Muḥibb Allāh Ilāhābādī’s
*The Equivalence between Giving and Receiving:*
Avicennan Neoplatonism and the School of Ibn ʿArabī in South Asia

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G. A. Lipton: Muḥibb Allāh Ilāhābādī’s The Equivalence between Giving and Receiving: Avicennan Neoplatonism and the School of Ibn ʿArabī in South Asia
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The current thesis focuses on The Equivalence between Giving and Receiving (Al-Taswiya bayna al-Ifāda wa-l-Qabūl), an unpublished Arabic treatise written by Muḥibb Allāh Ilāhābādī (d. 1648), known in India as “the second Ibn ʿArabī.” Although this text is one of the most controversial interpretations of Ibn ʿArabī’s metaphysics written in India, it and its author are rarely mentioned in contemporary scholarship on Sufism. I will argue that The Equivalence evinces a deeply Avicennan Neoplatonic idiom that is distinct from Ibn ʿArabī’s synthesis, which serves as its wider framework. The text thereby demonstrates an innovative integration of philosophical traditions within the larger context of Ibn ʿArabī’s school in seventeenth-century India, showing that Muḥibb Allāh’s unique philosophical synthesis is in conversation with his diverse intellectual milieu. The Equivalence reveals a dynamic philosophical discourse among intellectual communities of seventeenth-century South Asia.
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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>INTRODUCTION</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Thesis</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Argument: A Mythic Journey in Three Chapters</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Goal: Alternative Emplotments</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I. HISTORICAL “GENERATION AND CORRUPTION”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indian Historiography: Sirhindī <em>qua</em> Mystic or Political Ideologue?</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sirhindī’s “Revolution”: <em>In</em> the School of Ibn ʿArabī?</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sirhindī: Chishti Forerunner of Muḥibb Allāh?</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Muḥibb Allāh: Prolific but Forgotten</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>From Ṣadrpūr to Ilāhābād: Of Sufis, Philosophers, and a Prince</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>The Equivalence</em>: Commentaries and Controversies</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II. BETWEEN HISTORY AND TEXT: THE DISCOURSE IN CONTEXT</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Structure/Anti-structure Dialectic: Philosophy and Ibn ʿArabī</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neoplatonism in <em>The Equivalence</em></td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Avicennan Foundational Ontological Framework</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ibn ʿArabī’s “Synthesis”</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ibn ʿArabī’s School: The Later Tradition</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
III. ONE TEXT: THE “UNIFICATION” OF DISCOURSES ON THE ONE

The Equivalence: An Avicennan Approach ........................................69

Sectional Analysis .........................................................................73

1) The Rational Thinkers and Their Error Regarding the Necessary …73

2) Every Possible and Existent Thing Has an Entity, Which Causes Existence ........................................75

3) The Root of the Entities Is Pure Being .................................75

4) The Mistakes of the Asha‘rites and the Sophists .....................76

5) The Essence of a Thing Is Pure Being .....................................81

6) Gabriel Was in Muhammad ......................................................83

7) The Recipient Is Existent .............................................................86

8) The Real Influencer Is God ............................................................86

9) The Giver of Existence Has a Special Existence
   Other Than Given Existence .........................................................87

10) The Existence of the Necessary Is Both Cause and Effect ......88

11) The Necessary Gives Existence but Is Not Qualified
    by That Existence ........................................................................88

12) The Giver and the Recipient Are Equal .................................90

13) All Things Are Manifested in and from the Real, “Allah” ...........91

14) Closing Admonitions by Way of Qur’anic Allusion ...............92

Summary of Analysis .....................................................................93

CONCLUSION ..................................................................................97

APPENDIX A: THE EQUIVALENCE BETWEEN GIVING AND RECEIVING ........101
INTRODUCTION

The so-called Sufi “fight” of seventeenth-century India between supporters of Aḥmad Sirhindī (d. 1624), “the Renower of the Second Millennium” (Mujaddid-i Alf-i Thānī), and those who followed the teachings of Ibn ʿArabī (d. 1240), “the Greatest Master” (Shaykh al-Akbar), has been repeatedly portrayed in modern historiographic accounts as an epic clash of metaphysicians who are representative of the opposing forces of orthodoxy and heterodoxy within Islam. The battle between Sirhindī’s “sober” doctrine of “oneness of witnessing” (wahdat al-shuhūd) against Ibn ʿArabī’s “monistic” doctrine of “oneness of existence” (wahdat al-wujūd) has become a standard trope in South Asian Sufi histories. But as postmodern scholarship has powerfully argued, historiography is the business of creating narratives to serve ideological purposes often shaped by political agendas,¹ and the modern construction of the metaphysical “debate” that puts these two important Islamic mystics at irreconcilable odds is no exception. In the twentieth century, Orientalists and reformers alike cast Sirhindī as a revolutionary of “pure” Islam combating the heretical ideas of Ibn ʿArabī and the resultant syncretic policies of the equally heretical Mogul emperor Jalāl al-Dīn Akbar (d. 1605).² In this triumphalist version of history, India is cleansed of Ibn ʿArabī’s ideas like

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¹ For a comprehensive survey of postmodern perspectives on historiography, see Keith Jenkins, On ‘What is History?’: From Carr and Elton to Rorty and White (New York: Routledge, 1995).

a powerful cure in the wake of a gruesome pandemic. Sirhindī is lauded as a victorious ideologue who succeeded in eradicating South Asia of the evil menace of Ibn ʿArabī’s antinomian and immoral relativism, which had plagued India for so long, nearly destroying Islam itself. A metaphysical tragedy was thus narrowly averted, the dragon safely slain.

Although recent scholarship has challenged this triumphalist portrayal of Sirhindī as a construction of religious nationalist narrative within South Asian historiography, the continuing preoccupation with Sirhindī has overshadowed other important Indian Sufis of the same period, particularly the seventeenth-century Chishtī Shaykh Muḥibb Allāh Ilāhābādī (d. 1648), whose expositions of Ibn ʿArabī’s metaphysical thought earned him the honorific of “the second Ibn ʿArabī.” Yet despite being recognized as the most prolific Chishtī author, Muḥibb Allāh’s considerable body of work is virtually unknown to contemporary scholarship, remaining mostly in manuscript form.

**The Thesis**

The current thesis focuses on Muḥibb Allāh’s unpublished Arabic treatise *The Equivalence between Giving and Receiving (Al-Taswiya baya al-Ifāda wa-l-Qabūl).*

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*Religious Identities in Islamicate South Asia,* ed. David Gilmartin and Bruce B. Lawrence (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2000), pp. 176–77. It should be noted that the modern preoccupation with Akbar’s establishment of a heretical “new religion,” the Din-i Ilahi, appears to also be the product of such political hagiography. More recent scholarship has recast the Din-i Ilahi as a political pact that strove to bind nobles’ loyalties to the emperor, rather than as a religious covenant. Catherine B. Asher and Cynthia Talbot, *India Before Europe* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006), p. 130.


Although this text is one of the most controversial interpretations of Ibn ʿArabī’s metaphysics written in India, it is rarely mentioned in contemporary scholarship on Sufism. I will argue that The Equivalence evinces a deeply Avicennan Neoplatonic idiom that is distinct from Ibn ʿArabī’s synthesis, which forms its wider framework. The text thereby demonstrates a dynamic and innovative integration of philosophical traditions within the larger context of Ibn ʿArabī’s school in seventeenth-century India post-Sirhindī. I therefore argue that Muḥibb Allāh’s unique philosophical synthesis is in conversation with his diverse milieu and the intellectual tensions within it. When we look beyond contemporary preoccupations with Aḥmad Sirhindī and the nationalist ideological discourse that was formative of the modern South Asian historical narrative, we see that The Equivalence reveals a vigorous cultivation and exchange of philosophical ideas among intellectual communities in seventeenth-century India. Viewing The Equivalence and its author in light of these considerations, this paper argues for an alternative historical narrative that is more inclusive in its approach, and in particular one that should more readily include Muḥibb Allāh and his significant oeuvre.

The Argument: A Mythic Journey in Three Chapters

Like the Avicennan Neoplatonic cosmogonic myth of separation, transition, and return that informs the ethos of The Equivalence, the journey of my argument will begin in the mundane world, where “truth” and “fiction” are inseparably united within the “generation and corruption” of multiple narratives. The first chapter of this thesis will try to answer the following questions: Why do contemporary scholars rarely mention Muḥibb Allāh Ilāhībādī? And why do the majority of his works languish unpublished in Indian libraries as worm
fodder? I approach these questions, albeit somewhat ironically, by perpetuating the problem that I argue is the cause of these situations—namely, the contemporary concentration on Āḥmad Sirhindī. By examining the modern ideological construction of the so-called metaphysical dispute between Sirhindī and Ibn ʿArabī, which is echoed in contemporary scholarship on Muḥibb Allāh, I will argue that Sirhindī is simply another figure in a long line of members of Ibn ʿArabī’s school, and even has a place in Muḥibb Allāh’s Sufi lineage.

In addition, my approach to Muḥibb Allāh’s biography will primarily be based on sources drawing on content from his own letters and treatises, extant hagiographical material being meager. It will be shown that Sirhindī and his thought are notably absent from Muḥibb Allāh’s intellectual milieu in Ilāhābād. Rather, I will argue that Muḥibb Allāh’s unique philosophical discourse was in conversation with the Jaunpūrī philosophical school, which seems to have been markedly hostile to Muḥibb Allāh and Ibn ʿArabī’s thought. Thus, the first chapter will begin by approaching Muḥibb Allāh in the contemporary historiographical context of Sirhindī, where Muḥibb Allāh is surprisingly absent. But it will end by focusing on Muḥibb Allāh’s intellectual context in Ilāhābād, in which Sirhindī is surprisingly absent. By showing the unexpected presence and absence of both of these figures, new possibilities for alternative historical narratives come into view.

Like the second phase of the cosmogonic myth, the second chapter of this thesis will depart from the historiographical world of “generation and corruption” and travel to an intermediary realm of ideas, where it will focus on liminal concerns—namely, a theoretical contextualization of the multiple intellectual traditions of philosophical and metaphysical discourse that are synthesized within The Equivalence. These are: (1) key elements of the Islamic Neoplatonic tradition, especially that of Ibn Sinā, (2) key elements of Ibn ʿArabī’s
metaphysics, and (3) key innovations of Ibn Ṭabarī’s school. By comparing these three traditions, I will show the exchange and evolution of ontological and cosmological conceptions from one tradition to another, and in particular the way each tradition conceptualizes the liminal realm between God and the phenomenal universe.

Like the final return of the Neoplatonic journey from separation to unification, the third chapter of this thesis describes the broader synthesis of the separate intellectual traditions discussed in chapter two as a “unified” discourse within the text itself (which, of course, argues that the universe is ultimately unified with its source). Here, I analyze the fourteen sections of The Equivalence, and my analysis will identify four defining elements of the treatise: (1) specific Avicennan technical terminology, (2) an overarching Avicennan ontological argument, (3) specific Avicennan Neoplatonic motifs, and (4) the use of Ibn Ṭabarī’s ternary metaphysical categorization. The full translation of The Equivalence and the Arabic text can be found in the two appendices at the end of this paper.

The Goal: Alternative Emplotments

Folklorist Austin Fife astutely noted that any “author is inevitably involved in the process of myth formation.”5 Indeed, Hayden White has written extensively on the innate connection between literature and history. White has referred to the process of using historical facts to construct history as “emplotment,” which is “the encodation of the facts

[. . .] as components of specific kinds of plot structures [. . .]."6 Historiography, in this sense, is always the construction, or an “emplotment,” of historical narratives, which for White are “verbal fictions, the contents of which are as much invented as found and the forms of which have more in common with their counterparts in literature than they have with those in the sciences.”7 White, however, does not mean to say that the writing of history is worthless—quite the opposite. He simply calls for the historian’s level of self-consciousness to increase, which thereby may yield greater insights and more options for interpreting the past.8

Having sounded this caveat, it is important to note that historical facts, or traces, are the only way that historians can ground their ideas of the past in some kind of contextual field and thus construct their meaning. For as White has also said, “History-writing thrives on the discovery of all the possible plot structures that might be invoked to endow sets of events with different meanings.”9 Similarly, Edward Said keenly observed that individual scholars of history make contributions to a “common field of play.” Each contribution, no matter how significant, is simply a strategy of

redisposing material within the field; even the scholar who unearths a once-lost manuscript produces the “found” text in a context already prepared for it, for that is the real meaning of finding a new text. Thus each individual contribution first causes changes within the field and then promotes a new stability, in the way that on a surface covered with twenty compasses the introduction of a twenty-first will cause all the others to quiver, then to settle into a new accommodating configuration.10

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7 Ibid., p. 397.

8 Ibid., p. 407.

9 Ibid., p. 402.

Said thus observed that historical “emplotment” is dependent on found texts, which bring more information to light and thus ultimately add to the alternative plot structures available.

As I will argue presently, it is clear that much modern scholarship regarding seventeenth-century India has focused on Sirhindī because his figure has provided the opportunity for a particular historical emplotment based on nationalism and religious ideology. This circular narrative, which follows the romantic motif of the hero who slays the evil “one-eyed” dragon (monism) and thus rescues the “true” faith, has had little room for the life and work of Muḥibb Allāh, who based his intellectual interests on the work of the antihero Ibn ʿArabī, an antagonist who is, if not the dragon itself, certainly the dragon’s keeper.

Bruce Lawrence has trenchantly remarked, “At present there is a vast and numbingly circular literature on Islam in South Asia.”11 In a bid to offset the often “numbingly circular” ideological treatment of Sufism in seventeenth-century Indian historiography, this thesis attempts to self-consciously offer a text to the “field” in the hopes that it might help in the construction of more compelling and inclusive alternatives to the blinkered narratives found in much contemporary literature on the time period in question.

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CHAPTER I
HISTORICAL “GENERATION AND CORRUPTION”

South Asian Historiography: Sirhindī qua Mystic or Political Ideologue?

The use and abuse of Ibn ʿArabī and his intellectual universe as a tool for ideological and political agendas has become commonplace. Although there is a long history of polemics against Ibn ʿArabī’s works, Ibn Taymiya’s (d. 1328) being the most famous, perhaps the first modern ideological reaction to Ibn ʿArabī’s writings was from the renowned Islamic modernist Muhammad Abduh (d. 1905). As the president of an Egyptian commission for the publication of classic works in Arabic, Abduh refused to publish Ibn ʿArabī’s magnum opus, The Meccan Openings (al-Futūḥāt al-Makkiyya), claiming that his ideas weakened individuality and worldly responsibility, thus obstructing Islamic revival and Egyptian nationalism.12 As James Morris has observed regarding the Egyptian public debate in 1979 over the attempt by the Egyptian People’s Assembly to ban the writings of Ibn ʿArabī:13

[T]he references to Ibn ʿArabī (whether pro or con) serve almost exclusively an ideological (and not intellectual or philosophic) function. Unfortunately, most secondary accounts, even by modern Western scholars, have been content to repeat the outward “theological” remains of these disputes rather than to investigate their actual contemporary implications in each case. [. . .] Hopefully the many


contemporary instances of persecution of Sufis or similar groups [. . .] will encourage further healthy discrimination, in historical studies, between the intellectual and spiritual seriousness of such controversies (most often negligible, at best) and their ideological functions and significance [. . .].14

The South Asian historiographical treatment of the relationship between Ibn Ṭab平行 Arabī and Sirhindī is a case in point: contemporary Indian and Pakistani historians have tended to create historical narratives that serve their nationalist and ideological interests. As Carl Ernst has written:

The main distorting presupposition in Indian historical thinking today reads the medieval past in terms of modern religious nationalism. In this view, historical events are implicitly seen as prefiguring the partition of British India into an Islamic Republic of Pakistan and an overwhelmingly Hindu Indian Union.15

Yohanan Friedmann has importantly observed that the literary treatment of Sirhindī has changed dramatically since his death. Apart from the many sympathetic hagiographies of the Shaykh, the writings of seventeenth-century Muslim religious scholars (‘ulamā’) tended to see him as “an extravagant Şūfī, suffering from illusions of grandeur and highly disrespectful of the Prophet.”16 Indeed, the emperor Aurangzeb found Sirhindī’s ideas so offensive that he banned Sirhindī’s collected letters (Maktūbāt-i Imām-i Rabbānī), although the recommendations in those letters would later be credited as inspiring Aurangzeb’s orthodox revival.17 In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, interest in Sirhindī was mostly


17 Ibid., pp. xii, 101.
muted, and it was not until the early twentieth-century that Sirhindī was revived as an
important religio-political symbol. Ernst has noted:

In the twentieth century, Muslim nationalists gave Sirhindī a new role as
defender of Islam against the heresies of the emperor Akbar. This is based primarily
on a few selected passages in his writings that are critical of Akbar and Abū al-Fazl,
and that show a markedly hostile attitude to Hindus in the Mughul bureaucracy.
These remarks took on new significance in the polemical climate of religious
nationalism, which now tried to read Indian history as an eternal conflict between
Islam and Hinduism.18

As Friedmann has observed, early twentieth-century authors such as Abū al-Kalām Āẓād
now portrayed Sirhindī as the only individual to check the religious corruption that inundated
India during the reign of the emperor Akbar:

Sirhindī is seen by Āẓād not only as a radical reformer in the field of religion, but also
as an uncompromising and defiant rebel against the government in power. He comes
at a time when the lives and thoughts of the Muslims in India suffer from a disastrous
lack of vitality and are dominated by the petrifying atmosphere of corrupted

Āẓād’s portrayal of Sufism (tasawwuf) is fairly typical of modernists of the period, who often
judged Sufis to be passive and quietist and held the majority of them responsible for the
Muslim loss of political power, especially in India after the fall of the Mogul empire. Āẓād’s
writing catalyzed a new historiographic approach that portrayed Sirhindī as primarily a
political reformer and only secondarily a mystic. In so doing, Āẓād established Sirhindī as
the exemplar par excellence of the new political movement of Islamic nationalism.20 Indeed,
even Muhammad Iqbal (d. 1938)—the “father of modern Pakistan”—would write: “I stood
by the Reformer’s tomb [. . .] Whom Allah sent in season to keep watch / In India on the


20 Ibid., p. 107.
treasure-house of Islam.\textsuperscript{21} Although Iqbal was highly critical of Sufism as fatalistic, passivist, and harboring a false monism\textsuperscript{22} (no doubt engendered by Ibn ʿArabi’s thought), he found in Sirhindī a hero that could serve his nationalist agenda well.

Friedmann, however, argues that Sirhindī was first and foremost a Sufi mystic who, as such, was more interested in spiritual pedagogy than in the political reform that many twentieth-century modernists have claimed was his primary focus.\textsuperscript{23} Even though Annemarie Schimmel takes issue with this claim, citing the fact that the Naqshbandīs have had a long tradition of trying to influence political leaders,\textsuperscript{24} Friedmann’s argument is particularly compelling when the attempts by modern Pakistani historians to employ Sirhindī as a political ideologue are considered. Friedmann draws particular attention to a work published in 1963 by Muḥammad Miyān, \textit{The Glorious Past of the ʿUlamāʾ of India (ʿUlamāʾ-i Hind kā Shāndār Māzī)}, which treats Sirhindī as a major political reformer who had converted all the important members of the imperial courts of both Akbar and Jahāngīr, a fact not mentioned in previous histories. Moreover, Miyān claims that it was Sirhindī’s political influence that allowed Aurangzeb’s orthodox rule, despite the fact that Aurangzeb had proscribed Sirhindī’s letters.\textsuperscript{25}


The modernist positioning of Sirhindī and his followers as “good Sufis,” who were somehow disassociated from “mysticism,” attempts to polarize and demonize Ibn ‘Arabī and those in his school as “bad Sufis” who were not worthy of “Muslim” status. In Ahmad Faruqi’s 1940 publication *The Mujjaddid’s Conception of Tawhid*, Sirhindī is responsible for “the reclamation of the religious consciousness from the bondage of the speculative consciousness into which mysticism had thrown it.”26 Here Sirhindī is portrayed as having no connection with “mysticism” but rather with a doctrine “as near to religion or Islam as waḥdat-i-wujūd or unityism is away from it.”27 Similarly, Ishtiaq Husain Qureshi, in his 1962 publication *The Muslim Community of the Indo-Pakistan Subcontinent*, states:

The rejection of monism [*wahdat al-wujūd*] was the great need of the age and provided the basic diagnosis of the disease from which Islam was suffering at that time. [. . .] It is on the rejection of monism that Shaikh Ahmad Sarhindi’s claim for being the Mujaddid of the age is based.28

This strategy of selecting certain token Sufis over other “corrupted” ones seems to fit into a larger reformist perspective that functions according to the hackneyed trope of “classicism, decline, and revival.”29 As Carl Ernst has noted:

Reformist and fundamentalist thinkers have not hesitated to appropriate the Orientalist tendency to venerate past “golden ages”; this strategy permits them to pay respectful homage to selected early Sufis who can be described as pious Muslims, and

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27 Ibid., p. 127.


29 For a discussion of this Orientalist trope and alternatives for Chishti historiography, see Carl W. Ernst and Bruce B. Lawrence, *Sufi Martyrs of Love: The Chishti Order in South Asia and Beyond* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), p. 129.
at the same time to complain bitterly of the decline of modern Sufism into corruption.\textsuperscript{30} Perhaps the greatest claim for Sirhindī as the quintessential “good Sufī” fighting against the religious decline brought on by Sufism was made by Aziz Ahmad, who asserted in his 1964 publication \textit{Studies in Islamic Culture in the Indian Environment} that Sirhindī’s influence was such that “never before in India had Sūfism been brought so close to the religious core of Islam.”\textsuperscript{31} Moreover, Ahmad claimed, “his writings and his influence checked the process of Indian Islam’s disintegration into syncretic heresies.”\textsuperscript{32} This type of contemporary triumphalist rhetoric, depicting Sirhindī’s single-handed defeat of Indian “syncretism” and elevation of India into the model nation of Islamic religious orthodoxy, appeared in a scholarly article as recently as 2005, where Sirhindī is depicted as “the custodian of the House of Islam in India in the face of a rising tide of syncretism.”\textsuperscript{33}

As Friedmann has argued, there seems to be a great divide between how Sirhindī was understood in prenationalist India and the ideological construction of him in modernity. William Chittick has attempted to bridge this divide by rather boldly asserting that in terms of certain political and nationalistic ideas that have come to play a role in establishing Muslim identity in the present century, Sirhindī may indeed be considered to have special importance. But, if we are to judge by criteria internal to the Islamic tradition in general and the Sufi tradition in particular, we will find many

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{30} Ernst, \textit{The Shambhala Guide}, p. 18.
  \item \textsuperscript{31} Aziz Ahmad, \textit{Studies in Islamic Culture in the Indian Environment} (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1999), p. 188.
  \item \textsuperscript{32} Ibid., p. 189.
\end{itemize}
other authors of the same period deserving serious study and perhaps much more worthy than Sirhindī of being considered important.34

Indeed, Friedmann concluded his study on Sirhindī by stating, “On the basis of the material now available, we conclude that Sirhindī was not considered in the seventeenth century as an important thinker except by his disciples and by the ‘ulamā’ involved in the controversies surrounding him.”35

Although a qualification of Sirhindī’s original “importance” as a thinker is both too broad and too prescriptive as a category to be of critical value here, the context within which Sirhindī’s ideas germinated is of primary concern. That is, did Sirhindī develop a unique approach to Sufism as distinct from the mysticism of Ibn ʿArabī and his school, as contemporary historiographers suggest? Or were his teachings simply another manifestation of traditions already present in his intellectual and spiritual milieu?

**Sirhindī’s “Revolution”: In the School of Ibn ʿArabī?**

Sirhindī’s conception of the “oneness of witnessing” (waḥdat al-shuhūd) as a response to and defeat of the “oneness of existence” (waḥdat al-wujūd) has in modern times been heralded as “revolutionary.”36 As Ahmad has said with regard to “oneness of

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36 According to Sirhindī, the primary difference between the two “doctrines” is that the later tradition of Ibn ʿArabī (Ibn ʿArabī himself never used the term *wahdat al-wujūd*) considers all existence to be unified in reality, while Sirhindī’s doctrine only acknowledges the “appearance” of everything as one, even though this is not the total reality. Sirhindī thus saw this issue as a difference between spiritual levels; the first level is intoxication, where the mystic mistakenly takes all things, including himself, to be the manifestation of the divine, and the second is spiritual sobriety, where the mystic never loses consciousness of the distinction between God and His creation. Thus, for Sirhindī, the doctrine of
existence,” Sirhindī brought about a “revolution” in Indian Sufism that “negatived this position completely.”37 Ahmad goes on to say that Sirhindī’s “oneness of witnessing” was an “alternative system” that “re-integrated the formalistic dynamics of religion and the inner vitality of deep mysticism.”38 This type of contemporary assertion bases its claim on the idea that Sirhindī’s “system” uniquely and perfectly balanced Sufism with Islamic law (ṣharī‘a). But if Sirhindī’s thought is not idealized or lifted out of its historical context (that is, used to bolster contemporary ideological claims), then the assertion that Sirhindī’s “system” was religiously unique in its approach to mysticism and religious law becomes untenable.

One of the most notable exponents of Sirhindī as purveyor of a new orthodoxy in these terms is the formidable contemporary scholar Fazlur Rahman.39 Rahman tirelessly portrays Sirhindī as an orthodox religious hero who battled the “pantheism and moral-

\[wahdat al-wujūd—\text{or at least how he perceived it to be practiced in his day}—\text{was equivalent to the expression commonly found in Persian Sufi poetry: “All is He” (hama āst). See Friedmann, Shaykh Ahmad Sirhindī, pp. 59–60; and J. G. J. ter Haar, Follower and Heir of the Prophet: Shaykh Aḥmad Sirhindī (1564–1624) as Mystic (Leiden: Het Oosters Instituut, 1992), p. 118.}\]

37 Ahmad, Studies in Islamic Culture, p. 187.

38 Ibid., pp. 188, 189.

39 Although, as Ebrahim Moosa has observed, “Few people will hesitate to include Fazlur Rahman among the leading scholars of Islam in the latter part of the twentieth century,” it is important in the present discussion to also note that Rahman served as “the main ideological architect of reform” for the Advisory Council of Islamic Ideology, which was the supreme policy-making body of Pakistan’s religious reforms under General Ayyub Khan, the second president of Pakistan; see Fazlur Rahman, Revival and Reform in Islam: A Study of Islamic Fundamentalism, ed. Ebrahim Moosa (Oxford: OneWorld, 2000), p. 3. In a typical example of Rahman’s homage to Sirhindī’s “unique” contribution to Islam in terms of Sufism, he writes: “The essence of Shaikh Sirhindī’s attempt to restate the relationship between Tasawwuf and the Shari‘ah consists in re-evaluating the Eternal and Temporal, with a view to integrating the two afresh, so that their positions are reversed vis-à-vis God, turning the tables against the šūfis. In the process of doing so, the Shaikh, to my mind, reveals some of the rarest insights into the nature of Islam, and his religiously world-affirming attitude would astonish even the most modern thinker.” Fazlur Rahman, “Selected Letters of Shaikh Ahmad Sirhindī,” Eng. introd. to Intikhāb-i Maktūbāt-i Shaykh Ahmad Sirhindī (Karachi: Iqbal Akadami, 1968), p. 52.
religious relativism” of Ibn ʿArabi and his school.\(^{40}\) However, Ibn ʿArabi did not consider his teachings to be morally “relative”; rather, he presented them in quite a different light, considering the observation of Islamic law to be of paramount importance for the mystic. He thus dedicated entire sections of *The Meccan Openings* to ethico-religious concerns.\(^{41}\) Moreover, Ibn ʿArabi claimed that his particular spiritual function (divinely assigned, of course) was to “watch over the respect for the divine Law.”\(^{42}\) In this connection, Franz Rosenthal has rather bluntly stated: “Tolerance is quite uncharacteristic of the monotheistic mystic. Ibn ʿArabi was a staunch, even fanatic, supporter of Muslim beliefs, traditions, and practices.”\(^{43}\)

Even though Rahman presents Sirhindī’s ideas as assigning “the *Shari‘ah* a paramount place in religious experience,” which he claims is “a place quite new in the history of ṣūfīsm,”\(^{44}\) the same can be said for Ibn ʿArabi. As Michel Chodkiewicz has noted, Ibn ʿArabi held that it is through revealed religion and religious law that the “supreme perfection is achieved in man.”\(^{45}\) For example, Ibn ʿArabi states that the sacred law and the highest mystical truth (*haqīqa*) are inherently united as “two daughters of a single father”


\(^{45}\) Chodkiewicz, *An Ocean without Shore*, p. 35.
(bintānī min abin wāhid).⁴⁶ Rahman admits Ibn ʿArabī’s stated position regarding the importance of religious observance, but he simply cannot reconcile the Shaykh’s metaphysical ideas⁴⁷ with his religious claims and thus suspects Ibn ʿArabī of insincerity and hypocrisy, which Rahman asserts must inevitably lead to “the rejection of the Šariʿah”:⁴⁸

Although [Ibn ʿArabī and his school] continued to insist that the observance of the Šariʿah was absolutely indispensable even for the šūfīs, their lack of integration, indeed positive dislocation, between the Inner and the Outer leads to the suspicion that their insistence on the Šariʿah is formal and even hypocritical.⁴⁹

With statements such as these, Rahman and those who follow his lead have situated Sirhindī in a mode of thought that is “diametrically opposed”⁵⁰ to Ibn ʿArabī and his school. However, if Ibn ʿArabī’s words are read generously and allowed to stand on their own without undue suspicion of insincerity based on metaphysical disagreements (or even misunderstandings), then the purported chasm between the two shaykhs seems to lessen considerably, if not to disappear altogether.

Chittick has even gone so far as to suggest that Sirhindī is simply another figure in the school of Ibn ʿArabī in India,⁵¹ even though Sirhindī’s much-referred-to “counter theory” of

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⁴⁶ Ibid., p. 101.

⁴⁷ R. W. J. Austin has duly noted how Ibn ʿArabī’s statements have had the tendency to instill “horror into the mind of the religious establishment,” because Ibn ʿArabī “says that because each created being is and cannot be other than its Lord determines, as informed by its own eternal predisposition, each thing must therefore necessarily be, as the Qurʾan puts it, ‘pleasing to its Lord,’ irrespective of whether that ontological approval appear, to the untutored view, as praise or blame, reward or punishment.” Ibn al-ʿArabī, The Bezels of Wisdom, trans. R. W. J. Austin (Mahwah: Paulist Press, 1980), p. 104.


⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Faruqi, The Mujaddid’s Conception, p. 96.

the “oneness of existence,” the “oneness of witnessing,” was taken to be opposed to the
school. Indeed, Sirhindī’s own shaykh, Bāqī Bi’l-lāh (d. 1603), was part of a long line of
Naqshbandīs who were submersed within the school of Ibn ʿArabī.52 Although the
hagiographical tradition suggests that Bāqī Bi’l-lāh accepted Sirhindī’s theory at the end of
his life, he is supposedly to have spent most of his life teaching and defending the ideas of
Ibn ʿArabī. Interestingly, Bāqī Bi’l-lāh even defended Ibn ʿArabī’s views against the
criticism of ʿAlāʾ al-Dawla al-Simnānī (d. 1336) and stated that Simnānī’s differences with
the Shaykh al-Akbar were the consequence of misunderstanding rather than truth.53 It is also
telling that Bāqī Bi’l-lāh’s two sons championed Ibn ʿArabī’s concept of “oneness of
existence” over Sirhindī’s supposedly more orthodox doctrine, even though Bāqī Bi’l-lāh
assigned their training to Sirhindī.54

Most importantly, Sirhindī himself admits that he was part of the intellectual and
spiritual lineage of Ibn ʿArabī. As Friedmann has noted, Sirhindī not only frequently quoted
Ibn ʿArabī and spoke of him in a most reverential fashion; he also recommended the study of
the shaykh’s works as a basis for the proper understanding of his own ideas. Rather than
condemning Ibn ʿArabī for his opinions, Sirhindī tried to reinterpret his ideas in ways more

52 First and foremost among these was the highly revered Naqshbandī shaykh Khwāja ʿUbayd Allāh
Ahrar (d. 1490), whose overarching spiritual ethos was derived from the teachings of Ibn ʿArabī. Not
only was Bāqī Bi’l-lāh’s mother a descendent of ʿUbayd Allāh Ahrar, but Bāqī Bi’l-lāh paid such
respect to ʿUbayd Allāh that Bāqī Bi’l-lāh called his students to follow the Ahrariyya-Naqshbandiyya.
Rizvi, A History of Sufism, vol. 2, p. 188.

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54 Chittick, “Notes on Ibn Al-ʿArabī’s Influence,” p. 232. Sirhindī only did so by letters; see ter Haar,
Follower and Heir, pp. 43–44.
congruous with “proper” Islamic theology.\textsuperscript{55} For example, Sirhindī says of Ibn ʿArabī, “one ought to learn about the greatness and the profound wisdom of the Shaykh, not refute and condemn him.”\textsuperscript{56} He also states, “The science of the Prophets is the Book of God and the Sunnah [way] of the Prophet and the science of the saints is (Ibn al-ʿArabī’s) \textit{Fuṣūṣ al-Hikām} and \textit{Futūḥāt Makkīyah}.”\textsuperscript{57}

Moreover, Sirhindī’s criticisms of the doctrine of “oneness of existence” associated with the school of Ibn ʿArabī do not immediately estrange him from his school; disagreement with Ibn ʿArabī’s ideas on the part of those who follow him is as old as the school itself. In fact, in the first commentary ever written on \textit{The Bezels of Wisdom (Fuṣūṣ al-Ḥikam)}, al-Tilimsānī boldly contradicted Ibn ʿArabī’s ideas on the immutability of entities, believing them to be completely nonexistent. Defiantly, al-Tilimsānī states, “Even though the Shaykh would not deny what I say, I deny what the Shaykh says.”\textsuperscript{58} As Chittick has noted, “Al-Tilimsānī’s critical remarks are not untypical for Ibn ʿArabī’s followers, although few are quite as overt.”\textsuperscript{59}

Much of Sirhindī’s alleged disagreement with the doctrine of “oneness of existence” appears to be the result of Sirhindī’s concern for those who were not adequately equipped to understand it. As Chittick has pointed out, the term “oneness of existence” was not used by Ibn ʿArabī and was rarely mentioned by those in his early school. Ironically, the term seems

\textsuperscript{55} Friedmann, \textit{Shaykh Ahmad Sirhindī}, pp. 64–65.

\textsuperscript{56} Ibid., p. 65.

\textsuperscript{57} Rahman, “Selected Letters,” p. 60.


\textsuperscript{59} Ibid., p. 517.
to have been popularized by the polemical works of Ibn Taymiyya, who even used the term within the titles of two of his treatises. Moreover, Ibn Taymiyya employed the phrase “oneness of existence” to identify a heretical group as much as to identify a doctrine. In these treatises, Ibn Taymiyya associated “oneness of existence” with “unificationism” (ittiḥād) and “incarnationalism” (ḥulāl), two terms that were specifically rejected by Ibn ʿArabī and his school. In spite of—or out of spite for—Ibn Taymiyya’s biting polemics, the latter school of Ibn ʿArabī gleefully took up the term as a self-identifier. By Sirhindī’s time, “oneness of existence” had all kinds of negative associations attached to it. Chittick has therefore suggested that Sirhindī’s choice of “oneness of witnessing” over “oneness of existence” was most likely a move “to foil the criticisms of Ibn Taymiyya and his followers.”

In light of Sirhindī’s connection to Ibn ʿArabī and his school, it is prudent to read Sirhindī’s criticisms of Ibn ʿArabī generously. If Sirhindī is read otherwise, it would be quite easy to assume that he only had the most superficial understanding of Ibn ʿArabī’s thought, and that is clearly not the case. For example, Sirhindī criticizes the conception, often associated with Ibn ʿArabī, that the world is nonexistent and is absolutely identical to God. As has been often pointed out by students of Ibn ʿArabī since the time of Sirhindī, this is an oversimplification of Ibn ʿArabī’s statements taken out of their original context. Although

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62 The Indian Naqshbandī shaykh Shāh Walī Allāh (d. 1762), who was famous for “reconciling” the views of Sirhindī and Ibn ʿArabī, reproached Sirhindī where he diverged from the views of Ibn ʿArabī, asserting that Sirhindī had misunderstood Ibn ʿArabī and incorrectly cited his work. J. M. S.
Ibn ʿArabī does make statements like the one just mentioned, they are always contextualized in a larger matrix of contradictory assertions that serve to form his overarching ethos of mystical bewilderment (*hayra*), and as such “def[y] the categories of yes and no, either/or.” Ibn ʿArabī therefore claimed that his *modus operandi* was suprarational and as such occupied that liminal reality between knowing and unknowing, therefore constituting the paradox of a mystical “gnosis” (direct knowledge of Reality) that exists beyond the intellect. Indeed, this use of “contradictory statements and joining opposites” irritated Ibn Taymiyya to such an extent that he held Ibn ʿArabī’s teachings “totally indefensible” from both rational and traditional standpoints.

Ibn ʿArabī’s oft-repeated summation of the ontological paradox of creation is his famous definition of phenomenal existence as “He/not He (*huwa lā huwa,*” and although he stressed the need to acknowledge God’s similarity (*tashbih*), he clearly placed God’s incomparability (*tanzih*) as the foremost reference point for any articulation about the Divine. Therefore, Sirhindī’s primary assertion that God is completely transcendent and

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63 Chittick, “Rūmī and *waḥdat al-wujūd,***” p. 86.

64 For the importance of bewilderment in Ibn ʿArabī’s thought, see William Chittick, *The Sufi Path of Knowledge* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1989), p. 3. Regarding Ibn ʿArabī’s use of paradox to articulate his mystical ideas, Rosenthal observes, “Even more than other mystics and intellectuals, Ibn ʿArabī showed himself fond of the combination of contraries for the purpose of drawing attention to his ideas. Knowledge is at the same time ignorance, being might be conceived as non-being, right guidance implies both bringing near and keeping away, freedom is slavery […]” Rosenthal, “Ibn ʿArabī,” p. 35.


66 Chittick, “Rūmī and *waḥdat al-wujūd,***” p. 76.

unknowable is thoroughly in alignment with Ibn `Arabi’s conception of the Divine Essence, and as such Sirhindī’s claim is simply a reiteration rather than a rectification.

An especially telling incident should be noted that further indicates that Sirhindī’s so-called hostility to the doctrine of the “oneness of existence” is much exaggerated. The famous prince Dārā Shikūh (d. 1659), who was a believer in Ibn `Arabi’s “doctrine,” wrote The Ship of Saints (Safīnāt al-awliyā), a biography of famous Sufis. In it, Dārā writes about a meeting that took place between Sirhindī and his own Shaykh, Miyān Mīr, who was also famous as an “ardent follower” of the “oneness of existence.” As Ernst has noted, “The text is of particular interest because it shows how different Dārā’s perception of Sirhindī was from the modern political view of them both.” Indeed, instead of finding fault with Sirhindī, Dārā defends him—a defense, moreover, that is based on the personal attestation of Miyān Mīr. In this encounter, Miyān Mīr is shown three miracles by Sirhindī that indicate his rank as a saint, and no mention at all is made of the “oneness of existence.”

Finally, that the entire doctrinal clash of seventeenth-century India exists more in the imagination of contemporary historiographers than in the “reality” of the past is shown by several contemporary scholars’ direct references to the famous memoirs of the French explorer François Bernier, whom they claim witnessed this so-called “dispute” firsthand in

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68 Faruqi, The Mujaddid’s Conception, pp. 81, 87.


71 Ibid., pp. 508–509.
the seventeenth-century.\textsuperscript{72} Despite these assertions, however, the only “dispute” that Bernier actually mentions is his personal disdain for what appears to the doctrine of the “oneness of existence,” which he apparently encountered during his travels in India.\textsuperscript{73} Although Bernier does not refer to any “controversy” in India, he does briefly allude to a similar doctrine held by an English Rosicrucian and its apparent refutation by “our great Gassendy.”\textsuperscript{74} The fact that this letter, which Bernier wrote in 1667, makes no mention of any dispute—despite claims to the contrary—is quite telling on two counts: (1) it confirms the ongoing and pervasive acceptance of the doctrine of “oneness of existence” more than forty years after Sirhindī’s death,\textsuperscript{75} and (2) it shows that despite the assertions of certain modern scholars, there does not seem to have been a raging public conflict between the ideas of Sirhindī and those of Ibn ʿArabī during Bernier’s time.

**Sirhindī: Chishti Forerunner of Muḥib Allāh?**

In David Damrel’s important article “The ‘Naqshbandi Reaction’ Reconsidered,” Damrel suggests that Sirhindī was not just a Naqshbandī Sufi but was also an important


\textsuperscript{73} Bernier states, “You are doubtless acquainted with the doctrine of many of the ancient philosophers concerning that great life-giving principle of the world, of which they argue that we and all living creatures are so many parts […] .” Francois Bernier, *Travels in the Mogul Empire, A.D. 1656–1668*, trans. Archibald Constable (Delhi: S. Chand and Co., 1968), pp. 345–46.

\textsuperscript{74} Ibid., pp. 346–47.

\textsuperscript{75} With regard to this “doctrine,” Bernier states, “This is the almost universal doctrine of the *Gentile Pendets* of the *Indies*, and it is this same doctrine which is held by the sect of the *Soufys* and the greater part of the learned men of Persia at the present day, and which is set forth in Persian poetry in very exalted and emphatic language, in their *Goul-tchen-raz*, or Garden of Mysteries.” Bernier, *Travels*, p. 346. Here Bernier directly mentions the famous work of Shabistārī (d. 1320), who was a major transmitter of Ibn ʿArabī’s ideas in Persia. See Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions*, pp. 279–81.
inheritor and transmitter of the Chishti lineage.\textsuperscript{76} Damrel delineates a continuity between Sirhindî’s teachings and his Chishti roots, making it possible to situate Sirhindî not simply as Muḥibb Allāh’s most famous contemporary but also as a significant forerunner to Muḥibb Allāh in the same Chishti-Šābīrī line.

Sirhindî was initiated into the Chishti-Šābīrī Sufi line by his father Shaykh ʿAlī b. ʿAbd al-Aḥad (d. 1599).\textsuperscript{77} Shaykh ʿAbd al-Aḥad had been initiated into the order at the hand of Shaykh Rukn al-Dīn, who was the son of the illustrious ʿAbd al-Quddūs Gangōhī (d. 1537), whom K. A. Nizami called “the greatest figure of the Šābīriyya branch.”\textsuperscript{78} Importantly, ʿAbd al-Aḥad had studied with ʿAbd al-Quddūs personally at Gangōh.\textsuperscript{79} As Damrel has noted, Sirhindî was not only a Chishti Sufi for the first thirty-five years of his life; he also briefly served the function of a Chishti master (pīr), which included the instruction of disciples.\textsuperscript{80} Regarding the continuity of the Chishtiyya-Šābīriyya line in Sirhindî’s thought, Damrel has also pointed out:

That some or even much of Sirhindî’s mystical thought, practices, and teaching should derive from his education and experience prior to his enrollment as a Naqshbandī shaykh should come as no surprise. His discipleship under Bāqī Billāh was exceptionally brief, and afterwards he benefited from his pīr—through personal visits and correspondence—for only three more years before Bāqī Billāh’s death. It seems reasonable then to expect that much of Sirhindî’s non-Naqshbandī grounding in Islamic mysticism would come from his association with Indian Sufi orders,

\textsuperscript{76} See Damrel, “The ‘Naqshbandī Reaction’,” pp. 176–98.


\textsuperscript{79} Damrel, “The ‘Naqshbandī Reaction’,” p. 181.

\textsuperscript{80} Ibid.
particularly the Chishti-Šabiri lineage that connected his father, Shaykh āb al-Aḥad, with Shaykh āb al-Quddūs Gangōhi.  

What is most telling here is the connection between Shaykh āb al-Quddūs Gangōhi and Sirhindī. Regarding Shaykh āb al-Quddūs Gangōhi, Damrel notes, “as a defender of Ibn al- ārabi’s teachings in India, including the notion of waḥdat al-wujūd, he had no equals.”

Moreover, S. A. A. Rizvi mentions that that Sirhindī’s father was also a scholar of the “oneness of existence.” In addition, Damrel reaffirms Sirhindī’s connection to Ibn ārabi:

It seems clear that while Sirhindī took issue with various points of Ibn al- ārabi’s waḥdat al-wujūd, his was not a categorical rejection of the great Andalusian mystic’s work and was never intended to be. Sirhindī certainly believed that later Sufi commentators misunderstood and misinterpreted Ibn al- ārabi’s writings—sometimes with impious results—but Sirhindī regarded Ibn al- ārabi’s mystical achievements and writings with great respect and borrowed from them freely.  

Damrel’s provocative article suggests that Sirhindī “retained and even expanded upon” his “Chishti spiritual inheritance” after he entered the Naqshbandiyya. In terms of Sirhindī’s attitude towards “oneness of existence,” Damrel again reaffirms that rather than its antithesis, Sirhindī’s “oneness of witnessing” “in many ways is more a sympathetic commentary and elaboration [. . .].”

81 Ibid., p. 188.
82 Ibid., p. 189.
84 Damrel, “The ‘Naqshbandi Reaction’ Reconsidered,” p. 190.
85 Ibid.
86 Ibid., p. 193.
Muḥibb Allāh: Prolific but Forgotten

Chittick has observed that during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries in Mogul India, a plethora of Sufi authors were writing treatises that could be classified within the tradition of Ibn ʿArabī and his school. This is not unexpected, for Ibn ʿArabī had had such a wide influence on Sufi thought by that time that, as Chittick notes, “it was difficult to write anything on Sufi theory without employing the technical terminology of this school.” As such, Chittick has called Muḥibb Allāh the “the most learned representative of the school of Ibn al-ʿArabī in the subcontinent.” Similarly, in M. G. Zubaid Ahmad’s *The Contribution of India to Arabic Literature*, Muḥibb Allāh is the only author mentioned by name in Zubaid’s introductory remarks on important Indian authors of Sufism. Zubaid calls Muḥibb Allāh’s “Sūfīistic works” “highly valuable and meritorious.” Moreover, Rizvi has claimed that Muḥibb Allāh was “the most prolific Chishti author [. . .].” There are at least nineteen extant treatises (as well as several collections of letters) written by Muḥibb Allāh in Arabic and Persian, the vast majority of which are unpublished manuscripts currently decomposing in libraries throughout India.


88 Chittick, “The School of Ibn ʿArabī,” p. 520.

89 Ahmad, *The Contribution of India*, p. v.


As has been argued, the contemporary scholarly amnesia regarding Muḥibb Allāh’s life and work appears to be the result of a modern preoccupation with Sirhindī who has been used by historiographers to serve ideological and nationalist agendas at the expense of Ibn Ṭabarī and his school. However, it seems that modern scholars have not been the only ones to neglect the significance of Muḥibb Allāh; even though he was a prodigious and profound author, as well as an important Chishti pīr, there is a dearth of original biographical material on the shaykh. As Hafiz Mohammad Tahir Ali, one of only a few contemporary Indian scholars to publish scholarly material on Muḥibb Allāh in English, has stated, “it is unfortunate that the historians and biographers did not pay due heed to this great mystic.”

Indeed, while the amount of hagiographical material on Sirhindī is vast, comparatively little was written on Muḥibb Allāh. Lawrence has importantly observed that the early development of hagiographical material is a crucial component of a saint being remembered posthumously. In investigating


93 The two most important biographical accounts of Muḥibb Allāh are: Mir‘āt al-Asrār (1654) by ʿAbd al-Rahmān Chishti (d. 1683), who was a close companion of Muḥibb Allāh; and Maqāsid al-ʿĀrifīn (1712) by Shāh Add al-Dīn (d. 1758), who was a nephew of Shāh Muḥammadi Fayyād, Muḥibb Allāh’s main successor. Important biographical information is also provided by Muḥibb Allāh himself in several of his works, most importantly: Anfās al-Khawāṣṣ, Manāẓir-i Akhass al-Khawāṣṣ, and Maktubat-i Shah Muḥibbullah, a collection of his letters. See Ali, Manazir-i-Akhass, pp. 6. Other biographical works include: Ma‘ārij al-Walāyah (early 18th century) by ʿAbd Allāh Khweshghī Qasūrī, Anwār al-ʿĀrifīn (1876) by Muḥammad Husayn, and Iqṭibās al-Anwār (1895) by Akram Baraswī. See Ali, “Shaikh Muḥibbullah,” and Khan, “Shah Muḥibbullah,” pp. 315–22. All of the above-mentioned general Chishti biographies, except for Maqāsid al-ʿĀrifīn, are noted by Nizami “Cishtiyya,” p. 56.
why “certain Indo-Muslim Sufi masters from the Sultanate period become famous, while others have been forgotten [. . .].” Lawrence contends “that the cumulative reputation of a Sufi master largely depended on a biographical process [. . .].” Lawrence further notes that this “biographical process” seems to succeed when the Sufi’s family and followers effectively do two things: (1) record pivotal life events that have significant resonance with the elite of his immediate milieu, and (2) “perpetuate his memory” (through the creation of a hagiographical tradition, dissemination of his teachings, and formation of a tomb cult).

A comparison between the biographical traditions of Sirhindī and Muḥībb Allāh serves as a case in point. In his writings, Muḥībb Allāh argued that the highest order of saint strove to avoid perceptible miracles, and that the highest miracle afforded to a mystic by God was gnosis. Sirhindī too seems to have downplayed the role of miracles in his own writings, but as Friedmann has noted, the hagiographic literature on Sirhindī “is concerned primarily with the miracles Sirhindī was believed to have performed.” The miracles attributed to Sirhindī included the healing and rescuing of people, the prevention of disasters, the ability to read thoughts, bilocation, and influencing political outcomes. The hagiographical treatment of Muḥībb Allāh, however, does not construe him as a miracle worker, although one of his disciples, Shaykh Aḥmad of Naṣirabad, was noted for his

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95 Ibid.


97 Friedmann, Shaykh Ahmad Sirhindī, p. 92.

98 Ibid., pp. 92–93.
capacity to produce miracles. The most miraculous achievement attributed to Muḥibb Allāh was his ability to convince many legal scholars (‘ulama’) of the validity of the doctrine of “The oneness of existence.” As will be shown, however, even this claim seems to have been largely exaggerated. Thus, while Sirhindi’s followers succeeded in perpetuating his remembrance through an extensive and rich hagiographical tradition, Muḥibb Allāh’s followers did not.

As a result, the extant biographical information regarding Muḥibb Allāh’s life is scant. However, in addition to being a prodigious writer of metaphysical treatises, Muḥibb Allāh also wrote long letters in which he addressed the suspicions and concerns of a diverse audience of Sufis, philosophers, and the royal court. It is from his treatises and his letters that scholars can glean some of the most interesting information about Muḥibb Allāh and the volatile intellectual, religious, and political circles that formed his milieu.

**From Ṣadrpūr to Ilāhābād: Of Sufis, Philosophers, and a Prince**

Muḥibb Allāh was born in the village of Ṣadrpūr, near Ilāhābād, in 1587. His lineage was said to go back to the second caliph, ʿUmar, on both sides. Equally distinctive is that his father was a descendent of the thirteenth-century Chishti Shaykh Farīd al-Dīn Ganj-i Shakar (d. 1236) (a relation that he would also be able to claim on “both sides,” that is, both

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101 Not only was Muḥibb Allāh in correspondence with the Mogul prince Dārā Shikhā as is discussed below, but the Emperor Shah Jahān had also written the shaykh requesting his presence at court as an attained gnostic. Muḥibb Allāh, however, politely excused himself as one who had not yet attained the beginning stages of the path of gnosis. Ali, “Shaikh Muhibullah,” p. 253.

102 “Bābā Farīd” was the shaykh of the famous Shaykh Nizām al-Dīn Awliyā’ (d. 1325).
biologically and spiritually). After finishing a traditional education in Ṣadṛpūr, Muḥibb Allāh traveled to Delhi in search of spiritual guidance at the tomb of Khwāja Ḥusainbābā Ṭūbāl-Dīn Bakhṭiyyār Kākī (an important disciple of Khwāja Muḥammad al-Dīn Ḥasan, the founder of the Chishtiyya in India, and the shaykh of Bābā Farīd). Muḥibb Allāh was thus guided to his shaykh, Abū Saʿīd of Gangū.  

According to Muḥibb Allāh’s own account, he went into retreat under the supervision of Abū Saʿīd for only several days, at which time he was made Abū Saʿīd’s spiritual successor (khalīfa). Muḥibb Allāh is thus considered a major pīr in the Ṣābīriyya initiatic chain (silṣila) underneath Abū Saʿīd of Gangū.

Muḥibb Allāh returned to Ṣadṛpūr and resided there for an interim period, after which he traveled to Radawli, where he met Ādī b-d-Rahmān Chishti (d. 1683), who would later include him in his Chishti hagiography Reflection of Secrets (Mirʾāt al-Asrār). Muḥibb Allāh then spent some time traveling and visiting other Chishti centers until he arrived in Ilāhābād in 1628, where he would reside for the next twenty years, until his death in 1648.

At Ilāhābād, Muḥibb Allāh found himself on the defensive, writing letters to put out the fires that his preaching and works seem to have started. Local religious scholars apparently had some difficulty deciphering the meaning of his writing. More importantly, however, Muḥibb Allāh also drew the heated criticism of Mullā Maḥmūd Jaunpūrī (d. 1652),

104 Ibid., p. 245.
106 Ibid., p. 245.
who is considered to be the “greatest physicist, philosopher and logician of his century” and who was deeply opposed to the ideas of Ibn ʿArabi.\footnote{Rizvi, A History of Sufism, vol. 2, pp. 6–7, 99.}  
\footnote{Rizvi, A History of Sufism, vol. 2, pp. 6–7.} Notably, Mullā Maḥmūd’s main teacher, Shaykh Muhammad Afdal, held another of his students, Mullā ʿAbd al-Rashīd Jaunpūrī (d. 1672), to be Mullā Maḥmūd’s intellectual equal.\footnote{Hafiz A. Ghaffar Khan, “India,” in History of Islamic Philosophy: Part II, ed. Seyyed Hossein Nasr and Oliver Leaman (New York: Routledge, 1996), p. 1066.}  
\footnote{Ibid., p. 98. The two other articles that mention this fatwa besides Rizvi’s account—namely, Ali, “Shaikh Muhibullah,” and Khan, “Shah Muhibullah”—both tell this story verbatim and situate the fatwa during the lifetime of Muḥibb Allāh. However, neither article lists its sources, while Rizvi does; moreover, Rizvi’s account is more detailed, including biographical information on Shaykh ʿAbd al-Rashid. Thus, both Ali and Khan most likely took their information from Rizvi without citing him or squaring the dates that he gives for this incident, which they neglect to include.}  
\footnote{Ibid., p. 98.} While Mullā Maḥmūd famously fought against Muḥibb Allāh, ʿAbd al-Rashīd, a Qādirī shaykh, ardently defended him. As Rizvi notes, during this time Mullā Maḥmūd and his disciples in Jaunpūr led a philosophical movement against the thought of Ibn ʿArabi, and Muḥibb Allāh was forced to vigorously defend his own positions. Muḥibb Allāh thus established correspondences with both his rivals and his supporters in which he sought to explain his metaphysical conceptions to secure his position in Ilāhābād and stave off persecution.\footnote{Ibid., p. 98.}

As an indication of the force of these disputes, sixteen years after Muḥibb Allāh’s death, in 1664, Shaykh ʿAbd al-Rashīd was called to Ilāhābād to endorse a legal ruling (fatwa) drawn up by its leading scholars accusing Muḥibb Allāh and his main disciple, Shaykh Muhammadi (who was still living), of heresy and infidelity. ʿAbd al-Rashīd not only refused to endorse the ruling, but insisted that if Muḥibb Allāh and his disciple could not be considered Muslims, then who could?\footnote{Ibid., p. 98.}
In an interesting political twist just before the end of Muḥibb Allāh’s life, the Mogul prince Dārā Shikūh (one of the sons of the emperor Shah Jahān) was appointed as governor of Ilāhābād in 1645. As noted above, Prince Dārā was a Sufi who had a keen interest in Ibn Ārabi and the doctrine of “oneness of existence.” Although he never visited Ilāhābād, he engaged in an interesting correspondence with Muḥibb Allāh in which he asked for clarification regarding metaphysical questions. As Ernst has noted, Muḥibb Allāh’s first letter of response answers the prince’s questions “with much subtlety” and makes reference not only to Ibn Ārabi, whom he copiously quotes, but also to many other early Sufis.

Dārā’s response, however, was not entirely appreciative, for he had apparently become weary of Sufi bookishness and their constant reference to the traditions of the Prophet and the sayings of earlier mystics; thus, he writes, “the ecstasy that does not happen to be in accord with the Word of God and the Prophet is much better than that which is written in books.” Ernst notes that Muḥibb Allāh responded by politely rebuking the prince and asserting that he opposes “any suggestions contrary to the Qur’an and sunna [way of the Prophet].” This type of claim is typical for Muḥibb Allāh, who says in one of his treatises, “The truth is this that for the gnostic everything is good if the Qur’an and Sunnat

111 Ibid.


113 Ibid., p. 2.

114 Ibid.
always remain in his hand.”115 In this way, Muḥibb Allāh follows Ibn ʿArabiʾs emphasis on the correct observance of religious law and his insistence that the mystic keep within its boundaries in all states and stations.116

Unlike the hagiographical material on Muḥibb Allāh—which, as mentioned above, suggests the miraculous conversion en masse of those in his intellectual milieu to the doctrine of “oneness of existence”—Muḥibb Allāhʾs letters portray a man who finds himself awkwardly situated between, on the one hand, an uneasy and perhaps hostile local community of scholars and philosophers, and on the other an audacious Sufism represented by Prince Dārā, who has had enough of stuffy old books and who seeks gnosis directly in his own heart qua “a limitless ocean always yielding fresh pearls.”117

*The Equivalence: Commentaries and Controversies*

Muḥibb Allāh wrote the majority of his work during the twenty years in which he resided in Ilahābād. The exact date when he penned *The Equivalence* is unknown, but he wrote a commentary on it in Persian (*Sharḥ-i Risāla-i Taswiya*) sometime between 1637 and 1640.118 Thus, it is safe to say that *The Equivalence* was written during the first ten years of

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116 As Chodkiewicz has observed concerning Ibn ʿArabiʾs metaphysical understanding of the *sharīʿa*: “[T]he Law is not the cloak or the symbol of *haqīqa*, or a hidden truth that might be reached by transgression. It is the *haqīqa*: it thus imposes itself absolutely and up to the last iota on the ʾārif bi-Llāh (gnostic)—in the etymological sense of the word—as well as on the ʾāmma, the common believers.” Chodkiewicz, *An Ocean*, p. 57. Similarly, Muḥibb Allāh states, “So in annihilating or retaining everything, you don’t step out of the path of Shariʿat.” Muḥibb Allāh Ilahābādī, *Manāẓir-i-Akhass-ul-Khawās*, quoted in Ali, “Shaikh Muhibbullah,” p. 253.


Muhibb Allāh’s stay in Ilāhābād. Contemporary scholars who write about Muḥibb Allāh often give a portrayal of his ideology similar to that given by supporters of Sirhindī, but the philosophical arguments presented in The Equivalence seem to be much more in conversation with the Jaunpūrian philosophers than with Sirhindī.

For example, Muḥibb Allāh is often portrayed as battling Sirhindī and as a counter-renewer of the doctrine of “oneness of existence” over the “oneness of witnessing,” thus asserting his “own contribution to revive the doctrine after the vehement onslaught of Shaikh Ahmad Sirhindī [. . .].”119 But it is telling that Muḥibb Allāh never once mentions Sirhindī in his letters in which he defends Ibn ṣ-Arabī. Rather, the only Sufis he speaks of in these terms are Simnānī and Sayyid Muḥāmmad ibn Yūṣūf Ḥusaynī (Gīsū Darāz) (d. 1422).120 The Kubrawī mystic Simnānī is famous for his criticism of Ibn ṣ-Arabī,121 and the Chishti Gīsū Darāz is renowned as a onetime follower of Ibn ṣ-Arabī who adopted Simnānī’s position at the end of his life.122 Muḥibb Allāh does, however, state that mystics who opposed Ibn ṣ-Arabī were “ignorant Sufis” (ṣufī i-jahil) and that only the spiritually imperfect were followers of Simnānī.123 But had Muḥibb Allāh thought Sirhindī worthy of mention as an

119 Ibid., p. 4. See also Khan, “Shah Muhibbullah,” p. 322.


opponent, it seems likely he would have done so.\textsuperscript{124} Indeed, it was not until Shah Kalim Allah Jahanabadi (d. 1729) that a work associated with Muḥib Allāh—a commentary on \textit{The Equivalence}—would be used to criticize the thought of Sirhindī.\textsuperscript{125}

Zubaid Ahmad has noted that there have been many commentaries and glosses written on \textit{The Equivalence}, which suggests that scholars thought it an important text for a period of time.\textsuperscript{126} As will be shown, \textit{The Equivalence} is submersed in a philosophical framework that is striking in both its simplicity and its biting polemic. The text’s ruthless concision and reconditeness clearly mark it as a didactic primer intended for an elite audience with knowledge of Avicennan Neoplatonism and the complex ideas of Ibn ʿArabī. Formally, \textit{The Equivalence} is a commentary on some of Ibn ʿArabī’s most important points from \textit{The Bezels}, which Muḥib Allāh quotes exclusively throughout the text. Rizvi ironically claims that while \textit{The Equivalence} exceeded all of Muḥib Allāh’s other works in popularity, it was “concealed from the common gaze.”\textsuperscript{127} How “concealed” it actually was is perhaps hard to determine because it produced such a large body of commentaries. In addition, it has been called Muḥib Allāh’s “most controversial” treatise, and as such produced a few notable refutations. Particularly revealing in terms of \textit{The Equivalence}’s philosophical idiom is the fact that Mullā Maḥmūd himself wrote a refutation of it, which was in turn refuted by one of

\textsuperscript{124} It should be noted that Samnānī did influence Sirhindī’s criticisms of Ibn ʿArabī. See Friedmann, \textit{Shaykh Ahmad Sirhindī}, pp. 24, 26.

\textsuperscript{125} Ibid., p. 271.

\textsuperscript{126} Ahmad, \textit{The Contribution of India}, p. 78.

\textsuperscript{127} Rizvi, \textit{A History of Sufism}, vol. 2, p. 270.
Muhibb Allāh’s disciples.128 But perhaps the most famous reaction to the text was that of the Mogul emperor Aurangzeb, who had struggled with his more esoteric brother, Prince Dārā, for succession to the throne. Aurangzeb eventually defeated Dārā, and Aurangzeb’s men beheaded the Sufi prince.129

The Equivalence was brought to Aurangzeb’s attention, and he was apparently so baffled by it that he sent word to Muḥibb Allāh’s disciple Shaykh Muhammadi demanding that the meaning of the seemingly heretical passages be revealed, or else he would have all the extant manuscripts burnt. Muhammadi famously replied that he was not yet at the station of the Shaykh to know exactly what he had meant; if the emperor wanted to have the text burnt, then he should do so in the royal kitchen where “much more fire is available” than that which “can be had in the house of the ascetics who have resigned themselves to God.”130 Aurangzeb seems to have left it at that.131 The irony should not be overlooked that in the end Aurangzeb allowed The Equivalence to be freely promulgated, but banned Sirhindi’s collected letters, even though contemporary South Asian historiography would credit those letters for inspiring Aurangzeb’s orthodox revival.

The first phase of this thesis has thus come full circle. It began by approaching Muḥibb Allāh in the contemporary historiographical context of Sirhindi, where Muḥibb Allāh is surprisingly absent. It now ends with Muḥibb Allāh’s intellectual context in

128 According to Ahmad, both of these texts are owned by Muḥibb Allāh’s estate. Ahmad, The Contribution of India, p. 78.

129 Perhaps the most moving and dramatic account of the fateful struggle between the two princes is told by Bernier, who actually was with Dārā for three days while Aurangzeb was running him to ground. See Bernier, Travels, pp. 89–103


131 Ibid.
Ilahabad, where Sirhind is surprisingly absent. Instead of focusing on Sirhind, it is clear that Muhib Allâh was responding to other intellectual concerns. To understand how those concerns translate into the content of the “source” text itself (our final goal), we must first explore the intellectual traditions that inform the text’s discourse. Thus, our journey must separate from the “generation and corruption” of historiographical narratives and travel into the intermediary world of “ideas,” that is, conceptual frameworks and philosophical abstractions.
CHAPTER II

BETWEEN HISTORY AND TEXT: THE DISCOURSE IN CONTEXT

The Structure/Anti-structure Dialectic: Philosophy and Ibn ʿArabī

Victor Turner has famously theorized about the dialectic between structure and anti-structure within ritual, societal, and intellectual processes. Using Van Gennep’s three-phased processual theory of the “rites of passage” (separation, margin, and reaggregation), Turner develops a similar processual theory of liminality. Turner theorizes that individual and group transitions, which produce personal and social change, are often catalyzed by the separation of an individual or a group from a societal status quo into a marginal community, which he calls a “communitas.” This transition is thus processual and is marked by the shift from a rigid social structure into an inverted and more relaxed one, which consequently evokes a dynamic and fecund liminal creativity where social norms are subverted and epistemological boundaries are transcended. Given that intellectual communities also can participate in this process, viewing the processual transition of Ibn ʿArabī and his school from a Turnerian perspective will help to more clearly situate Muḥībb Allāh in the context of this metaphysical tradition.

Turner observes that in any social setting there is always a dialectic of structure: “Maximization of communitas provokes maximization of structure, which in its turn produces revolutionary strivings for renewed communitas.”¹³³ Turner also notes that transitions into liminal modes of being and thinking are highly creative and often produce mystical openings, breakaway religious groups, and religious leaders.¹³⁴ It is informative to use this perspective when looking at the thirteenth-century intellectual environment where Ibn Ṣaʿdī and his works emerged. As Marshall Hodgson has noted, there was a distinctive intellectual shift from the society of the High Caliphate (c. 692–945) to that of the Early Middle Period (c. 945–1258); as cultural norms were stabilized, the end of the High Caliphate witnessed a certain crescendo in societal structure.¹³⁵ From a Turnerian perspective, it is to be expected that when social structure reaches a certain level of stability, individuals and groups will separate from the status quo and form liminal communities where social and epistemological norms are subverted and new ideas are produced. Turner writes:

I would expect to find in liminal situations daring and innovation both in the modes of relating symbolic and mythic elements and in the choice of elements to be related. There might also be the introduction of new elements and their various combination with old ones, as in religious syncretisms.¹³⁶

Indeed, as Hodgson has noted, the “best thinkers” at the end of the eleventh century seemed to exhibit just such intellectual innovation and “combination,” where a rich florescence of

¹³³ Ibid., p. 129.

¹³⁴ Ibid., pp. 137-145.


knowledge produced intellectuals who combined different sciences and epistemological approaches. These formidable thinkers were not simply working out the consequences of the particular insights of their own immediate tradition, as often before, but now came frankly and honestly to grapple with the best insights that any accessible tradition could offer.\textsuperscript{137}

In addition, Turner observes that “gnosis,” or what he called “deep knowledge,” is “highly characteristic of liminality.”\textsuperscript{138} Hodgson also notes that the Early Middle Period was a time when “speculative Śūfism penetrated everywhere.”\textsuperscript{139} Thus, it is in the eclectic “liminality” of the Early Middle Period that we can situate Ibn ʿArabī and his metaphysical writings, which evince examples from the entire range of Islamic sciences and particularly from Islamic philosophical discourse.

Importantly, however, Turner has also observed that “Syntax and logic are problematic and not axiomatic features of liminality.”\textsuperscript{140} Thus, even though Ibn ʿArabī utilizes many different strains of philosophical concepts, particularly Neoplatonism, he did not consider himself a philosopher; moreover, as mentioned above, he was highly critical of ratiocination and speculative thought as a means to a (mystical) end; rather, Ibn ʿArabī saw himself as a “gnostic” who directly experienced knowledge as divine unveiling (kashf) and experiential knowledge (maʿrifa): “Had they, upon falling in love with wisdom, sought it from God, and not by means of thinking, they would have been right throughout.”\textsuperscript{141}

\textsuperscript{137} Hodgson, \textit{The Venture of Islam}, p. 154.

\textsuperscript{138} Turner, \textit{Dramas, Fields, and Metaphors}, p. 258.

\textsuperscript{139} Hodgson, \textit{The Venture of Islam}, p. 153.

\textsuperscript{140} Turner, \textit{Dramas, Fields, and Metaphors}, p. 255.

\textsuperscript{141} Rosenthal, “Ibn ʿArabī,” p. 16.
As Rosenthal has eloquently argued, even though Ibn ʿArabī’s terminology is philosophical in its “origins,” this is more a reflection of the language current in his intellectual universe than of his intellectual allegiance. Although he rarely referred to specific philosophers or their works, Ibn ʿArabī accepted the rational principles of Peripatetic teachings on logic, ethics, politics, and the nature of the soul, as well as much of Neoplatonic cosmogony. Although Ibn ʿArabī employed the philosophical terminology of the day, his use of it was at best original, and at worst “imaginative.” As Rahman has stated:

[Ibn ʿArabī’s] ideas, drawn from all the available sources—Greco-Gnostic, Christian, Persian, Islamic, Jewish—are not so much logically worked out and intellectually synthesized as partly absorbed and partly amassed by high [sic] suggestible and unbridled imagination. The result is a certain lack of fixity even of some of the cardinal ideas within the system.

Addressing the mystical quality of Ibn ʿArabī’s innovative use of language, Rosenthal has apologized for him thus: “If he used a bit of everything haphazardly, it was not mindless eclecticism on his part but the natural way to proceed for a thinker steeped in the vast culture that was his heritage.” That is to say, as Turner noted above, a liminal creativity combines symbolic elements of different epistemologies, and as Hodgson has confirmed, Ibn ʿArabī’s intellectual and spiritual milieu seems to have embodied this liminal mindset.

The last phase of Turner’s processual theory is the reaggregation from liminality back into structure as a necessary component in the continuation of any social or intellectual system. As Turner states, “man is both a structural and an anti-structural entity, who grows

144 Rosenthal, “Ibn ʿArabī,” p. 34.
through anti-structure and conserves through structure.”\textsuperscript{145} It should therefore come as no surprise that the evident anti-structural modality of Ibn \AArab\i’s work would produce a more structurally oriented school. As a result of the perceived lack of explanatory rigor in Ibn \AArab\i’s works, at least from a philosophical standpoint, his intellectual descendants attempted to harmonize his teachings with “traditional” interpretations of Hellenic philosophy. In fact, Ibn \AArab\i’s stepson and close disciple Şadr al-Din al-Qūnawī (d. 1274) was the first to try to reconcile Ibn \AArab\i’s works with “proper” philosophical systemization.\textsuperscript{146} Morris situates Qūnawī as the “founder” of the oft-mentioned “school” of Ibn \AArab\i that developed from Qūnawī’s initial metaphysical focus on Ibn \AArab\i’s thought. Qūnawī’s interpretive framework primarily focused on \textit{The Bezels} and was written for a scholarly elite well-acquainted with Islamic philosophy and theology. As Morris states:

> What resulted [. . .] was a body of complex theoretical literature focusing on the intellectual understanding and elaboration of certain perennial philosophic and theological problems within its own independent conceptual framework and technical terminology, drawn largely from the writings of Ibn \AArab\i.\textsuperscript{147}

Morris also notes that this metaphysical systemization of Ibn \AArab\i’s ideas was “something very different from Ibn \AArab\i’s own writings” and as such neglected Ibn \AArab\i’s detailed concern with method and practice, the “phenomenology” of the spiritual Path (a dimension he shared with other Sufi masters and most early Sufi authors); and his attempts to communicate his spiritual realizations and insights directly to his readers, through a wide variety of rhetorical devices (often closely tied to the Arabic language) which are never entirely separate from—nor reducible to—their implicit intellectual and metaphysical framework.\textsuperscript{148}

\textsuperscript{145} Turner, \textit{Dramas, Fields, and Metaphors}, p. 298.

\textsuperscript{146} Chittick, \textit{The Sufi Path}, p. xviii.

\textsuperscript{147} Morris, “Ibn \AArab\i and His Interpreters,” p. 753.

\textsuperscript{148} Ibid.
As a result, Morris asserts that the writings of Ibn ʿArabi’s “school” are “often virtually incomprehensible without a lengthy preliminary explanation of their own intellectual framework and terminology [. . .].”

Although Qūnawī’s more systematized philosophical approach was certainly well intentioned—and, in the Turnerian scheme of processual analysis, simply the movement of the dialectic back to structure—the resulting idiom seriously complicates any nonspecialized attempt at reading the texts in this tradition. As Morris has ironically noted, Ibn ʿArabi’s original writings are “both more powerful and more directly accessible than those of his interpreters in this ‘school’ [. . .].” Regardless of whether this is true or not, there certainly remains the difficult task of translating a work written in such an idiom. Any attempted analysis of such a text faces a hermeneutical double bind of both translating its written language, and the perhaps more daunting task of interpreting the various conceptual languages that make up its discourse.

The remaining portion of this chapter therefore attempts to separate and contextualize the multiple philosophical and metaphysical traditions that inform The Equivalence. By beginning with the emanationism of early Islamic Neoplatonism and ending with some key ontological ideas of Ibn ʿArabi’s school, it is possible to map out, so to speak, a certain intellectual evolution of many of these ideas as they are reflected in one degree or another in The Equivalence. Of particular significance here is the way each tradition conceives of the liminal metaphysical realm between God and the phenomenal universe.

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149 Ibid.

150 Ibid.
Neoplatonism in The Equivalence

Islamic Neoplatonism was initially conceived through the profound influence of two Arabic treatises that paraphrased the ideas of the Greek metaphysician Plotinus, often referred to as the father of Neoplatonism.151 The Neoplatonic perspective presented in these works hinged on the theory of emanation (fayd), which strove to explain the cosmogony of a material universe of multiple forms from an absolute, indivisible One (al-awwal).152 From the One, which is beyond time, the intellect, the soul, and the natural world arise successively through an outpouring of luminous virtue.153 The intelligible world is the abode of pure intellects, or separate intelligences, which are the essences, or entities, of the forms of the natural world. The soul, therefore, is intermediate between the spiritual and material realms, and can direct its attention upward to pure reason and its divine source, or downward to the world of sense and mundane form. In order for the seeker to regain his kinship to the “intelligible man,” his soul must separate from the unconscious reason of vegetative and animal existence (the temporal world of “generation and corruption”) and rise to conjoin with the noble human realm and the light of conscious reason, which is beyond the lower plane of discursive thought.154

Thus, the Arabic Neoplatonic texts provided the following seminal principles to the nascent Islamic philosophical tradition: (1) God is the utterly transcendent One. (2) All

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151 These two treatises were the apocryphal Theology of Aristotle (uthulugia arisṭuṭālis) and the Book of Divinity (kitāb al-rubahāya); see See Majid Fakhry, Al-Fārābī, Founder of Islamic Neoplatonism: His Life, Works and Influence (Oxford: Oneworld, 2002), p. 77.

152 Ibid.

153 Ibid., p. 78.

things emanate from Him. (3) Intelligence is the source of illumination and the locus of form. (4) The soul is the intermediary, or “horizon,” between the intelligible and sensible realms. (5) The cosmos emanates from God in a hierarchy, the mundane world being the basest emanation.\textsuperscript{155}

From a synthesis of these principles with certain Peripatetic elements, Al-Fārābī (d. 950), often called the father of Islamic Neoplatonism, was the first to fully develop an Islamic Neoplatonic theory in which the self-contemplation of the One produces a series of Ten Intelligences\textsuperscript{156} that give rise to corresponding spheres of heavenly bodies, ultimately resulting in the emanation of the material world.\textsuperscript{157} From God’s self-contemplation emanates the First Intelligence as a second being, which contemplates itself and the indivisible One. The contemplation of the First Intelligence gives rise to a Second Intelligence as well as a first heaven. This process of contemplation and resulting emanation continues and produces a series of intelligences that give rise to corresponding spheres of heavenly bodies, the Tenth Intelligence and the sphere of the moon being the lowest. The Tenth Intelligence, which al-Fārābī also called the “Active Intelligence” (\textit{aql fī‘il}), is thus the supramundane agency that governs the sublunary world of generation and corruption.\textsuperscript{158} The Active Intelligence

\textsuperscript{155} Ibid., p. 32.

\textsuperscript{156} In this essay I follow Rahman in translating two senses of the Neoplatonic use of \textit{aql} as: (1) “Intelligence,” denoting the divine / supramundane, and (2) “Intellect,” denoting the human / mundane. See Fazlur Rahman, \textit{Prophecy in Islam: Philosophy and Orthodoxy} (London: George Allen and Unwin Ltd., 1958).


\textsuperscript{158} Fakhry, \textit{Al-Fārābī}, pp. 79–83.
concludes the process of emanation by giving rise to three different kinds of souls: the vegetative, the animal, and the rational.\textsuperscript{159}

Importantly, the theory of emanation rejects the concept of \textit{creatio ex nihilo}, which holds that God created the world out of nothing and in time.\textsuperscript{160} As such, emanationism suggests an affinity between the emanated cosmos and its divine source.\textsuperscript{161} Following Aristotle, al-Fārābi situated intelligence in the highest position within the hierarchy of being. Moreover, he posited that the soul is the link between the intelligible and sensible realms and capable of attaining to the realm of intelligence, its original abode.\textsuperscript{162}

According to al- Fārābi, perfect philosophy or prophecy (he does not seem to distinguish between them) is the perfection of the human soul’s complete attainment of intelligence without external instruction by way of divine aid. The Active Intelligence illuminates the intellect of the prophet, in which the prophet’s internal images of sensible things are made “separate” (\textit{mujaarrad}) from the phenomenal world and are thus “actualized,” becoming individual entities known as intelligibles, or universals. In this way the perfected human \textit{qua} prophet is able to contemplate and receive the pure forms of his own intellect, which have been actualized and made “intelligible.” That is to say, because “every intelligible thing can be contemplated by the actual intellect by receiving its form and since the actual intellect is itself now an intelligible thing, it can therefore know itself.”\textsuperscript{163}


\textsuperscript{160}Fakhry, \textit{Al-Fārābi}, p. 78.

\textsuperscript{161}Rahman, “Selected Letters,” p. 3.

\textsuperscript{162}Fakhry, \textit{Al-Fārābi}, p. 78.

the intellect can thus contemplate and be contemplated, it is said to be both self-intellective and self-intelligible, thus being a form of a form and therefore becoming an “acquired intellect” (‘aql mustafād), which is similar to the self-intellective and self-intelligible Active Intelligence, but lower in rank. The highest mode of prophetic attainment is when the prophet’s acquired intellect can fully contemplate the Active Intelligence that originally produced it, so that a part of the Active Intelligence merges with the acquired intellect of the prophet.\footnote{Ibid., p. 14.}

Ibn Sinā (Avicenna) (d. 1037), the intellectual inheritor of al-Fārābi’s Neoplatonism, proposes a similar conception of the human soul and its relation to the Active Intelligence, but he emphasizes several differences. While al-Fārābi, who followed the Peripatetic tradition here, held that “the intellective act” makes the divine intelligibles separate from the particulars of the sensory world, Ibn Sinā posited that these intelligibles issue directly from the Active Intelligence. That is to say, for al-Fārābi, the philosopher stores images of experiences in his mind, and as he contemplates them in the light of his intellect (which is connected with that of the Active Intelligence), their universal essences emerge from the particulars themselves. For Ibn Sinā, however, the philosopher’s contemplation of the particulars prepares his mind to directly receive the essences from the Active Intelligence “by an act of direct intuition.”\footnote{Fazlur Rahman, “Ibn Sīnā,” in A History of Muslim Philosophy: With Short Accounts of Other Disciplines and the Modern Renaissance in Muslim Lands, ed. M. M. Sharif, vol. 1 (Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1963), p. 481; and Corbin, Avicenna, p. 495.} Moreover, Ibn Sinā holds that the ordinary (al-‘ānimīya) human intellect is inherently barred from infinite consciousness and thus cannot fully contemplate and receive all of the Active Intelligence at once until it quits the body. The prophetic
intellect, however, “can identify itself with or can ‘receive’ the entire Active Intelligence, thus breaking down the barrier between finite and infinite consciousness in certain special cases.”\textsuperscript{166}

Thus, while al-\textゥar\textゥbi holds that the prophet progresses through stages of rational noetic development, Ibn S\textゥn\textゥ holds that the prophet is endowed with a special intellect that the common person does not possess, namely, the Angelic Intellect. Despite their differences, it is important to note that both al-\textゥar\textゥbi and Ibn S\textゥn\textゥ held the Active Intelligence to be the “Giver of Forms” (\textit{w\textゥhib al-\textゥuwar}) “from which the substantive forms of immaterial entities, as Ibn Sina puts it, emanate.”\textsuperscript{167}

While al-\textゥar\textゥbi conceived of angels and angelic communication as having external existences, Ibn S\textゥn\textゥ held them to be purely intellectual phenomena; that is to say, angelic communication is “the emanation of intellectual truth into the imaginative faculty.”\textsuperscript{168} Thus, intelligibles emanate directly from the Active Intelligence, rather than being simply aided by the Active Intelligence and then separated by way of the intellectual act, as in al-\textゥar\textゥbi’s conception, and are bestowed upon the imaginative faculty of the prophet, who perceives them as symbols.\textsuperscript{169} The “Angel,” according to Ibn S\textゥn\textゥ, is therefore the special faculty of the prophet that allows him to receive direct emanations from the Active Intelligence as revelation. Moreover, Ibn S\textゥn\textゥ claims that the “Angel” or Angelic Intellect is “continuous

\textsuperscript{166}Rahman, \textit{Prophecy in Islam}, p. 20.

\textsuperscript{167}Fakhry, \textit{Al-\textゥar\textゥbi}, p. 75.

\textsuperscript{168}Ibid., p. 39.

\textsuperscript{169}Ibid., p. 37.
with the [Active] Intelligence, flowing from it not essentially but accidentally.” ¹⁷⁰ Thus, the prophet becomes identified with the Active Intelligence, but only accidentally. That is to say, the human being is not essentially connected with or qualified by this divine intelligence, but the special nature of the prophet allows this Intelligence to emanate into his soul in a way that makes the prophet appear to be divine. As Rahman states:

Hence the prophet is described [by Ibn Sinā] as possessing Divine Intellect, Divine Pneuma, and as a Divine Being, deserving of honours and almost to be worshipped [. . .] because he ‘accidentally’ [. . .] receives in himself the Angelic Intellect, the Daimon.” ¹⁷¹

Ibn Sinā thus articulates a mystical conception of the prophet as infused with the Divine nearly to the point of identification—an idea that goes back to Plato himself, who held that at its highest stage the soul “resembles God.” ¹⁷²

The reflection of the Divine within the perfected Soul is a mystical motif that forms the centerpiece not only of The Equivalence but also many of Ibn ʿArabi’s metaphysical teachings. This theme permeates Ibn Sinā’s “esoteric philosophy.” ¹⁷³ As distinct from Ibn Sinā’s earlier and more speculative writing, the writings that form this “esoteric” corpus are

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¹⁷⁰ Ibn Sinā, Risālā fī Ihkhāṣ al-Nubuwwāt, quoted in Rahman, Prophecy in Islam, p. 34.

¹⁷¹ Rahman, Prophecy in Islam, p. 35.

¹⁷² Plato also states in the Sophist, “according to me, man is never God [. . .] but Divine [. . .] and I give this name to all (true) philosophers.” Rahman, Prophecy in Islam, p. 69n18.

¹⁷³ Ibn Sinā’s particularly esoteric idiom is present in such works as Risāla fi al-ʿishq (The Treatise on Love), the last chapters of Al-Ishārāt wa-l-tanbihāt (Allusions and Admonitions), Risāla-yī Nafs (The Treatise on the Soul), and the “visionary recitals,” which comprise Hayy ibn Yaqẓān (The Living Son of the Awake), Risālat al-tair (The Treatise on the Bird), and Salāmān wa Absāl (Salāmān and Absāl); see Seyyed Hossein Nasr, An Introduction to Islamic Cosmological Doctrines: Conceptions of Nature and Methods Used for its Study by the Ikhwān al-Ṣafā’, Al-Birūnī, and Ibn Sinā (Bath: Thames and Hudson, 1978), and Henry Corbin, Avicenna and the Visionary Recital, trans. Willard R. Trask (New York: Pantheon Books, 1960).
often noted for their heavy use of symbolism and mystical allegory, which Ibn Sinā referred to as the “science of the elite” (‘ilm al-khawāss).174

The quest of the knower (‘arif), whose goal is to realize the Divine, is common throughout these works, particularly in Ibn Sinā’s famous “visionary recitals,” where he recounts the mythic journey of the soul on its search for Truth through the cosmos. Here, the seeker embarks on a transformational passage of illumination from asceticism to gnosis by way of union with the Divine. The spiritual traveler (sālik) “leaves the world of illusions for the world of Reality, and when his journey is complete he becomes himself the mirror in which Truth and its cosmic manifestation are reflected.”175 Ibn Sinā’s visionary recitals are thus a wonderful example of the “cosmogonic cycle” that Joseph Campbell popularized as a recurring motif of the mythic spiritual journey of the “hero,” which features the “rediscovery” of divine unity within the multiplicity of creation as reflected by his inner being:

The two—the hero and his ultimate god, the seeker and the found—are thus understood as the outside and inside of a single, self-mirrored mystery, which is identical with the mystery of the manifest world. The great deed of the supreme hero is to come to the knowledge of this unity in multiplicity and then to make it known.176

Similarly, Ibn Sinā states, “When it has achieved this perfection the Soul becomes in effect a replica of the intelligible world and is united to the absolute good and absolute beauty, wherein its highest bliss lies.”177 Thus, in the epic allegory described by the Avicennan

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175 Ibid., p. 265.


177 Ibn Sinā, Aḥwāl al-Nafs, quoted in Fakhry, A History, p. 149.
visionary cycles, the wandering gnostic is lead by an angel from the world of mundane matter, represented by the setting sun of the west, up through the nine celestial spheres to the highest intelligible realm of the pure light of the rising sun of the east, the First Intelligence, the King of the Universe. In the final narration, the hero is killed, and as such he is reborn into the angelic realm. Symbolically, the gnostic must separate himself from the sensory universe, the world of generation and corruption, and ultimately enter into the intelligible realm of pure form. This is the end of the cosmogonic cycle, the natural return of the cosmic emanation to its source. Thus, the microcosmic perfected soul merges with the macrocosmic universe and becomes fully identified with the Divine Intelligence, or mind of God, unified in the never-ending cycle of God’s self-contemplation.\footnote{179}{ibid., pp. 265–74.}

Keeping this Avicennan Neoplatonic motif in mind, a careful reading of the The Equivalence will show how much Muḥibb Allāh takes from Ibn Sīnā as an explanatory framework for his more overt discussion of Ibn Ṭarabī. However, it should also be mentioned that when Muḥibb Allāh alludes to the association of the Angel Gabriel with the Active Intelligence, he is drawing on a later interpretive tradition of Avicennan Neoplatonism, the Persian Illuminationist (ishrāqī) school of Suhrāwardī (d. 1191), which Henry Corbin has called “Suhrawardian Avicennism.”\footnote{180}{Although Rahman has noted that the “majority of Muslim philosophers” associate Ibn Sīnā’s “Angel” qua the Active Intelligence with the Angel Gabriel, according to Corbin it was the Illuminationists of Suhrawardian Avicennism who made this association explicit. See Rahman, “Ibn Sīnā,” p. 23n27.} For several centuries after the death of Ibn Sīnā, the Illuminationist school formulated much of its metaphysical ethos by making particular use of the above-mentioned “esoteric” works of Ibn Sīnā’s corpus. Indeed,

\footnote{178}{That is, in Salāmā wa Absāl; see Nasr, An Introduction, p. 266.}
not only did this school have a major impact on Islamic mysticism; the early modern revival of Neoplatonism in Islamic thought was due in large part to the transmission of the works of the Illuminationist school in the sixteenth-century Persian “School of Iṣfahān,”¹⁸¹ as well as the contemporaneous intellectual florescence in Mogul India during the reign of Akbar.¹⁸²

The Avicennan Foundational Ontological Framework

One of the major concerns of The Equivalence is that of ontology and the question of “existence” (wujūd), which is a central problem in both Islamic philosophy and speculative mysticism. As Chittick has noted:

Both the philosophers and Ibn al-‘Arabī attempted to explain the relationship between the many and the One, the creatures and the Creator, the existent things and Being, the possible existents and the Necessary Being. In the context of the philosophical terminology, the basic issue can be phrased in the simple question: “If God is wujūd, are the things also wujūd?”¹⁸³

Much of Ibn Sīnā’s thought revolves around issues of ontology, and it will become clear that Ibn al-‘Arabī synthesized many elements of Ibn Sīnā’s philosophy, the most crucial being the concept of the Necessary Being (wājib al-wujūd).¹⁸⁴ Before moving on to Ibn al-‘Arabī and his synthesis of Ibn Sīnā’s emanationism, it is therefore necessary to dwell a bit more upon Ibn Sīnā and his conception of God in relation to existence.


¹⁸² Khan, “India,” p. 1061.

¹⁸³ Chittick, The Sufi Path, p. 81.

¹⁸⁴ Ibid., p. 12.
Although Aristotle held that existence belongs to the essence of each thing, and as such is not accidental, al-Fārābī held that existence is “a pure accident.” Ibn Sīnā fully developed this conception by positing God *qua* the Necessary Being (*wājib al-wujūd*); the only being whose essence, or “quiddity” (*māhiyya*), and “existence” (*wujūd*) are united. That is to say, the “essence of God is *to exist,*” and God is therefore *necessary-by-itself,* while the existence of all other things is contingent on God’s existence and thus is something bestowed and accidental. This is, in the words of Rahman, “the celebrated Avicennian doctrine of existence as an ‘accident’.”

Importantly, Ibn Sīnā held that the First Intelligence that emanates from the Necessary Being has two aspects: (1) that of necessity, when it is held in relation to the Necessary Being, and (2) that of contingency, when it is held in relation to itself as separate from the Necessary Being. Therefore, two emanations take place simultaneously from the two aspects, necessary and contingent, of the First Intelligence. The first emanation *qua “necessary”* becomes the Second Intelligence; the second emanation *qua “contingent”* becomes a heavenly body, or sphere. The entire process of emanation continues in this way up until the Tenth Intelligence, from which proceed the necessary emanation of the three sublunar souls (vegetative, animal, and rational) and the contingent emanation of the four

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186 “Quiddity” (*quid est*) is derived from the Latin translation of the Arabic *māhiyya,* which is a compound of the sentence *mā hiyya,* i.e. “What is it?” Quiddity refers to a thing’s “whatness,” or essence, entity, or reality; see Chittick, *The Sufi Path,* p. 80. See also Robert Wisnovsky, *Avicenna’s Metaphysics in Context* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2003), p. 158; and see Nasr, *An Introduction,* p. 198.


188 Rahman, *Prophecy,* p. 34.
sublunar bodies (fire, air, water, and earth).\textsuperscript{189} Thus, Ibn Sīnā held that while every emanation is ultimately contingent, or “possible” (\textit{mumkin}), because the only necessary existent is the Absolute, there are two types of contingent beings: (1) those that are given pre-eternal, “substantive” existence, and as such receive the quality of “necessity,” which are the simple substances (\textit{mujarradāt}), intelligences, or angelic substances; and (2) those that are given noneternal, “accidental” existence, and are thus purely “contingent,” which are those things that exist only in the world of “generation and corruption.”\textsuperscript{190}

Thus, Rahman highlights the fact that for Ibn Sīnā, essences, or forms, exist in the mind of God or the Divine Intelligence and are \textit{given} sensory “existence,” which in turn causes them to have concrete existence in the phenomenal world. Rahman makes the important qualification that for Ibn Sīnā, existence is not purely “accidental,” as Averroes had apparently thought.\textsuperscript{191} That is, in relation to God, existence is necessary; it is only “accidental” in relation to other objects, and thus existence is “not an ordinary accident.”\textsuperscript{192} Elsewhere, Rahman states that existence cannot be applied both to the contingent and to the Necessary Being in the same sense. Here it is derivative, there it is primal; here it is composite, there it is simple; here it is always per se potential (even though in some cases eternal), there it is self-actual and self-necessary; here, in a sense, its identity is dislocated, there it is veritably self-identical.\textsuperscript{193}

\textsuperscript{189} Morewedge, “The Logic of Emanationism,” p. 12.

\textsuperscript{190} Nasr, \textit{An Introduction}, p. 199.

\textsuperscript{191} Averroes asserted that if existence was completely accidental and simply an added attribute, then this would imply an infinite regress and violate the definition of an essential substance as that which exists by itself. Rahman, “Essence and Existence,” p. 14.

\textsuperscript{192} Rahman, “Ibn Sīnā,” p. 484.

As Morewedge has noted, Ibn Sinā qualified this dual nature of existence in Persian by the distinction between “being” (hastī) and existence, where he equates “being” with essence, but not existence.  

Robert Wisnovsky, in observing what both Rahman and Morewedge seem to have missed, has noted that Ibn Sinā made the important distinction (in Arabic) between “specific existence” (al-wujūd al-khāṣṣ) and “affirmative existence” (al-wujūd al-ithbātī). Wisnovsky states:

To predicate affirmative existence of an entity is to assert that the entity is, not what the entity is. To predicate existence that is specific, on the other hand, is to assert what the entity is, not that the entity is. Since existence that is specific is identical to inner reality, and since inner reality is identical to whatness (māhiyya), it follows that existence that is specific is identical to whatness [. . .]. Since existence that is specific is identical to whatness, and since existence that is specific is distinct from affirmative existence, it follows that whatness is distinct from affirmative existence. In other words, essence is distinct from existence.  

This distinction is particularly important in two ways: (1) it shows how Ibn Sinā equated “specific existence” to essence, which as Morewedge has shown is “Being,” as opposed to simply “existence,” which is added, or accidental, to essence; and (2) because Muhibb Allāh will refer to “specific existence” in relation to God’s Being in The Equivalence.

Thus, in Avicennan terms, the Necessary Being has both “specific,” or essential, existence, and “affirmative” existence; that is, it is both essence and existence at once.

Accordingly, all other things beside the Necessary Being have “specific” existence when

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194 That is, in Ibn Sinā’s treatise Dāniš Nāme.


196 That is, in Ibn Sinā’s Ilāhiyyāt of al-Shifā’.

197 Wisnovsky, Avicenna’s Metaphysics, p. 155.
they exist as intelligibles, and when they are given sensory existence they acquire “affirmative” existence.

Ibn ٍArabi’s “Synthesis”

There has been a fair amount of contemporary debate regarding Ibn ٍSinā’s relationship with mysticism. However, as Morewedge has argued, there are major similarities between Ibn ٍSinā’s ideas and Sufism in general.\(^{198}\) Moreover, the exact relationship between Ibn ٍArabi and Ibn ٍSinā’s ideas remains unclear. As was discussed above, Ibn ٍArabi’s work is shot through with philosophical language, but he does not seem to have felt any compulsion to adhere to formal definitions. This being said, there is clearly much in common between Ibn ٍArabi’s ontological ideas and those espoused by the Islamic tradition of Neoplatonism and Ibn ٍSinā.\(^{199}\) Even though the major outlines of these ontological conceptions can be discerned in Ibn ٍArabi’s work, his treatment remains highly original.

Ibn ٍArabi is perhaps best known for the ontological concept of “oneness of existence” (wahdat al-wujūd), even though he never employed the term.\(^{200}\) Rather, the

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\(^{198}\) Morewedge, “The Logic of Emanationism,” p. 16.

\(^{199}\) Rosenthal holds that there is no documentation to support the idea that Ibn ٍArabi was familiar with any major philosophical works; he rarely refers to philosophers or philosophical works by name. Ibn ٍArabi does, however, present the beginning of Ibn ٍSinā’s poem of the soul by stating, “the poem famous among scholars,” although without reference to its author. Rosenthal, “Ibn ٍArabi,” p. 17. However, others have pointed out evident connections between the doctrines of both authors; see Shams Inati, Ibn ٍSinā and Mysticism: Remarks and Admonitions: Part Four (New York: Kegan Paul International, 1996), p. 66; and Charles Genequand, “Metaphysics,” in History of Islamic Philosophy: Part II, ed. Seyyed Hossein Nasr and Oliver Leaman (New York: Routledge, 1996), p. 796.

\(^{200}\) Chittick, “Rūmī and wahdat al-wujūd,” p. 72.
concept was developed as a result of the later systemization of his teachings. As Chittick has stated:

The term *waḥdat al-wujūd* in its literal sense does not afford a sufficient description of the nature of reality. *Wujūd* is one in itself at the level of its nonmanifestation or its incomparability, and many through its manifestation or its similarity; God is one in His essence (*dhāt*) and many through His names. Hence Ibn al-ʿArabī sometimes refers to God as the “One/Many” (*al-wāḥid al-kathīr*).201

It is this sense of God *qua* “the One” and “the Many” that Muḥibb Allāh seems most intent on expressing; indeed, the term “oneness of existence” is conspicuously absent from *The Equivalence*.

Ibn ʿArabī uses *wujūd* in a manner similar to that of Ibn Sīnā when referring to God *qua* the Necessary “Being.” In the same way, Ibn ʿArabī also utilizes *wujūd* to refer to that which is other than God in terms of sensory existence.202 Thus, Ibn ʿArabī’s conception of existence is similar to that contained within Ibn Sīnā’s doctrine of emanation; that is, when existence is considered in relation to God, it is essential, but in relation to the world existence is secondary and accidental. Ibn ʿArabī sometimes qualifies his use of *wujūd* for the Necessary Being as “Absolute Being” (*wujūd muṭlaq*) and for the contingent as “limited being” (*wujūd muqayyad*). While Absolute Being has “primal” existence in Rahman’s terms, the existence of the contingent is derivative, or “borrowed,” from the Absolute.203

Toshihiko Izutsu has remarked that Ibn ʿArabī’s entire “philosophy” is a theory of the self-disclosure, or self-manifestation, of the Divine Essence.204 The Divine Essence is pure

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201 Ibid., p. 76.

202 Ibid.


nondelimited Being, and as such is completely unknowable and purely transcendent. However, through the process of emanation, God *qua* the incomparable and unknowable Divine Essence discloses Himself in terms of multiple relationships with His creation, thus manifesting His immanence. By way of explanation, Ibn ʿArabī often refers to the famous َحَدِيثَ قُوْدِسْیَا: “I was a hidden treasure, and I wanted to be known, so I created the world.”\(^{205}\) The Divine as Necessary Being and Absolute Essence exists without the possibility of a relationship to anything, and as such is purely “incomparable” (*tanzīh*). However, in order to “be known,” the Necessary Being enters into a process of self-disclosure and thus becomes “similar” (*tashbih*) to creation. The dyad of incomparability and similarity represents the integral nature of Divine attribution, which can be expressed in many ways, such as transcendence and immanence, spiritual and phenomenal, nonmanifest and manifest, and so on.

According to Ibn ʿArabī, the self-disclosure of the Absolute comprises two basic stages. God’s emanation from the Unnamable Essence to the Divine Names constitutes the first stage of the divine self-disclosure. When the Divine Essence, which is inherently unknowable, moves toward self-disclosure, it moves toward the capacity to be known and so into the realm of relationship. That is to say, in order to be known, the Divine Essence allows itself to take on certain attributions and becomes known within a hierarchy of “realities” (*ḥaqqāʾiq* sing. *ḥaqqīqa*). In order to describe these divine realities, which are all attributions of the One Divine Essence, their Names are made known, and meaning is

attributed to the relationships they represent. The divine ontology is thus a hierarchy of Names, each encompassing a certain range of the spectrum of Reality.

The second stage of God’s self-disclosure occurs when the realities and the Names exercise their influence and produce effects or traces (āthār), which ultimately determine the actualization of the contingent or “possible things” (mumkināt, sing. mumkin) in the phenomenal world, that is to say, “creation.” The contingent things in the phenomenal world are called “possible” because they exist within the knowledge of the Divine Essence as possibilities, whether they are given phenomenal existence or not. Each possible thing derives its identity from its particular essence or “entity” (‘ayn); therefore, the entities comprise “the essential forms (suwar) of the Divine Names.” As such, the entities are equivalent to the intelligible forms of Neoplatonic cosmology.

The entities occupy an intermediate status ontologically; they exist in a liminal position between the Divine Essence and the sensible things. Entities are often referred to by Ibn Ṣarḥār, and in turn by Muḥibb Allāh, as “recipients” (qawābil, sing. qābil) because they receive their existential determination from the Divine Essence. The entities are not entirely passive, however, because once the process of “particularization” or “determination” (ta’ayyun) has occurred, the entities determine the identity of the possible things.

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206 Chittick, The Sufi Path, pp. 37, 52.
207 Ibid., pp. 12, 38–39.
208 Izutsu, Sufism and Taoism, p. 160.
209 Fakhry, Al-Fārābī, p. 148.
210 Ta’ayyun is the fifth verbal form of the root meaning “entity” (‘ayn), and it literally means “entification.” Although Ibn Ṣarḥār sometimes utilizes the fifth form and its derivatives, its usage was made popular by his foremost student, Ṣadr al-Dīn al-Qūnawī. See Chittick, The Sufi Path, p. 83.
Ibn ʿArabī’s conception of the Divine Names replaces the Avicennan emanational system of Ten Intelligences, although, as mentioned above, the Names still maintain a similar hierarchy. Moreover, in much the same way that the Ten Intelligences are often referred to as representative of the Divine Intelligence, or mind of God, the Names as a whole represent the intermediary manifestation of God’s consciousness between the Absolute and the phenomenal cosmos.\(^{212}\)

Thus, Ibn ʿArabī holds that there are three overarching metaphysical categories or things (\(\text{ashyā}\)\(\) sing. \(\text{shay}\)\(^{\text{s}}\)) that comprise all levels of existence. Divine Essence as the previously mentioned category of “Absolute Being” (\(\text{wujūd muṭlaq}\)) is the first metaphysical category. The second is “limited being” (\(\text{wujūd muqayyad}\)), which is identified with the sensory universe, and its existence is completely dependent upon the existence of the Absolute. Instead of the Neoplatonic Ten Intelligences, Ibn ʿArabī put forth his idea of a third category, which he referred to simply as the “third thing” (\(\text{al-shay}^{\text{a}} \text{ al-thālith}\)).\(^{213}\) Like the Avicennan Divine Intelligence, this third category exists in a liminal position between absolute and limited existence and is neither being nor nonbeing. Ibn ʿArabī associates this third category with a handful of other terms, such as the Divine Names themselves.\(^{214}\) As aspects of this third category, the Names are perfect intermediaries between the Absolute and the cosmos; that is, they are “relations (\(\text{nisab}\)) and modes (\(\text{ahwāl}\)) which are neither existent

\(\text{Izutsu, Sufism and Taoism, p. 159.}\)

\(\text{Takeshita, “An Analysis,” p. 259.}\)

\(\text{Landolt, “Simnānī on Wahdat al-Wujūd,” pp. 100–101.}\)

\(\text{In his concise work \text{Inshā’ al-Dawā’ir}, Ibn ʿArabī equates the “third thing” with five important terms: (1) the Names (\(\text{aṣmā}^{\text{'}}\)) and Attributes (\(\text{ṣifāt}\)) of God, (2) the Reality of Realities (\(\text{ḥaṭīqa al-ḥaqāʾiq}\)), (3) the Root (\(\text{aṣl}\)) of the universe, (4) Prime Matter (\(\text{madda ʿulā}\)), and (5) summum genus (\(\text{jins al-ajnās}\)); see Takeshita, “An Analysis,” pp. 244, 245, 248, 250.}\)
necessary and contingent, the Names in relation to God are undifferentiated and identified with Him. However, when the Names are perceived in terms of the cosmos and the specific realities of God’s attributes that they convey, they are entirely distinct from one another and God.  

Like the Neoplatonic conception of the Divine Intelligence, Ibn ʿArabī’s third category is the mind of God, or God’s consciousness, and as such is responsible for God’s self-disclosure within the cosmos. For Ibn ʿArabī, the Absolute is far too transcendent to have any type of delimitation, even in terms of knowledge. Thus, Ibn ʿArabī’s conception of the Necessary is even more “transcendent” that that of al-Fārābī and Ibn Sinā, who held the Necessary Being to be an intellect engaged in contemplating itself as an intelligible. Al-Ghazālī noted that this idea implies a relationship between subject and object and thus negates the posited absolute simplicity of the One. Instead, Ibn ʿArabī holds that both the subject and object of God’s knowledge are contained within the third category.  

Thus, on the one hand, the third category is aligned with the Absolute, and as such is God’s undifferentiated knowledge. But on the other hand, the third category is also connected with the sensory world and is thus the differentiated object of God’s knowledge that forms the prime matter (madda īlā) from which the universe is made. The third category is therefore an intermediary between the two other categories and is referred to by

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216 Ibid.

217 Ibid., p. 258.

218 Ibid., pp. 251, 259.
Ibn ʿArabī as the “Reality of Realities” (ḥaqīqa al-ḥaqāʾiq) and the “root” (asl) of the universe (two terms that Muḥibb Allāh uses often in The Equivalence). Therefore, the third category is both “God” and “the World,” and it is neither “God” nor “the World.” Again, Ibn Sīnā’s idea of the dual qualities of the emanation of the Ten Intelligences is reflected here: when aligned with the Necessary Being, the third category is “necessary” too, but when aligned with the world, it becomes the contingent world itself.

As Chittick has noted, the Reality of Realities is the “cosmic principle that undergirds all of manifest existence [. . .].” This principle is identical to the Muḥammadan Reality:

The Reality of Realities [. . .] exists as the object of God’s knowledge but, like any other reality, its wujūd is nothing but the wujūd of God. It is not identical with God, nor is it different from Him. Likewise, it is not identical with the total cosmos, nor is it different from the total cosmos. The cosmos makes manifest in differentiated detail all the realities that the Reality of Realities embraces, but its most perfect loci of manifestation are the perfect human beings and, most specifically, the prophet Muhammad. Hence the Reality of Realities, also called “the Breath of the All-merciful,” is identical with the Muḥammadan Reality.

Hermann Landolt has observed that the third category qua the “Muḥammadan Reality” is equivalent to the Greek concept of the “word” or logos. This idea finds its expression in the Qurʾān in the description of Jesus as the “word” (kalima) of God (4:171). Similarly, the “Muḥammadan Reality” is the light of prophecy and divine knowledge, or as A. E. Affifi has

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219 Ibid., pp. 258–59.
222 Ibid., p. xxvii.
called it, the “immanent Rational Principle in the universe,” which is “the maintaining and ruling Principle of the Cosmos” and “the life-giving Principle in all beings.”

Ibn ʿArabi entitles each of the twenty-seven chapters of The Bezels of Wisdom according to a specific divine “wisdom” (ḥikma) that is related to a “word” (kalima) of a particular prophet, such as for the first chapter: “The Wisdom of Divinity in the Word of Adam.” Each prophet is understood as an aspect of the Logos, or the “Reality” (ḥaqīqa) of Muḥammad, which is the divine archetype of the “perfect human being” (al-ḥaṣān al-kāmil). As Affifi has noted, “The essence of the Perfect Man is a mode of the divine Essence. His spirit is a mode of the universal Spirit. His body is a mode of the Universal Body (al ʿArsh). His knowledge is a copy or a reflection of the divine Knowledge.” Therefore:

The Perfect Man’s heart is the seat of the manifestation of the universal Logos (the Reality of Realities or Reality of Mohammed, etc.), and in it alone the activities of this Logos find their fullest expression. The Perfect Man is in immediate contact with Reality, and through him the essential unity of the universal and the particular is realized.

The Reality of Realities serves the function of intermediary between the Divine and creation in exactly the same way as the Avicennan conception of the Active Intelligence. Ibn ʿArabi even refers to the Muḥammadan Reality as the First Intelligence (al-ʿaqīl al-awwal). And, as will be shown, Muḥibb Allāh makes a dramatic correlation between the Active Intelligence and the Muḥammadan Reality.

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226 Affifi, The Mystical Philosophy, p. 82.

227 Ibid., p. 80.

228 Ibid., p. 66.
**Ibn ṢArabī’s School: The Later Tradition**

As Landolt has argued, the early members of Ibn ṢArabī’s school, including its founder, Qūnawī, and especially ṢAbd al-Razzāq Kāshānī (d. 1330), who was one of its most influential representatives,229 grafted the threefold Avicennan classification of quiddity onto existence in order to explicate more clearly the nature of Ibn ṢArabī’s three categories of God, the cosmos, and the Reality of Realities. As has been discussed, Ibn Šinā did not differentiate between quiddity and existence at the level of the Absolute, so this “innovation” is certainly subtle. Traditionally, a quiddity was classified in one of three ways: (1) “conditioned by nothing” (bi-shaṭ lā), (2) “conditioned by something” (bi-shaṭ shay’), and (3) “absolutely unconditioned” (lā bi-shaṭ). The first category cannot be “mixed” with anything, and thus it is impossible for it to be predicated of anything else. It is *purely* itself. The second category, however, has been mixed with, or determined by, something to form something else. Thus, a “man” is conditioned by something, because his essence of “animal” has been mixed with the essence of “rational.” The third category, however, is considered totally “unconditioned” because it always has the “possibility” of being predicated of anything equally, and as such it is wholly “undetermined.” Thus, a quiddity like “animal” fits in this category, because it can be equally predicated of any animal species, such as “horse” or “man.”

When Qūnawī and Kāshānī employed this categorization in terms of “existence,” the first two categories worked well with Ibn ṢArabī’s ontological classification: (1) “Absolute Existence” *qua* “nondetermined” (lā ta’ayyun) is condition *by nothing*, and (2) “limited existence” *qua* “determined” (ta’ayyun) is thus condition *by something*. However, the

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third category becomes transformed into “existence” that is neither negatively conditioned nor positively conditioned, neither nondetermined nor determined, and is thus absolutely unconditioned. As Landolt notes, this approach appears to shift the third category, or the Reality of Realities, into a central position where it becomes the “origin” of both its “negatively conditioned” and “positively conditioned” aspects.230

Landolt observes that it is by way of this later systemization of Ibn ʿArabī’s thought—employing “existence” in a ternary categorization of reality—that the doctrine of “oneness of existence” comes to the forefront of what are considered to be Ibn ʿArabī’s teachings.231 This occurs because when existence is used as the explanatory apparatus, and as such is placed in the middle of a continuum of negative (God) and positive (the cosmos) gradations of itself, then existence itself qua the third, or middle, category becomes the underlying and overarching “Principle” that unifies the two polar extremes. As Landolt has noted, Qūnawī and Kāshānī may have wanted to prevent the idea of the Absolute as a merely abstract universal without any immanent aspect in the world.232 But their efforts seem to have had negative consequences in terms of God’s transcendent aspect; that is, “unconditioned existence” as the foundation of both God and the cosmos became the most meaningful and primary category, over and above the notion of the Absolute.

In contradistinction to the later interpretive tradition, R. W. J. Austin holds (and Chittick concurs) that the dominant principle that synthesizes Ibn ʿArabī’s writings is the concept of the “perfect human being” (al-insān al-kāmil), who forms an “isthmus” (barzakh)


231 Ibid., p. 105.

232 Ibid.
between the Divine and His creation. The difference here is a subtle one, but it is crucial to understanding the shift in focus of the later school of Ibn Ṭabīb. When the Perfect Human Being is placed in this position not as an underlying substrate but as an “isthmus” that links these two poles, the focus shifts to what is being linked, rather than the linking apparatus itself. As Austin writes:

Having called man the link [...] it is necessary to point out that any link is important only so long as it serves to effect communication and relationship between things that are real in themselves, the link itself having no meaning per se, except by reference to the things it links. Thus, man, considered in himself and by himself, is an absurdity, while assuming enormous significance when considered within the context of the polarity God-Cosmos.

Therefore, the shift in the conception of Ibn Arabi’s third category—from a representation of the Neoplatonic Divine Intelligence or Logos, God’s conscious mind qua the Reality of Realities, or the Muḥammadan Reality, to the later tradition’s treatment of the third category as “absolutely unconditioned” existence—is a subtle but decisive one. By situating “absolutely unconditioned” wujūd in an intermediary position between two poles of conditionality, namely, the Absolute as negatively conditioned and the world as positively so, the prior Neoplatonic emphasis on God’s transcendence shifts to a new emphasis on God’s immanence. This shift in focus is brought to light through the comparison of the different ontological and cosmological approaches of Ibn Sīnā, Ibn Ṭabīb, and the later school of Ibn Ṭabīb in the following illustration:

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234 Ibn al-Ṭabīb, The Bezels of Wisdom, p. 34.
As is illustrated in the figure above, the subtle shift of emphasis from Ibn ʿArabi’s ontology to that of his school seems to conflate the Avicennan conception of God *qua* essence *and* existence to that of simply God *qua* existence. The point of emanation itself can easily be perceived as shifting from its Neoplatonic hierarchical position, emanating from the top to the bottom, to a centroidal position emanating to top and bottom simultaneously.

This apparent conflation engendered the famous conception of the “oneness of existence,” where all things are unified within God’s *wujūd*. However, this unification is apparently just one side of Ibn ʿArabi’s doctrine, with the other side distinguishing all existence from that of God’s. Indeed, as we shall see, Muhibb Allāh repeatedly points out
that when things are given sensory existence, this existence is accidental, or added, to their essence. Of course, the essences of things are still ultimately emanations of God that have an essential existence, but they “exist” as objects of His knowledge and are thus ultimately independent from God qua the Absolute. Thus, Chittick emphatically points out:

A thing is identical with wujūd inasmuch as it exists, but other than wujūd inasmuch as it is itself. Ibn al-ʿArabī’s opponents, in criticizing his teachings, look only at the first half of this phrase: “The cosmos is He.” This sentence recalls the refrain employed by Persian poets long before Ibn al-ʿArabī, “All is He” (hamā ʿust). For his part, Ibn al-ʿArabī constantly affirms that the cosmos is also not He. One must combine affirmation and negation, just as one must combine incomparability and similarity. To affirm that “All is He” and forget that “All is not He” would be unacceptable. But it would be equally unacceptable to claim that “All is not He” in every respect, for that would make the cosmos into an independent reality, another divinity.\(^{235}\)

This theological task, however, seems to be easier said than done. The conceptual shift of Ibn ʿArabī’s school from an Absolute that was thoroughly transcendent to one that was so thoroughly immanent blurred the lines, at least logically, between God and the phenomenal universe.

As the journey of this thesis culminates in the final phase of an analysis of Muḥibb Allāh’s text itself, the multiple traditions that have been assessed here are thus collectively “unified” within the author’s synthesis. White’s assertion that the meaning of “history” is as much imagined as it is found is a literary idea; the author’s intended meaning can never fully be recovered, just as the past cannot. But like the past that leaves behind historical facts, or “traces,” the traditions that were just explored have left behind traces in Muḥibb Allāh’s text. By teasing out these “doctrinal” traces left by the traditions that inform its discourse, it is possible to at least get a sense of the types of arguments that were raging within Muḥibb Allāh’s intellectual milieu.

\(^{235}\) Chittick, “Rūmī and waḥdat al-wujūd,” p. 77.
CHAPTER III

ONE TEXT: THE “UNIFICATION” OF DISCOURSES ON THE ONE

The Equivalence: An Avicennan Approach

As stated at the outset, The Equivalence was no doubt intended as a succinct compendium for an elite readership, and as such its deeper meanings are very much veiled within its concision. It is therefore very difficult to say definitively which aspects of which ontological frameworks (as reviewed above) Muḥibb Allāh accepts, and which aspects he rejects, if any. Rather, The Equivalence is a blending of multiple discursive traditions, from early Islamic Neoplatonism to Ibn ʿArabi’s school.236 That said, there are still many critical aspects of Muḥibb Allāh’s discourse that indicate from which traditions distinctive elements of the text are derived and how they might be interpreted.

Like Ibn ʿArabi himself, Muḥibb Allāh does not mention the expression “oneness of existence” (waḥdat al-wujūd), even though he writes at length about “existence” (wujūd). But as Chittick has noted about the work of Ibn ʿArabi, the idea of the “oneness of existence”

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236 Chittick has noted that Muḥibb Allāh’s particular language appears to be fairly distinct from the tradition of Qūnawī as transmitted by his student Saʿīd al-Din Farghānī (d. 1300) and from the later tradition of ʿAbd al-Rahman Jāmī (d. 1492). More research will have to be done to ascertain the extent of Muḥibb Allāh’s originality in terms of Neoplatonic terminology and usage. Chittick, “Notes on Ibn Al-ʿArabi’s Influence,” p. 233.
is “implicit” throughout. However, deciphering the way the term *wujâd* is used within the writings of Ibn Ārabi is often difficult because he uses the term to mean different things often without making extra terminological distinctions. There are two distinct senses of the term *wujâd* in Ibn Ārabi’s work that are also reflected in *The Equivalence*. When *wujâd* is discussed in terms of creation, it refers to phenomenal “existence”; but when *wujâd* is discussed in relation to God, it refers to God’s own existence *qua* His essential “Being,” which “cannot be juxtaposed with any entity other than Being, since God’s ‘thingness’ or entity is Being Itself.” For the most part, Muḥibb Allâh follows Ibn Ārabi in this dual use of the term “existence” (*wujâd*) without additional terminological specification, which can be at times confusing in the original Arabic (the following analysis takes an explanatory approach, rather than trying to articulate the subtle difficulties of the language, which can be observed in the full translation in appendix A).

Muḥibb Allâh approaches Ibn Ārabi’s conceptual framework (which in *The Equivalence* takes the form of commentary on *The Bezels*) within a particularly Avicennan idiom. Occasionally, Muḥibb Allâh makes use of Ibn Sinâ’s specialized terminology (often abbreviated), which he draws from Ibn Sinâ’s ontological, cosmological, and esoteric conceptions. However, overall it is not the terminology that Muḥibb Allâh employs that makes *The Equivalence* particularly Avicennan (although there are a few very critical examples); the text’s Avicennan character proceeds more from the arguments that Muḥibb Allâh engages in and the way in which he argues them, while more or less maintaining Ibn Ārabi’s language—especially his minimalistic use of *wujâd*, as noted above.

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Muḥibb Allāh’s unique use of Avicennan Neoplatonism is especially apparent in two motifs: (1) the nature of existence as both substantive and accidental (although he never mentions the specific Arabic technical terms, namely, jawhar and ʿaraḍ respectively), and (2) the metaphysical reality of the Divine Intelligence and its relationship with prophetology and angelology. While the details of Muḥibb Allāh’s treatment of these topics will be dealt with in the sectional analysis below, the few striking uses of Avicennan terminology that appear in the text should be mentioned at the start.

First, Muḥibb Allāh’s usage of Avicennan terminology is immediately evinced within the title itself: *The Equivalence between Giving and Receiving (Al-Taswiya bayna al-Ifāda wa-l-Qabūl)*. Here, the verbal nouns “giving” (al-ifāda) and “receiving” (al-qabūl) correspond to two nouns of agency that are used extensively throughout the text: *al-muḍīd*, “the Giver,” and *al-qābīl*, “the recipient.” Ibn Sīnā used this pair of terms together, and they are not used as such within *The Bezels*. It is telling that even though Muḥibb Allāh quotes exclusively from *The Bezels*, he chooses to use different terminology than Ibn ʿArabī to express the same conceptual dyad. For example, in *The Bezels* Ibn ʿArabī often uses the terms *al-wāḥīb* for “the giver” and *al-muʿāṭā* for “the recipient.” Moreover, on only one occasion in *The Meccan Openings* does Ibn ʿArabī use *al-muḍīd* in the same way that Muḥibb Allāh employs the term in *The Equivalence*, but in this instance Ibn ʿArabī uses *al-mustafīd* for “the recipient.” But it is Ibn Sīnā who uses the exact binary pair that Muḥibb

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240 Ibn ʿArabī uses *al-muḍīd* in the *Futūḥāt* on two other occasions, but in the sense of “beneficial.”

Allāh has chosen to employ (although without the esoteric “equivalence” that Ibn ʿArabī posits between al-muʿfīd and al-mustafīd above). It is interesting to note that on one occasion in The Meccan Openings Ibn ʿArabī uses another very similar dyad, al-muʿfīd and al-qābil, to also mean “giver” and “recipient.” Here, instead of al-muʿfīd, he uses al-muʿfīd, which comes from the root meaning to emanate (fāda). Likewise, although Kāshānī does not mention the term al-muʿfīd in his glossary, he does have an entry on al-muʿfīd, “the Bestower,” which he defines as a name of the Prophet who “shown forth the light of guidance [. . .].”

Second, and of critical importance, is the fact that Muḥīb Allāh employs the term “specific existence” (wujūd khāṣṣ), as explained above, in section nine of The Equivalence to refer to the essential existence of the Necessary Being. Interestingly, like the Avicennan usage of al-muʿfīd above, Ibn ʿArabī only uses “specific existence” once in The Meccan Openings, and not at all in The Bezels. In The Meccan Openings he employs the term to describe the “specific existence” of the hierarchy of the intelligible beings in the universe by way of God’s self-manifestation, and not in regard to the Necessary Being in its absolute

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242 Ibn Sinā states, “The recipient is always baser than the composite, and the agent (who gives) is nobler, because the recipient is a beneficiary, not a giver, and the agent is a giver, not to whom the thing that is given” (al-qābil dāʾimān akhass min al-murakkab wa-l-fāʾil ashrāf lianna al-qābil mustafīd lā muṣfīd wa-l-fāʾil muṣfīd lā mustafīd). Amélie-Marie Goichon, Lexique de la Langue Philosophique d’Ibn Sinā (Avicenne): Vocabulaires Comparés d’Aristote et d’Ibn Sinā (Frankfurt am Main: Institute for the History of Arabic-Islamic Science at the Johann Wolfgang Goethe University, 1999), p. 288.

241 In the single example of this dyad, Ibn ʿArabī states: “So [God] set up (in) creation some over others, and from them He made the giver and the recipient” (wa-aḥāl al-khalq bʿadahun ʿalā baʾd wa-jāʾala minhum al-muʿfīd wa-al-qābil). Ibn ʿArabī, Al-Futūḥāt, p. 316.

aspect, as Muḥibb Allāh does below.\(^\text{245}\) Regardless, the meaning of “essential” existence rather than “contingent” existence is maintained.

It is therefore revealing that Muḥibb Allāh should have chosen these Avicennan terms to explain Ibn ʿArabī’s ideas. Although they are not completely without precedent in Ibn ʿArabī’s work, their usage is exceptionally rare. While at present it cannot be determined where Muḥibb Allāh became familiar with these terms, his willingness to employ them in distinctive ways evinces his own intellectual independence as an interpreter of Ibn ʿArabī. Moreover, his employment of these terms shows that his audience was most likely familiar with them as well.

**Sectional Analysis**

The present translation of *The Equivalence* (see appendix A below) has been divided into fourteen titled sections, not including an introduction that offers praise to God and benedictions to Muhammad. What follows is an attempt to analyze the text in light of the above discussion of Neoplatonism, Ibn ʿArabī, and his later school.

1) **The Rational Thinkers and Their Error Regarding the Necessary**

The first section takes to task intellectuals whom Ibn ʿArabī in *The Bezsels* calls “People of Causation” (*aṣḥāb al-ʾilla*) and whom he describes as “those who deem the Real to be the cause of the existence of the world.”\(^\text{246}\) Ibn ʿArabī opposes the conception of God as cause because there can be no “cause” without an opposite “effect;” thus, if God is the

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“cause” of the cosmos, then the separate existence of the universe would be “necessary,” which contradicts God’s absolute independence. That is to say, the Absolute by definition cannot have an opposite and thus is beyond any sort of dyadic relationship with some “other,” such as the Absolute qua “cause” that produces an opposite entity qua “effect.” Rather, Muḥibb Allāh’s primary assertion in The Equivalence is that the Absolute is both cause and effect, and thus cause and effect are “equivalent” ontologically.

Throughout the text, Muḥibb Allāh uses the term the “Necessary” (al-wājib) as shorthand for what Ibn ʿArabī and the Muslim philosophers, such as Ibn Sinā, referred to as the “Necessary Being” (wājib al-wujūd), which is synonymous with God as the Absolute Being. Muḥibb Allāh here articulates the underlying thesis of the treatise, namely, “the possible thing (al-mumkin) is not other than the Necessary, the Most High!” The “possible thing” is an intelligible essence that is produced in the Divine Intelligence, and has yet to be given sensory existence. This is therefore Ibn ʿArabī’s conception that the Necessary Being qua “Absolute Existence” (wujūd muṭlaq) forms the underlying substrate of the cosmos and as such is responsible for both “giving” and “receiving” sensory or accidental existence—an idea that runs throughout the text and that is more or less Muḥibb Allāh’s version of the “oneness of existence.”

Muḥibb Allāh concludes this section by making an analogy between the need of the possible things for the Necessary Being and the need of bubbles for water. He ends with the assertion that the Necessary Being is therefore the “Reality of Realities” (ḥaqīqa al-ḥaqāʾiq). As has been noted above, the Reality of Realities is the explanatory linchpin upon which this

treatise turns. Muḥibb Allāh conceives of it as the liminal reality where both “giving” and “receiving” occur; as such, it specifically relates to Ibn Ḥarbī’s “third” category, which is the “Muḥammadan Reality,” and which Muḥibb Allāh will later identify as the Avicennan idea of the Active Intelligence.

2) Every Possible and Existent Thing Has an Entity, Which Causes Existence

In this section Muḥibb Allāh states that there is an “essential identity” or “entity” (‘āyn) that “is predicated of every possible and existent thing, and it is the Reality of Realities.”

Here Muḥibb Allāh asserts that there is “one” inner entity, namely, the Reality of Realities, that forms the substrate of all “things,” whether they are simply “possible,” that is, existing solely in the Divine Intelligence, or “existent,” meaning existing in the sensible universe.

3) The Root of the Entities Is Pure Being

In this section, Muḥibb Allāh begins by articulating the dual nature of God’s existence as “the Nonmanifest (al-bātin),” which he states is the “reality” of the human being, and as “the Manifest (al-ẓāhir),” which he claims to be “the uniqueness of the human being.” Thus, God forms the intelligible essence of the human being and of the cosmos, as well as the manifestation of that essence in the context of received existence, which is a

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248 Primarily, ‘āyn refers to specific identity of a thing. As Chittick has pointed out, the term ‘āyn differs from the term dhāt, “essence,” in that in English the term “essence” denotes the reality of something as distinct from its phenomenal existence. However, the term ‘āyn, in this sense, denotes an unchanging identity regardless of whether the thing has intelligible or sensory existence, as both realms fall within the purview of God’s knowledge. See Chittick, The Self-Disclosure, p. 389n9; and Chittick, The Sufi Path, pp. 83–84.

249 Similarly, Ibn Sīnā held that every thing (shay’) had an “inner reality” (ḥaqīqa), which made it what it was. Wisnovsky, Avicenna’s Metaphysics, p. 155.
central motif in *The Bezels.* Muḥibb Allāh thus articulates the “equivalence” between the invisible one God and the phenomenal, manifold cosmos, which is summarized in the last line of this section: “the meaning is one, and the expressions are diverse.”

However, Muḥibb Allāh proceeds to complicate the simple dyad of Nonmanifest/Manifest by relating that even though one is correct in stating that the “root” of the human being is his “reality” (his “entity” or Avicennan “intelligible form”), the deepest underlying reality beyond existence itself is that of the Necessary Being. Muḥibb Allāh states that the Necessary has “no determination” (lā taʿayyun) but immediately adds that it has “no existence (lā wujūd)” either, opening the door for Ibn Sīnā’s division between essential and accidental existence that recurs throughout the entire treatise. Muḥibb Allāh ends this section by defining the Necessary Being in two important Avicennan ways: (1) as “exclusively intelligible” (maʿqūl), which parallels Ibn Sīnā’s assertion that the Necessary Being (wājib al-wujūd) is the “greatest of intelligibles,” and (2) as “pure Quiddity” (māhiyya) and “pure Being” (wujūd), which, as we have seen, is Ibn Sīnā’s classic definition of the Absolute, all other things thus existing contingently.

4) **The Mistakes of the Ashaʿrites and the Sophists**

In this section Muḥibb Allāh builds on arguments regarding continuous creation (*creatio continua*) taken from *The Bezels,* where Ibn ʿArabī asserts that most people “are not aware of the renewal of the command with the breaths.” Here, Ibn ʿArabī addresses the

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250 Ibn ʿArabī states at the start of the chapter of Noah, “The truth is that the Reality [al-haqq] is manifest [al-zāhir] in every created being and in every concept, while He is [at the same time] hidden [al-bāṭin] from all understanding, except for one who holds that the Cosmos is His form and His identity.” Ibn al-ʿArabī, *The Bezels of Wisdom,* p. 73.

“mistakes” of both the Asha‘rites and the “Sophists” (al-ḥusbāniyyah)\(^{252}\) in terms of “the renewal of creation.” While the Sophists did not believe in the oneness of the eternal Substance of the universe, that is, in an objective “Reality,” the Asha‘arites considered the continual appearance and disappearance of accidents to be self-subsistent within the constant presence of substances that were distinct from God. Although Ibn ā‘Arabī agreed that there is a constant flux of accidents within the presence of substances, he maintained that the substances themselves were like accidents in that they were being continuously recreated within a deeper pre-eternal “substance” that he referred to as the Breath of the All-merciful, which, as Chittick noted above, is another term Ibn ā‘Arabī used for the Reality of Realities.\(^{253}\) Thus, unlike both the Asha‘rites and the Sophists, Ibn ā‘Arabī held that the universe was being constantly created and renewed within a pre-eternal substance associated with the Being of God by way of the intermediary Divine Logos.

Muḥibb Allāh thus brings Ibn ā‘Arabī’s discussion regarding the mistakes of the Sophists to a longstanding theological argument regarding the nature of atomistic theory that assumes creation “from something” as opposed to creation “from nothing.”\(^{254}\) Here, Muḥibb

\(^{252}\) According to Rosenthal, the “common description” of the Sophists, such as Ibn Hazm’s, “speaks of them as ‘those who declare the realities (pl.) false (yubṭilūn al-ḥaqā’iq).’” Ibn ā‘Arabī seems to refer to them in much the same way in the Futūḥāt; see Rosenthal, “Ibn ā‘Arabī,” p. 32n170. Regarding Ibn ā‘Arabī’s use of the term al-ḥusbāniyyah, translated here as “Sophists,” Chittick states, “Dehkhoda’s Lughat-nama [...] calls them followers of the Skeptics, and says that they had some influence in the third century A.H. By way of illustration, it quotes a passage from Ibn ā‘Abd Rabbih’s Iqd al-Fārīd, telling of someone influenced by them expressing his opinions in the majlis of al-Ma‘mun. Presumably, this ‘influence’ was that various students of philosophy picked up their ideas from translated Greek works.” Personal correspondence, October 17, 2006.


\(^{254}\) As Wolfson states, “The Mutakallimūn were atomists. To them the world is composed of atoms. On this point there was no difference between those who maintained that the world was created out of nothing and those who maintained that it was created out of an antemundane matter.” Harry Austryn Wolfson, “The Kalam Problem of Nonexistence and Saadia’s Second Theory of Creation,” The Jewish Quarterly Review 36, no. 4 (1946), p. 383.
Allāh states that the Sophists “are those who said that the cosmos is a building that needs a builder, but they did not know that the composition of the parts of the building requires a builder who is also a composite himself, and he himself is not (made) by his own materials.” The Sophists thus posit the existence of an antemundane matter, that is, matter existing prior to creation. This is so because in this scenario, God qua the “builder” builds the building of the cosmos from materials; thus, He creates creation “out of something,” rather than creatio ex nihilo. However, the Sophists as portrayed by Muḥīb Allāh are working from a Platonic model of antemundane matter, which is matter that is created in time, albeit before the creation of the world, and is thus corporeal.255 Muḥīb Allāh, however, emphatically points out that the “builder,” or God, cannot be made of the same matter as that of the mundane world. Rather, as Muḥīb Allāh states in section three above, God qua the Necessary is “exclusively intelligible” (maʿqūl). Thus, God qua the builder must be made of a “supramundane” intelligible matter. Indeed, it was Plotinus who held that “intelligible matter” or “Intelligence” is the source “out of which the matter of the sensible world comes into existence by a process of emanation.”256 As Wolfson has pointed out, the Muslim theologians who maintained, “that the nonexistent is something” synthesized a Plotinian supramundane matter with that of a Platonian antemundane matter,257 thereby establishing the Islamic Neoplatonic cosmogony that is articulated here by Muḥīb Allāh.

Given the critical importance of this argument in the text, one last factor should be mentioned. As Wolfson has noted, Muslim theologians who held to the idea of “Plotinian

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255 Ibid., pp. 381–82.
256 Ibid., p. 382.
257 Ibid.
intelligible matter, considered it also as being a conglomeration of atoms, and these atoms naturally had to be intelligible or ideal atoms.”

To this end, Wolfson gives the theory of “composite things” having their origin in a “simple thing” (shay basīḥ), which is also described as the “root” (aṣl) of “these [composite] things.”

This is the same terminology that Ibn ʿArabī and thus Muḥibb Allāh employ to speak of the idea of the “third category” in terms of a supramundane matter, “Prime Matter” (madda ʿulā) or the Reality of Realities (ḥaqīqa al-ḥaqīqāʾiḥq), that links the Divine Essence and phenomenal existence. As Takeshita has defined it,

prime matter is considered the first existent created by God without any intermediary cause and is itself the cause and matter of subsequent existents. In other words, Prime Matter is the existence of God in its first particularization, its first manifestation. While the existence of God as the Absolute Existent is the pure unity without multiplicity, as Prime Matter it is the unity of undifferentiated multiplicity. This potential multiplicity contained in Prime Matter undifferentiatedly is expressed sometimes as the Divine Names and sometimes as intelligible realities.

Muḥibb Allāh then states, “the affirmation of a builder is because (of the recognition) that the building was either brought into corporeal existence (ḥādīth), or has a determined possibility as its root principle, for ‘there is nothing that does not glorify His praise’” (Qurʾān 17:44). Muḥibb Allāh clearly believes that the second choice, “determination” (taʿayyun), is the reason why the cosmos qua “building” has come into corporeal existence, which foreshadows the discussion in section eleven below regarding Ibn ʿArabī’s cosmogonic theory of the self-determination of the possible things. The Qurʾānic verse

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258 Ibid., p. 384.

259 Ibid., p. 385.


261 Ibid.
17:44 that is here mentioned by Muḥibb Allāh is also used by Ibn ʿArabī in *The Meccan Openings* to illustrate the pre-eternal supramundane existence of the possible things.\(^{262}\) Muḥibb Allāh subsequently states, “if the effective cause for the cosmos necessarily exists with the cosmos, then how much more does the cosmos’s duration need an effective cause,” which refutes the theological position that “the duration of substances is not due to a cause” as a philosophical argument against *creatio continua.*\(^{263}\)

Muḥibb Allāh ends this section by once again clarifying his recurring point that God is not existent (*mawjūd*), although it can be said that He is “pure Being.” By using the term “existent,” Muḥibb Allāh refers to the ontological categories developed by the Muslim theologians to describe the universe as “existent” (*mawjūd*) and “nonexistent” (*maʿdūm*), given that the nonexistent is still understood to be “something.”\(^{264}\) In Ibn ʿArabī’s terms, that which is “nonexistent” (*maʿdūm*) has essential existence within God’s knowledge, but not phenomenal existence; that is, it is a thing known by God, but not “found in the created word.”\(^{265}\) Although Ibn ʿArabī sometimes uses the term “existent” to refer to God as the uppercase “Existent Being,”\(^{266}\) Muḥibb Allāh insists that the term is inappropriate, a position that may stem directly from Sirhindī’s assertion that the term “being” (*wujūd*) “should be

\(^{262}\) Ibn ʿArabī here states how the possible things, even in their “beginningless nonexistence” (*al-ʿadam al-azali*), never stop knowing God, whom they glorify “with a beginningless glorification and an eternal and inherent magnification.” Chittick, *The Sufi Path*, p. 246.

\(^{263}\) This was a position held by Abū Rashīd; see Harry Austryn Wolfson, *The Philosophy of the Kalam* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1976), p. 533.


\(^{265}\) Chittick, *The Sufi Path*, p. 81.

\(^{266}\) Ibid.
applied to the Essence of God ‘unequivocally’ (muwāṭa’atan), meaning that God is ‘Being’ and not ‘existent’ (mawjūd).”

5) The Essence of a Thing Is Pure Being

In this section Muḥibb Allāh introduces the Neoplatonic concept of “contemplation” as a mode of acquiring knowledge by separating the universal essence from particulars. Muḥibb Allāh states, “If you consider with true contemplation the essence of a thing, then indeed this is pure Quiddity, for the essence of every pure possible existent thing is thus separated (muḥarrad) and removed (muntaza’).” In the beginning of the treatise, Muḥibb Allāh states that the Necessary is “exclusively intelligible” (maʾqūl), and he affirms its Avicennan relation to “pure Quiddity” (and pure Being). Therefore, Muḥibb Allāh here makes the assertion that the essence of each phenomenal thing is in reality the Necessary Being.

Furthermore, Muḥibb Allāh employs the term muḥarrad, whose root literally means to be “stripped” or “divested,” while its philosophical meaning implies the notion of being made separate from corporeality, that is, to be made “bodiless” and “incorporeal.” Thus, the Neoplatonic process of “separation” refers to the progression of the soul from the world of “generation and corruption” to that of pure “intellect” as its truest identity, the ultimate goal of the philosopher/prophet being the unification of his soul with the Active Intelligence

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267 Ter Haar, Follower and Heir, p. 133.

268 See discussion on page 47 above.

269 As noted by Nasr, “The existence of something does not have its principle [or root (ašl)] in the essence of that thing but derives its principle from the Being whose essence is the same as its existence, that is, the Necessary Being.” Nasr, An Introduction, p. 198.

as the Divine Intelligence or *Logos* that governs the world. In this joining, the soul *qua* separate intellect enters the ranks of the angels, who are also separate intellects, or intelligences.\(^{271}\) These intelligences are also known as simple substances (*mujarradāt*) because they exist by themselves “without being supported by or existing in any subject.”\(^{272}\) Thus, the simple substances exist within the Divine Intelligence and as such are co-eternal and necessary, whereas contingent beings exist accidentally within subjects and are supported by substances.\(^{273}\)

Muḥibb Allāh further employs the Aristotelian idea that substance forms the bases of species,\(^{274}\) and he states that the “‘human being’ separate from Zayd, ʿAmr, and Khalid is a simple (*mujarrad*) substance, and its existence is the entity of their existence.” Muḥibb Allāh uses this common philosophical trope to point out the *unity* of the underlying essential substance as an “entity” (ʿ*ayn*). Ibn ʿArabī uses a similar example in *The Meccan Openings*, but he relates the underlying substance to “reality” (ḥaṣīqa), here referring to “essence”:

Although Zayd is not identical with ʿAmr with respect to their shapes, he is identical with ʿAmr with respect to humanity (insāniya). He is not other than ʿAmr. If he is not other than him with respect to humanity, then he is not his likeness, but they are identical. The [reality] of humanity is not divisible, rather it is in every man in its entirety, not in a part. There is no likeness of humanity. The same applies to all other [realities].\(^{275}\)

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\(^{271}\) Chittick points out that this entire process was not simply intended as a theoretical exercise. The philosophers’ quest was to transform their souls into “perfectly ethical and moral human beings [...]” William C. Chittick, *The Heart of Islamic Philosophy: The Quest for Self-Knowledge in the Teachings of Afdāl al-Dīn Kūshānī* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), pp. 16–17.

\(^{272}\) Nasr, *An Introduction*, p. 199.

\(^{273}\) Ibid., pp. 199–200.

\(^{274}\) Ibid., p. 200.

Thus, when Muḥībb Allāh states that Zayd “is both essence and attributes,” he is referring to the Avicennan notion that essence, or quiddity, is the underlying substance of all creation, while sensible existence is accidental. Moreover, by previously establishing the fact that the Necessary is indeed this essence, Muḥībb Allāh reasserts that the Necessary Being is the “root” and “reality” of all things.

Muḥībb Allāh ends this section by encapsulating the entire spiritual process of the separation of the soul from the lower world as “the destruction of the building of delimitation (al-muḥaddad),” which leaves only the unified reality of a primordial substance. He thereby relates how there is no sensible existence for a thing if it enters into intelligible existence, for only its essence remains.

6) Gabriel Was in Muḥammad

This section is Muḥībb Allāh’s most original, as well as his most controversial. Muḥībb Allāh begins by stating, “You should distinguish the separate intelligences from the celestial spheres and the world of generation and corruption.” Here, Muḥībb Allāh alludes to the entire Neoplatonic tradition of “emanation” (fayd) by mentioning the “separate intelligences,” “celestial spheres,” and “the world of generation and corruption.” Thus, in this cosmogonic tradition, from God’s self-contemplation emanate the series of intelligences and corresponding celestial spheres culminating in the Active Intelligence, which functions as an intermediary between the intelligible realm of the heavenly spheres and the mundane world of generation and corruption.276

Muḥībb Allāh then states that “Gabriel was in Muḥammad, upon him be peace, and thus in every one of the prophets.” In light of Muḥībb Allāh’s allusion to the Neoplatonic

276 Fakhry, Al-Fārābī, pp. 79–83. See also Morewedge, “The Logic of Emanationism,” p. 12.
cosmology, this reference to Gabriel evokes both Avicennan and Suhrawardian Avicennan angelology. As was discussed above, for Ibn Sīnā, prophets were endowed with an “Angelic Intellect” that enabled them to receive revelation directly from the Active Intelligence. However, in the interpretative framework of the Illuminationist (iṣhrāqī) school, the Archangel Gabriel is directly identified with the intermediary of the Active Intelligence.277

Just as Gabriel served as the guide of Muḥammad on his heavenly “Ascension” (miʿrāj) to “The Lote-Tree of the Furthest Boundary” (sidrat al-muntahā) (Qurʾān 53:14), where he witnessed “some of the greatest of his Sustainer’s signs” (Qurʾān 53:18), so too does Gabriel serve within Suhrawardian Avicennism as the guide for the spiritual ascent of the mystic who strives for union with the Active Intelligence qua the Archangel Gabriel in order to attain gnosis.278 It is in this sense that Gabriel symbolizes the relationship between the soul of the perfected mystic and the Necessary Being.279 As Schimmel has noted, in the Illuminationist tradition “Gabriel is the archetype of humanity, the rabb an-nauʿ al-insānī; he can be equated with the Holy Spirit and, as such, with the preexistent spirit of Muhammad, the prototype and model of humanity.”280

In Suhrawardian Avicennism, the cosmos is interiorized inside the body of the mystic: “[t]he cosmos, instead of being an exterior object, becomes for the gnostic (ʿārif) an interior reality; he sees all the diversities of Nature reflected in the mirror of his own

277 Corbin, Avicenna, p. 369.
278 Ibid., p. 23.
279 Ibid., p. 78.
Along these lines, Muḥibb Allāh completely interiorizes within the being of the Prophet not only Gabriel, but also the “The Lote-Tree of the Furthest Boundary,” which is situated within the breast of Muḥammad. Most controversially, however, Muḥibb Allāh states that the “Tremendous Throne” (al-‘ārsh al-‘azīm) (Qurʾān 9:129, 23:86, 27:26) is the “tongue of Muḥammad,” by which Gabriel spoke. There appears to be a consensus among Muslim exegetes that the metaphorical meaning of “throne” (‘ārsh) in its Qurʾānic usage expresses “God’s absolute sway over all His creation.”

Muḥibb Allāh, therefore, situates the seat of God’s power qua the source of revelation within the tongue of the Prophet. Muḥibb Allāh also interiorizes Satan within the body of the Prophet and refers to a famous ḥadīth that relates how Muḥammad converted him.

In light of the discussion regarding Ibn ʿArabi’s “third category” above, Muḥibb Allāh can be understood to equate the Angel Gabriel qua the Active Intelligence with the Prophet Muḥammad qua the Reality of Realities—the Muḥammadan Reality. Muḥibb Allāh thus reveals the Muḥammadan Reality to be the Divine Logos, the life-giving and ruling principle of the universe, here represented by the interiorization of Divine power and revelation within the body of the Prophet. By using Avicennan imagery, Muḥibb Allāh provocatively symbolizes in the Prophet Ibn ʿArabi’s central motif of the “perfect human being” (al-insān al-kāmil) who serves as the celestial “isthmus” (barzakh) between the Divine and the phenomenal universe.

281 Nasr, An Introduction, p. 263.


283 “When asked how his shayṭān behaved, [the Prophet] answered: ‘Aslama shayṭānī; my shayṭān has become a Muslim and does whatever I order him […].’” Schimmel, Mystical Dimensions, p. 113.
7) The Recipient Is Existential

In this section Muḥibb Allāh argues against the philosophical idea that only God qua the Existentiatating Giver (al-mūjid al-mufid) of existence possesses existence before giving it, while the recipient (qābil) does not exist before receiving that existence. Muḥibb Allāh states, “Just as it is not possible for anything that is not existent to give anything, likewise how will that which is not existent receive anything?” He uses several analogies for the giving of existence such as the giving of motion to provide heat. Motion, as that which is given, is not heat per se, for it must be received by something existent in order for it to be transformed into heat. Therefore, Muḥibb Allāh argues that the entities must first (essentially) exist in order to receive (sensory) existence from God, just as God must possess “existence” in order to give it.

8) The Real Influencer Is God

In this section Muḥibb Allāh contends that even though the Necessary qua the Giver creates physical conditions, which are experienced as phenomenal causes that create certain effects, the true cause is really the Necessary, or God Himself, whom Muḥibb Allāh refers to in this section as the “Influencer” (al-muʾathamīr al-mufid). To clarify this point, Muḥibb Allāh quotes a passage from The Bezels in which Ibn ʿArabī states:

> When something comes (to your attention), then attach every thing to the root that is related to it; for what comes is inevitably, and always, a derivation of a root, just as the Divine Love is a result of the supererogatory works (nawāfil) of the servant. This is an effect between affecting and affected, just as the Real is the slave’s hearing, his seeing, and his other faculties on account of this Love.

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284 Ibn Sinā uses similar examples in the Ṭabīʿīyyāt of the Dāniš Nāme. See Morewedge, “The Logic of Emanationism,” p. 12n76.
By mentioning the famous *hadith* of “supererogatory works,” Ibn ṣArabī presents the notion that the real root or source of the outcome of God’s loving the servant (as an apparent result of the servant’s supererogatory works) is in fact God’s original love for the servant, and not the servant’s worship. That is to say, the original Divine Love that embraces the servant causes the servant to perform supererogatory works that seemingly result in God’s love, but the performance of works is only a secondary cause; the original cause is God’s love. Muḥibb Allāh will use the philosophical term “Influencing Cause” (*al-ʿilla al-muʿaththira*) below to express this notion, which in terms of Ibn ṣArabī’s statement above is the original divine cause for the ultimate “effect” between the secondary relationships of “affecting and affected.” Muḥibb Allāh thus stresses that both cause and effect are unified in the root principle of Divine Love *qua* the Necessary Being.

9) The Giver of Existence Has a Specific Existence Other Than Given Existence

In this brief section Muḥibb Allāh recapitulates two critical points: (1) the Giver exists in a way that is not equivalent to the existence He gives, and (2) the recipient *qua* a possible thing also exists in an “equivalent” way prior to receiving existence. Importantly, Ibn Sīnā’s distinction between “specific existence” and “affirmative existence,” as mentioned above, is directly referenced here. Muḥibb Allāh asserts that the Giver exists in terms of “specific existence” (*wujūd khāṣṣ*) other than the existence that He gives. This “given” existence is accidental, “affirmative,” existence, although Muḥibb Allāh does not describe it other than by calling it “given” (*mufād*) existence. He ends this section with the analogy of

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285 This refers to the famous *hadith qudsi* in Bukhārī: “I love nothing that draws My servant near to Me more than [I love] what I have made obligatory for him. My servant never ceases drawing near to Me through supererogatory works until I love him. Then when I love him, I am his hearing through which he hears, his sight through which he sees, his hand through which he grasps, and his foot through which he walks.” Sachiko Murata, *The Tao of Islam* (Albany: State University Press of New York, 1992), p. 253.
the dyer who “gives” the color black to that which he dyes, even though he is not “black” himself.

10) The Existence of the Necessary Is Both Cause and Effect

This section builds on the points made in previous sections and brings them to the concise conclusion that God *qua* the Giver is the original or “influencing” cause, and that the final or “influenced” effect is also God *qua* recipient, an argument here aided by the Qur'ānic verse: “He is the First, and the Last, the Manifest and the Nonmanifest” (57:3). This is the first full allusion to Muḥibb Allāh’s overarching thesis, which he concludes by quoting another passage from *The Bezels*. Here, Ibn ʿArabī asserts that God’s “Selfhood (*huwīyya*) is the entity of each thing” and quotes the Qur'ānic verse, “And to Him the whole matter *returns*” (11:123), which alludes to the same notion of God as “First, and the Last,” Giver and recipient, influencing cause and influenced effect.

11) The Necessary Gives Existence but Is Not Qualified by That Existence

This section continues to expand on the two types of existence that Muḥibb Allāh discussed in previous sections, that is, the existence of God *qua* essential, “specific” existence, and the existence of creation *qua* accidental existence. Here, Muḥibb Allāh argues that God *qua* the Necessary is not “qualified” (*ittišāf*) by existence because the Necessary *is* pure existence, whereas the “existent things” (*mawjūdāt*) are entities that receive existence from the Necessary and are thus qualified by it. Muḥibb Allāh illustrates this again with the metaphor of the “dyer.” He states, “Indeed, the dyer is not qualified by that which is sought from him.” The dyer possesses the color black, which is what is “sought from him,” but he is not black himself. When he gives the color black to the garment that he dyes, then that thing becomes black and is thus qualified by the color black. Thus, when the possible things are
given existence, they become qualified by existence, and as Muḥibb Allāh states, this is the “essence of existentiation and the universe.” Thus, the Giver exists as a “specific” essence but is not qualified by an added existence, like the accidental existence of corporeal things.

To lend support to his argument, Muḥibb Allāh quotes a very interesting section of The Bezels that discusses God’s divine command as it is related in the Qur’ān: “When We desire a thing, We say to it ‘Be,’ and so it is” (16:40). Ibn ʿArabī here states that the Divine command connects “existentiation to the thing itself.” This is an elliptical allusion to the Avicennan idea that that “the concrete existence of empirical things is determined by their preeternal noetic realities [. . .],” which, as Alexander Knysh has observed, is a “metaphysical proposition [. . .] starkly at odds with the creatio ex nihilo axiom of the theological mainstream in all monotheistic traditions.”286 That is to say, Ibn ʿArabī held that the possible things qua the immutable entities (al-aʿyān al-thābita) were already determined, and that God’s divine fiat “Be!” is simply the actualization of the predetermined possibility of each pre-eternal entity, and not, as it were, creation ex nihilo. Muḥibb Allāh ends his quote from The Bezels with Ibn ʿArabī’s analogy between God’s divine fiat and a master’s command to his slave:

He is truthful in His word, and this command is comprehensible by itself, just as the master who is feared and thus never disobeyed says to his slave, “stand!” Thus, the slave stands, obeying his master’s command. However, the master has nothing to do with the standing of this slave except his command to stand; for the standing is an act of the slave, not an act of the master.

God has determined the forms of the entities, which as mentioned above are immutable. As such, they exist in perfection and cannot be changed by God, just as God cannot change His own attributes, for instance by making Himself nonexistent. Therefore, once the entities are

286 Knysh, Ibn ʿArabī, pp. 102, 110.
given the engendering command to “Be!” (kun), they simply manifest in their determined forms. As Izutsu states, “In this process, the coming-into-being (takawwun) itself is an act of that thing, not an act of God.”287 Kāshānī notes:

Everything that is ‘inward’ has in itself the power to come out into ‘outward’ existence. This is due to the fact that the Essence (designated by the) Name, ‘Inward’ (bāṭin) is the same Essence (designated by the) Name ‘Outward’ (ẓāhir), and because the ‘receiver’ (qābil) is (ultimately) the same as the ‘Agent’ (fāʾil).288

Kāshānī’s last line above, “the ‘receiver’ (qābil) is (ultimately) the same as the ‘Agent’ (fāʾil),” parallels the meaning of The Equivalence exactly, while introducing the next section succinctly.

12) The Giver and the Recipient Are Equal

Muḥībb Allāh begins this section by stating, “So the giver and the recipient are equivalent, both in qualification by way of existence, and in lack of qualification by it.” Muḥībb Allāh once again refers to the dual nature of the Necessary Being and the possible things in terms of the problematic qualification of “existence” (wujūd). That is to say, from one point of view it can be said that the Necessary and the possible both exist in terms of Ibn Sīnā’s category of “specific,” substantive, or essential existence. The Necessary qua the Giver of Existence must exist in order to give existence, just as the possible thing qua the recipient of existence must exist in order to receive it. In this sense, both the giver and recipient are qualified by the same essential existence. However, because both the giver and recipient are involved in a transaction of sensible existence, which is accidental, neither of

287 Izutsu, Sufism and Taoism, p. 200.
288 Ibid.
them are qualified by that existence which they give and take—at least not until that existence is fully received by the possible thing.

Thus, the Giver and recipient share specific existence, and because the Giver *qua* the Necessary Being is in reality the *only* being with substantive existence—all other existence being accidental—then the recipient, since it essentially exists before it is given accidental existence, must be “equivalent” to the Necessary Being. That is to say, the recipient is none other than the Giver itself.

Muḥibb Allāh finishes this section by saying that even though different pairs of terms such as the Giver of Existence (*al-mūjid*) and the Emanator of Existence (*al-wājid*) are technically distinct, they hold the same essential meaning in terms of giving the human being (Zayd) outer form. Thus, Muḥibb Allāh implies that even though “the Giver” and “the receiver” are distinct terms, they share the same essence and reality, that is to say, that of the Necessary Being.

13) *All Things Are Manifested in and from the Real, “Allah”*

In this penultimate section, Muḥibb Allāh brings his argument home by primarily relying on quotes of Ibn ārabi. Again Ibn ārabi is quoted citing the Qur’ānic verse, “*and to Him the whole affair is returned*” (11:123), which he uses to reiterate the notion that God is “the Selfhood of the cosmos,” and “all of the determinations are only manifested in Him and from Him [. . .].” Muḥibb Allāh then quotes a poignantly concise statement from *The Bezels* that summarizes the perspective of *The Equivalence* in broad terms. Here, the Shaykh al-Akbar writes that the cosmos is “in the image of the Merciful,” and that

we are His manifest form and His Selfhood is the Spirit of this form, and its director. There is no direction except in Him, just as there is none except from Him; for He is the First in meaning, and the Last in form.
Importantly, in this quote Ibn ʿArabī puts forth his three metaphysical categories that were discussed above: (1) “His Selfhood” (huwiyya) is the first category of “unknowable incommunicable Essence,”289 (2) “His manifest form” is the human being qua microcosm in phenomenal existence, and (3) “the Spirit” (rūḥ) is the “third category” of the Reality of Realities, the Muḥammadan Reality, the Divine Logos as the life-giving and directing principle of the universe.290 This is Ibn ʿArabī’s great hierarchy of emanation from God’s purely intelligible Necessary Being to His self-disclosure in phenomenal existence. As Chittick has observed, “In its primordial nature (fiṭra) every human microcosm is the outward form (ṣūra) of an inward meaning (maʿnā) that is named ‘Allah.’”291

14) Closing Admonitions by Way of Qurʾānic Allusion

The previous section closes with a quote from The Bezels, the import of which was discussed above. Interestingly, however, the quote ends thus:

And He is “a witness of everything” [Qurʾān 5:117], so that He knows by witnessing, not by discursive thought. Thus knowledge by way of direct experience is not discursive thought, and that is true knowledge. Everything else is simply conjecture and guessing, not knowledge at all.

Here, in a rhetorical move typical of Ibn ʿArabī, the Shaykh al-Akbar differentiates “true knowledge” qua “direct experience” from the specious knowledge of “discursive thought.” Direct experience is therefore the only legitimate mode of knowing, while everything else is simply guesswork. Muḥibb Allāh implicitly carries this sentiment over to his rather obscure conclusion of The Equivalence, where he strings together a succession of Qurʾānic verses that invoke God’s absolute knowledge and authority in favor of those who submit to Him and


290 Ibid., p. 75.

His revelation, and against those who dare to argue with or disbelieve in Him and His word. By ending in such a way, Muḥibb Allāh rhetorically aligns his thesis with the unequivocal authority of God’s word, even though none of these Qurʾānic verses overtly relate to the content of his argument.

**Summary of Analysis**

The three-phase journey of this thesis thus draws to a close with the conclusion of the foregoing analysis of Muḥibb Allāh’s metaphysical treatise *The Equivalence*. As has been shown, the text’s conceptual discourse represents a grand synthesis of distinctive modes of Islamic philosophy and metaphysics, bringing together a wide range of thought from early traditions of Islamic Neoplatonism to the later school of Ibn ʿArabī.

Four critical elements of *The Equivalence* help to make the text distinctive. First, Muḥibb Allāh uses two distinct sets of Avicennan terms: (1) the terminological pair *al-mufīd* “the Giver” and *al-qābil* “the recipient,” which presents the overarching metaphysical dyad of the treatise, and (2) the key term “specific existence” (*al-wujūd al-khāṣṣ*), meaning necessary existence, which relates to its corresponding term “affirmative existence” (*al-wujūd al-ithbāṭ*), meaning accidental existence, although Muḥibb Allāh does not specifically mention the latter term.

Second, the entire argument of *The Equivalence* relies on an Avicennan ontological framework that posits the Necessary Being (*wājib al-wujūd*) as the only true “specific” existent, which is identical to its essence. The emanation of God’s substantive essence, which “specifically” exists, forms the essential substance of the sensory universe; all phenomenal existence is added to this substance and is thus accidental. Muḥibb Allāh argues
that the Giver of Existence, which is none other than the Necessary Being, gives existence to the recipients of existence, which are the possible things. However, in order for the recipients of existence *qua* the possible things to receive existence from the Giver, they must “specifically” exist first, just as a garment must exist before it is given color by the dyer. Muḥībb Allāh thus concludes that because the only thing that has true “specific” existence is the Necessary Being, the recipients of accidental existence *qua* the possible things, which “specifically” exist before they receive existence, are thus “equivalent” to the “specifically” existent Giver, the Necessary Being.

Third, the centerpiece of *The Equivalence* is the Avicennan Neoplatonic conception of the Ten Intelligences that make up the mind of God. The Active Intelligence serves as the intermediary between the Necessary Being and the mundane world. Muḥībb Allāh thus invokes Suhrawardian Avicennism and directly associates the Active Intelligence with the Angel Gabriel. In the Avicennan cosmogonic myth of separation, transition, and return, the mystic hero leaves his mundane sensory existence and journeys through the cosmos towards his true source, the One Being, whom he ultimately merges with, thereby transforming and perfecting his soul. Muḥībb Allāh interiorizes within the being of the Prophet not only the Angel Gabriel but two distinctive Qurʾānic metaphors for the highest mode of the celestial intelligence: “*The Lote-Tree of the Furthest Boundary,*” to which the Prophet made his heavenly “Ascension” (*miʿrāj*), and the “*Tremendous Throne*” of God’s power as the source of revelation. As in the completion of the Avicennan cosmogonic cycle, not only is the highest aspect of divine emanation interiorized inside the Prophet, the soul itself becomes identified with Divine power and intelligence. Muḥībb Allāh shows that the Active Intelligence *qua* Gabriel does not exist external to the prophets, which means that the entire
emanation of the Necessary Being is found within the perfected human being. Thus, in The Equivalence, the human being is shown to be the locus of the divine self-disclosure qua the microcosm, just as the cosmos is the locus of the divine self-disclosure qua the macrocosm. As such, the text is loyal to the ethos of Ibn ʿArabi’s teachings.

Finally, Muḥibb Allāh refers to Ibn ʿArabi’s critical idea of a “third category” throughout The Equivalence as the “Reality of Realities” (ḥaqīqa al-ḥaqāʾiq) and the “root” (āṣl) of the human being. The third category appears to be Ibn ʿArabi’s simplification and synthesis of the Neoplatonic hierarchy of emanation and reflects Ibn Sīnā’s idea of the dual ontological qualities of emanated beings. When aligned with the Necessary Being, the third category is “necessary” too, and, like the Ten Intelligences and angelic substances it is related to God’s essence; but when the third category is aligned with the world, it becomes contingent and identified with the cosmos itself, much like the contingent emanations of the “sublunar” realm in the Neoplatonic model. Thus, for Muḥibb Allāh the Reality of Realities represents the entire intermediary category of the Neoplatonic Divine Intelligence, which in The Equivalence is internalized and embodied within the being of the Prophet qua the perfected human being. As such, the Reality of Realities is the “Muḥammadan Reality,” which is also an analogue used by Ibn ʿArabi. Thus, for Muḥibb Allāh the Reality of Realities qua the Muḥammadan Reality is the Divine Word or Logos, which is the life-giving and governing principle of the cosmos. It is this essential Reality (as none other than the Necessary Being) that forms the essential (as distinct from contingent) existence of both “the Giver” and “the recipient,” upon whose “equivalence” the entire treatise rests. Hence, Muḥibb Allāh’s use of the Reality of Realities in The Equivalence is very similar to the way it is used in Ibn ʿArabi’s school. Indeed, Kāshānī seems to sum up the overarching thesis of
The Equivalence quite well when he defines the “Reality of Realities” simply as “the Essence of Oneness that encompasses all realities.”

292 Al-Qāshāni, A Glossary, p. 27.
CONCLUSION

The argument of this thesis has been presented in three distinct chapters that parallel the Neoplatonic cosmogonic mythic journey of separation, transition, and return, a motif that Muḥibb Allāh Ilāhībādī uses in his controversial metaphysical treatise The Equivalence. My argument began with the “generation and corruption” of historical narratives. In order to answer the question of why Muḥibb Allāh and his oeuvre have been largely overlooked in contemporary scholarship, I discussed the modern ideological construction of the so-called metaphysical dispute between Muḥibb Allāh’s more well-known contemporary, Aḥmad Sirhindī, and Ibn ʿArabi, whom Muḥibb Allāh spent his entire life’s work trying to interpret.

Sirhindī’s popularity as a religio-political symbol took shape in the early twentieth century by the pens of Muslim nationalists. As a result, a tradition of historiographical “emplotment” emerged that portrayed Sirhindī as a (prenational) nationalist who triumphed against the heretical monism of Ibn ʿArabi and thus brought an Islamic revolution to India, which set the stage for the modern state of Pakistan, an idea even Iqbal would allude to. But, as I hope to have shown, Sirhindī’s writing can readily be interpreted as situating him as another figure in a long line of members of Ibn ʿArabi’s school. What is more, Sirhindī can be seen not only as Muḥibb Allāh’s most famous contemporary, but also as a significant forerunner to Muḥibb Allāh in the same Chishtī-Ṣābirī Sufi lineage.

Similarly, Muḥibb Allāh has also been emplotted in modern historiography as a
triumphal hero who valiantly beat back Sirhindī’s so-called “attack.” Surprisingly, however, Sirhindī is entirely absent from Muḥibb Allāh’s apologetic and polemical discourse, although Muḥibb Allāh does seem to have had continued disagreements with many of the religious scholars and thinkers in and around Ilāhābād (notwithstanding the fact that the few hagiographical accounts of him relate the large-scale conversion of these scholars to the doctrine of the “oneness of existence”). Most importantly, there seems to have been a prolonged tension between Muḥibb Allāh and the Jaunpūrī philosophical school, particularly with the famous philosopher Mullā Maḥmūd Jaunpūrī, with whom Muḥibb Allāh had a personal correspondence. Not only was Mullā Maḥmūd markedly hostile to Ibn ʿArabī’s thought in general; he even wrote a refutation of *The Equivalence*. Therefore, it is much more likely that Muḥibb Allāh’s deeply philosophical arguments found in *The Equivalence* are in conversation with his immediate milieu than with Sirhindī.

Like the second phase of transition in the Neoplatonic cosmogonic myth, the second chapter of this thesis focused on liminality. This chapter separated from the historiographical world of “generation and corruption” and traveled to the intermediary realm of ideas and theoretical contextualization. Using Victor Turner’s theory of processual analysis and the ongoing social dialectic of structure and anti-structure, I theorized that Ibn ʿArabī’s particular philosophical synthesis exemplifies the intellectually fecund liminality of his era, that is, the Early Middle Period. Turner’s symbolic processual analysis also theorizes the necessary processual movement of liminals toward structure, which I argue is reflected by the apparent “reaggregation” of the mystics in Ibn ʿArabī’s school through their attempt to philosophically systematize Ibn ʿArabī’s thought and thereby endow it with more conceptual stability. I then surveyed the multiple intellectual traditions of philosophical and metaphysical discourse that
are synthesized within The Equivalence and ultimately situated them as constitutive elements within Ibn Ṭarabî’s school. These are primarily the intellectual frameworks of: (1) the Islamic Neoplatonic tradition, particularly Avicennan Neoplatonism, (2) Ibn Ṭarabî’s metaphysics, and (3) the tradition of Ibn Ṭarabî’s school, respectively. By comparing these three traditions, I was able to show the exchange and evolution of ontological and cosmological conceptions from one tradition to another, and in particular the way each tradition thought about the liminal realm between God and the phenomenal universe (summarized in the illustration on page 67 above).

Like the final return of the Neoplatonic journey from separation to unification, the last chapter of this thesis returned to the “source” text itself and attempted to analyze its “unified” discourse within its fourteen sections. This analysis distilled four distinguishing elements of the treatise (articulated in detail at the end of the chapter): (1) a distinctive Avicennan technical terminology, (2) an overarching Avicennan ontological argument, which focused on the idea of the “specific” (essential) existence of both the “Giver” and “recipient,” (3) the Avicennan Neoplatonic motifs of cosmology, prophetology, angelology, and the cosmogonic journey of the soul, and (4) the use of Ibn Ṭarabî’s “third” category and its relationship to the Neoplatonic conception of the Active Intelligence as the “Reality or Realities” or the “Muḥammadan Reality” qua Divine Logos. Muḥibb Allāh posits that the Reality of Realities forms the essential existence of both “the Giver” qua God and “the recipient” qua the essential form of the cosmos. As such, they are both shown to be aspects of the Necessary Being and thus “equivalent.”

By way of the above-described three-phase journey, this thesis has demonstrated that Muḥibb Allāh Ilāhābādi’s Equivalence is shot through with Avicennan Neoplatonic motifs
and terminology as distinct from its wider framework of Ibn Ṭabarî’s metaphysics. Thus, Muḥibb Allāh’s interpretation of Ibn Ṭabarî has been shown to be a highly innovative integration of philosophical and metaphysical traditions. Moreover, this paper has demonstrated that Muḥibb Allāh’s unique philosophical synthesis is in conversation with his diverse milieu and the intellectual tensions within it. Finally, this paper has shown that The Equivalence reveals a dynamic exchange among intellectual communities of seventeenth-century India, particularly in relation to the thought of Ibn Ṭabarî, that is distinct from the thought of Aḥmad Sirhindī and the contemporary ideological narratives associated with him.

In conclusion, this thesis has been an attempt to contribute a “found” text to what Said calls the “common field of play” with the intention of providing additional “historical facts” for the future construction of alternative narratives regarding seventeenth-century Indian Sufi history that are more inclusive in their approach, and, in particular, narratives that more readily include Muḥibb Allāh, his intellectual milieu, and his important and innovative literary contributions to Sufism and the school of Ibn Ṭabarî.
APPENDIX A:

THE EQUIVALENCE
BETWEEN GIVING AND RECEIVING

by
Muhībb Allāh Ilāhābādī

In the Name of God, the Most Merciful, the Most Compassionate.

Introduction

(1) All praise is for Him who is found in all of what is found, and Who is worshiped in all that is worshiped. May blessing and peace be upon the best of those by whom He spoke, His chosen one, [Muḥammad]. He who brought the Most High’s saying, “wherever you turn, there is the face of God” [Qurʾān 2:115], His appointed one. And may blessing and peace be upon his family — the best of families and most beautiful refuge.

I. The Rational Thinkers and Their Error Regarding the Necessary

(2) Know that the rationalists from among the theologians and the metaphysicians (ḥukamāʾ) say that the Necessary, the Most High, is the Existentiating Cause (illa mujida) of the possible. And they are those whom the Shaykh (Ibn) al-ʿArabī in the Bezel of Muḥammad called the “People of Causation” for whom He is other than the possible. This is

\[\text{(sic)}\]

293 The present translation of Al-Taswiya bayna al-Ifāda wa-l-Qabūl is based on three manuscripts, all of which were collected and edited by Maliha Moallim, who is currently a graduate student at Hamdard University, New Delhi. The three exemplars are from the following libraries: (1) Dārul Ulūm Deoband, India, 2nd volume, Serial no. 464/101, Row no. 28, written 1007 A.H. (sic), 7 pages (said to be in the author’s hand), (2) Ayatollah al-ʿUzma Marʿashi Najafi, Qom, Iran, “risālat al-taswiya,” 6 pages, and (3) Central Library of Astan Quds Razavi, Mashad, Iran, Serial no. 24860, written 1121 A.H., 10 pages. The Arabic edition (appendix B below) is based on the Najafi manuscript, which Ms. Moallim completed by hand according to the other two exemplars.

294 The Arabic term ḥakim (pl. ḥukamāʾ) refers to followers of Greek philosophy who strive to reach truth through reason; see Nasr, An Introduction, p. 168n4.

295 That is, the “Necessary Being” (wājib al-wujūd).
not the case, however, as you shall hear if God the Almighty wills. How they will weep and agonize among themselves, for they speak of the evident need of the possible for the Necessary! Yes, it is certainly evident, but the possible thing \((al\text{-}mumkin)\) is not other than the Necessary, the Most High! Indeed, the need of [the possible thing] for [the Necessary] is like the need of bubbles for water, so [the Necessary] is the Reality of Realities!

II. Every Possible and Existent Thing Has an Entity, Which Causes Existence

(3) For every possible \((mumkin)\) and existent thing \((mawjūd)\) is an entity \((‘ayn)\) of a reality. Therefore, (there is) an entity (that) is predicated of every possible and existent thing, and it is the Reality of Realities; it is predicated of every possible and existent thing just as substance is predicated of the human being for example. If it was not for (this) entity, then there would not have been a single reality from all of the realities, nor would there have been an existent from all of the existent things \((mawjūdāt)\), as the Shaykh (Ibn) al-‘Arabī has said. And if it was not for God, and it was not for us, that which was would not have been.

III. The Root of the Entities Is Pure Being

(4) So His name the Nonmanifest \((al\text{-}bātīn)\) is the reality of the human being, and His name the Manifest \((al\text{-}ẓāhir)\) is the uniqueness of the human being. For example, we ask, “what is the root \((aṃl)\) of Zayd?” And if you say, “water and blood,” then we will say, “indeed it is determined \((muta‘ayyin)\) like him, but what is its root?” If you then say, “his

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296 For a discussion of the meaning and rendering of \(‘ayn\) as “entity,” see note 248 above.

297 The use of the objective pronoun “us” refers to humanity in general, its ideal function being most perfectly reflected in Ibn ʿArabī’s concept of the “perfect human being” as the “isthmus” between the Absolute and the cosmos. See page 66 above.

298 \(Muta‘ayyin\) is the active participle of the fifth verbal form \(ta‘ayyun\), meaning “determination,” or, more literally, “entification,” from the root \(‘ayn\), “entity.” Although Ibn ʿArabī sometimes utilizes the fifth form and its derivatives, its usage was made popular by his foremost student Ṣadr al-Dīn al-Qūnawī. See Chittick, The Sufi Path, p. 83.
reality,” we would say, “true,” but “he is only a determined distinction of a reality of an existent thing, but what of its root?” The question only ceases when taken to its extreme conclusion, I mean that which has no determination and is not distinguished by anything else. What is really astonishing is he who says that the determination of the Necessary is its entity, and likewise existence (al-wujūd). How is it hidden from him that there is no determination (lā ta‘ayyun) for it, and no existence (lā wujūd)? For it is exclusively intelligible (ma‘qūl) as the highest genus, it is pure Quiddity (māhiyya), and if you wish you can say pure Being (wujūd). Thus, the meaning is one, and the expressions are diverse.

IV. The Mistakes of the Asha‘rites and the Sophists

(5) The Shaykh (Ibn) al-ʿArabī says in the Bezel of Shuʿayb:

How beautiful is what God the Most High said in regard to the truth of the cosmos (al-ʾālam) and its transformation with the breaths “in a new creation”300 in a single entity. And He said concerning a particular group, indeed (this applies) to most (people) of the world, “but they are in doubt of a new creation” [Qurʾān 50:15]; they are not aware of the renewal of the command with the breaths. However, the Asha‘rites hit upon the truth regarding some of the existent things, namely accidents, while the Sophists came upon it regarding the entire cosmos. Whereas the people of philosophical speculation considered them all to be ignorant! Indeed, both groups have made mistakes. As for the mistake of the Sophists, although they spoke of the (continual) transformation of the cosmos, they did not discern the oneness of the entity of the intelligible Substance (jawhar) that receives these (changing) forms. Therefore, the Substance cannot be engendered except by these forms, just as these forms cannot be understood except by the intelligible Substance. If they had understood that, then they would have attained a high degree of realization in the matter. As for the Asha‘rites they did not know that the entire cosmos is a unity of accidents, and thus it transforms in each instant, since no accident remains for two instants.

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299 Muḥibb Allāh implies the Avicennan distinction between essential existence, or “specific existence” (al-wujūd al-khāṣṣ), and accidental existence, or “affirmative existence” (al-wujūd al-ithbāṭī), a distinction that he makes more explicit later on. See note 314 below and the discussion on page 55 above.

300 This phrase appears multiple times in the Qurʾān.
(6) Now are you aware of what he said regarding the mistakes of the Sophists? From them are those who said that the cosmos is a building that needs a builder, but they did not know that the composition of the parts of the building requires a builder who is also a composite himself, and he himself is not (made) by his own materials. If it is not known that those parts were previously scattered incoherently, then a builder is not readily recognized. But the affirmation of a builder is because (of the recognition) that the building was either brought into corporeal existence (hādīth), or has a determined possibility as its root principle, for “there is nothing that does not glorify His praise” [Qurʾān 17:44].

(7) Since one understands from this theory of theirs that the relationship (nisba) of the cosmos to the Necessary is like the relationship of the building to the builder, as one of them has said, “indeed, the possible needs the Necessary, the Most High, in existence but not duration,” then this is true to that extent. Furthermore, among them was one who said that the effective cause (al-ʿilla al-fāʿiliya)\(^\text{301}\) for the building is with the building itself, and the builder is the one who simply prepares the material, and this is a truth that was revealed to him. So how does he not see that if the effective cause for the cosmos necessarily exists with the cosmos, then how much more does the cosmos’ s duration need an effective cause! This is like the root of the bubble from the water that is with it — the bubble needs the water in terms of both existence and duration!

(8) Then they have said that the Necessary must be existent (mawjūd). Indeed, whoever says that His existence is the entity of His Essence, meaning that He is pure Essence

\(^{301}\) This is more commonly referred to as the “efficient” (fāʿila) cause, rather than the adjectival “nisba” form fāʿiliya, which is used here.
or pure Being, is safe from error. That is to say, there is no argument with him, except that
he calls Him, Most High, existent!

V. The Essence of a Thing Is Pure Being

(9) If you consider with true contemplation the essence of a thing, then indeed this is
pure Quiddity, for the essence of every pure possible existent thing is thus separated
(mujarrad) and removed (muntaza”). As one of them has said, the shared humanity separate
from Zayd, Amr, and Khalid is a simple (mujarrad)302 substance, and its existence is the
entity of their existence. So Zayd, for example, is both essence and attributes.303

(10) So God, in terms of essence, is “without need of the worlds” [Qur’an 3:97, 29:6]
for “God is self-sufficient, and you are the ones in need” [Qur’an 47:38], and such is every
essence, and this is the security of the essences! So look at their theory: that the two essences
of humanity (in general) and its individuals (afrād) are the animal and the rational,304 or one
might say their combination. Now consider their simple substances (mujarradāt), and do not
neglect to presume the destruction of the building of delimitation (al-muḥaddad), and of what
has entered into it from its windows — for a thing will not exist if it raises its head through
the window of nonexistence to the throne of Being, for (only) its essence remains.

302 Mujarrad and its plural mujarradāt also have the technical meaning of the most basic or “simple”
substance, referring to a “separate” intelligence, or angelic substance; see Nasr, An Introduction, p.
199.

303 That is to say, he is both substance and accidents. See discussion on page 83 above.

304 That is, the animal and rational soul, concepts taken from the Peripatetic philosophers and
developed in the Islamic tradition by Ibn Sīnā. See Abu Hamīd Al-Ghazālī, On Disciplining the Soul
and on Breaking the Two Desires: Books XXII and XXIII of the Revival of the Religious Sciences,
VI. Gabriel was in Muḥammad

(11) You should distinguish the separate intelligences from the celestial spheres and the world of generation and corruption. Thus look to the angels, both high and the low, and the remaining existent things, for Gabriel was in Muḥammad, upon him be peace, and thus in every one of the prophets. Thus Gabriel spoke by the tongue of Muḥammad, which is the “Tremendous Throne” (al-ʿarsh al-ʿazīm) [Qurʾān 9:129, 23:86, 27:26], and his breast is the “The Lote-Tree of the Furthest Boundary” (sidrat al-muntahā) [Qurʾān 53:14]. For did you know and hear that his Satan became Muslim at his hands, peace be upon him? So he who rejects this and says that he is existent in the being of other than the being of the possible thing will not be saved from error!

VII. The Recipient Is Existent

(12) And so we say that their saying, “the Existentiating Giver (al-mājid al-mufīd) of existence, or the Giver of everything, must exist but not its recipient (qābil)” is unacceptable. Just as it is not possible for anything that is not existent to give anything, likewise how will that which is not existent receive anything? For the receptivity of a thing requires that an active recipient exists, just as the benefit of that thing and the giving of it require that the being of the bestowing giver is existent.

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305 This refers to Ibn Sinā’s theory of “emanation” (fayd), which was first formulated in its Islamic form by al-Fārābī. See discussion on page 45 above.

306 A marginal note on the Najafī manuscript here reads: “Regarding his saying that ‘Gabriel was in Muhammad,’ not one of the jurists, theologians, legists, or Sufis have said this, may God’s pleasure be upon all of them!” (‘alā qawlihi fa jibra’il kāna fī muḥammad, mā qāla aḥad min al-fuqahā’ wa al-mutakallimūn wa al-uṣūliyin wa al-ṣuṭṭiya raḍwān allāh ʿalayhim ajmaʿīn!). See discussion on page 83 above.

307 This refers to a famous ḥadith; see note 283 above.
(13) So if it is said that the bestowal of everything requires the beneficent donor to be, prior to giving benefit, the possessor of that thing as opposed to its recipient, then it requires that the Existentiating Giver of existence is existent but not the recipient of existence, then we say this is unacceptable. Surely, motion (al-ḥaraka), according to what they said, is a cause that gives heat to the affected thing, but motion is not hot. Thus, the breeze of the west wind in the summer of our lands is the cause that gives the benefit of coldness to the water, but the breeze itself is not cold. And the wind, or the sun and the moon, and more besides them give the benefit of the sweetness, the sourness, and the bitterness in fruit, and the colors in the leaves; yet, none of them (i.e., the wind, sun, moon, etc…) possess these qualities. Similarly, fantasy creates qualities but is not the possessor of them, though the one who fantasizes perceives them!

VIII. The Real Influencer Is God

(14) So if it is said that the giver is the Necessary, and the motion and the blowing of the wind, for example, is the condition of giving, then we say that the Necessary is the giver (but) not by hot and cold and the like, though that is what is intended. If you say that what is intended is a benefit, and motion, for example, is the condition of its giving, then consider the influence of the people of the world and their giving, for the real Influencer (al-
muʿaththir al-mufid) is God, the Real, the Efficacious.

(15) Just as [Ibn ʿArabi] said in the Bezel of Elias:

For “God,” in reality, is an allusion for one who has understood the

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308 That is, the philosophers.

309 That is to say, the condition of giving (the wind) is the “cause” and “what is intended” (coldness) is the “effect.”
The spirit of this wisdom and its bezel is that the matter is divided into that which affects and that which is affected in it, and they are two expressions: that which affects, from every point of view, in every state, and in every presence, is God, and that which is affected, from every point of view, in every state, and in every presence, is the cosmos. When something comes (to your attention), then attach every thing to the root that is related to it; for what comes is inevitably, and always, a derivation of a root, just as the Divine Love is a result of the supererogatory works (nawāfil) of the servant. This is an effect between affecting and affected, just as the Real is the slave’s hearing, his seeing, and his other faculties on account of this Love. This effect is fixed and undeniable, for indeed it is legally established if you are a believer! As for someone of sound intellect, he is either a recipient of a naturally occurring divine self-disclosure, so that he perceives what we have said, or he is a submitted believer believing in it as it is mentioned in the sound tradition. There is no escaping the power of conjecture (al-wahm) to hold authority over one of inquiring intellect as to what the Real brought in this illustration, for indeed he is a believer in it. As for one who is not a believer, he judges conjecture by conjecture, and so he imagines by his rational discernment the impossibility of God’s self-disclosure that was given to him by God in the dream. And the conjecture, in that case, will never separate from him because of his ignorance regarding the heedlessness of his own soul.

310 Earlier in the chapter from which this quote is taken, Ibn ʿArabi refers to the different ways that the Qurʾanic verse 6:124 can be interpreted. The standard interpretation of this verse reads: “And when a sign comes to them they say, ‘We will not believe until we are given the like of what the messengers of God are given.’ God knows best where He places His message.” However, Ibn ʿArabi points out that this verse can just as legitimately be read from the perspective of God’s immanence: “And when a sign comes to them they say, ‘We will not believe until we are given the like of what has come.’ The messengers of God are God. He knows best where He places His message.” Thus, the first line of the quote refers to the double reading of this verse and reminds the reader that the word “God” here alludes to the immanent aspect of His self-disclosure, not to His transcendent aspect. See Ibn Al-ʿArabi, The Ringstones of Wisdom (Fuṣūṣ al-hikam), trans. Caner K. Dagli (Chicago: Great Books of the Islamic World, 2004), p. 229.

311 This refers to the famous ḥadīth qudsī of “supererogatory works”; see note 285 above.

312 Ibn ʿArabi states in a previous section that God’s self-disclosure or theophany (tajallī) in a person, here “form” (ṣūra), only occurs to the degree of “preparedness” (istiʿdād) of that person. That is to say, the quality of God’s self-disclosure is naturally defined by the limitations of the form in which He manifests. Ibn ʿArabi then gives the example of someone who is certain that they have witnessed God in a dream. In this case, the person’s particular “form” dictates the form in which God was seen. He goes on to say, however, that upon waking, the intellect is tempted to dismiss this “form” as limited and to thus assert God’s transcendence (tanzih) as beyond form. But Ibn ʿArabi asserts that a person of insight who interprets this dream would not simply interpret away the form that God took, for the form is an aspect of God’s immanence (tashbih), and as such is a critical part of gnosis. See Ibn al-ʿArabi, The Bezels of Wisdom, p. 231.

313 This quote appears only in the Deoband manuscript. See Ibn al-ʿArabi, Fuṣūṣ, pp. 145–46.
IX. The Giver of Existence Has a Specific Existence Other Than Given Existence

(16) And if it is certain that the Giver of Existence is necessarily the Possessor of Existence and thus the Giver of Everything, then it implies the necessity of His existence by a specific existence (wujūd khāṣṣ)\textsuperscript{314} other than the given existence to the possible thing, or even the necessity (of existence) for the possessor of that given existence, which is the existence of the possible thing, just as the dyer is the giver of the color black for example. Indeed, he is the possessor of blackness, and it is not necessary for him to be black himself.

X. The Existence of the Necessary Is Both Cause and Effect

(17) Our existentiation is through the “existence” of the Necessary, by which the Necessary exists as the Possessor of Existence; this is “the clear reality” [Qur\textsuperscript{ā}n 24:25], and firm truth. He is the Giver of hearing, seeing, and the rest of the faculties and limbs, and He is the Hearing and the Seeing. That is to say, there is none other than Him for “He is the First, and the Last, the Manifest and the Nonmanifest” [Qur\textsuperscript{ā}n 57:3]. So there is none other than Him in the sense that: He is the First, which is the Influencing Cause (al-\textsuperscript{9}illa al-mu\textsuperscript{a}ththira), and He is the Last, which is the Influenced Effect, and He is the Outer, which is the Changing, and He is the Inner, which is safeguarded from change, and that is the Essence.

(18) [Ibn \textsuperscript{6}Arab\textsuperscript{i}] said in the Bezel of Jonah:

His saying, “And to Him the whole matter returns” [Qur\textsuperscript{ā}n 11:123] indicates that management resides with Him, and He is the one who manages. Nothing exists outside of Him that is not of His Entity; far from it, His Selfhood (huw\textsuperscript{a}yya) is the

\textsuperscript{314}This is a reference to the Avicennan distinction between “specific existence” (al-wujūd al-khāṣṣ) and “affirmative existence” (al-wujūd al-ithbātī); see discussion on page 55 above.
entity of each thing, and He is the one who gives it unveiling in His saying, “And to Him the whole matter returns” [Qurʾān 11:123].

XI. The Necessary Gives Existence but Is Not Qualified by That Existence

(19) So if it is said that the Necessary qualifies the quiddity of the possible thing by existence, but not existence like the dyer has, then we say it is not required that the Necessary is an existent having (sensory) existence. Indeed, the dyer is not qualified by that which is sought from him. Rather, the possessor of that qualification is that quiddity, and it is itself the essence of existentiation and the universe.

(20) [Ibn ʿArabī] said in the Bezel of Ṣāliḥ:

If by this word a thing did not come from its own power of existentiation, it would not come into being. By the command of existentiation this thing was existentiated by itself after its having not been. Thus the Real, Most High, verifies that the existentiation for the thing is due to itself and not to the Real, for that which belongs to the Real is (only) a specific command. It was thus that He related of Himself, “When We desire a thing, We say to it ‘Be,’ and so it is” [Qurʾān 16:40] connecting existentiation to the thing itself by the command of God. He is truthful in His word, and this command is comprehensible by itself, just as the master who is feared and thus never disobeyed says to his slave, “stand!” Thus, the slave stands, obeying his master’s command. However, the master has nothing to do with the standing of this slave except his command to stand; for the standing is an act of the slave, not an act of the master.

XII. The Giver and the Recipient Are Equal

(21) So the giver and the recipient are equivalent, both in qualification by way of existence, and in lack of qualification by it. Therefore, I have called this treatise “The Equivalence between Giving and Receiving,” for the Giver of Existence (al-mūjid) is like the

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315 This quote is found only in the Deoband manuscript, and it ends with a marginal note that states: “By God he speaks the truth and he guides me on the way.” See Ibn al-ʿArabī, Fuṣūṣ, p. 132.

316 The “word” Ibn ʿArabī is referring to here is “Be!” (kun), which appears in the Qurʾānic verse, “When We desire a thing, We say to it ‘Be,’ and so it is” (16:40).

317 This quote is only in the Deoband manuscript. See Ibn al-ʿArabī, Fuṣūṣ, pp. 75–76.
Emanator of Existence (*al-wājid*) in terms of the outer nature of the existence of the possible, such as the external human body of Zayd. This is in accordance with what has previously been written regarding the Bezel of Shuʿayb. So controversy and impediment only emerge by an error in the knowledge of “the Necessary” and what is meant by “the Giver of Existence.” For “the Fashioner” (*al-muṣawwir*) also means “the One Who has fashioned,” (*al-mutasawwir*) just as “the precedent” also means “the preceding.”

**XIII. All Things Are Manifested in and from the Real, “Allah”**

(22) Then [Ibn ʿArabī] said in the Bezel of Job: “If the Real is the Selfhood of the cosmos, then all of the determinations are only manifested in Him and from Him as His saying, ‘and to Him the whole affair is returned’ [Qurʾān 11:123] is a reality and an unveiling.”

So the Most High, that is, the possessor of exaltedness in Himself, is He who has the perfection in which are immersed all of the ontological qualities (*al-umūr al-wujūdiyya*) and nonexistent correlations of which it is not possible to omit a single quality, whether they are praiseworthy by custom, intellect, and law, or equally blameworthy by them, for they are specifically designated by God.

(23) Then [Ibn ʿArabī] said:

There is nothing in possibility more wondrous than this cosmos because it is in the image of the Merciful, which God, the Most High, existentiated. That is to say, His existence, the Most High, manifested through the appearance of the cosmos, just as man manifested by the existence of the natural form. We are His manifest form and His Selfhood is the Spirit of this form, and its director. There is no direction except in Him, just as there is none except from Him; for He is the First in meaning, and the Last in form. He is the Manifest by the transforming of determinations and states, and the Nonmanifest in terms of direction – “and He knows everything” [Qurʾān 57:3, 318]

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318 That is to say, even though these words are technically distinct, they hold the same essential “meaning,” which Muhībb Allāh claims to be the case with respect to the Absolute and its self-disclosure (*tajallī*).

And He is “a witness of everything” [Qurʾān 5:117], so that He knows by witnessing, not by discursive thought. Thus knowledge by way of direct experience is not discursive thought, and that is true knowledge. Everything else is simply conjecture and guessing, not knowledge at all.”

XIV. Closing Admonitions by way of Qurʾānic Allusion

(24) “And I was a witness over them while I lived among them, when you took me you were the watcher over them” [Qurʾān 5:117].

“And even if I wish to counsel you, my counsel will not benefit you if God wills for you to go astray; He is your Lord and to Him you will return” [Qurʾān 11:34].

“And with Us is a Book that articulates the truth and they will not be wronged” [Qurʾān 23:62].

“That is because God is the Real and what they call on from besides Him is invalid” [Qurʾān 23:62].

“Do you argue with me about names that you and your fathers have given, which God has not granted any authority” [Qurʾān 7:71]?

“And We reveal from the Qurʾān that which is a healing and a mercy for the believers, and it does not increase the unjust in anything except loss” [Qurʾān 17:82].

“Certainly, it is a reminder for the God conscious and we are well aware that there are among you deniers” [Qurʾān 69:48-49].

“And surely it is sorrow for the disbelievers, indeed it is the truth beyond all doubt, so glorify in the name of your Lord, the Tremendous” [Qurʾān 69:50-52].

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321 In the Najafi manuscript, this verse was mistakenly placed toward the end of the preceding Ibn ʿArabī quote.

322 The Najafi manuscript ends with the following scribal coda: “The treaty of the Equivalence has thus ended in accordance with the interpretation of the author of the treatise, may his secret be sanctified” (tammat risālat al-taswiya wafq li-tarjamah ṣāḥib al-risāla qaddas sirrahu).
APPENDIX B:

THE ARABIC TEXT
(AL-TASWIYA BAYNA AL-IFĀDA WA-L-QABŪL)

التسوية بين الافادة والقبول
شيخ طلحة الله الابادي

- يسمر الله الرحمن الرحيم -

1) الحمد لله بُنَ وجد بكلّ ما وجد، وسُجِد بكلّ ما سُجِد، والصلاة والسُلام على خير من نطق به، أصدقنهما، وأتّى بقوله تعالى: {فَأِنَّمَا لَوْلَا فَنُّمْ وَجَهَّ الَّذِي هُوَ أَعْلَمُ} (4:115).

واحتبا، والخير الأعلى وأحسن المال.

2) أعلمن أن العلفاء من المتكلمين والحكيماء قالوا: إن الواجب تعالى علة موجودة للممكن، وهم الذين سماهم الشيخ العربي في الفصل المحمدي، أصحاب العلم، فهو غير الممكن، وليس الأمر عليه كما تستمع إن شاء الله العزيز. إذا وقع الممكن، والذء بينهم، فقالوا ببدارة افتقار الممكن إلى الواجب، نعم، إنه بديهي، لكن ليس الممكن غير الواجب تعالى، إن افتقاره إليه كافتقار الحجاب إلى الماء، فهو حقيقة الحقائق.

3) فكل ممكن موجود عن حقيقة، إذا تحمل عليه، وهي عن حقيقة الحقائق.

لذا تحمل عليه كما يحمل الجوهر (مر. 2) على الإنسان مثلًا، فلولاها لما كانت حقيقة الحقائق، وما كان موجود من الموجودات، كما قال الشيخ العربي، ولولاها ولولانا لما كان الذي كان.

4) قاسمًا الباطن حقيقة الإنسان، واسمه ظاهر، إفراد الإنسان، مثلًا، فنقول: لما أصلد؟ فإن قلت: المال والدم، نقول: إن متعين مثله، فما أصله؟ فإن قلت: حقيقةه، نقول: هذا هو الحق، بل نقول: إنه متعين ممتزجًا عن موجودة وحقيقة، فما أصلهما؟ فلا ينقطع السؤال إلا إذا اتجه الحرف إلى الطرف، أغنى الذي
لا تعين له ولا امتياز عن شيء، والعجب من يقول إن تعين الواجب عليه، وكذا。

الوجود. كيف خفي عليه أنه لا تعين له ولا وجود؟ فهو معقول محض، كالجنس العالي، فهو ماهية محضة. وإن شكلن في وجود محض، فإن العلم واحد والعبارات متعددة.

(5) قال الشيخ العربي في الغنْش الشعبي: "ما أحسن ما قال الله تعالى في حق العالم وتبيله مع الأنفس "في حلق (س. 2) جدير" في عين واحدة، قال في حق طائفة، بل في أكثر العالم: "بَلْ هُمُ فِي لَبِسٍ مِنْ حَلَقٍ جَنِينٍ[16:50]". فلا يعرفون تجديد الأمر مع الأنفس. لكن قد عُثرت عليه الأشاعرة في بعض الموجودات، وهي الأعراض، وعثرت عليه الحُسبانية في العالم كله، وجعلهم أهل النظر بأجمعهم، ولكن أخطَّا الفريقان، وأمام خطأ الحُسبانية فيكونهم ما عثروا، مع قولهم بالتبديل في العالم بأسره، على أحاديث من الجوهر المعقول الذي قيل هذه الصور، ولا يوجد إلا بها كما لا تعقل إلا به. فلو قالوا بذلك فازوا بدرجة التحقيق في الأمر. وأما الأشاعرة فما علموا أن العالم كله مجموع أعراط، فهو يبدع في كل زمان إذ العرض لا يبقى زمانين.

(6) فقيل عرفت ما قال في تحضنات الحُسبانية، ثم منهم من قال إن العالم كالتياء بحاجة إلى البينة، ولم يعلموا أن تركيب أجزاء البينة يتجه إلى البينة المركز في نفسه، لا نفسه بمواد. ولو لم يعلم أن تلك الإجراء كانت متفرقة غير متشابهة لم يحكم بأن له بناة. فالمحكم مبنه له (س. 4) بناه لأنه حادث، أو ممكن متبعين يحكم بأن له أصل "إن من شيء، إلا يسبح بحمد [17:44]."

(7) فلما فهم من قولهم هذا أن نسبة العالم إلى الواجب كنسبة البينة إلى البينة،
قال بعضهم: "إن الممكن يحتاج إلى الواجب تعالى في الوجود دون البقاء" وهذا هو الحق على ذلك التقدير. ثم منهم من قال إن الوعبة الفاعلة للبناء معه، والبناء معد من المعنات. وهذه كلام حقا اكتشفه عليه، لكن كيف خفي عليه أن الوعبة الفاعلة للعالم يجب أن تكون مع العالم، ولا كيف يحتاج في بقائه إليها؟ كافل الحب من الماء معه، ففي تحتاج إليه ووجوداً وبقاءً.

(8) ثم قالوا يجب أن يكون الواجب موجودا، فمن قال إن وجوده غير ذاته، بمعنى أنه ذات محضة أو وجود محض، نجا، إذ لا مناقشة معه، إلا أن يسمى تعالى موجوداً!

(9) وتتأمل حق التأمل في ذات الشيء، فإنها ماهية صرفه، فذات كل موجود ممكن مجرد متزعة منه. كما قال بعضهم، إن الإنسان المشترك مجرد من زيد وعمرو وحالة، مثلًا، جوهر (٥) مجرد، وجوده غير وجودهم، فزيد مثل ذات وصفات.

(١٠) قاله ذاتاً "عنه عن العالمين (١)٨٩١، (٣)٩٧. (ب) "الله يعني وأنتم الفقراء" [٤٨].

وقد كل ذات، وهذا هو الأمن على الذوات. فانظر إلى قولهم: إن ذاتي الإنسان وأفراده حيوان وتطلق، وقل المجموع أيضاً إن شئت. فانظر إلى مجرد ذاتهم إياها، ولا تغلب إله إن فرضت أنهم البناء البديع، وما فيه من الكواكب، لم يكن شيءًا.

رفع رأسه من كوة العدم إلى عرش الوجود وذاته باقيةً.

(١١) فجردَ أن العقول مرجعة عن الأفكار وعالم الكون والفساد، ثم أنظر إلى الملائكة الطويلة والسنوية وباقى الموجودات. فجبريل كان في محمد عليه السلام، وكذا

وصدره هو سورة المبادئ [4:14]، فهل عرفت وسمعت أنَّهُ شيطانه على السلام آسلم
على يده عليه السلام مثناً لمَّا يَقُولُ بذلك، بل قالَ إِنَّهُ موجود جبر ووجود المكن ما
نجا.

(12) فنقول: إن قولهم المجدُ الفيدُ الموجود، وكذا مفيد كل شيء، يجب أن
يَكُون موجوداً، بخلاف قابله (ص: 6) ممنوع، فكما أن كل شيء ما لم يكن موجوداً
كيف يفيد شيئان؟ كذلك إنه ما لم يكن موجوداً كيف يقبل شيئان؟ فقيلُ شبيه، يقتضي أن
يكون القابل الأخذ موجوداً، كأفادته ذلك الشيء، وإعطاه يقتضي كون الفيد المعني
موجوداً.

(13) فإن قيل إن إعطا كل شيء يقتضي أن يكون العطى الفيد، قبل الإفادة،
صاحب ذلك الشيء، بخلاف قابله، فقيلُ أن يكون المجدُ الفيدُ الموجود موجوداً، بخلاف
قابله، فلنا ممنوع، فإن الحركة، على ما قالوا، علة نفيد الحركة للتحرر، وهي ليست
باحرة. وكذا ريح الديور في صف ديارنا علة نفيد الريح النزول، وهي ليست بباردة.
والهواء أو الكبر، وغيرهما يفيد الحلاوة والحموضة والمرارة في الشار، والألوان في
الأوراق، وكلها منها ليس صاحب هذه الأمور، وكذا الوهب يخلق أموراً ليس هو
صاحبها، يعلمها صاحب الوهمن.

(14) فإن قيل الفيد هو الواجب، والحركة وهب وهو الريح مثل، شرط الإفادة، فلتنا
فالواجب المفيد ليس بحرا ولا بارد، (ص: 7) وهو المطلوب، وكذا الطبيعة. إن قلت إنهما
مفيداً والحركة مثلًا شرطًا إنفانتها، فانظر في تأثير أهل العالم وإفانتهم، فإن المؤثر
المفيد هو الله الحق الفعال.

(15) كما قال في الفصيّة الإلياسية: «فالله على التحقق عبارة لم فهم الإشارة،
وروح هذا الحكمة وفصّها أن الأمر ينقسم إلى مؤثر ومثير فيه، وهما عبارتان: فالمؤثر
بكل وجه وعلى كل حال وفي كل حضرة هو الله، والمرأة فيها بكل وجه وعلى كل حال
وفي كل حضرة هو العالم، فإذا ورد فألحق كل شيء بأتمه الذي يناسبه، فإن الولد
أبداً لا بد أن يكون رغماً عن أصل، كما كانت اللحية الإلهية عن النواة من العبد، فهذا
أتت بين مؤثر ومثير فيه، وكما كان الحق سمع العباد ويصره وقوافه من هذه الحجة.
فهذا أثر مقرر لا يقدر على إنكاره لثبوت شرعًا إن كنت مؤمنًا، وما العقل السليم، فهو
إذا صاحب تجل إلهي في مجلي طبيعي، فيعرف ما قناته، وإذا مؤمن مسلم يؤمن به
كما ورد في الصحيح، ولا بد من سلطان الومه أن يحكم على العاقل الباحث فيما جاء
به الحق في هذه الصورة، لأنه مؤمن بها، وأما غير المؤمن فيحكم على الومه بالومهم،
فتخيل بنظره الفكري أنه قد أحل على الله ما أعطاه ذلك التجلي في الرؤية، والومه في
ذلك لا يفارق من حيث لا يشعر لغلته عن نفسه.

(16) فإن وسلم أن مفيد الوجود يجب أن يكون صاحب الوجود وهكذا مفيد كل
شيء، فقوله ما يلزم منه أن يكون موجوداً بوجود خاص غير وجود الممكن الفعال، بل ما
يلزم منه أنه صاحب ذلك الوجود الفائق الذي هو وجود الممكن، فالمصدح الفيد السواد
مثلاً، فإنه صاحب ذلك السواد، ولا يلزم أن يكون نفسه أسود.
(١٧) موجودا هو وجوُدَ الواجب الذي يَهَوَّب مُوجَدٌ صاحبٌ الوجود، وهذا هو الْحَقُّ الْمِيْنَ [١٤٤:٦٤] والصَّدِيقُ المتين، هو المَفْيُ السمع والبصِر وباقي القوى والأعضاء، وهو السَّمِيعُ البصِيرُ. يعني لا غيره، وهو الآخر والأخير والظاهر والباطن [١٤٤:٦٥] يعني لا غيره، فهو الآخر، أي العلة المؤثرة، وهو الآخر أي المطłów المؤثر فيه، وهو الظاهر أي المتغير، وهو الباطن أي الأمر (٦٤) من التغيير، وهو الذات.

(١٨) قال في القصيدة اليونانية على أن قوله: "وَإِنَّهُ يُرِجِعُ الْأَمْرُ كَلِهْ" [١١:٣١] أي فيه يقَعُ التصرف، وهو التصرب. فما خرج عنه شيء لم يكن عنه، بل هو مثأثه هو عن ذلك الشيء، وهو الذي يعطيه الكشف في قوله "وَإِنَّهُ يُرِجِعُ الْأَمْرُ كَلِهْ" [١١:٣٦].

(١٩) فإن قيل إن الواجب يَغْيِرُ انصاف الامهية المكانتة بالوجود، لا الوجود كاملاً، فقال لا يلزم أن يكون الواجب موجوداً صاحب وجوُد. ثم إنه ليس صاحب ذلك الاضطراب وهو المطلوب، بل صاحب ذلك الاضطراب هي تلك الامهية، وهي نفسها ذات التكوين والكون.

(٢٠) قال في القصة الصالحية: فلَو نانه في قوله التكوين من نفسه عند هذا القول ما تكوَّن. فما أوجد هذا الشيء بعد أن لم يكن عند الأمر بالنكين إلا نفسه.

فأتيت الحق تعالى أن التكوين للشيء نفسه لا لحق، والذي للحق فيه أمره خاصة، وكذلك الآخر عن نفسه في قوله "إِنَّمَا قَوْلُنَا لِلشَّيْءِ إِذَا أَرْتُدَاهُ بِالْقُوْلِ"[١٤٤:٥] فنسب التكوين لنفس الشيء، عن أمر الله، وهو الصواب في قوله، وهذا هو المعقول في نفس الأمر، كما يقول الأمر الذي يُحَافُ فَلا يهتم في عبده: "قُمْ" فيقوم العبد.
امثالًا لأمر سيده. فليس للسيد في قيام هذا العبد سوى أمره له بالقيام، والقيام من فعل العبد لا من فعل السيد.

(21) فالفيد والقابل في الانتصار بالوجود وعدم الانتصار به، سواء، فسميت هذه الرسالة برسالة «النسوية بين الإفادة والقبول»، فالوجود كالواجد بإمكاني الظاهر بوجود المكن، كالإنسان الظاهر بوجود زيد مثلًا، على ما مر من الفص الشعبي. فما نشاء الشعب والتغلب إلا من الخطأ في معرفة الواجب ومنعت الموحد. فالصور بمعنى المتصور، كالقودة بمعنى المقدمة.

(22) ثم قال في الفصل الأولي: «إذا كان الحق هو العالم، فما ظهرت الأحكام كلها إلا فيه ومنه قوله: «وإيّاكَ نُعْلِمُ» (الأنبياء 1:110، حقيقة وكشفًا».

فالعلي، أي صاحب العلو (ص. 9) بنفسه هو الذي يكون له الكمال الذي يستغرق به جميع الأمور الوجودية والنسب العددية، بحيث لا يمكن أن يفوتون نعت من هنا سوا، كانت محمودة عنفا وعقلا وشرعا، أو مذمومة عنفا وعقلا وشرعا، وليس ذلك إلا للسمى لله خاصًا.

(23) ثم قال: «وليس في الإمكان أبدًا من هذا العالم لأنه على صورة الرحمن أوجده الله تعالى. أي ظهر وجوهه تعالى بظهور العالم، كما ظهر الإنسان بوجود الصورة الطبيعية. فنحن صورته الظاهرة، وهو يروى هذه الصورة المبديه لها. فما كان التقدير إلا فيه، كما لم يكن إلا منه، فهو الأول بالمعنى، والآخر بالصورة. وهو الظاهر بتغيير الأحكام والأحوال، والباطن بالتدبير، وهو بكل شيء علماء (1969.1.10).»
120

117:3

وهو «على كل شيء شهيد [117:5]» لعلم عن شهود لا عن فكر. [ف] كذلك

علم الأذواق لا عن فكر، وهو العلم الصحيح، وما عداه فخادس وتحريه ليس بعلم

أصلًا.

(24) «وكتب عليه شهيداً مادمت فيهم فلما توفيت كننت أنت الرفيق عليهم

[117:6].» «ولا يفقكم نصحي إن أردت (س) 10 أن أصحك لكم إن كان الله يريد أن

يغويكم هو نبيكم وإله ترجعون [34:11].» ودينا كتاب ينطق بالحق وهم لا يظلمون

[32:26].» «وذلك بأن الله هو الحق وإن ما يدعون من دونه هو الباطل [32:6].» أنت جادًا

لوبي في أسماه سمتهها أنتم وأباكم ما نزل الله بها من سلطان [7:71].» «وننزل

من القرآن ما هو شفاء ورحمة للمؤمنين ولا يزيد الطالبين إلا حسارة [17:82].» «وإنه

لذكورة للمتقين وانا لعلم أن منكم مكذبين [4:49].» «وإنه لهجرة على الكافرين

وإنه لحقق البقاء نسيب باسم ربك العظيم [3:56:0].»


