema may seem somewhat reductionistic. However, while I agree with Albayrak that one cannot represent the entire Qur'anic *Weltanschauung* in terms of binaries, there is no intimation in Izutsu's study that he seeks to do this. True, he draws attention to some oppositions

[254] Partin, "Semantics," 360-61; Albayrak, "The Reception," 84-85; Rahman, *Review,* x.
[255] Albayrak, "The Reception," 85-86; Rahman, *Review,* viii.
[256] Albayrak, "The Reception," 88.
[257] Ibid.

which he feels contribute to the overall semantic worldview promulgated by the Qur'an, but we find no insinuation that he considers this to be the only means through which the Qur'anic worldview is expressed.

Indeed, any particular facet of inquiry, by accentuating that facet to the exclusion of others, may appear reductionistic. Furthermore, one cannot begrudge an analyst viewing the Qur'an in terms of binaries a study of this type if it is the manner in which he views it, as long as he does not deem that line of inquiry to be the only one. If my scrutiny circumvents the binary "reductionism" of which Izutsu is accused, it is only because al-Qāshānī (and Ibn 'Arabī) do not generally view the Qur'an in this way (though there are individual instances of it). This thesis, therefore, does not adopt oppositions, nor does it seek to commingle terms to tease out a world-view. Rather, it uses just one key-term, entirely theocentric in nature, and allows a semantic outlook to emerge naturally.

This refined Izutsuian approach will thus provide a suitable approach for pursuing an investigation of this type, and will bypass many of the pitfalls to which its predecessor was exposed. The analysis of Ibn 'Arabī and al-Qāshānī's thought, then, is very much from a Qur'anic and, to a lesser degree, Ḥadīthī perspective. In this, I shall be emulating the methodology of Ronald Nettler.

1.9. Ronald Nettler

The Qur'an and other traditional sources are central to Ibn 'Arabī's thought, so repeatedly argues Nettler. He writes,

> Ibn 'Arabī's adherence to tradition may in one aspect be seen in the Qur'an-centredness of the *Fuṣūṣ* and of other works. One might even argue that the Qur'an and, secondarily, other traditional elements of Islam constitute for Ibn 'Arabī the core and foundation of religion through which his sufi metaphysics takes form and achieve its significance. Indeed, on the basis of the origin of

> the *Fuṣūṣ* as reported by Ibn ʻArabī, it would seem … that for him the *Fuṣūṣ* represented the truth of the Qur'an in esoteric, metaphysical form.[258]

It is for this reason that his approach proceeds from a perspective where a Qur'anic verse or Ḥadīth forms "the core round which Ibn ʻArabī builds and explicates his sufi metaphysics."[259] This "core" may not be a direct citation or even an explicit reference, many times Ibn ʻArabī constructs "a Qur'anic 'story' composed of elements which have no overt relation in the Qur'an to the prophet involved, but which for Ibn ʻArabī exemplify important aspects of that prophet's life and character."[260] At other times, the Ḥadīth might lead the narrative but not pertain to the prophet under discussion.[261] Ibn ʻArabī employs such prophetic traditions in conjunction with Qur'anic verses which, again, may or may not be connected with the prophet reviewed to expound his metaphysics.

The way in which Nettler disentangles the concept of divine mercy through the bezel of Zakariyyā[262] may illustrate how he pursues relentlessly Ibn ʻArabī's logic, and how the extensive textual analysis conducted in this study, seeks to do the same. Nettler correctly apprises us of Ibn ʻArabī's two-fold conception of mercy: personal mercy or favour—bestowed upon the God-fearing and obedient, in accordance with verse 7:156 of the Qur'an—and universal mercy, which is identified as an existentiating force that brings everything into being. The versions of mercy here described, Ibn ʻArabī derives from the same verse. This means that everything that exists is a recipient of God's mercy, even God's wrath because it exists. Thus, the punishment—again, a manifestation of God's mercy—endured by the residents

[258] Nettler, *Sufi Metaphysics,* 13.
[259] Ibid., 14.
[260] Ibid.
[261] Ibid.
[262] Nettler, *Sufi Metaphysics and Qur'ānic Prophets*, 154-76.

of hell is a mercy from Him. The lines between reward and punishment in this conception become very blurred, if not entirely effaced.

Nettler argues that the mystic goes even further when he argues that "names and attributes do not exist as discrete entities attached to the things characterised by them"[263] but are rather expressions of that attribute inhering in that thing. … "Thus 'God is compassionate (Raḥīm) by virtue of the mercy's inhering in Him. It may, consequently be affirmed that God is in fact Mercy."[264] Furthermore, Ibn 'Arabī states that, "Everyone whom Mercy has remembered has thereby become merciful."[265] Meaning, due to being touched by mercy, all existents have been reduced to one being. This, naturally, would have dire ethical implications, were it not for the way in which Ibn 'Arabī articulates the acquisition of mercy. He comments that "God's mercy may be attained in two ways, that of meeting the divinely enjoined ethical-legal obligations, *ṭarīq al-wujūb*, and that of divine grace, *ṭarīq al-imtinān al-ilāhī*."[266] This, not only re-establishes the traditional paradigm of reward and punishment, but also explains Ibn 'Arabī's notion of metaphysical mercy. The entire concept of divine mercy, then, the mystic culls from 7:156, and it is exemplified for him in the story of Zakariyyā's supplication for mercy.

It is clear that Ibn 'Arabī is not bound by the ostensible structure of the Qur'an in the *Fuṣūṣ*, but his goal always remains to extract, what he considers to be, the true esoteric meaning of the Qur'an. His approach is somewhat more restricted in the *Futūḥāt* (where he relies more heavily on citations of Qur'an and Ḥadīth). Nevertheless, it still exhibits his independence from conventional modes of exegesis. Al-Qāshānī, too, displays a remarkable propensity to elucidate his Sufi metaphysics

[263] Ibid., 167.
[264] Ibid., 168.
[265] Ibid., 169.
[266] Ibid., 171.

through the content of the Qur'an. The conventional structure of his commentary affords him less room for manoeuvre in this regard but it, nevertheless, furnishes him with a platform upon which to articulate his metaphysical outlook in the Qur'anic perspective.

1.10. My approach

My approach will combine the methods of Izutsu and Nettler: Izutu's method will allow delineation of the sections of the *Fuṣūṣ, Futūḥāt* and *Ta'wīlāt* requiring scrutiny. I shall imitate his method by selecting terms related to *huwiyya* i.e. its synonyms and antonyms. Once this diagnostic function is performed, I shall switch to Nettler's method and depend heavily on the portions of the texts demarcated to follow Ibn 'Arabī and al-Qāshānī's logic and depict their ideas and intellectual methods. Naturally, as one method simply defines the area for analysis and the other actually investigates it, the two will not be co-dominant. Nettler's approach will therefore be the primary method of this study.

Before we embark on the role *huwiyya* plays in the thought of Ibn 'Arabī and al-Qāshānī, however, the term and its various connotations need to be explained.

2.0. *Huwiyya*: An Introduction

This is an abstract noun from the pronoun *huwa* (he) and comes directly from the lexicon of Hellenistic learning. It has also been suggested that it is a loan-word based on the Syriac *hāywā*.[267] The relationship between *huwiyya* and *mawjūd*, and which should be used for the same Greek word, constituted a significant dilemma for Arabic translators of Greek philosophical texts. Indeed, Averroes' (d. 595/ 1198) "overwhelming interest" was "in the difference between *'mawǧūd'* or *'huwiyya'* which signifies the essence of the thing and the *'mawǧūd* or *'huwiyya'* which signifies the true. … Should they use *'mawǧūd*, despite its misleading paronymous form, or coin a new word and say *'huwiyya'*?"[268]

The term is first seen in the works of Abū Yūsuf al-Kindī's (d. 259/ 873) circle.[269] There is a close association between it and the abstract noun *anniyya* as both are translations for the Greek terms *on* ("being") and *einai* ("to be").[270] *Huwiyya*, nevertheless, is also employed by these early translators as an antonym for "otherness".[271] Adamson suggests that *huwiyya* is most commonly used to denote *on*

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[267] Peter Adamson, *The Arabic Plotinus*, 219, ft. 30; Olga Lizzini, "Wuǧūd-Mawǧūd/Existence-Existent in Avicenna," 117.

[268] Stephen Menn, "Fārābī in the Reception of Avicenna's Metaphysics: Averroes against Avicenna on Being and Unity," 62. See Louis Massignon, *The Passion of al-Ḥallāj*, 3:8. See also Richard Walzer, *Greek into Arabic*, 5-9. The aim of the present work is not to sketch the historical evolution of the term. F. E. Peters also provides a good overview of the terms that entered the Arabic language from Greek in relation to Ibn 'Arabī. See F. E. Peters, *Aristotle and the Arabs,* 214. It is also not my purpose to scrutinise whether this term belonged to philosophy or theology (*kalām*), or whether there was even a distinction between the two disciplines in the respective eras of Ibn 'Arabī and al-Qāshānī. Certainly, Abū Zayd 'Abd al-Raḥmān ibn Muḥammad ibn Khaldūn (d. 808/1406) stated that "by his time, works on *Kalām* and works on *Falsafa* appeared to be no longer distinguishable." (A. I. Sabra, "*Kalām* Atomism as an Alternative Philosophy to Hellenizing *Falsafa*," 203. See also A. I. Sabra, "The Appropriation and Subsequent Naturalization of Greek Science in Medieval Islam," where the significance of this circumstance is analysed in terms of astronomy.) In this study, I will concentrate on an analysis of thought, ideas and intellectual methods, though this endeavour, naturally, cannot be entirely extricated from the historical context.

[269] Adamson, *The Arabic Plotinus*,125.

[270] Ibid., 126.

[271] Ibid.

whereas *anniyya* is mainly reserved for *einai*.[272] Yet, there are cases when the converse is also true. The interchangeability between the terms suggests that the difference between them was not sufficiently delineated.[273] Indeed, Abū Naṣr al-Fārābī (d. 339/ 950) resolutely declares the two to be synonyms.[274]

In al-Kindī's circle, then, *huwiyya* and *anniyya* is used to refer to God, in terms of his existence, which is often presented with the ordinal adjective, *al-ūlā* (the first). This means the nature of God's existence is not expressed by the term, only its priorness to everything.[275] Nevertheless, there are also passages of the *Theology of Aristotle* translated by al-Kindī's circle that clearly deny that the First has being. The term, thus, is also applied to that which does have being first, which is the *intellect*.[276] Adamson hypothesises that:

> … the Adaptor[277] is trying to hold on to the idea that God *is* being, though he is prepared to admit that God does not *have* being, perhaps thinking that this would imply that God has being as something external attributed to him.[278]

In this case, *huwiyya* (and *anniyya*) is "the immediate effect and proper effect of the First, with all things being indirect effects through the mediation of the intellect."[279] There are other times, though, when it refers to the unknown-ness of God. We are told that His *huwiyya* is "not perceived in any way. He is the one whose name is unknown, to say nothing of His substance."[280]

Another connotation of *anniyya* and *huwiyya* used by this early theologian/

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[272] Ibid.
[273] Ibid., 161. Joel Kraemer declares that the two are used simply to express "*that* he exists," there being no difference between them whatsoever. (Kraemer, *Philosophy in the Renaissance of Islam*, 216.)
[274] Adamson, *The Arabic Plotinus*, 126.
[275] Ibid., 129.
[276] Ibid., 130.
[277] This is most likely to be Ibn Nā'ima al-Ḥimṣī, according to Adamson. (See Adamson, *The Arabic Plotinus*, 176-77.)
[278] Adamson, *The Arabic Plotinus*, 130.
[279] Ibid., 141.
[280] Ibid., 156.

translator is that it is an articulation of God's simplicity, meaning, "His being [is] nothing other than what it is" because "if God had attributes distinct from His being, He would not be truly one."[281] Again, this is not an outright negation, for it is conceded that though God has no attributes because He is their cause, He is still connected to them in the way a cause is connected to the caused. In this sense, then, He does have attributes.[282] Also, at other times, it seems positive attributes, at least in principle, can be said to be identical to God's *huwiyya*.[283]

Al-Kindī himself also uses *huwiyya* to underscore the simplicity of God, that is to say, he equates God's being to His simplicity. This means the primary difference, according to al-Kindī, is that God's *huwiyya* does not have multiplicity, everything else, in contrast, does.[284] The term *huwiyya*, thus, has the following early meanings:

1. It denotes God in terms of His priorness to everything else.
2. It is a term for the first thing to have being, that is, the intellect.
3. It connotes the unknown-ness of God, who cannot be apprehended by intellects.
4. It represents the positive attributes of God that are His being insofar as He is their cause, but are not He as He is one and simple.
5. It means the simplicity and unity of God, as opposed to the multiplicity of all other things.

By al-Fārābī's time, *huwiyya* was already very much part of the philosophical lexicon, which is why the late philosopher, Ibn Rushd (d. 595/1198), is somewhat of

[281] Ibid., 131.
[282] Ibid.
[283] Ibid., 156.
[284] Ibid., 183.

an outlier in seeking to explain the term.[285] Al-Fārābī, without feeling the need to elucidate the term, makes an important distinction between *māhiyya* and *huwiyya*: the former connotes conceptual essence, and the latter, an individual, existing manifestation of that essence,[286] such as man, and Fred who is *a* man. He also distinguishes between mental and extra-mental (that is, proper) existence, with *huwiyya* being employed for the latter. The only example where there is no distinction between *māhiyya* and *huwiyya*, according to al-Fārābī, is in God. This is because every essence needs an external stimulus to bring it into existence, notwithstanding God.[287]

Huwiyya, nevertheless, seems to be a term of extraordinary versatility. In the *Liber de Causis*, it is applied to the whole gamut of beings, from God, the first Being, to pure intellegencies, to beings with sensible existence.[288] Indeed, in Ibn Rushd's commentary of Aristotle's *Metaphysics*, it is "said to assume as many meanings as Aristotle has categories."[289] Moreover, according to Ibn Rushd, not only may *huwiyya* be used for substances and accidents, it may also denote both the essence of a thing, and whether it is true, that is, actual, or existing. In both cases, the word is the same, but the meaning very different.[290] A.M. Goichon identifies eleven uses for *huwiyya* in *Lexique de la langue philosophique d'Ibn Sīnā*,[291] the primary denotation being "a concrete being considered universally."[292] Ibn Sīnā

[285] *Encyclopaedia of Islam,* 2nd ed., s.v. "*Huwiyya*." The term had become such a staple of the philosophical tradition by the middle of the 4th/10th century that its primary connotations were taken for granted by philosophers. Ibn Rushd, for the purpose of thoroughness, it seems, sought to define it first before deploying it.
[286] Ibid.
[287] Ian Richard Netton, *Allāh Transcendent*, 110.
[288] *Encyclopaedia of Islam,* 2nd ed., s.v. "*Huwiyya*."
[289] Ibid.
[290] Ibid.
[291] Ibid.
[292] Ibid.

expounds much on the distinction between *māhiyya* and *huwiyya* initially presented by al-Fārābī,[293] and the term clearly plays a pivotal role in his philosophy. All these meanings and associations of *huwiyya* were available to Ibn ʻArabī and al-Qāshānī, and inform their own usage of the term, though one does not find in either a conscious philosophical use of it.

This study, as stated in the previous section, does not scrutinise the appropriation of the term from Hellenistic learning to Sufi literature,[294] nor does it analyse the evolution and various incarnations of it in the Islamic mystical tradition. It simply charts Ibn ʻArabī and al-Qāshānī's own usage of the term and what they mean by it in their principal works: the *Futūḥāt* and *Fuṣūṣ* for Ibn ʻArabī (with a greater emphasis on the latter) and the lexicons of al-Qāshānī and his *Ta'wīlāt*. A direct comparison of the two mystics in the context of this term will then be attempted to determine what the similarities and differences are, and what they say about the authors.

As with any such study, the point of departure must be each author's own definition of the term under investigation, inasmuch as it has been defined by them, and it is from this definition that this study, too, begins.

[293] Lizzini, "Wuğūd-Mawğūd/Existence-Existent in Avicenna," 117.
[294] For a study of these, see Massignon, *Passion*. See also Richard Walzer, *Greek into Arabic: Essays on Islamic Philosophy* and F. E. Peters, *Aristotle and the Arabs: The Aristotelian Tradition in Islam*.

3.0. Ibn ‘Arabī and *Huwiyya*

3.1. Ibn ‘Arabī’s Definition of *Huwiyya*

Ibn ‘Arabī defines *huwiyya* as, “The Reality in the realm of the unseen (‘*ālam al-ghayb*)”[295] and since *ālam al-ghayb* is nothing but preceding sensible manifestations of God, the term is entirely theocentric.[296] *Huwiyya* thus refers to the non-manifest aspect of God. However, given that this includes many different planes of existence, as well as many different types of divine manifestation, this definition requires further analysis.

3.2. *Huwiyya* in *Al-Futūḥāt al-Makkiyya*

3.2.1. Creational *Huwiyya*

Ibn ‘Arabī deploys *huwiyya* in different contexts in the *Futūḥāt*, if there is one thing the usages have in common, however, it is that they pertain to the unseen. This is most clearly highlighted in the following citation on Ibn ‘Arabī’s conception of the nature of God:

> As for the end of the divine Names, they are the very ones as their beginning and He is *al-huwa,* so He is as He said [of Himself], “*He is God, the One besides whom there is no god”* [*Huwa Allāh alladhī lā ilāh illā huwa*].[297] He thus began with *huwa,* then brought forth the Name *Allāh*, which encapsulates all the Names (which will come in detail), then [He followed this with] a negation. So He negated that this rank could be for anyone but Him. He subsequently affirmed this as being necessary of Himself by saying, “*besides whom*” [lit. except Him, *illā huwa*]. Thus, He began with *huwa* and ended with *huwa,* and all the details of the essences of the divine Names are surely subsumed under the Name *Allāh*, which comes after His mentioning *huwa*. Therefore, the word *huwa* is more general than the word *Allāh* for it alludes to God and all the unseen things, and to all things which have a *huwiyya*. And there is naught there [i.e. in the realm of the unseen] save it

[295] Ibn ‘Arabī, *Rasā’il Ibn ‘Arabī*, 538. See also al-Jurjānī, *Kitāb al-ta‘rīfāt,* 295, which provides the same definition on the authority of Ibn ‘Arabī.
[296] This is epitomised in Su‘ād al-Ḥakīm’s succinct explanation of *al-huwa.* She states, “According to Ibn ‘Arabī, *al-huwa* is a term for the divine essence in terms of its being non-manifest.” (Al-Ḥakīm, *Al-Mu‘jam al-ṣūfiyya,* 1120.)
[297] Qur’an, 59:23.

> has a *huwiyya,* irrespective of whether it is known or mentioned, existent (*mawjūd*) or non-existent (*ma'dūm*).[298]

In this passage, Ibn 'Arabī draws attention to the symmetry of the verse stating that it is not without meaning. The fact that the verse begins and ends with *huwa*, says Ibn 'Arabī, imparts an underlying truth: all the Names are the same in the sense that they convey the meaning of God. So it is that "the end of the divine Names … are the very ones as their beginning." This does not negate the disparity in pre-eminence between the Names, but the point Ibn 'Arabī makes is that there is a common thread that runs through all of them. He then turns his attention to the specific construction of the verse, which has a *huwa—Allāh—huwa* dynamic.

The mystic asserts that the verse begins with *huwa,* which is a nondescript term for one of the Names, and as such, could be any of the Names. The Name *Allāh* is then adduced, "which encapsulates all the Names" and this is followed by *huwa* again. The dynamic may thus also be defined as: any Name—all the Names—any Name. However, the final *huwa* differs from the former in that it is a negation. This, too, has meaning, for it is God negating "that this rank could be for anyone but Him." So to which rank does Ibn 'Arabī refer? The plain reading of the verse would suggest that it is the rank of divinity that is meant. And Ibn 'Arabī agrees with this, but for him this reality has far more significance because in Ibn 'Arabī's *Weltanschauung*, everything in the Cosmos and in pre-phenomenal planes of reality are manifestations of God. It is therefore to this rank, the rank of being the source of everything, of actually *being* everything, that he alludes.

Ibn 'Arabī states that the reason *huwa* is mentioned prior to *Allāh*, a Name which encompasses all the Names, is because "*huwa* is more general than the word *Allāh* for it alludes to God and all the unseen things, and to all things which have a

[298] Ibn 'Arabī, *Futūḥāt*, 6:317.

huwiyya." This means that the term *huwa* refers, as Ibn ʻArabī elaborates here, not only to any Name of God, and, as such, to all His Names, but to all the preceding sensible manifestations of God—everything that has a *huwiyya*, whereas the Name *Allāh* alludes to only the manifestations of the divine Names. But if everything is a manifestation of the Names, as Ibn ʻArabī intimates, then why exactly is *huwa* more general that *Allāh*? Ibn ʻArabī answers this question himself when he says, "There is naught there [i.e. in the realm of the unseen] save it has a *huwiyya,* irrespective of whether it is known or mentioned, existent (*mawjūd*) or non-existent (*maʻdūm*)." Everything, therefore, whether it exists or not, has a *huwiyya,* whereas only things that exist—even if they are in preceding sensible realms—can be a locus of divine manifestation. This is why *Allāh* is more specific than *huwa.*

This passage categorically states that *huwiyya* is applicable not only to God, but also to the existent things in the unseen world; their *huwiyya,* however, is only from *Huwa.* This is the secret of this verse. God's *huwiyya* gives rise to the *huwiyya* of everything, *some* of which are existent in the unseen and seen realms and therefore manifestations of His Names, and this rank befits Him alone. The reason *huwa* is used in the negation is because it needs to be just as emphatic as the initial assertion. In essence, it is the following that Ibn ʻArabī extracts from this verse: *Everything*, whether existent or non-existent, seen or unseen emanates from God. [This is the meaning of the first *huwa*]. Existent beings, whether in the sensible or pre-sensible realms, are manifestations of the Names of God. [This is the meaning of *Allāh*]. The rank of being the source of absolutely everything, whether existent or

non-existent, seen or unseen belongs only to God. [This is the meaning of the second *huwa*].[299]

Therefore, everything has a *huwiyya* but they emanate from His *huwiyya* which is a manifestation of His Names. The inextricable connection between the Names of God and His *huwiyya* is here fully displayed. It therefore behoves us to investigate this link further.

3.2.2. *Huwiyya* and the Divine Attributes

Even though *huwiyya* refers to both the essence of God and that of the unseen existents in Ibn 'Arabī's metaphysics, the latter only derive their essence from God, as stated. Thus, the true *huwiyya* is only His *huwiyya.* Ibn 'Arabī makes this point more explicitly when he says in the *Futūḥāt*,

> Do you not see them [i.e. people who are veiled from the truth] saying about "*kibriyā,"*[300] "glorified," "independent," "mighty," that they are indeed attributes of transcendence. That is to say, according to them, He is above being the opposite of this? But the matter, according to the gnostics, is not as they say … He said, "*For Him is the kibriyā' in the heavens and the earth"*[301] … that is the *huwiyya* of the Truth … for that which is in the heavens and the earth is a locus for Him and this is naught save *kibriyā'* as He is not praised except in the Cosmos itself. And He is too majestic for the matter to be other than Him [entirely]. So He is the One from every aspect and all-knowing when it comes to what He has set up in His creation.
>
> In short, what He has composed with His knowledge and wisdom is that He made the heavens and the earth a locus for His *kibriyā.'* It is as if He is saying, "For the One who created them [i.e. the heavens and the earth] is *kibriyā'* in the heavens and the earth themselves, to the point that they praise their God by it," and this is how it turned out. So they [i.e. the heavens and the earth] praise Him through their selves and say, "*He is the owner of*

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[299] It is worthy of mention that Ibn 'Arabī differs markedly from al-Tahānawī who mentions that *huwa* is a Name which is more specific than *Allāh* as it is subsumed in it. Al-Tahānawī, *Kashshāf*, 3:1539.

[300] Ibn 'Arabī seems to be using *kibriyā'* not in its traditional meaning (i.e. pride/arrogance/magnificence), but rather to denote "the One who is praised" above all others, in other words, *alladhī yukabbar.* He thus seems to be interpreting *kibriyā'* as the verbal noun of the verb, *kabbara* (i.e. to praise). Such interpretational license is a common feature of Ibn 'Arabī's linguistic analysis.

[301] Qur'an, 45:37.

majesty,"[302] that is, the possessor of the majesty which we find in ourselves for Him.[303]

Ibn 'Arabī, in this passage, uses the term *huwiyya* to refer to the source of all the divine attributes. He mentions that the heavens and the earth express these attributes, of which one is *kibriyā'.* This is manifested in the Cosmos, but not in the sense that the creation praises Him. Rather, their actual existence itself pays tribute to and is testimony of His *kibriyā'.* It is in this way that everything is God in its entirety, for all existence is a manifestation of God, and through that manifestation, He is exalted. It is then not a dissociated exaltation, one that dissociates Him from His creation, rather, it is a uniting exaltation—one that binds Him to His creation. God's *kibriyā'* or His glory or might, thus, is not the way He exerts His power over His creation, as is the usual conception, it is the way in which He is expressed in it.

Ibn 'Arabī comments further in his analysis of this verse:

> The Truth, in terms of His Essence, cannot be described by anything by which the existence of the Cosmos is described. So majesty and *kibriyā'* are attributed to Him [in metaphorical terms as] … He did not make its locus except the heavens and the earth. So He said, "*And to Him [alone] belong kibriyā' in the heavens and the earth, and He is the Mighty, the Wise*."[304] He did not say [this] about Himself, rather, the locus is the thing described by "*kibriyā,*" which is really for God.[305]

The remote God, who is far beyond the ken of human comprehension, says Ibn 'Arabī, cannot be defined by any terms used to describe the creation, for if this were the case, it would mean they have something in common, and on this absolute level, there can be no commonality between God and man.[306] He is even more unequivocal when he says,

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[302] Ibid., 55:27.
[303] Ibn 'Arabī, *Futūḥāt*, 6:352.
[304] Qur'an, 45:37.
[305] Ibn 'Arabī, *Futūḥāt,* 6:351.
[306] Collinson et al. remark along similar lines: "Ibn Arabi further holds that God as Essence cannot be known but that knowledge of him may be attained through knowledge of his attributes, and knowledge of his attributes is gained through certain forms of human thought. However, what is thus

> We [the gnostics] do not describe Him except by that which He describes Himself, and we do not name Him except by that which He names Himself. We do not invent a name for Him, neither do we form an opinion [about Him], nor do we establish for Him an attribute. … He does not resemble us nor do we resemble Him. There is nothing like Him in us and there is nothing like us in Him. For He is by Himself for Himself, and we are for ourselves in Him as we are not independent in our existence as He is in His Existence, except that He created the Cosmos in His form and therefore it accepts His Names. So that which is applied to the Cosmos is applied to the Truth as it is what the Truth has applied to Himself. But we should know that He is the original denotation of the Names, not us … [as] we are not worthy of them, rather, all this is for Him.[307]

This means that the epithets used to describe God are not ones of His true, remote essence, they are ones of His Names, with which man can form a bond because they are manifested in the Cosmos.[308] These attributes, thus, are attributes of the manifestations of the Names in the sensible world. So *kibriyā',* which is actually an epithet of a Name, is used for the Cosmos as it is a locus for manifestation of His attributes. This does not mean that the Cosmos itself has *kibriyā',* as it is only expressing the *kibriyā'* of the divine Names; nevertheless, due to its apparent manifestation of God's *kibriyā'* it is afforded this adjective.

Ibn 'Arabī comments that the reason God made the existence of all creation a manifestation of His Names is because the fundamental reason for the Cosmos and everything in it was that God may be known. Now, since the greatest indication that

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known is not knowledge of the attributes as they are in Reality, but only of them as they appear to the human mind: manifestations and revelations of God are shaped by or conform to the natures of their recipients." See Diané Collinson, Kathryn Plant, and Robert Wilkinson, *Fifty Eastern Thinkers*, 53. (For more details on the interplay between God's essence and the preparedness of the creation, see section on *huwiyya* and preparedness below.)

[307] Ibn 'Arabī, *Futūḥāt,* 6:351.

[308] It is this point that has confused many modern commentators on Ibn 'Arabī. Qaiser Shahzad, for instance, writes, "Ibn 'Arabi adopted the Mu'tazilite stance that attributes are identical with the divine essence [since] there is nothing in existence but His names." However, Ibn 'Arabī clearly states that the Names *are* the divine essence, but also *not* the divine essence. Just as the Cosmos *is* the Names and the divine essence but also not them. It is in these subtleties that Ibn 'Arabī is entirely unique and defies affiliation with any school of thought. Qaiser Shahzad, "Accommodating Trinity: A Brief Note on Ibn 'Arabi's Views."

may possibly be given to a created entity of the existence of God is existence of itself, God made our very existence a locus for His Names. He writes,

> God did not … leave any of the attributes in the Cosmos with us except in order to describe for us, through them, our creator, so that it would be clear to us that, since all these are His attributes and not ours, the attributes of the Cosmos are, in reality, *huwiyya* of the Truth and the different emanations to bring forth contingent things … so we do not doubt in what we see that it is the Truth, in terms of the signs which are between us and Him. And His *huwiyya* is our sight and our audition. We thus, do not see Him except by Him, not by our sight or audition.[309]

Ibn ʻArabī elucidates that the Cosmos is only a manifestation of the Truth and, as such, all the attributes that are expressed in it are His attributes, they do not possess these attributes intrinsically. He further explains that man is fundamentally dependent on God for His existence and He is innately independent of us. The only connection, then, between us and Him is that we have been created in His form. The reason for this is that, if we ourselves manifest the divine attributes, then we see Him through ourselves and there can be no clearer portent than this.

In this passage, Ibn ʻArabī uses *huwiyya* as a synonym of the combined divine attributes. He says that the attributes of the Cosmos are a manifestation of the attributes of God, which in turn is His *huwiyya.* Therefore, the Cosmos and everything in it, such as the faculties of sight and hearing, are actually the *huwiyya* of God. In using *huwiyya* for sight and audition, Ibn ʻArabī conveys that *huwiyya,* though more fundamentally an expression of the Names as a collective in the Cosmos, can also be used for disparate manifestations of Names, such as those that are displayed by individual entities like sight and audition. It is therefore the case that the *huwiyya* of God is expressed everywhere and in everything in the world, and the way it is perceived, is also through the *huwiyya.* This perception is most acute in the station of *huwiyya.*

[309] Ibn ʻArabī, *Futūḥāt,* 6:353.

3.2.3. The Station of *Huwiyya*

We have hitherto concentrated mainly on the manifestations of *huwiyya*, but if everything is a manifestation of the divine *huwiyya,* then the way in which God is known through the creation is also an aspect of *huwiyya*, and this gnosis is most profound in the rank of *huwiyya*, as Ibn ʻArabī informs us in the *Futūḥāt*,

> He, the Exalted, did not manifest Himself to him [i.e. Mūsā] except in the Muḥammadan form, so he saw Him in a Muḥammadan vision. And that is the most perfect vision (*akmal ru'ya*) in which the Truth may be seen, by it he [i.e. Mūsā] was raised to a station (*manzil*) which none but the Muḥammadans attain, and that is the station of *huwiyya.* So in the unseen, his sight persists … and this was the sight of Abū'l-Saʻūd ibn al-Shiblī in Bagdad who was among the principal companions of ʻAbd al-Qādir al-Jīlī.[310]

Ibn ʻArabī states that the station of *huwiyya* is one of the loftiest that may be attained, and in it the most complete divine vision may be seen.[311] This rank is usually the preserve of the Muḥammadans, but Mūsā, due to his request to see God,[312] was granted this status. By asserting here that the sight of the Muḥammadan gnostics persists in the realm of the unseen, Ibn ʻArabī refutes the notion that the unseen cannot be seen. For the gnostic, when he reaches the level of *huwiyya* in which he forges an intimate bond with the divine, sees through God. It is then that nothing of his self remains and God becomes the seer, the seen and indeed sight itself, a state to which the Andalusian Sufi alludes when he says,

> God, the Exalted, says about *huwiyya* that *He is the First and the Last.*[313] … After my coming into existence, the prayer[314] was split evenly between me and Him so there was nothing there but a worshipper. *Each one knows its*

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[310] Ibid., 6:385-6.
[311] It is asserted by some scholars that Muḥammad saw God without any veils, in a perfect vision at the time of the ascension. However, most orthodox scholars believe that this was not the case. For details of this debate, see al-Qurṭubī, *Tafsīr al-Qurṭubī,* 17:57-61.
[312] Qur'an, 7:143.
[313] Qur'an, 57:3.
[314] By "the prayer," Ibn ʻArabī refers to *sūrat al-Fātiḥā.*

> *own [manner of] prayer and praise,*[315] so he was my audition and sight. And He did not make hear save Himself so He is the First and the Last.[316]

What Ibn ʻArabī means when he refers to "seeing God" here is not the gnostic's seeing Him but God's being the sight and audition of the gnostic as nothing of the gnostic remains, so fully is he immersed in the divine. This passage is strikingly similar to the introductory part of the bezel of Ādam where Ibn ʻArabī cites the verse: *To Him the matter in its entirety shall be returned.* (To this, the author adds "as it began from Him.")[317] Both these sections asseverate that God is everything: He is the beginning and the end. Ibn ʻArabī explains the concept that the existents are receptacles which, by absorbing and emitting the Names, "worship" God. They are, therefore, nothing but what they have received.

The Muḥammadan gnostic, who has reached the station of *huwiyya,* is able to carry out this function with utmost fidelity as he is the locus of, and has the capacity to manifest all the Names. This issue is dealt with most comprehensively in the bezel of Ibrāhīm where Ibn ʻArabī states this prophet is known as *khalīl Allāh* (an intimate friend of God), not because of his devotion to Him as it is usually believed, but because of "his penetrating (*takhallul*) and encompassing everything by which the divine essence is characterised."[318] It is therefore not just an issue of the manifestation of the Names, it is the purity of this manifestation: the gnostic in the station of *huwiyya* not only manifests all the Names, he manifests them with uncompromised fealty.

3.2.4. Summary of *Huwiyya* in the *Futūḥāt*

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[315] Qur'an, 24:41. It is important to note that the verb *ʻalima* in this verse could refer to the creation (in which case the verse would be translated as I have done here), or to the Creator (in which case the translation would be: *Of each, He knows their prayer and praise*). I have chosen to translate it referring to the creation as I believe it is more consistent with Ibn ʻArabī's assertion.
[316] Ibn ʻArabī, *Futūḥāt,* 6:395.
[317] Ibn ʻArabī, *Fuṣūṣ,* 49.
[318] Ronald Nettler, *Sufi Metaphysics and Qur'ānic prothets,* 71.

It must be stressed that the forgoing in no way presumes to analyse all the facets of *huwiyya* in the *Futūḥāt*. However, it is, I believe, representative of some of the main contexts in which the term is employed. We observe that Ibn ʻArabī uses the term *huwiyya* to denote a number of different things, all these aspects of *huwiyya* are nevertheless connected and indicate different facets of God.

Ibn ʻArabī mentions that the *huwiyya* of God is the collective of all the divine Names that are manifested in the Cosmos. However, all created things also have a *huwiyya*, but this too is an expression of the divine *huwiyya* , as it is through God's essential *huwiyya* that everything has come in to existence, something to which Ibn ʻArabī repeatedly alludes. Therefore, there is an inextricable link between the divine *huwiyya* and the creational *huwiyya*: the former is the source and cause of the latter. Also, the term, when used in the context of the Names, connotes their amalgamation, which is not necessarily the case when it is applied to created beings as the creation does not usually manifest all the attributes of God. This brings us to the third manner in which the term is used: to denote the station of *huwiyya.* Ibn ʻArabī explains that though most created things do not express all the divine Names, there is one being that does: man when he has reached the station of *huwiyya,* such a man is more commonly known in the nomenclature of Ibn ʻArabī as the Perfect Man. It is only this created being that manifests all the Names and therefore his *huwiyya is* the divine *huwiyya* because in this state nothing of his self remains. This is also why his manifestation of each Name is the purest.

3.3. *Huwiyya* in the *Fuṣūṣ*: Defining the Approach

The term *huwiyya* is used many times in the *Fuṣūṣ* and in many different ways. In order to make sense of the term as employed in this work, I propose to compartmentalise the usages and view them as discreet focal points to elucidate

what Ibn ‘Arabī is immediately trying to impress on the reader by it. This analysis, superficial as it must of necessity be, will demarcate the general area of engagement vis-à-vis Ibn ‘Arabī’s *huwiyya* in the *Fuṣūṣ* such that a vague outline of the term will emerge. After this, some context will be provided by taking the treatment of *huwiyya* in one particular bezel—that of Joseph—which seems to encapsulate and exemplify the major facets of the term as defined in the rest of the work. It must be conceded, even at this early stage, that the bezel of Joseph does not, and cannot, contain all the aspects of *huwiyya* expressed in the *Fuṣūṣ* as a whole, but it is, nevertheless, useful in conveying a glimpse of the intricate matrix Ibn ‘Arabī invariably constructs with this term being one of many in a tight yet fluid system.

There are some patterns that seem to appear when *huwiyya* is analysed in the *Fuṣūṣ*, concepts and ideas that gravitate towards and orbit around this term so as to assert their inextricable connection to it. It is upon these concepts and ideas, terms, Qur’anic verses and prophetic traditions that I would like to focus. In this way, one may get a feel for what *huwiyya* means to Ibn ‘Arabī in this work and what the most immediate associations of the term are.

3.3.1. *Huwiyya* and its Synonyms

The best way, I believe, to begin to engage with this term in the *Fuṣūṣ* is to see how Ibn ‘Arabī himself defines it in his work. It has already been mentioned that Ibn ‘Arabī offers a terse definition of the term in the *Rasā’il*; however, a more thorough definition may be gleaned from the *Fuṣūṣ* itself in the form of synonyms and what these actually convey in the context of the passage in which they feature. We begin our analysis of the synonyms of *huwiyya* with the term *‘ayn* (essence).

3.3.1.1. *Huwiyya* and *‘Ayn*

'Ayn (essence) is a term that is used synonymously with *huwiyya* on multiple occasions in the *Fuṣūṣ.* Ibn 'Arabī writes,

> All the divine Names are ranked in terms of the precedence of one over another. Likewise, are the differing ranks of what is manifested in creation, such that it may be said, "This [person] is more knowledgeable than that [person], despite the unification of the essence (*aḥadiyyat al-'ayn*). And just as when you give precedence to one divine Name, you call it and describe it by all the Names, likewise is [the case for] that which is manifested in creation: it has the capacity to be [called by] everything over which it is superior.[319] So every part of the Cosmos is the whole Cosmos, that is, it accepts the fragmented realities of the whole Cosmos. Thus, us saying, "Zayd is less knowledgeable than 'Amr" does not contradict the *huwiyya* of *al-Ḥaqq* being the entity (*'ayn*) of Zayd and 'Amr, but it is more perfect (*akmal*) and knowledgeable in 'Amr than in Zayd, just as the divine Names are of differing ranks but are not other than *al-Ḥaqq*.[320]

There are many things that need to be addressed in this illuminating passage. Firstly, Ibn 'Arabī states that the *huwiyya* of God is the essence of the created manifestations of that *huwiyya.* It is clear from the passage that Ibn 'Arabī denotes the divine Names, viewed as a collective, by *huwiyya*. In other words, the combined Names of God are the essence of the phenomenal manifestation of those Names in the sensible world. This makes perfect sense in Ibn 'Arabī's conception of the formation of the Cosmos. Moreover, the categorical synonymy of the two terms (*huwiyya* and *'ayn*) is on full display such that one could be substituted for the other in both cases without any alteration in meaning. Indeed, Ibn 'Arabī does at times refer to man as the *huwiyya* of God.[321] We see, then, that *huwiyya* is *'ayn* and *'ayn, huwiyya* when *huwiyya* connotes the unified entity of all the divine Names. This means that the two are interchangeable, but also that this interchangeability is without a distinction. Whereas there are times when, though the terms are ostensibly

[319] For an excellent analysis of the concept of a superior Name incorporating all the Names below it, see Toshihiko Izutsu, *Sufism and Taoism*, 99-107, 106-107.
[320] Ibn 'Arabī, *Fuṣūṣ,* 153.
[321] See below.

interchangeable, there remains a distinction between them, as we shall have occasion to see later.

The second thing that must be noted is that, on a more general level, this passage elucidates the duality inherent in *huwiyya* of, firstly, the Names and then, the existents, as manifestations and loci of those Names. Ibn ʻArabī uses the term "unification of the essence" (*aḥadiyyat al-ʻayn*) to explicate this duality. This expression, like all in Ibn ʻArabī's writings, is deliberately selected as implicit within *aḥadiyya* (unity) is multiplicity—the coming together of disparate entities. Thus, Ibn ʻArabī states that the Names operate on two levels: on the lower level, they are discrete forces that are expressed in the sensible world as individual existents. However, even in this a higher Name incorporates a lower one and its corresponding locus manifests the lower Names.[322] Viewed on a more rarefied level, though, they all allude to and are part of the divine *huwiyya,* just as the existents emanating from them are also the *huwiyya,* which is why "every part of the Cosmos is the whole Cosmos (*ʻālam*)." The only difference, then, between the manifestation of one Name and that of more than one, is the level of perfection (*kamāl*) with which they communicate the *huwiyya* of God. However, Ibn ʻArabī does not see this duality as a true duality since the existents in the Cosmos are simply an unavoidable consequence of the Names.

In the bezel of Yūnus, Ibn ʻArabī again refers to the aforementioned rarefied level of *huwiyya.* He comments,

> So nothing proceeds from Him that is not His entity (*ʻayn*), rather, His *huwiyya* is the entity (*ʻayn*) of that thing and it is what reveals to him [i.e.

[322] See Izutsu, *Sufism,* 104-107.

> the gnostic, the meaning] of His saying, *And to Him the matter in its entirety shall be returned.*[323]

Ibn ʻArabī states here that everything in the Cosmos is the essence and *huwiyya* of God because they are manifestations of God's Names. This is precisely why "*to Him the matter in its entirety shall be returned*" because they are nothing but He. Ibn ʻArabī clearly denotes the known God in the form of the Names by his designation of *huwiyya.* It is worth mentioning that, although the *huwiyya* refers to all the Names collectively, the existents that manifest just one of the Names are still said to be God's *huwiyya* as, through the manifestation of one Name, they allude to all of them.

It is clear from the foregoing that Ibn ʻArabī defines *huwiyya* as the combination of all the divine Names, viewed as a whole, and uses *ʻayn* as its synonym in many places. What is also apparent is that, though *huwiyya* refers to all the Names, just one Name, or the phenomenal manifestation of one Name, may also be called *huwiyya* as they allude to the entire *huwiyya.* Furthermore, although Ibn ʻArabī uses *huwiyya* and *ʻayn* in two modes in the aforementioned examples, he does not use them to denote the unknowable God.[324] There are, nevertheless, places where he does employ *huwiyya* to denote the unknowable God and uses *dhāt* (essence) as its synonym.

3.3.1.2. *Huwiyya* and *Dhāt*

Dhāt (essence) is another synonym of *huwiyya* in the *Fuṣūṣ.* The most striking example of this is in the bezel of Shuʻayb, where Ibn ʻArabī remarks,

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[323] Ibn ʻArabī, *Fuṣūṣ,* 170.

[324] It may be remarked here that, in Greek Philosophy, the unknowability of God is a concept that occurs first in Philo, according to Wolfson. He states that, "It was introduced by Philo as a philosophic inference from the scriptural teaching of the unlikeness of God." Wolfson, "Philosophical Implications of the Problem of Divine Attributes in the *Kalam*," 76.

> *Al-Ḥaqq* has two kinds of manifestations (*tajalliyāt*): a manifestation of the unseen and a manifestation of the seen. From the manifestation of the unseen is bestowed the preparedness (*isti'dād*) upon which is the heart, and it is the manifestation of the [divine] essence *(dhāt)* whose reality is to be hidden, and it is the *huwiyya* which He affirms as being necessary of Himself by His saying "*He*" about Himself.[325]

In this passage, Ibn 'Arabī refers to the two aspects of God—the unknowable, remote God, and the known God manifest and immanent in the Cosmos. He writes that it is the unseen God, that is, the unknowable God who bestows the preparedness (*isti'dād*) upon the heart of the gnostic. The preparedness, thus, comes directly from this remote God who bestows it so that man can be a locus for His Names.[326]

Ibn 'Arabī unequivocally states that it is this God—the God who bestows the preparedness, the God who is unseen and unrepresented in the Cosmos—whose "essence *(dhāt)* is to be hidden," and this is His *huwiyya.* This corresponds perfectly with Ibn 'Arabī's definition of *huwiyya* in the *Rasā'il* where he states that *huwiyya* is "The Reality in the realm of the unseen (*'ālam al-ghayb*)."[327] However, now we are given more insight in to what "realm of the unseen" means. For it is not simply any and all pre-phenomenal realms that act as precursors to the phenomenal one, it is actually the realm of the Absolute—God in His incomprehensible reality. The *huwiyya* and *dhāt* of God, Ibn 'Arabī states in this section, is His remote self "whose reality is to be hidden" as it cannot be manifested or even comprehended by the conditional.[328] It is this that He has necessitated upon Himself "by His saying '*He*'," that is, by declaring His absolute oneness and asserting His absolute existence

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[325] Ibn 'Arabī, *Fuṣūṣ,* 120.
[326] For an insightful analysis of this concept see Nettler, *Sufi Metaphysics,* 114-136, 124-25.
[327] Ibn 'Arabī, *Rasā'il Ibn 'Arabī*, 538.
[328] It cannot be comprehended by the existents as "Duality is inherent in speech and rational thought. We affirm God's unity-*tawḥīd*-but in doing so we establish the reality of duality, since it is we who speak." And on this rarefied level, there is no duality. (Sachiko Murata, *The Tao of Islam*, 49.)

(*wujūd muṭlaq*), as opposed to the contingent existence (*wujūd muqayyad*) of everything else. This is His unseen reality—His true reality.

Two things of immense importance emerge from this passage: the use of *dhāt* and *huwiyya* to denote the unknowable, remote God when previously *huwiyya* was used to connote the known God through all His Names; and *huwiyya* and *dhāt* referring, as a corollary of this, to absolute existence in contradistinction to contingent existence. Furthermore, from Ibn ʻArabī's definition in the *Rasā'il,* we deduce that this—the unknowable, absolutely existent God—is the primary signification of *huwiyya,* as it is the one Ibn ʻArabī solely identifies in his terse definition.

It is readily observable how Ibn ʻArabī uses linguistic ambiguity to create conceptual abstruseness by enlisting the same terms in the service of entirely different notions. Indeed, in the bezel of Hūd, Ibn ʻArabī again speaks of *huwiyya* and the divergent preparedness of men, but this time the emphasis is very different. He writes,

> Know that the knowledge of the divine through [spiritual] tasting (*al-ʻulūm al-ilāhiyya al-dhawqiyya*) received by the people of God, the Exalted, is different in accordance with differing abilities received by it [i.e. the divine tasting] even though it returns to one essence. For God, the Exalted, says, "I am his hearing through which he hears, his sight through which he sees, his hand through which he grasps, his foot through which he walks."[329] So He mentioned that His *huwiyya* is the limbs themselves which are the servant himself. The *huwiyya,* therefore, is one but the limbs many.[330]

The knowledge of the divine through [spiritual] tasting (*al-ʻulūm al-ilāhiyya al-dhawqiyya*) to which Ibn ʻArabī refers seems not to be the knowledge of the remote God that is intuited by the gnostic as it was in the previous passage, even though Ibn ʻArabī suggests that it is different for each gnostic in accordance with his

[329] Al-Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ,* 81:38.
[330] Ibn ʻArabī, *Fuṣūṣ,* 107.

capability or preparedness. This knowledge appears to be the potentiality to bypass the sensible realities of the world to intuit the underlying reality behind it: God. Therefore, it is the ability to see the world as a manifestation of the Names of God. Ibn ʻArabī claims that each gnostic is able to do this to a different degree. This reading of the passage is buttressed by the prophetic tradition Ibn ʻArabī believes underscores his point, for in it God states that He is the limbs of His servant, to which Ibn ʻArabī appends, "So He mentioned that His *huwiyya* is the limbs themselves which are the servant himself. The *huwiyya,* therefore, is one but the limbs many." Ibn ʻArabī thus explains that though the limbs of men are many, they are all naught save various manifestations of the divine *huwiyya,* that is, loci of His Names.[331]

What surfaces from the analysis of these two passages is that there are two types of preparedness and correspondingly, two types of *huwiyya*: the preparedness to intuit the remote God, God in His absoluteness—a rank only the most adept Sufi who has arrived at the highest echelons of gnosis can perceive, and its analogous

[331] However, such is the linguistic ambiguity in this passage that it could also refer to the remote God. For if we suppose that the knowledge that is bequeathed in accordance with "differing abilities" or preparednesses is that of intuiting the remote God, and it is this knowledge that returns to one entity (*ʻayn*)— *ʻayn* naturally being used here to denote the unknowable God—then the passage almost completely mirrors its Shuʻaybian counterpart. However, then Ibn ʻArabī cites the tradition that asserts man as a manifestation of God's Names, that is, the known God, concluding the analysis with the statement, "The *huwiyya,* therefore, is one but the limbs many," meaning the *huwiyya,* as a symbol for all the Names is one, but the sensible manifestations of that *huwiyya* are many.

It thus transpires that Ibn ʻArabī begins the section discussing the remote God, using "entity" (*ʻayn*) as a means of articulating it, but then speaks about the known God, seemingly in order to explain the point he raised about the unknown God. The contradiction, I believe, is caused by the interpretation of the role the prophetic tradition plays in this passage, for if it is assumed that it is employed in a literal manner, as would be the most apparent reading, then it can only refer to the known God. And since the first section refers to the unknown God—there would a profound discrepancy which cannot be reconciled.

However, if we proceed conceptually, a clearer image develops. Ibn ʻArabī comments that (1) the knowledge of the remote God is known to Gnostics in accordance with their preparedness. (2) This knowledge, though different for each Gnostic, pertains to the same essence, that is, the same remote God. (3) This is like the prophetic tradition where God compares Himself to the various limbs of man. (4) The *huwiyya* is one but the limbs are many. Framed in this way, it becomes clear that Ibn ʻArabī does not use the tradition in a literal sense but rather in an analogical fashion—to show that different aspects can refer to the same reality. Specifically, to explain that the differing levels of intuition of the different Gnostics vis-à-vis the unknowable God still refer to the same remote God.

huwiyya denoting the unknowable God. This is the most fundamental signification of *huwiyya,* as mentioned earlier. But then there is another, secondary preparedness and its complementary *huwiyya*—the ability to glimpse the world as it truly is, that is, as a manifestation of the Names of God, by circumventing the ostensible façade of the material world. The *huwiyya*, in this case, is an aggregate of all the divine Names. This theme is revisited by Ibn ʻArabī in the bezel of ʻĪsā, where Ibn ʻArabī uses another term, *nafs* (self), interchangeably with *huwiyya.* It is to this term that we now turn our attention.

3.3.1.3. *Huwiyya* and *Nafs*

The prognostication of a conversation that will take place on the Day of Judgment between ʻĪsā and God[332] forms the backdrop for the synonymy between these two terms. In the Qur'an, God interrogates ʻĪsā as to whether he instructed his followers to worship himself and his mother as gods. To this ʻĪsā replies,

> *If I had said it, You would have known it,* because You are the speaker, and whoever says a thing surely knows what he is saying, and You are the tongue with which I speak, as the Messenger of God, peace and blessings be upon him, informed us from his Lord in the divine traditions, when he said, "I am his tongue with which he speaks."[333] So He makes His *huwiyya* the very tongue of the speaker but attributes the speech to His servant. Then when the righteous servant completed his response by saying, *You know what is in my nafs (self),* the speaker is God, "and I do not know what is in it." So the negation of knowledge vis-à-vis the *huwiyya* of ʻĪsā is in terms of *huwiyya,* not in terms of his being a speaker or one possessing [the ability to produce] an effect (*athar*).[334]

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[332] It is interesting to note that this conversation occurs in the past tense in the Qur'an thereby underscoring its inevitability. See al-Qurṭubī, *Tafsīr,* 6:241.
[333] Al-Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ,* 81:38.
[334] Ibn ʻArabī, *Fuṣūṣ,* 146. One notes that in this passage Ibn ʻArabī contrasts *huwiyya* with *athar.* ʻĪsā does not know what is in his *huwiyya,* but he knows, and is responsible for, his actions and the effects of those actions. Ibn ʻArabī uses the term *athar* to refer to the effects left behind by ʻĪsā. These effects allude to ʻĪsā's existence as *athar* denotes the "remnant of something." (Muḥammad ibn Manẓūr, *Līsān al-ʻArab*, 1:69.) However, ʻĪsā's existence itself alludes to God's existence as he is a manifestation of and a locus for His Names. In this sense, ʻĪsā is an *athar* of God. Ibn ʻArabī's outlook is entirely Qur'anic as God declares in the Qur'an, *We shall show them Our signs on the horizons and*

The significance of the role played by the prophetic tradition in which God states that He is the limbs of His servants in the context of *huwiyya* is becoming all too apparent, nor is this surprising as it is the clearest articulation of the unity between God and man. One notes how seamlessly Ibn ʻArabī alters the role of God from observer, in the literal reading of the Qur'an, to agent, in his conceptual outlook. ʻIsā, in his defence, claims that God would surely have known if he had made claims of being divine as He is witness to everything. But Ibn ʻArabī takes this further and affirms that God's knowledge is more robust than this, as He *was* the speaker. If this is the case, then why question ʻIsā about this at all? Ibn ʻArabī responds, "He makes His *huwiyya* the very tongue of the speaker but attributes the speech to His servant." Therefore, though God's *huwiyya* is the organ of speech, the speech itself is attributed to ʻIsā and it is about this attribution that he is questioned.[335]

After this, Ibn ʻArabī cites ʻIsā's reply: *You know what is in my nafs (self).* However, by way of commentary, he adds, "And I do not know what is in it." This attachment closely mimics the Qur'anic verse of *And I do not know what is in Yours,*[336] but the meaning is entirely different. For Ibn ʻArabī does not follow the Qur'anic argument in which ʻIsā claims that he is innocent of the charge levelled against him of claiming divinity for himself and his mother and God knows this as He knows everything, including what is hidden in the deepest recesses of his self, whereas he does not have the same knowledge about God. Instead, according to Ibn ʻArabī, ʻIsā is expounding the nature of his lack of knowledge. He says that he does

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within themselves until it will be manifest unto them that He is the Truth. (Qur'an, 44:53). Hence, Īsā is a sign of God's existence as he is His *athar*.

[335] For more detail on the ostensible dichotomy between God being the sole agent and the paradigm of reward and punishment, see section on *ṣūra*.

[336] Qur'an 5:116.

not know what is in his own self. Ibn ʻArabī then further clarifies this by his statement, "So the negation of knowledge vis-à-vis the *huwiyya* of ʻIsā is in terms of *huwiyya,* not in terms of his being a speaker or one possessing [the ability to produce] an effect (*athar*)." This means that ʻIsā is claiming not to know his *nafs* while God knows it as it is His *huwiyya*. This absolves ʻIsā from any wrongdoing as it was God who was the sole agent, with the role of ʻIsā being demoted to that of an unwitting locus of divine manifestation, one who did not even know what his own self was.

This, however, poses the question: If ʻIsā, who is one of the most revered prophets, does not know his *nafs,* then what is the meaning of Ibn ʻArabī's favoured prophetic tradition: *whoever knows his nafs, knows his Lord*? The answer lies in what Ibn ʻArabī himself says about this tradition and its relationship with *huwiyya* in the bezel of Shuʻayb. Ibn ʻArabī comments,

> So whoever knows himself knows his lord, and his self (*nafs*) is nothing but the *huwiyya* of *al-Ḥaqq*, and there is nothing of the *kawn*[337] that is, or will be, without the *huwiyya* of *al-Ḥaqq*, rather, it is the *huwiyya* itself. So He is perceived, known and established (*muqirr*)[338] in this form (*ṣūra*), [but] also not perceived, unknown and not established (*munakkar*) in this form.[339]

In this passage, we get the clearest indication of the synonymy between *huwiyya* and *nafs.* Ibn ʻArabī unequivocally avers that "his self (*nafs*) is nothing but the *huwiyya* of *al-Ḥaqq*." Furthermore, we are told that not only is the *nafs* the

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[337] *Kawn* is a term that is integral to Ibn ʻArabī's conceptual outlook. Man is the *kawn jāmiʻ,* the all-encompassing being, the one who embodies all the divine Names. Ibn ʻArabī uses this term to denote any and all manifestations of God. In this regard, he does not veer too far from the literal signification of the term, for as Aḥmad ibn Fāris (d. 395/1005?) notes, "Everything that will be, or is, is a *kawn* if it occurs or comes." (Aḥmad ibn Fāris, *Muʻjam maqāyīs al-lugha*, 5:148.) In Ibn ʻArabī's semantic *Weltanschauung*, everything that is a result of God's ontological mercy is a *kawn,* as affirmed by al-Jurjānī (d. 816/1413?) who remarks that "according to the gnostics, *al-kawn* is a term for the emergence of the Cosmos." (Al-Jurjānī, *Kitāb al-taʻrīfāt,* 197.)

[338] This means a camel whole pregnancy is established, according to Lane. (Lane, *Arabic Lexicon* 2: 2502.) Ibn ʻArabī seems to be using it in the sense of *muqarrar,* that is, "established" or "settled," as evidenced by its antonym being *munakkar*.

[339] Ibn ʻArabī, *Fuṣūṣ,* 122-23.

huwiyya of God, but *everything* is a *huwiyya* of God. This is an unmistakable reference to the *huwiyya* of God being an aggregate of all the divine Names that are manifested in the sensible world. Every *nafs,* indeed, every *thing*, then, is a *huwiyya* of God, which shows that the term *huwiyya,* though most commonly referring to all the divine Names as a collective, may also refer to individual Names as one Name alludes to all the Names.

Ibn ʻArabī continues, "So He is perceived, known and established (*muqirr*) in this form (*ṣūra*)"[340] as His *huwiyya* is manifested in the form of existents. This is the passive reading of the text, which I believe is closer to Ibn ʻArabī's intended meaning. The active reading would be: "So He is the gnostic, the knower and known[341] in this form." As is evident, the general signification in both readings is largely the same: God is everything, as everything is a manifestation of His Names. ʻĪsā, being a noble prophet and a gnostic naturally knows this, as this is known by all gnostics.

However, Ibn ʻArabī goes on to say, "[But] He is also not perceived, unknown and not established (*munakkar*) in this form."[342] God, that is, the remote God, the true God, therefore, is not perceived or known in the Cosmos, and He is not any of the existents, as nothing can even fathom Him. In this statement we find the solution to Ibn ʻArabī's interpretation of ʻĪsā's response. He believes that ʻĪsā retorted by saying that God knows what is in his self, while he did not because if he knew his *nafs,* he would know God as knowing one leads to knowing the other. But

[340] For a full discussion on *ṣūra,* see below.
[341] I have, in imitation of Ronald Nettler (*Sufi Metaphysics,* 133) translated *muqirr* as "known" even though this is far from the literal meaning of the term since the meaning Ibn ʻArabī seeks to convey is best expressed by it. This is apparent from the antonym of *muqirr* being *munkar*, and the overall context.
[342] This is again, if the passive reading is preferred. The active reading would be: "While [also] not being the gnostic, not the knower and unknown in another form." Both readings have the same overall meaning.

this is only possible in the context of the known God and knowing Him through His loci in the sensible world, or seeing through the ostentation of creation to the Names of God of which they are an expression. This is the preserve of the gnostics.

ʿIsā, conversely, says that he does not know his *nafs* because he is referring to the way in which God is not known in the Cosmos. Ibn ʿArabī clarifies this when he comments that ʿIsā's lack of knowledge is "in terms of *huwiyya,* not in terms of him being a speaker or one possessing [the ability to produce] an effect (*athar*)," that is, it is in terms of God's absolute, remote existence and not His sensible representation in the world, about which ʿIsā has knowledge.

ʿIsā claims that he does not know God as He is unknowable; however, he does intuit Him as do the most adept among the gnostics—those who have attained the highest ranks of gnosis. In this sense, *not* knowing God is a higher station of gnosis than knowing Him because one knows God through His Names, which is not the true God, but one does not know the true, remote God; and not knowing Him does not mean one cannot intuit Him, for this is precisely why the heart of the gnostic, according to Ibn ʿArabī, is even more comprehensive than God's mercy—it intuits His absolute reality whereas His ontological mercy can only bring forth creation as a manifestation of His Names, which is not His true essence.[343]

The foregoing illustrates the outright synonymy between the terms *nafs* and *huwiyya*, as deployed by Ibn ʿArabī. Not only do both terms denote the unification of the Names—the way in which God is known in the Cosmos, but they betray the remote God's true essence—the way in which He is not known. It now behoves us to

[343] For more details on the heart of the gnostic being more comprehensive than the mercy of God, see Nettler, *Sufi Metaphysics,* 114-137.

inspect a term that is very closely related to *nafs*; indeed, it is used interchangeably with it many times. This term is *rūḥ* (spirit).[344]

3.3.1.4. *Huwiyya* and *Rūḥ*

In the bezel of Ayyūb the best example of the relationship between *huwiyya* and *rūḥ* (spirit) is presented. Here Ibn ʻArabī explains the nature of God in the following way:

> *Al-Ḥaqq*, if you consider Him in His transcendence from the Cosmos, then He is far too exalted to have this attribute in this way.[345] [But] if *al-Ḥaqq* is the *huwiyya* of the Cosmos, then all the determinations do not come except from Him and in Him, and that is His saying, *And to Him the matter returns in its entirety,* [346] in reality (*ḥaqīqatan*) and through spiritual unveiling (*kashfan*). *So worship Him and in Him trust,*[347] through veiling and concealment. For there is nothing in the plane of possibility (*imkān*) more wonderful (*abdaʻ*) than this Cosmos because it is in the form of the Compassionate (*al-Raḥmān*). God created it, that is, His, be He exalted, existence was manifest through the manifestation of the Cosmos, just as man is manifested through the existence of his natural form (*al-ṣūra al-ṭabīʻiyya*). So we are His outward form (*ṣūratuh al-ẓāhira*) and His *huwiyya* is the spirit (*rūḥ*) of this form which regulates it. The regulation, thus, cannot be but in Him, just as it cannot be but from Him. He is therefore, *the First,*[348] in essence (*bi'l-maʻnā*); *and the Last,* in form (*bi'l-ṣūra*); and He is *the Manifest,* through the changes in determinations (*aḥkām*) and states (*aḥwāl*); *and the Hidden,* in governance.[349]

This passage furnishes us with a terse summary of Ibn ʻArabī's ideas regarding God and His relationship with the creation. He begins by questioning the conventional wisdom that God is either pleased or angered by the actions of men, but not both. He remarks that since pleasure is the antithesis of anger and anger the antithesis of pleasure, the two are generally thought to be mutually exclusive.

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[344] See al-Qurṭubī's commentary of verse 39:42 in which he does not even acknowledge that there is a difference between the two, assuming absolute identity between them.
[345] The attribute to which Ibn ʻArabī refers is that of either being pleased with someone or being angry at him, as is clear from the context.
[346] Qur'an, 11:123.
[347] Ibid.
[348] Qur'an, 57:3.
[349] Ibn ʻArabī, *Fuṣūṣ,* 172-73.

However, this would mean that everything is not God—something Ibn ʻArabī vehemently denies. The only solution, therefore, is relativity—anger is the relative preponderance of anger over pleasure and vice versa. This means that though God is everything, He is relatively angry or pleased with man because of his actions—the paradigm of reward and punishment is maintained,[350] if mitigated (which is why Ibn ʻArabī argues that the people of hell shall eventually enjoy God's pleasure).[351]

In the first sentence of the citation above, Ibn ʻArabī cautions against a simplistic view of God in which He is just angry or just pleased because this is the preserve of the existents; God transcends such binary categorisations. He goes on to say that God is everything "in reality" (*haqīqatan*) and "through spiritual unveiling" (*kashfan*), that is to say, God is everything in reality and the gnostics perceive this underlying truth through their spiritual unveiling. He continues, "*So worship Him and in Him trust,* through veiling and concealment." Here Ibn ʻArabī contrasts what God is in reality and how this reality is perceived through spiritual unveiling with the way in which He should be worshipped. In essence, what Ibn ʻArabī instructs is that though God is everything and the gnostics know this, courtesy of their spiritual insight, He should be worshipped as the one true God—alone and transcendent. This is worshipping Him "through veiling and concealment;" that is, veiling and concealing the true reality of God. For none but the gnostics fathom the real nature of God, of His being everything, and thus most people do not have the capacity to worship God in this way. The gnostics, too, must follow this path for fear of corrupting the masses. In this way the status quo of worship and obedience, of

[350] For an overview of Ibn ʻArabī's eschatology, see Chittick, "Death and the World of Imagination," in which the author argues the essential orthodoxy of Ibn ʻArabī's eschatological outlook.
[351] Ibn ʻArabī, *Fuṣūṣ,* 172. See also Chittick, "Death and the World of Imagination," 77-80.

reward and punishment is maintained, even though the reality of God, according to Ibn ʻArabī, is very different.

Next, Ibn ʻArabī reaffirms the concept of God being everything. He writes, "For there is nothing in the plane of possibility (*imkān*) more wonderful (*abdaʻ*) than this Cosmos because it is in the form of the Compassionate (*al-Raḥmān*)." It is interesting to note that Ibn ʻArabī uses the term "more wonderful" (*abdaʻ*) which is the same term that denotes "more original." In other words, the Cosmos is the most wonderful and most original creation because it is a locus for the manifestation of the Name "the Compassionate" (*al-Raḥmān*), under which all other divine Names are subsumed.[352] Ibn ʻArabī gives the analogy of man's corporeal form, his "natural form" (*al-ṣūra al-ṭabīʻiyya*) in relation to his spirit and remarks that this is the position the Cosmos occupies in relation to God's *huwiyya*. He continues,

> So we are His outward form (*ṣūratuh al-ẓāhira*) and His *huwiyya* is the spirit (*rūḥ*) of this form which regulates it. The regulation, thus, cannot be but in Him, just as it cannot be but from Him.

The relationship between the outward form and the *huwiyya* is therefore twofold: firstly, the outer form, that is, the Cosmos, manifests the *huwiyya* (and by *huwiyya* is meant a combination of all the divine Names, or just the Name, *al-Raḥmān,* which would still constitute all the Names as all are incorporated in it) and it is regulated by the *huwiyya*, just as the body is regulated and controlled by the spirit (*rūḥ*). This means that, not only is the *huwiyya* the cause of all the phenomenal manifestations in the world, it is also the cause of all the actions, as the actions of the loci of the Names themselves are also determined by the *huwiyya.*

[352] See Izutsu, *Sufism and Taoism*, 99-107.

The *rūḥ* is identical to the *huwiyya,* as a symbol of all the Names in this passage,[353] but this is only in the context of the analogy Ibn ʻArabī deploys. This means that though there is interchangeability between the terms, a distinction remains. However, Ibn ʻArabī asserts that both terms are exactly the same in the manner in which they interact with their outer forms. He concludes his analysis with a commentary of the most famous verse of *sūrat al-Ḥadīd*,[354] which is a reiteration of everything he has said before.

3.3.1.5. Summary of *Huwiyya* and its Synonyms

Analysis of the synonyms of *huwiyya* has broadened our understanding of the ways in which Ibn ʻArabī uses this term. The following conclusions may be gleaned from the foregoing:

1. The fundamental signification of *huwiyya* is the remote God—unknowable to the existents who cannot even fathom Him. The only slight exceptions to this are the most advanced gnostics who intuit God. A necessary consequence of this is the allusion of *huwiyya* to absolute existence of God, as opposed to contingent existence of the Cosmos.

2. *Huwiyya* refers, secondarily, to the divine Names as a collective. However, though *huwiyya* refers to all the Names, just one Name, or the phenomenal manifestation of one Name, may also be called *huwiyya* as it alludes to the entire *huwiyya. Huwiyya,* therefore, operates on two levels: the lower level is

[353] For terms as symbols denoting a combination of things, see Daniel Madigan, *The Qur'an's Self Image: Writing and Authority in Islam's Scripture.*

[354] This verse has much mystical significance and has been used by Sufis throughout the ages as a conduit to understanding the nature of God. It could be that its significance is due to the tradition which states that the Prophet used to recite the *musabbiḥāt* (i.e. *ṣūras* that begin by praising God) before he slept and remarked that there is a verse among them that is better than a thousand verses. ʻImād al-Dīn Ismāʻīl ibn Kathīr avers the verse to which the Prophet alluded is this verse. (See Ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr al-Qur'ān al-ʻaẓīm*, 4:387.)

the *huwiyya* of one Name that is manifested in the Cosmos by one thing. This thing, by its existence, indicates the higher *huwiyya* of all the Names viewed as a whole.

3. The relationship between the Cosmos and the *huwiyya* is twofold: firstly, the Cosmos manifests the *huwiyya*, which is the unification of all the Names or just one Name, but it is also controlled by the *huwiyya.* So the *huwiyya* is not just the phenomenal manifestation of the Names, it is the actions of the Names as well.

Fundamentally, from all this we have learned that *huwiyya* is God in all His aspects, in all His forms, and all His manifestations in different planes of existence. This is why the meaning of *huwiyya* drifts and changes from one passage to another because the articulation of each facet of God is different. However, this does not mean that *huwiyya* cannot be defined, or that it has no central meaning. On the contrary, the basic meaning of *huwiyya* is defined, and this definition is supplied by none other than Ibn ʻArabī himself in the *Rasā'il.* The difficulty in defining *huwiyya* stems, not from its lack of definition or central meaning, but from that *meaning* being impossible to express. For the basic meaning of the term is God, the incomprehensible, God in His true essence. This is the *huwiyya* of God. But this means nothing intrinsically because it is beyond the ken of human encompassment. Therefore, the term is further applied to an amalgamation of all the Names. In other words, a God that man can know, talk about and forge a relationship with. The most articulate definition is then the Cosmos, which is a manifestation of and a locus for the Names—something everyone can palpably relate to.

This means that the most accurate definition of *huwiyya,* which is the

unknowable God, is the least defined; and the most diffuse definition, which is the tertiary definition of the Cosmos as a manifestation of the Names, becomes the most defined, since it is a means of us comprehending God. They are the Names of God we know and relate to the most as it *is* us, and everything around us. So there is no dualism, on the most basic level, between the synonyms and antonyms of God as all is God, just not the true God.

We shall now proceed to the antonyms of *huwiyya* in order to excavate other nuances of this term.

3.3.2. *Huwiyya* and its Antonyms

Antonyms are very useful as they serve to exclude certain assumptions that may have been made about complex and multi-faceted terms such as *huwiyya.* In defining what something is not, we learn, to an extent, what it is. This is especially important in terms that change guises many times and operate on different levels simultaneously as we have shown *huwiyya* does in the *Fuṣūṣ.* Through the use of antonyms we can further hone our understanding of *huwiyya* by further delineating it.

3.3.2.1. *Huwiyya* and the Divine Names

Scrutiny of the synonyms of *huwiyya* has shown that the term is often used to denote either all the divine Names as a collective—its most frequent usage, or to denote a single Name, in which case the Name acts as a means of alluding to all the Names. However, the foregoing analysis has also conveyed that the most basic meaning of *huwiyya* is the remote, unknowable God. If this is the case, then there must be some opposition between *huwiyya,* a term for the unknowability of God, and the Names, which seek to define Him. Indeed, this is the case, which is why the

most fundamental antonym of *huwiyya* is the divine Names, in consequence of the central meaning of *huwiyya* being the unknowable God. We thus have a situation where both *huwiyya* and the divine Names denote both their original meanings and their antonyms simultaneously.

Let us look at how the Names function as the antonym of *huwiyya*, and what this tells us. The clearest example of the antinomy between the two is given in the bezel of Nūḥ. Ibn ʻArabī comments,

> *And they conceived a mighty plot,*[355] for the call to God, the Exalted, is deception played on the one called as He is not absent at the beginning such that he may call [to Him] to a destination. So this is the deception itself, *with insight*,[356] so He informed him that the matter is for Him in its entirety. They therefore responded with deception as he called them thus. And the Muḥammadan knows that the call to God is not in terms of His *huwiyya*, it is only in terms of His Names. He said, *On the Day We shall gather the God-fearing to the Compassionate as a (goodly) band,* so it is [written] with a particle of goal (*ḥarf al-ghāya*)[357] and connected with a Name, so we know that the Cosmos is under the provident care of a divine Name which makes it incumbent upon them to be God-fearing.[358]

According to Ibn ʻArabī, the people of Nūḥ rejected his call to worshipping the transcendental God as they were proponents of comparability and the distance between his notion of unmitigated transcendence and their categorical immanence was too great. Here Ibn ʻArabī interprets the Qur'anic verse, *And they conceived a mighty plot,* as a retaliatory plot due to Nūḥ's initial "deception" in calling them to just transcendence. However, Ibn ʻArabī is not censuring Nūḥ for his call as he says, "The call to God, the Exalted, is deception played on the one called as He is not absent at the beginning such that he may call [to Him] to a destination." In other

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[355] Qur'an, 71:22.
[356] Ibid., 12:108.
[357] The particle of goal (*ḥarf al-ghāya*) here refers to the word '*ilā*' (to) which, grammatically, denotes, "in the direction of, toward … a direction, a goal, or an obtainable end." (Fischer, *A Grammar*, 164, n. 303.)
[358] Ibn ʻArabī, *Fuṣūṣ,* 71-72.

words, *any* call to God is a deception because the call is to a deity that is everything and everywhere, even as the term "call" implies directional specificity, as is evident in Nūḥ's statement, "I call *to* God" (*ad'ū ilā Allāh*).[359]

Another reason Ibn 'Arabī does not reproach Nūḥ for the nature of his call is because he acknowledges that this was not something he did out of folly but rather *with insight,* when God had "informed him that the matter is for Him in its entirety."[360] So Nūḥ knew the dual nature of God: His transcendence *and* His immanence, and it is precisely because of this that he invited his people to God in the manner he did.[361] His call, emphasising transcendence, was a consequence of their insistence on immanence, and their steadfast rejection of the call was a consequence of the nature of Nūḥ's call. Things, therefore, could not have been otherwise. This is not a rebuke of Nūḥ, it is a simply a statement about the way things were.

This preface was necessary to contextualise the next sentence which, for our purposes, is the main part of the whole passage. After detailing the reaction of Nūḥ's people to his call, Ibn 'Arabī comments, "And the Muḥammadan knows that the call to God is not in terms of His *huwiyya*, it is only in terms of His Names."[362] In this there is a subtle reproach of Nūḥ's people, for Ibn 'Arabī insinuates that had Nūḥ called the Muḥammadan in the same manner as he did his people, he would have responded to his call as he knows that "the call to God is not in terms of His *huwiyya*, it is only in terms of His Names,"[363] that is to say, he would have known

[359] Ibid., 72.
[360] Ibn 'Arabī, *Fuṣūṣ,* 72.
[361] Maḥmūd Ghurāb comments that Ibn 'Arabī always emphasises both the transcendence and immanence of God, and this is why his works are in conformity with the canonical texts of Islam. See Maḥmūd Ghurāb, *Sharḥ Fuṣūṣ*, 8-9.
[362] Ibn 'Arabī, *Fuṣūṣ,* 72.
[363] Ibid.

that the call, must of necessity accentuate transcendence even as he accepts God's immanence. The reason for this is that the call to God must have an inherent element of direction—it must guide *to* something, just as God says in the Qur'an that He shall gather the God-fearing *to* the Compassionate. This verse exemplifies a directional quality and the gathering being *to* a Name of God. Ibn 'Arabī then concludes by saying, "So we know that the Cosmos is under the provident care of a divine Name which makes it incumbent upon them to be God-fearing." This means that it is the effect of the Name "the Compassionate" which compels the righteous to be thus, and it is the call *to* that Name which results in this.

We have come full circle. The call to God, according to Ibn 'Arabī, must be just that, *to God*—the transcendent, and *away* from comparability. This was the nature of Nūḥ's call, his people, due to their lack of gnosis, adhered to one aspect of God, whilst ignoring the other. They were not wrong in their belief in the immanence of God, only in their absolute attachment to it to the exclusion of transcendence. The Muḥammadan would have known this, he would have heeded Nūḥ's call because he would have accepted that the call must be to the Names and not the *huwiyya* of God.

So what do the *huwiyya* and Names mean here? We see that they function as antonyms, but what is the meaning of each? Ibn 'Arabī, it appears, identifies the call towards transcendence with the call towards the Names, and contrasts this with the call to the *huwiyya*.[364] First of all, we must identify the three antonyms implicit in

[364] It is, of course, possible that Ibn 'Arabī identifies Nūḥ's call to transcendence with the call to *huwiyya*, saying that it should have been a call to the Names, that is, immanence. And the Muḥammadan recognises this. However, I do not believe such a superficial interpretation applies here since it does not fit into Ibn 'Arabī's general assertions in the *Fuṣūṣ* and elsewhere. This is because he is still very punctilious in affirming the ostensible rules of Islamic Law and all that that necessitates. For more details see Maḥmūd Ghurāb, *Al-Fiqh 'ind'l-Shaykh al-Akbar Muḥyi al-Dīn ibn 'Arabī*. See also Maḥmūd Ghurāb's introduction of Ibn 'Arabī's *Al-Ṭarīq ilā Allāh ta'ālā*, in which he seems to place Ibn 'Arabī in the category of people who accept both the exoteric and the esoteric, but only

this statement. The Names have been juxtaposed with the emphasis on comparability in which the people of Nūḥ were engaged. Ibn ʻArabī states that the Muḥammadan knows that the call to God is in terms of the Names. This is in contradistinction to the people of Nūḥ who did not recognise this. However, in their idolatry, they accepted the Cosmos as a manifestation of the Names. The reason Ibn ʻArabī is somewhat critical of them here is that they expected the call to be in terms of a single Name of God, as the idols they worshipped were only a locus of one of the Names of God—this was their folly. The Muḥammadan knows, as should the people of Nūḥ, that the call to God is not in terms of one Name, it is in terms of God as a collective of *all* the Names. The first opposition, therefore, is between the worship of one Name, and that of all the Names as a collective. Nūḥ was right to call to God as a combination of all the Names, his call could not have been otherwise; his people were wrong to reject this call and adhere to the worship of just one locus of His manifestation, to just one Name.

Ibn ʻArabī then contrasts this call of God as an amalgamation of all the Names, with the call to the *huwiyya*. He states that the call to God cannot be in terms of the *huwiyya*. This is because the *huwiyya* in this case refers to the unknowable, remote God. It is axiomatic that the call to God cannot be in terms of His absolute *huwiyya* as it is beyond the ken of human comprehension. One cannot call to something that is unfathomable, with which no relationship can possibly be forged. It must thus be to the knowable God, the God communicated through *all* the Names. This is not a case of what Nūḥ's call was and what it should have been, as

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insofar as it conforms with Islamic law. (Ibn ʻArabī, *Al-Ṭarīq ilā Allāh taʻālā*, 14.) Moreover, when a text is particularly inscrutable and the author's intentions obscure, rather than capitulate to the Derrida-esque argument that a writer's intentions cannot be known, one may have recourse to "analytical behaviourism." This means, as Mark Bevir remarks, "the fact that we cannot know other minds is irrelevant because intentions are not mental states. … Authorial intentions must be observable as behaviour." Bevir, "The Errors of Linguistic Contextualism," 295.

appears *prima facie*, it is an explanation of what the call towards God must be, and what it cannot be.

We see the categorical antinomy between the *huwiyya* of God and His Names in this bezel. But if the Names are antithetical to the *huwiyya,* then their ostensible manifestation, the form (*ṣūra*) they assume in the sensible world must also be so. It is on this term, in the context of *huwiyya*, that we now focus.

3.3.2.2. *Huwiyya* and *Ṣūra*

The *ṣūra* (form) of the Cosmos, of Man, of all existents, are a manifestation of and a locus for the Names of God, as such, there is an inherent antimony between it and the *huwiyya* of God, as stated above. Ibn ʻArabī is keen to point this out in the bezel of Nūḥ. He writes,

> Surely for the Truth is, in every creation, a specific manifestation. So He is manifest[365] in every intelligible thing (*mafhūm*) and hidden (*bāṭin*) from all comprehension, except from the comprehension of one who says "The Cosmos is His form (*ṣūra*) and *huwiyya,*" and that is the Name, "the Manifest" (*al-Ẓāhir*) just as He is, in a sense, the spirit (*rūḥ*) of what is manifest so He is "the Hidden." His connection to what is manifest in the forms of the Cosmos is therefore the connection of the spirit that regulates the form.[366]

Ibn ʻArabī begins by explaining the divine Name, "The Manifest," remarking that God is thus called because He is manifested in "every intelligible thing (*mafhūm*)." He then juxtaposes this with God being "hidden (*bāṭin*) from all comprehension." In this succinct sentence, Ibn ʻArabī explicates the two facets of God: His observable phenomenal presence, His *ẓāhir*, betrayed by the *ṣūra* of the Cosmos, and His hiddenness, His *bāṭin*, elucidated by the *huwiyya* that eludes comprehension. He identifies the *ẓāhir* facet of God with that which is understood,

[365] Ibn ʻArabī is referencing verse 57:3 of the Qur'an which features heavily in his explanation of the comparability and transcendence of God.
[366] Ibn ʻArabī, *Fuṣūṣ,* 68.

that is, everything that is intelligible (*mafhūm*) because God, according to Ibn ʻArabī, is understood through the Cosmos as it is a manifestation of His Names. The best example of this is the Perfect Man who epitomises all the Names in one locus and is the most conducive to furnishing an understanding of God as he is His most intimate manifestation. Ibn ʻArabī explains this concept in this very bezel when he writes,

> The Exalted said, "*We will show them Our portents on the horizons*," and that is that which is segregated from you, "*and within themselves,*" and that is your essence, "*until it will be manifest on to them*," that is, to the onlooker, "*that He is the Truth*," as you are His outer form and He is your spirit. So you are to Him as your corporeal form (*ṣūra jismīyya*) is to you, and He is to you as the spirit governing your corporeal form.[367]

If, however, that which is manifested is identified with that which is understood, then it naturally follows that that which is unseen is identified with that which is not understood. Indeed, Ibn ʻArabī states that the *bāṭin* of God is "hidden from all comprehension."[368] The question is: what is the relationship between these two facets of God? It is this question that he answers when he remarks, "So His connection to what is manifest in the forms of the Cosmos is the connection of the spirit that regulates the form." In other words, God's *ẓāhir* is the form of the Cosmos, and His *bāṭin* is the spirit (*rūḥ*) regulating and directing that form. The manner in which *rūḥ* is employed is the same as its usage above where *rūḥ* is said to govern the form.[369] However, in this passage, Ibn ʻArabī adds that seeing and understanding God are facets that belong to the manifest God, manifest, that is, through the forms of the Cosmos, and not seeing and not understanding are facets of the unseen *huwiyya* of God. This raises a further question as to what Ibn ʻArabī

[367] Ibid., 69.
[368] Ibn ʻArabī, *Fuṣūṣ,* 68.
[369] See section 1.2.4.

means by the unseen and incomprehensible God? Is this the unknowable God, not understood by the creation as they do not possess the capacity to comprehend Him? Or is it simply the unseen God—God as a collective of the Names?

Ibn ʻArabī answers this question when he states that the only person that understands God is the one who says, "The Cosmos is His form (*ṣūra*) and *huwiyya.*" It is the gnostic, therefore, who appreciates and acknowledges both the *ẓāhir* and *bāṭin* aspects of God, to wit, His phenomenal forms in the Cosmos and His *huwiyya*, which here denotes the Names that give rise to those forms. It is he who understands God. Hence, it is the Names as a collective to which Ibn ʻArabī refers by the unseen, incomprehensible God.[370] He is incomprehensible, according to Ibn ʻArabī, to the ignorant who refuse to acknowledge His inner aspect—that is, His being the spirit that governs and regulates everything in the Cosmos.

However, we note that this inability to see the world as it really is, that is, as a manifestation of the Names, means that those people who see simply the ostensible forms of the universe as something dissociated from God, in fact, do not see the *ẓāhir* of God either, for what they see are just forms but not forms that mean anything. They are thus veiled from *both* the *ẓāhir* and *bāṭin* of God, as both are different facets of the same thing. Ibn ʻArabī alludes to this in this very bezel when he remarks,

> This definition incorporates both your outer (*ẓāhir*) and inner (*bāṭin*) aspects, for the form (*ṣūra*) that remains when the spirit that governs it departs is no longer a human, but it may be said that it is "the [outer] form of a man" (*al-ṣūra al-insāniyya*), there being no difference between it and the [outer] form

[370] It is, of course, possible that Ibn ʻArabī refers to the incomprehensible, unknowable God by this term. And one remains on unsteady ground with Ibn ʻArabī when it comes to deciphering what exactly his terms refer to. However, because he states that the gnostic who acknowledges both facets of God *understands* Him, as opposed to simply *intuits* Him (see above), it is most likely that he refers to God as a collection of all the Names, since even the most adept gnostic simply does not have the capacity to *understand* God as He truly is.

> of a piece of wood or a stone. Nor would the name of "man" be used for it, save metaphorically, not literally.[371]

Seeing the outer forms of the Cosmos, does not mean one sees the *ẓāhir* of God, unless he has the spiritual awareness to attribute that form to God. If he cannot, then he simply sees empty objects. We observe what a scathing indictment this is for those who are veiled, as Ibn ʻArabī intimates that they cannot even see what is truly in front of them. They see nothing but disparate forms, segregating everything and denying the reality that runs through all of them. He expresses his exasperation at such people when he comments,

> Why do you differentiate [between God and the creation] saying the matter is the Truth in its entirety or the creation in its entirety? It is the creation in one connection (*nisba*) and the Truth in another connection while the entity (*ʻayn*) is one. So the very form (*ṣūra*) that manifests is the same form which accepts that manifestation. So He is the One who manifests and the one to whom is manifested. Look at how wondrous the matter of God is in terms of His *huwiyya* and in terms of His connection to the Cosmos in the realities of His beautiful Names.[372]

Ibn ʻArabī uses *ṣūra* and *huwiyya* in the same sense here as he has done above: to denote the outer forms of the sensible realm and God as a collective of all the Names that furnishes that realm with existence, respectively. He reproaches those who compartmentalise God and the creation, saying that it is either one thing or the other. The essence and underlying reality of both, says Ibn ʻArabī, is one. The only difference, then, is how you look at it. Ibn ʻArabī concludes by announcing that the whole matter is wondrous because the One who manifests, and the One to whom is manifested is the same: both are God "in terms of His *huwiyya*" which is "the realities of His beautiful Names." It is apparent that Ibn ʻArabī uses the conjunction here in order to elucidate what he means by *huwiyya.* In this sense, this passage is

[371] Ibn ʻArabī, *Fuṣūṣ,* 69.
[372] Ibid., 121.

singularly important for our purposes as it defines, in Ibn ʻArabī's own words, what he means by the term.

In the bezel of Shuʻayb, Ibn ʻArabī again underscores the difference between the *ṣūra* of man, as an expression of the Names, and the *huwiyya* of God, as an amalgamation of those Names. He writes,

> The Truth has surely informed [us] that He, be He exalted, is the *huwiyya* of each of the parts [of man]. There is therefore no agent but the Truth, and [only] the form (*ṣūra*) belongs to the servant while the *huwiyya* is inserted (*mudaraja*) in Him, that is, in His Name and nothing else, because He, be He exalted is that which is manifested.[373]

In this passage, Ibn ʻArabī explains that God is the *huwiyya* of each part of man, in other words, everything that enables him to carry out actions. There is, therefore, no agent but God; all actions that occur in the Cosmos are because of Him as only "the form (*ṣūra*) belongs to the servant." However, we have seen above that God is relatively angry or pleased with His creation based on their actions. So if the actions are all God, how can this not impinge upon, or indeed eliminate the paradigm of reward and punishment? The inherent dichotomy present in these two concurrent scenarios: God being the sole agent and man being punished for his actions, is not even acknowledged by Ibn ʻArabī because for him there is no contradiction or inconsistency.

The basis of the problem is a misunderstanding into the nature of God. Ibn ʻArabī states that everything in the Cosmos is God—as an expression of His Names, thus, everything that happens in the Cosmos is executed by God. However, this, as we have said before, is not the true God—the incomprehensible, remote God. Man is questioned, is rewarded, is punished based on his actions as an expression of the Names of God. In this sense, it is God who is the sole agent in the Cosmos. However,

[373] Ibid., 151-52.

there is an omnipresent barrier between man and God to which Ibn ʻArabī constantly returns and from which his outlook emanates because God, in His incomprehensible truth, is not the Cosmos, He is not man, and He is not, therefore, the actions of man. It is for this very reason that knowing what Ibn ʻArabī means by his use of terms like *huwiyya*, by which he designates both the unknowable God and the God of the Names, is so vital.

It is axiomatic that Ibn ʻArabī refers to the Names of God by *huwiyya* in this passage. Indeed, he explains it himself when he comments, "… the *huwiyya* is inserted (*mudraja*) in Him, that is, in His Name and nothing else." However, it appears here that the *huwiyya* is *in* the Names of God, which are the *bāṭin* of man. This raises the issue of whether Ibn ʻArabī also views *huwiyya* as something that is disparate from the Names and included in them. From the passage, it is evident that this is not the case; Ibn ʻArabī simply uses *huwiyya*, as a symbol of all the Names, and says it is part of the one Name being manifested. In this way, one Name is all the Names, and all the Names are one Name, not because one Name alludes to all the Names, nor because a higher Name includes those below it, as mentioned earlier—this is certainly the case—but in a more literal way since the *huwiyya,* which is all the Names, is present in each Name. Indeed, it *is* each Name. Thus, one Name of God is all His Names as they are all He—this is His *huwiyya*, and each Name has a part in it. The only difference, then, between one Name and another Name and all the Names, is their *ṣūra* in the phenomenal world: each Name has a distinct *ṣūra* in the Cosmos, and it is only in the *ṣūra* of Perfect Man that they find their combined expression.[374]

[374] Ibn ʻArabī articulates this point in *al-Tajalliyāt* in the following way: "Since man's reality and developed form are in particular ranks … and [he is] the detailed form of everything in the Cosmos' condition, he is thus a book of the particulars of existence and its criterion, as alluded to by the

It is understood from the foregoing that *huwiyya* is the Names of God, and the Names of God are what are manifested in the *ṣuwar* (pl. of *ṣūra*) of the Cosmos. *Huwiyya* and *ṣūra* are thus antonyms in the sense that *ẓāhir* and *bāṭin*, or apparent and hidden are antonyms.

The innumerable *ṣuwar* in the Cosmos are therefore the knowable God, the God of the Names "because He, be He exalted is that which is manifested." This, nevertheless, begs the question: Is there a difference between the Names themselves and the *ṣūra* in which they are manifested? Or are they simply a straight differentiation of the Names, there, in essence, being no difference between the two? Ibn 'Arabī supplies an uncharacteristically direct answer to this question in the *Futūḥāt* when he again turns his attention to the anticipated dialogue between God and 'Īsā on the Day of Judgement, when the former questions the latter about whether his followers were instructed by him to worship him as the son of God. He comments,

> There is a difference between what a thing is and that which is manifested in its *ṣūra* … for when Allāh, the Exalted, said that man was a creation in His *ṣūra,* 'Īsā remarked, "*You were the Watcher over them*,"[375] so he differentiated between the Truth and those who were in His *ṣūra*.[376]

The point Ibn 'Arabī makes in this passage has massive ramifications for his entire metaphysics. Ibn 'Arabī, in the clearest possible terms, remarks that "there is a difference between what a thing is and that which is manifested in its *ṣūra*" and this difference is not in terms of the fidelity with which the thing is manifested, as we saw above, rather, it is an intrinsic difference. Ibn 'Arabī reaches this conclusion because even though everything including, and especially, man is a *ṣūra* of God, He

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saying, *We shall show them Our portents in in the universe and within themselves.* (Ibn 'Arabī, *al-Tajalliyāt al-ilāhiyya*, 9.)

[375] Qur'an, 5:117.

[376] Ibn 'Arabī, *Futūḥāt*, 6:20.

is still a *Watcher over them.* This means there is a difference between God the agent and God the Watcher, as He cannot be both in the same capacity. God the agent, we have seen is the *ṣūra* of the Names in the sensible world, and God the Watcher *is* a Name. If there is a difference between them—Ibn ʻArabī does not state what this difference is—then the paradigm of reward and punishment is reaffirmed, not just because God the agent is distinct from God the incomprehensible, but because God the agent is different from the God of the Names.

We thus arrive at three levels of divine consciousness and corresponding articulation. God the unknowable, the remote, is the truest yet least defined of these. He is categorically dissociated from His creation as they cannot even comprehend Him. On this purest and truest level, all the paradigms of good and evil, of reward and punishment still have meaning. There is then the God of the Names—the Names as they really are before their differentiation into the *ṣuwar* of pre-sensible and phenomenal worlds. On this plane, too, does the aforementioned paradigm retain its resonance because there is an innate difference between a Name and its manifestation, its *ṣūra*. Only on the lowest, and paradoxically most defined level—the plane of God as the sole agent—are the lines of reward and punishment somewhat blurred. However, Ibn ʻArabī is at great pains to assert that this is not the only level, his actions in this regard are yet more emphatic.[377]

3.3.2.3. *Huwiyya* and *Iʻtiqād*

Belief (*iʻtiqād*) appears as an antonym of *huwiyya* in the bezel of Shuʻayb where Ibn ʻArabī contrasts the God that is created in the belief of men with his *huwiyya.* The

[377] See Claude Addas, *The Quest for the Red Sulphur* for more details about Ibn ʻArabī's life. He was known to be extremely punctilious in the observance of religious ordinances—a clear indication that the unmitigated monism with which his metaphysical outlook is usually identified—is misguided. See also Chittick, trans., *Faith and Practice of Islam: Three Thirteenth Century Sufi Texts*, xii-xiii; Maria De Cillis, *Free Will and Predestination in Islamic Thought*, 169.

aim here is not to explain the concept of 'the God of belief' (*al-Ḥaqq al-i'tiqādī*), which has been dealt with in previous works,[378] but to shed light on its relationship with *huwiyya* and whether the two are influenced by one another. The God of belief seems to present a religious diversity that "bespeaks the validity of all belief … because the beliefs—like all 'creation'—*are* God's self-revelation."[379] And indeed, we see this in Ibn 'Arabī's recurrent circumlocutions on the need to bypass these superficial differences.[380] However, if the God of belief is the tertiary manifestation of God's self-revelation, as it is the action of the existents who themselves are phenomenal forms of the Names (see above), then this manifestation and its call to recognise God in all His aspects and beliefs does not encroach upon the religious exclusivity perpetuated on the basic level of divine consciousness. For in his explication of this very concept, Ibn 'Arabī chides the Mu'tazila for doubting the all-encompassing mercy of God, thereby giving credence to one set of beliefs over another.[381]

It is thus the case that the gnostic who sees beyond the God of beliefs in the phenomenal realm to the Names themselves and possibly even intuits the remote God, still abides by the dictates of his "God of beliefs" and the religious injunctions He imposes. Nor is this mere affectation, for the latter is conducive to arriving at an understanding of the former, as Ibn 'Arabī explains here:

> As for *huwiyya,* some servants are certain in their belief (*i'tiqād*) that God is such and such. So when the veil is uncovered they see the form of their belief, which is true and they believe it. And [when] the knot is undone then the belief dissipates and knowledge through witnessing (*mushāhada*) returns.[382]

[378] This concept is deftly handled by Nettler in *Sufi Metaphysics*, 126-30. See also Michael A. Sells, *Mystical Languages of Unsaying*, 97-100.
[379] Nettler, *Sufi Metaphysics,* 127. The same point is also made in Nasr, *Sufi Essays*, 148-49.
[380] See Ibn 'Arabī, *Fuṣūṣ,* 121.
[381] Ibid., 123-24.
[382] Ibid., 124.

Ibn ʻArabī acknowledges the significance of the beliefs held by men saying that it is "true." They are not a barrier to gnosis, rather, a conduit to it. Nevertheless, when "the knot is undone"[383] people witness the truth which causes this belief to dissipate.

Therefore, the God of beliefs leads to the God of Names and, ultimately, the remote God. Religious diversity asserted in the first phase is seemingly effaced in the second and third phases, for it is only the God of beliefs, the God that is everything in the Cosmos, including beliefs, that transcends religious parochialism. This parochialism is re-established in the God as the Names, who, as mentioned above, is not the same as His material manifestation. If it is reaffirmed in this secondary phase of the divine consciousness, the phase in which the paradigm of reward and punishment still holds significance, as explained in the chapter above, then it is yet more definite in the purest level—the level of the absolute, remote God, where this paradigm finds its starkest expression. This does not negate the religious diversity of the first phase, but neither does it contravene the religious parochialism of the second and third.

This contextualisation was necessary to fully comprehend what Ibn ʻArabī means by 'the God of beliefs,' for its intimate connection to the divine *huwiyya* is now laid bare. If *huwiyya* represents variously the remote God, the God of the Names, and God immanent in the Cosmos, then the God of beliefs will operate as a synonym or antonym of it, depending on the signification of *huwiyya*. In the above passage, Ibn ʻArabī says that some people believe God to be such-and-such—this is the God of their beliefs, but when spiritual witnessing occurs, as a result of this God of beliefs, they find that He is not what they had initially thought. This in no way diminishes the legitimacy of the God of beliefs—on the contrary, it reaffirms it. But

[383] Nettler correctly identifies Ibn ʻArabī's conceptual 'knots' as a means to understanding his metaphysical outlook. See Nettler, *Sufi Metaphysics,* 121-22.

neither is there parity between the God of beliefs and the God of the Names, which the gnostic observes in his *mushāhada* (spiritual witnessing), just as there cannot be parity between the God of the Names and the remote God.

Clearly, in the aforementioned citation Ibn ʻArabī refers to 'the God of beliefs' by *huwiyya*. It is therefore the forms of God that are manifest in the Cosmos as expressions of His Names, which, as mentioned, is the tertiary and most defined definition of the term. This being the case, *iʻtiqād* here may more properly be thought of as a subset of *ṣūra* since it is the *ṣūra* of one's belief that one sees, as Ibn ʻArabī himself states: "They see the form of their belief (*ṣūrat muʻtaqadih*)." This raises the question as to why the term features in the section of antonyms, and why it is mentioned at the start that the two terms are antonymic. The reason for this is that Ibn ʻArabī dismisses this initial synonymy in favour of the secondary antinomy when he says that this "belief dissipates and knowledge through witnessing (*mushāhada*) returns." He is thus referring to the truer *huwiyya* of the collective Names themselves that lie behind this *ṣura* of beliefs, and on this rarefied level the two terms are antonyms: the *huwiyya* being the unified collection of the Names, and the *ṣūrat al-iʻtiqādāt* being the multitudinous manifestations of those Names in the created world.

Finally, it is noteworthy that the overall antinomy between *huwiyya* and *iʻtiqād* is not the only opposite in this quotation, for Ibn ʻArabī also juxtaposes *mushāhada* (spiritual witnessing) with *iʻtiqād*. This spiritual witnessing, Ibn ʻArabī says, is opposed to beliefs, and since beliefs are what make sense to the rational intellect,[384] it is opposed to reason. However, he affirms the legitimacy of the rational intellect to a certain degree because he says that the result of rational

[384] For an excellent analysis of beliefs being the corollary of rational reflection in medieval Islamic thought, see Carl Sharif el-Tobgui, "Reason, Revelation and the Reconstitution of Rationality."

reflection –the God of belief—is also true, if only in a partial way. Here, just as *mushāhada*, as the conduit to realisation of the complete reality, is juxtaposed with *i'tiqad*, as the means of gaining the partial reality, so too is *huwiyya*, as the symbol of divine unity, contrasted with *ṣūrat al-i'tiqād*, as the form of one facet of God.

Ibn 'Arabī revisits this issue of belief versus *mushāhada* when he says,

> *And We are nearer to him than [his] jugular vein.*[385] He did not specify a man, for the divine closeness (*al-qurb al-ilāhī*) to the servant is present in the divine revelation without any secrecy. So there is no closeness greater than His *huwiyya* being the very limbs and faculties of the servant, and the servant is naught save these limbs and faculties. He is thus the witnessed Truth (*Ḥaqq mashhūd*) in an imagined creation (*khalq mutawahham*). Hence, the creation is comprehended (*ma'qūl*), and the Truth is sensed (*maḥsūṣ*) and witnessed by the believers and the people of spiritual unveiling. Those that are not from these two categories, for them the Truth is comprehended and the creation witnessed.[386]

Before embarking on the opposition between that which is witnessed and that which is imagined, or that which is sensed and that which is comprehended, it is important to note that Ibn 'Arabī uses *huwiyya* here as the unified composition of the Names that finds its sensible expression in the limbs of man. He therefore details the transition of the secondary phase of the divine, that of the Names as a collective, to the tertiary, the manifestation of those Names in the created world. What is more interesting in this passage is how Ibn 'Arabī interprets that transition. For he remarks that because the divine Names literally *become* the limbs of man, this means that God is witnessed, and the creation is imagined.

This is an outright reversal of the normal conception of man as an *expression* of the Names, as Ibn 'Arabī says that there is nothing but the Names, man's

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[385] Qur'an, 50:16. This is the declaration of God. He refutes thereby the assertion of those who deny Muḥammad's message and say that there will be no resurrection. God affirms that He was not wearied by the first creation that they should doubt the resurrection, and that they will need to account for everything they say and do, which He is aware of as He is closer to them than their jugular vein.

[386] Ibn 'Arabī, *Fuṣūṣ,* 108.

existence is imaginary, the only thing that really exists are the Names. The consequence of this, says Ibn ʻArabī, is that those with spiritual insight will comprehend what the creation actually is: nothing but the Names themselves, and will sense and witness through it God as He *is* the Names. However, those bereft of this spiritual rank will witness only the creation, that which is actually in front of them, and will comprehend that the Names of God are manifest in man.

The difference between the gnostic and the layman, then, is only that the former sees the Names, not their ostensible form in the created world, and the latter sees the form and understands that it is an expression of the Names.[387] However, the ramifications of this slight difference are immense as the entire relationship with God and the creation is reversed. Also, by saying that the world is imagined, that is, the tertiary manifestation of God is not real in itself, Ibn ʻArabī reverses the religious diversity he allows in this phase in the phase of the Names and that of the remote God. We thus find an explanation for one of the starkest paradoxes of Ibn ʻArabī's life: that of his seeming religious diversity and his punctilious observance of Islamic law.[388]

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[387] This layman is still superior to the one who sees only the apparent forms of the world and denies their underlying reality completely.

[388] Mayer observes that there is no contradiction between Ibn ʻArabī's assiduous orthopraxy (as evidenced by charges of being a Zahirite, as well as a full mastery of Ibn Ḥazm's (d. 456/ 1064) works displayed in his *ijāza*) and his seemingly daring Qur'anic interpretation. This is because "Ibn ʻArabī's intensely esoteric hermeneutic of the Qur'an is often strictly in line with the literal sense of the text." (Mayer, "Theology and Sufism," 283.) It must be mentioned that the prevailing opinion is that Ibn ʻArabī did not follow any school of thought and was a *mujtahid*. Maḥmūd Ghurāb cites specific examples of his divergence from the Zahirite school as proof of this assertion. See Maḥmūd Ghurāb, *Al-Fiqh 'ind'l-Shaykh al-Akbar*, 7.

Further evidence of Ibn ʻArabī's orthodoxy, not just in practice, but also in thought and exortations, is found in his book, *What the Seeker Needs,* which is written in response to a question by a student as to "What the seeker should believe in and what he should do in the beginning, before anything else." Ibn ʻArabī, in response to this, exhorts to oneness of God (*tawḥīd*) (and cites the Qur'an, 21:22 and 31:35 as proof) and to His transcendence (again citing the Qur'an, 42:11 as proof). Finally, he enjoins observance of the law. (Ibn ʻArabī, *Divine Governance,* trans. Al-Halveti, 199-230.) With regards to Ibn ʻArabī's conventional religious *fatāwa*, we need only look at his letter to the sultan of Konya counselling him on how he should deal with his Christian subjects, which was in complete conformance with ʻUmar ibn Khaṭṭāb's (d. 23/ 644) judgement. (See Robert J. Dobie, *Logos and Revelation,* 16.)

Ibn ʻArabī explains this concept in different terms in the bezel of Ayyūb where he comments,

> One of the gnostics was hungry and so he wept. Someone who did not have insight into this field (i.e. gnosis) censured him, upon which the gnostic replied, "He has only made me hungry that I might weep." He means, "He has only tried me with affliction that I might ask Him to alleviate it from me, and this does not contradict my being patient." So [from this] we know that patience is only restraining oneself from complaining to other than God. And by "other" I mean a particular aspect (*wajh khāṣṣ*) from the aspects of God, since God, the Truth, has designated a particular aspect from the aspects of God and that is called the aspect of *huwiyya* (*wajh al-huwiyya*). So you should supplicate through this aspect for the alleviation of affliction, not other aspects which are called, "causes" (*asbāb*). These [causes] are nothing but He in terms of the superiority of the matter in Himself. So the gnostic, in asking the *huwiyya* of the Truth to alleviate the affliction from him, is not veiled by all the causes being His essence from a particular standpoint.[389]

True patience is here defined by Ibn ʻArabī, not as abstinence from expressing displeasure or seeking help from God, but as doing so to "other than God." This immediately poses the question: If everything in the phenomenal world is a manifestation of God, how can anything be "other than God?" Ibn ʻArabī recognises that this may be a source of confusion and so moves to dispel it forthwith. He writes, "And by 'other' I mean a particular aspect (*wajh khāṣṣ*) from the aspects of God." This "particular aspect," we learn, are the overt causes of things in the

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It is not surprising that Ibn ʻArabī should be so conservative in all facets of his religion, if one considers the religious and cultural context in which he was born and raised. Scholem broaches the topic of the Andalusian's religious conservatism and the attempts to "pantheitise" him, when he remarks, "There is no such thing as mysticism in the abstract, that is to say, a phenomenon or experience which has no particular relation to other religious phenomena. There is no mysticism as such, there is only the mysticism of a particular religious system, Christian, Islamic, Jewish mysticism and so on. That there remains a common characteristic it would be absurd to deny. … But only in our days has the belief gained ground that there is such a thing as an abstract mystical religion. One reason for this widespread belief may be found in the pantheistic trend which, for the past century, has exercised a much greater infuence on religious thought than ever before. Its influence can be traced in the manifold attempts to abandon the fixed forms of dogmatic and institutional religion in favour of some sort of universal religion. … History rather shows that the great mystics were faithful adherents of the great religions." (Scholem, *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism*, 26.) Leigh Eric Schmidt comments on the same issue in his statement: "When turned into an essence and a universal, mysticism rapidly lost much of its grounding in history, cultural particularity, and place." (Schmidt, "The Making of Modern Mysticism," 288.)

[389] Ibn ʻArabī, *Fuṣūṣ*, 174-75.

created world. Ibn ʻArabī acknowledges that these causes themselves are an aspect of God, since everything in the world is He. But blaming the superficial cause, while it is, in a sense, the true cause, is antithetical to patience. Instead, Ibn ʻArabī would have us supplicate to the "aspect of *huwiyya* (*wajh al-huwiyya*)" even as we comprehend that "[causes] are nothing but He."

Ibn ʻArabī denotes the Names of God as a collective by *huwiyya* in this passage. He deems complaining and seeking succour to all the Names directly, bypassing the apparent causes, as the very definition of patience because it bespeaks awareness of the total reality, of God as a combination of all His Names and facets, not just a particular one. Appealing to just one aspect of God, the discernible causes in the world, is impatience because it denies the underlying totality of the God of *all* the Names. This one aspect, rather than allude to the complete reality, obfuscates it. It is only the gnostic "not veiled by all the causes being His essence from a particular standpoint" who acknowledges this.

This passage again underscores Ibn ʻArabī's disregard for the created world, even as he recognises that it is a manifestation of the Names of God. This may be because there is an innate difference between a Name and its manifestation or because the created world is nothing in itself.[390] His loose attitude to reward and punishment, of diversity of beliefs at this level, therefore, give way to a far more conventional outlook wherein one is exhorted to religious parochialism and appealing to God Himself. If this seems contradictory to the diversity he advocates in the created world, then it is only because the world, as an expression of the

[390] Ibn ʻArabī sees no contradiction between, on the one hand, asserting the manifestation of the Names in the sensible world is different to the Names themselves and, on the other, claiming that the Names *are* the creation. The two abide simultaneously for him. It is therefore probably more correct to say that the Names *are* the created world, but the created world, in the way it is, is not the Names as they are.

Names, must necessitate this. The ultimate reference, however, must always be the "aspect of *huwiyya* (*wajh al-huwiyya*)," that is, the aspect of God that is *all* the Names themselves without any mediation by manifestations of those Names.

3.3.2.4. Summary of *Huwiyya* and its Antonyms

An analysis of the antonyms of *huwiyya* has developed some deductions that were made in the previous section, as well as introduced new elements. The following is a list of the main conclusions:

1. The *huwiyya* of God denotes both His *ẓāhir* and *bāṭin* aspects. God's *ẓāhir* is the form of the Cosmos, and His *bāṭin* is the spirit (*rūḥ*) regulating and directing that form. Seeing and therefore understanding the Names are facets that belong to the manifest God—manifest, that is, through the form of the Cosmos that make Him intelligible, and not seeing and not understanding are facets of the unseen God.
2. One Name of God is all the Names, and all the Names are one Name, not just because one Name alludes to all the Names, nor because a higher Name includes those below it, as mentioned earlier, but in a more literal way since the *huwiyya,* which is all the Names, is present in each Name. Indeed, it *is* each Name.
3. The *huwiyya* of God as a symbol for all the divine Names *is* the created world, but the created world, in the way it is, is not the Names as they are. This is an expansion of Ibn 'Arabī's assertion that there is a difference between what a thing is and its manifestation. Ibn 'Arabī states that, not only is this the case, but the manifestation of God's Name is nothing in itself, it is

"imagined." The locus of manifestation of a Name, therefore, *is* the Name itself, but it is not like the Name that is not manifest.

4. The *huwiyya* of one Name, while it may allude to all Names, may also obfuscate this underlying reality, just as they did with the people of Nūḥ who adhered to one Name, to one locus of divine manifestation, and just as they do to those who cling to perceptible causes in the sensible world, which, though one facet of God, as everything is a manifestation of His Names, is not the totality of all the Names.
5. *Huwiyya* has three significations: the remote God, the God of the Names, and God as the Cosmos, as stated previously. Ibn 'Arabī advocates religious diversity in the last of these, but it is a diversity that dissolves in the first two, more fundamental meanings. This is why Ibn 'Arabī chides the people of Nūḥ, for they did not appreciate that the call to God—Nūḥ's call—*had* to be to the God of all the Names, not just to one locus of His manifestation. The problem was not their worship of one Name; it was their denial of all the others, since on this secondary level, religious parochialism is re-instituted.

The fluidity of meaning in Ibn 'Arabī's technical lexicon is all too apparent in this section, where the same term may be a synonym and antonym of *huwiyya*, depending on the denotation of *huwiyya*. This is particularly explicit in the case of the God of beliefs. But if this is a striking example of the mercurial nature of Ibn 'Arabī's terms, then it is by no means the only one. We shall now address other such cases in the *Fuṣūṣ*.

3.3.3. Synonyms as Antonyms and Antonyms and Synonyms of *Huwiyya*

The ambiguity surrounding the concept of *huwiyya* has already been shown; it is an abstruseness that results not only from there being three significations of *huwiyya*,

that of the remote God, the God of the Names and the God immanent in the Cosmos—and the consequent flexibility in the terms that are its synonyms and antonyms—but also in the synonyms and antonyms themselves, with which Ibn ʻArabī takes characteristic semantic license. The result, seemingly, is a farrago of terms that are tightly contextualised and endeavour to resist application of basic meanings. However, as mentioned, these terms do have basic meanings, which they offer up once the delicate mesh of terms is untangled. In order to do this, one of the two variables must be known—either the signification of *huwiyya*, or that of the synonym/antonym, for only then can we learn what the other means. This has hitherto been the approach, where the meaning of *huwiyya* has been deciphered from the synonyms/ antonyms, and the latter employed to delineate the former.

In this methodology, we have, nevertheless, assumed a basic meaning for the synonyms/ antonyms of *huwiyya* for one cannot proceed to extract a meaning for either term if it and its synonym/ antonym are unknown. The basic meaning for the synonyms/ antonyms have largely been provided by the context in which Ibn ʻArabī uses the terms, for even Ibn ʻArabī, as recondite as his metaphysics may be, does not render it completely incomprehensible to his reader. This system seems to have served its purpose in that it has, I believe, furnished us with a reasonably good conception of *huwiyya*. However, if our understanding of *huwiyya* has grown, then it behoves us to reverse-scrutinise passages that challenge the conventional basic meanings of the synonyms/ antonyms so that we may arrive at an even greater understanding of *huwiyya*. It is to such passages that we now turn.

3.3.3.1. *Huwiyya* and *Ṣūra* as its Synonym

We have observed above that Ibn ʻArabī employs form (*ṣūra*) as an antonym of *huwiyya,* when *huwiyya* denotes all the divine Names as a collective. *Ṣūra*, at its

core, seems to represent the multiplicity that results from the innumerable manifestations of the Names in the created world, whereas *huwiyya* denotes the unity of all the Names before such fragmentation occurs.[391] The interplay between divine unity and creational multiplicity is best summarised thus:

> Creation is nothing but the external manifestation or actualization of the ideas of God or the "essences." The secret of Creation … is that God manifests or reveals Himself in His own Ideas. In thus manifesting Himself God remains unchanged as He ever was, is, and shall be. God gives and yet preserves Himself, is multiplied and yet remains one. He manifests Himself according to the "aptitudes" of the things in which He is manifesting Himself. He bestows His attributes on His Ideas or forms or essences and they become things. The essences of things are in themselves non-existent.[392]

There is, nevertheless, the Perfect Man who combines all the divine Names in one locus of manifestation, but this too, is not so much an expression of the unity of the Names as a gathering of their disparate forms; as such, it is still a manifestation of multiplicity—the only difference is that this multiplicity is displayed in one place. Ibn ʻArabī writes in the *Futūḥāt*,

> Through the Perfect Man is manifest the perfection of form (*ṣūra*). So he is the heart in the body of the Cosmos,[393] which is a term for everything besides God. He is thus, the Frequented House (*al-Bayt al-maʻmūr*) of the Truth which encompasses Him. The Exalted says in a reported Ḥadīth, "The earth or heaven do not encompass Me, but the heart of a believing servant encompasses me."[394] So the rank of the Perfect Man is that of a heart between God and the Cosmos. And he is called a "heart" (*qalb*) as he is transmuted (verbal noun: *taqlīb*) in to every form (*ṣūra*).[395]

The status of the Perfect Man in Ibn ʻArabī's metaphysics is here succinctly articulated: he is the "heart in the body of the Cosmos," a term the author defines as

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[391] It must be remembered that though there is a successional element to this progression, it is devoid of temporality. For more details see Titus Burkhardt, *Mystical Astrology According to Ibn ʻArabī,* in which the author explains in depth this concept.
[392] Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan, *History of Philosophy: Eastern and Weste*rn, 176.
[393] This aspect of Ibn ʻArabī's metaphysics has obvious parallels with Plato's conception of a "world-soul" which "exists in the body of the world, just as there is a soul which exists in the body of any living being." See Wolfson, "Extradeical and intradeical interpretations of Platonic ideas."
[394] I could not trace this Ḥadīth in any of the conventional compilations.
[395] Ibn ʻArabī, *Futūḥāt,* 6:4.

"everything besides God." This means that the Perfect Man encompasses in his form all the forms of everything that is manifest in the Cosmos, which themselves are a consequence of the Names. In this sense he is "between God and the Cosmos" because "he is transmuted in to every form (*ṣūra*)." The term "God" in this passage refers to the combination of the Names that give rise to the forms of the Cosmos—much like the most frequent usage of *huwiyya*—for it cannot be the remote God who is utterly dissociated from His creation and not expressed therein.

Ibn ʻArabī explains here, as he does in many other places, that the Perfect Man is a locus of manifestation of all the Names and thus "transmuted in to every form (*ṣūra*)." However, this could mean one of two things: he could either be a manifestation of each individual Name in the Cosmos that is gathered in one form, or he could be the form of all the Names combined. The author clarifies that it is the former, since there is an innate difference between God and man, with the Perfect Man being "everything *besides* God." God is therefore a collective of all the Names, and the Perfect Man is a manifestation of each of those Names, *not* a manifestation of God. This is why he is linked to "the body of the Cosmos" by Ibn ʻArabī and not God, since he combines in his form all the disparate Names manifested in the Cosmos and not all the Names as a collective that is the knowable God. The form of the Perfect Man too, then, is an expression of multiplicity and not unity; he combines all the Names, but once they are segregated from the divine *huwiyya*. It is for this reason that *ṣūra* and *huwiyya* are essentially antithetical.

Ibn ʻArabī touches on this central issue in the bezel of Hūd when he asks, "Where are the God-fearing (*al-muttaqūn,* sing. *muttaqī*), that is, those who have taken God as a protection so the Truth is their outwardness, meaning, their outer

forms (*ṣuwar*)?"[396] God, as in the God of the Names, says Ibn ʻArabī, is the outer form of His *righteous* servants. The form of man, then, is not intrinsically an expression of the Names of God, it is only those who are God-fearing, who "have taken God as a protection" that manifest His Names.[397] We note the antinomy here between the term "God," as the unification of the Names,[398] and the numerous *ṣuwar* of men that manifest them, collecting, through their virtues, the Names of God. So it is that the form of a man may manifest some Names of God, but as he ascends the ranks of gnosis and righteousness, he becomes a locus for more of the Names, until he expresses all of them. This is the same manner in which the term *ṣura* has been deployed above.

However, Ibn ʻArabī goes on to say: "It is possible for the God-fearing (*muttaqī*)[399] to be he who makes himself a protection for the Truth with his form since the *huwiyya* of the Truth is the faculties of the servant." This means that man may use his form to safeguard the divine Names, in effect, being a "protection" for God precisely because the *huwiyya* of God is his faculties. Put another way: as the faculties of man are the *huwiyya* of God, the basis of these faculties—the form of man—may be a protection for the divine Names. We note how Ibn ʻArabī inverts the notion of *taqwā* (verbal noun of *muttaqī*) from seeking protection *in* God to being a protection *for* God. In the former case, man seeks God's protection from evil deeds and soars through the levels of righteousness thereby, manifesting more and more of the divine Names. It is to be a complete locus of His Names that he desires, even as

[396] Ibn ʻArabī, *Fuṣūṣ*, 112.
[397] This concept is covered in much greater detail in the section of *ṣūra*.
[398] Ibn ʻArabī makes this explicit in the passage immediately prior to this one. See Ibn ʻArabī, *Fuṣūṣ*, 112.
[399] *Muttaqī* literally means to protect oneself, but is used to denote one who is God-fearing or God-conscious. (See Lane, *Arabic Lexicon*, 8:3059). Ibn ʻArabī, nevertheless, seems to be using the literal meaning and using it as a basis for his argument of protecting the Names of God. This is yet another example of the "hyperliteralism" which is a characteristic feature of Ibn ʻArabī's works. Kristin Zahra Sands, *Sufi Commentaries*, 41.

he knows that God's unity cannot be expressed by a form that expresses multiplicity. In the latter case, on the other hand, it is the Names of God that are protected by the form of the Perfect Man because his faculties *are* the God of the Names, and it is his form that allows his faculties to be so. We perceive that Ibn 'Arabī uses form as a synonym of *huwiyya* in this scenario, as seen by the following syllogism:

- The *huwiyya* of God = The faculties of man

And

- The faculties of man = The form of man

Ergo

- The form of man = The *huwiyya* of God

So what differentiates this case from its erstwhile analogue? Why does Ibn 'Arabī underscore the antinomy between *huwiyya* and *ṣūra* in the first sentence, only to subvert it in the next? The answer, I believe, lies in the beginning of Ibn 'Arabī's last sentence, for he says, "It is *possible* for the God-fearing (*muttaqī*) to be he who makes himself a protection for the Truth with his form," he does not say it is the natural state of affairs, whereas he has no such reservations about the former case in which the form of "those who have taken God as a protection" seems to be antithetical to the *huwiyya* of God.

Ibn 'Arabī is thus expressing that the form of man, which exhibits multiplicity, is opposed to the unity of the God of the Names, but it is possible, in exceptional cases, for there to be such identity between God and the Perfect Man, that his form becomes a locus of manifestation for the divine *huwiyya* itself. This does not obviate the inherent multiplicity in the form of man, but it does show that

multiplicity is not the *only* remit of the Perfect Man; it may even extend to expressing unity.

Ibn ʻArabī again seemingly identifies the synonymy between *huwiyya* and *ṣūra* in the bezel of Shuʻayb where he writes,

> The one who has attained realisation (*ṣāḥib al-taḥqīq*) sees multiplicity in the One, just as he knows that which is indicated by the Names—even though their realities are various and many—is [of] one entity (*ʻayn*). This multiplicity is comprehensible in the One of essence (*wāḥid al-ʻayn*). So in manifestation (*tajallī*), multiplicity is witnessed in one essence just as the *hayūlā* is in the limit of each form and, despite the multiplicity and variety of forms, is from one *jawhar* in reality, which is its *hayūlā*. Thus, whoever knows himself in this way surely knows his lord, for He created him in His form; rather, he is His *huwiyya* and reality.[400]

In order to fully appreciate what Ibn ʻArabī conveys in this passage, we need to first understand his conception of prime matter (*hayūlā*), substance (*jawhar*) and how it relates to form (*ṣūra*). Suʻād al-Ḥakīm offers a terse definition of what Ibn ʻArabī considers to be the *hayūlā*. She writes,

> Ibn ʻArabī moves along the Aristotelian line in differentiating between form and prime matter (*hayūlā*), or between body and soul in the same man. But he goes deeper and does not restrict it to man, rather, he generalises it to all the levels of existence i.e. the Cosmos, the Truth, the creation, the meanings.[401]

Hayūlā is thus, most fundamentally, what an existent is made of, in contradistinction to its form, which is what makes it what it is, according to Ibn ʻArabī. The substances (*jawāhir,* pl. of *jawhar*), on the other hand, are those things which constitute reality and remain constant. Al-Qāshānī defines the *jawāhir* of knowledge (*ʻulūm*), intelligences (*anbāʼ*) (or reason, as stated in another copy of the

[400] Ibn ʻArabī, *Fuṣūṣ*, 124-25.
[401] Suʻād al-Ḥakīm, *Al-Muʻjam*, 703. It must be mentioned that though Ibn ʻArabī's philosophical outlook is more Aristotelian than Platonic—since he distinguishes between prime matter and form—what Aristotle calls '*hyle*' and *'eidos*' respectively, agrees with Aristotle that form is inseparable from an existent being, and attributes causality to these forms—there are still subtle differences between his outlook and Aristotle, which shall be become apparent in the section on *ṣūra.* (See Aristotle, *Aristotle Metaphysics: Books Z and H*, 72; Jeremy Kirby, *Aristotle's Metaphysics: Form, Matter, and Identity*, 6; 236).

text) and gnoses (*ma'ārif*) as "the realities which do not change or alter with the changing Islamic laws, nations and times, as God, the Exalted, said, *He has ordained for you that religion which He enjoined upon Nūḥ, and that which We reveal to you (O Muḥammad), and that which We enjoined upon Ibrāhīm, Mūsā and 'Īsā saying, 'Establish the religion and do not be divided therein.*"[402] Al-Jurjānī offers a far more detailed explanation. He writes,

> The *jawāhir* are the quiddity if it is found in the archetypes … and it is restricted to five things: prime matter (*hayūlā*), form, body, spirit and intellect; these may be absolute or contingent … they may be unattached to a body, and may [instead] be attached to thought and comportment, or it may be attached. The first [i.e. unattached to the body] is the intellect and the second [i.e. attached to the body] is the spirit. … And know that *jawhar* is applied to spiritual simplexes like absolute intellects and souls and also to corporeal simplexes like the elements.[403]

The substances (*jawāhir*) are therefore the things from which all existents derive, the unevolved entity from which, as Ibn 'Arabī explains in the bezel of Shu'ayb, the *hayūlā* is formed.

Now we may deconstruct Ibn 'Arabī's above statement. He makes the following points:

- The substance (*jawhar*) is differentiated into the prime substance (*hayūla*), among other things
- This *hayūlā* makes up each form of each existent
- All the different forms of the existents are part of the same *hayūlā,* which is part of the same *jawhar*

Ibn 'Arabī states this dynamic not as fact, but by way of example, for he says that just as there is only one *hayūlā* derived from the same *jawhar,* resulting in innumerable forms in the Cosmos, so there is one divine essence from which all the

[402] Al-Qāshānī, *Iṣṭilāḥāt,* 43.
[403] Al-Jurjānī, *Kitāb al-ta'rīfāt,* 83.

Names derive, resulting in innumerable existents. This means that though the outcome is multiplicity, its origin is unity. He concludes with, "Thus, whoever knows himself in this way surely knows his lord, for He created him in His form; rather, he is His *huwiyya* and reality." This is the summary of all he has said.

Ibn 'Arabī states that man is the *huwiyya* of the God of the Names, as is evident from his allusion to the Names in the passage as the source of multiplicity. The reason for this, we are told, is that God created man in His form; the form of man, therefore, is the *huwiyya* of God. The perfect synonymy between form and *huwiyya* seems to be here expressed. But it is not as simple as all that, for the mystic comments that it is only in the sense that the *jawhar* is the *hayūlā* is the *ṣūrā* that the *huwiyya* is the Names is the *ṣūra.* This means that the *ṣūra* of man is, in a sense, the *huwiyya* (as a term connoting all the Names as a collective) of God, just as the *ṣūra* of all existents in the Cosmos is, in a sense, the *jawhar,* as they derive their existence from it. Thus, the *ṣūra* of man is connected to the *huwiyya* of the God of the Names just as the *ṣūrā* of all existents are connected to the *jawhar.*[404] The statement made by Ibn 'Arabī here in no way impinges on the ontological antinomy of *huwiyya* and *ṣūra,* which appears to be contravened only in the bezel of Hūd, underscoring that the identity between *ṣūra* and *huwiyya* is rare indeed.

This kind of pseudo-synonymy is quite common in Ibn 'Arabī's writings, fostering much ambiguity in the discourse on his work. Another example that is relevant to this study is in the bezel of Sulaymān, where Ibn 'Arabī remarks,

> Do not be veiled (*tuḥjab*) by the differing ranks and say that the statement of one who says, "The creation (*khalq*) is the *huwiyya* of the Truth" is incorrect

[404] This example highlights the perils of taking Ibn 'Arabī's statements at face value, without providing proper context, for the statement, "He created him in His form, rather, he is His *huwiyya* and reality" seemingly bespeaks the perfect synonymy between *ṣūra* and *huwiyya* when, in actual fact, it is not that simple.

> after I have shown you the differing ranks of the divine Names, which you do not doubt are the Truth.[405]

Here Ibn ʻArabī defends the statement, "The creation (*khalq*) is the *huwiyya* of the Truth," commenting that seeing differences in the ranks of people and things should not lead one to question that all creation is the *huwiyya* of God. This is because people and things differ, just as the Names of God differ—some being superior to others.[406] The corresponding manifestations of those Names, then, will naturally differ in superiority.[407]

Huwiyya, as above, is used to denote an aggregate of all the Names, since it is their manifestation that is addressed. Ibn ʻArabī clearly explicates that the creation is the *huwiyya* as they are loci of the manifestation of the Names and, in this sense, they are the same, but that does not detract from them being fundamentally different. The *huwiyya* of the God of the Names is still a symbol of divine unity and the creation still one of multiplicity. They are the same in that the latter derives and emanates from the former, and it is a manifestation of one aspect of it, but they are ontologically distinct. The creation (*khalq*) may therefore be said to be the *huwiyya* in a very narrow and mitigated sense, even if this mitigation is not readily discernible.

3.3.4. Summary of *Huwiyya* in the *Fuṣūṣ*

The main issues pertaining to *huwiyya* have already been mentioned in the summaries above. It is therefore not necessary to reiterate these in this conclusion. What we may say, however, is that Ibn ʻArabī's treatment of *huwiyya* in the *Fuṣūṣ* is both incredibly detailed and incredibly abstruse. He approaches the term from

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[405] Ibn ʻArabī, *Fuṣūṣ*, 154.
[406] See Izutsu, *Sufism and Taoism*, 99-107.
[407] These differences are further compounded by the fidelity, or lack thereof, with which each Name is manifested by its sensible locus.

different angles, at times referring to *huwiyya* as the remote God, at others as the God of the Names, and at others still, by His manifestation as the Cosmos. He details that *huwiyya* may mean one Name as well as all the Names since one Name alludes to other Names, or because all inferior Names are subsumed within a superior one, while also saying that the *huwiyya* is actually part of each Name. He tells us that the manifestation of the Names, the existents, allude to the divine *huwiyya* but also obfuscate it. He mentions that the loci of the Names *are* the Names, whilst maintaining that a Name and its locus cannot be the same. The Cosmos is therefore an expression of the *huwiyya* of God, but also "imagined."

Finally, the Perfect Man, in combining in his form all the Names, betrays the multiplicity of the Names, but could also display their unity in the divine *huwiyya.* Framed in such a blunt way, the term seems an assortment of contradictions. However, in the context of Ibn 'Arabī's illuminating musings, they make sense. They transcend the basic inconsistencies here highlighted and merge into a cohesive outlook on not just a term, but on God. Hence it is the context which delivers all the clarification that is needed to rise beyond these paradoxes, context that has been cut short due to necessity. It may, nevertheless, be beneficial to analyse one full bezel to determine how *huwiyya* behaves in its natural environment. The bezel of Joseph seems fit for this purpose.

3.3.5. *Huwiyya* in the Bezel of Joseph

This bezel has been selected, not only because *huwiyya* features heavily in it along with many of its synonyms, but also because here Ibn 'Arabī expounds the shadow metaphor—one of his key concepts with regards to the nature of God. We thus get an idea of how the term *huwiyya* interacts with and fits into Ibn 'Arabī's wider metaphysical lattice.

3.3.5.1. The Shadow Metaphor

In order to comprehend Ibn ʻArabī's usage of the term *huwiyya* in the context of this *faṣṣ,* we must first understand his use of the shadow metaphor and then how it relates to *huwiyya*.[408] Ibn ʻArabī writes,

> No more is known from the Cosmos than is known from shadows, and the Truth is unknown to the same extent that the person casting the shadow is unknown. In terms of it being a shadow of His, it is known, but in terms of what is in the essence *(dhāt)* of the shadow of the person's form who casts it, the Truth is unknown. This is why we say that the Truth is known to us in one sense and unknown to us in another. *Have you not seen how your Lord casts the shadow? If He had willed, He would have made it stationary,* that is, it would be in Him potentially.
>
> He says this: The Truth does not reveal Himself to contingent beings (*mumkināt*) until the shadow is manifested, so it becomes as those contingent beings that are left whose entity (*ʻayn*) has not been manifested in existence. *Then We made the Sun allude to it,* and that is His Name "the Light," which we have already mentioned, and to which the senses testify, for shadows cannot have an essence without light.
>
> *Then We take it back with ease.* And He only takes it back to Himself as it is His shadow, so it is manifested from Him and to Him is the matter returned in its entirety, as it is He and nothing else. So everything you perceive is the existence of the Truth in the essences of contingent beings. In terms of the *huwiyya* of the Truth, it is His existence, and in terms of the differences of forms in it, it is the essences of contingent beings.[409]

In this passage, Ibn ʻArabī likens the Cosmos to the shadow of God and says that all we know about God is what we know about a person from his shadow. This means we can only know the vague outline of God from the Cosmos as it is only the manifestation of His Names.

Though this analogy asserts the Cosmos' inextricable connection to God, it also, and more fundamentally, gains its feature of distance from God. The God Ibn ʻArabī refers to here is the unknown God, but not the unknowable God—the

[408] For al-Qāshānī's view on the shadow metaphor, see Samer Akkach, *Cosmology and Architechture in Premodern Islam*, 33-36.
[409] Ibn ʻArabī, *Fuṣūṣ*, 102-103.

Absolute in His Absoluteness. The reason this metaphor displays distance from the unknown God is because Ibn ʻArabī attributes the lack of definition, form and colour of the shadow to the remoteness it has from its subject. He mentions in this very chapter that mountains seem black and the Sun the size of a shield when viewed from afar; this lack of colour and accuracy is due to *buʻd*. Nevertheless, he maintains that the shadow is still inescapably linked to its subject and its dissociation from it would be absurd.[410] This is the reason it is simply the unknown God after the first differentiation when there is a prefiguring of existence to which Ibn ʻArabī alludes, and not the unknowable God before any such differentiation,[411] for the unknowable God is entirely dissociated from creation, whereas after the first differentiation, though God on this rarefied plane may be unknown to all but the gnostics, He is still intimately connected to the Cosmos.[412]

Ibn ʻArabī then goes on to explain that the source of the shadow through which we fathom God is the Light of God. He remarks, "Shadows cannot have an essence without light," and adduces the verse, *Then We made the Sun allude to it,* as proof that God is the light which allows the existence of this shadow, as attested by

[410] Ibid, 102.
[411] For a detailed engagement with the 'levels' of being with which Ibn ʻArabī's emanationsim came to be identified, see Chittick, "The Five Divine Presences."
[412] Ibn ʻArabī states that God is known to us in terms of the Cosmos "being a shadow of His." The apparent reading of this passage would indicate that the pronoun refers to God. This tallies well with Ibn ʻArabī's general argument that God may only be known in terms of His Names, which is a vague outline, a shadow of His true self. However, in the following sentence he mentions "a person" (*shakhs*) casting the shadow after which he returns to God by mentioning that He is unknown. This seems to be a simple case of transition (*iltifāt*) from God to human back to God, a literary tool he frequently employs, but it could also be that Ibn ʻArabī does not intend any *iltifāt*, it would thus mean that a contingent being is known through its shadow and unknown through it. This would then be a statement vis-à-vis the absolute unknownness of God as it states that contingent beings may only be known to an extent, i.e. through their shadows, in a vague, formless and monochromatic way, which does not impart anything of their intrinsic nature or essence. God, as in the remote God, on the other hand, cannot be known even in this way as He is known by the shadow cast by the manifestation of His Names that are He but not He. Therefore the allusion to the physical form by the shadow, which though accurate to a certain degree in its depiction of the human form, is inaccurate when applied to God. The final statement, "He is ignorant of the Truth," according to this reading, would mean that man is ignorant of the Truth in the sense that he does not comprehend even His Names, as it is the shadow of the Names that is being discussed. The first reading, however, seems more likely.

His Name, "the Light." He concludes that the pronoun in this verse refers to the Light of God as he believes the Qur'an is drawing an analogy between the light of the Sun and how it creates shadows and the Light of God, or, rather, the Light that *is* God, and the shadow He creates i.e. the Cosmos.

He then says, "And He only takes it back to Himself as it is His shadow, so it is manifested from Him and to Him is the matter returned in its entirety." This means the shadow of God in the form of the Cosmos is latent inside the divine consciousness before its appearance in the pre-phenomenal and sensible worlds, and on the Day of Judgement, when it is taken back, it resumes its position in Him. Ibn 'Arabī concludes this statement with: "as it is He and nothing else." By asserting this so plainly, Ibn 'Arabī is declaring that God, viewed in this way, *is* the Cosmos as the latter is nothing save His shadow and the manifestation of His Names, but he shortly points out that though this may be categorised as being Him, in one sense, it is not *really* Him in another, for He cannot truly be known at all. He remarks,

> So everything you perceive is the existence of the Truth in the essences of contingent beings. In terms of the *huwiyya* of the Truth, it is His existence, and in terms of the differences of forms in it, it is the essences of contingent beings.

This is Ibn 'Arabī's summation of what has preceded in this bezel thus far. Here he addresses both audiences simultaneously: the layman and the gnostic. For the gnostic, it refers to everything he perceives in the pre-sensible as well as physical realms. For the layman, it alludes simply to everything he perceives in this world alone. Ibn 'Arabī states that the Names of God are existent in all the essences of contingent beings, indeed, it *is* their being. However, he at once identifies and distinguishes between the *huwiyya* and the innumerable forms it adopts.

Viewed in terms of the *huwiyya* as a combination of the Names, says Ibn ʻArabī, the existence of the Cosmos as a whole is proof of the *huwiyya* as the *huwiyya* is manifested in it. The numerous forms of the Cosmos, nevertheless, when viewed as individual entities, or disparate manifestations of each of the Names, are "essences of contingent beings." This means that the Cosmos is both an expression of the holistic *huwiyya*, when the Cosmos is perceived all at once, and an individualised *huwiyya,* that is, *huwiyya* as an expression of a specific Name,[413] when appreciated on the level of isolated forms in the phenomenal world. Ibn ʻArabī further explains this concept in the context of God's independence from His creation.

3.3.5.2. *Huwiyya,* the Independence of God from Creation and His Oneness

What concerns us primarily, and what the analysis of the previous passages have prefaced, is Ibn ʻArabī's usage of the term *huwiyya* in this section of the bezel of Joseph. We note that *huwiyya* is being employed to denote two things: the absolute existence of God, in terms of His being independent of all contingent beings, and His categorical oneness, as opposed to the multitudinous forms of the Cosmos. The following sentences corroborate this interpretation. Ibn ʻArabī writes,

> Just as the different forms are always called "a shadow," the different forms [of contingent beings] are always called "the Cosmos" or "other than God." So in terms of its unity as the shadow, it is the Truth, as it is the One, the Only. But in terms of the multitude of forms, it is the Cosmos.[414]

Ibn ʻArabī explains that the shadow of God may be looked upon in two ways: as the *huwiyya* of God, His essence as expressed by the Names. In this case, we are viewing the shadow as a single entity, not as the myriad forms it assumes. Thus, we see the entire Cosmos, indeed, all the planes (*ḥaḍarāt*) of existence, as Ibn ʻArabī

[413] *Huwiyya* has already been shown above to allude to both all the Names, and each individual Name.
[414] Ibn ʻArabī, *Fuṣūṣ*, 103.

points out when he says, "other than God," as a collective shadow. This collective shadow alludes, through its existence, to its originator. This is what Ibn 'Arabī means when he comments, "So in terms of its unity as the shadow, it is the Truth, as it is the One, the Only." The unity of the shadow is the known God, as expressed by His Names, its existence is His existence. However, the shadow can also be looked upon in its individualised forms, and, viewed in this way, it is the Cosmos. The *huwiyyat al-Ḥaqq* is therefore *ẓill al-'ālam* if seen as a whole and the *ṣūrat al-'ālam* is the *ẓill al-mumkināt* in its individual forms.

Here again, Ibn 'Arabī identifies *huwiyya* with the essence, *aḥadiyya* (unity) and oneness of God. *Ṣūra,* on the other hand, is recognised as the multitudinous manifestations of God in the Cosmos. *Huwiyya* has thus become a term for the oneness of God and His transcendence in contradistinction to *ṣūra,* which is a term for His multiplicity and immanence.

It is also apparent that the *huwiyya* of God is not His remote form but rather the combined essence of His Names, as it is only His Names that can be manifested in the Cosmos. The term "shadow of God" is therefore better articulated as "shadow of the divine Names." Hence, there is a contrast between the One, as a collective, and the many, as a differentiation of that collective, or the individual parts of that collective. Both are the same, the only difference is how they are viewed, all together or separately.

Ibn 'Arabī expounds further on this issue when he says,

> And if the matter is as I have mentioned to you, then the Cosmos is an illusion, it has no real existence, and this is the meaning of imagination, that is, it seems to you that it is a separate and self-sufficient thing apart from the Truth, but the matter in reality is not so. Do you not see it [i.e. the shadow], through sense-perception, that it is connected to the person who casts it, it being impossible for it to be separated from that connection just

> as it is impossible for a thing to be separated from its essence *(dhāt)*? So know your entity (*'ayn*), and who you are, and what your *huwiyya* is, and what your connection to the Truth is, and in what sense you are the Truth and in what sense you are the Cosmos.[415]

In this passage, Ibn 'Arabī is consolidating the idea that the Cosmos is nothing save the manifestation of the Names of the known God. From this vantage point, it is an "illusion," but not in the sense that it does not exist, Ibn 'Arabī does not dispute that the Cosmos is real. His definition of "illusion" is that it is not self-sufficient because it does not exist without God. This is why it, and everything else besides God, is "not real" in the true sense because His existence is the only existence that does not depend on anything else. This passage thus details what Ibn 'Arabī means by the phrase "an imagined creation (*khalq mutawahham*),"[416] it is not simply the Cosmos being a manifestation of the Names, and as such, just being a locus for them, rather, it is the result of this—of not having independent existence, that makes it truly "imagined."

3.3.5.3. *Huwiyya, 'Ayn, Dhāt* and *Aḥadiyya*[417]

After the above section, Ibn 'Arabī says, by way of summation, "So know your entity (*'ayn*), and who you are, and what your *huwiyya* is." The immediate issue that needs to be addressed is: are *'ayn* and *huwiyya* being used synonymously and how do they relate to *dhāt* used in the previous sentence? It would appear that Ibn 'Arabī employs *'ayn* and *huwiyya* here to indicate the Names of God that cause the emergence of man in the sensible realm, which is also what *dhāt* in the previous sentence denotes. This means the three are synonymous. From this perspective, there

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[415] Ibid.
[416] See section on *huwiyya* and *i'tiqād*.
[417] *Aḥadiyya* is generally acknowledged as constituting the first of the "five presences" formalised in the school of Ibn 'Arabī (though the term itself was never used by him.) See Chittick, "The Five Divine Presences," 116.

is no difference between the *huwiyya* of man and the *huwiyya* of God mentioned previously in the text because they denote the same thing: the assemblage of all the Names of the knowable God.

However, there is a difference between them inasmuch as *huwiyya,* when applied to God, *is* the Names, but when used to denote man, it is the *manifestation* of the collection of all the Names. There is also another key difference: the *huwiyya* of God refers to everything that subsists in all modalities of existence, whereas, when denoting man, it simply means his status as the comprehensive being (*kawn jāmi'*) who embodies all the Names in the sensible world alone.

It bears reiterating that when Ibn 'Arabī speaks of this *'ayn, dhāt* and *huwiyya* of man in general terms, he is expressing the emergence of man as the personification of the Names. But this is not the same as manifesting the Names in their purest sense, which occurs when a person achieves true gnosis and union with the Names. Only those who achieve this, and in whom this occurs, can claim to truly manifest all the Names—a rank few attain. In this sense, *huwiyya,* when employed by Ibn 'Arabī in a general way, may be seen as the latent embodiment of the Names without their manifestation, or the ultimate potential of man.[418] This is clear when Ibn 'Arabī comments, "He who realises in himself the Truth, manifests the form of the Truth in him[self] to a greater degree than it is manifested in others."[419] We see, then, that manifestation of the Names means two things for Ibn 'Arabī: (1) the original manifestation that is the creation of man, something all humans have, and

[418] We see how Ibn 'Arabī subverts the concept of potentiality: first, he employs it in the general philosophical sense as the antithesis of actuality, and then he appends the potentiality of man to it once he has already passed into actuality and is phenomenally existent. Moreover, man, once he has realised his true potential, develops a consciousness that his existence is no existence at all since it is only God that is existent and he is nothing but a locus of His manifestation, his reality therefore dissipates which means, according to Ibn 'Arabī, he has simultaneously achieved the perfection (*kamāl*) of his potential (which according to Avicenna is passing into actuality) and reverted into potentiality as a result of it.

[419] Ibn 'Arabī, *Fuṣūṣ*, 104.

(2) the deeper manifestation of the Names that occurs upon attainment of true gnosis; this is the preserve of the privileged few.

Ibn ʻArabī subsequently remarks,

> The only [true] existence of the Truth is [as] God, the Exalted, in terms of His essence *(dhāt)* and entity (ʻ*ayn*), not in terms of His Names. This is because the Names have two connotations: the first connotation is He is what is named, and the other is that by which this Name is separate and dissociated from another Name. So how can the Forgiving be the Manifest or the Hidden, and how can the First be the Last? It has thus become clear for you in what sense every Name is another Name and in what sense it is not. In the sense that it is He, it is the Truth, and in the sense that it is other than He, it is the Imagined Truth (*al-Ḥaqq al-mutakhayyal*).[420]

The thing that chiefly concerns us about this passage is that in it Ibn ʻArabī draws a distinction between the essence *(dhāt)* and entity (ʻ*ayn*) of God, and His Names. This means Ibn ʻArabī first says that the divine essence, being [and *huwiyya*] are the amalgamation of all the Names and then remarks that the divine essence/being are not the Names. There seems to be a blatant contradiction here. As with many such cases in Ibn ʻArabī's corpus, especially in the *Fuṣūṣ,* there is, in fact, no dichotomy because, as the author himself points out, what he means by them not being the Names is the Names as separate manifestations of God in the sensible world. In terms of all the Names as a collective, they are the divine essence, being [and *huwiyya*].

Ibn ʻArabī makes this explicit when he says, "So it has become clear for you in what sense each Name is another Name and in what sense it is not another Name."[421] Therefore, each Name *is* another Name because they all allude to God, the One, but each Name is also different as it has a separate and distinct manifestation in the pre-phenomenal and phenomenal realms. So the Names are His essence, being

[420] Ibid.
[421] Ibid.

and *huwiyya*, if viewed all together, but not His essence, being or *huwiyya* if viewed separately.

Ibn ʻArabī's logic, thus far, is clear: the *huwiyya*, *dhāt* and *ʻayn* refer to the combination of all the Names and not their individual manifestations in the world. However, he goes on to say:

> So whoever holds on to multiplicity is with the Cosmos and the divine Names and the names of the Cosmos. And whoever holds on to unity (*aḥadiyya*) is with the Truth, in terms of His essence *(dhāt)*, which is independent (*ghanī*) of created things. And if He is independent of created things, [He is also] independent of the nominal connections (*nisbat al-asmāʾ*). This is because just as the Names allude to it [i.e. His *dhāt*], they also allude to other named things whose effects they realise.[422]

Here Ibn ʻArabī places multiplicity, divine Names and names of the Cosmos on one side, and contrasts them with unity (*aḥadiyya*) and *dhāt* on the other. It is logical for Ibn ʻArabī to put multiplicity with the divine Names as they are the cause of multiplicity in the realms. The names of the Cosmos also clearly belong in this camp as they are the sensible offshoots of the divine Names.

What is less clear, is why Ibn ʻArabī has juxtaposed the Names with the *dhāt* of God, which, as we have just mentioned, are all the Names in combination. So what is one to make of this contradiction? The clue lies in the term "unity" (*aḥadiyya*). Ibn ʻArabī employs it synonymously with *dhāt,* whereas previously he used *dhāt, ʻayn* and *huwiyya* as synonyms. Is *dhāt* in this equation then the same as *dhāt* in the erstwhile one? The answer is no.

By unambiguously using unity (*aḥadiyya*), Ibn ʻArabī is declaring that his purpose here is not to denote the Names as a collective (as opposed to the individual ones), it is to indicate the remote, unknowable God in contradistinction to the known God i.e. He who is known through the Names. This is confirmed by his statement

[422] Ibid., 104-05.

about God being independent of all "nominal connections (*nisbat al-asmā'*)" because one cannot apply a name to God that can also be used for created beings. This leaves us with no way to articulate the remote God and, consequently, no way to fathom Him, for if He is beyond anything we can say about Him, how can we know Him? As ʻAfīfī remarks, "To know in this sense is to determine that which is known, and determination is a form of limitation which is contrary to the nature of the Absolute."[423] In short, Ibn ʻArabī states that we simply do not possess the consciousness to process the concept of the Absolute God on this most rarefied plane.

What is even more significant about this passage, however, is that here Ibn ʻArabī refers not to the unknown God, but the unknowable God—the Absolute in His Absoluteness before any differentiations, the God who is independent of all created things and who cannot even be fathomed by creation as He is independent also of all "nominal connections." To denote this unknowable God, Ibn ʻArabī uses the terms *aḥadiyya* and *dhāt.* He heralds this new conception of God by use of the term "the Imagined Truth (*al-Ḥaqq al-mutakhayyal*)" in the previous passage, where he states that in terms of the Names not being God, they allude to God's status and an Imagined God, that is, the God that is imagined in the consciousness of man through the Names, and the implications of those Names, which in reality could never be applied to the unknowable God in any meaningful way.

This poses the question: if *dhāt* may be used to denote the unknowable God as well as the One expressed by the Names, can the same be the case for *huwiyya* (and *ʻayn*)? Ibn ʻArabī seeks the aid of chapter 112 of the Qur'an to answer this, he writes:

[423] ʻAfīfī, "Ibn ʻArabī," 411.

> *Say God is One,* in terms of His entity (*'ayn*). *God is eternal*, in terms of our dependence on Him. *He did not beget,* us, in terms of His *huwiyya*; *nor was He begotten,* in like manner; *nor is anyone equal to Him,* in like manner.[424]

The first thing to note about this commentary is that Ibn 'Arabī proffers it as an explanation and proof of the remote, unknowable God. He remarks that God in His purest form is beyond all "nominal connections (*nisbat al-asmā'*)" and therefore beyond the ken of human consciousness, and adduces this chapter as proof of that statement. He begins with, "*Say God is One,* in terms of His entity (*'ayn*)." The answer to our question as to whether *'ayn* may be used to denote the unknowable God is provided forthwith, for here Ibn 'Arabī conjures it categorically to do just that. He continues, "*He did not beget,* us, in terms of His *huwiyya*." This furnishes us with the response to our other query as to whether *huwiyya* too, could be used in this way, for in this context, *huwiyya* is deployed in precisely the same way as *'ayn* and *dhāt* before it. Ibn 'Arabī states that the *huwiyya* of God, i.e. the Absolute in His Absoluteness, did not beget anything, including us. Meaning, nothing in any of the planes of existence is a manifestation or representation of His in this pure sense as He surpasses all such connections and categorisations.

To summarise, then, Ibn 'Arabī uses these three terms to not only refer to the collective entity that is all the Names i.e. the manner in which we, as a creation, know God, but also to denote God in His truest form before any differentiations, God as the Absolute who transcends all nominal and conceptual connections. Lest there be any doubt as to the interchangeability of all three terms, Ibn 'Arabī also uses the last of them *(dhāt)* in his commentary of this *sūra* when he comments, "So this is His description and He singles out His essence *(dhāt)* by saying, *God is One.*" Ibn

[424] Ibn 'Arabī, *Fuṣūṣ*, 105.

‘Arabī therefore uses *dhāt* and *‘ayn* in his commentary of the same verse, and *huwiyya* in the commentary of a verse that corroborates it.

It seems clear that Ibn ‘Arabī adopts chapter 112 as a means of solely asserting the unqualified remoteness of God. However, his next statement casts doubt on this assumption, for immediately after proclaiming, “He singles out His essence *(dhāt)* by saying, *God is One,*” he remarks, “while the multiplicity known to us is manifest in His attributes.”[425] This seems to suggest that Ibn ‘Arabī is again employing *dhāt* to connote the combination of all the Names, as opposed to the multiplicity (*kathra*) expressed by the Names in their individual manifestations in the sensible world. This assertion is afforded further credence by Ibn ‘Arabī’s use of the same noun in singular and plural forms (*na‘t* and *nu‘ūt*) to signify God’s singular attribute as an amalgamation of all the Names, and His multitudinous attributes that give rise to the *kathra* in the physical world, respectively. So to which God: the unknowable One, the known God, or both, is Ibn ‘Arabī referring?

Ibn ‘Arabī’s extended commentary of chapter 112, which shortly follows his initial, brief one, offers few hints, for he writes,

> So we beget and are begotten, and we depend on Him, and we are equal to one another [as humans]. But this One [being] is free from these attributes, for He is independent of them just as He is independent of us. And the Truth does not have a lineage/origin except [as expressed in] this *sūra, sūrat al-Ikhlāṣ*, as it was revealed for this purpose.[426]

It is conceivable for Ibn ‘Arabī to be denoting the unknowable and the known God when he says, “So we beget and are begotten, and we depend on Him, and we are equal to one another [as humans],” though it is more common for a sentence like this to be reserved for the description of the known God only. He then comments

[425] Ibid.
[426] Ibid.

that "this One [being] is free from these attributes," which is largely reminiscent of his previous remark about God being "independent of the nominal connections (*nisbat al-asmā'*)." This would seem to be a reference to the unknowable God. However, he concludes the sentence with, "just as He is independent of us," which, again, could refer to both conceptions of God, though it is predominantly used by Ibn ʻArabī to denote the known God. Ibn ʻArabī then says that this is the truest description of the lineage (*nasab*) of God, which is why he selected this chapter to express the nature of God. This is an allusion to the context of revelation (*shān al-nuzūl*) for this chapter, with which Ibn ʻArabī is clearly familiar.[427]

One is left rather disorientated by Ibn ʻArabī since he begins his analysis of chapter 112 to demonstrate the remoteness of the Absolute God who cannot be fathomed as he is beyond all "nominal connections," and ends it with ascriptions and designations that he usually reserves for contrasting the collective entity of all the Names against their individual manifestations in the world. What, then, is one to make of this? To which conception of God is Ibn ʻArabī referring? Ibn ʻArabī takes it upon himself to dispel the confusion, he writes,

> The unity (*aḥadiyya*) of God, in terms of the divine Names which require us, is a unity of multiplicity (*aḥadiyyat al-kathra*). Whereas, the unity of God (*aḥadiyyat Allāh*), in terms of His independence from us and the Names is a unity of essence (*aḥadiyyat al-ʻayn*). To both the Name "the One" (*al-Wāḥid*) is applied, so remember this.[428]

What is primarily of note is Ibn ʻArabī's acknowledgement of the perplexity that his treatment of the nature of God thus far may have fostered, particularly since he seldom bestows such benevolence upon his audience. There is, though, a reason for this munificence: it is that Ibn ʻArabī has used the same three terms (*dhāt, ʻayn*

[427] For a detailed report of the context of revelation of chapter 112, see al-Ṭabarī, *Jāmiʻ al-bayān*, 12:740-41.
[428] Ibn ʻArabī, *Fuṣūṣ*, 105.

and *huwiyya*) and the same chapter of the Qur'an to denote both the unknowable God and the known God. He has vacillated in his analysis from one conception of God to the other and back again. Here he seeks to banish the dark clouds of confusion. In order to do this, he invokes the term, "the unity of God" (*aḥadiyyat Allāh*), which is a term he usually retains for the unknowable God.

He states that the unity of God can be a "unity of multiplicity (*aḥadiyyat al-kathra*),"[429] by which he means a unity of all the Names i.e. the knowable God. Furthermore, he uses the phrase, "The divine Names which require us," as it is through the Perfect Man that the divine Names may be manifested as a collective entity in the sensible world. The reference, then, is certainly to the knowable God. This knowable God does Ibn 'Arabī juxtapose with the "unity of essence" (*aḥadiyyat al-'ayn*), by which he refers to the unknowable God.[430]

He writes that the *aḥadiyyat al-'ayn* is God's independence of us and the Names. Ibn 'Arabī appends "the Names" as God's independence of us could still be a suitable description of the known God. However, by adding "the Names," Ibn 'Arabī categorically states that this is the God who transcends all nominal and conceptual relations and is unequivocally unknowable. Thus does Ibn 'Arabī answer the question as to which God he refers by *huwiyya, 'ayn* and *dhāt*: it is both. He slips and slides from one conception to the other. He uses the same three terms for both and it is the free exchange between them that engenders such bewilderment, which he not only acknowledges, but also dispels.

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[429] Al-Jurjānī defines *aḥadiyyat al-kathra* as, "The One in which the relative multiplicity becomes intelligible." (Al-Jurjānī, *Kitāb,* 11.) This clearly refers to the known God as He is intelligible to the creation, which is the way in which Ibn 'Arabī employs it here.

[430] Al-Jurjānī defines *aḥadiyyat al-ayn* as, "The way in which He is independent of us and the Names," which coincides with Ibn 'Arabī's usage here in delineating the remote God. (Al-Jurjānī, *Kitāb,* 12.)

Aḥadiyya, it must be mentioned in passing, is the term Ibn 'Arabī usually reserves for the unknowable God. However, he needed a term that could connote both conceptions of God and *aḥadiyya* is the only term he almost exclusively uses for the Absolute in His Absoluteness. He therefore, in my opinion, decided to expand it to incorporate both conceptions of God.

3.3.5.4. *Huwiyya* and the Knowable God

Ibn ʻArabī completes the bezel of Joseph with the following passage:

> Without doubt the Cosmos is essentially in need of causes. The greatest of causes for it is the causality of the Truth. And there is no causality of the Truth that the Cosmos is in need of save the divine Names. The Cosmos needs every Name of the divine Names from a Cosmos like it or the entity (*ʻayn*) of the Truth, for it is God, no other. This is why He says, *O people, you are in need of God while God is the Independent, the Praised.*[431] And it is known that we are in need of one another, so our names are the Names of God, the Exalted, since, without doubt, everything is in need of Him. But our essences (*aʻyān*), at the same time, are His shadow, no other. So He is our *huwiyya* and not our *huwiyya.*[432]

This reads as a summation of the main points raised in this bezel as well as a continuation of the clarification begun by Ibn ʻArabī in the previous paragraph. He turns his attention here almost entirely towards the knowable God as the collective of all the Names and His relationship to the Cosmos. This he does in order to explain the emergence of the Cosmos and, indeed, all modalities of existence.

To comprehend why Ibn ʻArabī seeks to reinforce this point, we must first grasp what the concept of the unknowable God necessitates. For Ibn ʻArabī, in his analysis of the unknowable, remote God, states that He is utterly independent of everything and everyone; He has absolutely no need of anything and nothing can even fathom Him. A necessary corollary of this assertion is to call in to question the need for the emergence of the Cosmos. For if God, on this absolute level, is completely incomprehensible, then what is the purpose of creating a Cosmos that can never truly reflect the image of the divine? It is this question that Ibn ʻArabī answers with the following proclamation:

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[431] Qur'an, 35:15.
[432] Ibn ʻArabī, *Fuṣūṣ*, 105-06.

> Without doubt the Cosmos is essentially in need of causes. The greatest of causes for it is the causality of the Truth. And there is no causality of the Truth that the Cosmos is in need of save the divine Names.

In other words, it is not this unknowable God who seeks His image to be reflected in the Cosmos because it is impossible for any creation to achieve this; the purpose of the creation of the Cosmos is to reflect the divine Names and through them, the *knowable* God. This is the "greatest cause" for the emergence of the Cosmos.

Ibn ʻArabī then writes, "The Cosmos needs every Name of the divine Names from a Cosmos like it or the entity (ʻ*ayn*) of the Truth, for it is God, no other." This consolidates the previous statement about the Cosmos requiring the Names for its existence, but it also imparts that the emergence of the phenomenal realm is not a uni-step process. This is because the sensible Cosmos, which requires each and every Name, comes into being when the Names are manifested in the pre-phenomenal realm and then into the material one. This may be what Ibn ʻArabī alludes to by the phrase "from a Cosmos like it." However, it is not necessary for each Name to pass through this intermediary stage, as could be understood from Ibn ʻArabī's comment, "or the entity (ʻ*ayn*) of the Truth." Naturally, *ʻayn* here refers to the combination of all the Names i.e. the essence of the knowable God.

Ibn ʻArabī could therefore be articulating that the emergence of the Cosmos may come about through two routes: the first begins with a Name that is manifested in the pre-sensible world and then the physical one. The second passes directly into phenomenality, bypassing the pre-sensible realm. In this sense, it is "the entity (ʻ*ayn*) of the Truth," which appears in the material world and does not require another Cosmos like it to make the leap from the essence to the sensible world. Either way, its dependence on a Name is absolute, which is why Ibn ʻArabī says, "It is God, no other."

Ibn ʻArabī's closing remarks in this chapter recapitulate his entire outlook towards the complex God-man relationship. He writes, "We need each other,"[433] which means that we are mutually dependent because just as we require God for our existence, the knowable God needs us for His manifestation as "His Names are our names,"[434] i.e. His Names are manifested through us. This also means that our names, as in the manner in which we name and articulate things in order to describe them, comprehend them and forge relationships with them, are also applicable to Him. We thus describe Him in the same way and with the same names as we do ourselves; this is why "His Names are our names."[435]

It is noteworthy that Ibn ʻArabī completes this thought with the phrase, "as everything is dependent on Him,"[436] when, only in the previous sentence he avows the mutualism between the Names and the Cosmos. Moreover, the verse he adduces as proof of this symbiosis asserts only God's independence from everything and the Cosmos' dependence on Him. So why does Ibn ʻArabī believe this verse corroborates his contention about the God-man mutualism? And why does he begin his remarks by solely affirming the Cosmos' reliance on the Names, proffering a verse that substantiates it, only to interpret it as symbiosis, and then conclude his remarks by

[433] Ibid., 106.
[434] Ibid.
[435] It is noteworthy that this concept of describing things from a narrow frame of reference is something that Ibn ʻArabī derives from the Qur'an. It states in chapter 2: *Every time they are given fruits therefrom they say, "This is what we have been given before*." (Qur'an, 2:25.) Al-Ṭabarī, in his commentary of this verse, asks rhetorically, "Is it not permissible that the names of that which is in paradise, in terms of fruits, foods and drinks, should be like their names in the world? So if one denies that, then he disagrees with the text of the Book of God, for God, exalted be His praise, made His servants know what is with Him in paradise through names that they were given in the world. (Al-Ṭabarī, *Jāmiʻ*, 1:210-11.) We see in this verse, and its interpretation by al-Ṭabarī, that he acknowledges the same names may be applied to entirely different things due to a limited scope of reference. Here, the fruits of paradise are given the same names by its inhabitants because all they know are the names they have been taught in the world. Indeed, al-Ṭabarī argues that the *reason* these names are given to them in the world are so that they can employ them in paradise. Ibn ʻArabī likewise states that the names we use to describe God are also applied to other things that are part of the creation. The reason for this is we cannot describe Him with names that are outside our frame of reference, we can only describe Him with what we know, even if the connotation, when applied to Him is entirely different.
[436] Ibn ʻArabī, *Fuṣūṣ*, 106.

again asserting God's independence? The reason for this rather schizophrenic analysis is given by his statement: "But our essences are, at the same time, His shadow,"[437] for what Ibn 'Arabī suggests here is a complex mutualism, it is not a simple case of the knowable God requiring the Cosmos for His manifestation and the Cosmos needing the Names for its existence, in equal measure. No, the Cosmos requires the Names far more than the Names need the Cosmos. This is because this Cosmos is only one of an infinite number which could manifest His Names. Ibn 'Arabī intimates this by the phrase "a Cosmos like it," which could refer to a pre-phenomenal realm of existence or another sensible one.

Finally, by stating that our essences are His shadow, Ibn 'Arabī makes clear that man, though he is the most focussed manifestation of the divine Names, is still just a vague allusion to the knowable divine essence. It is in this regard that we are His *huwiyya* and He is ours, but this must not lead to think the relationship is evenly balanced; our dependence on Him is far greater. Therefore, He is our *huwiyya* far more than we are His *huwiyya* because His Names are the absolute cause of our existence and our existence is but a blurred reflection of His Names.

3.3.5.5. Summary of *Huwiyya* in the Bezel of Joseph

The foregoing displays the significance of *huwiyya* in this bezel. Ibn 'Arabī uses the context of the story of Joseph to elucidate the concept of *huwiyya* in all its nuance and complexity. He aims to dispel any confusion caused by his use of the term to denote both the unknowable God, the God that remains forever beyond the ken of human comprehension, and the God that is "imagined" by the creation through a holistic engagement with the Names. *Huwiyya* may be used to denote the essence of the divine in both cases, but the meaning in each case is very different. Indeed, the

[437] Ibid.

difference in connotations may be perceived as an evolution of the true meaning of *huwiyya*, which is a term to denote the absolutely unknowable God with whom the creation engages by the nominal *huwiyya,* a *huwiyya* that makes God intelligible but can never be a true representation of His. This nominal *huwiyya* is connected to the creational *huwiyya* as it is a manifestation of the nominal *huwiyya*, either in its entirety, in the case of the Perfect Man who embodies all the divine Names, or a single Name, in the case of other existents. All the *huwiyyāt,* then, are connected in an evolutionary process beginning with the *huwiyya* of the unknowable God and ending with the *huwiyya* of existents.

3.3.6. Conclusion of Ibn ʻArabī and *Huwiyya*

The foregoing has underscored how intricate and multifaceted the term *huwiyya* is in Ibn ʻArabī's conceptual outlook. The reason for this is because it goes to the very heart of the nature of God and, as such, it may be conceived of as the highest "focus-word"[438] with everything originating from and returning to it. Specifically, in the context of Ibn ʻArabī's emanationism, it is even more significant as the entire universe, indeed, all modalities of existence are an expression of God—of His *huwiyya* while it is also a term for Him alone, as an incomprehensible, categorically independent, solely existent being. It is therefore a term that covers everything and God alone. Being at once so broad and so narrow, it is little wonder that *huwiyya* is the source of such confusion in Ibn ʻArabī's corpus. However, Ibn ʻArabī, in acknowledgment of the ambiguity fostered by this term, and the significance of it, deigns to explicate what he means when he employs it.

[438] See Izutsu, *God and Man*, 100-117.

Let us now see if all the nuances of meaning are preserved by ‘Abd al-Razzāq al-Qāshānī, or whether he omits and adapts the term according to his own spiritual insight.

4.0. Al-Qāshānī and *Huwiyya*

4.1. Al-Qāshānī's Definition of *Huwiyya*

It must be stated at the very outset that al-Qāshānī's treatment of *huwiyya* shall be dealt with in this section on its own terms without reference to or comparison with that of Ibn 'Arabī. This, at least, is the objective; naturally, one cannot escape this trap entirely so steeped is al-Qāshānī's engagement in Ibn 'Arabī's semantic *Weltanshauung*. The attempt, nevertheless, will be to try and avoid it as much as possible so that al-Qāshānī's own conception of what this term means shall emerge before it is analysed with that of his Sufi master.

To explore what al-Qāshānī means by *huwiyya,* we must proceed from his definition of the term in his various lexicons. The term is conspicuously absent from his *Iṣṭilaḥāt* and we are given only a brief definition in *Rashḥ al-zulāl,* wherein he writes that *huwiyya* is "the absolute, comprehensive Reality … in the absolute unseen … for the absolute unseen, in terms of it being unseen, does not reach a point where it is ever witnessed."[439]

This succinct definition furnishes us with our most basic starting point as to al-Qāshānī's conceptualisation of *huwiyya*: it is the absoluteness of God; God in a rarefied plane of existence; a plane that never enters the realms of sensory perception, in this way it is severed from the creation and its manifestation therein. However, God may be characterised as this in the first and second planes of existence, that is, in the plane when there is nothing and manifestation of God is not even presaged, the absolute form of God about which man cannot know anything; and the first plane, when there is a prefiguring of creation and, thus, a prefiguring of

[439] Al-Qāshānī, *Rashḥ*, 139.

manifesting the divine Names, as this is the purpose for creation. To find out which al-Qāshānī means, we may look at his definitions of *huwiyya* in the *Laṭā'if*.

Al-Qāshānī presents numerous definitions of the different types of *huwiyya* in the *Laṭā'if*, all the better for our understanding what exactly he means by them. His most elementary definition corresponds well with what is written in *Rashḥ.* He comments that *huwiyya* is, "The Reality in the unseen realm, and the *huwiyya* of the [divine] essence *(dhāt)* is in terms of its entity (*'ayn*)."[440] This definition does little to identify the plane of existence to which al-Qāshānī refers, but it does reveal an indelible link between this term, "[divine] being" *(dhāt)* and "essence" (*'ayn*).[441]

The other two definitions al-Qāshānī provides in the *Laṭā'if* seem to be synonyms of one another. The first of these is "the great *huwiyya*" (*al-huwiyyat al-kubrā*), about which he remarks that "it is the Reality of realities (*ḥaqīqat al-ḥaqā'iq*) and it is the *huwiyya* encompassing all the *huwiyyāt*."[442] This, again, does not disclose what plane of existence is being referred to, but it does betray that in the opinion of al-Qāshānī, as in the opinion of Ibn 'Arabī, things other than God have a *huwiyya.* The second definition, "the all-encompassing *huwiyya*" (*al-huwiyyat al-muḥīta*), is largely a recapitulation of the former, included, it would seem, for mere scrupulousness. He writes,

> It is the *huwiyya* encompassing all the *huwiyyāt*, and it is the Reality of realities, which you know, as it is the inner aspect of the oneness (*waḥda*), from the provident care (*ḥīṭa*) of which, nothing leaves.[443]

This definition tells us that, not only do things other than God have a *huwiyya*, but *all* things have one, and they are all under the control of the divine *huwiyya*.

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[440] Al-Qāshānī, *Laṭā'if*, 697.
[441] These are the very terms with which Ibn 'Arabī identifies *huwiyya.* For more on this, see the comparative analysis of *huwiyya.*
[442] Al-Qāshānī, *Laṭā'if*, 697.
[443] Ibid.

The various catergorisations of *huwiyya* supplied by al-Qāshānī in his lexicons have thus furnished us with three fundamental points from which we can begin our investigation: (1) It refers to the absoluteness of God, though on what plane we know not (2) the terms *'ayn* and *huwiyya* may be used interchangeably as they are by Ibn 'Arabī, and (3) everything has a *huwiyya.*

4.2. *Huwiyya, 'Ayn* and the Perfect Man

The next step, having established a link between *huwiyya* and the term "essence" (*'ayn*), would be to look at what al-Qāshānī says about it. In the *Laṭā'if,* al-Qāshānī defines the "entity of the Truth" (*'ayn al-Ḥaqq*) as,

> The man who has realised the great intermediary manifestation (*al-maẓhariyya al-barzakhiyya al-kubrā*),[444] as you know. By it is also meant he who realises the manifestation of the Name, "the Seer"[445] … and he who attains this station sees God in everything. This is only due to his realisation of the manifestation of the Name, "the Seer". … And this man is called the servant of the Seer (*'abd al-Baṣīr*) due to realising the manifestation of the Name, "the Seer," be He exalted and sanctified.[446]

Following the logic that if A=B, and B=C, then A=C, we can deduce that, since *huwiyya='ayn,* and *'ayn*=someone who has realised the great intermediary manifestation (*al-maẓhariyya al-barzakhiyya al-kubrā*), then *huwiyya=* someone who has realised the great intermediary manifestation. A man who has realised the great

[444] This term has a special significance in Ibn 'Arabī's terminology. Su'ād Ḥakīm summarises it well when she writes that by it Ibn 'Arabī "refers to the reality of man (*ḥaqīqat al-insān*), which, through its being (*dhāt*), combines the two forms (*ṣūratayn*): the Truth and the creation . So it is two copies with two connections: a connection with which it enters the divine plane (*al-haḍra al-ilāhiyya*), and a connection with which it enters the creational plane (*al-ḥaḍra al-kawniyya*). So it is the intermediary (*barzakh*) between the Cosmos and the Truth, and it is the rank of the Perfect Man." (Su'ād Ḥakīm, *Al-Mu'jam,* 194.) For al-Qāshānī, the term *barzakh* is clearly significant. He states that it is "something that comes in between two things and forms a partition between them." (Al-Qāshānī, *Laṭā'if*, 231.) However, when applied to man, an exteriorisation of all the divine Names, his multiplicity (*kathra*) is the "connection between the real oneness (*al-waḥda al-ḥaqīqiyya*) of the [divine] Essence (*dhāt*) and the real multiplicity (*al-kathara al-ḥaqīqiyya*), which are the forms (*ṣuwar*) of the existents. (Al-Qāshānī, *Laṭā'if*, 234.) For a detailed engagement of all the denotations of *barzakh*, see Al-Qāshānī, *Laṭā'if*, 231-34.

[445] Al-Qāshānī evidently uses *'ayn* to refer to both "essence" and "eye," as attested by his continual reference to sight and seeing in this and other definitions. However, I prefer to translate the term as "essence" as I believe it captures the overarching meaning of *'ayn* in al-Qāshānī's various works.

[446] Al-Qāshānī, *Laṭā'if*, 536.

intermediary manifestation, according to al-Qāshānī, is one who has the capacity to act as an intermediary between God and the creation. In other words, his existence is a conduit for expression of the Names that are manifested in their individualised forms in the Cosmos. This man is more commonly known as the Perfect Man (*al-insān al-kāmil*).[447] We find confirmation of this in the *Iṣṭilaḥāt* where the essence of the Truth and the Cosmos is defined as,

> The Perfect Man who has realised the great intermediary Reality. This is because God sees the Cosmos through his sight and thus bestows upon it the mercy of existence. As He said, "But for you [O Muḥammad!] I would not have created the heavens." And he is the man who realises the Name, "the Seer" (*al-Baṣīr*) because everything that he sees in the Cosmos of things he sees by this Name.[448]

We see from these definitions that the reason the Perfect Man is the great intermediary between God and His creation is because he is the reason for it. The Cosmos came into being only because God wanted to see an expression of all His Names, a function the Perfect Man fulfilled. Al-Qāshānī is most unequivocal on this point in his definition of the essence of the Cosmos (*'ayn al-'ālam*), about which he remarks,

> It is the essence of the Truth, for He is only the essence of the Truth due to his realisation of the manifestation of the Name, "the Seer," so likewise, he is the essence of the Cosmos as there is no seer without the Name, "the Seer," be He exalted and sanctified. And the Shaykh [i.e. Ibn 'Arabī] said in the *Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam,* "Man is only the essence of the Truth because the Exalted saw the Cosmos through him and thus had mercy upon it, meaning, by pouring forth existence upon it because of him. Since, but for the Perfect Man, He would not have created the Cosmos, as alluded to by His saying, "But for you, I would not have created the heavens." And His, be He exalted, saying, "*And He has subjugated to you whatever is in the heavens and whatever is on the earth.*" To summarise what he [i.e. Ibn 'Arabī] said in the

[447] The major work on the concept of the Perfect Man is by al-Jīlī, See *Al-Insān al-kāmil.*
[448] Al-Qāshānī, *Iṣṭilaḥāt*, 151.

Fuṣūṣ, "Man is only the essence of the Cosmos because he is the essential aim of the Cosmos."[449]

So the Perfect Man is the entity (*'ayn*) and *huwiyya* of God because he realises the Name "the Seer" which, in this context, means all the Names, as all the Names are viewed through it. This also, at least in part, reveals what al-Qāshānī means by "the absolute, unseen Reality," for the Perfect Man can only be an expression of the Names after there is a prefiguring of pouring forth existence; *huwiyya,* then, means the communicable essence of God, as we cannot fathom, let alone articulate what the Absolute in His Absoluteness is. In this regard, al-Qāshānī imitates Ibn 'Arabī who also holds that if something can be named then it is knowable to an extent. The *huwiyya* therefore, is the unknown God, but not the absolutely unknowable God.[450] It must also be mentioned that *huwiyya* referring to the unknown God, does not detract from its communicability, for something may be unknown and still communicated, and such is indeed the case with the divine *huwiyya.*

4.3. *Huwiyya* in the *Ta'wīlāt*: Absolute Existence versus Contingent Existence[451]

We have now the basic tools to undertake a surgery of the use of *huwiyya* in the *Ta'wīlāt*. The foregoing has endowed us with a general conception of what al-Qāshānī means by the term, what remains to be seen is whether his application of it is faithful to his definitions.

Al-Qāshānī begins his commentary of chapter 45 thus:

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[449] Al-Qāshānī, *Laṭā'if*, 536-37.
[450] It is noteworthy that al-Qāshānī, unlike some others in the school of Ibn 'Arabī, classifies the presence the unknowable God as a distinctly separate "presence" (*ḥaḍra*) to that of the unknown God, or the "Second Entification." Chittick, "The Five Divine Presences," 122.
[451] For an analysis of how absolute and contingent existence operate in the emanatory scheme of the school of Ibn 'Arabī, see Chittick, "The Five Divine Presences," 115.

> *Ḥā Mīm.*[452] This is the statement following the oath that is omitted by virtue of the Book being revealed to him, that is, "I swear by the reality of the *huwiyya* (*ḥaqīqat al-huwiyya*), that is, absolute existence (*al-wujūd al-muṭlaq*), which is the source of everything and the essence of union (*'ayn al-jam'*), and by Muḥammad, that is, relational existence (*al-wujūd al-iḍāfī*), which is the perfection of everything and a differentiated form (*ṣūrat al-tafṣīl*), that I will surely reveal the Book that will make these two things apparent.[453]

In this passage, we are given the clearest and most basic definition of *huwiyya* to be found anywhere in the *Ta'wīlāt,* al-Qāshānī characterises it as the "absolute existence" (*al-wujūd al-muṭlaq*) of God as opposed to the relational existence (*al-wujūd al-iḍāfī*) of His creation. *Huwiyya,* though used for other things and for other beings, first, and most fundamentally, means this: it is God's absolute existence, the one red line that distinguishes Him from everything else. All other definitions and uses of *huwiyya* emanate from this primary one, just as all existence emanates from God Himself. It is precisely because there are so many uses and definitions of *huwiyya* that al-Qāshānī seeks to underscore the primariness of this one by saying that it is "the reality of the *huwiyya* (*ḥaqīqat al-huwiyya*)." In other words, this is the main *huwiyya* and the source of all *huwiyyāt.* The usage of *huwiyya* corresponds well with the definitions we have hitherto encountered in al-Qāshānī's lexicons, but in none of them are we directed to think of it in terms of God's absolute existence.

The commentary of this verse also demonstrates that *huwiyya* denotes the absolute essence of God, but not in the sense of God before there was any prefiguring of existence, rather of God as the unified source of all existence. This represents a significant departure from Ibn 'Arabī's most basic signification of

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[452] Al-Qāshānī takes *ḥā'* to denote *ḥaqīqa* (reality), as in the absolute reality, and *mīm* to denote Muḥammad. This is why he chooses to delineate the difference between absolute and relational existence here, as he sees Muḥammad as the epitome of relational existence. For a detailed engagement with al-Qāshānī's interpretation of "the isolated letters" (*al-ḥurūf al-muqaṭṭ'āt*), see Michel Vâlsan, *Les interprétations ésotériques du Coran*, 100-01, 110-11.
[453] Al-Qāshānī, *Ta'wīlāt* 2:545.

huwiyya. For though master and disciple are in agreement that the main connotation of the term is the unknowable God, al-Qāshānī employs it here to denote the second emanatory stage of the divine in which a prefiguring of existence occurs. God is still alone and unknown as there is nothing besides Him, and He is dissociated from His creation, in a sense, as there is nothing but He. However, He is no longer absolutely alone and unknowable due to the prefiguring of creation within the divine consciousness—a prefiguring that connects Him to the creation that will be.

Al-Qāshānī clearly draws a distinction here between God, the absolutely existent and the Perfect Man, that is, Muḥammad, the contingently so, the one who is the differentiated form (*ṣūrat al-tafṣīl*) of all the Names. Only in the commentary of one other verse does al-Qāshānī articulate this distinction between the absolute *huwiyya* of God and His creation in a similar way:

> *Alif Lām Rā … these,* that is, what is alluded to by these letters are the fundamentals of the entire, wisdom-filled book, or the [book whose] completeness of differentiations are masterly and perfect. Or I swear by God, in terms of the *huwiyya* of unity (*al-huwiyya al-aḥadiyya*) generally, and in terms of the attribute of oneness (*al-ṣifa al-wāḥidiyya*) in particular.[454]

This extract elucidates the same concept as its forerunner, the verse it is explaining is also similar in the sense that both are individual letters (*al-ḥurūf al-muqaṭṭa'āt*), but the terms employed are different. To begin with, in place of the reality of the *huwiyya* (*ḥaqīqat al-huwiyya*) which has absolute existence (*al-wujūd al-muṭlaq*) and the creation which has relational existence (*al-wujūd al-iḍāfī*), we are acquainted with the designation: the *huwiyya* of unity (*al-huwiyya al-aḥadiyya*), in contradistinction to the attribute of oneness (*al-ṣifa al-wāḥidiyya*). We must thus make sense of these terms in order to ascertain whether the overall commentary does indeed correspond with its predecessor.

[454] Ibid. 1:232.

We note that where we had *ḥaqīqat al-huwiyya,* we now have *al-huwiyya al-aḥadiyya*. If the two commentaries are synonymous, these terms, too, must be synonymous and therefore refer to the absolute essence of God.

4.3.1. *Huwiyya* and *Aḥadiyya*

Al-Qāshānī is remarkably fastidious in expounding the concept of *aḥadiyya* in his lexicons so we can construct an accurate picture of what this term exactly means in his nomenclature. Unsurprisingly, the most concise definition is delivered in the *Iṣṭilāḥāt*, where al-Qāshanī describes *aḥadiyya* as, "its consideration while discarding everything [else]."[455] This would seem to be an allusion to God in His absolute state where He cannot be considered in reference to anything else as everything is unified in Him or because there is no prefiguring of existence.

Al-Qāshānī's definition of the oneness of union (*aḥadiyyat al-jam'*) affords us a more detailed definition. He writes that it is "its consideration just as it is, without discarding or confirming it, such that the aforementioned relationship of the plane of oneness (*haḍrat al-wāḥidiyya*) is included in it."[456] This means that oneness (*wāḥidiyya*) is included in unity (*aḥadiyya*) because the former emanates from the latter. But what of *aḥadiyya* itself? Al-Qāshānī creates an elaborate profile of this term, from its basic meaning, progressing through its ever more differentiated forms, and culminating in the oneness of union (*aḥadiyyat al-jam'*) in the *Laṭā'if*.

> The basic meaning of *aḥadiyya* is said to be:
>
> > Consideration of the [divine] essence *(dhāt)* in terms of there primarily not being a connection between it and anything else, nor there primarily being a connection between something and the [divine] essence *(dhāt)*. This is why consideration of something that is described by *aḥadiyya* necessitates the [divine] essence *(dhāt)* to be independent of the world because, from this

[455] Al-Qāshānī, *Iṣṭilāḥāt*, 51.
[456] Ibid.

> standpoint, there is no connection between it and anything else, and from this point of view, a thing called *aḥadiyya* necessitates that the [divine] essence *(dhāt)* does not reach [it], nor does it reach [the divine *dhāt*], or encompass it in any way as it cannot be considered in terms of anything. And this is the [only] consideration by which the [divine] essence *(dhāt)* is called "unified," as you know.[457]

This definition correlates perfectly with the commentary of chapter 45 above where the *huwiyya* of God is described as having absolute existence (*al-wujūd al-muṭlaq*) and everything else as having relational existence (*al-wujūd al-iḍāfī*). Therefore, from this vantage point, there cannot be any relationship between God and His creation as their existence is of diametrically opposite kinds. This is also what al-Qāshānī means when he remarks that primarily, there is no connection between it i.e. the *aḥadiyya* or basic *huwiyya* of God, and anything else. It could also refer to the absolute incomprehensibility of God—of His being entirely dissociated from His creation as they cannot even fathom Him, let alone forge a relationship with Him. However, the allusion above of the *wāḥidiyya* being contained within the *aḥadiyya* would suggest that the first meaning is more dominant.

Another denotation, as stated previously, is that since everything is unified in God in this plane of existence, there cannot be any connection to anything else as nothing else exists yet. We note also that *dhāt* and *aḥadiyya* are used synonymously in a context where *aḥadiyya* denotes *huwiyya.* This is corroborated by al-Qāshānī's definition of *al-aḥadiyya al-dhātiyya,* which is a recapitulation of this definition. He writes,

> It is what you know of it in terms of the [divine] essence *(dhāt)* not having primarily any connection to anything, nor anything having a connection to it in a certain way. And the [divine] essence *(dhāt)*, in terms of this *aḥadiyya*, necessitates independence from the worlds.[458]

[457] Al-Qāshānī, *Laṭā'if*, 152.
[458] Ibid.

So far, there is either no differentiation (which is less likely, as stated above) or the differentiation of existence being anticipated in the *aḥadiyya,* as the two terms are synonyms of one another—each employed to delineate the absolute essence of God. This also means that the default designation of *aḥadiyya,* if used in isolation, is this one because if a different meaning is intended, al-Qāshānī will further qualify it with one of the following terms:

1. *Al-Aḥadiyya al-ṣifatiyya*. Through this, according to al-Qāshānī, "there are considerations of the [divine] essence *(dhāt)*, in terms of union of the Names and the attributes in it … and this consideration unites the different kinds of Names, while every Name alludes to it. Also, if one meaning is understood from it, another of the Names is distinct from it.[459]

   This term, then, is closely allied to oneness (*wāḥidiyya*) as we observe from al-Qāshānī's near exact definition in the *Iṣṭilaḥāt,* wherein he writes that oneness (*wāḥidiyya*) is: "Consideration of the [divine] essence *(dhāt)* in terms of the Names emanating from it, and its oneness being with it despite its multiplicity with the Names."[460] In the *Laṭā'if,* as ever, we are given more detail, but the central premise of *wāḥdiyya* denoting the oneness of the Names remains. Al-Qāshānī comments that it is,

   > Cosideration of the [divine] essence *(dhāt)* in terms of the Names emanating from it and its unity with them. So the Name of the [divine] being "the One" is positive, not negative because the oneness (*wāḥidiyya*) is the source of the emanation of the Names from the [divine] being since the Names are disparate connections to the one [divine] being in reality; and upon this oneness, gnosis depends, and to it the search is directed.[461]

[459] Ibid.
[460] Al-Qāshānī, *Iṣṭilaḥāt*, 73.
[461] Al-Qāshānī, *Laṭā'if*, 703.

The principal distinction between this term and the aforementioned two, therefore, is that while the first two refer to the absolute *huwiyya* of God, in terms of which He is entirely dissociated from His creation, this one asserts the *huwiyya* as an amalgamation of all the Names, which makes it the chief manner in which God is connected to His creation and manifested in them.

2. *Aḥadiyyat al-asmā'* (unity of the Names). Predictably, this is the same as *al-aḥadiyya al-ṣifatiyya* since the Names are the attributes of God. Hence, al-Qāshānī proffers an abridged version of the previous definition, saying that it "is the unity of attributes (*al-aḥadiyya al-ṣifatiyya*), as you know."[462] We know this because we have just been informed of it in the preceding definition.

3. *Al-Aḥadiyya al-fi'liyya* (unity of action). This is the most differentiated from of *aḥadiyya* and pertains to the actions of God, or rather, things that occur in the phenomenal realm. Al-Qāshānī gives the following signification of it:

> Through it the means of actions are eradicated and all of them are seen as the act of the Truth alone, be He exalted. It is necessary to know that there are two facets of this *al-aḥadiyya al-fi'liyya*: one of them is the eradication of considering means [of things] and this is the state of those who seek annihilation (*mustahlikīn*). The second of them is consideration of the unity of witnessing(*al-aḥadiyya al-mashhūda*) [and this is] the person who is at the station of the highest perfection (*maqām al-akmaliyya*),[463] in terms of which, the meaning is

[462] Ibid., 152.

[463] The term "station" (*maqām*) requires some explanation. It is one that is continually used with "state" (*ḥāl*) and the difference between them is succinctly explained by al-Tahānawī, who defines "station" (*maqām*) as being "in the form of an adverb [of place] according to the wayfarers [on the spiritual path] (*sālikīn*). It is that which is maintained by and remains [with] the servant, for if it is not maintained, [then] it is called a "state" (*ḥāl*)." (Al-Tahānawī, *Kashshāf,* 3:1227.) The basic difference between station (*maqām*) and state (*ḥāl*) is therefore the difference between a persisting state and one that is transitory. But what of *maqām* itself? Al-Qāshānī offers a detailed definition in the *Iṣṭilāḥāt* that is virtually reproduced *verbatim* in his other two lexicons. He writes that *maqām* is,

> Fulfilment of the rights of [one's] duties, for if one has not fulfilled the rights of the rank he is in, then it is not right for him to progress to that which is above it. … The meaning of

> eradication of different means [of things] with regard to tracing the act to the Truth from tracing it to the creation because the meaning of eradication of the means when viewed properly, is eradicating its consideration [totally, and] that is the state of those who seek annihilation (*mustahlikīn*), as you know.[464]

This type of *aḥadiyya* is therefore attributing all things that transpire in the sensible realm (and indeed, pre-sensible realms) to God, who is the true agent of each action. The two facets of this *aḥadiyya* that al-Qāshānī mentions seem to be (1) knowing that all the actions are fundamentally carried out by God, and (2) actually seeing the act as an act of God without even perceiving the creational intermediary; this, it would seem, is the preserve of those at the station of the highest perfection (*maqām al-akmaliyya*).

4.3.1.1. *Aḥadiyyat al-Jam'*

Al-Qāshānī, it can be observed, has devoted much ink to the explication of this term and all its variations, and if he has been comprehensive in his analysis of this term, choosing even to include permutations of the same terms, then it is only because he considers *aḥadiyya* so important, as we have seen and will have ample occasion to see. However, as thoroughgoing as his scrutiny may have been, it compares not to the article al-Qāshānī writes about *aḥadiyyat al-jam',* where he synthesises all the erstwhile expressions of *aḥadiyya.* Let us dissect the long entry. Al-Qāshānī begins:

> "fulfilment" does not signify that none of the stages of the lower stations remain until he may proceed to the higher, for most of the remaining things of the lower stations and its final stages will only be rectified in the higher [anyway]. Rather, the meaning is that he firmly establishes himself in it in such a manner that he does not change and it [becomes] a [permanent] state (*ḥāl*). (Al-Qāshānī, *Iṣṭilaḥāt*, 107-8.)

In this comprehensive definition, al-Qāshānī seeks to underscore two things: firstly, that being on a station means consciously fulfilling the rights of that station. It is not something that one simply stumbles upon; rather, it requires sustained effort on the part of the wayfarer on the spiritual path. This is the difference between *maqām* and *ḥāl*: the former is a state that persists due to effort, and the latter is an impulse or a fleeting condition. Al-Qāshānī makes this point most forcefully in his *Laṭā'if,* where he defines "state" (*ḥāl*) as "that to which the heart inclines without proper consideration, without procurement or acquisition … and that is in contradistinction to *maqām* because, according to them, it is a term for fulfilment of the rights of [one's] duties. … This is why it is said, "States are given and stations earned." (Al-Qāshānī, *Laṭā'if,* 332.)

[464] Al-Qāshānī, *Laṭā'if*, 153.

> It is called the plane of *aḥadiyyat al-jam'* and the stage of *aḥadiyyat al-jam'*. The meaning of this is the first differentiation of the [divine] essence *(dhāt)* and the first stage, which is not considered in reference to anything but the [divine] being alone, as alluded to by his, peace and blessings be upon him, saying, "There was God while nothing was with Him."[465] This is because the matter then, and [by "then"] I mean in the stage of *aḥadiyyat al-jam'*, was [absolute] oneness. Since there was nothing there besides the [divine] being alone with [its] connection [to everything] and its unity (*aḥadiyya*), which is the essence of the one [divine] being, being included in it. So this connection, even though it is manifested in the form (*ṣūra*) of the attributes in the second stage, which is the plane of division and separation, only combines two attributes: oneness (*waḥda*) and multiplicity (*kathra*).[466]

This paragraph tersely summarises all the stages of differentiation of the divine *huwiyya* up to, but not including, *al-aḥadiyya al-fi'liyya*. Al-Qāshānī commences his treatment of the term with what he defines as the first differentiation and the first stage, which is the basic meaning of *aḥadiyya.* This is the stage where there is a prefiguring of creation, but nothing actually exists besides God, and as such, there is no point of reference besides God and everything is unified in Him. In this sense, He is connected to everything and dissociated from everything, as He *is* everything. It is for this reason that al-Qāshānī asserts the dissociation of God from everything at the beginning of his definition, citing the prophetic tradition, "There was God while nothing was with Him," as proof of this assertion only to state that "there was nothing there besides the [divine] being alone with [its] connection [to everything]." He was thus dissociated from everything and connected to everything, He was alone but with everything, as everything was unified in Him and He was everything.

Al-Qāshānī then mentions the second differentiation where the Names come into being. However, he says the source of all the Names is but two things: oneness

[465] Al-Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, 4:129.
[466] Al-Qāshānī, *Laṭā'if*, 153.

(*waḥda*) and multiplicity (*kathra*) because all the Names allude to the one, true God, and they are naught save He in the multitudinous manifestations of creation. At the stage of the first differentiation, however, there is no actual separation and only a presentiment that the Names will emerge from it, as he elucidates further when he comments,

> So there are two forms and [two] connections among the connections of the all-encompassing, united, undivided [divine] essence *(dhāt)*. [However,] the separation that has these two attributes is not a true separation in itself, and this separation becomes the cause of comprising the comprehensiveness of the [divine] essence *(dhāt)* because it is the connection of the [divine] essence *(dhāt)* in its first stage, as judged in terms of there not being there an "other" or "otherness."[467]

So the first differentiation is not actually a physical differentiation, but rather an alteration in the divine consciousness predisposing it towards creation. There is no "other" or "otherness" at this stage; nothing exists besides God in His absolute solitude. Al-Qāshānī continues in the same vein:

> Thus, it [and by "it"] I mean that connection and qualification of the attributes, is judged to be a separation between it [i.e. the attributes] and that which is described by it in the second stage. But this is in terms of its innerness, which is a matter of the [divine] essence *(dhāt)* and nothing else, as there is no otherness or contrast there [i.e. in this stage.] This is because there [i.e. in this stage], it is not an attribute of the [divine] essence *(dhāt)*, rather it is the [very] essence of the [divine] being.[468]

Al-Qāshānī writes that those Names which are individualised entities in the second differentiation are deemed to be a separation in the first differentiation only insofar as they express a change in the divine consciousness, but not as a physical separation. Thus, there is no otherness in the first stage and all the Names that will come to be in the second differentiation are not simply attributes of God in this stage, they are the essence of God.

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[467] Ibid.
[468] Ibid., 154.

Al-Qāshānī then rather seamlessly transitions to *aḥadiyyat al-jam'* as a station (*maqām*) of the gnostic. He writes,

> So this is the stage of *aḥadiyyat al-jam'*, in which seeing separation in the [divine] essence *(dhāt)*, in terms of its differentiation and generalisation (*iṭlāq*), is not proper. Or say, [seeing separation] in it [i.e. the divine being], in terms of the reality of realities and the first manifestation (*al-tajallī al-awwal*), [is not proper] due to the loftiness of this station, which is the station of *aḥadiyyat al-jam'*. Its superiority over all the ranks of separation is the superiority through which the description and the thing described become one. Or say, the [divine] essence *(dhāt)* and its matters [become] the same one, [divine] essence *(dhāt)*, without any contrast or otherness.[469]

As a station of the gnostic, then, *aḥadiyyat al-jam'* represents a state where the gnostic bypasses the sensible divisions and manifestations of the Cosmos and perceives them in their original state of the first differentiation. He thus views everything as God before they became differentiated from Him, as He is the true source of all existence.

In his concluding remarks on this treatise of *aḥadiyyat al-jam',* al-Qāshānī states that a natural consequence of circumventing the physical manifestations of the Names and seeing them only as God is that the gnostic's own reality dissipates. He writes,

> This is why whoever's secret [rank] rises from [seeing] effects by stages of separation, restriction (*taqyīd*) by their results, and concealment by viewing [things in this way] to the plane of *aḥadiyyat al-jam'* , with all its vigour of reality from all the judgements of multiplicity (*kathra*) and otherness, then nothing of his reality remains except this reality of unity (*ḥaqīqat al-aḥadiyya*). He [would] thus say:
>
> I have ascertained that I am, in reality, [the] one
>
> And the sobriety of union corroborates the effacement of dispersion
>
> He [would] also say:
>
> I am he who loves, and He who loves me

[469] Ibid.

> And he [would] say:
> I have ascertained that I am the very one of whom I am a slave
> And other such things, the meaning of which, you already know.[470]

A much fuller and richer picture emerges of *huwiyya* and its uses from the citations of the *Ta'wīlāt* when used in conjunction with the definitions that are supplied in al-Qāshānī's lexicons, and indeed, this is how he intended for them to be used—as a guide to the concise explanations he proffers in his commentary. The *Ta'wīlāt,* it is clear, was never meant to be consulted unaccompanied by the lexicons, unless by an advanced gnostic, as stated previously.

4.3.2. The Divine *Huwiyya* and the Cosmos

The fundamental difference between God's absolute existence and the Cosmos' contingent existence and the disparate facets of this dynamic are exquisitely presented by al-Qāshānī in his commentary of chapter 53 where it is written that there was a distance of two bows between Muḥammad and either Jibra'īl or God.[471] Al-Qāshānī writes,

> *So he was at a distance of two bows,* that he, upon him be peace, was [a distance of] two bows from the boundary of the domain of the existence that combines all the divided parts by an imaginary line, in terms of the Truth and the creation. So it is regarded as an imaginary line that divides the domain [of all existence] in two: in terms of the beginning [of existence] and its closeness, the creation is the first bow, the veil for the *huwiyya* in the essences of the created things and its forms; and the Truth is the last half, to which [the created things] get closer little by little and are effaced and annihilated in it. [However,] in terms of the end [of these created beings] and [His] suspension [far from them], the Truth is the first bow, the One who is fixed in His state always and forever, and the creation is the last bow, which is originated after the annihilation as a new creation that He gives it.[472]

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[470] Al-Qāshānī, *Laṭā'if,* 154.
[471] Al-Qurṭubī, *Tafsīr al-Qurṭubī,* 17:60.
[472] Al-Qāshānī, *Ta'wīlāt*, 2:579.

Al-Qāshānī tells us that there are two ways of looking at the relationship between God and His creation: one in terms of His absolute existence, in which His state is fixed always and forever, as opposed to the creation who are annihilated and created anew. In these terms, God is the first bow—the source of all creation, and the Cosmos is the second bow, as the differentiation of the divine *huwiyya.* But there is also another way of approaching this mutualism: it is by looking at the innumerable forms of the divine *huwiyya* in the Cosmos and tracing their trajectory towards the *huwiyya* and ultimate annihilation in it. Viewed in this way, the Cosmos is the first bow*,* a "veil for the *huwiyya* in the essences of the created things and its forms," as it cloaks the *huwiyya* in its differentiated form; and God is the last bow, the source to which the creation yearns proximity and final annihilation. Both aspects fundamentally describe the same relationship, the only difference is whether it is seen from the perspective of the divine *huwiyya* or the Cosmos.

4.3.3. The Differentiations of the Divine *Huwiyya*

Though al-Qāshānī proffers details about the God-Cosmos dynamic in the aforementioned passage, he is less expressive about the divine *huwiyya*'s differentiations. For an analysis of this issue, we must turn to the commentary of chapter 6, where God declares that He will resurrect all creatures by saying, "Be!" Al-Qāshānī writes,

> *On the day He says, "Be!" So it will be,* that is, the eternity, which is the infinity of manifesting things in the eternity of His essence *(dhāt)*, which is the absolute eternity. And it is when His eternal will (*irādatuhu'l-qadīma*) became attached with the manifestation in the differentiation of His essence *(dhāt)*, expressed by His saying, "Be!" And it occurs after the eternity in intellectual terms but does not come after this eternity temporally, only in relative intellectual terms in His essence *(dhāt)*, be He exalted, for the differentiations come after the pure *huwiyya* intellectually and physically, and its manifestation is by the [divine] will named "His saying 'Be!'" So it is

without interval or delay, known as "So it will be," because it was not present in eternity.[473]

In this illuminating paragraph, al-Qāshānī corroborates the definitions and statements he has made about the divine *huwiyya,* by which he means the unknown God, but not the unknowable God. This pure *huwiyya* (*al-huwiyya al-maḥḍa*), says al-Qāshānī, becomes differentiated by the divine consciousness' inclination towards creation, as articulated by the pronouncement "Be!" There are many points of note in this commentary: al-Qāshānī, it may be observed, uses a verse that ostensibly refers to the Day of Resurrection and conscripts it to elucidate the creation of the Cosmos. He evades the dichotomy of using a verse clearly referring to the future (*kun, fayakūn*) to explain something that unmistakably occurred in the past by transcending temporality itself.[474] Thus, he comments that the verse alludes to the manifestation of things in the eternity of God's being, "which is the absolute eternity." This means that the reality of God's creating by pouring forth ever more differentiated forms of the divine *huwiyya* is something unaffected by temporality, it simply is. It existed then just as it does today, which is why creation continues to proliferate.

But this raises the question: How are we to make sense of things that seem to follow one another? Like the inclination of the divine consciousness towards creation symbolised by His pronouncement, "Be!" Al-Qāshānī answers this implicit contradiction by stating that there is no temporal lag between God's erstwhile state

[473] Al-Qāshānī, *Ta'wīlāt,* 1:173-74.

[474] One observes hues of Avicenna here, who himself seems to skirt temporality in his conciliation between orthodox creationism and Neoplatonic emanationism. (See Dastagir, "Plotinus and Ibn Sina," 1-14.) This is because Avicenna is widely regarded as a "Neoplatonised Aristotelian" and believed that the world proceeded from God from eternity. (See Wolfson, *The Philosophy of the Kalām,* 444-48.) However, it would be folly to suggest that Avicenna believed the world was co-eternal with God because while he asserted that it did not proceed from God in time, he also maintained that there was a fundamental difference between God and the creation in that the former is necessary while the latter contingent. It would therefore, I believe, be more accurate to say that Avicenna believed in the atemporality of the world rather than its eternity.

and His post-"Be" state, that is, His state of inclining towards creation. This means that there is no actual change in the divine consciousness as the state of inclination towards creation was always in Him just as all the future differentiations where in Him in His unified state. There is, then, no change in the nature of God—He is constant. However, intellectually, one may conceive of a difference between the states in order to comprehend the divine, or as al-Qāshānī puts it, "it occurs after the eternity in intellectual terms but does not come after this eternity temporally." So even if we think of this as a change, it is not, and there is no temporal relationship between the two states.

Al-Qāshānī seeks to clarify that though the divine consciousness is ever-constant and the Cosmos is nothing but a manifestation of the Names, it does not follow that the Cosmos, too, is temporally transcendent. He thus concludes his analysis by stating that further differentiations of the divine *huwiyya* do physically and intellectually follow one another, and this is elucidated by the phrase "*So it will be*" because it did not exist in eternity. This necessarily means that, though, in one sense God is seen as pouring forth existence from His self and the Cosmos is a manifestation of His Names; in another, there is a profound disconnect between God and His creation: He is absolutely existent, it is contingently so; He is eternal and has always existed, it has not; He is ever-constant, it is ever-changing. We see a lucid articulation of this very point in the commentary of chapter 67 where al-Qāshānī comments,

> *And He is the Kind,* the One who knows the innermost [details] of them [i.e. the secrets of men], the One who carries out their concealments, *the Knowing,* about what is manifested from their states, that is, the One who is acquainted with the inner and outer aspects of what He has created, rather, it is Him in reality in its inward and outward aspects; there is no difference [between them] except in [terms of] absolute and contingent [existence], and

> unrestricted and restricted [existence], and concealment of the *huwiyya* by "this-ness" (*hādhiyya*), and [concealment] of the Reality by individuality.[475]

In this passage, al-Qāshānī reiterates that the Cosmos is the manifestation of God. God, then, knows the intimate secrets of the creation because they are nothing but His own secrets. There is no difference, remarks al-Qāshānī, between God and His creation besides their fundamental existence being of different kinds: God's existence is unrestricted as He is manifested in innumerable forms in all planes of existence, there being no limit to the forms in which He may be manifested. The creation, nevertheless, is restricted in the form it may adopt and herein lies another difference between God and the Cosmos. This distinction between the two is described by al-Qāshānī as the *huwiyya* of God being concealed by the "this-ness" (*hādhiyya*) of creation, that is, their restricted form, which can only be "this" or "that," he thus concludes that God (the Reality) is concealed by the sensible individuation of the innumerable existents.

4.3.4. The Attributes of the Divine *Huwiyya*

We have thus far seen that *huwiyya* is used for the essence of the unknown God, but in the manner He is communicated to His creation. He is thus unknown to us but we know Him to be so, we can name the unknown and through this, know Him to be unknown. If we know Him to be unknown, then this "unknown-ness" (as opposed to unknowability) is an epithet of the divine *huwiyya.* This attribute distinguishes the divine *huwiyya,* which is when the essence of God has not been differentiated into the Names, from the Names themselves. We can thus think of the divine *huwiyya* as itself having a set of attributes exclusive to it, before the emergence of the Names, which themselves are designations of the differentiated divine essence. "Unknown-

[475] Al-Qāshānī, *Ta'wīlāt,* 2:631.

ness," therefore, is an attribute of the divine *huwiyya* just as "the Knowing," "the Seeing," etc. are attributes of the differentiated divine self after the emergence of the Names. Al-Qāshānī alludes to this subtlety in his first use of the term *huwiyya* in the *Ta'wīlāt*. He writes about the verse chastising the people who reject Muḥammad, waiting for ever more clear portents of his prophethood to be displayed,

> *Are they waiting … for nothing but that God comes to them,* [that is,] God manifests Himself, *in the canopies* (*ẓulal*), the attributes of *huwiyya* from amongst the manifestation of all the attributes.[476]

In this short commentary, al-Qāshānī clearly segregates the attributes of the divine *huwiyya* from the other attributes even though the other attributes are nothing but a further differentiation of the *huwiyya.* The reason for this, of course, is that one of the chief attributes of the divine *huwiyya* is its "unknown-ness," which is antithetical to the Names as their primary function is to impart the attributes of God. Furthermore, just because the divine Names are a differentiated form of the divine *huwiyya* does not mean the *huwiyya* ceases to be. The *huwiyya* continues to exist along with the Names, just as God exists along with the Cosmos, which is the most differentiated form of His self. It is in this sense that all the planes of existence are simultaneously existent in God and all are He but not He as His reality is the only true reality. A consequence of this complex dynamic is that God is unknown and known at the same time.

We see evidence of this perception of God as the comprehensive assimilation of all the planes of reality in the manner al-Qāshānī articulates the difference between the attributes of the divine *huwiyya* from the attributes in general. He states that the unbelievers wait for naught save that the "attributes of *huwiyya*" be manifested "from the manifestation of all the attributes." This, on the one hand,

[476] Ibid., 1:65.

asserts the distinction between the attributes of the *huwiyya* from the differentiated divine attributes i.e. the Names, but on the other, it conveys that the attributes of the divine *huwiyya* are among the attributes in general. This furnishes us with the three ways in which God may be fathomed: as the unknown God; as the God to whom belong the Names, who can be known to us in a certain way; or the God who is at once known and unknown, who has an unknown *huwiyya* but known Names. The last of these is the most comprehensive manner in which God may be understood.

The dynamic of God concurrently being the lesser and more differentiated forms of Himself is also explicitly stated in al-Qāshānī's commentary of chapter 33 wherein he states,

> *Surely We offered the trust to the heavens, the earth, and the mountains,* by placing the reality of the *huwiyya* in them and veiling it by differentiations in them, *but they refused to bear it,* as the magnitude of the crime of accepting it without having the preparedness [to do so] became manifest unto them.[477]

Al-Qāshānī comments here that the reality of the *huwiyya* was veiled by the differentiations in the heavens, the earth, and the mountains. This may, more clearly, be expressed as the differentiations that allowed them to be, as they are nothing but manifestations of that very *huwiyya.* We therefore notice that both the less differentiated form of God, the *huwiyya,* and the more differentiated forms i.e. the heavens, the earth, and the mountains, exist simultaneously. Moreover, we see that the increase in differentiation is actually instrumental in veiling the differentiated thing from knowing its erstwhile form. This, then, is the answer to the implicit paradox of how something that exists as a differentiated form of something may then be given that very thing from which it was differentiated, to wit, how the *huwiyya* may be given to the heavens, the earth, and the mountains, when they were

[477] Ibid., 2:470.

differentiated from the *huwiyya* in the first place: it is because the *huwiyya* and its differentiated forms may exist simultaneously.

This does not, however, address *how* they were given the *huwiyya.* Al-Qāshānī writes that the reality of the *huwiyya* was placed in them but they refused to bear it. Hence, they already had the reality of the *huwiyya* but could not hold on to it as they did not have the preparedness to do so. If we combine all the facets of this puzzle, we may be able to deduce how the *huwiyya* was placed in them. Firstly, we know that the heavens, the earth, and the mountains are differentiated forms of the *huwiyya*. Secondly, we know that they are veiled from this *huwiyya* by their differentiation. Thirdly, we know that the reality of this *huwiyya* was given to them but they refused to accept it as they did not have the preparedness to do so. If we bring together these disparate strands of information it becomes clear that the reality of the *huwiyya*—from which the heavens, the earth, and the mountains were veiled due to their insufficient preparedness—is actually knowledge of their being differentiated from the *huwiyya.* It is true, of course, that al-Qāshānī does not explicitly indicate this, but the manner of his commentary seems to suggest it.[478]

They were given knowledge of this reality i.e. the reality of the *huwiyya,* or, one could say, their own reality, but did not have the capacity to bear the burden of

[478] It is noteworthy that in most conventional commentaries, "trust" (*amāna*) is said to be an allusion to all the aspects of religion, that is, all the commands (*awāmir*) that need to be followed and all the prohibitions (*nawāhī*) that need to be avoided. There are slight differences of opinion, with some stating it refers to the obligations (*wājibāt*), wihle others saying it means the five prayers (*ṣalawāt*) etc. but the general consensus is that the term denoties obedience to God. (See al-Ṭabarī, *Jāmi' al-bayān,* 10:338-42; al-Qurṭubī, *Tafsīr al-Qurṭubī,* 14:162-64; al-Rāzī, *Mafātīḥ,* 25:201-02.) It is only in the commentary of Abū'l-Qāsim 'Abd al-Karīm al-Qushayrī (d. 465/1074) that the term is related to gnosis (*ma'rifa*). Al-Qushayrī writes, "*they refused to bear it,* that is, refused to keep it, *and man assumed it,* that is, failed to keep it. And they [i.e. those who failed to keep the trust] are in degrees: the unbelievers failed to keep the basic [rights] of the trust, and that is gnosis—so they disbelieved. Those who were less than that [in wickedness] failed by disobedience, and some were worse and others were less so." (Al-Qushayrī, *Laṭā'if,* 5; 173.) Al-Qushayrī, it can be seen, remarks that the most fundamental right of the *amāna* is gnosis. However, he does not denote by gnosis the higher echelons of spiritual enlightenment as does al-Qāshānī, rather, he identifies this gnosis as the basic belief in God. The unbelievers fail to honour this central right of the *amāna* and are consequently much worse than those who merely disobey God while acknowledging His existence and oneness.

this knowledge, thus it was taken from them. Man, on the other hand, did accept this burden, which is why one of Ibn ʻArabī's favourite adages is, "whoever knows himself, knows his Lord,"[479] since knowing yourself is actually knowing that you are a differentiated form of the *huwiyya.* This is station of oneness of unity (*aḥadiyyat al-jamʻ*). However, not everyone comprehends this; in fact, it is but a select few that have a true understanding of this concept—they are the gnostics. This is because knowing one's true reality, though it is something that God has bestowed upon mankind generally, as elucidated by this verse, represents the absolute potential of man. It does not necessarily follow that all men will reach this potential, most do not.

4.3.5. The Station of *Huwiyya*

The ultimate potential of man is the realisation that he is but a differentiation of the divine *huwiyya*. This is referred to by al-Qāshānī as the station of *huwiyya.* He writes in his commentary of the verse that elucidates the virtues of the Qur'an,

> *And this is a reminder,* full of goodness and blessing, containing the three matters (i.e. the criterion, *furqān*; an illumination, *ḍiyāʾ*; and a reminder, *dhikr*) but more than just that [as it also has] intrinsic unveiling (*al-kashf al-dhātī*) and true witnessing (*al-shuhūd al-ḥaqqī*) in the station of *huwiyya* and the spring of the union of unity (*ʻayn jamʻ al-aḥadiyya*), the most comprehensive of comprehensive speech (*jāmiʻ jawāmiʻ al-kalim*).[480]

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[479] He cites this proverb a total of five times in the *Fuṣūṣ* (three times directly, and twice indirectly) and around eighty times directly in the *Futūḥāt*. However, this statement does not appear in any of the canonical Ḥadīth texts. Ibn Taymiyya has classified it as "fabricated" (*mawḍūʻ*), Abu Zakariyya Yaḥyā ibn Sharaf al-Nawawī (d. 676/1277) has remarked "it is not proven" (*laysa bi-thābit*), Abū'l-Mundhir al-Samʻānī (d. 489/ 1096?) writes in his book, *al-Qawāṭiʻ*, that "it is not known to be a statement of the Prophet (*marfūʻ*), and is only reported from Yaḥyā ibn Muʻādh al-Rāzī (d. 258/872), that is, from his sayings." Ibn ʻArabī, however, seemed to be aware of its weak chain of transmission, but relied on his spiritual unveiling (*kashf*) to verify its authenticity, for he says, "Though it is not sound through transmission, it is sound, according to us, through spiritual unveiling (*kashf*)." (Shams al-Dīn al-Safīrī, *Sharḥ ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī,* 24:12.) It is noteworthy that Aḥmad Shihāb al-Dīn ibn Ḥajar al-Haytamī (d. 973/1566) also believes that the proverb belongs to Yaḥyā ibn Muʻādh al-Rāzī (see al-Haytamī, *al-Fatāwā al-ḥadīthiyya,* 290), and the contemporary Ḥadīth scholar Muḥammad Nāṣir al-Dīn al-Albānī, in his *Silsilat'l-aḥādītha al-ḍaʻīfa wa'l-mawḍūʻa wa athruha'l-sayyi'a fi'l-umma ,* too, claims that it has no basis (*aṣl*). (Al-Albānī, *Silsilat,* 1:165.)

[480] Al-Qāshānī, *Ta'wīlāt*, 1:376.

Al-Qāshānī, in this passage, delineates two levels on which the Qur'an is received: on the lower level it contains three matters, which we know from the context[481] is reference to it being the criterion between good and evil, an illumination of the correct path, and a reminder of God. These three things were present in the Torah and is also the lower degree on which most people interact with and relate to the Qur'an. However, al-Qāshānī comments that *furqān* means "the detailed knowledge from spiritual unveiling (*al-'ilm al-tafṣīlī al-kashfī*) known as the discriminating intellect (*al-'aql al-furqānī*)," [482] an illumination (*ḍiyā'*) refers to "the perfect light (*nūr tāmm*) from spiritual witnessing (*al-mushāhadāt al-rūḥāniyya*)," [483] and a reminder (*dhikr*) denotes "a reminder and admonition *for the God-fearing; those who* have purified their souls from the vices and attributes of being veiled so great noble lights radiate from their hearts on their souls due to their clearness and purity, thus they inherit fear [of God] in the state of absence (*ḥāl al-ghayba*) before they arrive at the station where the heart is present." [484]

One notices the ostensible contradiction between his two designations because, on the one hand, he asserts that the Torah contains knowledge from spiritual unveiling, from spiritual witnessing, and admonition for those who are not veiled, and on the other he remarks that the Qur'an is "more than just that" because it also has "intrinsic unveiling (*al-kashf al-dhātī*) and true witnessing (*al-shuhūd al-ḥaqqī*)." This dichotomy emanates from a perceived parity between the ranks where one gains detailed knowledge from spiritual unveiling (*al-'ilm al-tafṣīlī al-kashfī*) and intrinsic unveiling (*al-kashf al-dhātī*), and between spiritual witnessing (*al-*

[481] Al-Qāshānī, in mentioning the three matters, is referring to verse 21:48 (two verses prior to this one) where the Torah is described as the criterion (*furqān*), an illumination (*ḍiyā'*), and a reminder (*dhikr*). He remarks that the Qur'an, while retaining these traits of the Torah, has much more besides.
[482] Al-Qāshānī, *Ta'wīlāt*, 1:376.
[483] Ibid.
[484] Ibid.

mushāhadāt al-rūḥāniyya) and true witnessing (*al-shuhūd al-ḥaqqī*). For what al-Qāshānī is communicating is not the most basic level on which one relates to the Qur'an, it is the difference between a high rank of gnosis and the highest rank of gnosis.

The Torah, al-Qāshānī informs us, contains detailed knowledge from spiritual unveiling (*al-'ilm al-tafṣīlī al-kashfī*) and information that may be gleaned by spiritual witnessing (*al-mushāhadāt al-rūḥāniyya*). It consequently occupies a high rank and gnostics may acquire much from its spiritual content. This, the Qur'an has as well. However, in addition to this, the Qur'an also has "intrinsic unveiling (*al-kashf al-dhātī*) and true witnessing (*al-shuhūd al-ḥaqqī*) in the station of *huwiyya* and the spring of the union of unity (*'ayn jam' al-aḥadiyya*)," which is the highest level of gnosis, for the station of *huwiyya* is the rank at which the gnostic becomes aware that his reality is actually the differentiated form of the *huwiyya*. This, then, is where his reality is annihilated in the *huwiyya.* It is for this reason that al-Qāshānī refers to the Qur'an as "the most comprehensive of comprehensive speech (*jāmi' jawāmi' al-kalim*)" because though the Torah is lofty and contains spiritual enlightenment, it is not this, and it does not impart the highest rank of gnosis.

Therefore, the two levels of interaction al-Qāshānī mentions vis-à-vis the Qur'an are: the high level that is equal to the level of the Torah, the level of spiritual unveiling and witnessing; and the highest level of *huwiyya*-consciousness that is only afforded through the Qur'an. *Huwiyya*-consciousness is therefore the ultimate potential of man, a rank afforded him by the Qur'an, but a rank also, that is the preserve of the select few since most people are not only unable engage with the Qur'an on this level, they fail to connect with it on the level of the Torah, which too, is only accessible to lower-level gnostics.

4.3.6. Submergence in the Sea/Spring of *Huwiyya*

The state of *huwiyya*-consciousness has many synonyms, such as annihilation (*fanā'*) or the station of oneness of unity (*aḥadiyyat al-jam'*) and it is a station where one becomes subsumed in the divine *huwiyya,* for appreciation of one's essence as a differentiation of the *huwiyya* allows one to see through it and perceive the *huwiyya* itself. *Huwiyya*, when used in this sense, is not the undifferentiated *huwiyya*, it is not God in His absoluteness, for as has been mentioned, no existent can even fathom Him on this most rarified level. This is as true for Ibn 'Arabī as it is for his disciple. In the words of Henry Corbin,

> What a man attains at the summit of his mystic experience is not, and cannot be, the Divine Essence in its undifferentiated unity. And that is why Ibn 'Arabī rejected the pretension of certain mystics who claimed "to become one with God."[485]

Al-Qāshānī elaborates on this issue many times in his commentary. He repeatedly likens this union with the differentiated God as the stage of submergence in the sea or spring of *huwiyya,* by which he means that the self becomes annihilated in the differentiated *huwiyya.* This concept is best described in the commentary of chapter 12 in the verse which speaks of Yūsuf's false incarceration, where al-Qāshānī writes,

> The lover, the one who witnesses the beauty [of God] is perplexed, negligent of all the creation, and of the differentiations of his existence, nay, of his [very] self, [as he is] immersed in the spring of union (*'ayn al-jam'*) until his annihilation is finished and his intoxication complete. Then he returns to sobriety (*ṣaḥw*) and remembers the differentiations. So when his [i.e. Yūsuf's] annihilation was complete by submergence in the sea of *huwiyya* and effacement in the unified being (*al-dhāt al-aḥadiyya*) and his term in prison was over, God returned his life to him and gave him an existence from His essence *(dhāt)* and His attributes.[486]

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[485] Henry Corbin, *Creative Imagination in the Ṣūfism of Ibn 'Arabī*, trans. Ralph Manheim, 273.
[486] Al-Qāshānī, *Ta'wīlāt*, 1:270.

Al-Qāshānī comments that one is no longer aware of the creation when he is immersed in the spring of union (*'ayn al-jam'*), which, it can be seen is synonymous with being submerged in the sea of *huwiyya* and effacement in the unified being (*al-dhāt al-aḥadiyya*). This is because he uses the former in a generic way only to give an example of it through Yūsūf, in the delineation of which, he uses the latter two phrases. Rather, he sees past the creation and past his ostensible essence to the beauty of the *huwiyya* that is the source of all being.

The impression given by al-Qāshānī is that this state of complete immersion in the *huwiyya* is a transitory one, but the effects and gnosis of which persist. For he remarks that after submergence in the sea of *huwiyya* and the spring of union, God returns the gnostic (in this case Yūsuf) to a state of sobriety (*ṣaḥw*) and he remembers the differentiations, that is, the ostensible forms of the Cosmos. In other words, he is able to reconnect to the creation on a sensible plane. However, the gnosis gained whilst in this state of supreme annihilation remains with him, and it is to this that al-Qāshānī alludes when he states that God gives "him an existence from His essence *(dhāt)* and His attributes."

Since all existence comes from God, the Cosmos being nothing but a manifestation of His being and attributes, there seems nothing special in this conferral of existence from His being until we recognise that this existence from His being and attributes is unlike the one enjoyed by all other existents because it is an existence that allows him to know that his existence is from God's being and attributes. It is this gnosis that bequeaths the special rank given to the gnostic: the enduring appreciation of his essence as the differentiated form of the *huwiyya.* This is why al-Qāshānī articulates it as "an existence from His essence *(dhāt)* and His attributes" because after submergence in the sea of *huwiyya,* the gnostic forever

knows that his existence is directly from His essence *(dhāt)* and His attributes, that it is indeed, nothing but a manifestation of His being and attributes.

That submergence in the spring or sea of *huwiyya* is a privilege afforded only the highest gnostics is evident from the commentary of chapter 10 when al-Qāshānī says, "*Surely the friends of God,* those immersed in the spring of unified *huwiyya* (*'ayn al-huwiyya al-aḥadiyya*) by annihilation of the *inniyya* …"[487] Al-Qāshānī defines "friends of God" as "those immersed in the spring of unified *huwiyya* (*'ayn al-huwiyya al-aḥadiyya*)". He furthermore states that this is not something that just happens. Rather, though it is a boon from God, it nevertheless requires effort on the part of the mystic who must annihilate his *inniyya.*[488] In order to fully comprehend what al-Qāshānī means by this, we must again turn to his lexicons to ascertain the meaning of *inniyya.*

4.3.6.1. *Huwiyya*, *Inniyya* and *Anāniyya*

Remarkably, the most succinct definition of *inniyya* is to be found in the *Laṭā'if,* here al-Qāshānī writes that it is, "consideration of the self in terms of its intrinsic rank."[489] The *Iṣṭilāḥāt* offers some more details wherein it is defined as, "realisation of essential existence (*al-wujūd al-'aynī*) in terms of [a thing's] intrinsic rank."[490] However, it is in *Rashḥ* that we find a comprehensive definition that gives us the luxury of tying together these disparate snippets of information. In this work, al-Qāshānī comments that *inniyya* is:

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[487] Ibid., 1:241.
[488] There is some debate as to whether this term should be vocalised as *inniyya*—an abstract noun derived from *inna* (indeed), *anniyya*—derived from *anna* (that), or *anā* (I). (The last of these is highly unlikely). Adamson, *The Arabic Plotinus*, 125.
[489] Al-Qāshānī, *Laṭā'if*, 211.
[490] Al-Qāshānī, *Iṣṭilāḥāt*, 58.

> The reality through man, as the absolute reality is qualified in every way by his intrinsic rank of *inniyya.* So the reality with its *huwiyya* is manifested in everything with an *inniyya*.[491]

The *inniyya,* then, is the intrinsic rank of all existents that acts as a filter in them processing the divine *huwiyya*.[492] No existent can ever perceive the absolute reality of God, His *huwiyya,* except through this primordial lattice. Thus, whereas the gnostics who have attained the rank of *huwiyya* or annihilation (*fanā'*) and have been submerged in the sea of *huwiyya,* can identify their reality and the reality of everything in the Cosmos as manifestations of the divine *huwiyya,* most people, and all creatures and things never know this truth because their elemental rank will not allow it.

This is somewhat different from a similar term, "*anāniyya*" that is defined variously in al-Qāshānī's three lexicons as, "You saying, 'I,'"[493] "The reality which is qualified in every way by the slave, like his saying, 'my self,' 'my heart,' 'my hand,'"[494] and, most comprehensively, "The reality—as you know—called thus because everything is qualified by it, so it is said, "my self," "my soul," "my heart," "my body," "my all," "my part."[495]

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[491] Al-Qāshānī, *Rashḥ*, 139.
[492] This displays a change in emphasis from the early philosophical use of the term, in which it is used to denote "existence" or "being" and is generally synonymous with *huwiyya*. See Adamson, *The Arabic Plotinus*, 125-30.
[493] Al-Qāshānī, *Rashḥ*, 139.
[494] Al-Qāshānī, *Iṣṭilāḥāt*, 57.
[495] Al-Qāshānī, *Laṭā'if*, 211. Al-Tahānawī, in his explanation of this concept, gives virtually the same definitions as those offered by al-Qāshānī. He does, however, cite *Al-Tuḥfa al-mursala,* and states that in it, the term is defined as "your reality and your innerness which is not the Truth. The negation of *al-anāniyya* is the very meaning of 'There is no god' (*lā ilāh*), then the subsequent affirmation of the Truth, be He praised, in your innerness is the very meaning of 'except God'" (*illā Allāh*)." (Al-Tahānawī, *Kashshāf*, 1:98.) Here, the Muslim declaration of faith has been split into first, a denial of the *anāniyya,* an egoistic barrier to annihilation in God, attested by the phrase 'There is no god,' and a subsequent annihilation and regeneration in God, by the affirmatory phrase 'except God.'

This term is hugely important because of the way it is routinely used in the context of *huwiyya,* most notably, in the al-Qāshānī's commentary on the bezel of Ibrāhīm, where he writes,

> *I have two aspects: He and I*
> *But He does not have I in my I*
>
> This means that the Perfect Man has two aspects: an aspect towards the Truth, and that is his internal *huwiyya* by virtue of which he is a Truth; and an aspect towards the Cosmos, and that is his apparent *anāniya* by virtue of which he is a [form of] creation. So man has, through it [i.e. these two aspects] a *huwiyya* and an *anāniyya,* but the Truth does not have an *anāniyya* through man as He does not have, in this vicegerent, an "I," in reality. The meaning of the word "I" is that this word cannot be applied to Him in this context. This is why there is a "*fā*" (i.e. "*fa Ī wajhān," "[So] I have two aspects"*) even though it is an independent pronoun in the nominative case.[496]

Al-Qāshānī declares that the Perfect Man has both a *huwiyya*, which is his essence i.e. the divine Attributes of which he is a manifestation, and an *anāniyya,* which is his creaturely, egoistic self. He goes on to aver that God "does not have an *anāniyya* through man." This is because the *anāniyya* denotes the creaturely aspect of man, which can never be applied to God. However, in stating that God does not have a representation of "I" in man, or any existent in the sensible world, he could also be alluding to the incommunicable essence of God, which does not, and cannot, be transmitted in this, or any other realm. If this is the case, it is not that the term cannot be applied to God, just that it is not applied to Him as there is no manifestation of the absolute *anāniyya* in any realm.

Al-Qāshānī seems to imply that the "*fā*" in "*fa Ī wajhān," "[So] I have two aspects"*) is one of causality (*sababiyyah*). This is because Ibn 'Arabī writes, "He does not have save my *kawn* (being/existence). … So I have two aspects."[497] Meaning, the reason I have two faces is because His only representation is my

[496] Al-Qāshānī, *Sharḥ Fuṣūṣ,* 127.
[497] Ibn 'Arabī, *Fuṣūṣ,* 1:84.

existence in the phenomenal world. Therefore, in order to maintain my essence and represent His Attributes, I must have two faces.

The difference between the terms *inniyya* and *anāniyya* seems to be that between primordial limitations and intentional constraints, respectively. Both curtail gnosis of the *huwiyya,* but whereas the former is an innate restriction of one's essential existence over which one has no power, the latter is a wilful state of being veiled by the ostensible superficiality of sensible reality. *Inniyya,* thus, may also be looked upon as the preparedness (*isti'dād*) of any given existent, a predetermination of the rank it can achieve and how much of the divine *huwiyya* it can know.

4.3.7. *Huwiyya* and Preparedness

Preparedness (*isti'dād*)[498] is a term curiously absent from al-Qāshānī's lexicons, yet we encounter it in the *Ta'wīlāt,* both manifestly and allusively. We have already seen that al-Qāshānī explains that the heavens, the Earth, and the mountains did not accept the trust from God because they did not have the preparedness to do so. It was an elemental realisation that it did not behove them to assume such an awesome responsibility that led them to decline the offer. Indeed, this concept is also present in most conventional commentaries (though not in the same terms). Al-Ṭabarī states in his commentary,

> *Surely We offered the trust to the heavens, the Earth, and the mountains,* [meaning] if they fulfil it, He will reward them and if they squander it, He will punish them. So they refused it without disobeying God, [rather, it was because] they were apprehensive, due to the loftiness of the religion of God, that they would not be able to carry out [its injunctions]. Then He presented it to Ādam who accepted it.[499]

[498] Preparedness (*isti'dād*) is a concept that is very important to al-Qāshānī. For the types of preparedness and their role in the divine decree, see the chapters: *Fī bayān al-isti'dād wa tanawwu'ihā* and *Fī'l-sa'āda wa'l-shakāwa* in *Al-Risāla fī'l-qaḍā' wa'l-qadar*. (Al-Qāshānī, *Ādāb al-ṭarīqa wa asrār al-ḥaqīqa*, 73-79.)

[499] Al-Ṭabarī, *Jāmi' al-bayān,* 10:339.

This commentary makes it clear that the heavens, the Earth, and the mountains knew they did not have the preparedness to bear the burden of God's great religion. They knew this intrinsically—it was part of their primordial constitution. Al-Qurṭubī makes the same point in his commentary. He writes,

> He offered the trust to the heavens, the Earth, and the mountains and [said] there would be reward and punishment [if they fulfilled] and squandered it [respectively], that is, He made it manifest to them, but they did not assume its burden and were apprehensive. They [each] said, "I do not desire reward or punishment," and all of them said, "This is a matter for which we do not have the capacity."[500]

It is evident that the heavens, the Earth, and mountains knew they lacked the preparedness to carry out the inherent obligations of the trust. This was their primordial red line. Al-Rāzī sums it up best in his commentary,

> *We offered the trust,* that is, the duty (*taklīf*), and it is something besides that which is in [one's] nature. Know that this type of duty is not placed upon the heavens or the Earth because the Earth, the mountains, and the heavens are all for that [purpose for] which they were created. [Thus,] the mountains do not seek to move, nor does the Earth seek to rise or the heavens seek to fall.[501]

Al- Rāzī explains that it is no more in the preparedness of the heavens, the Earth, and the mountains to accept the trust God offered them, than it is in their preparedness to fall, rise or move, respectively. They simply do not have it in their primordial constitution to do these things.

Al-Qāshānī deals with this concept most forthrightly in his commentary of chapter 30 where the transitory nature of the phenomenal world is expressed. It is written that God did not create everything but with truth,

> *And for an appointed term,* it is the limit of perfection of each of them and his annihilation in God, according to the *huwiyya* of his primary preparedness (*isti'dādihi'l-awwal*) until they [all] bear witness, according to their

[500] Al-Qurṭubī, *Tafsīr al-Qurṭubī,* 14:164.
[501] Al-Rāzī, *Mafātīḥ,* 25:202.

> preparedness, and God is cast in them with His attributes and being. *And yet many people deny the meeting with their Lord,* due to their being veiled from it so they think it will not occur except as an imaginary encounter (*al-muqābila al-ṣūriyya*) in another realm due to [their] *huwiyya* being inserted into [God's] *huwiyya.*[502]

Al-Qāshānī remarks clearly that the annihilation of a person in God is not absolute, rather, it is according to his preparedness. He calls this "the *huwiyya* of his primary preparedness (*isti'dādihi'l-awwal*)." In other words, it is the primordial preparedness over which he has no control. He reiterates that everyone bears witness to God, knows God, is annihilated in God, manifests the being and attributes of God, according to his preparedness. Therefore, everything is qualified by this intrinsic rank.

This concept is detailed in al-Qāshānī's commentary of the *Fuṣūṣ* wherein he writes,

> The same thing varies according to the states of the onlookers. Likewise is [the case for] the divine manifestation, that is, it is different for different onlookers. And if you want, you may say that God, the Exalted, manifests in this way, that is, He manifests Himself in one manifestation which varies according to the varying states of the onlooker. And if you want, you may say that the Cosmos, in terms of looking at it, is the same as the Truth in His manifestation, that is, the Cosmos … in the view of the onlooker is like the manifestation of the Truth that he sees according to his disposition, which is different to what another person sees. Just as a person being punished with heat sees wind as fire and he who is punished with cold sees it as severe frost.[503]

Al-Qāshānī avers that though God is constant and unchanging, the way in which He manifests Himself varies in accordance with the varying states of the existents. This means that His manifestation does not actually alter; only the appreciation of that

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[502] Al-Qāshānī, *Ta'wīlāt*, 2:454.

[503] Al-Qāshānī, *Sharḥ Fuṣūṣ,* 328. It is worth mentioning that al-Qāshānī adopts the same view when it comes to Qur'anic exegesis. He refers to this as "making correspondences" (*taṭbīq*) and emphasises that the meaning of verses is in accordance with the spiritual states of people. (Lory, *Les Commentaires*, 28-33; Sands, *Ṣūfī Commentaries*, 77.)

manifestation alters depending on the state of the person, which may be interpreted as God manifesting Himself as this in one person and as that in another, but in reality, it is simply their limited primordial vision of the divine.

He elaborates further on this concept remarking,

> With regards to the divine manifestation, the meaning of the constitution of the onlooker is his state and spiritual form, not his physical constitution, for the [divine] manifestation to the gnostic does not differ according to his different parts. However, the body, too, in a way, is an entrance for this [manifestation] so at times the same manifestation varies according to the state of the onlooker and at other times the onlooker varies due to the varying manifestation, as has been mentioned. As for the heart of the perfect servant, stripped from the controls of multiplicity, it varies according to the varying [divine] manifestations, for this heart is with the manifestation of the divine when it changes and [it may be] the Truth vacillates his heart for He is the vacillator of hearts.[504] Both these things are possible in the [heart of the] perfect [servant], but not in others.[505]

Here al-Qāshānī alludes to the subtlety of the onlooker of the divine manifestation being himself a focussed manifestation of that very divine manifestation. This is why it may be remarked that the person varies according to his primordial preparedness because, since he himself is a manifestation of the divine *huwiyya,* his appreciation of the divine manifestation of his own form will be different to that of another person with a different spiritual rank.

However, the gnostic, is "stripped from the controls of multiplicity," that is, he sees the divine oneness in multiplicity and comprehends that all the countless manifestations are nothing but a manifestation of God. The heart of the gnostic, therefore, "varies according to the varying [divine] manifestations" because it appreciates the underlying divine core of all things in the Cosmos. Al-Qāshānī, in the end, makes a discreet allusion to one other possible source of the gnostic's

[504] This is a reference to a Ḥadīth in which the Prophet supplicates to His Lord in the following manner: "O Vacillator of hearts, (*Ya muqallib al-qulūb*) establish my heart upon Your religion!" Al-Tirmidhī, *Sunan al-Tirmidhī,* 33:7; Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal, *Musnad Aḥmad,* 4:182.
[505] Al-Qāshānī, *Sharḥ Fuṣūṣ,* 328-29.

appreciation of the divine substrate that underpins all ostensible forms in sensible reality: God's guidance, for it is He who may guide the heart to this final realisation.[506] But, again, this is still under the sway of the preparedness, which is why such gnosis is "in the [heart of the] perfect [servant], but not in others" because it is only the heart of the gnostic that can be guided to this lofty station.

Returning to al-Qāshānī's commentary of chapter 30, we notice that the author employs the phrase "limit of perfection" with "primary preparedness" and "annihilation" in order to underscore that, though the preparedness is the primordial rank of every existent, it is nevertheless, a potential—one that is not necessarily realised. He comments that most people are veiled and so do not attain the intrinsic rank designated for them. They thus think that their meeting with God will be an imaginary one and that their *huwiyya* will be inserted into God's *huwiyya* in a metaphorical sense. Hence, they believe that annihilation in God will only happen figuratively and the reason for this is their being veiled from the truth by their *anāniyya*.

The notion of all existents having elemental ranks by which they are arranged and classified is most elaborately articulated in the commentary of chapter 6 where Muḥammad declares that he has been commanded to be the first to submit to God. Al-Qāshānī writes,

> *Say: I have been commanded to be the first to submit [to Him].* He said this, despite His saying, "*Then We revealed to you: 'Follow the way of Ibrāhīm, the upright."* Likewise, did Mūsā say, "*I turn to You in repentance and I am the first of the believers,"* because the ranks of the souls are different in terms of their closeness and remoteness from the divine *huwiyya.* So every person who is further, his faith is through he who is above him in rank, and the people of oneness (*ahl al-waḥda*) are all of the rank of divineness, the people of the first row, so their faith is without mediation, and the faith of those

[506] For guidance and its interplay with preparedness, see chapter below on divine guidance.

> other than them is through them. … Everyone whose faith is without mediation is the first to believe, even if they have come into being later temporally, as the Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him, said, "We are the last, the foremost.[507]"[508]

Al-Qāshānī unambiguously declares that all "souls are different in terms of their closeness and remoteness from the divine *huwiyya*." This means the primordial preparedness of each is different and is translated in terms of proximity to or distance from the divine *huwiyya.* Those that are further from the divine *huwiyya* cannot be annihilated to the degree of those that are closer. Moreover, those that are further are actually dependent on those that are closer unless their faith is without mediation. All the prophets, thus, are independent, in a sense, because their faith is without mediation. However, from a different vantage point, they are all dependent on the supreme Perfect Man, Muḥammad, as He is the fundamental reason for creation of the entire Cosmos and everyone in it. Therefore, his perfect preparedness is the reason for their preparednesses.[509]

We note here again that the divine *huwiyya* is the unknown God, the ostensibly undifferentiated God, but not the unknowable, absolutely undifferentiated God. Proximity and distance from this divine *huwiyya* is thus an expression for the level of gnosis and subsequent annihilation of each existent, just as it was in the commentary of chapter 53.[510]

4.3.8. The Creational *Huwiyya*

[507] Al-Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, 1:68.
[508] Al-Qāshānī, *Ta'wīlāt*, 1:164.
[509] For details on the "Doctrine of the Person of Muḥammad" as developed by Ibn 'Arabī and perpetuated by his school, see Arthur Jeffrey, "Ibn al-'Arabī's *shajarat al-kawn*." See also the chapter on the light of Muḥammad in *And Muḥammad is His Messenger* by Schimmel, and Baldick, *Mystical Islam*, 84.
[510] See above.

We observe also that in his commentary of chapter 30, al-Qāshānī explicitly employs the term *huwiyya* to denote the essence of an existent as well as the divine *huwiyya.* He states that "*Many people deny the meeting with their Lord,* due to their being veiled from it so they think it will not occur except as an imaginary encounter (*al-muqābila al-ṣūriyya*) in another realm due to [their] *huwiyya* being inserted into [God's] *huwiyya.*" The confluence of the divine and creational *huwiyyāt,* in this passage, rather than be identified with annihilation in God, is said to be the cause of one being veiled. The reason for this, it appears, is that when one considers his *huwiyya,* as a distinct entity to the *huwiyya* of God then there cannot be any annihilation and these people are veiled from the reality of what true annihilation is.

Moreover, "*the meeting with their Lord*," by which al-Qāshānī seems to understand the absolute meeting with the knowable God, to wit, the meeting of the existent with the divine *huwiyya* in absolute union, is thought to occur on a metaphorical level due to the consideration of the independence of the *huwiyya.* Thus, a person believes he will meet His Lord in "an imaginary encounter (*al-muqābila al-ṣūriyya*)" and in another realm, there being nothing real and lasting about his encounter, because he is unwilling to relinquish his *huwiyya* and would rather his *huwiyya* be *inserted* into the divine *huwiyya* without *losing* itself in the divine. This acceptance of a metaphorical meeting, according to al-Qāshānī, is an implicit denial of a true meeting i.e. annihilation, precisely because it shows one considers his *huwiyya* as something separate from and different to the divine *huwiyya.*

The insertion of the creational *huwiyya* in the divine *huwiyya* being an articulation for concealment from the truth is only when it is from the point of view of the existent. If, on the other hand, it is from the perspective of God, it denotes

absolute annihilation, as we see in the commentary of chapter 30, when al-Qāshānī furnishes the reader with a detailed account of the creation of the Cosmos. The section most relevant for us is the following:

> *So He completed them as seven heavens,* that is, the seven unseen realms that have been mentioned i.e. the faculties, the spirit, the heart, the secret [i.e. the intellect], the soul, the hiddenness (*al-khafā'*), and the Truth who has inserted His *huwiyya* into the *huwiyya* of the existing person and has lowered Himself to create it on this level and has concealed Himself in it. Even though the seven forms of creation are created such that the *huwiyya* comes out of all of them, [it comes especially from] one of them, the fourth one between the heart and the secret of the intellect, and it is the closest heaven in terms of its closeness to the heart which makes a human human.[511]

Al-Qāshānī states, quite unequivocally, that God inserting His *huwiyya* into the *huwiyya* of the existent is His clothing Himself in the existent and "concealing Himself in it." We observe also that there are not two *huwiyyāt,* with the divine one being physically inserted into the creational one. Rather, this turn of phrase is used to describe the differentiation of the divine *huwiyya* in to the faculties, the spirit, the heart, the intellect, the soul, and the hiddenness (by which al-Qāshānī denotes the most intimate aspect of oneself) of creation, for, as al-Qāshānī informs us, *huwiyya* "comes out of all of them." There are, nevertheless, some forms of creation that express the *huwiyya* more intensely than others, these are the heart and the intellect, as they are the defining traits of humans, or, in the words of al-Qāshānī, what "makes a human human," and since man is the most comprehensive and focussed expression of the divine *huwiyya,* it follows that those aspects of man which make him what he is will communicate the *huwiyya* most vividly.

One final point worth noting in this passage is that al-Qāshānī articulates God's differentiations that allow the Cosmos to be, as God lowering Himself. This is

[511] Al-Qāshānī, *Ta'wīlāt*, 2:519.

because God, as the unknowable, absolute God is too lofty for us to have any conception of Him, let alone forge any relationship with Him. The divine *huwiyya,* which, as stated before, is the unknown God, is still beyond what we know, though not beyond what we *can* know. It is with each subsequent differentiation that God becomes lower, or rather, closer to us so that we can finally know Him through knowing ourselves as we are the most focussed manifestation of His *huwiyya.*

4.3.9. *Huwiyya* and the Veiled Ones

We have seen how al-Qāshānī uses the concept of *huwiyya* in a context that describes, not only the people who acknowledge it, but those who deny it and those who are veiled from it. Indeed, there are numerous sections where al-Qāshānī does the same thing. Let us look at some of them. God commands Muḥammad and the believers,

> *Do not transgress,* by veiling yourselves with the veil of "I-ness" (*anā'iyya*)[512] and attributing the limitless divine perfections to your individual "I-ness" that is restricted to [simply] viewing you, [so] it would necessitate veiling with restriction [His] limitlessness, for the divine *huwiyya* cannot be restricted by the instruction of "this-ness" (*hādhiyya*) and "I-ness."[513]

The transgressors, in this passage, are those who use their "I-ness" (*anā'iyya*) to veil themselves from the boundless manifestations of God in the Cosmos, a manifestation of which they themselves are the most vivid example. Here, then, "I-ness" (*anā'iyya*) is much like the *anāniyya,* which is an intentional act on the part of the existent to limit and misattribute the infiniteness of the divine *huwiyya* by viewing it as a manifestation of his own "I-ness." It is worthy of note that "individual *huwiyya*" in this passage could quite easily replace "individual *anā'iyya*" without loss of meaning since al-Qāshānī means by the *anā'iyya,* the creational

[512] This is the abstract feminine noun from *anā* ('I'). For more details on "I-ness" (*anā'iyya*) and how it relates to *huwiyya* and *anniyya/ inniyya*, see *Encyclopaedia of Islam,* 3rd ed., s.v. "*Anniyya*."
[513] Al-Qāshānī, *Ta'wīlāt*, 1:259.

huwiyya that inhibits true gnosis of and annihilation in the divine *huwiyya.* We see that al-Qāshānī deems the creational *huwiyya* as a barrier that needs to be overcome if true annihilation is to be achieved. This is because there is no place for a personal *huwiyya* when everything is simply the manifestation of the divine *huwiyya.*

Al-Qāshānī writes that the result of veiling oneself with his *inniyya* is that one attributes the innumerable divine perfections to oneself and one's existential form. He thus only sees himself as creational perfection without being conscious that his form is nothing but one manifestation of the divine *huwiyya.* The consequence of this is that he curtails the divine perfection as he deems it to be just what is apparent from his existence, which "necessitate[s] veiling [His] limitlessness with restriction." It is the imposition of this "this-ness" (*hādhiyya*), that is, delimiting the infinite manifestations of the divine *huwiyya* to "this" or "that" specifically, which misses the point entirely. Indeed, al-Qashānī believes that,

> Attempts to declare God transcendent beyond any sensible form delimit God and even liken him (*tashbih*) to nonsensible, spiritual forms. Attempts to declare God free of any limitation whatsoever, in fact, limit him by this very declaration, by nonlimitation. This difficulty cannot be evaded by moving away from *tanzih* just as declarations of transcendence limit God, so, too, do affirmations of immanence.[514]

In his commentary of chapter 21, al-Qāshānī again deploys the term *huwiyya* in order to denote people who are ignorant of the true reality. The Qur'an tells of Ibrāhīm's debates with his father and people, when the only justification they offer for idolatry is they found their forefathers doing the same thing. Ibrāhīm proclaims that they are

> *In manifest error,* in being veiled from the illuminated Truth, not reaching the essence of being (*'ayn al-dhāt*), clinging [simply] to the isthmuses of the

[514] Sharify-Funk and Rory-Dickson, "Traces of Pantheism in Islam," 152.

attributes, not being guided to the reality of unity (*ḥaqīqat al-aḥadiyya*) and submergence in the sea of *huwiyya.*[515]

Now it may be that the author is merely categorising these people as not being submerged in the sea of *huwiyya* as opposed to those that are,[516] but it nevertheless highlights al-Qāshānī's penchant for using the term for people that are veiled from the truth, those that simply adhere to the superficiality of the Attributes without fathoming the underlying reality. *Huwiyya* as a state, as a station, as a rank, and as an ultimate goal, then, is just as significant in negative terms as it is in positive ones since most people will never attain this celebrated position.

4.3.10. *Huwiyya* and Divine Guidance

It is significant that in the aforementioned passage al-Qashānī does not speak of intrinsic ranks or primordial preparednesses, rather, he speaks of being guided to the "reality of unity (*ḥaqīqat al-aḥadiyya*)"[517] and "submergence in the sea of *huwiyya*." So how do the two relate to one another: is it the preparedness that determines whether one is submerged in the sea of *huwiyya* or divine guidance? Is there even a difference between the two? The answer, as ever, is both yes and no. Preparedness is unlike divine guidance inasmuch as it is the primordial limit of any given existent. Divine guidance, therefore, does not enter into the equation. It is simply something that is the way it is.

The two, nevertheless, are synonymous as it is divine guidance that leads to the preparedness, and the existent, with its own specific preparedness, is the manifestation of the divine *huwiyya.* It is thus as much an offshoot of the Names as the form of the existent. This is why the intrinsic rank of an existent may be looked

[515] Al-Qāshānī, *Ta'wīlāt*, 1:377.
[516] See examples above.
[517] For a detailed examination of this term see above.

upon in terms of its preparedness or the divine guidance that has led it to its individual station. Moral responsibility is in no way erased by this dynamic because it is only through toiling that one reaches one's destined station as this is the upper limit of one's potential. However, though divine guidance causes an individual's preparedness, it is still under the sway of that preparedness to which it has given rise, as stated previously. Thus we have a complex dynamic where divine guidance at once leads to and is constrained by preparedness.

This concept is deftly dealt with by al-Qāshānī in his commentary of the *Fuṣūṣ* where he writes:

> The intrinsic, unseen manifestation bestows eternal preparedness (*al-isti'dād al-azalī*) by the appearance of the Essence in the realm of the unseen in the forms of the archetypes, and that which pertains to each one of the archetypes in terms of their states. This is what is revealed to the heart [of the gnostic] in the state of manifestation in the phenomenal world. The absolute unseen (*al-ghayb al-muṭlaq*), the absolute Reality (*al-ḥaqīqa al-muṭlaqa*) and the absolute *huwiyya* (*al-huwiyya al-muṭlaqa*) is that by which the Truth describes Himself; it is this essence manifested in the forms of the archetypes, each archetype having a specific *huwiyya* by which it is as it is. The Truth continues to be "He" forever as when the archetypes are manifest in the phenomenal world and the heart [of the gnostic] receives this natural preparedness (*al-isti'dād al-fiṭrī*), which is bestowed upon it by the manifestation [of the divine] in the phenomenal world i.e. the phenomenal manifestation (*al-tajallī al-shuhūdī*), he sees Him in the form of his preparedness, and it is what a group of the Sufis mean when they say, "The Truth manifests Himself in accordance with the preparedness of the servant."[518]

In this paragraph, al-Qāshānī asserts that God remains constant and unchanging, but everyone has a different appreciation of Him, in accordance with his "natural preparedness" (*al-isti'dād al-fiṭrī*). He refers to the unknown God by the terms "the absolute unseen (*al-ghayb al-muṭlaq*), the absolute Reality (*al-ḥaqīqa al-muṭlaqa*) and the absolute *huwiyya* (*al-huwiyya al-muṭlaqa*)" and remarks that "it is

[518] Al-Qāshānī, *Sharḥ Fuṣūs*, 216-7.

this essence manifested in the forms of the archetypes." Therefore, it cannot be the unknowable, remote God as "the archetypes are manifest in the phenomenal world." As hidden as these archetypes may be, then, they are still a means by which the divine essence is communicated in the sensible world, and it is this reality that "the heart [of the gnostic] receives," not the ability to intuit the unknowable God that we are acquainted with in the bezel of Shu'ayb.

Al-Qāshānī speaks of each archetype having its own *huwiyya* "by which it is as it is" and in the form of which, he sees God. The existent thus sees God "in the form of his preparedness." This does not however mean that guidance has no place, for al-Qāshānī continues,

> As for guidance in His statement, *then He guided,*[519] it is the lifting of the veil between Him and His servant until he sees Him in the form of his belief. For the Truth, according to him, *is* his belief, since neither the heart nor the eye sees anything except the form of his belief in the Truth; so he sees not save himself in the mirror of the Truth. Thus, from these archetypes, whoever has complete preparedness, his preparedness will necessitate that he sees the Truth in all the infinite forms of His Names because his preparedness is not restricted to the form of some Name, rather, it accepts every plane (*ḥaḍra*) of the planes of Names in, and by which, are manifested to him what is in himself in terms of how he is connected through this plane to the Truth, unfettered by any restrictions. So this is the gnostic mentioned [in this passage], whose heart is always in the form of what is manifested to it in any form or aspect that it is manifested.[520]

Thus, it is divine guidance that leads to the preparedness being what it is. It is He who lifts "the veil between Him and His servant until he sees Him in the form of his belief." It is He who determines the preparedness so that a person sees himself "in the mirror of the Truth." Moreover, it is only the gnostics who have a "complete preparedness" that see God in all the innumerable manifestations of the Cosmos because it is only their preparedness that "is not restricted to the form of some

[519] Qur'an, 20:50.
[520] Al-Qāshānī, *Sharḥ Fuṣūs*, 216-7.

Name, rather, it accepts every plane (*ḥaḍra*) of the planes of Names." The gnostics, therefore, can be fully led by divine guidance to the true reality of multiplicity in divine oneness because their preparedness has the capacity to harness the guidance that gave rise to them in the first place. A lesser preparedness will lack this capacity and will curtail divine guidance, though it is that very guidance that created them.

We note that al-Qāshānī seems more concerned with maintaining orthopraxy than his predecessor. He retains some of the determinism of his forerunner, but in his conception, the preparedness that every existent is bequeathed is by no means attained. Only through fastidious adherence to divine commands are the veils removed, the ranks ascended and the predetermined preparedness achieved. Duncan MacDonald articulates this distinction between the two mystics in the following manner:

> Abd ar-Razzaq did not follow his master absolutely. On the freedom of the will especially he left him. For Ibn Arabi, the doctrine of the oneness of all things had involved fatalism. Whatever happens is determined by the nature of things, that is, by the nature of God. So the individuals are bound by the whole. Abd ar-Razzaq turned this round. His pantheism was of the same type as that of Ibn Arabi; God, for him, was all. But there is freedom of the divine nature, he went on. It must therefore exist in man also, for he is an emanation from the divine. His every act, it is true, is predetermined, in time, in form, and in place. But his act is brought about by certain causes, themselves predetermined. These are what we would call natural laws in things, natural abilities, aptitudes, etc., in the agent; finally, free choice itself. And that free choice is in man because he is of and from God. Further, it is evident that Abd ar-Razzaq's anxiety is to preserve a basis for morals. Among the predetermining causes he reckons the divine commands, warnings, proofs in the Qur'an. The guidance of religion finds thus its place and the prophets their work.[521]

It is true that al-Qāshānī underscores this issue more vehemently than does Ibn 'Arabī, and this aligns him more closely with the orthodoxy, for as Van Ess writes, "For Islam, orthopraxy is more important than orthodoxy. At the level of

[521] Duncan B. MacDonald, *Development of Muslim Theology,* 271.

action, in the liturgy and in daily life, details counted a great deal."[522] However, it is folly to suggest Ibn 'Arabī's outlook is entirely fatalistic. Indeed, the foregoing shows that Ibn 'Arabī, too, believes in orthopraxy as a vehicle for attainment of man's true potential. If al-Qāshānī is more fastidious in accentuating this point, then it is only because it handsomely serves his irenic endeavors.[523]

Returning to the commentary of chapter 21, we once again observe the interchangeability of the terms *huwiyya* and *aḥadiyya,* a detailed discussion of which has been given. What is more interesting is the contrast between these terms and what al-Qāshānī calls, "the isthmuses of the attributes" to which the veiled person clings. Al-Qāshānī, it seems, draws a distinction between realising that all things in the Cosmos are manifestations of the divine *huwiyya* or *aḥadiyya,* and seeing them as a manifestation of the Names. The nuance of difference between these two states is vital because, though everything is a manifestation of the Names, the Names emanate from the divine *huwiyya* or *aḥadiyya.* Anyone who sees the Cosmos as a manifestation of the Names, but does not recognise the Names as differentiations of the *huwiyya* has only recognised the partial truth. The reason al-Qāshānī calls these Names the isthmuses (*barāzikh*) is because they are the connecting filament between the creation and the divine, but to attribute the Cosmos to them alone without acknowledging the divine differentiations before them is to be veiled from the truth.

[522] Van Ess, *The Flowering of Muslim Theology*, 16.
[523] For more details on al-Qāshānī's view on free-will and predestination, see al-Qāshānī, *Al-Risāla fi'l-qaḍā' wa'l-qadar (Traité sur la prédestination et le libre arbitre)*, trans. Stanislas Guyard. A good example of al-Qāshānī's more stringent adherence to the significance of orthopraxy is the fate of Pharoah: though he accepts the account in Ibn 'Arabī's *Fuṣūṣ* (the account in the *Futūḥāt* is different) and believes in the last-breath faith of Pharoah, he nevertheless concedes that Pharoah will suffer punishment for his treatment of the Israelites. Carl W. Ernst, "Controversies over Ibn al-'Arabī's *Fuṣūṣ*," 262.

Only in one other place do we find reference to someone being guided to the *huwiyya,* without any mention of preparedness or *inniya.* Al-Qāshānī writes about Mūsā presenting Pharoah the portents of his prophethood:[524]

> *So he [Mūsā] showed him [i.e. Pharoah] the great sign,* that is, the *huwiyya* pertaining to the reality (*al-huwiyya al-ḥaqīqiyya*) with the rational oneness (*al-tawḥīd al-'ilmī*) and the guidance of the reality (*al-hidāya al-ḥaqqāniyya*).[525]

The great sign, according to the author, is "the *huwiyya* pertaining to the reality (*al-huwiyya al-ḥaqīqiyya*)." God equipped Mūsā with the two things that allowed him to appreciate this sign: "rational oneness (*al-tawḥīd al-'ilmī*) and the guidance of the reality (*al-hidāya al-ḥaqqāniyya.*)" This means that God guided Mūsā to the reality of His *huwiyya* and also made His oneness (despite its multiplicity) congenial to his faculty of rationality. The guidance, as stated above, is both direction to the *huwiyya* and instillation of the preparedness. The faculty of rationality, on the other hand, is subsumed under preparedness as it is through reason that he realises what the *huwiyya* truly is. One observes shades of the familiar Ibn 'Arabian tightrope between rationality and gnosis, or rather, gnosis as a form of rationality here.

Al-Qāshānī praises rationality as God's oneness is something that is "rational," but it is only through guidance in the form of, among other things, preparedness that secures gnosis of the divine *huwiyya.* From a different angle, though, it is only through the preparedness to rationally contemplate God's *huwiyya* that gnosis of it derives. The two are thus tightly woven in an intricate lattice, each having its own function, being dependent as well as independent, distinct as well as the same.

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[524] This refers to Mūsā's miracles in traditional Sunni commentaries. See al-Qurṭubī, *Tafsīr al-Qurṭubī,* 19:131.
[525] Al-Qāshānī, *Ta'wīlāt*, 2:667.

4.3.11. *Huwiyya* and the Last Day

The penultimate category of events in which al-Qāshānī uses the term *huwiyya* pertain to the Last Day. Al-Qāshānī writes in his commentary of chapter 39,

> *And the horn will be blown,* at the slaying (*imāta*) by the spirit of the Truth and His manifestation in everything, and the witnessing of His self by His self and the annihilation of everything in Him. *So will swoon,* that is, be destroyed, *everything that is in the heavens and the earth,* in a state of annihilation in oneness (*tawḥīd*), and the *huwiyya* will be manifested by the spiritual breath, *save him who God wills,* of the people of subsistence (*ahl al-baqā'*), those whom God has revivified after their annihilation in the Truthful existence (*al-wujūd al-ḥaqqānī*). So they will not die again at the Resurrection as their life is in Him and they have been annihilated from their selves before. *Then it is blown again,* upon subsistence after annihilation and the return to differentiation after union.[526]

Al-Qāshānī paints a very vivid picture here about the moment the sensible Cosmos comes to an end. He comments that when the horn is blown, "the slaying (*imāta*) by the spirit of the Truth" will occur. By this he means the manifestation of God in every existent thing will be reversed, as we see from his explicative conjunction succeeding the phrase. The sound of the horn will thus bring an end to all the tangible differentiations of the divine *huwiyya* so that God will no longer view "His self by His self," that is, He will no longer see Himself in that which is other than He because of "the annihilation of everything in Him," so all the differentiations of His *huwiyya* will return to Him just as they emanated from Him. One almost feels the echo of Ibn 'Arabī reciting his favourite part-verse "*and to Him returns the matter in its entirety.*"[527]

Al-Qāshānī then uses plainer language to express this "annihilation in oneness" (*fanā' fi'l-tawḥīd*) and 'manifestation of the divine *huwiyya*.' The first of these phrases is easy to comprehend in the context of what al-Qāshānī seeks to

[526] Ibid., 2:508.
[527] Qur'an, 11:123.

communicate and, indeed, reinforces his point that when everything will be destroyed, it will not simply perish, but shall return to God, just as it came from Him.[528] The second phrase, which conveys that this return to God actually exposes the divine *huwiyya,* is a little more arcane but nonetheless logical when one thinks of what a reversion of differentiated forms of the *huwiyya* necessitates. For when the differentiations of the *huwiyya* return back to it, nothing remains but the undifferentiated *huwiyya* from which they first emanated. The divine *huwiyya* is thus exposed due to the removal of the veils of phenomenal existentiality in which it was cloaked.

It seems that at the end of the world, all the processes and differentiations that caused it to be will be actively reversed, such that even the spiritual breath (*al-nafkha al-rūḥiyya*), that is, the divine breath, which instigated the processes that led to the existence of the Cosmos, will bring about the undifferentiation that induces its end.[529] Indeed, we see that the "breath" (*nafkh*) is always seen as a differentiating,

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[528] One observes conformity with Ibn 'Arabī's notion of there being no net loss when it comes to God, as articulated in the bezel of Yūnūs, where Ibn 'Arabī writes,

> If it were that a dead or killed person—any dead or killed person—when they died or were killed, did not return to God, God would not ordain death for anyone nor would He advocate their execution. So everything is in His grasp, and there is no loss in terms of His right. The advocation of execution and the command of death is due to His knowledge that His servant cannot escape Him and he will return to Him, as attested by His saying, *And unto Him shall the whole matter be returned,* that is, all disposal lies with Him, and He is the Disposer. So nothing proceeds from Him that is not His essence, rather, His *huwiyya* is the essence of that thing and that is what reveals to him [i.e. the Gnostic, the meaning] of His saying, *And unto Him shall the whole matter be returned.* (Ibn 'Arabī, *Fuṣūṣ,* 170.)

Ibn 'Arabī speaks of the cyclical nature of existence in this passage, with everything emanating from and returning to God. He rationalises the seemingly arbitrary dispensation of life and death stating that, since the return of all existents is to God, it is merely a transition from one plane of existence to another, and existence itself persists. Al-Qāshānī, too, speaks of the return of everything to God, almost as an undifferentiation to undo the first outpouring that gave rise to the Cosmos.

[529] Parallels can be observed between the active reversal from a life-giving breath to a life-taking one in this case with that of the prophet 'Īsā—who himself is a sign of the Day of Judgement—and whose life-giving breath (al-Qur'ān, 3:39) shall be transformed in to a life-taking one upon his second coming. (Muslim ibn al-Ḥajjāj, *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, 55:110.)

existentiating force in al-Qāshānī's commentary, until it comes to the Last Day. Al-Qāshānī writes in his commentary of chapter 12,

> For surely God, the Exalted, does not give life to the people of sainthood (*wilāya*) upon absolute annihilation (*al-fanā' al-tāmm*), which is the beginning of prophethood, except by means of His breath (*nafkh*) and His revelation; and by association with these, the differentiations become manifest in the spring of union.[530]

One of the two chief ways by which God gives life to the people of sainthood, according to al-Qāshānī, is through His breath. It is the divine breath that causes the differentiations, and it is this very breath that retracts the same differentiations on the Last Day.

The only people who will not die on the Last Day will be the gnostics who have achieved complete annihilation in the divine *huwiyya* because "God has revivified [them] after their annihilation in the Truthful existence (*al-wujūd al-ḥaqqānī*)." The "Truthful existence" (*al-wujūd al-ḥaqqānī*) is existence that is real as it emanates from the eternally existent and the only One who has absolute existence. "So they will not die again at the Resurrection as their life is in Him and they have been annihilated from their selves before."

In the view of al-Qāshānī, subsistence (*baqā'*) is represented by the resurrection of everything when the horn is blown again. This is "subsistence after annihilation and the return to differentiation after union." The second blowing of the horn, therefore, recreates the differentiation that the first repeals. However, it is not a simple reversion to the pre-apocalyptic differentiation, rather, it is a differentiation after annihilation and union in the divine *huwiyya,* with all that that entails and signifies, to wit, the subsistence of the annihilation-derived gnosis, just as was the case for Yūsuf when God returned him to sobriety (*ṣaḥw*) after his annihilation.

[530] Al-Qāshānī, *Ta'wīlāt*, 1:270.

4.3.12. *Huwiyya* and the Forgiveness of God

The final context in which *huwiyya* is employed by al-Qāshānī is to denote the forgiveness of God, and what that means in terms of the divine *huwiyya.* Nor is this surprising, for we have already seen how *huwiyya* is used to denote gnostics who are annihilated in the divine *huwiyya* and transgressors of God's laws who are veiled from the *huwiyya*; it is only fitting, then, that the term should be used to connote the forgiveness of God, which enables unworthy people to relate to the *huwiyya* thereby bridging the divide between these two classes.

The commentary of the following verse of chapter 47 in which God describes the rewards for the righteous is most pertinent for our purposes:

> *A likeness of the garden promised the God-fearing [is this:] in it are rivers of water unpolluted; and rivers of milk, the taste of which will not alter; and rivers of wine, delicious for drinkers; and rivers of purified honey; and for them will be every kind of fruit; and forgiveness from their Lord.*[531]

In his commentary of this verse, al-Qāshānī writes,

> *And forgiveness from their Lord,* by concealment of the aspects of disobedience and veiling the evils of vices for the people of milk, then also by concealment of the actions of the people of water, then by eradication of the attributes for the people of honey and some of the people of wine, then by effacement of the sins of the states (*aḥwāl*) and stations (*maqāmāt*), and the annihilation of the remainder, and screening their manifestations by the light and revelations for the people of fruit, then by annihilation of the essence *(dhāt)* by submergence in the union of unity (*jam' al-aḥadiyya*) and perishing in the spring of *huwiyya* (*'ayn al-huwiyya*) for the drinkers of pure wines (*al-khumūr al-ṣirfī*), and all of these are types of the god-fearing [believers].[532]

It is interesting to note that al-Qāshānī interprets all the rewards in the gardens of paradise as being subsumed under the final one: forgiveness from God. Therefore, the water, milk, wine, and honey that will be offered people are not

[531] Qur'an, 47:15.
[532] Al-Qāshānī, *Ta'wīlāt*, 2:556.

beverages but types of forgiveness that is specific for them. However, it seems somewhat contradictory that all these classes of people are offered bespoke forgiveness when al-Qāshānī states they are all "types of the God-fearing [believers]." The only reconciliation between these statements is that, though they are all types of God-fearing believers, they have still transgressed to differing degrees and are thus in need of forgiveness from God.[533]

It appears from the above passage that the forgiveness of God elevates each class according to his rank. So, for the people at the lower end of the spectrum, the people of water and milk, forgiveness entails concealing their vices and transgressions. Whereas those at the other end, the people of pure wine, forgiveness means "annihilation of the essence *(dhāt)* by submergence in the union of unity (*jam' al-aḥadiyya*) and perishing in the spring of *huwiyya* (*'ayn al-huwiyya*)." It is they, then, who reach the highest level of gnosis as their status was far beyond others to begin with. In this way, both the mercy and justice of God is presented.

4.4. Conclusion of *Huwiyya* in al-Qāshānī's works

The foregoing underscores how nebulous the concept of *huwiyya* is and how al-Qāshānī employs it in many contexts to convey his meaning. However, if *huwiyya* is somewhat amorphous, then it is still distinct enough to have a thread that runs through all its various usages in the *Ta'wīlāt*, a "basic meaning" that we may adhere to and to which all "relational meanings" may be referred. This meaning is of two kinds and may be better articulated as two symbols. *Huwiyya*, then, is:

[533] This is different to the classification of men generally, for al-Qāshānī, like many of his predecessors, divided men into three categories, as MacDonald notes: "The first is of men of the world, who are ruled by the flesh (*nafs*) and who live careless of all religion. The second is of men of reason (*aql*). They through the reason contemplate God, but see only His external attributes. The third is of men of the spirit (*ruh*) who, in ecstasy, see God face to face in His very essence, which is the substrate of all creation." MacDonald, *Development of Muslim Theology,* 272.

1. A symbol for God's absolute existence (*al-wujūd al-muṭlaq*), as opposed to the relational existence (*al-wujūd al-iḍāfī*) of the creation.
2. A symbol of the primary differentiation of God, that is, the unknown God (but not the unknowable God) who is predisposed towards creation.

In his commentary of chapter 45, al-Qāshānī writes,

> I swear by the reality of the *huwiyya* (*ḥaqīqat al-huwiyya*), that is, absolute existence (*al-wujūd al-muṭlaq*), which is the source of everything and the essence of union (*'ayn al-jam'*), and by Muḥammad, that is, relational existence (*al-wujūd al-iḍāfī*), which is the perfection of everything and a detailed form (*ṣūrat al-tafṣīl*).

This single quotation combines the two main facets of *huwiyya* which are played out in their numerous guises throughout the *Ta'wīlāt.* Firstly, al-Qashānī states that the divine *huwiyya* is "absolute existence (*al-wujūd al-muṭlaq*)," something that distinguishes God from everything else. It is the one trait that can be applied only to God. This, in many ways, is the most fundamental definition of *huwiyya* because it articulates what *huwiyya* is in isolation, without reference to creation or anything else. It is what *huwiyya* may primarily be conceived of. What follows is the designation of *huwiyya* in the context of creation. Al-Qāshānī comments that divine *huwiyya* is "the source of everything" because all existents derive their *huwiyya* from it. This means that all allusions to creational *huwiyyāt* in their various manifestations ultimately emanate from this one. A corollary of this is that while the *huwiyyāt* of created entities can only be either "this" or "that," the *huwiyya* of God that gives rise to these numerous creational *huwiyyāt* is liberated from this "*hādhiyya*." This, while seeming like another distinction between the divine *huwiyya* and the creational one, is merely a logical consequence of the former giving rise to the latter.

We are further informed that, not only is the divine *huwiyya* the source of everything, but it is "the essence of union (*'ayn al-jam'*)." Thus, all subsequent references to annihilation in God, to submergence in the sea or spring of *huwiyya,* are articulations of this primary definition. When expressed in this manner, it is not so much the *huwiyya* itself that is being detailed, as a station where an awareness and appreciation of the divine *huwiyya* is acquired by the gnostic who sees through the façade of phenomenality and to the *huwiyya* behind it all.

Al-Qāshānī then speaks of Muḥammad, as the emblem of relational existence (*al-wujūd al-iḍāfī*), "which is the perfection of everything and a detailed form (*ṣūrat al-tafṣīl*)" of the divine *huwiyya.* The Perfect Man, therefore, is the comprehensive amalgamation of all the Names and a "detailed form," that is, a differentiated version of the divine outpouring, through which the divine *huwiyya* is known to the creation. This means the difference between God and the Perfect Man is not only that God has absolute existence and the Perfect Man has contingent existence, it is also that the divine *huwiyya* is a representation of how God is unknown, though not unknowable, to creation and the Perfect Man is a symbol of how God is known to the creation.

Through characterising the Perfect Man as the "detailed form" of the divine *huwiyya*, al-Qāshānī also alludes to the second "basic meaning" of *huwiyya*: God after the first differentiation, to wit, when there is a prefiguring of pouring forth existence. There can, after all, be no "detailed form" if there is no predisposition towards creation. We are thus left with three interrelated yet distinct concepts: the divine *huwiyya,* which is God unknown, the absolutely existent, who is predisposed to creating a being that has the capacity to manifest all of His Names so that He may be known. Secondly, the Names themselves, which are the manner in which God is

known. And finally, a comprehensive outlook of God in which the concepts of the divine *huwiyya* and that of the Perfect Man are looked upon in unison and God is seen as the unknown in terms of His *huwiyya* and known in terms of the differentiated result of that very *huwiyya*—the Perfect Man.

All this, of course, does not diminish the essential unknowability of God, a God about whom nothing can be articulated or even fathomed. A terse yet comprehensive definition of *huwiyya*, in light of al-Qāshānī's usage of it in the *Ta'wīlāt*, would thus be that it is a means of articulating the unknown, absolutely existent God while acknowledging both His true unknowability and insinuating His limited knowability by the contingently existent creation through expression of His Names.

5.0. The *Huwiyya* of Ibn ʻArabī versus the *Huwiyya* of al-Qāshānī

The manner in which *huwiyya* is employed in the texts of Ibn ʻArabī and al-Qāshānī is similar but not the same, nor would one have expected a sharp variation between the disciple and his Sufi master. There are, nevertheless, important differences that have emerged, and which we shall now catalogue.

The definitions of *huwiyya* by both mystics are extremely alike, even if al-Qāshānī's is more detailed than that of Ibn ʻArabī. For what Ibn ʻArabī laconically categorises as, "The Reality in the realm of the unseen,"[534] al-Qāshānī explains as, "The absolute, comprehensive Reality … in the absolute unseen … for the absolute unseen, in terms of it being unseen, does not reach a point where it is ever witnessed."[535] Al-Qāshānī, therefore, already assumes the role of a commentator who unequivocally expresses what he deems to be the exact intentions of the author. In this definition, he seems to be referring to the remote, unknowable God—the true God who cannot be manifested or "witnessed" in the phenomenal realm or any other plane of creation. This is the primary signification of *huwiyya* in Ibn ʻArabī's semantic *Weltanschauung*, too, as we learn from the bezel of Shuʻayb.[536]

The two mystics are agreed, then, that *huwiyya* is fundamentally the remote, unknowable God. However, al-Qāshānī's usage in the *Ta'wīlāt* and elsewhere does not correspond with this assessment. For we note that the absolute Reality to which al-Qāshānī refers in the *Ta'wīlāt* and his lexicons is not the remote, undifferentiated God, but rather God after the first differentiation when there is a prefiguring of existence. He is still unseen, His reality is still comprehensive because if nothing has yet emanated from Him, it is latent within Him, and He is still far removed from the

[534] Ibn ʻArabī, *Rasā'il Ibn ʻArabī*, 538.
[535] Al-Qāshānī, *Rashḥ*, 139.
[536] See above.

existence of any onlookers who are many differentiations away, but there is already a distance between master and disciple.

This is not to suggest that al-Qāshānī would dispute *huwiyya* could potentially be used for the remote God, it is just to say that he does not use generally it in such a way, which tells us he is far more reticent about employing the term for the Absolute in His Absoluteness than Ibn ʻArabī. This necessarily means that al-Qāshānī's treatment of *huwiyya* is already impoverished and narrow—he does not generally avail himself of the full spectrum of significations, largely overlooking the most important denotation—that of the unknowable God.

Al-Qāshānī, it is true, comes very close to Ibn ʻArabī in his meanings of *huwiyya* and this is reflected in concurrence with his master that *huwiyya* is almost a byword for the absolute existence of God as opposed to contingent existence of the creation—an assertion most forthrightly articulated in the commentary of chapter 45. However, this distinction does not do away with or impinge on the underlying difference between the conception of the unknowable God and that of the unknown God, that is, God after the first differentiation, as it could equally be applied to both.

Both mystics agree on the other end of the spectrum with regards to the most differentiated form of *huwiyya* being, not only the existents of the phenomenal world, but their very actions, as they too are manifestations of God. But even in this accord do we see the difference in formulation, for what Ibn ʻArabī leaves undefined, merely intimating it through his rich and varied reflections (notably in the bezel of Shuʻayb), al-Qāshānī categorises as *al-aḥadiyya al-fiʻliyya* (unity of action).

We also observe that whereas the disciple is categorical in defining this differentiated form of *huwiyya* in his *Laṭāʾif*, the term, as such, is never employed in the *Taʾwīlāt*. Yet again, then, does al-Qāshānī define a term in his lexicon without

invoking it in his commentary. The reason for this may be due to the confines of the commentary genre, which curtails metaphysical disquisitions. It could also be that the *Laṭā'if* was meant for a different audience,[537] or it could be that his definitness of style and bluntness of expression exposes him to contradictions that Ibn ʻArabī circumvents and transcends. He thus, despite acknowledging that *huwiyya* is the absolutely unknowable God, restricts himself to the meaning of the unknown God, for all his usages of the term pertain to the manner in which God is connected to and manifested in His creation (even if His existence is absolute and that of His creation contingent) and not how He, in His absoluteness, is not even fathomed by the creation.

Indeed, we see a distinct shift in emphasis in the invocation of the term between Ibn ʻArabī and his disciple: the former uses it primarily in reference to the dissociation of God from His creation, His unknowability, His lack of true manifestation; whereas the latter, though recognising this, employs it to delineate how God is related to and expressed in His creation. This is why one observes so many categories of *huwiyya* connected to the existents in his commentary, whether it be how man may be submerged in the sea or spring of *huwiyya* (about which he is especially loquacious) or how *huwiyya* is linked to creational *inniya* and *anāniyya* or even, how it pertains to divine guidance and eschatology. All these concepts, in their vague outlines and hazy blueprints are present in Ibn ʻArabī's verbal fussilades, but they remain out of focus precisely because his focus lies elsewhere. Al-Qāshānī, in making the relationship between the creator and His creation the main purpose of his use of the term, sacrifices its primary denotation. Yet, it may be that al-Qāshānī, views God as being closer to His creation than does Ibn ʻArabī, that the emphasis on

[537] See below for more details.

the ways in which the creator and creation are connected consistutes a slender doctrinal difference between the master and disciple.

If the meaning of the unknowable God is downgraded by al-Qāshānī, then at the other end of the continuum, the most differentiated form of *huwiyya* being the actions of existents, also does not escape unscathed. Al-Qāshānī, being tethered to the text of the Qur'an, seems unable to extricate himself to properly address the dichotomy between God being everything, including the actions of man, and His promise of reward and threat of punishment for the righteous and evil, respectively.[538] Consequently, he tries to avoid the issue and confines his scrutiny, for the most part, to the phenomenal loci of *huwiyya*, without entering the choppy waters of their actions. He does, on occasion, drift to this issue, but it is tangential and brief.[539]

The phraseology of al-Qāshānī, too, is worthy of note, for even though these concepts are present in the works of Ibn 'Arabī, the master does not employ nearly as many set phrases like "submergence in the sea of *huwiyya*" or "*hādhiyya*" etc. as his successor. These phrases have the propensity to both enrich and impoverish the tradition. We see this in the work of the disciple where they create a lucidity which, though they make concepts more amenable to both laymen and Sufi neophytes alike, may not have been envisioned by the Andalusian. Moreover, lucidity comes at the expense of vibrancy and looseness of expression that allows Ibn 'Arabī the luxury of glossing over contradictions in the mélange of his linguistic virtuosiy. These contradictions are laid bare by al-Qāshānī, which may be the reason for his timidity in exploring all the connotations his master intended.

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[538] For a detailed analysis of how al-Qāshānī views this issue, see his work: *Al-Rīsāla fī'l-qaḍā' wa'l-qadar.*

[539] See for example, the section on *huwiyya* and divine guidance.

Al-Qāshānī's role, however, is not restricted to one of systemisation and formalisation, for he also develops and refines concepts and ideas introduced by Ibn 'Arabī. The *huwiyya* of God, for example, says al-Qāshānī, has its own set of attributes that impart its "unknown-ness." This is distinct from the *huwiyya* when differentiated into an amalgamation of the divine Names which is the chief manner in which it is known to the existents. However, this pre-differentiated, unrepresented, unknown *huwiyya* and its differentiated, manifested, known materialisation exist simultaneously. This means that God is at once unknown—through His *huwiyya,* known—through His Names, *and* a mixture of the two. One finds hues of this notion in Ibn 'Arabī's suggestive excurses, especially in his adherence to emanational atemporality, but never is it so explicitly pronounced. The idea, too, that the *huwiyya* has its own set of attributes seems altogether al-Qāshānī's own. The way in which it is woven into the tapestry of Ibn 'Arabī's metaphysics exemplifies how al-Qāshānī's spiritual insight manoeuvres in his Sufi predecessor's mystical framework.

Al-Qāshānī also analyses notions that feature in the Andalusian's worldview from his personal angles. The creational *huwiyya* affords us an opportunity to inspect this aspect of his commentary, for what Ibn 'Arabī views as a *huwiyya* derived from the divine *huwiyya*, and therefore a direct link to it, al-Qāshānī decries as a barrier to annihilation. It is true that both, though seemingly antithetical, are articulations of the same thing since conviction of personal *huwiyya* being distinct from and independent of the divine *huwiyya* is an obstacle to annihilation, which does not violate the creational *huwiyya* being a direct connection to it. Revealingly, al-Qāshānī, far from following Ibn 'Arabī's lead in solely proclaiming creational

huwiyya's positive aspect as a straight route to the divine, accentuates its negative one as an obstruction to it.

True though it is that al-Qāshānī differs sometimes and somewhat in his comprehension and adoption of *huwiyya*, it is nevertheless, consonant with Ibn 'Arabī's usage most of the time. Thus, do we get similar allusions to the interplay between *huwiyya* and preparedness and between *huwiyya* and divine mercy; the station of *huwiyya*, too, appears to be straddling the same general line, among many others. It is merely al-Qāshānī's antiseptic style and clinical communication that displays the points of divergence and conceals those of convergence. Indeed, from definition to application one sees only nuanced differences; a shift in emphasis here, a drift in meaning there. Put together, though, we end up with a term which, though not unrecognisable from its erstwhile guise, is quite a different proposition.

6.0. Conclusion

We note that al-Qāshānī never explicitly disagrees with Ibn'Arabī.[540] His purpose is not to question his predecessor's thought and ideas,[541] it is merely to explain them as he understands them. This is his self-proclaimed objective in *Sharḥ fuṣūs* where he states that his aim is to "not conceal anything from the jewels of his (Ibn 'Arabī's) treasures"[542] and to "decode the words of the book as much as God allows me."[543] He further petitions God to safeguard him from the machinations of his intellect if it compels him to deviate from the truth.[544] It is true, of course, that such declarations are standard *modus operandi* in the commentary genre. However, the reverential tone and disinclination to even challenge Ibn 'Arabī's *kashf* disclose that al-Qāshānī's objectives are not mere faux modesty, but sincere goals.

He appears to view his role as a systematiser of Ibn 'Arabī's thought primarily, and Sufism generally, to be evidenced by his lexicons which go from expounding concepts in just three works in the *Iṣṭilāḥāt*,[545] to all of Ibn 'Arabī's writings in *Rashḥ,* and finally, the whole gamut of Sufi thought in the *Laṭā'if.* It is little wonder, then, that his approach is more term-centric than that of his forerunner, as we have seen. However, al-Qāshānī, due to operating in a far more rigid system—firstly because of his style, which is much more clinical and direct than that of Ibn 'Arabī and secondly because of the *tafsīr* and lexicon genre, which curtail any digressions and demand any expositions capitulate to the text or entry—

[540] Al-Qāshānī's position on predestination, at first glance, appears at odds with that of Ibn 'Arabī. However, upon closer examination we see that it is simply a more robust defence of orthopraxy—something that is present in his master's works and, more importantly, deeds. This issue, nevertheless, is beyond the scope of this study. See also the section on *huwiyya* and divine guidance.
[541] Al-Jīlī, on the other hand, openly questions and refutes Ibn 'Arabī's assertions. See al-Jīlī, *Al-Insān al-kāmil.*
[542] Al-Qāshānī, *Sharḥ Fuṣuṣ,* 3.
[543] Ibid.
[544] Ibid.
[545] These are *Manāzil al-sā'irīn,* his commentary of *Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam* and *Ta'wīlāt al-Qur'ān.* See introduction for more details.

paradoxically, explores fewer of the meanings than that of his master. This may also be because his fidelity to the more conventional meanings obligates him to forgo the fringe significations for fear that they would compromise or impinge on the former.

The main reason, however, for al-Qāshānī's condensed version is the very one why his language and style differ so dramatically from his master: his audience is different to Ibn 'Arabī's.[546] Whereas the Andalusian's works seem to address Sufi specialists and obscures his language for the lay folk, exotericists and mystic neophytes,[547] al-Qāshānī tailors his approach precisely for these Sufi trainees.[548] It thus becomes a multi-level esoteric reading of the Qur'an, one that addresses absolute beginners up to, but not including, the adepts that Ibn 'Arabī focusses on, as is evident from the introduction to the *Iṣṭilāḥāt*, *Rashḥ*[549] and the *Ta'wīlāt* in which he describes the work as:

> A sample (*anmūdhaj*) for the people of spiritual tasting (*dhawq*) and ecstasy (*wajdān*) which they may imitate when they recite the Qur'an so that its hidden knowledge may be unveiled for them in accordance with their

[546] The audience and era naturally *determines* what the author writes. Al-Qāshānī writes in the manner he does because he does not seek to address Sufi adepts as does Ibn 'Arabī. Skinner articulates this point particularly well when he remarks, "The essential question which we … confront, in studying any given text, is what its author, in writing at the time he did write for the audience he intended to address, could in practice have been intending to communicate by the utterance of this given utterance." Skinner, "Meaning and Understanding in the History of Ideas," 48-49.

[547] The reason for the inscrutability of Ibn 'Arabī's language, according to 'Afīfī, is a conscious effort on the part of the author to complicate his mode of expression in order to insulate him from the orthodoxy and insulate the mystic neophytes from him. 'Afīfī remarks, "It is not improbable that ibn 'Arabi made a deliberate effort to complicate the style … in order to conceal his ideas from the narrow-minded orthodox and the uninitiated." ('Afīfī, "Ibn 'Arabī," 403.) He cites Ibn 'Arabī's own admission that he has hidden the secret of his metaphysics in his works as proof of this assertion, commenting, "It is extraordinary that he admits that he has intentionally concealed his special theory by scattering its component parts throughout his books and left the task of assembling it to the intelligent reader. (Ibid., 405.) De Cillis makes a similar point when she writes, "Ibn 'Arabī's works "are made deliberately confused as they were meant to be understood exclusively by minds already trained in and acquainted with Sufi propositions." (De Cillis, *Free Will and Predestination in Islamic Thought*, 168.)

[548] Michel Vâlsan, *Les interprétations ésotériques du Coran*, ix.

[549] See introduction. The objective of the *Laṭā'if* is different: it is to defend Sufism as a whole and the intended readership is therefore chiefly the exotericists. This is why al-Qāshānī is far more expressive in this work and far less dependent on Ibn 'Arabī than in the other three works mentioned above. The pedagogical slant is there, but it is less prominent as the *Laṭā'if* is more about defending than training. See below.

> preparedness, and its secrets of the unseen may be revealed to them in accordance with their capacity.[550]

James Morris is correct, then, in his assertion that

> Kāshānī's works in general … are extremely helpful pedagogical tools, for those previously unacquainted with Ibn 'Arabī's outlook and terminology, in bringing out some of his key concepts and technical vocabulary.[551]

He continues in the same vein:

> Kāshānī's Qur'anic commentaries, like his other books, are all clearly distinguished by a thoroughgoing pedagogical concern and didactic procedure that is manifested in such interrelated characteristics as their rigorous systematization, the clarification and simplification of vocabulary (especially if compared with Ibn 'Arabī), and the conceptualization (often in an openly reductionist manner) of what were originally multivalent symbols.[552]

However, he attributes this tendency, not only to the edification of trainee Sufis, but also to

> a shift in the content and underlying intentions of Kāshānī's writing (when compared with Ibn 'Arabī) that brought him very close to the prevailing systems of Avicennan philosophy (especially in their interpretations of the phenomena and claims of Sufism) and related schools of kalam—to such a degree that their verbal formulations are sometimes virtually indistinguishable.[553]

The reason al-Qāshānī turns Ibn 'Arabī's mystical outlook in to a philosophical thought, according to Morris, is that he tries to "explain the insights of Ibn 'Arabī to students with a philosophic background, with the aim of drawing them into the practical efforts necessary to realize the more profound intentions of Ibn 'Arabī."[554] He is especially qualified to do this given his extensive philosophical training.[555]

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[550] Al-Qāshānī, *Ta'wīlāt*, 6. This is why al-Qāshānī is so scrupulous about emphasising the differing spiritual states of Sufis right from the outset and creates a work that continually refers to them. See Sands, *Ṣūfī Commentaries*, 76-77. Indeed, the emphasis on different preparednesses is an aspect that permeates most of al-Qāshānī's oeuvre. For an example of this, see al-Qāshānī, *Manāzil*, 14.)
[551] James Morris, "*Ibn Arabī and His Interpreters*," part II-B, 4.
[552] Ibid., 5-6.
[553] Ibid.
[554] Ibid., 6.
[555] Ibid., part II-A, 38-39; Chittick also notes this propensity of al-Qāshānī, remarking, "Given his early philosophical training, it is not surprising that his *Fuṣūṣ* commentary accentuates the trend

However, al-Qāshānī, in the introduction of the *Iṣṭilāḥāt, Rashḥ* and the *Ta'wīlāt* declares that his purpose is to educate Sufi novices, those who believe but do not understand fully all the complexities and nuances of Ibn 'Arabī's world view, and not, as Morris claims, "toward convincing readers with a similar *falsafa* or kalam training (rather than toward the spiritual direction of already practicing Sufis)."[556] The only exception to this is the *Laṭā'if* which is intended more for exotericists than trainee mystics.[557] It is not, though, intended to turn the theosophy of Ibn 'Arabī in to a philosophical system for students of *kalām* or *falsafa*, but has the much broader aim of defending Sufism (not just Ibn 'Arabī) against the onslaught of exotericists. As such, the reliance of al-Qāshānī particularly in this work on the Qur'an and Ḥadīth is prominent, as is his relative independence of Ibn 'Arabī when compared with the other two lexicons.

It is true that al-Qāshānī's approach is a "'rational' philosophic exposition"[558] of Ibn 'Arabī's works and contains none of the "outbursts of mystic emotion"[559] of his master, and that Ibn 'Arabī's "insistence on the primary role of *kashf* (immediate experiential 'unveiling') and the concomitant limitations of abstract, formal 'reasoning' ('*aql*) have been substantially altered, if not indeed reversed, in Kāshānī's far more sober philosophic perspective,"[560] but that is the role he adopts as commentator. His purpose is to explain the *kashf* of Ibn 'Arabī, not describe his own.

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established by Qūnawī to present the text in philosophical terms. The manner in which Kāshānī's approach differs from Ibn 'Arabī is especially obvious in his *Ta'wīlāt al-qur'ān.*" (Chittick, "The School of Ibn 'Arabī," 518.)

[556] Morris, "*Ibn Arabī and His Interpreters*," part II-B, 7. It is true that in al-Qāshānī's time, many learned Sufis would have also studied philosophical *kalām*. However, Morris argues that it was only students of *falsafa* and *kalām* who were al-Qāshānī's primary audience, which is contradicted by al-Qāshānī's own assertion that it was practising Sufis who may or may not have studied these sciences.

[557] See introduction.

[558] Morris, "*Ibn Arabī and His Interpreters*," part II-B, 7.

[559] 'Afīfi,"Ibn Arabī," 412.

[560] James Morris, "*Ibn Arabī and His Interpreters*," part II-B, 7.

Morris correctly observes that al-Qāshānī's works "demonstrate an originality and independence that makes them considerably more than [a] mere 'commentator' in any limited sense."[561] But he is guilty of conflating influence and intention, for al-Qāshānī was undoubtedly influenced by Avicennan philosophy and this percolates through his works,[562] but the same is the case for Ibn 'Arabī, as Marshall G. S. Hodgson explains when he writes that Ibn 'Arabī

> willingly made use of every pattern of conceptualizing that had been known in Islamdom: not only earlier Ṣûfî mythopoetic writings, but Ash'arî and Mu'tazilî kalâm disputation, the Bâṭinî speculations of the Isma'îlîs, and of course the various strands of the older philosophical heritage, including the neo-Platonist notion of creation by divine emanation. … But Ibn al-'Arabî relied also on personal experience and taste.[563]

Ibn 'Arabī was influenced by and made use of all these "patterns of conceptualizing," but, from his scholarly output, it does not appear he based his metaphysics on them.[564] Hodgson, though undeniably correct that most of these elements exist in the works of Ibn 'Arabī, maybe does not take the experiential

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[561] Ibid., part II-A, 39. This is the opposite of what 'Afîfî argues when he says, "Some writers of his [i.e. Ibn 'Arabī's] school, such as 'Abd al-Karīm al-Jîlî and 'Abd al-Razzāq al-Kāshānî, did little more than reproduce his thought in a different form." ('Afîfî, "Ibn 'Arabī," 408.)

[562] Al-Qāshānī may also have been influenced by al-Qūnawī who is "better acquainted with the Avicennan tradition [than Ibn 'Arabī] and incorporates a number of its terms and concepts into his doctrine." Todd, *The Sufi Doctrine of Man*, 50.

[563] Marshall G. S. Hodgson, *The venture of Islam* 2:239. I would be disinclined to agree with Hodgson that Ibn 'Arabī adopted the *bāṭinī* speculations of the Isma'īlīs as his work does not seek to efface the literal meaning in favour of an allegorical one. Indeed, Hodgson also writes that "Ibn al-'Arabī, however, was very sophisticated in his methods of exegesis. He accepted the rules laid down by Ghazālî limiting metaphorical exegesis of the Qur'an and Ḥadîth reports; he was glad to acknowledge literal meanings and the authority of Arabic linguistic use. But in addition, he saw 'parallel' evocative implications in the texts, which he made the basis of a search for the *bāṭin*, inward, meanings of them." (Ibid. 2: 242.) This seems to contradict his earlier assertion. See also below for details on *bāṭinī* commentaries.

[564] It is widely believed that Asín Palacios, too, fell into this trap when he attributed too much influence of Christian monasticism upon Ibn 'Arabī. (See *El Islam cristianizado*, 274, in which he comments, "Tal es, vislumbrada en la perspectiva de sus últimos influjos, la fecundidad de la espiritualidad cristiana, que investigaciones futuras pondrán tal vez a más plena luz : en el gráfico que haya de esquematizar su vital evolución, dos líneas arrancarán del monacato cristiano europea ; otra marcará sin titubeos la influencia que también ejerció en la espiritualidad del Islam. Ambas líneas vendrán, por fin, a coincidir (paralelas o quizá tangentes) dentro del solar español, escenario en éste, como en otros aspectos de la cultura medieval, de las más fecundas interferencias.") Alexander Knysh writes that an objective investigation reveals this not to be the case. (Alexander D. Knysh, *Ibn 'Arabi in the Later Islamic Tradition*, 19:283-84.) Indeed, there seems to be a scholarly consensus now that Ibn 'Arabī, though affected by such influences, was entirely original.

aspect seriously enough, as he seems to relegate it to another pattern of conceptualisation rather than regarding it as a basis of all of them. There is, after all, a difference between having all these methods of conceptualising for articulating one's mystical experiences, and using them to *create* a metaphysical outlook. Ibn 'Arabī had mystical experiences and had a plethora of ways to communicate those experiences, so naturally he would avail himself of all the methods at his disposal. This is also not to suggest that Ibn 'Arabī wasn't the product of a region and time that was saturated with earlier traditions and ideas. However, these traditions and ideas are not the source of the material about which he writes, it is his spiritual insight and mystical experiences which, by his own admission, are the sources of that (irrespective of whether one believes him or not).

Likewise was al-Qāshānī influenced by Avicennan thought but I do not believe he purposely sought to seduce philosophers by couching his language in Avicennan nomenclature, or as a means of "convincing readers with a similar falsafa or kalam training" of the legitimacy of Ibn 'Arabī's mystical world view.[565] Al-Qāshānī's works are a product of his "spiritual evolution," in the same way as Ibn 'Arabī's works are the product of his spiritual evolution, an evolution that climaxed in him having experiential insights. Nevertheless, it is also the culmination of an

[565] Morris, "*Ibn Arabī and His Interpreters*," part II-B, 7. This is not to dispute that al-Qāshānī was intimately acquainted with Avicennan philosophy, and that parts of his commentary display a marked resemblance to the theories of Avicenna e.g. al-Qāshānī's treatment of the story of Mūsā and al-Khaḍir. (See al-Qāshānī, *Ta'wīlāt*, 1:339-42; Soheil Afnan, *Avicenna: His Life and Works*, 136-67.) Al-Qāshānī also clearly followed Avicenna's idea of the theoretical and practical intellects. (Lory, *Les commentaires*, 76.) However, Ibn 'Arabī, too, was familiar with Avicenna and even made use of his terminology when it was conducive to achieving his objectives. (Sands, *Ṣūfī Commentaries*, 165, ft. 57.) Furthermore, al-Qāshānī's works do not simply display influence of Avicenna. Al-Qāshānī was also very well-acquainted with, and influenced by Abū Ḥafs 'Umar al-Suhrawardī (d. 632/1234), see *Medieval Islamic Civilization: An Encyclopaedia*, 1st ed., s.v. "Illuminationism;" Nasr, "The Spread of the Illuminationist School of Suhrawardi," 775-76. Indeed, he was intimately acquainted with *'Awārif al-ma'ārif* and tackles many of the same concepts in his works. (Hādīzāda, *Majmu'āt-i-rasā'il*, 67.) In addition, there are important differences between Avicenna's cosmological outlook and that of al-Qāshānī which would have been detrimental to the Sufi's purpose of seducing Avicennan philosophers, if that was his intention. Fatemeh Hashtroodi, "Concept [*sic*] of Chivalry (*futuwwa*) According to Abd al-Razzaq Kashani," 33.

intellectual evolution where all the influences that were seething under the façade of both mystics' individual makeup found expression in their individual works.

Morris also alleges that al-Qāshānī is far more figurative in his commentary than Ibn 'Arabī. He writes,

> In Ibn 'Arabī … what must strike any reader is the consistent and thorough 'literality'—an attitude equally removed from Kāshānī's 'symbolic' approach and from what we ordinarily think of as 'literalism'—with which the Shaykh treats the profuse descriptions given by the Qur'an and *hadith.*[566]

Nor is he alone in this avowal, for Maḥmūd Ghurāb describes the *Ta'wīlāt* as a *bāṭinī* commentary.[567] The difference between a *bāṭinī* commentary and a Sufi commentary is supplied by al-Dhahabī who describes the former as extreme esotericism tantamount to distortion of the Qur'an and the latter as acceptable interpretation since it does not efface or impinge on the apparent meaning (*ẓāhir*) of the text.[568] This is the same distinction al-Ghazālī makes when he attributes to the Ismaʿīlīs unacceptable interpretation and defines what is and is not acceptable. The difference, according to al-Ghazālī, is that a Sufi commentary never excludes the literal meaning of the Qur'an.[569]

The influential Ismāʿīlī thinker, Ḥamīd al-Dīn al-Kirmānī (d. 411/ 1020?), details the proofs for esoteric interpretation (*ta'wīl*) in *Al-Maṣābīḥ fī ithbāt al-imāma*. He writes,

> As it is impossible for wise, rational people to converse with the inanimate—those that have no life, no reward or punishment, and no means of accepting a command or [rejecting] a prohibition, or [even] responding—it is, *a fortiori,* [impossible] for the Most High, hallowed Lord of the heavens and the earth.

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[566] Morris, "*Ibn Arabī and His Interpreters*," part II-B, 9.
[567] Maḥmūd Ghurāb, *Raḥmah min al-Raḥmān,* 5.
[568] Al-Dhahabī, *Al-Tafsīr wa'l-mufassirūn*, 2:297-98. See also Kristin Zahra Sands, *Ṣūfī Commentaries of the Qur'an in Classical Islam.*
[569] Farouk Mitha, *Al-Ghazāli and the Ismailis*, xiii. See also Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī, *Faḍā'iḥ al-bāṭiniyya*, in which al-Ghazālī constructs a detailed argument against, what he considers to be, hermeneutic infringements of the Ismaʿīlīs that seemingly annul the obvious meaning of the Qur'an.

> However, the Messenger (upon him be peace) related from God that He addressed the heavens and the earth, saying, "*Then He turned to the heaven when it was smoke, and said to it and to the earth, 'Come willingly or unwillingly.' They said, 'We come willingly.*"[570] But *God is All-Knowing, All-Wise*,[571] and the heavens and the earth are inanimate, without rationality or means of speech. Thus, due to the impossibility of a wise person addressing the inanimate, there must be, in His command to the heavens and the earth and their response to Him, a meaning that makes the statement of God, the Exalted, true and acceptable to the intellect in its wisdom, and it is this meaning that we call esoteric interpretation (*ta'wīl*). Therefore, esoteric interpretation (*ta'wīl*) is necessary.[572]

In this passage, al-Kirmānī argues for the necessity of engaging in esoteric interpretation as there are instances when the literal interpretation is "not acceptable to the intellect". In doing so, however, he is denying the literal text and seeking to supplant it with his interpretation. He does not endeavour to explain the text, as al-Ghazālī advises should be the case.[573]

It is true that al-Qāshānī's language is often metaphorical and sometimes even allegorical, such as in the commentary of chapter 12, which is turned "into a full-fledged Philo-like allegory about the struggle between man's inner faculties such as his heart (*al-qalb al-musta'idd*—Joseph) and his intellect (*al 'aql*—Jacob), his outer and inner senses (*al-ḥawāss al-ẓāhira wa-l-bāṭina*—the brothers), and his carnal soul which incites to evil (*al-nafs al-ammāra bi-l-sū'*—his master's wife, *imra'at al-'aziz*)."[574] However, he only engages in this "following Ibn al-'Arabi's *Futūḥāt*."[575] The metaphors and allegories al-Qāshānī conjures, then, are mere extensions of what is already present in the works of Ibn 'Arabī. Here again does he assume the mantle

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[570] Qur'an 41:11.
[571] Ibid., 76:30.
[572] Al-Kirmānī, *Al-Maṣābīḥ*, 53-54.
[573] I must concede that the naked contempt for the *ẓāhir* of the Qur'an here displayed is a little reductionistic as al-Kirmānī and other Fatimid thinkers did attempt to conciliate, at least to some degree, the *bāṭin* and *ẓāhir* of the Qur'an, combining, in the process, orthopraxy with esoteric interpretation. Nevertheless, it does show that esoteric interpretation has pride of place for al-Kirmānī, something that is alien to al-Qāshānī, who exhausts all exoteric facets of interpretation before he proceeds to the esoteric. See conclusion for further details.
[574] Hava Lazarus-Yafeh, "Are There Allegories in Ṣūfī Qur'ān Interpretation?," 369.
[575] Ibid.

of commentator. Al-Dhahabī is also of this opinion, commenting that in exegesis, al-Qāshānī merely follows where Ibn ʻArabī leads.[576]

Indeed, al-Dhahabī, after delineating the difference between a *bāṭinī* commentary and a mystical one, comes to the conclusion that al-Qāshānī's is predominantly mystical. He writes that though some people believe the *Ta'wīlāt* is *baṭinī*, it is only so when it comes to passages in which the concept of oneness of being(*waḥdat al-wujūd*) is expounded because the allusions are far-fetched (*al-ishāra al-baʻīda*). However, generally it is not. The reason for this is that al-Qāshānī does not efface the apparent meaning (*ẓahir*) of the text,[577] which is also proven in his *sharīʻa*-compliant life as well as most of his commentary and because the *Bāṭinīs* deny the exoteric meaning of the Qur'an and say "the meaning is the esoteric one alone," which al-Qāshānī does not do.[578]

Al-Dhahabī is correct in his assessment that the *Ta'wīlāt* is not *bāṭinī*, for the author never rejects the literal word of the Qur'an, and we can have no clearer proof of this than al-Qāshānī's all-encompassing commentary, *Haqā'iq al-ta'wīl,* in which the exoteric and esoteric co-exist. Indeed, in the introduction of this work al-Qāshānī comments that his teacher Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad al-Kīshī (d. 695/1296?) said:

> The account of whoever pens an exegesis [of the Qur'an should] contain five things … the first is an explication of the language, the second is the different types of desinential inflections (*iʻrāb*), the third is the points of

[576] Al-Dhahabī, *Al-Tafsīr wa'l-mufassirūn*, 2:300, 307.
[577] Helmut Gätje writes that al-Qāshānī creates a "parallel exegesis" in which are "allusions" (*ishārāt*) to a deeper esoteric knowledge, but that he also maintains "the character of reality of the external meaning." Gätje, *The Qur'an and its Exegesis*, 40.
[578] Al-Dhahabī, *Al-Tafsīr wa'l-mufassirūn*, 2:296-98.This is an exegetical principle developed by Philo, namely, that "the Bible had a literal as well as an allegorical sense." (Yeshayahu Goldfeld, "The Development of Theory on Qur'ānic Exegesis," 11.) In the Islamic context, the binary fission of exegesis into exoteric and esoteric is seen as early as ʻAbd Allāh ibn ʻAbbās (d. 68/687), and the principles of interpretation he outlines. (Ibid., 15-16.) However, it must be noted that most specialists in Qur'anic commentary are sceptical of attributions to Ibn ʻAbbās. (See Andrew Rippin, ed., *The Qur'an: Formative Interpretation*, xii.)

> rhetoric (*ma'ānī wa'l-bayān*), the fourth is the exoteric exegesis (*ẓawāhir al-tafsīr*) and the fifth is the realities of the esoteric exegesis (*ḥaqā'iq al-ta'wīl*), and that which refers to the state (*ḥāl*) of the interpreter in terms of the inner rank of what is revealed, and to explain what is apparent to him. None of the exegetes have trodden this path [of esoteric exegesis], so blessed be he who purifies his intention [and does this] for God, and precedes all others in this virtue. So it occurred to me that I was who he (i.e. al-Kīshī) meant by his insinuation, even though I was not worthy of that.[579]

Al-Qāshānī consequently divides his commentary in to the following categories:

1. Linguistic analysis (*lugha*)
2. Desinential inflections (*i'rāb*)
3. Rhetoric (*ma'ānī wa'l-bayān*)[580]
4. Exoteric exegesis (*tafsīr*)
5. Esoteric exegesis (*ta'wīl*)

We note that all the exoteric sciences *precede* the esoteric one. There is no question, therefore, of al-Qāshānī negating the apparent meaning. This evidence is all the more compelling as the *ta'wīl* section contains the same commentary that appears unaccompanied in the *Ta'wīlāt*.

It is only when it comes to explaining the concept of oneness of being (*waḥdat al-wujūd*) that al-Dhahabī says the *Ta'wīlāt* is *bāṭinī.* However, it is the actual concept itself with which he takes issue, for he levels the same charge against Ibn 'Arabī remarking that *waḥdat al-wujūd*

> As far as I can see is totally detrimental to the exegesis [of the Qur'an]. And He [Ibn 'Arabī] changes what God means by His verses and compels them to

[579] This citation is translated from the version edited by Necmettin Ergül as part of his doctoral thesis. Ergül "Kāşānī ve Hakāiku't-te'vīl fi dekāik't-tenzīl Adli Eserinin," 2.
[580] Both these terms, along with *badī'* are sub-sections of rhetoric and represent "translations of essential terms of Greek rhetoric." (Benjamin Jokisch, *Islamic Imperial Law: Harun-al-Rashid's Codification Project*, 422-25, 422.) See also G. J. H. Van Gelder, *Beyond the Line: Classical Arabic Literary Critics on the Coherence and Unity of the Poem*, 8-11.

> include his thought so that they may be a support for him. This is not the purpose of an exegete.[581]

Generally, he classifies Ibn ʻArabī's hermeneutic approach as "commentary by allusion" (*al-tafsīr al-ishārī*),[582] by which he means that the mystic alleges the hidden meaning of each verse of the Qur'an is alluded to by the literal word of the text. However, it is not made explicit to preserve it from exoteric scholars.

The only people, claims Ibn ʻArabī, worthy of explaining God's book are the Sufis as they derive their knowledge from God, and they comment on the Qur'an using spiritual insight (*baṣīra*) whereas exotericists (*ahl al-ẓāhir*) use opinions and guesswork.[583] As such, Ibn ʻArabī does not distinguish between the Qur'an itself and the interpretation of the people of God[584] as both are right because, just as the Qur'an is from God and completely true, so the interpretation of the people of God is from God to their hearts and is also true.[585]

Al-Qāshānī's commentary corroborates this belief, for his entire work outlines stages of spirituality for those on the path because the stage affects, indeed

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[581] Al-Dhahabī, *Al-Tafsīr wa'l-mufassirūn*, 2:304-5.
[582] Ibid., 2:304. This is also how Sands defines it. See *Sufi Commentaries*, 39-42.
[583] Ibn ʻArabī replaces probability with certainty due to the authority of *kashf* because theology cannot be at the mercy of intellectual whims, as Van Ess observes when he says that using reason for theological problems was a "position [that] turned out to be untenable. Eternal truths could not be subject to the caprices of the human intellect. … In the *fiqh*, the human attempt to understand divine law, it was a different situation. It was soon recognized that the judgement of a mufti or a *qāḍī* never led to more than a certain probability (*ghalabat al-ẓann*)." (Van Ess, *The Flowering of Muslim Theology*, 175.) Rufus Jones also makes the same point when he says, "No religion can minister to the deepest needs of men unless it reveals permanent and time-transcending Realities." (Rufus Jones, *Studies in Mystical Religion*, xiii.)
[584] Scholem makes this very observation about mystics in general. He writes, "Mysticism postulates self-knowledge, to use a Platonic term, as the surest way to God who reveals Himself in the depths of the self." (Scholem, *Trends in Jewish Mysticism*, 34.)
[585] Al-Dhahabī, *Al-Tafsīr wa'l-mufassirūn*, 2:304. The difference between this opinion and that of Avicenna, according to al-Dhahabī, is that while Ibn ʻArabī believed exotericists did not possess the *spiritual insight* to comprehend the hidden meaning of the Qur'an, Avicenna claimed people did not possess the *intelligence* to do so. He thus explained the realities of religion through philosophical opinions because he believed the Qur'an was a compilation of allusions through which God hinted at realities that laymen would be unable to understand, so he intimated them for those who could. (Ibid., 2:314.)

determines, their comprehension of Qur'anic verses.[586] Indeed, he states in his introduction of the *Ta'wīlāt:*

> As for the esoteric interpretation (*ta'wīl*) … it differs according to the state of the listener and his station in the ranks of his wayfaring, and [according to] the differences of his status, every time he graduates from his station, a new gate of understanding is opened for him and he beholds through it a pre-prepared, subtle meaning.[587]

But what Morris sees as "allegorical reductionism,"[588] which is antithetical to Ibn 'Arabī's highly subtle and complex thought, I regard as yet another example of al-Qāshānī's pedagogical slant due to his stated difference in audience. This is also the reason, as previously mentioned, he is so hesitant about probing all the connotations of Ibn 'Arabī's terms. And from the very outset are the consequences of this approach conspicuous, for when Ibn 'Arabī defines *huwiyya* as, "The Reality in the realm of the unseen (*'ālam al-ghayb*)," [589] he leaves the canvas blank for all shades and strokes of the comprehension of God. Only in the bezel of Shu'ayb are we given a slight intimation as to what this involves: God in His absolute incomprehensibility. This, however, is only the starting point of a range that concludes with the materialisation of the sensible world, absorbing all existents and manifestations in the intervening planes.

Al-Qāshānī, on the other hand, provides numerous, comprehensive definitions of *huwiyya* in his *Iṣṭilāḥāt* and *Laṭā'if.* He agrees with his forerunner's denotations of *huwiyya* but limits his usage to the unknown God. This reticence could be because the lexicon/*tafsīr* format curbs his exploration of the term or because he is unable to adequately assimilate and articulate this meaning in his style. Either way, it is not a

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[586] Sands, *Sufi Commentaries*, 76-77. Al-Qāshānī calls this methodology "making correspondences" (*taṭbīq*) as Sands correctly observes. (Ibid., 77.)
[587] Al-Qāshānī, *Ta'wīlāt*, 6.
[588] Sands, *Sufi Commentaries*, 77.
[589] Ibn 'Arabī, *Rasā'il Ibn 'Arabī*, 538.

wilful deviation from his master, but an outcome of circumstance. Even when entirely original uses of the term—the "unknown-ness" of *huwiyya,* for instance—are employed, one still perceives no direct conflict with Ibn ʻArabī; indeed, these connotations could quite easily be categorised as offshoots and examinations of existing formulae in the Andalusian's semantic framework. True though it is that this imparts a distinct hue on al-Qāshānī's exposition of the term, not least because of its emphasis on the creational aspect of the term as opposed to its theocentric one in that of Ibn ʻArabī, it never collides with the original. It feels completely like a conciliatory commentary, because that is precisely what it is.

In terms of his status as an *ʻārif,* al-Qāshanī is thus very much a pupil of Ibn ʻArabī,[590] one who recognises that his rank does not permit him to question or challenge his master, it simply allows him to accept and explain the former's deep theological meditations so that the teachings he subscribes to so assiduously reach a wider audience. This potential broader accessibility, one of al-Qāshānī's stated goals,[591] comes at the price of a profundity that defies articulation—something Ibn ʻArabī himself makes clear when he claims his work should not be read by the masses.[592] Al-Qāshānī, in this sense, seems to oppose his master by increasing his appeal. But Ibn ʻArabī's prohibition, one notes, is more a defence against his detractors, who levelled charges of heresy at him, than an outright ban. Indeed, his objective for composing the *Fuṣūṣ*—arguably his most divisive work—was so that

[590] It is pertinent that al-Qāshānī only began studying the *Fuṣūṣ* and gain a mastery of Ibn ʻArabī's works after his principal teacher, Nūr al-Dīn al-Naṭanzī, passed away and he perceived a great void that needed to be filled. Indeed, he remarks that during this time, "I entered the desert and I remained there for seven months. I chose solitude there with little food." After this period, with no living teacher, al-Qāshānī turned to Ibn ʻArabī due to Naṭanzī's reverence for him and because he kissed the *Fuṣūṣ* out of respect. (Al-Qāshānī, *Laṭāʾif,* 9.) Therefore, in one sense, Ibn ʻArabī was al-Qāshānī's direct *shaykh* after Naṭanzī.

[591] Al-Qāshānī, *Sharḥ fuṣūṣ*, 3. He expresses similar aspirations in his lexicons. See Al-Qāshānī, *Iṣṭilāḥāt al-ṣūfiyya,* 21; Al-Qāshānī, *Rashḥ al-zulāl,* 34.

[592] See introduction.

people would know it and derive benefit from it.[593] Al-Qāshānī understands this and launches his own defence of the Andalusian Sufi by flattening and sanitising his work—another potential reason why he refuses to probe all facets of Ibn 'Arabī's semantics.

The main difference between the two, however, is not in the minutiae and nuances of textual discrepancies, but in the overall comprehension and execution of one's perceived role, for Ibn 'Arabī's function is very much " 'intellectualisation' of sufism—without loss of the 'experiential.'"[594] Whereas al-Qāshānī never contests this mantle, his objective, as he himself has stated in the *Iṣṭilāḥāt*, *Rashḥ* and *Sharḥ fuṣūṣ,*[595] is to make sense of this "intellectualisation," through an analysis of terms, for Sufi novices. In this way, his works are more term-centric to be sure, but with the overall purpose of linearising and universalising Ibn 'Arabī's thought. So it is that if Ibn 'Arabī's "watershed achievement" is the "intellectualisation" of Sufism,[596] then al-Qāshānī's is the universalisation of Sufism.[597]

The most important issue is how he achieves this: for al-Qāshānī knew that in bringing Ibn 'Arabī's work to a larger audience, he would inevitably make the Andalusian's works more accessible to potential detractors. His pre-emptive response to this was to adopt a 'scholastic' style which would (a) placate potential critics by the normalcy of its format, and (b) dispel the myth of a disorganised farrago of mystic ideas by creating a step-by-step manual akin to those of exoteric sciences. This he achieves through the combination of his lexicons and the *Ta'wīlāt*.

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[593] Ibn 'Arabī states in his introduction of the *Fuṣūṣ* that it was given to him by the prophet Muḥammad so that it may be circulated amongst people. He claims that he saw the messenger in his dream who gave him the book and said, "This is the book of *Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam,* take it, and go with it to people so they may benefit from it." Ibn 'Arabī, *Fuṣūṣ*, 47.
[594] Nettler, *Sufi Metaphysics,* 128.
[595] See above.
[596] Nettler, *Sufi Metaphysics,* 128.
[597] The universalisation of Sufism seems to be his main objective in the *Laṭā'if*, which is why it has a much greater scope and transcends Ibn 'Arabī. See introduction for more details.

In essence, he conscripts the 'scholastic' process for his aims because scholasticism, as George Makdisi notes, was

> a scholarly religious movement, away from the excesses of a philosophical theology inspired by Greek thought, towards a juridical theology more in conformity with the nomocracy of Islam.[598]

Al-Qāshānī uses the tools of this movement to normalise philosophical theology[599] so that it appears more like juridical theology. This he accomplishes by his staunch adherence to terms and maintaining their prescribed limits, for whereas in the works of Ibn 'Arabī "the same idea is indicated with different names,"[600] thereby perplexing the reader and perpetuating the notion of a chaotic, woolly system, al-Qāshānī remains resolute and consistent in the use of his terms even if it costs him some of the meanings on the periphery of the Andalusian's scale. Nor can it be otherwise, for Ibn 'Arabī's terms have many meanings that have a basic core but which fade into one another as they move away from the semantic centre. Al-Qāshānī severs the list of meanings close to the basic one so as to preserve the integrity of each term. What he gains in structure, he loses in vibrancy, but that is a sacrifice he seems willing to make.

This case is not confined to terms either, since Ibn 'Arabī's exegesis follows a similar pattern: he cares little about consistency and uniformity. As Abū Zayd notes,

> One verse may evoke in the intellect of Ibn 'Arabī many existential and gnostic proofs in a specific context. It is also possible that the same verse evokes different proofs in another context. The thing that pervades the works of Ibn 'Arabī, especially those that are connected to the exegesis of the Qur'anic text, is the numerous problems which make their comprehension difficult [and is only intelligible] after much deliberation. [The difficulty

[598] Makdisi, *The Rise of Humanism*, xx.
[599] Makdisi uses this term to denote theology influenced by Hellenistic philosophy, as is apparent from the context. However, al-Qāshānī uses it for his own purposes, that is, to normalise his understanding of Ibn 'Arabī's philosophical theology. (See introduction for details on the classification of Ibn 'Arabī's metaphysical outlook).
[600] De Cillis, *Free Will and Predestination in Islamic Thought*, 171.

arises from] the relationship between the scattered ideas and the endeavour to combine them in one sequence.[601]

Al-Qāshānī, on the other hand, makes his work far more comprehensible as the ideas are organised and the terms used to describe them the same. Morris argues that it is Ibn ‘Arabī who is literal and consistent and al-Qāshānī who is not.[602] The reason, I believe, Morris launches this scathing attack (for he intends it as such) on al-Qāshānī is that we find in the *Ta’wīlāt* none of the hair-splitting grammatical analysis with which the *Fuṣūṣ* and *Futūḥāt* are punctuated, and were one to study the *Ta’wīlāt* alone it would appear that al-Qāshānī is quite blasé about this. However, when analysed through the *Ḥaqā’iq*, in which entire sections are devoted to grammar, we see the cause of this omission. Moreover, there is uniformity in the “symbolic”[603] approach of al-Qāshānī that Ibn ‘Arabī does not share. The images conjured by the former are consistently repeated and far more defined and narrow than the expansive, indeterminate ones of Ibn ‘Arabī, as the previous section has adequately shown. This, again, is due to al-Qāshānī’s unerring pedagogical concern, which he prizes above all else.[604]

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[601] Abū Zayd, *Falsafat al-ta’wīl*, 257.

[602] Morris writes, “In Ibn ‘Arabî … what must strike any reader is the consistent and thorough ‘literality’—an attitude equally removed from Kâshânî’s ‘symbolic’ approach and from what we ordinarily think of as ‘literalism’—with which the Shaykh treats the profuse descriptions given by the Qur’an and *hadith*.” Morris, “*Ibn Arabī and His Interpreters*,” part II-B, 9.

[603] Morris, “*Ibn Arabī and His Interpreters*,” part II-B, 9.

[604] It is worthy of mention that a marked pedagogical edge is perceptible in almost the entire corpus of al-Qāshānī’s oeuvre. This is most prominent in works such as *Tuḥfat al-ikwān fī khaṣā’iṣ al-fityān*, which aims to delineate qualities and traits that the neophytes need to inculcate within themselves in order to proceed on the path to enlightenment. (See al-Qāshānī, *Ādāb al-ṭarīqa wa asrār al-ḥaqīqa*, 9-47.) Other examples include al-Qāshānī’s numerous *rasā’il*, which seek to educate his audience on specific topics and are written in response to questions directed at the sufi from his followers. The treatise: *Fī ittiḥād al-dhāt ma‘ al-ṣifāt aw taghāyurihā*, is a good case in point. (Ibid., 141.) Another work which displays this propensity is al-Qāshānī’s commentary on *Manāzil al-sā’irīn*. (Al-Qashānī, *Manāzil al-sā’irīn li Abū Ismā‘īl’Abd Allāh al-Anṣārī, sharḥ Kamāl al-Dīn’Abd al-Razzāq al-Qāshānī*.)

This didactic approach manifests itself in other ways too, such as the format of "self-study" books that al-Qāshānī's lexicons and the *Ta'wīlāt* assume, for as Makdisi remarks,

> Traditionalism was the only scholastic movement in Islam, contrary to what has long been identified as such, namely Kalam, the movement of philosophical theology. Strictly speaking, Kalam was not scholastic; it was, in fact, *excluded* from the schools. As a philosophical theology it was banned from the school curricula, especially so from the colleges of law: the *masjid*-inn and the madrasa.[605]

The colleges of law and *madrasas*, therefore, excluded this type of study. Nevertheless, in al-Qāshānī's era, under the patronage of the powerful vizier Rashīd al-Dīn and then his son, Ghiyāth al-Dīn, the study of Sufism in spiritual retreats (*khānqas*) flourished.[606] It should be borne in mind, however, that this type of study was still side-lined, as attested by "a late fourteenth century manual on the craft of secretaries," which provides "the ordering of ranks."[607] The first six of the "elite of civil society (*ashrāf al-nās*)," in order, were: "the law professors, the jurisconsults, the Koran commentators, the Traditionists, the preachers, the deliverers of the Friday sermons (*khaṭībs*)," while the "Sufi Shaykhs (*arbāb-e futuvvat*) and hermits … in the Sufi covenants and *ribāṭs*" were in sixteenth and seventeenth place respectively.[608] Moreover, Ibn 'Arabī's thought was still challenged, not only by traditionalist stalwarts like Ibn Taymiyya, but also Sufis like the influential mystic al-Simnāni.[609] So the need to author "guidebooks" arose, as Makdisi declares:

> The exclusion of many sciences from the curricula of institutionalized learning created a demand for 'guidebooks', in addition to the commentaries, to guide autodidacts in their studies. It was one thing to own books, quite

[605] Makdisi, *The Rise of Humanism*, 2.
[606] Said Arjomand, "Philanthropy, the Law, and Public Policy in the Islamic World before the Modern Era," 124; Charles Melville, "The Mongols in Iran," 59; Melville, *The Fall of Amir Chupan*, 60.
[607] Arjomand, "Philanthropy," 124.
[608] Ibid., 124-25.
[609] Al-Qāshānī's letter to al-Simnānī is particularly instructive in this regard. (See above). On the correspondence between these two mystics see also Jamal J. Elias, *The Throne Carrier of God*, 199-200.

> another to read and understand them. This need for guidance brought about the production of books which, although they could be used by students studying under the direction of teachers, were written primarily with the autodidact in mind … books on technical terms, distinct from the ordinary lexicons … commentaries on fundamental works as substitutes for the teacher. … They were, as previously remarked, veritable maps laying out the unfamiliar territory of newly approached fields, with clear lines of demarcation, across which territory the neophyte was taken by the hand, as it were, and led gently from one field to the next. Such books as these served primarily both the humanist and the student of the 'foreign sciences'. Some authors state the purpose of their books explicitly, others do not.[610]

So admirably does Makdisi's account of such works reflect al-Qāshānī's own characterisation of his lexicons[611] that it could almost be written exclusively about his works. Al-Qāshānī takes the Sufi autodidacts "by the hand" with the *Iṣṭilāḥāt*, which serves as a user-friendly introduction to Ibn 'Arabī's terms and is intended to be consulted alongside the *Ta'wīlāt, Manāzil* and *Sharḥ fuṣūṣ*, until they graduate to *Rashḥ*, which is deeper and more complex (both in content and structure, as it is arranged conceptually).

It is worth mentioning that Ibn 'Arabī was a relative newcomer on the Sufi scene in al-Qāshānī's region. We know that the *Fuṣūṣ* only became easily available in Shiraz around 655/1257.[612] At this time, the mystical landscape was dominated by al-Ghazālī's *Iḥyā'*, al-Qushayrī's *Risāla*, Ibn al-Fāriḍ's *Naẓm al-sulūk*, and al-Suhrawardī's *'Awārif*.[613] Hence, students with an interest in mysticism would not have known much about Ibn 'Arabī, to say nothing of his arcane terms and erudite metaphysics. It was vital, therefore, for a proponent of the nascent school of Ibn 'Arabī to propagate the master's teachings, and it is a testament to al-Qāshānī's

[610] Makdisi, *The Rise of Humanism*, 218.
[611] See introduction, where al-Qāshānī is cited as having said that his purpose for writing the *Iṣṭilaḥāt* is to supplement the *Ta'wīlāt, Manāzil* and *Sharḥ fuṣūṣ* because people did not understand Sufi terminology. He also states that he wrote *Rashḥ* because there was a need among Sufi neophytes (one of whom requests the work to be written) to elaborate on the *Iṣṭilaḥāt.*
[612] Hādīzāda, *Majmu'āt-i-rasā'il*, 68-69.
[613] Ibid., 67-69.

industry and success that towards the end of his life, the *Fuṣūṣ* had been inducted into this pantheon.[614]

Al-Qāshānī was by no means alone in penning such works, for as Makdisi remarks,

> A striking feature of Muslim education in the Middle Ages was the dichotomy between two sets of sciences: the 'religious' and the 'foreign'. This dichotomy would not be so remarkable were it not for the fact that actual intellectual activity embraced the two sets, and scholarly production was prosperous in both.[615]

Al-Qāshānī intended the Sufi neophytes to progress from the exoteric sciences to the esoteric, imitating his own trajectory in doing so. We see allusions to this in the *Ḥaqā'iq* where all basic sciences of language and grammar are dealt with first, followed by rhetoric, then exoteric exegesis and finally, esoteric exegesis.[616] This was indeed, the normal course advocated by many mystics who saw mysticism as an advanced level of learning as well as of spirituality.[617] It was also, of course, a means of legitimising their brand of mysticism, for many of those who claimed privileged esoteric knowledge without having mastered the literal sciences were shunned and their school repudiated, as Makdisi notes,

> Ibn al-Jauzi censured the Sufi Hammad ad-Dabbas (d. 525/1131) whose Sufism he considered suspect because 'he was destitute of the Islamic sciences'. … The tendency in Islam was to encourage a diversification of the sciences to be learned. A learned man should have some knowledge of every science.[618]

It did not behove the defender of a school to invite suspicion due to (a) his ignorance, or (b) his actions, which is why al-Qāshānī was just as fastidious in his

[614] Ibid., 69-70.
[615] Makdisi, *The Rise of Colleges*, 77.
[616] See above.
[617] See Makdisi, *The Rise of Colleges*, 80-91. See especially the sequence of disciplines mastered by al-Qushayrī (82).
[618] Ibid.,84.

observance of Islamic laws as his predecessor.[619] Nor was al-Qāshānī's *sharī'a*-compliance outside the norm, as

> Medieval men, humanists and scholastics alike, were not merely men of contemplation; they were on the whole practical men of action, men who preached that one must practise what he preaches.[620]

Every facet of al-Qāshānī's life and conduct had to be unimpeachable because "orthodoxy" was defined "in legal terms,"[621] and therefore in order to demonstrate the essential orthodoxy of Ibn 'Arabī's thought, all aspects of al-Qāshānī's behaviour had to pass this litmus test. Indeed, al-Qāshānī in his letter to al-Simnānī, despite his usual reticence about detailing aspects of his life, cites his orthopraxy as a demonstration of the compatibility between orthodoxy and belief in *waḥdat al-wujūd*.[622]

So it was that orthodoxy had to beam out of every prayer al-Qāshānī read, out of every speech he delivered, and every page he wrote. The fundamental character of theology was apologetic in nature anyway, but it was the defence of Islam against other religions.[623] Al-Qāshānī turned this inter-religion discipline into an intra-religion one by using the tools of apologetics to defend Ibn 'Arabī's metaphysics against co-religionists, such as Ibn Taymiyya who posed a formidable challenge to Ibn 'Arabī's supporters. In the second of his famous three *fatwās* against the Mongols, distinguished by its polemical nature, the jurist singles out Ibn 'Arabī's followers as among those against whom it is permissible to take up arms, classifying

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[619] One recalls Ibn 'Aṭā' Allāh's (d. 709/1310) famous debate with Ibn 'Arabī's chief critic, Ibn Taymiyya, in which the mystic petitions the jurist to reconcile Ibn 'Arabī's unwavering orthopraxy with the charges of incarnationism that he levels against him; Ibn Taymiyya has no response to this. It must be remarked, nevertheless, that the textual origins of this encounter are somewhat problematic. (See Julian Johansen, *Sufism and Islamic Reform in Egypt*, 108).
[620] Makdisi, *The Rise of Humanism*, 339.
[621] Makdisi, *The Rise of Colleges,* 284.
[622] Hādīzāda, *Majmu'āt-i-rasā'il*, 157.
[623] Makdisi, *The Rise of Colleges,* 284; Van Ess, *The Flowering of Muslim Theology*, 158.

them as people of innovation (*ahl al-bid'a*).[624] The rise in popularity of the Sufi was viewed by Ibn Tayimiyya as yet another symptom of Shi'ism creeping into the upper echelons of the Mongol ruling class, and could thus have not been issued before Öljeytü's conversion in late 708/1308, or early 709/1309.[625]

Rashīd al-Dīn, known to be in contact with Ibn Taymiyya,[626] could not have taken kindly to this legal pronouncement, and it is very likely that his patronage of 51 Sufis, including al-Qāshānī, was a reaction to the threat Ibn Taymiyya posed.[627] His patronage was extended by his son, Ghiyāth al-Dīn, who was even more ardent in his encouragement of Sufi literature; indeed, al-Qāshānī dedicates many of his works to him.[628] In fact, such was the closeness between the two that it was a source of criticism, as is clear in the letters between al-Qāshānī and al-Simnānī.[629]

Al-Qāshānī, therefore, had to defend Ibn 'Arabī's thought, not only against exoterocists like Ibn Taymiyya, but also against influential mystics like al-Simnānī.[630] His letters to the latter show that he constructs the edifice of his defence upon the three pillars of Qur'anic verses, prophetic narrations, and orthopraxy.[631] Perhaps buoyed by the success he had with al-Simnānī, who took a more favourable opinion of Ibn 'Arabī due to this correspondence,[632] al-Qāshānī seems to have

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[624] Denise Aigle, "The Mongol Invasions of Bilād al-Shām by Ghāzān Khān and Ibn Taymīyah's Three 'Anti-Mongol' Fatwas," 100-101.
[625] Ibid., 118.
[626] Ibid., 105-6.
[627] Alkiş, "Aburrezāk Kāşānī ve 'Şehru Fusūs'l-hikem'," 54. It must also be remembered that Sufis were immensely influential at the Mongol court anyway, as it is they who converted the rulers to Islam in the first place. See Haji Muhammad Bukhari Lubis, "The Role of Sufis in Converting the Mongols to Islam."
[628] Al-Qāshānī would meet regularly with Rashīd al-Dīn and Ghiyāth al-Dīn. (Alkiş, "Aburrezāk Kāşānī ve 'Şehru Fusūs'l-hikem'," 57.)
[629] Ibid., 56.
[630] Al-Simnānī was close to Öljeytü, but after his conversion to Shi'ism, shunned him; he, nevertheless, still had an intimate association with his son, Abū Sa'īd. (Devin Deweese, "'Alā' al-Dawla al-Simnānī's Religious Encounters at the Mongol Court Near Tabriz," 36-37.)
[631] Hādīzāda, *Majmu'āt-i-rasā'il*, 157.
[632] Elias, *The Throne Carrier of God*, 97-98. Indeed, al-Qāshānī and al-Simnānī even met face-toface after their correspondence. (Alkiş, "Aburrezāk Kāşānī," 62.)

adopted the same formula in his works on the Andalusian.[633] Furthermore, due to the popularity of the public debate (*munāẓara*) format, which was responsible for Öljeytü's conversion to Shi'ism and continued to play a pivotal role at the Mongol court,[634] with the accompanying rewards,[635] al-Qāshānī, it would appear, embraced the art of public disputation which was intimately intertwined with apologetics, as Van Ess describes,

> Theology, because of its apologetic nature, favored public debate from the start, and that attracted curiosity-seekers and produced emotional reactions. As in the marketplace, skill and speed of reaction often prevailed over circumspection and sincerity.[636]

The distance-learning students of al-Qāshānī whom he was training, not only to progress along the spiritual path, but also to defend the metaphysics of the school, needed to be well-versed in the specialty of disputation in Mongol-era Iran. Now this art was one of the main ways of learning about theology as well, as Richard Frank explains:

> *Kalām* … called itself: *'ilm uṣūl ad-dīn*. As with the *disputatio* of medieval Scholasticism, the *munāẓarā* was one of the chief techniques of learning and research for the *kalām* (as for the *fiqh* too); and it is this, again as in the case of Scholasticism, that gave it its characteristic form of expression.[637]

But al-Qāshānī, it seems, was less interested in his students learning via disputation and more in their possessing the "skill and speed of reaction" required to triumph.

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[633] The letters to al-Simnānī were written sometime after 720/1320? (Hādīzāda, *Majmu'āt-i-rasā'il*, 156) and the *Ḥaqā'iq* and *Ta'wīlāt* were written between 727/1327? and 729/1329?, after which was written *Sharḥ Fuṣūṣ, Iṣṭilāḥāt, Rashḥ* and *Laṭā'if*. (Alkiş, "Aburrezāk Kāşānī ve 'Şehru Fusūs'l-hikem'," 79, 85.)

[634] Turner, *Islam Without Allah?*, 51; Marlow, *Hierachy and Egalitarianism in Islamic Thought*, 172. Öljeytü even had a "mobile madrasa" that accompanied him and in which debates took place between the leading proponents of Shi'ism and different Sunni schools. (Sheila Blair, "The Religious Art of the Ilkhanids," 117.)

[635] Chief among these was the propagation of one's school with the royal seal of approval. For it is known that although Öljeytü was religiously tolerant, he still ordered removal of the names of the Sunni rightly-guided Caliphs from coins and replaced them with names of the Twelve Imams. Also, the latter were to be mentioned at Friday prayers by royal decree. See *Medieval Islamic Civilization: An Encyclopedia*, 2006 ed., 573, s.v. "Öljeitü."

[636] Van Ess, *The Flowering of Muslim Theology*, 185.

[637] Richard Frank, "*Kalām* and Philosophy: A Perspective from One Problem," 71.

This being the case, his works needed to be (a) easy to learn (b) comprehensible, even to those not well-acquainted with Ibn 'Arabī's thought, and (c) concise enough to deal a devastating blow in a public disputation.

The first of these, memorisation, was "pervasive in all fields."[638] However, though "memorization involved great quantities of materials, their understanding, and their retention through frequent repetition at close intervals of time,"[639] a multi-volume work like the *Futūḥāt* would overwhelm even the most assiduous student. It therefore had to be reasonable in length, as the lexicons of al-Qāshānī[640] and the *Ta'wīlāt* are, works that could be recalled in battle promptly, as Makdisi explains:

> The 'art of the humanist secretary' was as impregnated with it as was the 'art of the scholastic disputant'; that is to say that both humanism and scholasticism were based on the ability of memorizing great stores of materials, so classified, ordered and disposed in the memory as to enable their adepts, in the moment of need, to retrieve them instantly.[641]

Al-Qāshānī, in his introduction to the *Ta'wīlāt* insinuates that, among other things, he intends his work to be learned and retrieved in such a scenario. He writes,

> I began to draft on these pages that which may allow (*yasmaḥ*) the mind (*al-khāṭir*) to [proceed to] the path of agreement (*sabīl al-ittifāq*), without roaming thirstily for the rest of the commentary, nor plunging into the abyss of the look-out points which are too vast to be determined, while respecting the organisation and arrangement of the book. [I have also] not returned to that which is repeated in it or that which is similar in approach. And I have essentially not mentioned everything that, in my opinion, does not accept, or does not need a *ta'wīl*.[642]

His purpose for authoring the *Ta'wīlāt*, remarks al-Qāshānī, is so that it would allow people to reach "the path of agreement (*sabīl al-ittifāq*)" without the need for them to roam "thirstily for the rest of the commentary," as the sample given

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[638] Makdisi, *The Rise of Humanism,* 207.
[639] Ibid., 202.
[640] The *Laṭā'if* could also be used for this purpose as, even though it is intended for exotericists, it displays the essential orthodoxy of Sufism by showing its origins in Qur'an and Ḥadīth, as such, it would be invaluable in a disputation where verses of the Qur'an and sayings of the Prophet could be invoked to legitimise a particular position or belief.
[641] Makdisi, *The Rise of Humanism,* 207.
[642] Al-Qāshānī, *Ta'wīlāt*, 6.

during the disputation would be enough.[643] The propitiative motive for this work is emblematic of al-Qāshānī's personality generally, which was so conciliatory that he didn't even retaliate when al-Simnānī hastily proclaimed him to be an apostate for believing in *waḥdat al-wujūd* before confessing he had not researched the concept in much detail.[644] Indeed, he was known to be the epitome of gentle grace, and was polite to a fault, even to his opponents.[645]

Al-Qāshānī makes the work concise intentionally, without "plunging into the abyss of the look-out points which are too vast to be determined," so that it would be easy to memorise and understand. However, length was not the only determining factor in such works, for the *Fuṣūṣ,* though shorter than the *Ta'wīlāt*, would have been far less effective in a disputation than the works of al-Qāshānī. This is because it is convoluted and extremely erudite so that even if the student understood it, the opponent would not, and even if he did, it is not succinct enough to defeat the adversary in a limited time.

This brings us to the second factor: comprehensibility, for if there is one aspect of al-Qāshānī's work that almost everyone seems to agree on, it is that it is simpler and much more intelligible than that of his master.[646] The primary reason for this is naturally to facilitate the comprehension of students, for "memorization, not meant to be unreasoning rote learning, was reinforced with intelligence and understanding,"[647] and al-Qāshānī fostered this understanding through his numerous lexicons and uncomplicated style. But it is also the comprehension of the rival that is

[643] In this case, al-Qāshānī would be harbouring hopes of enticing the uninitiated into the school of Ibn 'Arabī by what they would learn during disputations because it was one of the "chief techniques of learning and research," as Frank proclaims. (See above).
[644] Hādīzāda, *Majmu'āt-i-rasā'il*, 156.
[645] Ibid., 99.
[646] Morris, "*Ibn Arabī and His Interpreters*," part II-B, 5.
[647] Makdisi, *The Rise of Colleges,* 103.

required as a decisive victory cannot be claimed unless and until the competitor understands they have lost. This is why al-Qāshānī does not include in the *Ta'wīlāt* everything he knows, rather, he restricts himself to what the student/disputant needs. He says,

> I do not claim that I have reached the limit [of meanings] in what I mentioned. Nay, for the facets of comprehension are not restricted to what I have understood, and the knowledge of God is not confined to what I know. Nevertheless, my understanding is not restricted to what I have mentioned in it.[648]

Al-Qāshānī comments that, not only is there much more to the mystical exegesis of the Qur'an than he knows, but that he has not even included everything he knows for the sake of brevity and concision. Another reason al-Qāshānī omitted so much, as we have noted, is because he only included what was required by his audience: the neophytes and uninitiated. He concedes that, in trying to weed out repetition, he may have favoured some verses above others, but maintains that he has kept clear of far-fetched interpretations, as this would be antithetical to the ethos of the school. He writes,

> And that which could not be esoterically interpreted of the exoteric ordinances, intended to be exoteric, I did not interpret esoterically except a little so that it may be known that they may be understood thus and [the meaning of] analogous verses could be thus inferred for one who goes beyond the exoteric. There is no escape from arbitrariness, and the mark of virtue is forsaking far-fetched [esoteric meanings].[649]

Here he intimates that in his work, there are lessons on esoteric interpretation for those who attain a sufficient spiritual understanding so that they may conduct such an exegesis themselves. He continues in the same vein:

> Perhaps someone other than me following guidance will be directed to better aspects [of interpretation], for that is easy for those who are individual servants [of God]. And for each word of God, the Exalted, are [so many words] that seas would run dry before they are exhausted. So how can they be

[648] Al-Qāshānī, *Ta'wīlāt*, 6.
[649] Ibid.

> restricted and enumerated? But [this] is a sample (*anmūdhaj*) for the people of spiritual tasting (*dhawq*) and ecstasy (*wijdān*) which they may imitate when they recite the Qur'an so that its hidden knowledge may be unveiled for them in accordance with their preparedness, and its secrets of the unseen may be revealed to them in accordance with their capacity.[650]

Al-Qāshānī announces here that the *Ta'wīlāt* is "a sample (*anmūdhaj*) for the people of spiritual tasting (*dhawq*) and ecstasy (*wijdān*)." In other words, it is a sample for spiritual neophytes, one they can use as a point of departure for their own gnosis, and it is a sample for them through which they can debate with the uninitiated and defend the school. Both of al-Qāshānī's principal aims are here declared: to teach mystical novices about Ibn 'Arabī's metaphysics, and to enable them to carry out a defence of his teachings.

So it becomes clear why in al-Qāshānī's works his methodology, his style, and his content vary so widely from his master; why he is so reticent to explore all the meanings of *huwiyya* even though he clearly subscribes to them; why he linearises and sanitises Ibn 'Arabī's metaphysics; why he modifies Ibn 'Arabī's thought: it is because his audience was different, and because his purpose was different. This is not to suggest that all al-Qāshānī has achieved is the production of a sanitised and simplified conceptual outlook of Ibn 'Arabī's thought. It is indeed sanitised and simplified, but in emphasising the uncontroversial aspects of Ibn 'Arabī's thought and accentuating the pedagogical facet of the *Fuṣūṣ* and the *Futūḥāt*, al-Qāshanī forges a new world view as well. This new conceptual outlook is the cumulative effect of all the small changes, additions and omissions al-Qāshānī makes to Ibn 'Arabī's *Weltanschauung*, thereby creating a metaphysics that is not only faithful to his Sufi master, but also one more in keeping with the spirit of his time.

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[650] Ibid.

Al-Qāshānī's world, though one of more religious tolerance in general,[651] was far more restrictive in terms of the acceptance of Ibn 'Arabī's ideas.[652] Indeed, we know that al-Qāshānī was fending off attacks, not only from exoteric scholars, some of whom anathematised him, but also from prominent Sufis.[653] For the Andalusian enjoyed widespread celebrity and renown in his final years. Al-Suyūṭī lists scores of masters in the traditional sciences of Ḥadīth, *fiqh* and *tafsīr* who approved of Ibn 'Arabī during this period in Damascus. Indeed, many of these traditional scholars even considered the Sufi to be the pole (*quṭb*) of his era.[654] Ibn 'Arabī could therefore afford to be daring, vibrant and even a little reckless. He could afford to direct his works solely to the Sufi adepts and obscure it for everyone else.[655] Al-Qāshānī had no such luxury. In a new world of suspicion and cynicism to Ibn 'Arabī's ideas, of many exoteric and Sufi detractors and few allies,[656] he had to assume the mantle of

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[651] Ergül, "Kāṣānī," 20.

[652] The correspondence between al-Qāshānī and al-Simnānī, one of the most influential Sufis of the Mongol era, provides ample proof for this.

[653] Hādīzāda, *Majmu'āt*, 102. Al-Simnānī was incredibly influential, even after he distanced himself from the higher echelons of power. Indeed, he was one of the few Sufis who was known throughout the land. (Hādīzāda, *Majmu'āt*, 108.)

[654] See Al-Suyūṭī, *Tanbīh al-ghabī*, 3-6.

[655] This does not mean, of course, that Ibn 'Arabī's impetus for the generation of the *Fuṣūṣ* and *Futūḥāt* was not his *kashf*. These works were the product of his gnosis, but their flagrant and intellectual articulation was the product of the celebrity and acceptance he enjoyed in his final years. (See Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūṭī, *Tanbīh al-ghabī*.)

[656] This may be gleaned from al-Qāshānī's letter to al-Simnānī. (See above). Also, if al-Qāshānī was moved to defend al-Anṣārī against an attack by Ibn Taymiyya by the composition of a commentary on his work (see above), he would, *a fortiori*, defend Ibn 'Arabī against an even more vicious and sustained attack by the same. (Wan Abdullah, "Herawī's Concept of *tawḥīd*," 98.) It must be stated that the dates of completion of the extant copies of al-Qāshānī's commentary of *Manāzil al-sāirīn* are between 728/1328? and 731/1331? which would mean it was certainly written after Ibn Taymiyya's *Kitāb al-tawḥīd*. (Al-Qāshānī, *Manāzil al-sā'irīn*, 35.)

Furthermore, we know that al-Qāshānī's conciliatory disposition moved him to defend many of his Sufi contemporaries against accusations hurled at them by the exoteric elite (Hādīzāda, *Majmu'āt*, 103.). It is entirely consonant with his character, then, that he would defend a thinker who had exerted such a profound influence on him. It is worthy of mention, too, that *Manāzil al-sā'irīn* became somewhat of a focal point during al-Qāshānī's era where both exotericists and Sufis converged in order to establish the legitimacy of their viewpoint. This they achieved through commentaries which were written in the light of their theological proclivities. Ibn al-Qayyim (d. 751/1350), the ardent disciple of Ibn Taymiyya, for instance, uses it to relentlessly attack al-Tilimsānī and his "monist" (*ittiḥādī*) interpretation of the work. (Ovamir Anjum, "Sufism without Mysticism?," 166.) Al-Qāshānī, being an "interpreter and defender of Ibn 'Arabī" also "interpreted al-Anṣārī in the light of Ibn 'Arabī." (Ibid., 179.)

defender and educator. And it is around these two objectives that all his works orbit. This meant that his works had to be instructive and succinct, they had to be faithful to the school but uncontroversial, they had to encapsulate the major tenets of Ibn ‘Arabī’s highly abstruse thought but be simple enough for a beginner. With all these demands, walking along the slenderest of tightropes, al-Qāshānī produced his lexicons and the *Ta’wīlāt*, and if it does not meet all the above criteria, it certainly comes close.

6.1. Final Comments

It has been demonstrated that al-Qāshānī operates in the system of thought created and developed by his predecessor, Ibn ‘Arabī. He never seeks to assert his independence from the Sufi master by challenging his ideas or methods. What he does seek to do is defend and promulgate his teachings. It is these two objectives that permeate his entire *oeuvre*. His style is sober and conciliatory—a scientific survey of Ibn ‘Arabī’s concepts, rather than a submergence in the experiential. He thus at once educates Sufi neophytes about his master’s thought and equips them with the knowledge they require to defend him in a Mongol-ruled region dominated by public debates. At the same time, his familiar style, more reminiscient of legal manuals than of Sufi texts, performs this irenic function on their own should detractors of Ibn ‘Arabī chance to read them. This represents the major difference in approach and style between al-Qāshānī and Ibn ‘Arabī.

There is, nevertheless, a difference in content as well. For though al-Qāshānī never openly contradicts the Andalusian, he does interpret his works in a manner that is couched in and based on his own spiritual insight. This means, despite al-

Qāshānī's attempts to explain Ibn 'Arabī's ineffable experience he still weaves into his commentary his own understanding of that very experience. Nor can it be otherwise, as "it is doubtful whether any two selves have offered themselves exactly the same image of the truth outside their gates: for a living metaphysic, like a living religion, is at bottom a strictly personal affair".[657]

This personal aspect is inescapable; indeed, each neophyte reading Ibn 'Arabī's highly conceptual, or even al-Qāshānī's rigorously didactic analysis of this "personal affair," will still have a different engagement with it based on his mystical experiences, if he has had them. It is this truth the al-Qāshānī appreciates more than his master, when he categorises his work as essentially a launching pad into the individual gnosis of the reader. I would go further: it is both a launching pad for the hitherto uninitiated, and an articulation of junior mystics' experiences, which they have struggled to convey.

The most ostensible corollary of this, in the case of al-Qāshānī's use of *huwiyya*, is his employment of the term to denote the manner in which God is connected to His creation and not, as Ibn 'Arabī suggests, dissociated from Him. Al-Qāshānī agrees with Ibn 'Arabī that the meaning of the term under consideration is essentially God in His absolute, unfathomable oneness. Neverthless, he is hesitant about exploring this signification fully, and instead concentrates on God in the second emanatory phase where a prefiguring of creation exists. The inevitable question here would be why al-Qāshānī endevours to underscore this aspect of God when discussing God's absolute transcendence would be more conducive to his propitiative efforts. The main reason for this has already been proffered: it is simply his understanding of Ibn 'Arabī's writings. For al-Qāshānī, it seems, views God as

[657] Evelyn Underhill, *Mysticism: A Study in Nature and Development of Spiritual Consciousness*, 14.

being closer to His creation than his predecessor, a definite doctrinal shift of emphasis is perceptible here.

However, it could also be to do with the nature of the scriptural text to which the *Ta'wīlāt* is subordinated: verses of God's transcendence tend to be far more categorical and less in need of mystical analysis than those which mention the interaction of God with His creation, the way in which He guides, He forgives and rewards it. Such verses provide rich fodder for mystical analysis. This does not mean, of course, that al-Qāshānī does not recognise the primary denotation, as stated previously.

Another reason al-Qāshānī concentrates more on how God is linked to His creation and less on His transcendence, is that his purpose is to educate Sufi neophytes in Ibn 'Arabī's thought. The point of departure for this, naturally, is God's absolute transcendence, about which al-Qāshānī is unequivocal. This also serves to allay reservations of Ibn 'Arabī's detractors and, though he does not dwell on it as much as his predecessor, his clarity and concision are nonetheless sufficient to persuade an impartial audience. But Ibn 'Arabī's cosmology is far more complex than this: it is an interplay between God's transcendence—His absolute unknowability—and His comparability. Since it is far easier to comprehend the former than the latter, a promulgator and, more importantly, elucidator of Ibn 'Arabī's thought must of necessity pay more attention to God's interaction with the Cosmos.

It thus transpires that the two fundamental differences between Ibn 'Arabī and al-Qāshānī: the disparity in style, and focus on God's relationship with His creation as opposed to His detachment from it, are the result the same thing. It is his unwavering commitment to educating Sufi neophytes in the minutae of Ibn 'Arabī's

thought. This objective has ramifications in, not only the clinical and dispassionate style of al-Qāshānī, but also in the content too, which emphasises complex concepts at the expense of simpler ones. His role is not simply to explicate what Ibn ʻArabī says, it is to ensure his readership understand what he means. He thus triages concepts and ideas, focusses on what his readership needs rather than imparting everything he knows,[658] and writes in a style and manner that behoves an instructor. He is more than a mere commentator of Ibn ʻArabī's thought—he is a teacher of it, but in his own understanding of it. For his understanding still represents a divergent worldview, even if the divergence is not significant in its individual elements. It is this feature of al-Qāshānī that constitutes his greatest achievement: he has managed to remain a faithful commentator while simultaneously forging a new worldview.

6.2. Further Research

Many terms directly related to *huwiyya* in the works of Ibn ʻArabī and al-Qāshānī have been analysed in the course of this thesis. Neverthess, there are many more terms that, though not obviously linked to the term at the centre of this work, are still immensely important for these gnostics. These terms further enhance our understanding of *huwiyya* in the context of these authors' respective works, but fall outside the scope of this introductory study.

The interplay between *huwiyya* and *ʻālam* (cosmos), for instance, requires attention as *al-ʻālam* is the manifestation of God in the physical and other realms. However, its etymology also suggests it is linked to God in terms of knowledge. Al-Jurjānī writes that *ʻālam* is "a term denoting everything except God among the

[658] See above where al-Qāshānī writes in his introduction of the *Taʾwīlāt* that he has not included everything with which his spiritual insight has furnished him in the interest of simplicity and concision.

existent things as God knows them by their names and attributes."[659] It clear that the reason *'ālam* is thus called, according to al-Jurjānī, is because of God's knowledge of the Cosmos. Other scholars, however, claim that the reason is not what al-Jurjānī suggests, but because *al-'ālam* is "the means by which the Creator is known."[660] Therefore, it is not referring to the knowledge of God about man, but rather, the knowledge of man about God.

'Ālam is divided in the Qur'anic perspective, into *al-ghayb* (the unseen) and *al-shahāda* (the seen). Izutsu correctly notes that this categorisation is only from the human perspective as, from the point of view of God, nothing can be unseen.[661] In Ibn 'Arabī's lexicon, however, this classification undergoes a further distillation as *'ālam* is conscripted to denote only beings that have proper existence. Al-Qāshānī, too, concurs with this in his definition of *'ālam.* He writes,

> It is the second shadow, which is nothing save the existence of the Truth being visible in all the contingent forms. … The contingent things have no existence except solely by this connection … so the Cosmos is the form (*ṣūra*) of the Truth, and the Truth is the essence and soul of the Cosmos.[662]

The Qur'anic definition thus forms a sub-system of the linguistic application of *'ālam* and the definition of Ibn 'Arabī and al-Qāshānī forms a sub-system of the Qur'anic delineation.

The contingent things mentioned by al-Qāshānī is also denoted by the term *kawn*, which is integral to Ibn 'Arabī's conceptual outlook, and clearly linked to *huwiyya*. Man, for example, is the *kawn jāmi',* the all-encompassing being, the one who embodies all the divine Names. He is the physical manifestation of the divine *huwiyya* in the sensible realm. Generally, in Ibn 'Arabī's semantic world view,

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[659] Al-Jurjānī, *Kitāb al-ta'rīfāt,* 149.
[660] Edward Lane, *Arabic Lexicon* 5:2140.
[661] Izutsu, *God and Man,* 83.
[662] Al-Qāshānī, *Al-Iṣṭilāḥāt al-ṣūfiyya,* 105.

everything that is a result of God's ontological mercy is a *kawn,* as affirmed by al-Jurjānī who remarks that "according to the gnostics, *al-kawn* is a term for the emergence of the Cosmos."[663] The Indo-Muslim Ḥanafī lexicologist, Muḥammad ibn 'Alī al-Tahānawī (d. 1158/ 1745), provides more detail on this issue. He writes,

> Generatio[*kawn*] is the opposite of corruptio (*fasād*),[664] and it is said that *al-kawn* and *al-fasād*, in the nomenclature of the gnostics, have two significations: the first is the occurrence of a relative representation and the disappearance of another relative representation, that is, occurrence is *al-kawn* and disappearance is *al-fasād.* The second, is existence (*wujūd*) after non-existence (*'adam*) and non-existence after existence.[665]

For al-Tahānawī, therefore, a *kawn* is either a relative representation of an underlying reality or the existence of a thing from nonentity. Both these meanings are present in Ibn 'Arabī's world view wherein *kawn* denotes the existence of the Cosmos after non-existence and the representation of the underlying reality of God. Most people, nevertheless, are unaware of this underlying reality, which is where the concept of the *ḥijāb* (veil) comes in.

This term is immensely important in Islam generally, in Sufism specifically, and in the works of Ibn 'Arabī especially,[666] thus its connection to *huwiyya* needs to be investigated. Verses of the Qur'an repeatedly allude to those who are veiled from the truth,[667] such verses are the source of one of Islamic mysticism's most prevalent allegories.[668]

Ibn 'Arabī defines *ḥijāb* as simply, "everything that conceals what you seek

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[663] Al-Jurjānī, *Kitāb al-ta'rīfāt,* 197.
[664] For a detailed engagement on Avicenna's understanding of the terms *kawn* (generatio) and *fasād* (corruptio), see the chapter: *Fi'l kawn wa'l-fasād* in Ibn Sīnā, *Al-Shifā'.*
[665] Al-Tahānawī, *Kashshāf,* 3:1274.
[666] A superficial analysis of the term in the work of al-Qāshānī has been given above. Though, this too, needs to be dealt with in far more depth.
[667] See, for instance, Qur'an, 41:5.
[668] Massignon, *Essay on the origins of the technical language of Islamic Mysticism*, 75.

from your sight."[669] This seems in accord with the definition supplied by al-Qāshānī who, nevertheless, expounds on the nature of this veil. He writes that it is

> everything which conceals that which you seek. According to the gnostics, it means sealing of an obstructive heart by existential forms so it cannot accept the manifestation (*tajallī*) of the Truth.[670]

Al-Qāshānī thus regards existential forms themselves as a barrier to receiving the divine Truth, that is to say, the whole universe acts as a barrier as it diverts man from his true goal. This concept, too, has its source in the Qur'anic outlook of the seen world. God announces: *The life of this world is but comfort of illusion.*[671]

However, they differ in their perspectives on this veil. For al-Qāshānī, the veil is obstructive, it impedes the truth. Ibn 'Arabī, on the other hand, believes it is a necessary veil, a spiritual gauntlet the gnostic must run to arrive at annihilation. Al-Ḥakīm expounds this concept thus:

> [In Ibn 'Arabī's view, *ḥijāb*] becomes a gate and a path which leads to the One who is veiled. For one cannot reach the One veiled save through the veil (*ḥijāb*). Thus, the *ḥijāb* is a facilitative partition and not an obstructive one. … Naturally, Ibn 'Arabī and those like him from among the Sufis do not strive save to attain the divine aspect (*al-wajh al-ilāhī*); this is their ultimate goal. The *ḥijāb,* then, is everything that comes on the path to their direct vision of the divine aspect. It is therefore, everything that separates, but leads to, God. This definition includes all the created things at every stage of existence. The *ḥijāb* is the creation.[672]

Having used this "facilitative partition," those Sufi adepts who ascend to the highest echelons of gnosis may achieve *jam'* (union). This term may be applied to both God and man. In terms of the former, it is "an expression for the Truth (only) without the creation,"[673] according to Ibn 'Arabi. This may be because God is everything. When related to the divine, then, the term retains its positivity. This is

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[669] Ibn 'Arabī, *Rasā'il,* 538.
[670] Al-Qāshanī, *Iṣṭilāḥāt,* 57.
[671] Qur'an, 3:185.
[672] Al-Ḥakīm, *Al-Mu'jam,* 313.
[673] Ibn 'Arabī, *Rasā'il,* 532; al-Qāshānī, *Iṣṭilāḥāt,* 41.

true in Sufism generally when the term pertains to man as it refers to man's perfect union with God, which is the ultimate station of the gnostic. However, Ibn 'Arabī uses it in a negative sense, too, as al-Ḥakīm instructs us,

> Ibn 'Arabī departs from the classical Sufi perspective regarding *al-jam'* as being the union between the Truth and the creation and asserts the opposite. For *al-jam'* [according to Ibn 'Arabī] is the dissociation between the Truth and the creation, between the attributes of sempiternity and temporality.

Ibn 'Arabī, thus, uses *jam',* not as a term for union with God, but as one for separation from it. This may seem strange given the root of the word implies union and gathering, but it also suggests the presence of many, individual entities, and it is this aspect of the word upon which Ibn 'Arabī hones in. This is because "*jam'* itself establishes multiplicity (*kathra*), as we do not combine save disparate things."[674]

For absolute union with God, Ibn 'Arabī employs the term, "*jam' al-jam',*" which he defines succinctly as, "complete annihilation in God."[675] Al-Ḥākim provides a little more detail, she writes,

> As for *jam' al-jam',* it is annihilation of the two aspects of reality (the Truth/creation, sempiternity/temporality) in its oneness, so the Truth, the creation, sempiternity and temporality actually become nothing but two aspects of one reality.[676]

Al-Qāshānī, however, seems to offer a slightly different account. He writes that *jam' al-jam'* is "witnessing the Cosmos as being existent in the Truth."[677] The two classifications are incongruous; Ibn 'Arabī's is a higher station than the one al-Qāshānī attributes to *jam' al-jam'*. This is because seeing the divine substratum behind all existent things is not the same as being annihilated in the divine.

Intimately associated with the term *jam'* is one of the highest focus words in

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[674] Ibid.
[675] Ibn 'Arabī, *Rasā'il,* 532.
[676] Al-Ḥakīm, *Al-Mu'jam,* 269.
[677] Al-Qāshānī, *al-Iṣṭilāḥāt,* 41.

Sufism: *fanā'* (annihilation). This term is one of the Qur'anic opposites, its antonym being *baqā* (subsistence).[678] God unequivocally declares, *Everyone who is on it (earth) will pass away (fān).*[679] *Fān,* here indicates that everything will "come to an end" or "vanish away."[680] This makes the term resolutely correlational, as when something perishes, the focus is on what is left behind. The connotation is a comprehensively negative one. Yet in mysticism, it is largely seen as something positive. Indeed, it is the ultimate goal of the gnostic, who strives for nothing save annihilation in the divine, as al-Tahānawī explains,

> According to the Sufis, [it means] a person not being sensible of his self, nor of any of the intrinsic attributes of his self … his *fanā'* in his beloved is his annihilation in it.[681]

The denotations of perishing or vanishing away remain, but they are perceived as being thoroughly positive, as it is the perishing of creaturely traits and the passing away of self-consciousness till nothing remains but the beloved. This is why *fanā'* constitutes one of the highest focus words in Sufism.

Another point that al-Tahānawī's definition underscores is the seemingly indissoluble association between *fanā'* and the divine *huwiyya*. This, too, has its origin in the Qur'an, as the only thing that remains when everything is annihilated is: *the Countenance of your Lord, full of majesty and honour.*[682] The mystical subversion of the meaning, then, has not extricated God from the equation; rather, it has put Him at the centre of it. However, in the Qur'anic narrative, the relationship is an inversely correlative one.

The positivity of *fanā',* and its close relationship with God, which is

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[678] Massignon, Essay, 35.
[679] Qur'an, 55:26.
[680] Lane, *Arabic Lexicon,* 6:2451.
[681] Al-Tahānawī, *Kashshāf,* 3:1157.
[682] Qur'an, 55:27.

prevalent in Sufi thought, is also alluded to by Ibn ʻArabī's definition of it. He writes, "[*Fanā'* is] the slave seeing God's existence in everything."[683] However, this is not the same rank as actually being annihilated in Him, for seeing the divine foundation which underpins all existence is not tantamount to losing oneself in it. This, then, is a lesser annihilation, one that comes before true *fanā'*. Al-Jurjānī describes this annihilation as "losing the blameworthy attributes, just as subsistence (*baqā'*) is the continuation of praiseworthy ones."[684] The annihilation is therefore of certain traits, not of the self completely. This rendition is, nevertheless, generally sympathetic to other Sufi ones, but there is a certain manner in which this application of the term signifies a consummate rupture from that of most other Sufi strands. Al-Ḥakīm writes that in Ibn ʻArabī's semantic *gestalt*,

> *Fanā'* and *baqā'* are two states that are inseparably connected, and occur in a person at the same time, but are connected to different things. For *fanā'* is the connection of the person to the creation and *baqā'* is his connection to the Truth. *Al-Baqā',* then, is a connection that never wanes, and it is a divine attribute, as opposed to *fanā'*.[685]

This means that although *fanā'* is a positive step towards absolute annihilation in the divine, it is only intrinsically positive. When compared with *baqā',* it is negative as *baqā'* maintains a relationship with God, whereas *fanā'* preserves one with the creation. This feature of Ibn ʻArabī's treatment of *fanā'* restores the antonymically correlative Qur'anic paradigm, where *fanā'* is linked with the creation and *baqā'* is connected to God. Also, *fanā'* is inferior to *baqā'* just as the creation is inferior to the creator. This means that the subversion of the Qur'anic meaning of *fanā',* carried out by Sufism, is reverted fully by Ibn ʻArabī, who, far from being daring in his digression, returns the terms to their semantic origins.

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[683] Ibn ʻArabī, *Rasā'il*, 532.
[684] Al-Jurjānī, *Kitāb al-Taʻrīfāt,* 176.
[685] Al-Ḥakīm, *Al-Muʻjam,* 203-4.

Al-Qāshānī, however, is not faithful to Ibn ʻArabī in this regard as he adopts the entirely positive meaning of *fanā'* without its contextualisation in the *fanā'-baqā'* paradigm. We thus observe that for al-Qāshānī, *fanā'* is absolute annihilation in the divine *huwiyya.* This is clearly displayed in his commentary of the bezel of Isḥāq, where he writes,

> Sacrifice is ostensibly annihilation in God, and the greatest sacrifice is that of the self in the path of God, as he, upon him be peace, said, "I wish that I could fight in the path of God so that I would be martyred then be brought back to life, then fight so that I would be martyred then be brought back to life, then fight so that I would be martyred then be brought back to life," three times [did he say this]. And the Exalted said, *Surely God has purchased from the believers their lives and their wealth for theirs will be the Garden; they fight in the path of God so they kill and are killed.* So indeed, in the sacrifice of the self is the appearance of absolute annihilation (*al-fanā' al-muṭlaq*).[686]

In this extract, al-Qāshānī interprets martyrdom as absolute annihilation (*al-fanā' al-muṭlaq*) of the self in God. He does not suggest that this annihilation is followed by subsistence. Rather, the annihilation itself is the end point, the ultimate desire of the gnostic, as attested by the prophetic tradition which expresses a yearning to repeatedly be annihilated in God, according to al-Qāshānī.

Deatiled scrutiny of these terms, and others besides that are also related to *huwiyya* would afford a broader understanding of the word. They would also further detail the complex and elaborate relationship between the works of the master and those of his disciple.

Word Count: 88, 244.

[686] Al-Qāshānī, *Sharḥ Fuṣūṣ,* 129.

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