

mittleren Verspaar (Vsse 5-6), dem *gurīzgāh*, zur Präsentation und Namensnennung des Belobigten an, und zwar in einer an Rūdakī erinnernden wortartlichen und syntaktischen Buntheit der Reimglieder:

*tu ay mubārīz \* ba-justan-ī 'izz*  
*bi-dān ki hargīz \* ba-faẓl u gavhar*  
*dar īn havālī \* na-khāst 'ālī*  
*chu Bū-l ma'ālī \* jihān-i mafkhar*

Du grosser Kämpfer \* voll Drang nach Ehre,  
 wisse dass niemals \* an Wert und Wesen  
 in solchen Zeiten \* ein Hoher auftrat  
 wie Bū-l ma'ālī, \* die Welt des Ruhmes!

Das hieran unmittelbar anschliessende dritte Verspaar (Vsse 7-8) sorgt dann wieder für rhetorisierende Zucht und Ordnung mit einer beliebten Methode, die darin besteht, dass ein paar spezifische Qualitäten oder Tätigkeiten des Belobigten in formal parallel strukturierten Halbversen, in unserem Fall Viertelversen, aufgezählt werden. Dergleichen schreit dann geradezu nach Reim der betreffenden Glieder:

*'adū gudāzād \* walī navāzād*  
*sukhan tīrāzād \* chu durr u shakkar*  
*bihī panāhad \* niyāz kāhad*  
*ba-'udhr kh'āhad \* ki bakhshadat zar*

Er schmilzt den Feind weg, \* hätschelt den Freund,  
 macht schmuck die Rede \* wie Perlen und Zucker.  
 Er schützt die Güte \* und mindert die Not,  
 erbittet Nachsicht, \* wenn er dir Gold schenkt.

Es folgen noch zwei abschliessende single-Verse, in deren erstem die vorausgegangenen Parallelismen wenigstens auf Halbversebene noch nachwirken, während sich im Schlussvers alles in einem Treuebekenntnis zum Belobigten normalisiert.

VI.8. Der steinige, manchmal auch dornige oder überwachsene Pfad des BQP-Metrums hat uns schliesslich zu Rūdakīs goldenem Eingang in den Zaubergarten manieristischer Dichtung geführt, aus dem ich mir in Form von Mukhtārīs Lobqaside eine kleine Blume zu pflücken erlaubte, wohl wissend, dass eine fruchtbare Betreuung dieser Gartenpracht den kundigen Händen unseres hochverdienten Jubilars am besten ansteht. Aber gelegentlich wetzt sich ein Sperling den Schnabel auch da, wo man gewöhnt ist, dem Gesang der Nachtigall zu lauschen.

*IBLĪS*  
*IBLĪS AND THE JINN*  
*IN AL-FUTŪHĀT AL-MAKKIYYA*

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- I. *Spirits and Angels*  
 II. *The Jinn*  
 III. *Shape Shifting*  
 IV. *Suggestions of Angel and Satan*  
 (*Satan's Cosmological Dimension*)  
 V. *Iblis*  
 VI. *Waḥdat al-Wujūd Revisited*

A few years back Professor Heinrichs was teaching a course on Iblis in Arabic literature. During that semester, we happened to meet on several occasions and he recounted a number of interesting texts. I recall that he asked me if I knew of any good material from Ibn 'Arabī. I believe I responded that nothing stuck in my mind, though I had many references in my notes. The invitation to contribute to his Festschrift seemed like a good opportunity to give some order to those notes.

Although Iblis or *al-shayṭān*, "the Satan," is one of the jinn, not a fallen angel like Lucifer, the distinction between angel and jinn is not especially clear. In Christianity, once Lucifer fell, he became a demon, devil, or evil spirit. When Iblis fell he became the first satan—a word the Qur'ān sometimes uses in the plural. Not all the jinn became satans, however. "The 'satans' among the jinn are specifically the wretched (*shaqī*), those driven far from God's mercy, and the name 'jinn' remains for the felicitous (*sa'īd*)."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Ibn 'Arabī (1911), *al-Futūḥāt al-makkiyya*, 4 vols., Cairo, II: 466, line 30. Those passages also found in 'Uthmān Yahyā's partial edition of the *Futūḥāt* (1972-92), 14 vols., Cairo: al-Hay'a al-Miṣriyya al-'Āmma li-l-Kitāb, are indicated hereafter as "Yahyā."



Iblis might be called an evil spirit, but the believing jinn are not evil, nor are they angels. Rather, they are good spirits, but the sense in which they are "spirits" needs to be clarified. And we cannot say that "satans" are simply the evil jinn, because the Qur'an uses the expression *shayāṭīn al-jinn wa-l-ins*, "the satans of jinn and mankind" (Q. 6:112). So the satans are not only evil jinn but also evil people, just as believers are not only good people but also good jinn. Ibn 'Arabī makes these points as follows:

God created the jinn both wretched and felicitous, and so also mankind, but He created angels felicitous without any portion of wretchedness. The wretched jinn or human being is named an "unbeliever," and the felicitous jinn or human being is called a "believer." God also made mankind and jinn share in satanicy. He said, "the satans of jinn and mankind."<sup>2</sup>

To understand the distinction that Ibn 'Arabī draws between angels and jinn, we need to examine how he fits them into the structure of the "cosmos" (*al-ālam*, defined as "everything other than God," *mā siwā llāh*). The nearest thing to a cosmological scheme that he provides is found in chapter 198 of the *Futūḥāt* on the Breath of the All-merciful, one of the longest chapters of the book. There he describes the cosmos as the articulation of twenty-eight divine letters arranged phonetically. The first is *hamza*, the First Intellect, and the final two are *mīm*, man (*al-insān*), and *wāw*, the levels, stations, and waystations (*al-marātib wa-l-maqāmāt wa-l-manāzil*). By this last he means the differentiation of human beings into a vast range of types and individuals according to their degree of achieving the perfections of the human state. In this scheme angels and jinn are respectively the twenty-fifth and twenty-sixth letters of the alphabet.<sup>3</sup>

This depiction of the universe is a version of the notion of *al-mabda' wa-l-ma'ād*, "the origin and the return," much discussed in philosophy. In Sufism the same topic is commonly dealt with in terms of the "two arcs" (*qawsān*) of the circle of existence, an expression derived from the Qur'an's account of the Prophet's *mī'rāj*

<sup>2</sup> *Futūḥāt* III: 367.34.

<sup>3</sup> For the overall scheme, see William C. Chittick (1998), *The Self-Disclosure of God: Principles of Ibn al-'Arabī's Cosmology*, Albany: State University of New York Press, xxviii-xxxii and Titus Burckhardt (1977), *Mystical Astrology According to Ibn 'Arabī*, Gloucestershire: Beshara Publications.

(Q. 53:9).<sup>4</sup> The descending arc traces of the emergence of all creatures from God, and the ascending arc maps out the stages of their return. In Ibn 'Arabī's twenty-eight letter scheme, the descending arc includes the first twenty-one letters, from the First Intellect down to the four elements. As we will see shortly, Satan's role is prefigured in the eighth level of manifestation, the Footstool, where the pure mercy of the previous level, the Throne, branches into two sorts of mercy, one of which is mixed with wrath. Without the repercussions of divine wrath in the cosmos, there can be no distinction between good and evil, no revealed laws, and no place for Iblis to act out his role as enemy to the prophets.

The ascending arc includes minerals, plants, animals, jinn, angels, and human beings, and it reaches its culmination with those human beings who achieve perfection. By placing angels and jinn right before humans, Ibn 'Arabī is indicating that each designates a major category of creatures, like plants or animals, and that both play important roles in bringing about the full actualization of "the Intended Entity" (*al-'ayn al-maqṣūda*), which is perfect man (*al-insān al-kāmil*). This generic term designates those human beings who achieve the divine purpose in creating the cosmos, a purpose announced in the famous hadith of the Hidden Treasure—for God to be known. Angels, however, in contrast to the jinn, also play an important role in the descending arc, given that the arc's differentiation depends on their intermediacy between God and the creation. The first two stages of cosmogenesis are the First Intellect (the Highest Pen) and the Universal Soul (the Guarded Tablet), both of which are angels.<sup>5</sup>

### I. Spirits and Angels

The Qur'an divides the cosmos into two realms, unseen and visible, or heaven and earth, and these are frequently glossed as the world of spirits and the world of bodies. Ibn 'Arabī and many others, however, were not inclined to take this as a stark dualism. They typically added an intermediate realm, to which they saw reference in the Qur'anic expression, "what is between the two," that is, between heaven and earth. They called this realm the *barzakh* or isthmus. For

<sup>4</sup> On the two arcs in Ibn 'Arabī, see Chittick 1998, 233ff.

<sup>5</sup> *Futūḥāt* I: 148.13; *Yahyā*, II: 349.



Ibn 'Arabī, it is the *mundus imaginalis* (*ālam al-khayāl*), the world of imagination that is neither spiritual nor bodily but partakes of the qualities of both sides.

Angels and jinn pertain to the realm of unseen things, though both have the ability to appear in the sensory world through imaginalization (*tamaththul*). Both are spirits, but Ibn 'Arabī differentiates between them by calling angels "luminous spirits" (*al-arwāḥ al-nūriyya*) and jinn "fiery spirits" (*al-arwāḥ al-nāriyya*). As for satans, he sometimes contrasts them with angels by speaking of pure, angelic spirits (*al-arwāḥ al-tāhira al-malakiyya*) and impure, satanic spirits (*al-arwāḥ ghayr al-tāhira al-shaytāniyya*).<sup>6</sup>

The fact that angels are luminous and jinn fiery is supported by Qur'ānic verses and a well-known hadith: "God created the angels from light, God created the jinn from fire, and He created man from what you have been told." The light from which angels were created is "natural," says Ibn 'Arabī, though this certainly does not mean physical. In his vocabulary, nature (*ṭabī'a*) has two basic senses. It refers either to the Breath of the All-merciful itself, within which the divine words become imprinted (*ṭab*), or to everything below the Universal Soul, whether spiritual, imaginal, or corporeal.<sup>7</sup>

Ibn al-'Arabī uses the words *malak* and *rūḥ*, angel and spirit, interchangeably. He points out that when a distinction is drawn between the two, it is done because the word *malak* derives from a root meaning "message," so this specific quality is being taken into account.<sup>8</sup> Spirits that carry messages are angels, and those that have other functions should not properly be called by this name. He classifies angels/spirits into three sorts: enraptured (*muhayyam*), governing (*mudabbir*), and subjected (*musakhkhar*), but he adds that only the third sort are angels in the strict sense.<sup>9</sup>

The enraptured angels are so totally engrossed in the contemplation of God that they have no awareness of themselves. The First Intellect was originally one of them, but God turned its attention away from himself and employed it to create the universe. The governing spirits are put in charge of all bodies in the cosmos, whether these be

<sup>6</sup> *Futūḥāt* III: 390.33. For the whole passage, see Chittick 1998, 366-8.

<sup>7</sup> On his use of the word, see Chittick (1989), *The Sufi Path of Knowledge*, Albany: State University of New York, 139-43.

<sup>8</sup> *Futūḥāt* II: 255.22, 254.8, 254.12; *Yahyā* XIV: 567, 556-7.

<sup>9</sup> *Futūḥāt* II: 250.2 (*Yahyā* XIV: 527); III: 38.2, 209.10.

luminous, fiery, or elemental. They are the spirits of all "living things" (*ḥayawānāt*), a word which means, in the view of "the folk of unveiling" (*ahl al-kashf*; Ibn 'Arabī's term for those who achieve visionary knowledge), every natural and elemental body. The subjected spirits are the angels properly so called, because they alone act as messengers. Unlike governing spirits, they are not limited to a single body. They have been entrusted with specific affairs in the cosmos, for God wanted to give them "leadership" (*imāma*) over all things. Highest among them is the First Intellect. Among their functions are revelation, inspiration, provision, taking spirits, giving life to the dead, asking forgiveness for believers, and cultivating the plots of the Garden.

## II. The Jinn

Ibn 'Arabī is well aware that there is much confusion about the difference between angels and jinn. The Qur'ān does not always distinguish between the two, because it uses both terms in broad and narrow senses. Sometimes it uses angel in the literal sense of "messenger" and includes the jinn, and sometimes it uses jinn in the literal sense of "concealed" and includes the angels.

God made angels and satans share in being curtailed (*istitār*), so He named both of them "jinn." He says concerning the satans, "[I take refuge ...] from the evil of the slinking whisperer, whether jinn or man, who whispers in the breasts of men" (Q. 114:1-6). Here by "jinn" he means the satans. He says concerning the angels, "They have set up a kinship between Him and the jinn," i.e., the angels, "and the jinn know that they shall be arraigned" (Q. 37:158).

The angels are messengers (*rusul*, s. *rasūl*) from God to man, given charge of man, guardians, and writers of our acts. The satans are given authority over man by God's command, so they [also] are envoys (*mursalūn*, s. *mursal*) to us from God... . Since God made Iblis share messengerhood (*risāla*) with the angels, He included him with the angels in the command to prostration.<sup>10</sup>

Ibn al-'Arabī devotes the ninth chapter of the *Futūḥāt* to the "true knowledge of the existence of the flaming, fiery spirits." As usual, the chapter begins with a Qur'ānic verse, in this case Q. 55:15: "He created the jinn from a flame of fire." He explains that after God had

<sup>10</sup> *Futūḥāt* III: 367.18.



created the four elements, smoke (*dukhān*) rose up to the inside surface of the sphere of the fixed stars, and inside the smoke, God unstitched (*fataqa*) the seven heavens. To each heaven he revealed a command (Q. 41:12), and then he brought about the marriage of heaven and earth. Heaven "cast" (*alqā*) into earth something of the commands that God had revealed to it, "just as the man casts water into the woman in intercourse," and the result was the birth of the progeny (*muwalladāt*)—minerals, plants, and animals. To create the jinn, God heated air to produce a "flame" (*mārij*). The first dictionary meaning of this word is "mixture," and Ibn 'Arabī says flame is called by this name because it is fire mixed with air.

The jinn were created of two elements, air and fire, and Adam was created from the other two, dust (*turāb*) and water. Ibn 'Arabī does remind us, however, that elemental creatures are by definition created from all four elements, so the issue is rather the predominance of one or more elements over the others. In Adam's case, water and dust were called "clay," and in the jinn's case air and fire were called "flame." Air gives jinn the ability to take any shape (*tashakkul*), and fire makes them insubstantial (*sakhīf*) and subtle (*latīf*). Fire also drives them to subjugate (*qahr*) others, claim to be great (*istikbār*), and consider themselves exalted (*izza*). Iblis refused to prostrate himself before Adam precisely because of fire's exalted place among the elements. He did not understand that clay is more excellent than fire, because water extinguishes fire and dust is more fixed than fire. Fire bestows arrogance (*takabbur*), and clay humility (*tawādu'*).

In support of water's superiority, Ibn 'Arabī comments on a hadith that tells us that God created water stronger than fire, air stronger than water, and the children of Adam stronger than air. Fire's weakness explains why "Satan's guile is ever feeble" (Q. 4:76). The strength of clay allows man to achieve unhurriedness, deliberation, reflection, and circumspection. "He has ample intellect, because dust hinders and restrains him, and water softens and smoothes him." When Iblis said about Adam, "I am better than he" (Q. 7:12), he combined ignorance and ill manners because of the lightness of his intellect.<sup>11</sup>

The importance of air in the jinn's make-up is suggested by Ibn 'Arabī's statement here that "Angels are spirits blown (*manfūkh*) into lights, jinn are spirits blown into winds (*riyāh*), and mankind are spir-

<sup>11</sup> *Futūḥāt* I: 133.33; *Yahyā* II: 287.

its blown into apparitions (*shabah*)."<sup>12</sup> That the in-blown spirit (*rūḥ*) has qualities associated with air and wind (*rīḥ*) is shown, of course, by its very name, as in the case of *spiritus*. When God blows the spirit into wind and fire, which are already characterized by constant agitation (*iḍṭirāb*), the agitation increases. This provides another key to the constantly shifting and changing shapes that characterize the jinn.

When the jinn engage in sexual intercourse, this takes the form of twisting (*iltiwā'*), "like the smoke you see coming from a furnace or a potter's kiln. Each of them interpenetrates the other, and both derive pleasure from the interpenetration."<sup>13</sup> Procreation takes place through "casting air" (*ilqā' al-hawā'*), just as in the human case it takes place through casting water.<sup>14</sup> "What they cast is like the pollen of the palm tree, which emerges with the slightest breeze."<sup>15</sup>

The food of the jinn is the aroma of grease from bones. Ibn 'Arabī cites two hadiths to this effect and the words of one of the folk of unveiling, who reported to him that he saw some of the jinn coming to bones and sniffing them, like wild animals. Then they went away, having taken their provision.<sup>16</sup> The fact that the jinn take nourishment is alluded to in the story of Solomon (Q. 21:8), and this helps differentiate them from angels, who do not take food, as we know from the story of Abraham and his guests (Q. 11:70).<sup>17</sup>

The first jinn, Ibn 'Arabī recounts, was created 60,000 years before Adam. According to one report, it had the sexual organs of both male and female; in order to reproduce, one part of it copulated with another part, and children were born as either male or female. Some people say that reproduction among jinn comes to an end after 4,000 years and among mankind after 6,000 years, but in fact this has not yet happened and reproduction continues in both races. No one has any verified knowledge as to how many years ago Adam was created, nor as to how many years remain until the end of this world. People who claim to know such things "are a little gang whose words are of no account."<sup>18</sup>

<sup>12</sup> *Futūḥāt* I: 132.20; *Yahyā* II: 281.

<sup>13</sup> *Futūḥāt* I: 132.31; *Yahyā* II: 283.

<sup>14</sup> *Futūḥāt* I: 132.14; *Yahyā* II: 280.

<sup>15</sup> *Futūḥāt* I: 132.33; *Yahyā* II: 283.

<sup>16</sup> *Futūḥāt* I: 132.30; *Yahyā* II: 282.

<sup>17</sup> *Futūḥāt* I: 133.13; *Yahyā* II: 284.

<sup>18</sup> *Futūḥāt* I: 132.20; *Yahyā* II: 281.



As for Iblis, Ibn 'Arabī rejects the common idea that he was the first of the jinn. Rather, he was like Cain among humans, the first sinner.<sup>19</sup> All the jinn continued to worship God until the creation of Adam. Then one of them, called al-Ḥārith, was overcome by hatred for him, and it is he who came to be known as Iblis.<sup>20</sup>

The jinn have many tribes and families, though it is said that originally there were twelve tribes, which then became subdivided. Tremendous wars take place among them, and some, but not all, storms and whirlwinds are the result of their wars. There is the "well-known and often retold" story about 'Amr al-Jinnī, who appeared after having been mortally wounded in a storm that had been a battle among the jinn. Ibn 'Arabī does not go into details, however, and he tells us why: "Were this work based on the telling of reports and stories, we would mention a few, but this book is only the science of meanings (*ilm al-ma'ānī*), so you can look for stories about the jinn in the chronicles of literature and poetry."<sup>21</sup>

When Ibn 'Arabī does tell stories about the jinn, he typically has a clear teaching in mind. In a later chapter, for example, he tells an anecdote in order properly to cite a hadith that is *gharīb* or unattested by any other line of transmission. The context concerns a point he often makes: The believing jinn were better than people at listening to the Qur'ān when the Prophet recited it.<sup>22</sup>

I have recounted a *gharīb* hadith from one of the community of the jinn. It was narrated to me by the blind man, Ibrāhīm b. Sulaymān in my home in Aleppo. He was from Dayr al-Rummān, one of the districts of Khābūr. He had it from a trustworthy man, a woodcutter, who had killed a serpent. He was then abducted by the jinn, who brought him before a very old shaykh, the leader of the people. They said, "This man has killed our uncle's son."

The woodcutter replied, "I do not know what you are saying. I am a woodcutter, and a serpent interfered with me, so I killed it."

The group said, "That was our uncle's son."

Then the shaykh—God be pleased with him—said, "Let the man go and take him back to his place. You can do nothing against him, for I heard the Messenger of God say, while he was speaking to us, 'He

<sup>19</sup> *Futūḥāt* I: 134.13; *Yahyā* II: 289.

<sup>20</sup> *Futūḥāt* I: 133.25; *Yahyā* II: 286.

<sup>21</sup> *Futūḥāt* I: 133.3; *Yahyā* II: 283.

<sup>22</sup> See, for example, *Futūḥāt* II: 467.9, III: 3.20, 48.24.

who assumes a form other than his own form and is slain had no intellect, and there is no retaliation.' The son of your uncle assumed the form of a serpent, which is one of the enemies of human beings."

The woodcutter said, "I said to him, 'Sir, I see you saying that you heard the Messenger of God. Did you meet him?' He said, 'Yes. I was one of the jinn of Naṣībīn who went before the Messenger of God. So we heard from him. But I am the only one of that group left. I judge among my companions according to what I heard from the Messenger of God.'"

But the narrator did not mention the name of this great man [*rajul*, i.e., the shaykh] of the jinn, nor did I ask it from him.<sup>23</sup>

### III. Shape Shifting

In chapter 198 on the Breath of the All-merciful, Ibn 'Arabī associates each of the twenty-eight cosmic levels with a divine name. Angels manifest the properties of the Strong (*qawī*), and jinn those of the Subtle (*latīf*). As a divine name, *latīf* is usually understood to mean Gentle or Kind and is taken as the complement of *qahhār*, the Severe or Subjugating. In the cosmological sense that Ibn 'Arabī has in mind here, *latīf* is opposed to *kathīf*, dense or solid. The elements are ranked in degrees of increasing subtlety in the order dust, water, air, and fire. The unseen worlds are subtle in relation to the visible realms. The jinn are subtle compared to creatures of clay, but dense relative to angels. Their intermediacy means that they pertain to the *barzakh* or isthmus.

They are a creation between angels and man. They are elemental, which is why [Iblis] showed arrogance; had he been purely natural, without any property of the elements, he would not have shown arrogance and would have been like the angels. Their configuration is *barzakhī*: It has a face turned toward the luminous spirits through fire's subtlety, and thereby they possess the veil (*ḥijāb*) and the assumption of shapes; and it has a face turned toward us, through which they are elemental and a flame. The name Subtle gives the jinn the ability to flow in the children of Adam like blood without their being aware of this.<sup>24</sup>

<sup>23</sup> *Futūḥāt* III: 49.3.

<sup>24</sup> *Futūḥāt* II: 466.31.



Because of their subtlety the jinn can take on any sensory form they desire.<sup>25</sup> This form is called *jasad*, “tangible body,” as opposed to *jism*, the ordinary, corporeal body possessed by creatures of the visible world (cf. Q. 38:34, where the jinn appears as a *jasad*). “The name Subtle makes the jinn heirs to being curtained from the eyes of people, so eyes do not perceive them unless they become tangibly embodied (*tajassud*).”<sup>26</sup>

The jinn can be seen only if they choose to be seen, “unless God desires to bestow unveiling upon one of His servants, who then sees them.”<sup>27</sup>

When God desires a person to see them even though the jinn do not desire it, He lifts up the veil from the eye of him whom He wants to perceive them, and he perceives them. God may command angels or jinn to become manifest to us. Then they become tangibly embodied for us and we see them. Or, God unveils the covering from us, and we see them with the vision of the eye. We may see them as tangible bodies in forms, or we may see them not in human form, but rather in their own forms in themselves, just as each of them perceives himself in the form that he possesses.<sup>28</sup>

In chapter 51, “On the Knowledge of Certain Men among the Folk of Abstention (*wara'*) who have Realized the Waystation of the Breath of the All-merciful,” Ibn 'Arabī mentions some of the dangers posed by the jinn for travelers on the path to God. The chapter describes various sorts of ascetics or renouncers (*zuhhād*, s. *zāhid*). The lowest ranking group of these ascetics sit with the jinn to their own detriment:

Some of them become sitting-companions (*julasā'*) of the spirituals (*rūhānī*) from among the jinn, but these are the lowest of this group in level—if this should be their only state. The reason for this is that the jinn are very near to mankind in meddling (*fuḍūl*). The clever person flees from the jinn just as he flees from people, since sitting with them is extremely vile; few people gain any good from it. This is because their root is from fire, and fire has a great deal of movement. Anyone with a great deal of movement is quick to meddle in everything. Hence as sitting-companions they are a more severe trial than people, for they may come together with people to unveil shameful things of which it behooves the intelligent person not to gain cognizance.

<sup>25</sup> *Futūḥāt* I: 132.8; *Yahyā* II: 278.

<sup>26</sup> *Futūḥāt* II: 467.4.

<sup>27</sup> *Futūḥāt* I: 132.9; *Yahyā* II: 278.

<sup>28</sup> *Futūḥāt* III: 367.27.

Moreover, if someone sits with people, this will leave no trace of arrogance in him, in contrast to sitting with the jinn. By nature they leave in their sitting-companion the trace of displaying arrogance over people and every servant of God. If any servant of God arrogantly sees himself superior to others, God has hated (*maqata*) him in Himself while he is unaware. ... He imagines that he has gained, but he has lost.

Know also that the jinn are the most ignorant of the natural world about God. They report to their sitting-companion about the occurrence of events and what transpires in the cosmos, and they acquire this by eavesdropping on the Higher Plenum (cf. Q. 15:18). Then he [sc. the *zāhid*] imagines things, and he supposes that God is honoring him, but he should beware of what he supposes! This is why you will never see any sitting-companion of the jinn who has gained any knowledge of God whatsoever. The furthest limit of the man to whom the spirits of the jinn show their concern is that they grant him knowledge of the characteristics of plants, stones, names, and letters. This is the science of *sīmiyā'*.<sup>29</sup> Hence he will not acquire from them anything but knowledge blamed by the tongues of the religions (*al-sharā'i'*). So if someone claims to be their companion—and if he speaks the truth in his claim—ask him a question in the divine science (*al-ilm al-ilāhī*). You will find that he has no taste (*dhawq*) of that whatsoever.

The Men of God flee the companionship of jinn more than that of people, for [the jinn's] companionship cannot but bring about in the soul of him who is their companion an arrogance by nature (*bi-l-ṭab'*) toward others<sup>30</sup> and a disdain for anyone who has no share in their companionship.

I saw a group who really were their companions and who made manifest demonstrations of the soundness of the companionship that they claimed. They were all folk of diligence, effort, and worship, but on

<sup>29</sup> *Sīmiyā'* (Gk. *semeia*), one of the occult sciences, is exemplified by the activity of the sorcerers in the time of Moses (*Futūḥāt* III: 288.9; Chittick 1998, 356).

<sup>30</sup> In other words, the individual nature of the person is changed by his consorting with the jinn. This can happen because the soul (*nafs*) is the least fixed and most prone to change of the three main components that make up the human individual (the other two are the body (*jism*) and the divine spirit blown into it (*al-rūḥ al-manfukh fīh*)). The discussion of how the soul changes often falls under the rubric of *khuluq* (character—and note the close connection of this word with *khalq*, creation; and *khilqa*, created nature). *Akhlāq*, the plural of *khuluq*, is typically translated as ethics. In both philosophy and Sufism, the process of moral and spiritual training aims to reshape the soul by eliminating blameworthy character traits (*akhlāq maḥmūda*) and replacing them with praiseworthy ones (*akhlāq maḥmūda*). Ibn 'Arabī is saying here that associating with the jinn changes character traits for the worse.



their own they had not the slightest whiff of knowledge of God. I saw in them exaltation and arrogance. I did not leave them until I came between them and their companionship with the jinn, for they were just and sought the best. But I have also seen others who were not like that.

So, he who speaks the truth in claiming to have this attribute has not prospered, nor will he prosper. As for him who is lying, we do not concern ourselves with him.<sup>31</sup>

In chapter 283, on the “shatterers” (*qawāṣim*), Ibn ‘Arabī tells us more about the dangers of consorting with the jinn. At the outset, he says that when he entered this waystation, he saw “the transmutation of sensory forms within corporeal forms, just as spirituals assume shapes in forms.” He goes on to explain various sorts of transformation perceived or created by travelers on the path. One of the several methods that certain shaykhs use for manipulating imagination is precisely what is done by the jinn.<sup>32</sup>

Another way is that the individual makes the air surrounding him take the shape of any form that he wills, while he stays on the inside of this form. Hence perception falls on that airy form that has been shaped in the form in which he desired to become manifest. However, if that form should speak, this occurs only in the tongue recognized by the viewer. He hears the sound and recognizes it, but he sees the form and does not know it. The person who has this state cannot get rid of his own voice.

The jinn’s power over those who recognize them is of the same sort, for they become manifest in whatever form they desire, but the voice is the voice of the jinn. They have no power over anything else. He who does not know this much about the jinn knows nothing.

There are certain people with whose intellects the jinn play games. They make their eyes imagine forms, just as the sorcerers [in the time of Moses] made people imagine that they saw ropes in the form of sliding serpents. Such people reckon that they are seeing jinn, but they are not jinn. The forms that they are made to imagine speak to them, but the forms are not speaking, in contrast to the jinn when they tangi-

<sup>31</sup> *Futūḥāt* I: 273.28; *Yahyā* IV: 232.

<sup>32</sup> Part of what he has in mind in this chapter is the sort of assumption of forms ascribed to Sufi shaykhs like Qaḍīb al-Bān of Mosul, whom Ibn ‘Arabī sometimes mentions in similar contexts. For a long anecdote that he relates from the Persian Sufi poet Awhād al-Dīn Kirmānī about the ability of some shaykhs to assume forms, see chapter 311, translated by Chittick in Ibn al ‘Arabī (2002), *The Meccan Revelations*, New York: Pir Press, 169-80.

bly embody themselves. Those of the gnostics who recognize the voice of each tribe recognize what they see and are never overcome by confusion (*talbīs*) in what they see.

I knew a group of people in Andalusia who used to see the jinn whether or not they assumed shapes. Among them was Fāṭima bt. Ibn al-Muthannā of Cordova,<sup>33</sup> who recognized them without any confusion.

In the city of Fez I saw a group whose eyes the jinn would make imagine to see forms. The forms would address them however they liked so as to enthrall them, though the forms were not the jinn, nor were they the shape of the jinn. Among them was Abū l-‘Abbās al-Zaqqāq in Fez. The whole situation was confused for him. He was made to imagine that jinns’ spirits were addressing him, and he was convinced of that. The reason for this was his ignorance of their voices. When he sat with me and was present in my session, he would be stupefied (*baht*). Then he would describe what he had seen, so I knew that he was being made to imagine things. In this he reached the point of play, companionship, and conversation. Sometimes there would be quarrel and hostility between him and what he witnessed. The jinn would harm him in one way, and he would imagine that the harm had issued from those forms. He was completely overcome by this—God have mercy upon him! Abū l-‘Abbās al-Dahhān and all of our companions used to witness that from him.

He who recognizes the voices will never suffer confusion by a form, but there are few who recognize them. So, people are often deluded as to the truthfulness of what becomes manifest from these forms.<sup>34</sup>

#### IV. *Suggestions of Angel and Satan* (*Satan’s Cosmological Dimension*)

Most people may not need to worry about encountering jinn, but this does not mean that they pose no danger, particularly the satans. In strictly cosmological terms, everyone interacts with angels and satans because they play an essential role in the deployment of the possibilities latent in the twenty-eighth and final letter of the All-merciful Breath, “the levels, stations, and waystations.” Both are present in the unseen realms of the human substance. Satan “runs in the blood of Adam’s children,” as the Prophet put it. Ibn ‘Arabī agrees

<sup>33</sup> One of Ibn ‘Arabī’s important early teachers. See R.W.J. Austin (1971), *Sufis of Andalusia*, London: George Allen & Unwin, 143-6.

<sup>34</sup> *Futūḥāt* II: 621.22.



with the common notion that each person has his own satan and angel, or rather, it seems, several of each. In any case, angels and satans are antagonists inside the human soul. Each offers "suggestions" (*lamma*), which the soul is free to follow or ignore. The term derives from this hadith:

The satan makes a suggestion to the son of Adam and the angel makes a suggestion. The satan's suggestion promises evil and denies truth. The angel's suggestion promises good and affirms truth. When a person finds the latter, he should know that it is from God, so he should praise God. If he finds the former, he should seek refuge in God from the accursed Satan: "Satan promises you poverty and commands you to indecency" (Q. 2:268).

Ibn al-ʿArabī makes a brief reference to the "angels of suggestion" (*malāʾikat al-lammāt*) in chapter 160. This is the third of three chapters dealing with messengerhood (*risāla*), first in a general sense, second as a human role, and third as an angelic role. The discussion is put into the context of cosmology when Ibn ʿArabī says toward the beginning of the first of these three chapters (158), "The station of messengerhood is the Footstool, because from the Footstool the divine Word becomes divided into reports (*khābar*) and rulings (*ḥukm*)."<sup>35</sup> Theologically, he is clarifying the distinction between two sorts of divine command (*amr*), the creative or engendering (*takwīnī*) and the prescriptive (*taklīfī*).

"Our command," says God in the Qurʾān, "is but one, like a glance of the eye" (Q. 54:50). This one command is precisely the divine Word that becomes divided at the Footstool. Ibn ʿArabī calls it *kālimat al-ḥadra*, "the word of the [divine] Presence," and explains that it is the command "Be!" (*kun*). It is addressed to the entire cosmos and becomes manifest as the infinite words articulated in and by the All-merciful Breath.

As the command descends through the First Intellect, the Universal Soul, and the higher levels of the cosmos, it retains its oneness as far as the Throne, the seat of the All-Merciful. Then the All-merciful puts his "two feet" on the Footstool. These are the "foot of firmness" (Q. 10:2), also called the "Foot of the Lord,"<sup>36</sup> and the Foot of the Compeller (*qadam al-jabbār*), a term that derives from a hadith in

<sup>35</sup> *Futūḥāt* II: 257.17; *Yahyā* XIV: 580.

<sup>36</sup> *Futūḥāt* III: 202.32.

which the Prophet says that God will put it in hell to make hell stop saying, "Are there any more?" (Q. 50:30). The Foot of Firmness is pure mercy, but the Foot of the Compeller is mercy mixed with wrath. Appropriately, the word *jabbār* has both wrathful and merciful connotations, given that it has the double sense of compeller and restorer (from the latter sense we have *jābir*, bonesetter).

At the Footstool, the engendering command is supplemented by the prescriptive command, which embraces all the commandments and prohibitions that God addresses to human beings. The prescriptive command can be disobeyed, in contrast to the engendering command. The fact that disobedience comes into play here allows for the appearance of wrath, for wrath has no other object. Mercy, however, takes precedence over wrath, so disobedience also plays the more important role of actualizing the attributes of forgiveness and pardon. Ibn ʿArabī likes to cite the sound hadith, "If you did not sin, God would replace you with a people who did sin, and then He would forgive them."

At first glance, the prescriptive command seems to pertain simply to law and morality, but in fact it is an extension of the engendering command, for it results in the existence of paradise and hell, which have no *raison d'être* outside of free choice and responsibility, attributes that appear only in human beings and jinn. Moral agency actualizes a variety of existential and ontological possibilities demanded by divine attributes such as love, generosity, justice, and compassion. So basic are these attributes to the nature of things—to the real world—that they determine the way in which the cosmos unfolds not only in society and the environment, but also in the unseen realms that are experienced after death.

Ibn ʿArabī summarizes the cosmology of the prescriptive command and the reason why it becomes differentiated into detailed prophetic messages in terms of two sorts of mercy, nondelimited (*muṭlaq*) and delimited (*muqayyad*), also called *raḥmānī* (pertaining to the All-merciful) and *raḥīmī* (pertaining to the Ever-merciful). He commonly cites Q. 7:156 to make the distinction: "My mercy embraces everything," i.e., it is nondelimited in keeping with the engendering command that is addressed to all things, "and I write it for those who are godfearing and pay the alms..." i.e., it is delimited on the basis of the prescriptive command. The nondelimited mercy becomes manifest as the entire cosmos—the Breath of the All-merciful—and the delimited



mercy finds its full actualization in paradise. The delimited mercy has its counterpart in wrath, which becomes manifest cosmologically as hell. For paradise and hell to appear, choice must be offered to those who have free will, and this is precisely the function of prescription, with all its differentiated details.

God let down the two feet from the Throne to the Footstool, and mercy split open like a seed. The attribute of mercy branched into non-delimitation and delimitation. The delimited mercy, which is one foot, became manifest, and the nondelimited mercy became distinguished from it by the manifestation of this other foot. The division of the One Word of the Throne thereby became manifest in this foot as report and ruling, though no division had been manifest in the Throne itself. Ruling became divided into commandment (*amr*) and prohibition (*nahy*). Commandment became divided into necessity (*wujūb*), recommendation (*nadb*), and indifference (*ibāḥa*). Prohibition became divided into precaution (*ḥazar*) and reprehensibility (*karāha*). Report became divided into many kinds, including question, statement, supplication, denial, story, and teaching.<sup>37</sup>

In his brief reference to the angels of suggestion in chapter 160, the third chapter in this series, Ibn 'Arabī explains that their role pertains to the five rulings of the Shariah, and the satans get into the act by offering contrary suggestions. Like mercy and wrath, angels and satans are complementary, even if they appear to be antagonistic. Interestingly, he does not connect the Shari'ite rulings here and in some other relevant passages with prophetic messages, showing that he considers them part of the cosmic order itself. He mentions that people become aware of the suggestions through "passing thoughts" (*khawāṭir*), and he alludes to how one can distinguish between the angelic and the satanic sort.<sup>38</sup>

Passing thoughts are a common topic in Sufi texts. As Ibn 'Arabī indicates in chapter 55, "On the Knowledge of Satanic *Khawāṭir*," the traditional discussion typically addresses how people can distinguish among four basic sorts: Lordly (*rabbānī*), angelic (*malakī*), soulish (*nafsi*), and satanic (*shayṭānī*). Other contexts make clear that he considers the angelic and satanic sort to include the "suggestions" mentioned in the hadith. He connects the angels of suggestions with passing thoughts in chapter 260, whose topic is self-disclosure (*ta-*

<sup>37</sup> *Futūḥāt* II: 676.9.

<sup>38</sup> *Futūḥāt* II: 259.31; *Yahyā* XIV: 598.

*jallī*), which he defines as "the lights of unseen things that are unveiled to hearts."<sup>39</sup> Among the various sorts of lights, some pertain to the "winds" (*riyāḥ*), and it is these that come by way of these angels.

The lights of the winds are elemental lights hidden by the intensity of their manifestation, so eyes are prevented from perceiving them. I have witnessed them only in the Isthmus Presence (*al-ḥadra al-barzakhiyya*), even if God did give me a vision of them in sensory form in the city of Cordova one day, as a divine designation and a prophetic inheritance from Muhammad. These wind lights have an authority and power over all the children of Adam except the Folk of God... .

These are specifically the angels of suggestions and inspiration. In this self-disclosure, the casting is to the souls. From this self-disclosure arise passing thoughts, and all of these pertain to the winds, since the winds pass quickly and do not become fixed. If someone says they are fixed, that is not wind.<sup>40</sup>

Ibn 'Arabī devotes chapter 262 to passing thoughts, which he defines as "that which enters in upon the heart" (*mā yaridu 'alā l-qalb*). He explains that this means everything that comes to mind without self-conscious effort (*ta'ammul*). God sends passing thoughts in keeping with the five rulings of the Shariah, and the angels and satans play a role in how the heart receives them.

Know that God's emissaries (*sufarā'*) to the heart of His servant are named "passing thoughts." They stay no longer in the heart than the time it takes them to pass through it and convey to it that with which they were sent, without taking up residence. God created them in the form of the message (*risāla*) with which they were sent, so each passing thought is itself identical with His message. When the eye of the heart falls upon it, he understands it, and then he either acts in accordance with what has been brought to him, or he does not.

God appointed between Himself and the heart five paths upon which these passing thoughts walk to the heart. God originated these paths when He originated the religions (*al-sharā'ī*). Were it not for the religions, He would not have originated the paths... . He named the first path "necessity" and "obligation" (*fard*), the second "recommendation," the third "precaution," the fourth "reprehensibility," and the fifth "indifference." He created the angel put in charge of the heart so that [the angel] would guard the person by God's command, and He designated for him the paths of necessity and obligation. He placed

<sup>39</sup> *Futūḥāt* II: 485.20.

<sup>40</sup> *Futūḥāt* II: 487.35, 489.8.



counter to the angel a satan to hold him back on his side without God's Shari'ite command; [the satan] acts in envy, because he sees that God is concerned for this human configuration rather than for him and that the human is superior to him; [for the satan] knows that the person will reach felicity if he performs what is rightfully due (*ḥaqq*) in the Shari'ite acts and avoidances.

God also placed the like of these on the paths of both precaution and reprehensibility. On the path of indifference, He placed a satan without an angel counter to it.<sup>41</sup>

### V. Iblis

If we look at the "divine roots" (*al-uṣūl al-ilāhiyya*) of creation, which are the divine names, then the prophets make manifest the name *hādī*, the Guide, and Iblis manifests the properties of the name *mudill*, the Misguider. In the Qur'ān, God is the usual subject of the verb "to misguide," but Satan and not God is described as "misguider" (Q. 28:15). Ibn 'Arabī does not list this word as a divine name in his lengthy chapter 558 on the ninety-nine most beautiful names, perhaps because it is not so beautiful, but he does mention it in chapter 362. There he sets down the principle at work, briefly and clearly: "If you move toward Him, He is the Guide; if away from Him, that is from His name the Misguider."<sup>42</sup>

That God should be both Guide and Misguider follows from *tawḥīd*, which does not allow for any real agency outside the activity of the Real. Ibn 'Arabī cites an anecdote and then a few Qur'ānic verses to make the point:

Iblis asked for a meeting with Muhammad. When permission was given to him, it was said to him, "Speak the truth to him." The angels surrounded him, and he was in the station of meekness and abasement before Muhammad. He said to him, "O Muhammad! Surely God created you for guidance (*hidāya*), and there is nothing of guidance in your hands. He created me for leading astray (*ghawāya*), and there is nothing of leading astray in my hands." Thus he spoke the truth to him, and he acknowledged his truthfulness.

God says, "You do not guide whom you love, but God guides whomsoever He will" (Q. 28:56). He says, "He inspired [the soul] with its lewdness and its godfearing" (Q. 91:8). He says, "All is from God"

<sup>41</sup> *Futūḥāt* II: 564.4.

<sup>42</sup> *Futūḥāt* III: 304.28.

(Q. 4:78). And He says, "There is no crawling thing but that He takes it by the forelock" (Q. 11:56).<sup>43</sup>

As this little dialogue suggests, Ibn 'Arabī holds that Satan accepted *tawḥīd*. On several occasions he insists that the sin of Iblis had nothing to do with *shirk* or associating others with God, such as in the following example:

The most disobedient of creatures is Iblis, but the limit of his ignorance was that he saw himself better than Adam because he was from fire and he believed it to be the most excellent of the elements. The limit of his disobedience was that he was commanded to prostrate himself before Adam, and he claimed to be too great to prostrate himself because of what we mentioned, and he refused, so he disobeyed God's command. Hence God named him an unbeliever, since he combined disobedience and ignorance.<sup>44</sup>

Such passages seem to imply that Ibn 'Arabī wants to offer a defense of Satan in the manner of al-Ḥallāj and others, but he does not go that far. Certainly he acknowledges the necessity of Satan's activity not only for human wretchedness, but also for felicity. He does not, however, defend Satan's motivations. His theological position can again be clarified in terms of the distinction between the two commands and their connection with the two sorts of mercy, nondelimited and delimited, also called the mercy of gratuitous favor (*minna* or *imtinān*) and that of necessity (*wujūb*). The first sort of mercy is none other than *wujūd* (being, existence), which is bestowed on all things by the Breath of the All-merciful and the engendering command. "The abode of mercy is the abode of *wujūd*."<sup>45</sup> This cosmic mercy is nondelimited because it reaches everything without exception. As for the delimited kind, God makes it obligatory on himself through his promises to reward those who do good works, but not others.

That this distinction is the key to Ibn 'Arabī's understanding of Iblis seems to be suggested by the longest anecdote about Iblis in the *Futūḥāt*, an account related from Sahl al-Tustarī, whom Ibn 'Arabī considered one of the greatest Sufi shaykhs. In his introduction to and commentary on the anecdote, Ibn 'Arabī wants to explain that God's nondelimited *wujūd* includes in its nondelimitation the assumption of every delimited form, a point that is basic to his ontol-

<sup>43</sup> *Futūḥāt* II: 89.13; *Yahyā* XII: 413-14.

<sup>44</sup> *Futūḥāt* II: 95.34; *Yahyā* XII: 459-60.

<sup>45</sup> *Futūḥāt* IV: 4.32.



ogy.<sup>46</sup> This means that the (delimited) mercy of necessity is in fact a form taken by the (undelimited) mercy of gratuitous favor, just as the prescriptive command is a form taken by the engendering command. From the human point of view, it may seem that faith and good works necessitate the delimited mercy, but if we are strict in our *tawhīd*, nothing can impose necessity on God except God himself. Hence, as Ibn ‘Arabī writes, “He attracts His munificence (*jūd*) through His munificence,” which is to say that the nondelimited mercy drives the servant to seek out the delimited mercy. Grace always precedes faith.

Know that God has a delimited munificence and a nondelimited munificence, for He has delimited some of His munificence by necessity. He says, “Your Lord has written upon Himself mercy” (Q. 6:54). In other words, He has necessitated and obligated (*fard*) Himself to be merciful toward a specific people whom He describes with specific attributes, which are that, “Whosoever of you does something ugly in ignorance, and then repents and makes well, He is Forgiving, Ever-merciful” (Q. 6:54). This is the munificence delimited by necessity for those who have this attribute. It is a compensation for this specific work.

Repentance and making well, however, derive from the nondelimited munificence. Thus He attracts His munificence through His munificence. So, no one determines His properties except He, and no one delimits Him but He. As for the servant, he is a vanishing accident and an object on display.

Our scholar and leader Sahl b. ‘Abdallāh said, “I encountered Iblis and recognized him, and he knew that I had recognized him. There occurred between us a debate. He spoke to me, and I spoke to him, and the discussion became intense. The quarrel was drawn out until I stopped short and he stopped short. I was heated and he was heated. One of the last things he said to me was this:

‘O Sahl! God says, “My mercy embraces everything” (Q. 7:156), so He made it general. It is not hidden from you that I am a thing, without doubt, for the word *thing* demands encompassment and generality. *Thing* is the most indefinite of the indefinites, so His mercy embraces me.’”

Sahl said, “By God, he silenced me and bewildered me with the subtlety of his argumentation. He won with verses like this. He understood from them what we had not understood. He knew what we did not

<sup>46</sup> For details, see Chittick 1989, 109ff.

know about them and their significance. So I remained bewildered and thinking. I began to recite the verse to myself, and when I came to His words in it, ‘So I shall write it’ etc., I became happy. I imagined that I would win the argument by making manifest to him what would break his back. I said to him, ‘O accursed one! God has delimited it with specific descriptions that remove it from generality, for He says, “I shall write it.”’

Iblis smiled and said, ‘O Sahl! I did not think you were so ignorant. I did not think that you did not know, O Sahl, that here the delimitation is your attribute, not His attribute.’”

Sahl said, “So I returned to myself and I choked on my spittle, and the water caught in my throat. By God, I found no answer, and I did not shut the gate in his face. I knew that he was craving something, but he turned away, and I turned away. By God, I did not know what would come to be after that. For God did not state plainly anything that would eliminate this ambiguity. So, for me the situation stayed with His will in His creation. I do not judge that He gives it a duration that comes to an end or that does not come to an end.”

Know, brother, that I [sc. Ibn ‘Arabī] have gone deeply into the arguments recounted from Iblis, and I have not seen anyone who falls shorter than he in arguments or who is more ignorant than he among the ‘ulamā’. So, when I came to understand this question from him as told by Sahl b. ‘Abdallāh, I was surprised. I came to know that Iblis may have some knowledge in which there is no ignorance, for he is the teacher of Sahl in this question.

As for me, I do not take it except from God, so I do not owe a favor to Iblis in this question or in any other—praise to God. And I hope it will be so for the rest of my life.

This is a question of roots, not branches. Iblis is expecting to reach God’s mercy from gratuitous favor and nondelimited munificence itself, through which He necessitated for Himself what He necessitated and with which He turns toward those who repent and make well. So the property belongs to God, who is High and Great beyond delimitation in the midst of delimitation. So, nothing is necessitated for God other than what He necessitates for Himself.<sup>47</sup>

Human beings, then, play a role in cosmogenesis, because their works “necessitate” God’s recompense. In fact, however, the necessity derives from God’s delimitation of himself, not man’s influence on God. In effect, God creates paradise and hell through human ac-

<sup>47</sup> *Futūhāt* II: 662.7. For two briefer mentions of this meeting in similar contexts, see II: 45.12 (Yahyā 12, 92); III: 466.21.



tivity. "If not for us," says Ibn 'Arabī, "the next world would not become distinct from this world."<sup>48</sup>

Given the repercussions of human activity in worlds that extend indefinitely beyond the visible realm, it is impossible to understand the full implications of human nature without receiving knowledge from God, e.g., through prophecy, which comes in the form of reports and rulings, the latter being the specific realm of the prescriptive command. In order for prophetic guidance to be meaningful, however, there must also be a call to misguidance, or there would be no reason to turn away from God in the first place. This is to say that God's mercy and guidance demand the existence of Iblis. As Ibn 'Arabī puts it, "Were there no prescription, no satan would ever come near a human being to lead him astray, for that would be useless (*abath*), and the Real does nothing useless, for all is His act 'and to Him the whole affair is returned'" (Q. 11:123).<sup>49</sup>

Ibn 'Arabī reminds us that it is prescription itself that brings the satans into existence while advising "courtesy" (*adab*) in dealing with God. Even though everything comes from God, directly or indirectly, people should acknowledge that good (*khayr*), but take evil (*sharr*), if they must, from Iblis.

If the Real makes you blind and deaf and uses you in the grip of evil, it is part of courtesy that you do not take it from the hand of the Real. Take it from the hand of the one named "Satan," for evil comes to you on his hand. Were this postman (*barīd*) to disappear, the property of evil would not occur in existence. And, the only thing that made evil itself manifest from this Satan is prescription.<sup>50</sup>

The cosmic role of Iblis allows us to recognize that Adam, Eve, and Satan did not fall (*hubūt*) from the Garden for the same reasons. Adam and Eve were not being punished. Rather, they were being honored, for God created Adam to be his vicegerent and Eve to be the mother of his children. Only Iblis was being punished, but he was also being sent to lead people astray.<sup>51</sup> Nonetheless, he is held accountable for his blameworthy activity, for God did not force him to do what he did. Ibn 'Arabī makes this point in a number of ways, for example in a little dialogue:

<sup>48</sup> *Futūḥāt* III: 253.21.

<sup>49</sup> *Futūḥāt* III: 527.6 (Chittick 1998, 120).

<sup>50</sup> *Futūḥāt* IV: 223.25.

<sup>51</sup> *Futūḥāt* I: 231.34 (Yahyā 3, 404-5); III: 143.33, 382.3; IV: 4.26.

Iblis said to the Real, "You commanded me to do what You did not desire to occur from me. If You had desired that I prostrate myself before Adam, I would have prostrated myself."

God said to him, "When did you come to know that I did not desire prostration from you? Was it after the occurrence of your refusal and the elapse of the time of the command, or before it?"

[Satan] said to Him, "After the occurrence of the refusal, I came to know that, if You had desired me to prostrate myself, I would have prostrated myself."

God said to him, "That is why I took you to task."<sup>52</sup>

The conclusion that Ibn 'Arabī immediately draws is typical of his perspective: "No one is taken to task for anything but ignorance." The way to salvation lies in knowledge, specifically knowledge of *tawḥīd*. He often quotes or refers to the sound hadith, "Those who know that there is no god but God will enter the Garden." One might respond that if this is the case, Iblis has nothing to worry about, because he certainly knows that much. Ibn 'Arabī writes, "Iblis knew that Gehenna does not allow the folk of *tawḥīd* to stay forever within it and that God will never leave a *muwahḥid* in it, whatever may be the path of his *tawḥīd*. Iblis depended on this in his own case, so in one respect he had knowledge, but in another respect he was ignorant."<sup>53</sup>

Some of his ignorance was his belief that the people of *shirk* will suffer forever. This is why his goal is not simply to get people to disobey the prescriptive command, but rather to become *mushriks*. Iblis knows that God has denied the *mushriks* entrance to paradise, and like many theologians, he takes this to mean that their suffering will never end. Ibn 'Arabī, however, offers numerous scriptural and theological arguments to show that the suffering will eventually cease.<sup>54</sup> *Mushriks* will not leave hell, but they will find that it is a pleasant and appropriate place for them to be. Ibn 'Arabī makes some of these points while explaining the significance of the verse, "Satan promises you poverty and commands you to indecency, and God promises you forgiveness from Him and bounty" (Q. 2:268).

<sup>52</sup> *Futūḥāt* III: 124.15.

<sup>53</sup> *Futūḥāt* III: 382.20.

<sup>54</sup> See William C. Chittick, "Ibn al-'Arabī's Hermeneutics of Mercy," in: Stephen Katz, ed. (2000), *Mysticism and Sacred Scripture*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 153-68 and idem (2005), *Ibn 'Arabī: Heir to the Prophets*, Oxford: Oneworld, 2005, chapter 9.



The fall of Iblis was for the sake of leading astray. Then, when God's mercy becomes all-inclusive, everything by which he leads astray the children of Adam will recoil upon him. For God made man's every opposition (*mukhālafā*) to derive from the casting and leading astray of the Enemy. He says, "Satan promises you poverty and commands you to indecency," that is, [he commands you] to make it manifest, which is to say that it should occur from you. For Satan knows that the Real relieves man from [responsibility for] what his own soul says to him and from the ugliness within him, unless he manifests it with his own limbs through activity. That is "indecency."

Thus God says, "And God promises you forgiveness from Him" for the indecency that occurs from you because Satan has commanded you to do it; "and bounty," because of the poverty that Satan has promised you.

This is the most enormous and difficult verse heard by Iblis, because he knows that his leading astray will not profit him. This is why he is eagerly desirous only of *shirk* specifically, for he has heard the Real say, "Surely God does not forgive that anyone be associated with Him" (Q. 4:48). He imagines that the duration of punishment for *shirk* is endless, but God did not say that. The *mushrik* has no escape from punishment or from dwelling in Gehenna, for he will not emerge from the Fire (Q. 2:167), so he will dwell there everlastingly. But God did not remark upon the end of the duration of chastisement and wretchedness within it. There is nothing to be feared except that—not the fact that it is an abode of staying for those who inhabit it.

So, God declared it true that the *mushrik* will be taken to task for his *shirk*. This is like the enactment of a penalty for those who are designated for it, whether it be in this world or the next world. These are divine penalties that the Real enacts on His servant if He does not forgive their causes. Iblis was ignorant of the end of the duration of the punishment of the *mushrik* for his *shirk*.<sup>55</sup>

Ibn 'Arabī mentions that Iblis was a *muwahhid* and not a *mushrik* on a number of occasions, but he maintains nonetheless that Iblis will suffer the punishment of the *mushriks* and something additional as well. His chastisement in hell will be more severe than that of any other creature,<sup>56</sup> and he will stay in hell forever. Ibn 'Arabī explains the severity of his punishment in terms of the hadith, "He who sets down an ugly sunna will carry its burden (*wizr*) and the burden of those who act by it."

<sup>55</sup> *Futūḥāt* III: 382.4.

<sup>56</sup> *Futūḥāt* I: 300.8; *Yahyā* IV: 382.

The fall of Iblis was a fall of abandonment, punishment, and acquiring burdens, for disobedience does not demand the everlastingness of wretchedness. After all, he was not a *mushrik*. Rather, he was proud of the way God had created him. God, however, wrote him down as wretched, and the abode of wretchedness is singled out for the folk of *shirk*. So, God sent him to the earth to set down the sunna of *shirk* by whispering in the hearts of the servants. When they associate, Iblis declares himself quit of the *mushrik* and *shirk* (Q. 59:16). But, declaring himself quit has no profit for him, for he is the one who said to him, "Disbelieve!," as God has reported (Q. 59:16). Hence the burden of every *mushrik* in the world recoils upon him, even though he is a *muwahhid*, for he set down an ugly sunna, and upon him is its burden and the burden of those who acted by it.<sup>57</sup>

Ibn 'Arabī continues this passage by telling us that the only way Satan can instill *shirk* in people, given that it goes against human nature, is to keep it firmly fixed in his own imagination. In effect, he is participating in *shirk*, even if he knows it theoretically to be false.

So Iblis is never separate from *shirk*, and that is why God made him wretched, for he cannot conceive of *tawḥīd* for a single breath, because he clings to this attribute and eagerly desires that it persist in the soul of the *mushrik*. Were it to leave the soul [of Iblis], the *mushrik* would not find anyone to speak of *shirk* in his soul, so *shirk* would leave him.<sup>58</sup>

#### VI. Waḥdat al-Wujūd Revisited

In the Muslim popular imagination and much of the secondary literature, Ibn 'Arabī's name is inseparable from *waḥdat al-wujūd*, "the Oneness of Being." It is not difficult to see why his metaphysics and cosmology might be given this label. He commonly uses the basic philosophical term *wujūd* as a designation for God, and he often returns to God's creation of the universe by means of the command "Be!" This is what he calls an "existential utterance" (*lafza wujūdiyya*), because its fruit is "being" (*kawn*) as a whole, the *wujūd* that is given to every word articulated in the All-merciful Breath. Nonetheless, given the diverse ways in which people have understood *waḥdat al-wujūd* over history, the statement that he believed in it is a frequent and gross misrepresentation of his teachings. Suffice it to re-

<sup>57</sup> *Futūḥāt* I: 232.3; *Yahyā* III: 404-5.

<sup>58</sup> *Futūḥāt* I: 232.14; *Yahyā* III: 406.14.



member that the first person to claim he supported it was the Hanbalite polemicist Ibn Taymiyya, who considered it synonymous with *kufr* (unbelief) and *ilhād* (heresy). For Ibn Taymiyya, as for some supporters of Ibn 'Arabī in the past and not a few aficionados in the present, *waḥdat al-wujūd* means "All is He" (*hama ūst*)—to use the gloss of Shaykh Aḥmad Sirhindī.<sup>59</sup>

There is no doubt that Ibn 'Arabī asserts the Oneness of the Real Being (*al-wujūd al-ḥaqq*), but so does every other Muslim theologian. More importantly for the human situation, Ibn 'Arabī also asserts the multiplicity of the Real's manifestations and the necessity to differentiate among them. As he says in a typical passage,

Were we to halt with "Be!" we would see nothing but One Entity (*'ayn wāḥida*). But we halt only with the traces (*āthār*) of this word, and these are the engendered things (*mukawwanāt*). So they become many, numerous, and distinct through their individuals.<sup>60</sup>

The fact that Ibn 'Arabī halts with the traces of the One Word has been lost on most of those who categorize him under *waḥdat al-wujūd*, whether as praise or blame. If we look carefully, we can see that for him, claiming that "All is He" is the pretext offered by Iblis, who thinks that he can depend on the engendering command to reap the fruit of God's nondelimited mercy. The key to people's existential and ontological situation lies not in the oneness of *wujūd* that is affirmed by the engendering command, but in the diversity of manifestation and the delimitation of mercy affirmed by the prescriptive command. Only prescription allows people to reap the fruit of their freedom. This is the point that Ibn 'Arabī is making in this passage:

God gives to His servants by Himself and on the hands of His messengers. If something comes to you on the Messenger's hand, take it without any scale (*mīzān*), but if something comes to you on God's hand, take it with a scale. For God is identical with every giver, but He has forbidden you to take every gift. This is why He says, "Whatever the Messenger gives you, take; whatever he forbids you, forgo" (Q. 59:7). Hence, if you take from the Messenger, this will be more profitable for you and better for achieving your felicity. Your taking from the Messenger is nondelimited, but your taking from God is delimited.

<sup>59</sup> See William C. Chittick (1994), "Rūmī and *Waḥdat al-wujūd*," in: A. Banani, R. Hovannisian, and G. Sabagh, eds., *Poetry and Mysticism in Islam: The Heritage of Rūmī*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 70-111 and idem (2002), "*Waḥdat al-Shuhūd*," *EI*<sup>2</sup> XI: 37-9.

<sup>60</sup> *Futūḥāt* III: 284.16; Chittick 1998, 197-8.

The Messenger himself is delimited, but taking from him is nondelimited. God is not delimited by any delimitation, but taking from Him is delimited.<sup>61</sup>

Ibn 'Arabī did not employ the expression *waḥdat al-wujūd*, and there is no reason to suppose from his own writings that he would have considered it an appropriate designation for his perspective. His preferred term for his activity was *taḥqīq*, "realization." The word means to understand and actualize *ḥaqq*. As a Qur'ānic divine name, *ḥaqq* means the Truth and Reality, that is God, the Real *wujūd*. As a human attribute, it designates the right, the true, the worthy, the appropriate, and the just, as well as duty and responsibility. The *ḥaqq* that is accessible to human beings appears by means of the delimited disclosure of the nondelimited One, for the Real created everything with a reality (*ḥaqīqa*) appropriate (*ḥaqīq*) to its own niche in the Divine Breath. Everything is a disclosure of the Real, and as such everything is real, right, appropriate, and true.

For people to make good use of their embodiment in clay, they need to recognize the differing *ḥaqq*s of things, that is, the diverse demands that things make upon them. These are determined not by the fact that things manifest the One *wujūd*, but by the fact that each is a unique and delimited disclosure representing a specific *ḥaqq* that must be understood if one is to act appropriately and rightly. Thus the basic human task is encapsulated in the sound hadith, "Give to everything that has a *ḥaqq* its *ḥaqq*." In order to do this, people need to recognize things for what they are in the context of the *ḥaqq* of God, the *ḥaqq* of the cosmos, and the *ḥaqq* of the knowing self. Having gained this understanding, people need to act *bi-l-ḥaqq*, appropriately and rightly. It is precisely the prescriptive command that provides the guidance for discernment and activity.

In short, Ibn 'Arabī's cosmology attempts to clarify not only the structure of the cosmos, but also its relationship with *al-wujūd al-ḥaqq* and the human self. The mythic language of the Qur'ān—angels and jinn and satans—helps bring home the fact that the world out there is not distinct from the world in here. Given the real presence of Iblis in both the cosmic process and the human soul, ethics and morality cannot be placed into the category of the conventional or the subjective, but instead must be recognized as having an objec-

<sup>61</sup> *Futūḥāt* IV: 186.22.



tivity at least as real as our own physical embodiment. Making a sharp distinction between self and other, subject and object, values and facts, is contingent upon ignoring the *ḥaqq* of things. It is true that such dualistic thinking has dominated the Western mindset since the Enlightenment and has made possible the appearance of modern science, but this historical fact says nothing about whether or not this way of looking at things is *ḥaqq*—true and appropriate to the cosmic and human situation.

*ĪQĀ'*  
MUSIKALISCHE METRIK BEI AL-FĀRĀBĪ (GEST. 950)  
UND IHR EBENBILD BEI THOINOT ARBEAU (GEST. 1595)

Eckhard Neubauer, Universität Frankfurt

Mit zu den frühesten Zeugnissen der arabischen Literatur in islamischer Zeit gehören Bücher über die Theorie der Musik. Sie entstanden seit dem 2./8. Jahrhundert und sind uns in Zitaten oder auch vollständig erhalten. Bereits die älteste bekannte Musiktheorie in arabischer Sprache umfasste die drei Aspekte „Töne“ (*nagham*), musikalische Metrik (*īqā'*) und „Komposition“ (*ta'līf*), die für die musikalische Praxis grundlegend sind.<sup>1</sup>

Die Lehre vom *īqā'*, wörtlich das „Fallenlassen“ eines Stabes (*qa-dīb*) zum Markieren von Metrum und Rhythmus, war in Analogie zur prosodischen Metrik (*'arūd*)<sup>2</sup> gebildet. Zwei musikalische „Perioden“ (*dawr*, pl. *adwār*) bilden eine metrische Einheit (*īqā'*) wie zwei Halbverse (*miṣrā'*) den Vers (*bayt*) eines Gedichtes. Danach bestand das arabische Kunstlied (*ṣawt*) offenbar in der Regel aus geradzahligen musikalischen Perioden. Als metrisches Skelett der Lieder war der *īqā'* Hilfe bei der Komposition und Mittel musikalischer Analyse.

Die sechs zentralen Metren der Kunstmusik (*ghinā'*) bildeten je drei „schwere“ (*thaqīl*) und drei „leichte“ (*khafīf*) „Gattungen“ (*ajnās*, sing. *jins*) mit jeweils langen oder kurzen Grundsschlägen im Verhältnis 2:1.<sup>3</sup> Hierunter fiel der auch als Versmass bekannte *ramal*,<sup>4</sup> der zu-

<sup>1</sup> Farmer, H.G. (1965), *The Sources of Arabian Music*, 2. Aufl., Leiden, 1 ff.; Neubauer, E. (1998), *Arabische Musiktheorie von den Anfängen bis zum 6./12. Jahrhundert*, Frankfurt, 43 ff.

<sup>2</sup> Zur arabischen Prosodie s. Heinrichs, W. (1987), „Poetik, Rhetorik, Literaturkritik, Metrik und Reimlehre“, in: H. Gätje (ed.), *Grundriss der Arabischen Philologie*, II: *Literaturwissenschaft*, Wiesbaden, 177-207, hier 190-200.

<sup>3</sup> Dazu zählen das „erste schwere“ Metrum (*al-thaqīl al-awwal*) und seine „leichte“ Form (*khafīf al-thaqīl al-awwal*) mit Folgen von „schweren“ bzw. „leichten“ Schlägen, die in wertlicher Notation als 4/2- bzw. 4/4-Takte darstellbar sind, sowie das „zweite schwere“ Metrum (*al-thaqīl al-thānī*) mit seiner „leichten“ Form