Monistic Interpretations of *Tawheed* in the Sufi Notion of *Wahdat al-wujud*

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Mashhad Al-Allaf, in his book *The Essential Ideas of Islamic Philosophy*, proposes, "that future studies focus on the relationship between Muslim philosophers and western scholars."[1] Here I will, to some degree, answer his call. In what will follow, I will explore the Sufi notion of '*wahdat al-wujud'*, or 'unity of existence', focusing on its relation to monism in the west. I will argue that the Sufi notion of '*wahdat al-wujud'* is a monistic understanding of *tawheed*, the doctrine of oneness of God. I will also argue that monism developed along side Sufism or at least was present in Sufism since its inception. Before I begin to argue any development of Sufi monism, it is prudent to first outline the Western notion of monism that I will employ so that we may see that this Western concept applies to the development of '*wahdat al-wujud'* in Sufism.

I. Monism

Monism is not a singular concept. That is to say there are a variety of views that claim to be monist. In this diversity, however, is the common binding theme of oneness.[2] In Western philosophical discourse, there have been two dominant forms

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[1] Mashhad Al-Allaf, *The Essential Ideas of Islamic Philosophy: A Brief Survey* (Lewiston: The Edwin Mellen Press, 2006), 330.
[2] Jonathan Schaffer, "Monism," *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Fall 2008 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), http://plato.stanford.edu/achrives/fall2008/entries/monism/

of monism: existence monism and priority monism.[3] Whereas existence monism

maintains that, "exactly one concrete object exists,"[4] priority monism offers a level

of existence through dependency to a multiplicity of objects but maintains that the

multiplicity is dependant on a single object.[5] The kind of monism that we are

concerned with, the kind that I will demonstrate exists in Sufism, is priority monism.

That is not to say that other kinds of monism do not exist in greater Sufi thought,

only that priority monism appears as the most successful and dominant form of

monism in Sufism. Indeed we will find that some Sufis endorse existence monism

but Ibn 'Arabi, the focal point of our discussion and perhaps the most influential Sufi

philosopher, and his followers will support priority monism.

Jonathan Schaffer has recently come to dominate philosophical discourse on

monism, arguing in favor of a priority monism world-view. Schaffer has written

extensively on the topic and thus will be our voice of monism in the West. Though

the purpose of this paper is neither to uphold nor to challenge the validity monism,

we will look at Schaffer's explanation of priority monism acknowledging only the

structure of monism rather than arguments for or against its adoption. We will find

one significant difference between Sufi priority monism and the priority monism of

Schaffer that is worth discussing here. Whereas Schaffer maintains the secular

understanding of unity, that the one thing upon which all things depend is the

cosmos, Sufis will understand unity as *tawheed*, the unity of God. Thus, without

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[3] Ibid.
[4] Ibid.
[5] Jonathan Schaffer, "Monism: The Priority of the Whole," *Philosophical Review* 119 (2010): 32.

altering the metaphysical relations of dependence that are necessary for the

classification of priority monism, we will, none the less, understand the priority

monism of the Sufis as pertaining to unity in the divine rather than the material

world.[6] This switch from cosmos to God as ultimate priority might arouse some

skepticism as to whether or not the Sufi notions that we will explore constitute

monism, as it is understood in the West. These skeptics should note that the

treatment of God as whole rather than the cosmos does not interfere with the scope

of the concept of priority monism. Schaffer defines monism as the position that "the

whole is prior to its parts…"[7] and adds "thus views the cosmos as fundamental, with

metaphysical explanation dangling downward from the One."[8] What is important

for a philosophy to qualify as priority monism is the metaphysical 'dangling

downward from the One', or the metaphysical dependence of the many on the one,

not Schaffer's atheistic conclusion in which he presumes a cosmos without God.

One, specifically theists, might just as well conclude that all things depend on

something greater than the cosmos, say a deity, as is the case in Islam. Such a

philosopher would conclude not that the cosmos is fundamental, but rather that God

is fundamental. With this construction one does not alter the metaphysical

structure of priority monism, only the content that is endorsed as the "One" from

which all parts "dangle".

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[6] One should also note that Schaffer's position is materialistic though materialism
does not necessarily follow from monism.
[7] Ibid. 31.
[8] Ibid. 31.

Keeping in mind our notes on the metaphysical structures of dependence that are required for the implementation of the category 'priority monism', we will see that throughout Sufi history, from its development through the development of the notion of *wahdat al-wujud* in Sufism, priority monism is present.[9] In the following sections one might find it useful to periodically remember to ask if there is a determinate and basic existence, a One, upon which all other things depend so that the presence of the concept of priority monism may become clear.

II. Priority Monism Expressed in Mystical Interpretations of *Tawheed*

According to William C. Chittick, "if any characteristic is shared by all Islamic ways of thinking, surely this has something to do with *tawheed*, the assertion that God is one."[10] Innumerable Islamic thinkers, however, interpret the unity in tawheed, very differently. That is, there is no single current within Islam or Sufism that we can point to and claim any kind of universality of belief about unity. The predominant interpretation of *tawheed* is not monistic; there are, however, monistic understandings of *tawheed*. These monistic interpretations of the doctrine of *tawheed* lie predominantly, though not exclusively, in Sufism. This correlation may

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[9] For priority monism to be present one must only identify that the concept is in play. That is, one does not have to be aware of their use or endorsement of a concept in order to use it or compel others to use it. Philosophers identify the concepts that all people may use, the use of concepts does not require that one be a philosopher.

[10] William C. Chittick, "Spectrums of Ilamic Thought: Sa'id al-Din Farghani on the Implications of Oneness and Manyness," in *The Heritage of Sufism*, ed. Leonard Lewisohn (Boston: Oneworld Publications, 1999), 203.

be due to the extinguishing of the self in mystical experience. It might also be

integral to the Sufi notions of the veil of illusion or merely coincidence. Regardless

of the presumably various causes for Sufism's compatibility with monism, one will

see that it existed in Islamic mysticism prior to Sufism and continued in its presence

throughout the development and early history of Sufism.

The first person we will acknowledge as utilizing the concept of priority

monism in Islamic mysticism is Bayazid. Bayazid is one of several mystical figures

in Islam credited with inspiring the mystical movement of Sufism. Ahmet T.

Karamustafa claims that Bayazid proposes a monistic notion of *tawheed* in his

understanding of mystical practice in which one can come to experience the basic

undifferentiable state of oneness with God. This particular understanding of

Bayazid's is evident here:

> Once He raised me up and caused me to stand before Him and said to me, 'O
> Abu Yazid, My creatures desire to behold you.' I answered, 'Adorn me with
> Your unity and clothe me in Your I-ness and raise me to your Oneness, so that
> when Your creatures behold me they may say that they behold You, and that
> only You may be there, not I.'[11]

It is clear from the above poem that Bayazid conceives of a state of basic existence

that can be attained through one's relationship with God. Further, it is clear that

Bayazid acknowledges existence outside of God but seems to interpret such an

existence as lesser, or less basic, than his own and all other things under creation.

Karamustafa speculates that Bayazid believed that God was "the only true subject in

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[11] Ahmet T. Karamustafa, *Sufism: The Formative Period* (Berkeley: University of
California Press, 2007), 4.

existence."[12] That is to say that Bayazid maintained that there is one fundamental basic entity by which all others depend, God. If my and Karamustafa's interpretation of Bayazid is correct then we have identified the existence of priority monism in mystical Islam even if it had not yet been outlined or named as a philosophical concept at that time.

Bayazid is just one of many Islamic mystics who predate, but also helped found, Sufism.[13] His, and seemingly others', understanding of *tawheed* seems to conflict with the common understanding in Islam that God exists as a distinct entity, separated and existing independently of the world. It is certain that not all Sufis will, have, or do, agree with Bayazid's account of unity. But it is also clear that many Sufis do hold a strong notion of unity that may be understood as monism. The Sufi poets that we will now explore, like Bayazid, endorse a monistic understanding of *tawheed* in their expositions.

Rumi, one of the most influential Sufi's of all time and author of the <u>Masnavi</u>, also known as the 'Persian Koran', it is hypothesized, met ibn 'Arabi (who we will discuss later) in Damascus.[14] Whether or not Arabi's philosophical monism influenced Rumi is unknown. It is clear, however, that Rumi, at least at times, proposes a monistic interpretation of *tawheed*. Further, being among the most influential Sufis in history, it behooves us to explore his notion of unity. In the poems that follow one can see the concept of priority monism at work. That is to

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[12] Ibid. 4.
[13] Ibid. 6.
[14] Majid Fakhry, *A History of Islamic Philosophy* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004), 263.

say, Rumi utilizes the concept even if he does not explicitly outline his notion of

tawheed as monistic in any philosophical manner.

The poem we will look to, as one demonstration among many of Rumi's implementation of priority monism, is ripe with a striving to associate oneself with God. In doing so, one may realize the pervasive fundamental existence of God throughout all of creation:

> I am dust particles in sunlight
> I am the round sun.
> To the bits of dust I say, Stay.
> To the sun, Keep moving.
> I am morning mist,
> And the breathing of evening.
> I am wind in the top of a grove,
> And surf on the cliff.
> Mast, rudder, helmsman, and keel,
> I am also the coral reef they founder on.
> I am a tree with a trained parrot in its branches.
> Silence, thought, and voice.
> The musical air coming through a flute,
> A spark of a stone, a flickering
> In metal. Both candle,
> And the moth crazy around it.
> Rose, and the nightingale
> Lost in the fragrance.
> I am all orders of being, the circling galaxy,
> The evolutionary intelligence, the lift,
> And the falling away. What is,
> And what isn't. You who know
> Jelaluddin, You the one
> In all, say who
> I am. Say I
> am You.[15]

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[15] Coleman Barks, and John Moyne trans., *The Essential Rumi* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1995), 275-6.

Rumi, here, seemingly employs a pantheistic monism. That is to say he utilizes identity in equality with all existent objects to draw the reader to a place where they ultimately realize that being one with the world is sharing an identity with God. The temptation to interpret such writings as pantheistic monism or existence monism is strong, but we should not confuse the assertion that one may share an identity with God with the assertion that independent identity is meaningless. To put yet another way, one discovers through the identification with the world that this experience of pure being is nothing more than the realization of the extinguishing of particular identities in the face of the true basic existence of God while still acknowledging on some level the existence of plurality. After all, how would one come to extinguish one's identity if one had no identity to extinguish? The extent to which we can categorize plurality as existent will become more clear in our discussion on Ibn 'Arabi, for now we will let it be sufficient that a monism is employed by Rumi and that this monism, given forthcoming explanations of plurality, qualifies as priority monism.[16]

Hafiz is another Sufi poet of great influence. In the following poem he clearly states that he has achieved a union with God and that this union implies a release of his particular identity into a shared universal identity of fundamental being, a being from which the rest of the world is explained.

> Who can believe the divine kindness of God?
> Who can comprehend what happens when
> Separation ends?
> For now,

[16] For further implementations of priority monism in Rumi see: *The Masnavi* 3: 3901-7, 4: 415-18, 6: 1528.

Because of my union with Reality,
Now,
Whenever I hear a story of one of His prophets
Having come into this world,
I know I was a tree that stood near,
Leaned down and took notes.
I know I was the earth that measured the infinite
Arch of His feet.
I know I was the water,
I know I was the food and water that nourished Him-
That went into our Beloved's mouth.
Pilgrim,
If it is your wish, you will someday see
You sat inside of Hafiz
And it was with the lyre you gave me
We sang of truth and the sublime intimacy:
"I know I was the water
That quenched the Christ's thirst.
I know I Am the food and water that goes
Into every
Mouth."[17]

Hafiz, like Rumi, employs pantheistic symbolism. What is more striking, however, is that he demonstrates the explicability of the world and particular events (such as prophetic interactions with God) through the basic identity of God. Now one might find Hafiz's poem radically hubristic, this is not unreasonable, but Hafiz seems only to employ his own identity in so far as it is not his historical person but God. That is, Hafiz utilizes his own identity as a demonstration that unity with the most fundamental and basic entity in existence, God, is possible, and that this unity is a destruction of the walls of identity. Once again the implementation of monism is clear, and, along with our consideration of Rumi, given forthcoming explanations of plurality within monism we may understand Hafiz's monism as priority monism.

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[17] Daniel Ladinsky, trans., *The Gift: Poems by Hafiz the Great Sufi Master* (New York: Penguin/Arkana, 1999), 320-321.

III. Avicenna and the Philosophical Evolution Towards *Wahdat al-Wujud*

Now that we have demonstrated the existence of monism in the poetry of

infamous Sufi poets, it is prudent to turn our attention to the philosophy of Avicenna

so that we may clearly see the development of a philosophical delineation of

monistic *tawheed* and ground ourselves for the development of the concept of

wahdat al-wujud.[18] *Wahdat al-wujud* became a discreet philosophical concept in

Sufism largely due to the influences of Avicenna; thus, in this section I will outline

relevant aspects of Avicenna's philosophy so that we may see the connection

between Avicenna and priority monism as it comes to take the form of *wahdat al-*

wujud. We will also contextualize the development of monism through Avicenna in

his connection to philosophical discourse in the west.

Avicenna is popularly regarded as one of the most influential philosophers in

the history of Islam. His philosophical developments influenced philosophical and

theological traditions throughout Islam, Christianity, and Judaism.[19] Within his vast

philosophical system there are certain aspects that communicate monism. Avicenna

is only sometimes regarded as a monist, however his ontology resembles a neo-

platonic monistic structure, all things emanating from the one.[20] This neo-platonic

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[18] Our brief exploration of Avicenna serves our purpose in that it will provide a
philosophical context in which priority monism can develop in Sufi philosophy.
[19] Jon McGinnis, *Avicenna* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010) 244-254.
[20] For Avicenna interpreted as a monist, see Cecile Bonmariage's book *Le Réel et les
réalités: Mullā Ṣadrā Shīrāzī et la structure de la réalité.* Due to the unavailability of
the text mentioned, my information regarding said text is from: Sajjad H. Rizvi, "*Le
Réel et les réalités: Mullā Ṣadrā Shīrāzī et la structure de la réalité* By CÉCILE
BONMARIAGE," *Journal of Islamic Studies* 21 (2010): 119-122, accessed May 17,
2011, doi:10.1093/jis/etp099. http://jis.oxfordjournals.org/content/21/1/119.
For Neo-Platonism as monism see: John M. Rist, "Monism: Plotinus and Some

heritage had long influenced Islamic philosophy, finding its way into Islamic thought

through neo-platonic translations of Greek philosophical texts such as those of

Aristotle.[21] Considering the monistic influences on Avicenna, then, it is no great

surprise that his system comes to influence the monism of Western philosophers as

well as Sufi philosophers.

Avicenna views the world as constituting two distinct ontic categories, those

things that exist necessarily (through itself), and those things that exist contingently

(through another).[22] While only one object can exist necessarily in Avicenna's

system, all other objects exist contingently and are conceived through the necessary

existence.[23] Ultimately Avicenna maintains that the single necessary existence is

God and that God is wholly simple (basic) and the only thing that actually exists in

the strict sense of the term.[24] That there is one fundamental entity through which

the rest of the world is conceived constitutes priority monism. It is no wonder then

that philosophers that count Avicenna among their influences such as Spinoza in the

West or Ibn 'Arabi in Sufism, create monist philosophies.

Predecessors," *Harvard Studies in Classical Philology* 69 (1965).
[21] F. E. Peters, "The Greek and Syriac background," in *History of Islamic Philosophy: Part I*, ed. Seyyed Hossein Nasr and Oliver Leaman. (New York: Routledge, 1996), 40-51.
[22] McGinnis, *Avicenna,* 161.
[23] Ibid. 161-165.
[24] Ibid. 167-168

To utilize Schaffer's metaphor of "metaphysical explanation dangling downward from the One,"[25] we can see priority monism at work in Avicenna's ontology from the following chart.

Proof for a Material Subject of Possibility
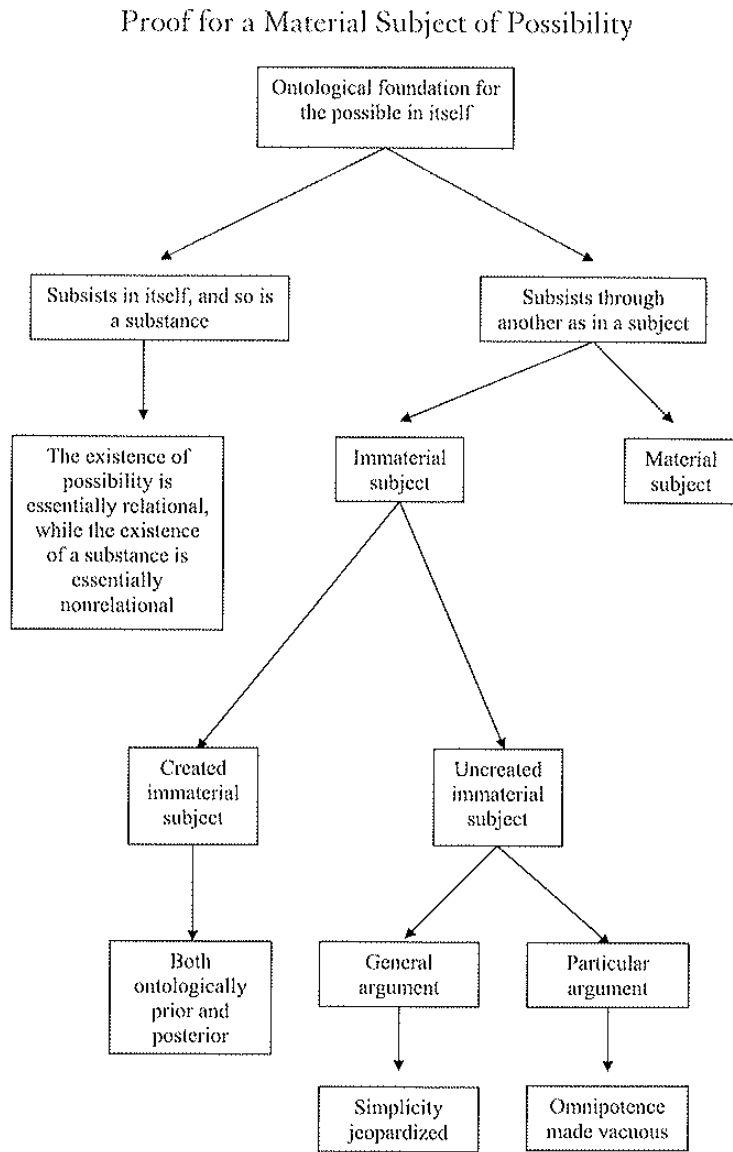
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[25] McGinnis, "Avicenna," 31.
[26] Ibid. 258.

One can see that a substance that is conceived through itself is necessary and all other things are conceived through it. This, then, is a relationship of dependence of everything on the single necessary substance.

After Avicenna, and in his philosophical progeny, monism comes to be the understanding of *tawheed* among several Sufi thinkers. Through this process *tawheed*, understood monistically, becomes *wahdat al-wujud*. Thus, we will now turn our attention to the development of the concept *wahdat al-wujud*.

IV. *Wahdat al-Wujud* and Philosophical Monism in Sufi Philosophy

As *tawheed* came to be interpreted monistically as a philosophical concept, it came to be expressed through the concept of *wahdat al-wujud.* The phrase '*wahdat al-wujud'* is often attributed to Ibn 'Arabi to whom we will soon turn our attention. This however is an incorrect attribution. Though 'Arabi may be credited for the significant development of priority monism in Sufism, the understanding of *tawheed* as *wahdat al-wujud* was actually introduced by Ibn Sabin.[27] Thus is in order to come to a sufficient understanding of priority monism in the concept of *wahdat al-wujud*, we must look to both Arabi and his predecessors. First we will look at the monism of Ibn 'Arabi. Next we will see how Arabi's monism comes to be understood through *wahdat al-wujud*.

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[27] Toby Mayer, "Theology and Sufism," in *The Cambridge Companion to Classical Islamic Theology*, ed. Tim Winter. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 277.

Ibn 'Arabi, it has been said, represents the ""zenith of philosophical development in Sufism".[28] His range of thought is vast, including discourses on the Qur'an, Hadith, and jurisprudence.[29] Our interest in Arabi, however, pertains to his overall view of the cosmos and what is designated with ontic status. Arabi adopts the ontological perspective of Avicenna and the neo-platonic structure of emanation from the singular. To this, Arabi adds a sort of dependence in dualism that allows for expression of God in creation while maintaining the supreme reality of God in his distinctly Sufi philosophy.

Arabi's take on Sufism includes the position that "perfected human beings come to know God as God is in Himself and, at the same time, to manifest God's Attributes through their mode of existence in the cosmos."[30] That is when one comes to behold the presence of God, the goal of every Sufi, one becomes, "*dhu'l-'aynayn*", or "the possessor of two eyes".[31] Those who possess two eyes are those who see both the uniqueness of particular being in multiplicity and their shared identity with God.[32] Arabi's position here indicates two points of interest pertaining to priority monism. First, Arabi does not reject an existence separate from God. Second, though separate existence is maintained, identity with God is also maintained. How is this seeming contradiction reconciled? Arabi utilizes an approach that stratifies reality or being. Like Augustine before him, and Spinoza

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[28] Fakhry, *Islamic Philosophy,* 261.
[29] William C. Chittick, "Ibn 'Arabi," in *History of Islamic Philosophy Part I*, ed. Seyyed Hossein Nasr and Oliver Leaman. (New York: Routledge, 1996), 497.
[30] Ibid. 500.
[31] Ibid. 501.
[32] Ibid. 501.

after, Arabi maintains that proximity to God yields greater reality. Essentially God is identified as the ultimate, or most basic reality, whereas all other 'existences' lack full or complete reality (which is God's alone).[33] In this way all particular objects that can be said to exist depend, express, or 'dangle', from the one true existence, God. In this way we can acknowledge the dependent existent of particulars while still making sense of the singular position of God as expressed by Arabi here:

> None but God there exists;
> He is all that exists[34]

One might take these words to indicate a denial of other existences as one might have been inclined to do with the expositions of Rumi and/or Hafiz above, but this is not exactly the case. God's exclusive position as absolute or most basic existence is what is maintained here and one cannot properly talk about absolute or most basic existence in reference to dependents, one must, rather, speak of the existence of dependents in terms of partial existence.

Arabi's position has thus been misinterpreted as pantheism at times, Toby Mayer explains:

> Clear evidence of the great scope of Ibn 'Arabi's success is to be found, paradoxically, among his opponents. His doctrine of "the unity of existence" (*wahdat al-wujud*, i.e. objective theomonism) was not without vehement opposition within Sufism. […] They [his opponents] claimed that the theory promoted antinomian forms of spirituality by demolishing the creator-creature distinction on which worship and moral accountability were predicated.[35]

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[33] Ibid. 501.
[34] Ibn 'Arabi. "Futuhat IV 135," in *The Pantheistic Monism of Ibn Al-'Arabi*, by S. A. Q. Husaini (Lahore: Kashmiri Bazar, 1970), 176.
[35] Mayer, "Theology," 275.

The objection to Arabi's monism, then, is that it rejects the ontic status of creation

and proposes that everything is God, or pantheism. At least one modern author also

carries this criticism. S. A. Q. Husaini argues that Arabi's philosophy is "pantheistic

monism".[36] Arabi's monism, however, maintains that only God exists, but also

claims that there is ontic status to things that are both existent and lack full or

complete existence. All objects other than God, in fact, can exist separately from God

because they express a lack of existence. In this way 'Arabi's philosophy is not

existent monism or pantheism but priority monism.

As previously mentioned, the phraseology of '*wahdat al-wujud*' originated

not with Arabi but with Sabin.[37] Ibn Sabin, an Andalusian Sufi philosopher, is

credited with a new religious movement in Islam, *Sab'iniyun*.[38] Relatively little is

known about Ibn Sabin, for most of his forty-one works have not survived through

history.[39] Sabin was critical of Ibn 'Arabi and is of particular importance to us in

that he is credited with first using the phrase *wahdat al-wujud*, the phrase that

comes to be known as a corner stone of Arabi's philosophical monism.[40] Sabin

argued for a true pantheistic monism in which "there is no real basis to the

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[36] S. A. Q. Husaini, *The Pantheistic Monism of Ibn Al-'Arabi* (Lahore: Kashmiri Bazar, 1970).

[37] Mayer, "Theology and Sufism,"277.

[38] Henry Corbin, *History of Islamic Philosophy* (London: Kegan Paul International, 1993), 264.

[39] Abu'l-Wafa al-Taftazani, and Oliver Leaman, "Ibn Sab'in," in *History of Islamic Philosophy Part I*, ed. Seyyed Hossein Nasr and Oliver Leaman. (New York: Routledge, 1996), 347.

[40] William C. Chittick, "The School of Ibn 'Arabi," in *History of Islamic Philosophy Part I*, ed. Seyyed Hossein Nasr and Oliver Leaman. (New York: Routledge, 1996), 512.

distinction between the existence of God and of everything else."[41] Here we find an

important point of disagreement between Arabi and Sabin. Arabi will admit, that

non-God entities have ontic status that is distinct from the being of God. Sabin does

not. The name that Sabin provides for this strict pantheistic monism is '*wahdat al-*

wujud'. It is here that something tricky occurs that demands a bit of our time.

Wahdat al-wujud is, in the use of Sabin, a monistic pantheism, or, in reference

to the two dominant forms of monism in the West, existence monism. This phrase,

intended to communicate Sabin's existence monism, comes to be understood as the

position of Arabi. One might suspect that the monism that is clearly present in the

phrase might not apply to Arabi's philosophy but more appropriately apply to a

misunderstanding of Arabi's position. Though it is true that the phraseology of

wahdat al-wujud may have originally been applied to Arabi due to

misunderstanding of the type of monism Arabi proposes, a look at Arabi's followers,

or the 'school of Ibn 'Arabi', will shed light on how Arabi's position can none-the-less

be described by *wahdat al-wujud*.

'Arabi's following is not as easy to identify as one might think. 'Arabi had

followers but never established a distinct following. Thus, the 'school of Ibn 'Arabi'

is only functional in tracing 'Arabi's influence, Chittick explains:

> The term "school of Ibn 'Arabi" was coined by Western scholars to refer to
> the fact that many Muslim thinkers – most of whom considered themselves
> Sufis – took seriously Ibn 'Arabi's title as the "Greatest Master" (*al-shaykh al-*

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akbar) and consciously rooted their perspective in their own understanding of his theoretical framework.[42]

The first great impact on the following of Arabi comes through Sadr al-Din Qunawi who is recognized by some as central to the understanding of Arabi.[43] William Chittick claims, "He [Qunawi] can be given more credit than anyone else for determining the way in which the Shaykh [Arabi] was read by later generations."[44] With this insight in mind we will find that Arabi's philosophy, as it came to impact Sufi philosophy, comes to be understood through the principle *wahdat al-wujud*.

Qunawi, being chief disciple of Arabi came to solidify Arabi's position as *wahdat al-wujud*. Mayer informs us, "What begins with Qunawi, then, is the systematic formulation of *wahdat al-wujud* as a virtually philosophical perspective. Qunawi's approach is transmitted through a series of direct master-disciple relations, becoming the prevalent reading of Ibn 'Arabi."[45] Thus it is not Arabi who proposes his system be interpreted as *wahdat al-wujud*, but his disciples that come to understand him as such.

V. Conclusion

From what has been demonstrated above, we see that unity is a central concept in Sufism. From the formation of Sufism out of early Islamic mysticism through major figures in early Sufi history, priority monism is at work. Though some Sufis reject monism, it is also clear that some Sufis endorse a monistic

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[42] Chittick, "The School," 510.
[43] Chittick, "Spectrums of Islamic Thought," 206.
[44] Chittick, "The School," 511.
[45] Mayer, "Theology," 277.

interpretation of unity. As Sufi notions of unity combined with Islamic philosophy over time the priority monism that was expressed by early Sufi figures came to take the form of *wahdat al-wujud*.

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