

Two Different Theories: “Unity of Being” And “Absolute Unity of Being” (In Light of the Studies of Ibn ‘Arabi and Ibn Sab‘īn)

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ABSTRACT: Importance of studying Muhyiddin Ibn Arabi and his theory of "unity of being" lies in examining the heritage of his predecessors to uncover and clarify the ambiguity of concepts and perceptions held by earlier Sufis. In fact, monotheistic religions before Islam depicted the deity through the names of divine attributes, not the essence of God. Islam is the first religion to believe that God has an essence and attributes that are indefinable and unimaginable. However, Islam believes in the thingness of the divine essence. The debate over the essence and attributes of God has been ongoing since the Mu'tazila period and was later addressed by Islamic philosophers and later by Sufis. Some of them anthropomorphized God, while others likened Him to His likeness. However, Ibn Arabi distinguished between likening and transcendence, unity and multiplicity, absolute and restricted, and self-sufficiency and need. We have addressed all these elements in the studies of Ibn Arabi and Ibn Sab'in. The aim of this research is to answer some questions to understand the difference between the two theories: Ibn Arabi's "unity of being" and Ibn Sab'in's "absolute unity of being." We use the descriptive analytical approach, which is always suitable for studying such topics.

KEYWORDS: Ibn ‘Arabi, (Unity of Being), Mu'tazila: The thingness of the non-existent, Plotinus: Theory of Emanatio), Ibn Sab'in: Absolute Unity of Being.

Research Questions

When we study Muhyiddin Ibn ‘Arabi and his theory of (Unity of Being), we find some questions directly related to his personality and theory, such as:

- A. Was Ibn ‘Arabi the first to address the idea of (Unity of Being) or did others like theologians and philosophers precede him in this topic?
- B. Were the ideas like the "non-existence of the entity" of Mutazilites or the fixed realities in Ibn ‘Arabi's thought known or unknown to the theologians and philosophers in the East or West?
- C. Was discussing the essence of God and His attributes in terms of existence and non-existence permissible for the human reasoning in the religion?

1. INTRODUCTION: Ibn ‘Arabi (560 AH-638 AH)

Muhyiddin Ibn ‘Arabi spent his mature years of his age in traveling extensively, starting from Murcia in Andalusia, where he was born in 1165 CE. His journey included Andalusian cities, North Africa, Palestine, Mecca, Iraq, and Anatolia, finally settling in Damascus, where he passed away in 1240 CE. Throughout his travels, Ibn ‘Arabi produced many works that survived the passage of time, allowing us today to study his life and intellectual trajectory.

He was born into a well-to-do family in Murcia, Andalusia, where his father was a courtier at the time of the ruler of Murcia and remained so until he fled with his family to Seville, escaping Almohad rule. During these years, the young Ibn ‘Arabi received a diverse education in the various Islamic religious sciences and studied all the trends of the Andalusian sheikhs of the time. However, he was not initially inclined toward the Sufism and asceticism, but occupied himself with literature and hunting trips, accompanied by his father's servants. He also obtained a position as a clerk in the court of the ruler of Seville and married. However, during these years, he was frequently hunted by visions and received numerous signs urging him to do things he did not understand. This caused him a spiritual crisis that he did not know how to deal with. Some researchers suggest that the death of his father was a major factor in this crisis and his turning towards the "path of revelation".

The villages and cities of Andalusia were “the first stage of Ibn ‘Arabi’s wanderings”, as Asin Palacios, one of the orientalists who wrote about Ibn ‘Arabi’s life, described him. In Seville, he learned various sciences and literature and became

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acquainted with the Sufi trends. From there, he began his wanderings in Andalusia, between villages and cities, learning, teaching, and discussing, which spread his fame in Andalusia. Ibn 'Arabi even mentions that on one of his visits to Cordoba, while he was still in his early youth, he met Ibn Rushd, who was the city's judge at the time. Ibn Rushd welcomed him with eagerness after hearing about him and asked him if the path of "revelation" had led him to what the path of "contemplation" had led him to, that is, Ibn Rushd's path in philosophy and logic.

At that time, Ibn 'Arabi knew he had embarked on the path of "the spirit", and he was approximately twenty-one years old, as he noted in his famous work, "The Meccan Conquests". This status and fame placed him, like every renowned scholar of the time, before the challenge of dealing with the authorities, whom he did not wish to be close to. He also constantly felt that he had to move away and travel, a move encouraged by visions that encouraged him to visit Mecca and promised him that a companion awaited him in Fez.

During his many journeys, he stayed for three years in Mecca, where his wisdom and spiritual knowledge reached their peak and his visions became clearer. He began writing his book: "The Meccan Conquests", which took many years, and in which he recorded all of his spiritual diaries, in addition to his poems: "The love" in his Devan: "The Interpreter of Desires", and his letter "The Holy Spirit in Advising the Soul", which he sent during his stay in Mecca to Abu Muhammad b. Abu Bakr al-Qurashi in Tunisia, whom he described as a friend. (1)

However, throughout his life, he faced hostility from certain parties concerned. Some excommunicated him, denied his doctrine, accused him of corruption, or even incited against it. However, the place where Ibn 'Arabi found peace and settled was Damascus, a major scholarly center at the time. There, he found respect and a suitable climate to spend the final years of his life, concluding his book "The Meccan Conquests" and composing some of his other scholarly works.

Ibn 'Arabi died in 1240 AD in Damascus and was buried in Al-Salihiyyah, where his final resting place remains to this day. His famous saying about travel is: "The believer is constantly on a journey, and all of existence is a journey within a journey".

(2) 2. Doctrine of "Unity of Being"

Muhyiddin Ibn 'Arabi established a unique intellectual theory in Islamic mysticism known as (Unity of Being). Ibn 'Arabi has taken the meaning of transcendence and simile to the meaning of absoluteness, and specification and restriction without separating one from the other. Ibn 'Arabi believes that God is transcendent, meaning that He is in His essence absolute and not limited by a specific definition from the infinite definitions in which He appears at every moment. He is likened in the sense that in His attributes and names He appears in the form of every specific thing, and He is restricted in His appearance by the requirements of the forms in which He appears. Thus, transcendence and simile are two aspects of a single truth, it means that they are two considerations, so, (The pure truth is the creation that is likened to Him). The difference between them is only in one attribute, which is the attribute of necessary existence that is unique to God. (3)

It should be noted that there is a group that supports Ibn 'Arabi's view of transcendence and anthropomorphism, and a group that opposes it. Those who supported him were led by Shihab al-Din al-Suhrawardy, Majd al-Din al-Firouzabadi, Qutb al-Din al-Hamwi, Salah al-Din al-Safadi, Fakhr al-Din al-Razi, Jalal al-Din al-Suyuti, Abd al-Razzaq al-Qashani, Abd al-Ghani al-Nabulsi, and others of their ilk from the men of knowledge, virtue, understanding, and insight.

Those who explained his book (Fusus al-Hikam) and disseminated his doctrines and theories in philosophical Sufism were led by Wahid al-Din al-Kirmanī, Sadr al-Din al-Quni, Mu'ayyid al-Din al-Jundi, Fakhr al-Din al-'Iraqi, Dawud Ibn Mahmud al-Qaysari, and Abd al-Rahman al-Jami.

Those who opposed him were led by Ibn Taymiyyah (d. 728 AH), Ibn Khaldun (d. 808 AH), Ibn Hajar al-Asqalani (d. 852 AH), and Ibrahim al-Biqā'i (d. 858 AH). Al-Biqā'i wrote some books against Muhyiddin Ibn 'Arabi, such as: (The Prophet's Warning Against the atonement of Ibn 'Arabi), and Jalal al-Din al-Suyuti responded to Ibrahim al-Biqā'i by writing his book entitled: (The Prophet's Warning Against the Exoneration of Ibn 'Arabi). (4)

Perhaps the first one who defined the concept of the "perfect human being" was Ibn 'Arabi, one of the Sufis of the seventh century AH. The gist of what he said is that God gathered the angels for Adam as an honor, and asked Iblis what prevented him from prostrating to Adam? Adam was the one who combined the image of God and his own image, while Iblis did not have these two images. Therefore, Adam was God's caliph on the earth. It was necessary for him to fulfil every requirement of those who were appointed as caliphs. Iblis did not have the image of his Creator, so he was not His caliph because this condition was not found. The caliphate is only valid for the perfect human being; therefore he made his outward image from the realities of the world, and his inner image in the image of God Almighty. (5)

Ibn 'Arabi is considered the link between the philosophical Sufi heritage that preceded him, and he had a profound influence on subsequent scholars who produced books and studies on Islamic philosophy. The importance of studying Ibn 'Arabi is proven by the importance of studying the heritage of those who came before him, to uncover the ambiguity in the concepts and perceptions found among his predecessors among the Sufis that require clarification and elucidation. Moreover, Ibn 'Arabi's personality is itself the subject of more disagreement among the scholars than other Sufis. We see him adopting the literalist approach to worship, but he was concerned with interpreting the Sharia from its esoteric meaning, i.e., from a more general perspective of purpose and goal,

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and then substantiating this with Quranic verses, to provide his thought with religious legitimacy, as other Sufis before him had done.

3. Concept of Absolute Imagination in Ibn ‘Arabi's Theory

There is no doubt that this topic is limited to the "divinity", the mediator between God's essence and the human world, as it is the first of the four mediators of absolute imagination in Muhyiddin Ibn ‘Arabi's theory of "unity of being".

Unity of being - as understood by the others - is a unity that either embeds God in the nature or negates the existence of the world in favor of God's absolute existence.

However, Ibn ‘Arabi does not believe in either of these two concepts. Rather, he differentiates by the relationship of duality between the Divine Essence and the world, so that they are not united by a common denominator. He makes the world of imagination, with all its levels and gradations of existence, an intermediary between God and the world. This intermediary demonstrates the existence of this duality according to Ibn ‘Arabi. This intermediate world has two sides: The apparent and the hidden. Its appearance contrasts with the sensory world that we see and sense, the world of the universe and nature. Its interior contrasts with the Divine Essence. Thus, this intermediate world brings the two sides of this duality closer together, mediating between them on one side, and isolating and separating them on the other, so that the two do not meet.

The theory of "unity of being" has a special concept, which must be understood within the framework of this primary duality, and within the framework of this intermediate existence that unites and separates them at the same time. Nasr Hamid Abu Zayd attempted to describe this methodology, embodied in these three aspects or considerations, in Ibn ‘Arabi as follows:

- A.** Existence with a condition of something: This is a partial existence restricted by the limits of time, place, and matter.
- B.** Existence with a condition of nothing: This is opposed to the first restricted partial existence. This is the absolute universal existence, which is absolute only in relation to the restricted partial existence.
- C.** Existence without a condition of anything: This is the true absolute existence, which is not restricted at all, even by the restriction of absoluteness, like the previous universal existence (meaning the absolute universal existence), which is an existence devoid of restriction and any type of restriction by the partial or the universal.

It is self-evident that the third type of existence is the one that must be attributed to the Essence of Allah - the Most High - and that must be applied to it. The unity of existence here (according to Ibn ‘Arabi) is the unity of the (true) absolute, which is existence in and of itself and for itself. No duality or multiplicity is conceivable in the conception of absolute existence at all.

This is the methodology for explaining the three existential levels according to Ibn ‘Arabi, and with it he was assured of distinguishing between the absolute existence that is not conditioned by anything, even by the condition of absoluteness - since absoluteness in this case is a condition in addition to the existence - and the existence restricted by the conditional part, and that is by a third existence, which is (existence conditioned by nothing) and the level of the world (existence conditioned by something).

4. Motives for Ibn ‘Arabi's Theory of “Unity of Being”

The reality that Ibn ‘Arabi experienced was the height of the conflict between Christianity and Islam on the one hand, and between the various trends within Islamic society in his first homeland, Andalusia, on the other. These conflicts were represented by the sectarian conflicts between Sunnis and Shiites, Mutazilites and Asha'irites, jurists and philosophers, and Sufis. This conflict manifested in the presence of multiple intellectual approaches, including: The method of transmission for the Sunnah, the method of reason for the philosophers, the method of reconciliation between the transmission and reason for the Mutazilites, and the Sufi approach sought to transcend the framework of this direct, tangible, sensory reality with all its contradictions, conflicts, and concerns, in pursuit of the eternal, fixed absolute. This is to overcome every kind of conflict, anxiety and tension. However, if Sufi was a philosopher-thinker like Ibn ‘Arabi, it is inconceivable that he would ignore the reality. He presented his theory in (the unity of existence), which was an open religious project that transcended religious, doctrinal and political differences. However, it did not transcend the framework of Islam itself, as the last, most complete and most comprehensive religion expressing the absolute truth, as Ibn ‘Arabi himself believed.

5. Sources from which Ibn ‘Arabi drew his theory of (Unity of Being)

The philosophical sources of the idea of “divinity” or the “intermediate world” between God and the world have their roots and authenticity that extend from Plato to Plotinus, and then to the illuminationist aspect of Islamic philosophy. There is no doubt that there are many similarities between Ibn ‘Arabi and each of those philosophers that are worthy of comparison and discussion.

We studied Ibn ‘Arabi's concept of isthmus and saw that this idea is taken from the concept of the word (Logos). We then saw that Abu al-Ala al-Afifi also traces the concept of isthmus - unifying it with the concept of the word (Logos) - back to the influence of Philo of Alexandria. He believes that the influence of this concept is clear in the similarity between the terms used by each of them.

There are some researchers who have actually traced Ibn ‘Arabi's thought back to Plato and Plotinus on the basis of the similarity between many of the ideas of each of them, especially Plotinus's conception of the cosmic progression based on a series of emanations or the issuance of multiplicity from the One, which ends with man, then the return journey that man undertakes to transcend this apparent multiplicity to its one origin.

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The difference between Plotinus the Sufi and Ibn 'Arabi the Sufi is that according to Plotinus, Sufism is rational Sufism, and the intermediaries that mediate between God and man are also rational intermediaries, while according to Ibn 'Arabi, the Sufi does not depend on reason entirely, nor does he rely on it, and the intermediaries according to him are imaginary intermediaries that are not based on emanation or emanation from the One as is the case with Plotinus. For Plotinus, the One from which the universe emanates is equivalent to (divinity), which is one of the levels of the world of absolute imagination, which Ibn 'Arabi calls the isthmus. It is, in turn, an intermediary between the divine self and the world. For Ibn 'Arabi, the emanation of the universe from (divinity) does not occur through coming out or emanation, but rather through a series of manifestations. For Ibn 'Arabi, manifestation is an alternative word used to coming out or emanation for Plotinus.

6. Ibn 'Arabi and Philosophy of Ten Intellects to Al-Farabi and Ibn Sina

From this perspective, Ibn 'Arabi differs from Ibn Sina and Al-Farabi, who stopped the chain of emanations at the tenth intellect, Gabriel. This is the intellect connected to the intellect of the philosopher or the imagination of the prophet, from which they derive their knowledge. (6)

While the theory of emanation or emanation, whether in its Plotinian form or its Islamic formulation, aims to resolve the problem of the emanation of many from the One, it makes the tenth intellect the cause of everything that occurs under the orbit of the moon in the world of the universe and impossibility, as if in doing so, it isolates the One from any activity after the last chain of emanations, but Ibn 'Arabi places divinity - despite its unity and infinite simplicity in itself - in a state of constant activity, and direct intervention in the affairs of the world. This is achieved through the idea of uninterrupted manifestations, which Ibn 'Arabi calls "the new creation", proving from the Qur'anic verse: "Rather, they are in doubt about a new creation".

It was natural for the Orientalists to understand Ibn 'Arabi in the context of (unity of being), accepting what was said about him by both his lovers and his enemies alike, but they understood (unity of being) in the theory of Ibn 'Arabi as it is mentioned in the context of the unity of being in Western philosophy, and through the term (Pantheism), and this conception of (unity of being) in the theory of Ibn 'Arabi was adopted by both Nicholson and Asin Palacios. (7)

In fact, Ibn 'Arabi's (Unity of Being) doctrine starts from a clear, sharp dualism that he establishes between the divine self and the world, on the one hand, and between it and humanity, on the other. Henry Corbin also noted this clear distinction between the dualisms in his study of various aspects of Ibn 'Arabi's thought, based on its fundamental premise of studying creative imagination. In contrast to (Unity of Being), Arberry believes that Ibn 'Arabi's thought is a monotheistic doctrine, not a pantheistic one. (8)

Abu al-Ala al-Afifi understood Ibn 'Arabi's (Unity of Being) doctrine considering the Western concept (Pantheism), following his professor Nicholson in this when he addressed it in his doctoral dissertation under his supervision. This was despite his awareness of the fundamental distinction in Ibn 'Arabi's thought between the divine self and the world. (9)

Many researchers, most notably Ibrahim Bayoumi Madkour in his book (Unity of Being between Ibn 'Arabi and Spinoza) and Mahmoud Qasim in his book (Muhyiddin Ibn 'Arabi and Leibniz), followed Abu al-Ala al-Afifi in his account of Ibn 'Arabi. In their studies, they compared Ibn 'Arabi and Spinoza, and Ibn 'Arabi and Leibniz.

We also find another group that sees no trace of unity of being in Ibn 'Arabi's thought, but rather views his thought as based on the duality between God and the world, and God and man. This latter group proceeded from a well-intentioned defensive position, aiming to exonerate Ibn 'Arabi from the charge of unity of being and bring him into the fold of Islam. Muhammad Ghallab also argued that the texts that indicate unity of being in Ibn 'Arabi's thought were fabricated by the haters and fanatics who were contemporaries of Ibn 'Arabi or those who came after him, driven by narrow-mindedness or biased political tendencies. (10)

The result is that the attackers attacked because of a particular religious position, which considered Ibn 'Arabi outside the framework of religion, an intruder on Islam, and a saboteur of its beliefs. This is what Abu al-Ala al-Afifi argued, pointing to Ibn 'Arabi's failure to reconcile his doctrine with Islam. (11) However, Abu al-Ala al-Afifi records his correct observation regarding Ibn 'Arabi's interpretation of the Qur'an, summarizing that "he was not a extrinsic and intrinsic in his doctrine of worship, but he was a extrinsic in his doctrine of worship with the extrinsic, and an intrinsic in his doctrine with the intrinsics, and he was closer to the intrinsics, because he was a jurist and a Sufi, and his understanding of religion was closer to the Sufis than to the extrinsic jurists."

Abu al-Ala al-Afifi does not see any trace of the Qur'an in his thought, but he believes that he adopted the interpretation of these texts as a hedge for his ideas and a framework within which to weave the threads of his doctrine. He subjected them to a particular method of interpretation and extracted from them whatever he wanted to extract from the meanings contained in his doctrine of (the unity of existence). (12)

We cannot claim that Ibn 'Arabi's thought began from nothing, because we find in his thought many fundamental similarities with numerous intellectual approaches, some of which go back to the origins of Platonism, Aristotelianism, and Neo-Plotinism, some to the Mutazilites and Asha'irah, some to Ismaili Shi'ism, some to Christian or Jewish thought, some to Gnostic Hermetic thought, and some to Hindu thought. Indeed, all these elements are present in Ibn 'Arabi's thought and philosophy. Therefore, we should accept Abu al-Ala al-Afifi's statement, "Ibn 'Arabi has a foothold in every camp". However, there is a

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difference between the presence of these elements in Ibn 'Arabi's thought and his existential project, in terms of its purpose and goal. This is because the intellectual fabric that Ibn 'Arabi presented to us, through which he attempted to overcome the intellectual conflict in which he lived with a tremendous degree of compromise and moderation, is characterized by novelty and originality, primarily by its connection to the interpretation of Quranic verses, thus providing his theory with legitimacy from the Islamic faith.

After these backgrounds, we can say that his thought drew from every philosophical approach, especially from the Plotinian, illuminating theory of emanation, which also influenced Ibn Sina and Suhrawardy.

7. Ibn 'Arabi and Ismaili Esoteric Philosophy

Another source is the connection between Ibn 'Arabi's thought and the thought of Ibn Masarra's school, and his influence on this school's thought, as discovered by Asin Palacios, who studied Ibn 'Arabi's thought to understand Ibn Masarra's thought and school. (13)

The features of Ismaili esoteric philosophy, which advocates a theory of intellects and spheres like that of emanationist philosophy (14), were evident in the founder of the Andalusian esoteric philosophical school, Muhammad b. Abdullah b. Masarra al-Jabali, who was born in Cordoba in 269 AH and died in 319 AH. (15)

Ibn Masarra had followers and students during his lifetime who continued to spread his doctrine after his death (16), the most prominent of whom was Ismail b. Abdullah al-Ra'ini, who lived in the late fourth century AH. (17)

Then Ibn 'Arabi himself (560 AH - 638 AH) used to secretly frequent one of the Andalusian schools that secretly taught the doctrine of modern esotericism, full of symbols and interpretations inherited from Pythagoreanism, Orphism, and Indian nativism. This school was the only one that taught its students hidden principles and symbolic teachings since the time of Ibn Masarra. (18) Ibn 'Arabi himself did not hesitate to claim affiliation with Ibn Masarra, as he says: "We have narrated from Ibn Masarra from Cordoba, one of the greatest people of the path in knowledge, majesty, and revelation." (19)

The esoteric interpretation of Ibn 'Arabi regarding the "bearers of the throne" - all these elements - find their meaning only within Ismaili philosophy and Shi'a doctrine. (20)

Ibn Khaldun was the best who expressed the nature of this esoteric Sufi philosophical movement and its source when he said: "Then these later Sufis who spoke of revelation and the supersensible went too far in this, and many of them went to the point of incarnation and unity, filling the pages with it, such as al-Harawi in his book (Al-Maqāmāt) and others. Ibn 'Arabi, Ibn Sab'īn, and their students followed them in their poems. Their predecessors were associated with the later Ismailis among the Rafidis, who also believed in incarnation and the divinity of the Imams." (21)

Likewise, there are Shiite principles from which Ibn 'Arabi drew the imaginary means for his idea of "divinity". This is due to the complete similarity between them in combining Quranic and philosophical terminology to denote a single thing. Al-Kirmani, for example, makes a complete distinction between the divine essence and the world, and attacks the Mu'tazila, just as Ibn 'Arabi attacked the 'Ashā'ira, because they added affirmative attributes to this essence, likening it to created things. This "divine" essence can only be characterized by negative attributes from every angle. (22)

Al-Karmani makes the first intellect exist secondly from this transcendent, absolute self that is separate from the world through creativity, not through the emanation. This intellect does not exist, but through the creation of Allah the Highest... (23)

This intellect equates (the divinity) according to Ibn 'Arabi, except that this first intellect has an existence according to al-Kirmani. Divinity, according to Ibn 'Arabi, does not have an independent existence in itself; rather, it is merely a relation and a name without any entities.

Then, from this first intellect, by the emanation - according to al-Kirmani - the second intellect, which is the pen, emanates. (24)

The pen also emanates the tablet, which is (the material) "which is expressed" by the tablet that deposited all forms. (25)

Thus, it is noted that the difference between Ibn 'Arabi and the Shiites is only that Ibn 'Arabi made the first intellect the pen, and the universal soul the Preserved Tablet, and he reserves for divinity - which, according to al-Kirmani, is equivalent to the first intellect - (26)

Some researchers have reached this conclusion: "It is possible to discern many of Ibn 'Arabi's origins in Shiite thought, especially the parallel between the spiritual and intermediate levels of the world and the levels of the Gnostics according to Ibn 'Arabi, who are the Shiite preachers have different levels. Despite all of this, Ibn 'Arabi's conception of the imaginary world with its various levels remains his own" (27), but this saying is true that the Orientalists studied Ibn 'Arabi's theory of (unity of being) considering the theory of (unity of being) in Western philosophy known through the term: (Pantheism). (28)

8. Ibn Sab'īn and His Theory of "Absolute Unity"

A. Introduction: Ibn Sab'īn (624 AH-669AH)

He is 'Abd al-Haqq b. Ibrahim b. Muhammad al-Mursi, the Sufi from Andalusia, known as "Ibn Sab'īn." He was a Sufi who adhered to the principles of the philosophers and believed in the unity of being. He wrote extensively on mysticism, and he had writings, followers, and students known as the "Seveners." (29)

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B. Views of Scholars in Ibn Sab‘īn's Theory “Absolute Unity of Being”

Salim al-Khoury included a lengthy biography of Ibn Sab‘īn in the book: (Athar al-Adhar), saying: Ibn Sab‘īn was accused of weak belief, and the opinions differed regarding him. More than one said: People's intentions regarding him are diverse and far from moderation. Some of them are exhausted and disbelievers, while the others are respected and admired imitators. These two extremes have achieved fame, aversion, and criticism that no one else has.

Ibn Khaldun said: "He was a memorizer of the religious and rational sciences, a practitioner and ascetic, according to his own account, following the path of Sufism.

Ibn Khaldun said: He was a memorizer of the religious and rational sciences, and he was a follower and ascetic, according to his claim of the Sufi way, and he spoke of strange doctrines. He holds the view of unity and claims that there is Sufism in the universe in general. He was exhausted in his belief and accused of blasphemy or immorality in his words, and he was publicly denounced.

Ibn Sab‘īn adopted the view of absolute unity and incarnation and delved into it. Like al-Harawi, Ibn ‘Arabi, Ibn al-Afif, Ibn al-Farid, and al-Najm al-Isra‘ili, this view is strange in its rationality and its branches.

Al-Dahabi said: Our Sheikh Ibn Daqiq al-Eid said: I sat with Ibn Sab‘īn from early morning until close to noon, and he was reciting words whose individual details were understood but whose components were not. He also said: “He was famous for saying: Ibn Amina has been extremely rigid in his saying: “There is no prophet after me”. He also said: If Ibn Sab‘īn said this, he went out from Islam, even though these words are lighter and more insignificant than his statement about the Lord of the Worlds: He is the reality of all beings - God is far above that - then he bled his hands and let the blood flow until he died in Mecca in the year 668 AH.

He wrote several messages and the book: "Al-Ihāṭah". It is said that he was knowledgeable in alchemy and chemistry, and it is said some things about him related to the asceticism (i.e., magic). This quote from the book "Al-Taj Al-Mukallal" is ended.

Ibn Hajar said in (Lisan Al-Mizan): He is Abd Al-Haqq bin Ibrahim bin Muhammad bin Sab‘īn bin Nasr bin Fath bin Sab‘īn. He was born in the year 624 AH or the year before that. He was famous for his asceticism and behavior. He had eloquence and brilliance and was an expert in the sciences. He had many followers, and he wrote an article on the Sufism of the Unionists Sufis.

Ibn Abd al-Malik said in the book (Al-Takmilah: The sequel): Ibn Sab‘īn studied Arabic and literature with a group of people, then embraced the path of Sufism, becoming well-known and gaining many followers. He then traveled and performed the Hajj pilgrimage. He called for the saying that he was known for without any education, and he wrote books on this subject that were well-known by his followers, and no one was free from it. They are closer to the whispers of the ascetics. He was of good character and patient with harm.

Safi al-Din al-Armāwi said: I performed the Hajj pilgrimage and met Ibn Sab‘īn, so I discussed wisdom with him. He treated the Emir of Mecca for an injury that had befallen him, and he recovered, and he attained a high status with him.

Ibn Taymiyyah narrated that Ibn Sab‘īn used to say: "The Sufism of Ibn al-Arabi is a foolish philosophy." He said: "If it is as he said, then Ibn Sab‘īn's Sufism is also a foolish philosophy". He died on the ninth of Shawwal in the year 669 AH.

Ibn Taymiyyah said about the Unionist Sufis: “This is why prophethood was acquired for them, so many of them sought to become prophet, as happened to the murdered Suhrawardy and Ibn Sab‘īn”, that is why Ibn Sab‘īn used to say: You have added to a Hadith that says: There is no prophet after an Arab prophet!!”.

These people consider prophethood to be of one kind, and the strength of people lies in knowledge and ability. However, they say that the difference between them is that the prophet's wills are good and the magician's wills are evil. They say: ‘The angel and the devil are strong, but the strength of the angel is a good strength, and the strength of the devil is a corrupt strength!’

As for their extremists, such as Al-Farabi and his likes, who prefer the philosopher to the Prophet, as their likes also prefer, such as Ibn ‘Arabi al-Ṭā‘i, the author of the book (Meccan Conquests), (Fuṣuṣ Al-Ḥikam) and others, then they prefer the saint to the Prophet. He claimed that he takes from the mine from which the angel takes that he inspires to the Prophet, and that the angel, according to the principle, is the state in the soul of the Prophet, and the Prophet, according to his claim, takes from that state, and the state takes from the mind. Then he claimed that he takes from the mind that is in this imagination, so for this reason he said: He takes from the mine from which the angel takes what he inspires to the Prophet. These people shared their original path, but their misguidance and ignorance of the status of the prophets were great, even though the original knowledge of these people regarding the status of prophethood was incomplete and unusual.

9. Ibn Sab‘īn's Theory of “Absolute Unity of Being”

Perhaps the most interesting Sufis are those who dared to challenge the status quo and ventured into areas of thought considered by some to be uncharted by extremists, despite the harsh criticisms of scholars like Ibn Taymiyyah, who considered them heretics for their unconventional and dangerous views, in his view. By delving into the lives and works of these figures, we can gain a deeper understanding of the diversity of Sufi thought, and the profound impact had on the Islamic world. (30)

Two Different Theories: “Unity of Being” And “Absolute Unity of Being” (In Light of the Studies of Ibn ‘Arabi And Ibn Sab‘īn)

In the heart of medieval Andalusia, amidst the vibrant fabric of culture and knowledge, lived a controversial scholar named Ibn Sab‘īn. His mind was a maze of profound thoughts, grappling with the mysteries of existence, seeking to unravel the complex threads of reality.

In the heart of medieval Andalusia, amidst the vibrant fabric of culture and knowledge, lived a controversial scholar named Ibn Sab‘īn. His mind was a maze of deep thoughts, wrestling with the mysteries of existence, seeking to unravel the complex threads of reality.

Ibn Sab‘īn was born into a family steeped in intellectual pursuits, and his thirst for knowledge was insatiable. He devoured the texts of philosophy, theology and the spiritual arts. He always longed for something deeper, for a truth that transcended the confines of mere thought.

Ibn Sab‘īn was drawn to Sufi teachings, particularly those teachings that he heard from Ibn ‘Arabi. Through meditation and the cultivation of inner stillness, he sought to achieve the Sufi state of annihilation, meaning the union with God without the need for an intermediary.

As Ibn Sab‘īn delved deeper into the Sufi world, he began to formulate his unique perspective on the nature of reality. His ideas were often bold, challenging conventional understandings of the essence of life, the universe and God. Ibn Sab‘īn spoke of the absolute unity of being, the idea that all existence is ultimately one, a seamless fabric woven from divine essence.

Ibn Sab‘īn's unusual ideas did not go unnoticed. His contemporaries, both within and outside Sufi circles, were often puzzled and sometimes even alarmed by his bold statements. Some hailed him as a visionary and a pioneer in the world of Sufi thought, while others condemned him as a heretic and a threat to the foundations of the faith itself.

10. Differences between the theory of “Unity of being” and “Absolute Unity of Being”

When we look at the theory of absolute unity of existence, we see it as a single, coherent unit that does not move, but it contains very small particles. Imagine a group of dancers locked in a single, endless dance. This is largely what happens to particles in a solid substance like a rock. (31)

"You might see a rock as a single entity, but it would be difficult for you to imagine that within it lies a world of a large number of particles moving in a coordinated manner to form the fixed shape of the rock".

For Ibn Sab‘īn, the rock is an example of the existence of the one God. Ibn Sab‘īn also believes that God or His spirit is only one thing that is indivisible, and that what we see of human existence as multiple, complex, and ever-changing is nothing but a mere illusion, because we are inside the rock, that is, inside the existence of the one God. (32)

As we see, in his famous book, "Bud al-'Arif," Ibn Sab‘īn enthusiastically declares his belief in this profound unity, where only God exists. While Ibn ‘Arabi believed that the world is relatively real and that it reflects God's essence, attributes, and countless names, Ibn Sab‘īn adopted a more radical view, denying the existence of the world as a self-contained entity at all. Rather, he considered it a mirage that the human mind imagines its existence. Ibn ‘Arabi called for contemplating the world around us to know God, while Ibn Sab‘īn saw no reason for this, as there is no world outside of us, so it is sufficient for us to contemplate our inner selves in silence, to realize the absolute truth of existence, that there is no existence except for God alone.

His writings echo the maxim “God only”, asserting that everything, from individual selves to the world, is nothing but nonexistent illusions. In his view about the world, God alone is the undeniable truth. This perspective also calls for transcending all forms of multiplicity, even many names of divine attributes. Instead, Ibn Sab‘īn focuses intensely on the divine essence, seeing it as the essence of all reality. Instead, Ibn Sab‘īn focuses intensely on the divine essence, viewing it as the essence of every reality and there is no reality other than it. (33)

CONCLUSION

Indeed, Orientalists trace everything back to its origin, and this is their approach. Undoubtedly, we find the roots of the elements upon which Ibn ‘Arabi based his theory of "unity of being" taken from Western philosophy. Let us not forget that when they study Ibn ‘Arabi's "unity of being," they study it in terms known to them as "unity of being" from the beginning. This is to demonstrate the extent of the influence of Western philosophy on his thoughts, and this is a natural thing. This approach is followed by Nicholson, Asin Palacios, and Goldziher in their studies of Ibn ‘Arabi. The goal of their studies was not to exclude Sufism in general, and Ibn ‘Arabi in particular, from the fold of Islam or to bring him into its fold. Rather, the primary goal was to demonstrate the extent of the influence of Western philosophy on Islamic philosophy, and this Western influence on his thought is undeniable.

As for Ibn Sab‘īn, everything he left us of his writings is a testament to the power of independent thought and the audacity to question established teachings. Although his ideas, often controversial, continue to inspire and challenge seekers of truth, reminding us that the path to enlightenment is often paved with paradox and a desire to embrace the unknown.

So, Ibn Sab‘īn was not deterred by the controversy surrounding his ideas, and continued to pursue his intellectual pursuits, writing treatises exploring the depths of his Sufi vision. His poetic beauty and intellectual precision resonated with those who dared to challenge prevailing norms and seek a deeper understanding of the universe.

Two Different Theories: "Unity of Being" And "Absolute Unity of Being" (In Light of the Studies of Ibn 'Arabi And Ibn Sab'īn)

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