“THE UNITY OF EXISTENCE”

IN IBN ʿARABĪ’S SEALS OF WISDOM AND PLOTINUS’ ENNEADS

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DECLARATION OF ORIGINALITY

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ABSTRACT

"The Unity of Existence"

in Ibn ʿArabī's Seals of Wisdom and Plotinus' Enneads

The doctrine of 'the unity of existence' or 'oneness of being', generally referred to as the doctrine of 'the One,' is of cardinal importance in philosophy. It has penetrated the Greek and Islamic Metaphysics so deep that studying the history of philosophy in these two traditions would be impractical without understanding it. Two very influential thinkers advocating this doctrine are Plotinus and Ibn ʿArabī. Therefore, I think it is important to clarify the two thinkers' positions in the best light. My primary aim is to shed light on the metaphysical position of the doctrine of the unity of existence in Plotinus' *Enneads* and Ibn ʿArabī's *Seals of Wisdom*. My secondary aim is to examine whether, from an entirely philosophical point of view, the metaphysical positions of the two philosophers' doctrines are defensible and reasonable in themselves. The following is the central interpretive question I plan to resolve: 'How do Plotinus' *Enneads* and Ibn ʿArabī's *Seals of Wisdom* understand the doctrine of the unity of existence?' Examining and comparing both these masterpieces, I conclude that the metaphysical positions of the doctrines of the unity of existence echoed in these works are credible and that despite minor differences, the two doctrines are very similar, a resemblance which indicates that the latter thinker might have been influenced by the former. I think this thesis would help the reader to have a good basis to study Greek and Islamic Metaphysics. Finally, one important problem deserving further research is Ibn ʿArabī's 'fixed entities.'

ÖZET

“Varlığın Birliği”

İbn-i Arabi’nin Fusûsü-l- Hikem ve Plotinus’un Enneadlar’ında

Felsefede ‘varlığın birliği’ doktrini büyük bir öneme sahiptir. Bu doktrin hem Yunan hem de İslam metafiziğine öylesine nüfuz etmiştir ki felsefe tarihi çalışmalarında varlığın birliği meselesi anlaşılmadan bu iki alanda çalışmak neredeyse işlevsizdir. Bu doktrini savunan iki önemli filozof ise Plotinus ve İbn-i Arabi’dir. Bu iki filozofun varlığın birliği meselesindeki duruşlarının açığa kavuşturulmasıyla doktrinin öneminin ve etkisinin daha iyi anlaşılacağını düşünüyorum. Bu çalışmada birincil amacım İbn-i Arabi’nin *Fusûsü-l- Hikem*’inde ve Plotinus’un *Enneadlar* (*Dokuzluklar*)’ında varlığın birliği doktrinine metafizik konum üzerinden ışık tutmaktır. İkinci olarak ise tamamıyla felsefi bir bakış açısıyla bu iki filozofun öğretilerinin metafizik konumlarının kendi içlerinde savunulabilir ve mantıklı olup olmadığını incelemektir. Her iki başyapıtı inceleyerek ve karşılaştırarak varlığın birliği doktrinini nasıl anladıkları sorusunu çözümlemeye çalışmak da diğer bir amacımdı. Yaptığım karşılaştırma ve incelemeden sonra her iki eserde doktrinlerin metafizik konumlarının inandırıcı ve küçük farklılıklara rağmen birbirlerine oldukça benzer oldukları sonucuna vardım. Dahası İbn-i Arabi’nin Plotinus’dan etkilenmiş olma ihtimalini de görmüş oldum. Bu tezin Yunan ve İslam metafiziği üzerine çalışmak isteyenlere yardımcı olacağını düşünüyorum. Son olarak, ilerleyen zamanlarda üzerinde çalışılmayı daha fazla hak eden bir konunun da İbn-i Arabi’nin tümeller (*al-aʿyān al-thābitah*) kavramını olduğunu düşünüyorum.

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DEDICATION

To my lovely parents and younger brother—Ali.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

In this thesis, I examine the doctrine of 'the unity of existence' or 'oneness of being', more generally referred to as the doctrine of 'the One', from Ibn ʿArabī's and Plotinus' views. I focus on the unity of the soul with the One. This exegetical work has four chapters: In chapter two, I examine the doctrine of the unity of existence in Ibn ʿArabī's *Seals of Wisdom*. In chapter three, I analyze the doctrine of the unity or the One in Plotinus' *Enneads*. And, in chapter four, I compare the two doctrines and examine the formative influence of Plotinus' doctrine on Ibn ʿArabī's.

1.1 Ibn ʿArabī's biography and frame of thought

Abū ʿAbd Allāh Muḥammad Ibn ʿAlī Ibn Muḥammad Ibn ʿArabī al-Ḥātimī al-Ṭāʾī, shortened as Ibn ʿArabī, was an Arab Islamic philosopher, mystic, poet, and Sufi scholar. He was born at Murcia in Andalusia, Spain, in 560 A.H. (i.e., 1165 A.D.), and passed away in Damascus, Syria, in 638 A.H. (1240 A.D.). Because of his significance in the Islamic tradition, he is referred to as the great master and the animator of religion. A pillar so influential that up until today, Islamic philosophers, mystics, and scholars have been nourishing on his thought. Among the large corpus of his works, two globally well-known ones are the voluminous *Meccan Unveilings*[1] and the short yet dense *Seals of Wisdom*. In this thesis, I examine the latter work. Why has Ibn ʿArabī named this work *The Seals of Wisdom*? In the past, kings used their ring-stone as a seal to safeguard their treasure chests. Al-ʿArabī uses this simile

[1] A good English translation of this work is Chodkiewicz (2002). And relevant secondary sources are Chittick (2012; 2015) and Morris (2005).

regarding the Prophets, saying that they, and the human being in his or her excellence, whom he calls the Perfect Man (2006, p. 529), are the divine seals that God uses to safeguard His treasure chests of existence (Hasanzade-Amuli, 2015). There are 27 chapters in this book. In each chapter, Ibn al-ʿArabī discusses the divine knowledge of a particular prophet.

Before studying *The Seals of Wisdom*, the reader should gain familiarity with Ibn ʿArabī's philosophy and Sufism. So, let us first discuss Ibn ʿArabī's frame of thought.

1.1.1 Philosophy and theosophy

Philosophy, as understood today, is different from the philosophy that Ibn al-ʿArabī was doing. To understand the differences, let us examine the meaning of 'philosophy' and 'theosophy.' The word 'philosophy' comes from the Greek term *philosophia*, meaning 'love of wisdom.' The term 'theosophy' comes from the Greek word *theosophia*, which in the Arabic language means 'wisdom,' in general, and 'philosophy,' in particular. Theosophy and philosophy are mostly used interchangeably; however, they have some differences. Philosophy, generally put, is the search for truth. Relying primarily on speculative and rational reasoning, it deals with the most fundamental aspects of reality. Theosophy, on the other hand, is a rich tapestry of knowledge encompassing rational, traditional,[2] and mystical knowledge. A metaphysics that helps humans to understand and reach perfection, happiness, beatitude, and the Truth. Hence, theosophy encompasses philosophy. Theosophists are philosophers, and more!

[2] The Quran and the sayings from the Prophet of Islam and the Shii Imams.

Unlike the word philosophy, the term theosophy appears in the Quran (2:129; 2:151; 2:231; 2:251; 3:48; 3:81; 3:164; 4:54; 4:113; 5:110; 16:125; 17:39; 31:12; 33:34; 38:20; 43:63; 54:5; & 62:2). It is also the preferred term in Islamic writings. The following are some works whose names in Arabic include—or have a derivative of—the term theosophy: Ibn ʿArabī's *Seals of Wisdom*,[3] Suhrawardī's *Theosophy of Illumination*, and Mulla Sadrā's *Transcendent Theosophy*.

Theosophy is divided into two groups (Mutahhari, 2002): theoretical and practical. Theoretical theosophy explains the states of things as they are or will be and is divided into three categories: (1) divine knowledge, metaphysics, and theology, (2) mathematics, and (3) cosmology or natural philosophy. Practical theosophy, on the other hand, explicates the duties of human beings, duties that are set by the intellect alone, not by law (be it divine Law or human laws). It is the knowledge that concerns the general, absolute, and perpetual dos and don'ts of voluntary human actions. It does not concern with the individual and relative duties of humans. The tools of this knowledge are intellect and will. Practical wisdom can be grouped into three areas: morality, family (rules and values), and socio-politics (pp. 164-168).

1.1.2 Mysticism

Islamic tradition has two aspects, the exoteric and the esoteric. The former is the realm of the divine Law and it is ruled by the science of jurisprudence. The latter

[3] The Arabic for *The Seals of Wisdom* includes the word 'theosophy' in its plural form. But in almost all translations, the term is translated in its general meaning, 'wisdom'.

aspect is governed by Sufism (mysticism).[4] Sufism itself is a cultural and social system (Mutahhari, 2002): Considered from a cultural aspect, it is called mysticism (gnosis, gnosticism). And, considered from a social aspect, it is called Sufism. This socio-cultural system is divided into two groups: practical and theoretical mysticism. Practical Sufism (or mysticism) deals with the duties of the human being concerning oneself, the world, and God. It tells one who journeys in this path where to start, which stages to conquer, and how to reach the height of humanity, that is the union with God. Theoretical Sufism, on the other hand, examines the world. It is like philosophy; however, there are some differences between them (to be discussed).

The term Sufism first appeared in the second century (A.H.) but some Sufi Orders go back to ʿAlī Ibn Abī Ṭālib (the first Imam in Twelver-Imam Shiism) and the Prophet of Islam. So, it seems that Sufism was being practiced even before the second century (A.H.) though not under the same name! Allegedly, the first person called Sufi[5] was Abū Hāshim Ṣūfī Kūfī, who lived in the first half of the second century (A.H.).

It seems that Sufism became strongest in the seventh century (A.H.). An era that hosted great figures like sheikh Najm al-Dīn Kubrā Khārazmī,[6] sheikh Farīd al-

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[4] Doctors of the divine Law categorize Islam into three areas (Mutahhari, 2002): (1) The Principle of Beliefs: It deals with reason and thought, and the science of Theology rules it. (2) The Principle of Ethics: It explains the duties of the human beings on what is right or wrong, and the science of Ethics governs it. (3) The Rules of Law, which is responsible for the external deeds and behavior of the individuals, and the science of Jurisprudence reigns it. Although mystics acknowledge the principle of beliefs, according to them this discipline should not limit itself to the intellectual beliefs and reason, and it should also appeal to higher levels of reality. Moreover, they say, the static principal of ethics, held by jurists, cannot get human far and it should be integrated with a more dynamic path, i.e., practical mysticism.

[5] Regarding the origin of the word Sufi, there are several speculations, the most popular of which says (Mutahhari, 2002), the word Sufi comes from the Arabic word '*sūf*,' meaning 'wool'. Therefore, the term 'Sufi' might have been coined in allusion to the woolen clothes that Sufis wore in the past.

[6] The Iranian Shii Sufi who was so well-known that before the Mongolians attacked Iran, they sent him a letter saying that he and his fellows may leave the country—he stayed, fought, and died defending his compatriots (Mutahhari, 2002).

Dīn Aṭṭār,[7] Ibn al-Fāriḍ Miṣrī,[8] Ṣadr al-Dīn Muḥammad Qūnawī,[9] Mawlānā Jalāl al-Dīn Muḥammad Balkhī Rūmī, and, of course, Muḥyī al-Dīn Ibn al-ʿArabī. Sufism was prominent from the second to the ninth century (A.H.). During this period, mystics were members of official Sufi Orders but after the ninth century Sufism took up a different color; there were not as many great figures as there were before. In this period, even those who were not members of any Orders started studying Ibn ʿArabī's thought; thus, Sufism became more theoretical than practical, and, consequently, lots of dilettantes set foot on stage (*ibid*., p. 126). Today, although there is a lot of pseudo-Sufis who are distorting this tradition out of its shape, there are still some genuine figures. The Iranian Sufi and scholar, Seyyed Hossein Nasr, is one such figure.

1.1.3 Theoretical mysticism and philosophy

Let us examine the differences between philosophy and theoretical mysticism (Mutahhari, 2002). First, philosophy primarily relies on reason in its investigations, but theoretical mysticism mainly relies on spiritual vision. Second, philosophical reasoning is like writing in a language and reading in the same language (i.e., logic); however, mystical reasoning is like translating something from another language. The mystic apprehends through divine unveiling and explains with the language of

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[7] Aṭṭār was the Iranian Sufi poet about whom Rūmī says: 'Aṭṭār journeyed through the Seven Cities of Love / we are still in the corner of an alley' (cited in Mutahhari, 2002, p. 116). By 'The Seven Cities of Love,' Rūmī is referring to the seven stages of mysticism that Aṭṭār introduces in his *Manṭiq al-Ṭayr*.

[8] Miṣrī was one of the greatest of Sufis whose poetry's greatness and elegance in Arabic is comparable to that of Ḥafiẓ in Persian (Mutahhari, 2002, p. 117). Upon their meeting, Ibn ʿArabī tells him, 'Write a commentary to your own poems,' to which he replies, 'your *Meccan Unveilings* is the commentary of my poetry.'

[9] Qūnawī was Ibn ʿArabī's chief student. He lived in Konya, Turkey—the city where Rūmī's tomb is located—and he had an amicable relationship with Rūmī. It seems that Ibn ʿArabī's gnosis echoed in Rūmī's poetry was inherited to the Persian poet, in part, through Qūnawī.

reason. Third, using reason, the philosopher wants to understand the world, but the mystic wants not only to understand it but also to reach the reality of the world.

In some philosophical circles, it is often said: 'Mysticism is not "provable," which is the reason why it should be abandoned.' Here, the question that should be asked is, 'mysticism is not provable with what?!' If one says, with 'reason,' then, clearly, one does not have a proper understanding of mysticism because it does not aim to understand everything through reason. As discussed before, the discursive reason is only one tool in mysticism. Aiming to understand the whole reality with reason alone is like looking at the world through a pipe! A view that gives a very limited picture of reality. If by 'proving' one means this approach, then, 'the search for reality' is a very limited endeavor. An approach which—thanks to the dominance of secularism and materialism—is employed in the mainstream Western philosophical tradition. Why be so resistant to broadening the scope of the search for truth in the first place? Why limit oneself to a limited picture of reality when one can transcend such limitations?

Mysticism is not a proposition to be proven, it is a way of life, a path that relies on intuitive experience to acquire higher forms of knowledge than what is achieved through intellectual knowledge. This way of life does not aim to prove something as does philosophy. It is the mystic's intuition that amounts to a proof, not one's line of reasoning. Yes, one's experience cannot be taken as proof for some other person, but again, this is not what mysticism intends, the aim in this way of life is to direct one to experience intuitive vision oneself.

It is in this framework that one should study Ibn ʿArabī's works. He was more of a theosophist than a philosopher. Although he writes philosophy, his works are the result of divine intuition. Yes, he uses discursive reason, but he uses it not as

a step-by-step means to reach a certain conclusion, but only to analyze, formulate, and explicate his intuitions to the reader.

1.2 Plotinus' biography

Known as the founder of Neoplatonism, Plotinus (204/5 - 270 C.E.) was born in Lycopolis, Egypt. In the later part of his life, in 245, he moved to Rome and spent the rest of his life there and his *magnum opus*, *The Enneads*, was written in that period.

After Plotinus' death, his chief student, Porphyry, arranged *The Enneads* differently from the chronology according to which the treatises were written. He arranged this work into six books, each consisting of nine treatises; hence, the name *Enneads*, which is Greek for 'nine'. Each section is dedicated to certain matters: *Ennead* I, mainly ethics; *Enneads* II–III, natural philosophy and cosmology; *Ennead* IV, psychology; *Ennead* V, epistemology, especially the intellect; and *Ennead* VI, numbers, being in general, and the One (Gerson, 2018b).

Plotinus' thought seems to have been colored by those of some of his predecessors and understanding them can put *The Enneads* in the spotlight. Of such philosophical systems, the chief is the doctrine of the One, the transcendental source of all being from which emanate all levels of existence. According to O'Brien (1964), Plotinus 'derived it, ultimately, from Philo (30 B.C. - 40 A.D.)' (p. 15). Philo's doctrine of the One seems to have been passed to Plotinus by Albinus (fl. 152) or Numenius (fl. 160). Porphyry says (quoted in O'Brien, 1964), 'it was "by meditation and by the method that Plato teaches in *Banquet*" that Plotinus "lifted himself . . . to the first and all-transcendent divinity." . . . The method thought there is that of a twofold purgation of the mind'. The first aspect is the mental detachment from the world of senses and focusing on the immaterial, spiritual, and intellectual.

The second aspect is the detachment ‘from the changing and the incidental in order to attach oneself to an object that is immovable, essential, fixed’ (pp. 16-17). Plotinus digested the philosophy of Philo, Stoics, and Plato, trimmed and perfected them, and expressed them in a novel doctrine, i.e., the doctrine of the One.

Plotinus’ philosophy influenced the subsequent philosophical and theological thought greatly. Back then, there was a great interest among the Islamic, Christian, and Jewish scholars in Greek philosophy, especially in Platonism. The reason for this fervor was that the theologians found Platonism very close to their theological framework and they could benefit from the systematic Platonic arguments in understanding and defending their traditions. Thanks to this interest and pursuit, the questioning spirit of ancient Greek philosophy found its way into these three traditions. Importantly, Plotinus was the chief channel leading these theologians and philosophers to Platonic thought (Fakhry, 2004; Gerson, 2018b).

1.3 Objectives

1.3.1 Objectives of chapter two

The doctrine of existence projected in *The Seals of Wisdom*, mainly in chapter one, has been named by scholars other than Ibn ʿArabī: *t*he unity of existence or the oneness of being. This doctrine is of central importance for understanding Islamic Metaphysics in general and al-ʿArabī’s philosophy in particular. A doctrine so complex that it has been subject to lots of controversies. Therefore, I think it is of paramount importance to clarify the Andalusian thinker’s position in this work in the best light. My primary aim is to shed light on the metaphysical position of Ibn ʿArabī’s doctrine of the unity of existence. I examine this work holistically, with a special focus on chapter one, where the author establishes the foundation of this

doctrine. In my interpretations of *The Seals of Wisdom*, I examine commentaries written for this work and present reasons for the opposing interpretations. Among the commentaries, I plan to examine Muwahhid (2006) and Hasanzade-Amuli (2015). Concerning the relevant secondary sources, I plan to investigate Abrahamov (2015), Burckhardt (1975), Nasr (1964), and Fakhri (2004). My secondary aim is to examine whether, from an entirely philosophical point of view, the metaphysical position of Ibn ʿArabī's doctrine of the unity of existence is defensible and reasonable in itself. The following is the central interpretive question I plan to resolve: 'How does Ibn ʿArabī's *The Seals of Wisdom*, in particular, chapter one, understand the doctrine of the unity of existence?' To answer this question, I aim to answer the following sub-questions: 'What is the relationship between God and the world? What is the relationship between God's Essence and His external manifestations? Is there unity in existence? If so, what is the relation between unity and multiplicity in the world? Is the unity in Ibn ʿArabī's doctrine of the unity of existence a numeric unity? What is the relationship between God and human beings? And, if there is a unity between them, what aspect of the human being is divine?'

There are some objections to Ibn al-ʿArabī's doctrine of the unity of existence. In what follows, I point to some of these objections, to the parts of *The Seals of Wisdom* that seem to raise such objections, and to some questions that help answer these charges.

Objection 1: 'The unity of being' that al-ʿArabī's writings point to is nothing but pantheism or panentheism!'. What seems to be objectionable with pantheism and panentheism is that they are inconsistent with Ibn ʿArabī's metaphysics. This objection is related to the following questions: What is the relationship between God

and the world? Is there unity in existence? In chapter two, I examine these two accusations from Ibn ʿArabī's perspective.

Objection 2: Ibn ʿArabī (2006) writes, 'the human is [at once] created in time and eternal; the being [created] and ever-living . . .' (p. 523, own translation).[10] For one thing, this remark is self-contradictory. For another, it entails the 'eternity' of the world; however, because only God is Eternal, and the world—including the human being—is created in time, this assertion is inconsistent with Ibn ʿArabī's metaphysics. This objection points to the question about the nature of the human being. So, to be able to answer this objection, first, the question of human nature should be answered. Commentators differ about which aspect of the human being Ibn al-ʿArabī refers to as 'eternal.' Some argue that the human being's fixed entity is eternal. Others, however, hold that his inward form is eternal. In chapter one, I present both arguments, evaluate their validity, and demonstrate which one is closer to Ibn ʿArabī's view.

Objection 3: Ibn al-ʿArabī (*ibid*., p. 527) states, things in the world are the manifestations of God's Names and Qualities. However, throughout chapter one, he argues for what is named the unity of existence. These two positions are paradoxical. How is it that the multiplicity we see in the world does not jeopardize the unity of existence? This objection is that this unity of existence is inconsistent with Ibn al-ʿArabī's metaphysics. The underlying assumption in this objection is that the intended unity is in the concrete existence. The critic considers the concrete existents separate from God, which is why she thinks that their multiplicity negates the unity

[10] Arabic text: فَهُوَ الإنسانُ الحادِثُ الْأَزَلِيُّ والنَّشْءُ الدّائِمُ لأَبَدِيُّ.

in existence. The answer to the central interpretive question posed above and answers to the alternative questions posed there can help address this objection.

1.3.2 Objectives of chapter three

My primary aim is to clarify the metaphysical position of Plotinus' doctrine of the One—echoed through his theory of emanation—in *The Enneads*. I focus on the unity of the soul with the One in *Enneads* III, IV, V, and VI. In my interpretations, I examine commentaries and secondary sources written for this work and present reasons for the opposing interpretations. The following are the works I examine. Corrigan (2005), Gerson (2018), Hadot (1998), Inge (1918), and O'Brien (1964). My secondary aim is to examine whether the metaphysical position of Plotinus' doctrine of the unity of existence is philosophically defensible and reasonable in itself. The following is the central interpretive question I plan to resolve: 'How does Plotinus' *Enneads*, in particular *Enneads* III, IV, V, and VI, understand the doctrine of the unity or the One?' To answer this question, I aim to answer the following interpretive questions.

What are the Plotinian hypostases and what is the function of unity concerning them? How are the hypostases generated? What is the nature of the Soul? What is the relationship between the Soul and the cosmos? What is the relation between the Soul and individual souls? What is the nature of the Intellect? What is the relationship between the Intellect and Being? What is the relationship between the Intellect and the intelligible world? What is the nature of the intelligible entities—individual intellects? What is the relationship among the intellects, and between the intellects and the Intellect? What is Plotinus' understanding of the human beings' true self and how can we be aware of it? What is the nature of the

One? Is it identical to the Soul, Being, Intellect, existence, or essence? How does the soul know the One? How can one conceive of the One? What guides one through the journey to the One? What is the Plotinian 'center of the soul'? What is the unity of the contemplative and the One like? Does Plotinus' metaphysics, which guides one towards the other-worldliness, have worldly implications as well?

An objection I examine in this chapter is this. Plotinus (2005) says, the nearer we are to the One, the more we are (p. 128). Corrigan (*ibid*.) claims that there is a problem here, namely, the problem of degrees of reality. He asks, what does Plotinus mean by 'the more we are'? 'How can one exist or be a human being more or less? . . . Either we exist or we do not; there is no in-between' (pp. 127-128). The underlying assumption in this objection is that Plotinus' remark concerns a binary possibility of existence.

1.3.3 Objectives of chapter four

In this chapter, I compare Plotinus' and Ibn al-ʿArabī's doctrines of the oneness of being and discuss their similarities and differences. The following are the questions I investigate in this chapter from Plotinus and Ibn ʿArabī's perspectives.

Is Ibn ʿArabī's doctrine influenced by that of Plotinus? Why did the One create the world? To what extent are the two thinkers' views similar or different on the divine emanation? What happens to the One in emanating the entities? Is this emanation continuous or intermittent? Given that both authors consider the divine emanation hierarchical, are all levels of this emanation uniform? Is the One identical with these levels of emanations? How does the cosmos become alive? What is responsible for managing different parts of the cosmos? What is the mediate chain between the fixed entities and the corporeal entities? Is the Plotinian 'Intellect'

identical with Ibn ʿArabī's 'world of fixed entities'? Are there only the fixed entities, say, of the human being, in the intelligible world or are there also fixed entities of individuals, say, of Socrates? What is the relationship between the intelligible and the sensual worlds? Is the Plotinian supreme Principle, 'the One,' similar to that of Ibn ʿArabī's in *The Seals of Wisdom*? If so, to what extent? What is the soul's motion like in moving towards the One? Should the soul have a particular target in this movement? What is the relationship between the One and the contemplative? How does an individual get to know the One? What is the relationship between the human being and the cosmos? Can Plotinus' and Ibn ʿArabī's frames of thought complement each other to yield a better understanding of the One? If so, how?

CHAPTER 2

IBN ʿARABĪ'S DOCTRINE OF THE UNITY OF EXISTENCE

2.1 Introduction

The doctrine of existence projected in *The Seals of Wisdom*, mainly in chapter one, has been named by scholars other than Ibn ʿArabī: the unity of existence or the oneness of being. This doctrine is of central importance for understanding Islamic Metaphysics in general and al-ʿArabī's philosophy in particular. My primary aim, in this chapter, is to shed light on the metaphysical position of Ibn ʿArabī's doctrine of the unity of existence. I examine this work holistically, with a special focus on chapter one, where the author establishes the foundation of this doctrine. My secondary aim is to examine whether, from an entirely philosophical point of view, the metaphysical position of Ibn ʿArabī's doctrine of the unity of existence is defensible and reasonable in itself. The following is the central interpretive question I plan to resolve: 'How does Ibn ʿArabī's *The Seals of Wisdom*, in particular, chapter one, understand the doctrine of the unity of existence?'

2.2 Thesis of chapter one of *The Seals of Wisdom*

Alluding to each faculty of the human in his or her excellence, i.e., the Perfect Man (more on this designation later), Ibn ʿArabī says, the human constitution (2006, p. 522),[11] 'has divine all-comprehensiveness: From one aspect, he goes back to the Divine, from one to the Reality of Realities, and from another . . . to that which is required by the universal nature which encompasses all the receptacle of the world

[11] *The Seals of Wisdom* was originally written some time in the seventh century A.H. (12th century A.D).

from top to bottom' (own translation, see appendix A). A tripartite constitution that gains him the highest rank in existence. Ibn ʿArabī calls this constitution: the Perfect Man (*ibid*., p. 529). Although he uses this term about Adam, it is not restricted to him alone. The Perfect Man is a human being in her or his excellence. The Perfect Man is the King's seal and His vicegerent on the earth (p. 523). Because of his outward and inward constitution, Adam, as the Perfect Man, is both the Real and the created (p. 529). And, he is the single soul from which God created humankind (p. 530). Aside from these, concerning God's relation with creation, Ibn ʿArabī (p. 529) asserts, 'The Real is in every existent in the world, to the degree that the reality of that existent requires.' If the fixed entities did not exist, concrete existents would not exist. Similarly, if 'the Real did not pervade the existents by His Form, the world would not exist.'

2.3 The Creation

In chapter one of *The Seals of Wisdom*, Ibn al-ʿArabī (2006, p. 521) writes:

> The Real wished to see the essences of His . . . Names, which are infinite in number—or you could say He wished to see His Essence—in an all-comprehensive being, which, being qualified with existence, encompassed the Order of all the [divine] Names, [so that] in it He manifested his mystery to Himself. (Own translation, see appendix B)

The Real contemplated Himself in His Essence; however, He wanted an *object* to contemplate the Essences of His Names and Qualities on; therefore, He created the world as a mirror for this purpose. From the aforementioned passage, it can be inferred that every part of the world is a locus that reflects the divine Names. In al-ʿArabī's (*ibid*., p. 521) understanding, having a unique aptitude, the most comprehensive reflection happens through the human being. Thus, it appears that in

the above quote, although the writer is discussing the creation of the world, in 'an all-comprehensive being, which . . . encompassed the Order of all the (divine) Names', the quantifier 'all' points to the human being, who alone, among all created beings, can receive the entirety of the divine Names and Qualities (to be discussed). In chapter twenty-five, our thinker (2015) discusses the purpose of creation from another aspect (p. 161):

> His [God's] knowledge of Himself with respect to His ability to dispense with (all) things belongs to Him (alone) by virtue of His essence . . . . What remains is only to complete the degree of knowledge through the knowledge of what comes into being . . . based on the concrete entities, the entities of the world, when they exist . . . . The form of perfection is manifest through the knowledge of things that come into being and knowledge of the eternal things; the degree of knowledge becomes perfect through both aspects. The degrees of existence are perfected similarly, for existence is divided into the eternal and noneternal; the latter is what comes into being. The eternal is the existence of the Real by virtue of Himself, and the non-eternal is the existence of the Real in the form of the concrete . . . world. . . . Thus, existence becomes perfect . . . .

So, the second purpose in creation is the perfection of knowledge and existence through both the eternal and non-eternal entities. The critics say, Ibn ʿArabī is playing a dangerous game here. 'Perfection' of knowledge indicates a lack thereof, and, 'lack' implies 'need'. However, the Quran (112:2) says, 'God, the Eternally Sufficient unto Himself' (translated by Nasr, Dagli, Dakake, Lumbard, and Rustom). A verse that shows God's 'needlessness.' The author would have a hard time saving this passage from this criticism! To answer this criticism, let us point to another purpose.

The third purpose of creation is explained by the Prophet Muḥammad (as cited in Ibn ʿArabī, 2006): God said, 'I was a Hidden Treasure; I loved to be

recognized, so I created the creatures to be recognized' (p. 141, own translation).[12] It is understood from this saying that another purpose in creation was the fact that 'The Hidden Treasure' wished to be known. A 'knowledge' which He 'loved' to bestow upon the created; thus, we could say, according to this saying, the purpose of creation was love and knowledge, not need. It can also be inferred that by knowing God, one fulfills the purpose of creation. A purpose that satisfied God's love.

2.4 The fixed entities

To make comprehensible Ibn ʿArabī' cosmological doctrine, let us discuss what he calls 'fixed entities' (*al-aʿyān thābita*). What are the fixed entities? What is the relationship between the fixed entities and the concrete existents? Are realities of the concrete existents general or particular? For example, is the reality of 'knowledge' general, or is it particular to each person?

Regarding the term 'fixed entities,' the Arabic word ʿ*ayn* (plural: *aʿyān*) means 'entity' (also translated as archetype, ipseity, essence, reality). And the word *thābita* means 'fixed' (also translated as immutable, invariable). According to Ibn ʿArabī (*ibid*., p. 524), dwelling intelligibly in God's Knowledge, in one respect the fixed entities are the intelligible forms of the divine Names and Qualities, and in another, they are the 'whatness' or 'quiddity' (*māhiyyah*) of existent entities. Concerning the term *aʿyān thābita* (Chittick, 2019),

> Early translators opted for expressions like immutable or permanent 'archetypes' or 'essences', without noting that there is no difference in whatness between 'fixed entities' and 'existent entities' (*aʿyân mawjûda*). The fixed entities are the things inasmuch as they are nonexistent in themselves but known to God; the existent entities are the exact same things

[12] Original text in Arabic: كُنْتُ كَنزا مَخفّيا فَاَحبَبْتَ اَن أعْرَف فَخَلَقْتُ الخلَقَ لأعرَف.

> inasmuch as they have been given a certain imaginal or delimited existence by the engendering command. The fixed entities are not the "archetypes" of the existent entities but are rather identical (*ʿayn*) with them; nor are they "essences", if by this is meant anything other than the entities' specific whatness. (p. 21)

Ibn ʿArabī also refers to fixed entities as 'realities' (*ḥaqāʾiq*, plural of *ḥaqīqah*), a term which, according to Chittick (*ibid*.), 'is used to mean entity, quiddity, thing, and possible thing, though it is used more broadly as well' (p. 24). This is a passage in chapter one of the *Seals* in which the writer uses this term (2006, p. 525):

> the determining rule of … existent entities relate to . . . universal reality to the degree the realities of these existent entities require, like the relationship of knowledge to the knower and life to the living' (own translation).[13]

The fixed entities, as Chittick (2019) puts it, are 'the potentialities of manifestation latent in Infinite Possibility, or the never-ending delimitations of the Nondelimited' (p. 20). These entities are both hidden and manifest. They are hidden in that they are intelligible and do not have external existence as such, and they are manifest in that they are the 'whatness' of existent entities. Put differently, every external existent is the actualized form and expression of its fixed entity. To understand this better, consider a painter; before starting, she has a design in her mind. Although this inner design does not exist externally, it determines the external work. Similarly, despite being intelligible, the fixed entities determine everything about the corporeal existents. Paintings are the actualized forms of mental designs and existent entities are the actualized forms of fixed entities.

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[13] Original text in Arabic:
. . . الْأَمْرَ الْكُلِّيَّ يَرْجِعُ إِلَيْهِ حُكْمٌ مِنَ الْمَوْجوداتِ الْعَيْنِيَّةِ بِحَسَبِ ما تَطْلُبُهُ حَقائِقُ تِلْكَ الْمَوْجوداتِ الْعَيْنِيَّةِ، كَنِسْبَةِ، الْعِلْمِ إِلَى الْعالِمِ، وَالْحَياةِ إِلَى الْحَيِّ.

In chapter nine, Ibn al-ʿArabī (2015) introduces an interesting simile picturing God's relation with the world through the fixed entities: The world is God's shadow, 'from Him it appears and to Him all things return, for the shadow is He, and no other' (p. 71). The relation of the cosmos to the Real is like that of the shadow to an individual. Now, because the shadow exists in the senses, there must be a substrate through which the shadow arises. The substrate that facilitates the extension of this shadow is the fixed entities of the possible things; these entities 'are non-luminous, because they are non-existent,' that is, they do not exist in concrete form; 'existence is light' (*ibid*., p. 70). There, al-ʿArabī makes two puzzling remarks: First, the shadow 'spreads out over the fixed entities of the possible things'; and second, perception, in the world of the senses, occurs through the divine Name 'the Light.' How are these two sentences related? Abrahamov (p. 73) delicately consolidates these two sentences. He writes, 'Ibn al-ʿArabī seems to say that God's Light illuminates the fixed entities, and as a result of this illumination shadows appear.' Put differently, these 'shadows are the possible things in the concrete world.'

According to Ibn al-ʿArabī (2006), one's knowledge of the cosmos and the Real correlates to one's knowledge of shadows; however, the Real's Essence, as the shadow's source, is unknown. This polarity of the knowledge about Essence and shadow is the reason why the Real—God—is known in one sense and not known in another (pp. 592-593).

To shed light on the relation between the Real and the concrete existents, Ibn ʿArabī (2015) presents another simile: The Real is like a colorless light that passes through colorful glasses which are placed between the Real and the observer. What the observer sees is a range of colorful lights. So, although the original light is colorless, it assumes the colors of the glasses it passes through (p. 71). Now,

applying this simile to the relation between the Real and the concrete existents, one would realize that the Light is the Real existence, the colorful glasses are the fixed entities, and the colorful lights produced are the concrete entities which al-ʿArabī calls 'the luminous shadows.'

> If you say the light is green because of the greenness of the glass, you are right, as your sense (of sight) bears witness. And if you say the light is not green and has no color, because you use a logical proof, you are right, as your witness is based on sound, rational speculation . . . . (p. 71)

Let us illustrate the relation between the fixed entities and the concrete existents (Ibn al-ʿArabī, 2006, pp. 524-525). We said before that by the fixed entities (*aʿyān thābita*) Ibn ʿArabī refers to the 'whatness' of the corporeal existents; intelligible entities that dwell in the world of God's knowledge. Looked closely, talking about the universal properties, instead of 'fixed entities,' Ibn ʿArabī (*ibid*., 524) uses the term 'universal realities' (*umūr al-kulliyyah*)—also translated as 'universals.' The following is the passage where this distinguishment becomes clear (p. 525):

> the determining rule of … existent entities relates to . . . universal reality to the degree the realities [*ḥaqāʾiq*] of these existent entities require, like the relationship of knowledge to the knower and life to the living' (own translation).[14]

As this passage shows, the factor that determines the degree to which existent entities participate in universal realities is their 'realities' or 'fixed entities'. Although some (Muwahhid, 2006) use *aʿyān thābita* and *umūr al-kulliyyah* synonymously (p. 146), it can be understood from the above quote that universal realities and fixed entities

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[14] Original text in Arabic:
. . . الْأَمْرَ الْكُلِّيَّ يَرْجِعُ إِلَيْهِ حُكْمٌ مِنَ الْمَوْجوداتِ الْعَيْنِيَّةِ بِحَسَبِ ما تَطْلُبُهُ حَقائِقُ تِلْكَ الْمَوْجوداتِ الْعَيْنِيَّةِ، كَنِسْبَةِ، الْعِلْمِ إِلَى الْعالِمِ، وَالْحَياةِ إِلَى الْحَيِّ.

are not the same things. Although both universal realities and fixed entities derive from divine Names, the former are universal 'properties,' like knowledge, but the latter are the 'whatness,' 'thingness,' and 'quiddity' of the existent entities. In this interpretation, the universal realities are general, but the fixed entities can also be particular; that is, there are fixed entities of individuals, say, of Socrates in God's Knowledge. This interpretation is in line with other parts of the *Seals* as well. Below are some examples.

In chapter one, Ibn ʿArabī (2006) says, (I) God is manifested in every existent in the world, but this emanation is in direct proportion to the 'aptitude' of the fixed entity of 'each existent entity' to receive it (p. 529). (II) Concerning the Quranic verse (37:164), 'There is none among us [human beings], but that he has a known station' (translated by Nasr), Ibn ʿArabī (2015) says, the station mentioned is that which one has in one's fixed entity, a station according to which one appears in the corporeal form (p. 52). In chapter fourteen, he (*ibid*.) says, (III) 'God's knowledge concerning things is in keeping with what the objects of knowledge give, that is, their exact essences [fixed entities]' (p. 98). (IV) Further, 'manifestation occurs only in keeping with your predisposition, through which experiential perception takes place, hence you will know that your perception mirrors your predisposition' (p. 100). These examples indicate that the fixed entity of individuals has different aptitudes, and if there are such differences from one fixed entity to another, then there are distinct fixed entities of things and individuals in God's Mind.

According to Ibn ʿArabī, (2006, p. 525), the universal realities are determining and determined. To understand what the author means by this determination, let us consider a new term. Coined by Qūnawī and derived from the word 'entity' (ʿ*ayn*), the term 'entification' (*ta*ʿ*ayyun*) means to become an entity; 'a

designation for the manner in which Nondelimited Being becomes determined, limited, defined, and "thingish" in the process of disclosing itself as everything other than God' (Chittick, 2019, p. 25). This term is used synonymously with 'determination'.

According to Ibn ʿArabī, universals, in one respect, determine the particulars, and, in the other, they are determined by the particulars. On the one hand, for example, knowledge, as a universal entity, determines one being a knower; on the other, the characteristic of the knower determines the knowledge. Additionally, '[K]nowledge is created in time in connection with that which is created in time, and (it is) eternal in connection with that which is eternal' (2006, p. 525). If the knower is eternal, his knowledge is eternal and if the knower is created in time, his knowledge is created in time. This is why one says, God's knowledge is eternal and the human being's knowledge is created in time. Furthermore, 'Whether the concrete existent is temporal or not, its relationship to the universal is one and the same. However, the universal serves as the source of the determining rule of the concrete existents according to the requirements of the latter's essences . . .' (2015, p. 20). To illustrate, the relationship between 'knowledge' and the 'knower,' and 'life' and 'the living'—where 'knowledge' and 'life' are universals and the 'knower' and 'the living' are particulars—is always the same. One acknowledges, for instance, that God 'knows' and 'lives,' the Angels 'know' and 'live,' and the human beings 'know' and 'live'. In all these cases, the reality of 'knowledge' is one, so is the reality of 'life,' and the connection between 'knowledge' and 'the knower,' and 'life' and 'the living' is the same. Moreover, essentially, universals do not undergo particularization or division. For example, when one says, 'humans know such and such,' although 'knowledge' is integrally present among all humans, this multiplicity does not affect the oneness of

‘knowledge.’ Essentially, ‘knowledge’ is one; it is not divided among and particularized to individuals.

The critics of Ibn al-ʿArabī say the author contradicts himself in the last few sentences. Granted that despite the apparent multiplicity of its presence among individuals, essentially, knowledge is one, the claim that knowledge is not particularized concerning a specific individual is inconsistent with what he says in other chapters of *The Seals of Wisdom*. For example, in chapter eleven, referring to the Quranic verse (37:164): ‘There is none among us [human beings], but that he has a known station’ (translated by Nasr), the author (2015, p. 52) says, the station mentioned here is that which one has in one’s fixed entities, a station according to which one appears in corporeal form. The human being determines himself according to the capacity and aptitude of his fixed entities. God just pours existence into the mold of one’s aptitude. Now, if each individual has a known station (through his fixed entity) and he determines himself according to the capacity of this entity, then, what each individual can know in the corporeal world is in correlation with the capacity of his fixed entity for knowledge. And, because this capacity differs among individuals, knowledge also differs among them. In other words, knowledge *is* particular to each person, a particularization that is an obvious contradiction to the author’s assertion (that knowledge is not particularized concerning a specific individual). Now, what the critics fail to realize is that Ibn al-ʿArabī has in mind the ‘relationship’ between knowledge and the knower, not the ‘degree’ of the knowledge of the knower! Although the individuals’ knowledge is determined according to the capacity of their fixed entities, this determination is about the degree to which one knows. Knowledge is not divided and particularized among individuals; the degree of knowledge varies from one individual to another.

Let us examine the relationship between the fixed entities and the corporeal further. In chapter two, he (2006, pp. 533-535) points out: Divine gifts, be they Essential or of His Names, follow people's request and divides into three: verbal request, spiritual state, in which one's state speaks for her request, and essential request of one's fixed entity. The third request is the aptitude that God has put in the fixed entity of each person in creation. One's fixed entity speaks through the magnitude of its aptitude and requests gifts in this proportion. The essential gifts, which follow such a request, come through divine manifestation and appear only in the degree of the aptitude of the person receiving it. Further in this chapter, he (*ibid*., pp. 540-542) adds, if one who experiences a divine unveiling, sees a form that gives him new knowledge, one that he did not possess before, the form that grants him this knowledge is his essence, and none other than himself. It is from the tree of his aptitude that he garners the fruit of knowledge. Like the form that a mirror shows of a person is not other than him. The writer does not mean that the person himself is the form that gives him such knowledge. Rather he means that Ideals are already within a person and he possesses these Ideas by participating in them.

> Whoever understands . . . [what is discussed] . . . knows that the good and evil that befall him come only from himself. . . . Whoever witnesses this (wisdom) ascribes all excuses to the existents themselves, . . . knowing that all that befalls one derives from oneself, for as we have mentioned before, knowledge follows the known object. (Ibn ʿArabī, 2015, p. 84)

In chapter fourteen of *The Seals of Wisdom*, citing the Quranic verse (42:27, translated by Nasr), 'He sends down whatsoever He will according to a measure', Ibn ʿArabī (2015, p. 99) writes, 'He only wills what He knows and judges, and as we said above, His knowledge follows the known object.' Moreover, 'God's predetermination . . . can be perceived only through [the] revelation of things in their

state of fixed entity . . .' (*ibid*., pp. 99-100). Further, 'manifestation occurs only in keeping with your predisposition, through which experiential perception takes place, hence you will know that your perception mirrors your predisposition' (p. 100).

2.5 The divine Names

In Abrahamic religions, God is referred to with different Names. The question might be asked how such different Names relate to the one Entity Ibn ʿArabī is picturing. In chapter four of *The Seals of Wisdom*, Ibn ʿArabī (2006) says, the Name 'Allah' pertains to Essential Elevation and absolute perfection. In other words, this Name is all-comprehensive. Other divine Names pertain to God's manifestations and loci. Because the loci of manifestations differ from one another, the divine Names (other than 'Allah') also differ from each other; that is, each Name is unique to its locus (p. 560). Quoting the famous Sufi, Abū al-Qāsim ibn Qassī (died 1151), he adds (*ibid*.), every divine Name is designated and depicted by all divine Names. Every Name points both to the divine Essence and to the particular meaning it is directed to. Pointing to the divine Essence, each Name contains all the other Names, thus, the Name and the Named are the same; and, pointing to the unique meaning it is directed towards, each Name is different from all others, thus, the Name and the Named are different (pp. 560-561). Similarly, in chapter nine, al-ʿArabī (p. 594) states, 'The Real Existence is God, as regards His Essence, not as regards His Names'. The author calls the Names of the second group 'the imaginal Real'. It seems that he uses this terminology because, as regards their non-essential aspect, the divine Names are relational and accept plurality. In this regard, they are not real. To illustrate this point, in chapter twenty-seven, interpreting the Quranic verse (17:110): 'Call upon God, or call upon the Compassionate. Whichever you call upon, to Him belong the

Most Beautiful Names' (translated by Nasr), the writer (2015) asserts, it does not matter with which Name you call Him since the Essence behind the different Names is one (p. 150).

In chapter seven, alluding to the unity in divine Essence, the Andalusian mystic (*ibid*.) says, 'His Unity is the totality of His attributes in potentiality' (p. 59). To clarify, all divine Names are present in the corporeal world actually and distinctly; however, these Names are present in God's Essential Unity in potentiality and without distinction.

Further in this chapter, he (p. 59) writes: 'Each existent has from God only a single lord, and it is inconceivable for it to have all the lords.' Interpreting this puzzling statement, Abrahamov says, 'Since each existent is the embodiment of a fixed entity, which in turn is a form of a specific [divine] name, . . . [each] existent is a servant of a specific name' (p. 62). Muwahhid (2006) has also a similar interpretation of the latter sentence. He (pp. 388-389) writes, 'In the sheik's world view, the Real relates to the created beings through His Names, and the created beings relate to the Real through their fixed entities.' In one interpretation, the 'created beings are the manifestations of the divine Names, and in another, they are God's acts. God communicates with His acts through His Names.' Thus, each 'Divine Name takes the lordship of the being in which It is manifested . . .' (own translation, see appendix C).

2.6 The amorphous form

Enlarging the scope of his cosmological discussion, Ibn ʿArabī (2006, p. 521) writes:

> The Real had [initially] created the entire world [as something] amorphous and without a soul, like an unpolished mirror. And, the divine decree requires

> that [when] He prepares a place, that place receives the divine Spirit; this [reception] has been interpreted [in the Quran] as blowing [the divine Spirit] into it [i.e., into the amorphous thing]; and, this [blowing the divine Spirit] is none other than [the fact that] the amorphous form receives the aptitude to accept the eternally manifesting emanation, which has always existed and will always exist. (Own translation, see appendix D)

What does Ibn ʿArabī mean by 'mirror not yet polished' and 'divine Breath breathed into the amorphous thing'? To express it figuratively, comparing the world to 'a mirror not yet polished', al-ʿArabī means that the world was not yet perfected; something was missing, something to gloss and light this mirror, for one cannot see oneself in a dull and dark surface. For this purpose, he says, alluding to the Quran (15:29), God chose Adam and breathed His Spirit into him. Thus, Adam became the gloss and light of this mirror and the spirit of this form. Here, by 'breathing His Spirit into Adam,' is meant that God actualized in Adam the aptitude to receive the eternally manifesting emanation to the highest degree among all creatures. The Light made Adam the locus where He shone most brightly. Though one should note (Muwahhid, 2006), no manifestation in the created beings is an essential manifestation of the Real (p. 407). That is, although the beings host the manifestation of the divine Names and Qualities, they do not host the absolute, essential manifestation.

Lets us take a closer, and a more literal, look at the aforementioned quote (2006): 'The Real had (at first) created the entire world (as something) amorphous . . .' (p. 521). What does the author mean by 'amorphous'? It seems that the 'amorphous thing' is 'formless matter.' The term 'amorphous' literally means formless. The author does not seem to believe that the formless matter eternally existed; he says God created the formless matter, 'The Real had [initially] created the entire world [as something] amorphous and without a soul . . .' (*ibid*., p. 521). In the

line immediately following the above quote, he refers to this amorphous thing as ‘receptacle.’ By ‘receptacle,’ literally meaning ‘receiver,’ and comparing it to an ‘unpolished mirror,’ the author seems to mean that at this stage, God has not yet imposed form on this shapeless thing by having it receive definite universals.

In his discussion of a thing receiving divine Spirit, he alludes to Quran (15:29) when he says that this reception ‘has been interpreted as blowing into it’, i.e., into the amorphous thing. In this Quranic verse, concerning His creating Adam, God says, ‘I have proportioned him and breathed into him of My Spirit’, a verse that al-ʿArabī uses to illustrate the points he is making. The picture in this verse is that God first created Adam’s body and then breathed Spirit into him: first amorphous matter, then universals proper to human nature imposed on it. A picture that is in line with the myth of creation in Plato’s *Timaeus*, in which the Demiurge creates our world by imposing Platonic forms upon the pre-existing matter. On this understanding, Ibn ʿArabī is working with this classic model.

It is because of the divine Breath that the human being is divine. As al-ʿArabī (2015) says repeatedly (p. 132; p. 157; p. 174; p. 175), the human being is created in God’s image. In chapter twenty-seven, he (*ibid*.) elaborates this statement even further and says: ‘The world was created in God’s image, and the human was created in two images (the Real and the world) . . .’ (p. 178). It seems that he introduces this duality of images because he has in mind the internal-external aspects of human nature; his internal aspect being of the divine and his external aspect of the forms of the corporeal world.

Now, let us examine the ending part of the quote we started this section with (2006): Breathing into the amorphous thing, ‘is none other than’ the fact that ‘the amorphous form receives the aptitude to accept the eternally manifesting emanation,

which has always existed and will always exist.' What is this 'eternally manifesting emanation' and what is its role in the creation of the world? Let us clarify the vaguely expressed concept of 'emanation'. In his shrewd commentary, Muwahhid (*ibid*.) takes al-ʿArabī's concept of emanation (effusion, theophany, manifestation) to be two-fold (pp. 147-148): (1) 'The holiest emanation'. (2) 'The sacred emanation'. The former is 'the principle [sic.] manifestation, meta-cosmic, where the "immutable Essences" are Divinely "conceived" before their apparent projection in the relative existence' (Burckhardt, 1975, p. 10). And the latter is the emanation that projects the fixed entities unto the corporeal world. It should be noted that there is only one emanation, the nominal distinction is about different aspects of it. This is how the world was created. First, through the holiest emanation, God conceived the fixed entities; and second, through the sacred emanation, He manifested them as corporeal forms. Considering this process, instead of the corporeal world, some thinkers consider the world of fixed entities as the mirror which reflects the divine Names and Qualities, and they take the corporeal world as the image projected from it. Interestingly, these thinkers call the world of fixed entities 'the mirror of non-existence'.

2.7 Human nature

What is human nature? Two interpretational questions could shed light on this question: What is the relation between the human being and the world? What is the relationship between him and God? Ibn al-ʿArabī (2006) discusses human nature in two sections of chapter one: In the first section, he (pp. 522-523) introduces the human as a tripartite being. And, in the second section, he (*ibid*., pp. 527-529)

categorizes those three parts into external and internal aspects. First, he (p. 522) says, the human constitution

> has divine all-comprehensiveness: From one aspect, he goes back to the Divine, from one to the Reality of Realities [*ḥaqīqat al-ḥaqāʾiq*], and from another . . . to that which is required by the universal nature which encompasses all the receptacle of the world from top to bottom' (own translation, see appendix A).

This synthesis is the reason why Ibn al-ʿArabī calls the human being in his or her excellence: 'the Perfect Man'. According to Chittick (2019), the Perfect Man's 'fixed entity is identical with the Reality of Realities, his spirit with the unseen world, his soul with the imaginal world, and his body with the visible realm . . .' (p. 37).

The term 'Reality of Realities' (*ḥaqīqat al-ḥaqāʾiq*) that the author uses in the aforementioned quote is also referred to as Universal Reality and Mohammadan Reality. 'This Reality, says Chittick (*ibid*.,), 'is neither the Necessary Being nor the cosmos. In God it is the divine knowledge of all things, and as such is eternal; in the cosmos, it is the ever-changing totality that is temporal creation' (p. 25). It is this 'in God' aspect of the Reality of Realities—i.e., the divine knowledge of all things—that Ibn ʿArabī calls 'the holiest emanation' (2006, p. 522). That is (Chittick, 2019), 'God's self-disclosure to himself in himself, or the self-knowledge by which he knows every concomitant of his own infinity' (p. 25).

Second, Ibn al-ʿArabī (2006, p. 529) interprets the Quranic verse (38:75), where God says, I have created Adam with My two Hands, as a reference to the 'outward-inward' constitution of Adam: his exterior form being of realities and the forms of the world, and his interior of the divine Form (to be elaborated). The author (*ibid*., p. 522) acknowledges, however, that human intellect cannot understand this

all-comprehensiveness through reason. Only divine unveiling can grant this understanding.

In the author's (p. 522) understanding, the world in its entirety is considered a human being, namely: 'the Great Man'—not to be confused with 'the Perfect Man.' And, the individual human being is considered 'the Small Man'. To put it in Muwahhid's (p. 144) words, the former is an extended form of the latter, and the latter is a concise form of the former. The world is a detailed copy of the book of human existence and the human being is a concise copy of the cosmic book. The world is a macrocosm, and the human being is a microcosm. Now, both 'men' reflect the divine Names and Qualities but having an all-comprehensive constitution, The Small Man also reflects the forms of the world. The microcosm mirroring the macrocosm! Whatever there is in the world, there is in the Perfect Man; a possession because of which Ibn ʿArabī (2015) says 'The world was created in God's image, and the human was created in two images (the Real and the world) . . .' (p. 178).

The human being is the seal that the King uses to safeguard His treasure chests of existence (2006). It is exactly because of this responsibility that the Quran (2:30) calls him God's vicegerent on the earth. He is responsible for protecting the world (p. 523). For al-ʿArabī (*ibid*.), the relationship between man and God is like that of the pupil and the eye. The human being is the pupil whence the All-Seeing contemplates His creation. Interestingly, the Arabic word for 'pupil' literally means 'man inside eye'. It is in allusion to this meaning that he is named 'human' (p. 522).

Further in chapter one, in a very controversial passage, Ibn ʿArabī writes, 'the human being is [at once] created in time and eternal; and the being [created] and ever-living [perpetual; immortal] . . .' (p. 523). The critics argue: 'This remark is not only self-contradictory, but it also entails the "eternity" of the world; however,

because only God is Eternal, and the world—including human—is created in time, the thesis is flawed.'

This criticism stems from a gross misunderstanding of what al-ʿArabī means. Many mystics and philosophers have written extensively to dismiss this charge. Let us examine two such views (as cited in Muwahhid, 2006): (1) Qeyṣarī says eternity of the human being is true of his soul, not of his corporeal existence. Although we say that both the human soul and God are eternal and immortal, there is a distinction between them. The human soul's eternity is 'essentially' preceded by non-existence, in that its existence 'essentially' depends on God, but it is not the case with God. Here, it seems that Qeyṣarī is saying, essentially, there was no 'human' soul before creation! Breathing 'His' Soul into Adam, God created the 'human' soul. (2) Contrary to the previous commentator, Makkī argues that the human being's corporeal existence is created in time but his existence in the world of God's knowledge is eternal. To him, 'a being created perpetual and immortal' points to the human being's life in the afterworld. Which interpretation is closer to Ibn ʿArabī's view? Muwahhid, rightly, points out that the former interpretation is better because, if, as Makkī says, the human being's eternity is with regards to his existence in the world of God's knowledge, then, how is it that Ibn ʿArabī takes this eternity to be exclusive to the human being? Every corporeal entity dwelled in the world of God's knowledge before existence! How is, then, the human being different from the rest (pp. 152-153)?

2.8 The contingent and the Essentially Necessary

In chapter one, al-ʿArabī (2006) examines the relationship between the created in time and the Essentially Necessary (pp. 526-527): The created in time needs a

bringer into being because it is a possible entity. That which the created in time depends on should be essentially necessary, subsistent in itself, and needless of another for its existence. As the Essentially Necessary, it is God who brings the created in time into being. The created in time has an essential dependence on its source and this dependence necessitates that the former reflects the latter's form. Now, the world is created in time, and, as a contingent being, it depends on God for its existence. Having an essential dependence on Him, the world reflects God's Form. To know God, one needs to contemplate the world, where he has put his signs. I should point out, by the ending part of the last sentence, al-ʿArabī is alluding to the Quranic verses (41:53; 51:20-21) concerning the signs in the cosmos: 'We shall show them [humankind] Our signs upon the horizons and within themselves' and, 'Upon the earth are signs . . . and within your souls' (translated by Nasr). The world is a mirror that facilitates the recognition of The Almighty, and the human being is the best-reflecting part of this mirror! The recognition of God reaches its apex through human self-recognition. As the prophet of Islam says (as cited in Naraqi, 2012): 'One who knows himself, knows his Lord' (p. 28, own translation).[15] Ibn ʿArabī (2015) elaborates this matter further in chapter seven. He (p. 61) says, one's knowledge of God comes through one's knowledge of oneself and it is of two kinds: (I) One knows God through oneself. This is rational knowledge. Here, one gets from the effect to its cause. For instance, from one's kindness, one recognizes God's kindness, and from one's anger, one recognizes God's anger. (II) One knows God through oneself but from God's perspective. A revelatory knowledge through which one knows God through one's divine self. Here, one looks at the effect as the cause.

[15] Arabic: مَنْ عَرَفَ نفسَه فقد عَرَفَ ربَّه.

As Abrahamov (*ibid*.) puts it, ‘the second . . . makes one find God in his soul’ (p. 62).

Further, Ibn ʿArabī (2006) adds, ‘Because we know Him through ourselves, we describe Him with whatever we describe ourselves . . . and, He describes Himself to us through ourselves. When we witness God, we witness ourselves and when He witnesses us, He witnesses Himself’ (p. 527). Clarifying this quote, in chapter two, Ibn ʿArabī (*ibid*., pp. 536-537) says, in the same way that when one stands before a mirror, one does not see the mirror itself and one sees one’s form in the mirror, when one receives an Essential manifestation which appears in the mirror of the Real, one does not (and cannot) see the Real; one sees only his form. The Real is the mirror on which one sees oneself, and the individual is the mirror on which the Real sees His Names. The latter sentence makes clear what the author meant by ‘When we witness God, we witness ourselves and when He witnesses us, He witnesses Himself’. This is the highest degree of knowledge one can achieve; one cannot and should not bother trying to go further!

Some criticize Ibn ʿArabī for the following assertion (2006). Because we know Him through ourselves, we describe Him with whatever we describe ourselves and, He describes Himself to us through ourselves (p. 527). They argue, describing God with qualities that are human casts limitations on Him. Let us answer this objection.

For Ibn ʿArabī (*ibid*., p. 527), there is something that distinguishes individuals from one another, but there is also something that unites them. Had there been no such uniting factor, there would not have been unity in multiplicity. The thing that unites the individuals is the reality of existence: they all exist! And the thing that distinguishes them is the mode of existence: God’s Existence is essential;

however, the human being's existence is contingent. Even if God describes us with qualities, He describes Himself with, there is a difference between the qualities that describe us and the ones that describe Him, and this distinction concerns our need for Him for our existence (p. 527). As discussed before, when qualities apply to different entities, they do not undergo particularization and division. For instance, when we say, 'God is Generous' and 'human is generous,' although the same quality is applied to both God and humans, this quality is one. However, there must be something that separates God's Generosity from human generosity. This separating factor is their mode of existence: God has Essential Existence: He exists independently of another entity, but the human has a contingent existence: he owes his existence to an entity other than himself. It is because of this dependence that in Islamic tradition, the human being is referred to with the adjective 'the indigent', and God is referred to with the Quality: 'the Rich'.

2.9 The First and the Last

The Quran says (57:3), God 'is the First, and the Last, and the Outward, and the Inward . . .' (translated by Nasr). This is a very important verse for Ibn al-ʿArabī and the advocates of the doctrine of the unity of existence; however, because of superficial reading, it has also been the subject of some controversy. Let us examine the first part of this verse where the Quran describes God as 'the First' and 'the Last'. The superficial reader might say: 'The qualities "First" and "Last" are contradictory to each other. Also, God's primacy (antecedence: coming to existence from non-existence) indicates prior non-existence.' According to Ibn al-ʿArabī (2006), God's primacy should not be taken as that of the possible beings. His eternity and pre-existence deny His antecedence:

> Even if He is the First, primacy does not apply to Him. This is the reason it has been said [He is] the Last. If His primacy was [like] that of the limited existence [i.e., of the possible existence], then, as a Being limited to antecedence, He could not have been the Last, since there is no last possible thing; possible things are infinite and have no last [one]' (p. 527, own translation, see appendix E).

I think another way to consider the divine primacy is that His Essence is the Source of existence. He is called 'the First' because He is the Center whence existence originates.

Now, concerning the divine Quality 'the Last,' Ibn al-ʿArabī (*ibid*., p. 527), points out that God is called the Last because everything ascribed to the possible entities finally goes back to Him. Because, for the Andalusian thinker, all possible beings are emanations of one single Reality, everything will go back to its Source when the 'projection' ends. In creation, God gave us His Soul; put more accurately, He lent us His Soul and He will get it back! This is why He is called the Last.

Thus, concludes Ibn al-ʿArabī (p. 527), it is in His Essence that God is the First and the Last. 'He is the Last in the essence of (His) primacy, and He is the First in the essence of (His) being the Last.'[16] This quote is also in line with the Quran (2:156): 'Truly, we are from God, and to Him we return . . .' (translated by Nasr). But the author (2015) seems to contradict himself in chapter nineteen where he says, 'He is the First in essence, and the Last in form' (p. 134).

The Quranic verse (57:3) describing God as the First, and the Last, and the Outward, and the Inward is an approval on the doctrine of the unity of existence. I urge the critics to explain this verse without this doctrine. How can God have both these Qualities if there is no unity in existence? Saying that an entity is the first or the

[16] Arabic text: فَهُوَ الْآخِرُ في عَيْنِ أَوَّلِيَّتِهِ، وَ الْأَوَّلُ في عَيْنِ آخِريَّتِهِ.

last automatically entails the existence of two or more entities. One cannot describe an entity both as the first and the last unless there is unity. Similarly, if one describes God as 'the First,' one deprives himself of describing Him as 'the Last.' And, if one describes Him with both these qualities, then, one accepts two separate realities. A duality that casts a shadow on God's Oneness. Therefore, ignoring the doctrine of the unity of being is equal to acknowledging a reality alongside God.

2.10 The Outward and the Inward, the many and the One

Coming to the second part of the aforementioned verse (57:3), He is the Outward and the Inward, Ibn ʿArabī (2006) asserts, the Outward and the Inward, has also fabricated the world as the hidden and the manifest so that 'we understand the Outward from the manifest in ourselves, and the Inward from the hidden in ourselves . . .' (p. 527). But He is covered with dark veils, which are the natural bodies, and luminous veils, which are the subtle spirits. So, the world is its veil, and it cannot see its reality; it sees nothing but itself. Therefore, the Omnipresent always remains invisible and uncapturable by either intuition or senses.

The inner aspect of the vicegerent is also invisible. The human being's body is his veil; he cannot see his reality. In his astute interpretation of a Quranic passage where God says, 'I created [Adam] with My two Hands' (38:72-76), Ibn al-ʿArabī (2006) takes 'the two Hands of God' as a reference to the 'outward-inward' constitution of Adam. He (p. 529) writes, 'God created human's exterior form of realities and the forms of the world and his interior of His Form, and it is because of

this He said of him: “I become his hearing and his sight,” He did not say, I become his ear and his eye. He distinguished between the two forms’ (own translation).[17]

By ‘I become his hearing and his sight’, al-ʿArabī is alluding to part of a famous saying from the Prophet Muḥammad, where God says, liking an individual, I become the sight by which he sees, the hearing by which he hears, and the speech by which he talks. To elaborate, distinguishing the two forms, the outer and the inner, God says, I become the Perfect Man’s sight, hearing, and speech; He does not say his eye, ear, and tongue. The latter ones are physical, but the former ones are inner. God prizes one whom He likes by making him know his ‘self.’ From that moment on, it is He who sees through him, it is He who hears through him, and it is He who speaks through him. Thus, to know the Inward, we need to know our ‘selves’. Ibn ʿArabī also discusses this issue in chapter twenty-three (2015):

> He did not limit Himself to the faculties alone [hand, foot, etc.; he talked about the inner aspect too: sight, hearing, for instance] . . . . Thus, the essence of what is named ‘the servant’ is the Real. This does not imply the identification of the servant with the master, because the relationships (between the servant and God’s names) are differentiated on account of themselves, while the essence to which they refer is not differentiated, because in all relationships only His Essence exists. This one essence (alone) combines all relationships, references, and attributes. (P. 149)

The critic says, ‘assuming that God is the Outward and the Inward and that there is unity in existence, how does the multiplicity in the world not jeopardize God’s Oneness?’ This objection is that the doctrine of the unity of being is inconsistent with Ibn al-ʿArabī’s metaphysics in which he argues for God’s Oneness. The underlying

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[17] The keen reader will realize that, here, Ibn ʿArabī considers fixed entities ‘external’ because, although intelligible, these entities put on the mask of substantial existence and have worldly form. The Arabic text:
فَأَنْشَأَ صورَتَهُ الظّاهِرَةَ مِنْ حَقائِقِ الْعالَمِ وَ صُوَرِهِ وَ أَنْشَأَ صورَتَهُ الْباطِنَةَ عَلى صورَتِهِ تَعالى، وَ لِذالِکَ قالَ فيهِ «كُنْتُ سَمْعَهُ وَ بَصَرَهُ» ما قالَ كُنْتُ عَيْنَهُ وَ أُذُنَهُ: فَفَرَّقَ بَيْنَ الصّورَتَيْنِ.

assumption in this objection is that the intended unity is in the corporeal realm. The critic considers the corporeal separate from God, which is why she thinks that the multiplicity in this domain negates the unity in existence. One should realize that multiplicity is a relational matter. Consider, for example, an individual: Ali. He is a husband, a father, a brother, and a son. All these are relative. No matter how many relations one might assign to Ali concerning people around him, he is one! Similarly, no matter how many manifestations appear in the world, Essentially, 'God is One' (Quran, 112:1, translated by Nasr). Describing God as 'the Outward,' the Quran indicates that the multiplicity one sees in the world is the emanation of the divine Names and Qualities as His Outward Forms; and, describing Him as 'the Inward,' the Quran implies that all the emanations come from one Inward Source: the divine Essence. A Source about which 'one can only know "that it is" (the fact of its existence), not "what it is" (its quiddity)' (Chittick, 2019, p. 12), and (Nasr, 1964),

> a center in which all oppositions are united and which transcends all the polarizations and contradictions in the world of multiplicity. It is the center of the circle in which all is unified and before which the mind stands in bewilderment for it involves a *coincidentia oppositorum* which cannot be reduced to categories of human reason and cannot be explained away as a monism which annihilates ontological distinctions and which overlooks the transcendent position the center occupies vis-à-vis all the oppositions that are resolved in it. The Exterior . . . and the Interior . . . [are] apparent oppositions that are resolved in the Divine Essence which encompasses and contains all these polarities without being reduced to them. (P. 108)

Hence the Quranic verse (41:54), 'Truly He encompasses all things' (translated by Nasr). There is nothing in existence but the One. The Outward is He and the Inward is He. He manifests Himself to Himself, through Himself; He contemplates Himself through Himself; He sent Himself, to Himself, through Himself; He is the Knower,

the thing known, and the knowledge; He is the Intelligent, the intelligible, and the intellect.

As Muwahhid (2006) says, God's Oneness should not be considered 'oneness despite multiplicity,' rather this is 'oneness encompassing the multiplicity' (p. 309).

Ibn ʿArabī (*ibid*.) gives several examples to show that the multiplicity in nature does not contradict the oneness he defends. One example is in chapter four (p. 559). Nature is a platform witnessing birth and death, increase and decrease, and change and sameness. Despite this come and go, neither a new happening adds something to nature, nor the vanishing of something takes something away from it. Despite the diversity of forms, nature is 'one'. 'The world of nature', says Ibn ʿArabī (p. 559), 'is a multitude of forms in one mirror, nay, one form in multiple mirrors' (own translation).[18] Therefore, things in the world are both different from each other and the same, different concerning their apparent form, and the same concerning their essence. This is also the case with the Creator and the created. They are different and the same, different in form, same in essence. Ibn ʿArabī gives another example in chapter ten (2015). He asserts that the multiplicity of organs of the body does not defy a person being one, similarly, the multiplicity of the forms in the world does not deny the oneness of being (p. 74).

Interestingly, in chapter three, our author (2006, p. 552) states, realizing that the One is manifested in multiple forms brings about bewilderment. A perplexity that makes one move to find the truth about this matter. The question is, he asks, what kind of movement is the best for this purpose? In moving towards the One, if one follows a linear path, one has set in one's mind a beginning and an end; however,

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[18] Arabic text: فَعالَمُ الطَّبيعَةِ صُوَرٌ في مِرْآةٍ واحِدَةٍ؛ لا، بَلْ صورَةُ الواحِدَةُ في مَرايا مُخْتَلِفَةٍ.

warns the author, because in such a path one has a target in mind, it follows that the ending point is imagined, determined, and restricted. Ibn ʿArabī believes, searching for the One, the true movement of bewilderment is circular. A path that has no beginning and no end. And, having no end, such a movement has no imagined target, no restriction, and no threshold for perfection (the reader now has a better grasp of Rūmī's whirling dance and what it represents!). This is why, says Ibn ʿArabī there, the prophet Muhammad prayed: 'God, increase my bewilderment in You.' In a circular movement, the farther one gets from the starting point, the closer one gets to it: The end is the starting point. The perplexed searcher can walk only when the divine light is cast on his path—in allusion to the Quranic verses (2:19-20); he stops when this Light fades away and darkness spreads; and, this is the point where bewilderment starts again. In search of the One, arriving at the ending point, one realizes that he was searching for himself!

2.11 The Real's permeation in the world

In chapter one of *The Seals of Wisdom*, Ibn ʿArabī (2006) introduces a passage where the title 'the unity of being' feels most appropriate (p. 529, own translation):

> The Real is in every existent in the world to the degree that the reality of that existent requires. . . . if the Real did not pervade the existents by His Form, the world would not exist, similarly, if there were no universal intelligible realities, no determining rule would have appeared in the corporeal entities. (See appendix F)

Clarifying this passage, Abrahamov (2015) points out, the author seems to say, for the world to exist, it, primarily, needs the divine Form (Spirit) and, secondarily, the fixed entities (p. 26). It should be noted that by 'The Real is in every existent in the world to the degree that the reality of that existent requires', our thinker means that

God is manifested in every existent in the world, but this emanation is in direct proportion to the capacity and aptitude of the fixed entity of each existent to receive it.

God's penetration in the world's texture has Quranic roots as well. For instance, the Quran (2:15) says, 'To God belong the East and the West. Wheresoever you turn, there is the Face of God. God is All-Encompassing, Knowing' (translated by Nasr). It is because the divine Form is in the world's texture, 'Wheresoever you turn, there is the Face of God'. Of course, as al-ʿArabī (2006) puts it, given that the Face of God presents itself to the degree that the reality of the locus allows (p. 559), having an all-inclusive nature, the Perfect Man has the most beautiful Face of the Beautiful.

Let us examine an objection posed against Al-ʿArabī's ontology. Pointing, mostly, to al-ʿArabī's (*ibid*., p. 529) assertion, 'the Real is in every existent in the world', some accuse his doctrine of the unity of being of pantheism and panentheism. This objection is related to the relationship between God and the world. What is objectionable with pantheism and panentheism is that they are inconsistent with Ibn ʿArabī's metaphysics. Pantheism is the doctrine that equates the cosmos with God and holds a substantial identity between them. Panentheism, on the other hand, is the doctrine that holds that although God pervades the cosmos, it is not identical with and limited to it; it extends beyond the cosmos. Both these accusations are erroneous! As Nasr (1964) puts it, taking the doctrine of the unity of existence as pantheism is wrong because 'pantheism implies a substantial continuity between God and the Universe, whereas the Shaikh would be the first to claim God's absolute transcendence over every category, including that of substance' (p. 105). To expand on this point, pantheism holds that the cosmos is God but Al-ʿArabī holds that the

world is the manifestation of God's Names and Qualities, and even though these manifestations derive their essences from God, the divine Essence is transcendent concerning them. 'The world and the things in it are not God but their reality is none other than His; otherwise, they would be completely independent realities, which is the same as considering them to be deities along with Allah' (*ibid*., pp. 106-107). There is also another difference between the two doctrines under discussion. Unlike pantheism, according to the doctrine of the unity of being, God existentially differs from the cosmos. He exists necessarily and independently but the world exists contingently. Taking the doctrine of the unity of being as panentheism is also false. 'It is true that God dwells in things,' however, in the doctrine of the unity of being, 'the universe does not "contain" God' (p. 105), as it is attested in panentheism. Opposite to the accusation of pantheism and panentheism, in 'Treatise on Unity,' Ibn ʿArabī (as cited in Nasr 1964) writes:

> He is, and there is with Him no after nor before, nor above nor below, nor far nor near, nor union nor division, nor how nor where nor when, nor time nor moment nor age, nor being nor place. And He is now as He was. He is the One without oneness and the Single without singleness. He is not composed of name and named, for His name is He and His named is He . . . .
>
> Understand therefore . . . He is not in a thing nor a thing in Him, whether entering in or proceeding forth. It is necessary that thou know Him after this fashion, not by knowledge, nor by intellect, nor by understanding, nor by imagination, nor by sense, nor by perception. . . . By Himself He sees Himself, and by Himself He knows Himself. None sees Him other than He, and none perceives Him other than He. His veil is (only a 'consequence' and effect of) His oneness; nothing veils other than He. His veil is (only) the concealment of His existence in His oneness, without any quality. None sees Him other than He—no sent prophet, nor saint made perfect, nor angel brought nigh know Him. His Prophet is He, and His sending is He, and His Word is He. He sent Himself with Himself to Himself. (p. 107)

There is but the One. Although He has brought about multiplicity in the world, He is transcendent concerning them. The divine Reality encompasses the manifestations

without being reduced to them. To conclude, the unity of being is neither pantheism nor panentheism.

In chapter five, discussing the divine Wisdom of Abraham, Ibn ʿArabī (2006) gives another account of God's permeation in the world (pp. 563-568). In the Quran (4:125), Abraham is described with the Arabic term *Khalīl*. The primary meaning of this term is 'friend;' so, according to this meaning, God refers to Abraham as 'His friend.' However, Ibn ʿArabī takes the secondary meaning of this term: 'permeation.' According to him, Abraham was called *Khalīl* because God permeated him with all His Qualities. The relationship between God's Qualities and Abraham is different from the relationship between a place and that which is placed on it where there come about physical changes and a duality. Rather, this relationship is like the permeation of color and the colored where there is no duality and they are one. That which permeates another is immersed in it. Thus, the former is hidden, and the latter is manifest, and the latter nourishes from the former, like the water and the wool.

> If the Real is the manifest, then the created (human being) is hidden in Him, and as a result the created (embraces) all the names of the Real, His hearing, seeing, all His relationships and perceptions. If the created is the manifest, the Real is concealed and hidden in him; the Real, then, is the hearing of the created, his seeing, hand, foot and all his faculties . . . . (Ibn ʿArabī, 2015, p. 50)

2.12 Transcendence and imminence

In chapter three, Ibn ʿArabī (2015) examines God's transcendence and immanence to the world (pp. 36-43). He believes, one who holds only God's transcendence to the world is in error since, in doing so, one accepts God partially and limits Him. One who holds only God's immanence in the world is also in error since, in doing so, one restricts Him. According to the Andalusian mystic, to have a better understanding of

God, one should consider God as both transcendent to and immanent in the world. He adds (2015, p. 38), in the Quran, 'God said, "There is nothing like Him" (42: 11), thus making Himself transcendent, and "He is the All-Hearing, the All-Seeing", thus likening Himself to creation.' In chapter four, Ibn ʿArabī (*ibid*.) gives an interesting example which sheds light on the divine transcendence-immanence (p. 35):

> [N]umbers appear through (adding) 'one' to each number in a known arrangement. The 'one' brings the number into existence, and the 'one' divides the number. The number appears only through that which is countable. The countable can be either absent or existent: a thing may be absent with respect to the senses, but existent with respect to the intellect. In sum, there must be a number and that which is countable, just as there must be 'one' which creates the number and the number is increased by it. Each grade of number is a single reality, such as nine or ten, down to the lowest number and up to the highest infinitely. These numbers are not a sum (of particulars), but rather they are called a collection of ones.

To clarify, all numbers and that which is countable depend on the number 'one,' and they are created by it. Each number is a combination of ones, despite such combination, each is a unique reality that makes it distinct from the other. So, 'one' can have different faces despite being one. Numbers are repetitions of 'one'. Although number twelve, for instance, is different from, say, fourteen, both are a collection of ones, and their essence is the same. So, apparently, numbers are distinct but, essentially, they are the same: their essence is one. Therefore, negating a number is the same as affirming it. Put differently, when we negate a number's distinction and say that it is, essentially, a combination of ones, at the same time we affirm that number's uniqueness and distinction from other numbers. So, says Ibn ʿArabī (p. 47),

> Whoever knows that which we have established regarding the numbers, namely, that their negation is their very affirmation, knows that the transcendent Real is the same as the immanent created thing, even though the created differs from the Creator.

It is in this sense that God is transcendent to and immanent in the world. It is also in this sense that the created is separate from the Creator, yet the Creator is not separate from the created; and that the Creator is like the created, yet the created is not like the Creator. 'The statements that the Creator is like the created and the created is like the Creator refer to One Essence . . . . [I]t is (simultaneously) One Essence and many essences' (p. 47). Defining God and His relationship to the world is difficult because (p. 36)

> The Real is manifest in every created and comprehended thing, and He is hidden from all comprehension, except for the comprehension of the one who holds that the cosmos is His form and ipseity. The cosmos is His manifest name, just as He is in another sense the spirit of that which is manifest, and this spirit means His being hidden. The Real's relationship to the manifest forms of the cosmos is like the relationship of the spirit that governs a form. . . . The Real (in his manifest aspect) can be defined by every definition, for the forms of the cosmos are infinite and cannot be encompassed. The definitions of every form of the cosmos cannot be known but through the measure of the knowledge of the form of the cosmos that one possesses. Consequently, the definition of the Real is not known, for His definition cannot be attained except through the knowledge of every form, which is impossible. Therefore, the definition of the Real is inconceivable.

2.13 The man-God

Having said that, 'the Real is in every existent in the world' (2006), al-ʿArabī (p. 529) makes a second startling assertion: considering Adam's inward-outward constitution, 'he is both the Real and the created' (own translation).[19] That is to say, Adam is God concerning his internal form and he is human concerning his external form. Adam, and, thus, the Perfect Man, oscillates between the Creator and the created. In chapter seven, in a beautiful passage, Ibn ʿArabī (2015) writes, God calls unto the human:

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[19] Arabic text: . . . فَهُوَ الْحَقُّ الْخَلْقُ.

> You conceal me through Your Essence. I am known only through You, just as You are not . . . (but) through me. Whoever knows You knows me, and I am not known through (another), (just as) You are not known through (another, but through me). (pp. 60-61)

By 'You conceal me through Your Essence', the author seems to mean that the human being's essence is the veil between him and the Real.

2.14 The unique soul

Ibn ʿArabī (2006) cites the Quranic verse (4:1): 'O mankind! Reverence your Lord, Who created you from a single soul . . .' (translated by Nasr). And, building upon this verse, he (p. 530) says: 'So, Adam is the unique soul from which (God) created the humankind . . .' (own translation).[20] The Quranic commentators are also in agreement with al-ʿArabī that 'the single soul' ('the unique spirit') in this verse refers to Adam. In closer inspection, however, the question might be raised whether the 'unique soul' mentioned in this verse is that of Adam as an individual! The difficulty with this question is that al-ʿArabī does not answer it directly, and that one should rely on inference and interpretation, a method which might yield varying answers. Some argue that al-ʿArabī names the chapters in *The Seals of Wisdom* after 'the prophets.' Thus, chapter one is named after Adam as an individual. Others, like Muwahhid (*ibid*., p. 623), rightly, assert that this unique soul is not Adam the individual; rather, it is Adam as the form encompassing the divine manifestations and which occupies the highest rank in existence, i.e., the Perfect Man.

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[20] Arabic: فَآدَمُ هُوَ النَّفْسُ الْواحِدَةُ الَّتي خُلِقَ مِنها هذَا النَّوْعُ الْإِنْساني.

2.15 On writing *The Seals of Wisdom*

At the end of chapter one, concerning writing this book, Ibn ʿArabī (p. 530) says,

> I have brought in this book . . . to the degree which was assigned to me, not the entirety of what I know, since that neither a book could contain, nor the world . . . . I have deposited in this book, from the things that I have seen, and to the extent that was ascribed to me by God's Messenger [the Prophet of Islam] . . . . (Own translation, see appendix G)

He (pp. 531-532) adds, 'each Wisdom is a Word [i.e., a prophet] to whom that Wisdom belongs. Regarding the Wisdoms that I have brought in this book, I transcribed as much as was recorded in the Mother Book . . . . I obeyed the order and stopped where it was the limit' ascribed to me; 'I could not continue further even if I wanted to, because God would have prevented me . . .' (own translation, see appendix H). Muwahhid (p. 190) says, by the Mother Book, Ibn ʿArabī here is alluding to 'the world of God's Knowledge'. Interestingly, Ibn ʿArabī confesses that this book is not the result of discursive reason; rather it is the result of intuition. The second interesting point concerning this passage is that Ibn ʿArabī says: of my intuitions and experiences, I write only a small portion, as much as is assigned to me, not all of it, 'for that no book in the present world could contain.' By this impossibility, I believe, he does not just refer to the length of what is, or can be, written, he is alluding to the impossibility of expressing the divine secrets through human language. Long have mystics hidden their intuitions or have written them using symbols. The reason for such cryptic writing is that, for one thing, not everyone is prepared to know the secrets, and, for another, language cannot express higher-order understanding.

2.16 Conclusion

In this chapter, I examined Ibn ʿArabī's doctrine of the unity of existence in *The Seals of Wisdom*. According to the Andalusian thinker (2006, pp. 521-532), in the Creation, God penetrated existence by His 'Form,' which is to say by the emanation of His Names and Qualities. Despite the multiplicity of the fixed entities and substantial existents, there is only one Reality that exists in itself, and that Reality is the One. The multiplicity one sees is nothing but form and appearance; they do not exist as such; they derive their existence from a Being that is Absolute and Independent, i.e., from God. 'The Real is in every existent in the world to the degree that the Reality of that existent requires' (*ibid*., p. 529, own translation, see appendix F). The human being in his excellence, i.e., the Perfect Man, has an all-inclusive constitution because of which he is chosen as God's seal and His vicegerent on the earth. Owing to his outward-inward constitution, Adam, as a Perfect Man, is at once the Real and the created.

As Ibn ʿArabī tells us (p. 530), the content of this book is not the result of discursive thought, rather, it is the fruit of divine intuition. Though he uses discursive reason and philosophy to analyze, formulate, and explicate his intuitions to us. It is only the latter aspect of this work that is examined in this thesis. Based on my analysis of *The Seals of Wisdom* and its comparison with those of other scholars, the presentation of the metaphysical position in this chapter is credible and the doctrine echoed in it is rightly named: 'the unity of being'.

CHAPTER 3

PLOTINUS' DOCTRINE OF THE UNITY OF EXISTENCE

3.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I examine Plotinus' (204/5-270 C.E.) doctrine of 'the oneness of being', more precisely, the doctrine of the One, reflected through his theory of emanation, in *The Enneads*. I focus on the unity of the soul with the One in *Enneads* III, IV, V, and VI. In Plotinus' cosmological doctrine, there are three principles that he (1964)[21] calls the primal hypostases: the Soul, the Intellect, and the One (V, 1, 10, p. 102). Each level of existence needs a higher degree of unity than what it has to act as its organizing principle. The corporeal entities need the unity of the Soul, this third hypostasis, in turn, needs the higher unity of the Intellect, and this second hypostasis needs the unity of the One. The Soul and the Intellect, and thus all levels of existence, emanate from the One (VI, 9, 9, pp. 84-86). Furthermore, descending from the world above and distracted with the trivial things here below, the human soul has forgotten its true value and the things of real worth. But the soul can change its direction back to the higher world by awakening to two facts (V, 1, 1): (1) The low value of the things in the lower world, and (2) the high value of its nature and status (pp. 91-92). Realizing this, the soul starts its ascent back to the One by an inward retreat—an inward journey that makes it clear that Plotinus's cosmology rests on psychology and introspection. The soul travels through the three primal hypostases. First, it rises to the Soul, from there to the Intellect, and, finally, to the One (V, 1, 10,

[21] *The Enneads* was compiled and edited by Plotinus' chief student, Porphyry (234-305 C.E.)—who went farther than just editing this work and re-arranged the chapters entirely as he saw fit! Citing this work, (V, 1, 10, p. 102), for example, means *Ennead* five, treatise one, section ten, page one-hundred and two.

p. 102). Reaching the One, the soul attains unity, gets to perfect at-oneness with It, and 'ones' with It (VI, 9, 10-11, p. 87). In this chapter, demonstrating my reasons, I conclude that the metaphysical position of the doctrine of the unity of existence in Plotinus's *Enneads* is credible from a philosophical standpoint.

3.2 The three primal hypostases

The Plotinian primal hypostases are the One, the Intellect, and the Soul, respectively. As its organizing principle, each level of existence needs a higher degree of unity.

> Things depend upon unity to be individual things . . . . Thus, the organization, beauty, and order of both nonliving and living things [in the corporeal world] cannot occur simply by themselves. Accounting for them requires a higher degree of unity—namely, soul. . . . Soul's organizing principle, in turn, Plotinus supposes, must be the more intensive unity of intellect, where unity and multiplicity are immediately reflected in each other. [Because of the dual nature of the Intellect,] There must be a purer, simpler unity beyond intellect, namely the One. (Corrigan, 2005, pp. 25-26).

Why does each superior hypostasis produce another as its offspring? According to Plotinus (1964), 'everything, as existing, necessarily produces of its own substance some further existent dependent on its power and image of its existence' (V, 1, 6, p. 98). This unfolding, says the author (IV, 8, 6), 'proceed[s] continuously until all things, to the very last, have within the limits of possibility come forth' (p. 68). 'What becomes perfect becomes productive. The eternally perfect is eternally productive, and what it produces is eternal, too, although its inferior' (p. 98). Thus, the first hypostasis, the One, 'without assent, or decree, or movement of any kind' (p. 97), produces the second hypostasis, the Intellect (Intelligence; Spirit). The Intellect is the One's alike and shares many of Its features. Being the image of the One and the second in perfection, the Intellect produces the third hypostasis: the Soul. 'The

Soul is word and deed of The Intelligence just as The Intelligence is word and deed of the One. But in the Soul the word is obscure,' as Plotinus puts it, 'for The Soul is only an image of The Intelligence. Therefore, the Soul turns itself to The Intelligence,' out of need, 'just as, to be The Intelligence, it must contemplate The One' (p. 98).

Plotinus asks there, given that the One is not an intellectual principle, how does It produce such a principle—i.e., the Intellect? To which he answers, 'In turning towards itself the One sees. It is this seeing that constitutes The Intelligence.' Put differently, the One contemplates Itself, and, thus, it produces the Intellect. Furthermore, the latter contemplates the One, and, thus, it produces the Soul. And, the third hypostasis contemplates the Intellect, and, accordingly, it produces the corporeal entities (to be discussed). In this begetting, the One and the Intellect remain unchanged, but the Soul is altered; that is (V, 2, 1), 'Contemplating its source it [the Soul] is filled and "goes out" . . . and begets its own image: Sense and . . . Nature' (p. 107). Plotinus there adds,

> The Soul's going out seems to extend even to the vegetal level. In one sense it does extend that far for the life of growing things is its province. But it does not go out wholly onto the level of vegetation; it is there solely in the sense that . . . it is the producer of an existent other. Its higher part (its own intelligence, to The Intelligence akin) continues in untroubled self-possession.

3.3 The divine emanation

How does the One produce the hypostases? According to Plotinus, Intellect, Being, and Soul emanate from the One (VI, 9, 9, p. 84). They are 'the One and yet not the One.' That is, 'They are The One because they are from The One. They are not The One because The One abides within itself in giving them existence' (V, 2, 2, p. 108).

What happens to the One in emanating these entities? Because the One is not a material mass, it does not lessen as a result of this emanation (VI, 9, 9, pp. 84-85). Is this emanation continuous or intermittent? The divine emanation is not intermittent. The One 'does not bestow its gifts at one moment only to leave us again; its giving is without cessation' and continuous (p. 85). The divine emanation flows hierarchically, from the One to the Soul, down to matter, and the lower the emanation reaches, the less real it gets. The entities of the lower realms are copies and imitations of the ones in the higher ones (V, 1, 6, p. 98). Because of His emanation, the One is present in the world. A presence about which Plotinus says, 'I'm trying to make whatever is divine within me rise back up to whatever is divine in the universe' (as cited in Hadot, 1998, p. 110). And a permeation because of which he considers the human beings as living temples 'in which the divine presence can manifest itself' (*ibid.*, p. 45). Owing to this mentality, Plotinus (1964) says, 'Nothing hinders anything from sharing in the Good to the extent it is able' (IV, 8, 6, p. 68). He is not specific, however, as to what this 'extent' is according to which things share in the One and how each entity is 'able' to determine this extent.

Next, Plotinus makes a puzzling statement (cited in Corrigan, 2005). He (p. 127) says, 'In being filled with its vision of the One, the Intellect itself comes to be . . . and this fullness in intellect is ultimately the cause of intellect's giving birth to soul.' What does Plotinus mean by 'filling' and 'being filled'? Corrigan, rightly, points out, by 'filling' and 'being filled,' Plotinus seems to refer to 'desire'.

> The dialectical movement toward being, or the good, especially for discursive thought, is never simply accomplished. Even intellect . . . is 'always desiring and always attaining' . . . . he [Plotinus] strikingly uses discursive language of intellect's being or becoming 'most what it is' to emphasize not only the limitations of language but the eternal trajectory of desire, which starts in fullness and ends in fullness but without satiety . . . . (*ibid.*, p. 129)

Contemplating the One, the Intellect is filled with desire and then goes out when it begets the Soul.

An objection posed against Plotinus' cosmology is this. According to Plotinus (2005), the nearer we are to the One, the more we are (p. 128). Corrigan (*ibid*.) claims that there is a problem here, namely, the problem of degrees of reality. He asks, what does Plotinus mean by 'the more we are'? 'How can one exist or be a human being more or less? . . . Either we exist or we do not; there is no in-between' (pp. 127-128). The underlying assumption in this objection is that Plotinus' remark concerns a binary possibility of existence. I think Corrigan's assumption is erroneous. In his so-called problem of degrees of reality, saying that 'Either we exist or we do not' he thinks in a binary way about existence. But this is not what Plotinus seems to have in mind when he says, the nearer we are to the One, the more we are. By this remark, he seems to be saying that the nearer we are to the One, the more our potentials are achieved and actualized. In the corporeal world, we have a limited number of actualized potentials. Rising to the Soul, more of these hidden gifts would flower. And, this actualization increases even more in the Intellect, in which, beings are, as Plotinus tells us, mutually inclusive and ever-present, potentials we lack here below because we are far from the One (V, 9, 6, pp. 51-54; V, 1, 4, pp. 94-96).

3.4. The Soul

The Intellect is the image of the One and the Soul is the image of the Intellect. Although because the latter image occupies a lower level of existence compared to the former, it is less vivid. The Soul's higher part contemplates its maker, and doing so, according to Plotinus (1964), 'it possesses the object of its contemplation within itself, as its own, and it is then wholly active' (V, 1, 3, p. 94). Its lower part manages

the lower world.[22] When the Soul contemplates itself, it preserves itself (*ibid*., IV, 8, 3, p. 65).

> The cosmos is like a net thrown into the sea . . . . Already the sea is spread out and the net spread with it as far as it can . . . . Because it has no size, The Soul's nature is sufficiently ample to contain the whole cosmic body in one and the same grasp. . . . The cosmos extends as far as The Soul goes. (IV, 3, 9, p. 137)

The Soul, as the soul of the cosmos, flows into the 'tranquil mass', by which Plotinus (V, 1, 2) means the corpse of the universe, 'from all sides, streaming into it, spreading through it until it is luminous.' The Soul's animating omnipresence 'gives value to a universe that before was no more than an inert corpse . . . darksome matter and nonbeing . . . . It is through the power of the Soul that this world of multiplicity . . . is held within the bonds of unity' (p. 92).

> The Soul imparts unity to all things in producing, fashioning, and disposing them. . . . The Soul makes each being one by looking [, through the mediation of the Intellect,] upon The One, just as it makes man by contemplating the Idea, Man, effecting in man the unity that belongs to Man. (VI, 9, 1, pp. 73-75)

Does the Soul walk into the sensual world?! No! The Soul contains individual souls. Having created the cosmos, the Soul makes individual souls responsible for governing each part of it (IV, 3, 6, p. 132). Souls dwell at the lowest level of the intelligible realm, and from there they contemplate the higher world—a contemplation which, unlike that of the Soul, is intermittent—and control the lower world.

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[22] It is worth noting that according to Plotinus (1964), 'The Soul governs the bodily not by discursive reasoning, as we do, but by intuition . . .' (IV, 8, 8, p. 70).

Having a close look at the aforementioned remarks, it seems that Plotinus contradicts himself. He states, (I) the Soul's animating omnipresence 'gives value to a universe that before was no more than an inert corpse . . .' (p. 92). And, (II) Having created the cosmos, the Soul makes the individual souls responsible for governing each part of it (p. 132). Here lies the contradiction: If the Soul animates the inert corpse of the universe, it means that the corpse already existed. If so, then, why does he (p. 132) say that the Soul created the cosmos? I'm not denying that in the Plotinian cosmology, the Soul creates the sensual world, I am just pointing out that his language is not accurate. Is this a two-step process, that the Soul first creates the world like a corpse, and then gives it life? It is not specified!

As to make his discussion of the Soul more understandable, Plotinus (VI, 9, 8) says, 'as we have a part of our being contained in the body, we are like a man whose feet are immersed in water while the rest of his body remains above it.' He adds, 'Raising ourselves above the body by the part of us that is not submerged, we are, by our own center, attaching ourselves to the center of all' (pp. 83-84).

Let us now examine the relationship between the Soul and individual souls more closely. Given that souls constitute the Soul, is it right to say that souls are 'parts' of the Soul? No! Although Plotinus uses the term 'part,' he does not mean that the Soul is broken into smaller 'parts.' To our author (IV, 3, 2), 'souls are all alike and complete. Then it is evident that The Soul is not divided as quantity is divided. . . . The Soul is not broken up into parts'; the Soul 'ought to be everywhere the same, everywhere entire, one, and present in many beings at one and the same time' (p. 129). Additionally, the Soul has differing functions in different parts of the cosmos. Its function differs concerning, for example, different bodily organs, like

those of hearing, seeing, and smelling. But ‘it cannot be said that the part of the soul that is concerned with seeing is different from that concerning with hearing’ (p. 130).

What is the relationship between souls and bodies? The depth of the descent of souls relates to the entity it belongs to (IV, 3, 12). Compelled by the natural principle managing it, each soul

> descends into a body made to receive it and conformed to its own inner disposition. Each is transported into the body with which it has the greatest resemblance, one into the body of a man, another into the body of a beast, for each one is different. (p. 141)

How does a soul manage a living thing? Well, ‘at the appropriate time it stirs and brings forth each part,’ effecting in the sensual world ‘new impulses, new flowerings. The soul of a tree governs it, and every incident of its growth is according to a schedule determined in advance’ (IV, 3, 13, p. 142). What is this schedule according to which a soul manages a living thing? Does each being have a fixed destiny? If so, the problem of free will surfaces here, a problem which the author leaves unexamined.

3.5 The Intellect

Why should there be an Intellect, is the Soul not enough? According to Plotinus (V, 9, 4), the Soul is a changing entity. For it to exist, there must be something unchanging and prior. Also, the Soul is in the sensual world; there must be an entity outside this world on which the Soul depends. The Soul’s begetter, its form-giver, prior, and superior is the Intellect (pp. 49-50).

What is the nature of Intelligence (Intellect)? Plotinus (V, 9, 5) tells us, ‘The Intelligence . . . must be understood not as intelligence in potency or intelligence

evolving . . . but as intelligence in actuality and for all eternity' (p. 50). The Intelligence (III, 8, 11) 'is a sort of seeing, that is, a seeing that is active. . . . As our seeing needs the realm of sense for its actualization and perfecting, its [the Intelligence's] seeing needs' the One (p. 174). Furthermore (V, 1, 4), unlike the Soul, whose action is successive and intermittent, the Intellect contains everything in an unaltering identity, having no past, nor future, in an eternal present (pp. 94-96). The Intellect 'does not acquire thoughts; it has thoughts of itself. It thinks of itself and by itself;' that is to say (V, 9, 5), 'it is its thoughts. Were its thoughts a reality other than itself, its own reality would not be the objects of its thinking and it would be in potency and not in act' (p. 50). In other words, the Intellect is both the subject and the object.

What is the relationship between the Intellect and Being? The Intellect's 'abiding with The One constitutes it Being; its contemplating The One constitutes its being Intelligence;' and, 'because it abides with The One in order to see, it becomes—at one and the same time—Intelligence and Being' (V, 2, 1, p. 107). 'The Intelligence gives existence to Being in thinking it. Being, by being object of thought, gives to The Intelligence its thinking and its existence. . . . The Intelligence and Being exist simultaneously and together and never apart' (V, 1, 4, p. 95).

Plotinus quotes *Timaeus* of Plato, 'Spirit [Intellect: *νοῦς*] sees the Ideas which dwell in real being' (as cited in Inge, 1918, p. 40). From Plotinus' standpoint, what does Plato's 'real being' refer to? Inge (*ibid*., p. 40) points out, according to Plotinus, by 'real being' Plato means 'the spiritual world' (*τὸ νοητόν*, *τὰ νοητά*).[23] That is,

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[23] Although Inge (1918, p. 38) uses *τὰ νοητά* interchangeably with *τὸ νοητόν*, both referring to 'the spiritual world,' at times he uses *νοητά* referring not to the spiritual world but to the entities dwelling in it, i.e., the intelligibles. For example, he (*ibid*., p. 44) quotes Plotinus saying, 'The *νοητά* existed before the world [of sense]; they are the archetypes of sensible things, and they constitute the true being or reality of Spirit.'

through spiritual perception, the Intellect sees the Ideas in the spiritual world—which is, for both Plato and Plotinus, the real world. However, Plato, and, following him, Plotinus does not mean that the Ideas are external to the Intellect. 'If they were,' says Inge there, the Intellect 'could only possess the images of them, not the Ideas themselves . . . .' The Intellect and the intellectual world are distinguishable yet not separable. 'Plato, when he says that *νοῦς* sees *νοητόυ*, means that it possesses them in itself. The *νοητόυ* is *νοῦς*, but *νοῦς* in a state of unity and calm . . . . In contemplating it, it becomes like it . . . . It is in one aspect *νοῦς*, in another *νοητόυ*' (p. 40). As Inge (p. 41) puts it:

> 'Spirit, the whole of reality (=*τὰ νοητά*), and truth are one nature.' Yet the relation between them is not bare identity. 'The perceiving Spirit must be one and two, simple and not simple.' That is to say, if *νοῦς* and *νοητόυ* were diverse, they could not come together; if absolutely one, there could be no thought.

Let us move on from this matter. Souls contemplate the One through the Intellect, since (1964) 'by hypostasis is hypostasis seen . . .' (VI, 9,11, p. 88). One might ask, given that the One is beyond the Intellect, how does the Intellect reach the One? O'Brien (1964) answers this question this way:

> There are, according to Plotinus, two capacities of the intellect: *to noein*—the ability to act as intellect, by which in 'possession of its faculties' it beholds what is within it; and *to me noein*—the ability not to act as intellect, by which 'inebriated' and outside itself it attains to what is beyond it. (p. 22)

The Intellect contemplates the One, not as Intellect that reasons but as Intellect inebriated by love.

3.5.1 The individual intellects

Within itself, the Intellect contains many individual intellects (‘*νοητά*). The Intellect ‘is one and many’ (IV, 8, 3, p. 65). It perceives the individual intellects ‘as in itself and as itself’ (V, 9, 5, p. 50). What is the nature of these intellects? According to Plotinus (as cited in Inge, 1918), ‘The *νοητά* existed before the world [of sense]; they are the archetypes of sensible things, and they constitute the true being or reality of Spirit’ (p. 44). The particular intellects are not in space, because they do not have magnitude. As Plotinus (V, 9, 5) tells us, ‘They are not prior to it [the Intellect]. They are not after it. They all subsist in themselves without end, undergoing no change or decay. It is for this reason that they are real’ (p. 50). In the Intellect (V, 9, 10) ‘All is essence . . . for every real being must actually be and not just possible to be’ (p. 54). Sensual beings, on the other hand, are not real; their existence is contingent; they derive their existence from the individual intellects dwelling in the Intellect.

Let us re-consider the remarks where Plotinus says, the intellects are not prior to the Intellect (p. 50). Later, he contradicts himself when he (V, 9, 7) says, ‘The object of intellection must exist before there is the act of intellection. If it did not, how would the Intelligence come to know it?’ (p. 52). Now, the act of intellection exists as long as the Intellect exists. If the objects of intellection—i.e., the intellects—existed before the act of intellection, then, those objects existed before the Intellect itself. A statement that is contradictory with the writer’s saying that intellects are not prior to the Intellect.

Plotinian intellects are the sources of direct and immediate knowledge. Reaching the intelligible realm, the soul contemplates the residents therein. But acquiring knowledge in that realm is different from what the soul has to suffer in the corporeal world. Here below, to get knowledge, the soul has to go through the step-

by-step path of discursive reason. In the Intellect, however, the soul acquires knowledge directly and all at once. To clarify this acquisition, let us consider this example. In the past, instead of using letters, words, sentences, and arguments, people used 'hieroglyphs' to share their intended pieces of information. Through this method of communication, instead of lengthy and wordy arguments, one could express oneself immediately and all at once. Consider this example: 'The sun is a planet. It is large, round, and yellow. This planet is the source of light and heat for the stars and other planets around it—the source through which we experience the day and night, and different seasons here on earth.' Now, all this information can simply and immediately be expressed by a hieroglyph, a picture that is capturable at one glance. Intellects are like hieroglyphs. Contemplating them, the soul grasps everything about them directly and all at once (Hadot, 1998, p. 40).

Next, in a puzzling statement, Plotinus (V, 9, 8) says, if thought in the Intellect 'is thought of an object interior to' Intellect, then 'the interior object is form and form is Idea' (pp. 52-53). Clarifying this remark, Inge (1918) says, 'so far as every thought in Spirit is also an eternal Form of being, all the thoughts of Spirit are Ideas' (p. 56). That is, the individual intellects are 'Ideas.'

What is the relationship among the intellects, and between the intellects and the Intellect? According to Plotinus (1964, V, 9, 6), beings in the Intellect exist mutually inclusively. That is, they are one yet separate, one in that the *νοητά* are none other than the *νοῦς* and separate in the sense that each *νοητά* has distinct features. Multiplicity and oneness of the *νοῦς* are similar to those of branches of knowledge. Different branches are one under the umbrella of knowledge, yet they are distinct in that each branch has a particular domain to which it is directed (pp. 51-54). 'In this way, but even with greater unity, The Intelligence is every one of the beings and not

every one of the beings at the same time because each of the beings is a distinct power' (*ibid*., p. 51).

The intellects are not 'parts' of the Intellect. As Inge (1918) says, 'They exist "in" each other; each is the whole under a particular form. The universal is implicit in the particular. . . . They are not separated in the slightest degree from each other . . .' (p. 62). He (*ibid*.) adds, the Intellect is the totality of intellects 'in actuality . . . and each of them potentially . . .' (p. 82).

3.5.2 The self, consciousness, and presence

For Plotinus, the human self has different levels. Our true self dwells in the Intellect. As Hadot (1998) puts it, 'Our "self" extends from God to matter, since we are up above at the same time as we are down here on earth'; our true self, this self in God, 'is our "self" within divine Thought . . .' (p. 27). He there adds, 'when', through contemplation, 'we identify ourselves with this self, we identify ourselves with divine Thought itself . . . .'

One may ask, why are we not aware of the activities of our true selves? Plotinus (1964, V, 1, 12) answers, while we are in this world, 'Such activities are known only when perceptible by sensation.' Otherwise 'they are not communicated to the entire soul and thus we are not conscious of them' (p. 103). 'Consciousness is a point of view, a center of perspective. . . . [I]n order for a psychic activity to be "ours," it must be conscious' (Hadot, 1998, p. 29). Moreover, says Hadot (*ibid*.), to be conscious of the higher part of ourselves, our self should coincide with consciousness:

> Consciousness, then—and along with it our "self"—is situated, like a median . . . between two zones of darkness, stretching above and below it: on the one

> hand, the silent, unconscious life of our "self" in God; on the other, the silent and unconscious life of the body. (p. 103)

We are aware of the activities of our higher part when they present themselves to the middle part. Thus, to be aware of them, we need to direct the middle part upward (29-30). The middle part, i.e., our 'consciousness', says Hadot, 'is a kind of mirror: it need only be polished and turned in a certain direction for it to reflect the objects that present themselves to it' (p. 30).

> [A]pprehension would seem to exist or to occur when the thought bends back upon itself and the activity which is the life of the soul is in a way reflected back just as in a mirror which has a smooth, bright, and still surface. . . . when this sort of thing in us [i.e., the mirror] in which images of discursive thinking and of intellect are reflected is still, they are seen and, in a way, like sense-perception . . . . But when this situation [i.e., the mirror] is shattered . . . discursive thinking and intellect think without an image and then there is intellection without imagination. (Plotinus, 2018, I, 4, 10, pp. 80-81)

How does the mirror of consciousness break? According to Hadot (1998), it breaks when it 'has become foggy and tarnished by our concern for terrestrial and corporeal things' (p. 31). The matter is not evil, but our preoccupation with the corporeal world is, in that it prevents the soul from reaching its true potentials. How does consciousness act and how is it different from the way our true self acts?

> [O]ur consciousness . . . requires us to split into two, for there must be a temporal difference—however infinitesimal—between that which sees and that which is seen. Consciousness is thus more of a memory than a presence. It is inexorably entangled up in time. All it can give us is images . . . . (Hadot, *ibid.*, p. 32)

Our true self, however, according to Hadot, acts differently. It acts 'in total presence, eternity and perfect simplicity' (p. 30), and, because it is in total presence when we reach our true self, we lose self-awareness and consciousness. As Plotinus says,

‘Consciousness tends to render more faint those very activities which it accompanies’, for example, reading and being conscious that one is reading, would slow one down. When such activities are not accompanied by consciousness, they are pure and more active (p. 33). Therefore, ‘The more intense an activity is, the less it is conscious’ (p. 33). If so, then, how can we raise ourselves to the spiritual life? Because we are conscious beings and split into two, ‘The only way . . . we can raise ourselves up to spiritual life is by a kind of continuous oscillation between the discontinuous levels of our inner tension’ (p. 33). That is, by oscillating between the unconscious life of our self, and the conscious life of our soul in the corporeal world.

3.6 The One

The doctrine of the One pictured in *The Enneads* is of great importance, and one should have a good grasp of it, not only to understand this thinker’s complex thought but also to comprehend the metaphysics of existence in general, since this doctrine has influenced the subsequent philosophical and theological works. In Plotinian cosmology, everything comes from a transcendent supreme principle—i.e., the One. Although Plotinus (1964) names ‘the strictly nameless,’ as he puts it (VI, 9, 5, p. 80), the One, he warns us about this usage (as cited in O’Brien, 1964, p. 18):

> It would be better not to use the word ‘one’ at all than use it here in the positive sense, for only confusion could come of that. The word is useful solely in getting the inquiry started aright to the extent that it designates absolute simplicity. But then even this designation must be promptly eliminated, for neither it nor any other designation can be applied to what no sound can convey, what cannot be known on any hearing. Only the contemplative knows it; and even he, should he seek to see a form, would know it not.

What is the One's nature? Is it identical to the Soul, Being, Intellect, existence, or essence? In what follows, Plotinus investigates these possibilities. (i) Is the One identical with the Soul? 'Each thing that is called "one" has a unity proportionate to its nature, sharing in unity, either more or less, according to the degree of its being' (*ibid*., VI, 9, 1, p. 74). Despite the multiplicity of the faculties it has, 'reason, desire, perception', to name some, the Soul 'has unity, but a unity received from another source' (p. 74). To elaborate, although it is a higher existence than sense objects, and, accordingly, it has a greater unity than them, the Soul is still subordinate to a higher existence—i.e., to the Intellect. Therefore, because of this subordination, the Soul is not identical to the One. (ii) Is the One identical with Being? Being has 'the form of being; the One is without form, even intelligible form' (VI, 9, 3, p. 77). Additionally (VI, 9, 2), Being contains all beings, and, thus, is composite. The One is simple, therefore, Being is not identical to the One (p. 75). (iii) Is the One identical with the Intellect? The essence of the Intellect is intellection, an activity that implies the duality of the thinker and the object of thought. The One, however, does not admit duality (VI, 9, 2, pp. 75-76). Additionally (VI, 9, 6), the One is not an intellective existence either. If It were, thinking would indicate that the One was ignorant of what It was thinking about. 'Excluded from' the all-knowing One 'are both thinking of itself and thinking of others' (pp. 80-82). Therefore, the Intellect is not identical to the One.

> As The One begets all things, it cannot be any of them—neither thing, nor quality, nor quantity, nor intelligence, nor soul. Not in motion nor at rest, not in space, nor in time, it is 'the in itself uniform,' or rather it is the 'without-form' preceding form, movement, and rest, which are the characteristics of Being and make Being multiple. (VI, 9, 3, p. 77)

Is the One identical with existence (iv) or essence (v)? According to Plotinus (O'Brien, 1964), both existence and essence are accompanied by determination. A thing that is determined is limited (p. 19). The One is not limited. Therefore, neither existence nor essence is identical to the One.

3.6.1 Knowing the One

How does the soul know the One? According to Plotinus (1964, VI, 9, 4), 'awareness of The One comes to us neither by knowing nor by the pure thought . . . but by a presence transcending knowledge' (p. 78). Not knowledge because knowledge implies the duality of the knower and known. 'When the soul knows something,' he says there, 'it loses its unity; it cannot remain simply one . . . . The soul then misses The One and falls into number and multiplicity.' If the soul sets aside knowledge (2018), then

> carried along in a way by the wave of the intellect, and in a way raised on high by it, puffed up in a way, he sees suddenly without seeing how. . . . The One is absent from nothing and from everything. It is present only to those who are prepared for it and are able to receive it, to enter into harmony with it, to grasp and to touch it, by virtue of their likeness to it . . . . Thus will The One be 'seen' as far as it can become an object of contemplation. (VI, 7, 36, p. 843; 1964, VI, 9, 4, p. 79)

It is difficult to 'see' the One even in this contemplation (*ibid*., VI, 9, 3): 'when the soul seeks to know' the One 'in its own way—by coalescence and unification—it is prevented by that very unification from recognizing it has found the One, for it is unable to distinguish knower and known' (pp. 76-77). 'When we wish to speak with precision, we should not say that the One is this or that, but revolving, as it were, around it,' says Plotinus (p. 78), 'try to express our own experience of it, now drawing nigh to it, now falling back from it as a result of the difficulties involved.'

Using discursive reason to speak about the One (VI, 9, 7), the purpose is to direct the seeker towards the vision, which is the only way to experience that presence transcending knowledge (p. 82). The writer there adds, 'If the mind reels at this, the One being none of the things we mentioned, a start yet can be made from them to contemplate it.'

To conceive the One, the soul should not be distracted by external things. Turning inward, it 'must forget everything, the subjective first and, finally, the objective. It must not even know that it is itself that is applying itself to contemplation of The One' (p. 83). In mystical experience (O'Brien, 1964),

> the mystic 'stands outside' himself. He has gone beyond the contingency of the ego and is fixed upon . . . something immovable that intimately penetrates the ego while infinitely transcending it. . . . [A] plenitude in which all the fumbling potentialities of the ego are luminously fulfilled, because these potentialities were never more than shadows of this substance, partial sharings in this pienitude [*sic*.]. (p. 24)

3.6.2 'The center of the soul' and unity with the One

In the fourth *Ennead*, in an autobiographical nostalgic moment, Plotinus (2018) writes:

> Often, after waking up to myself from the body, that is, externalizing myself in relation to all other things, while entering into myself, I behold a beauty of wondrous quality, and believe then that I am most to be identified with my better part, that I enjoy the best quality of life, and have become united with the divine and situated within it, actualizing myself at that level . . . . Following . . . this and descending from Intellect into acts of calculative reasoning, I ask myself in bewilderment, how . . . did I ever come down here, and how ever did my soul come to be enclosed in a body, being such as it has revealed itself to be, even while in a body? (IV, 8, 1, p. 512)

What is the nature of this retreat? As discussed before, the three primal hypostases are the Soul, the Intellect, and the One. These hypostases, Plotinus (1964) tells us, are 'in the very nature of things, they are also in us' (V, 1, 10), viz., soul, intellect, and center of the soul (p. 102). Let us see what Plotinus means by the center of the soul—an analogy that has been used heavily in philosophical and theological discussions after him. He (*ibid*., VI, 9, 7) writes, 'Self-knowledge reveals to the soul that its natural motion is . . . circular, as around some inner object, about a center, the point to which it owes its origin.' This point, the center of the soul, itself is not the principle that the soul should be seeking. The soul should seek the 'principle upon which all centers converge and to which, only by analogy . . . the word "center" is applied. The soul is not a circle as, say, a geometrical figure.' In using such terms, our 'meaning is that in the soul and around about it exists "the primordial nature," that it derives its existence from the first existence especially when entirely separate from the body' (pp. 83-84). We move around the One, always, but 'our gaze does not remain fixed upon The One.' But when we do, 'Then it is that, all discord past, we dance an inspired dance around it' (p. 84). The Plotinian center of the soul is the place-less 'point' where the soul meets the One. Like circles with different radii which have the same center while they coincide, but they have separate centers when they diverge. In the same way, the soul and the One converge through the center of the soul, though intermittently in this world, and become one; they separate when the centers part ways!

How, in Plotinus' view, does the contemplative unite with the One? The Egyptian thinker (VI, 9, 8) tells us because the circles and centers we are discussing are not geometrical, 'we are forced to say that the union of the intellective thinking being with its object proceeds by different means.' To elaborate, 'The intellective

thinking being is in the presence of its object by virtue of its similarity and identity, and it is united with its kindred with nothing to separate it from them.' Unlike the bodily, which are separated from each other by spatial distance, the incorporeal are separated by 'their own differences and diversities: when there is no difference between them, they are mutually present.' This is also true of the One; because it 'does not contain any difference, it is always present and we are present to it when we no longer contain difference' (VI, 9, 8, pp. 83-84).

Souls live a double life (IV, 8, 4): the intelligible and the sensible. But the degree to which they engage with either world differs. One who is occupied and allured by the corporeal world excessively loses touch with the higher world. A deprivation which Plotinus calls 'loss of wings' or 'chaining of the soul'. Prisoned in the material world, the soul becomes isolated and weak. One who is disinterested in the trivial things here below lives a contemplative life and enjoys the intelligible world and the entities it contains; perfect models of which the sensual entities are images and imperfections (pp. 65-66). So, why live such a life, when one can live a life with fully unleashed potentials? Why be occupied with shadows when one can (climb out of the Platonic cave and) see the luminous entities of which the corporeal entities are shadows?

Souls possess nostalgia and a desire for the intelligible life and for returning to the fatherland. The question is, 'how should souls make their return?' Through, Plotinus (V, 1, 12) tells us, a turning inward (pp. 103-104). 'Let The soul, taking its lead from memory, merely "think on essential being" and its shackles are loosed and it soars' (p. 66). A soar inward! Tune down the sensual and listen to the voice from within. What guides us through this inward retreat? The Soul (VI, 1, 3). 'Start your

ascent. You will not need to search long. Few are the steps . . . . Take as your guide . . . The Soul' (p. 93).

> Let him who can arise, withdraw into himself, . . . turn aside forever from the bodily beauty that was once his joy. He must not hanker after the graceful shapes that appear in bodies, but know them for copies, for traceries, for shadows, and hasten away towards that which they bespeak. . . . "Let us flee then to the beloved Fatherland." . . . The Father for us is there whence we have come. (I, 6, 8, pp. 41-42)

One cannot initially see the inward beauty (I, 6, 9, p. 42). Because for the soul, to *see* something is to be like it, to see the beauty inside, the soul should cleanse herself of the ugliness and dust she catches here below and decorate herself with virtue; to receive the divine light, she should shine from within. 'How can one see the beauty of a good soul?'

> Withdraw into yourself and look. If you do not as yet see beauty within you, do as does the sculptor of a statue that is to be beautified: he cuts away here, and smooths it there . . . until he disengages beautiful lineaments in the marble. Do you this, too. Cut away all that excessive, straighten all that is crooked, bring light to all that is overcast, labor to make all one radiance of beauty. Never cease 'working at the statue' until there shines out upon you from it the divine sheen of virtue, until you see perfect 'goodness firmly established in stainless shrine.' Have you become like this? (P. 42)

What does Plotinus mean by the ugliness of the soul?

> Ugliness of soul comes from its mingling with, fusion with, collapse into the bodily and material: the soul is ugly when it is not purely itself. It is the same as with gold that is mixed with earthy particles. If they are worked out, the gold is left and it is beautiful . . . . So also the soul. Separated from the desires that come to it from the body with which it has all too close a union, cleansed of the passions, washed clean of all that embodiment has daubed it with, withdrawn into itself again—at that moment the ugliness, which is foreign to the soul, vanishes. (I, 6, 5, p. 39)

What is the relationship between the contemplative and the object of the contemplation?

> When the contemplative looks upon himself in the act of contemplation, he will see himself to be like its object. He feels himself to be united to himself . . . he will experience himself as simple . . . . Actually, we should not say, 'He will see.' What he sees . . . is not seen, not distinguished, not represented as a thing apart. The man who obtains the vision becomes, as it were, another being. He ceases to be himself, retains nothing of himself. Absorbed in the beyond he is one with it . . . . (VI, 9, 10, p. 87)

The contemplative is absorbed into the One; he gets to 'perfect at-oneness' with it; he 'ones' with it. In this state, the contemplative is the image of the One. This is the end of 'the flight of the lone to the Alone'; this is the unity of the soul with the One (pp. 87-88). 'Such experience is hardly a vision. It is a seeing of a different kind,' it is 'a self-transcendence, a simplification, self-abandonment, a striving for union and a repose, an intentness upon conformation' (p. 88). Why does the soul quit this state? Because 'it has not yet entirely detached itself from things here below. Yet a time will come when it will uninterruptedly have vision, when it will no longer be bothered by body' (p. 86).

3.7 Conclusion

In this chapter, focusing primarily on the unity of the soul with the One, I examine Plotinus' doctrine of 'the oneness of being' in *The Enneads*. A doctrine that is more generally known as 'the doctrine of the One.' According to the Egyptian thinker (1964), to act as its organizing principle, each level of existence needs a higher degree of unity than what it has. An arrangement that forms the Plotinian three primal hypostases: The One, the Intellect, and the Soul. The corporeal entities need the unity of the Soul, the latter, in turn, needs the higher unity of the Intellect, and the

Intellect needs the unity of the One. The Soul and the Intellect emanate from the One (VI, 9, 9, pp. 84-86), a manifestation because of which the One is present in all levels of existence. Additionally, Plotinus points out the soul's need to get back to its source, the One, and he sketches its journey.

Interestingly, although Plotinus guides us towards the otherworldliness, his akin-ness argument—be good to see the Good—has positive worldly implications as well. The argument that the contemplative should decorate herself with virtuosity and goodness pushes one towards living ethically in this life. Plotinus' metaphysics promotes compassion and support towards all human beings (and no less the animals and Nature). Despite the differences in appearance, culture, and geography, all individuals are one. They are deployed in the game board of this life, one differently from the other—one as a king and the other as a beggar—for a purpose. Realizing this oneness, it falls upon all individuals to help one another in misfortunes and difficulties. Helping others is helping oneself because after all, we are all one. So, let us not be tricked, blinded, and carried away by the different roles and circumstances on this board!

In the end, as Plotinus tells us (*ibid*., VI, 9, 7, p. 82; VI, 9, 4, p. 78), using discursive reason in speaking of the One, the purpose is to direct one towards the vision. Thanks to the limitations of reason alone, the same approach is true of examining his work—*The Enneads*. He indeed does philosophy, but he does so only to illuminate and articulate his visions to the reader. It is only the latter aspect of this work—the presentation of his intuitions—that is examined in this thesis. I conclude, despite minor flaws, the presentation of the metaphysical position of the doctrine of 'the unity of existence' in Plotinus's *Enneads* is credible from a philosophical standpoint.

CHAPTER 4

CONCLUSION

4.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I compare Plotinus and Ibn al-ʿArabī's doctrines of unity or the One. Reading *The Enneads* and *The Seals of Wisdom,* one would realize, despite minor differences, there is a striking similarity between the two doctrines. One would also realize that al-ʿArabī is influenced by Plotinus. However, it should be noted, al-ʿArabī (2006) tells us that *The Seals of Wisdom* is not the result of discursive reason and thinking, this book is dictated to him (pp. 530-532). This, however, does not discredit the similarities of the two thinkers' doctrines. It would be no surprise that the same light that enlightened *The Seals of Wisdom*, might have shone upon *The Enneads* as well! In what follows, I discuss the similarities and differences between the two doctrines.

4.2 The Creation

Why did the One create the world? In the fifth *Ennead,* Plotinus says (1964), 'everything, as existing, necessarily produces of its own substance some further existent dependent on its power and image of its existence.' Thus, 'The eternally perfect is eternally productive . . .' (V, 1, 6, pp. 97-98). Additionally, in the third *Ennead,* speaking of contemplation, the writer asserts (*ibid*.):

> Generation is a contemplation. It results from the longing of pregnancy to produce a multiplicity of forms and objects of contemplation, to fill everything with reason, and never to cease from contemplation. Begetting means to produce some form and this means to spread contemplation everywhere. (III, 8, 7, p. 169)

Therefore, it is understood that the purpose of creation for Plotinus is twofold. From one aspect, the One created the world as a result of the pregnancy with perfection and eternal productivity. From another aspect, the One created the world, as he says in the passage above, to bring about 'the multiplicity of forms and objects of contemplation.'

In chapter one of this thesis, we discussed Ibn ʿArabī's (2006) understanding of the purpose of creation (details of which I will not repeat here). First, he (p. 526) says, God created the world for contemplation; second, for the perfection of knowledge and existence through both the eternal and non-eternal entities; and third, for bestowing His knowledge to the created. The first purpose Ibn ʿArabī (*ibid*.) presents will be our focus here. In chapter one of *The Seals of Wisdom*, he (p. 521) writes:

> The Real wished to see the essences of His Most Beautiful Names, which are infinite in number—or you could say He wished to see His Essence—in an all-comprehensive being, which, being qualified with existence, encompassed the Order of all the [divine] Names, [so that] in it He manifested his mystery to Himself. (Own translation, see appendix B)

The Real contemplated Himself in His Essence; however, He wanted an object on which to contemplate the Essences of His Names and Qualities; therefore, He created the world as a mirror for this purpose.

This assertion from Ibn al-ʿArabī is in line with Plotinus' (1964) remark that 'Generation is a contemplation. It results from the longing of pregnancy to produce a multiplicity of forms and objects of contemplation . . .' (III, 8, 7, p. 169). So, both thinkers believe that one reason the One brought about an array of entities was to have objects of contemplation.

4.3 The divine emanation

The reader by now understands that both Ibn al-ʿArabī and Plotinus believe that everything emanates from the One. Let us now examine the extent to which their views of the divine emanation are similar.

Considering the two authors' viewpoints on divine emanation, several conclusions and inferences can be made. First, both thinkers hold that all levels of existence, top to bottom, emanate from the One hierarchically, and the lower the emanation reaches, the less real the entities are; the entities of the lower realms are copies and imitations of the ones in the higher realms (Plotinus, 1964, V, 1, 6, p. 98; Ibn al-ʿArabī, 2015, p. 161). Concerning the latter point, Plotinus (*ibid.*), for instance, tells us that the Intellect is the image of the One and that the Soul is the image and less perfect version of the Intellect (p. 98). And, Ibn al-ʿArabī (2006) holds that the corporeal entities, for example, are expressions and imitations of the fixed entities, and the latter themselves are the forms of divine Names (p. 526).

Second, the two thinkers assert that everything is the One and not the One. According to Plotinus (VI, 9, 9, p. 84), Intellect, Being, and the Soul emanate from the One. They are the One and not the One! They are the One in the sense that they originate from it; they are not the One in the sense that 'The One abides within itself in giving them existence' (V, 2, 2, p. 108). And, for Ibn al-ʿArabī (*ibid.*), all entities are Him and not Him. They are Him in the sense that they are His manifestations, and they are not Him in the sense that they have borrowed existence and essence (pp. 526-529).

Third, both philosophers hold that the divine emanation is uninterrupted. Plotinus (VI, 9, 9, p. 85) tells us, the One 'does not bestow its gifts at one moment only to leave us again; its giving is without cessation' and continuous. Similarly, Ibn

al-ʿArabī (p. 521) asserts: having created the cosmos as something amorphous, through the divine Breath, 'the amorphous form receives the aptitude to accept the eternally manifesting emanation.' The One's giving 'without cessation' and 'eternally manifesting emanation' show that our thinkers believe in a continuous divine emanation.

Fourth, for both authors, because of the divine emanation, God is present in the world. According to Ibn ʿArabī (p. 529), 'the Real is in every existent in the world to the degree that the reality of that existent requires' (own translation, see appendix F). And, each part of the world is a locus that reflects the divine Names (p. 521). Similar to this, Plotinus says, 'I'm trying to make whatever is divine within me rise back up to whatever is divine in the universe' (as cited in Hadot, 1998, p. 110). He also has it that the human beings are like living temples 'in which the divine presence can manifest itself' (*ibid*., p. 45). Both authors have the same position, it is just that Ibn ʿArabī is speaking more figuratively than Plotinus. By 'reflection of the divine Names' the former author too is alluding to 'divine presence'.

Fifth, neither Plotinus nor Ibn al-ʿArabī's doctrine of unity is pantheistic. That is to say, neither one of our authors equate the corporeal world with God. The corporeal entities are emanations of the One, not the One Himself. These entities are imitations and images of the Entity that is transcendent concerning everything.

Despite these similarities, a difference is seen in Ibn ʿArabī's and Plotinus' explanations concerning the divine emanation. According to Ibn ʿArabī (2015), conceiving the fixed entities in His 'Mind,' God manifested them unto the corporeal realm, and this emanation happened through the divine Name 'the Light' (p. 70). For Ibn ʿArabī, says Abrahamov (*ibid*.), 'God's Light illuminates the fixed entities, and as a result of this illumination shadows appear.' And these 'shadows are the possible

things in the concrete world' (p. 73). Plotinus, however, does not speak of divine Names playing a role in emanation.

4.4 The Soul

How does the cosmos become alive? Both Plotinus and Ibn al-ʿArabī state that the Soul gives life to the corpse of the cosmos. According to Plotinus (1964), as the soul of the cosmos, the Soul flows into the 'tranquil mass', by which he means the corpse of the cosmos, 'from all sides, streaming into it, spreading through it until it is luminous.' The Soul's animating omnipresence 'gives value to a universe that before was no more than an inert corpse, . . . darksome matter and nonbeing . . .' (V, 1, 2, p. 92). In the same vein with Plotinus, Ibn ʿArabī (2006, p. 521) writes:

> The Real had [initially] created the entire world [as something] amorphous and without a soul, like an unpolished mirror. And, the divine decree requires that [when] He prepares a place, that place receives the divine Spirit; this [reception] has been interpreted [in the Quran] as blowing [the divine Spirit] into it [i.e., into the amorphous thing]; and, this [blowing the divine Spirit] is none other than [the fact that] the amorphous form receives the aptitude to accept the eternally manifesting emanation, which has always existed and will always exist. (Own translation, see appendix D)

God breathed His Spirit into the 'unpolished' and the incomplete corpse of the world and His Soul made the amorphous form alive. One should note here, unlike translators of Plotinus who use the term 'Spirit' interchangeably with 'Intellect,' but the term 'Soul' different from them, translators of Ibn ʿArabī's works use the term divine 'Spirit' interchangeably with the divine 'Soul.' From this discussion, it is clear that, for both thinkers, the Soul illuminated and rejuvenated the corpse of the cosmos.

Let us now consider this question: ‘What is responsible for different parts of the world?’ Plotinus (*ibid*.) says, having created the cosmos, (I) the Soul makes individual souls responsible for governing each part of it (IV, 3, 6, p. 132).

How about Ibn ʿArabī? For the Andalusian thinker (*ibid*.), existing intelligibly in God’s Knowledge, in one respect the fixed entities are the intelligible forms of the divine Names and Qualities, and in another, they are the essences of the corporeal entities (p. 526). Additionally (2015), ‘Each existent has from God only a single lord . . .’ (p. 59). That is to say (Abrahamov, *ibid*.), ‘Since each existent is the embodiment of a fixed entity, which in turn is a form of a specific [divine] name, . . . [each] existent is a servant of a specific name’ (p. 62). In other words (Muwahhid, 2006, pp. 388-389), ‘In al-ʿArabī’s world view, the Real relates to the created beings through His Names, and the created beings relate to the Real through their fixed entities.’ In one interpretation, the ‘created beings are the manifestations of the divine Names, and in another, they are God’s acts. God communicates with His acts through His Names.’ Thus, each ‘divine Name takes the lordship of the being in which It is manifested . . .’ (own translation, see appendix C). Put differently, (II) the divine Names are responsible for governing each part of the world.

In their face value, statements (I) and (II) seem different on what is responsible for each part of the world. (I) says it is individual souls but (II) says it is the divine Names. A close attention though shows that Ibn ʿArabī’s view is not different from that of Plotinus. Although Plotinus asserts that the Soul makes individual souls responsible for governing each part of the world, he also tells us that the Soul—and, hence, the individual souls—is the image of the Intellect, and it is by looking into the One through the Intellect that the Soul fashions the corporeal entities (VI, 9, 1, pp. 73-75). What this means is, although the individual souls manage each

part of the world, they do so according to their models, the individual intellects. The souls are hands of the intellects; therefore, it is more accurate to say that the intellects are responsible for each part of the world. And this is exactly what Ibn ʿArabī states (II). The fixed entities, which are the intelligible forms of the divine Names, are responsible for each part of the world.

A question raises here: If, according to Ibn ʿArabī, the fixed entities, as the intelligible forms of the divine Names, are responsible for governing each part of the world, what is then the mediate chain between the fixed entities and the corporeal entities? Although Ibn ʿArabī himself does not answer this question explicitly in *The Seals of Wisdom*, it can be inferred that the mediate term—as in the Plotinian cosmological doctrine—is the Soul. In other words, the divine Names manage the corporeal world through the mediation of the Soul.

4.5 The Intellect

Even a cursory reading of *The Enneads* and *The Seals of Wisdom* will tell the reader that 'the Intellect' Plotinus speaks of is Ibn ʿArabī's 'world of fixed entities,' and that there are striking similarities between them. For both thinkers, beings in the intelligible world are the timeless, shapeless, un-altering, mutually inclusive, and one-yet-separate essences of which the entities in the corporeal world come to be (Plotinus, 1964, V, 9, 6, pp. 51-54; V, 9, 8, pp. 52-53; V, 9, 10, p. 54; IV, 8, 3, p. 65; V, 1, 4, pp. 94-96; 1918, p. 44; Ibn ʿArabī, 2006, p. 526).

Despite these similarities, the two authors' thoughts differ in some cases. First, Plotinus tells us that the individual intellects are the essences of the corporeal entities dwelling in the Intellect (period!). Ibn ʿArabī acknowledges this definition, however, unlike Plotinus, he (*ibid*.) adds another dimension to the universals saying

that they are, in another sense, the intelligible forms of the divine Names and Qualities (p. 526). Second, Plotinus (*ibid*.) writes, 'if the Idea of man exists in the intelligible realm, there must exist there as well the Idea of reasoning man and of artistic man.' He adds, 'The Ideas will be of universals, not of "Socrates" but of "man"' (V, 9, 12, p. 55). For Ibn ʿArabī's, however, as we saw in chapter two, there are also fixed entities of particulars, say, of Socrates, in the World of God's Knowledge.

Other than the similarities concerning the content of the intelligible world—i.e., the essences—there is also an uncanny similarity in how the two authors outline the relationship between the intelligible and the sensual worlds. Plotinus writes, 'although wholly domiciled in the intelligible realm,' the Intellect 'influences things here below through the mediation of The Soul' (IV, 12, p. 141). Similarly, Ibn ʿArabī says, every external existent is the actualized form and expression of its fixed entity. Despite being intelligible, the fixed entities determine everything about the corporeal existents. The concrete existents are the actualized forms of fixed entities (p. 526).

4.6 The One

Both Plotinus (p. 21) and Ibn ʿArabī (p. 527) speak of an all-transcendent supreme Source from which everything starts and to which everything returns. Although there are slight differences, the One that they both speak of is the same. Let us see to what extent they are similar and different.

4.6.1 The soul's circular motion around the One and its bewilderment

According to Plotinus (VI, 9, 8), the soul moves in a circular way around an inner center, the place-less 'point' where all centers converge (pp. 83-84). Through the

center of the soul, we always move around the One, however, ‘our gaze does not remain fixed upon The One’, but when it does, ‘Then it is that, all discord past, we dance an inspired dance around it’ (p. 84). Speaking of the One, ‘we should not say that The One is this or that, but revolving, as it were, around it,’ says Plotinus (VI, 9, 3), ‘try to express our own experience of it, now drawing nigh to it, now falling back from it as a result of the difficulties involved’ (p. 78).

The difficulty and bewilderment in speaking of the One are also present in Ibn ʿArabī’s words. He (p. 552) says, realizing that the One is manifested in multiple forms brings about bewilderment. A perplexity that makes one move to find the truth about this matter. The question is, he asks, what kind of movement is the best for this purpose? In moving towards the One, if one follows a linear path, one has set in one’s mind a beginning and an end; however, warns the author, because in such a path one has a target in mind, it follows that the ending point is imagined, determined, and restricted. Ibn ʿArabī believes, searching for the One, the true movement of bewilderment is circular. A path that has no beginning and no end. And, having no end, such a movement has no imagined target, no restriction, and no threshold for perfection. In a circular movement, the farther one gets from the starting point, the closer one gets to it: The end is the starting point. The perplexed seeker can walk only when the divine light is cast on his path—in allusion to the Quranic verses (2:19-20); he stops when this Light fades away and darkness spreads, and this is the point where bewilderment starts again. In search of the One, arriving at the ending point, one realizes that he was searching for himself!

4.6.2 Unity of the contemplative and the One

According to both authors, because the cosmos is the One's emanation, the One has permeated it. With this mentality, Plotinus says, 'Nothing hinders anything from sharing in the Good to the extent it is able' (IV, 8, 6, p. 68). What is this 'extent' to which things share in the One and how is it determined for each entity? For Ibn ʿArabī, this extent is the capacity of the fixed entity of each being to receive the divine emanation. He (p. 529) says, 'the Real is in every existent in the world to the degree that the reality of that existent requires' (own translation, see appendix F). Plotinus though is not specific as to what the extent of this sharing is.

Let us restrict examining the relationship between the One and the cosmos to that of the One and the contemplative, which, again, is a common theme for the two authors. According to Plotinus (VI, 9, 10):

> When the contemplative looks upon himself in the act of contemplation, he will see himself to be like its object. He feels himself to be united to himself . . . he will experience himself as simple . . . . Actually, we should not say, 'He will see.' What he sees . . . is not seen, not distinguished, not represented as a thing apart. The man who obtains the vision becomes, as it were, another being. He ceases to be himself, retains nothing of himself. Absorbed in the beyond he is one with it, like a center coincident with another center. While the centers coincide, they are one. They become two only when they separate. It is in this sense that we can speak of The One as something separate. (p. 87)

In his vision, the contemplative is absorbed into the One; he gets to 'perfect at-oneness' with it; he, says Plotinus (pp. 87-88), 'ones' with the One; this is the unity of the soul with the One. From this description, it can be understood that 'Such experience is hardly a vision. It is a seeing of a different kind,' that is, this experience is 'a self-transcendence, a simplification, self-abandonment, a striving for union and a repose, an intentness upon conformation' (p. 88).

Let us now see what Ibn al-ʿArabī says about this union and self-transcendence. He writes, ‘God created human’s exterior form of realities [fixed entities] and the forms of the world and the interior of His Form, and it is because of this He said of him: “[If I like an individual,] I become his hearing and his sight” . . .’ (own translation, p. 529).[24] The Human being is divine considering his inner form, and he is human considering his external form. God prizes one whom He likes by making him know his ‘self.’ From that moment on, it is He who sees through him, it is He who hears through him, and it is He who speaks through him. Piercing off the veils and uniting with the One, the human being transcends its self. This makes clear what the author meant by ‘When we witness God, we witness ourselves and when He witnesses us, He witnesses Himself’ (pp. 536-537). For Ibn al-ʿArabī, in this unity, it is not that one entity unites with another one, rather, it is the unity of one entity with itself! Veils that the human soul is covered in make him think that he is and he is a being other than God. When the veils are torn, ‘he’ realizes that only He is! Though at that moment, there is no ‘he’ anymore; ‘he’ has transcended ‘himself.’ As Rūmī (2021) says in *Dīwān-i Shams-i Tabrīzī* (Quartet, 1877, own translation),[25]

> Last night, out of love and desire,
> I was begging the Cupbearer for Wine.[26]
> When He showed me His grandness and beauty,
> I disappeared, there remained only the Cupbearer and the Cupbearer.

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[24] The Arabic text:
فَأَنْشَأَ صورَتَهُ الظّاهِرَةَ مِنْ حَقائِقِ الْعالَمِ وَ صُوَرِهِ وَ أَنْشَأَ صورَتَهُ الْباطِنَةَ عَلى صورَتِهِ تَعالى، وَ لِذالِکَ قالَ فيهِ «كُنْتُ سَمْعَهُ وَ بَصَرَهُ» . . . .

[25] Poem in Persian:
دوش از سر عاشقی و از مشتاقی/ می‌کردم التماس می از ساقی. چون جاه و جمال خویش بنمود به من/ من نیست شدم بماند ساقی ساقی

[26] In Persian literature, ‘the Cupbearer’ refers to *God* and ‘Wine’ to *the divine love and knowledge*.

So, both Plotinus and Ibn ʿArabī hold that the contemplative transcends himself in the union with the One.

4.6.3 Man, the image and the microcosm

Another common point for Plotinus (pp. 24-26) and Ibn al-ʿArabī (p. 522) is the notion that the human being is the microcosm and the cosmos is the macrocosm; the notion that man is the concise copy of the cosmos.

Common to them too is the notion of 'man, God's image.' It was Plotinus (VI, 9, 10) who said, if in contemplation, the contemplative could see herself, she would realize that she is the One's image (pp. 87-88). A notion which well influenced the subsequent thoughts—no less the Islamic thought and that of Ibn ʿArabī (2015), who repeats it on multiple occasions in *The Seals of Wisdom* (p. 132; p. 157; p. 174; p. 175). In chapter twenty-seven, he (*ibid*.) elaborates this statement even further and says: 'The world was created in God's image, and the human was created in two images (the Real and the world) . . .' (p. 178). It seems that he introduces this duality of images because he has in mind the internal-external aspects of human nature; his internal aspect being of the divine and his external aspect of the fixed entities and forms of the corporeal world. However, given that the forms of the world are also emanations of the One, this duality does not damage the notion of man the image.

4.6.4 Knowing the One

Another common point for the two writers is the One's undifferentiated oneness that hides Him from being captured. Plotinus (VI, 9, 4) states, 'The One [will] be "seen" as far as it can become an object of contemplation' (p. 79). Then, he warns us, even

in this contemplation 'seeing' the One is difficult (VI, 9, 3): 'when the soul seeks to know in its own way—by coalescence and unification—it is prevented by that very unification from recognizing it has found The One,' since 'it is unable to distinguish knower and known' (pp. 76-77). Similar to this, Ibn ʿArabī (as cited in Nasr 1964) says:

> None sees Him other than He, and none perceives Him other than He. His veil is (only a 'consequence' and effect of) His oneness; nothing veils other than He. His veil is (only) the concealment of His existence in His oneness, without any quality. (p. 107)

According to both mystics, the discursive reason can neither understand the One nor explain Him fully. In a mystical experience, one experiences the One. For Plotinus (VI, 9, 7), using discursive reason in speaking of the One, the purpose is to give directions and to guide one towards the mystical vision (p. 82). The 'awareness of The One', he adds (VI, 9, 4), 'comes to us neither by knowing nor by the pure thought . . . but by a presence transcending knowledge' (p. 78).

Similarly, in 'Treatise on Unity' (as cited in Nasr 1964), Ibn ʿArabī says, you can know God 'not by knowledge, nor by intellect, nor by understanding, nor by imagination,[27] nor by sense, nor by perception' (p. 107). Knowledge of the One is not the result of contemplation and discursive reasoning; rather it is the result of divine intuition and vision (2006, p. 522). Even concerning *The Seals of Wisdom*, which is a treasure map leading to the One, he writes (*ibid*., p. 530): 'I have brought in this book . . . to the degree which was assigned to me, not the entirety of what I

[27] For Ibn ʿArabī's concept of *imagination*, see Corbin (2007).

know, since that neither a book could contain, nor the world . . .' (own translation, see appendix G).

4.6.5 The panacea for knowing the One

How can the complexity Plotinus faces in speaking of the One and attaining His knowledge be settled? I think this problem would be minimized if Plotinus looked at the issue from Ibn ʿArabī's perspective. The way Ibn ʿArabī considers God's transcendence and immanence is the solution here!

In chapter three of *The Seals of Wisdom*, Ibn ʿArabī (2015) states, one who holds only God's transcendence to the world is in error since, in doing so, one accepts God partially and limits Him. One who holds only God's immanence in the world is also in error since, in doing so, one restricts Him. According to the Andalusian mystic, to have a better understanding of God, one should consider Him as both transcendent to and immanent in the world (pp. 36-43).

Applying this view to the Plotinian hypostases would, to some extent, settle the difficulties of knowing and speaking about the One. The view that the One is not what one says He is and yet He is what one says He is! Plotinus limits himself only to one side. He comes close, but the solution eludes him. For instance, he (VI, 9, 3) says,

> When we wish to speak with precision, we should not say that The One is this or that, but revolving, as it were, around it try to express our own experience of it, now drawing nigh to it, now falling back from it as a result of the difficulties involved. (p. 78)

Another point where Plotinus could benefit from Ibn ʿArabī's transcendence-imminence argument is this. Although the Egyptian thinker believes that the second

and third hypostases are the One's emanations, he speaks, maybe unwittingly, as if the three hypostases are separate. The fact that the Intellect and the Soul, and accordingly, what they contain, are the One's emanations, is the reason why they should not be considered separate. The Intellect and the Soul are not different from the One, yet they are not the same either! The One's simultaneous transcendence and immanence—and, thus, difference and sameness—is the panacea for Plotinus' complexities. For instance, should he (VI, 9, 2) have considered the Intellect and the One distinct (pp. 75-76), or should he have instead considered them one having different levels of reality? If he distinguishes them, arguing the One is not the Intellect, he is considering an entity other than the One. An entity that has something—having what it takes to be the Intellect—that the One does not have. But this negation is contradictory to Plotinus' definition of the all-encompassing, supreme principle.

Journeying within transcendence and imminence would help Plotinus in his other assertions as well. For example (O'Brien, 1964), he holds that the One has neither existence nor essence because if It did, It would be limited (p. 19). But saying that the One does not have existence and essence, he is limiting the One. Just because the human language is not capable of expressing the divine nature adequately, it does not mean that God does not have an essence because 'having an essence' limits Him; the problem here is with the human language! As Nasr (1964) puts it, the divine Essence is

> a center in which all oppositions are united and which transcends all the polarizations and contradictions in the world of multiplicity. It is the center of the circle in which all is unified and before which the mind stands in bewilderment for it involves a *coincidentia oppositorum* which cannot be reduced to categories of human reason and cannot be explained away as a monism which annihilates ontological distinctions and which overlooks the

> transcendent position the center occupies vis-à-vis all the oppositions that are resolved in it. The Exterior . . . and the Interior . . . [are] apparent oppositions that are resolved in the Divine Essence which encompasses and contains all these polarities without being reduced to them. (p. 108)

4.7 Conclusion

Despite having minor differences, Ibn ʿArabī's and Plotinus' doctrines of the unity or the One are very similar. At face value, Ibn Arabi's God appears more personal than Plotinus', and this, I think, stems from the fact that the Andalusian thinker is more mystically oriented in his writings compared to the Egyptian thinker who is more philosophically oriented in his works. Such differences concern only the appearance though; both mystic-philosophers speak the same 'language'.

APPENDIX A

TRANSLATION OF THE PASSAGE ON PAGE 522 OF THE SEALS[28]

وَ أَنَّ فيها، فيما تَزْعَمُ، الْأَهْلِيَّةَ لِكُلِّ مَنْصِبٍ عالٍ وَ مَنْزِلَةٍ رَفيعَةٍ عِنْدَ اللهِ، لِما عِنْدَها مِنَ الْجَمْعِيَّةِ الْإِلٰهِيَّةِ مِمّا يَرْجِعُ مِنْ ذٰلِكَ إِلَى الْجَنابِ الْإِلٰهِيِّ، وَ إِلَى جانِبِ حَقيقَةِ الْحَقائِق، وَ ـــ فِي النَّشْأَةِ الْحامِلَةِ لِهٰذِهِ الْأَوْصافِ ـــ إِلَى ما تَقْتَضيهِ الطَّبيعَةُ الْكُلِّيَّةُ الَّتي حَصَرَتْ قَوابِلَ الْعالَمِ كُلِّهِ أَعْلاهُ وَ أَسْفَلَهُ.

([*The human constitution*] *has divine all-comprehensiveness: From one aspect, he goes back to the Divine, from one to the Reality of Realities, and from another . . . to that which is required by the universal nature which encompasses all the receptacle of the world from top to bottom.*)

[28] All the Arabic texts in the Appendices are from *The Seals of Wisdom* (2006).

APPENDIX B

TRANSLATION OF THE PASSAGE ON PAGE 521 OF THE SEALS

لَمّا شاءَ الْحَقُّ سُبْحانَهُ مِنْ حَيْثُ أَسْمائِهِ الْحُسْنَى الَّتي لا يَبْلُغُهَا الْإِحْصاءُ أَنْ يَرىٰ أَعْيانَها، وَ إِنْ شِئْتَ قُلْتَ أَنْ يَرىٰ عَيْنَهُ، في كَوْنٍ جامِعٍ يَحْصُرُ الْأَمْرَ كُلَّهُ، لِكَوْنِهِ مُتَّصِفاً بِالْوُجودِ، وَ يَظْهَرُ بِهِ سِرُّهُ إِلَيْهِ.

(*. . . The Real wished to see the essences of His . . . Names, which are infinite in number—or you could say He wished to see His Essence—in an all-comprehensive being, which, being qualified with existence, encompassed the Order of all the* [*divine*] *Names,* [*so that*] *in it He manifested his mystery to Himself*.)

APPENDIX C

TRANSLATION OF THE PASSAGE ON PAGES 388-389 OF THE SEALS

در جهان بینی شیخ حق به میانجیگری اسما خود با خلق پیوند می یابد و خلق به میانجیگری اعیان ثابته خود با حق ارتباط پیدا میکنند. خلق مظاهر اسما الهی هستند و باز به تعبیری دیگر خلق فعل خداوند است و حق از طریق اسم خود با فعل خود ارتباط دارد. هر اسمی از اسما الهی ربوبیت موجودی را که در آن ظهور کرده است بر عهده دارد . . . .

(*In the sheik's world view, the Real relates to the created beings through His Names, and the created beings relate to the Real through their fixed entities.* [*In one interpretation, the*] *created beings are the manifestations of the divine Names, and in another, they are God's acts. God communicates with His acts through His Names.* [*Thus, each*] *divine Name takes the lordship of the being in which It is manifested . . .* .)

APPENDIX D

TRANSLATION OF THE PASSAGE ON PAGE 521 OF THE SEALS

وَ قَدْ كانَ الْحَقُّ سُبْحانَهُ أَوْجَدَ الْعالَمَ كُلَّهُ وُجودَ شَبَحٍ مُسَوّىً لا روحَ فيهِ، فَكانَ كَمِرْآةٍ غَيْرِ مَجْلُوَّةٍ. وَ مِنْ شَأْنِ الْحُكْمِ الْإِلٰهيِّ أَنَّهُ ما سَوّىٰ مَحَلّاً إِلّا وَ يَقْبَلُ روحاً إِلٰهيّاً عَبَّرَ عَنْهُ بِالنَّفْخ فيهِ؛ وَ ما هُوَ إِلّا حُصولُ الْإِسْتِعْدادِ مِنْ تِلْكَ الصّورَةِ الْمُسَوّاةِ لِقَبولِ الْفَيْضِ التَّجَلّي الدّائِمِ الَّذي لَمْ يَزَلْ وَ لا يَزالُ.

(*The Real had* [*initially*] *created the entire world* [*as something*] *amorphous and without a soul, like an unpolished mirror. And, the divine decree requires that* [*when*] *He prepares a place, that place receives the divine Spirit; this* [*reception*] *has been interpreted* [*in the Quran*] *as blowing* [*the divine Spirit*] *into it* [*i.e., into the amorphous thing*]*; and, this* [*blowing the divine Spirit*] *is none other than* [*the fact that*] *the amorphous form receives the aptitude to accept the eternally manifesting emanation, which has always existed and will always exist.*)

APPENDIX E

TRANSLATION OF THE PASSAGE ON PAGE 527 OF THE SEALS

فَلا تُنْسَبُ إِلَيْهِ الْأَوَّلِيَّةُ مَعَ كَوْنِهِ الْأَوَّلَ. وَ لِهٰذا قيلَ فيهِ الْآخِرُ. فَلَوْ كانَتْ أَوَّلِيَّتُهُ أَوَّلِيَّةَ وُجودِ التَّقْييدِ لَمْ يَصِحَّ أَنْ يَكونَ الْآخِرُ لِلْمُقَيَّدِ، لِأَنَّهُ لا آخِرَ لِلْمُمْكِنِ، لِأَنَّ الْمُمْكِناتِ غَيْرُ مُتَناهيَةٍ فَلا آخِرَ لَها.

(*Even if He is the First, primacy does not apply to Him. This is the reason it has been said* [*He is*] *the Last. If His antecedence was* [*like*] *that of the limited existence* [*i.e., of the possible existence*]*, then, as a Being limited to antecedence, He could not have been the Last, since there is no last possible thing; possible things are infinite and have no last* [*one*].)

APPENDIX F

TRANSLATION OF THE PASSAGE ON PAGE 529 OF THE SEALS

هُوَ في كُلِّ مَوْجودٍ مِنَ الْعالَمِ بِقَدْرِما تَطْلُبُهُ حَقيقَةُ ذلِکَ الْمَوْجودِ. . . . وَ لَوْلا سَرَيانُ الْحَقِّ فِى الْمَوْجوداتِ بِالصّورَةِ ماكانَ لِلْعالَمِ وُجودٌ، كَما أَنَّهُ لَوْ لا تِلْکَ الْحَقائِقُ الْمَعْقولَةُ الْكُلِّيَّةُ ما ظَهَرَ حُكْمٌ فِى الْمَوجوداتِ الْعَيْنِيَّةِ.

(*The Real is in every existent in the world to the degree that the reality of that existent requires. . . . if the Real did not pervade the existents by His Form, the world would not exist, similarly, if there were no universal intelligible realities, no determining rule would have appeared in the corporeal entities*.)

APPENDIX G

TRANSLATION OF THE PASSAGE ON PAGE 530 OF THE SEALS

جَعَلْتُ في هٰذَا الْكِتابِ . . . ما حُدَّ لي ما وَقَفْتُ عَلَيْهِ، فَإِنَّ ذٰلِکَ لا يَسَعُهُ كِتابٌ وَ لَا الْعالَمُ . . . . فَمِمّا شَهِدْتُهُ مِمّا نودِعُهُ في هٰذَا الْكِتابِ كَما حَدَّهُ لي رسول الله. . .

(*I have brought in this book . . . to the degree which was assigned to me, not the entirety of what I know, since that neither a book could contain, nor the world . . . . I have deposited in this book, from the things that I have seen, and to the extent that was ascribed to me by God's Messenger* [*the Prophet of Islam*] . . . .)

APPENDIX H

TRANSLATION OF THE PASSAGE ON PAGES 531-532 OF THE SEALS

وَ فَصُّ كُلِّ حِكْمَةٍ الْكَلِمَةُ الَّتي تُنْسَبُ إِلَيْها. فَاقْتَصَرْتُ عَلىٰ ما ذَكَرْتُهُ مِنْ هٰذِهِ الْحِكَمِ في هٰذَا الْكِتابِ عَلىٰ حَدِّ ما ثَبَتَ في أُمِّ الْكِتابِ. فَامْتَثَلْتُ ما رُسِمَ لي، وَ وَقَفْتُ عِنْدَ ما حُدَّ لي، وَ لَوْ رُمْتُ زيادَةً عَلىٰ ذٰلِكَ مَااسْتَطَعْتُ، فَإِنَّ الْحَضْرَةَ تَمْنَعُ مِن ذٰلِكَ . . . .

(. . . *each Wisdom is a Word* [*i.e., a prophet*] *to whom that Wisdom belongs. Regarding the Wisdoms that I have brought in this book, I transcribed as much as was recorded in the Mother Book . . . . I obeyed the order and stopped where it was the limit* [*ascribed to me;*] *I could not continue further even if I wanted to, because God would have prevented me . . . .*)

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